PATRONAGE, DEVOTION AND POLITICS:
A BUDDHOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE
PATOLA ŚĀHI DYNASTY’S
VISUAL RECORD

DISSERTATION
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
The Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of the Ohio State University

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* * * *

The Ohio State University
2008

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ABSTRACT

During the 6\textsuperscript{th} – 8\textsuperscript{th} centuries, the Pa\text{\textth}ola Ś\text{\textah}hi dynasty ruled the country of Bolor, which is Baltistan and Gilgit, in what is today, Northern Pakistan. The archaeological record from this region, and the large collection of the Pa\text{\textth}ola’s Buddhist texts, and the accounts written by Buddhist pilgrims, indicate that their kingdom was a Buddhist stronghold. In addition, there are a number of Buddhist artworks that can be attributed through inscriptions to a donation by members of the royal Pa\text{\textth}ola Ś\text{\textah}hi family.

These Pa\text{\textth}ola Ś\text{\textah}hi sculptures are clearly Buddhist, yet no comprehensive art historical scholarship has been conducted on them. The iconography of the images as a group has not been analyzed, nor have they been placed within the broader framework of Buddhist theoretical principles and practices. This study focuses on these inscribed works and other extant visual culture of the Pa\text{\textth}ola Ś\text{\textah}hi dynasty.

This study analyzes the major iconographic features and interprets them within a Buddhological context. The epigraphical and compositional components, particularly the frequent representation of the donors, are also
examined for their significance to specific Buddhist teachings and practices. The historical and cultural context of the Paṭola Śāhi dynasty is also examined, considering the milieu of social, economical, historical, and political concerns of the time.

This study provides the most comprehensive iconographic study to date of the visual culture of the Paṭola Śāhis. This study’s findings suggest that the Paṭola Śāhi family were devout Buddhist practitioners, some of them adherents of early Vajrayāna Buddhism. A contextualization of the iconography of the visual record reveals an underlying pattern of the primary benchmarks needed to portray a meditational construct of a *sambhogakāya* Buddha. My findings suggest, through the use of a fully developed iconography as a coded visual language, including a *pañca jina* crown, jeweled ornaments, silk items, and the *dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā*, the donors specifically reference Vairocana Buddha. As such, they demonstrate their understanding of the imagery at an esoteric level.

Additionally, by situating the Paṭola Śāhi monastic and royal donors within the iconography, and by considering the inscriptional and textual evidence, the findings reveal that many of these donors were initiates into and practitioners of the esoteric teachings of the Vairocana Buddha. Specifically, the core elements of the practice of generosity and the three main components of the teaching transmissions in the Mahāyāna/ Vajrayāna traditions – the receiver, the gift, and the giver – are evident. The
iconographic and iconological pattern of donor-practitioner (receiver), donor-practitioner’s teacher (giver), and practice (gift of the teaching), which is repeated in various ways throughout the Pañola Śāhi dynasty, gives significant insight into the corpus of Pañola Śāhi imagery.

Finally, through an examination of the patronage of Buddhism, specifically by the Pañola Śāhi kings, the finding of this study make it evident that political aspirations and legitimizing forces were also part of their Buddhist practices. Both the visual and textual record underscore the support of Buddhism as a means for protection of the kingship and state, as well as a claim to both spiritual and secular power through their portrayal as divine dharmarājas, perhaps even incarnations of bodhisattvas and Buddhas. When considered within a larger framework of Buddhist theoretical principles and practice, as well as intricately linked social, religious, and political practices at the time, the motives and impetus for royal patronage and select, multivalent iconographies are gleaned.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. John C. Huntington, for his expertise, support, and encouragement. His incredible knowledge of Buddhism and Buddhist art has made the process a wonderful learning experience. I would also like to extend my gratitude to my readers, Dr. Howard Crane and Dr. Thomas Kasulis, for their direction and insight on the dissertation.

I am indebted to my friends and family for their support and encouragement throughout the long process. It has sustained me more than you will ever know. I especially wish to thank Alan and Barbara Robertson for their thoughtful generosity. And most importantly, I would like to thank my new and wonderful husband, David, for his loving support, encouragement, patience, and understanding. Thank you for making the completion of this dissertation your goal as well. This dissertation is for you.
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Major Field ....................................................History of Art
                     Emphasis in Buddhist Art

Minor Field ....................................................Himalayan and South Asian Art

Department .....................................................History of Art Department
TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vita</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviations</td>
<td>xvi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapters:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A Visual Record of the Paṭola Śāhis</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The Iconography of the Paṭola Śāhi Images and their Buddhist Context</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Monastics in the Paṭola Śāhi Dynasty</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The Paṭola Śāhi Royal and Noble Donors as Buddhist Practitioners</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Paṭola Śāhi Political Patronage and Kingship</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Concluding Remarks</td>
<td>344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A - Visual Record of the Paṭola Śāhis</td>
<td>348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

## Chapter 1

Figure 1.1. View of mountainous region of Gilgit.  
Photograph by John C. Huntington ....................................................51

Figure 1.2. Map showing the location of Baltistan and Gilgit.  
From von Schroeder, *Indo-Tibetan Bronzes*, 162 ...............................52

## Chapter 2

Figure 2.1. The donor Simhota on rock carving from Thalpan III.  
From von Hinüber, "Brāhmī Inscriptions,” *ANP*,  
Vol. 1, pl. 137 ........................................................................................121

Figure 2.2. Second side of three-sided stone sculpture from Gilgit  
showing a Buddha figure.  
Photograph by John C. Huntington ....................................................122

Figure 2.3. Third side of three-sided stone sculpture from Gilgit  
showing a Buddha figure.  
Photograph by John C. Huntington ....................................................123

## Chapter 3

Figure 3.1. Pāñcika and a donor wearing a cape. Stone sculpture from  
Gandhara. Lahore Museum, India.  
Photograph by John C. Huntington ....................................................211

Figure 3.2. Donor with a cape. Stone sculpture from Gandhara.  
Private Collection.  
Photograph by John C. Huntington ....................................................212
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.3. Figure wearing a cape. Stone fragment from Gandhara. Private Hirayama Collection in Japan. From Taddei, M. &quot;Bejewelled Buddha,” Figure 55.1</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.4. Buddha figure wearing a cape and jewels. Stone fragment from Hadda. Musée Guimet, no. MG 20996. From Taddei, M. &quot;Bejewelled Buddha,” Figure 55.2</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.5. Crowned Vairocana wearing a cape. Stone carving at IDan ma brag, Eastern Tibet (Khams). From von Schroeder, <em>Buddhist Sculptures</em>, Figure xii-9</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.6. Buddha wearing a crown and cape. Painting in niche “i” at Bamiyan. Photograph by John C. Huntington</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.7. Buddha wearing a jeweled cape. Clay fragment from niche D, Fondukistan. Musée Guimet, Paris. Photograph by Rebecca Twist</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.8. Buddha wearing a crown and jeweled cape. Stone from Gandhara. Private collection, London. Photograph by John C. Huntington</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.9. Buddha wearing a crown and jeweled cape. Stone fragment from Parihasapura. Sri Pratap Singh Museum, Srinagar, Kashmir. Photograph by John C. Huntington</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.10. Buddha wearing a crown. Stone piece from Parihasapura. Sri Pratap Singh Museum, Srinagar, Kashmir. Photograph by John C. Huntington</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.11. Buddha wearing a crown and four-pointed cape. Brass sculpture from Kashmir. Po to lha Collection: Li ma lha khang: inventory no. 221, Lhasa Tibet. From von Schroeder, <em>Buddhist Sculptures</em>, pl. 14 A-B</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.12. Buddha wearing a crown and a jeweled cape. Brass sculpture from Kashmir. Jo khang/gTsug lag khang Collection; inventory no. 644, Lhasa, Tibet. From von Schroeder, <em>Buddhist Sculptures</em>, pl. 16A</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From Pal, Bronzes of Kashmir, pl. 29 ..................................................223

Figure 3.14. Buddha wearing a crown. Brass sculpture from Kashmir. Po to la Collection: Li ma lha khang; inventory no.1392. Red Palace, Lhasa, Tibet.
From von Schroeder, Buddhist Sculptures, pl. 36A .......................224

Figure 3.15. Buddha wearing a crown and jeweled cape. Brass sculpture from Kashmir. Ben Heller Collection, New York.
From Pal, Bronzes of Kashmir, pl.36 ...................................................225

Figure 3.16. Pañca jina Buddhas with crowned Vairocana.
From von Schroeder, Buddhist Sculptures, pl. 33 ..............................226

Figure 3.17. Pañca jina Buddhas with crowned Vairocana. Brass sculpture from Ladakh, Tibet.
Photograph by John C. Huntington .....................................................227

Figure 3.18. Vairocana with symbols. Painting from Balawaste, Central Asia.
Photograph by John C. Huntington .....................................................228

Figure 3.19. Mahāvairocana in sambhogakāya form performing the bodhyāgrī mudrā. Brass sculpture from Kashmir. Sri Pratap Singh Museum, Srinagar, Kashmir.
From Pal, Bronzes of Kashmir, pl. 37 ..................................................229

Figure 3.20. Detail of dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā from Vairocana/Maitreya, Figure A.2.
From Pal, Himalayas, fig. 64 ...............................................................230

Figure 3.21. Buddha performing dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā.
Brass sculpture from Kashmir. Nasli and Heeramanneck Collection, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (M.69.13.5).
Photograph by John C. Huntington .....................................................231
Figure 3.22. Vairocana Buddha performing the dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā. Brass sculpture from Western Trans-Himalaya, Michael Phillips Collection. From, Klimburg-Salter, Silk Route, pl. 113 ........................................232

Chapter 4

Figure 4.1. The donor Kuberavāhana with the monk and kalyānamitra Ācāryagupta. Rock carving from Chilas. Photograph by John C. Huntington .....................................................254

Chapter 5

Figure 5.1. Hayagrīva. Brass sculpture from Swat. Photograph by John C. Huntington .....................................................298

Appendix

Figure A.1. Vairocana/Mañjuśrī Buddha commissioned by King Nandivikramādityanandi. Brass sculpture now in the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (86.120). Photograph by John C. Huntington .....................................................349

Figure A.2. Vairocana/Maitreya Buddha commissioned by King Nandivikramādityanandi. Brass sculpture in the Pritzker Collection, New York. From Pal, Himalayas, fig. 64 ...............................................................350

Figure A.3. Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara commissioned by King Surendrāvikramādityanandi. Brass sculpture in the Palace Museum, Beijing, China. From von Hinüber, “Die Palola Śāhis,” Abb. 36 ...............................................................351

Figure A.4. Bodhisattva commissioned by King Jayamaṅgalavikramādityanandi. Brass sculpture in the Jo khang/gTsug lag khang Collection: inventory no. 870. Lhasa, Tibet. From, von Schroeder, Buddhist Sculptures, pl. 52A .........................352
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure A.5. Bodhisattva Maitreya commissioned by King Jayamaṅgalavikramadityanandi. Brass sculpture in the Tholing monastery in Western Tibet (Guge). From von Schroeder, <em>Buddhist Sculptures</em>, Fig. II-4</td>
<td>353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure A.6. Vairocana/Śākyamuni Buddha commissioned by Śrī Surabhī and the monk Hariṣayaśa. Brass sculpture of unknown location. From von Hinüber, “Die Palola Śāhis,” Abb. 35</td>
<td>354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure A.7. Vairocana/Śākyamuni Buddha commissioned by the monk Bhadradharma and his parents. Brass sculpture in the Po ta la Collection: Sa gsum lha khang; inventory no. 82. Red Palace, Lhasa, Tibet. From von Schroeder, <em>Buddhist Sculptures</em>, pl. 22</td>
<td>355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure A.8. Vairocana/Śākyamuni Buddha commissioned by Samkarasēṇa and the princess Devaśrī. Brass sculpture in the Rockerfeller 3rd Collection in the Asia Society in New York (1979.44). Photograph by John C. Huntington</td>
<td>356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure A.9. Vairocana/Maitreya Buddha. Brass sculpture in the Jo khang/gTsug lag khang Collection: inventory no. 261[A]. Lhasa, Tibet. From von Schroeder, <em>Buddhist Sculptures</em>, pl. 20</td>
<td>357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure A.10. Buddha. From a pair of painted covers from Manuscript 1. Museum of the Institute of Central Asian Studies at Kashmir University, Srinagar, Kashmir. From Klimburg-Salter, <em>Silk Route</em>, Fig. 30</td>
<td>358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure A.11. Bodhisattva. From a pair of painted covers from <em>Manuscript 1</em>. Museum of the Institute of Central Asian Studies at Kashmir University, Srinigar, Kashmir. From Klimburg-Salter, <em>Silk Route</em>, Fig. 33</td>
<td>358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure A.12. Bodhisattva. From a pair of painted covers from <em>Manuscript 2</em>. Museum of the Institute of Central Asian Studies at Kashmir University, Srinigar, Kashmir. From Klimburg-Salter, <em>Silk Route</em>, Fig. 32</td>
<td>359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.13</td>
<td><em>Bodhisattva</em>. From a pair of painted covers from Manuscript 2. Museum of the Institute of Central Asian Studies at Kashmir University, Srinagar, Kashmir. From Klimburg-Salter, <em>Silk Route</em>, Fig. 31.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.14</td>
<td><em>Śākyamuni/Vairocana Buddha</em>. From a pair of painted covers from <em>Manuscript 3, Samghāṭa Sūtra</em>, commissioned by Devasirikā and Atthocasimgha. Museum of the Institute of Central Asian Studies at Kashmir University, Srinagar, Kashmir. From Klimburg-Salter, “Gilgit Manuscript Covers,” Fig. 47.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.16</td>
<td><em>Śākyamuni/Vairocana Buddha</em> commissioned by Varṣa. Brass sculpture in the private Rossi Collection. Photograph by John C. Huntington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.19</td>
<td><em>Śākyamuni Buddha</em>. Brass sculpture in the Norton Simon Foundation in Pasadena, California (F1972.48.2.5). Photograph by John C. Huntington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure A.22.</td>
<td>Vairocana/Vipaśyin Buddha commissioned by Simhota. Rock carving from Chilas. Photograph by John C. Huntington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure A.23.</td>
<td>Vairocana/Maitreya Buddha. Brass sculpture in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. From Pal, <em>Bronzes of Kashmir</em>, pl. 32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure A.24.</td>
<td>Vairocana/Śākyamuni Buddha. Side one of three-sided stone sculpture from Gilgit. Photograph by John C. Huntington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure A.27.</td>
<td>Maitreya/Vairocana Buddha. Brass sculpture in the Heeramaneeck Collection, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (M.76.2.33). Photograph by John C. Huntington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure A.28.</td>
<td>Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. Brass sculpture in private collection. Photograph by Meg Whitlock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure A.29.</td>
<td>Śākyamuni Buddha. Carved into cliffs at Kargah near Gilgit. Photograph by John Huntington</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABBREVIATIONS

AH  Art History of Kashmir (S. Khosa).
ANP  Archaeology of Northern Pakistan, Vol. 1-5.
BHK  Bamiyan and Hindu Kush (D. Klimburg-Salter).
BK  Bronzes of Kashmir (P. Pal).
BS  Buddhist Sculptures (von Schroeder).
COB  Circle of Bliss: Buddhist Meditational Art.
ESK  Early Sculptures of Kashmir (P. Paul).
GE  Report on the Gilgit Excavation (Kaul-Shastri).
GMC  Gilgit Manuscript Covers (D. Klimburg-Salter).
HAA  Himalayas: Aesthetic Adventure (P. Pal).
HAB  Huntington Archive of Buddhist and Related Art.
ITB  Indo-Tibetan Bronzes (U. von Schroeder).
MB  Magnificent Bronze (O. von Hinüber).
PCS  Painted Covers of the Saṃghāṭa Sūtra (D. Klimburg-Salter).
PWC  Painted Wooded Covers (P. Banerjee).
SI  Sensuous Immortals (P. Pal).
SR  Silk Route and the Diamond Path (D. Klimburg-Salter).
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The “Snowy Mountains” mentioned in many of the travel records of early Buddhist pilgrims consisted of the Hindu Kush-Karakoram-Western Himalayan mountain regions. Gilgit and Baltistan, two regions central to this study, are nestled in this world of jagged peaks, glaciers, snow, and deep gorges in what is today, northern Pakistan (Figure 1.1). Gilgit is bordered on the northeast by the Karakorum Mountains, the range that separates Gilgit from Chinese Turkestan and the important cities of Yarkand and Kashgar in Central Asia. Baltistan is also bordered to the north by the Karakorum Mountains (Figure 1.2). To the northwest of Gilgit is the Hindu Kush Mountain range, which separates it from other Central Asian cities, such as Balkh and Samarkand. On the other side of the Himalayas, to the southwest of Gilgit are some of the primary ancient states of Kabul, Bamiyan, Swat, and Taxila, which are now part of Afghanistan. Kashmir is located to the southeast of both Gilgit and Baltistan, connecting them to this northern India state via more mountain passes. Baltistan with its capital at Skardu is
situated east of Gilgit. Ladakh and Western Tibet border Baltistan to the southeast along the Ladakh mountain range and the Himalayas.

Gilgit and Baltistan themselves are not easily connected through a direct route. It is likely that early travelers moved between the regions on a route through the Astor Valley or Nagar, and then to the Hispar Glacier. Alternatively, the route through Hunza, Nagar, and the Hispar Glacier into the Shigar Valley of Baltistan may have been used. Travel through the regions of Gilgit and Baltistan was difficult with mountain passes often open only a few months out of a year. In addition, the area supports a three river system, including the Indus, the Oxus, and the Kasghar or Tarim Basin Rivers that come from the three mountain regions. The rivers are often swollen and raging from melting glaciers making travel dangerous in the best of seasons and impossible in the worst of seasons.

Given the physical terrain, one might expect to find that Gilgit and Baltistan were historically isolated. To the contrary, Gilgit and Baltistan were strategic centers on travel routes used from the 1st through the 8th centuries, especially from the 5th to the 8th. Indeed, both Gilgit and Baltistan were components in a transcontinental travel system, with routes

1 See Deborah Klimburg-Salter, *The Silk Route and the Diamond Path: Esoteric Buddhist Art on the Trans-Himalayan Trade Routes* (Los Angeles: Published under the Sponsorship of the UCLA Art Council, 1982), 36; and Karl Jettmar, *Beyond the Gorges of the Indus; Archaeology before Excavations* (Karachi; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 117.
connecting the locations to major centers on the Silk Roads, which consisted of two primary roads running through Central Asia (one in the north and one in the south), ultimately connecting China in the East to Hindu Kush in the West and to India in the South. The routes were used by traveling merchants and their caravans for trade and religious pilgrims, especially Buddhist monks. From at least the 1st century, there is evidence of Buddhist monks traveling to spread the dharma or Buddhist law, establishing monasteries and religious centers along the way. For example, Indian Buddhist monks went to Gandhara, Kashmir, Central Asia, and eventually to China, traveling along the intricate system of the Silk Roads.

The Silk routes allowed for an expansion of trade and economic growth. This, in turn, created the need for supplies and stopping points for the travelers, which led to the development of major cities along the trade routes. Populaces began to grow to provide for the needs of the traveling merchants and religious pilgrims, generating further economic and religious growth. The cultural exchange encouraged by trade included a wide variety of ethnic groups and their various traditions and beliefs. Eventually, there were various political units and kingdoms with institutionalized Buddhist centers.

2 See fn. 1 above. For information on travel in Gilgit and Baltistan during the Kushan period, see Gérard Fussman, "Inscriptions de Gilgit," Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient (Tomb LXV, 1978), 54-67.

3 For information on Buddhism on the Silk Routes, see Luc Boulnois, Silk Road: Monks, Warriors, and Merchants on the Silk Road (Hong Kong: Odyssey Books and Guides, 2005).
Because of their central location on the trade routes, Gilgit and Baltistan served as a crossroads between India in the South, Hindu Kush in the West, and Central Asia and China in the East, and travelers used several important international travel routes on the Silk Roads through them. Thus, the two flourished and became important political centers. Gilgit, for example, was directly connected through two different routes to its neighboring kingdom Kashmir, and as such, sources often refer to Gilgit as the northern gate of India leading to Kashmir.4 One route from Kashmir to Gilgit began by traversing either the Kamir or Burzil pass, then moving through Astor, Ramghat, Bunji, and finally on to Gilgit.5 A second southern route that was easier and shorter followed the same route up to Ramghat, and, from there, went through Chilas to Gilgit. One could also travel from Skardu, the capital of Baltistan, through the Bunji Pass, the Satpura Valley, to the Deosai Plains into Gurais to Kashmir.6

Astor Valley also served as a means of travel between Gilgit and Ladakh. This route intersected with a trail from the capital Skardu of Baltistan as well. Another route went from Gilgit through the Khunjerab Pass in the Karakorum Mountains to Yarkand and Kashgar which leads to Kucha and Qizil. Gilgit was the door from Swat to the northern routes. One

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5 For more details and more routes see, Hassnain, *Gilgit*, 18.
route starting in Swat went through the Ghorband Valley to the Indus River, traveled upstream to Darel, passed over the mountain range south of Gilgit to Singal located on the Gilgit River, and ended over the Ishkoman or Karambar Pass crossing the Pamirs. Another road went over the Chonchar Pass, reaching the Gilgit River at Naupur, and then finishing through Hunza to the Pamirs. Another route reached the Tarim Basin by traveling from Gilgit, to Chilas, to Yasin, and over the Pamirs.

Through this complex system of ancient trade routes, India and Kashmir became connected to Central Asia, including Kashgar, Khotan, Gandhara, Taxila, and many other kingdoms through Gilgit and Baltistan. We know that Kashmir was one of the main Buddhist centers under the auspices of the Kushan king Kaniska (ca. 120-146). It is likely that the missionary Buddhist monks traveled from Kashmir to China via Gilgit using this network of travel routes even then. There is certainly evidence of the later Chinese pilgrims traveling them, which is discussed later in this chapter.

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7 Klimburg-Salter, *Silk Route*, 34.

8 For details regarding the routes taken by the monks, see Khosa, 26-7. There was a 10th century manuscript found at Dunhuang that mentions Buddhist monasteries and a trade route from Kashgar to Gilgit (Gidagitta) to Kashmir. See Oskar von Hinüber, "Buddhism in Gilgit between India and Central Asia," *Proceedings of The South Asia Seminar* (III, 1982-83), 35.
Many of these ancient city states, developing from the expansion of trade and the spread of Buddhism, featured a royal or elite ruling class that formed the basis of the political unit. The king was responsible for the continued safety and economic success of his city state and any satellite cities or villages. Therefore, cultural exchange via trade and travel were encouraged with the merchants, often utilizing the benefits for their own support and wealth. The ruling elite often had a strong relationship with the Buddhist missionary monks, some even supporting Buddhism as a state religion. It is not surprising, then, that the archeological record from these regions reveals Buddhist religious complexes and images that were commissioned by the royalty.

Commissioning images has been and continues to be a common practice in Buddhism. The impetus for this practice varies, depending on the individual and historical and cultural circumstances. The gaining of merit (puñya) for oneself, loved ones, and other sentient beings, however, has been a primary impetus since the early period of Buddhism. This practice expanded as Mahāyāna Buddhism began to flourish after the turn of the

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9 There are generally three main schools of thought or vehicles of Buddhism. Most believe in eliminating all traces of self or ego through the Four Noble Truths and Buddhist Dharma. While they hold many precepts in common with enlightenment as the ultimate goal, or freedom from samsara through karma, it is the path or means to achieve the goal where they greatly differ. Śrāvakayāna also known as Hinayāna Buddhism, the earliest form, is considered the Small Vehicle where there are only a certain number of Buddhas in this eon. Mahāyāna Buddhism is the Great Vehicle where anyone can attain enlightenment. In both of these schools of thought, enlightenment takes many lifetimes.

The third school is Vajrayāna Buddhism, which is the Adamantine Vehicle. It is also known as esoteric or Tantric Buddhism. In Vajrayāna, the key element is the self, where the adept becomes the Buddhist deity. Moreover, enlightenment is possible in one lifetime.
Common Era, and as the merit became transferable to others, including the deceased. Attaining merit aids the Buddhist practitioner, since it is seen to engender beneficial *karma* and lead to a better rebirth. Acts of generosity, including gifts and other offerings, are a central way to gain merit. Such pious gifts could be offered to a monastic community or to the laity. In addition, the gifts and offerings were to have a function associated with religious practice, such as a teaching tool, a way to promote the faith, an aid to meditation, or a tool for ritual or veneration.

The relative grandeur of a gift was determined by an individual’s means, status, intention and commitment to the Buddhist tradition. Royalty often used their considerable means to support the Buddhist *dharma*, thereby playing an important role in patronizing Buddhist art. Indeed, the extant archaeological record contains numerous Buddhist images that were commissioned by royal donors. Cave complexes in the oasis Central Asian kingdoms, for example, feature well-made paintings and large-scale sculptures. Images forged of brass and bronze that are relatively small and therefore portable, were also created as offerings. The ongoing trade between regions allowed for such sculptures to be made in one major artistic center, such as Kashmir, and to be transported upon completion to the donor’s palace. Sometimes the artist traveled to his patron’s city and worked there.

As strategic hubs along the vast system of the Silk Roads, Gilgit and Baltistan were no exception, flourishing under the long distance commerce
and embracing Buddhism. This is especially true of the Paṭola Śāhi Dynasty, which ruled in the country Bolōr, now Gilgit and Baltistan during the 6th, 7th, and 8th centuries. It is known from historical texts that during this period Bolōr was divided, where Baltistan was called Great Bolōr (Arabic) or Great Po-lū/Palûr (Chinese) and Gilgit was called Little Bolōr (Arabic) or Little P'ō-lu/Palur (Chinese). The Tibetans called Baltistan sBal-ti and the region of Giligt was called Bru-za. For the purpose of this dissertation, however, I will use the modern names of Baltistan and Gilgit.

The archaeological record from this region is evidence of the presence of Buddhism in both Baltistan and Gilgit, especially, during the Paṭola Śāhi period. Some of this evidence includes the following: the four excavated stūpas (relic mounds) at Naupur, near Gilgit, which delivered a large collection of Buddhist manuscripts; other extant stūpas in the region; the

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10 The title Śāhi usually brings to mind the better known Śāhis in Northwestern Punjab and Kabul, which were Turkic Śāhis and later Hindu Śāhis. Some scholars suggest that the Paṭola Śāhis were a branch of these same Turkic Śāhis, maybe both of Tibetan origin. However, others have suggested that the Paṭola Śāhis had Central Asian nomadic roots, or even Mongol or Iranian origins. Therefore, as of yet, their origin cannot be determined with any certainty and it is beyond the scope of this study to present all of the arguments.

11 In various inscriptions in the region, various terms are found, such as palola, palala, palolo, and palalojo, which are believed to be phonetic variants of the kingdom’s name of Bolar, P’u-lū, or Palur. For a discussion, see Oskar von Hinüber, "Royal Inscriptions from North Pakistan, " Journal of Central Asia (Vol. VIII, No. 1, July 1985), 63; Oskar von Hinüber, "Brāhmī Inscriptions on the History & Culture of Upper Indus Valley," Antiquities of Northern Pakistan: Reports and Studies, Vol. 1 (Mainz: Verlag Philip von Zabern, 1989), 65; and Gérard Fussman, "Inscriptions de Gilgit." Bulletin de l’École Française d’Extrême-Orient (Tomb LXV, 1978), 39. According to Jettmar, this term “palolo” is used even today as an ethnic designation by the Dards for the “pale” people of Baltistan. Karl Jettmar, "The Patolas, their Governors and their Successors," Antiquities of Northern Pakistan: Reports and Studies, Vol. 2 (Mainz: Verlag Philip von Zabern, 1993), 78.

large Buddha figure carved into the cliff at Kargah, three miles west of Gilgit; small Buddhas and relics found in Yasin; the thousands of Buddhist images and inscriptions carved on rock faces in the region;¹³ an inscription in Shigar, Baltistan, that was written by the Buddhist monk, Buddhabala;¹⁴ and even the possible ruins of a Buddhist monastery in Shigar that features numerous rock-carved images and other inscriptions.¹⁵

Buddhist pilgrims also provide evidence of Buddhism in Baltistan and Gilgit during the Pa†ola Śāhi period. Xuan Zhang in his travel accounts (629-645) said that the kingdom of Po-lu-lo (Bolôr) was a Buddhist kingdom with about a hundred monasteries and a thousand priests.¹⁶ The Korean traveler, Huei Ch’ao (723-729), said that Baltistan had Buddhist monasteries and monks that honored the triñratna (three jewels of Buddhism).¹⁷

¹³ Some of these rock carvings date to the Saka period through the Kushan period, but the majority of inscriptions are from the 5th-8th century. Gérard Fussman, "Les Inscriptions Kharosthi de la Plaine de Chilas," Antiquities of Northern Pakistan: Reports and Studies, Vol. 1 (Mainz: Verlag Philip von Zabern, 1989), 30 ff.


¹⁵ For a discussion of the archaeological remains, see Karl Jettmar, "Exploration in Baltistan, ” South Asian Archaeology (pt. 2, 1987), 804-07. It is suggested that these ruins date to the 6th or 7th century.


In addition, as a Buddhist stronghold between Kashmir and Kashgar, there are a number of Buddhist artworks that can be attributed through inscriptions to a donation by the royal Paṭola Śāhis. The inscriptions with the Buddhist images declare the Paṭola donor’s religious intentions – to offer as gifts in the form of Buddhist images in order to attain religious merit.

This dissertation focuses on these inscribed works and other extant visual culture of the Paṭola Śāhi dynasty. Through an examination of the visual record, and the subsequent historical and Buddhological contextualization of the findings, it examines the relationship between the Buddhist image and royal patronage, particularly how it affects the construct of the art itself.

Objectives

This study has five primary objectives. The first objective is to examine the Paṭola dynasty within a historical and cultural context. It considers the historical and epigraphical evidence in order to place the dynasty, and each individual king, within a larger framework of historical, economical, social and political concerns, as well as the milieu of religious practices during their time period. In addition, this allows for the formation of a relative chronology for the Paṭola Śāhi kings.

The second objective is to undertake a detailed iconographic analysis of the extant Paṭola Śāhis’ visual record known to date. The visual materials include painted Buddhist manuscript covers with colophons and inscribed
and/or dated sculptures that can be concretely connected to the Paṭola Śāhi patronage. It also incorporates other objects that can be attributed to Paṭola patronage through stylistic, iconographic and contextual analysis.

The third objective of this study is to contextualize the visual materials, including the iconography, epigraphic and compositional components, within the broader framework of practice and theoretical principals of Buddhism during the time periods in question. It considers, in particular, the specific teachings and practices that were preferred by the Paṭola Śāhi ruling family.

The fourth objective of this study is to contextualize the patronage of the Paṭola Śāhis, particularly by situating the depicted donors into the Buddhist iconography and iconology of the images. Specifically, it examines the monastic donors and the royal and noble donors, considering the underlying religious meanings of their patronage.

The fifth objective of this study is to contextualize the patronage of the Paṭola Śāhi kings, considering the role of kingship in Buddhism and the impetus behind royal sponsorship. In particular, it examines their patronage with respect to possible underlying political motivations.

**Methodology**

This study of the Paṭola Śāhi visual culture uses an art historical approach. Using a Buddhist art historical approach, in particular, the methodologies consist of the visual examination of artwork, including a
stylistic, iconographic, and compositional analysis. As a fundamental aspect of art historical scholarship, my system is interdisciplinary. Therefore, I incorporate a contextual approach, using cultural, historical, economic, religious, and political forces that shaped the works of art.

Primary Visual Sources

The primary source for this study is the artwork comprised of fourteen Buddhist brass sculptures and six painted covers from different Gilgit Buddhist manuscripts, all of which can be definitively attributed to the Paṭola Śāhi patronage. It also includes comparative artwork of several brass sculptures that can possibly be attributed to the Paṭolas due to similarities.

It is important to point out that many scholars incorrectly use the term “bronze” when discussing these sculptures. Bronze is comprised of copper and tin, while brass is a combination of copper and zinc, thereby the term “brass” is the correct designation for the Paṭola Śāhi sculptures. In addition, since there is no way to be certain of the origin of the sculptures, whether they were made in Gilgit or Baltistan or Kashmir, and this discussion is not part of this study, I do not use the common nomenclature “Gilgit Bronzes.” Rather, I call them Paṭola Śāhi sculptures or brasses.

Most of the sculptures depict a large central Buddha, however, representations of the Paṭola Śāhi donors, including royal, noble, and

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18 The term brass should also be used for sculptures from Kashmir, Tibet, and Nepal. Robert E. Fisher, “Art from the Himalayas,” Asian Art at the Norton Simon Museum, ed.
monastic figures, in the sculptural composition are the singular feature found on almost all of the images. For the purpose of this dissertation, I use the term “royal” or “royalty” to describe a donor with a meaning pertaining to a sovereign and his family. The term “noble” donor infers a class of persons distinguished by rank or status, but not necessarily related by blood to the ruling family.

Due to the current political situation and warfare in the Afghanistan and Pakistan region and between India and Kashmir, field research in the Pañola Śahi region was not possible. The corpus of materials for this study, therefore, came primarily from published materials such as museum catalogs, monographs, corpora, and journals. Other sources for comparative materials also came from photographic material now in the Huntington Archive of Buddhist and Related Art at The Ohio State University, and my own photographic research in museums. The current location of the various artworks ranges from monasteries in Tibet, to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, to the Metropolitan Museum, to the Sri Pratap Museum in Kashmir, to private collections.

Although an observation of the objects is the focus of this study, a formal, extensive analysis of style is not included. There are numerous intricacies inherent in the stylistic research of art from areas like Gilgit and Baltistan, which sustained such extensive cross-cultural interaction. In

Pratapaditya Pal (New Haven: Yale University Press in association with Norton Simon Art
addition, stylistic arguments considering Buddhist artworks must involve the important issues of origin and provenance. Many of the Paṭola sculptures were taken to Tibet and preserved there, until recently released on the market. Since the brass images are relatively small and portable, they could have been made in a variety of places and not necessarily the recorded “find” spot. Moreover, Kashmir was a major artistic center for Buddhist art during the rule of the Paṭola Śāhi dynasty, so Kashmiri artists could have been commissioned to make a piece for the Paṭola Śāhi rulers while either in Kashmir or by traveling to Gilgit or Baltistan. Further, artists may well have worked in the style of their region or in a style requested by the patron. Beyond these more typical intricacies relating to stylistic analysis, the newly discovered dates on many of the Paṭola images has shifted the previous chronological assessment set forth for Kashmiri sculptures, and an entire new dating system must be formulated and argued in its entirety. Therefore, properly addressing the styles, influences, and dating issues would necessitate a dissertation on its own merit.

This visual analysis is, therefore, confined to the study of the subject matter and composition of the primary sources as a means to interpret the iconography deliberately chosen by the Paṭola Śāhi patrons. A detailed reading of each image provides a correct description of what and who are depicted. As a result, iconographic patterns used to represent a concept or a

Foundation, 2003), 48.
particular Buddhist deity, with which the viewer, specifically the donor, must be familiar are made clear. The investigation of the subject matter and the symbolism in the artworks informs the deeper meaning conveyed through the iconography. For this dissertation, I define iconography as the use of images or symbols that are assigned a particular meaning in Buddhist art. Iconology is the interpretation or meaning associated with the symbols or iconographic elements.

The study of the comparative visual materials provides a background in which to understand the period and country from which the artworks are derived. It offers information about not only the religious traditions of a specific milieu, but also historical, economical, social, and political concerns. This multi-disciplinary approach is needed for the interpretation of the iconography present in the images.

**Primary Inscriptional Sources**

The primary inscriptional evidence used for this study is comprised of epigraphical evidence related to the Paṭola Śāhi dynasty. This includes numerous inscriptions carved on the Paṭola Śāhi sculptures, rock carvings, and in colophons of Buddhist texts.

**Brass Sculptures**

Many of the Paṭola Śāhi brass sculptures feature detailed inscriptions that were analyzed in this study as key components of contextualizing the
artwork. This epigraphic evidence is inscribed using the *Proto-Śāradā* script and is consistently written in a specific formula.\(^{19}\) The formula is comprised of the following elements: a date (*sam #*); a statement that it is a pious gift (*deyadharma*); a title and a name of the donor; and any other people associated with the gift to share in the merit. As such, the inscriptions usually provide the identity of the donor or donors, often a king, and corresponding dates. This formula was a key element in this study for determining which inscribed images could be attributed to the Paṭola Śāhis, in addition to the use of the *Proto-Śāradā* or an earlier script. The discussion regarding the *Proto-Śāradā* script and the method of dating follows at the end of this section.

**Colophons**

Another primary source for the Paṭola Śāhi inscriptive evidence is found in the colophons in the so-called *The Gilgit Manuscripts*. The Buddhist manuscripts were discovered buried in a *stūpa* at Naupur in Gilgit during the 1930’s. Since the texts were found in Gilgit, they were subsequently given, and published under, the name *The Gilgit Manuscripts*, thereby this study also refers to these specific manuscripts as such. The majority of the texts were written on birch bark except for one that was written on palm leaf.
They were designed like typical ancient Buddhist manuscripts with either long horizontal or vertical pages that were held together by a string through holes, which were punched at the top or side, allowing the pages to be flipped over.

The manuscripts are divided into two groups according to what script they were written – those written in the *Brāhmī* round script and those written in the *Proto-Śāradā* script. The texts in *Brāhmī* contain some of the earliest inscriptions and help fill in many gaps for the early part of the dynasty. The colophons in these Buddhist manuscripts also use the typical Paṭola Śāhi formula, thereby providing names and titles of donors and often dates. Certain texts will be discussed in later chapters as they are relevant to the discussion.\(^20\)

**Rock Carvings**

There are several references to the Paṭola Śāhis in paleographic inscriptions carved onto rocks in the region of Baltistan and Gilgit. The Gilgit Valley and surrounding areas, primarily along the trade and pilgrimage routes alongside the Indus, Gilgit, and Hunza rivers, are abundant in such rock carvings with images and inscriptions.\(^21\)

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\(^{21}\) These inscriptions are written in various scripts, including Karosthi, several types of Brāhmī, *Proto-Śāradā, Śāradā*, Chinese, Tibetan, Sogdian, and Bactrian, see von Hinüber, “Brāhmī Inscriptions,” 43.
The earliest Paṭola rock inscriptions were along the bank of the Gilgit River at the Alum Bridge, almost opposite the village of Hatun. Scholars interpret some of the names written in Brāhmī, such as *palalo, palala, palolo*, as referring to the Paṭola Śāhi dynasty. Often these terms or titles are with the names of a *bhikṣu* or Buddhist monk. The other main inscriptions referring to Paṭola Śāhi kings, such as Danyor, Hatun, and Hodar, are discussed in detail in Chapter Six.

**Dating and Script**

Since the epigraphical evidence is so important to this study, it is necessary to provide an overview of the method of dating and the scripts used in the inscriptions. In a historical context, even when there is a date provided in an inscription, there are inherent problems in correctly interpreting the date. For instance, it must be determined if the inscribed date is meant to represent the sovereign year of a king or if it relates to a “customary era of reckoning.” In the examination of the Paṭola Śāhi inscriptions, the majority of scholars agree that the dates used are not referring to the sovereign years of a Paṭola Śāhi king. It is agreed that the

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22 This location is believed to have possibly been a halting spot or control point between Skardu or Astor with the Tarim Basin between Gilgit and Indus, where skin rafts would then be used to cross the river. Jettmar, “The Patolas, their Governors,” 79.


Pațola Śāhis used a specific dating method which is called the Laukika era system. This dating system is well attested and widely used for pieces in Kashmir and northwest India. In the Laukika era system, the inscribers used the practice of dropping the notation for the hundreds and/or thousands for the date, thereby using a single or double digit instead. This is, indeed, what is found in the Pațola inscriptions.

Oskar von Hinüber explains that when using the Laukika era system to convert the year in an inscription to the Christian era, then twenty-four or twenty-five years must be added to the date. For example, the year 3 found in a Gilgit manuscript would be converted to 27/28. The next difficulty is to assign a correct century, since this system of dating is not absolute and can leave room for error of 100 years later or earlier. This is often why scholars try several sets of dates. For example, the year 3 became 27/28, so it could be 527/528 or 627/628 or 727/728. In addition, one can also use style and subject matter to determine the correct century, however, the most important factor in determining the correct century is the paleography of the script itself. For example, epigraphists look at the evolution and the development of the letters and syntax.

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26 For a discussion of the epigraphists analysis, especially the development from 600-671 C.E., see Fussman, “Chilas, Hatun,” 27.
There are two scripts that have been used for the Paṭola Śāhi inscriptional record. The earliest script is called Brāhmī Round Script which was generally used prior to 600 or 620/630 C.E. It is an ornate, calligraphic script. The later script used by the Paṭolas is most commonly called Proto-Śāradā, but early scholars sometimes referred to it as Post-Gupta or Upright Gupta.27 Proto-Śāradā was used after the Brāhmī round script, so it provides a terminus ante quem date for the introduction of Proto-Śāradā to Gilgit.28 The fully developed Śāradā script was developed in Kashmir and was used in the second half of the 8th century.29 Therefore, it is generally suggested by epigraphists that Proto-Śāradā was used by the Paṭola Śāhis between 600-750 C.E.30

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27 See B.K. Kaul Deambi, Corpus of Śāradā Inscriptions of Kashmir with Special Reference to Origin and Development of the Śāradā Script (Delhi: Agam Kala Prakashan, 1982), 16; and Nalinaksha Dutt, ed. Gilgit Manuscripts, Vol. 1 (Delhi: Sri Satguru, 1984), 42.

28 Several scholars have offered reasons for the transition and why there was an overlap of the usage of both the Brāhmī and the Proto-Śāradā scripts. Sander suggests it was the development of a new type of pen that was not suitable for the ornate script. Lore Sander, “Remarks on the Formal Brāhmī of Gilgit, Bāmiyān & Khotan,” Antiquities of Northern Pakistan: Reports and Studies, Vol. 1 (Mainz: Verlag Philip von Zabern, 1989), 110-11. It is suggested by von Hinüber that the movement to Proto-Śāradā script was so that the language could be nearer to the standards of classical Sanskrit. Von Hinüber, “Buddhism in Gilgit, 42, and “The Paṭola Śāhis of Gilgit,” 223. In addition, Fussman points out the possibility that older scribes, who had been using the Brāhmī ornate script for decades, would be resistant to change, and therefore, local traditions do not instantly disappear creating an overlap. Fussman, “Chilas, Hatun,” 27.

29 This is the script still used by the priests in Kashmir and it is the script on the famous sculpture of Queen Didda. For a discussion on the earliest use of the Śāradā script in the Paṭola Śāhi region, see Deambi, 3.

Since the majority of the primary inscriptional evidence has been thoroughly studied and documented by epigraphers, I have relied upon their translations on this subject. These outside sources help to clarify the visual record within a historical and social context.

**Primary Literary Sources**

The investigation of primary literary sources is another aspect of the methodology used in this study. These primary literary sources are comprised of ancient historical records, such as works by early historians and geographers, Buddhist pilgrim travel accounts, and Buddhist texts.

**Historical Records**

One primary historical source is by Abû Raihân Muhammad Ibn Ahmed Alberuni (973-1078), who wrote *Alberuni’s India: An Accurate Description of all Categories of Hindu Thought* at the end of the 10th c. This was originally written in Arabic and translated and edited by Edward Sachau into German and then into English in 1887. Alberuni was a Muslim scholar, a man of science and literature who studied India, Sanskrit and Sanskrit literature. He states that he does not want to blindly accept the traditions of former ages, but wants to understand and criticize them. He attempted to make his book a simple historic record of facts. Therefore, it is thought that his chronology is more accurate than previous scholars. Alberuni’s topics feature the Hindus, their religious beliefs and philosophy, their castes,
their literature and science. This source helped to provide general information regarding kingship and Buddhism in the region, especially in Kashmir and the Śāhis in Kabul. Although there is not an account of the Paṭola Śāhis, it is noteworthy that Alberuni refers to their kingdom in the north region of Kashmir as Bolor. In addition, he makes a brief mention of the kings called Bolar-Shah (Paṭola Śāhi) with the title Bhatta-Shah who ruled over towns such as Gilgit, Aswira, and Chilas, therefore, providing historical proof of the dynasty’s existence.

The Śāhis are also briefly mentioned by Kalhana, a 10th c. Kashmiri poet-historian in his Kalhana’s Rājatarāṅgiṇī: A Chronicle of the Kings of Kaśmir. It was written in 1148-1149 A.D. and his father was an official of King Harṣa of Kashmir (1089-1101). This book, written in Sanskrit, was translated and edited by M.A. Stein (1961). This poetic-narrative text is known as one of the oldest and fullest records of Kashmir history. Kalhana states his use of earlier sources while noting their mistakes, such as The Nīlamata Purāṇa and Kṣemendra’s “List of Kings.” He also used inscriptions, coins, and traditional lore. The problems, however, are that for the distant past he had to rely on myths, legends, and previous authors as “true” history, and therefore, the chronological framework before his own period is questionable. Although this gives some scholars concern for using it as a historical source, it is widely used, just with caution regarding his early chronology. As such, this book was used to provide general information
regarding kingship and Buddhism in the region, especially in Kashmir and the Turkic Šāhis in Kabul. Kalhana mentions a land near Kashmir with Daradas and Bhauttas (Bhattas). Today, there is still some confusion as to whether the Darada Šāhis were the Paṭola Šāhis, since they ruled over the same region, however, the Bhauttas most likely does refer to the Paṭola Šāhis as it does in Alberuni’s *India*.

Another ancient literary source, the *Hudud-al-ʿAlam*, can be used for historical reference as well. It was written in 982 by an unknown Persian author as a geographical work. The work does not mention the Paṭola Šāhi dynasty itself, but it does mention the country of Bolōr and the kings who are called Balurin-shah, who declare that they are the Son of the Sun.

*The Nīlamata Purāṇa* was also considered in this study. It is a ca. 6th or 7th century Sanskrit text that deals with sacred places (*tīrthas*), rituals and ceremonies, legends of origins, and the social conditions of Kashmir. It provides a social history of Kashmir whereas Kalhana provides more of a political history. It was translated and published by Buhler in 1877. The later editor, Ved Kumari, is the one who dated the text to the 6th or 7th century, which is contemporary to the Paṭola Šāhi dynasty. Importantly, the text tells us that Hinduism, Buddhism, and the *nāga* cult co-existed at this time period in Kashmir, an important neighbor to Gilgit. Ved Kumari states,
“It is not a literary piece of high quality; nevertheless, it is significant for being the earliest literary record of Kaśmīra handed down to us.”

Chinese literary sources were used for the historical background, especially regarding the politics in the region. The Official Annals of the Tang Dynasty, *Documents sur les Tou-kiue occidentaux* (1903), translated by Edouard Chavannes was one important source for the history of Gilgit and Baltistan during the 7th and 8th century.

Tibetan literary sources were also used for historical and political accounts. The Tibetan *Blue Annals* written by Gos Lo-tsa-ba Gzon-nu-dpal and Bu ston’s *History of Buddhism in Tibet* were, especially, important for understanding the politics during the period in question from the Tibetan point of view. Thus, both the Chinese and Tibetan accounts are important records of the conflict between Tibet and China over the Paṭola Śāhīs’ domain, documenting the events that led to the eventual collapse of the dynasty.

**Travel Accounts**

The travel records of Buddhist monks are also considered in this study, providing a religious, historical, and cultural contextualization of the period of the Paṭola Śāhi dynasty. Many of these Buddhist pilgrims traveled

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through Baltistan and Gilgit and the neighboring kingdoms.\textsuperscript{32} Some of these accounts, translated into English, are from Chinese travelers, such as Zhimeng (404), Faxien (399), Song Yun (518-522), Xuan Zhang (629-645), Ou-Kong (759), and the Korean traveler, Huei Ch’ao (723-729).

**Buddhist Literature**

Buddhist texts were also used as primary literary sources in this study. Since one of the largest groups of extant Buddhist texts was found in Gilgit and they were commissioned by the Paṭola Śāhis themselves, the *Gilgit Manuscripts* are fundamental to this study. Although scholars have worked on many of the texts, there are still many that have not been studied. One primary publication was the *Gilgit Manuscripts* edited by Nalinaksha Dutt. It was important to this study since it provided a description and excerpts from many of the texts. A few of the other works concerning Gilgit manuscripts that were consulted for this study include: *The Gilgit Manuscript of the aśṭādaśasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* by Edward Conze; the *Tathāgatabimbakārāpana Sūtra* by Adelheid Mette; the *Devatā Sūtra and Alpādevatā Sūtra* by Adelheid Mette; and the *Gilgit-Blatter der Mekhalā-dhāraṇī* by Chandrabhal Tripathi.

The study also utilized "The Sūtra of the King of Samādhis" (*Samādhīraṇa Sūtra*) by a translation committee, and "The Manuscript of the

\textsuperscript{32} Others monks who also went through Baltistan are Fa-Yang (518) and Che-Mong (400). Jettmar, *Beyond the Gorges*, 174 ff. and Khosa, 27.
Vajracchedikā Found at Gilgit” by Gregory Schopen, both published in *Studies in the Literature of the Great Vehicle: Three Mahāyāna Buddhist Texts*. Another work on the *Vajracchedikā Sūtra* was done by Niranjan Chakravarti called ”The Gilgit Text of Vajracchedikā” in *Minor Buddhist Texts*.

Several scholars have done work on the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtras*, including Oskar von Hinüber, Shoko Watanabe, and Hirofumi Toda. Work on *The Bhaisajyagura-Sūtra and the Buddhism of Gilgit* was Gregory Schopen’s dissertation. Raniero Gnoli has done work on another text, *The Gilgit Manuscript of the Samghadha-devastu*.

In addition, other Buddhist literary sources, not part of the Gilgit collection, were consulted for this study. For example, various Buddhist texts were used to trace the development of the iconography of a crowned Buddha and its inherent meaning. The texts provided a general understanding of the practice and themes current at the time of the Paṭola Śāhis, and include the *Mahāvastu*, the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*, the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, the *Mahāvairocana-abhisambodhi Tantra* (also called the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*), and the *Sarva-tathāgata-tattva-saṃgraha*.

Other Buddhist texts that were useful to this study in relation to their dates, contents, and region were from Khotan and Bamiyan. All of these kingdoms had connections with the Paṭola dynasty and likely shared similar forms of Buddhism. Moreover, some of the texts found in Gilgit have also
been discovered in other places, such as Khotan or Bamiyan. One important Khotan text was *The Sūtra of Golden Light* (*Suvarṇabhāsattama Sūtra*) translated by R.E. Emmerick. The other Khotanese texts came primarily from R.E. Emmerick’s *A Guide to the Literature of Khotan* and H.W. Bailey’s *Khotanese Buddhist Texts*. The primary correlating text from Bamiyan is the *Bower Manuscript* published by A.F.R. Hoernle and Levi Sylvain.

This use of Buddhist texts further contributes to the understanding of the practice of Buddhism in Gilgit and Baltistan. Specifically, they provide a religious context for the royal patronage of the Paṭolas in an attempt to glean what literary sources may have been available to the artist or patron during the period in question, and those that might have had an influence on the artworks themselves.

**State of Scholarship**

**Scholarship on the General History of Gilgit and Baltistan**

One of the earliest mentions of the ancient kingdoms of Gilgit and Baltistan was first found by Edouard Chavannes when he was translating the official annals of the Tang Dynasty. He published the translation as *Documents sur les Tou-kiue occidentaux* (1903). He provides the history of the Chinese activity during the 7th and 8th century in Little Po-lü (identified
as Gilgit) and Great Po-lü (mistakenly identified as Ladakh). He also included the names of several kings of Gilgit in their Chinese names. However, no mention is made of the Paṭola dynasty by their name.

Sir Aurel Stein further clarified the history of the region. Using the Chavannes translation, and Alberuni’s India, as well as his translation of Kalhana’s Rājatarāṅgiṇī: Chronicles of Kashmir, Stein provided an account of his travels and research regarding the Gilgit region in Chapter 1 of Ancient Khotan (1907). He discusses the Gilgit region’s geography, the history of the relationship between Gilgit and China, and the few ancient Buddhist remains that he found in Gilgit still surviving. Stein correctly identifies Great Palur as Baltistan rather than Ladakh. Although, this is a better outline of the history of the kingdoms of Gilgit and Baltistan, the Paṭola Śāhi dynasty remained unknown, and therefore no mention of their name is made.

Hashmatullah Khan, an official in the service of the government of Kashmir (which controlled Gilgit at that time), wrote a comprehensive work on the political and religious history of Baltistan in the Short History of Jammu and Kashmir (1939). He covers the genealogies and chronologies of the dynasty’s ruling Baltistan up to 1843. Still no mention is made of the ancient Paṭola Śāhi dynasty. R.M. Emmerson took up Khan’s point of view in his publication, Charismatic Kingship: A Study of the State Formation and

Authority in Baltistan (1984). Like Khan, he believed that early Baltistan consisted of various independent communities of various ethnicity (especially stateless Tibetans) that were protected and governed by military mercenaries who became legitimate through their protection. This clearly does not coincide with the history given in the Chinese and Tibetan sources for the 7th and 8th century.

In 1977, both Giuseppe Tucci and Karl Jettmar independently published an overview of the political developments and historical evidence of the Bolör kingdom. Jettmar's is titled "Bolör- A Contribution to the Political and Ethnic Geography of North Pakistan" (1977). The article discusses the political geography of Little and Great Bolör. Jettmar uses Stein, Chavannes, and Kalhana, Tibetan sources, the Gilgit Manuscripts, the Hatun inscription, and the one known Paṭola Śāhi sculpture published by Pratapaditya Pal for his re-appraisal of the history, so that it can be made available to the “non-Orientalist” scholar. He believed that having more substantial evidence now rather than what was available to previous scholars, gave his interpretation more credit. Jettmar also attempted to discern the ethnicity of the Dards in Chilas. He found evidence for various traditions such as Kushan, Iranian, Burushos, but had to admit that there was no satisfying answer.

The most comprehensive history for the kingdoms of Gilgit and Baltistan was written by Christopher Beckwith, Tibetan Empire in Central
Asia (1987). In the book, Beckwith discusses the fight over Gilgit and Baltistan during the 7th and 8th century between the Tibetan empire and the Chinese Tang Empire. Chinese sources were commonly used previously due to Chavannes translation, but in Beckwith, for the first time, the Tibetan activity is outlined in extensive detail as well. He used Gos Lo-tsa-ba’s Tibetan Blue Annals and Bu Ston’s History of Buddhism in Tibet, in addition to other sources. Since it provides such a complete chronology of events, Beckwith’s book is now the primary English language source of history for all the scholars touching on the subject of the Paṭola Śāhis or on Gilgit and Baltistan.

Scholarship on the Paṭola Śāhi Dynasty

The Paṭola Śāhis were unknown to scholarship prior to the discovery of the Gilgit Manuscripts. The discovery was first published in 1931 by Aurel Stein in the Statesman. He said:

“Some boys watching flocks above Naupur village, about 2 miles west of Gilgit cantonment, are said to have cleared a piece of timber sticking out on the top of a small stone-covered mound. Further digging laid bare a circular chamber within the ruins of a Buddhist stūpa filled with hundreds of small votive stūpas and relief plaques common in Central Asia and Tibet. In the course of excavation a great mass of ancient manuscripts came to light closely packed in what appears to have been a wooden box.... The paleographic indications of some of the manuscripts suggest that they may date back to the sixth century A.D.”

In 1932, Joseph Hackin visited the site at Naupur and published further details in the Journal Asiatique. He began excavation of the four
stūpas, finding the first discovered group of Buddhist texts in wooden boxes. His article was descriptive of the site and the excavation with various measurements, some of which have been contested by later scholars. However, nothing was said regarding the patrons of the manuscripts.

M. Kaul-Shastri, who was the second to conduct excavations of the stūpas, published “Report on the Gilgit Excavations in 1938” (1939), summarizing the excavation and what was found and where it was found. He briefly mentions the colophons in a few manuscripts with the names of donors, suggesting the donors are portrayed on the painted manuscript covers. However, he incorrectly interprets and identifies the term Paṭola. Kaul-Shastri says the Lord of Gilgit’s name appears twice, once as “Nandideva” in Sanskrit and second as “Paṭola” in Tibetan. He does correctly identify the term “Śāhi” as part of a title. He also mentions another king, yet no mention is made of the term Paṭola that is in the colophon with that name.

For many years after the excavation, the focus remained on the amazing discovery of numerous ancient Buddhist texts. Nalinaksha Dutt was the first to edit and publish many in The Gilgit Manuscripts (1939). Dutt draws attention to the donors listed in the colophons as being Śāhis of Kashmir. She suggests they were located in the country of the Dards, the

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34 Aurel M. Stein, The Statesman and Gazette (July 24, 1931), quoted from Dutt, Gilgit Manuscripts, vol. 1, 41.
later seat of Śāhi rulers, and that they were possibly identical to the Turkic Śāhis in Kabul. Although she gives the name of a king, once again the Paṭola in front of the name is not acknowledged. The number of texts was so numerous, that Lokesh Chandra compiled copies of each text in the manuscripts as a Facsimile Edition from 1959-1974 in 10 volumes called the *Gilgit Buddhist Manuscripts*. However, no translations are provided.

Stein determines in his article “Archeological Notes from the Hindu Kush Region” (1944) that the Paṭola Śāhi was, indeed, a local dynasty who used the Kushan system of the Iranian title “Śāhi.” This dynasty was called Paṭola. Once scholars were made aware of this specific dynasty, other discoveries began to surface.

Niranjan Chakravarti was one of the first epigraphist to work on the Paṭola Śāhi inscriptions. He published one very long rock inscription from Hatun located near Gilgit in the article, “Hatun Rock Inscription of Paṭoladeva” (1954). The inscription featured another king’s name with the title of Paṭola Śāhi. Chakravarti also published an appendix of the Paṭola inscriptions he had studied with his chronology for the known kings to date in *Minor Buddhist Texts* (1956). His work on the inscriptions was worked on by later scholars such as Ahmad Hasan Dani and H. Humbach, with a better understanding of the paleography. Thus, each time a scholar worked on the difficult *Proto-Śāradā* inscriptions that were often badly damaged or written with enigmatic grammar, it set better groundwork for the understanding and
continuing research of the Pațola Śāhis. Finally, a few scholars began to focus on the question of the identity of this Pațola Śāhi dynasty.

Much later, Gérard Fussman brought together more inscriptive evidence in his publication “Inscriptions de Gilgit” (1978). Fussman’s focus in the article was primarily on the hitherto unpublished graffiti at the Alum Bridge near Gilgit. This work was, in part, due to Karl Jettmar’s excursions and photographs of the site. Fussman discussed the epigraphy with various languages and the problems of translation of the various inscriptions, providing the transliterated and corresponding translation. He found a few names of donors with the words *palalojo* / *palaço* with them, making scholars suggest it was a possible variation of the term Pațola.

Although the petroglyphs in the region were seen by Stein and a few others as early as 1906, they were not fully studied or recorded. This remained the case for many years because of the restricted access to the area by the government of Pakistan, and the inaccessibility of the area due to the lack of roads. Various trips were made by Karl Jettmar in the 1950s through the 1970s, but it was not until 1980-1983 that a systematic recording of the petroglyphs was made possible. A serious expedition was given the Pakistani government’s approval and funding from various German sources. Their goal in exploring was the documentation and photographing of every rock carving and inscription possible, but they were not allowed to excavate. The team gathered an enormous amount of material and data, which is now part of the
Forschungsstelle für Felsbilder und Inschriften am Karakorum Highway der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, founded in 1984 by Karl Jettmar and headed by Professor Hauptmann (http://www.rzuser.uni-heidelberg.de/~u71/kara/welcome.html). A catalogue, Between Gandhara and the Silk Roads: Rock-carvings along the Karakorum Highway (1987), was published by the Akademie in conjunction with an exhibition, summarizing the information gathered by the German-Pakistani Expeditions from 1979-1984.

The epigraphist, Oskar von Hinüber, accompanied some of the expeditions, utilizing his expertise in languages and translating hundreds of inscriptions. As a result, von Hinüber became interested in the Paṭolas, and therefore, over time, he has published some of the most detailed studies on the dynasty, especially regarding their history resulting from the translation of their inscriptions. In his article “Die Erforschung der Gilgit Handschriften” (1979), he provides a historiography of works that have been published by various scholars regarding each Gilgit text, since their discovery to the writing of his article. The significance of this article is that he gives a list of all of the donor’s names found in the manuscripts, as well as listing where each text is currently located. Most importantly, von Hinüber provides an appendix listing the entire collection of manuscripts by the individual names of each and every text. Prior to this, there was only the one facsimile publication completed by Vira Raghu and Lokesh Chandra, which is kept in
the Niedersächsische Staats-und University library, and therefore, remains inaccessible to the majority of scholars. In this article, von Hinüber provides the name of the text, what volume of Chandra’s it is in, what year that volume was published, and what pages of the text correspond to the specific page number in the volume. There are over sixty-five texts and the pages in Chandra’s ten volumes number from 1-3368. Hinüber obviously understood the need for an available source for finding specific texts, thus providing general knowledge regarding the corpus of Buddhist texts that were found. Consequently it serves as an enormous contribution for future scholarship.

From his knowledge of the corpus of the Buddhist texts in the collection of the Gilgit Manuscripts, von Hinüber published a seminar paper as an article “Buddhism in Gilgit between India and Central Asia” (1982-82). He discusses specifically the *Samghāṭa Sūtra* which, despite its popularity in Khotan, Tibet, and China, had previously received little attention by Buddhist scholars. There were actually two *Samghāṭa Sūtra* texts found in the Gilgit collection, and he notes the changes from the earlier one to the later one. For example, the language in the later one was brought closer to the standards of Classical Sanskrit; a movement which he suggests began in Gilgit itself. To support this, he uses the Paṭola kings’ names found in the colophons of the texts and on inscriptions found on rock carvings and sculptures, providing various linguistic arguments. In this article, von

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35 von Hinüber, ”Buddhism in Gilgit,” 42.
Hinüber is the first scholar to create a fragmentary chronology of the kings from all of these inscriptions, hence, providing an important base for following scholars. Although he wants to set a chronological framework for Buddhism in Gilgit, the article does not give any detailed information on the form of Buddhism in Gilgit as a whole; rather, just that which pertains to the *Saṃghāṭa Sūtra*. Once again, this shows the need to contextualize the visual record and even the Buddhist texts within the practice of Buddhism in Gilgit.

Oskar von Hinüber’s next two articles “Royal Inscriptions from North Pakistan” (1985) and “The Paṭola Śāhis of Gilgit: A Forgotten Dynasty” (1986-87) are significant for the new ground covered. He discusses the Paṭola kings and their specific dates in detail, using the Laukika era system. From the paleography, he determines a relative chronological order for the three kings listed in the Gilgit manuscripts, as well as furnishing a more complete list of Paṭola kings and queens with approximate dates of their reigns. As evidence, he uses the later Gilgit *Saṃghāṭa Sūtra* dated year 3 (627/628); the Hatun inscription dated year 47 (671/672); the king in the Hodar inscription known to have ruled from the Tang Annals (720-725); and the Danyor inscription dated year 6 (730/731). He also uses a Paṭola Śāhi sculpture with the year 90 (714/715), correcting Pratapaditya Pal’s translation of the year 6. Moreover, von Hinüber is able to use the ancient Chinese historical texts to correlate the king in the sculpture’s inscription with one listed in the text, thus providing further dated evidence. It is noteworthy that he acknowledges
that the style on this bronze does not fit within the chronology previously
given to the sculpture nor other similar ones, which calls for a complete
dating revision based on the newly determined dates. Thus, von Hinüber’s
underlying significance to the scholarship for this study was his more
accurate reading and translation of numerous difficult and damaged
inscriptions and to use the epigraphy to provide relatively secure dates for
the kings of the Pațola Šāhi dynasty.

Another key scholar in the study of the Pațola Šāhi dynasty who has
published quite widely is Karl Jettmar. In his article, “Non-Buddhist
Traditions in the Petroglyphs of the Indus Valley” (1983), he summarizes the
results of several expeditions in the northern area of Pakistan. Based on the
new material gathered, Jettmar discusses the interethnic system and the
indigenous religious heritage of the area near Chilas. He finds various ethnic
influences and languages, such as mixed origins of Dardic, Iranian, Shina,
and Burushaski languages which make up what he calls the Darada
kingdom. He also believes that earlier non-Indo-European religions in the
area, especially in Thalpan, integrated with some of the foreign aspects of
Buddhism, creating a “folk” Buddhism.

Karl Jettmar’s next article “The Main Buddhist Period as Represented
in the Petroglyphs at Chilas and Thalpan” (1985) compares the Buddhist
petroglyphs with Buddhist monuments found in Swat. He says that although
they are separate traditions, they are contemporary and are both a form of
Gandharan art. Jettmar sees a mixed iconography in a variety of stylistic idioms portraying various Buddhist artworks and donors. He discusses the Darada Ĥâhis, suggesting that they ruled somewhere west of Kashmir but not at Gilgit, and that the Chilas inscription attributed to them reflects their preservation of their Kushan heritage. Once again, Jettmar mentions what he calls “folk” Buddhist cults with their new motifs appearing along with the continuity of their old motifs.

Besides studying the Chilas Ĥâhis, Karl Jettmar also often focuses on Baltistan. He wrote “Exploration in Baltistan” (1987) where he uses previous scholarship, inscriptive evidence, and his own research to work out contradictions about the dynasty. He states that there were powerful rulers in the area of Baltistan who emulated the standards of the Kushan kings as well as their administration. Interestingly, Jettmar does not give the dynasty a name, never once referring to the Paṭola Ĥâhis. Through his field research in 1984 and 1985, he documented evidence that he claims supports the notion that, in early times, Baltistan was a Buddhist state. Jettmar found archaeological remains that he interprets to be ruins of stūpas and other architectural ruins that were perhaps a Buddhist monastery. The carvings of stūpas, crowned Buddhas, and clay tablets with Buddhist texts or images (ts’a ts’a) are proof of the local support of Buddhism by the dynasty. Jettmar discusses a Brāhmī inscription dated to the 6th-7th century that identifies the inscriber as a pious Buddhist monk creating it on behalf of his
ruler. He uses this to date the powerful Bolōrian kingdom. He also points out the need for documentation and excavation to be done in the area to fully understand the dynasty, which so far has not been permitted.

Karl Jettmar’s latest publication regarding the Paṭola Šāhis is his book, *Beyond the Gorges of the Indus – Archaeology before Excavation* (2002). Basically, this book is a collection of his already published articles mentioned above, with each one being a separate chapter. As such, the book does not add anything new to scholarship regarding the Paṭola Šāhis, however, Jettmar does update the historiography of the scholarship and research.

The most comprehensive and collaborative work covering new groundwork and materials is found in a set of studies titled *Antiquities of Northern Pakistan: Reports and Studies*. The series is comprised of studies concerning the paleography, linguistics, and archaeology in Northern Pakistan, including Gilgit and Baltistan, providing further information on the Paṭola Šāhis. Five volumes were published in 1989, 1993, 1994, 2000, and 2004. The first three volumes were edited by Karl Jettmar and they are studies based, in part, on the new evidence documented and accumulated on the expeditions mentioned above. The series was the beginning of a systematic approach to disseminate the knowledge gleaned from the data by various scholars with their own interpretations and opinions.
Volume One focuses on the linguistics and paleography of the inscriptions found in Northern Pakistan. The two articles important to this study in this volume were by Oskar von Hinüber; “Brāhmī Inscriptions on the History & Culture of Upper Indus Valley” and “Buddhistische inschriften aus dem tal des oberen Indus.” They are important because he translated many of the Proto-Śāradā and Brāhmī inscriptions, some of them hitherto unpublished or some published in English for the first time. The first article focuses on various subjects in the inscriptions, dividing them into categories based on language, grammar types, ethnic groups or tribes, titles, and religious affiliation. The second article deals with inscriptions describing activities, mostly in a Buddhist context. This includes votive inscriptions offering artworks, incantations, or ones mentioning bodhisattvas or Buddhas. These articles are important because they lay the foundation of translations of the inscriptions, and therefore, serve as the basis for future studies for scholars who are not so expert on linguistics and paleography.

The other useful article in Volume One titled “Remarks on the Formal Brāhmī of Gilgit, Bamiyan and Khotan,” was by Lore Sander. She discusses how the script found in Gilgit and its linguistics is the same Proto-Śāradā that was found in Bamiyan and Khotan. This scholarly finding is important for tracing connections between the three kingdoms.

The second volume in the series was published after enough background had been set for scholars to conduct an analytical investigation of
the related artworks and obtain a chronological framework, according to Jettmar. Therefore, the volume predominantly contains reports by archaeologists. The article by Gérard Fussman, “Chilas, Hatun et les Bronzes Bouddhiques du Cachemire,” was especially helpful for this study, since it set forth the first chronology of the Paṭola Śāhis that incorporated the context of a few of the dated Paṭola Śāhi images and inscriptions. Previously scholars had given dates to the images that were not compatible with the Paṭola Śāhi donors listed. For the first time, the majority of all of the known Paṭola inscriptions, including those associated with the extant artworks, were brought together into one publication. He focuses on the Hatun inscription, the Gilgit manuscript colophons, the Chilas rock-carvings and Buddhas, and what he calls "Kashmir bronzes" with each of their translations. Fussman considers these items to be part of a singular cultural world, which included Kashmir and the states around it. He also employs a few new comparison images in his article that had not been considered in previous scholarship in relation to the Paṭola Śāhi images. Using linguistic arguments, he sets forth a chronology for many of the undated images to the mid-7th century (i.e., around 650).

Karl Jettmar also wrote an article in the second volume, “The Paṭolas, their Governors and their Successors,” that was important to this study. It is significant for the new historical theory that is suggested regarding the Paṭola Śāhis. Using previous scholarship, especially Beckwith, he states that
the Paṭola kings ruled in Baltistan while their governors ruled in Gilgit. He provides the names of the Chinese rulers listed in Chavannes, which he claims were the governors in Gilgit. Jettmar says that, over time, these governors got very independent, so much so, that when the court fled from Baltistan to Gilgit, the king had a difficult time re-establishing his royal sovereignty. In addition, he states his belief that Baltistan was a Buddhist country, using his own evidence in previous articles and also Buddhist pilgrim records. Jettmar suggests, therefore, that it was the royalty in Baltistan who commissioned the Gilgit manuscripts and that they took them with them when they fled, indicating that they were not written in Gilgit.

Volume Three of the series features monographs from a seminar, each one devoted to specific archeological site. Although there were no articles specific to the Paṭolas, a few articles address iconography issues relating to the Paṭola Śāhi pieces and to other artwork in the region. The fourth volume was not relevant to this study since it did not pertain to the Paṭola Śāhis or their region, but focused on a village named Sazin.

Volume Five, however, was crucial to this study. This volume, published in 2004, was written by Oskar von Hinüber, and is entirely centered on the Paṭola Śāhi dynasty. It is titled, *Die Palola Śāhis: ihre Steinenschriften, Inschriften auf Bronzen, Handschriftenkolophone und Schutzzauber: materialen zur Geschlichte von Gilgit und Chilas*. It was important to my study because it brought all of the known Paṭola inscriptions
from texts and images together into one publication for the first time. In the first section of the book, von Hinüber’s skill as an epigraphist shines, where he gives each inscription and colophon relating to the Pațola Śāhis in a transliterated form from the Proto-Śāradā or Brāhmi, and often a translation. His book also discusses the various titles that are found with the names of the Paṭola Śāhi donors. This includes the titles of the kings, queens, governors, other donors, as well as spiritual and secular titles. In addition, von Hinüber also includes at least two new pieces that he has attributed to the Paṭola Śāhis through the inscriptional evidence. This source was important, as well, since it had a detailed index with every name and title known to date, and references to where each inscription or image has been published elsewhere. This book provided several visual and inscriptional sources, otherwise not known, in addition to supplying expert translations. However, it did not provide any contextualization of the imagery or inscriptions or the patronage of the dynasty.

Scholarship on the Art of the Paṭola Śāhis

As noted, early scholarship regarding issues related to the Paṭola Śāhis was based primarily on the relevance of the manuscripts to Buddhist textual studies, including epigraphy and linguistics. More recent scholarship has offered greater clarification about the regions under the control of the Paṭola Śāhis. Similarly, early studies of the artwork did not have the benefit of recent archaeological findings and secondary scholarship, and, as with
other fields of study, scholarly revisions of early art historical conclusions and further research on art associated with the Paṭola Śāhis is called for and can now be conducted.

Gilgit Manuscript Covers

To date, no comprehensive Buddhological or Buddhist art historical study has been conducted on the painted covers of the Gilgit Manuscripts in relation to their texts or the Paṭola images as a whole. Rather, there are only a few general articles dedicated to the covers and brief mentions of them in other publications. For example, in his article mentioned above, Kaul-Shastri (1939), briefly discusses the painted manuscript covers he found with the texts. He provides a possible identification for the bodhisattvas and donors. Later, P. Banerjee (1968) published a short article, “Painted Wooden Covers of Two Gilgit Manuscripts in the Sri Pratap Singh Museum, Srinagar (Jammu and Kashmir)” with clearer reproductions than found in Kaul-Shastri’s article. He attempts to identify the figures as specific bodhisattvas and donors as well. He says they are stylistically important since they fill in a gap in extant Kashmir painting. Almost a decade later, Klimburg-Salter published two articles on the covers as well, titled “The Gilgit Manuscript Covers and the ‘Cult of the Book’” and “The Painted Covers of the Samghāṭa Sūtra 627/8 the Votive Object from Gilgit” (1987 & 1989). Her primary purpose was to suggest that the painted panels were votive objects with a cultic function for the book. As of yet, hers is the most detailed discussion
regarding the images and their style, finding other wooden panels to compare to them.

Sculptures

Scholarship on the Pañola sculptures is the most recent. In the 1970s there was a surge in the market of sculptures that were thought to originate from Kashmir due to their style. Many of these sculptures came out of Tibet so their provenance is unknown. Pratapaditya Pal published an article “Bronzes of Kashmir; their Sources and Influences” (1973) and subsequently published a monograph on the same topic called Bronzes of Kashmir (1975). It includes two Pañola Śāhi sculptures hitherto unpublished. Pal’s study, as the title suggests, concluded that the inscribed Pañola Śāhi sculptures were from Kashmir. Because Kashmir was a cultural and religious center, it was considered to have exerted its influence over Gilgit. Using the Pañola sculptures along with others, Pal states that the fluorescence of the Kashmir stylistic tradition was tied to the patronage of the nobility of the Kārkoṭa dynasty in Kashmir.

Pal conducted a stylistic analysis of the pieces within this framework of interaction and influence, and sets forth a chronology based on it. Pal includes some partial translations of the inscriptions found on the artwork. However, through his readings, he concludes that only one image may be tied to a Śāhi sovereign of Gilgit, and that, although the donor figures depicted on another sculpture were Śāhis, it was likely that they were in the employ of a
Kashmir king. As noted, more recent findings and secondary scholarship, more accurate inscriptive readings, and new scholarly paradigms of complexity of cultural exchange and interaction, have pointed toward the need to revisit Pal’s stylistically-based chronology and conclusions about sculptural patronage, both of which have been adopted in most art historical scholarship. Advances in Buddhist iconographic studies also suggest the need to reexamine several of Pal’s iconographic identifications.

Beyond Pal’s work, only sporadic mention is made of a few of the Paṭola Śāhi sculptures, mainly in various publications on Kashmir sculpture. Pran Gopal Paul’s dissertation *Early Sculptures of Kashmir: Before the Middle of the 8th Century* (1986) attempts to rectify some of the dates set by Pal, using several dated images. Importantly, he uses two Paṭola sculptures and provides their complete transliterated inscriptions and translations with discussions of the dates. Another art history book which mentions a few Paṭola Śāhi sculptures is *Sculptures of Kashmir (600-1200 AD)* by Bansi Lal Malla (1990). He also attempts to set forth a chronology for Kashmir sculptures, determined by its stylistic characteristics. It was not until Fussman considered the Paṭola Śāhi sculptures in their entire context in his article in Volume Two of the *Antiquities of Northern Pakistan* (1993), discussed above, that an important stepping stone was made in the study of the Paṭola Śāhi images.
The study by Ulrich von Schroeder in *Buddhist Sculptures in Tibet: Vol. 1 India & Nepal* (2001) was the first purely art historical discussion of the Paṭola images. He devotes an entire section to the “Paṭola-Śāhi Dynasty of the Gilgit Valley,” providing a brief historical background based on work by previous scholars. He also provides numerous reproductions, as well as the full transliterated inscriptions with their English translations. Not only does von Schroeder gather all of the previously known Paṭola sculptures together, but he adds another one hitherto unpublished. Ulrich von Schroeder also provides numerous other sculptures that are iconographically or stylistically similar to the Paṭola Śāhi’s artistic idiom, suggesting that they may be attributed to the Paṭola Śāhis. A few of these even have dates, helping to set forth a more reliable chronology. Although it is significant to my study, von Schroeder does not contextualize the Paṭola sculptures, nor discuss the other known sculptures or petroglyphs or the Gilgit Manuscripts.

The most recent scholarship regarding the Paṭola Śāhi sculptures addresses only a few of the Paṭola sculptures. One article was significant for the new material it introduced, “The Magnificent Bronze of Nandivikramādityanandi: A Delight for the Beholder, A Worry for the Epigraphist,” by Oskar von Hinüber (2003). It is important because he ties a new previously unpublished inscribed and dated sculpture to the Paṭola Śāhi patronage, which happens to be almost iconographically identical to an already published image. He provides a complete translation and date for
this piece along with the translation of the inscription found on another new sculpture introduced earlier by von Schroeder. Oskar von Hinüber also provides a brief discussion on the royal Paṭola family.

Another recent exhibition catalogue, *The Circle of Bliss: Buddhist Meditational Art*, (2003) features one of the Paṭola sculptures, which is significant for its new groundwork on iconography. The entry by John Huntington does not address the donor figures, however, it provides a detailed reading of the iconography of the piece that helps to explain the iconography found in other Paṭola Śāhi sculptures.

**Expected Contributions**

This study provides the most comprehensive iconographic study to date of the visual culture of the Paṭola Śāhis. When considered within a larger framework of Buddhist theoretical principles and practice, as well as intricately linked social, religious, and political practices at the time, the motives and impetus for royal patronage and select, multivalent iconographies can be gleaned. This contextual study of the Paṭola Śāhis’ visual record suggests that they were devout Buddhist practitioners, providing information on the specific teachings evident in the imagery. It is also clear that political aspirations and legitimizing forces were also part of their Buddhist practices. It is my hope that this dissertation will help fill in the lacuna in the field regarding the patronage of Buddhism by the Paṭola Śāhi dynasty.
Organization of the Study

This study is organized into six main chapters. This chapter serves as a general introduction to the topic. It includes a brief overview of the Paṭola Śāhi dynasty and the region in which they ruled. Chapter One also provides important information needed to understand the study, including a list of the main objectives, my methodology and approach, my primary and secondary sources, the state of scholarship, and the contributions of this study.

Chapter Two provides a detailed description of the visual record of the Paṭola Śāhis used for this study. It includes inscribed and/or dated sculptures and paintings that can be definitively attributed to the Paṭola patronage. It also takes into account other artworks that possibly belong to the Paṭola Śāhi corpus. The appearance and composition of each image is discussed, including the significant appearance of the donors.

Chapter Three provides an analysis of the iconography and iconology of the Paṭola visual material, so that they can be placed within a larger framework of Buddhist theoretical principles and practice. In particular, through a Buddhological contextualization, the underlying meaning of the crowned images is gleaned. Both the visual evidence and Buddhist literature are examined, revealing the practice of the esoteric teachings of Vairocana Buddha.

Chapter Four addresses the presence of Buddhist monastic figures in the Paṭola Śāhi visual record as donors, particularly their roles in the
sculptures’ iconography. These findings reveal that many of the monks portrayed in the sculptures or mentioned in the inscriptions were initiates into and practitioners of the esoteric teachings of Vairocana Buddha. Moreover, this chapter examines the relationship of the monastic figures with the ruling family, showing that they were members of, and spiritual teachers or advisors to, the royal family.

Chapter Five focuses on the Paṭola Śāhi lay donors, specifically the royal and noble patrons, as part of the interpretation of the Buddhist iconography. A contextualization of the religious patronage of the royal and noble Paṭola Śāhis clarifies the theoretical principles and practices which they embraced. Specifically, the visual and literary records of the dynasty show that they were practitioners of early Vajrayāna Buddhism, in particular, Vairocana-related teachings.

Chapter Six contextualizes the patronage of the Paṭola Śāhi kingship. Specifically, it situates the donors as sovereigns within the iconography and also considers their patronage of Buddhism, with respect to possible underlying political motivations.

This study ends in Chapter Seven with brief concluding remarks. The primary visual source consisting of the Paṭola Śāhi images is placed in Appendix A.
Figure 1.1. View of mountainous region of Gilgit.
Figure 1.2. Map showing the location of Baltistan and Gilgit.
CHAPTER 2

A VISUAL RECORD OF THE PAṬOLA ŚĀHIS

This chapter describes the extant visual record of the Paṭola Śāhis used for this study. This includes dated and otherwise inscribed sculptures and paintings that can be definitively attributed to Paṭola patronage. It also takes into account other artwork that likely belongs to the Paṭola Śāhi’s corpus of visual materials. The description addresses the appearance of the Buddhist figures, including their garments and other adornments, their 
\textit{mudrās} (hand gestures), the details of the throne upon which they are seated, and any accompanying figures. This general discussion of the Paṭola Śāhi visual record is followed by an iconological interpretation in Chapter Three.

There are several commonalities, or shared features, in the corpus of Paṭola Śāhi images, some of which are particularly significant to this study. Foremost, is the consistent presence of donor figures in the artwork. Of the more than twenty-nine works considered for this study, twenty have at least one donor figure included in the composition. Thirteen of these twenty-nine works include inscriptions that identify the donors. Therefore, when donor figures are not physically depicted in the art, then the donor or donors are
typically noted by the listing of their names in the accompanying inscription or colophon. Sixteen sculptures show or list the donors in pairs, consisting of a male and female couple. The visual evidence, then, suggests the importance of patronage, and the regular depiction of patrons in the art during the Paṭola Śāhi period.

My research of the imagery suggests that the visual materials can, reasonably, be divided into several classifications. The overarching division for this study was the presence or absence of a crown on a Buddha figure. The crown is an important Buddhist iconographic feature, and therefore, I separated the artworks into two categories or types: Buddha figures with crowns and Buddha figures without crowns. The crowned Buddhas are not to be confused with bodhisattvas (defined below), who although they wear crowns, are Buddhas-to-be and not Buddhas. Therefore, I placed the bodhisattva figures and the Buddhas without crowns into the same category.

Within these two broad divisions, sub-categories according to donor figure types are also present, such as kings, other royalty and nobility, and monastics. The various identified groupings for this study are discussed in the following order: 1) Buddha images with crowns donated by Paṭola Śāhi kings, 2) Buddha images without crowns and bodhisattva images donated by Paṭola Śāhi kings, 3) crowned Buddhas donated by other Paṭola Śāhi royalty, nobility, and monastics, and 4) Buddha images without crowns and bodhisattva images that were donated by the same Paṭola Śāhi royal, noble,
and monastic figures. Therefore, categories three and four comprise the extant visual materials that can be attributed to the broader sphere of patronage within the Paṭola Śāhi period. The fifth and sixth groups discuss the remaining crowned Buddhas and the Buddha images without crowns or bodhisattva images, respectively, that do not follow the categorical breakdown of donors as just described. These are the images that may possibly be attributed to the Paṭola patronage.

The discussion of art within each of these six categories proceeds in the following manner: the dated and/or inscribed images are presented first and in chronological order.36 Those Paṭola Śāhi pieces that are undated are grouped according to whether or not they are inscribed, and are thereby given in the order of possible chronology within each section. All of the main images that are used in this chapter and for the remainder of the study are placed in an appendix at the end.

The description of the Paṭola Śāhi visual materials through these six categories illustrates two key facts that become crucial to this study. First, the large number of crowned Buddhas marks the significant role this type of figure played in the Paṭola Śāhis' patronage. Second, it provides evidence that it was clearly an important tradition for the royal and noble classes of

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36 For a discussion of the formula used in the inscriptions and how it played a role in my methodology and choices, see Chapter 1, p. 16.
the Paṭola Śāhi dynasty to depict themselves as donors within the composition or through an inscription.

**Buddha Images with Crowns Donated by a Paṭola Śāhi King**

**Dated:**

*Mañjuśrī Buddha: (Figure A.1)*

Published: BK, pl. 31; ANP, vol. 5 fig. 5, p. 38-39; ANP, vol. 2, pl. 30; SR, pl. 10; SI, pl. 26; ESK, fig. 86, Malla, fig. 34, p. 71.

This Paṭola Śāhi brass sculpture was originally part of the Pan-Asian collection, and is now in the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (#86.120). The piece stands 29.9 cm or 11 ¾ in. tall and it is cast in brass with silver inlay. The Buddha is seated in *vajraparyāṅkāsana* or yogic position on a lion throne. The two lions' bodies are shown in profile with their heads frontal. The throne rests upon a single-petaled lotus supported by an inscribed base. The Buddha is wearing monastic garments styled with ribbing to create folds in the drapery with one shoulder exposed. This particular style of ribbed garments is predominant among the Paṭola Śāhi pieces. Scholars have rightly identified the figure as a Buddha, due to his monastic robes.

However, further iconographic identification is possible, since the figure holds an attribute in his left hand. The Buddha's left hand holds a Buddhist text called a *sūtra*, a typical attribute of the *bodhisattva* Mañjuśrī (the Buddhist male embodiment of perfect wisdom), while his right hand rests upon the head of a smaller standing figure. A *bodhisattva* is an
enlightened being in Buddhism who acts as a protector and a guide to the devotee and as an exemplar of the Buddhist path toward enlightenment. A bodhisattva is typically represented as bare-chested wearing a dhotī (skirt), jewels and ornaments, and an ascetic's topknot hairstyle (jaṭāmukuta) often with a simple crown. Not only does Mañjuśrī Buddha wear the monastic garments typical of a Buddha, but he also wears a crown with silk ribbons that are attached to the sides with ends hanging down to each shoulder and ornaments and jewelry. He is therefore depicted as a crowned Buddha Mañjuśrī, rather than the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī.

The inscription on the front of the bottom of the pedestal is inscribed in Proto-Śāradā script. It includes a date and a reference to the Paṭola Śāhis, providing the name of the donor king:

# svamsti // samvatsare namate 90 vaiśākhe śu di 8 mahārājādhirāja paramiśvara paṭola śahi śrī āryā nandivikramā-dityanandidevena deyadharmo yam pratisthipitam // sārdhamantaśpurikā upalā // tathā sārdham m(ā)tā rājū i ujūi.

Success! Let there be welfare! In the year ninety, 90, the 8th day of the bright half of (the month) Vaiśākha. This is the pious gift endowed by the great King of Kings, the Supreme Lord, Paṭola Śahi, the King Nandivikramādityanandideva. Together with Upalā, the harem-lady. Together with his royal mother Lady Ujuī (or Ujvai).\(^{37}\)

Using the well accepted Laukika era system, the year 90 from the inscription corresponds to 714/15 C.E.\(^{38}\) Moreover, from the days and month in the

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\(^{37}\) The Sanskrit transliteration is from von Hinüber, “Die Palola Śāhis,” 38. The translation is a combination of that done by Fussman, “Chilas, Hatun,” 40; Paul, 210; and von Hinüber, “Die Palola Śāhis,” 38 and 96.
inscription, the date can possibly be narrowed down to Thursday the 26th or Friday the 27th of April 714 C.E.\textsuperscript{39}

From the inscription, it is clear that the sculpture was a pious gift by the Paṭola Śāhi king named Nandivikramādityanandi. It is likely, therefore, that the devotee shown in royal garb and depicted to the proper right of Mañjuśrī is this king as the primary donor.\textsuperscript{40} He offers a wreath in his left hand and a censor in his right hand.\textsuperscript{41} The donor's official dress consisting of a crown, jewels, tall boots, breastplate with a cross piece, a cloak, and a sword hanging from his belt are Central Asian in appearance.\textsuperscript{42} His royal attire and his Central Asian ethno-cultural traits support that it is the Paṭola Śāhi king.

It is a known characteristic of the Paṭola Śāhi patrons to include themselves within the composition of their artworks. Although there are earlier dated sculptures with inscriptions naming Paṭola Śāhi sovereigns,

\textsuperscript{38} See discussion of dating the images in Ch. 1. Although Pratapaditya Pal read the year differently as year 6, von Hinüber has a good argument for the year 90. See, Pratapaditya Pal, \textit{Bronzes of Kashmir} (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1975), no. 31; and von Hinüber, "The Paṭola Śāhis of Gilgit," 225.

\textsuperscript{39} Paul says that date is either April or May of 714 C.E., Paul, 212. Oskar von Hinüber suggests that the date can be further pinpointed to Thursday the 26th or Friday the 27th of April 714, von Hinüber, "Die Palola Śāhis," 39.

\textsuperscript{40} The depiction of a donor is not a new tradition, as it was already in practice in India and Gandhara. See Chapter 5.

\textsuperscript{41} This censor is an unusual spoon type found in Central Asia and China. von Hinüber, "Die Palola Śāhis," 154.

\textsuperscript{42} According to von Hinüber, the top of the crown has a lion head with a chain in its mouth. von Hinüber, "Die Palola Śāhis," 156.
this is the first one known to definitively portray a Paṭola Śāhi king. The image, therefore, marks a significant event within the realm of Paṭola Śāhi patronage. Also noteworthy is the king’s choice of Buddhist deity – a crowned Buddha.

The other two female donors listed in the inscription are not depicted. The harem-lady, Upalā, is named in the inscription on figure A.4, and therefore, is known to have been of Paṭola Śāhi nobility, since all members of Nandivikramādityanandi’s royal harem would have been from noble ranks. The king’s mother, Ujvai or Ujuī, was not a queen-wife to Nandivikramādityanandi’s predecessor. She is given the title "rājñī," however, which is reserved for royal or noble women of high status. Therefore, both women noted in the inscription were Paṭola Śāhi nobility, perhaps even members of the extended ruling family. Although Upalā is not depicted within the composition itself, there is clearly a royal donor couple referenced in the sculpture’s inscription. Indeed, as shall be shown, the inclusion of the donor images in artistic compositions is an important part of the Paṭola Śāhi tradition, as is the pairing of a male and female as a donor couple.

*Maitreya Buddha: (Figure A.2)*
Published: ANP, vol. 5, fig. 7, pp. 40-42, pp. 157-158; HAA, pl. 64, p. 108; MB, fig. 5.

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43 Upalā is also given the title “rājīnā” in the inscription on figure A.4. It is interesting that she is not given this title in the inscription on this image, since she was one of the wives of the king, and perhaps one of his favorites since she alone is selected in this inscription. For a discussion of this title, see von Hinüber, “Die Palola Śāhis,” 131-32.
This stunning Pațola Śāhi sculpture is part of the Pritzker Collection in New York. The piece has only relatively recently been attributed to the Pațola Śāhis, and has not been extensively published. Showing exquisite craftsmanship, the brass piece is inlaid with silver and copper and stands 36.8 cm tall. The largest central figure shows the future Buddha Maitreya seated in his characteristic bhadrāsana pose (Joyous Posture) with his legs pendant. Like Mañjuśrī Buddha, Maitreya wears monastic garments to specify that he is meant to be understood as a Buddha, rather than as the bodhisattva Maitreya. The Buddha wears jewelry, rings, a crown with silk ribbons, and a distinctive cape with a triangle corner draped over each shoulder, one on the chest, and one to be understood on the back. He also has a rosette sun inside a crescent moon on each of his shoulders. His crown is a type that is distinctive to the Pațola Śāhi pieces. It has a string of large pearls accenting the front of the five points of the crown, with the front central piece featuring a rectangular jewel below a smaller round one. The Buddha is also wearing a large flower garland that is draped through his arms and falls below his knees. Maitreya Buddha is performing a variant of the dharmacakra mudrā (gesture of turning the wheel of Buddhist law by teaching) called the dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā.

44 The large flower garland is also worn by the donor Varṣa in Fig. A.16.
The Maitreya Buddha is flanked by two smaller *bodhisattvas* that stand on double-petaled lotuses. They both wear long *dhotīs*, jewelry, elaborate crowns, and large flower garlands falling almost to their ankles. The *bodhisattva* of loving-kindness, Maitreya, stands on the central Buddha’s proper right with an *akṣamālā* (rosary-like beads). He can be identified by the *stūpa* in his crown and his characteristic hand-held attribute the *kuṇḍikā* (water jar) in his left hand. On the proper left of the Buddha, is the *bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara (the *bodhisattva* of wisdom). He is identified by the Amitābha Buddha in his crown. Avalokiteśvara holds an *akṣamālā* in his right hand, while holding a long lotus stalk in the left hand as his typical attribute.

The Maitreya Buddha sits upon a lion throne supported by a lotus that rests on a pedestal with cubical geometric shapes to represent a rocky landscape that is recessed in horizontal steps. The cushion is created through an elaborate work inlaid with copper and silver. This rocky landscape and distinguishing cushion are also characteristic of the distinctive Paṭola Śāhi sculptural idiom. At the front of the base there are two *ganas*

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45 Some scholars suggest that the rocky landscape is a Kashmiri trait, but in studying the corpus of brass sculptures, it appears to me that this is primarily a Paṭola Śāhi feature. It is even seen in rock carvings in the region. The Kashmiri pieces of a similar time period, on the other hand, have either a lattice-like, lion throne or a solid square pedestal. The Swat pieces, however, have a similar rocky landscape on the bases.

46 The inlay recalls Sassanian metal pieces or Central Asian textiles seen in paintings.
(supporting “characters” used in Indic art to separate the transcendent from
the mundane) flanking a *cakra* (wheel), with deer on each side of the them.

This work actually has two inscriptions in *Proto-Śāradā* script. They
give the date of the image and the names of the donors from the Paṭola Śahi
dynasty:

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# bhagadattānvayayomaravir arcāṃ muner imāṃ cakāra (tya)patiś śrīmān
āryānā(tyā)gunodadhīḥ śrīmac chyāmaprabhādevyā <śā>
( )rdham mūrnenduvaktrayā samāyāṃ ekanavatāu paurāṇamāsyatithau m(a) v(ā)//
samvatsare ekanavatī 91 devadāhrno yaṃ rājādhiraj(ā) parameśvara paloladeva
śahi śri a( )rya NANDA(!)vīkramādiyadevasya. śrī śamādevī namovdāhāya //
kalyā(!)mitra vikhyātarakṣītah//
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The sun in the sky of the Bhagadatta family made this image of the Buddha, the
king, the auspicious noble ocean of endless virtues, together with the auspicious
queen of dark splendor, who has a face resembling the full moon, in the year 91 on
the full moon day, a Tuesday.

In the year 91. This is the pious gift of the great King of Kings, the Supreme
Lord, Paṭola Śahi, the King Śrī Nandivikramādiyadeva, (and) Śrī Śamādevī (Queen)
Namov[=b]uddhāya. The spiritual friend Vikhyātarakṣīta.47

The year 91 in the Laukika era system corresponds to 715 CE. The details
about the full moon provide even further specifics about the date. The only
full moons occurring on a Tuesday in the year 715 would have been on April
23rd and September 17th.48 Since April 23rd is such an auspicious day for

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47 The Sanskrit transliteration is from von Hinüber, “Die Paṭola Śahis,” 40. The translation
is from Oskar von Hinüber, “The Magnificent Bronze of Nandivikramādityanandi: A Delight
for the Beholder, a Worry for the Epigraphist,” *Orientations* (April 2003), 39; and
Pratapaditya Pal, *Himalayas – An Aesthetic Adventure* (Chicago: The Art Institute of
Chicago in association with the University of California Press and Mapin Publishing, 2003),
285.

48 Oskar von Hinüber states that the only full moons would have been on April 23 and
September 17th in the year 715 C.E. Therefore, he suggests that it is April 23, 715 since April
23rd is such an auspicious day for Buddhist practitioners. von Hinüber, “Die Paṭola Śahis,”
41. The 23rd of April is celebrated as the day that Buddha was born, enlightened, and
attained *nirvāṇa* (final cessation).
Buddhist practitioners as the birthday of Śākyamuni Buddha, it is possible that the sculpture was consecrated on April 23, 715.

From this inscription, the donors portrayed at the bottom of the pedestal can be identified. The male donor figure on the proper right of the Buddha, the place for the primary donor, is most likely the Paṭola Śāhi king Nandivikramādityanandi. He is the same one who commissioned the sculpture of Mañjuśrī Buddha. Once again, the king is included in the composition and noted in the inscription. Nandivikramādityanandi is in the same Paṭola regal king’s attire with the crown, earrings, breastplate, lapelled coat, cloak, sword, and high boots. The front piece of his crown is decorated with the symbol of the crescent moon with a rosette sun inside of it. Nandivikramādityanandi is also wearing a large flower garland. The king offers an incense burner in his left hand and what appears to be a fruit in the right hand.

Behind the king, the smaller kneeling figure is most likely the Paṭola Śāhi queen Namov[=b]uddhāya. She is performing the añjali mudrā or gesture of respectful greeting with her hands together. The queen is wearing a royal costume consisting of pants, shoes, and a long cloak that hangs down her back. In addition, she wears a crown formed from the repeated motif of

49 Pal, Himalayas, 108, says this breastplate is a cross belt of a hero called a chanavira. According to von Hinüber, the crown on the king also features a lion’s head with a string of pearls in its mouth, like that seen in the previous figure, von Hinüber, “Die Palola Śāhis,” 41.

50 For a discussion of the various Paṭola Śāhi queens’ titles and how they signify rank, see von Hinüber, “Die Palola Śāhis,” 114 ff.
the solar symbol placed inside a crescent moon. It appears that Namobuddhāya is also wearing a flower garland.

On the proper left of Maitreya Buddha, there is a bearded kneeling figure representing the third Paṭola Śāhi donor. Through the inscription, he can be identified as the spiritual friend or advisor, Vikhyātarakṣita. He is wearing a turban-like cap with a knot at the top, earrings, and a lapelled coat or tunic with a sword at his waist. He is wearing a large flower garland as well. Vikhyātarakṣita holds a wreath in his left hand while offering some sort of flower in his right hand. His splendid appearance is very similar to the king's, yet his lower status is evident through various clues. He is depicted kneeling rather than standing like the king, and he is wearing a hat rather than a crown. One can surmise that in order to appear with the royal pair as donors of this magnificent sculpture, he must have held an important place at court and relationship with the sovereign.

This sculpture of Maitreya Buddha is exemplary of the level of patronage offered by the Paṭola Śāhi dynasty. Noteworthy to this study is that the piece was commissioned by a Paṭola king who has placed himself in the composition that features a Buddha with a crown. In addition, the royal couple is both named in the sculpture's inscription and depicted, although in this work, the queen is depicted beside her king. As the two primary donors, Nandivikramādityanandi and Namobuddhāya are located on the right side of

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51 The title of "kalyānamitra" and its role is discussed in Ch. 4.
the Buddha. Also important to this study is that the figure of
Vikhyātarakṣita, who is shown in the composition, is also of royal or, at least,
noble descent.

**Buddha Images without Crowns and Bodhisattva Images Donated by a Paṭola Śāhi King**

**Dated:**

*Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara (Figure A.3)*
Published: ANP, vol. 5, fig. 36, Addendum; and *Buddhist Statues of Tibet. The Complete Collection of the Treasures at the Palace Museum.* Vol. 60. Hong Kong 2003, Nr. 10.

This brass sculpture is 14.3 cm and is located in the Qing Court Collection in the Palace Museum in Beijing, China. It depicts a *bodhisattva* seated in the *lalitāsana* pose (royal ease), with one leg down and the other crossed in front of him, on a throne with two frontal lions on each side. His identity as a *bodhisattva* is marked by his bare chest and *dhoṭī* (rather than monastic garments worn by a Buddha), jewels and ornaments, and a *jaṭāmukutā* hairstyle with a crown. His crown features an image of Amitābha Buddha, which, in addition to the lotus stalk in his left hand, identifies him as Avalokiteśvara.

The recently discovered inscription is located on the front of the base.⁵²

It states:

ś[r]ī paṭoladevaśāhi surendrādityanandinaḥ.

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⁵² Oskar von Hinüber was the first to translate the inscription and realize that the king listed is, indeed, a Paṭola Śāhi king. However, he does not say whether the inscription is in *Proto-Śāradā* or *Brāhmī*, see von Hinüber, “Die Palola Śāhis,” 190.
The inscription references an early Paṭola Śāhi king named Surendravikramādityanandi. The date given for the ruling period of this king is before 630-644 C.E., suggesting a similar date for the brass sculpture. Consequently, it is the oldest of the extant inscribed Paṭola Śāhi sculptures to date.

It is noteworthy that images made during the early period of the Paṭola Śāhi dynasty did not show the donors in the composition. Surendravikramādityanandi was among the earliest kings, hence, no donor is depicted. The donor king is, however, represented through the inscription.

_Bodhisattva: (Figure A.4)_
Published: ANP, vol. 5 fig. 4, p. 31-36; BS, pl. 52A-F, p. 176-180; MB, fig. 3.

This Paṭola Śāhi sculpture is brass with copper and silver inlay, standing 67 cm tall. It is now located in the Jo khang/g Tsug lag khang collection at Lhasa (inventory no. 870). His eyes are inlaid with silver while

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53 The Sanskrit transliteration and translation are from von Hinüber, “Die Palola Śāhis,” 190.

54 Hinüber rightly points out that because the “Vikrama” portion of the name is not present in this inscription, it is not problematic since he is named as a donor on an early Gilgit text as Surendradityanandi as well, see von Hinüber, “Die Palola Śāhis,” 190.

55 The museum has this piece labeled as from Swat during the 8th-9th century, again pointing out that the entire dating chronology of early sculptures needs to be revised, see von Hinüber, “Die Palola Śāhis,” 190.

his lips and nails are inlaid with copper. The sculpture’s hair is painted with blue pigment and its face is painted with cold gold, which was not original and is representative of its time spent in Tibet. The bodhisattva is seated on a lotus in the lalitāsana pose (royal ease) with one leg down and the other crossed in front of him. His right hand holds an aksamālā. The left hand, now damaged, rests on his knee.\textsuperscript{57} He wears the typical royal attire of a bodhisattva, including an elaborately patterned dhotī that leaves the upper portion of his body bare, a scarf inlaid with silver and copper, ornaments and jewelry. He wears what appears to have once been a crown, and his hairstyle is in the long locks of the jaṭāmukuta. He also wears a garland of flowers. Since the part of his crown and broken left arm may have held identifying iconographic features, the identity of the bodhisattva can not be determined with certainty, thereby I will refer to him by the general identification of bodhisattva.

The pedestal consists of another throne type found in the Paṭola Śāhi visual record. It has a cylindrical center resting on a base of the characteristic Paṭola Śāhi rocky landscape. The bottom is decorated in front with a frontal center lion flanked by two deer, while the sides feature a ram and a peacock. On the front of the pedestal and its two sides, there is a very long inscription written in Proto-Śāradā script. The unusually long inscription lists thirty-three donors as part of the Paṭola Śāhi dynasty and

\textsuperscript{57} von Schroeder suggests that this sculpture can be identified as the bodhisattva Maitreya
includes a date. Some of the people listed were living when the inscription
was made, while others were deceased. The donors appear to be members of
the royal family, as well as extended family members, related by blood or
marriage. The inscription reads:

Front:
Success! In the year (82). This is the pious gift of the layman of great faith, the
great King of Kings, the Supreme Lord, Pratoli Śāhi, the King
Jayamangalavikramadityanandideva who ruled: this pious gift this (!) of the
laywoman of great faith Śamādevī Śrī (Queen) Śamāvati together with the Śrī
Mahādevī, Śrī (Queen) Mangalakasarī, the princess Tratānī(ā), the princess
Mahāmāyā, the princess Trōya, the princess Namov=r=buddhaya, the princess
Padmavati, the princess Vajrapā(n?)ī, the princess Devaśrī, the princess Nandr(i), the
princess ++kaṇī, the princess Ì(ṣa)pālā.

Left:
Deceased together with the great King of Kings, the Supreme Lord
Navasurendradityanandideva, together with Queen Rāmāmalā, the princess
Ha(p)āṣirā, the princess Ś(u)khamalā, the minister Rāmala with Sarasvīmakaśrī,
the nobleman Mahuṣadhu, the nobleman Rāmāśuna, the nobleman
Samudrāsaṇa, the spiritual friend Devaśrīsita[a], the spiritual friend and teacher
Pranjaśingha, the spiritual friend Devaśena.

because of its similarity to figure A.5, see von Schroeder, Buddhist Sculptures, 176.
Right:
the prince Surapatijayanandi, the noble woman Śumākā, the noble woman Sasundrī, the noble woman Vinayadevi, the noble woman Upalā, the noble woman Duddhī, the noble woman Vuryā, the noble woman Śu(śū)rī, the noble woman Maṅgalakṣanā.\textsuperscript{58}

Using the Laukika era system, the date of year 82 corresponds to 706/707 C.E. Although there are no donors depicted in the early sculptures like Figure A.3, the inscription is important because it continues the tradition of naming the donors, particularly another Paṭola Śāhi king. The inscription shows that the principal donors of this brass piece are the Paṭola Śāhi king Jayamaṅgalavikramaḍityanandi and his two queens – Śrī Śāmāvatī with Śrī Maṅgalakesarī. In addition, numerous princesses are named as well as his deceased predecessor King Navasurendrādityanandi.\textsuperscript{59} Obviously, there are too many donors to depict in the composition, but from the inscription it is certain that this bodhisattva sculpture was commissioned by the Paṭola Śāhi king. Although there are two queens included, the king and his wives would have been conceptually understood to be a “royal couple” as well.

Undated:

\textbf{Bodhisattva Maitreya: (Figure A.5)}
Published: BS, Fig. II-4, pp. 64-65; ANP, vol. 5, p. 36-38.

\textsuperscript{58} The Sanskrit transliteration is from von Hinüber, “Die Palola Śāhis,” 31-2. The translation is from a combination of those taken from von Schroeder, \textit{Buddhist Sculptures}, 178; and von Hinüber, “Die Palola Śāhis,” 32.

\textsuperscript{59} For a complete discussion of which donors in the inscription are living or deceased, and a discussion regarding the various titles with the names, see von Hinüber, “Die Palola Śāhis,” 31-6. According to von Hinüber, the main donor was actually the Queen Śāmāvatī.
This bodhisattva sculpture is located in the Tholing monastery in Western Tibet, Guge. It is brass with inlaid silver eyes and copper lips, standing about 35 cm tall. The figure is clearly recognizable as the bodhisattva Maitreya from the stūpa in his crown (stūpacockade). It is possible that at one time he held a characteristic hand-held attribute of Maitreya, which is the kuṇḍikā or water jar. The bodhisattva is missing his right arm, however, so it is not possible to determine what he was holding. The throne and pedestal type is very similar to figure A.4, showing the same cylindrical shape resting on a rocky mountain landscape base that is decorated with a frontal lion and two pairs of deer or antelope.

The base has an inscription in Proto-Śāradā script. It says:

deyadharmo yam mahāśraddhopāsaka mahārājādhirāja paramēśvara paṭoladeva śāhi śrī jayamaṅgalavikramāditya-nandidevasya //
tatha śāmādevya śrī śāmāvatīya / tathā mahādevyā : śrī maṅglakesaryaya + <rā> jaduhiṣṭ(ā) mahāmāyā // rājaduhiṣṭ(ā)

This is the pious gift of the layman of great faith, the great King of Kings, the Supreme Lord, Paṭola Śāhi, the King Jayamaṅgalavikramādityanandideva, with Śāmādevī Śrī (Queen) Śāmāvatī : with (Queen) Mahādevī, Śrī (Queen) Maṅgalakesarī, the princess Mahāmāyā : princess.

From the inscription, it is evident that the same Paṭola Śāhi king Jayamaṅgalavikramādityanandideva commissioned both this bodhisattva figure and the bodhisattva in figure A.4. Although there is no date in the inscription, the stylistic and iconographic similarities with the bodhisattva in

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60 von Schroeder, Buddhist Sculpture, 64.

61 The Sanskrit transliteration is from von Hinüber, “Die Pałola Śāhis,” 37. The translation is from von Schroeder, Buddhist Sculptures, 64.
figure A.4, as well as the indication of the same donor names for the Pañala Śāhi king, queens and princesses, the date of this sculpture should fall within the same date range, making it approximately 706/707 CE. As with other early dated pieces, the sovereign donor is not depicted within the composition. However, the Pañala Śāhi tradition of proclaiming the donors through an inscription is continued and, again, we see a bodhisattva figure, created through royal commission and dedicated by Jayamaṅgalavikramādityanandi and his queens, as a form of a couple.

Crowned Buddha Images Donated by Other Pañala Śāhi Royalty, Nobility, and Monastics

Dated:

Crowned Buddha: (Figure A.6)
Published: ANP, vol. 5, fig. 35, pp. 168-170.

This newly discovered sculpture is made of brass, although the size and location are not given in its place of publication. It depicts a single Buddha figure seated in vajraparyankāsana on the distinctive Pañala Śāhi patterned cushion as found in figure A.2 and later examples. The Buddha is wearing the characteristic Pañala Śāhi ribbed style monastic garments with one shoulder exposed. He is also wearing jewelry and a low crown with silk ribbons hanging from it. He is performing the dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā.

62 The date is suggested by von Schroeder, Buddhist Sculptures, 64. Interestingly, von
The elaborately decorated cushion is placed on a lion throne. Below, a seated atlantid figure holds it up at the center, while flanked by two front facing lions. The inscription on the front of the base is written in Proto-
Śāradā and reads as follows:

# sam 54 d(e)yadharma yaṃ : śri surabhīya : tathā sārdham : śākyabhikṣu hariṣayaśasya :

In the year 54. This is the pious gift of Śrī Surabhī together with the Śākya monk Hariṣayaśa.63

Using the accepted Laukika era dating system, the year 54 equates to 678/679 C.E.64 This date would most likely place the sculpture within the reign of the Paṭola Śāhi king Navasurendrādityanandi, making it one of the earliest crowned Buddhas in the Paṭola Śāhi visual record.

As part of the later Paṭola Śāhi tradition, the two donors listed in the inscription are also depicted in the composition, one on each corner of the pedestal. Interestingly, although Surabhī is listed first as the main donor, she is not represented on the proper right side of the Buddha, the seemingly usual location given to the main donor. This is because in Tantric Buddhist protocols, the male devotees are always on the right and the females are always on the left. Thus, the monk Hariṣayaśa is depicted on the right and

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Hinüber does not make any mention of this piece in his “Die Palola Śāhis.”

63 The Sanskrit transliteration and the translation are from von Hinüber, “Die Palola Śāhis,” 168.

64 Oskar von Hinüber suggests that the date of this piece is 678/679, using the Laukika era system, see von Hinüber, “Die Palola Śāhis,” 168.
Surabhī is portrayed on the left. The donor monk is wearing monastic garments with the right shoulder exposed.65 He is kneeling and performing the añjali mudrā. The donor Surabhī is also kneeling and performing the añjali mudrā. She is wearing the attire of royal Patola Śāhi females, including jewelry, pants and a cloak. Her head is covered by a hood on the cloak, so it is not possible to discern whether or not she wears a crown.

Surabhī is given the title “Śrī” which has already been shown to be used to refer to Patola Śāhi royalty. For example, the inscriptions with the names of the kings Surendravikramāditya, Nandivikramādityanandi, and Jayamaṅgalavikramādityanandi all use the honorific title ”Śrī” before their names (see Figures A.1, A.2, A.4, and A.5). On these same examples, the title “Śrī” is used with their queens’ names as well. Śrī, an honorific term, has been used for centuries prior to the Patola Śāhi reign throughout the Indic subcontinent when referring to important personages and deities. The Patola Śāhis continued this long-held practice by incorporating it, and here, it is used specifically when referring to the female donor to note her high standing. Therefore, it is likely that Śrī Surabhī was a royal or noble woman belonging to the Patola Śāhi aristocrats, part of the extended family itself.

Although the word Patola does not appear anywhere in the inscription, there is evidence that this piece belongs to their corpus of artworks. The ribbed style drapery on the Buddha’s robes, as well as the patterned cushion,

65 The appearance of the monk as a donor will be discussed in detail in Ch. 4.
are characteristic of the Paṭola Śāhi idiom. Furthermore, the predominance of the dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā performed by the Paṭola Śāhi Buddhas is demonstrated again with this crowned Buddha. In addition, the use of the Proto-Śāradā script in this inscription falls within the perimeters of qualifications for Paṭola Śāhi pieces. Lastly, there are donors depicted within the composition, especially the pairing of a male and female, a characteristic trait employed by the Paṭola Śāhi patrons.

_Crowned Buddha with Stūpas: (Figure A.7)_
Published: BS, pl. 22A.

This sculpture is located in the Potala Collection, specifically Sa gsum lha khang: Inventory no. 82 in the Red Palace in Tibet.\(^66\) It is made of brass with silver inlays and is 20.5 cm tall and 20.2 cm wide. It depicts a large central Buddha figure between two stūpas. He is seated in the vajraparyāṅkāsana pose on a plain cushion. The Buddha is wearing the characteristic Paṭola Śāhi style of ribbed drapery in his monastic garments, covering both shoulders. He is also wearing the distinctive four-pointed cape, as seen on figure A.2, that is decorated with jewels and flanges. The symbol of a crescent moon with the figure of a sun is placed on each of his shoulders. He wears a five-pointed crown with silk ribbons, and the front piece of his crown has the distinct Paṭola Śāhi rectangular jewel below a round one. The Buddha is performing the dhyāna mudrā (gesture of meditation). The tops of

\(^{66}\) von Schroeder, _Buddhist Sculptures_, 114.
the stūpas have seven bhūmis (umbrellas), each one surmounted by a
crescent moon with a solar symbol, although it is broken off of the left stūpa.67

The pedestal features the characteristic Paṭola Śāhi rocky mountain
landscape that is interspersed with pairs of peacocks, rams, deer, and
another lion in the center. The inscription at the bottom of the base is carved
in Proto-Śāradā:

\[
\text{siddham } \# \text{ sam } 55 \text{ deyadharmo yam śākyabhikṣu bhadradharmasya tathā}
\text{ sārdham mātāpitrībhām } // \text{ ca ya tatra punyam tadbhavatu satvā(ī)}\text{[ām]
\text{ anutarajñānāvāptye stu.}
\]

In the year 55. This is the pious gift of the Śākya monk Bhadradharma
together with his parents.
Whatever merit is (created) should be for beings to reach the highest knowledge.68

Using the Laukika era system and considering the years and corresponding
dates in the other inscriptions, the year 55 corresponds to 679/680 C.E.69
This is only one year after the consecration of figure A.6. This date would
place the sculpture during the reign of the Paṭola Śāhi king
Navasurendrādityanandi.

In a niche, directly below the Buddha, there is a lion looking out along
with two figures, one on each side of the lion. The details on these small

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67 This type of stūpa is similar to the ones found in Gandhara and in Parihasapura, again
showing evidence of their cross-cultural interaction.

68 The Sanskrit transliteration and the translation are from von Schroeder, Buddhist
Sculptures, 114.

69 Two dates of either 679/680 or 779/780 are offered by von Schroeder in Buddhist
Sculptures, 114. However, the style of this sculpture is clearly a precursor to the sculpture
in figure A.8 (dated to 714), and therefore, I would go with a date no later than 679/680. The
epigraphist Oskar von Hinüber has not analyzed this inscription.
human-like figures are difficult to discern, so their identity is undetermined.\textsuperscript{70}

Although there are no donors depicted in the composition, the donors are listed in the inscription, following the Paṭola Śāhi tradition. The inscription states that the sculpture was a pious gift by the Śākya monk Bhadradaṁra with his parents. Moreover, there are other similarities that support that this piece belongs to the Paṭola Śāhi visual record. The choice of the imagery of a crowned Buddha was popular among the patrons of the dynasty. The cape and crown depicted on the Buddha are very similar to other Paṭola Śāhi images. The ribbed style drapery on his monastic garments and the rocky landscape are also characteristic of the Paṭola Śāhi pieces. Most importantly, the composition and design of this image is almost identical to that of figure A.8, which was donated by a Paṭola śāhi princess.

\textit{Crowned Buddha with Stūpas: (Figure A.8)}

Published: ANP, vol. 2, pl. 31; Sherman Lee, \textit{History of Far Eastern Art}, fig. 162; HAA, pl. 63, p. 107; SR, pl. 9; COB, pl. 9; ANP, vol. 5, fig. 6, p. 39 and 154; BK, pl. 30a,b; ESK, fig. 87; BM, fig. 4.

This Paṭola Śāhi sculpture is part of the Asia Society in New York, in the Mr. and Mrs. Rockefeller 3rd Collection (1979.44). It is made of brass with copper and silver alloy and stands about 12 \(\frac{1}{4}\) in. high or 31.1 cm. Due to its extraordinary craftsmanship and accessibility, it is probably the most

\textsuperscript{70} If one were to attempt to identify the figure as a specific Buddhist character, it would likely be Vajrapāṇi with his weapon.
extensively published piece of the Paṭola visual record, although it has, to date, been attributed to Kashmir.

It depicts a large central Buddha seated in the vajraparyāṅkāsana pose on a double lotus between two stūpas, which is a very similar design to the previous sculpture. He is wearing full monastic garments with the usual ribbed pattern in the drapery, and the distinctive cape decorated with jewels and a fringe. The Buddha has the same crescent moons with rosette-solar symbols on his shoulders, as seen on figure A.2. His crown features the characteristic elements of a Paṭola Śāhi crown, with the string of pearls accenting the triangles of the five-pointed crown with jewels in the center and attached flowing silk ribbons. The Buddha is performing the dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā.

On each side of the Buddha, a stūpa sits on a lotus. Each stūpa has a tiny meditating Buddha inside. Instead of the seven levels, as seen in the previous piece, these stūpas have thirteen levels that represent the thirteen bhūmis or stages on the Tantric path to enlightenment. Each stūpa is surmounted by the sun in the crescent moon symbol seen elsewhere. Interestingly, there is an eye on the stūpa to the Buddha’s right and a lunar crescent with a solar disc on the left one.\textsuperscript{71}

\textsuperscript{71} For suggestions on the meanings of this imagery, see Chapter 3.
The lotus upon which the Buddha sits is supported by *nāgas* or serpent deities. Only their upper bodies are depicted and their *nāga* hoods are clearly visible. There are stylized water lines on the top surface of this base to represent a lake from which the lotus rises. Below, there is again the rocky mountain landscape represented on the base. The decoration on the front part is almost identical to the pedestal in figure A.2, depicting guardians with a *cakra* and deer. However, on this pedestal, the figures are alternated with columns or *vajra*-shaped uprights in shallow niches.

The *Proto-Śāradā* inscription is written along the front of the very bottom of the base. It provides a date and the names of the main donors, however, it does not specifically mention the Paṭola Śāhis. It says:

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samvatsare 90 vaiśākha śu di 2 // deyadharmo yaṁ paramopāsaka
mahāgamjāpati samkarasenaśya. // deyadharmo yaṁ mahāśrāddhāyā
paramopāsiṁka rājāduhitṛ devaśryāyāḥ /
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In the year 90, on the 2nd day of the bright half of Vaiśākha. This is the pious gift of the foremost among lay worshippers, the great treasurer, Śamkarasena. This is the pious gift of the foremost lay worshipper of great faith, the princess Devaśri.  

In the Laukika dating system, the year 90 corresponds to 714 C.E. Using the details given in the inscription, it is possible to pin-point the exact date to

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72 This is like the rock cut relief in Cave no. 89 at Kanheri in India dated to the 5th-6th century. See Susan Huntington, *Art of Ancient India – Buddhist, Hindu, Jain* (New York, Tokyo: Weatherhill, Inc. 1985), fig. 12.25.


74 Paul, 233, suggests that the year is instead 733/734 C.E.
April 20, 714, which is only six days earlier than the date on figure A.1.\textsuperscript{75} This date would place the sculpture within the reign of the Paṭola Śāhi king Nandivikramādityanandi.

From the inscription, it is known that the elaborate work of art was a pious gift by Saṃkaraseṇa with his wife, the princess Devaśrī. At the bottom, on the sides of the base, the small donor figures are depicted. At the Buddha's proper right, Saṃkaraseṇa is standing offering a wreath in his left hand.\textsuperscript{76} He is bearded and wears the attire characteristic of Paṭola Śāhi royalty and nobility. He wears a turban-like cap with the knot hanging to the side rather than on top, jewelry, a cloak, and patterned pants. His patterned coat is widely lapelled and belted and he has a sword at his waist, and his boots are very tall. Saṃkaraseṇa's attire is very similar to the king's costume in figure A.1 and figure A.2 except that he does not wear a crown or the breastplate.

On the other side of the pedestal, to the left, there is a standing female figure identifiable as princess Devaśrī. She is wearing the characteristic Paṭola Śāhi female royal attire, including a decorative top and pants, shoes, a cloak hanging down her back, jewelry, and a crown on her head. This is very similar to the attire of the queen Namobuddhāya in figure A.2. Devaśrī offers an incense burner (censor) in her right hand. There is a smaller kneeling

\textsuperscript{75} von Hinüber, “Die Palola Śāhis,” 40.

\textsuperscript{76} The male donor's right hand is open and empty, forming a bridge with the piece, see von Hinüber, “Die Palola Śāhis,” 154.
figure behind each of these two main donors, both of whom perform the *añjali* mudrā. Both of these figures are female and wear similar royal clothing to Devaśrī, with the pants, cloak, earrings, and crown.\(^{77}\) Perhaps they are the daughters of this Paṭola Śāhi couple.

It is easy to tie Devaśrī to the Paṭola Śāhi dynasty, and therefore Saṃkaraseṇa as well. In the long list of family inscribed on figure A.4, Devaśrī is named as the princess or daughter of the Paṭola Śāhi king Jayamaṅgalavikramādityanandi. Hence, Devaśrī was part of the royal Paṭola family. Saṃkaraseṇa, whose official title was Mahāgamjāpati, was the Great Treasurer. Therefore, considering his fancy costume and official position, he must certainly belong to the royal or noble class. Moreover, it is possible that Devaśrī and Saṃkaraseṇa were husband and wife. This would account for them being portrayed together as a donor pair. Although this is not a requirement, since, as we have seen, there is the example of the male monk with the noble female as donors in figure A.6. For this study, it will be assumed that they were married, further suggesting the male figure’s royal status.

Thus, the royal daughter Devaśrī was married to Saṃkaraseṇa, the Great Treasurer for the Paṭola Śāhi dynasty and king. This king was Nandivikramādityanandi, who was not her brother, but who married her

\(^{77}\) Oskar von Hinüber states that both of these figures are female, wearing the same type of royal clothing as the female donor, whereby suggesting that they are sisters. von Hinüber, “Die Palola Śāhis,” 132. Others have suggested their identity as children, or attendants, or female adorants.
sister Namobuddhāya. Since the two are sisters and royalty, it is no surprise to see that their attire is almost identical. As part of the royal family, the donors continued the tradition of portraying themselves within the composition of the sculpture. In addition, the work is another example of a couple, especially royalty, being portrayed together. Moreover, this sculpture is a splendid exemplar of the penchant for representations of crowned Buddhas by the Paṭola Śāhi patrons, particularly royalty. Since princess Devaśrī was Paṭola Śāhi royalty, this helps to explain how such a lavish piece could have been commissioned. It also explains why figure A.7 and figure A.8 are so close in style and composition – they both belong to the royal Paṭola Śāhi visual record.

Undated:

*Crown Buddha Maitreya: (Figure A.9)*

This intricate brass sculpture has copper and silver inlays and stands 24 cm tall. It is located in the Jo khang/gTsug lag khang Collection, inv. No. 261 [A], Lhasa Tibet. Its face is painted in cold gold with blue pigment on the hair, as evidence of its stay in Tibet. The sculpture features a Buddha wearing the ribbed style monastic garments. He is seated on a lion throne with another characteristic Paṭola Śāhi patterned cushion in the bhadrāsana pose, which is the pose typical of the future Buddha Maitreya (see Figure

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A.2). The Buddha wears silk ribbons, jewelry, and the characteristic Paṭola Śāhi crown with the string of large pearls and the jewels in the center. The Maitreya Buddha is also wearing an additional robe that creates interesting pleats at his shoulders. He is performing the *dharmacakra-pravartana* mudrā.

The crowned Maitreya is shown in a trilobate arch with two small kneeling figures above his shoulders. They are crowned and holding attributes, suggesting that they may be *gandharvas* (sky-dwelling deities) or *bodhisattvas*. There is a crescent moon with a sun symbol at the top in the center of the arch, over the Buddha's head. Maitreya Buddha's large aureole features scrolling patterns filled with seven Buddha images. The middle pair of Buddhas on the left and right side perform the *varada* mudrā (gift bestowing gesture). The bottom and top pairs of Buddhas, on the left and right side, perform the *dhyāna* mudrā. The last small Buddha, at the very top, is wearing a crown and performs the *dharmacakra* mudrā. It is possible that the seven Buddhas in the aureole represent the seven *mānuṣi* Buddhas.79 The *mānuṣi* Buddhas are a group of historical or mortal Buddhas, with Śākyamuni as the last *mānuṣi* Buddha of the current era. As such, Śākyamuni, who would be considered the prior Buddha to the era of the future Maitreya Buddha, is likely the *mānuṣi* figure depicted with a crown at the top center. The *mānuṣi* Buddhas' names in chronological order are:

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79 This was suggested by von Schroeder, *Buddhist Sculptures*, 110.
Vipaśyin, Śikhin, Viśvabhū, Krakucchanda, Kanakamuni, Kaśyapa, and Śākyamuni. If one considers the future Buddha Maitreya, yet to come, there is a list of eight mānuśi Buddhas. This would account for all eight Buddhas present in the sculpture, and further reiterates the identification of the large central Buddha as Maitreya.

The Maitreya Buddha is flanked by two bodhisattvas standing on lotuses. The figure at the Buddha’s proper right is the bodhisattva Maitreya, identifiable by the stūpa in his crown. He makes the varada mudrā with his right hand and holds a vase in his left hand. The bodhisattva on the Buddha’s proper left is Avalokiteśvara, identified by the Amitābha figure depicted in his crown. Avalokiteśvara's right hand also makes the varada mudrā while his left hand holds a stalk with a padma. Both of the bodhisattvas wear long flower garlands, like those seen on the bodhisattvas and Buddha in figure A.2.

The pedestal of the sculpture features a rocky mountain landscape cut away in several receding horizontal steps. The furthermost step supports Maitreya’s feet and is decorated with a cakra at the bottom center flanked by guardians in the ālādhā pose. The geometrically formed landscape on the other steps is interspersed with figures of deer and rams.

On the base, there is a donor portrayed kneeling on each corner. The base is not inscribed, so the names of the donor couple depicted within the composition are not known. The bearded male donor is placed on the
Buddha’s proper right. He is wearing a turban-like cap with a knot, a lapelled coat or tunic, and a sword. His right hand is held up in what looks like an *abhaya mudrā* (absence of fear gesture) and it is unclear what he holds in his left hand. The female devotee is on the opposite side of the base, wearing a crown decorated with lotus flowers and crescent moon motifs. She is holding a scarf as an offering.

Because of her royal garments and crown, it is evident that the female patron is a Paṭola Śahi queen or princess, thereby the male donor is likely royalty or, at least, a nobleman. The intricate piece made with such skilled craftsmanship is part of the ongoing tradition for the Paṭola Śahi dynasty to depict the donors within the composition. Once again, there is a portrayal of a donor couple, featuring a male and female patron. Furthermore, it is significant that the imagery of a crowned Buddha appears with a royal donor, in particular, a female one.

Although the sculpture does not have an inscription with a date or a Paṭola Śahi king’s name to provide a general year, it is possible to suggest a date range. The piece features the characteristic Paṭola Śahi style ribbed drapery, the particular crown and patterned cushion, the distinctive *dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā*, and rocky mountain landscape as found on many other artworks. Thus, based on the stylistic and compositional
similarity with the other Paṭola Śāhi sculptures, the date should fall between 675-722 C.E.  

Non-Crowned Buddha Images and Bodhisattva Images Donated by Other Paṭola Śāhi Royalty, Nobility, and Monastics

Dated:

Painted Covers on Gilgit Manuscript 1: (Figure A.10 and Figure A.11)
Published: PWC, figs. 1-2; AH, pls. 7-8; GMC, figs. 2-3; GE, pl. 1438; BHK, pl. 11.

These two pictures are painted on the inner birch bark covers of what is commonly called Manuscript 1, which was found in a stūpa in Naupur near Gilgit. They measure 6 x 25 cm and this is the only manuscript with palm leaf pages. The painted covers are now located in the Museum of the Institute of Central Asian Studies at Kashmir University in Srinigar.

The painting in figure A.10 depicts a frontally seated Buddha in full monastic garments, seated in vajraparyāṅkāsana pose on a lotus. He is unadorned with only a light colored halo. The Buddha’s right hand is at his chest making the vitarka mudrā (gesture of discourse), while the left hand holds the hem of his robes. Above the Buddha’s head is a canopy and

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80 I use this date range for the majority of undated images for two reasons. One, the date 675 coincides with the earliest dated crowned Buddha of Śrī Śurabī. Second, the end date of 722 is used because that is the date the king had to flee his seat in Baltistan to go to Gilgit. See discussion in Chapter 6. Thereafter, there was a decline of power until the dynasty disappeared by 750. von Schroeder uses a general date range of 650-750 for many of the undated images, while von Hinüber suggests a date for this piece of 675-710, von Hinüber, “Die Palola Śāhis,” 160.

banners with a string of large pearls cutting across the middle. His face is slightly at a three-quarter angle as he looks downward toward the donors.

In the bottom portion of the painting, below this Buddha, there are two kneeling donors facing each other. On the Buddha’s proper right, there is a female donor with her hair curled across her cheek. She is wearing a turban-like hat and long robes or coat. She is performing the \textit{añjali mudrā}. The male donor is facing her, looking up at the Buddha. He has a mustache, a similar turban-like cap, and long robes or coat with another color as accents. The male donor offers an \textit{akśamālā} in his left hand and his right hand holds what appears to be a censor.

The other cover in figure A.11 features a painted \textit{bodhisattva} and two donors. The frontal \textit{bodhisattva} is depicted bare-chested wearing a \textit{dhotī}, jewelry, scarves, and the \textit{jaṭāmukūṭa} hair style with a jewel in his crown. He is seated with casually crossed legs on a lotus. The \textit{bodhisattva} has a simple halo and the same type of canopy above him, as seen in the Buddha image. The \textit{bodhisattva} performs the \textit{vitarka mudrā} with his right hand at his chest and his left hand rests on his leg, while holding what appears to be a lotus stalk.\footnote{This lotus attribute can possibly identify the bodhisattva as Avalokiteśvara or Padmapani.} He is also looking downward at the donors below him.

Like the partner cover, the two donors, male and female, are painted kneeling beneath the Buddhist deity. The female is placed on the \textit{bodhisattva}’s proper right. She wears a costume similar to the other female donor.
donor, with hair curled on her cheek, and she is offering what appears to be a flower. The male donor facing her has a mustache and perhaps a beard. He is also wearing a similar costume to the other male donor on the other cover with a turban-like hat and long robes. The male devotee's hands are damaged, so it is unclear as to what he is offering the bodhisattva.

It is not known what specific Gilgit Buddhist text this pair of painted covers accompanied and the identifying colophon containing the donor's names can not be provided. The works employ the Paṭola Śāhi pattern of representing donor figures within the composition and are, perhaps, the earliest Paṭola examples of royal or noble donor-couples. Many manuscripts in the Gilgit collection were donated by Paṭola Śāhi kings and queens, as individuals or as couples, so perhaps the aristocrats depicted are the ruling family, however, at this time it is inconclusive.

Painted Covers on Gilgit Manuscript 2: (Figure A.12 and Figure A.13)
Published: GMC, fig. 4-5; PWC, fig. 3-4; AH, pl. 10-11; BHK, fig. 1.

This pair of painted covers is now located in the Museum of the Institute of Central Asian Studies at Kashmir University in Srinigar. Originally, they were discovered in the stūpa at Naupur with Manuscript 1. They are painted on the inner birch bark covers belonging to what is commonly called Manuscript 2. They are 7.5 x 30 cm in size.

The painting in figure A.12 depicts a frontal bodhisattva standing on a lotus in the Indian style tribhaṅga (thrice bent) pose. He has a halo and body
aureole with an umbrella above his head. The bodhisattva is bare-chested and wears a short dhoṭī, earrings, and a scarf. He has the jaṭāmukuta hair style and a crown with an image of a Buddha. The bodhisattva’s left hand holds a long stalk, which appears to be attached to the lotus supporting a seated Buddha in monastic garments that is painted above the umbrella. The bodhisattva’s right hand is stretched outwards as if going to rest on the donor’s head, while his face is in three-quarter view as he looks down at the donor figure.

The single donor is painted kneeling on the proper right side of the bodhisattva. He is a male figure with a mustache. The donor is wearing a long robe or coat with another color used as accents and what appears to be a sword at his waist. He is wearing a low crown, rather than the turban-like hat. The devotee is performing the aṇjali mudrā and looking up at the bodhisattva.

The painting in figure A.13 shows another frontal bodhisattva standing on a lotus. He is bare-chested and wears a long striped dhoṭī, jewelry, and a scarf. He has a halo and body aureole as well, with an umbrella above his head. The bodhisattva wears the jaṭāmukuta hairstyle

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83 The attribute of the image of Amitābha in the crown, as well as the lotus stalk help to possibly identify the bodhisattva as Avalokiteśvara.

84 The Buddha is wearing monastic robes and performing the dhyāna mudrā. The practice of placing a Buddha in a crown was used to identify the lineage of a bodhisattvas or a Buddha, and thereby provide an identity of the Buddhist figure. In its early beginnings, it is possible that the Buddha was just placed above the head or beside the figure in some manner to perform the same function.
with a crown that is now damaged. His right hand reaches out toward the head of the kneeling donor figure. The bodhisattva’s left hand rests on his hip and holds what appears to be a long lotus stalk, supporting another seated Buddha in monastic garments. The bodhisattva’s face is shown in three-quarter profile as he looks down at the donor.

The single donor is painted kneeling on the bodhisattva’s proper right. Although the figure is damaged, it appears to be wearing the same type of dress seen on the other painted donor figures. The donor wears a long coat or robe and a turban-like cap and makes the añjali mudrā.

Unfortunately, the exact Gilgit manuscript that these covers bound is not known, and therefore, the colophon with the donors’ names cannot be used to identify the painted devotees. The ongoing Paṭola Śāhi penchant for placing donors within the composition is evident in these examples. It is possible that they are royal or noble donor figures, perhaps a male and female, continuing the pattern of portraying the patrons as couples, as seen in figure A.10 and figure A.11.

*Painted Covers on Gilgit Manuscript 3 – Saṃghāṭa Sūtra: (Figure A.14 and Figure A.14)*
Published: GE, pl. 1436 and 1433; AH, pl. 12-13; PCS, fig. 47.1- 47.2; ANP, vol. 1, pl. 160; MB, fig. 2.

These two covers are painted on birch bark and their size is 9 x 3 inches. They are now located in the Museum of the Institute of Central Asian Studies at Kashmir University in Srinigar. They belong to another Gilgit
manuscript called *Manuscript 3*. The cover in figure A.14 features three frontally seated Buddhas. They are placed in a row on a single ground-line with a dark background strewn with flowers. All three Buddhas are seated in the *vajraparyankāsana* pose on a double lotus, with halos and body aureoles. The two Buddhas on the outside wear full monastic garments with both shoulders covered, while performing the *dhyāna mudrā*. Each one is looking toward the center Buddha with three-quarter view faces. The central Buddha is slightly different. He is wearing monastic garments with one shoulder exposed. His body aureole is a lighter color than the other two and his halo is much lighter and more ornate. This central Buddha is performing the *dharmacakramuṇḍa-pravartana mudrā*. There are no donors painted on this cover.

The accompanying painted cover, shown in figure A.15, depicts four figures in the same dark background strewn with flowers. The two figures on the viewer’s right are *bodhisattvas*. They are both seated with casually crossed legs on cushions with halos and body aureoles. The *bodhisattva* on the inside is wearing a long flowered *dhotī* in green and red, scarves, and jewelry. He wears a crown with flying silk ribbons attached to it. The *bodhisattva’s* right hand is placed at his chest, holding a beaded *akṣamālā* in

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85 This double lotus is found on numerous Paṭola Śāhi pieces.
the *vitarka mudrā*. His left arm crosses his body halfway and is holding a golden *kundikā* or water jar.⁸⁶

The other *bodhisattva*, on the outside, wears a similar crown which seems to lack the silk ribbons. The *bodhisattva* wears jewelry and scarves and a plain *dhotī*. The right hand makes the *vitarka mudrā*, while holding an *akṣamālā* out to the side. The left arm also crosses in front of the body and holds a lotus stalk that rises, supporting a small seated Buddha. This is very similar to the two Buddhas above the heads of the *bodhisattvas* in figures A.10 and A.11.⁸⁷

The remaining two figures in the painting are kneeling donors, a male and a female. The male figure, closest to the *bodhisattva*, has a beard, and wears a small crown with a red ribbon. He wears jewelry and a long green robe or coat with a fancy gold belt at his waist that holds a sword. His attire indicates his high status. He is offering an *akṣamālā* in his right hand and an incense vessel in his left hand.⁸⁸ The kneeling female behind him wears a long orange robe with a long white cape falling down behind her back. She also wears jewelry, and a crown, signifying her royal status. She is offering a white scarf with both of her hands.

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⁸⁶ Based on this attribute, it is possibly the *bodhisattva* Maitreya. For another suggestion regarding their identity, see von Hinüber, “Die Palola ˛āhis, 150.

⁸⁷ The Buddha wears red monastic garments and performs the *dhyāna mudrā*, and therefore, is likely Amitābha Buddha. Based on this, the second bodhisattva can possibly be Avalokiteśvara.
This pair of Paṭola Śahi painted covers was with the Buddhist text as the *Samghaṭa Sūtra*. The text is written in *Proto-Śāradā* script.

Significantly, the colophon provides the names of the donors and a date:


This is the pious gift by the laywoman of great faith, the noblewoman Devaśirikā. And through the ring of the basis of the salvation that has been laid through the permitted writings of the correct teachings and through the one great statement of the teachings of the Mahāyāna book, *Samghaṭa*, she is allowed in her body to linger with long life, strength, color and growth. Later it allows the highest, pure and spotless enlightenment to be attained. Together with the Lord, Chief Minister and Great Possessor of Buddhist mantras, Atthocasinghā. Together with Cikkidipāyā, together with Śūntukas, together with Kākka, together with Kukudama, together with ( )purasinghā, together with Rājāsirya, together with Ratnaputta. This book was written by the Mahādīvīrapati Śāśīvardhan, the son of Maniyakabhāgi, in the year three. Together with the deceased Cakkhravāṇā, together with the deceased Dharmāśrī, together with Īśivaravāṃga, together with Rājasimghā, together with the deceased Vuryasinghā and Devasinghā, together with the deceased Devaratnā. What merit arises from the devout praise, it shall serve all beings.

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88 It is compared to other Central Asian incense vessels in, von Hinüber, "Buddhism in Gilgit," 40 and 151.


Using the Laukika dating system, the year 3 corresponds to 627/628 CE.\textsuperscript{91}

From the inscription, it is clear that the primary donor was a woman named Devaśirikā. From her title “rājñī,” we can determine that she was a royal or noble woman closely associated with the ruling family. The second main donor was the Atthocasīṃgha. Part of his title indicates that he was Lord and Chief Minister, likely to the king.\textsuperscript{92} Because of these donors’ attire and the crown, it is evident that they are a royal Paṭola Śāhi couple. It is possible that they are representations of the two primary donors listed in the colophon – Devaśirikā and Atthocasīṃgha. The manuscript was part of the Paṭola Śāhi library found buried in the stūpa and so it is not surprising to find the Paṭola Śāhi tradition of depicting donors within the composition in a similar style and manner. More specifically, there is once again, a noble, if not royal, couple portrayed as donors.

\textit{Buddha: (Figure A.16)}
Published: ANP, vol. 5, fig. 3, pp. 28-31 and 152-153.

This Paṭola Śāhi sculpture is made of brass and stands 29 cm tall. The latest known location of the piece is that it was part of a private collection.\textsuperscript{93} It depicts a Buddha wearing monastic garments styled with the ribbed drapery and exposing one shoulder. He does not wear any ornaments, nor a


\textsuperscript{93} This piece was last known to be part of the Rossi Collection.
crown or cape. The Buddha is seated on a double lotus in the
vajraparyāṅkāsana pose. He is performing the dharmacakra-pravartana
mudrā. The lotus he sits upon is rising from a lake, similar to figure A.8, but
it does not have the nāga figures. The lotus is flanked by two profile lions
with their heads turned frontal. The base of the pedestal is created with the
characteristic Paṭola Śāhi rocky mountain landscape.

The inscription carved across the front of the pedestal is badly
damaged. It was written in Proto-Śāradā and the legible portion reads:

# samvatsare 2[0 or 9] ... mahārāja navasurendrasya //
{devadharmo} yam mahāśraddhopāsaka gamjijapiputra varsasya tathā sādham
bhāryā śiriyena tathā sādham gir(ṛna)rasiṁghena // sādham putra simghena tathā
sādham putra śiriena.

In the year (20 or 29) of the rule of the Great King Navasurendra. This is the pious
gift of the layman of great faith, the son of the Treasurer, Varṣa, together with his
wife Śirī, together with Girṇarasimgha. Together with their sons Simgha and Śirī.94

This inscription is important because it mentions either the year 20 or 29,
which was during the reign of the Paṭola Śāhi king Navasurendrādityanandi.

Using the Laukika system, the sculpture can, therefore, be dated to 645 or
654 CE.95 Thus, this provides a few possible dates for the king’s rule,
although no end or beginning dates are known. This is, therefore, the second
oldest brass sculpture of the known Paṭola Śāhi visual record.

94 The Sanskrit transliteration is from von Hinüber, “Die Palola Śāhis,” 28. The translation is
a mix of von Hinüber’s and my own.

From the inscription, it is clear that the main donors were Varṣa, the son of the king’s treasurer, with his wife Śiri. It also includes their sons Simgha and Śiri, and someone named Girṇarasimha, which is perhaps his father. Following the common Paṭola Śāhi practice, these donors are depicted in the composition. Due to the damage and pieces broken off, however, it is not certain how many donor figures were originally portrayed. Three figures are still intact. The largest figure at the Buddha’s proper right is unfortunately missing his head. He is kneeling, while offering a scarf, and wears a tunic with small lapels like that of the royal donor, Vikhyātarakṣita (Figure A.2). His royal garments suggest that this male figure is Varṣa.

The slightly smaller figure opposite him on the proper left side is also kneeling. Since he is bearded, and is the next largest in size, and in the common position of the co-donor, it is likely the father Girṇarasimha. This is especially probable, since he is wearing a crown, earrings and the same type of lapelled tunic, which would reflect his status of Treasurer. It is unclear what he is offering to the Buddha. On the next level of the base, behind Varṣa, there is another smaller kneeling figure, perhaps one of the

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96 This identity is suggested by von Hinüber, “Die Palola Śāhis,” 29.

97 This is suggested by von Hinüber, “Die Palola Śāhis,” 152.
sons. He is wearing a turban-like hat with a rolled knot and a similar robe or tunic with lapels and earrings. He is holding a jar in his left hand.

Although the wife Śīrī is no longer present in the composition, it is likely that she was one of the figures depicted on a now broken portion of the base. She is named in the inscription as the second donor and it is a common practice, as we have seen, among the Paṭola Śāhi donors to present a couple within the composition. The male donor figures still present are clothed in a manner similar to that of the royal donors on figure A.2 and figure A.8. In addition, since they use the name of the Paṭola Śāhi king in their inscription and state that Varṣa is the son of the Treasurer, it is likely that they are Paṭola Śāhi aristocrats. The crown on the Treasurer, Girnarasiṃgha, especially, indicates that he was a royal official at court or, at least, married to royalty, as seen with the other Treasurer-donor in figure A.8.

_Buddha: (Figure A.17)_

This brass sculpture is in a private collection in Paris. It stands 30 cm tall, depicting a Buddha in monastic garments with one shoulder bare. He is seated in the _vajraparyāṅkāsana_ pose and performs the _varada mudrā_ with

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98 Oskar von Hinüber suggests that his right hand held a _mālā_ at one time since even though his right hand is broken off, you can see the traces of it along his thigh. See von Hinüber, “Die Palola Śāhis,” 152.

99 It is suggested that the wife, Śīrī, was depicted behind the father along with the second son. Hinüber, “Die Palola Śāhis,” 152. This would follow the pattern of placing the male figure of a couple on the right side and the female on the left.
his right hand and the *dhyāna mudrā* with his left, which also holds the hem of his robe.

The Buddha is seated on a plain cushion that rests upon an hourglass pedestal constricted by *nāga* tails at the center.\textsuperscript{100} The *nāgas* are bejeweled and sit amongst a typical Paṭola Śāhi rocky mountain landscape.\textsuperscript{101} This is similar to the pedestal in figure A.20. The sculpture includes an inscription in *Proto-Śāradā* on the front of the base:

\[
\text{# sam 92 bhāḍrapada śu di 14 : deyadharmo yam kṛtam mayā veyatyāsa :} \\
\text{tathā sārdham mātāpitṛbhyyām yad atra punyam tad bhavatu sarvasatvānām //}
\]

In the year 92, in the month of Bhāḍrapada on the 14\textsuperscript{th} day. 
This pious gift was made by Veyatyāsa together with his parents.
That the merit that results belongs to all beings.\textsuperscript{102}

The year 92 in the inscription corresponds to 716/717 C.E., using the Laukika system. The rainy month of Bhadrapada falls within the middle of August to September, and as such, the date can be narrowed down to the August 14\textsuperscript{th} to September 14\textsuperscript{th} in the year of 716 or 717 C.E.\textsuperscript{103}

\textsuperscript{100} This type of constricting *nāga* tails on pedestals is seen on other pieces, such as from Haḍḍa and Kashmir.

\textsuperscript{101} Fussman suggests that this composition with the constricting *nāgas* at the center was an early method for depicting the Māravijaya. If this were the case, the Buddha would be performing the *bhūmisparśa mudrā* that is specific to the Māravijaya, however, in this image he is performing the *varada mudrā*. Fussman, “Chilas, Hatun,” 38.

\textsuperscript{102} The Sanskrit transliteration is from von Hinüber, “Die Palola Śāhis,” 151; and Fussman, “Chilas, Hatun,” 32. The translation is a combination done by Fussman, “Chilas, Hatun,” 32, and myself. Fussman translates the name as Voyatyasa.

\textsuperscript{103} Fussman believes that the year 92 = August 616. However, using the Laukika era dates on the other images, this is not correct, and I think this is too early. Fussman, “Chilas, Hatun,” 32.
The inscription provides the names of the donors as Veyatyāsa and his parents. There were, however, five donors originally represented in the composition. Only two donor figures are currently intact. The patron on the Buddha’s proper left was the largest figure and therefore, he is most likely the main donor, Veyatyāsa. He has a beard and is wearing a turban-like cap and a lapelled tunic or coat. He is offering a scarf to the Buddha. A pair of knees, about the same size as those of Veyatyāsa’s, remains behind him. Perhaps it was his wife, although she was not listed in the inscription. This seems probable, since a wife would be portrayed in a size similar to that of her husband, and, as seen in some of the other Paṭola sculptures, the wife is depicted behind the husband (Figure A.2 and Figure A.15). On the Buddha’s proper right, there are two other figures that are broken off from the waist down. Since they were together, perhaps they were Veyatyāsa’s parents.\textsuperscript{104} The second completely intact figure is in the very center. It is a kneeling male figure offering an akṣamāla. Perhaps he is a son of Veyatyāsa or a spiritual friend, as seen in figure A.2.

Although the word Paṭola does not appear anywhere in the inscription, there is visual evidence that this piece belongs to their corpus of artworks. The ribbed style drapery on the Buddha’s robes, the throne type, and the rocky mountain landscape are characteristic of the Paṭola Śāhi idiom. In

\textsuperscript{104} It is suggested by von Hinüber, “Die Palola Śāhis,” 151, that that they were the parents.
addition, the date and the use of the *Proto-Śāradā* script in this inscription falls within the perimeters of qualifications for Paṭola Śāhi pieces.

Furthermore, there are donors depicted within the composition, a characteristic trait employed by the Paṭola Śāhi patrons. There are clearly more donor figures represented than named in the inscription. This was also the case in figure A.8, which shows a sculpture dedicated by the princess Devaśrī and Saṃkarasena. By including the parents in the dedication, it is also similar to the inscription on figure A.7, where the monk includes his mother and father. Veyatyāsa’s attire in this sculpture is similar to other Paṭola Śāhi royal men, including the long lapelled coats and turban-like hats. Hence, Veyatyāsa was probably a royal or noble figure, perhaps an official at the Paṭola Śāhi court. If his wife was portrayed with him, it would also show the Paṭola Śāhi penchant for representing couples as donors.

**Undated:**

*Buddha* (Figure A.18)
Published: BS, pl. 19A-C, p. 106; ANP, vol. 5, p. 164

This sculpture is brass with silver and copper inlay and stands 30.3 cm tall. It is located in the Potala Collection: Li ma lha kang or Red Palace inv. 1383.105 The hair is painted with blue pigment and the face with cold gold, as evidence of its stay in Tibet. It depicts a Buddha in the Paṭola Śāhi ribbed style drapery on his monastic garments with one shoulder bare. Although he

appears unadorned, he does have a jewel at the top of his usñīša (top knot). The Buddha is sitting in the vajraparyāṅkāsana pose on another one of the same elaborate cushions found on several other Paṭola Śāhi sculptures. He is performing the dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā.

The pedestal features two tiers. On the top level, at the center, an atlantid figure supports the Buddha on his cushion. The atlantid is flanked by two profile lions with frontal faces, and on the corner are winged griffins. The bottom or second tier contains a cakra at the center flanked by two guardian figures. On the other side of the pillars, there are figure that appear to be small pairs of monks. The base of the pedestal is formed by the characteristic Paṭola Śāhi rocky mountain landscape.

The sculpture is not inscribed, so no donors are listed. However, there are two donors depicted in the composition. On each corner of the top tier of the pedestal, there is a small kneeling monk. The monks are dressed in monastic garments with one shoulder exposed. Both of the donor monks are offering scarves.

The appearance of the monks as patrons, as seen here, continues the Paṭola Śāhi pattern of depicting the donors within the composition. The portrayal of the monks is similar to the depiction of the donor monk, Hariṣayaśa found in figure A.6, and others seen in figure A.19 and figure A.21. Moreover, there are also other pieces specifically donated by monks, known from inscriptions, such as figure A.6 and figure A.7. Therefore,
monks, as well as lay royal or noble personages, are commonly shown as Paṭola Śāhi patrons.

Besides the placement of the donors within the composition, there are other features that further suggest attributing this sculpture to the Paṭola Śāhi idiom. The elaborately inlaid cushion is characteristic of Paṭola Śāhi sculptures, as seen in figures A.2 and A.6 (inscribed), and also on figures A.9, A.16, and A.17 (un-inscribed). The ribbed style drapery and the tiered pedestal with the rocky landscape are also elements typical of the Paṭola artworks. In addition, the predominance of the dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā performed by the Paṭola Śāhi Buddhas is apparent in this Buddha. Hence, in a stylistic and compositional comparison to the other pieces, I suggest a date for this sculpture of 675-722 CE.106

_Buddha: (Figure A.19)_
Published: BK, pl. 22a,b; ANP, vol. 2, pl. 35-39, p. 50; HAA, pl. 62, p. 105; ITB, pl. VI; ANP, vol. 5 p. 160; Fisher, _Art from the Himalayas_, fig. 1.

This Paṭola Śāhi sculpture is made of brass with copper and silver inlays, and it stands 33.6 cm tall. It belongs to the Norton Simon Foundation in Pasadena, California (F1972.48.2.5). It portrays an unadorned Buddha in the same style of ribbed drapery in the monastic garments with one shoulder exposed. He is seated in the vajraparyāṅkāsana position on the same type of elaborate inlaid cushion seen in so many of the other Paṭola Śāhi sculptures. He is performing the bhūmisparsa or earth-touching mudrā.

A pair of smaller bodhisattvas accompanies the Buddha: one on each side, kneeling on one knee upon a double lotus. The bodhisattva on the Buddha’s proper right has a wreath in his right hand and his left hand performs a version of the vitarka mudrā. The bodhisattva on the proper left holds a jewel in his left hand, while he performs the same vitarka mudrā with his right hand. Both bodhisattvas wear long flower garlands and their crowns are very similar to the ones on the bodhisattvas in figure A.2.

The pedestal has two levels like the one in figure A.18. The bottom tier has the same geometric rocky mountain formation interspersed with columns, creating niches, with animals, such as deer, rams, and birds. The two lions are particularly playful. At the very center of the top tier, there is a niche like that in figure A.7. Inside this niche, there are two of the smallest figures in the composition, one male and one female. The male sits in the rājalīlā posture and appears to have once been holding something, almost like one would hold out a flute. The female inside the niche, sits in the same manner and holds something round in her left hand, perhaps a jewel. It is uncertain who these two figures might be.107

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107 It is possible that the male is Mara, in which case, the female could be Devī. There is a textual account where in the Māravijaya, the earth goddess often appears with a water pot and rising from the ground. For an example, see Susan L. Huntington and John C. Huntington. *Leaves from the Bodhi Tree: The Art of Pāla India (8th – 12th centuries) and Its International Legacy* (Seattle and London: The Dayton Art Institute in Association with University of Washington Press, 1990), 140, pl. 15. Fisher says these are two humans playing in a cave, however, it is not likely that humans would be depicted on Mt. Meru itself. Fisher, “Art from the Himalayas,” 48.
There is no inscription on the piece, and therefore, there are no names for the donors depicted within the composition. There are, however, four small donor figures depicted on the top level of the pedestal. The primary donors are most likely the two inside figures who face each other. On the proper right of the Buddha, a royal female kneels with one knee down. She is wearing patterned pants with an upper garment featuring hanging tassels around the bottom. The female donor is bejeweled and wears a crown, signifying her royal status. She is offering a water jar or vessel. The male donor, opposite the female, kneels with one knee down. From the crown on this figure, he is clearly royalty as well. He is bare-chested and wears a short striped dhōti with a cloak or necklace around his neck. He holds something that appears to be a scepter or weapon in his left hand and an unidentifiable object in his right hand.108

The kneeling donor figure on the Buddha’s farthest proper right is a monk. He is wearing monastic robes with one shoulder bare. The monk offers some type of fruit in his right hand, while his left hand holds a wreath.109 The farthest donor on the proper left is kneeling and offering a large beaded aksamālā or a string of large pearls. This male donor is bearded and wears a royal costume, consisting of a tunic with lapels that falls to his knees and a belt. Although he is not wearing anything on his head, his

108 This male figure is almost identical in appearance and attributes to the male figure in figure 7, whose identity is undetermined.

109 The fruit was suggested by von Hinüber, “Die Palola Śāhis, 160.
appearance is similar to other court officials and spiritual advisors that are seen in other Paṭola Śāhi sculptures.

Since the sculpture is not inscribed, the names of the donors depicted in the pedestal cannot be determined. The royal attire and the crowns indicate the couple’s royal status. The patrons employ the Paṭola Śāhi practice of portraying themselves within the composition as donors. Moreover, not only is there a royal couple represented, but also another royal figure of lesser status and a Buddhist monk, which is a complete combination of the variety of donor types seen in other Paṭola Śāhi pieces. The sculpture features several other Paṭola Śāhi stylistic characteristics, such as the inlaid cushion, the ribbed style drapery on the Buddha, the prevalent dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā, and the rocky mountain landscape on the pedestal. In addition, the piece is very similar in composition to figure A.18. In considering these parallels with the dated images, a possible date for the sculpture could be 675-722 C.E.

_Buddha: (Figure A.20)_
Published: BS, pl. 21, p. 112; ANP, vol. 5, p. 164-165.

This brass sculpture is inlayed with silver and copper. It is about 20.8 cm tall and is located in the Potala Collection: Li ma lha khang in. 547, Red Palace, Tibet. It is an unadorned Buddha seated in the vajraparyankāsana pose on another characteristic elaborate Paṭola Śāhi cushion. His face is

\[\text{von Schroeder, } Buddhist Sculptures, 112.\]
painted with cold gold and his hair with blue pigment, as evidence of its stay in Tibet. The Buddha wears ribbed style monastic garments with one shoulder bare. He is performing the *dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā*. His decorated aureole depicts the eight great events in the life of the Buddha Śākyamuni that become known as the *aṣṭamahāprātihārya*. Therefore, the identity of the Buddha is clearly Śākyamuni.

Śākyamuni Buddha is flanked by two *bodhisattvas* that are seated on double lotuses. The *bodhisattva* on his proper right holds a branch of the *nāgakesara* tree in his right hand, while his left hand appears to make the *chinmudrā* (gesture of wisdom). The attribute of the *nāgakesara* tree identifies him as the *bodhisattva* Maitreya. The *bodhisattva* on the proper left holds a lotus stalk in his left hand, while his right hand performs the same *mudrā*. The lotus identifies him as the *bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara.

The Buddha is seated on an hourglass throne type formed by two *nāga* tails that intertwine and constrict it at the center, like that seen on figure A.17 and figure A.8. The two *nāgas* with their hoods face forward. The bottom part of the pedestal features the characteristic rocky mountain landscape. It is cut away into two receding horizontal steps similar to figure A.17. The front section is decorated with a *cakra* in the very center with an

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111 The life events in order are: birth (behind Maitreya); Māra’s defeat (behind Avalokiteśvara); First Sermon; miracle of Śrāvastī; descent from Trāyastriśā; taming the elephant Nālāgiri; offering of the monkey; and *parinirvāṇa* (at the top). For a discussion regarding images with these eight scenes, see John C. Hungtinton, “Pilgrimage as Image: The Cult of the *Aṣṭamahāprātihārya*,” Pt. I- II, *Orientations* (April 1987).
elephant and perhaps a horse on each side of it. The recessed sections on each side feature small human figures. There are two figures kneeling on the proper right and one figure kneeling on the proper left. It is unclear if these are donors, or monks, or Buddhist characters.

There is no inscription on the sculpture. However, there are at least two donors depicted within the composition, one on each corner of the base. They are not sculpted in the careful detail seen with the other Paṭola Śāhi sculptures, so specific details are difficult to discern. The donor figure on the proper right of Śākyamuni is kneeling and performing the añjali mudrā. The donor figure on the proper left is also kneeling and performing the añjali mudrā. The figure on the left is wearing a hooded cloak like the royal female Surabhī in figure A.6, so it is likely another royal female patron. Further supporting a female attribution to this donor figure, her placement on the left side of the Buddha coincides with the pattern of placement for female figures, seen on the majority of Paṭola Śāhi images. Consequently, it is likely that the donor on the right side is a male figure, but his identity is undetermined.

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112 Ulrich von Schroeder suggests that it is the seven jewels that are depicted along the bottom of the base, von Schroeder, Buddhist Sculptures, 112. von Hinüber suggests that three more donors are depicted, von Hinüber, “Die Paṭola Śāhis,” 165. I suggest that perhaps they are monks.

113 von Hinüber says this figure is male and I cannot agree or disagree because is it so unclear, von Hinüber, “Die Paṭola Śāhis,” 165.

114 I agree with von Hinüber that this is a female.
Besides the representation of the donor couple, the artwork features several other elements that are characteristic of the Paṭola Śāhi idiom. These include the ribbed style drapery on the Buddha’s robes, the inlaid cushion, the prevalent dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā, and the rocky landscape. Thus, in comparing this piece with other Paṭola Śāhi sculptures, I propose that this sculpture can be dated between 675-722 C.E.

_Mahāvairocana Buddha: (Figure A.21)_
Published: BS, pl. 23E-F, p. 116; ANP, vol. 5, no. xxii, p. 165.

This is a brass sculpture about 19 cm tall. It is located in the Potala Collection, specifically, Sa gsum lha khang: inventory no. 1481 in the Red Palace in Tibet. Its face is painted in cold gold with blue pigment painted on the hair, evidence of its stay in Tibet. The sculpture portrays a Buddha seated in the vajraparyāṇaṃkāsana on a plain cushion. The Buddha is not wearing monastic garments, but instead is bare-chested and wearing a ribbed styled dhotī and a scarf. He also has on rings, jewelry, and a crown with the Paṭola Śāhi characteristic rectangular and round gems in the front section. There are silk ribbons hanging from the crown and the top of the crown features a flaming jewel. He is performing the bodhyāgni mudrā (the gesture...

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115 The only difficulty in ascribing the work absolutely to the Patola dynasty is the different style of the bodhisattvas. In a comparison to all of the other visual representations of bodhisattvas in the Paṭola Śāhi visual record, the two bodhisattvas in this piece are decidedly different in style and appearance. In addition, it is the only sculpture in the material that depicts the eight life events of the Buddha. Perhaps it was a new artist in the atelier or perhaps it was based on an image from India using a mixture of styles and traditions.

116 von Schroeder, _Buddhist Sculptures_, 116.
of immediate enlightenment), which is the mudrā specific to Vairocana.\textsuperscript{117} From the mudrā and the flaming jewel on his crown, he can be identified as the Buddha Mahāvairocana. The pedestal consists of a rocky mountain landscape formed in an hourglass shape, similar to figure A.17 and figure A.20, but without the nāgas. At the very center of the pedestal, there is a lion looking outwards.

This sculpture does not have an inscription. However, typical of the Paṭola Śāhi patrons, there is a pair of donors depicted, one on each corner. The donors are monks kneeling down on one knee, both of whom look up toward the Buddha. Both of the monks are wearing monastic garments with one shoulder exposed, similar to the monastics in figure A.18. The monk on the proper right of Mahāvairocana offers an aḵṣamāḷā with his left hand and makes the vitarka mudrā with his right. The monk on the proper left offers a scarf with both hands. The donors present are consistent with the Paṭola Śāhi idiom. There have been several examples in the Paṭola record of monks as donors, such as in figures A.6, A.16, and A.18, as well as ones donated by monks through inscriptions such as figure A.7. Moreover, the piece is stylistically uniform with the known Paṭola pieces in the type of crown, the style of the drapery, as well as the rocky landscape.\textsuperscript{118} Consequently, I suggest a date for this sculpture somewhere between 675-722 C.E.

\textsuperscript{117} This mudrā is also called the bodhāgrī and bodhyāṅgī mudrā.

\textsuperscript{118} The representation of Vairocana’s face, in particular, is similar to that of the Buddha in figure A.7.
Crowned Buddha Images Possibly Donated by the Paṭola Śāhis

Undated:

*Crown Buddha Vipaśyin:* (Figure A.22)

This rock carving is found in the Chilas area, near Gilgit.\(^{119}\) It portrays a Buddha wearing monastic garments, jewelry, a cape with a decorated border, and a crown with silk ribbons. On the front of each shoulder on the cape, there is a sun and moon symbol. He is performing the *dhyāna mudrā.*

The Buddha is seated in the *vajraparyankāsana* pose on a double lotus and is surrounded by a body aureole with a pearl patterned border. The entire image is depicted resting upon a pedestal, giving it a sculptural, or three-dimensional, appearance.

There is an accompanying inscription carved on the proper left of the Buddha. It is written in *Brāhmī* and says:

\[# \text{namo āryā vipaśis tathāgatāya sārdham siñ(h)ōtena}\

Homage to the tathāgata Vipaśyin; Simhota.\(^{120}\)

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\(^{119}\) According to Karl Jettmar, there are numerous other crowned and caped Buddhas carved on rocks in the Chilas-Thalpan area, some with inscriptions dating them to the 6\(^{th}\) or early 7\(^{th}\) century. Karl Jettmar, *Between Gandhara and the Silk Roads, Rock Carvings along the Karakorum Highway: Discoveries by German-Pakistani Expeditions 1979-1984* (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1987), 20. For an example of a supposedly similar Buddha with a crown and cape, see Karl Jettmar, “The Main Buddhist Period as Represented in the Petroglyphs at Chilas and Thalpan,” *South Asian Archaeology* (1985), Fig. 15.

\(^{120}\) The Sanskrit transliteration and the translation are from Fussman, “Chilas, Hatun,” 22.
From the inscription, the crowned Buddha can be identified as the Buddha Vipaśyin, one of the seven *mānuṣi* Buddhas. The inscription is not dated per se, however, since the inscription is in *Brāhmī* which is earlier than the *Proto-Śāradā* script, it was most likely created prior to 630 CE.\(^{121}\)

Furthermore, the inscription provides the name of the donor who is depicted beside the Buddha – Sīhota. On the proper left of Vipaśyin, Sīhota is kneeling as the donor. He is wearing a long coat or tunic with tall boots, a turban-like hat with a knot, and earrings, all similar to other Paṭola Śahi royal or noble donors. Sīhota is offering a censor in his right hand, as seen in the sculpture commissioned by the king Nandivikramādityanandi (Figure A.1). The donor figure also holds an *aṅkhamālā* in his left hand.

Although it is unknown who Sīhota was, the similarities between the Buddha Vipaśyin, who wears a crown and the distinct cape, with the crowned Buddhas in other Paṭola Śahi images, such as figures A.2, A.7, and A.8, cannot be ignored. The method of portraying a crowned Buddha is consistent, indicating parallels between the Chilas carving and the Paṭola Śahi visual record. Considering the *Brāhmī* inscription, perhaps this type of image was a proto-type for the pursuant popular brass sculptures.

The Paṭola Śahi tradition of representing a donor with the dedicated image is also employed in this carving. Sīhota is portrayed kneeling before

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\(^{121}\) Fussman suggests these dates, see Fussman, “Chilas, Hatun,” 48.
the Buddha and he is named in the inscription as well. This carving is not the only example of this early practice. In another carving from Thalpan near Gilgit, another donor is depicted kneeling before an image of a stūpa that was dedicated as a pious gift (Figure 2.1). This donor is very similar to Simhota in his appearance with a long coat or tunic, tall boots, sword, cap, and censor offering. His wonderfully patterned coat with its collar and wide lapels, in particular, recalls the attire of Saṃkaraseṇa and even the king in figure A.1. These examples show an early pattern beginning to emerge for portraying donors with their pious gifts. The rock carvings are all located in the near proximity of Gilgit and Baltistan, and therefore, the donors could be early Paṭola Śāhi royalty or nobility, or perhaps even one of the first kings as yet unknown. There is a clear stylistic, iconographic, and compositional connection between the Chilas carving and the other images that cannot be overlooked, and therefore this carving is included as a potential Paṭola Śāhi artwork.

Crowned Buddha: (Figure A.23)
Published: BK, pl. 32.

This brass sculpture is located in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. It stands 7 ¼ inches tall. It depicts a seated Buddha in

122 Simhota donated several carved images in the area, including one of the bodhisattva Lokeśvara with an inscription listing him as a couple with his wife. See Oskar von Hinüber, "Buddhistische inschriften aus dem tal des oberen Indus," Antiquities of Northern Pakistan: Reports and Studies, Vol. 1 (Mainz: Verlag Philip von Zabern, 1989), 84.
vajraparyanāṅkāsana or yogic position. He is seated upon a lion throne where the two lions' bodies are in profile with their head frontal on each corner. In the center of the base is an atlantid figure holding up the Buddha's cushion. The Buddha is wearing monastic garments with the ribbed styled drapery typical of the Paṭola Śāhi images. The Buddha wears jewelry, a damaged crown with flowing silk scarves, and the distinctive cape characteristic of the Paṭola Śāhi Buddhas. On each of his shoulders, he has a symbol of a crescent moon with a sun inside it. He is performing the varada mudrā with his right hand, while his left holds the hem of his robes.

The base of the crowned Buddha's pedestal features the characteristic Paṭola Śāhi rocky mountain landscape that is interspersed with figures of deer. It does not have an inscription, however, as typical of the Paṭola Śāhi patrons, there is a donor portrayed on each corner of the base. The figure on the proper right of the Buddha is kneeling and performing the añjali mudrā. It appears to be a male donor wearing jewelry and a turban-like hat. The donor on the opposite corner is a kneeling female who also performs the añjali mudrā. She is wearing jewelry and a long cloak that falls behind her back, and perhaps a crown on her head.

The sculpture clearly continues the Paṭola Śāhi pattern of depicting donors within the composition, especially a male and a female. In addition, the Buddha is also characteristic of the visual imagery used by the Paṭolas to

123 The inscription says, “This is the pious gift of Dharmasiṃha ...” von Hinüber,
depict a crowned and caped Buddha figure. Therefore, this artwork is included as a piece potentially belonging to the dynasty, with a suggested date of 675-722 C.E.

Crowned Buddha: (Figure A.24)
Published: K. Jettmar, *Beyond the Gorges of the Indus – Archaeology Before Excavations*, 2002, fig. 27.

This triangular stone piece features three sides. There is a different life-size Buddha figure carved on each side. It was originally discovered in the Bubur village in Punyal and is now located in Gilgit. The side most important to this study portrays a Buddha seated in what appears to be either a vajraparyankāsana pose or the lalitāsana pose, however, it is difficult to be certain since one leg is missing. Both of his hands are missing, but it appears that he might be performing the varada mudrā or the bhūmisparsa mudrā with his right hand. The Buddha is clearly wearing a crown with silk ribbons attached to it. He has something across his chest that is perhaps a necklace or a slightly different type of cape, with rounded edges rather than the four points.

No inscription survives on the stone fragment, so it is unknown if there was originally one naming specific donors. Although there is no donor image currently present on this side, there are possible traces of a figure on bended knees on the Buddha’s proper left. As support for this, both of the Buddhas

"Buddhistische inschriften,” 75, and Pl. 137.
carved on the other two sides of the piece do have small donor figures at the bottom (Figure 2.2 and 2.3). It is impossible to make out specific details regarding the donors, especially any defining traits of the Paṭola Śāhi patrons. However, the potential appearance of a donor with the crowned Buddha, and the definite representation of donors on the other sides, continue to demonstrate the trend that the Paṭola Śāhis employed for depicting donors within the composition. Due to its find location near Gilgit and the already large corpus of crowned Buddhas in the Paṭola Śāhi visual record, this stone Buddha is quite possibly a Paṭola Śāhi commission. If this is the case, a date of the 7th century can be suggested for the stone sculpture.

Two Crowned Buddha Maitreyas: (Figure A.25 and A.26)
Published: BS, pl. 25A and 25B.

Both of these sculptures are brass with inlaid copper and/or silver. They are both located in the Potala Collection. Figure A.25 is in the Li ma lha khang, inventory no. 588 and the other one, figure A.26, is in the Sa Gsum lha khang, inventory no. 478.125 The measurements for the first one are not known, but figure A.26 is 17.7 cm tall. Both sculptures depict a seated Buddha Maitreya in the bhadrāsana pose. The Maitreya Buddhas are wearing monastic garments depicted with the typical Paṭola Śāhi ribbed style drapery. The Buddhas also wear jewelry and the characteristic Paṭola Śāhi

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124 Jettmar suggests that these were carved at the end of the Buddhist period when Turkish tribes ruled the area under Tibetan chiefs and compares them to baba-sculptures. Jettmar, Beyond the Gorges, 106 and 154.
crown with the rectangular and round gems in the front piece, along with the hanging silk ribbons. The Maitreya Buddhas are both performing the *dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā*, so commonly seen on other Paśola Śāhi Buddha images.

Both Buddhas are seated on a plain cushioned throne that features a frontal lion on each side. The main difference between the two bases is that figure A.26 has a rocky base, while figure A.25 portrays Maitreya’s feet on a lotus. Neither sculpture is inscribed, so there is no donor name listed nor is there a donor depicted. Due to the stylistic parallels in the crown and drapery with the other Paśola Śāhi crowned Buddhas, especially figure A.7 and figure A.9, these two examples are included as possible Paśola Śāhi pieces. Furthermore, they are so similar to the Maitreya Buddha in figure A.27, that I was compelled to include them here as they all might be attributed to the Paśola Śāhi idiom. Considering the parallel characteristics and style, I suggest a date of the 7th century for these two sculptures.

**Non-Crowned Buddha Images and Bodhisattva Images Possibly Donated by the Paśola Śāhis**

**Undated:**

*Buddha Maitreya: (Figure A.27)*

Published: BK, pl. 33; ANP, vol. 2, pl. 33; Malla, *Sculptures of Kashmir*, pl. 33; ANP, vol. 5, p. 156.

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125 von Schroeder, *Buddhist Sculptures*, 120. He categorizes them as possibly belonging to the Kārkotā Dynasty in Kashmir during the 7th or 8th century.
This brass sculpture is located in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in the Heeramanec Collection (#M.76.2.33). It stands 17.5 cm tall. It portrays an unadorned Buddha Maitreya wearing monastic garments with one shoulder exposed. He is seated in \textit{bhadrásana} pose on a lion throne with a lion on each corner. The entire throne rests upon a double lotus and his feet rest on lotus steps. Maitreya is performing the \textit{dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā}.

There is no typical Paṭola Śāhi rocky landscape, however, there is a donor depicted on the proper right side of Maitreya on the base. It is not inscribed so the name of the donor is not known. The patron is a kneeling female figure performing the \textit{añjali mudrā}. Her attire is similar to the Paṭola Śāhi royal costume found on Princess Devaśrī in figure A.8. She wears patterned pants, a top, jewelry, a cloak, and a something on her head, perhaps a crown or a hood.\footnote{Oskar von Hinüber, “Die Palola Śāhis, 156, suggests that she is a Paṭola Śāhi princess.}

This sculpture is included in this category because it further demonstrates the tradition of portraying a donor within the composition, and because her dress is similar to that seen in other Paṭola Śāhi pieces. From her appearance, we can surmise that she is a royal or noble Paṭola Śāhi woman. In addition, there are a few other characteristics in the sculpture that help to possibly attribute it to the Paṭola Śāhis. Maitreya is performing the \textit{dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā}, that is so typical of the Paṭola Śāhi
Buddhas, and although his monastic garments are worn down, they seem to have the common ribbed style drapery. In addition, except for the crowns and jewelry, this sculpture is almost identical to the crowned Maitreya Buddhas in figure A.25 and A.26, which also potentially belong to their corpus of artworks. A suggested date for this piece is 7th century.\(^\text{127}\)

*Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara: (Figure A.28)*

Unpublished

This brass sculpture is located in a private collection. The eyes are inlaid with silver and the lips are inlaid with copper. The size is unknown. It portrays a *bodhisattva* seated in *vajraparyanākāsana* pose on a double lotus. He is bare-chested and wears a *dhoṭi*, jewelry, scarf, and the *jaṭāmukuta* hairstyle with a crown. The *bodhisattva* has a figure of Amitābha Buddha in his crown. His right hand performs the *varada mudrā*, while his left hand holds a lotus. From the attribute in his crown and the lotus, he can be identified as the *bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara.

It is unknown if this sculpture is inscribed, however, there is clearly a donor depicted on the right side of the *bodhisattva*. The donor is kneeling and performing the *añjali mudrā*. The donor figure is very worn, so the only detail that can be discerned is that it wears a long coat or tunic with wide lapels. Because of this attire, it is evident that he is likely a male donor.

\(^{127}\) Fussman, “Chilas, Hatun,” 49, dates it to 650, and von Hinüber does not agree or disagree.
This piece is included as a potential Pañola piece for several reasons. Clearly, there is the donor depicted within the composition, which is characteristic of the Pañola Śāhi patrons. The donor is shown in the common costume used for Pañola Śāhi royal and noble men. In addition, the double lotus is characteristic of Pañola artworks as well, as seen in figures A.2, A.8, A.16, and A.22. Considering the parallels with other Pañola Śāhi pieces, I suggest a date of the 7th century.

_Buddha: (Figure A.29)_
Published: Stein, p. 19.

This Buddha is carved 30 feet above the ground into the cliffs at Kargah, four miles from Gilgit. The unadorned Buddha wearing monastic garments is about 9 feet tall. His right hand performs the _abhaya mudrā_ at his chest while his left hand grasps the hem of his robe. He is depicted within a trilobate arch like on figure A.9, although it is not decorated with other figures.

There is no inscription nor are there any donors depicted within the composition that can tie the Buddha to the patronage of the Pañola Śāhis. However, the flat form and rounded features used to represent the Buddha are very similar to the Buddhas in figures 2.2 and 2.3, which have been shown to possibly be Pañola Śāhi pieces. Often large images of Buddhas were

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placed at Buddhist centers along the Silk Roads, such as the colossal Buddhas at Bamiyan. In addition, it is known that Buddhist kings and queens commissioned colossal or large Buddhas, such as the ones at Yungang and Longmen in China that date to the 5th and 7th centuries respectively. Since it is evident from the visual record that the Paṭola Śāhis were Buddhist practitioners, including the kings and queens of the dynasty, and their kingdom was a Buddhist center, it is probable that this lofty Buddha was commissioned by a Paṭola Śāhi king. Consequently, due to its date range of the 7th – 8th century, and its style and proximity to the place of Gilgit, it is included as a potential Paṭola Śāhi image.

**Conclusion**

The distinction between the presence and absence of a crown on the Paṭola Śāhi Buddhas sheds light on the large number of crowned Buddhas in the visual record. Moreover, the consistency of the iconography representing the Buddha images with crowns is significant. As such, a detailed examination of donor figures within the composition and inscriptive evidence suggests that the royal Paṭola Śāhi patrons, in particular, held an affinity for the Buddha images with crowns.

129 There are several other large Buddhas carved in the Ladakh and Western Tibet area near Baltistan that are potentially related to the Paṭola Śāhis as well. However, it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to discuss them.
It is also evident that the communication of donor figures, either through inscription or direct representation in the composition, is a common and significant feature of the Paṭola Śāhi idiom. As Oskar von Hinüber so aptly stated, "Superior diligence by the creators of the Gilgit bronzes prevails in the consistency of the donor representations."¹³⁰ The division of images according to donor types, such as kings, other royal and noble figures, and monastics, provided further detailed information regarding the patronage of the dynasty, which is discussed in later chapters. In addition, it was evident in the analysis that the donors were often portrayed as a couple consisting of a male and female patron. Thus, the patronage of the Buddhist sculptures, especially the Buddhas with crowns or the Buddhas performing the dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā, are important aspects of the Paṭola Śāhi idiom and this study.

Figure 2.1. The donor Dharmasimha on a rock carving from Thalpan.
Figure 2.2. Second side of a three-sided stone sculpture from Gilgit showing a Buddha figure.
Figure 2.3. Third side of a three-sided stone sculpture from Gilgit showing a Buddha figure.
CHAPTER 3

THE ICONOGRAPHY OF THE PAṬOLA ŚĀHI IMAGES
AND THEIR BUDDHIST CONTEXT

The general descriptions of the images in Chapter 2 substantiates that members of the Paṭola Śāhi dynasty practiced Buddhism. This chapter presents the iconography and iconology of the images that can be attributed to the Paṭola Śāhi period, so that they can be contextualized within a larger framework of Buddhist theoretical principles and practice. The first part of this chapter focuses on the iconography of the crowned Buddhas. Rather than discussing the meaning of each individual figure described in Chapter 2, it discusses the recurring core iconographic elements and their symbolism, specifically the Mt. Meru throne, the crown, the cape, and the sun and moon symbols. In addition, in order to demonstrate that the Paṭola Śāhis were not alone in their choices of visual imagery, other examples with similar iconographic traits are provided.

The second part of this chapter discusses how this set of symbols creates a coded visual language in which the theoretical practices are made manifest. I show that the underlying meaning in the Buddhist imagery of the crowned Buddhas conveys the sambhogakāya or “bliss body” nature of the
Buddha being depicted. After defining *sambhogakāya*, I discuss the visual indicators used in artwork to communicate the enjoyment body aspect of a Buddha. The important relationship between Vairocana Buddha, especially, and the *sambhogakāya* is then discussed, as well as how, Vairocana Buddha figures centrally in the visual record of the Paṭola Śāhis. Specifically, through an iconological examination of the Paṭola Śāhi crowned Buddhas, this chapter shows that the nature of Vairocana, as the embodiment of all Buddhas, is manifested through various Buddhist figures, suggesting a layering of identities in many of the works commissioned by the Paṭola Śāhis. As such, my research suggests that through this expression of multivalency, several Paṭola Śāhi images that are not outwardly identifiable as Vairocana Buddha can be read as a hypostasis of this important central figure.

The last section in this chapter focuses on Buddhist literary evidence that shows the development of the iconography of the crowned Buddha. My research traces the iconographic evolution from a transcendent and crowned Śākyamuni Buddha to the fully expressed manifestation of Mahāvairocana as a *sambhogakāya* figure or meditational construct. The texts included are the *Mahāvastu*, the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*, the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, and the *Mahāvairocana abhisambodhi Tantra*.

The evidence compiled in this chapter suggests that all of the crowned Buddhas, and even some of the unadorned Buddhas, in the Paṭola Śāhi visual record can be recognized as Vairocana. Moreover, it reveals how the Paṭola
Śāhi patrons established a fully developed iconography that became essential to understanding an image at the *sambhogakāya* or esoteric level. In other words, an iconological reading of the Paṭola Śāhi visual record reveals a main soteriological methodology with which the Paṭola Śāhi dynasty identified.

**Iconography of the Crowned Buddhas**

As seen in Chapter 2, numerous Buddha figures in the Paṭola Śāhi visual record are depicted with crowns. In particular, the crowned Buddhas are also consistently given other motifs, such as the distinctive cape and the crescent moon with a solar symbol. These are all royal emblems that were likely chosen by the Buddhist artist, patron, and spiritual advisor due, in part, to the symbolism they embody and express. This section discusses the individual iconographic elements of the throne, crown, cape, and lunar and solar symbols that are crucial in understanding the visual imagery. The discussion reveals the coded visual language underlying the image of a Buddha with a crown that is needed to fully interpret the image within a Buddhological context, considering both theoretical practice and methodology.

**Mt. Meru and Akanistha**

An important aspect of understanding the iconography of a Buddha is to first consider the throne or pedestal on which he is seated. On one level,
every Buddha is considered to be seated on the top of Mt. Meru.\textsuperscript{131} According to Buddhist cosmology in the \textit{Abhidharmakośa} of Vasubandhu, Mt. Meru is the center of the Buddhist universe or world-system.\textsuperscript{132} It is the macrocosm and microcosm for all Buddhas and for all Buddhist practitioners. It is not a physical place, but a conceptual one where almost all meditation and all levels of Buddhist attainments occur. Thus, it is a whole system in a practitioner's heart-mind (\textit{bodhicitta}). Mt. Meru is envisioned as a mountain, a purified sacred space. It is surrounded by various continents with hells below it and heavens above it, all lined up on a vertical axis. Among the paradises at the top are Tuṣita, where Maitreya the future Buddha resides until his eon or \textit{kalpa} arrives, and Akaniṣṭha as the highest heavenly realm.

Since every Buddha has attained the highest enlightenment, Mt. Meru symbolism is inherent in nearly all Buddhist artworks and architecture, including rituals and practice.\textsuperscript{133} For example, the sculptures that are elevated on a single tri-part platform base or throne are conceptually on Mt. Meru. The stepped level base would be considered the lower terraces of the mountain, while the large central part is the mountain itself. The stepped


\textsuperscript{132} For discussion, see Vasubandhu, \textit{Abhidharma-kośa-śāstra}, translated by Xuan Zhang.

\textsuperscript{133} Huntington, “Mt. Meru,” 899.
levels of the top represent the heavenly worlds, with Akaniṣṭha at the uppermost top. This is, especially, understood if the Buddha figure is seated on a lotus, since they are born on a lotus in Akaniṣṭha and it is considered the Lotus World.

I suggest that the imagery of the rocky mountain base, especially characteristic in the artworks of the Paṭola Śāhis, may well have been meant to emphasize this notion and place as the sacred Buddhist mountain. Mt. Meru, as the ultimate sacred space, is the quintessential place for a Buddha to teach the Buddhist doctrine.\textsuperscript{134} Thus, all of the pedestals for the Paṭola Śāhi sculptures depicting Buddhas, crowned or uncrowned, inherently symbolize Mt. Meru.

Crown

The crown is historically an ancient symbol worn to mark royalty in the earthly realm, and, as such, it became an emblem to denote kingship. In addition, the crown has long been used as a symbol of power and authority in a plethora of religions for the representation of deities. In Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna Buddhism, a Buddha with a crown represents attainment of all knowledge.\textsuperscript{135} A crowned Buddha (mukutadhārin) who also wears jewelry is depicted as such to symbolize his aspect as a universal sovereign. It

\textsuperscript{134} John Huntington has suggested that the name may relate to the heaven of Avalokiteśvara, Potalaka, since the name Paṭola is similar or perhaps derived from it.

\textsuperscript{135} For a discussion of Vajrayāna Buddhism, see Ch. 1, fn.9, and Ch. 5.
represents his majestic power and authority. John Huntington explains that the crown and jewelry "draw a visual analogy between the attainment of Buddhahood and coronation as a king."\textsuperscript{136} The crown on a Buddha in the Pañolâ Śâhi visual imagery distinguishes him as a universal sovereign and enlightened being that has attained Buddhahood. The crowns are different from the \textit{jaṭāmukuta} worn by \textit{bodhisattvas}, setting the crowned Buddha figures apart as having achieved higher attainment than the \textit{bodhisattva} figures.

In Vajrayâna or esoteric Buddhism, the crown, especially, represents the five transcendent insights (\textit{jñāna}) needed to attain all knowledge and ensuing Buddhahood. The five insights are: mirror-like wisdom, equality of all things, discriminating wisdom, perfected action, and full understanding of truth and reality.\textsuperscript{137} These five qualities are personified in Buddhist iconography by the \textit{pañca} (five) \textit{jina} (victorious) Buddhas. They are also called cosmic or transcendent Buddhas and are generally shown wearing crowns and ornaments. Each \textit{jina} Buddha presides over what is called a Buddha family or \textit{kula}, each with their own color, direction, \textit{mudrā}, symbol, and female \textit{prajñā} (partner).\textsuperscript{138} The \textit{jina} Buddha Akṣobhya performs the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{136} Huntington, \textit{Leaves from the Bodhi Tree}, 105.
  \item \textsuperscript{138} See figure in Livingston, 91.
\end{itemize}
bhūmisparśa mudrā while manifesting the insight of mirror-like wisdom. The jina Buddha Ratnasambhava performs the varada mudrā and personifies the transcendent quality of the equality of all things. The jina Buddha Amitābha performs the dhyāna mudrā and embodies the insight of discriminating wisdom. The jina Buddha Amoghasiddhi performs the abhaya mudrā, manifesting the quality of perfected action. Lastly, the jina Buddha Vairocana performs the dharmacakra mudrā and personifies the transcendent insight of the full understanding of truth and reality.

When a crown has five points or triangular sections (leaves) or five jewels around the diadem, it especially represents the five insights of the jīna Buddhas and is, therefore, called a pañca jina crown. The pañca jina crown is an esoteric symbol of the five transcendent qualities that constitute the totality of enlightenment or Buddhahood. In the crown, the jina Buddhas can either be depicted as Buddhas or as symbols in each of the five triangular pieces or, because the crown has five points, the jina Buddhas can be understood to be inherently present. John Huntington suggests that, because their concept is so fundamental in Vajrayāna Buddhism, the jina Buddhas are inherent in every piece of esoteric art including the five-pointed crown.

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139 Huntington, *Leaves of the Bodhi Tree*, 105.

140 Livingston, 90. An example of the pañca jina crown’s esoteric function can be seen with the Vajrasattva headdress when it is used in public rituals in Nepal. When the practitioner places the crown on his head, he becomes purified as an adamantine being and transformed into the deity Vajrasattva. The practitioner can then perform the Buddhist ritual with authority and full knowledge of the secret rites. This marks the knowledge and power
Thus, the *pañca jina* Buddhhas are a paradigm for Vajrayāna symbology, practice, and attainment. Since the *pañca jina* Buddhhas each represent an aspect of Buddhahood or transcendental insight that together constitute the totality of enlightenment, a five-pointed crown on a Buddha, as an esoteric image, represents his attainment of the five aspects and resulting Buddhahood. The crowns on the Paṭola Śāhi Buddhhas symbolize their attainment of all knowledge. As a culmination of their achievement, the Buddhhas are endowed with a crown to represent their coronation as universal sovereigns and Buddhahood.

While not all of the crowns found on the Paṭola Śāhi Buddhhas are the five-pointed *pañca jina* crowns, every crown does feature flowing silk ribbons that are attached to them, as well as two open lotuses on each side of the crown, further signifying the royal imagery of a Buddha as a universal sovereign. The earliest Paṭola Śāhi crowned Buddha (Figure A.6) wears a low crown with a row of pearls across the front that is also decorated with several jewels. Perhaps there are five jewels to represent the *pañca jina* Buddhhas. The crown on Mañjuśrī Buddha, for example, is tall with four points and a high fifth point in the center (Figure A.1). It is decorated with inherent in the crown. The crown is part of esoteric initiations as well. Huntington and Bangdel, *Circle of Bliss*, 224-29.

141 The silk ribbons were likely derived from royal crowns on historical kings, thus becoming a symbol of royalty used by Buddhist artists. This could have originated from the Iranian or Sassanian kings, perhaps back to the Achamenids. The ribbons are also attached to images of *stūpas* in art to represent the same thing, see figure 2.1.
jewels and a string of large pearls running along the top points of the
crown.\textsuperscript{142} The five points arguably symbolize the \textit{pañca jina} Buddhas.

The remaining crowns on the Paṭola Śāhi Buddha figures have distinct
triangular sections with either three or five leaves. The crowns with five
points specifically refer to the \textit{pañca jina} crown and are found on the
Buddhas in figures A.2, A.7, A.8, and A.9. The crowns on the Buddhas in
figures A.21, A.22, A.23, A.24, A.25, and A.26 only have three visible
points.\textsuperscript{143} Both of the three and five-pointed crowns are typically decorated
with a string of large pearls accenting the front of the five points and/or the
front central triangular piece features a rectangular jewel with a small round
one above it.

Due to the significant number of Buddhas that are crowned in the
corpus of Paṭola Śāhi images, it seems unequivocal that the Paṭola Śāhi
patrons deliberately chose the iconography of the crowned Buddha image.
Importantly, many of the crowned Buddhas feature the distinct esoteric
\textit{pañca jina} crown. The symbology of the crown creates a clear distinction
between an unadorned Buddha and a crowned figure wearing ornaments. I
suggest that the Paṭola Śāhi donors intended to convey the notion of the

\begin{footnote}{
\textsuperscript{142} It is possible that the crown is decorated with the seven precious substances (\textit{sapta-ratna-māya}). Paul, 204.

\textsuperscript{143} It is possible that sometimes only three of the five points are made visible on a representation of a frontal image, so it is still meant to imply the five transcendent insights. If it is a truly a three-pointed crown, this type of crown is still reserved only for images of Buddhas and does not appear on any of the \textit{bodhisattvas}.}

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transcendent *jiṇa* Buddha Vairocana with the power and authority of a universal king. The implications of these readings are discussed later in this chapter.

**Cape**

The distinct cape found on the Paṭola Śāhi Buddhas is depicted with a triangle corner draped over each shoulder, one on the chest, and one to be understood on the back – making a four pointed cape. It is suggested by some scholars that the cape was adopted from royal or noble attire as seen on donors in a few sculptures from Northwest India, Central Asia, or the Himalayas. Although it is not the point in this study to prove the origins of

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144 There are sculptures with this fourth corner depicted on the back, so it is reasonable to assume that on a frontal image, only the three corners would be depicted. For an example of this, see Figure 3.11. Other scholars also acknowledge that these capes are four-pointed. See P. Banerjee, *New Light on Central Asian Art and Iconography* (New Delhi: Abha Prakashan, 1992), 107; and Maurizio Taddei, "The Bejewelled Buddha and the Mahiśāsuramardini: Religion and Political Ideology in Pre-Muslim Afghanistan," *South Asian Archaeology* (1989), 457.

145 According to Taddei, the cape was adopted from the royal attire found in early Afghanistan and Northwest India, more specifically Gandhara. Taddei, "Bejewelled Buddha," 457. Klimburg-Salter distinguishes the Gandhara donor cape from those that appear in the images at Bamiyan, saying that the ones at Bamiyan have fringes and jewels, and are therefore ceremonial. Deborah Klimburg-Salter, *Kingdom of Bāmiyān: Buddhist Art and Culture of the Hindu Kush* (Naples, Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1989). She compares the ceremonial ones to capes that she says Kashmir nobles put on their gods. The only example she has to support this is the image of Surya in Pal, *Bronzes of Kashmir*, pl. 16. However, Klimburg-Salter’s argument does not prove the cape was noble attire. On the other hand, von Schroeder suggests that the capes are of a Himalayan origination, von Schroeder, *Buddhist Sculptures*, 58. Pran Gopal Paul suggests that the cape is from Central Asia and the Hepthalites, Paul, 222-42.

Several scholars argue that the cape motif is from a famous image at Bodh Gaya at the Mahabodi Temple. This suggestion comes from a 9th c. painting discovered at Dunhuang that has the following inscription, "Country of Magadha light emitting magical image." See Benjamin Rowland, "The Bejewelled Buddha in Afghanistan," *Artibus Asiae* (XXIV, 1961), 20-4. It is believed that this painting was a representation of the same Buddha at Bodh Gaya and it bears a cape and crown. The cape is different, however, with scalloped edges.
the cape, it is important to discuss a few of the examples used to argue this point.

There are not many known examples where a donor is depicted wearing such a cape. The primary example is found in a Gandharan sculpture depicting Pāñcika (Figure 3.1). In this sculpture, there is clearly a kneeling donor on the proper right of the Buddhist deity. The standing figure on the proper left is wearing the four-pointed cape made of what appears to be animal skin. The head is missing on this figure so his identity is difficult to determine. If this donor was royalty as suggested, it is curious as to why he is not depicted in the primary position on the proper right of the Buddhist deity. Regardless of his identity, the cape he wears is distinctly different from the Pañola Šahi types, since it is made of animal skin and is not decorated with jewels or a fringe of tassels. Another Gandharan figure, perhaps a donor, is wearing similar attire to the male in figure 3.1, including the four-pointed cape (see Figure 3.2). Although the figure is damaged, it appears to be the same type of animal skin cape.

Another example used for a donor wearing the same type of cape is a fragment of a figure in the Hirayama collection (Figure 3.3). This figure’s cape, however, is different because it is decorated with motifs to represent

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rather than the distinct four corners found on the Pañola Šahi Buddha images. The only cape I found similar with the scalloped edges is on the stone carved crowned Gilgit Buddha.

Taddei also lists a donor figure in the Noriyoshi Horiuchi collection in Tokyo, but he does not provide an image. Taddei, “Bejewelled Buddha,” 457.
jewels, including a large crescent moon symbol in the front and a fringe along the bottom. The figure wears an elaborate headdress with ribbons flowing out to the side. His arms are broken off so it is impossible to know what they held or if they performed a mudrā. If this piece is compared to the fragment piece from Haḍḍa, now in the Musée Guimet labeled as a Bejeweled Buddha (Figure 3.4), I am not so certain that figure 3.3 portrays a donor. On the Haḍḍa piece, only a portion of the upper torso remains, but it is clearly a Buddha figure in monastic robes performing the abhaya mudrā. The Buddha in figure 3.4 wears a four-pointed cape similarly decorated with jewels, including the large crescent moon symbol. Due to the jeweled cape and the silk ribbons on the figure’s crown in figure 3.3, I suggest that it is also possibly an early representation of a Buddha figure, and a crowned one at that.147 With only the fragment remaining, however, it cannot be determined with certainty whether it was a donor or a Buddha.

In a discussion of whether or not the four-pointed cape was adopted from royal attire in Gandhara, Central Asia, or even the Himalayas, it is important for this study to note that none of the royal Paṭola Śāhi donors wear the cape, not even the kings. Rather, on the Paṭola Śāhi Buddhas, when the iconography of the four-pointed cape appears, it is consistently found on Buddhas with crowns. In addition, the crowned Buddhas with capes in figures A.2, A.7, and A.8 wear pañca jina crowns. The two Buddhas

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147 The mustache is not problematic, since Gandharan Buddhas often had them as well.
wearing capes in figures A.22, A.23, and A.24 wear either a three-pointed or a five-pointed crown. In considering the Paṭola Śāhi visual evidence, specifically, the extant record indicates that the emblem of the four-pointed cape decorated with jewels and a tasseled fringe was reserved for the portrayal of the crowned Buddhas. Therefore, I suggest that the cape had a specific meaning within a Buddhist context, and was, therefore, chosen as iconography explicitly for the crowned Buddhas in order to set them apart.

The cape may have been a symbol of royalty borrowed from kings to convey the notion of a transcendent Buddhas as a universal sovereign, much like the crown. However, within the Paṭola Śāhi context, it was also most likely incorporated into Buddhist iconography to convey a specific meaning or function. In a Buddhist context, each four corners of the cape represent the four corners of Mt. Meru and the four quarters of the worldly realm of knowledge. This is even evident today in Vajrayāna Buddhism, where this same type of cape is worn by Vajrasattva priests in Nepal when they do meditations visualizing themselves as being on Mt. Meru. The cape aids in the transformation of space and identity in Vajrayāna practice for a yogin priest, particularly taking place in the highest meditational realm as Akaniṣṭha on Mt. Meru.

148 Huntington and Bangdel, Circle of Bliss, 84.

149 Mt. Meru is at the center of every mandala as the symbol of sacred space and a map toward enlightenment. Such capes can be worn by priests and images in rituals to identify with specific Buddhas, including the pañca jina Buddhas. Klimburg-Salter, Bāmiyān, 108.
In early esoteric artworks in Tibet, the iconography of the cape was used as a means to distinguish an Ādi Buddha from other Buddhas. An Ādi Buddha is a primordial or supreme Buddha, considered to be the essence of Buddhist dharma. For example, the four-pointed cape is depicted on Vairocana abhisambodhi on a rock carving at lDan ma brag in Eastern Tibet or Kahms (Figure 3.5). The cape was also used in later images in Tibet to individualize the other Ādi Buddhas, such as Vajrasattva, Vajradhara, and Sarvavid Vairocana. Thus, although the four-pointed cape may have been chosen, in part, for its royal significance, it is imbued with a symbolic meaning and function, especially in esoteric Buddhist practices.

Sun and Moon Symbols

The lunar and solar symbols are also effigies of royalty. This is obvious since there are several Paṭola Śāhi donor crowns that feature this motif. For example, both the king and the queen in figure A.2 have crescent moons with a solar symbol inside of it decorating their crowns. Moreover, there are examples at Bamiyan and Fondukistan with other variations of the heavenly symbols incorporated into the decoration of the crowns used for both Buddha figures and human kings.

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150 von Schroeder, Buddhist Sculptures, 58.

151 von Schroeder dates this to 804/816 C.E., Buddhist Sculptures, 58.

152 It is possible that these motifs also derive from the Sassanians like the silk ribbons on the crown. Klimburg-Salter says that the emblems emphasize the nature of a sovereign lord, Bāmiyân, 109.
Although the symbols have royal connotations, they are also significant emblems in Buddhist iconography. The sun and the moon are often used as metaphors or descriptors for Buddhas and Buddhist teachings. For example, in the *Lotus Sūtra* it says, "As the light of the sun and moon can banish all obscurity and gloom, so this person [Buddha] as he passes through the world can wipe out the darkness of living beings."153 The sun and the moon dispel darkness and aid in disseminating light just like the light of knowledge taught by the Buddhist dharma. In addition, in the *Bhaiṣajyagura Sūtra* found in Gilgit, it says that the sun and moon have great power, just like the Buddha and the dharma.154 In visual imagery, a moon or sun disk on a lotus represents the perfect wisdom attained by all Buddhas through the dharma. Therefore, the sun and moon symbols, especially on a crowned Buddha's shoulders, signify his attainment of the highest truth and Buddhahood, similar to the iconography of the crown.155 Both the Buddha and his teachings emanate light and truth - like the heavenly symbols they reflect his great power and sovereignty.


In addition, considering Buddhist iconography, there is another level of interpretation for the symbols. The emblems are found on each shoulder of a figure wearing the four-pointed cape that symbolizes Mt. Meru. Hence, it is also possible that in Vajrayāna meditations the symbols represent the sun and moon that are visualized to circle around Mt. Meru. The effigies are therefore, most likely another iconographic element chosen by the donors to reinforce the notion of the place as Akaniṣṭha on Mt. Meru. Moreover, they are symbols in yogic meditation where the sun and moon symbol represent the top *cakras*. In Vajrayāna Buddhism, the emblems of the sun and moon can also symbolize the male and female aspect. According to Shashi Bhushan Dasgupta, Vajrayāna Buddhism practiced in Nepal uses the symbols to express male and female. The crescent moon symbolizes the female element and the flame inside it is the male aspect, representing their union. The union of male and female as a symbol of non-duality is an important concept in esoteric methodologies. Perhaps the version of the crescent moon with the rosette sun on the Paṭola Śāhi images is an earlier proto-type for this metaphor of non-duality through the union of male and female.

The lunar and solar symbolism appears on quite a few of the Paṭola Śāhi images. Most importantly, a crescent moon with a solar symbol inside is found on all of the shoulders of the crowned Buddhas wearing capes,

156 Huntington and Bangdel, *Circle of Bliss*, 84.
including figures A.2, A.7, A.8, A.23 and A.24. In addition, there is a crescent moon with a sun disc at the top center of the crowned Buddha Maitreya’s aureole in figure A.9. Interestingly, the symbols also appear on the top of the stūpas that flank both Buddhas in figure A.7 and figure A.8, although one is damaged and lost. These are not the only examples of this iconography. The crescent moon with a solar disc is also depicted on several stūpas found in rock carvings in Chilas and Thalpan.

Thus, while the sun and moon in the Paṭola Śāhi crowned Buddha images indicate kingship and power, the emblems also help to identify the crowned figures as a fully enlightened being that has attained Buddhahood, possessing the great light of truth. In addition, there is an additional level of meaning within a Vajrayāna Buddhist context where the sun and moon symbols aid in the transformation of space to Akaniṣṭha on top of Mt. Meru.

Other Examples of Crowned Buddhas with the Same Iconography

Aside from the examples used in the discussion above, there are other images of crowned Buddhas with these same iconographic elements. Some of the other examples originate from Central Asia and Northwestern India. For example, a crowned Buddha, very similar to the Paṭola Śāhi type at Bamiyan, is painted in niche "i" (Figure 3.6).158 It shows a seated Buddha in

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158 This is dated to the 7th century. Klimburg-Salter, Bāmiyān, 100. See her Fig. 3 for the full context of the image.
monastic garments with an obvious *pañca jīna* crown with silk ribbons attached to it and a four-pointed cape decorated with jewels and tassels.\footnote{\textsuperscript{159}} Another similar Buddha made of unbaked clay is from Fondukistan and is now located in the Musée Guimet (Figure 3.7). This Buddha, generally dated to the 7\textsuperscript{th} century, was located on the left wall of Niche D at the monastery. The Buddha is wearing monastic garments with an elaborate necklace, and a highly decorated four-pointed cape with jewels and a fringe. It is suggested that he wore a metal crown now lost, and due to the consistent iconography used on all of the other Buddhas, it is probable.\footnote{\textsuperscript{160}} Another example of a Buddha with similar iconography is from Gandhara. It is a sculpture of a standing Buddha in monastic robes wearing a four-pointed cape decorated with jewels and tassels (Figure 3.8). Moreover, he is wearing a crown decorated with the motif of the crescent moon with a sun. There is also a Buddha figure made of clay from Tapa Sardar, on the left wall in Chapel 23, who wears monastic robes and a cape.\footnote{\textsuperscript{161}}

Other examples of crowned Buddhas with the same iconographic features come from Kashmir as well. There are two life-size crowned

\footnote{\textsuperscript{159} It is not clear if there is a symbol of a sun and moon on the shoulders or not. According to Klimburg-Salter, there are flame-like emblems on the shoulders. She provides images of other crowned Buddhas with capes at Bamiyan, such as in the colossal Buddha niche (fig. 31, 35, 36); one in cave S (fig. 33); and in cave K on the ceiling (fig. 5). Klimburg-Salter, \textit{Bāmiyān}.}


\footnote{\textsuperscript{161} This is discussed in Taddei, “Bejewelled Buddha,” 457.}
Buddhas from Parihasapura carved from stone dated to the 7th century (Figure 3.9 and Figure 3.10). Their crowns have an especially prominent crescent moon with a rosette sun inside, similar to the Paṭola Śāhi motif. Moreover, both of the crowns feature the billowing silk ribbons. The crowned Buddha in figure 3.9 wears the accompanying four-pointed cape with jewels and a fringe as well.

Several 7th and 8th century brass sculptures from Kashmir feature the same iconographic elements similar to the Paṭola Śāhi crowned Buddhas. The crowned Buddha in figure 3.11 wears an elaborate four-pointed cape as seen from the frontal and back views. His crown has billowing silk ribbons and he also has a crescent moon with a solar symbol on each of his shoulders, while he performs the dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā. The Buddha in figure 3.12 wears a three-pointed crown. He is wearing monastic garments along with a four-pointed cape decorated with gems and tassels. The standing Buddha in figure 3.13 wears monastic robes with a crown similar to the Parihasapura Buddhas along with the flowing silk ribbons. The Buddha also wears a four-pointed cape with elaborate tassels and a sun and moon symbol on each shoulder. The Buddha in figure 3.14 wears a pañca jīna crown with the attached silk ribbons as well as jewelry. He does not wear the distinct four-pointed cape, however, he does have a special cape-like robe that creates pleats at his shoulders similar to the Paṭola Śāhi crowned Buddha in figure A.9. Another example of a Maitreya Buddha features the same
typifying iconography (Figure 3.15). He is wearing monastic garments and a crown similar to the Mañjuśrī Buddha in figure A.1. He is also depicted in a four-pointed cape decorated with jewels and tassels and he performs the dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā.

We can conclude, therefore, that there are numerous examples of Buddhas featuring iconography similar to that found in the Paṭola Śāhi corpus, especially works showing the crown and the cape. It is interesting that the other examples of crowned Buddhas are from Northwest India, Central Asia, and the Himalayan area. It is noteworthy that the Paṭola Śāhi crowned Buddhas comprise the largest collection of the crowned and caped images in these regions. Most of the examples are contemporary to or earlier than the Paṭola Śāhi artworks, so it cannot necessarily be said that the Paṭolas were the creators of this iconographic form. However, it can be said with certainty that this iconographic form of a Buddha was significant to the Paṭola Śāhi patrons. The prevalence of the crowned Buddhas is of important consequence, especially the use of the pañca jina crown. This type of Buddha is typically called a "bejeweled" Buddha, but this study classifies them as a "crowned Buddha" in order to emphasize the importance of the iconography of the crown and its related interpretation. The Paṭola Śāhi images are crucial because they are some of the earliest dated brass sculptures that feature these core iconographic elements. Together, these symbolic traits create a coded visual language that sheds new light on the theoretical
meaning and purpose underlying the Buddhist imagery, particularly within the context of Buddhism practiced by the Pațola Śāhi dynasty.

**Crowned Buddhas as *Sambhogakāya***

The iconography of the crown, the cape, and the sun and moon symbols are consistently incorporated in the Pațola Śāhi idiom. Although the iconology of the individual symbols has been discussed, it is important to consider what they mean as a whole. In other words, the contextualization of the image is possible through an understanding of the iconography. I have shown that these core iconographic elements were borrowed as various symbols of royalty, particularly the crown, in order to represent a transcendent Buddhist deity who has attained all knowledge and Buddhahood. The notion of a universal sovereign is relevant to the discussion of these images. However, as suggested, the Buddhological symbolism is consistent and fully developed. The Buddhist artistic vocabulary, then, can be viewed as multi-valent, and, as such, the set of symbols as a visual language are assigned a primary theoretical meaning within the framework of Buddhist practice and beliefs. Within a Buddhist context, the iconography of a crowned Buddha image primarily embodies a specific methodology relating to the concept of *sambhogakāya* as part of the *trikāya* or three-body system.

*Sambhogakāya* (Enjoyment Body)
The notion of *trikāya*, or three bodies of a Buddha, is a system formulated to explain the concept of Buddhahood. It is a fundamental concept in both Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna Buddhism. The *trikāya* system was developed primarily by Asaṅga, his teacher Maitreya, and his brother Vasubandhu in 4th century India. Together, they are often credited with establishing a new school of thought in Mahāyāna Buddhism called Yogācāra. The earliest texts written by the sect introducing the *trikāya* system are the *Mahāyānasūtrālāmkāra* by Maitreya and the *Mahāyānasamgraha* by Asaṅga.

The concept of *trikāya* stems from the earlier Buddhist theory of the two-body system. The two *kāyas* or bodies were the *dharmakāya* (*dharma* body) and the *rūpakāya* (form body). The two bodies separated the physical or temporal body of the historical Buddha Śākyamuni from the permanent and eternal Buddhist teachings. The *rūpakāya* Buddha, teaching the Buddhist *dharma* to sentient beings, was the manifestation of the incorporeal and intangible *dharmakāya*. Hence, the two forms allowed for the distinction between the human Buddha and the qualities of the absolute or *dharma*.

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163 For a discussion of these texts, see Hanson, 62-5; Paul J. Griffiths, *The Realm of Awakening: a Translation and Study of the tenth chapter of Asanga’s Mahāyānasamgraha* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); and Guang Xing, *The Concept of the Buddha: Its Evolution from Early Buddhism to the trikāya theory* (London and New York: Routledge Curzon, 2005), 109. A more systematic explanation of the *trikāya* can be found in the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*, see Xing, 101.
With the multitude of new Buddhas introduced in Mahāyāna Buddhism, the *trikāya* system is thought by scholars to have been developed to help the practitioner understand the nature of the numerous Buddhas. The purpose of any and all Buddhas is to lead the follower to enlightenment and Buddhahood, also known as *dharmakāya*. The new Buddhas, therefore, manifested various bodies for the sake of sentient beings, becoming a metaphor for *dharmakāya*. All three bodies were considered different aspects of the same reality. The *trikāya* systemized these bodies, basically dividing the *rūpakāya* into two separate form bodies.\(^{164}\) The three natures of a Buddha can be experienced as *nirmāṇakāya* (transformation body), *sambhogaṃkāya* (enjoyment body), or *dharmakāya*.

The excellence of wisdom is to be understood as three bodies of Buddha: the Essence Body, the Enjoyment Body, and the Transformation Body. Among these, the Essence Body is the Dharma Body belonging to Tathāgatas because it is the support for mastering all things. The Enjoyment Body is constituted by Buddha’s various assemblies and supported upon Dharma Body. This is because it experiences the complete purification of the Buddha field and enjoys the Dharma of the great Vehicle. The Transformation Body is also supported upon Dharma Body. It manifests: residing in and descending from the Tuśita palace: being born; indulging desire; leaving home; meeting with infidels; practicing asceticism; attaining perfect awakening; turning the wheel of the doctrine; and entering into final cessation.\(^{165}\)

In the *trikāya* system, the *dharmakāya* remained the origin and totality of all Buddhist *dharma*, and was therefore unconceivable. As the eternal and pure nature of all phenomena, *dharmakāya* is the principle of the

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\(^{164}\) David L. McMahan, *Empty Vision – Metaphor and Visionary Imagery in Mahāyāna Buddhism* (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), 159-61. It is suggested that this was to separate the human physical Buddha from the Buddha who was beginning to attain transcendent qualities and supernatural powers. Xing, 101.
Paul Williams explains that dharmakāya is considered to be identical to dharmadhātu or the dharma-realm and therefore, dharmakāya is the fundamental aspect of the cosmos - the essence of a Buddha. Dharmakāya is embodied by all Buddhas, past, present and future, hence making them identical or equal. Furthermore, since dharmakāya is indefinable, it is non-representational, having no form or substance. Therefore, strictly speaking, there is no representation for a Buddha in his complete dharmakāya nature.

The physical or corporeal body in the trikāya system is called the nirmāṇakāya or transformation body. Like rūpakāya, it remained the manifestation of the temporal and earthly qualities of the historical Buddha Śākyamuni. The biography of Śākyamuni in the ordinary world became the paradigm for a nirmāṇakāya. His life events, including the descent from Tuṣita to be born in a palace, renouncing the princely life to become an

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165 From Paul Giffiths tranlsation, Realm of Awakening, 49.
166 Xing, 82.
168 The Ādi or Primordial Buddhas who embody the Buddhist dharma are dharmakāya s in Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna Buddhism. Since the dharmakāya is non-representational, a visual depiction of an Ādi Buddha is regarded as a sambhogakāya manifestation. The Ādi Buddhas include Vairocana, Vajrasattva and Vajradhātu. Huntington and Bangdel, Circle of Bliss, 81 and 88. See also the later section in this chapter on the Mahāvairocana abhisambodhi Tantra.
ascetic, attaining enlightenment, teaching the Buddhist dharma, and death are to be examples to lead others to higher understanding and enlightenment. As a nirmāṇakāya, the dharma was taught to all living beings in order to manifest the wisdom and perfection of dharmakāya.\footnote{Paul Williams, Mahāyāna Buddhism – The Doctrinal Foundations (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), 178-79; and Xing, 142. See also William Montomery McGovern, An Introduction to Mahāyāna Buddhism (London, 1922; reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1971), 90.}

The sambhogakāya or enjoyment body became the new meditational form within the trikāya system. Since it serves as an intermediary form between nirmāṇakāya and dharmakāya, it is a way to experience or visualize the highest or inconceivable form of dharmakāya. There are actually two levels of bodies within the sambhogakāya nature.\footnote{Xing, 1; and McGovern, 87-8.} Guang Xing explains that the svasambhogakāya is the reward body pertaining to the merit and award attained by the bodhisattva in training. The parasambhogakāya is the form experiencing the eternal enjoyment of the dharma. Therefore, he suggests a complete translation of the term sambhogakāya can be the Enjoyment Body of the Award. Furthermore, sambhogakāya’s nature is two-fold. As a bridge between nirmāṇakāya and dharmakāya, sambhogakāya has aspects of both, yet it is neither.\footnote{Minoru Kiyota, “Tantric Concept of Bodhicitta: A Buddhist Experiential Philosophy – An Exposition based upon the Mahāvairocanasūtra, Bodhicitta-śāstra and Sokushin-jōbutsugi,” Ph.D. Diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1982, 58-9.} Minoru Kiyota explains that sambhogakāya is indestructible and eternal like dharmakāya, but it is also

capable of communicating with sentient beings like *nirmāṇakāya*. The
enjoyment body transcends the *nirmāṇakāya* Buddha as a symbol for living
beings to understand *dharmakāya*, and as such, *sambhogakāya* concretizes
the indefinable.\textsuperscript{173}

"The *sambhogakāya*, by definition, functions within a Buddha-field
(buddhakṣetra), a meditational realm not easily accessible to ordinary,
worldly beings."\textsuperscript{174} The Buddha-field is a transcendent realm, purified by the
enjoyment of the *dharma*.\textsuperscript{175} The *dharmakāya* is manifested through the
enjoyment body to tenth-stage *bodhisattvas* in this Buddha-field. A tenth-
stage or great *bhūmi bodhisattva* is an advanced being who has completed the
practice of the ten *dharma* of the ten *bhūmis*.\textsuperscript{176} The *bodhisattvas* at this
level perform intense meditation, allowing them to visualize or experience
various Buddhas and to receive the teachings.\textsuperscript{177} Hence, a *sambhogakāya*
brings *bodhisattvas* to complete maturity, enabling them to perfect their
skills and attain realization of the *dharmakāya*.\textsuperscript{178} In the tenth *bhūmi* after
attaining *dharmakāya*, the *bodhisattva* is on the threshold of Buddhahood.

\textsuperscript{173} Xing, 1.

\textsuperscript{174} Chaya Chandrasekhar, "Pāla-Period Buddha Images: The Hands, Hand Gestures, and

\textsuperscript{175} Hanson, 169. See also Griffiths, *On Being Buddha*, 128-33.

\textsuperscript{176} For further description of these stages, see later section in this chapter on the
*Avatamsaka Sūtra*.

\textsuperscript{177} Griffiths, *On Being Buddha*, 129.

\textsuperscript{178} Xing, 86-7.
The conceptual Buddha-field, according to Paul Griffith, is caused to arise when a highly skilled Buddhist adept has completed various stages on his religious path and perfected advanced meditational practices. Thus, the intrinsic nature of the Buddha-field and *sambhogakāya* is manifested in the mind. Chaya Chandrasekhar explains that enjoyment bodies "are sole meditational constructs, manifested in the minds of skilled practitioners . . . In other words, through envisioning a Buddha-field and its inhabitants, an adept practitioner, while physically bound to earthly existence, conceptually experiences the glory of the *sambhogakāya* and transcends ordinary space and time." In Vajrayāna Buddhism, in particular, using transformative meditation practices, the adept even becomes a *sambhogakāya* Buddha.

As a meditational construct, it is important to define the characteristics of *sambhogakāya* nature. The enjoyment body can be described and understood through "Five Certainties:"

1) The place is always Akaniṣṭha, the highest meditational realm in the Buddhist cosmos.
2) The teacher is always Vairocana.
3) The peers are all tenth-stage *bodhisattvas*.
4) The teachings are always from the Great Vehicle or Mahāyāna teachings.
5) The time is always the eternal continuum of the past, present, and future.

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180 Chandrasekhar, 184-85.

181 Huntington, “Vairocana and Vajradhara,” 81. His list is slightly different than the five certainties formulated by the 14th century Tibetan scholar, Bu ston. Rather than the certainty of the teacher as Vairocana, Bu ston has the form certainty possessing thirty-two major marks and eight minor marks. For Bu ston’s list, see John Makransky, *Buddhahood*.
The Representation of *Sambhogakāya* Buddhas

In Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna Buddhism, the Buddha manifests various bodies in accordance to the level of the practitioner’s spiritual development and practice of particular teachings. Since the dharmakāya is unconceivable and non-representational, it is the sambhogakāya and nirmānakāya that are specific to Buddhist visual imagery. In Buddhist practice, a Buddha can be depicted, therefore, as nirmānakāya or sambhogakāya for worship and meditation. The two form bodies help to distinguish between the two perceptual bodies of a Buddha.

In visual depictions, the nirmānakāya Buddha represents the physical body used by a Buddha existing on earth. The nirmānakāya is the essence of Buddhahood in human form. Although it manifests in whatever way may be necessary for others, the life of Śākyamuni serves as the exemplar for the transformation body. Consequently, all of the mānuṣi Buddhas experienced the same life events as Śākyamuni, just as will the future Buddha Maitreya. It is the nirmānakāya form in which the mānuṣi Buddhas expound the core Buddhist dharma to sentient beings. When a

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182 In Buddhist practice, the nirmānakāya form body translates to the physical body experienced by the individual practitioner and teacher.

183 Paul Williams points out that this can be human form or animal form as found in various jātakas (life stories). Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, 178.

184 For further explanation of this notion, see the later section in this chapter on the *Mahāvastu*. See also Griffiths, *On Being Buddha*, 52.
Buddha is portrayed or visualized in his human transformation body, he is depicted as an unadorned ascetic wearing monastic garments. Often, his *mudrā* refers to a particular life event highlighting his *nirmāṇakāya* nature. Chaya Chandrasekhar explains that the *nirmāṇakāya* Buddha's *mudrās* relate to the earthly activities completed in order to bring living beings to enlightenment.\(^{185}\)

In visual representations of the *sambhogakāya*, the Buddha must manifest the features particular to the enjoyment body. The description of the Buddha Vajrasattva as a *sambhogakāya* formulated by Kunzang Lama in his instructions in the *Kun-zang La-may Zhal-lung* provides an important list of traits.\(^{186}\) Since Vajrasattva is a quintessential *sambhogakāya*, the list can also describe any *sambhogakāya* Buddha. The list of thirteen specific characteristics for the enjoyment body are:\(^{187}\)

**Silk Items:**
1) Ribbons (tied on the crown)
2) Upper garment (almost never depicted)
3) Silk scarf
4) Sash at the waist (often hidden)
5) Lower garment

**Jeweled Ornaments:**
1) Crown
2) Earrings

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\(^{185}\) Chandrasekhar, 210.


Moreover, John Huntington describes additional traits belonging to a *sambhogakāya* Buddha that are understood in Buddhist imagery. These seven features are:188

1) Bindu at the top of the Buddha's head, symbolizing yogic attainment
2) Merujatā hair arrangement consisting of a three-tiered yogin headdress, representing Mt. Meru
3) Pañca Jina Buddha Crown, indicating complete enlightenment
4) White complexion, representing purity
5) Lotus seat, symbolizing heavenly transcendence
6) Moon disc on the top of the lotus seat, representing perfect wisdom
7) Existence manifested only in the mind of the practitioner

The silk items and the jeweled ornaments present a resplendent image of the *sambhogakāya* nature or meditational construct as a manifestation of *dharmakāya*.

The *pañca jina* Buddhas are also embodiments of the *dharmakāya*, and as such, play a fundamental role in the conception of *sambhogakāya*.189 Iconographically, they inherently convey the *sambhogakāya* nature and are

188 Huntington and Bangdel, *Circle of Bliss*, 209.

189 Kün-zang Lama, Vol. 4, xi-xii. John Huntington explains that *sambhogakāya jina* Buddhas began with three Buddha families rather than five, consisting of the Tathāgata or Buddha Family (Vairocana), the Vajra family (Aksobhya), and the Padma family (Amitābha). By the 4-5th century the three developed into the five families, manifesting the *jina* Buddhas. See Huntington, “Vairochana and Vajradhara,” 80. See also Snellgrove, *Image of a Buddha*, 135.
most often depicted with the characteristic enjoyment body traits. In a meditational framework, the *jīna* Buddhas (Amitābha, Akṣobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amoghasiddhi, and Vairocana) can be represented in various manners while still personifying the totality of enlightenment. They can be depicted as individual Buddhas or as symbols in each piece of a five-pointed crown, thereby symbolizing the *pañca jīna* crown. Moreover, if they are not depicted in a five-pointed crown, their presence is implied. The *pañca jīna* Buddhas can be portrayed in paintings or sculptures individually or as a group. Two early sculptures representing the group of *pañca jīna* Buddhas are from Kashmir dating to the 7th–8th century (Figure 3.16 and Figure 3.17). Both sculptures show the five transcendent Buddhas sitting in a row upon their *vāhanas* (vehicles). In these figures, only Vairocana is shown as a *sambhogakāya* with a crown, jeweled ornaments, and silk items, while the other Buddhas are unadorned.

This particular way of setting the *jīna* Buddha Vairocana apart from the others through the crown marks his primary role in Buddhism. The *jīna* Buddhas are identifiers of the processes of enlightenment, and as such, Vairocana embodies the final attainment of absolute truth and reality. The Buddha Mahāvairocana, in particular, represents the subtle nature of the *jīna* Buddha Vairocana and his primary importance.\textsuperscript{190} Vairocana is a

fundamental Buddha because he personifies the totality of dharmakāya. He resides in Akaniṣṭha, the highest meditational realm, and as the epitome of a sambhogakāya, Vairocana manifests the dharma.

Sambhogakāya Vairocana

Vairocana is the source of all Buddhist teachings, and thus the aggregate of all Buddhas.\(^{191}\) Vairocana as a transcendent Buddha, not limited by time and space, is considered the universal sovereign.\(^{192}\) Tom Kasulis explains that the universe is a manifestation of the actions and deeds of Vairocana, thereby this Buddha is at the core of everything in the cosmos.\(^{193}\) As such, Vairocana is the descriptor of dharmakāya.\(^{194}\) Vairocana is, therefore, an archetypal enjoyment body Buddha. When Vairocana is visualized and depicted in a physical form, it is generally understood that he is a manifestation of the sambhogakāya form demonstrating the dharmakāya, and as such, is represented with the sambhogakāya traits characterizing his role as universal king.\(^{195}\)


\(^{192}\) See later section in this chapter on the Avatamsaka Sūtra.


\(^{194}\) Huntington, “Vairochana and Vajradhara,” 80; and Saso, 82.

\(^{195}\) John C. Huntington with Chaya Chadrasekhar, “The Dharmacakramudrā Variant at Ajanta: An Iconological Study,” Ars Orientalis (Supplement 1, 2000), 39, fn.4.
In tracing the development of representations of Vairocana as *sambhogakāya*, this aspect was formulated by the time of the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* (2nd-5th c.), where he was endowed with a great cosmic body, becoming the universal Buddha. In the *sūtra*, he is described as an intensely luminescent light, transcendent like the sun, pervading the whole universe.\(^{196}\) Vairocana is considered the nature of all *dharma* and the principle of the universe, and hence, his *sambhogakāya* nature personifies *dharmakāya*.

There are several early images that represent Vairocana in his early *sambhogakāya* form. The colossal Buddha carved at Lungmen in Honan, China is identified as Vairocana.\(^{197}\) This representation of a giant Buddha is based on the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*, popular in China at this time. His transcendent light that emanates and pervades all things is symbolized through one thousand little Buddhas in his halo. Moreover, the large size of the sculpture conveys the notion in the *sūtra* that he is the cosmic and Universal Buddha. The colossal Vairocana Buddha at Tōdaiji in Japan was based on the same premise and *sūtra*.\(^{198}\) Perhaps the great Buddha at Kargah, near Gilgit, is meant to represent Vairocana as the great universal Buddha as well (Figure A.29).

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\(^{196}\) See later section in this chapter on the *Avatmasaka Sūtra*.

\(^{197}\) This sculpture was commissioned by the Chinese Empress Wu in 672-675 C.E.

\(^{198}\) It is dated to the 8th century. The original was destroyed in a fire, and the reconstruction also has 1000 Buddhas in the halo.
Vairocana’s early *sambhogakāya* aspect was also depicted through other forms of representation. For example, the cave painting at Balawaste in Central Asia depicts the concept of the universal and cosmic Vairocana by painting ornaments and symbols on the body of the Buddha (Figure 3.18).\(^{199}\) Vairocana even has a solar symbol on his right shoulder and a crescent moon with a vertical piece and rosette on his left shoulder.\(^{200}\) Other images that are similar, include a Vairocana Buddha painted on a banner from Dunhuang now in the British Museum.\(^{201}\)

No later than the 7\(^{th}\) c., there was a fully developed concept of *sambhogakāya* Vairocana as Mahāvairocana (Greatly Intense Light) in Buddhist literature. In the *Mahāvairocana abhisambodhi Tantra*, he is described as blazing in light with his topknot and crown.\(^{202}\) The imagery identifying Mahāvairocana as a *sambhogakāya* Buddha is further confirmed in the 8\(^{th}\) century commentary on the *sūtra* by Buddhaguhya, where he says Mahāvairocana is a *sambhogakāya* Buddha.

By the word "Vairocana," they [advanced practitioners who can comprehend the entire meaning of the tantra through simply hearing the words of the title] know that

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199 This dates to the 7\(^{th}\) or 8\(^{th}\) century.

200 Banerjee suggests that he held a crown in his hands that is no longer present. Banerjee, *Central Asian Art*, 17.

201 See discussion in Williams, *On Being Buddha*, 136-38. For other images relating to the notion of a cosmic Buddha from Farhad-Beg, Kyzyl, Karashar, and China, see Angela Falco Howard, *The Imagery of the Cosmological Buddha* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1986). Some of these examples are dated as early as the 5\(^{th}\)-6\(^{th}\) century.

the Bhagvat Vairocana is the sambhogikakaya, the perfect accumulation of merit and awareness, all-knowing in nature.²⁰³

The early artworks depicting this concept and theoretical practice of Vairocana as a meditational construct or *sambhogakāya* become more consistent in their iconography. He no longer appears solely as a colossal or cosmic representation. Rather, Vairocana is depicted with the specific characteristics of a *sambhogakāya*, such as the silk items and jeweled ornaments. The sculpture of Mahāvairocana in the Sri Pratap Singh Museum is a benchmark of this *sambhogakāya* nature (Figure 3.19). Mahāvairocana is wearing the silk items of the ribbons tied to the crown, perhaps the upper garment, a silk scarf, perhaps a sash at the waist, and the lower garment. He also is wearing the jeweled ornaments including the crown, earrings, beaded necklace, armlets, bracelets, and anklets. In this image, *sambhogakāya* Mahāvairocana is performing the *bodhyaṅgī mudrā*.

The *bodhyaṅgī mudrā* is formed by the index finger of the right hand pointing upwards, while the thumb and remaining fingers of the right hand make a fist. The fingers of the left hand wrap around the vertical right finger. As prescribed in the *Tattva Saṁgraha* and the *Sādhanamāla*, the *bodhyaṅgī mudrā* is specific to Vairocana, representing the totality of the five transcendental insights of the five *jīna* Buddhas. As such, Vairocana is a manifestation of this supreme or highest enlightenment.

²⁰³ Hodge, 44.
Therefore, as Chaya Chandrasekhar explains, the bodhyāgri mudrā of Vairocana is, in essence, an attribute, which conveys his primary nature as a meditational Buddha. Consequently, some scholars argue that a figure can only be identified as Vairocana if he is performing the bodhyāgri mudrā. According to this theory, a crowned figure is not Vairocana unless he is also performing the bodhyāgri mudrā. There is, however, another mudrā that acts as an iconographic signifier to identify Vairocana, although perhaps less known. It is the dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā. The dharmacakra mudrā refers to the turning or teaching of the wheel of Buddhist law. Typically, the wheel is formed by the thumb and forefinger of the right hand in front of the chest or where the seat of the heart-mind lies (core essence that transforms the individual into a Buddha) while the index finger of the left hand points to the wheel. In the dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā, the right hand is creating the same wheel, however, the little or fourth finger of the left hand points to the wheel.

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205 Chandrasekhar, 115.

206 Huntington and Chandrasekhar, Dharmacakramudrā, 34; Snellgrove, Image of the Buddha,” 286 and 336; and von Schroeder, Buddhist Sculptures, 114.
wheel (Figure 3.20). The dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā is known to be performed by Vairocana Buddha in the Durgatiparśodhana mandala of the Niśpannoyogāvalī. In the text and imagery, Vairocana is dressed in the monastic robes of Śākyamuni and performs the dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā.

Examples of the dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā can be found as early as the caves at Ajanta. An image in Cave 4, dating to the 5th century, shows a Buddha performing the dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā. In several caves at Aurangabad, especially Caves 6 and 7, the dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā is performed by a Vairocana Buddha and a Maitreya Buddha respectively. These caves date to the 6th century. The dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā was also common in the Kashmiri idiom. For example,

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207 Huntington and Chandrasekhar state that, “More specifically, the little finger of the left hand lies alongside the thumb of the right hand, and the tips of the two digits are capped by the forefinger of the proper right hand.” Sometimes he is grasping the hem of the robe between the thumb and the first three fingers so it rests in the palm of his left hand at the same time. This holding of the robe is called urnagarbha, which signals the prediction of enlightenment by the Buddha. Huntington and Chandrasekhar, “Dharmacakramudrā,” 33.


209 von Schroeder, Buddhist Sculptures, 106. Without understanding the iconography, he suggests that when Śākyamuni makes the mudrā, it represents the First Sermon, but on other images it just represents the wheel of the dharma, 118.

210 The dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā is found frequently, and remained consistent throughout West India, thereby it is suggested that it must be an iconographic convention based on a particular teaching. Huntington and Chandrasekhar, “Dharmacakramudrā,” 33.

the Buddha in figure 3.21 is a brass sculptures identified as Vairocana from Kashmir, dating to the 7th-8th century. The unadorned Buddha wears monastic robes and performs this *dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā*. It is important to note that although the sculpture from Kashmir does not feature any of the silk or jeweled ornaments of a *sambhogakāya* Buddha, through the iconographic signifier of the *dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā*, he is still understood as Vairocana - the quintessential enjoyment body Buddha.

The symbolic meaning of the *dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā*, especially, relates to the fourth finger of the left hand touching the *dharmacakra* formed in the right hand. As mentioned previously, the typical *dharmacakra mudrā* performed by a Buddha has the first finger of the left hand touching the wheel in the right hand. There are also images of Śākyamuni Buddha where the second or middle finger is pointing to the wheel. For example, in the sculpture of Śākyamuni’s First Sermon from Sarnath, India, belonging to the Gupta period, the second finger on the left hand touches the *dharmacakra*.\(^{212}\) There are also examples where the left third or ring finger is used to point to the wheel.\(^{213}\) John Huntington and Chaya Chandrasekhar suggest that since the *mudrā* is a symbolic language, there is a sequential progression counted on the fingers that refers to a

\(^{212}\) For an image of this, see Susan Huntington, *Art of India*, fig. 10.20.

\(^{213}\) For a discussion of these images, see Huntington and Chandrasekhar, “*Dharmacakramudrā*,” 36-37 and Fig. 6 showing a Buddha from a folio in a *Prajñāpāramitā* manuscript from Bihār, India.
specific category of Buddhist teaching. In this case, this fourth or little finger pointing to the forefinger of the right hand refers to the fourth Buddhist teaching. They suggest this might relate to the teachings of Zhiyi, the founder of the Tendai sect. Zhiyi divided Śākyamuni’s teachings into five categories. The first category refers to the moment of Śākyamuni’s enlightenment and victory over Mara when he goes to Akaniṣṭha and teaches as Vairocana. The second teaching refers to the First Sermon at Deer Park, or what is known as Hinayāna or Śravakayāna Buddhism. The third category is the Mahāyāna Buddhist teachings. Since esoteric Buddhism is the last and most the complex of the Buddhist teachings, one could conclude that this fourth teaching refers to Vajrayāna Buddhism. Therefore, the dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā is not only another means of depicting Vairocana as a sambhogakāya, an embodiment of dharmakāya, but it is also a symbolic reference to esoteric Buddhism.

The Paṭola Śāhi Sambhogakāya Buddhas as Vairocana

This section considers the crowned Buddhas represented in the corpus of the Paṭola Śāhi visual imagery, applying the typifying features of a sambhogakāya. In particular, the images are examined for the specific list of thirteen ornaments and seven additional traits found on an enjoyment body

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Buddha. In this section, the group of crowned Buddhas is comprised of the images that definitely belong to the Paṭola Śāhi's visual record as well as the images that can possibly be attributed to the dynasty.

Although the majority of crowned Paṭola Śāhi Buddhas do not bear all of these traits, I believe that they still represent the sambhogakāya aspect. I suggest that as early representations of the formulated sambhogakāya, they bare the primary benchmarks needed to distinguish them as meditational constructs. The Paṭola Śāhi images feature transitional iconography between the cosmic, colossal sambhogakāya representation of Vairocana and the fully developed Vajrayāna enjoyment body Buddha, personified by Vajrasattva and described in the standard set of characteristics. It is obvious that the core elements denoting a sambhogakāya in the Paṭola Śāhi idiom relate to the silk item of the ribbons tied to the crown and the jeweled ornaments of the crown, earrings, necklaces, armlets, bracelets, finger rings, and anklets.

Furthermore, the evidence shows that this set of iconographic identifiers is also used in conjunction with the dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā in the Paṭola Śāhi visual record to portray Vairocana. Thus, the predominance of the Vairocana images within the Paṭola Śāhi corpus not only reflects his popularity among the donors of the dynasty, but also clarifies the theoretical practices and beliefs they embraced. For the Paṭola Śāhi patrons, the central role of Vairocana facilitates the depiction of a meditational

Fourfold Teachings,” trans. The Buddhist Translation Seminar of Hawaii (Tokyo: Daiichi-
Buddha, especially as a crowned *sambhogakāya* symbolizing a universal monarch.

The crowned Buddha in figure A.21 can be unequivocally identified as Mahāvairocana. Mahāvairocana is performing the *bodhyāgrī* mudrā and is wearing the standard set of ornaments personifying *sambhogakāya* nature, including the ribbons tied to the crown, the silk scarf, a sash around the waist, the lower garment, and the jeweled ornament of the crown, earrings, necklace, armlets, bracelets, and a finger ring. In addition, the flaming jewel as a *bindu* on top of his *merujāṭā* hair arrangement indicates his yogic attainments. It is noteworthy that although Mahāvairocana features a majority of the standard traits that belong to the fully developed iconography of a Vajrayāna Mahāvairocana Buddha, he still clearly belongs to the Paṭola Śāhi idiom. I suggest that the donors of the sculpture as Buddhist monks, preferred to portray an image of Mahāvairocana closer to their texts and practice.

The remaining crowned Buddhas in the Paṭola Śāhi visual imagery are also manifesting the *sambhogakāya* aspect (Figures A.1, A.2, A.6, A.7, A.8, A.9, A.22, A.23, A.24, A.25, and A.26). Their jeweled crowns, some of them *pañca jīna* crowns, all have the flowing silk ribbons to help characterize the *sambhogakāya* Buddha. Moreover, all of the crowned Buddhas wear the typifying features of the jeweled ornaments, such as earrings, a beaded

Shobo, 1983), 55-61.
necklace, armlets, bracelets, and anklets. These iconographic elements
denote that these Paṭola Śāhi images are meant to communicate the
enjoyment body Buddhas, serving as meditational constructs. In addition, I
suggest that the four-pointed cape found on many of the crowned Buddhas is
a visual reinforcement of the *sambhogakāya* aspect in the Paṭola Śāhi idiom.
Five of the crowned Buddhas wear the distinctive cape decorated with a large
central jewel and an elaborate fringe. Not only does the iconography of the
cape help to create the vision of a transcendent *sambhogakāya*, but it also
enhances the resplendent image of a universal king, the role of Vairocana.
The cape with the sun and moon symbols also underscores the presence of
Vairocana in his realm of Akaniṣṭha.

Vairocana, as an archetypal enjoyment body Buddha, is a
manifestation of the *dharmakāya*. Many of the crowned Buddhas in the
Paṭola Śāhi visual record perform the *dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā*, the
*mudrā* specific to Vairocana, which further corroborates their identity as
Vairocana. The *dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā* is found on six of the eleven
crowned images belonging to the Paṭolás including figures A.2, A.6, A.8, A.9,
A.25, and A.26. The exceptions are the Mahāvairocana in figure A.21 and
then the crowned Buddhas in figures A.1, A.7, A.22, A.23, and A.24. The
*dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā* performed by Vairocana refers to the fourth
Buddhist teaching, the quick and highest method of enlightenment through
Vajrayāna Buddhism. The crowned Buddhas performing the *dharmacakra-
pravartana mudrā all have several other features that distinguish their sambhogakāya aspect, such as the billowing silk ribbons, the crown, earrings, necklaces, and armlets or bracelets. In addition, the crowned Buddhas in figures A.2 and A.8 performing the dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā also wear the four-pointed cape with the sun and moon symbols on their shoulders. Since the mudrā is specific to Vairocana and the Buddhas performing it are portrayed as sambhogakāya, these Paṭola Śāhi crowned Buddhas can, therefore, be identified as Vairocana.

Moreover, the crowned Paṭola Śāhi Buddhas depicted with sambhogakāya traits while performing the dhyāna mudrā can also be recognized as Vairocana (Figures A.7 and A.22). These two Buddha figures have the typifying sambhogakāya features of the flowing silk ribbons, the crown, earrings, and a beaded necklace. The crown on the Buddha in figure A.7, in particular, is a pañca jina crown. In addition, both Buddhas wear the four-pointed cape with the heavenly emblems on their shoulders. This form of Vairocana is described in the Mahāvairocana abhisambodhi Tantra where it says, "The Lord free from all ills should be depicted residing in samādhi." Therefore, these two Buddhas can actually be identified as Mahāvairocana abhisambodhi.

The dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā, common to the crowned Buddhas, is also found on a large number of the Paṭola Śāhi unadorned

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216 Hodge, 106.
Buddha figures. The *mudrā* is performed by five of the nine unadorned Buddhhas (Figures A.14, A.16, A.18, A.20, and A.27). The exceptions are seen in the Buddha images in figures A.10, A.17, A.19, and A.29. This type of representation is related to the form of Vairocana described in the *Durgatiparipārodhana maṇḍala* of the *Niśpannoyogāvalī*. It describes Vairocana wearing the monastic robes of Śākyamuni and performing the *dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā*. Therefore, the Paṭola Śāhi images, as well as the Kashmir example in figure 3.21, are depicted in monastic garments without any significant *sambhogakāya* traits, yet they perform the *mudrā* characteristic of Vairocana – the *dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā*.

Chaya Chandrasekhar explains that the *mudrās* of Vairocana can also serve to underscore his *sambhogakāya* identity. In Buddhism, a *mudrā* is defined as a sign or a seal. It is a symbolic mark or seal of a vow to lead sentient beings to enlightenment, and as such, it is a visual manifestation of the permanent and absolute *dharma*. In other words, since he embodies the ultimate state of Buddhahood, he does not need an attribute – his *mudrā* is his symbol or promise. The *dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā* is a reference to Vajrayāna Buddhism and symbolizes its rapid path of enlightenment.

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217 See fn. 208.

218 Chandrasekhar, 211-24.

such, Vairocana performing the *dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā* marks his mind-manifested character as a *sambhogakāya*.

Additional iconography in one of the Paṭola images, especially, corroborates the identification of the unadorned Buddhas performing the *dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā* as Vairocana. The unadorned Buddha in figure A.18 performing the *dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā* has a jewel on the top of his *uṣṇīśa*. This iconography is very similar to a Vairocana Buddha in the Michael Phillips Collection with the same jewel and *mudrā* (Figure 3.22). In the translation of the *Cakrasamvara Sādhana* by David Snellgrove, he translates a section describing the *sambhogakāya* form of Heruka that relates to this jewel. It says, "... the tip of his matted hair, which is bound up on the top of his head, is adorned with a precious wish-granting gem, for he bestows all desirable things in accordance with ones' wishes."\(^{220}\) Chaya Chandrasekhar points out that the wish-granting gem most likely refers to the *bindu*, which is one of the *sambhogakāya* traits.\(^{221}\) In addition, the top tier of the pedestal belonging to the Buddha in figure A.18 features a winged griffin on each corner. According to Buddhist iconography, a griffin is one of Vairocana’s váhanas.\(^{222}\) The iconographic clues of the jewel, griffins, and *mudrā* indicate that the Buddha in figure A.18 is undeniably meant to be


\(^{221}\) Chandrasekhar, 208.

\(^{222}\) For a discussion on the iconography of Vairocana, see Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, *The Indian Buddhist Iconography* (Calcutta: Firma K.L., Mukhopadhyay, 1987), 54.
identified as Vairocana. This confirms that the other unadorned Buddhas, performing the same mudrā are most likely Vairocana as well.

The core qualities of the mind-manifested being are clearly exhibited in the Paṭola Śāhi Buddhas in which a sambhogakāya can be identified. The recurring iconography of the enjoyment body nature, especially the pañca jina crown, and the dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā, in particular, provide a clearer understanding of the form of Buddhism practiced by the Paṭola Śāhi patrons. Specifically, the visual imagery indicates that the esoteric teachings of sambhogakāya Vairocana were very popular among the patrons of the dynasty.

In a review of the core iconographic elements used to portray sambhogakāya Vairocana, the multi-valent interpretations are evident. As noted, the bodhyāgrī mudrā is one of Vairocana’s mudrās. This mudrā represents the union of wisdom and compassion, which is also representative of male and female in esoteric Buddhism, and as such, it is the gesture of a promise of quick enlightenment - in other words, the rapid Vajrayāna path.223 The bodhyāgrī mudrā denotes the highest enlightenment held by a dharmakāya Buddha. In addition, another mudrā specific to Vairocana is the dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā. The fourth finger of the left hand touching the dharmacakra is a symbolic reference to the fourth Buddhist teachings or

223 Huntington and Bangdel, *Circle of Bliss*, 522. This mudrā also represents the union of male and female, see Snellgrove, *Image of the Buddha*, 367.
Vajrayāna Buddhism. The mudrā used by the quintessential enjoyment body Buddha, Vairocana, signifies a dharmakāya Buddha and the quick path to enlightenment. Furthermore, many of the Paṭola Śāhi Buddhas wear pañca jīna crowns, which is an esoteric symbol of the pañca jīna Buddhas serving as a paradigm for Vajrayāna symbology, practice, and attainment.

Vairocana resides in Akaniṣṭha, the highest heavenly realm on Mt. Meru. Akaniṣṭha is where most esoteric Buddhist meditations conceptually take place, and therefore, Vairocana is intrinsic to Vajrayāna Buddhism. Moreover, according to the "Five Certainties," Akaniṣṭha is the transcendent sphere belonging to a sambhogakāya Buddha. All meditational or heavenly realms exist within the domain of Akaniṣṭha, further reinforcing Vairocana's mind-manifested quality. The rocky Mt. Meru landscape in the bases of the Paṭola Śāhi artworks, along with the other esoteric iconography inherent in the cape and heavenly symbols, functions as indicators for the location of Vairocana's teaching in Akaniṣṭha. Thus, together the following aid in depicting Vairocana's transcendent sambhogakāya and esoteric form: the crown, particularly the pañca jīna crown; the silk items; the other jeweled ornaments; the cape; the heavenly symbols; and both the bodhyāgri mudrā and the dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā.

Vairocana is the embodiment of dharma, and because of this, any Buddha is understood, on this level, to be the teacher Vairocana. Hence, as

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224 See p.150 above. See also Wilson and Brauen, 357, 376, and 443.
the totality of the processes of the jīna Buddhas and an Ādi Buddha, Vairocana is the true teacher of esoteric Buddhism. John Huntington states that, "The Vairocana concept humanizes and reifies the teachings that generate all Buddhas." In other words, Vairocana is implied in any and every Buddha. If a Buddha does not have the identifying iconography directly pertaining to Vairocana, such as one of his mudrās, Vairocana, as a metaphor of dharma-kāya, is still conceptually embodied in the image. Therefore, there are inherent dual meanings in the portrayal of any sambhoga-kāya Buddha, especially relating to the concept and role of Vairocana. Since all crowned Buddhas are depicted as such to reflect their enjoyment body, and all Buddhas are Vairocana, then the identity of a Buddha can be conceived as a hypostasis of the Buddha Vairocana.

Hypostasis of Vairocana

It is commonly understood that Buddhist art and architecture can be read on several levels. The Paṭola Śāhi sculptures are no exception to this tradition. The majority of the Buddhas in the Paṭola Śāhi visual record, especially the ones with crowns, are performing the dharmakāra-pravartana mudrā specific to Vairocana Buddha. The Buddhas in their jeweled ornaments, particularly the crown, and the silk items are manifesting the

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225 From a discussion with John C. Huntington.

226 In Vajrayāna Buddhism, in particular, the various hypostasis of Vairocana play an important role.
dharmakāya through their sambhogakāya form as a means to visualize and meditate upon the absolute. All Buddhas and bodhisattvas are the same because they all have dharmakāya as their real nature.

Vairocana is manifest in all Buddhas of all times as the eternal dharma.227 The universe and everything in it is identical with Vairocana.228 Therefore, to understand the nature of dharma is to see Vairocana, the archetypal sambhogakāya aspect. This archetypal view further suggests that other crowned sambhogakāya Buddhas are identical to Vairocana. For example, although an image of a Buddha with a crown may be identified simply as Śākyamuni, when considered within this archetypal perspective, the image of Śākyamuni can be read as a hypostasis of Vairocana. A conflation of two seemingly different Buddhas indicates a conscious association of the two, therefore, the following section discusses how the identity of a Buddha can be layered with the identity of sambhogakāya Vairocana. This is specifically relevant to the Paṭola Śāhi visual record, and therefore focuses primarily upon the images of the crowned sambhogakāya Buddhas. The examples used, specifically, include the reification of Vairocana through images of the mānuṣī Buddhas such as Śākyamuni, Vipaśyin, and Maitreya, in addition to the Buddha Maṇjuśrī.

227 From an email from John C. Huntington, May 22, 2007.
228 Kasulis, Shinto, 125.
Although many crowned sambhogakāya Buddhas can ultimately be interpreted to be Vairocana Buddha, there is a special relationship between Śākyamuni and Vairocana.\textsuperscript{229} As a mānuṣi Buddha, Śākyamuni’s body is expressed in the nirmāṇakāya aspect. His transformation body represents his temporal and earthly qualities as a Buddha manifesting the dharma. In his nirmāṇakāya body, Śākyamuni expounds the Buddhist doctrine to sentient beings. Vairocana, on the other hand, is considered the embodiment of dharma, and as such, all Buddhas, including Śākyamuni, are the teacher Vairocana.\textsuperscript{230} Vairocana in his sambhogakāya aspect symbolizes universal enlightenment and Buddhahood, and therefore, Śākyamuni Buddha is merely a different manifestation of the same dharma and principle. In essence, Vairocana and Śākyamuni are identical.

As stated previously, the sambhogakāya nature has aspects of both dharmakāya and nirmāṇakāya. The sambhogakāya is the means through which humankind realizes the dharma or dharmakāya as taught by the nirmāṇakāya. Since a Buddha can simultaneously manifest in two or three different bodies, Śākyamuni is the nirmāṇakāya manifestation of Vairocana,


\textsuperscript{230} Kiyota, \textit{Shingon}, 61. This is the case, especially, in Shingon Buddhism in Japan where he is called Mahāvairocana.
while Vairocana is the *sambhogakāya* manifestation of Śākyamuni. The two Buddhas personify different aspects of *dharmakāya* according to a practitioner’s spiritual level.

That Śākyamuni is a hypostasis of Vairocana is evident in several Buddhist texts. The *Brahmajāla Sūtra* states that Śākyamuni’s original name was Vairocana and that he abided in a lotus with one thousand petals manifesting one thousand Śākyamunis, just as does Vairocana in the *Avatamsaka Sūtra.* In other words, Śākyamuni is Vairocana. In the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*, it says that Śākyamuni was Vairocana who descended from Tuśita heaven into the womb of his mother Mahāmāyā. Another section mentions Vairocana born into the house of King Śuddhodana, who was Śākyamuni’s father. In other words, Vairocana is Śākyamuni.

The *Avatamsaka Sūtra* gives the names of Buddhas, stating that in the four quarters of the world, the Buddha had various lives and bodies. Sometimes he was called Śākyamuni, and sometimes he was called Vairocana, and there are ten thousand such names. The two Buddhas,

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231 Xing, 141. Kiyota states that Mahāyāna Shingon Buddhism which has many Vajrayāna practices claims that Śākyamuni is *nīrmanakāya* and Mahāvairocana is the *dharmakāya* of the same aspect. Kiyota, *Shingon*, 61.

232 Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Discourse on the All-embracing Net of Views: The Brahmajāla Sūtra and its commentarial exegesis* (Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1978). For a discussion regarding this *sūtra* in which Vairocana’s mother takes a vow to be the same mother to all other Buddhas, see Xing, 141, and his fn. 122, 231.

therefore, are interchangeable. It is further explicit in the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* that the authors considered Vairocana and Śākyamuni as different manifestations of the same Buddha. The two Buddhas are conflated - Śākyamuni is *nirmāṇakāya* and Vairocana is *sambhogakāya*. In a conflation between the two Buddhas, John Huntington states that, “Shakyamuni has a finite lifetime and Vairocana is coincidental with the condition of voidness (*śūnyata*) and manifests the *dharma* abode (*dharmadhātu*).” As a hypostasis of Vairocana, the crowned image of Śākyamuni Buddha has characteristics of both *dharmakāya* and *nirmāṇakāya*. Śākyamuni reveals the Buddhist doctrine which has as its source the transcendent and eternal Vairocana.

The Paṭola Śāhi visual imagery uses specific iconographic elements in order to illustrate the notion of a dual image of Śākyamuni and Vairocana. Śākyamuni is teaching the *dharma* wearing monastic garments, which manifests his transformation body, and yet he also features the typifying characteristics of the *sambhogakāya* aspect, such as the silk items and jeweled ornaments, especially the crown. This specifically relates to the event in Śākyamuni’s biography where immediately after his enlightenment

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235 Śākyamuni is the *nirmāṇakāya-dharmakāya* and Vairocana is the *sambhogakāya-dharmakāya*. Kiyota, *Shingon*, 64.

he appears in Akaniṣṭha as the *sambhogakāya* Vairocana Buddha to teach the Buddhist *dharma*.237

As a representation of the Buddha in this event, the Paṭola Śāhi Buddhas are depicted in monastic garments, yet also with *sambhogakāya* traits. Moreover, the enjoyment body Buddha is clearly recognizable as Vairocana through the visual signifiers, such as the crown and silk ribbons and, especially, the *dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā*. The crown and jewelry, especially, "emphasize the aspect of Buddha as a universal sovereign, drawing a visual analogy between the attainment of Buddhahood and coronation of a king."238 In addition, the visual imagery in the Paṭola Śāhi pieces such as the rocky Mt. Meru pedestal, the double-petaled lotus, and the four-pointed cape draw further attention to the notion that these *sambhogakāya* images are in Akaniṣṭha, Vairocana's abode on Mt. Meru.239 Hence, the Paṭola Śāhi images depict Śākyamuni-_*nirmanakāya* as Vairocana-*sambhogakāya* in Akaniṣṭha. Thus, the visual representation of Śākyamuni Buddha with the *sambhogakāya* ornaments, including the cape, teaching in Akaniṣṭha conveys the interchangeability he has with Vairocana Buddha. In this case, he is Vairocana/Śākyamuni.


239 In addition, perhaps the recurring elaborately patterned throne cushion is supposed to convey the notion of the ultimate Buddha Vairocana in his highest paradise.
In addition, many of the Paṭola Śāhi Buddhas, in particular, perform the \textit{dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā}. This iconographic feature further helps to substantiate the dual identity of Śākyamuni and Vairocana in the images. The \textit{dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā} is known to be performed by Vairocana Buddha in the \textit{Durgatipariśodhana maṇḍala} of the \textit{Niśpannoyogāvalī}. It presents Vairocana dressed in the monastic robes of Śākyamuni, while performing the \textit{dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā}. This description especially applies to the Paṭola Śāhi unadorned Buddhas performing the \textit{dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā}. The unadorned Buddhas in Śākyamuni’s monastic robes performing the \textit{dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā} represent Vairocana, and as such, they can also be conceived as a dual image between Śākyamuni Buddha and Vairocana in Akaniṣṭha. They are one Buddha in different manifestations of \textit{dharmakāya}, and thus, the two are interchangeable. As such, he is Śākyamuni/Vairocana.

Furthermore, even the symbols of Śākyamuni and Vairocana are identical, aiding in the conflation of the two Buddhas. Vairocana, as one of the \textit{jina} Buddhas in Vajrayāna Buddhism belongs to the \textit{tathāgata} family or \textit{kula}. Therefore, Vairocana takes on Śākyamuni’s previous role as the head of the \textit{tathāgata} family, and as such, Vairocana adopts the \textit{dharmacakra} or wheel as his symbol from Śākyamuni.\footnote{Chaya Chandrasekhar explains that} Chaya Chandrasekhar explains that

\footnote{See fn.208; and von Schroeder, \textit{Buddhist Sculptures}, 106.}
\footnote{This is found in the \textit{Mañjuśrīmālākalpa}. See discussion later in this chapter.}
the symbol of the dharmacakra represents Vairocana's fundamental nature, like that of Śākyamuni. In essence, it serves a function like an attribute found on other meditational deities, marking his identity. Hence, the motif of the wheel and deer in both Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna Buddhism can symbolize the Buddhist dharma in general.\footnote{Chandrasekhar, 224.} Unfortunately, by ignoring other iconography in an image, many scholars see the symbolic motif of the deer and wheel solely as a reference to Śākyamuni's First Sermon. The iconography of the dharmacakra and deer motif prevalent in the Paṭola Śāhi bases underscores the identity of the Buddha as Vairocana.

Thus, it can be concluded that the Paṭola Śāhi Buddhas vividly express this special relationship between Śākyamuni and Vairocana. The combined images are depicted in their transformative space of Akaniṣṭha, and may be shown in their sambhogakāya aspect or unadorned and performing the dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā. The sambhogakāya adornments not only evoke the Buddha’s majesty and omniscience, but also present him as an esoteric mind-manifested construction.\footnote{Huntington, Leaves of the Bodhi Tree, 230.} In their multi-valent Buddhist

\footnote{As Vajrayāna Buddhist images with Śākyamuni as a hypostasis of Vairocana, it is no surprise to find additional Tantric symbolism in some of the images. In Fig. A.8, on each side of the Buddha, there is a stūpa or chaitya sitting on a lotus, each with a tiny meditating Buddha inside. Not only do the two stūpas refer to the Buddhist teachings since they represent the enlightened mind of a Buddha and the stages toward enlightenment, but the thirteen levels of the parasols (bhūmis) above the stūpas could refer to the thirteen stages of the Tantric bodhisattva path, verses the ten stages in Mahāyāna Buddhism. In addition, as mentioned previously, each stūpa is surmounted by a sun and moon symbol that could}
context, these images can be recognized as Śākyamuni teaching as sambhogakāya Vairocana (Vairocana/Śākyamuni) or as Vairocana in Śākyamuni’s robes (Śākyamuni/Vairocana). Śākyamuni is the manifestation of the transformative body and, as a hypostasis of Vairocana, he is depicted with traits of a transcendent enjoyment body. Although there are distinctions between Vairocana and Śākyamuni, on the whole, all Buddhas, as exemplars of the dharma, are conceptually identical. Traditionally, the sculpture would be labeled as either Śākyamuni or Vairocana, but an understanding of esoteric iconography allows for different levels of reading - Śākyamuni is a hypostasis of Vairocana and therefore they are one in the same.

* Vairocana/Vipaśyin

Figure A.22

Śākyamuni, the Buddha of the present eon, is the last of the seven mānuṣī Buddhas, and the archetypal nirvāṇakāya. The six mānuṣī Buddhas of the past, like Śākyamuni, were the Buddha of their own kalpa, so their form was also manifested in the transformation body of a Buddha. As mentioned previously, the other mānuṣī Buddhas all experienced the same paradigmatic life of nirvāṇakāya Śākyamuni, and as such, were all models

represent the top chakras in Tantric yogic meditation. See Huntington and Bangdel, Circle of Bliss, 84.

for attainment. Therefore, the relationship of Śākyamuni-\textit{nirmāṇakāya} with Vairocana-\textit{sambhogakāya} translates to the other \textit{mānuṣi} or \textit{nirmāṇakāya} Buddhas as well - the referent becomes identical.

The Buddha in figure A.22 is an example of this conflation, specifically portraying the \textit{mānuṣi} Buddha Vipaśyin as Vairocana. The inscription with this figure identifies the crowned Buddha as Vipaśyin, yet he is not depicted in the iconography of a transformation body. Rather, Vipaśyin is depicted in the distinctive \textit{sambhogakāya} aspect, including the jeweled ornament of the crown, perhaps a \textit{pañca jina} crown, earrings, a beaded necklace, bracelets, and the silk item of the ribbons tied to the crown. Furthermore, he wears the four-pointed cape with heavenly symbols to enhance the vision of a meditational Buddha. Like the dual image where Śākyamuni has aspects of both \textit{nirmāṇakāya} and \textit{dharmaokāya}, Vipaśyin as a hypostasis of Vairocana is depicted in his \textit{sambhogakāya} nature.

The discussion above concerning Śākyamuni and Vairocana as different manifestations of \textit{dharmaokāya} can also be applied to any \textit{nirmāṇakāya} Buddha, including Vipaśyin. John Huntington states that "in Mahāyāna Buddhism all \textit{mānuṣi} Buddhas are axiomatically representations

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[247] In the \textit{Blue Annals}, there is an account where the \textit{ācārya} Vanaratnapa is referred to as a \textit{nirmāṇakāya} or transformation Buddha, and as such, in an image of him he is a dual image of Vairocana and himself. Dina Bangdel, "Mahasiddha Vanaratnapa Receiving Abhisheka from White (Sita) Tara," \textit{Circle of Bliss}, 145.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
of the *dharma*, and thereby aspects of Vairocana.*

In order to not be redundant, it will suffice to say that Vipaśyin is the *nirmāṇakāya* of Vairocana, while Vairocana is the *sambhogakāya* manifestation of Vipaśyin. The dual Paṭolla Śāhi image shows Vipaśyin as Vairocana conceptually in Akaniṣṭha on a double-petaled lotus with the iconography of a *sambhogakāya* Buddha. As a hypostasis of Vairocana, the meditational construct can be identified as Vipaśyin teaching as *sambhogakāya* Vairocana or as Vairocana/Vipaśyin – they are one in the same.

* Maitreya/Vairocana and Vairocana/Maitreya
  Crowned: Figures A.2, A.9, A.23, A.25, A.26
  Unadorned: Figure A.27

Maitreya, as the future Buddha, waits in Tuṣita for his *kalpa* and final rebirth. In his form as the Buddha Maitreya, he is typically shown seated in the *bhadrāsana* pose. Since Maitreya is considered the Buddha of the future, he is often shown with the *mānuṣi* Buddhas as a group of eight, such as in figure A.9. Therefore, the group of eight becomes the *nirmāṇakāya* Buddhas of the past, present, and future. Maitreya, as the next universal Buddha, will also have the same paradigmatic *nirmāṇakāya* life, and as such, is also identical to Śākyamuni.*

As a *mānuṣi* Buddha, Maitreya can also be a

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248 Huntington and Chandrasekhar, “*Dharmacakramudrā,*” 35.

249 In Mahāyāna Buddhism, it is believed that the life of Śākyamuni Buddha and Maitreya Buddha are identical. Huntington, *Leaves of the Bodhi Tree*, 229. The *nirmāṇakāya* Maitreya Buddha has the same life as Śākyamuni, and therefore, his live events are interchangeable with the moments of Śākyamuni in his conflation with Vairocana. The crowned Śākyamuni amongst the seven *mānuṣi* Buddhas at the top of the aureole of the crowned Maitreya in Fig. A.9, especially supports this idea, where both are crowned.
hypostasis of Vairocana. Just like the above examples of Śākyamuni and Vipaśyin, Maitreya is a manifestation of nirmāṇakāya simultaneous to the manifestation of sambhogakāya by Vairocana.

As a transformation body Buddha that experiences the same biography as Śākyamuni, it can be suggested that Maitreya will experience the same event as Śākyamuni when he goes to Akaniṣṭha at the moment of his enlightenment and teaches the dharma as sambhogakāya Vairocana.250 Consequently, it is no surprise to find Paṭola Śāhi images of Maitreya being expressed as a dual image of Vairocana in his enjoyment body nature. Maitreya’s aspects of nirmāṇakāya are evident through his monastic garments, while the sambhogakāya is manifested through the crown, silk ribbons, jeweled ornaments, and even the cape. In addition, the crowned Maitreya in figure A.2 wears five rings on each of his fingers that are also

250 The conflation of Maitreya with Vairocana helps to further explain the representation of the bodhisattva Maitreya together with the Buddha Maitreya in the same composition, which some scholars argue is not possible (see Fig. A.2). There is a convention for the two bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Maitreya to appear with Śākyamuni in the Māravijaya at the time of his enlightenment. This form of Buddha is called Vajrāsana Śākyamuni. The bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara personifies wisdom and the bodhisattva Maitreya personifies compassion – reinforcing the enlightened state of a Buddha. There is no textual tradition known for this convention, however, visually there are many examples from the Pāla period. Huntington and Bangdel, Circle of Bliss, 102. There are even examples of these two bodhisattvas with other Buddhas, such as the pañca jina Buddhas, to represent this same concept – the attainment of Buddhahood. See Huntington and Bangdel, Circle of Bliss, pl. 13. Therefore, the same visual imagery can be applied to the Buddha Maitreya. When he attains Buddhahood, like Śākyamuni under the bodhi tree, the two bodhisattvas would be present to reinforce this notion.

Moreover, the large central figure of the Buddha Maitreya is identical to Vairocana, and as such, is shown in his sambhogakāya aspect to differentiate between him as a Buddha from his life as a bodhisattva. If he is depicted in Tusiṭa he is shown as a bodhisattva, but if he is residing in his earthly realm (Keśumati) then he is portrayed as a Buddha. Huntington, Leaves of the Bodhi Tree, 229. Another example of this is a large central figure of Tārā flanked by two other aspects of herself. See Art of India, pl. 20 and Circle of Bliss, 25.
characteristic of a *sambhogakāya*.\(^{251}\) Moreover, through the rocky landscape, Mt. Meru throne, and the lotus, there is a clear restatement that the figures of Maitreya as Vairocana are present in Akaniṣṭha, just like the Śākyamuni figures. Therefore, when Maitreya is depicted with the above iconography, it reinforces the concept that the *sambhogakāya* Maitreya Buddha in the Paṭola Śāhi images is a hypostasis of Vairocana. In other words, he is Vairocana/Maitreya - the two are identical in this form.

Since the *mānuṣī* Buddhas are interchangeable, other parallels can be drawn between Śākyamuni and Maitreya, such as the time when Vairocana is dressed in the monastic robes of Śākyamuni and performs the dharmačakra-pravartana mudrā. This description translates to the iconography in the Paṭola Śāhi Maitreya Buddha, such as in figure A.27, where Maitreya is unadorned and therefore not shown in *sambhogakāya* aspect, yet he performs Vairocana’s mudrā the dharmačakra-pravartana mudrā. Therefore, the two Buddhas are conflated in this example, identifying him as Maitreya/Vairocana.

* Vairocana/Mañjuśrī

Figure A.1

The figure of Mañjuśrī in figure A.1 depicted as a crowned Buddha relates to this same concept of layered identities. All enlightened beings that have attained Buddhahood or a dharmačakra-pravartana nature are conceptually

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\(^{251}\) It is also suggested that they are an esoteric symbol representing the *pañca jina* Buddhas, or the totality of enlightenment.
identical. Moreover, they can manifest in various bodies simultaneously. The *Avatamsaka Sūtra* says, "Mañjuśrī, the dharma is always thus, the King of the Dharma has only one Dharma . . . The bodies of all buddhas are but one dharma, one mind and one wisdom."  

In a *maṇḍala* (circular diagram) in the *Mahāvairocana abhisambodhi Tantra*, Mañjuśrī is with Vairocana as a symbol of the *dharma* which leads to wisdom. Since all Buddhas are one body and one wisdom, Mañjuśrī can also be a hypostasis of Vairocana.

An example of the conflation between the two Buddhas is the form of Mañjuśrī in Nepal called Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa. In this form, he is depicted as a fully enlightened Buddha, and as the essence of Vairocana and the nature of *dharma*, and he is considered a hypostasis of Vairocana. Mañjuśrī has this role in Newar Buddhism because it is held that he initiated the first Buddhist Tantric priest through the transmission of the teachings of Vairocana. Hence, Mañjuśrī is considered the Ādi Guru in Nepal, and this is why his esoteric form of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa is such a popular representation in Buddhist iconography. In this form, Mañjuśrī wears the *pañca jina* crown and displays the *dharmacakra* while holding the

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253 See Kiyota, "Tantric Concept," 23.

254 Huntington and Bangdel, *Circle of Bliss*, 30-1; and Wilson and Brauen, no. 500. There is another form of Mañjuśrī where he is considered a fully enlightened Buddha, which is Nāma Sangīti Mañjuśrī. He is the teacher of the condensed *Nāma Sangīti Tantra* and represents the total knowledge of Buddhahood.

255 Huntington and Bangdel, *Circle of Bliss*, 30.
Prajñāpāramitā text. Dina Bangdel explains their duality, stating that, "As the essence of dharma (dharmadhātu), Manjushri is equated with Vairochana as Vairochana-atman, and in the Newar Buddhist tradition, is identical to the Primordial Buddha."256

In addition, since Mañjuśrī and Śākyamuni are interchangeable, the same notion of conflation between Śākyamuni and Vairocana can be applied to the relationship of Mañjuśrī and Vairocana. For example, in the three kula or Buddha families that are still important in Nepal, Mañjuśrī replaces Śākyamuni Buddha as the representative of the tathāgata family.257 As mentioned previously, Vairocana is head of the tathāgata family in the five kula system. Therefore, both Mañjuśrī and Vairocana represent the tathāgata family and, in that context, are identical.

Another instance where there is a relationship between Mañjuśrī and Vairocana can be found in the Garbhadhātu and Vajradhātu maṇḍalas of the Mahāvairocana Sūtra practiced in Shingon and Tendai Buddhism in Japan.258 During various meditations, there is a rite of "putting on" aspects of Vairocana. Michael Saso explains that Vairocana is equivalent to Acala, or Amida, or any other Buddha, and that the practitioner must not be attached

256 Huntington and Bangdel, Circle of Bliss, 430.

to one name or one vision of one particular Buddha. For example, in one ritual, Vairocana and Acala, who has a special connection with Mañjuśrī, are united and become the same Buddha. In other meditations in the sūtra, different deities and even the practitioner are united with Vairocana, becoming one. For example, the concluding meditation of union says:

The reason why the Dharma is not understood is because I have never realized that my heart and the Buddha heart are one and the same. My heart and that of all sentient beings are one. The Buddha world, my heart, and all sentient beings are now united as one. We are not different. My body is Vairocana. Vairocana is I.

Whether or not the Paṭola Śāhi image of Mañjuśrī is an early representation of Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa, the iconography shows that he is a dual image with Vairocana in some form. Mañjuśrī wears the nirmāṇakāya Buddha’s monastic garments, but also shows the sambhogakāya traits, including the silk item of the billowing ribbons and the jeweled ornaments of the crown, earrings, beaded necklace, armlets, bracelets, and anklets. As a sambhogakāya, he must be in Akaniṣṭha, the sphere belonging to the enjoyment body Buddhas. The iconography clearly shows another level of identification, presenting a dual image of Mañjuśrī

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258 In Japan, Shingon Buddhism was founded by Kukai (Kobo Daishi) and Tendai by Saicho (Dengyo Daishi). See Kasulis, *Shinto*, 95-100.

259 Saso, 32.

260 Saso, 25. Interestingly, Acala is often accompanied by two esoteric forms of Mañjuśrī – Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa and Mañjuvajra. Huntington and Bangdel, *Circle of Bliss*, 327.

261 Saso, 31.
and Vairocana, and as such, Mañjuśrī is a hypostasis of Vairocana
sambhogakāya and can be identified as Vairocana/ Mañjuśrī.

**Crowned Buddhas in Buddhist Literature**

It is widely accepted that in early representations of Śākyamuni Buddha he was portrayed in his rūpakāya nature as a great sage in his monastic garments. He did not have adornments, but rather could be identified by the iconographic marks of a Buddha, such as the uṣnīśa, ūrṇā (a mark between the eyebrows), and elongated earlobes, and a variety of mudrās. In Mahāyāna Buddhism, this iconographic type continued as a means to depict Śākyamuni’s nirmāṇakāya aspect - his Buddha body in the mundane world. The sambhogakāya aspect, as a meditational form, was represented through the silk items and jeweled ornaments, in particular, through the crown. I have shown that the Paṭola Śāhi crowned Buddhas represent not only the enjoyment body, but that they can also be identified as Vairocana.

This begs the question, “What Buddhist literary evidence exists that specifically presents the same iconography of a sambhogakāya?” Consequently, this section examines various Buddhist texts, such as the Mahāvastu, the Avatamsaka Sūtra, the Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa, the Guhyasamāja Tantra, and the Mahāvairocana abhisambodhi Tantra, looking for descriptions of crowned Buddhas and the sambhogakāya nature. The texts provide a general understanding of the practice and themes current at
the time of the Paṭola Śāhis. The premise is such that there is a clear development in the texts illustrating the iconographical conception of a crowned Buddha that transitions from Śākyamuni as a *cakravartin* (universal sovereign) to epitomize Vairocana Buddha as *sambhogakāya*.

**Mahāvastu**

The *Mahāvastu*, is an important early Mahāyāna Buddhist text. It was written in Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit and ascribes its affiliation to the Vinaya Piṭaka of the Lokottaravādin, a branch of the Mahāsāṃghikas. It was compiled over a long period of time, so it is generally dated from the 1st-4th c. It is a collection of history and legends regarding Śākyamuni and other Buddhas. It begins with, “Homage to all Buddhas, past, future, and present.”

The introduction and the text itself show the importance of the mānuṣi Buddhas and how their lives are interchangeable with that of Śākyamuni.

This Mahāyāna *sūtra* is an example where Śākyamuni was endowed with magic powers and superhuman qualities, despite the fact that he was a transformation body Buddha. For example, in the *Mahāvastu*, Śākyamuni is often mentioned as a transcendent figure. The text states, “... his body is


transcendent in a transcendent robe.”

There are other adjectives for Śākyamuni used throughout the text that allude to kingship, such as "king of dharma" and "splendid in majesty." Hence, the ascetic figure of Śākyamuni developed into the notion of the Buddha as *lokottara* or endowed with supernatural powers.

Although there are references to Śākyamuni as a *cakravartin*, he is not directly called a universal king, nor is he described wearing a crown. The term "universal king" is used throughout the text, but it is used for the tenth-stage *bodhisattvas* in their last rebirth as a *cakravartin* king. It is in this last princely life that Śākyamuni and the other *mānuṣi* Buddhas renounce their riches and wealth to become an ascetic, eventually leading to enlightenment and Buddhahood. If the Buddhas did not give up their royal existence, they would instead have become a *cakravartin* or a universal monarch. In addition, the name of Vairocana, relating to a universal king, is mentioned briefly in the text. It says, “Suprabhasa was *tathāgata* and a perfect Buddha when the *bodhisattva* Maitreya, as the universal king Vairocana, was aiming at perfect enlightenment in the future and first


acquired the roots of goodness.” This statement further supports the notion that Maitreya’s identity can be layered with Vairocana, since Maitreya is called Vairocana.

Paul Mus and Deborah Klimburg-Salter, however, suggest that the Mahāvastu is the primary text where Śākyamuni’s appearance changes from an emphasis on his ascetic qualities to a royal figure. Paul Mus focuses on Śākyamuni’s transition to a royal conception. He suggests that as early as the Lotus Sūtra, and particularly in the Mahāvastu, Śākyamuni has become not only a cakravartin, but also a transcendent Buddha. In other words, he suggests that the trikāya system was already in existence and that this transcendent and royal conception of Śākyamuni is the sambhogakāya manifestation. However, the date of the text is too early for the established trikāya system, and the sambhogakāya body theory is not contained within the text of the Mahāvastu. Rather, Śākyamuni is described as a transcendent Buddha with great powers.

Another part of this sūtra that is relevant to this discussion is found in a brief section that describes the ten bhūmis of the career on a bodhisattva path. The tenth or last stage is experienced by all bodhisattvas or Buddhas-to-be before their last rebirth. Deborah Klimburg-Salter suggests

268 Jones, Mahāvastu, Vol. 1, 49.


that the *Mahāvastu* features a consecration as a king, where in the tenth bhūmi Śākyamuni receives the raiment of a king, whereby explaining the imagery of crowned Buddhas at Bamiyan. She identifies this iconographic type as the so-called abhiṣeka (consecration) coronation of Śākyamuni in the tenth bhūmi. In my research, however, I did not find a coronation described during the tenth stage in the *Mahāvastu*. There is a tenth bhūmi coronation described in the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*, discussed below, so perhaps Klimburg-Salter has confused the two, or assumed that since they are both tenth stages of the bodhisattva career that they are identical.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the notion of sambhogakāya is not mentioned nor implied in the *Mahāvastu*. Since there is no description of Śākyamuni’s coronation in the tenth stage, there is no direct and literal reference to Śākyamuni as being crowned. Although, the concept of Śākyamuni has changed from an ascetic figure to become a great majestic cakravartin or transcendent figure, I do not think it is likely that the artistic tradition and iconography for depicting a Buddha in monastic garments with a crown stems from this text. Especially, since the earliest iconographic type for a transcendent enjoyment body Buddha was taken from the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*, and as such, he was shown as a colossal figure or covered in cosmic symbols rather than being crowned.

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271 Klimburg-Salter, *Bamiyan*, 111.
Avatamsaka Sūtra (Flower Garland Sūtra)

The Avatamsaka Sūtra (hereafter called the AS), was begun as early as the 2nd century with a comprehensive rendition existing by the early 5th century.²⁷² It is a Mahāyāna text that is primarily about Vairocana and spiritual experience. The text is important to this study because of Vairocana’s key role and personification within the trikāya system. In addition, it is considered the pre-cursor of later Tantras that centered around Mahāvairocana.

In this sūtra, there is a clear description of the dharmakāya as Vairocana - he is the entirety of all Buddha realms.²⁷³ The universe or dharmadhātu realm is the Buddha, the essence of Vairocana.²⁷⁴ He resides in Akaniṣṭha, the realm of the sambhogakāya beings. Since Vairocana embodies all Buddhist dharma, he manifests as a sambhogakāya. As an early vision of an enjoyment body Buddha, he is described as a universal Buddha with a greatly intense light that pervades the whole cosmos: Śākyamuni, as a lokottara or a cakravartin, is no longer the primary Buddha. The new theory of sambhogakāya is presented as a means to differentiate the transformation body and the enjoyment body. In the AS, Vairocana and

²⁷² The translation by Cleary of the Avatamsaka is based on Buddhabhadra’s version (317-402 C.E.).

²⁷³ Huntington and Chandrasekhar, “Dharmacakramudrā,” 34. Dasgupta says that the dharmakāya’s cosmological and ontological meaning in this sūtra lead to the development of the tantric concept of the primordial or Ādi Buddha. Dasgupta, 11-3, and 33.
Śākyamuni are different manifestations of the same Buddha - Śākyamuni is *nirmāṇakāya* and Vairocana is *sambhogakāya*.

As mentioned previously, this *sūtra* was popular in early China and Japan, and therefore, the iconographic elements used to depict Vairocana as *sambhogakāya* consisted of a colossal Buddha with a halo radiating one thousand Buddhas. In Central Asia, the universal aspect of *sambhogakāya* Vairocana was shown by painting cosmic symbols and ornaments on his body. In these various representations, a new iconography was given to Vairocana in order to show his manifestation as a *sambhogakāya* or as a meditational construct.

In addition, there is specific reference to a coronation or *abhiseka* in the tenth *bhūmi* in the AS, and perhaps this led to the next development of the iconography of the crowned Buddhas as a representation of *sambhogakāya*. The *sūtra* has the same ten stages of the *bodhisattva* path listed in the *Mahāvastu*, but in the *AS* the *bhūmis* are much more detailed and elaborate, especially with several parts to the tenth stage. For example, the Tenth Abode is called the "Abode of Coronation." The true Buddha kings or spiritual monarchs who vivify the worlds reside here. In the *bhūmi* of the "Tenth Practice of Truth," an enlightened being gains entry into the “adornment of unexcelled knowledge and wisdom” and thus shows spiritual

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274 For discussion on the *dharmadhātu* in the *Avatamsaka*, see Williams, *On Being Buddha*, 122 ff.

275 Cleary, Book 15, 399, and 1552.
power.\textsuperscript{276} The truth in this practice is based on transcendent knowledge. Lastly, there is the "Tenth Stage of Enlightenment." It is the stage of coronation or anointment where great lords and unexcelled leaders are given a crown that symbolizes all knowledge.\textsuperscript{277}

The crown represents the attainment of a Buddha, and as such, in the tenth stage, it especially signifies knowledge.\textsuperscript{278} Sambhogakāya is the symbolic perfection of the bodhisattva practices and path, and it is a means to manifest the dharma to the tenth stage bodhisattvas and the skilled practitioner. Hence, a sambhogakāya brings bodhisattvas to complete maturity, enabling them to perfect their skills and acquire dharmakāya, to become dharmakāya bodhisattvas. Guang Xing explains that at the tenth stage level, there is no difference between the dharmakāya of a Buddha and the bodhisattva except for their merit and powers.\textsuperscript{279} Since both embody the dharmakāya, they denote the same reality of Buddhahood. He says that therefore, on the threshold of Buddhahood, the tenth stage bodhisattvas can even be considered as a Buddha.\textsuperscript{280} This is typical in Mahāyāna and

\textsuperscript{276} Cleary, Book 21, 470-71, and 1554.

\textsuperscript{277} Cleary, Book 26, 794, and 1562.

\textsuperscript{278} Cleary, 1531. The other adornments described in the sūtra also have symbolic meaning. For example, the garlands and jewelry represent virtues, knowledge, and the cultivation of skills.

\textsuperscript{279} For a discussion of this role, see Xing, 86-7.

\textsuperscript{280} Xing, 155 and 183-84.
Vajrayāna Buddhism, where the ultimate state of Buddhahood is shared by all Buddhas, making them indistinguishable from each other – identical.

All enlightened beings who make it to the tenth stage and are on the threshold of Buddhahood, are crowned like royalty, including Śākyamuni and Vairocana. Vairocana is also described as purified by jewels and arrayed with adornments, or with marks of greatness so that each limb is adorned with myriad jewels. By the time of the AS, the royal motifs are clearly adopted into Buddhist iconography as a signifier of a sambhogakāya Buddha. It is obvious that the text is no longer referring to an all-powerful or transcendent Śākyamuni Buddha, but rather, a cosmic principal of the universe – Vairocana who is a dharmakāya Buddha.

Using the Avatamsaka Sūtra and its tenth-stage coronation to explain the iconography of a crowned Buddha, some scholars argue about when and where Śākyamuni can appear as a crowned Buddha. As mentioned earlier, it is thought that crowned Buddhas represent the abhiṣeka Buddhas in Tuṣita and that only bodhisattvas can be present as other figures in the composition. Yet, in this sūtra, it becomes clear that Śākyamuni is simultaneously present in many places.

281 Kingship and crowning appear in other places throughout the AS. Often the enlightened beings are called spiritual sovereigns, or monarchs, or are crowned as sovereigns. See Clearly, Book 38, 1115, and 1120, 1131.

282 Cleary, Book 34, 945, and Book 39, 1504-505. Furthermore, there is a chapter on Vairocana when he was a king, see especially, Cleary, 1611.
For example, Book 13 describes the moment of Śākyamuni’s enlightenment where he is still by the *bodhi* tree, but he also ascends to the peak of Mt. Meru or Akaniṣṭha. While there, he teaches numerous enlightened beings from many Buddha-lands. While preaching there to enlightened beings, they see Vairocana because they are empowered by the Buddha through his spiritual power. In other words, Śākyamuni is Vairocana, and they are just two different manifestations in two places. In Book 19, at the moment of his enlightenment and without leaving the *bodhi* tree, Śākyamuni also ascends to the Palace of Suyama Heaven. He is greeted there by the celestial king who asks Śākyamuni or the Buddha Jewel King to preach. He is surrounded by a multitude of enlightened beings from various Buddha-lands. In addition, in Book 23, Śākyamuni Buddha at the moment of his enlightenment goes to Tuṣita heaven. The text even says that while he is there, he is also at the same time at the *bodhi* tree and in Suyama heaven. Śākyamuni is greeted by the celestial king of gods, and is offered robes and jewels by the multitude of deities, and celestial and enlightened beings, and he is adorned with countless virtues. Moreover, he is called “the virtuous qualities of the king of truth” and adorned with the ornaments

283 Cleary, Book 13, 368.
284 Cleary, Book 14, 383.
285 Cleary, Book 19, 438 ff.
of Buddhahood. This is obviously an example where his *sambhogakāya*

nature is envisioned as a way to see him as in the heavenly realms.

Therefore, crowned Śākyamuni is present in multiple places on Mt. Meru and even appears as Vairocana in Akaniṣṭha, confirming, once again, the theory of conflation. The *AS* shows that there is not only one single moment where a *sambhogakāya* can be manifested. Rather, there are a multitude of moments and a multitude of Buddhas associated with Vairocana, specifically, as meditational constructs for the skilled adept.

Thus, in the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*, the *sambhogakāya* nature is explicitly manifested by Vairocana – an ultimate *dharmaṇaṇa* Buddha. Vairocana is described in royal adornments. The crown of knowledge, in particular, is noted, and as such, we see the textual beginnings of the standard traits of an enjoyment body Buddha that are so clearly visible in the later artwork. It is interesting to note that the visual imagery correlating to the *AS*, such as that found in China, depicts Vairocana as a colossal or cosmic Buddha rather than a crowned one. It is possible that the *sūtra* and its description of a coronation had a direct influence on the developing iconography of a *sambhogakāya* Buddha as a crowned image, although further study is required to firmly establish this relationship.

*Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*

The *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* (hereafter called the *Mmk*), is another Buddhist text compiled over time, containing parts that might have existed
independently at one time.\textsuperscript{287} It is suggested that \textit{Mmk} 4 is the oldest, perhaps dating to the 2\textsuperscript{nd} - 4\textsuperscript{th} century, while the remaining chapters are dated somewhere from the 5\textsuperscript{th} - 7\textsuperscript{th} centuries.\textsuperscript{288} Glenn Robert Wallis points out that it is clear, however, that the \textit{Mmk} documents a prevalent form of Buddhism practiced by the early 8\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{289} This text is important not only because it introduces many new Buddhist deities, but also because they are to be worshiped inside \textit{maṇḍalas} through various rituals using \textit{mantras} (sacred syllables or words) and \textit{mudrās} that are clearly associated with Vajrayāna Buddhist practice.\textsuperscript{290} As an important aspect to this study, the \textit{Mmk} is perhaps the earliest Buddhist text where there is a clearly stated iconography for a crowned Buddha that relates specifically to the \textit{sambhogakāya} aspect within the \textit{trikāya} system.\textsuperscript{291}


\textsuperscript{288} Scholars debate over the dates. Although Wallis says it is early, Linrothe says it is from the 6\textsuperscript{th} - 7\textsuperscript{th} century with later parts from the 8\textsuperscript{th} century, see Rob Linrothe, \textit{Ruthless Compassion – Wrathful Deities in Early Indo-Tibetan Esoteric Buddhist Art} (London: Serindia Publications, 1999). 25.

\textsuperscript{289} Wallis, “The Persistence of Power,” 15.

\textsuperscript{290} It is not within the scope of this dissertation to argue whether this text is Mahāyāna or early Vajrayāna. For the sake of this study it is considered, at least, proto-Vajrayāna with many esoteric elements.

\textsuperscript{291} Several scholars see the \textit{trikāya} evident in this text. See Ariane MacDonald, \textit{La Maṇḍala du Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa} (Paris: A. Masionneve, 1962); Mus, “Le Buddha Parē,” and Huntington and Chandrasekhar, “\textit{Dharmacakramudrā},” 34.
The first chapter in the \textit{Mmk} marks the origination and setting for the propagation of the \textit{Mmk} as the highest realm Akaniṣṭha.\textsuperscript{292} Akaniṣṭha, the Buddha-field of the \textit{sambhogakāya} Buddha, is only accessible to the tenth-stage \textit{bodhisattvas} and the skilled practitioner who is adept in meditation. It is in Akaniṣṭha that the resplendent enjoyment body teaches the \textit{dharma}.

In the \textit{Mmk}, several Buddhas manifest the glorious \textit{sambhogakāya} nature.\textsuperscript{293} The best example of a crowned \textit{sambhogakāya} is found in the description of a \textit{maṇḍala} in Chapter 14, where a resplendent Ratnaketu Buddha is placed at the center of a \textit{maṇḍala}. The \textit{maṇḍala} is made of five colors of powder with four doors and four portals and Ratnaketu, as a great \textit{cakravartin} king, is to be placed at the center.

He has the colour of saffron and is like the rising-sun. He holds a great wheel which is turning. Thus painstakingly should one draw him. He is like a great king with his palace and his decorations, a great being who is crowned and adorned with all adornments. His lower garment is of fine cloth and his upper garment of cloth of various colours. He is bewreathed and handsome, adorned with strands and garlands. ... In his left hand he holds the wheel, which is wreathed in blazing light. He is turning it, as he sits in the semi-\textit{paryanka}-posture.\textsuperscript{294}

Ratnaketu is another name for Akṣobhya, and as a \textit{jīna} Buddha he obviously manifests a \textit{sambhogakāya} nature.\textsuperscript{295} Hence, the image of the meditational

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{292} See Wallis, “The Persistence of Power,” 123-25.
\item \textsuperscript{293} Wallis, “The Persistence of Power,” 134.
\item \textsuperscript{294} \textit{Mañjuśrīmālakalpa}, ch. 14, quote taken from Snellgrove, “Divine Kingship,” 206-07.
\item \textsuperscript{295} From the \textit{Mahavairocana Sūtra}. It is noteworthy that there is a Gilgit text specifically regarding this Buddha Ratnaketu called the \textit{Ratnaketuparivarta}.
\end{itemize}
Buddha is described as wearing a crown and jewels - some of the typifying traits of a *sambhogakāya*.

In Chapter 2 of the *Mmk*, Śākyamuni Buddha is at the center of a *maṇḍala* with Mañjuśrī below the lion throne. He is also depicted as a *sambhogakāya* being.²⁰⁶ Mañjuśrī is in the center of another *maṇḍala*, employing numerous *dhāriṇī* and *mantras* and *mudrās*. John Huntington explains that the iconography of the *maṇḍala* relates to the same configuration of the Garbhadhātu *maṇḍala* in the *Mahāvairocana abhisaṃbodhi Tantra* (discussed later), where Vairocana is at the center of the *maṇḍala*. Since the two *maṇḍalas* are identical, Huntington suggests that Mañjuśrī, in the center of the *Mmk maṇḍala*, is understood as Vairocana.²⁰⁷ The *sambhogakāya* aspects as well as the blazing light, especially bring to mind the imagery of Vairocana, the archetypal enjoyment body Buddha whose light pervades the universe. Vairocana as the manifestation of the Buddhist *dharma* is well established in the *Mmk*, and therefore, whatever Buddha, whether it is Ratnaketu, Śākyamuni, or

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²⁰⁶ Without understanding the iconography, Klimburg-Salter says that he is not the historical Śākyamuni Buddha, but rather a resplendent one appearing in a crown with royal symbolism, like in the *Mahāvastu*. She says that he is a transcendent lord, but not Vairocana. See Bāmiyān, 65 and 111.

²⁰⁷ Their identical identity further corroborates the hypostasis of Buddhas with Vairocana. See discussion in Huntington and Chandrasekhar, “*Dharmacakramudrā*,” fn. 13.
Mañjuśrī, the texts imply the reification of the *dharmakāya* through Vairocana in Akaniṣṭha heaven.\(^{298}\)

Some scholars, such as Deborah Klimburg-Salter, attempt to use the explanation for an image of a crowned Buddha in the *Mmk maṇḍalas* as a direct correlation to a coronation or *abhiṣeka* during the tenth stage.\(^{299}\) It is rightly so, in Vajrayāna Buddhism, that the *abhiṣeka* takes place in the *maṇḍala* for the initiate, and there, he identifies himself with the crowned Buddha. However, in theoretical application, it is not a *nirmāṇakāya* Buddha he visualizes for identity transfer, but a *sambhogakāya* crowned Buddha. Therefore, the crowned Buddha in a *maṇḍala* is best explained in the *Mmk* as the *sambhogakāya* nature manifesting the body of *dharma*. Vairocana as a quintessential *sambhogakāya* is implied in any enjoyment body Buddha.

Thus, in the *Mmk* there is a standard formula developed for the iconography of a *sambhogakāya* Buddha, particularly with the crown. It is a means of visualization and representation for the meditational construct of *sambhogakāya*. The textual description matches the visual representation of the crowned Paṭola Śāhi Buddhas, and as such, the *sambhogakāya* nature of a Buddha has been given concrete iconography. The Paṭola Śāhi enjoyment body Buddhas are like great kings with their crowns and adornments.

\(^{298}\) Huntington and Chandrasekhar, “Dharmacakramudrā,” 34.

\(^{299}\) Klimburg-Salter, *Bāmiyān*, 111.
Furthermore, Vairocana’s role as an enjoyment body Buddha is established in this text, which can be fulfilled by various Buddhas as a dual image. In the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, the crown on the Buddha and other *sambhogakāya* traits, as well as the iconographic program of a *maṇḍala*, show that Vairocana’s presence is implied as the totality of Buddhist teachings.

**Guhyasamājā Tantra: (Secret Assembly Tantra)**

The *Guhyasamājā Tantra* (hereafter called *GT*), is dated by some to the 3rd-4th century or by others to the 6th–7th century, with its explanatory Tantras written in the 8th-12th centuries.³⁰⁰ It is more systematic than the *Mmk* with a clear classification of the Vajrayāna Buddhist pantheon worshipped through a *maṇḍala*, *mantras*, invocations, and *mudrās*. The Tantra is used by skilled yogins in advanced meditational practice, and as such, the *sambhogakāya* aspect with different manifestations or conflated images plays a key role in this Buddhist text.

The *maṇḍala* in the *GT* has the quality of compassion as the primary male deity in the center. According to the Ārya school, the center of the *maṇḍala* features a fierce form of Guhyasamāja-Akṣobhyavajra. In the Jñānanapāda tradition, the central deity is Guhyasamāja-Mañjuvajra, an esoteric form of Mañjuśrī.³⁰¹ The *pañca jina* Buddhas with their *prajñās* or

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³⁰⁰ See Cathleen A. Cunningham, “Guhysamaja Tantra,” *Circle of Bliss*, 432-35. The GST tantra was originally associated with the *Sarva Tathāgata Tattva Samgraha* in the 6-7th c. as a supreme uttaratantra in India.

³⁰¹ Cunningham, 435 and 447. The Jñānanapāda school was begun in the 8th century.
female counterparts are represented in the *maṇḍala* as well. Cathleen Cunningham explains that all of the figures in the *GT maṇḍala* are understood on the *sambhogakāya* level.\textsuperscript{302} The central Buddha and the *jīna* Buddhas are, therefore, represented with the iconography of a *sambhogakāya*. For example, Guhyasamāja-Akṣobhya-vajra is described not only as multi-headed and multi-armed armed, but he also wears the five silk items and the eight jeweled ornaments, including the crown, manifesting the *sambhogakāya* nature.\textsuperscript{303}

Since Vairocana embodies all Buddhist *dharma* and is the paradigmatic enjoyment body Buddha, he is also important in this Buddhist text. David Snellgrove explains that there are three titles used for the Buddha in the Tantra, including "universal king (i.e., *cakravartin*), Vairocana, and Vajradhātu/Vajrasttva."\textsuperscript{304} Since Vairocana is the descriptor of *dharmakāya* and the aggregate of all Buddhas, through Vairocana other Buddhas can be conflated, becoming one in the same image. In the practice of the *GT*, even the yogin practitioner becomes a *sambhogakāya*, visualized as a great king through identity transformation. Vairocana's fundamental *dharmakāya* nature personified through *sambhogakāya* reifies the *dharma*, and as such, they are interchangeable in their *sambhogakāya* aspects.

\textsuperscript{302} Cunningham, 435.

\textsuperscript{303} Cunningham, 433. For images see pl. 134 and 135.

\textsuperscript{304} Snellgrove, “Divine Kingship,” 217.
Cathleen Cunningham states that the center of the GT mandala can therefore have Akṣobhya-Vairocana, or Mañjuśrī-Vairocana, or Akṣobhya-Mañjuśrī. Clearly, the Guhyasamāja Tantra is important since the iconography belonging to an enjoyment body Buddha is fully formulated, in addition to the important role of Vairocana in this practice.

Mahāvairocana abhisambodhi Tantra

The Mahāvairocana abhisambodhi Tantra, also called the Mahāvairocana Sūtra (hereafter called MVT), was most likely composed during the first half of the 7th century. According to Stephen Hodge, it is one of the first fully developed extant Tantras. This Buddhist text is

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305 Cunningham, 432.

306 This sūtra features the Gharbadhātu mandala with Vairocana at the center and it is used in both Shingon and Tendai Buddhism in Japan. For a discussion of the transmission to Japan, see Kiyota, Shingon, 11-14.

307 The sūtra was taken to China by the monk Śubhākarasimha (637-735). Hodge suggests a date for the sūtra around 640 C.E., making it a true Tantra of the early phase. Hodge, 11. Śubhākarasimha spent two years in Kashmir learning the Tantra before going to China, see Huntington, “Cave Six at Aurangabad,” 48. It can be suggested that he went through either Gilgit or Baltistan, the Paṭola Sāhi region at the time, on his way from Kashmir to China as part of the Silk Route, and therefore, taught the Tantra to the dynasty.

308 The Sarva-tathāgata-tattva-saṃgraha (hereafter called the STTS), is believed to have immediately followed the MVT, with a more elaborate version translated by Amoghavajra in 753. See Hodge, 11-12. Like the MVT, it is a fully developed Tantra with sophisticated practice and doctrine, using mandalas, mantras, mudrās and yogin practices of transformation. Vairocana is the focus of this Tantra, being the center of two major mandalas - the Garbhādhātu mandala from the MVT and the new Varjaydhātu mandala. At the center of the Garbhadhātu mandala, Vairocana performs the samādhi mudrā, while he performs the bodhiyāgrī mudrā in the Vajrādhātu mandala.

It is suggested that since the same form of the mandalas are seen in the caves at Ajanta around the 5th c., that there must have been some form of this Tantric soteriological methodology extant at that time. Huntington and Chandrasekhar, “Dharmacakramudrā,” 38.
important to this study because it teaches perfect enlightenment personified by Mahāvairocana. It has some similar traces to the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* and to Yogācāra regarding the concept of Vairocana as the principal of the universe and *dharmadhātu*, and as such, it states that all things, all spiritual teachers, and all Buddhas are manifestations of Vairocana.\(^{309}\) He is the *dharmakāya*, where all things are manifested by him, with Śākyamuni as his *nirmāṇakāya*.\(^{310}\)

In the *MVT*, it is clear from the prescribed practice and the text itself that Mahāvairocana is a mind-manifested being. It says, "Know your mind as it really is. That is the supreme, full and perfect enlightenment."\(^{311}\) In other words, to know enlightenment, is to know Mahāvairocana. At this advanced level of Vajrayāna practice, Mahāvairocana is more than just a *sambhogakāya* manifestation of *dharmadhātu*. Stephen Hodge explains that he manifests all three bodies of the *trikāya* in the tantra.\(^{312}\) The *dharmakāya* is Mahāvairocana’s mind and since it is formless, it cannot be directly manifested. In this aspect, he is an Ādi or Primordial Buddha, generating the *maṇḍala* of the mind. Hodge says that the *sambhogakāya* is

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\(^{309}\) See discussion in Hodge, 29 ff.

\(^{310}\) Hodge, 29-33.

\(^{311}\) Hodge, 32, *MVT* 1.7.

\(^{312}\) Hodge, 33-5. Vairocana and the *maṇḍala* he manifests embody the relationship of the *trikāya*. The center of the *maṇḍala* is *dharmakāya*, then there is the *sambhogakāya*, and then on the outside there are the *nirmāṇakāya* beings. See discussion in Kiyota, "Tantric Concept,” 21.
Mahāvairocana’s speech or the way he communicates the dharma to enlightened beings and adept practitioners. In other words, he causes mantras to arise. The nirmanaḥkāya is Mahāvairocana’s body demonstrated through mudrās. Using the maṇḍala, the mantras, and the mudrās, the yogin can identify himself with Mahāvairocana and become Mahāvairocana, or transform himself into the deity as sambhogakāya.

The iconography of Mahāvairocana described in the text is unquestionably that of an enjoyment body Buddha in Akaniṣṭha. In the directions of creating the maṇḍala it says:

In the centre of the matrix, he should draw the most excellent Lord of the jinas, golden in colour, blazing in light, with his topknot and crown. He is completely surrounded by pure light. The Lord free from all ills should be depicted residing in samādhi.  

Other important Buddhas that help to reveal pure enlightenment in the maṇḍala are also understood on a sambhogakāya level, and as such, have the distinguishing enjoyment body iconography. For example, in a description of the Buddha Vajradhara who is placed to the south of Mahāvairocana in the maṇḍala it says:

To the south of the Lord Vairocana, Vajradhara should be drawn; he fulfils all wishes, and in colour he is like a priyangu flower, greenish-yellow, or like an emerald. This Lord has a crown and is adorned with all the ornaments of a Great Being.

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313 Hodge, 106, MVT 2.23. Hodge suggests that Vairocana has a crown because he is a Dharma King. Saso points out that, in the meditation, Vairocana is wearing the pañca jina crown and is finely adorned. Saso, 94.

314 Hodge, 472.
Moreover, there is an abhiṣeka or consecration with a crown as part of the meditation. Michael Saso states that the advanced practitioner receives the "consecration of the self to the service of Vairocana by donning a crown." Therefore, the adept becomes sambhogakāya and is identified as Vairocana or Mahāvairocana.

Thus, by the 7th century the iconography of sambhogakāya Vairocana and Mahāvairocana can be completely substantiated in a Buddhist text. The enjoyment body traits identify the transcendent and esoteric nature of a sambhogakāya, and as such, they are incorporated into the Paṭola Śāhi idiom.

**Conclusion**

This Buddhological contextualization of the Paṭola Śāhi visual record shows that the underlying patterns of the silk items and jeweled ornaments, particularly the crown, demonstrate the specific and intentional reference to the sambhogakāya nature of a Buddha. As such, the iconography constructs a coded visual language through which a sambhogakāya aspect is made manifest and Vairocana's intrinsic nature as a sambhogakāya becomes a paradigm for the Paṭola Śāhi crowned Buddhas. It may be surmised from the evidence, therefore, that all twelve of the crowned Paṭola Śāhi Buddhas can be identified as sambhogakāya Vairocana or a hypostasis of him. Moreover,

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315 Saso, 83.
the unadorned Buddhas that perform the *dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā* underscore the identity of Vairocana, who is wearing a *nirmāṇakāya*’s monastic garments, and as such, at least five of the nine unadorned Buddhas can also be recognized as Vairocana. Thus, in the Paṭola Śāhi corpus, eighteen Buddha figures out of twenty-one are, indeed, Vairocana. The visual evidence is compelling proof that the archetypal mind-manifested Buddha, Vairocana, was the preferred Buddhist deity by the Paṭola Śāhi patrons.

In addition, the examination of contemporary Buddhist literature provides evidence that there was a transition for the iconographical meaning of a crowned Buddha; developing from the representation of Śākyamuni as a crowned *cakravartin* with super powers, changing to portray a *sambhogakāya* aspect within the *trikāya* system. In the *Mahāvastu*, Śākyamuni is a transcendent or lokottara being. In the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*, Vairocana becomes the entirety of all Buddha-realms and Buddhist teachings. Śākyamuni is still important as he and Vairocana are considered different manifestation of the same Buddha - Śākyamuni is *nirmāṇakāya* and Vairocana is *sambhogakāya*. Both Buddhas were envisioned as crowned, having successfully attained *dharma-kāya* and Buddhahood in the tenth-stage *bhūmi*, and as such, can simultaneously manifest multiple Buddha bodies in multiple heavenly realms.
In the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, the iconography is clearly set forth where a *sambhogakāya* is described as crowned and adorned. Moreover, Vairocana's power to reify *dharma* in Akaniṣṭha, the highest meditational realm, confirms his ability to conflate his identity with other Buddhas. In the more developed *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, the standard *sambhogakāya* traits are explicitly used for multiple enjoyment body Buddhas. By the time of the *Mahāvairocana abhisambodhi Tantra*, Mahāvairocana is, indeed, the supreme Ādi Buddha. There is a clear description of Mahāvairocana as a *sambhogakāya*, using the crown of knowledge and the jeweled ornaments. He is the perfection of enlightenment like in the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*, but now he is worshiped and visualized through esoteric Vajrayāna Buddhist practices. Hence, the image of a crowned Buddha evolved from the Mahāyāna universal sovereign to an esoteric conception.

The iconography of a crowned Buddha did not developed in a vacuum. In a full contextualization of the Paṭola Śāhi images, Buddhist texts and the Buddhist imagery go hand-in-hand. The literary sources like the Paṭola Śāhi imagery corroborate the identity of their crowned Buddhas as *sambhogakāya* aspect, particularly, *sambhogakāya* Vairocana.

Thus, the prolific number of Vairocana images, consistently expressed in a fully developed *sambhogakāya* iconography in the Paṭola Śāhi corpus, demonstrates that the teachings of Vairocana were popular among the dynasty. It also indicates that they fully understood his character as the
source of all Buddhist teachings and the aggregate of all Buddhas. In addition, the visual imagery of Vairocana as a meditational construct, especially the references to esoteric Buddhism through the pañca jina crown and the dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā, confirms the donor-practitioners’ understanding of the image at an esoteric level within Vajrayāna methodologies. As such, the context of the images, revealing the Paṭola Śāhi soteriological methodology, indicates a strong foothold of the esoteric teachings of the Vairocana cycle.
Figure 3.1. Pañcika and a donor wearing a cape. Stone sculpture from Gandhara. Lahore Museum, India.
Figure 3.2. Donor with a cape. Stone sculpture from Gandhara. Private Collection.
Figure 3.3. Figure wearing a cape. Stone fragment from Gandhara. Private Hirayama Collection in Japan.
Figure 3.4. Buddha figure wearing a cape and jewels. Stone fragment from Haḍḍa. Musée Guimet, no. MG 20996.
Figure 3.5. Crowned Vairocana wearing a cape. Stone carving at lDan ma brag, Eastern Tibet (Khams).
Figure 3.6. Buddha wearing a crown and cape. Painting in niche “i” at Bamiyan.
Figure 3.7. Buddha wearing a jeweled cape. Clay fragment from niche D, Fondukistan. Musée Guimet, Paris.
Figure 3.8. Buddha wearing a crown and jeweled cape. Stone from Gandhara. Private collection, London.
Figure 3.9. Buddha wearing a crown and jeweled cape. Stone fragment from Parihasapura. Sri Pratap Singh Museum, Srinagar, Kashmir.
Figure 3.10. Buddha wearing a crown. Stone piece from Parihasapura. Sri Pratap Singh Museum, Srinagar, Kashmir.
Figure 3.11. Buddha wearing a crown and four-pointed cape. Brass sculpture from Kashmir. Po to la Collection: Li ma lha khang: inventory no. 221, Lhasa Tibet.
Figure 3.12. Buddha wearing a crown and a jeweled cape. Brass sculpture from Kashmir. Jo khang/gTsug lag khang Collection; inventory no. 644, Lhasa, Tibet.
Figure 3.14. Buddha wearing a crown. Brass sculpture from Kashmir. Po to la Collection: Li ma lha khang; inventory no. 1392. Red Palace, Lhasa, Tibet.
Figure 3.15. Buddha wearing a crown and jeweled cape. Brass sculpture From Kashmir. Ben Heller Collection, New York.
Figure 3.17. *Pañca Jīna* Buddhas with crowned Vairocana. Brass sculpture from Ladakh, Tibet.
Figure 3.18. Vairocana with symbols. Painting from Balawaste, Central Asia.
Figure 3.19. Mahāvairocana in *sambhogakāya* form performing the *bodhyāgrī mudrā*. Brass sculpture from Kashmir. Sri Pratap Singh Museum, Srinagar, Kashmir.
Figure 3.20. Detail of *dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā* from Vairocana/Maitreya Figure A.2.
Figure 3.21. Śākyamuni/Vairocana Buddha performing *dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā*. Brass sculpture from Kashmir. Nasli and Heeramanek Collection, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (M.69.13.5).
Figure 3.22. Vairocana Buddha performing the *dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā*. Brass sculpture from Western Trans-Himalaya, Michael Phillips Collection.
CHAPTER 4

MONASTICS IN THE PAṬOLA ŚĀHI DYNASTY

This chapter addresses the presence of Buddhist monastic figures in the Paṭola Śāhi visual record. Specifically, it considers inscriptive references to monks as primary and secondary donors, and their roles in the sculptures’ iconography. These findings, when contextualized within the sculptures’ overall iconographies, as well as historical and Buddhological frameworks, shed light on the specific Buddhist practices in which the donor-monks were engaged. In particular, the evidence suggests that many of the monks portrayed in the sculptures or mentioned in the inscriptions were initiates into and practitioners of the esoteric teachings of Vairocana Buddha. Moreover, I suggest that their role as Vairocana practitioners, as well as their close relationship to their spiritual teachers, provided the commissioning impetus and iconographic program for several of the Paṭola Śāhi sculptures.

This iconographic and contextual study also provides insight into the roles of the donor-monks within the royal Paṭola Śāhi dynasty, itself.
Specifically, my research suggests the Buddhist donor-monks\textsuperscript{316} portrayed in the sculptures were members of, and often spiritual advisors to, the Paṭola Śāhi royal family. Therefore, as donors of \textit{sambhogakāya} Vairocana images, initiates into Vairocana-related practices, and members of the royal family, the donor-monks were, in many cases, also teachers of Vairocana-related Buddhist practices to members of their royal family.

\textbf{Monks as Initiated Donors}

Buddhism traditionally has relied upon the oral transmission of doctrine and practices through the teacher-student relationship. In the Buddhist monastic context, a monk is taught a specific set of teachings and meditational practices by a master. When more advanced esoteric Buddhist practices are involved, in addition to communication of doctrinal study and practice specifics, the teacher-student transmission also usually includes an \textit{abhiśeka}, or initiation ritual, that “empowers” the monk to engage the practices.\textsuperscript{317} Through this process, a monk, is thereby, initiated into a

\textsuperscript{316} See discussions of figures A.6 and A.7 in Chapter 2 that demonstrate through inscriptive evidence that monks shown in the compositions of other sculptures were primary or secondary donors of the sculptures (A.18, A.19, A.21). In the Gilgit Manuscript colophons, there are some texts that also name monks as co-donors with royalty or nobility, although they are not related specifically to Vairocana. For details, see von Hinüber, “Die Palola Śāhis, 80-83.

\textsuperscript{317} In Vajrayāna Buddhism, the practitioner is brought before an image or shrine with an image, or a \textit{mandala}, that is to be the object of initiation, such as Vairocana. The practitioner undergoes rituals and instructions, and then the head is sprinkled with water or crowned. John Huntington believes that the Caves 6 and 7 at Aurangabad are examples of a space used for this purpose with the main shrine image being Vairocana. See Huntington, “Cave Six at Aurangabad,” 52. In the \textit{Hevajra Tantra} and the STTS, it gives directions for a consecration of knowledge in a \textit{mandala}, including a step of crowning the initiate by his
particular teaching and practice cycle. Throughout the Buddhist world, it is not uncommon for monks to commission images that relate to the specific teaching and practices into which they have been initiated. In fact, within the esoteric context, it would be highly irregular to depict a donor who had not been initiated into the specific teaching cycle represented in the artwork.

With respect to the Paṭola Śāhi objects, given our present understanding of the Vairocana-related texts during the time of the Paṭola Śāhi dynasty, only a monk who had been initiated into the teachings of Vairocana, such as the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* or the *Mahāvairocana abhisambodhi Tantra*, would have commissioned or depicted himself with a *sambhogakāya* aspect of Vairocana. Examples of such initiated monks are included in the following: figure A.7, which depicts an image of *sambhogakāya* Vairocana/Śākyamuni donated by the śākya bhikṣu Bhadradharma; figure A.6, which shows an image of *sambhogakāya* Vairocana/Śākyamuni co-commissioned by the monk Hariśayaśa; figure A.21, which represents the *sambhogakāya* image of Mahāvairocana donated by two Buddhist monks; and figure A.18, which depicts Vairocana Buddha donated by two monks.

In discussing the appearance of the monks with Vairocana seen in figure A.18, Ulrich von Schroeder suggests that the monastic teacher is master. The crown on the pupil’s head reflects his empowerment by the *pañca jina* Buddhas. In the Kagu tradition in Tibet, there are different crowns used for initiations into different Buddhist teachings.
shown on the left side of the Buddha, while the student monk is depicted on the right side - the student monk being the individual who commissioned the image in honor of his teacher. This interpretation is quite plausible, given the essential role of the teacher and the lineage transmission in esoteric Buddhist practices, as well as the long-standing importance of oral transmission throughout the broader South and Central Asian cultural spheres. Indeed, the depiction of teachers and teaching lineages in commissioned artwork is quite common in Buddhist art. Thus, when read within this framework, the combined iconography of *sambhogakāya* Vairocana with a donor-monk and his teacher, seen in figure A.18, suggests that the teacher-monk in the sculpture was responsible for initiating the student-monk into the Vairocana cycle practice relating to the image’s main figure.³¹⁹

Therefore, in the sculptures depicting two monks with Vairocana, the set core of elements are revealed through the iconology: 1) the presence of the donor-practitioner (the donor-monk), 2) the presence of the donor-practitioner’s teacher, and 3) the presence of the key symbol that expresses the practice into which the practitioner was initiated (i.e., *sambhogakāya*).


³¹⁹ The iconography does not require that the teacher consistently be depicted on the proper left, as there are other Pañolá Śāhi examples where the teacher appears on the right with the student on the left, such as fig. A.6. The particulars may depend upon the relationship, relative rank, or who is being depicted in the composition. There may be patterns to this, but a further study is necessary and beyond the scope of this study.
Vairocana-related practice). These elements reflect the core components of the practice of generosity (dāna) and three main constituents of the teaching transmissions in the Mahāyāna/Vajrayāna traditions – the receiver, the gift, and the giver. Here, the receiver is the donor-monk, the gift is the dharma related to Vairocana practice, and the giver is the donor-monk’s teacher.\(^{320}\)

This three-pronged iconographic depiction for the practice of generosity and transmission of teaching is further corroborated by the presence of the symbolic offering of a scarf by a monk, as seen in figure A.18 and figure A.21. Robert Beer points out that in the Tibetan tradition a white scarf, as an auspicious offering, is given to a teacher, and as such, it symbolizes the offering of a pure mind, heart, and motivation.\(^{321}\) In other words, the pupil is providing a symbol of allegiance to the teacher and his teachings. Hence, in these Paṭola Śāhi images, the student-monk offering a scarf (the receiver) represents his initiation and practice of the esoteric teachings of the Vairocana cycle (the gift), as well as his commitment to his teacher-monk (the giver) and Vairocana Buddha (the gift). The iconographic and iconological pattern of donor-practitioner, donor-practitioner’s teacher, and practice, I suggest, repeats in various ways throughout the Paṭola Śāhi dynasty and gives significant insight into the corpus of Paṭola Śāhi imagery.

\(^{320}\) In an expanded version of this notion, they all represent the elements necessary for the transmission of the esoteric teachings, specifically the “five certainties” discussed in chapter 3, including the teacher, the student, the teachings, and the place. See Ch. 3 p. 150.
Spiritual Teachers to the Royal Family

The donor-monks that appear in many of the sculptures or in the inscriptions played an important role in the Paṭola Śāhi dynasty, and as such, it is important to consider the relationship of these religious figures with the ruling family. My research indicates that the donor-monks were not only the spiritual teachers to other monks, but that they were also spiritual guides or formal teachers to the royal family. As such, the three-pronged iconology translates to the images that feature a monastic donor, a royal or noble donor, and an image of Vairocana. In these cases, the monastic donor figure can be read as the giver, the royal or noble donor figure is the recipient of the gift, and the image of Vairocana represents that gift of the dharma and practice. As such, the recurring theme of the teacher-student relationship as part of the transmission of esoteric Buddhist practices is present in the iconography, indicating that all of the donors had been initiated into the specific teaching cycle of Vairocana. For example, in figure A.6, the bhikṣu Hariṣayaśa, who is present in the composition on the right side of the sambhogakāya Vairocana/Śākyamuni and listed in the inscription, is the teacher-monk, Śrī Surabhī is the initiated student-receiver, and the gift is the dharma related to Vairocana practice evident through the central image.

It is noteworthy that many of the teachers in this three-pronged iconographic depiction held the rank of kalyāṇamitra, a dharma friend or

321 See Beer, 202.
spiritual advisor. The role of the *kalyānamitra* was introduced into Mahāyāna Buddhism as a noble and virtuous or meritorious friend. This friend served as a companion and advisor in order to bring his peer’s “own good qualities and aspirations to fruition,” and was thereby, an important figure for the follower on the *bodhisattva* path. From the time of the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*, it is known that the term *kalyānamitra* refers to any teacher, and it is still used with that designation in Buddhist practice. In fully developed Vajrayāna Buddhism, this role was given the title of *guru*, who confers the *abhiṣeka* or initiations upon the student. These initiations empower and allow the initiate to visualize deities and perform *manda* practices that include complex iconography, meditations, *mantras*, and *mudrās*. However, as a spiritual teacher, a *guru* is still considered a *kalyānamitra*.

A Paṭola Śāhi example of a monastic figure as a *kalyānamitra* is found in the inscription carved onto a rock accompanying an image of a *stūpa* found in Chilas near Gilgit (Figure 4.1). The inscription says that it is the pious gift of the donor Kuberavāhana to share the merit with his *kalyānamitra*, the monk Ācāryagupta. The carving shows Kuberavāhana as a nobleman

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322 Huntington and Bangdel, *Circle of Bliss*, 133-34.

323 Huntington and Bangdel, *Circle of Bliss*, 133-34. The Tibetan term for *guru* is not a literal translation, but an interpretation, therefore, they use the term *lama*.

laying on the proper left of the stūpa and Ācāryagupta in monastic robes kneeling to the proper right of the stūpa. Ācāryagupta, then, is an example of a monastic spiritual teacher, who also held the important title and role of kalyāṇamitra. Once again, the same pattern with the three constituents of the teaching transmissions with a Buddhist monk as the giver-teacher is manifest.

Oskar von Hinüber explains that in many of the Paṭola inscriptions, the term “bhikṣu” or monk is often interchangeable with the term “upādhyā,” which is also a renunciant religious teacher.325 The title “bhikṣu” is found in inscriptions on figure A.6 and figure A.7, while “upādhyā” is found on other Paṭola Śāhi inscriptions. For example, in the inscription on the bodhisattva in figure A.4 it states one of the donors as, “. . . the kalyāṇamitra and upādhyā Prajñāśimha . . .” Therefore, the inscription provides the name of an upādhyā or teacher as a co-donor along with thirty-two other donors, including the Paṭola Śāhi king Jayamaṅgalavikramādityanandi and his royal family. This inscription clarifies that Prajñāśimha was a kalyāṇamitra, or spiritual advisor, who functioned within the monastic capacity as a teacher of Buddhist dharma to the king and his family.

In the Paṭola Śāhi record, the role of a monk and a kalyāṇamitra, as spiritual teachers, were often interchangeable. Therefore, like Ācāryagupta

and Prajñāsīṃgha, it is probable that the other donor-mono figures were
spiritual teachers and advisors to the Paṭola Śāhi royalty, whether or not
they are listed as holding the rank of *kalyāṇamitra*. In the recurring theme
of the student-teacher relationship expressed through the iconography, much
of the visual evidence indicates that these monastic teachers transmitted the
gift of the Vairocana cycle to the ruling family.

**Monks as Members of the Royal Family**

In an examination of these spiritual teachers in the visual record, the
question arises regarding the identity of the monks who are acknowledged as
teachers through the inscriptions or iconographic placement. Are these
figures so prevalent in the Paṭola Śāhi imagery and inscriptions only because
they were the Buddhist spiritual teachers and advisors? My research
suggests that these monks were part of the royal Paṭola Śāhi family.

I propose that the monks were royal princes who took ordinations as
Buddhist monks. This was a common practice in Buddhist Central Asian
kingdoms, which were connected to the Paṭola Śāhis through the Silk Routes.
For example, in Buddhist Khotan, there were royal sons that became
Buddhist monks.\(^{326}\) The eldest son of the Khotan king Vijaya Jaya went to
India to study Buddhism. Vijaya Jaya’s spiritual advisor (*kalyāṇamitra*) at

\(^{326}\) Mariko Namba Walter, “Kingship and Buddhism in Central Asia,” Ph.D. Diss., Harvard
University, 1997, 119. See also F.W. Thomas, *Tibetan Literary Texts and Documents
33-5.
court was an Ārya monk from India. The king’s second royal son was ordained as a monk in Khotan, and thereby changed his name to Dharmānanda. Vijaya Jaya’s youngest or third son was his successor, becoming King Vijaya Dharma. It is important to note that the son and monk, Dharmānanda, later became the spiritual advisor to his brother the king.  

In addition, there were many Buddhist monks from Kucha who went to China in the 3rd and 4th centuries that were from royal or aristocratic backgrounds. Even the famous Mahāyāna monk Kumārajīva from Kucha was royalty, since his mother was a Kuchan princess. Interestingly, Kumārajīva went through Gilgit on his way back from his studies in Kashmir to Kucha. Mariko Namba Walter explains that, for a time, Kucha was the main Buddhist center for the neighboring kingdoms, and therefore, numerous princesses and daughters of nobility went to Kucha to be ordained as Buddhist nuns. Even today in Buddhist Tibet, the oldest son often takes monastic orders.

Thus, it is possible that the monastic figures in the Paṭola Śāhi visual record are members of the royal family who became Buddhist monks. This

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328 Walter, 173.
330 Walter, 155.
means that they would more than likely change their name, so their new
Buddhist name would not necessarily reflect their Paṭola Śāhi heritage. The
royal son from Khotan, Dharmānanda, is an example of this process, and the
Śākya bhikṣu Hariśayaśa and Bhadradharma also experienced this process.
It is also noteworthy that the names of these monks are included with the
names of lay practitioners in the inscriptions, such as Hariśayaśa with Śrī
Surabhī in figure A.6 and Bhadradharma with his parents in figure A.7. This
suggests that they retained their family relationship despite their status as
Buddhist monks. In addition, the iconography of the sculpture commissioned
by the monk Bhadradharma in figure A.7 is almost identical to the
iconography of figure A.8 donated by the princess Devaśrī, further indicating
that the monk belonged to the Paṭola Śāhi family.

Some monks, who were members of the royal family, traditionally
would have had an important relationship with their Buddhist king. In the
Tibetan tradition, the kalyānamitra are known to be advisors of donating
kings.331 In a text found in Kucha, it states that some Buddhist paintings in
a cave were commissioned by a king through the advice of a kalyānamitra
who was a high-ranking monk.332 Even Xuan Zhang records that monks were
part of the court at Kucha.333 In the Khotan example, Vijaya Jaya’s

331 Walter, 160.
332 See Albert Grunwedel, Alt-Kutscha (Berlin: O. Elsner Verlagsgesellschaft m.b.h, 1920)
S.I., 10 (1): I, II, 1, 12 (4).
333 See Walter, 161.
kalyānamitra at court was an Ārya monk from India. In addition, the Khotan king’s son, Dharmānanda, who was an ordained monk, served as a spiritual advisor to his brother the king.

These examples demonstrate that rulers throughout Central Asia and the Himalayas used Buddhist monks who came from the royal family to be the kalyānamitra at court. The Paṭola Śāhi kings were no exception to this practice. The kalyānamitra and upādhyya Prajñāsimgha, listed in the inscription in figure A.4, for example, was the kalyānamitra to the Paṭola Śāhi king Jayamaṅgalavikramādityanandi. There are even two other spiritual advisors listed in the same inscription. The relevant part of the inscription says, “. . . the kalyānamitra Devarakṣitu[a], the kalyānamitra and upādhyya Prajñāsimgha, the kalyānamitra Devasena . . .” The fact that there are thirty-three people specifically listed in this inscription, including the king and his wife and children, implies that the other listed co-donors were related in some manner to the Paṭola Śāhi ruler, or at the very least, were extended family. As such, the kalyānamitra were also related to the ruling family. This argument follows for the monastic donor that appears with the king and queen in figure A.19 as well. He was likely the kalyānamitra to the Paṭola Śāhi king and part of the royal family.

Moreover, as sons and members of the royal family, the monks would have been perfect candidates for positions in administration for the dynasty in both Baltistan and Gilgit. It was a common practice for Buddhist monks to
serve as bureaucrats in the government, going back to at least the time of the Kushan kings in India and Northwest India.\textsuperscript{334} Mariko Namba Walter explains that in the Central Asian kingdom of Krорaina, Buddhist monks were often married, and that they served as officials in the government.\textsuperscript{335}

Their title was “śramaṇa” in Sanskrit which is similar to the Gandhari form of “śamaṇa.”\textsuperscript{336} Many of these monks held high status and were very wealthy. Due to their official status and wealth, Mariko Namba Walter suggests that the śramaṇa most likely did not live in a temple or secluded monastery.

Rather, they lived with their family “rooted in daily pursuits of laymen.”\textsuperscript{337}

Both of the titles of “śramaṇa” and “śamaṇa” are found on rock inscriptions around the Gilgit area, such as Chilas and Thor-Nord, further indicating the

\textsuperscript{334} In Japan, Buddhist monks were often political envoys and government bureaucrats, see William D. Deal, "Buddhism and the State in Early Japan," \textit{Buddhism in Practice}, edited by Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), 216-17. It is suggested that Kushan kings also used Saka monks in the administration of their government.

Oskar von Hinüber suggests that Saka monks played a role later in Gilgit and Baltistan due to his analysis of the language in several Gilgit Manuscripts. He found many peculiarities that are also found in works by Central Asian Saka monks, therefore, von Hinüber believes that the majority of the manuscripts were written in the northwest by Saka scribes. See von Hinüber, "Buddhism in Gilgit," 42-3. Since the Vajracchedikā script is analogous to the Bower Manuscript dated to the late 4\textsuperscript{th}, this identity is also suggested by Niranjan Chakravarti, "The Gilgit Text of Vajracchedikā," \textit{Minor Buddhist Texts}, edited by Guiseppe Tucci, Appendix II (Delhi, Varanasi, Patna, Madras: Motilal Banarsidass, 1956), 178-79.

For a further discussion regarding the possibilities of Sakas in Gilgit and the Paṭola Śāhis, see Boris Litvinskij, "Pamir und Gilgit," \textit{Antiquities of Northern Pakistan: Reports and Studies}, Vol. 2 (Mainz: Verlag Philip von Zabern, 1993), 141 ff.; and Deborah Klimburg-Salter, "The Gilgit Manuscript Covers and the 'Cult of the Book'," \textit{South Asian Archaeology} (1987), 815.

\textsuperscript{335} Walter, 74.

\textsuperscript{336} For other names of Buddhist renunciants, see Skilling, 245.

\textsuperscript{337} Walter, 75.
presence of wealthy monastic figures, which also functioned in the secular realm.\textsuperscript{338} As such, it is likely that the many of the Paṭola Śāhi monks also served in official government roles, in addition to their position as Buddhist teachers and spiritual advisors to their royal relations.

The notion that the wealthy religious figures functioned primarily within the secular realm rather than a monastery, suggests the notion of a householder monk, and therefore, I suggest that it is possible that the royal sons of the Paṭola Śāhi family could have participated in the practice of becoming a household monk (\textit{grha\textasciitilde}stha bhik\textasciitilde}u). The role of a Buddhist householder monk is found in both Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna Buddhism. Basically, a household priest is a monk with the life of a lay practitioner, however, he follows the rules and Buddhist precepts with a greater strictness. Examples of the institution of married monkhood can be found today still in Nepal.\textsuperscript{339} The monk is a member of a monastic community and receives a monastic ordination that reinforces his role as a Buddhist monk. Once this is done, he can perform various duties, such as a guardian of the deity of a shrine and perform regular worship or rituals and ceremonies at the monastery. It is noteworthy that in Nepal, during the early periods, many of the householder monks used the title “Śākya bhik\textasciitilde}u” referring to

\textsuperscript{338} See Fussman, “Chilas, Hatun,” 27, no. 20, and 28, no. 25; and von Hinüber, “Buddhistische inschriften,” 83. These inscriptions are dated to the 5\textsuperscript{th} – 6\textsuperscript{th} century, so perhaps this title developed into mahāśamanta as discussed above.
their lineage of descent from the Śākyamuni Śākyas, which is the same title used by the Paṭola Śāhi monks in figure A.6 and figure A.7. In addition, Tantric Vajrācārya monks in Newar Buddhism in Nepal are often married and yet function as an important religious figure and priest in the community.

If the Paṭola Śāhi monastic figures practiced in the form of a household priest, the monk could be part of the royal family or married to a member of the ruling elite. Perhaps this type of monk even lived in the palace as part of the family, whereby providing spiritual instruction and advice to the ruling family, as well as maintaining the palace shrine. This suggestion regarding the practice of householder monasticism, however, is inconclusive and requires further study.

The visual and inscriptional evidence, as well as Buddhist traditions, support the suggestion that the monastic figures were members of the royal family, or at the very least, members of the extended Paṭola Śāhi family. This would provide a further explanation for the marked appearance of donor-monks with the royal family, such as seen in figures A.6 and A.19. Perhaps the monk in figure A.6, Hariśayaśa, was the royal brother of the

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340 In a discussion between John Huntington and the queen of Ladakh, Rani Stok, he was told that she kept a monk in the palace to maintain the palace shrine. John Huntington suggests that this practice was originally a Kashmiri tradition that was passed on to Ladakh and perhaps to Nepal.
princess Śrī Surabhī, and this is why a female can be depicted alone with a monk, an indication of their familial ties. Or, perhaps Hariṣayaśa was a married monk and Surabhī was his wife. In addition, it is possible that the Paṭola Śāhi monks, as part of the family, considered it a filial duty to bring their relatives into the fold of Buddhism. John Strong explains that often Buddhist monks not only took care of the spiritual needs of their family members, but also the material needs if necessary.\textsuperscript{341} Enthusiastic about their own Vajrayāna Buddhist faith, the monastics would want to initiate the rest of the ruling family. As such, the monks were performing filial piety through teaching and advising.

As members of the ruling Paṭola Śāhi family, the monks would have access to great wealth. This accumulation of wealth could be contributed solely to the monks’ blood ties, either through birth or marriage, or it could relate to the additional role as kalyāṇamitra, or as a government official, or as a household priest. In the Paṭola Śāhi images where monks appear with royal donors, it is possible that they were not the patrons to put up the funds necessary to commission the artworks. However, if the religious figures were considered part of the ruling family, it would explain the monastic wealth seen in some of the Paṭola Śāhi visual imagery. An example of a patron

monk’s affluence is seen in figure A.18 with the intricate cushion inlaid with sliver and copper, so typical of the Paṭola Śāhi idiom, and like that commissioned by the king in figure A.2. The monks could commission artworks using the same iconographic programs that rivaled the splendor and craftsmanship of those donated by the ruling family because they were related to the royal Paṭola Śāhi family.

Significantly, *kalyāṇamitra* to the Paṭola Śāhi family were not only monastics, but also lay figures, who had attained a certain level of spiritual practice pursuant to initiation, thereby affording them this Buddhist title and role. Figure A.2, for example, shows a lay practitioner who functioned in the same capacity of a *kalyāṇamitra* at court. The inscription on this *sambhogakāya* Vairocana/Maitreya image names the spiritual advisor to the king and queen as “*kalyāṇamitra* Vikhyātarakṣita.” He is shown to the left in the composition, kneeling respectfully at the feet of the Vairocana/Maitreya figure and is dressed as a wealthy, lay nobleman with a beard, wearing a turban-like hat with a knot on the top, a lapelled coat, earrings, and a sword at his waist. In other words, he is shown similar to the king, yet he does not wear a crown. To appear as a co-donor with the king and queen, Vikhyātarakṣita was obviously important and held in high regard. Thus, his marked presence with the king and queen and his royal depiction in the composition, as well as his crucial role as spiritual teacher
and advisor to the king, indicate that Vikhyätarakṣita was a member of the royal family.

Figure A.9 also depicts an individual dressed in royal garb, similar to that of Vikhyätarakṣita. Unlike Vikhyätarakṣita, however, he appears on the proper right in the sculpture of sambhogakāya Vairocana/Maitreya with a queen as co-donor on the proper left. Given his placement and presence with the queen, and the three-pronged expression of giver, receiver, and gift evidenced in the Paṭola Śāhi art, it is likely that this noble figure is a layman kalyānamitra, or advisor of lesser spiritual status, to the royal family. This argument follows for the same type of figure represented in figure A.19 offering a scarf, who is depicted with a king and queen, as well as a monastic figure. As such, these lay kalyānamitra were also members of the ruling Paṭola Śāhi family, or at the very least, members of the extended royal family.

The evidence suggests, then, that when a lay kalyānamitra figure was shown or listed with a royal donor, he was understood to be a spiritual teacher to members of the royal family and initiator of the practice being represented in the sculpture. In the case of figures A.2 and A.9, the lay kalyānamitra would have functioned as one of the three core elements of

342 It should be noted that the title of kalyānamitra is not found in all of the inscriptions on the Paṭola Śāhi sculptures. However, the absence of the term kalyānamitra in the inscriptions does not necessarily indicate the absence of this spiritual status on the part of the teacher. There are similarly represented male donors in Fig. A.19 and Fig.2.1, who perhaps are also kalyānamitra. The donor Dharmasimha even has a name like a monk, although he is depicted as a noble figure.
Buddhist transmission related through the iconography (i.e., he was the teacher (giver) of the gift (teaching and practice) to the receiver (the royal donor). Given the overall iconography, we can say that the lay *kalyāṇamitra* likely transmitted a teaching related to Maitreya and the Vairocana cycle to the king and queen and the ruling family.

Although the title *kalyāṇamitra* is not used for the co-donor of the *Saṃghāṭa Sūtra*, Atthocasimha, his title and placement are also reflective of his spiritual role and close connection to the Paṭola Śāhi king. Atthocasimha is depicted with his wife on one of the painted covers (Figure A.15), while the partner cover depicts Śākyamuni/Vairocana (Figure A.14). Atthocasimha’s title “mahāmātyā mahāmantrin” can be translated as the “Lord, Chief Minister and the King’s Counselor” or as “Lord, Chief Minister and Great Possessor of Buddhist *Mantras*,” referring to one who knows sacred texts and spells, particularly associated with Vajrayāna Buddhism. If Atthocasimha was a Buddhist *mantrin*, he would be similar to the Vajrācārya monks in Nepal, who are married and have been initiated into Tantric practices with the ensuing empowerments. Like a Vajrācārya monk, Atthocasimha is depicted in his lay attire rather than as a monastic figure, although it is most likely some sort of ritual garb. As husband to the princess Devaśirikā, Atthocasimha was, indeed, part of the ruling family with close ties to the Paṭola Śāhi king.
In addition, Atthocasingha’s title as “Lord, Chief Minister” implies that he was a bureaucrat in the government, and it is even suggested that it refers to the title for the governor of Gilgit. With his two titles, therefore, Atthocasingha was a great religious figure and a government official. As such, it is likely that the many of the other lay kalyānamitra also served in official government roles, in addition to their position as Buddhist teachers and spiritual advisors to their royal relations.

**Conclusion**

Thus, if the monastic donors are situated into the iconography, especially, of an image of a sambhogakāya Vairocana, it provides unequivocal evidence that they were initiates and practitioners of the esoteric Vairocana-related teachings. Specifically, the core elements of the practice of generosity and teaching transmissions are revealed, which include: the receiver, the gift, and the giver. This underlying iconographic and iconological pattern is repeated throughout the images including monks and lay kalyānamitra. As such, the evidence indicates that these religious figures were the formal spiritual teachers of Buddhism and, in particular, the esoteric Vairocana cycle to the royal family.

Moreover, I have shown that the Buddhist monks were members of the royal Paṭola Śāhi family, either through birth or marriage, or as an extended

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family member. Therefore, they could hold important places at court as advisor to the king, or as a government official, or perhaps even as a priest to the palace shrine. Thus, the contextualization of the patronage of the monastic figures, and even the lay *kalyānāmitra*, and their capacity within the dynasty, provides insight into the historical and Buddhological practices of the Paṭola Śahi family.
Figure 4.1. The donor Kuberavāhana (proper left of the stupa) with the monk and kalyānamitra Ācāryagupta (proper right of the stupa). Rock carving from Chilas.
This chapter focuses on the Paṭola Śāhi lay donors, specifically the royal and noble patrons, as part of the interpretation of the Buddhist iconography. Although it is unique that the Paṭola Śāhi donors are consistently depicted in the compositions or listed in inscriptions, the presence of donors within a composition is not a new Buddhist tradition. The practice goes back historically to at least the Kushan period, where groups of donors are seen in Gandharan and Mathuran pedestals, including couples or monks.\textsuperscript{344} Susan Huntington explains one purpose for including donors with images of Buddhist deities is that conceptually it "insures perpetual adoration of the image."\textsuperscript{345} The Paṭola Śāhi donors in the composition featuring the Buddha Vairocana, therefore, provide constant worship of the Vairocana images.

\textsuperscript{344} For a discussion of early donor figures, see von Hinüber, “Die Palola Śāhis,” 149-51; and Skilling, 260-61.

\textsuperscript{345} Susan Huntington, \textit{Art of India}, 419. Her example is an image of Syama Tārā where she appears in a complete shrine image with her accompanying Tārās, a group of nāgas, and a devotee on the offering platform. Except for the offering platform, a few of the Patola Śāhi sculptures could be considered as shrines. The offerings made by the Paṭola donors at the
There are, however, additional underlying Buddhological reasons for placing representations of themselves as donors with images of Vairocana. A contextualization of the religious patronage of the royal and noble Paṭola Śāhis clarifies the theoretical principles and practices which they embraced. The predominance of representations of Vairocana, the archetypal \textit{sambhogakāya} Buddha, shows that the patrons were practitioners of Vajrayāna Buddhism, in particular, Vairocana-related teachings. I suggest that the presence of the donors with the \textit{sambhogakāya} images of Vairocana shows that they understood the iconography at an esoteric level within early Vajrayāna methodologies. As such, it indicates that they were initiated into the esoteric Buddhist teachings of the Vairocana cycle. In other words, they are present in the image to demonstrate their faithfulness and commitment to their preferred deity, Vairocana Buddha, as well as marking their level of spiritual attainment as being present in Akaniṣṭha with him.

The first section of this chapter uses the Paṭola Śāhi visual record to situate the donors into the iconography and iconology of the images, whereby attesting that they were practitioners of esoteric Buddhism. The discussion considers not only their patronage of the \textit{sambhogakāya} images of Vairocana Buddha, but also their spiritual titles and the role of the donor couples, which aid in denoting them as devout practitioners of early Vajrayāna Buddhism. In addition, it addresses other layers of iconography that further
substantiates the initiation of the royal and noble donors into Vajrayāna Buddhism, especially the Vairocana cycle.

The second section of this chapter uses the Buddhist literary evidence of the Gilgit Manuscripts that were donated by Paṭola Śāhi kings, queens, members of the royal family, and nobility, in order to show the patrons’ tendency toward the practice of esoteric Buddhism, with several texts clearly referring to Vajrayāna Buddhist practices. Thus, the visual and literary evidence prove that the Paṭola Śāhi patrons intentionally commissioned images, with such a deliberate choice of iconography repeated throughout, to confirm that they were early Vajrayāna Buddhist practitioners.

**Visual Record – The Royal and Noble Donors as Vajrayāna Buddhist Practitioners**

Donors of Images of *Sambhogakāya* Vairocana

There are several examples where royal donors appear with *sambhogakāya* Buddha figures. As such, the images depict some form of a hypostasis of Vairocana, showing their preference for the teachings of Vairocana. In figure A.1, the King Nandivikramādityanandi is depicted alone with Vairocana/Maṇjuśrī in his *sambhogakāya* aspect. The same king is portrayed with his queen, Namobuddhāya, in the image of Vairocana/Maitreya who features the primary benchmarks of a *sambhogakāya* Buddha (Figure A.2). A Paṭola Śāhi queen is depicted as part of a donor couple in the *sambhogakāya* image of Vairocana/Maitreya in figure
A.9. In the sculpture of a *sambhogakāya* image of Vairocana/Śākyamuni, the Paṭola Śāhi princess, Devaśrī, is represented with her husband Saṃkaraseṇa (Figure A.8). The woman Devaśirikā, whom I suggest is a royal female, is the main donor depicted on a painted manuscript cover with its partner cover portraying an image of Śākyamuni/Vairocana (Figures A.14 and A.15).

Additional representations of dual-images with Vairocana Buddha feature other royal or noble Paṭola Śāhi patrons in the compositions. The royal or noble woman Śrī Surabhī was a patron of the *sambhogakāya* image of Vairocana/Śākyamuni in figure A.6. In figure A.16 depicting Śākyamuni/Vairocana, the noble man Varṣa, who is the son of a Treasurer, is portrayed with his family. A noble couple is depicted in the composition with Śākyamuni/Vairocana in figure A.20. The donor Simhota is dressed as a royal or noble man with the *sambhogakāya* representation of the Buddha Vairocana/Vipaśyin in figure A.22. Another noble couple, similar to the others, is represented with Vairocana/Maitreya, who is depicted as a *sambhogakāya* Buddha in figure A.23. In figure A.27, there is a noble, or perhaps royal, female depicted with Maitreya/Vairocana. The majority of commissioned artworks relate to the *sambhogakāya* nature of Vairocana Buddha, implying an understanding of esoteric iconography and the use of meditational constructs. The visual imagery itself speaks to the fact that

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346 There are also noble donors in images that are not Vairocana, including figures A.10, A.11, A.12, A.13, A.17, A.19, and A.28.
they were initiated practitioners of the Vairocana cycle, especially since crowned Buddhas are understood within a Tantric context.

**Spiritual Titles and Donor Couples**

It is significant that in many of the inscriptions on the Paṭola Śāhi sculptures, the donors gave themselves specific titles relating to their level of Buddhist spiritual practice and devotion, some particularly to Vairocana Buddha. The typical title used by donors in Indian Buddhist art was upāsaka (layman or follower) or upāsikā (laywoman or follower). However, the Paṭolas frequently used the title mahāśraddhopāsaka (mahāśraddha-upāsaka/upāsikā), which translates as layman or laywomen of great faith.347

This title is even used by Paṭola Śāhi kings. For example, the inscription on the bodhisattva in figure A.4 says, “. . . the gift of the layman of great faith, the Great King of Kings, the Supreme Lord, Paṭola Śāhi, the king Jayamaṅgalavikramādityanandi. . .” It is noteworthy that the title mahāśraddhopāsaka or layman of great faith comes before the other aspects of the king’s great title. One might ask if it is first because it is most important. The same title is also used in the same inscription for his primary queen Śrī Śāmāvatī. King Jayamaṅgalavikramādityanandi uses the spiritual title mahāśraddhopāsaka exactly the same way again in the inscription on the bodhisattva in figure A.5. Obviously, the king was a devout Buddhist.

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347 For a discussion of this title, see von Hinüber, “Die Paṭola Śāhis,” 133-35.
The same title is also found with an earlier Paṭola king. In a colophon in the *Bhaiṣajyaagara Sūtra*, it calls the king “mahāśraddhopāsaka Surendravikramādityanandi,” signifying that he was also a devout practitioner.

The title mahāśraddhopāsikā is used by the royal donor woman, Devaśirikā, who was the primary donor of the *Samghāṭa Sūtra*. This is the Gilgit text with the painted covers depicting the donors on one cover and Śākyamuni/Vairocana on the other cover (Figures A.14 and A.15). The image of Vairocana and her title likely indicate that she was a laywoman with great faith in the Buddha Vairocana. Varṣa, the son of the king’s treasurer, uses the same title with his name in the inscription on figure A.16 depicting Śākyamuni/Vairocana.

In addition, there is another title used by the Paṭola Śāhis that denotes great faith and devotion. The title is paramopāsaka (parama-upāsaka), which translates as foremost among lay worshippers. This title is used for the donor Saṃkaraseṇa, the Great Treasurer, in the inscription on an image of a sambhogakāya aspect of Vairocana/Śākyamuni (Figure A.8). In the same inscription, a variation of this title is used to show even higher devotion by his wife, the Paṭola princess Devaśrī, calling her mahāśrāddhāyā paramopāsikya or foremost lay worshipper of great faith. These descriptive

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348 This title is found with names in other Gilgit text colophons, although they are not related specifically to Vairocana. For examples, see von Hinüber, “Die Palola Śāhis,” 17-24 and 81-85.
spiritual titles were surely used to denote themselves as profound devotees. In other words, the donors wanted to clearly state that they were devout Buddhist practitioners of great faith, some particularly to Vairocana Buddha.

Moreover, I suggest that it is possible that the donors reinforced their roles as profound devotees and followers of Vairocana through the representation of a donor couple in the composition. In the Gilgit text, the *Ekottaragāma*, the Buddha names model pairs to emulate, not just monks and nuns, but also laymen and laywomen.\(^{349}\) It lists Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī and Utpalavarṇā as a couple and also Viśākhā Mṛgāramatā of Śrāvastī and Kubjottarā of Kośāmbhī as another exemplar couple.\(^{350}\) Since the Paṭola Śāhi compositions often feature a couple, perhaps this is an underlying purpose. The Paṭola couple is depicting themselves as lay practitioners of great faith and as a model pair to inspire others to emulate.

It is interesting that one of the exemplar women listed in the *Ekottaragāma*, Kubjottarā, was an upāsikā who was responsible for the transmission of Buddhist scripture.\(^{351}\) It is held that she learned the Buddhist text, the *Itivuttaka*, by heart and transmitted it to the ladies of the

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\(^{349}\) Skilling, 248-49.


\(^{351}\) Skilling, 254.
royal harem of King Udena at Kośāmbhi. Therefore, she is praised for her wide learning and presented in the *Ekottaragāma* as a model laywoman. Perhaps this story relates to the predominance of female donors, even queens, in the Paṭola Śāhi visual record and in the manuscripts (seen later in this chapter). Some of the Paṭola Śāhi women were also the primary donors, showing their practice and transmission of Buddhism. It is not uncommon for women to commission images in the Buddhist tradition, as seen in the sculpture of Śākyamuni/Vairocana excavated from Domoko in Khotan. The 7th century *Proto-Śāradā* inscription says it was commissioned by Sārvatti, the wife of the warlord, Dholaka, with their sons and other figures. The evidence, therefore, suggests that the Paṭola Śāhi royal and noble women played a central role in the transmission of Buddhism in the dynasty through Buddhist images and texts, hence the depiction of so many female donors.

More significant, however, is the importance of the male and female as a couple in Tantric imagery. In Vajrayāna Buddhism, corresponding opposites are fundamental principles in Tantric symbolism, such as: wisdom

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353 It is interesting that in all of the inscriptions, even the really long ones, a prince is only named once and he is relegated to the side rather than the front with the royal daughters. The evidence indicates that he never succeeded the throne.

354 Ulrich von Schroeder suggests that this piece originated from Gilgit and is further proof of the Sakas in the dynasty, see *Buddhist Sculptures*, 63.
(prajñā)/skillful means (upāya); night/day; moon/sun; woman/man; and lotus/vajra. In the Vajrayāna context of the Pañola Śāhi images, the female donor is the prajñā, representing wisdom, and she is thereby the female counterpart of the male practitioner, who represents upāya, particularly compassion. Both wisdom and compassion are the two key components for enlightenment, and as such, in esoteric methodologies, the union of corresponding opposites embodies the notion of non-duality.

This esoteric notion of corresponding opposites is present in the Pañola Śāhi visual record. For example, the royal and noble patrons are using Tantric protocols by placing the male devotee on the right side and the female on the left side, even if the female is the primary donor. This is evident in figures A.6, A.8, and A.9. In addition, the name of the harem-lady in the inscription on Vairocana/Mañjuśrī as the king’s partner has obvious references to esoteric Buddhism. Her name, Upalā, (blue lotus) in Vajrayāna Buddhism is equivalent to calling her the king’s prajñā or his corresponding opposite with him representing the vajra.

Another example of a royal couple as Vajrayāna practitioners can be found in the image of Vairocana/Maitreya, where the queen Namobuddhāya is the prajñā to the male practitioner, the king Nandivikrama-dītyanandi (Figure A.2). Moreover, the sun and moon, as corresponding opposites, also

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355 See Gellner, 281. This concept of non-duality in corresponding opposites is also used in the sexual symbolism seen in later Vajrayāna art. As such, the imagery becomes a Tantric metaphor for the blissful experience of ultimate non-duality or enlightenment.
symbolize the male and female aspect in esoteric Buddhism, and the
inscription on this same sculpture of Vairocana/Maitreya shows direct
evidence that this was a known Tantric concept to the Paṭola donors. The
relevant part of the inscription on figure A.2 states:

The sun in the sky of the Bhagadatta family made this image of the
Buddha, the king, the auspicious noble ocean of endless virtues,
together with the auspicious queen of dark splendor, who has a face resembling
the full moon, in the year 91 on the full moon day, a Tuesday.

The inscription equates the queen, Namobuddhāya, with the moon and the
king, Nandivikramādityanandi, with the sun, whereby invoking esoteric
imagery through symbolic language, which refers to the union of opposites as
Vajrayāna practitioners. Furthermore, the symbolism of non-duality is
central to Tantric initiation, indicating that the royal devotees were initiated
into the Vairocana cycle.

Even the warrior-garb worn by the king in this image indicates his
relationship to a bodhisattva and keeps the iconography within a Vajrayāna
context. In some esoteric practices, the advanced practitioner, through the
practice of mantra and meditation, is considered a human bodhisattva, as
found in the Mmk where it describes an ācārya as a bodhisattva.\footnote{Wallis, “Persistence of Power,” Mmk G.1.22.21-24.8, 267.}
Moreover, when a sādhaka (practitioner of sādhana) receives an initiation,
which is like a royal consecration (rājyābhīṣkamīva) in the Mmk, he is
empowered like a cakravartin or great king, going into battle to perfect the
power of his *mantras*.\(^{357}\) Perhaps the Paṭola Śāhi king is depicted in his military splendor to illustrate this concept.

**Iconography of Initiation**

Aside from the obvious images of a *sambhogakāya* aspect of Vairocana, there are several other clues in the iconography of the Paṭola Śāhi artworks that indicate the royal and noble donors were initiated into esoteric methodologies. For example, just like the donor-monks, the scarf offerings made by the lay devotees are significant indicators that the donors were initiated into the Vairocana cycle. Devaśirikā is offering a white scarf on a pair of painted covers where one depicts Śākyamuni/Vairocana (Figures A.14 and A.15). The donor figure of a Paṭola Śāhi queen in figure A.9 offers a scarf to *sambhogakāya* Vairocana/Maitreya. Varṣa, the Treasurer’s son, offers a scarf to Śākyamuni/Vairocana in figure A.16. In addition, the donor Veyatyāsa offers a scarf to the Buddha in figure A.17, and the noble bearded donor in figure A.19 also offers a scarf.

The auspicious offering of a white scarf symbolizes the Buddhist pupil’s allegiance and submission to the spiritual teacher and his teachings. In certain traditions, a white silk scarf specifically represents Vajrayāna Buddhism.\(^{358}\) In addition, the white scarves are used in esoteric rituals, such as that found in the *MVT*: The Tantra says that once the *mantrin* has made

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all of the other offerings to the *mandala*, he then is to offer scarves: “Cotton scarves should be offered, one to each of the main deities, and one per group for the ordinary Great Beings.”\(^{359}\) Therefore, in the Paṭola Śāhi sculptures, the royal and noble devotees signify, through the offering of the scarves, their commitment and faithfulness of themselves and the ruling house to Vairocana Buddha. This act, of course, would be subsequent to an initiation into the esoteric teachings of Vairocana.

Even the string of prayer beads (*akṣamālā*) which is held by many Paṭola Śāhi donors is an essential tool used for the recitation of *mantras*, especially for Vajrayāna rituals. In Tantric Buddhism, the beads represent the attachment to self and the string which holds them symbolizes the Buddhist *dharma*, which severs these attachments.\(^{360}\)

Moreover, the hand gesture where the Buddhist deity has his hand out toward a donor’s head has connotations of investiture and is found in Buddhist iconography relating to the initiation into a particular teaching. For example, in a painting of the great Mahāsiddha Vanaratnapa, he is shown kneeling while the Buddhist deity, white Tārā, reaches her hand out toward his head. Dina Bangdel points out that this relates to his teaching

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\(^{358}\) See Beer, 202.

\(^{359}\) Hodge, *MVT* 2.88, 137. Perhaps this is what is depicted in the painting in the Gilgit manuscript where Devaśirikā offers a white scarf with the mantrin Atthocasingha (see figure A.15.

\(^{360}\) Beer, 215.
lineage that was associated with his instructions on Buddhist doctrine concerning this form of Tārā.\textsuperscript{361}

This same iconography of the hand gesture is found in a few Paṭola images and, in a Buddhist context, has the same interpretation of initiation and consecration of the initiate. For example, the *bodhisattvas* in figures A.12 and A.13 are reaching their hands out toward the heads of the kneeling donor figures. Therefore, it can be suggested that the royal or noble donors in the paintings are invested with a specific teaching, perhaps relating to the specific Gilgit text itself. As such, the *bodhisattvas* and Buddhas are not painted on the manuscript covers as illustrations of the texts, but are there to show investiture into the teachings of the doctrine, and a blessing of merit for commissioning the copying of the text.

Most importantly, the gesture of investiture is found in figure A.1, where the Buddha Vairocana/Mañjuśrī reaches his right hand out and touches the head of the king Nandivikramādityanandi. This indicates his consecration and initiation into the teachings of Vairocana, the source of all Buddhas and *dharma*, and perhaps a reward or blessing for spreading these Buddhist teachings.\textsuperscript{362} The consecration portrayed in the iconography marks

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\textsuperscript{361} Bangdel, “Vanaratnapa,” 144. Bangdel points out that other ritual paraphernalia is present to mark the moment, including the rain of flowers, witnesses, and a man blowing a conch shell. For another example, see pl. 54 in Klimburg-Salter, *Silk Road*, where two bodhisattvas are consecrating or initiating a figure of a monk.

\textsuperscript{362} As an initiate into esoteric teachings, it could be suggested that the warrior garb worn by the king can relate to him as a bodhisattva within a Vajrayāna context.
the initial entrance of the practitioner, here the king, into the teachings and allows him to engage in the Tantric practices. Perhaps it is to be interpreted as the king being crowned in his initiation. A passage in the *MVT* says that all the Buddhas placed their hands on Vajrapâni’s head after he uttered a *vidyārāja*, whereby he entered into the “Level of the Bhagavat Vairocana’s Body, Speech and Mind.”

Perhaps Vairocana/Maṇjuśrī’s hand on the head of the king represents that Nandivikramādityanandi has entered into the same level of Vairocana as well. As such, the gesture would also be a visual signifier of spiritual attainment.

Therefore, it can also be suggested that the spiritual attainment of the donors is attested by their very presence in the composition. In the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*, there is a character Sudhana who is directed and taught by Maṇjuśrī and *kalyānamitra* as he goes on a pilgrimage journey. At the end of his journey he meets Maṇjuśrī in Akaniṣṭha, Vairocana’s realm.

Maṇjuśrī places his hand on Sudhana’s head and says:

> Good, good! Those without the faculty of faith, those who are weary or sluggish in mind, those who have not accumulated efforts, those whose vigor recedes, those who are satisfied with meager virtues, those who are not in the care of spiritual benefactors ... cannot know this true nature, this principle, this sphere, this abode, they are unable to know, to fathom, to believe ... to attain.

I suggest that the king is using the iconography, in part, to possibly equate himself with Sudhana, whereby he is represented as a great Buddhist pilgrim.

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363 Hodge, *MVT* XIII.9, 259.
in the highest realm of Akaniṣṭha. Not only is the king making a statement about the greatness of his own faith and spirituality and the resulting attainment by being blessed by Mañjuśrī, but he is also transformed into the realm of Akaniṣṭha before Vairocana in the visual imagery. It can even be said, for that matter, that all of the donors situated into the iconography of a sambhogakāya Buddha are conceived as being present in Akaniṣṭha with Vairocana, listening to the dharma, as great followers. In other words, by representing themselves in the composition with sambhogakāya Vairocana, they mark their spiritual attainment at an especially high level of esoteric practice.

**Pious Gifts**

Although it is not a practice specific to the worship of Vairocana or esoteric Buddhism, the pious act of gift giving can be attributed to all of the Paṭola Śāhi donors, and therefore, it should be discussed, albeit briefly. It is obvious from numerous Paṭola Śāhi inscriptions that one directly stated motive for the commissioning of the artworks or Buddhist texts is to give a pious gift. One common practice in Buddhism it to gain merit (puṇya) for

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364 Cleary, vol. 3, 378. Paul suggests that it relates to a passage in the *Saddharmapundarīka Sūtra* which states that the Buddha will place his hand on the head of one who recites, or copies, or worships the *sūtra* as an award. See his discussion, Paul, 207.

365 This was originally suggested by Tom Suchan.

366 Perhaps this can also relate to the Buddhist belief that if one is present in Tuṣita, listening to the bodhisattva Maitreya’s teachings, that person is ensured attendance in the assemblies when he descends to this world as a Buddha, which is mentioned in Xing, 169. As such, the devotee is ensuring that they will be in Akaniṣṭha with Vairocana.
oneself as well as for all other sentient beings. Attaining merit gives the practitioner religious points toward *karma* and a better rebirth. One way to attain such merit was to provide gifts as offerings (*dāna*), especially of images, but it can also be gained by learning a Buddhist doctrine and teaching it to others and by having texts copied. In Mahāyāna Buddhism this merit became transferable to others, including the deceased.

Although this was not a new tradition among Buddhist practitioners, it was commonly practiced by the members of the Paṭola Śāhi dynasty. All of the Paṭola Śāhi images that have inscriptions specifically state that they are donated as a pious gift, including figures A.1, A.2, A.4, A.5, A.6, A.7, A.8, A.14, A.15, A16, and A.17. It is evident from the inscriptions that the Paṭola Śāhi donors were attempting to not only gain merit for themselves, but also for their deceased ancestors. This is evident, especially, in the long inscription on the *bodhisattva* in figure A.4 naming thirty-three donors, some of them deceased, or as *kālagata*. It is also prevalent in the colophon of the *Saṃghāṭa Sūtra* naming seventeen people, some of them deceased, as well as in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra* naming forty-three donors with fourteen of them noted as deceased.\(^{367}\)

The concept of a pious gift is also evident in the Paṭola Śāhi literary record, as seen in several Buddhist texts found in Gilgit. Two of these are the *Samādhirāja Sūtra* and the *Aṣṭādaśasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*. In the

Samādhīrāja Sūtra, there is frequent reference to the attainment of merit. Chapter 24, in particular, dwells on the transfer of merit, the merit of aspiration toward Buddhahood and toward others, and merit gained by taking pleasure in the merit of others. In addition, the Aṣṭādaśasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā discusses merit and how sons and daughters of a good family can dedicate merit to others in great compassion. It also states that one perfection to acquire is giving (dānapāramitā).

Thus, the pious donations by the Paṭolas were to achieve merit for the donors of the royal family, such as kings, queens, and other royal family members, including monks and kalyānamitra. Therefore, it could be said that on a basic level the donors are present in the iconography to show them as receiving the promised merit for their gifts, as well as their adherence to this Buddhist practice. However, because of the multi-valent iconography in Buddhism, it is important to remember that these images and texts were not just pious gifts for merit and the benefit of others.

There is no way to know for certain the context for the use of the elaborate gifts comprising the Paṭola Śahi visual record and the Buddhist manuscripts. It is possible that they were given to a monastic community or to a palace shrine maintained by a household priest. It can be assumed, however, that the gifts would have served a function associated with religious

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368 Edward Conze, The Gilgit Manuscript of the aṣṭādaśasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā, Ch. 55-70, Corresponding to the 5th Abhisamaya (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente. 1962) 220-22 and 287.
practice, such as a teaching tool, a way to promote the faith, an aid to meditation, or a tool for ritual or veneration. Wherever the image was installed and given devotion, the ultimate image of Vairocana would, indeed, vivify the shrine.

The Gilgit Manuscripts as a Literary Record – Donors as Practitioners

The *Gilgit Manuscripts* are a large collection of Buddhist texts that were discovered buried in a *stūpa* at Naupur in Gilgit, and as such, they were given the name the *Gilgit Manuscripts*. The manuscripts are generally divided into two main groups – those written in *Brāhmī* round script and those written in *Proto-Śāradā* script. Therefore, this collection of manuscripts can be securely dated prior to the late 8th century when *Proto-Śāradā* was no longer used. Some can be dated as early as the 5th century, due to the particular script in which the text is written. Scholars acknowledge that the collection of Gilgit Manuscripts consists of Hinayāna and Mahāyāna texts, but my research suggest that there are also some that fall into the early Vajrayāna category, further attesting that the Paṭola Śāhis were practitioners of esoteric Buddhism.

It is a difficult task to separate early Vajrayāna Buddhism from the late phases of Mahāyāna Buddhism. The boundaries can be rather fluid since some of the same practices and methodologies are found in both, although the methodologies are set into different frameworks. Tantras, using the basis of Mahāyāna principles, provide practical methods for the
realization of enlightenment in one lifetime with a stress on esoteric methodology.\textsuperscript{369} Often the early form of esoteric practice is called \textit{Mantrayāna} for this very reason. Even a brief theoretical analysis of this issue lies outside the scope of this study, it will, however, suffice to understand that an early Vajrayāna text must have esoteric rituals or practices. These esoteric methodologies include, \textit{mantras} (sacred syllables or words), \textit{dhāraṇīs} (incantation of \textit{mantras} to invoke beneficial powers), \textit{mudrās} (symbolic hand gestures), \textit{maṇḍalas} (mystic diagrams), and \textit{sādhana} (invocation rituals involving the practice of visualization).\textsuperscript{370}

Stephen Hodge provides a list of features that are generally present in Tantric Buddhist practices and texts. Some of them which are useful to this study are as follows:\textsuperscript{371}

1. Tantric Buddhism offers an alternative path to Enlightenment in addition to the standard Mahāyāna one.
2. It teaches special types of meditation (\textit{sādhana}) as the path to realization, aimed at transforming the individual into an embodiment of the divine in this lifetime or after a short span of time.
3. Such kinds of meditation make extensive use of various kinds of \textit{maṇḍalas}, \textit{mudrās}, \textit{mantras} and \textit{dhāraṇīs}.
4. The formation of images of the various deities during meditation by

\textsuperscript{369} For discussions on differences between early Tantra and Mahāyāna Buddhism, see Dasgupta, 1ff; and Linrothe, 41. Linroth suggests that the primary difference between Mahāyāna and Tantric Buddhism is the amount of emphasis placed on the \textit{dhāraṇī}, the consecration ceremonies, and the enlightenment in one lifetime.

\textsuperscript{370} These Tantric methodologies use various elements for practice, such as the three mysteries: body, speech, and mind. These are purified through the processes of \textit{mudrā}, \textit{mantra}, and \textit{samādhi} (meditation) and \textit{sādhana} (visualization). Esoteric methods also involve rituals and performance yoga, some which overturn social norms using impure substances or places.

\textsuperscript{371} Hodge, 5.
means of creative imagination plays a key role in the process of realization. These images may be viewed as being present externally or internally.

5. There is an exuberant proliferation in the number and types of Buddhas and other deities, with a stress on the importance of the feminine.

6. Great stress is laid upon the importance of the guru and the necessity of receiving the instructions and appropriate initiations for the sādhanas from him.

7. A spiritual physiology is taught as part of the process of transformation.

Importantly, Hodge notes that in the early Tantric phase or even proto-tantric phase, only a few of the above features may appear in a text or practice. It is only in the fully developed Vajrayāna context that all of these features are incorporated.

It is accepted by many scholars that esoteric Buddhism had a solid foundation by the 7th century, which coincides with the dates of the Paṭola Šāhi dynasty. As such, it is not surprising to find that many of the Gilgit texts described below feature some of these key aspects with precise symbolic meanings that were revealed to initiates at different levels as part of the soteriological methodology of Vajrayāna Buddhism, such as mudrās, dhāraṇīs, mantras, maṇḍalas, and sādhanas. It is evident, therefore, that there was an early form of Vajrayāna Buddhism practiced by the Paṭola Šāhis.

*Dhāraṇī:*
A **mantra** is a combination of letters with divine origin, and as such, it can be a sacred and mystic word or syllables that contain the essence of a Buddha or bodhisattva whom they designate.\(^{372}\) In Vajrayāna Buddhism, they are chanted in ceremonies and rituals, meditations, and yogin practices in order to invoke a deity. A **dhāraṇī** contains **mantras**, forming a verse or even a sūtra that is worn as a mystical charm or recited as a prayer to a specific Buddhist deity, often a female one, which generates and gives great power.\(^{373}\) It can be defined as, "That which is borne. An incantation used to invoke the deities into one's presence or to invoke their powers to affect some benefit. Recitation of the dhāraṇīs will result in both Buddhological and mundane benefits."\(^{374}\) Early dhāraṇī or mantras were chanted to drive away evil and bring about fortune and happiness. In Vajrayāna Buddhism, the dhāraṇī became more elaborate with religious symbolism and complicated rites.\(^{375}\) Kriya Tantras, the lowest level of Tantra, especially, feature esoteric rites like dhāraṇīs that can relate to mundane success.\(^{376}\)

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\(^{374}\) Huntington and Bangdel, *Circle of Bliss*, 524.


\(^{376}\) Huntington and Bangdel, *Circle of Bliss*, 24-5.
says that early Chinese Tantric texts were conceived with *dhāraṇīs*, featuring prayers or requests for liberation from suffering, adversity, and protection. Some of the Tantric *dhāraṇīs* even had *pūjās* (worship rituals) and employed visualization practices.\(^{377}\)

Long Buddhist *sūtras* or texts were difficult to learn and master by ordinary laypeople, and therefore, abridged or shortened versions were created that often relate to *dhāraṇī*.\(^{378}\) For example, a text like the Gilgit one, the *Aṣṭādaśasāhasrikā prajñāpāramitā*, was shortened to a few stanzas as found in the *Prajñāpāramitā hṛdaya sūtra*. In this context, the term “*hṛdaya*” means the core essence of the divine knowledge or *sūtra*.\(^{379}\) This shortened version was further reduced to the *Prajñāpāramitā dhāraṇī* and even further to the *Prajñāpāramitā mantra* or *bīja* (letter).\(^{380}\) There are several of these abridged type texts in the Gilgit manuscripts, including *dhāraṇī*.

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\(^{377}\) Hodge, 7.

\(^{378}\) Dasgupta, 57-58. Other shortened versions are called upa *hṛdaya* and *rakṣā*.

\(^{379}\) See Wallis, “Persistence of Power,” 268-69. In the Cologne Digital Sanskrit Lexicon it says it is at one’s heart or core essence. The core is also described as the dearest and most secret part. For a discussion of these terms, see Snellgrove, *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism*, 141-44.

\(^{380}\) John Huntington explains that in the *MVT*, Mahāvairocana, as the core in the *mandala*, can be reduced to a syllable or harmonic essence (bijā) in order to attain knowledge of *dharmadhātu*. Therefore, the *sambhogakāya* Mahāvairocana Buddha can be merely a syllable as a metaphor for *dharmakāya*. Huntington, “Vairochana and Vajradhara,” 81.
A *vidyārājīṇī* text is also a form of *dhāraṇī*. The term “*vidyā*” means wisdom or knowledge, and the term “*rājīṇī*” means queen, and as such, a *vidyārājīṇī* is a Queen of Knowledge. It is a text personified by a female Buddhist deity as the lady of spells and wisdom, or mystical knowledge. There are also *vidyārājas* relating to a King of Knowledge, with a male Buddhist deity having mystical knowledge. Rob Linrothe explains that “*vidyā*” refers to the wisdom of the *dhāraṇī*, so it is a personification of a *dhāraṇī* with specific iconography.

In addition, *dhāraṇīs* and *vidyās* are associated with Vajrayāna practices regarding Vairocana-related worship. In the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, there are *mudrās* and *dhāraṇīs* as well as *vidyārāja* deities. For example, one passage says:

> Now as for reciting the great protective *dhāraṇī* to remove obstacles, it causes all demons and evil ghosts to be gone. For this reason, one should think of the *vidyārāja* who are “hard-to-bear” because those who create obstacles cannot bear them.”

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381 In the *Mmk*, an ācārya is also considered a *vidhādhāra*, signifying he possesses the *vidyā*. It reflects that the adept has realized *mantra*, whereby he is also called a *mantrin* or *mantrasiddha*. A *mantrin* means that he possesses profound experiential knowldge of *mantras*. See Wallis, “Persistence of Power,” 267-68. As mentioned in Ch. 4, there is a Paṭola Śāhi donor, Atthocasimgha, who is called a “mahāmantrin.”

382 *Cologne Digital Sanskrit Lexicon*. Wallis suggests that “*vidyā* is knowledge that is acquired intellectually (through instruction and study) and experientially (through ritual application). See Wallis, “Persistence of Power,” 268.

383 Linrothe, 19.

384 *MVT*, T.18.849.57a, as quoted in Lintrothe, 26.
Therefore, it can be said that a dhāraṇī or vidyārājñī can be classified as a Vajrayāna text if it invokes a Tantric deity, or is used in esoteric rituals and meditation. 385

**Gilgit Dhāraṇī**

There are quite a few texts in the Gilgit Manuscripts that fall into the category of dhāraṇīs, or texts with mystical power and spells. Many of them are centered on the worship of female deities or goddesses. For example, several texts are classified as part of the Pañcarakṣā texts. The Pañcarakṣā is a collection of dhāraṇīs addressed to five goddesses or rakṣā deities. The five are Mahāmāyūrī (green), Mahāsitavatī (red), Mahāsahasapramardanī (white), Mahāpratisarā (yellow), and Mahāmatrānusārinī (blue). 386 In some Tantric contexts, they are the female partners of the pañca jina Buddhas. The Pañcarakṣā goddesses are the most important of the dhāraṇī deities, and they are especially popular with the laity since the devotees could easily recite the important mantras. The goddesses can be worshiped, collectively or individually, for the protection of a kingdom or from evil spirits and for a long life. 387

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386 Huntington and Bangdel, *Circle of Bliss*, 78.

387 Bongard-Levin, 485; Bhattacharyya, *Buddhist Iconography*, 302-06. These goddesses were included in the Buddhist pantheon relatively early in Mahāyāna, perhaps by the 1st c. C.E
There are two copies of the Mahāpratisarā vidyārājīṇī text among the Gilgit texts, belonging to the Pañcaraksā texts. The oldest text was written in round Brāhmī script and has a colophon stating that it was donated by the Pañula Śahi queen Śābyakhātu. It is dated prior to 630 since that is the date when Proto-Śradā was commonly used. The second and later copy was written in Proto-Śradā and was commissioned by the Pañula Śahi queen Trailokadevi. Both Śābyakhātu and Trailokadevi were queens to the Pañula Śahi king Surandravikramādityanandi. These texts use dhāraṇīs and mantras to invoke the goddess Mahāpratisarā for protection.

Another set of the Pañula Śahi manuscripts belonging to the Pañcaraksā texts are three copies of the Māyūrī vidyārājīṇī also called the Mahāmāyūrī dhāraṇī. Mahāmāyūrī is often the primary goddess of the five. All three dhāraṇī were written in Proto-Śradā script and were written on behalf of the king Navasurendrādityanandi. His queen, Śrī Anangadevi, was also named with him in the colophon on the second and third copies. This dhāraṇī contains the story of a monk who is saved from a fatal snakebite through the recitation of the mantras and spells, invoking the goddess Mahāmāyūrī.

391 There was a Mahāmāyūrī dhāraṇī similar in context and script found in Bamiyan in the Bower Manuscript. According to Horenle, it dates to the 3rd c. and was written by Kashmir or Swat monks. See A.F. Rudolf Hoernle, ed., The Bower Manuscript: fascimile leaves, Nagari transcript, romanised transliteration, and English translation with notes, (Delhi: Sharada Rani, 1983), pt. VI and VII, xciv, xxvi.
Mahāmāyūrī. The Māyūrī vidyārājī was popular in China, and by the 5th or 6th century they contained descriptions for ritual areas to be decorated with five swords, five banners, five mirrors, twenty-one arrows, and twenty-one lamps. The site was then anointed with perfumes and then mustard seeds were burned to ward away demons. This ritual area sounds very much like mandala consecrations in Vajrayāna practices.

There are several other dhāraṇī or texts with spells invoking goddesses or female Buddhist deities who do not belong to the Pañcarakṣā deities. One female goddess, Mahāvidyā, is invoked in the Mahāvidyārāja hrdaya and the Mahāvidyā dhāraṇī. Mahāvidyā means Great Knowledge, and the name is often used for a class of female deities who personify śakti or female energy in Tantrism. Another female Buddhist deity, Mekhalā, is invoked and worshipped in the Mekhalā dhāraṇī and the Mekhalā vidyā.

Another dhāraṇī text found in the Paṭola Śāhi collection is the Āryaśrīmahādevī vyākaraṇa, also called the Śrīmahādevī vyākaraṇam. It invokes the female tathāgata or Buddha, Śrīmahādevī, for protection and

392 See Dutt, Gilgit Manuscripts, Vol. 3, 37.
393 Hodge, 8.
394 Cologne Digital Sanskrit Lexicon.
395 The word mekhalā means a girdle or belt, so it is possible that she is related to the six paramitas that became the six sanmudra dakinis.
396 Although there are various names for Śrī Devī, under this name she is still worshipped in Tibet. Śrī Devī is prayed to for protection from disease, demons, and destruction, as well as for a long life and merit. See prayer in Robert Thurman, Essential Tibetan Buddhism (New Jersey: Castle Books, 1997), 275.
prosperity, as well as providing a mantra for worshiping her.\textsuperscript{397} In addition, there are two identifiable fragments that were also commissioned by Pațola Śāhi royalty. It is known that both of the text fragments were written on behalf of the king Vajrādityanandi and his queen Mamgalahasirika. Since the majority of dhāraṇī are donated by the Pațola Śāhi queens and kings, it is possible that these fragments are also dhāraṇīs, but that has yet to be determined.

There are, of course, dhāraṇīs in the Gilgit collection of manuscripts that invoke various other deities. One such text is the Hiranyavatī dhāraṇī.\textsuperscript{398} There are three fragments that belong to the Sarvatathāgata hrdaya garbha (Heart Womb of the Sarva Tathāgata), which were commissioned by the Paṭola Śāhi king Navasurendrādityanandi. Another dhāraṇī in the collection of the Gilgit Manuscripts is the Ekādaśamukha hrdaya, also known as the Ekādaśamukham. The text is a dhāraṇī that invokes the protection of the eleven-headed form of Avalokiteśvara.\textsuperscript{399} The Ekādaśamukha hrdaya contains two dhāraṇīs, and states that by uttering the mantra, one will attain merit and avert evil, and ultimately be reborn in

\textsuperscript{397} Śrī Devī is also described in this same role in a chapter in the Suvarṇabhāṣa Sūtra, which is discussed in Ch. 6.

\textsuperscript{398} It is not certain who this deity is, however, the term hiranya means gold, Cologne Digital Sanskrit Lexicon.

\textsuperscript{399} It is known that the dhāraṇī was translated as early as the 6\textsuperscript{th} century by Yasogupta (557-581) and later by Xuan Zhang in 656 into Chinese. This eleven-headed form was very popular in Turfan, Kucha and China, especially during the 7\textsuperscript{th} and 8\textsuperscript{th} century. See Simone Gaulier, et al., Buddhism in Afghanistan and Central Asia (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976) 13; and Dutt, Gilgit Manuscripts, Vol. 1, 59.
the paradise Sukhāvatī. The text also states that incalculable merits are attained by practicing sādhana with this mantra.

Although the Gilgit text the *Sarvatathāgata dhiṣṭhāna sattvālokana buddhakṣetra sandarśanavyūha* does not have the word dhāraṇī in its title, it is considered one. The title has been translated in Chinese versions as "The dhāraṇī for a benefit watch over the beings of excellent Buddha-land, to whom all tathāgatas vow their protection." The text contains several dhāraṇīs spoken by Vajrapāṇi, Avalokiteśvara, and Mahādevī, including instructions for complicated rituals of pūjā and recitation of mantras and dhāraṇīs.

In addition, there is the noteworthy Hayagrīva vidyā, which is dated somewhere between the 6th-8th centuries. It is thought that this vidyā was used as a charm, and was therefore often were worn in amulets for protection. This text with mystical spells describes an early esoteric form of Hayagrīva to be invoked for protection. It says to make a maṇḍala with

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401 In the same manuscript from Tibet, this text is preceded by another text that is now perhaps lost from the Gilgit one. The Tibetan one includes four sūtras: Lalitavistara, Mañjuśrīvikridityanamamahāyāna Sūtra, Mañjuśrī-vikurvana, and the Sarvatathāagatadisthanavyuha. See Dutt, *Gilgit Manuscripts*, Vol. 1, 67.

402 Dutt, *Gilgit Manuscripts*, Vol. 1, 63. Csoma Karosi translates it as "Description of the province of Buddha, on which, for the sake of all beings, all Tathāgatas have bestowed their benedictions."

403 Schopen, “Non-Tantric Cult Form,” 187. Schopen says it is a late Mahāyāna text despite this fact. He says the pūjās were to shrines or chaityas as relics, not to stūpas, and therefore, it relates to practice of the cult of the book.

Lokeśvara in the center. Vajradhāra is on the right and Avalokiteśvara is on the left. On the top of Lokeśvara is the horse-faced deity, Hayagrīva, who can counteract the evil affects of other people’s mantras and other sorts of evil. This text describes an esoteric figure of Hayagrīva that correlates to an early sculpture from Swat depicting this deity (Figure 5.1). In this sculpture, the horse-headed Hayagrīva sits on a double lotus, resting on a rocky base similar to those of the Pațola Śāhi idiom. The association of Lokeśvara with Amitābha is made by the representation of the jīna Buddha in Lokeśvara’s crown on his horse-faced head. In addition, the crown and other iconographic traits in the sculpture depict the figure of Hayagrīva in a sambhogakāya aspect as an esoteric Buddhist deity.

Moreover, Nalinaksha Dutt, using the Sādhanamāla, points out that it is only when Hayagrīva is the principle deity does he have the face of a horse and carry the image of Amitābha in his crown to show his association with Lokeśvara. Therefore, in the Gilgit text, Hayagrīva is the main deity. In addition, this Buddhist figure is another example of a dual-image of two separate Buddhist deities. From the title of the text and the described image to be visualized, Hayagrīva is combined with Lokeśvara. This further

\[\text{Dutt, } \textit{Gilgit Manuscripts, } \text{Vol. 1, 61-2;} \text{ and Klimburg-Salter, } \textit{Silk Route, } 100.\]

\[\text{I was not able to find out if Hayagrīva is four-armed in the Gilgit text. The four arms in the sculpture hold the following attributes: lower right hand performs the } \textit{varada mudrā}; \text{ the lower left hand holds a lotus; the upper right hand holds a } \textit{vajra}; \text{ and the upper left hand holds a water pot.}\]

\[\text{Dutt, } \textit{Gilgit Manuscripts, } \text{Vol. 1, 62.}\]
substantiates the practice of the Paṭola Śahis in commissioning various Buddhhas who are a hypostasis of Vairocana.

**Mudrās, Mandalas, and Tantras**

In addition to the numerous dhāraṇī and vidyā texts found in the Paṭola Śahi manuscripts, there are also a few other texts that directly pertain to Vajrayāna practices. Sadly, no one has worked on the following three texts and they are not readily available, so I cannot be certain of their content. However, it is obvious from their titles that the Gilgit texts relate to Vajrayāna symbolic and esoteric practices.\(^\text{408}\)

The first text is called the *Mudrā vidhāna*. A *mudrā*, as defined in Chapter 3, is a mark or seal, a sign of a divine attribute. In Vajrayāna Buddhism, the *mudrās* take on metaphysical meanings, so that they can construct and evoke the presence of a deity for the practitioner. A *mudrā* is also a physical representation of a *mantra* as discussed in the *MVT* in Chapter 3. The term “*vidhāna*” means methods and arrangements, or performance and execution of prescribed acts.\(^\text{409}\) Therefore, from the title, it would appear that the text has instructions on performing *mudrās* for specific rites.

\(^{408}\) I tried, especially, to get a copy of these pages, but to no avail. They are only available in one library in the world and they do not send out copies. See discussion in Ch. 1.

\(^{409}\) Cologne Digital Sanskrit Lexicon.
The second text is the *Maṇḍala vidhi sādhana*. *Maṇḍalas* are symbolic circles or diagrams, often with a geometric character, that are used for rituals. In Vajrayāna Buddhism, the *maṇḍala* is a complex mystic diagram containing symbols and deities that are associated with a philosophical system, which is used in meditational practices. A *sādhana* is an invocation ritual involving visualization during meditation. In Vajrayāna Buddhism, *sādhana* is used to transform the identity of the adept into the Buddhist deity, which is called identity transformation. *Sādhana* is often performed within *maṇḍalas*, while using *mudrās*, *mantras*, and *dhāraṇīs*. Therefore, using the Sanskrit words in the title, it would imply that the text contains *sādhana* formulas or precepts for *maṇḍalas*. In other words, it would seem to be instructions regarding *sādhana* using *maṇḍalas*, which would likely place the text into a Tantric classification.

The third Gilgit text is obviously an esoteric Buddhist text. It is titled the *Tantra sad bhāvasāra* or the *Sad Bhāva Sāra Tantra*. This translates to the *Six Births Tantra*. To date, this text is only known in the collection of Gilgit Manuscripts from the Paṭola Śāhi dynasty. From the title of the text, John Huntington suggests that this Tantra falls after the *Mahāvairocana abhisaṃbodhi Tantra*, the *Sarva-tathāgata-tattva-samgraha*, and the *Sarva Durgatipariśodhana*, yet comes before the *Maṇjuśrī Nāma Saṅgīti*.\(^\text{410}\)

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\(^\text{410}\) This was from a discussion with John Huntington on Sept. 20, 2007. John determines the order of the Tantras based on the following: in the *Mahāvairocana abhisaṃbodhi Tantra*, the focus is on Mahāvairocana who embodies the highest complete enlightenment; the *Sarva-tathāgata-tattva-samgraha* is a commentary on the MVT and as the collected essence of all
Vajrayāna texts are primarily called Tantras and are considered sacred revealed texts. Since the title of the text contains the word Tantra, it clearly classifies this Paṭola Śāhi text as a Vajrayāna Buddhist text with Tantric practices.

F.M. Hassnain makes a reference that some of the Gilgit Manuscripts deal with the *Kālacakra Tantra*, dating it to the 6th century, however, he does not identify which ones and I could not prove or disprove this comment.411 Perhaps it is one or all of these three texts that are part of the esoteric ritual practice of the Kālacakra Tantra. This would be incredible evidence, since it is believed that the Tantra did not exist until the 10th century.412

Thus, the extant manuscripts provide textual evidence that there was a definite tendency for the early Paṭola Śāhi kings, queens, royal family, and nobility to patronize esoteric-like texts, in addition to the standard Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna ones. These particular Gilgit texts feature Vajrayāna practices, including *dhāraṇī*, *vidyās*, *mantras*, *mudrās*, *maṇḍalas*, and *sādhanas*, and a Tantra. Therefore, the literary record further corroborates

Buddhas it has the two main *maṇḍalas* of the Gharbadhātu and the *dharmaḍhātu* (both of these prior text were known in Mitsung Buddhism in China and Shingon and Tendai in Japan); the *Sarva Durgatiparīśodhana* relates to all births ending and going away; and the *Mañjuśrī Nāma Saṃgīti* focuses on Manjursi as the atman of Mahāvairocana with the *maṇḍala* of Vāgīśvara Maṇjughoṣa, who as the *prajñāpāramitā* is the female aspect of Mahāvairocana.


412 For a discussion of the *Kalachakra Tantra* and its suggested date, see Rebecca Twist, “Kalachakra Tantra,” *Circle of Bliss*, 475-79.
the presence of Vajrayāna methodologies and practices by the Paṭola Śāhi dynasty.

**The Impetus for the Practice of Vajrayāna Buddhism**

Although it is evident from the visual and literary evidence that the Paṭola Śāhi royal and noble donors practiced esoteric Buddhism, it begs the question of why the ruling family practiced this form of Buddhism, especially focusing on the Vairocana cycle. One could argue that the repeating pattern of the same core elements revealed through the iconology discussed with the monastic donors also applies to the lay donors. These three elements are: 1) the presence of a donor-practitioner (the royal or noble donor), 2) the presence of the donor-practitioner’s teacher (a monk or *kalyāṇamitra*), and 3) the presence of the key symbol that expresses the practice into which the practitioner was initiated (i.e., the *sambhogakāya* Vairocana-related practice). Since the monastic and *kalyāṇamitra* donors were also part of the royal Paṭola Śāhi family, the overlap of this iconographic program becomes even more fluid. Perhaps this special connection to their spiritual teachers, who were also royal family members, provides some of the impetus behind their practice of Vajrayāna Buddhism.

In addition, this three-pronged iconographic depiction is also seen in the practice of generosity (*dāna*), which was discussed in Chapter 4. As such, there is the continuity of the three components of the teaching transmissions in the Mahāyāna/Vajrayāna traditions that are consistently seen in the
Paṭola Śāhi visual record – the receiver, the gift, and the giver. In this specific context, the receiver is the royal or noble donor, the gift is the teachings of the Vairocana Buddha, and the giver is the teacher, such as a monk or kalyānamitra. This pattern is seen in the image of Vairocana/Śākyamuni with the receiver as Śrī Surabhī, the giver as the monk Hariśayaśa, and the teaching is the gift (Figure A.6).

Another example of this can be seen in the image of Vairocana/Maitreya, where a king and queen are depicted as the receivers of the teaching, the teacher is the kalyānamitra Vikhyātarakṣita, and the gift is the Vairocana-related teachings (Figure A.2). In particular, this iconographic program relates to the “Five Certainties” discussed in Chapter 3. For example, the sambhogakāya Vairocana/Maitreya Buddha manifests and teaches in Akaniśṭha. Vairocana is the sambhogakāya teacher. The sambhogakāya Buddha Vairocana instructs in Mahāyāna teachings. The moment of Vairocana’s teaching is the universal moment of time, whereby the donors can be present.

In esoteric Buddhism, lay practitioners also undergo abhiṣeka or initiation rituals that empower the lay person to engage in the practices. The lay practitioner is initiated into a particular teaching and cycle of practice, such as Vairocana, through this process. As royalty, the members of the Paṭola Śāhi family were, especially, prime candidates for initiation into esoteric Buddhist practices. The Mmk says the, “Best of all aspirants should
already be princes: they should be kṣatriyas, those who have been consecrated great kings, or their sons or daughters." In the consecration of the princes and princesses as students by the teacher in the Mmk, they are to say:

O master, I wish to enter upon the performance of the mantra-practice of the buddhas and bodhisattvas; I wish to enter the secret circle of that release which transcends all that pertains to this world; I wish to attain buddhahood involving universal sovereignty in the dharma. In brief, may I be a buddha.

As mentioned previously, the Mmk features rituals of worship using Vajrayāna methodologies. It could be proposed that the iconography of the crowned Buddha having received abhiseka could relate to the practitioners own abhiseka. The initiate is before the image of Vairocana Buddha, and thereby consecrated by the Buddha’s presence. Thus, as royalty, the lay donor figures are the perfect aspirants for initiation into the Vairocana cycle.

This notion of royalty being primary candidates for Vajrayāna initiation, brings forth further questions regarding further underlying impetus behind their practice of this esoteric Buddhism. It is unclear whether the members of the Paṭola Śāhi royal family practiced the Vairocana-based cycle because it was designated as the “appropriate” practice for royalty. It is possible that since Vairocana practices and texts, especially

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413 Mmk ch. 2, 47;, quoted from Snellgrove, “Divine Kingship,” 205.
the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*, show a distinct relationship with kingship, that this is why the teachings of Vairocana were chosen by the royal patrons.

In Japan, during the 7th century, esoteric Buddhism and the worship of Vairocana was the prerogative of the imperial family, often described as being "in the custody of the ruling elite."\(^{415}\) In Nepal, the king was traditionally initiated into Tantric practices because that was his designated role, which gave him additional power as a sovereign.\(^{416}\) There are examples where even if the Paṭola Śāhi donors were not kings, the donors used the king’s name in the inscription, perhaps to identify themselves as belonging to the royal family and to say that they were following the right prescribed teaching of the king.\(^{417}\) Considering these examples, it is possible that that status and rank of royalty provided a niche for which form of Buddhism was practiced by the Paṭola Śāhi royal family. In other words, perhaps the ruling family was born into the practice of Vajrayāna Buddhism due to their royal blood. This could be like a familial connection with the imperial line, such as seen in Japan where the royalty are considered born into Shinto.\(^{418}\)

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\(^{415}\) Deal, 216.

\(^{416}\) See Jeffery S. Lidke, "The Goddess within and Beyond the Three Cities: Śakta Tantra and the Paradox of Power in Nepāla-Mandala," Ph.D. Diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 2000, 139. Gellner says that because of its emphasis on secrecy, Vajrayāna Buddhism lends itself to the legitimization of hereditary roles, such as kingship. See Gellner, *Monk, Householder*, 325.

\(^{417}\) This is suggested by von Hinüber, “Die Palola Śāhis,” 184.

\(^{418}\) Kasulis, *Shinto*, 90 and 94.
The question must also be asked if the practice of Vajrayāna Buddhism by the ruling family was done to distinguish them as not only royal, but also as elite and intellectual – as a status symbol. In actuality, esoteric methodologies are complex and require a high level of intellectual skill and education. In the *Tattva-ratnāvalī*, it states that the teachings of mantra are more difficult and superior than that of other sūtras with easier methods. It states the principles of mantra are deep and subtle, and therefore, they are not accessible to the ordinary man, but are reserved for those with higher intellect.419

In the Gilgit text, the *Samādhīrāja Sūtra*, the practice of samādhi is described as “obtaining the dhāraṇīs, the entrance into knowledge, the knowledge of the possible, the impossible, the undertaking and the practice.”420 It also states that dhāraṇīs are “subtle, not not easily understood and incomprehensible for those who are not prepared, because it is difficult to understand.”421 As such, dhāraṇīs are perceived by the wise and obtained by the few. In Japan during the 8th and 9th century, the complex and sophisticated doctrines of esoteric Buddhism, such as Shingon and Tendai,
were only accessible to the educated elite.\textsuperscript{422} Perhaps this was the case for the Paṭola Śāhis as well, where the intellectuals considered Vajrayāna Buddhist philosophy and practice especially respectable. As such, esoteric Buddhism was not just for the devout adept, but for the elite and the erudite.

The inscription on the sculpture of Vairocana/Śākyamuni in figure A.8 might provide a glimpse into this motive. In the inscription, the princess Devaśrī, is called mahāśraddhāya paramopāsikya or foremost lay worshipper of great faith. Perhaps this title alludes to her royal or “foremost” status, but also as “foremost” among practitioners because of her engagement of the fourth and most difficult form of Buddhism - Vajrayāna. Perhaps the multiple layers found in Buddhist art, particularly in Tantric symbolism, appealed to the royal practitioners since their patronage of the esoteric Vairocana cycle would demonstrate their skillful knowledge and intellectual prowess.

In addition, it is not known if the Vairocana cycle was practiced only by the Paṭola Śāhi royalty in Baltistan and Gilgit. Historically, the court was often the place where Buddhism was first supported and, then, transmitted.\textsuperscript{423} For example, it is suggested that the change in earlier Central Asian kingdoms from Hinayāna Buddhism to Mahāyāna Buddhism

\textsuperscript{422} Kasulis, \textit{Shinto}, 99-100.

\textsuperscript{423} Kings were often gravitated to Buddhist monks because of their wide learning concerning knowledge of spells, charms, medicine, math, engineering, and astronomy. Some were even called magicians and sorcerers in Chinese sources. Walter, 101.
was due to the influence and preferences of the kings, especially in Kucha where Kumerājīva was supported by the king rather than his monastic peers.\textsuperscript{424} As such, Mahāyāna Buddhism was not solely practiced by the royal and noble classes in Kucha. Perhaps the form of Buddhism practiced related to one's class, such as found in Newar Buddhism. In Nepal, according to what caste one is born into determines whether one practices Hinayāna Buddhism, or Mahāyāna Buddhism, or Vajrayāna Buddhism. In this case, the royal class practiced Vajrayāna Buddhism.

It could also be suggested that the form of Buddhism practiced and specific teachings engaged related to one's career or stage on the bodhisattva path. A more advanced or highly skilled adept would be initiated into esoteric Buddhism, where a less skilled practitioner would likely practice Mahāyāna Buddhism. If this is the case, the Paṭola Šāhi visual evidence suggests that the spiritual teachers to the royal family selected the esoteric teachings on Vairocana Buddha because of the practitioner's individual progress on the Buddhist path toward enlightenment. In other words, the royal and noble donors were highly skilled adepts of esoteric Buddhism. Indeed, only an educated initiate would understand the esoteric iconography so prevalent among the Paṭola Šāhi visual record, whereby revealing the stage of practice and attainment of the donors.

\textsuperscript{424} Walter, 114 and 154-57.
It is not known for certain whether there were other advanced practices that were available to the royal family, the evidence, however, indicates that the Vairocana cycle was the preferred teaching. In Vajrayāna Buddhism, the esoteric practice of one methodology or teaching does not preclude the adept from practicing others. Whether there were other fully developed esoteric meditational practices taking place or not, many members of the royal family were initiated into the Vairocana cycle. Although I suggest that the existing evidence most likely supports the theory that the Vajrayāna teaching of Vairocana Buddha was, especially, deemed the "appropriate" form of Buddhism for royalty to practice, at this time, these suggestions regarding the motive behind the patrons chosen form of practice are inconclusive and require further study.

**Conclusion**

Thus, a contextualization of the religious patronage by the royal and noble Paṭola Śāhis of the visual and literary record reveals that the donors were early Vajrayāna Buddhist practitioners. The worship of an esoteric form of Vairocana Buddha, especially, a fully developed and understood iconographic form of him as a *sambhogakāya* Buddha, is more than evident in their visual imagery. In addition, there is an inscription on a rock carving from Thalpan, near Gilgit, that says, "nama vairocana tathāgata," referring
to the Buddha Vairocana.\textsuperscript{425} Only the initiated could perceive and correctly perform the esoteric practices involving the Vairocana-related teachings. As such, I have shown that the multiple layers in the iconography and iconology indicate that they were initiated into the teachings of Vairocana, seen in the offering of scarves, the hand gesture of initiation and consecration, and the symbols of opposites. Perhaps their initiation was very reason for the commission and creation of the images.\textsuperscript{426} Even the titles used by the patrons with great faith in the Buddha Vairocana further support the wide practice of the Vairocana cycle by the royal family.

With this in mind, it is important to acknowledge the obvious absence of a Gilgit text specifically related to Vairocana.\textsuperscript{427} However, if one looks at the evidence from the opposite point-of-view, there are numerous female deities and other Buddhas mentioned in the Gilgit texts that are not found in the Paṭola Śāhi visual record. Scholars do not suggest that the lack of visual evidence indicates that these Buddhist teachings with the pantheon of other deities did not exist. So, neither should the lack of an extant text on Vairocana-related teachings within the Gilgit Manuscripts infer the same. In this study, the use of the Buddhist literary tradition to reconstruct the form

\textsuperscript{425} von Hinüber, "Buddhistische inschriften,” 92, no. 96.

\textsuperscript{426} Dutt suggests that the colophons were written in such a way that they infer that the manuscripts were prepared for specific ritualistic practices. See Dutt, \textit{Gilgit Manuscripts}, Vol. 1, iii.

\textsuperscript{427} This is the same case in Kashmir during the 7th-8th century, where there is visual evidence of esoteric Buddhism, but there is not a great abundance of literary evidence.
of Buddhism practiced by the Paṭola Śāhi ruling family is helpful, but is not exclusive to the visual record. There is no contradiction, therefore, between the literature and artistic sources of the Paṭola Śāhis as evidence of early Vajrayāna Buddhism, particularly of the Vairocana cycle.

In Tantric Buddhism, art and ideology are conjoined as spiritual components in ritual practice. The predominance of the fundamental aspects of the iconography marking a sambhogakāya Vairocana Buddha in the images, can not be an idiosyncrasy of the sculptor nor of the royal patron. Rather, it is self-evident that the esoteric imagery was based on some textual source. There were contemporary texts related to this form of sambhogakāya Vairocana, and such Buddhist texts must have been available to the royal family, whereby the lay donors chose to focus on Vairocana Buddha. It is known that the MVT was taken to China by the monk Śubhākarasimha (637-735) after spending two years in Kashmir learning the Tantra. It is likely that he went through either Gilgit or Baltistan on his way from Kashmir to China, and thereby perhaps taught the Tantra to the Paṭola Śāhis. Xuan Zhang even mentions that the Mahāvairocana Sūtra was transmitted to Bolora in Kashmir. Since it is held that the Gilgit manuscripts were buried in the stūpa around 751 C.E., no manuscript would

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428 In his discussion of the sculpture of Maṇjuśrī/Vairocana, Paul even states that there was some “hitherto untapped textual source.” Paul, 207. In the history of practice, it is possible that there was not a fully articulated text in the Paṭola Śāhis’ possession, and in such cases, iconography and ritual precede the text. See also fn. 210 for another example of this.

429 Xuan Zhang, Ta-t'ang shi-you chi, 15.2087, 884. See also Kiyota, Shingon Buddhism, 22.
be later than that date. Perhaps the collection was buried before the 
Mahāvairocana abhisambodhi Tantra could be fully copied and added to the 
collection. The cultural transformation of Buddhism in the community of the 
Paṭola Śāhis, especially at court with the royal and noble donors, shows a 
distinct and individual character, which must be considered on its own merit 
and evidence.
Figure 5.1. Hayagrīva. Brass sculpture from Swat.
CHAPTER 6

PAṬOLA ŚĀHI POLITICAL PATRONAGE AND KINGSHIP

This chapter contextualizes the patronage of the Paṭola Śāhi kings, in particular, exploring the notion of kingship as it relates to these rulers. It has been established that the kings were Buddhist practitioners, especially by the images where they are depicted as donors within the composition or named in an inscription. As such, it is important to consider the underlying political meanings by situating the donors as sovereigns within the iconography as well. In considering, specifically, their political patronage of Buddhism, more is learned about the concept of kingship as practiced by the Paṭola Śāhi kings.

Since these Paṭola Śāhis were Buddhist practitioners but kings above all else, the first section of this chapter explores the notion of a Buddhist king as a dharmarāja. Specifically, it considers the role of a dharmarāja as it applies to the Paṭola Śāhi monarchs. The second part of the chapter discusses how the Paṭola Śāhi kings used Buddhism as a vehicle to express their political identity. It shows how by combining their spiritual and mundane authority, they could solidify and legitimate their rule, and as such,
their political aspirations are manifested in the practice of Buddhism, including Buddhist art and literature. In particular, by perhaps incorporating the tradition of kings being an incarnation of a Buddhist deity, the Paṭola Śāhi sovereigns are given the semblance of spiritual power in the political domain. In addition, this section discusses how the Paṭola Śāhi kings find political identity through one of the roles of a *dharmarāja*, which is to protect and unify the kingdom. This discussion is presented within the historical context of the time period for each Paṭola Śāhi king, showing how each individual king used Buddhism as a religious justification for political ends. Thus, through the multi-valence of Buddhist iconography, the chapter demonstrates that the political aims of the kingship of the Paṭola Śāhi dynasty was in the service of Buddhist religion.

The Role of a Buddhist King (*Dharmarāja*)

The notion of a king as a *cakravartin* goes far back into Indian history. A *cakravartin* was considered a universal monarch or ruler. He was an ideal king performing great feats of conquests, yet he also ruled righteously and properly. Early Buddhist texts, such as the *Dīghanikāya* and the *Sammata* (or *Mahāsammata*), refer to secular kings and their role as a world sovereign who should descend from the *kṣatriya* caste of noble lineage.\(^{430}\) Mariko Namba Walter explains that the function of a *cakravartin* king began as a

\(^{430}\) Walter, 33-4.
social contract role to provide services for the people, in particular, water and protection.  

As the concept of the *cakravartin* was central to Buddhism, it changed to eventually encompass the notion of a *dharmarāja* king. A *dharmarāja* is a king that rules by the Law - Hindu or Buddhist. In Buddhism, a *dharmarāja* is therefore a king who rules his kingdom according to the Buddhist *dharma*. If the king protects the Buddhist *dharma*, he ensures the well-being of his people and the country will prosper. The Buddhist king Aśoka (272-231 B.C.E.), who ruled during the Mauryan period is an early example of a *dharmarāja*. As a Buddhist king, a *dharmarāja* was to also accumulate merit for himself and by extension for his people by being an exemplar of the bodhisattva path. Merit could be attained through the donation (*dānapati*) of monuments, architecture, Buddhist texts, and artworks. Hence, *dānapati* was an important practice for a *dharmarāja*, and as such, patronage by royalty and ministers accounts for many major developments of Buddhism within a kingdom.  

During various time periods, some *dharmarājas* were imbued with divine characteristics. The Kushan kings in Gandhara and Mathura justified the idea of Buddhist divine kingship, by using the epithet "*devaputra*" or "son

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431 Walter, 35.
432 Walter, 38.
433 For an example from Khotan, see Walter, 124.
of god." It is thought that they incorporated the divine king from their Iranian heritage into the dharmarāja role, whereby the Kushan rulers were divine kings, ruling according to the Buddhist Law. Because of this notion, a Kushan dharmarāja had to be consecrated by a king's priests to symbolize their divine right to rule. Often, this was done with a coronation ritual.

The Gupta kings in India are especially known for exercising the idea of divine kingship. The Hindu king, Samudragupta (335-376) adopted the title "devatideva" or "god of gods." The Gupta king Candragupta II (380-415) used the title "paramabhaṭṭaraka" translated as "one who is entitled to reverence and homage." Interestingly, the Paṭola Śāhi king Navasurendrādityanandi used this same title "paramabhaṭṭaraka" with his name in an inscription at Hatun. In the concept of divine kingship, the ruler is the mediator between heaven and earth. Susan Huntington explains that the notion of a divine dharmarāja, it is not necessarily raising the king to the status of a god, but rather showing that the king is supreme in his own dharma world. In other words, the dharmarāja's role of protection and maintaining order in the mundane world is identical to the role of the god in

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434 In the sculptural portrait of the Kushan king Kaniṣka, he is shown in his military garb with a sword and mace, much like the images of the Paṭola Śāhi kings. See image in Susan Huntington, Art of India, fig. 8.3.

435 Walter, 44-5.

436 Walter, 36.

437 For a complete discussion of divine kingship, particularly Hindu kings, see Susan L. Huntington, "Kings as Gods, Gods as Kings: Temporality and Eternity in the Art of India," Ars Orientalis (Vol. 24, 1994), 31-8.
the sacred world, and thus, the two are seen with identical roles and functions.

The evidence in this study clarifies that the Buddhist Paṭola Śāhi kings were, indeed, *dharmarājas*. From their patronage of numerous Buddhist manuscripts and Buddhist sculptures discussed in the previous chapters, it is clear that they were Buddhist kings. As such, they would have ruled their kingdom according to the Buddhist *dharma*, hoping to ensure peace and prosperity for their dynasty. Sadly, no extensive archaeological excavations have been permitted by the government, so there are not many known surviving Buddhist monuments. However, the practice of *dānapati* was practiced by the Buddhist *dharmarājas* as seen in the visual and textual record, which includes pieces donated specifically by the Paṭola Śāhi kings. Although their deliberate choice of Buddhist iconography incontrovertibly marks them as devout Buddhist practitioners and great *dharmarājas*, it manifests political aspirations as well. It is evident that Buddhism was used by the Paṭola Śāhi kings, in part, for political ends.

**The Paṭola Śāhi Kings – Their Religious and Political Role**

Although there is no way to be certain if Buddhism was a state religion or if it was practiced primarily at court, it is known from inscriptions and images that the Paṭola Śāhi rulers were Buddhist kings or *dharmarājas*, and that Buddhism was practiced by the ruling elite and aristocrats. Therefore, the spiritual aims of the Paṭola Śāhi kings discussed in Chapter 3 must be
considered within the context of their roles as kings, particularly as
\textit{dharmarājas}, whereby more connotations become apparent for their art and
iconography. While functioning as a \textit{dharmarāja} king, there is an intrinsic
connection between spiritual and political power. As a Buddhist king, he not
only has mundane authority, but also transcendent authority - power over
secular and religious realms.

As a relatively new kingdom, the Paṭola Śāhi kings needed to establish
the identity of the dynasty as a growing power. I suggest that the kings used
Buddhism as a vehicle to express this identity and authority. They were
Buddhist practitioners, monarchs who had Buddhist texts copied and
Buddhist artworks created, with their royal sons even perhaps becoming
Buddhist monks, and then employing the monks and/or \textit{kalyānamitra} for
spiritual guidance. While these spiritual pursuits served as a religious
benefit to the rulers and thereby the subjects, they also served as an aid in
worldly pursuits. By exercising the spiritual advice regarding worldly
concerns from Buddhist monks and \textit{kalyānamitra} at court, the Paṭola Śāhi
king was demonstrating his ability and authority to rule in both the spiritual
and the political realm. Thus, there must certainly have been a beneficial
relationship between the Paṭola rulers and the Buddhist monasteries or
sanghas.

Through Buddhism, attempts were made by the Paṭola Śāhi kings to
legitimize their rule and lay claim to greatness, both sacred and secular – the
right of a *dharmarāja* as a divine king. By embracing Buddhism as a means to express the dynasty’s identity, there are allusions to both political and spiritual aims in the visual record, and as such, it is evident that political patronage bears a direct affect on the construct of the art itself. This section discusses how the Paṭola Śāhi kings’ political aspirations are manifested through their choice of Buddhist deities serving as models with which they can identify. In addition, it explains how in a Buddhist *dharmarāja*’s role, the Paṭola Śāhi sovereigns saw Buddhism as a means to assure the protection of kingship and the state, but also to consolidate the kingdom. A historical and political context of the reign of each Paṭola Śāhi king shows why Buddhism was needed to protect and unify the kingdom. Therefore, I provide a historical background of events that helped to shape the rule of a Paṭola Śāhi kings and their choice of Buddhism to serve and protect the dynasty. It was a time of crisis, and it is evident that Buddhism became a means to an end for the dynasty.

**Political Identity through Incarnations**

There is a tradition for Buddhist kings to consider themselves incarnations or manifestations of certain Buddhas or *bodhisattvas*. As *dharmarājas*, they sought these Buddhist deities as models to give expression to their power and authority, spiritual and mundane. This practice allowed them to be seen as a *cakravartin* and at the same time as a powerful spiritual being, such as a Buddha or *bodhisattva*. For example, this tradition was
practiced by one of the first Buddhist king in Tibet, Songtsen Gampo (629-650), who was considered an incarnation of the *bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara.\textsuperscript{438} He was even married to two princesses who were different manifestations of Tārā: Khri-btsun from Nepal as Bhrikutī (white Tārā) and Wenchen from China as Green Tārā.\textsuperscript{439} The second major *dharma* king of Tibet was Khri-srong lde brtsan (755-780), who was an incarnation of the *bodhisattva* Mañjuśrī. This tradition was also practiced in Khotan where the kings were often considered manifestations of the *bodhisattvas* Maitreya or Mañjuśrī.\textsuperscript{440}

I propose that this tradition was perhaps practiced by the Pañula Śāhi kings, particularly the rulers during the end of the 7\textsuperscript{th} century and into the 8\textsuperscript{th} century when the dynasty was at the pinnacle of its power. As such, this would explain the gradual transition from the patronage of Buddhist texts by the earlier kings to image making by these later kings. For example, the Pañula Śāhi king Surendravikramādityanandi (before 630 or 644 C.E.) commissioned a sculpture of the *bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara (Figure A.3). It is significant that there is nothing inscribed on the sculpture except "Śrī Pañoladevaśāhi Surendradityanandi," perhaps directly identifying the king as


\textsuperscript{439} Huntington and Bangdel, *Circle of Bliss*, 37. See also Huntington, *Leaves of the Bodhi Tree*, 28. The princess Wenchen is also called Kon-jo. See Francke, *Indian Tibet*, 83.

\textsuperscript{440} Walter, 124. In Nepal still today, like his predecessors, the king publicly claims to be an incarnation of a Tantric deity. See Lidke, 159.
an incarnation of Avalokiteśvara. In addition, the Paṭola Śāhi king Jayamaṅgalavikramādityanandi (686-719 C.E.) commissioned two almost identical sculptures of bodhisattvas. One bodhisattva is identifiable as Maitreya (Figure A.5), and therefore, it is most likely that the other figure is as well (Figure A.4). Consequently, Jayamaṅgalavikramādityanandi could have been considered a manifestation of the bodhisattva Maitreya, like the Khotan kings.

His successor was Nandivikramādityanandi (710-716 C.E.), the Paṭola Śāhi king who commissioned the sculptures of Vairocana/Mañjuśrī (Figure A.1) and Vairocana/Maitreya (Figure A.2). As the philosophical doctrine of Vairocana Buddha had become more prevalent by this time, I believe that Nandivikramādityanandi deliberately chose the iconography of the crowned sambhogakāya Buddha to serve as his incarnation. The epitome of a universal sovereign in a Buddhist deity was sambhogakāya Vairocana, and as such, the king chose crowned Buddhas to serve as the analogy of his imperial and spiritual power. Although the figures were two different Buddhas (Mañjuśrī and Maitreya), they were dual-images of Vairocana. Therefore, the king was ultimately identifying himself with Vairocana, the perfect metaphor to invoke the notion of kingship.

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411 As dharmarājas, they were to exemplify the path of a bodhisattva, this may be a literal version of idea.

442 Perhaps one reason why so many Vairocana images were commissioned by Paṭola Śāhi donors was that it was a way to portray their king and their deity in one image, and give homage to both.
In Japan during the 8th century, the Emperor Shōmu also identified himself with Vairocana Buddha. After having the large sculpture of Vairocana made for the temple in Tōdajii, the emperor was initiated as a lay person right in front of the sculpture.\textsuperscript{443} In addition, Shōmu took a cognate name that was a variant of the Buddha Vairocana’s name. Thomas Kasulis explains that in doing so, the emperor made himself the entry point or “sacred holograph” for Buddhist practice, while also providing a justification for imperial authority.\textsuperscript{444} Although it is not known if the Paṭola Śāhi monarch’s intentions are as deliberate and conscious as the Japanese emperor’s, the impetus is likely related.

These Paṭola Śāhi rulers, as Buddhist kings, wanted to give homage to the Buddhist deity and attain merit for the pious gift, yet also identify themselves with the Buddha or bodhisattva.\textsuperscript{445} It could even be said that this tradition was a means of portraying the king as a divine being within the confines of Buddhism. As a divine king, or a king with divine qualities, he would be a powerful figure of authority ruling as a Buddha or bodhisattva. In addition, it would help to solidify the king’s reign by combining the monarchy with the worship of a particular deity at a popular level. The

\textsuperscript{443} Kasulis, \textit{Shinto}, 88-9.

\textsuperscript{444} Kasulis, \textit{Shinto}, 94-5 and 88.

\textsuperscript{445} In the consecration of kings and their sons and daughters in the \textit{Mmk}, it states that they wish to attain Buddhahood involving universal sovereignty in the \textit{dharma} and that they wish to be a Buddha. Perhaps this is a means of portraying themselves as a Buddha. \textit{Mmk}, Ch. 4.
practice of incarnation was a public proclamation of the king as a *cakravartin* or political ruler and as a powerful spiritual being, helping to legitimize his rule. The tradition of considering the king as an incarnation was the perfect ideological justification, whereby the Paṭola rulers were empowered by the Buddhist deity to transform their spiritual power and authority directly into the secular and political domain.

Political Identity – The *Dharmarāja*’s Role of Protection and Unity

A Buddhist *dharmarāja* protects the Buddhist *dharma*, and as such, his reign and the kingdom will be peaceful and prosperous. In other words, the kingdom is protected by Buddhist deities. By ruling according to the *dharma* and by practicing Buddhism and by performing his role, a *dharmarāja* was imbued with divine qualities. As this concept developed, it began to appear in Buddhist *sūtras*, especially in the form of protection of the state. One such text was the *Suvarṇabhāsā Sūtra* (also called the *Suvarṇabhāsattamasūtra Sūtra*) translated as the *Sūtra of Golden Light*. It was written during the Gupta period during the 4th century and became a very important text in Khotan during the 5th century and in Japan during the 7th century.446 One passage explains the notion of a divine Buddhist king:

> Why is a king, though born among men, called “divine?” And for what reason is a king called a “divine son?” If he is born here in the world of men, he should become king, but how will a god exercise kingship among men? ... Under the blessing of the divine kings, he will enter the womb of his mother. Having first been blessed by the

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gods, he afterwards enters her womb. Although as king he is born and dies in the world of men, yet since he comes from the gods he is called a divine son. The Thirty-three divine kings have given portion to the king. Hence his sonship to all the gods, (for) the lord of men has been magically created.  

447 Emmerick, *Sūtra of Golden Light*, 58. Mariko Namba Walter explains that in this text the *cakravartin* and the *dharmarāja* are merged, given the right to rule through divine will. Walter, 38 and 107. Walter points out that Central Asian kingship fits closely with this concept of a *dharmarāja* as found in this *sūtra*.

The *Suvarṇabhāsa Sūtra* even has a chapter called the "Instructions Concerning Divine Kings," where it is promised that a king that preaches and protects the law, enters into the *sūtra* and will be protected along with his queens, princes, princesses, harem, and the entire country.  

Moreover, through *dhāraṇīs* in the *sūtra*, there will be assistance given and defense from all threats and enemies, assuring peace and welfare for the king and his people.  

449 Walter says that *dhāraṇī* were recited for protection of the kingship and state in Central Asia, and some were even recited during repentance rites performed in imperial court. See Walter, 53.

448 Emmerick, *Sūtra of Golden Light*, 24-9. There are several goddess that appear in this sutra that also appear in *dhāraṇīs* from Gilgit.

Thus, there is the assurance of protection of kingship and of the state through Buddhism.

Because of its power for protection, the *Suvarṇabhāsa Sūtra* was embraced by the Japanese emperor in 694 C.E., being read once a year.  

450 Walter, 253.

The previous century was a very turbulent period and the rulers felt it would protect and unify the country. In 743, the Japanese emperor Shōmu constructed a colossal image his incarnation, Vairocana, that radiated little.

449 Walter, 253.
Buddha images in the halo. As such, he was identifying himself as Vairocana, thereby symbolizing his relationship with the governors of the provinces as radiating from him.\textsuperscript{451} The emperor even dedicated himself as a servant of Vairocana so that there would be peace with spiritual and economic well being. Penelope Mason explains that the Japanese imperial family made Buddhism the state religion to provide one ideology to disparate groups, and therefore, unify the kingdom.\textsuperscript{452}

There were similar \textit{sūtras} of protection used in China during the Tang dynasty. One such text was called \textit{The Dhāraṇī for Protection of the State and the Ruler (Shou-hu kuo chieh chu t’o-lo-ni ching)}.\textsuperscript{453} In addition, the \textit{Sarvadharama guṇavyūharāja Sūtra}, translated by I-Ching in 705, is a text exclusively regarding the protection of kingship as well. Thus, Buddhism and its literature were an important means to provide protection and peace for a divine king and his people.

With this in mind, the Paṭola Śāhis also embraced Buddhism as a vehicle to protect the kingship and the state. As one of the primary roles of a \textit{dharmarāja} was to protect his kingdom, the Paṭola Śāhi kings sought to protect and consolidate their rule through various Buddhist practices and texts. The Paṭola kings ruled over Baltistan (Great Bolūr) and over Gilgit


\textsuperscript{452} Mason, 40.

\textsuperscript{453} See Walter, 55.
(Little Bolör). The Tibetans called the regions sBal-ti and Bru-za. The Paṭola sovereigns ruled in a strategic region that was constantly being fought over by the Tibetans and the Chinese, making it a time of continual crisis. As such, the political unrest must have cause ongoing anxiety for the kingship of the dynasty, giving rise to the need for protection and help from Buddhism.

Moreover, there was an emphasis for unity among the dynasty as well. The king’s seat was in Baltistan in the capital of Skardu, and as such, he would have to maintain control over Gilgit from afar. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Gilgit and Baltistan are not easily connected through a direct route, making the task of consolidation even more difficult. It is thought that the Paṭola Śāhi kings used governors to administer Gilgit on his behalf, and thereby they would need to be kept loyal and dependent upon the kingship. Even the Kārkoṭa dynasty in Kashmir used various administers in the government. For example, there was a strong central government led by the king with various levels of bureaucrats and ministers, and then the land-owning aristocrats were responsible for the administration at the local level.


455 It is possible that, as Karl Jettmar suggests, the king had two residences, one in each state. When the king was in one capital, a viceroy would rule in the other, however, without archaeological evidence, it cannot be determined. Jettmar, “Patolas, their Governors,” 83.

456 Klimburg-Salter, *Silk Route*, 86.
There are several titles used with the names of Paṭola Śāhi nobles in various inscriptions for which the interpretations are not clear. One such title was "Gilgittā-sarāṃgha," which could possibly allude to the governor of Gilgit. As governors of Gilgit, their relationship between themselves and the Paṭola Śāhi kings in Baltistan was crucial. Perhaps the royal daughters of the Paṭola Śāhi kings were given as wives to governors of Gilgit to guarantee loyalty. The princess Devāṣrī was married to the Great Treasurer Saṃkaraseṇa and they are both royally depicted as donors in the image of Vairocana/Śākyamuni (Figure A.8). So maybe the numerous figures of noble donors, some depicted almost like royalty, are married to members of the royal Paṭola Śāhi family. As such, they could be important officials or administrators attached to the court, even perhaps a governor or treasurer of Gilgit, which would explain the great wealth exhibited in commissioning the images and texts.

Thus, it was not only important for the Paṭola Śāhi sovereigns to assure the protection of kingship and the state, but also to consolidate and unify the two regions or states of the kingdom. Therefore, it is no surprise that the kings incorporated Buddhism to serve these purposes, as well as to provide spiritual salvation.

Historical and Political Context

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457 This is found in the inscription at Hatun. For the full inscription, see von Hinüber, “Die Palola Śāhis” 48-9 and 139 ff. See also Fussman, “Chilas, Hatun,” 6.
In the early period of the Paṭola Śāhi dynasty, there are three known kings that ruled at the end of the 6th century and into the early 7th century. Oskar von Hinüber explains that there is no specific chronology or dates given for these three kings, but from the structure of their names it is possible to arrive at a chronological order. He says that since all of the later kings use the limb of “vikramāditya” in their names, that Vajrādityanandi must be the first king of the three, indicating that Vikramādityanandi must be the second king. Surendravikramādityanandi uses the “vikramāditya” stem so he must therefore follow Vikramādityanandi.

In addition, a colophon in the Ratnaketuparivarta text mentions Vikramādityanandi and his wife the queen Surendramālā. Using the tradition common at this time of combining parents' names, both the king's and queen's names can be combined to create the king's name Surendravikramādityanandi. This is further proof that he is the last of the three kings. Although it appears that this is their chronological order, it is not certain, however, if they followed each other in a direct line of succession.

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459 Kalahana tells us that this was a practice in Kashmir, where the name of the king, Cippata Jayāpida (782-794/801-813), derived from his father's name, Lalitāpīda, and his mother's name, Jayādevī. See Aurel M. Stein, Kalhana's Rājatarangini. A Chronicle of the Kings of Kaśmīr (Reprint, 1961; Delhi, Varanasi, Patna: Motilal Banarsidass, 1979), Book IV, 677.

460 von Hinüber, “Royal Inscriptions,” 61. He also suggests evidence for an additional Paṭola Śāhi king named Sri Somana from an inscription, however, it was not conclusive enough for me to use in this study. See von Hinüber, “Die Palola Śāhis,” 85.
Moreover, a general end date for the reign of these three kings can be determined from the Gilgit manuscripts. The three kings are named in colophons in various texts, all which were written in the early Gilgit or Brāhmī round script, and as such, they can be dated before the use of Proto-Śāradā script of 620/630. One of two Samghaṭa Sūtras found at Gilgit has a date of the year 3 (627/628 C.E.), and it is identical to the earlier one except that this one is written in Proto-Śāradā. Therefore, it can be concluded that the early manuscripts naming the kings must date to before 627/628, and as such, it can be determined that all three of the kings ruled before 630.\footnote{von Hinüber, “The Paṭola Śāhis of Gilgit,” x.}

Other inscriptions and historical records provide specific dates for the following Paṭola Śāhi kings, however, the exact date range for their specific reigns is not certain either. Yet, a fairly reliable general chronology can be assumed through the work of various scholars, and from my analysis based on the inscriptive and historical evidence. This general chronology is offered in the following section.

During the late 6\textsuperscript{th} and early 7\textsuperscript{th} century, several warlike powers were expanding their territories around the Paṭola Śāhi kingdom, including Tang China and the Yarlung dynasty from Tibet. The Tang Empire was founded in China in 618 and remained a powerful force for centuries. The Buddhist king Songtsen Gampo (629-650) ruled in Tibet.\footnote{He is the Tibetan king who sent men to Kashmir to learn to write Sanskrit in order to worship Avalokiteśvara. Francke, \textit{Indian Tibet}, 82-3.} Under this king, Tibet
conquered regions as far as India and Nepal, and the frontiers of China, often using his new subjects as allies against his enemies.463 Both Nepal and China realized that Tibet was a new force to reckon with, so they each gave him a princess to marry. Even the Kārkotā Dynasty (625-855) in Kashmir was beginning to grow more powerful.

It was in this background that the Paṭola Śāhi kings were trying to establish their political identity as a dynasty. In this time of expansion and turmoil, the early Paṭola rulers turned to Buddhism. As such, Buddhist texts were commissioned, especially dhāraṇīs or sūtras containing dhāraṇīs, that were popular among the royalty to guarantee protection for the king and a long life. In addition, the protection of the state through religious practice was also incorporated into these texts.464

* Vajrādityanandi

463 David Snellgrove and Hugh Richardson. A Cultural History of Tibet (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1968), 27. Several kingdoms were brought under Tibetan subjugation through this king, including Lhasa, Ladakh, and parts of Guge. It is said that he brought them the customs of the Buddhist religion to these new subjects. See Francke, Indian Tibet, 32.

464 Gregory Schopen even points out that ideas concerning protection of the state through religious practice were well known in Gilgit, although he believes that there was no set pattern for the notion as of yet. See Gregory Robert Schopen, "Bhaisajyagura-Sūtra and the Buddhism of Gilgit," Ph.D. Diss., Australian National University, 1978, 366.
The first known king was Vajrādityanandi (before 630 C.E.). He commissioned two Buddhist texts now in fragments with his queen Mamgalasirika, which might be dhāraṇī for protection.465

* Vikramādityanandi

The Paṭola Śahi king Vikramādityanandi (before 630 C.E.) turned to Buddhism for protection and prosperity. He commissioned the copying of the Aṣṭādaśasahasrikā Prajñāpāramitā along with four of his queens, Torahaṃsika, Saharaṇamālā, Surendramālā, and Dilnitapuṇyā. It was to be recited for peace, wealth, and longevity. Vikramādityanandi also commissioned the Ratnaketuparivarta with two of his queens, Surendramālā and Dilnitapuṇyā. It is a dhāraṇī for the protection and glory of the king. The text states that with this sūtra terrible misfortune will be averted for the ruler or anyone else.466 Vikramādityanandi is named in an inscription carved on a rock at Thalpan-Dorf, however, the only words still legible are his name.467 Perhaps the inscription was a record of a dānapati, proclaiming him a great dharma-rāja, whereby his kingdom would be protected, which was practiced by his successors.

465 It is possible that the donors depicted on the covers of Manuscript 1 and 2, which were discussed in Ch. 2, were early Paṭola Śahi kings and queens. If this is the case, then they were commissioning these texts as well as having themselves painted as the donors.

466 Rkp 39.11-40.11, Schopen, "Bhaiṣajyagura-Sūtra," 364.

467 For the damaged inscription, see von Hinüber, "Die Palola Śahis," 46.
Surendravikramadityanandi

The third Pañola Śāhi king in this early period was Surendrakramadityanandi (before 630 or 644 C.E.). He was the patron of the Bhaisajyagura Sūtra with his queen Trailokadevi. There are passages in this sūtra that specifically refer to providing power and protection for a Buddhist king, where he is assured peace and plenty in his realm, with an increase in life and leadership. Moreover, the Bhaisajyagura Sūtra was to be placed on the top of a standard while going into battle to provide protection for the army. This is certainly evidence of their belief in its powers for protection of the king and state.

Surendrakramadityanandi was also the first known Pañola king to commission a brass sculpture. As mentioned previously, the sculpture of Avalokiteśvara (Figure A.3), was perhaps a statement that he was an incarnation of this bodhisattva. As such, he was using Buddhist traditions to sanction his spiritual and political authority to rule and to provide protection as a dharmarāja.

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468 Schopen, ”Bhaisajyagura-Sūtra,” 363. Schopen explains that this section is very similar to the Sūtra on Perfect Wisdom which explains how benevolent kings may protect their kingdoms. In the Gilgit text, the troubles of ruling kings are removed by uttering the name of Bhaisajyagura, Bhaisajyagura-Sūtra, 180.

469 Schopen, ”Bhaisajyagura-Sūtra,” 19, 366. This was also to be practiced with the Ratnaketuaparvarita, 364.

470 In the text, Arya Śrīmahādevi vyakarana, the goddess Śrīmahādevi tells Avalokiteśvara that whatever king or royal authority preserves the sūtra that all fear, plagues, and calamities will be averted for all beings in the realm and that Sri will dwell in the palace of the king. It is not known who commissioned this text. SmD 94.9. trans. Schopen, ”Bhaisajyagura-Sūtra, 365.


Navasurendrådityanandi

The succeeding king Navasurendrådityanandi (644 or 654 - 685 C.E.) also ruled during a period of crisis and turmoil. The Tibetan king Mang srong mang brtsan (649-676) was at war with the Chinese and the Turks, beating them both. Mang srong mang brtsan also conquered most of Central Asia, thus extending the Tibetan empire beyond the Pamirs. 471 Due to their strategic location, both Baltistan and Gilgit were involved in the turmoil of the region, especially from the Chinese and Tibetan rivalry. Most importantly, records indicate that in 663 C.E. the Tibetan empire controlled Baltistan. 472 Mang srong mang brtsan was married to a Bru-za or Baltistan princess in the 7th century, so it was most likely arranged after this conquest, serving as a means to maintain an alliance with the Paṭolas. 473

With the continued threat of invasion and eventual conquest by the Tibetans, it is no surprise that Navasurendrådityanandi continued the practice commissioning Buddhist dhāraṇīs and texts to provide protection for

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471 His name is also spelled as Mon-sron-mon-btsan. For more information on this king, see Edouard Chavannes, Documents sur les Tou-Kiue (Turcs) occidentaux (Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1942), 329; and Francke, Indian Tibet, 84.


473 Hoffman says that the Tibetan king Man slon man brtsan married a Bru-za princess in the 7th century, which would have been a Paṭola Sāhi princess. For a discussion of this, see H. Hoffman, “Geschichte Tibets,” Oldenbourgs Abriss der Weltgeschichte II, Tiel B.S. (Munchen, 1954), 47; and Karl Jettmar, “Bolar: A Contribution to Political and Ethnic Geography of Northern Pakistan,” Zentralasiatische Studien des Seminars fur prach – und Kulturwissenschaft Zentralasiens der Universität Bonn (Band 11, 1977), 430.
the king and the state. He commissioned three *Mahāmāyūrī vidyārājīnī dhāraṇīs* with his queen Anaṅgadevī, written to ensure a long life for the king. He also ordered the copying of the three surviving fragments of the *Sarvatathāgata hrdaya garbha* for protection.

In addition, to legitimize his rule as a *dharmarāja*, Navasurendrādityanandi had a rock inscription carved at Hatun to record his *dānapati*. Hatun is located at the junction of the trade routes that lead to Pamir, Chitral, Gilgit, and Baltistan - an ideal place for everyone to see his proclamation.474 It is carved in *Proto-Śāradā*, and was basically to commemorate the construction of an irrigation canal and foundation of a small city, Makapura.475 The relevant part of the inscription to this study states:

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# svasti // samvatsare saptacatvārisatitame 47 pośya śukla trayodaśyām 13 śrī 
 bhagadattavanśa sambhūta paramabhatṭāraka mahārājādhirāja parameśvara paṭōla 
 śāhi śrī navasurendrādityanandideva . . .
```

Success! Happiness! In the year 47, to the month of Pausa, in the bright half, on the thirteenth 13 day, under the prosperous reign the great King of Kings, the Supreme Lord, of the Paṭōla Śāhi, the King Navasurendrādityanandi of the Bhagatta family . . .477

474 It was found on a rock at Hatun, near Gilgit in 1941 by the Austrian Redpath who was the Assistant Political Agent in Gilgit. He told Sir Aurel Stein about it who had already been there twice and not seen it. At that date, it was the largest inscription found in North Pakistan.


476 For the remaining portion of the Sanskrit transliteration, see von Hinüber, “Die Palola Śāhis,” 49.

477 The translation is from a combination from Fussman, “Chilas, Hatun,” 9; von Hinüber, “Die Palola Śāhis,” 51; and my own translation.
The section most important to this study is "saṃvatsare 47...
bhagadattavamsa ... paramabhaṭṭāraka mahārājādhirāja parameśvara
paṭoladeva śāhi śrī navasurendrādityananideva" As mentioned previously,
the title "paramabhaṭṭāraka" was used by the Gupta kings and is translated
as "one who is entitled to reverence and homage." The title "mahārājādhirāja
parameśvara" has been translated as "great king of kings, the Supreme
Lord." Therefore, the inscription says it was made in 671/672 in honor of
one who is entitled to reverence and homage, the great king of kings, the
Supreme Lord, king of Paṭolas Navasurendrādityanandi of the Bhagadatta
family.

Not only does this provide a date for the Paṭola king
Navasurendrādityanandi who ruled in 671-672, but the dynastic title makes


479 Oskar von Hinüber states that the title parameśvara is found in Gupta India, but the only
example with a full title closest to that of the Paṭola Śāhi kings was found on a coin. It uses
the title “paramabhaṭṭāraka mahārāja.” Therefore, the title mahārāja with parameśvara is
only found together with the Paṭola Śāhi kings. von Hinüber suggests that this is because
they were sovereign foreign rulers. In addition, he suggests that Navasurendrāditya
introduced the titles and the Proto-Śāradā script as an official act in order to be more like the
Gupta kings in India. Oskar von Hinüber, "Die Bedeutung des Handschriftenfundes bei
60. However, Sander says this is too late in the development of the script because the Gilgit
manuscripts show the transitional style and use the script before the 7th century. Sander,
107-30. For further discussion of the titles and their possible origin, see von Hinüber, “Die
Palola Śāhis,” 108-1.

480 For a discussion regarding the use of Bhagadatta for the Paṭola family, see von Hinüber,
“The Patola Śāhis of Gilgit,” 225; von Hinüber, “Magnificent Bronze,” 35-9; and von Hinüber,
“Die Palola Śāhis,” 85 and 93. Considering the use of the Indian titles, the Indian family
name of Bhagadatta, and even their names which were used by contemporary Indian kings,
there is a clear indication that there was a close association between the Paṭola Śāhi and
India, however, a detailed study of this is not within the scope of this dissertation and
requires further study.
a statement about his concept of kingship. It is noteworthy that in this Hatun inscription Navasurendrādityanandi is the first Paṭola Śāhi king to use this specific dynastic title of "great king of kings, the Supreme Lord." Since this title does not appear with the prior kings’ names in the colophons of the manuscripts, Oskar von Hinüber suggests that sometime between 627/628 and 671/672, the Paṭola Śāhi kingdom had gained independence.\(^{481}\) Perhaps this is an explanation and the king ended the Tibetan rule. It is, however, certainly a public proclamation of Navasurendrādityanandi establishing his identity as a powerful king. He has performed his role as dharmarāja by providing water and a town for his subjects, and as such, through Buddhism he is legitimizing his right to rule over mundane and spiritual matters. In addition, this monarch is also mentioned in an inscription on figure A.16 with a year of 20 or 29, corresponding to 645 or 654 C.E.\(^{482}\) Therefore, the inscriptive evidence indicates that Navasurendrādityanandi had quite a long reign.

* Jayamaṅgalavikramādityanandi

The Paṭola Śāhi king Jayamaṅgalavikramādityanandi (686-709 C.E.) was involved to a greater extent in the turmoil of the region. The Tibetans had conquered Baltistan under the previous king in 663, yet there is a record that in 696, a king from Baltistan with a Paṭola name sent an envoy to

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China.\textsuperscript{483} As a result of the embassy, the king received the imperial seal of investiture with an official decree from the Tang court, awarding the king the title “King of Palur.”\textsuperscript{484} As such, the Paṭola kingdom was not technically part of the Tang Empire, but rather under China’s protection. Christopher Beckwith explains that this was a maneuver as a diplomatic offensive to send a message to Tibet.\textsuperscript{485} Perhaps it was a strategic ploy to allegedly give allegiance to Tibet, while at the same time trying to get protection from China before actually changing affiliations. The Tang Empire’s policy was rather \textit{laissez-faire}, where there was no Chinese administration forced upon them and they were to send tribute to the emperor as a protectorate of China. This may have sounded better to the Paṭolas than the method of control under the Tibetans.

Perhaps the Paṭola Śāhi king Jayamaṅgalavikramādityanandi briefly overthrew the Tibetan rule, however, under the rule of the king, Khri ‘du srong brtsan (676-704), Tibet conquered Baltistan again, as well as parts of Turkestan and Nepal.\textsuperscript{486} This would explain why in the year 707, the king of Baltistan sent soldiers along with the Tibetans to help the Turgis leader.

\textsuperscript{482} See Ch. 2, Figure A.16.

\textsuperscript{483} Chavannes, \textit{Documents sur les Tou-Kiue}, 150; Jettmar, “Patolas, their Governors,” 83; and von Hinüber, ”The Paṭola Śāhis of Gilgit,” 226.

\textsuperscript{484} Chavannes, \textit{Documents sur les Tou-Kiue} , 199-200; Beckwith, 87, from Wang Ch’in-jo’s \textit{Ts’ê fu yüan kuei}, 964, 13r-13v (11343).

\textsuperscript{485} Beckwith, 74.

\textsuperscript{486} This king is also called Gun-sron-hdu-rje. Francke, \textit{Indian Tibet}, 85.
Saqal Turkic, the protector of Ferghana, to fight against the Tang incursions. With the aid of Jayamaṅgalavikramādityanandi, the Tang forces were defeated in 707-708.

The Paṭola Śāhi king Jayamaṅgalavikramādityanandi is mentioned in a rock inscription at Danyor in Gilgit. It is a long inscription and heavily damaged, so that only the last few lines are completely legible, however, the king’s name can be deciphered at the beginning. It features some sort of a gift, perhaps a land grant, and has a date as well as the name Jayamaṅgalavikramādityanandi. The relevant portion to this study states:

\[
\text{parameśva(ra) śrī Jama(!)maṅgalavikrāmādityanandideva} \ldots \\
\text{saṃvatsare 6(2) phalguna śu di 2.}
\]

The translation of this part is, "the Supreme Lord, Śrī Jayamaṅgalavikramādityanandi... in the year 62." The date and year of 62 corresponds to Thursday, February 19, 687 C.E., using the Laukika era system. The inscription uses the title "parameśvara" or Supreme Lord as

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487 Beckwith, 74, from Wang Ch'in-jo's “Ts'e fu yüan kuei,” 964: 13v (11343). It is possible that the next king Nandivikramādityanandi was the king at this time, but it is known that Jayamaṅgalavikramādityanandi was king, at least, through 706/707 when he commissioned the sculpture of the bodhisattva A.4.

488 The inscription was first discovered by an Austrian expedition with Jettmar around 1958, however, it was not until the later research expedition in the 1980's that good photographs and rubber casts were taken. Therefore, the first complete reading was published in von Hinüber, “The Patola Śāhis of Gilgit,” 228.

489 For a complete translation of the inscription, see von Hinüber, “Die Palola Śāhis,” 56.

490 In previous publications, von Hinüber thought it was the year 6, and therefore, believing there were two Paṭola Śāhi kings with the name Jayamaṅgalavikramādityanandi. However, he corrected this error in his latest publication to the year 62, attributing it, through the date
seen in the inscription by Navasurendrādityanandi, however, it is interesting that there is no Paṭola Śāhi included.\(^{491}\)

Jayamaṅgalavikramādityanandi was the Paṭola king who commissioned the two bodhisattvas, perhaps both images of Maitreya, around 706/707 C.E. (Figure A.4 and Figure A.5). As mentioned previously, it is likely that the king considered himself a manifestation of Maitreya, imbuing him with spiritual and political power and authority – a divine right to rule. The images were certainly pious gifts of a great Buddhist king, providing merit and salvation, and thereby protection for the long list of the Paṭola Śāhi family in the inscriptions. Through this Buddhist practice, his political identity and that of the dynasty could be established and legitimized.

The king’s political aspirations are especially manifested through his use of the dynastic title in the inscriptions on the sculptures. The title “mahārājādhirāja parameśvara” is used on both sculptures to reinforce his power and authority as a dharmarāja. Jayamaṅgalavikramādityanandi also uses the title of “mahāśraddhopāsaka” or laymen of great faith on both of the inscriptions, which further corroborates his desire to be seen as a dharmarāja with powers in the spiritual and political domain. Thus,

\(^{491}\) There might be a “Śāhi” in the inscription, but it is not in the context with the name where the Śāhi would normally be. See von Hinüber, “Royal Inscriptions,” 64.
Jayamaṅgalavikramādityanandi was a devout Buddhist practitioner, but also a sovereign of a growing dynasty with political aims.

* Nandivikramādityanandi

The Paṭola Śahi king Nandivikramādityanandi (710-716 C.E.) was Jayamaṅgalavikramādityanandi’s successor. At this time, both Baltistan and Gilgit were still involved in the turmoil of the region, especially since the Tibetans wanted it as a passageway to the Tarim Basin, Tukharistan and Transoxiana and other territories. The king Khri lde gtsug brtsan (704-755) ruled Tibet and was married to a Chinese princess and a Samarkand princess.\(^{492}\) The Tang Empire was by ruled Hsuan Tsung, which was continually being invaded by Tibet from 712-727.

Nandivikramādityanandi was not Jayamaṅgalavikramādityanandi’s son, and therefore, he attained the throne through his marriage to the daughter of Jayamaṅgalavikramādityanandi, Namobuddhāya.

Nandivikramādityanandi’s mother’s name is on the inscription on Vairocana/Maṇjuśrī, as the noblewoman Ujvaī, but she is not found on any other inscriptions.\(^{493}\) Nandivikramādityanandi is the king who commissioned the elaborate sculptures of Vairocana/Maṇjuśrī (Figure A.1) and

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\(^{492}\) This king is also called Khri-lde-gtsug-brtsan-mes-'ag-tshmos. Francke, *Indian Tibet*, 85.

\(^{493}\) Perhaps Ujvaī was Chinese, which might explain why the dynasty changed from Tibetan allegiance to Chinese. Oskar von Hinüber does note that a few names in the colophons of the Gilgit manuscripts and in various rock carvings are Chinese names. For a few examples, see von Hinüber, "Brāhmī Inscriptions," 67-72.
Vairocana/Maitreya (Figure A.2). In both of these sculptures, he is depicted in the composition in full regal and military attire. I propose that there are several elements in the king’s choice of iconography in both of these sculptures that manifest political aspirations.

I have suggested that it is possible that the Pațola Śāhi kings considered themselves incarnations of Buddhist deities. Nandivikramādityanandi was perhaps considered a manifestation of Vairocana, and thus, he commissioned the images of Vairocana/Mañjuśrī and Vairocana/Maitreya, reinforcing his spiritual power in the political domain. The fact that Nandivikramādityanandi is depicted in the compositions with the conflated images does not deter from this interpretation, rather it reinforces his identity as a dual-image as well. He was the universal king just like Vairocana.

As mentioned previously, Vairocana/Mañjuśrī’s hand on Nandivikramādityanandi’s head implies investiture into the teachings of Vairocana. In other words, the gesture is a visual signifier of the initiation into the teachings, whereby he attains an understanding of the esoteric sambhogakāya Vairocana. This particular iconography also suggests a political investiture of kingship. As such, the Buddha is demonstrating Nandivikramādityanandi’s divine right to rule. Through this hand gesture, the king is appointed and blessed by the Buddha as a dharmarāja, who therefore rules according to the Buddhist dharma. Perhaps since
Nandivikramādityanandi was not related by blood to the royal family, he needed to legitimize his place on the Paṭola Śāhi throne, and this iconography served this purpose. In Nepal still today, the king is blessed by the Buddhist goddess Kumāri in a public proclamation to indicate the divine sanction of the king’s sovereignty. As a divine investiture of kingship, the gesture could be considered Nandivikramādityanandi’s coronation or abhiṣeka. The king uses the Buddhist iconography as a means to show his spiritual and political legitimization – his divine sanction of sovereignty.

In addition, as mentioned previously, there is a royal consecration ritual (rājyābhiṣekamiva) in the Mṅk, where the practitioner as a cakravartin goes into battle with the intent to perfect the power of his mantra. This could be one of multiple explanations for the appearance of Nandivikramādityanandi in his full military regalia within the compositions of both sculptures. As such, the king is presenting himself as a consecrated dharmarāja with great political authority. Perhaps the military attire also identifies him with the Gesar King, the mythical hero-warrior king in a saga famous in Central Asia, Tibet, and Ladakh. The Gesar saga tells of the

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494 Lidke, 138.

495 Snellgrove points out that in early Buddhism, Mañjusrī had a relationship with royal coronation ceremonies, “Divine Kingship,” 206. As mentioned in Ch. 3, the esoteric symbols of the sambhogakāya Buddha derived from royal motifs, and it is possible that they even derived from rites of royal coronation. See Klimburg-Salter, Bāmiyān, 110. Fussman even states that the sun and moon symbols relate to abhiṣeka and coronation, “Chilas-Thalpan,” 61.

496 This is part of the samayabhīṣeka initiation, see Wallis, “Persistence of Power,” 251 and 259.
supernatural king's exploits with magical fighting powers and his great power as a leader. The Gesar king was a charismatic warrior and a protector of his family and his kingdom - an ideal role model during a time of uncertainty.

Moreover, the iconography of the hand gesture also has underlying significance relating to protection, one of the role's of a dharmarāja. Vairocana/Maṇjuśrī's hand on the head of Nandivikramādityanandi implies the Buddha's protection over the king and the kingdom, and as such, Buddhism serves as a defense and safeguard for kingship. The iconography suggests that the king has dedicated himself and the dynasty to Vairocana, asking for protection during the period of crisis. In addition, if the donor figures on the painted manuscripts are early Paṭola Śāhi rulers, these same political intentions are implied in the Buddhist iconography where the Buddhist deities' hands are on their heads (Figures A.12 and A.13). The Paṭola Śāhi monarchs are depicting their tutelary deity who has given them the divine right to rule and will provide protection for the kingship and state.

It is also important to point out that Nandivikramādityanandi continues the use of the distinctive Paṭola Śāhi dynastic title

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497 Richard M. Emerson, "Charismatic Kingship: A Study of State Formation and Authority in Baltistan," *Journal of Central Asia* (Vol. VII/2, 1984), 96. In this article, he explains that the role of warfare is used in legitimizing central authority, which could perhaps apply to the Paṭola Śāhi kings.

498 Fussman suggests this idea as well, especially, since he says it is is a tradition in Ceylon to make Śākyamuni the sovereign and protector of the kingdom. Fussman, “Chilas, Hatun,” 42.
“mahārājādhirāja paramēśvara” in the inscriptions on both Figure A.1 and Figure A.2. His splendid appearance with the grand title of "great king of kings, the Supreme Lord of the Paṭola Śāhis,” makes a statement about his role as king. It is certainly a public proclamation of Nandivikramādityanandi establishing his identity as a powerful monarch belonging to the Paṭola Śāhi dynasty. The king is clearly a primary exemplar where a Paṭola Śāhi sovereign has incorporated the Buddhist religion and its iconography to its fullest, in order to convey underlying political aspirations. He is depicted as a great powerful dharmarāja or cakravartin, attaining merit through his dānapati for himself and by extension his subjects. At the same time, however, he is reinforcing his divine authority to rule in the spiritual and political realm, thereby legitimizing his rule, especially since he was not related through blood to the royal Paṭola Śāhi family.

* Su-fu-she-li-chih-li-ni

Little is known about the following Paṭola Śāhi king, Su-fu-she-li-chih-li-ni (717-720 C.E.).499 As of yet, his Sanskrit name has not been found and the Paṭola Śāhi king is known only from a record in the Tang Annals.500 The record says that he sent an envoy to China in 717 and as a result, on July 10, 717, there was an official decree from the Tang court awarding him the title

499 His name is also spelled as Su-fu-she-li-ji-li-ni or Sou-fou-cho-le Tche-li-ni. He is known only from the T'ang Anals, see Chavannes, *Documents sur les Tou-Kiue*, 150.

500 Perhaps he is really Nandivikramādityanandi, but it can not be determined.
“King of Bolōr.”  Once again, a Patola Śahi king was sending a message to Tibet that his kingdom was under the protection of the Tang Empire.

In 718, Tibet retaliated with a short occupancy of Gilgit by the king Khri lde gtsug brtsan as a means for passage to neighboring kingdoms. It is said that the ruler or governor of Gilgit, Mo-chin-mang, escaped to Chinese territory and pleaded to the Chinese military governor saying, “Palûr is Tang’s western gate. If Palûr is lost, all of the Western Regions will be Tibetan!” The military governor, Chang Hsiao-sung, sent 4000 troops to join Gilgit’s army, forcing out the Tibetan army, and supposedly killing and capturing tens and thousands of men. Su-fu-she-li-chih-li-ni’s rule was brief, however, the battle over his region continued between Tibet and China. Sadly, there are no inscriptions or artworks found to date that can provide more information on this Patola Śahi king.

* Surendrāditya

The succeeding Patola Śahi king was Surendrāditya (720-725 C.E.).

There is also a record in the Tang Annals that this king sent an embassy to China for recognition in 720. Consequently, Surendrāditya was recognized as

501 Chavannes, Documents sur les Tou-Kiue, 199-200; and Beckwith, 87, from Wang Ch’in-jo’s “Ts’e fu yüan kuei,” 964, 13r-13v (11343).

502 Beckwith, 95 from Ssu-ma Kuang’s Tzu chich t’ung chien, 212, 6752; and Stein, Ancient Khotan, 7.

503 Scholars believe it is the same Surendraditya which is listed in the Tang Annals as the king who ruled Bolōr in 720-725. See von Hinüber, “Royal Inscriptions,” 63; and von Hinüber, “The Paṭola Śāhis of Gilgit,” 223; and Jettmar, “Patolas, their Governors,” 77-122.
the King of Bolör by the Tang Court. In retaliation, under the rule of Khri lde gtsug brtsan, Tibet invaded Great Bolör in 722, causing Surendrāditya to flee to Gilgit where he took up residence. It is said by Huei-ch’ao that the Paṭola Śahi nobles remained in Baltistan, and as such, Karl Jettmar suggests that the administration of Baltistan was then given to a Bru-za lord who married a Tibetan princess. Tibet also tried to take Gilgit in 722 and again in 736, but they were repelled with military support from the Chinese and the Kashmir forces of King Lalitāditya. The political turmoil of the region had finally split the Paṭola Śahi kingdom.

There is a rock inscription written in Proto-Śāradā at Hodar that features the name of this king, however, it does not have a date. It says, “śrī palola śahi surendrādityanandi deva + dharmo yam.” The epigraphy, however, aligns with the dates of this king. It is a record of some pious gift


505 Chavannes, Documents sur les Tou-Kiue, 150, fn. 5; and Fuchs, “Huei-ch’ao’s pilgrerreise,” 221. Huei-ch’ao states that the king fled to Gilgit, but the nobility remained in Baltistan. For a discussion on this event signifying the decline of the dynasty, see von Schroeder, 62; and Jettmar, “Patolas, their Governors,” 107.


507 See von Schroeder, Buddhist Sculptures, 63. Kashmir was also allied with China, rather than Tibet. As an example, in 723, the Chinese princess (Chih-ch’eng), who was married to a Tibetan emperor, wrote to the King of Kashmir (Chandrapīḍa) asking for asylum. For further details, see Beckwith, 96.

508 This inscription was discovered by Karl Jettmar in 1983.

509 The Sanskrit transliteration is from von Hinüber, “Palola Śahis,” 47.

510 von Hinüber, “Palola Śahis,” 47.
from the dharmarāja, but it is unknown as to what it was. It is significant that this inscription does not use the dynastic title of “mahārājādhirāja parameśvara” such as that found on previous Paṭola Śāhi inscriptions. Since Surendrāditya avoided using the typical full dynastic title, both Oskar von Hinüber and Karl Jettmar believe this inscription was carved after he fled to Gilgit. As such, the inscription reflects the crisis of the time and the decline of power of the Paṭola kingship. However, it shows he was still practicing Buddhism, perhaps hoping his kingdom would be protected and his kingship restored. Thus, Surendrāditya was the last king of Baltistan, and hereafter it was a part of the Tibetan empire from 722-756.

* Gilgit Officials: from Governors to Kings

Once Surendrāditya fled to Gilgit in 722, it is possible that there were two dynasties that co-existed in Gilgit. From 722-747, the names of the Little Bolōr kings in the Tang Annals have a different structure than those of the previous Paṭola Śāhi dynasty. Karl Jettmar suggests that the former governors of Gilgit had become increasingly independent of their king in Baltistan, and thereby were very upset at the arrival of the royal court in Gilgit in 722. As a result, the governors asked the emperor in China to say that they were the kings of Gilgit, beginning with Mo-kin-mang who went to China to plead for help in 722.\(^{511}\) Therefore, the descendents of the former

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\(^{511}\) Chavannes, *Documents sur les Tou-Kiue*, 151; Beckwith, 95; Jettmar, “Patolas, their Governors,” 84.
governors of Gilgit became kings with the official title of “King of Bolōr” from the Tang imperial court. It appears that the new line of kings of Gilgit were given Chinese administers and were to pay tribute to China for protection. Thus, there would have been two rival dynasties in Gilgit at this time. Few details are known about the surviving Paṭola Śāhi dynasty and it is not known specifically, if either dynasty continued to practice Buddhism. After the Tibetan invasion of Baltistan, there are only Chinese records of Gilgit’s activities, who maintained loyalty to the Tang dynasty for a period of time.

There was a peace treaty between China and Tibet beginning in 730, but it only lasted seven years. In 731, the new Gilgit king, Mo-kin-mang’s younger son Nan-ni was awarded the title King of Bolōr from the Chinese court. Tibet started to increase military activity in the area again and in 732, Tibet had neutralized the Tang control over Gilgit. In 736, Tibet used Gilgit to march into Turkistan, making the king of Gilgit send another envoy to the Chinese emperor to complain. The Chinese consequently broke the peace treaty in 737 and invaded northeast Tibet.

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512 There are later Buddhist sculptures that fall within the Patola Sahi idiom, although they do not have inscriptions to confirm this and they are not considered in this study. It is possible that the royalty and nobility of this dynasty fled to Kashmir, and are the Śāhis recorded by Kalhana as having official posts in the government, however, this discussion is beyond the scope of this study and requires further study.

513 Chavannes, Documents sur les Tou-Kiue, 52; Beckwith, 123, n. 94; and Jettmar, “Patolas, their Governors,” 84.

514 Beckwith, 114.
As a result of this, another Tibetan army entered Gilgit in late 737/738 and captured the Gilgit king Su-shih-li-chih (a son of Mo-kin-mang), who was allied with the Tang court. As a result of this defeat, the Gilgit king paid homage to Tibet and ended the Chinese administration and tribute.\textsuperscript{515} For a short period of time their dependency continued upon Tibet, especially, when in the fall of 740, the Tibetan king Khri lde gtsug brtsan forced a political marriage between the Tibetan princess lady Khri ma lod and the king Su-shih-li-chih.\textsuperscript{516} This political marriage secured the Tibetan sovereignty over both Baltistan and Gilgit, and the Tibetans gave the king the title “Bruza lord” (Bruza rje).\textsuperscript{517}

In 741, the Chinese refused to accept the Tibetan authority over Gilgit, and thereby gave the royal title of “King of Bolör” to Ma-hao-li, who was Su-shih-li-chih’s brother and the eldest son of Mu-kin-mang.\textsuperscript{518} This action was a clear indication that two dynasties or houses could “rule” in the same kingdom during the same time period. The Tang dynasty made three failed

\textsuperscript{515} Beckwith, 116.

\textsuperscript{516} Considering the history of the dynasty, there are two theories suggested regarding how the brasses came to be in Tibet. One is that the Tibetans took them at the time of conquest as spoils of war. The second one is that the sculptures were taken there by Buddhist refugees when the Muslims invaded at a much later date. At the latest, it is agreed that it would have been by 750 C.E. For a discussion of this, see Paul, 217; and Jettmar, “Patolas, their Governors,” 108-122.

\textsuperscript{517} See J. Bacot, F.W. Thomas, and Ch. Toussaint, Documents de Touen-houang relatifs à l’histoire du Tibet (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1940), 50-1; Beckwith, 123; Stein, Ancient Khotan, 7; and Jettmar, “Bolar: A Contribution,” 430.

\textsuperscript{518} See Chavannes, Edouard. Documents sur les Tou-Kiue, 65; Beckwith, 123, 210-11; Jettmar, “Patolas, their Governors,” 84; and von Schroeder, 63.
attempts to actually take back Gilgit over the course of several years. Interestingly, the Gilgit king, Ma-hao-lai, changed his allegiance from China to the Tibetans, and therefore upon his death in 741, Gilgit was united under the rule of Su-shi-li-chih or the Bruza Lord.

The Chinese Tang army invaded Gilgit in 747 and captured the capital. They executed the Tibetan officials, destroyed the suspension bridge, and took Su-shi-li-chi and his Tibetan queen, both who had surrendered, to China and presented them to Hsuan Tsung. The Chinese garrisoned the city and left 2000 soldiers there to maintain control. The king of Gilgit was pardoned by the court and supposedly given a position in the palace guards, but it is unknown what happened to the Tibetan princess. After this, the status of Gilgit was changed to that of a tributary kingdom, with records showing they sent ambassadors to China in 748, 752, 753, and 755.

In 750, China sent an army to Baltistan, which was still controlled by the Tibetans, however, there was no military victory. The Tang army tried again in 753 and this time they defeated the city P’u-sa-lao (Ho-sa-lao) which


520 The supplies for this garrison, however, had to come from Kashmir, who was also loyal to China. Beckwith, 132-35; and Stein, *Ancient Khotan*, 8-10.

521 Jettmar, “Patolas, their Governors,” 90.

submitted. In 755, the Tibetans retaliated, attacking the Chinese in Baltistan. China had suffered an overwhelming defeat by the Arabs elsewhere in 751, so they withdrew their troops and abandoned their interest in Baltistan and Gilgit once and for all. Nothing more is known of the Paṭola Śāhi dynasty in either Baltistan or Gilgit. Although it is not known the extent to which the governor-kings of Gilgit practiced Buddhism, there must have been some semblance of the religion left in the kingdom reflected by the numerous texts and Buddhist items buried in the stūpa at Naupur. However, the spiritual power and the political glory of the Paṭola Śāhi Buddhist kings during the late 7th and early 8th century was no more.

**Political Identity – Dated Images**

There is only conjecture about the dated Paṭola Śāhi images regarding what specific events might be correlated to their commissions. Since various scholars have offered differing options, these suggestions are discussed briefly in this section. It would certainly be significant if the dates corresponded to the coronation or abhiśeṣa of each Paṭola Śāhi king, however, since the exact dates of their reigns is uncertain, it can not be proved or disproved.

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523 Chavannes, *Documents sur les Tou-Kiue*, 129; Beckwith, 141; and Jettmar, “Patolas, their Governors,” 90.

524 Beckwith, 142; and Jettmar, “Exploration in Baltistan,” 803.

525 Oskar von Hinüber points out, using the Danyor inscription of 687 C.E., that we know that Jayamaṅgalavikramādityanandi had already been ruling for 20 years at the time of the
Pañcavārśika Ceremony

Scholars, such as Deborah Klimburg-Salter, Benjamin Rowland, and G. Taddei, suggest that crowned Buddhas relate to the Pañcavārśika ceremony. The Pañcavārśika was a ceremony started by King Aśoka as part of a Buddhist king’s responsibility. It was documented by Buddhist pilgrims, such as Faxien and later by Xuan Zhang in various Buddhist kingdoms. Xuan Zhang describes one in Kucha:

Outside the western gate of the chief city, on the right and left side of the road, there are erect figures of Buddha, about 90 feet high. In the space in front of these statues there is a place erected for the quinquennial assembly. Every year at the autumnal equinox, during ten several days, the priests assemble from all the country in this place. The king and all his people, from the highest to the lowest, on this occasion abstain from public business, and observe a religious fast; they listen to the sacred teachings of the law, and pass the days without weariness. In all the convents there are highly adorned images of Buddha, decorated with precious substances and covered with silken stuffs. These they carry in idol-cars, which they call the "procession of images." On these occasions the people flock by thousands to the place of assembly.

The Pañcavārśika ceremony involves the king, the royal family, and officials of the government, as well as vassals of the kingdom, helping to promote unity. Supposedly, there is a ritual where the king gives his crown commissioning of the bodhisattva sculpture in 706/07, and therefore, it was not likely commissioned for a coronation ritual. See von Hinüber, “Die Palola Śāhis,” 95. This may apply to this specific image, however, it can not be assumed to apply for every image.

Klimburg-Salter suggests that the crowned Buddhas at Bamiyan are explained by this ceremony, Bāmiyān, 125-26 and 176. See also Taddei, 459, and Rowland, 24.

Xuan Zhang describes such ceremonies in Bamiyan, Kapisa, Khotan, and Kucha. Huei Ch’ao describes one in Pakistan, perhaps it was the kingdom of Bolör, but it is undetermined.

to the Buddha, confirming his devotion to the Buddha as the spiritual guide and protector of the state.\textsuperscript{529} From the descriptions, the ceremony is thought to have been held in a sacred Buddhist site or pilgrimage center, these would be located on trade routes. In Japan in the 7th century the place of the \textit{Pañcavārṣika} was moved from the temple to the palace in order to honor the emperor and show it served to protect kingship and kingdom.\textsuperscript{530}

The \textit{Pañcavārṣika} ceremony was certainly a Buddhist ritual that also allowed the king to legitimize his political power, affirming his role as a \textit{dharmarāja}. It would serve as a justification of the union between spiritual and mundane power, once again marking the combined religious and political role of a Buddhist king.\textsuperscript{531} However, the ceremony is held every five years and the dates of the Paṭola Śāhi sculptures are not a regular interval of five years. Thus, it is not likely that these Paṭola Śāhi images were commissioned for a \textit{Pañcavārṣika} ceremony in the kingdom.

Auspicious Days

\textsuperscript{529} Klimburg-Salter, \textit{Bāmiyān}, 123-27. A similar festival called \textit{Sahasrabhakta} is documented in Kalhana’s \textit{Rājatarangini}. It was held by the king of Kashmir, Lalitāditya, in Parihasapura with the help of other lords, military and civil servants, and monks. See Aurel M. Stein, \textit{Kalhana’s Rājatarangini. A Chronicle of the Kings of Kaśmīr} (Reprint, 1961; Delhi, Varanasi, Patna: Motilal Banarsidass, 1979), vol. 1, 146-49.

\textsuperscript{530} Klimburg-Salter, \textit{Bāmiyān}, 125.

\textsuperscript{531} Klimburg-Salter suggests that once the two roles were merged in Tantric kingship, the ceremony died out. Klimburg-Salter, \textit{Bāmiyān}, 125.
Oskar von Hinüber suggests that the known dates relate to auspicious days, in particular, April 23rd, which is celebrated as the date of Śākyamuni’s birth, enlightenment, and nirvana.\textsuperscript{532} The date of Vairocana/Maitreya (Figure A.2) is dated to the year 91 on a full moon day, Tuesday. This date can possibly be narrowed down to April 23, 715, based on the full-moon calendar, however, it could also be September 17, 715. There are two other sculptures that are dated to the month of April, however, they do not fall on the 23rd day. For example, the sculpture of Vairocana/Manjuśrī (Figure A.1) is dated to the year 90, the 8th day of the bright half of the month, Vaiśākha. This date can be narrowed down to Thursday the 26th or Friday the 27th of April, 714.\textsuperscript{533} The sculpture of Vairocana/Śākyamuni (Figure A.8) is also dated to the year 90 and can be pinpointed to the specific date of April 20, 714.\textsuperscript{534} The evidence just does not support the theory that only the 23rd was an auspicious day, however, it is possible that the other dates were also auspicious to the Paṭola Śāhi kings.\textsuperscript{535} Perhaps the sculptures were consecrated on local festival days for a specific Buddhist deity, such as we

\textsuperscript{532} von Hinüber, “Die Palola Śāhis,” 41. Pal suggests that two of the sculptures were made for an annual festival honoring the Buddha. See Pal, Himalayas, 108.

\textsuperscript{533} von Hinüber, “Die Palola Śāhis,” 39.

\textsuperscript{534} von Hinüber, “Die Palola Śāhis,” 40.

\textsuperscript{535} Paul suggests that the Paṭola Śāhis were using the Gilgit text Sarva-tathāgata-dhistahana-sattva-valokenbuddhaksetrasenarsar vuyhamm which refers to auspicious times to make images of the Buddha and the duration of some rites. One suggested time is the week between the 8th and 15th day of bright half of the month of Vaiśākha. See Paul, 212-13. However, with the various dates, this explanation can not apply to all of the images.
still see in Nepal, especially since Vaiśākha falls around the time of the spring equinox.

Initiations

I suggest that another theory is that perhaps the dates of the sculptures coincide with my premise in previous chapters that the Paṭola Śāhi kings were initiated into particular Buddhist teachings, and that this is reflected by the specific deity chosen. For example, king Surendravikramāditya would have been a follower of the teachings concerning Avalokiteśvara, and as such, the bodhisattva became his tutelary deity. The king Jayamaṅgalavikramādityanandi’s sculptures reflect his adherence to the teachings on Maitreya bodhisattva, perhaps even noting his guarantee in paradise. And, of course, king Nandivikramādityanandi was an initiate into the esoteric teachings of Vairocana, as seen in the sambhogakāya nature in the iconography as well as the conflated images. In addition, as mentioned previously, these choices of their own particular tutelary deity could relate to the notion that they were incarnations of that specific bodhisattva or Buddha as well.

Buddhism in Service of the State

It is possible that the dates on the images correspond primarily to the date of the pious gift, just as stated in the inscriptions. A dharmarāja is supposed to practice dānapati to attain merit for himself, for his family, and
for his people. As such, by commissioning the dated sculptures, the Paṭola Śāhi kings were performing their Buddhist role, while also creating political statements.

**Conclusion**

Thus, it is evident that political patronage bears a direct affect on the construct of the art itself, including Buddhist art. Buddhism provided the philosophical support for the Paṭola Śāhi kings to merge Buddhism with affairs of the state. Esoteric Buddhism, especially, gave justification to the rulers in Buddhist rhetoric, such as with Shingon and Tendai Buddhism in Japan.\(^{536}\) The Paṭola Śāhi visual and textual record underscore the theoretical practices of Buddhism for religious merit and the protection of kingship and the state, as well as the underlying political aspirations to bolster legitimacy and lay claim to greatness, both spiritual and secular. As such, the rulers are portrayed as divine *dharmarājas*, perhaps even incarnations of *bodhisattvas* and Buddhas. This shows the explicit desire to be seen as both a universal king and a powerful spiritual being, substantiating the intrinsic connection between spiritual and political authority for a Buddhist king.

In addition, it is evident that the Paṭola Śāhi sovereigns utilized Buddhism as a vehicle to establish the identity of the dynasty. In a historical and political contextualization, it is shown that distinctive Buddhist practices
or phases can correspond to political situations and cultural influences.

Buddhist texts, images, and rituals were utilized not only for spiritual benefit and to exemplify the king on the bodhisattva path, but for national interests. The divine kingship and the state were assured protection and harmony through Buddhist dhāraṇīs and sūtras, and investitures from Buddhist deities during a period of ongoing political crisis. The evidence indicates that the Paṭola Śāhi monarchs were, indeed, devout Buddhist practitioners, yet there were also political and social implications in their support of Buddhism, reiterating the multi-valency of Buddhist iconography and iconology.

Kasulis, Shinto, 95.
CHAPTER 7

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The objectives of this study were to conduct a detailed iconographic analysis of the extant Paṭola Śāhi record; to contextualize the visual materials, including the iconography, epigraphic and compositional components, within the broader framework of Buddhist theoretical principles and practice; to contextualize the religious patronage of the Paṭola Śāhis, particularly by situating the depicted donors into the Buddhist iconography and iconology of the images; and to contextualize the patronage of the Paṭola Śāhi kings, particularly with respect to possible underlying political motivations. The iconography of a crowned Buddha, so prevalent among the visual record, gives significant insight into the corpus of Paṭola Śāhi imagery. As such, a coded visual language is evident in the iconography of a crowned Buddha, through the underlying patterns of the silk items and jeweled ornaments, especially, the pañca jiña crown.

The Buddhological contextualization of the visual record shows this set of iconographic visual identifiers constructs the meditational nature of a sambhogakāya Buddha. The majority of the crowned sambhogakāya
Buddhas in the Paṭola Śāhi imagery are performing the *dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā*, which is specific to Vairocana Buddha and refers to esoteric Buddhism, whereby providing the identity of these Buddhas as Vairocana or a hypostasis of him. In addition, the unadorned Buddhas that perform the *dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā* underscore the identity of Vairocana as well. As such, Vairocana Buddha is the paradigm for the majority of the Paṭola Śāhi Buddhas, revealing a strong foothold of the esoteric teachings of the Vairocana cycle. Therefore, through the meditational construct of the *sambhogakāya* Buddha, the *pañca jina* crown, and the *dharmacakra-pravartana mudrā*, the donor-practitioners’ understanding of the image at an esoteric level within Vajrayāna Buddhist methodologies is confirmed.

A contextual study of the religious patronage of the Paṭola Śāhis, particularly by situating the depicted donors into the Buddhist iconography and iconology of the images, reveals that many of these donors were initiates into and practitioners of the esoteric teachings of Vairocana Buddha. The inscriptionsal evidence and the presence of the donor-monks with *sambhogakāya* Vairocana images, especially, indicate that the monastic patrons were initiates into Vairocana-related practices. Specifically, the core elements of the practice of generosity and the three main constituents of the teaching transmissions in the Mahāyāna/Vajrayāna traditions – the receiver, the gift, and the giver – are evident. As such, the receiver is the donor-monk,
the gift is the dharma related to Vairocana practice, and the giver is the donor-monk’s teacher.

Since these Buddhist monastic figures were the spiritual teachers and kalyānamitra to the royal family, the three-pronged iconography of the practice of generosity and teaching transmission can be translated to the images that feature a monastic donor, a royal or noble donor, and an image of sambhogakāya Vairocana. This emphasizes the teacher-student relationship as part of the transmission of the esoteric Buddhist practices present in the iconography.

By considering additional visual evidence, such as the significance of the male/female relationship of the depicted couples in Vajrayāna Buddhism or the imagery indicating initiation and investiture, as well as the inscriptive and textual evidence, the practice of esoteric Buddhism by the ruling Paṭola Śāhi family is further substantiated. The iconographic and iconological pattern of donor-practitioner (receiver), donor-practitioner’s teacher (giver), and practice (gift of the teaching), repeats in various ways throughout the Paṭola Śāhi dynasty and gives significant insight into the corpus of Paṭola Śāhi imagery, especially the specific practices in which the donors were engaged.

A contextual study of the role of kingship in Buddhism and the impetus behind the patronage of Buddhism by the Paṭola Śāhi sovereigns, shed light on underlying political motivations. It is evident that political
aspirations and legitimizing forces were also part of their Buddhist practices. The Paṭola Śāhi monarchs, as divine dharmarājas, likely identified themselves with certain bodhisattvas or Buddhas as a means to express their power and authority in the spiritual and mundane realms. In addition, the visual and textual records underscore their support of Buddhism to protect the kingship and state. By contextualizing the rule of the Paṭola Śāhi kings within the milieu of historical and political concerns, it is evident that political patronage bears a direct affect on the construct of the art itself. Thus, when considered within a larger framework of Buddhist theoretical principles and practice, as well as intricately linked social, religious, and political practices at the time, the motives and impetus for the Paṭola Śāhi patronage and select, multivalent iconographies are gleaned.
APPENDIX A

VISUAL RECORD OF THE PAȚOLA ŚĂHIS
Figure A.1. Vairocana/Maṇjuśrī Buddha commissioned by King Nandivikramādityanandi, April 714 C.E. Brass sculpture now in the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (86.120).
Figure A.2. Vairocana/Maitreya Buddha commissioned by King Nandivikramadityanandi, April or September, 715 C.E. Brass sculpture in the Pritzker Collection, New York.
Figure A.3. *Bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara commissioned by King Surendravikramādityanandi, 625-654 C.E. Brass sculpture in the Palace Museum in Beijing, China.
Figure A.4. *Bodhisattva* commissioned by King Jayamaṅgalavikramādityanandi, 706/707 C.E. Brass sculpture in the Jo khang/gTshug lag khang Collection: inventory no. 870. Lhasa, Tibet.
Figure A.5. *Bodhisattva* Maitreya commissioned by King Jayamaṅgalavikramādityanandi, approx. 706/707 C.E. Brass sculpture in the Tholing monastery in Western Tibet (Guge).
Figure A.6. Vairocana/Śākyamuni Buddha commissioned by Śrī Surabhī and the monk Hariśayaśa, 678/679 C.E. Brass sculpture of unknown location.
Figure A.7. Vairocana/Śākyamuni Buddha commissioned by the monk Bhadradharma and his parents, 679/680 C.E. Brass sculpture in the Po ta la Collection: Sa gsum lha khang: inventory no. 82. Red Palace, Lhasa, Tibet.
Figure A.8. Vairocana/Śākyamuni Buddha commissioned by Samkaraseṇa and the princess Devaśrī, April 20, 714 C.E. Brass sculpture in the Rockerfeller 3rd Collection in the Asia Society in New York (1979.44).
Figure A.9. Vairocana/Maitreya Buddha, approx. 675-722 C.E. Brass sculpture in the Jo khang/gTsug lag khang Collection: inventory no. 261[A]. Lhasa, Tibet.
Figure A.10. Buddha.        Figure A.11. Bodhisattva.

Figure A.12. *Bodhisattva.* Figure A.13. *Bodhisattva.*

Figure A.14. Śākyamuni/Vairocana Buddha.

Figure A.15. Bodhisattvas and donors.

Pair of painted covers from Manuscript 3, Samghāṭa Sūtra, commissioned by Devaśīrikā and Atthocasingha, 627/628 C.E. Museum of the Institute of Central Asian Studies at Kashmir University, Srinigar, Kashmir.
Figure A.16. Śākyamuni/Vairocana Buddha commissioned by Varṣa, 645 or 654 C.E. Brass sculpture in the private Rossi Collection.
Figure A.17. Śākyamuni Buddha commissioned by Veyatyāsa, August or September, 716/717 C.E. Brass sculpture in a private collection in Paris.
Figure A.18. Vairocana Buddha, approx. 675-722 C.E. Brass sculpture in the Po ta la Collection: Li ma lha khang; inventory no. 1383. Red Palace, Lhasa, Tibet.
Figure A.19. Śākyamuni Buddha, approx. 675-722 C.E. Brass sculpture in the Norton Simon Foundation in Pasadena, California (F1972.48.2.5).
Figure A.20. Śākyamuni/Vairocana Buddha, approx. 675-722 C.E. Brass sculpture in the Po ta la Collection: Li ma lha khang: inventory no. 547. Red Palace, Lhasa, Tibet.
Figure A. 21. Mahāvairocana Buddha, approx. 675-722 C.E. Brass sculpture in the Po ta la Collection: Sa gsum lha khang; inventory no. 1481. Red Palace, Lhasa, Tibet.
Figure A.22. Vairocana/Vipaśyin Buddha commissioned by Simhota, prior to 630 C.E. Rock carving from Chilas.
Figure A.23. Vairocana/Maitreya Buddha, approx. 675-722 C.E. Brass sculpture in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.
Figure A.24. Vairocana/Śākyamuni Buddha, 7th century. Side one of three-sided stone sculpture from Gilgit.
Figure A.25. Vairocana/Maitreya Buddha, 7th century. Brass sculpture in the Po ta la Collection: Li ma lha khang: inventory no. 588. Red Palace, Lhasa, Tibet.
Figure A.27. Maitreya/Vairocana Buddha, 7th century. Brass sculpture in the Heeramanec Collection, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (M.76.2.33).
Figure A.28. *Bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara, 7th century. Brass sculpture in private collection.
Figure A.29. Śākyamuni Buddha, 7th – 8th century. Carved into cliffs at Kargah near Gilgit.
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376


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