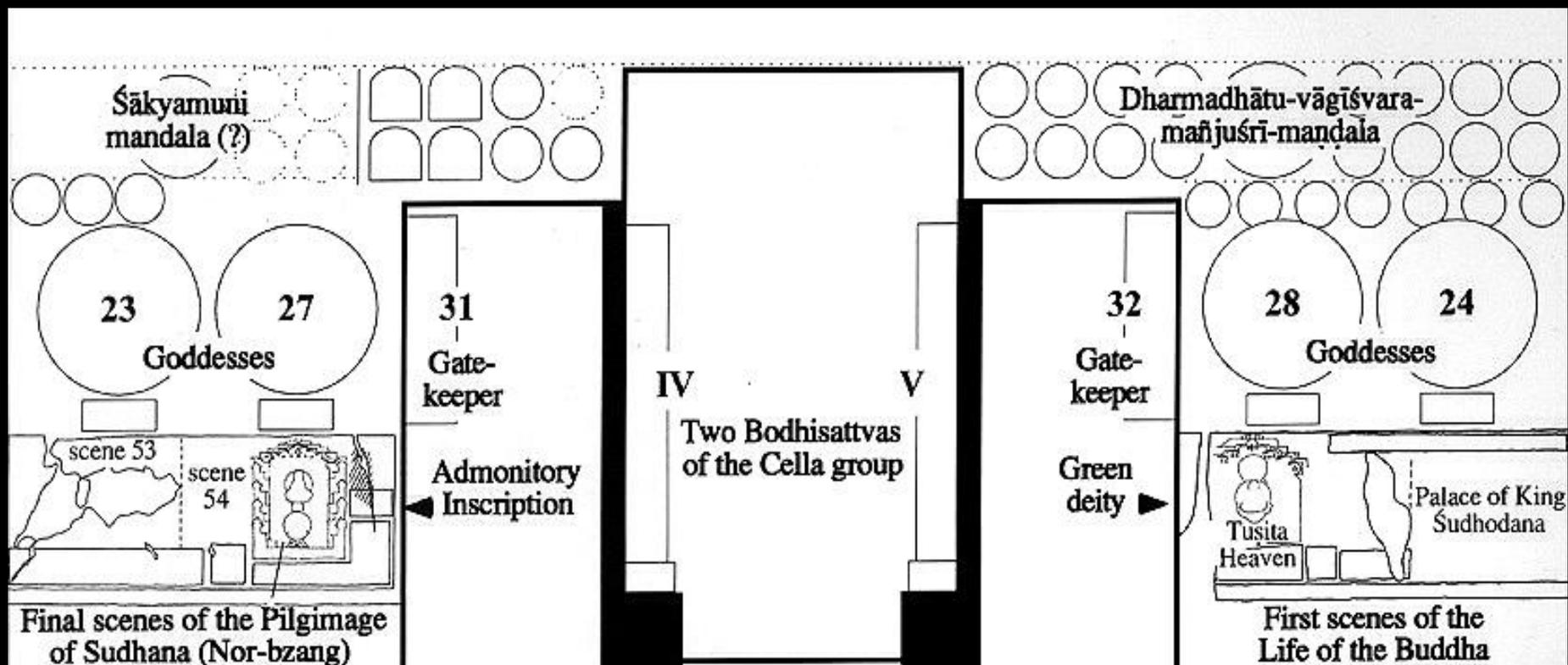


Revival of Buddhism in Western Tibet and Western
Himalayas: development of the Kashmiri style
Phase 2: Tabo, Dunkar and Alchi
ca. 1080-1120/1150

Tabo: mandala in horizontal configuration ca. 1075 ?



Dharmadhatu –Vagisvara -Manjusri Mandala /TABO



Vairocana in Dharmadhatu
Vajrasvara Manjusri Mandala
8 arms, 4 heads
Holding sword
Emblematic of conflation with Manjusri
Vairocana at center of the group of 5 Buddha

Principal Forms of Vairocana –
Vairocana anthropomorphic
Meditation gesture
2 Bodhisattva attendants (Vajrapani,
Avalokitesvara)
(Vairocana Abhisambodhi Tantra or
Mahavairocana Sutra)

Vairocana, 4 heads
Hands in Meditation gesture –
Sarvadurgati parisodhana tantra

Vairocana, 4 heads
gesture of highest enlightenment
(bodhiyagri mudra)
Sarva-Tathagata-Tattva-Samgraha



Even the goddesses of the Dharmadhatu-Vagisvara mandala have swords



Repete theme:
the 1000 Buddha
of the
Bhadrakalpa

« the fortunate
eon »

Tabo – both in
main sanctuary
and
Mandala chapel
ca. 1075??



Tabo Mandala Chapel , very damaged



Tabo Mandala Chapel

Bhadra-kalpa
Buddha wall
With additional
Portraits
Tsong khapa
(1357-1422)
Founder of Gelugpa
Monastic school
Another Gelugpa
monk

Both Added in 15th
century when
Gelugpa monastic
School does
Renovation of this
Mandala chapel



Tabo Mandala Chapel

3 different mandala

Vairocana mandala



ALSO: mandala from Durgatiparisodhana cycle where Mahavairocana is represented as Sakyamuni surrounded by a wheel with group of 8 "Usnisha" male figures, Prajnaparamita is represented directly below the central Buddha



Aksobhya mandala (White Akshobhya)

Tabo / Alchi Dukhang



Tabo photo courtesy of Tucci Archive
Photo by Eugenio Ghersi, 1935



Alchi photo by Lionel Fournier, 1978

New capital of Guge ca 1083 AD: instead of Tholing, henceforth
Dunkar with cave temples / Dharmadhatu-Vagisvara Manjusri
Mandala



Dun mkhar, integral program of paintings and clay sculptures

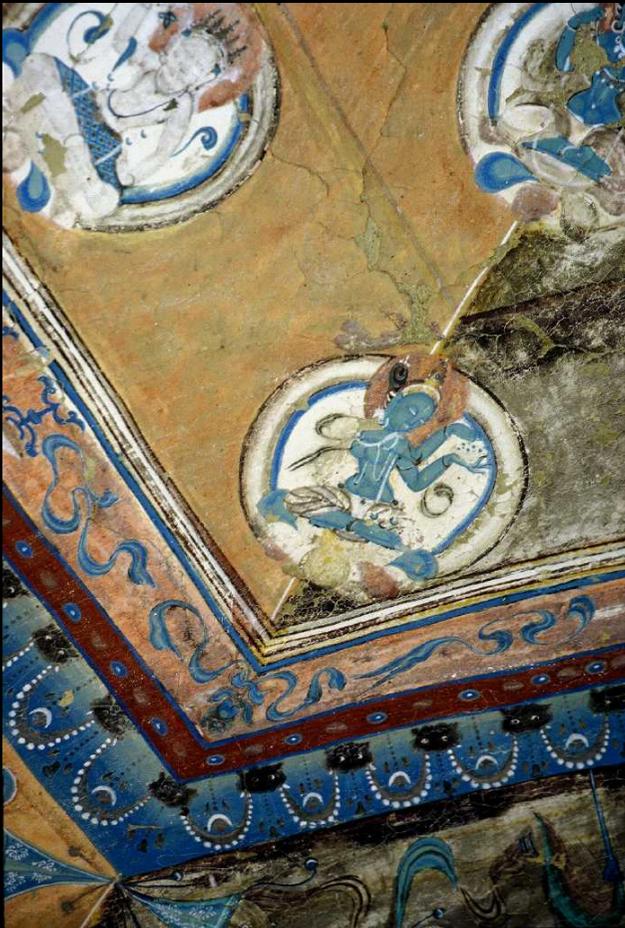


Photo

Lionel Fournier

See H. Neumann, *Cave of the Offering goddesses: Early Painting in Western Tibet*, *Oriental Art*, 1998/1999.

Ceiling mandala in
Dunmkhar : circular
configuration



Comparison:

Dun mkhar ca.1088 /Mang nang ca. 1042

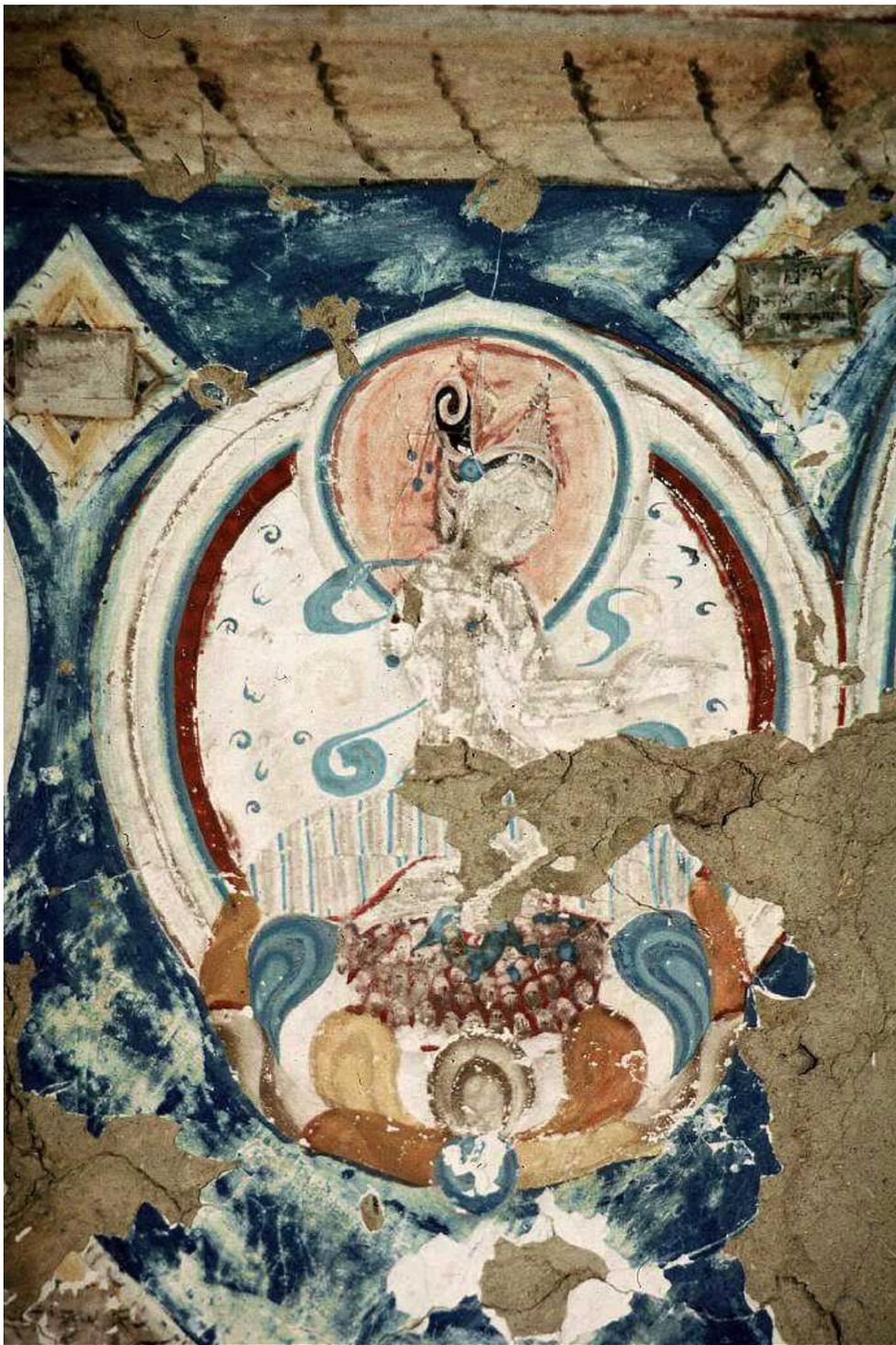
- Dun mkhar figures: enveloped in scarves
- Mang nang figure: emphasis on silhouette
- Both have double earrings - upper earring at 90 ° angle
- Both are seated on lotus which goes beyond frame
- Mang nang = simplicity, high contrast
- Dun mkhar = elaboration



Dun mkhar

- Goddess is also enveloped in scarves
- Elaborate hair ornaments
- Color has faded





Dun mkhar goddess

- She wears the veil like the goddesses of Tholing stupa and Tabo

Offering GODDESS:
Dun mkhar vs Tholing
Tholing stupa, ca. 1024



Dun mkhar



Dun mkhar cave 2: ceiling



Dun mkhar 2



Mang nang



ALCHI

- Date of foundation ? Uncertain – contrary to Tabo, no inscriptions in Alchi give precise date
- Dukhang historical inscription « the founder studied at Nyarma »
- at least 2-3 generations from foundation Nyar ma 996
- Foundation during marriage of 'Od Ide and his Bruzha wife??? (ca.1030)
- Foundation after 1076 Tholing Religious council ?
- Foundation when Dun mkhar became capital, ca. 1083 ?
- Sumstek inscription says ancestor came from Guge, stayed in Nyarma, then served as « minister or regional governor » for Pho brang Dbang Ide, ruler of Guge 1085-1093.
- Foundation of Dukhang in late 11th-early 12th, then long construction to make such mandalas >> 1120-1150 ??
- ?? Foundation as BRIGUNG sanctuary in 13th century ca 1220???
- More likely: reconsecration by Brigung ca. 1220
- Renovation under King bKrahis rnam gyal, supporter of Brigung ca. 1575.

Alchi
monastery ,
Ladakh

3-tier
cruciform
temple -
Sumstek

Dukhang, the
assembly hall:
rectangle with
cella at west



Alchi Dukhang Bhadrakalpa

Aksobhya Paradise

also several mandala

Vairocana Mandala

Prajnaparamita

Vairocana/Sakyamuni from

Sarva- Durgatiparisodhana

cycle to ensure good

rebirth





Aksobhya: white aspect and teaching mudra

See R. Goeppe, Akshobhya and his Paradise, Murals of Alchi Dukhang, Orientations, Jan. 1999



Dukhang Alchi, full wall with guardians and mandalas, 330 CM diamter



Prajnaparamita

VAIROCANA

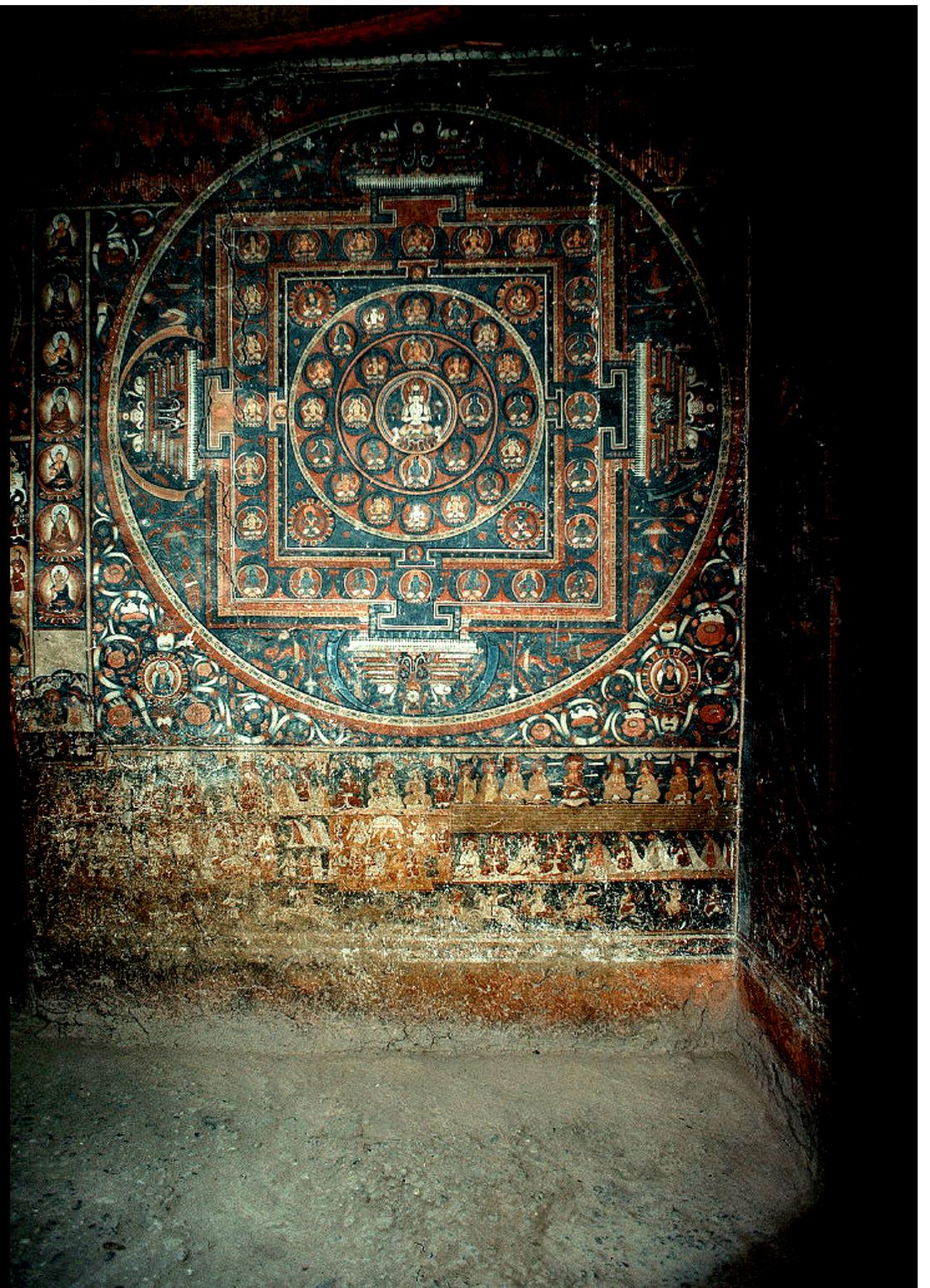
Lalitavistara – life of the Buddha, dream of conception



Birth of the Buddha emerging as Queen Maya raises her arm



Consecration scenes
beneath
Durgatiparisodhana
mandala
(Sarvavid Vairocana, the Omniscient one)

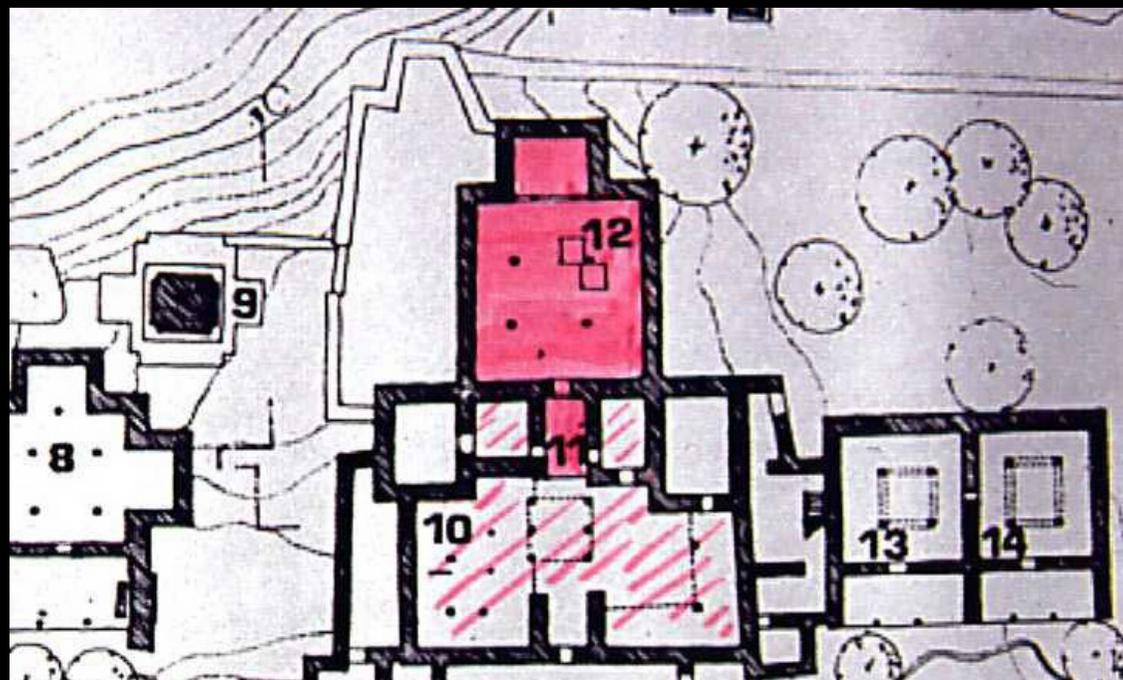
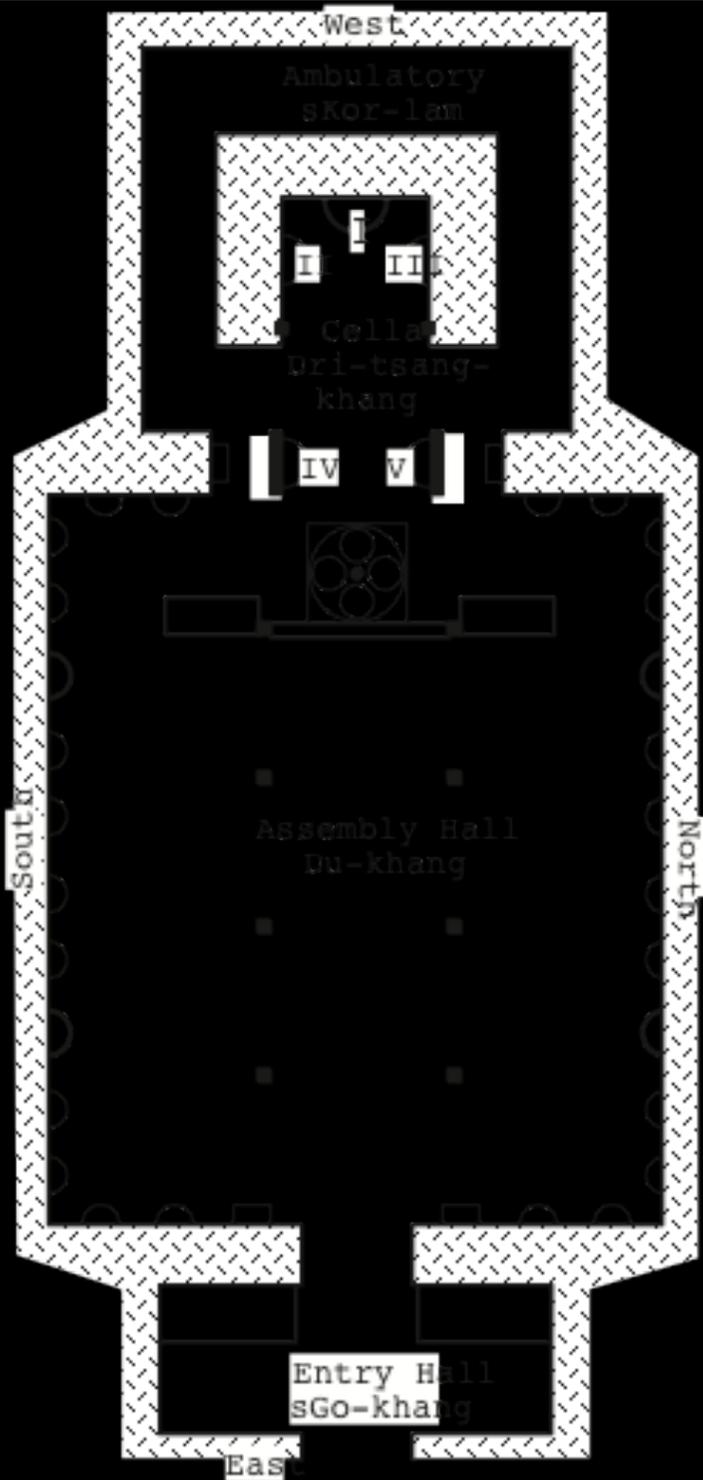


Consecration scenes



Alchi iconography

- If Alchi were indeed a 13th foundation, iconographic program should be Anuttarayoga class mandala
- All Yab-yum (male /female deities in embrace)
- In Alchi, primarily Vairocana mandala of many variations plus Prajnaparamita
- Yoga tantra category, not Anuttarayoga
- If a Drigung foundation, Vajrayogini of special importance of the founder of Brigung, would probably be represented prominently : totally absent in Dukhang and also absent in Sumstek.



- Tabo and Alchi ground plan very similar
- Alchi???
- Foundation traditionally attributed to Rin Chen bZang po but this is not historically proven at all.

Alchi : historical data

- Ye shes 'od died in 1024 and was succeeded by 'Od Ide.
- Od Ide fully incorporated Ladakh into Guge post 1023 and married Bruzha wife (Gilgit/ Hunza valley)
- Utpala, usurper of Ladakh throne, mid -11th century (foreign origin, also NW of Ladakh)
- Guge regains some form of sovereignty in Ladakh post 1075, then sends Regional Governor from Guge
- To Ladakh...

Consecration in Dukhang: foreign king and local queen?



Consecration in Dukhang

This scene

Shows

Aristocrats:

Local costume
for Women
with
turquoise in
hair, braids

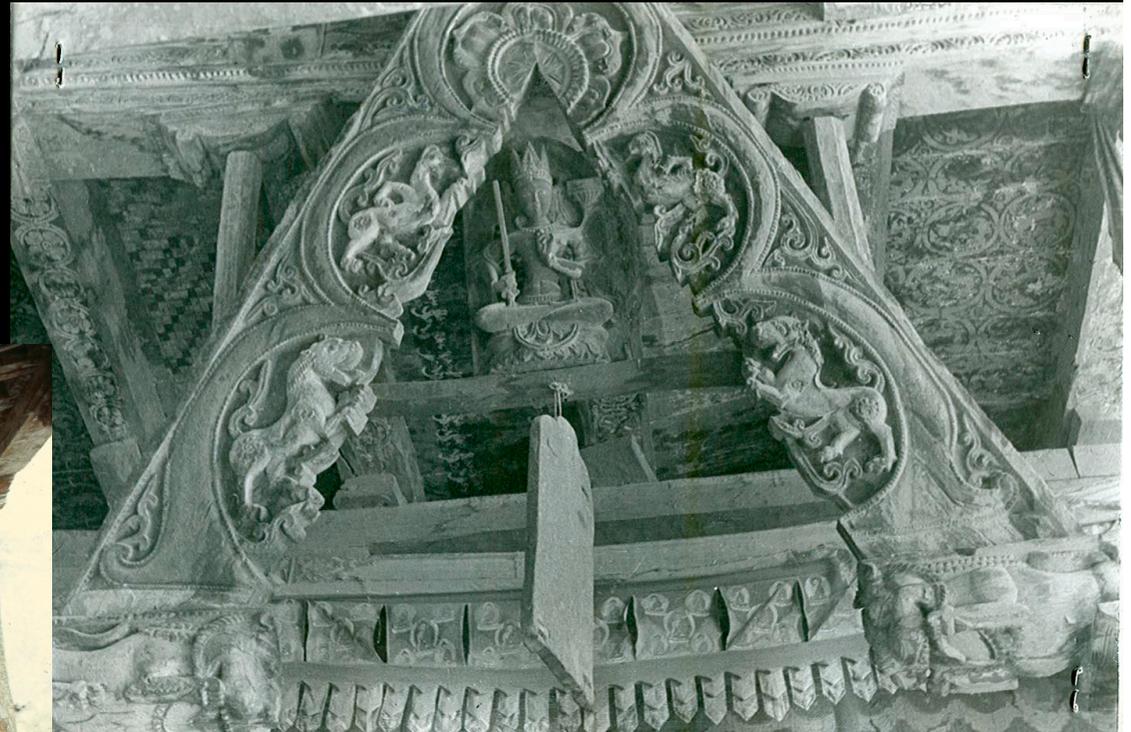
The male has
robe with
roundels,
like those
worn by
Tibetan
Emperor in
Dunhuang....



Alchi Dukhang: entrance



Alchi 2000 vs Alchi 1935, photo by G. Tucci



Alchi Dukhang: Vairocana sculpture





Thrones:
Alchi vs
Grathang
central Tibet ca. 1083



Alchi Dukhang

- Sculpture of Ratnasambhava near Vairocana sculpture
- Shows architectural frame
- As well as prabha
- Shows Integrated program of both painting and sculptures



Tara of AlchiDukhang



Tara of Alchi Dukhang – the elaborate hairdress as per Tholing, as per Dun mkhar, very delicate painting



Tara or Prajnaparamita

Alchi Dukhang



Prajnaparamita or Tara, Alchi Dukhang

- Kashmiri costume
- Kashmiri body proportions
- The very narrow waist:
« wasp » waist
- Long and rounded body
- Elaborate coiffure
- Elaborate textile patterns
- 6 arms in very graceful
- Holding book and lotus, prayer beads
- Holding hand in varada mudra
- Holding « special stick » similar to
Tholing tshatsha of the goddess



Prajnaparamita 's frame

- The Gandharva:



The Gandharva musician



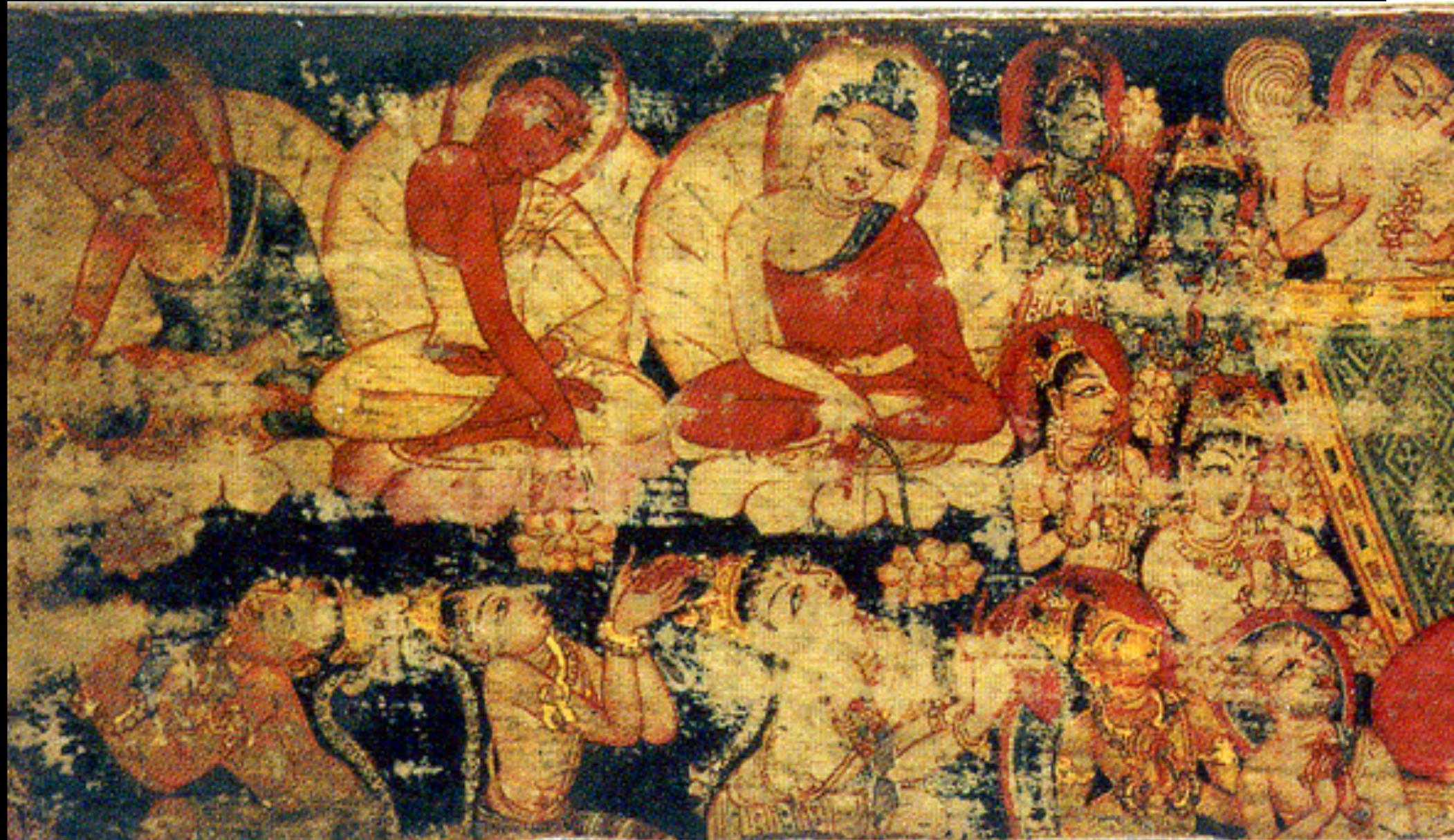
A Painted Book cover from Ancient Kashmir, Pratapaditya Pal



- Panel or bookcover with Buddha in assembly, pigments on wood, 33 x 7.5 cm, private collection
- www.asianart.com
- <https://www.asianart.com/articles/kashmir/index.html>

Kashmiri painting late 10th-mid 11th

c



Kashmiri Painting from Tholing



- Tibetan Prajnaparamita text but Kashmiri painting, Indic letters inside color fields
- Prajnaparamita – 6 arms as in Alchi Dukhang

Los Angeles County Museum of Art
Collected by Tucci at Tholing

Alchi Sumstek

- Are the Sumstek and the Dukhang of Alchi co-eval or not?

Dukhang VAIROCANA mandala



Sumstek Manjusri



Comparison



Sumstek: royal offering scene



Sumstek Queen and Princess



Amitabha

- Minute attention to detail in all respects
- Pastiglia gold
- Textiles, vegetation



Amitabha, detail



The basis for 13th c foundation theory

Upper floor of Sumstek,

One wall has a Lineage of monks and yogi/siddha
Who are their spiritual ancestors

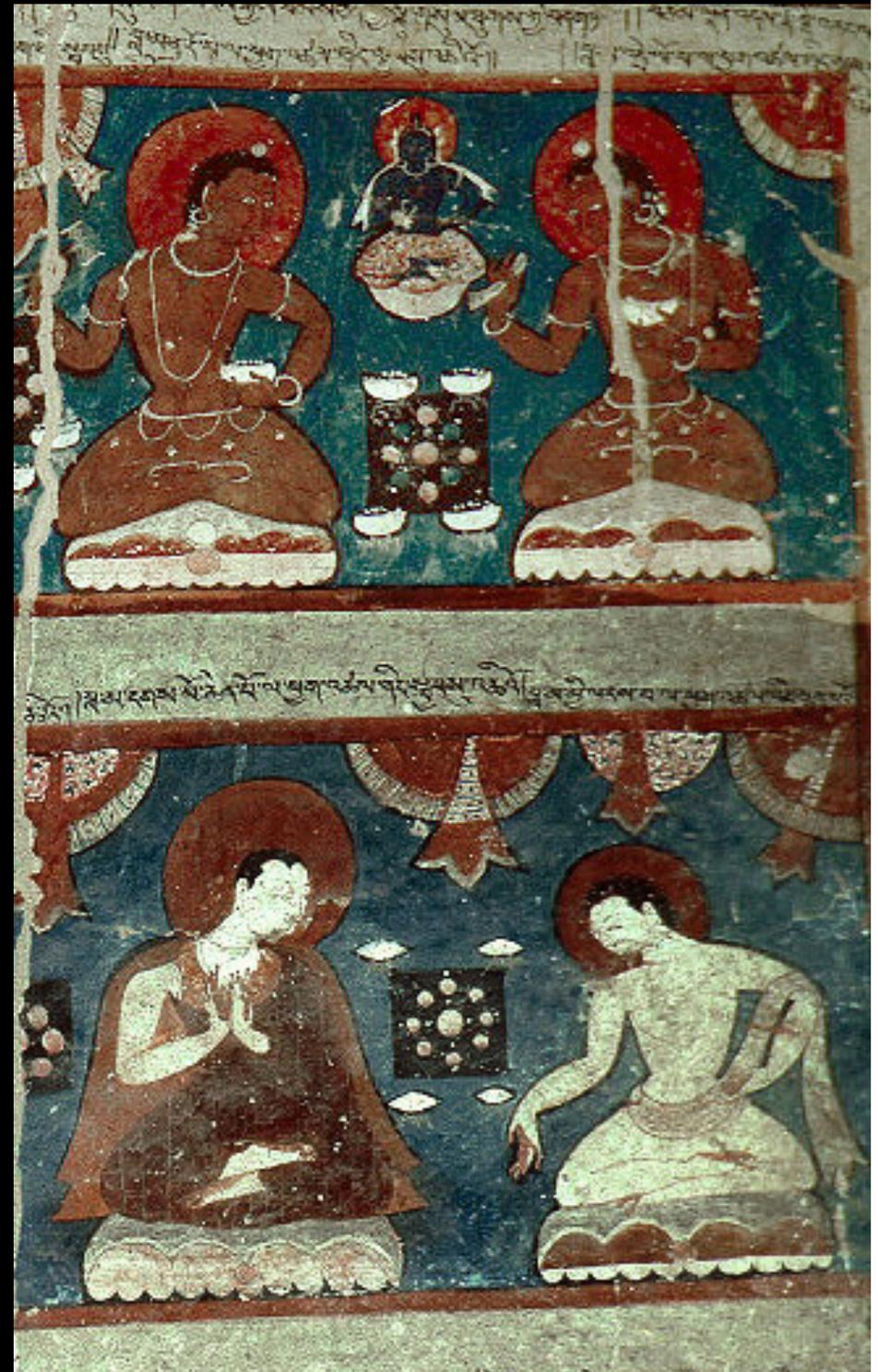
Inscription of names is written in unusual
handwriting for Alchi

similar to the inscriptions on Sumstek ground floor,
Describing restoration of temples ca. 1575)

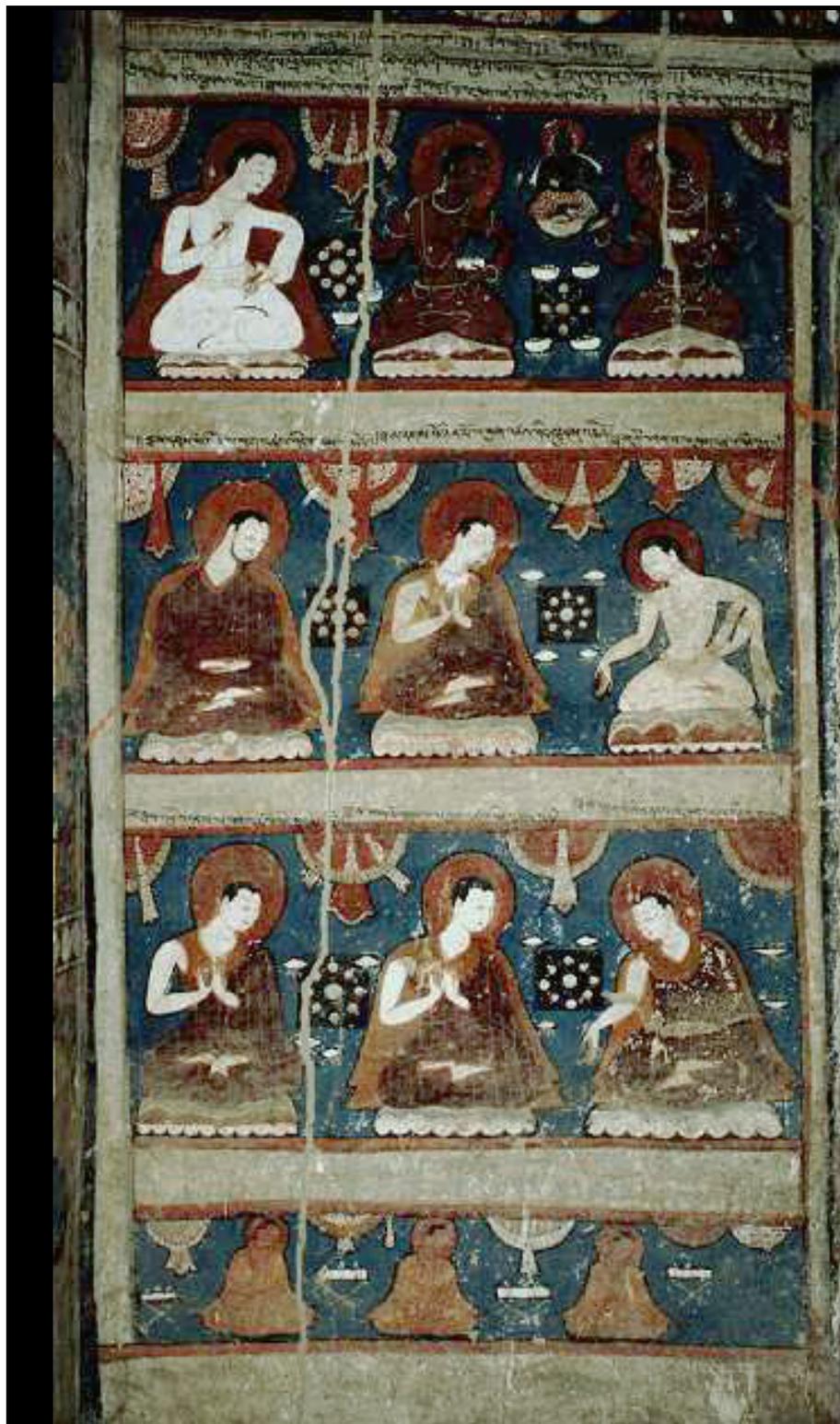
Painting is crude in comparison to the exquisite
portraits of Manjusri and Amitabha
on ground floor of Sumtstek

Names added later??

Even the spelling of the Ye dharma prayer
is incorrect...



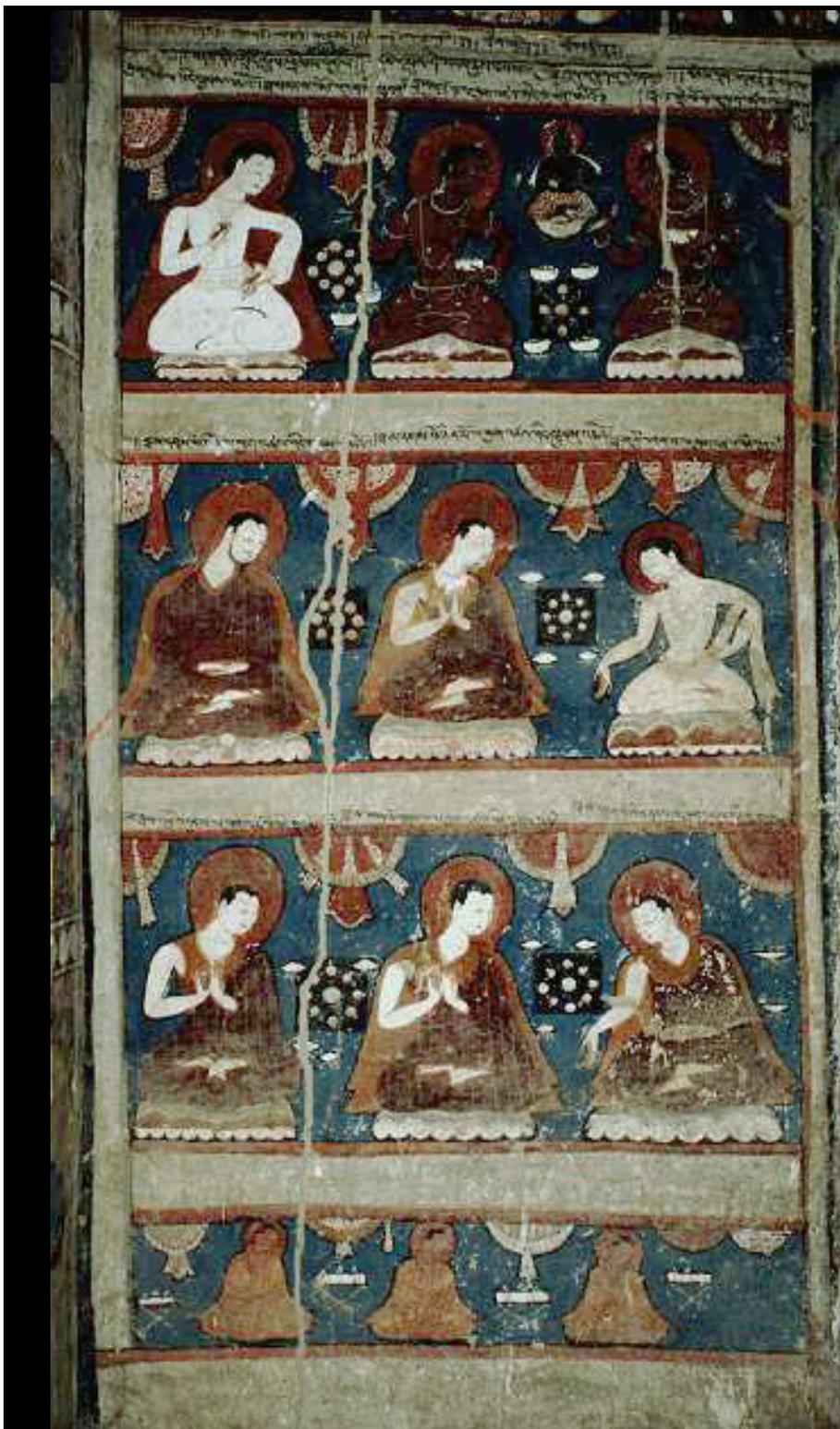
The full Brigung lineage



The full Brigung lineage



Upon comparison with
Dukhang offering scene showing monks,
The Sumstek scene is
crudely painted
And - beneath, there is clearly
A group of smaller monks
Who appear to be
Painted earlier -
Same color robes as Dukhang



Alchi Chronology

- Alchi Dukhang appears to be slightly earlier than Sumstek
- Similar consecration scenes in both Dukhang /Sumstek
- All circular configuration of Mandalas
- Transition from pure Vairocana mandala>
- Vairocana> Prajnaparamita
- Dharmadhatu Vagisvara=Manjusri mandala
- Later will come Transition towards focus on Amitabha and the wish for the afterlife: in Alchi Dukhang, the prayer to be reborn in the paradise of Aksobhya

In terms of Methodology

- As we examine these early temples of western Tibet and Western Himalayas, we must remember:
- Architecture reflects not just habitat or sacred space of a sanctuary
- These monuments are embedded in the society which produced them and reflect its values: they represent and illustrate the socio-religious, political and economic hierarchies then prevalent.