



MASTERWORKS

A JOURNEY THROUGH HIMALAYAN ART

MODEL OF THE MAHABODHI TEMPLE

Eastern India, probably Bodhgaya; ca. 11th century

Stone (serpentinite)

Rubin Museum of Art

Purchased with funds from Ann and Matt Nimetz

and Rubin Museum of Art

C2019.2.2

According to Buddhist tradition, Bodhgaya is the place where the Buddha meditated under the bodhi tree and attained his awakened state. Mahabodhi Temple was built to commemorate this event at this site during the reign of Ashoka (ca. 268–232 BCE), the famed patron of Buddhism credited with building many temples and stupas. It attained the form seen in this model in the fifth to sixth century. A pilgrimage site revered across the Buddhist world, Mahabodhi Temple was often reproduced as portable pilgrimage souvenirs like this one. Such replicas also enshrined symbolic representations of the site, such as bodhi leaves, which were considered relics.

Seeing a replica of the temple served as a substitute for those who couldn't visit the site in person, and it acted as a symbol of remembrance for those who did. Small models like this one have been found in Burma and Tibet, and full-scale temple replicas were constructed in places like Nepal and Beijing. This model was likely created in Bodhgaya itself. It represents what the temple may have looked like in the eleventh century, shortly before it fell into ruin.



CROWNED BUDDHA

Northeastern India; Pala period (750–1174), 10th century

Stone

Rubin Museum of Art

C2013.14

For early Tibetan Buddhists the holy sites of northeastern India were important pilgrimage sites. This sculpture is modeled after images of the Buddha located in and around Bodhgaya, the place of the Buddha's awakening (see adjacent model of the Mahabodhi Temple). In this region Tibetans encountered images of the Buddha standing in a rigid pose, facing forward, with his legs together and clothing clinging to his body. Many Buddha depictions of this period are crowned and bejeweled, a characteristic that became popular beginning in the seventh century and is occasionally quoted in early Tibetan painting.



MAJOR EVENTS OF THE BUDDHA'S LIFE

Northeastern India; 12th century

Andagu stone with pigments

Rubin Museum of Art

C2005.4.2 (HAR 65388)

At the center of this small upright carved stone slab, or stele, the Buddha touches the ground under a tree, a reference to the moment of his awakening. Scenes of his life surround this central image.

For early Tibetan Buddhists, the northeastern Indian village of Bodhgaya, the place of the Buddha's awakening, was an important pilgrimage site. Some pilgrims returned to Tibet with small stone steles dedicated to the Buddha's life, like this one, as souvenirs. The composition of these steles is similar to those seen in early Tibetan paintings. The physical appearance of the Buddha, featuring a disproportionately short and thick neck, is a direct reference to the main sculpture that occupied the temple at Bodhgaya, as seen seated in the adjacent model of the Mahabodhi Temple, from about the eleventh to the thirteenth century.



SNAKE GODDESS MANASA

Northeastern India; ca. 12th century

Phyllite

Rubin Museum of Art

C2005.36.2 (HAR 65569)

This masterfully carved stone stele depicts the Hindu snake goddess Manasa, who is venerated in Bengal in northeastern India. She is worshiped primarily for her ability to prevent and cure snakebites, a power reflected visually in her hood of seven snakes and the snake she holds in her left hand. She is also believed to bestow agricultural prosperity and fertility, here represented by the fruit in her right hand and the vase underneath her foot.

The same artisans often made objects for different religious traditions, so Hindu and Buddhist images often share stylistic similarities. For example, the imagery for the Hindu goddess Manasa is comparable to depictions of the Buddhist deity Tara, as seen in the adjacent Tibetan sculpture, including the shape and position of the body and jewelry.





GREEN TARA

Central Tibet; 14th century

Gilt copper alloy

Rubin Museum of Art

C2003.11.1 (HAR 65209)

This bronze of the Buddhist deity Green Tara represents early Tibetan aesthetics and metal sculpture at its best. The overall composition of this sculpture and the elegant sway of the body are based on Indic examples, as are details like the hair with a knot on one side covered by a net and the transparent scarf crossing the chest and forming a loop on the left shoulder.

There are many similarities with the adjacent northeastern Indian stone sculpture of the Hindu goddess Manasa, such as the aesthetic ideal of the female form, the position of the hands and feet, the jewelry, clothing, and lotus throne, even the fall of the drapery.



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KASHMIRA

Kashmir, India; 10th century
Copper alloy with inlays of silver
Rubin Museum of Art
C2005.16.5 (HAR 65427)

Kashmira is the personification of Kashmir. She is also known as the Daughter of the Himalayas and Parvati. Hindus and Buddhists alike revere her. This small sculpture is an excellent example of early metalwork from Kashmir, with its characteristic features including silver inlaid eyes; an inset chin; a small waist and fleshy abdomen; a linear, pointed, flaming halo; and a plain geometric base. Artisans and their patrons in parts of Tibet and the Western Himalayas appreciated and adopted this aesthetic.



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GUHYASAMAJA MANJUVAJRA

Himachal Pradesh, India; 11th century

Leaded copper-zinc-tin alloy with silver inlay

Rubin Museum of Art

C2004.14.3 (HAR 65339)

The art of the northwestern Indian area of Kashmir has greatly influenced Tibetan Buddhist art in both style and content. Tantric or Esoteric practice and its accompanying imagery, featuring deities with many heads and arms, developed and flourished in Kashmir. Many of the earliest Himalayan bronzes depicting such multi-appendaged tantric deities are from this region.

Kashmiri artistic inspiration is visible in this sculpture of a tantric deity from the neighboring region of Himachal Pradesh. Several features typical of Kashmiri art are present, including the deity's broad chest and pronounced navel, long garland, and floral crown and earrings.



INSCRIBED LION THRONE

Gilgit, Pakistan (Patola Shahi rule); early 7th century

Metal alloy

Gift of Carlton Rochell

C2005.37.2 (HAR 65412)

This large lion throne likely once supported the image of a seated buddha. Based on inscriptions on a group of bronzes like the one seen here, scholars have established a chronology of the royal house that ruled the area from the late sixth to the eighth century. This object's inscription, located on a textile hanging between the lions, indicates that the principal donor was a queen of the Patola Shahis in the area of Gilgit in northern Pakistan, and it is one of the earliest Palola Shahi bronzes known to exist. Many of these bronzes eventually made their way to Tibet where they were influential.



GATEKEEPER VAJRASPOTA

Western Tibet or Kashmir; 11th–12th century

Silver with copper inlays and traces of pigment
and copper alloy base

Long-term loan from the Nyingjei Lam Collection

L2005.9.30 (HAR 68449)

This exceptional sculpture represents the wrathful gatekeeper Vajrasphota (Vajra Chain), who presses a chain against his hips. As is typical for a wrathful sculpture from the Western Himalayan region, his hair stands on end at the sides of his head, his upper body is muscular and emphasizes the chest and navel areas, his clothing falls asymmetrically, and his garland of skulls reaches his ankles. Tibetans recognized these features as deriving from Kashmir and classified such sculptures accordingly.



HATHA DYA AS BHAIRAVA

Nepal; ca. 16th century

Gilt copper alloy

Rubin Museum of Art

C2005.16.14 (HAR 65436)

On one level this monumental mask represents a fierce form of the Hindu god Shiva known as Bhairava, or the Terrifying One. His broad face, bulging eyes, gaping mouth, five-pointed crown with peaceful elements (jewels) and wrathful ones (skulls and snakes), hair that stands on end, and fiery facial hair are typical features of fierce images of Hindu and Buddhist deities. To the Newar people of the Kathmandu Valley, the face is also known as Hatha Dya and represents the sky. They worship him in autumn as Divine Grandfather, and he is mythically associated with an ancestor king.

This mask was used to dispense beer during Hindu festival processions in Nepal. A tube connected the mouth of the mask to a hidden reservoir of alcohol—the hole for the tube is still evident—allowing the drink to be poured into the mouths of devotees. Such rituals were meant to confer blessings from the god during festivals.

ART IN CONVERSATION

What shifts in colors, techniques, and materials do you notice as you move through the exhibition?



BODHISATTVA OF COMPASSION AVALOKITESHVARA

Nepal; 13th–14th century

Gilt copper alloy with semiprecious stone inlay

Rubin Museum of Art

C2005.16.8 (HAR 65430)

Avalokiteshvara is one of the most popular deities in Nepal, where 108 forms of him are known. In his simplest form, extending his right hand in the gesture of giving and holding the stalk of a lotus (now broken) in his left, he is often called Padmapani, or Lotus-in-Hand.

Metal sculpture figures from Nepal share a number of characteristic features, such as a gentle smile and hawk-like nose. This sculpture is remarkable for its simplicity of line, graceful proportions, and elegant jewelry. The subtle modeling of the body contrasts with the voluminous and pointed ends of the bodhisattva's clothing and the large, slim-petaled lotus blossom over his shoulder. The reddish tone of the metal, seen where the gilding has worn away, indicates a high copper content, which is typical of Nepalese sculpture.



MANDALA OF CHANDRA

Nepal; ca. 1500

Pigments on cloth

Rubin Museum of Art

Gift of Shelley and Donald Rubin

C2010.23 (HAR 100016)

In this mandala of Chandra, the personification of the moon, the deities are not depicted residing in a palace, as is typical of other mandalas. Instead Chandra sits at center on an elaborate chariot pulled by geese with a complex arch framing his head. The mandala is set against a black background with the corners symmetrically distributed.

Stylistically the Buddhist paintings of Nepal and Tibet are closely related, but there are some features that are characteristically Nepalese. One such cultural concern reflected here is the expansive depiction of patronage, ritual action, and veneration at the bottom of the painting.



Wangguli and five other Newar artists (active mid-15th century)

FOUR MANDALAS OF THE VAJRAVALI CYCLE

Ngor Ewam Choden Monastery,
Tsang Province, Central Tibet; ca. 1429–1456
Pigments on cloth
Rubin Museum of Art
C2007.6.1 (HAR 81826)

This painting is the thirteenth in a set of fourteen paintings depicting mandalas of the Vajravali cycle, commissioned by Ngorchen Kunga Zangpo (1382–1456), founder of Ngor Ewam Monastery (1429), in memory of his deceased teacher Sazang Phakpa Shonnu Lodro (1358–1424?). Remarkably, details of this set’s creation were recorded in monastic histories, which recount that it was made at Ngor Monastery by six itinerant Newar artists who came from the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal, to paint them, including the famous artist Wangguli. It is very rare to have surviving artworks that one can match to such detailed historical accounts of their creation. Ngor Monastery became particularly famous for meticulous, intricately painted mandalas—recognizable by a rich red and blue palette highlighted in yellow—that closely followed Newar aesthetics inherited from such itinerant Nepalese master painters.

Remarkable for its near pristine condition, this painting represents the culmination of Newar artisanship in Tibet, its refinement indicated by the size and precision of the figures, the variation in the delicate vegetal scrolls filling the background, and many of the minor motifs. Although the painting was made by Newari artists, the composition strictly follows Tibetan conventions and accounts of the work’s Tibetan commission.

ART IN CONVERSATION

Spend thirty seconds looking at this artwork. Do you notice things that you didn’t see before?





PHAKMODRUPA (1110–1170) WITH HIS PREVIOUS INCARNATIONS AND EPISODES FROM HIS LIFE

U Province, Central Tibet; ca. 1272

Pigments on cloth

Rubin Museum of Art

C2002.24.3 (HAR 65119)

This painting belongs to the Taklung Kagyu School of Tibetan Buddhism. The school's main monastic seat, Taklung Monastery (founded 1185), was an artistic center known for its distinctive Eastern Indian–inspired painting style (Sharri). This style is recognizable here by the multicolored, narrow, rock formations used to frame the figures.

Phakmodrupa, at center, was a charismatic Buddhist mystic, and portraits of him circulated widely both during and after his lifetime. In such early Tibetan portraits, the lama, or religious master, is visually elevated to the level of a buddha. He sits between two columns featuring scenes of his previous lives.

On the back of this painting are several inscriptions that allow us to both reconstruct something of the history of the object and discern its date, unusual for Tibetan art. They record its consecration by Sanggye Onpo (1251–1296), and suggest that it was likely created in 1272, the year of Onpo's brief tenure as interim abbot of Taklung. In 1273 he took this painting and many other sacred objects with him to Riwoche in Kham Province in eastern Tibet.



An inscription at the top of the back of the painting records its consecration by Sanggye Onpo. A longer inscription in the shape of a stupa at the center contains mantras to the entire Taklung Kagyu lineage, ending with Onpo himself, which helps date the painting to 1272.



BUDDHA SHAKYMUNI AND SCENES FROM HIS LIFE

Tsang Province, Central Tibet;
second half of the 14th century
Pigments on cloth
Rubin Museum of Art
C2011.3 (HAR 77032)

This detailed representation of the Buddha's life is based on a composition derived from northeastern India. At the center of the painting is a depiction of the Buddha's awakening, with Mara, a personification of evil, and Mara's army attempting to stop the Buddha from reaching enlightenment. Other scenes from the Buddha's life surround this central image. They are arranged chronologically starting in the top-right corner and moving in a clockwise direction.

This artwork features many other characteristics of early Tibetan painting with close links to Nepalese art found across the Himalayas during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. These characteristics include the central Buddha sitting under a three-lobed arch supported by lotus columns; rosettes represented above his ears; his cranial protuberance (*ushnisha*) topped by a flame-shaped jewel; the dominant red color; the black background to differentiate the scenes from his life; and yellow lines defining the main parts of the composition.



BUDDHA RATNASAMBHAVA WITH WEALTH DEITIES

Tibet; early to mid-14th century

Pigments on cloth

Rubin Museum of Art

C2005.16.39 (HAR 65462)

Ratnasambhava, the buddha that presides over the southern direction, is one of the Buddhas of the Five Families. Each Buddha Family is associated with a cardinal direction. This painting is from a set of five, each depicting one of these buddhas. Ratnasambhava represents the jewel family, associated with wealth, and five forms of the wealth deity Jambhala are shown along the bottom of the painting.

Early Tibetan paintings are strictly organized with each figure sized and placed in a way that reflects his or her relative importance. For instance, Ratnasambhava is the subject of the painting, so he is the largest figure and located at the center. He is richly bejeweled, with all of his jewelry raised and gilded, as is typical of Tibetan paintings of this subject and period. The bold color scheme, strong shading, and abundance of decorative details separate this work from earlier examples of this theme.

ART IN CONVERSATION

Observe how your eyes move over this artwork.



BUDDHA RATNASAMBHAVA

Central Tibet; 13th century
Brass with traces of pigment
Rubin Museum of Art
C2010.19

In early central Tibetan art, of which this sculpture is a fine example, figures have massive heads and rather large hands and feet. The deities have a high hair knot at the back of the head, crowns with large points set apart from each other, ribbons and circular earrings, and strands of hair falling on their shoulders. They sit on a double-lotus throne with plain, fleshy petals in elegant poses with minimal sense of movement. Their large jewelry is graceful but has little variation.



Dorje Tseten (active first half 16th century)

BUDDHASHRI SANGGYE PEL (1339–1419)

Ngor Ewam Choden Monastery,

Tsang Province, Central Tibet; ca. 1516–1534

Pigments on cloth

Rubin Museum of Art

C2006.66.220 (HAR 269)

An inscription on the front of this painting identifies it as depicting Buddhashri (1339–1419), and unusually, it names the artist, “the supreme brush holder” Dorje Tseten.

The painting preserves several features of early Tibetan art into the sixteenth century, such as the dominant red palette, the Newar-inspired scrolling patterns, and the hierarchic symmetrical organization of the figures. Such early features continued unabated in the more conservative art tradition at the great artistic center of Ngor Monastery, even after much of Central Tibet began embracing the new landscape styles with green and blue dominated palettes. More recent developments in Tibetan painting also appear, such as the main teacher’s Chinese-inspired seat and the emphasis on textiles.

Buddhashri was the Tibetan master who transmitted the key Sakya School “Path with the Fruit” (Lam dre) instructions to the founder of Ngor Monastery, Ngorchen Kunga Zangpo (1382–1456). This painting is from a larger set of eleven paintings commissioned by Lhachok Sengge (1468–1535), the ninth abbot of Ngor Monastery (tenure 1516–1534), an important patron of the arts.



GUHYASAMAJA AKSHOBHYAVAJRA

Ngor Ewam Choden Monastery,
Tsang Province, Central Tibet; ca. 1604
Pigments on cloth
Rubin Museum of Art
F1997.31.13 (HAR 487)

This painting of the meditation deity Akshobhyavajra was once part of a larger set of paintings created for the funeral services of the Fourteenth Ngor Khenchen, Jampa Kunga Tashi (1558–1603), suggesting a date of 1604. The gilding of the figures has no iconographic significance, but it may have been employed to increase the merit generated for the deceased.

Many of the stylistic elements—including the faces, scrollwork background, and hierarchical organization—are reminiscent of early Tibetan art. In contrast, the sense of movement, fullness, and patterns of the deities' garments, such as the Chinese-inspired flowers and clouds, are more recent developments that emerged with the Khyenri painting tradition in the fifteenth century.



HEVAJRA WITH CONSORT NAIRATMYA

Central Tibet; mid-15th–16th century

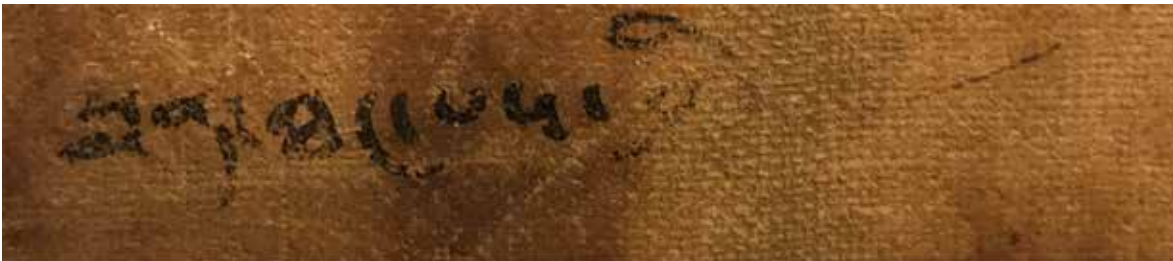
Pigments on cloth

Rubin Museum of Art

C2003.23.3 (HAR 90919)

This painting depicts Hevajra, the primary meditational deity (yidam) of the Sakya School of Tibetan Buddhism.

What makes this painting of special interest is an intriguing inscription on the back: “painted by Menthangpa.” It either names the artist as the famous founder of the Menri painting tradition, Menthangpa Menla Dondrup (active mid-fifteenth century), or a later follower. Yet the depiction of Hevajra seems to derive from another contemporary artist, Khyentse Chenmo.



Tibetan inscription on the back: *sman thang pas bri[s]* “painted by Menthangpa.”

Beginning in the mid-fifteenth century the indigenous Tibetan painting traditions of Menri and Khyenri— named after their respective Tibetan founders Menla Dondrup and Khyentse Chenmo (active ca. 1450s–1490s)—incorporated Chinese landscape elements into an otherwise Nepalese-inspired Tibetan painting tradition. The landscape depicted here is not designed to suggest spatial depth. Instead mountains and clouds are used as framing devices for the figures.



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SACRED SITES AND PURE REALMS

Central Tibet; 17th century

Pigments on cloth

Rubin Museum of Art

Gift of Shelley and Donald Rubin

C2010.31 (HAR 210)

In this painting Tibet's sacred geography is mapped out, with Mount Wutai and its distinctive five multicolored peaks to the east (bottom left) and Mount Kailash's snowy peaks towering over nomadic scenes of the Northern Plains to the west (top right).

The central imagery in this painting accords with a prophecy in which a universal ruler transforms the world into an ideal realm. Here the king sits in a palace surrounded by representatives of various races and nations who have come to make offerings at his feet.

This work of art represents later developments in the painting traditions in Central Tibet, dominated by rich green and blue landscape palettes, dense lively compositions, highly decorative ornamentation, and dramatic landscapes.

ART IN CONVERSATION

What is one detail that stands out to you? Why?



THREE TANTRIC ADEPTS (MAHASIDDHA) KAMALA, SUVARNADVIPA, AND VIRAYA

Central Tibet; ca 17th century

Pigments on cloth

Rubin Museum of Art

C2004.14.2 (HAR 65349)

This painting is from a large set depicting the eighty-four great Tantric adepts (mahasiddha) of India. It portrays three of them, including both monastic and lay yogis. The painter had to follow a strict set of rules regarding iconography, but he nonetheless infused each of the adepts with their own personalities. This finely crafted painting is a delicate balance of colors. It abounds with details to draw the eye, such as the colorful parrot sitting in the crook of a staff below.

Several scholars have attributed this painting to the Khyenri Style, which is known for its figures with delicate, differentiated facial features, realism, and fine attention to detail, especially in animals. However, the Sakya School lamas of Central Tibet already had a long tradition of such portraiture in Chinese-inspired landscapes that went back to the early fifteenth century, when the Ming Yongle emperor (1402–1424) of China offered similar paintings to Tibetan hierarchs.



BLACK CLOAK MAHAKALA

Tibet; 18th century

Pigments on cloth

Rubin Museum of Art

Gift of the Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation

F1996.32.7 (HAR 544)

Black Cloak Mahakala is the personal protector of the Karmapas and a special protector of the Karma Kagyu School of Tibetan Buddhism.

Tibetans developed special genres of painting using solid ground colors in black, red, and gold (see for instance the nearby gold-ground painting of Hevajra). They tend to lack solid figural forms or the distinctive green and blue landscape palettes typical of later Tibetan painting. Instead these specialized genres primarily make use of outlines, with energetic lines that emphasize the artist's brushwork mastery.

Each special format is associated with a specific function and type of deity. Black background paintings are traditionally reserved for wrathful deities and often kept in special chapels dedicated to protector deities. Sometimes black-ground paintings are described in texts as sized with cremation ash and inked with nose blood, but more typically this black effect was achieved with ink made from lamp soot. The gold used to outline the figures and the spare touches of red to create dramatic flames are typical of this genre.

ART IN CONVERSATION

Do you feel anything while viewing this artwork? What do you feel and why does it evoke this response in you?



PRATISARA, ONE OF THE FIVE PROTECTOR GODDESSES

Central Tibet; mid-14th–mid-15th century

Gilt copper alloy

Rubin Museum of Art

C2005.16.21 (HAR 65444)

Pratisara is one of the Five Protector Goddesses (Pancha Raksha), personifications of five early Esoteric Buddhist spells (mantras) with protective powers. Of the five she is often considered the principal figure and protects from sin and illness.

This slender image bears typical characteristics of late fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century sculpture. The slim figure is slightly bent towards the left, and her multiple heads and arms are stacked in a way that makes them appear almost natural. The double-lotus base with its slim petals is typical for Nepalese craftsmanship of this period, both in Tibet and at the Chinese court.

In its elegance of form and ornamentation this bronze demonstrates the continuing importance of Nepalese craftsmanship in Tibet, as famously represented by the sculptures of Densathil in Tsang Province, Central Tibet, to which this sculpture has been attributed.



BUDDHA AKSHOBHYA

Central Tibet; 15th century

Gilt copper alloy with inset turquoise, garnets, and lapis
and powdered blue lapis pigment in the hair

Zhiguan Museum of Art

ZG1021 (HAR 2431)

This sculpture of Akshobhya, Buddha of the East, is emblematic of a time when Tibetans sought veneration through greater elaboration and adornment in art. The humility of the mendicant once symbolized by Buddha Shakyamuni's patchwork robe has transformed here into an elaborate display of ornamentation through both raised beading and incised floral patterning, punctuated by colorful insets of turquoise, garnets, and lapis. This decoration stands in sharp contrast to the simple alms bowl he holds in his lap.

Akshobhya's features and form, such as his broad shoulders and chest, along with aspects of his ornamentation, including the stylized fishtail-shaped hem resting on his left shoulder, suggest Newari (Nepalese) inspiration. Yet the emphasis on the patterning of the robe also reflects the introduction of Chinese models. Such complex aesthetics were especially popular in Tsang Province, Central Tibet, and comparable imagery survives in Gyantse, which was one of Tibet's great artistic centers in the fifteenth century.



PELDEN LHAMO DUSOLMA, THE SMOKE-CLAD GODDESS

Bhutan; 19th century
Pigments on cloth
Rubin Museum of Art
F1996.11.4 (HAR 440)

Palden Lhamo is one of the primary protector deities of Tibetan Buddhism. Here she is shown in her “smoke-clad” form (Dusolma) riding a white-nosed donkey and surrounded by flames and billowing clouds of smoke. At the top center is the founder of the Bhutanese theocratic state, Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyel (1594–1651), clearly identifying this as a Bhutanese work.

The painting combines a black background with a small portion of blue-green landscape at the bottom of the canvas, creating the sense that one is looking beyond coastal rocks onto an ocean of blood under a black sky. The edges of clouds, smoke, flames, and rocks are highlighted in gold and form an irradant setting for the black goddess.



MONKEY MASK

Bhutan; ca. 19th century

Wood and polychrome

Rubin Museum of Art

Gift of Bruce Miller and Jane Casey

C2016.1

This expressive monkey mask is typical of Bhutanese masks used in the yearly monastic festival dances such as the judgment of the dead (Raksha Mang Cham). This dance drama has an educational purpose, teaching the laws of cause and effect (karma) by presenting the judgment by Yama, the Lord of Death, of a sinner (such as a hunter) versus a pious man. The monkey counts out white and black stones, symbolic of the individual's good and bad deeds, and puts them on a scale. Such communal rituals also reaffirmed group identity.

The peg on top of this mask was used to attach strips of colored textiles as a decorative flourish and to cover the back of the wearer's head, completing the dancer's transformation.



Attributed by inscription to Choying Dorje (1604–1674)

UNIDENTIFIED DEITY (VAJRAPANI?)

Tibet; variously attributed to 7th and 17th century

Solid cast copper with traces of gilding, cold gold, blue pigment, and devotional accretions in recessed areas

Zhiguan Museum of Art

ZG1027 (HAR 10005)

This famous figure is one of Tibetan art's most enigmatic sculptures. It has fascinated scholars, receiving at least three different attributions in the last thirty years. First it was described as a seventh- to eighth-century Nepalese sculpture, due to its high copper content and glossy, worn patina. Based on a similar argument, it was later heralded as one of the earliest surviving sculptures from the Tibetan Empire (seventh–ninth century).

More recently, it has been attributed to the Tenth Karmapa Choying Dorje (1604–1674), based on an inscription that runs along the base, which reads, “made by the hand of the venerable Choying Dorje.” The honorific word “venerable” probably precludes the possibility that the Karmapa inscribed it himself. Some scholars believe an artisan in his workshop or a follower could have added the inscription. Others assert that it is a false attribution from a later date.

Aspects of this sculpture closely relate to other painted and sculpted works attributed to the Tenth Karmapa. But he was known to have copied a wide range of ancient models during his artistic career. Whether the similarities are a sign that this sculpture is from the same artist's hand or indicate that it is an ancient model from which he copied continues to fuel debate.



SITU PANCHEN AS PATRON OF THE AVADANA SET

After Situ Panchen's (1700–1774) Set of The Wish-Granting Vine Series of One Hundred and Eight Morality Tales

Kham Province, eastern Tibet; 19th century

Pigments on cloth

Rubin Museum of Art

C2002.27.5 (HAR 65136)

The scholar and artist Situ Panchen (1700–1774) is largely credited with reviving the Encampment Style (Gardri) in his native Kham after it was nearly eclipsed in Central Tibet due to civil war. Situ's role as a commissioner of paintings is commemorated through this portrait of him as patron. In 1736 Situ composed a long inscription, which would have appeared in this painting in the large blank scroll held up by goddesses:

I have followed the Chinese masters in color, in mood expressed, and form, and I have depicted lands, dress, palaces, and so forth as [I have] actually seen in India. Even though all the discriminating skill of Menthang—[both] New and Old—and the Khyen[ri] tradition followers, Chiugangpa and the Encampment masters are present here, I have made [these paintings] different in a hundred thousand [particulars of] style.

Situ names all of the major Tibetan painting traditions (Menri, Khyenri, Chiugangpa, and Encampment) as represented in his work to suggest the all-encompassing nature of his artistic vision. His mention of things he had “actually seen in India” refers to his firsthand experiences with the culture of the Indian subcontinent during his first pilgrimage to Nepal in 1723.

Two painters sit in the bottom-left corner, brushes poised, as if awaiting Situ's instructions.



WHITE CHAKRASAMVARA

*After Situ Panchen's (1700–1774) Set of Twenty-Seven
Tutelary Deities*

Kham Province, eastern Tibet; late 18th century

Pigments on cloth

Rubin Museum of Art

C2006.66.15 (HAR 432)

In 1750 Situ Panchen (1700–1774) commissioned twenty-seven paintings of major tantric deities from the master artist Jeto Tsewang Drakpa of western Kham. Situ personally designed each painting and took special care to ensure that their proportions agreed with the systems prescribed in the Kalacakra and Samvarodaya tantras, the classic Indian scriptures that served as the ultimate authorities on iconography. This is the first painting of that series, with White Chakrasamvara depicted as the main figure.

This piece is an example of a painting method unique to the painters of the Encampment Style, in which the artist builds up the landscape by applying successive layers of blue and green pigment in dry dots using the tip of the brush. Instead of a unified composition, the figures here seem pasted into the landscape, a pastiche of visual references from earlier figural styles, such as Khyenri, and decorative designs in a Chinese-inspired blue-green landscape.



SHERAB CHAMMA, LOVING MOTHER OF WISDOM

Eastern Tibet; 19th century

Pigments on cloth

Rubin Museum of Art

C2005.4.7 (HAR 65397)

Sherab Chamma, the Loving Mother of Wisdom, is the principal female deity of Bon, a religion indigenous to Tibet. Her primary role is that of a compassionate mother figure, embodying wisdom. She is therefore considered the mother of all Bon deities and enlightened ones.

Bon coexisted with Buddhism for centuries in some communities, and local painters created works for both religious traditions, drawing on the same visual vocabulary. The deep, flat blue and gray hues suggest this painting might be from southern Amdo or northern Kham Province, where the Bon religion flourished in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.



Attributed to Choying Dorje (1604–1674) or his workshop

GREEN TARA

Tibet; 17th century

Brass with pigments

Rubin Museum of Art

C2005.16.3a-b (HAR 65425)

Few Tibetan artworks can be attributed to a specific artist, and by far the most remarkable among them are those associated with the Tenth Karmapa, Choying Dorje (1604–1674). A renowned Tibetan artist and religious leader, Choying Dorje looked to a range of traditions, including Chinese art of antiquity for inspiration in his paintings and ancient metalwork from the regions of Kashmir and Swat for his sculptures. The fleshy lotus petals that make up Tara's seat and the striated pattern on her tight-fitting clothing reveal this connection.

Aspects of the Tenth Karmapa's personal figural style include the thick plates of hair piled on the left side of Tara's head and the thick plasticity of her ornaments, such as her tremendous earrings and the bulbous bobbles of her necklace. The Karmapa often subtly incorporated his love of animals into his works, as seen in the pair of birds nestled in a leafy bower above the goddess's head.



THE ARHAT CHUDAPANTAKA

Tibet; late 15th century

Pigment on cotton

Rubin Museum of Art

C2003.50.3 (HAR 129)

Chudapantaka is one of the sixteen arhats, the original followers of the Buddha. The arhat genre was imported to Tibet from China, and this Tibetan painting closely follows an early fifteenth-century composition produced in the Chinese Ming court (see inset). The early Ming emperors gave a large number of such paintings on silk to high-ranking Tibetan religious clerics.

Notice this Tibetan painting faithfully reproduces many aspects of the Chinese model, from figures to landscape, though somewhat more schematically. However, in the highly polished Chinese court productions, the opulence of ornamentation often competes for the viewer's attention, whereas in this Tibetan work the divine figures are more emphasized.

This painting also includes a Tibetan innovation to this genre, a long-life deity, the Buddha Amitayus, hovering in the sky.



AD)))
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Arhat Ajita; China; Ming dynasty, Yongle period (1402–1424); mineral pigments on silk; 30 x 19 in. (78 x 50 cm); Collection of Robert Rosenkranz and Alexandra Munroe

STANDING ARHAT

China; Ming dynasty (1368–1644), dated 1439 by inscription

Gilt copper alloy

Rubin Museum of Art

Gift of the Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation

F1997.31.18 (HAR 700018)

In Chinese painting and sculpture, robes usually take precedence over the form of the body. This arhat, an original follower of the Buddha, wears a heavy robe with wide sleeves reaching down to his knees and shoes with upturned tips. The figure's bumpy cranium and articulated neck folds are typical Chinese visual cues that he is a sage of an advanced spiritual state. Here the arhat displays a common Chinese gesture of greeting and paying respect. In both paintings and sculpture, arhats were displayed in sets, ranging from sixteen in the Tibetan tradition and up to five hundred in the Chinese tradition. A two-character inscription on the back indicates that the sculpture was the fifth image in a set of an unknown number.



VAJRABHAIRAVA

Tibet or China; 15th century

Gilt copper alloy

Zhiguan Museum of Art

ZG1029 (HAR 8086)

In the early years of the fifteenth century, a fully mature Sino-Tibetan artistic synthesis provided visual evidence of the Ming imperial atelier's continuity from the Mongol Yuan dynasty (1271–1368). Bronzes from the Yongle (1403–1424) and Xuande (1426–1435) periods most famously exemplify this style. This sculpture lacks the base where the imperial reign mark would both date and identify it as a product of the Ming imperial workshops. Many Yongle and Xuande period works were sent to Tibet as part of complex diplomatic exchanges, and Tibetan artists took them as models. This sculpture may be one such Tibetan work.

This particular example is remarkable for its complexity and sculptural depth. Deities of this type are often depicted in a shallow plane, as if copied from a drawing, but here the sculptor took advantage of the three-dimensional medium with a fine attention to iconographic detail.



CHAKRASAMVARA AND VAJRAVARAHI

China; Qing dynasty, 18th century

Silk embroidery

Zhiguan Museum of Art

ZG2008 (HAR 12956)

This finely embroidered silk thangka depicts the meditational deities Chakrasamvara and his consort Vajravarahi.

The precise, meticulous detailing reflects the spectacular skill of the artisans and ateliers associated with the Qing imperial court. The workshops of the Suzhou area of southeastern China produced its most famous textiles. The creation of Tibetan icons—often following Tibetan painting compositions—in the Chinese luxury medium of silk was a hallmark of imperial court production. Such production occurred from at least the early thirteenth century and reached its peak of popularity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.



MANJUSHRIKIRTI, KING OF SHAMBHALA

From a Set of Previous Incarnations of the Panchen Lamas

Du Jinsheng Silk Factory, Hangzhou,
Zhejiang Province, China; ca. 1922–1937

Silk embroidery

Rubin Museum of Art

Gift of Shelley and Donald Rubin

C2006.66.155 (HAR 132)

Tibetan Buddhism played a prominent role in the courts of the Mongolian Yuan (1279–1638), Chinese Ming (1368–1644), and Manchu Qing (1644–1911) dynasties, resulting in the creation of Tibetan Buddhist art in Chinese workshops. Here a Tibetan composition has been created in the Chinese luxury medium of silk embroidery. It is based on a seventeenth-century composition created by the founder of the New Menri painting tradition, Choying Gyatso (active ca. 1640s–1660s), in Central Tibet and widely disseminated through woodblock prints in the eighteenth century.

The black Tibetan and Chinese inscriptions at the bottom record that it was produced in a Chinese silk factory in Hangzhou, located on the east coast of China. Knowing the years of operation of that factory, we can date this piece to between 1922 and 1937.



杭州生絲總局出品 中華民國三十四年

ELEVEN-HEADED AVALOKITESHVARA

China; 18th century

Silk embroidery and gold thread

Rubin Museum of Art

Gift of Shelley and Donald Rubin

C2006.66.5 (HAR 106)

This is the most commonly worshiped form of the Bodhisattva of Compassion Avalokiteshvara, one of the most popular deities in Asia.

Tibetan Buddhism played a prominent role in the courts of the Mongolian Yuan (1279–1638), Chinese Ming (1368–1644), and Manchu Qing (1644–1911) dynasties, resulting in the creation of Tibetan Buddhist art in Chinese ateliers, which reached its peak in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Here a Tibetan composition has been created in the Chinese luxury medium of silk embroidery.



VAISHRAVANA, GUARDIAN KING OF THE NORTH

China; 16th century

Wood with lacquer and gold pigment

Rubin Museum of Art

Gift from a trustee in honor of Shelley and Donald Rubin,
founders of the Rubin Museum of Art

C2010.17 (HAR 69916)

This exceptional Chinese lacquered-wood sculpture represents Vaishravana, an important wealth deity and guardian king of the northern direction who is popular in both Tibet and China.

One of the major differences between Chinese and Indian deity depictions is the relative size of the animal, or vehicle, upon which the deity sits. In China these animal companions are sometimes larger than the deity itself, a feature that carries into some Tibetan representations that use Chinese models. In this sculpture Vaishravana, wearing an elaborate coat of mail, sits on a massive crouching lion. Their bodies are relaxed, but their facial expressions are fierce, signifying the potential for action.



PAGES FROM A MONGOLIAN *LIBERATION THROUGH HEARING IN THE INTERMEDIATE STATE* (*BARDO THODROL*) MANUSCRIPT

Mongolia; 19th century

Textile over wood; pigments and ink on paper

Rubin Museum of Art

C2004.37.3 (HAR 65385)

Illuminated, handwritten books became popular in nineteenth-century Mongolia. This manuscript of *Liberation through Hearing in the Intermediate State*, more widely known in Western language translations as the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, is a guide to navigating the intermediate state of consciousness between death and rebirth, or the bardo. This manuscript features a vertical Uyghur-based Mongolian script that was instituted by order of Chinggis (Genghis) Khan in the early thirteenth century.

These painted illustrations are meant to prepare practitioners for the series of visions they will experience at death, which are said to take the form of a series of peaceful and wrathful deities. The text repeatedly reassures the practitioner not to be afraid of these visions, as they are only projections of one's own mind.

The active female figures represented in the bottom folio would be among the frightening visions encountered in the bardo. Each one has a different animal head and body color. The colors relate to elements such as fire, air, and earth, and the animal heads are derived from Central Asian species of wild game along with some iconic Indian animals.



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HAYAGRIVA

Tibet or Mongolia; 18th century

Pigments on wood

Rubin Museum of Art

Gift of the Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation

F1997.36.1 (HAR 552)

This painted wooden panel depicts Hayagriva, the Horse-Necked One, a tantric meditational deity (yidam) and a powerful remover of obstacles. He is recognizable by the horse head peaking from his flowing hair at the crown of his head.

Across Asia, Hayagriva is popularly worshiped as the patron god of horses, here invoked in the sensitive depiction of horses at the bottom, complete with a charming bucolic scene of a mare nursing her foal.



DORJE DROLO, ONE OF EIGHT MANIFESTATIONS OF PADMASAMBHAVA

Tibet or Bhutan; ca. 19th century

Silk appliqué

Rubin Museum of Art

C2004.14.5 (HAR 65336)

This fierce deity standing in a powerful pose represents a wrathful manifestation of the legendary wizard and founding saint of Tibetan Buddhism, Padmasambhava, called Guru Dorje Drolo. Padmasambhava's life was said to be full of magical battles and teaching activities in India and across the Himalayas, which earned him many names by which he became known. These names assumed specific iconographic forms that are thought to represent his various aspects. Dorje Drolo, raising a vajra in the right hand and a ritual dagger in the left, is the conqueror of demons.

Although of substantial size itself, this is only a detail of what was once a huge, impressive appliqué depicting the Buddhist master surrounded by all eight of his manifestations. Such large appliqué images are made of scraps of multicolored silks in various patterns that are cut to shape, cleverly integrated into a complex rendering, and sewn into gigantic compositions. These huge textiles are displayed at annual celebrations for communal viewing on the outside wall of a monastery or the side of a hill. They are found all over the Tibetan Buddhist world and are especially popular in Tibetan, Bhutanese, and Mongolian regions.



ORGYEN DORJE CHANG, ONE OF THE EIGHT MANIFESTATIONS OF PADMASAMBHAVA

Tibet or Bhutan; ca. 19th century

Silk appliqué

Rubin Museum of Art

C2003.34.2 (HAR 65253)

Bearing small fangs and wearing a crown of skulls, this figure seated on a lotus represents a semi-wrathful manifestation of the legendary wizard and founding saint of Tibetan Buddhism, Padmasambhava, called Orgyen Dorje Chang. Padmasambhava's life was said to be full of magical battles and teaching activities in India and across the Himalayas, which earned him many names by which he became known. These names assumed specific iconographic forms that are thought to represent his various aspects. Orgyen Dorje Chang alludes to a story of Padmasambhava being reborn on a lake, combined with his origin legend in the land of Orgyen (Oddiyana).

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LODEN CHOKSE, ONE OF THE EIGHT MANIFESTATIONS OF PADMASAMBHAVA

Tibet or Bhutan; ca. 19th century

Silk appliqué

Rubin Museum of Art

C2003.34.1 (HAR 65254)

This figure richly attired in royal garb, playing a hand drum and holding a skull cup, represents a manifestation of the legendary wizard and founding saint of Tibetan Buddhism, Padmasambhava, called Loden Chokse. Padmasambhava's life was said to be full of magical battles and teaching activities in India and across the Himalayas, which earned him many names by which he became known. These names assumed specific iconographic forms that are thought to represent his various aspects. Loden Chokse represents the (lay-tantric) scholar manifestation of Padmasambhava.

Although of substantial size itself, this is only a detail of what was once a huge, impressive appliqué depicting the Buddhist master surrounded by all eight of his manifestations. Such large appliqué images are made of scraps of multicolored silks in various patterns that are cut to shape, cleverly integrated into a complex rendering, and sewn into gigantic compositions. These huge textiles are displayed at annual celebrations for communal viewing on the outside wall of a monastery or the side of a hill. They are found all over the Tibetan Buddhist world and are especially popular in Tibetan, Bhutanese, and Mongolian regions.



DURGA KILLING THE BUFFALO DEMON

Nepal; 13th century

Gilt copper alloy

Rubin Museum of Art

C2005.16.11 (HAR 65433)

The Hindu goddess Durga assembled the weapons of all the gods and overcame the demigod Mahisha, who endangered the order of the world. She is represented here at the moment of her victory. Having chopped off the head of a bull, Durga pulls the body of the demigod by the hair from the animal and stabs him before he can even draw his sword.

This outstanding sculpture perfectly combines the dynamic with the static. The goddess's powerful stance and fan of arms are balanced by her otherwise delicate features and calm expression. Her fan of arms is magnificently rendered in three-dimensions; the positioning of multiple arms to her arched back gives the appearance of two arms captured in different positions along an arc, as if conveying motion.



School of Zanabazar (1635–1723)

GODDESS OF THE DAWN, MARICHI

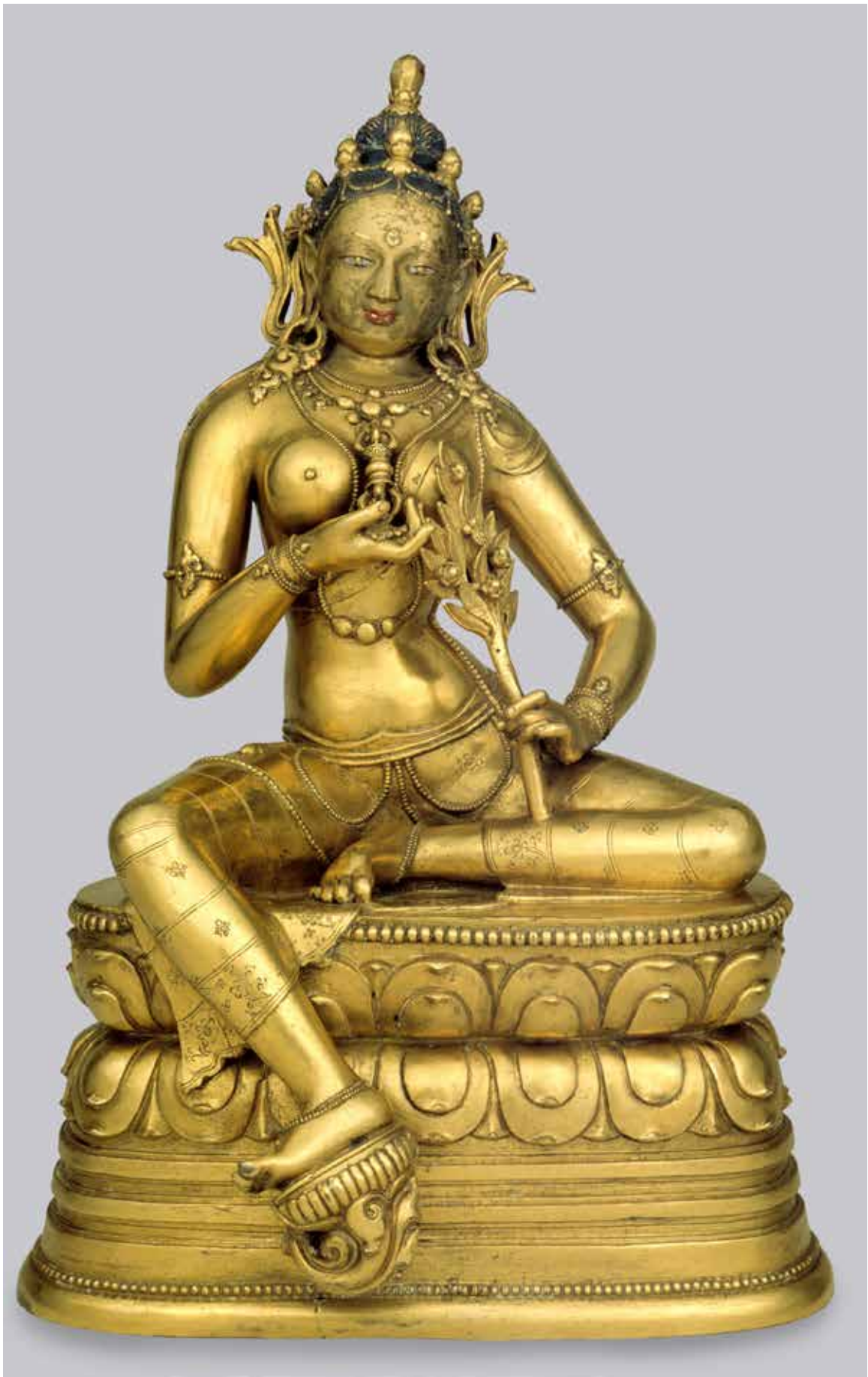
Mongolia; late 17th or early 18th century

Gilt copper alloy

Rubin Museum of Art

C2005.16.26 (HAR 65449)

This sculpture has many characteristics of the exceptional Mongolian artist Zanabazar (1635–1723) and his workshop. Zanabazar was Mongolia's first recognized incarnate lama and leader of Mongolian Buddhism. He founded a sculptural style that has had a profound influence to this day. The style is marked by round faces; fleshy, bee-stung lips; patterned etching on garments; jewelry rendered with finesse; and warm, gilded surfaces.



BUDDHA SHAKYAMUNI WITH BODHISATTVAS MAITREYA AND AVALOKITESHVARA

Swat Valley, Pakistan; 8th century

Metal alloy

Rubin Museum of Art

C2006.71.10 (HAR 65763)

Buddha Shakyamuni performs the gesture of giving and holds the end of his robe. He sits cross-legged on a lion throne, a traditional symbol for a universal ruler (*chakravartin*). This sculpture bears many characteristics of bronze images from the Swat Valley, including the dark metal alloy, thick wave-shaped flames surrounding the halo, folds of the Buddha's robes, and type of throne placed on a lotus with fleshy downturned petals. The robe forms a thick, wide collar at his shoulders and undulating hem at the legs.



SIX-ARMED MAHAKALA

Mongolia; 18th century

Silver and gilt copper alloy with semiprecious stones

C2006.70.1a-f (HAR 65729)

This six-armed form of Mahakala in this dynamic pose is one of the principal protectors of the Geluk School of Tibetan Buddhism, to which most Mongolians have adhered since the late sixteenth century. Mahakala has been a special object of veneration in Mongolia since the thirteenth century, when he served as the state protector of the Mongolian Empire. One of Mahakala's primary roles is to overcome obstacles to enlightenment. Mahakala is depicted trampling an elephant-headed god, who represents such obstacles.

Several details underscore the artist's ingenuity in this masterfully executed sculpture, including the use of a silver patina in the reclining elephant-headed figure's skin as contrasted with his gold ornaments and clothing, as well as the individual articulation of the facial expressions on the severed heads strung together around Mahakala's waist.



YOGINI NAIRATMYA

Tibet; 17th century

Gilt copper alloy, gems, and pigment

Rubin Museum of Art

Gift of the Nyingjei Lam Collection

and Anna Maria and Fabio Rossi

C2018.3.1 (HAR 68463)

The female tantric deity Nairatmya, or Goddess without Self, is considered the embodiment of the profound understanding of the nature of reality, which posits that the self, or ego, is empty of inherent existence. She sits on a corpse, symbolizing the empty nature of attachment to ego.

The casting practices used to create this sculpture bear similarities to seventeenth-century Newar works. The main figure, corpse, and parts of the skull garland were cast separately, while the lotus base was hammered out of thin metal sheets.



EIGHTH KARMAPA, MIKYO DORJE (1507–1554)

Tibet; ca. 16th century

Silver

Rubin Museum of Art

Purchased with funds from Ann and Matt Nimetz

and Rubin Museum of Art

C2019.2.1 (HAR 68498)

This silver portrait depicts the Eighth Karmapa, a master of great scholastic learning who is also remembered as influential in the founding of the Encampment Style, one of the main Tibetan artistic traditions, in both painting and sculpture.

A distinctive feature of the Encampment sculptural style is an intense interest in the patterning of robe layers, which gives them a sense of weight and plasticity of form. Based on other extant examples, the medium of silver itself also seems characteristic of these early portraits.



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LOTUS MANDALA OF HEVAJRA

Northeastern India; ca. 12th century

Copper alloy

Rubin Museum of Art

C2003.10.2 (HAR 65207)

Lotus mandalas, likely invented in northeastern India, are three-dimensional representations of a deity's palace. The main deity is typically at the flower's center, with the retinue on the petals. The petal shape, scrolling sides of the stem, and material are common to this region. The mechanical hinges allow the petals to close around the deity, so the sculpture resembles a flower bud. Housing the deities in a lotus, a symbol of purity, is a metaphor for the perfection of their palatial habitat.



UNIDENTIFIED RELIGIOUS MASTER

Tibet; 16th–17th century

Parcel-gilt silver repoussé with pigments

Rubin Museum of Art

C2009.12 (HAR 65904)

Sculptural portraits of such commanding dimensions were produced to commemorate only the highest religious dignitaries, although this sculpture's subject is unknown. His sleeveless vest suggests his Tibetan identity, as it is not part of Indic monastic dress.

The quality of this sculpture is evident in the decoration of the robe. The robe decoration features many auspicious symbols ranging from the Chinese character for longevity (*shou*) to auspicious flower and cloud motifs. The scarf is also decorated with auspicious symbols, including the “seven jewels of a universal ruler” such as a rhinoceros horn, coral, and pairs of square and round earrings.



ILLUMINATED TITLE PAGE AND FRONTISPIECE OF *THE PERFECTION OF WISDOM SUTRA* MANUSCRIPT

Western Tibet; 15th century
Ink, gold, pigments on paper
Rubin Museum of Art C2018.4.1-2

Tibetans revere sacred books as objects of devotion, believing that books contain the power to remove obstacles and advance people on their spiritual paths. It was a common practice, especially in western Tibet, to commission *The Perfection of Wisdom (Prajnaparamita) Sutra* on behalf of the deceased to improve their rebirth in the next life. For this reason the patrons were prominently featured. Here they are depicted in western Tibetan garments (see detail).



Donors dressed in western Tibetan garments. The painting's color palette and stylistic elements—such as the red line drawings and outlines, proportions of the figures, and representations of local architecture—are comparable to the mural paintings in the temples of Tsaparang in western Tibet. The root fibers found in the paper indicate that it was produced locally.



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TANGTONG GYELPO (1361–1485)

Central Tibet; second half of the 15th century (ca. 1485)

Copper alloy with pigment

Long-term loan from the Nyingjei Lam Collection

L2005.9.63 (HAR 68496)

This sculpture of the famed Tibetan yogi, engineer, and artist Tangtong Gyelpo bears an inscription on the back that states it contains grain consecrated by Tangtong Gyelpo himself. This suggests that he may have been involved in its creation or it was created roughly during his time period.

The thick layers of gold pigment add realism to the carefully modeled folds of his flesh, giving a lifelike quality to the sculpture. In contrast the stylized robe is elaborately patterned and deeply engraved.



CROWNED BUDDHA

Possibly Kurkihar, Northeastern India; 11th century

Copper alloy with copper and silver inlay

Zhiguan Museum of Art

ZG1010 (HAR 8083)

This slender crowned Buddha exemplifies the elegance of Pala period (eighth–twelfth century) sculpture. The image of the crowned Buddha became popular as Tantric Buddhism rose to prominence in India and spread throughout Asia. Typical of this period, the Buddha stands solemnly on a lotus base, and his robe clings to his body and highlights the silhouette. Richly applied contrasting silver and copper inlays adorn his ornaments as well as the mark on his forehead (*urna*), eyes, and lips, which stand out against the figure's unusually dark patina.



VAJRASATTVA WITH CONSORT

Kashmir, 11th century

Brass with silver and semiprecious stone inlays

Zhiguan Museum of Art

ZG1007 (HAR 20382)

This small sculpture of Vajrasattva and his consort is an excellent example of eleventh-century Kashmiri sculpture. The ornamentation is fine, including silver, copper, and semiprecious stone inlays. The deity's long garland is a distinctive detail of Kashmiri bronzes. Characteristic of both divine and human females in Kashmiri art is the headscarf that hangs down the consort's back. The sway of the elephants' trunks is a particularly charming detail that reveals the high level of artistry.



BODHISATTVA

China, Qing dynasty, Kangxi period (1662–1722)

Gilt copper alloy with inset pearls, turquoise, and coral

Zhiguan Museum of Art

ZG1030 (HAR 8084)

This sculpture mixes lost-wax casting—seen in the figure and throne base—with the repoussé technique of hammering thin sheets of metal for the delicate lotus blossoms and curling branches at the shoulders, five leaves of the crown, earrings, and lotus petals framing the throne. The jewelry and crown are set with seed pearls, turquoise, and coral, accentuating the complexity of the work.

The elegant, reserved manner of the figure is characteristic of Manchu Qing court workshops. Yet the overall style, observable in the face and complex lotus base, reflects a Mongolian model. Qing workshops often created copies of gifts or made works inspired by gifts from prominent people. These objects also marked important events.

Mongolian leader and master sculptor Zanabazar (1635–1723) submitted his Khalkha (Eastern) Mongols to the Manchu state and gave its Kangxi emperor many sculptures, marking a momentous political event. The Palace Museum's Qing court collection holds several similar sculptures from the Kangxi period.

