amongst the wondrous metal images of the Berti Aschmann Collection of Tibetan Art preserved in the Rietberg Museum stands a unique statue ‘Bodhisattva with gadā’ (fig.1). The unidentified Bodhisattva has been attributed to Kashmir and dated from the ninth to tenth century. However, a Tibetan inscription engraved on the top of the lotus base has seemingly gone unnoticed. The reading of the inscription not only allows for the identification of this figure, but also raises the question of its place of production and workmanship. The inscription on the pedestal reads as follows (fig.2):3

14 nub li’i byang chub sM’d’ rdo rgyal mtshan
"14 The Bodhisattva Vajradhvaja of Western Li”

The inscription opens with a number fourteen written in Tibetan numerals. A small gap separates this number from the first word of the inscription. At the outset, it would seem to suggest that this statue was initially part of a set of images. Alternatively, the statue would have been engraved and listed alongside other miscellaneous religious articles belonging to a particular place. I will return to this point later.

Two words of the inscription are clearly abbreviated. The last two syllables of the Buddhist word byang chub sM’s dpa’ (Skt. bodhisattva) are cut short. A dot above the term sM’s indicates that the third syllable is shortened by means of an anusvāra (Tib. rjes su nga ro). The last syllable dpa’ is equally abridged. Second, the name rDo rje rgyal mtshan (Skt. Vajradhvaja) is abridged, too. Here, the second syllable of the noun rDo rje (Skt. vajra) is omitted. The use of abbreviated nouns is common practice in Tibetan epigraphic writing, usually because of

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1 This research benefitted from the generous assistance of the Tise Foundation.
2 Helmut Uhlig, On the Path To Enlightenment: The Berti Aschmann Foundation of Tibetan Art at the Museum Rietberg Zürich (Zürich: Museum Rietberg, 1995), 120-121.
3 I am very grateful to Alexandra Von Przychowski from the Rietberg Museum for sharing her own photograph of the inscription.

space, sometimes for technical reasons. In the present context, the
identification of Bodhisattva Vajradhvaja does not pose any problems
and is further confirmed by the iconography, as I intend to show.

There is every reason to think that the expression nub li might also
be an abbreviation of some sort. Therefore, the genitive case suffixed
to the word li has been provisionally translated ‘of’. It could also be
rendered as ‘from’, ‘in’, or as a clause introduced by ‘that’, depending
upon our reading of the expression ‘Western li’.

Some remarks on the term ‘li’ and its derivatives

Dictionaries usually define the word li as ‘bronze’ or ‘metal bell’. This
term is also used to mean a unit of distance of approximately one
third of a meter. The latter can easily be ruled out as far as the in-
scription is concerned. Moreover, the term li is often found in com-
pound nouns pertaining to metal casting (Tib. li ma), the oasis of Kho-
tan (Tib. li yul), or an artistic style (Tib. li lugs) related to Central Asia.

In the context of traditional metalwork, the word li is used some-
what loosely by Tibetan authors. It is generally admitted that li is
employed to designate different types of alloys. Tibetan texts discussing
casting and metallurgy speak of red li (Tib. li dmar), white li (Tib.
li dkar), reddish brown li (Tib. smug li), or even iridescent li (Tib. li
khra). Overall, these terms seem to reflect the hues of different types
of copper alloys that assumed a dominant position in Tibetan and
Himalayan metalwork.4 Incidentally, Pad-ma dkar-po (1527 – 1592)
reported in his work on metal images that red li and white li were
found in the hills of Khotan (Tib. li yul). They were both regarded as
the finest alloys for having been blessed by four different Buddhas.5

In some cases, the word li ma is used instead of li. It introduces
a small distinction between metal alloys and metal objects, which is not
strictly followed by all Tibetan authors, in particular with regard to
sculpture. A chapel inside the Potala Palace in Lhasa, for instance,
bears the name of Li ma lha khang. It is renowned for housing about
eight hundred metal images (Tib. li ma) of divine figures (Tib. lha
sku). Tibetan historian and lexicographer Dung-dkar blo-bzang

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4 Erberto Lo Bue, “Statuary Metals in Tibet and the Himālayas: History, Tradition
5 ‘li dmar dmar [m]dangs cung zad ser ba dang | li dkar dkar [m]dangs cung zad ser ba
yin | ’di gnyis li yul ri la thub dbang bzhis | ’byin gyis brlabs pa las ‘ongs mchog tu
bsngags | “Red li is red in hue with some yellow, and white li is white in hue
with some yellow. These two came to be praised as the finest since four Buddhas
blessed the hills of the Country of Li (i.e. Khotan)”; Pad-ma dkar-po, Li ma brtag
pa’i rab byed smra ’dod pa’i kha rgyan, text edited by Tashi Tsering and Ngawang
Lungtok (Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works & Archives, 2002), 295.
‘phrin-las (1927 – 1997) listed a whole variety of mediums, periods, and provenances for these images. In addition to various types of li alloys, he noted that Tibetan statues produced during the imperial period were called chos rgyal li ma. He also explained that sculptures of Indian origin are classified according to their place of production. Hence, the Li ma lha khang contains statues made in Magadha in the heartland of India (Tib. rgya gar yul dbus ma gha dha). Other metal images manufactured in East India are commonly referred to as Eastern li (Tib. shar li), whilst sculptures created in West India are called Western li (Tib. nub li). In addition, this classification of Indian metal images also includes statues produced in Nepal (Tib. bal po'i li ma), Kashmir (Tib. kha che'i li ma), and in Khotan (Tib. li yul gyi li ma).

In light of the literary tradition, however, the geographical distribution and stylistic development of early metal images is not always recognised unequivocally. This situation is particularly relevant when it comes to Kashmir and Khotan, two springboards for the development of Buddhist figurative art in Tibet. According to Tāranātha (1575 – 1634), who included a chapter about artistic production in his History of Buddhism in India, the early formative influences on Kashmiri art came from Central and Western India. Pad-ma dkar-po, for his part, gave a long description of stylistic features found in images produced in the ‘Land of Kashmir in Western India’.

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7 The abbreviated form chos li is also found in Pad-ma dkar-po’s work on casting and metal images; Pad-ma dkar-po, Li ma brtag pa, 301.
8 The same paragraph as above.
9 Padma dbyigs mo chig rkyang ’dab ma che | pad mgo cung rgyas kha sbyar rkyang pa’ang srid | gan khris la sogs ci rigs yod ba yin | “The deities from the Land of Kashmir in Western India [are made] of white li – slightly yellowish – and in particular of red li, stone, enamel-like (i.e. ivory) and also zi khyim (i.e. natural copper), which were to be found there in large numbers. The stylistic features of [these] images [include] long and fleshy faces. The upper and lower
Likewise, the Country of Li (i.e. Khotan) in the deserts of Central Asia was also accepted as being part of a larger Indian geography. Located to the north-west of the Tibetan plateau, it is not clear as to why this region came to be known as such in early Tibetan sources. Notwithstanding the homonymic relationship between the term li, ‘bronze’, and the name of the country, Khotan has long had a reputation for its artistic influence in Tibet. The literary tradition recalls, for instance, the episode in which King Srong-btsan sgam-po (r. c. 605 – 650) and his army set off to ‘Khotan in India’ (Tib. rgya gar li yul) to assume ownership of sacred statues in order to install them inside the royal temple of Khra ‘brug.\textsuperscript{10} Similarly, one of the most famous metal sculptures of the Kadampa tradition (Tib. bka’ gdams li ma) preserved in Tibet is a forty-five centimetre-tall representation of Mañjuvajra (Tib. ’Jam dpal rdo rje),\textsuperscript{11} which is said to have been brought from Kho-

\textsuperscript{10} [...] slar yang phyogs bcu’i rgyal ba sras bcas kyi mgrün gcig tu khyol\textsubscript{od} [khyi lha’i ’khor rnams rgya gar li yul lcang ra smug po na sugar sangs rgyas ’o srung gis rab gnas mnga’ gsol mzdâd ba’i \| nye sras brgyzad \| rje btsan sgrol ma \| kho bo dang bcas pa bzhus yod \| de nams khyod kyi lha’i ’khor du bdan drongs shig \| ’dzam bu’i gling na rten de las ngo mtshar che ba med \| nged rnams kyi kyang grogs byed gsungs na nam [mikha’ nas sgra bsgrags pas \| nang par rgyal po thugs shin tu mnyes te \| blo’ bhangs rnams bdus nas \| mdang nub lha’i ’khor rnams rgya gar li yul lcang ra smug po gzhugs yod pa’i lung bstan byung bas \| de gdan ’der gn Jo’ gro do’ pas khyod rnams dmag dpung sogs la grab gyis gsungs [...]’; “ [...] Once again the Buddhas of the ten directions and the Bodhisattvas unanimously declared: ’The retinue of your divine images, which is at the Maroon Willow Grove of Khotan in India, had been consecrated and enthroned by Buddha K\texttextsubscript{āś}yapa in former times. The Eight Close Sons (Skt. \textit{aṣṭa utaputra}, the venerable Tārā, together with Krodha reside [there]. Bring and establish them as the retinue of your divine statues! There is no sacred images more wondrous [than these] on Jambudvīpa. We too shall provide assistance’.

[Their] word having resounded through the sky, the king utterly elated brought together the ministers and the subjects the following day and declared: ’Last night, I had the prophetic revelation that the retinues of the deities are at the Maroon Willow Grove of Khotan in India. Since we must depart to bring them here, you shall assemble the troops’ [...]’. For the Tibetan rendition and a different translation of this passage; see Per K. Sørensen and Guntram Hazod, Thundering Falcon: An Inquiry into the History and Cult of Khra-‘brug Tibet’s First Buddhist Temple (Vienna : Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2005), 62-63, 341-342.

tan to the Land of Snows as part of a civilizing enterprise. A stylistic analysis of these images, when they exist, would certainly be useful to evaluate the historical dimension of these Buddhist narratives. In any case, we are repeatedly told that metal sculptures attributed, whether rightly or wrongly, to Khotanese workmanship were held in great esteem. When Tsong-kha-pa (1357 – 1419) officially declined an invitation made by the Yongle Emperor (1360 – 1424) in 1408, the Tibetan master dispatched sumptuous presents to the Chinese emperor amongst which a ‘statue of Avalokiteśvara brought from Khotan’.

Eventually, the term li, as in the expression li lugs, came to convey a certain Khotanese artistic influence on the art and architecture of the imperial period in Tibet. It is found, for example, in reference to the monastery of bSam-yas that was founded around 780 CE. If Tibetan sources generally agree that the main three-tiered temple (Tib. dbu rtse) had been erected following three artistic styles (i.e. Tibetan,
Indian, and Chinese), they are yet at variance when it comes to the exact sequence and the style of at least one of these floors.\(^{14}\) In a text ascribed to the fourteenth century, it is stressed that the upper floor of the main temple of the monastery of bSam-yas had been built in Khotanese style (Tib. \textit{li lugs}).\(^{15}\)

The possibility of a direct influence from Central Asia on Tibetan visual art took a new turn when the term \textit{li lugs} was found by the Italian polymath Giuseppe Tucci on the walls of a chapel at g.Ye dmar in Tibet.\(^ {16}\) At the time, his misreading of the inscription supported the idea that the painted representation of Tathāgatas was following a Khotanese style. More recently, art historian and Tibetologist Amy Heller has argued that the syntax of the inscription indicates the exact opposite, pointing at paintings that, in fact, did not conform to Khotanese style.\(^ {17}\) Based on stylistic evidence and comparative analyses, it was eventually proposed that the expression \textit{li lugs} should not be taken too literally but rather be understood as ‘Central Asian style’.\(^ {18}\)

To compound the matter further, Amy Heller has also remarked that technical terms such as \textit{li lugs} and \textit{li ma lugs} are also being used by Tibetan artists today in reference to a style of depiction, in both painting and sculpture, based on the tradition of metal images, as the

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\(^{14}\) Anne Chayet drew attention to the fact that it is difficult to speak of different architectural styles and stylistic characteristics related to the artwork of these stor­eys as the building underwent important damage and renovation phases. She suggested that the three types of floor (Tib. \textit{rigs gsum}) mentioned in Tibetan sources might, in fact, reflect construction techniques rather than artistic trends: with a ground floor made of stone, a middle floor made of bricks, and an upper floor constructed in wood; see Anne Chayet, “Le monastère de bSam-yas: sources architecturales”, \textit{Arts asiatiques}, 43 (1988): 19-29. The use of three distinct building materials for each storey is further attested in Tibetan sources; see bSod-nams rgyal-mtshan, \textit{rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long} (Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1981), 18, 209.

\(^{15}\) \textit{dbu rtse rigs gsum bkod pa'i khayd par ni | 'og khang rgya nag bar khang rgya gar lugs | steng khang li yi lugs su bzhengs pa yin |}; “As for the structural characteristics of the three-tiered dBu rtse [temple]: the ground floor is Chinese; the middle floor is in Indian style; the upper floor is built in Khotanese/Central Asian style”; U­rgyant gling-pa, \textit{Pad ma bka' thang} (Chengdu : Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1987), 508.


\(^{17}\) \textit{bde bar gshegs 'bri ba li lugs mi mthun}; “the painted Tathāgata do not conform to the style of li”; Amy Heller, circular note (Nyon: 1996), 1-3.

phrase ‘the monastic robe in the style of Indian metal images’ (Tib. *rgya gar li ma lugs kyi chos gos*) would tend to indicate.\(^{19}\)

What are we to conclude from this brief review with regard to the expression ‘western li’ engraved on the pedestal of the Rietberg Bodhisattva? In light of the above, three main lines of enquiry can be pursued here, namely: (i) *li* as a medium, (ii) *nub li* (ma) as a place of provenance, and (iii) *nub li* (ma lugs) as stylistic tradition. As a medium, the inscription would simply state that the Bodhisattva represented was made of a type of alloy ubiquitous in the West, in the same way that some statues are said to be made of gold (Tib. *ser gyi sku*) or silver (Tib. *ngul gyi sku*). This interpretation would accord well with the use of the genitive case (i.e. *li’ i*) but is not very probative as far as the geographical reference is concerned. In a less restrictive sense, the term *nub li* could be interpreted as a metal image of Indian origin (Tib. *rgya gar li ma*), which was produced in West India (Tib. *nub li*), as opposed to statues cast in central or East India.\(^{20}\) We have seen, however, that Tibetans have a rather inclusive understanding of Indian geography vis-à-vis casting and metallurgy. As a result, the traditional classification of Indian metal images and the origin of sculptures produced in the western margins of the Tibetan plateau can be somewhat conflated. A statue manufactured in Kashmir, Swat, Gilgit, or Khotan could still potentially be described as a Western metal image. This leads to the final point where the term ‘Western li’ encapsulates artistic elements representative of images from Western India. This expression would thus suggest a mode of representation, as in *li lugs* or even *li ma lugs*, where artists replicated stylistic elements that were typical of metal images produced from within an Indic-influenced cultural environment. Whatever approach is adopted, a description of the Rietberg Bodhisattva is now in order.

**Iconographic and stylistic comments**

The ‘Bodhisattva with *gada*’ from the Berti Aschmann collection measures 13.5 centimetres (fig.1). It is likely cast in one piece with a partly hollow pedestal.\(^{21}\) In the absence of a composition analysis, it is reasonable to assume a copper alloy. A separately cast halo is now lost. The figure is seated in *sattvaparyāṅkāsana* on a single lotus base,

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\(^{19}\) Amy Heller, circular note (Nyon: 1996), 1-3.

\(^{20}\) The term *nub li* would hence stand for longer sentences such as: *rgya gar nub phyogs kyi li ma* or *rgya gar nub phyogs nas yin pa’i li ma* (i.e. a metal image from Western India).

\(^{21}\) A piece of metal fixed to the statue inside the lotus base suggests the presence of a possible tenon.
with his right leg over his left leg. Unlike other seated Buddhist images, the right knee does not rest on the pedestal but is being held in mid-air. The left hand is placed on the hip. The right hand holds the staff of a banner (Skt. dhvaja, ketu) – broken off above the hand – that was likely topped by a cintāmani. The deity wears a dhottī-like garment decorated with deeply incised flower patterns tied around the hips with a beaded girdle; traces of red pigment are visible on the right thigh, left calf, and buttocks. A swirling ribbon-like scarf placed over the shoulders is broken off in several places. Silver and copper inlays were used to embellish body parts and jewellery. The eyes and the āurnā, for instance, are made of silver, whilst the nipples are inlaid with copper. The figure wears bejewelled adornments, namely a necklace with multi-coloured pendants, similarly inlaid bracelets on the upper arms, and a pair of circular earrings. Beaded bracelets are also visible around the wrists and the right ankle, along with a sacred thread (Skt. yajñopavīta) over his left shoulder. Finally, an upswept hairstyle – damaged in its upper section – is surmounted by an elaborate crown composed of a beaded headband with flowers on the sides and a central round jewel, three large flower blossoms and crescent moons, from which two long strands of hair fall to his shoulders. Traces of blue paint in the hair and remnants of cold gold are still visible on the face and neck, attesting that the statue was preserved in a Tibetan Buddhist context.

Overall, the iconographic composition of this image exhibits the general iconographic features of a seated Bodhisattva. Moreover, the position of the left hand and the remaining part of the attribute in the right hand (Tib. phyag mtshan) are well-suited to support the identification of this statue as Bodhisattva Vajradhvaja, as suggested by the inscription.23

The artistic depiction of this Vajradhvaja can be compared to at least two other known metal images (fig.3-4).24 These sculptures

22 Similar flowers can be seen on the dhottī of a standing Mañjuśrī attributed to Kashmir schools in Western Tibet in the eleventh century; see Ulrich von Schroeder, Buddhist Sculptures in Tibet (Hong Kong: Visual Dharma, 2001) 1, 152, 40A-C.

23 This Bodhisattva is often known under the name Vajraketu. For a review of Vajradhvaja-Vajraketu’s iconography; see Lokesh Chandra, Dictionary of Buddhist Iconography (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture and Aditya Prakashan, 1999) 13, 3974-3979; Shashibala, Comparative Iconography of the Vajradhātu-Mandala and the Tattva-Saṅgraha (New Delhi: Sharadi Rani, 1986) 164-168; Marie-Thérèse De Mallmann, Introduction à l’iconographie du tântrisme bouddhique (Paris: Librairie Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1975) 1, 397.

24 For a general description of figure 3; see Ulrich von Schroeder, Buddhist Sculptures, 1, 190, 57A. For a general description of figure 4; see Von Schroeder, Buddhist Sculptures, 1, 190-191, 57B.
show two seated figures whose body proportions, modelling, clothing, and ornaments are strikingly similar to the stylistic features of the Rietberg Bodhisattva. They have been identified as the goddess Mālā (Tib. 'phreng ba ma) and a form of Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī (Tib. 'jam dpal) by Ulrich Von Schroeder who attributed these images to Kashmiri workmanship – or schools – in Western Tibet around the eleventh century. These three sculptures represent a closely related corpus of sculptures and point towards a similar artistic tradition or workshop.

Within this group of sculptures, the Rietberg Bodhisattva and the goddess Mālā display strong stylistic similarities. Notwithstanding their respective iconography, the two images are similar in nearly all respects as far as the description and photographic documentation allow us to judge. The goddess from the Li ma lha khang in Lhasa measures 13.7 centimetres, as against 13.5 for Vajradhvaja. It is cast in one piece with a hollow pedestal. Both figures had separately cast aureoles. The goddess Mālā is also seated in the noble attitude on a single lotus base, which is the perfect replica of Vajradhvaja’s pedestal; here again, a distinctive feature is the fact that the right knee does not touch the ground. The relief work of her garment follows the same fashion, with stripes of eight-petalled flowers outlined in black and the presence of a similar roundel motif on the left knee, whilst traces of red pigment are also visible in the inner thighs. Unlike Vajradhvaja’s, Mālā’s ribbon-like scarf is not broken off but swirls around her arms, with similar beaded fringes, and two large fork-tailed ends at the level of her shoulders; an interesting element is the later addition of a small thread with a wafer seal attached to the lower left loop of the scarf. The most salient elements for a comparison between these two images are the ornaments; with the major exception, however, that the use of inlays has not been reported in the description of the second image. They include a beaded girdle with a yet slightly different central buckle-like ornament, beaded bracelets and anklets, identical circular earrings clipped onto the earlobes, and

25 Von Schroeder, *Buddhist Sculptures*, 1, 190, 57A-57B. The identification of Mālā is congruent with the iconography of the goddess. The image, however, seems to lack female body forms. Alternatively, this statue could be related to the depiction of vajra-bodhisattvas such as Vajrahāsa, Vajraraka, or Vajrayaka, who also hold their hands in front of the chest in a similar fashion.

26 The face of Mālā was later on covered in cold gold and her hair painted in blue according to a Tibetan fashion and religious praxis. The difference of patina between the two images can be imputed to various reasons; including an exposition to the smoke and soot of butter lamps in a traditional Tibetan shrine for Mālā; anti-tarnish cleaning and polishing in the case of Vajradhvaja as remnants of cold gold can attest; and the conditions in which the photographs were taken.

27 Von Schroeder, *Buddhist Sculptures*, 1, 190, 57A.
a similar headdress. The angle of the photography and the use of cold
gold on Mālā’s chest does not allow for a clear view of her necklace.
The central arrow-like pendant with roundel, however, is reminiscent
of the one on Vajradhvaja’s neck. Finally, the very distinctive pair of
beaded bracelets on the upper arms of these figures, with three dan-
gling ornaments and stylised fleurs-de-lys on top, are identical in all
aspects.

In light of the great similarities between these two metal images, it
is tempting to reconsider their stylistic provenance. As a remind er,
the Rietberg Bodhisattva has been ascribed to ninth-tenth century
Kashmir, whilst the goddess Mālā has been attributed to Kashimir
schools in Western Tibet around the eleventh century. There are
grounds, I will argue, to refute the first provenance and to question
the second attribution.

To begin with, the body proportions of these two figures differ
considerably from ninth-tenth century Kashmiri metal images. In
particular, the elongated torsos, well-proportioned chests, and lean
shoulders do not accord well with the triangular upper body, broad
chests, and rounded shoulders of many metal sculptures from Kash-
mir. In fact, the manner in which the tripartite trunk (i.e. developed
chest, slender wasp waist, and pronounced cruciform abdomen) is
modelled relate these two sculptures to a Western Indo-Tibetan style.
But yet again, the Rietberg Bodhisattva and the goddess from the Li
ma lha khang differ quite significantly from eleventh-century bronzes
from Western Tibet, with their general stiffness and often dispropor-
tionate body parts.

Likewise, the facial features of these images seem to defy easy
classification, whilst retaining un-je-ne-sais-quoi familiar to both
Kashmiri statues and metal images from Western Tibet produced
between the tenth and eleventh centuries. Stylistically, their heads are
rather well-proportioned, avoiding the round and full faces with
fleshy cheeks of most Kashmiri images, and the slightly oversized
heads with oval faces of later Western Tibetan copies altogether. It
combines the heavy upper eyelids with high bow-like brows of tradi-
tional Kashmiri works, yet avoids the low foreheads of the latter. In
particular, the position of the protruding ārṇā in the middle of the
forehead does not accord well with Kashmiri metal images – pro-
duced in Kashmir or by Kashmiri artists – in which the tuft of hair is
more often than not positioned between the converging lines of the
upper eyebrows, almost at the root of the nose. Finally, I see no visual
parameters to evaluate with any degree of certainty the nose, mouth,
and gently marked chin; while evading the large nose with rounded
ridge of early pieces, these features do not seem to conform to the
mannerism of Western Tibetan images based on Kashmiri models.

Another stylistic feature can be raised against a Kashmiri provenance or Kashmiri workmanship in Western Tibet. The depiction of the *yajñopavīta* of the Rietberg Bodhisattva, as well as to a large extent that of the goddess Mālā, is of dubious appearance. In both cases, the sacred thread runs down the left side of the body and joins the girdle or, more likely, disappears below the *dhotī*-like garment. Furthermore, the initiation thread does not resurface on the right side of the body, and was clearly not represented on Bodhisattva Vajra-
hvaja’s back. According to art historian and Tibetologist Christian Luczanits it could suggest that the depiction of the *yajñopavīta* was an artistic and iconographical convention no longer clearly understood by craftsmen. This would exclude, in theory, the hand of a Kashmiri master who must have been accustomed to the religious meaning of the *yajñopavīta* and its cultural significance within a Buddhist context. As a result, the simplification of the thread would indicate that the image was, perhaps, made by a foreign artist, either trained in Kashmir or trained by a Kashmiri master.

The possibility that we are dealing here with foreign craftsmanship in a Western Indo-Tibetan idiom becomes particularly interesting when looking at Vajradhvaja and Mālā’s pedestals. As noted earlier, the fluted moon disc atop a lotus flower, with a single row of downward-pointing broad lotus petals, double-lobed elements, and alternate sharped-edged petal tips, is the same in both images. The treatment of these petals is generally absent from the art of Greater Kashmir and Western Tibet. It differs substantially from the long, broad, and plain lotus petals that are often associated with the Swat Valley, and which came to influence west Kashmir and Gilgit. One must acknowledge that in a small number of cases, however, the lotus seat of sculptures related to Kashmir and Western Tibetan bear

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28 Compare with the depiction of the sacred thread in the front and back of figure 4 where it has been stylized; see Von Schroeder, *Buddhist Sculptures*, 1, 190-191, 57B-C.

29 In the case of the example discussed by Luczanits, the geographical provenance of the artist is attributed to the Western Himalayas. I see no reason to limit the sphere of Kashmiri influence to the East and exclude the possibility of artists from regions to the north and northeast of Kashmir to be included here; see Christian Luczanits, “From Kashmir to Western Tibet: The Many Faces of a Regional Style”, Rob Linrothe, *Collecting Paradise: Buddhist Art of Kashmir and Its Legacies* (New York: Rubin Museum of Art, Evanston: Northwestern University, Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art), 111, 119.
some resemblance with the rows of lotus petals described above, suggesting perhaps a regional variation of the same theme (fig. 5-6). 

A good example of this is found at Dras in Lower Ladakh where a stone sculpture representing Bodhisattva Maitreya offers the closest depiction of these lotus petals for the Western Himalayan region (fig. 7). The life-size sculpture is dated to the seventh-eighth century by art historian Rob Linrothe who analyses several stone images as part of a wider artistic movement in Zangskar and Ladakh which he assimilates to a ‘Kashmiricisation’. Linrothe does not discuss the pedestal of the Maitreya image but notes how the Bodhisattva’s vase (Skt. kundika) in the lower left hand is curiously reminiscent of Sogdian and Tang Chinese ewers. With the stone sculpture in Dras, we are certainly reminded of extensive cultural contacts between Kashmir and Ladakh, through which pilgrims, merchants, and artists would often travel to Yarkand or Kothan in Central Asia after the fifth century. In this respect, the lotus base of the Rietberg image would seem to attest to an artistic trend well established further East.

This type of lotus seat appears in Buddhist imagery as early as the sixth century. It is seen in stone and metal sculptures produced in China from the Northern Wei Dynasty (535 – 557) all the way through the Tang Dynasty (618 – 907) (fig. 8). Furthermore, sculptures retrieved from the Tarim Basin underscore the long history and popularity of this type of lotus representations in Central Asia. Three

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30 Figure 5 shows a seated Buddha from the O.C. Sud Collection in Shimla, India, dated from the eleventh century. Compared to the lotus leaves under review, the heart-shaped central part of the petal is yet quite different with the absence of bulging elements. Image taken from Deborah Klimburg-Salter, *Tabo, a Lamp for the Kingdom: Early Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Art in the Western Himalayas* (Milan, Skira, 1997), 170. As for Figure 6, it shows a seated Buddha Maitreya from the Nyinjei Lam Collection, currently on display at the Rubin Museum of Art, New-York, USA. This metal image is attributed to Kashmir and dated from the late eighth-ninth century. Here, the lotus petals are more closely related to our images. They still differ considerably in shape, design, and arrangement, with the main petals being positioned largely apart from one another, leaving space for a second row of alternate petals. Image from Rob Linrothe, *Collecting Paradise: Buddhist Art of Kashmir and Its Legacies* (New York: Rubin Museum of Art, Evanston: Northwestern University, Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art), 68.


33 Figure 8 shows a seated Bodhisattva in a pensive pose measuring 54.4 centimetres and dated 544 CE based on a dedicatory inscription; see 金申, 海外及港台藏历代佛像珍品年图鉴 (山西出版集团,山西人民出版社: 2007), 121.
images deserve further considerations here. The first image shows a stucco relief fragment that served to decorate Buddhist monuments. The artefact was brought back from Khotan by the Ōtani expedition team and is currently kept in the National Museum of Korea (fig.9). It shows a Buddhas in dhyānamudrā seated on a lotus seat seen from above. The double-lobed lotus petals are slightly more elongated, yet, they generally conform to the style of petals discussed here above. Other stucco reliefs with similar petals were also retrieved from the site of Dandān-oilīq to the north-west of Khotan (fig. 10). Finally, a fragment of a wooden panel from Khotan dated to the seventh-eighth century features a seated Buddha flanked by a standing Bodhisattva (fig.11). Notwithstanding its rough cut appearance, the Khotanese version of the Buddha’s seat closely resembles the lotus base of the Rietberg Bodhisattva, with its moon disc atop a row of downward-facing lotus petals, double humps, and lower leaf tips.

**Discussion**

An impressive corpus of Buddhist metal images attributed to North-Western India, Greater Kashmir, Western Tibet and beyond has found its way into museums, private collections, auction catalogues, and academic publications in the last twenty years or so. Although these sculptures seem to form a coherent whole, art historians are often at loss when it comes to locating the exact geographical production of these works. Moreover, very few of them appear to be securely datable objects and the bulk of metal images from these regions are usually attributed quite loosely to the tenth and eleventh centuries. Therefore, it is generally believed that a multitude of small and independent metal workshops developed by the end of the first millennium; usually on the basis of stylistic similarities observed in groups of images, rather than based on archaeological data, epigraphic evidence, and literary testimonies. As a result, these metal statues regularly fall under convenient yet rather imprecise labels such as ‘Western Tibet’, ‘Kashmiri style in Western Tibet’, ‘Western Himalayas’, ‘Western Trans-Himalayas’, or even ‘Kashmiri style in Central Asia’.

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34 It is believed that these ornamental motifs adorned larger statues dated from the Tang Dynasty; see [金申, 海外及港台藏历代佛像珍品纪年图鉴, 580.](#)


36 A sixth-seventh century date is generally given for the wood carving preserved in the National Museum in New Delhi. For a later date adopted here; see Linrothe, *Collecting Paradise*, 33.
It is interesting to note that the complexity of this situation may have been experienced in Tibet as well, conceivably as early as the fourteenth-fifteenth centuries. Judging from a literary genre dedicated to metallurgy and casting (Tib. *li ma brtag pa*), metal images were identified and grouped under four distinct headings: Indian, Tibetan, Mongolian, and Chinese. In the case of statues made in Indian style, sculptures were then classified according to their provenance, with further distinctions between images ascribed to Central, Eastern, Western, Southern, or Northern India. It is in this context that the term ‘Western *li’*, which came to be incised on the lotus base of the Rietberg Bodhisattva, must be considered. But as we have seen, Western metal images cast in Indian style could easily include a variety of sculptures produced in North-Western India, Kashmir, or even Central Asia. Whilst caution may be appropriate with regard to the Tibetan classification of Indian metal images, the question remains as to whether Tibetan Buddhist masters, artists, and craftsmen were able to clearly identify the provenance and artistic trend of sculptures sometimes produced centuries before them.

In this regard, the inscription on the Rietberg Bodhisattva is unique. First of all, it does not seem to have any equivalence with other known bronzes bearing meritorious or devotional inscriptions. Secondly, Tibetan inscriptions engraved on metal sculptures from Kashmir in the eleventh century offer the means for a palaeographic analysis. A comparison of the headed script (Tib. *dbu can*) used to inscribe these statues reveals that the engraving of the Rietberg Bodhisattva can hardly be attributed to that period. In this con-

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37 In a recent article about the collection of metal sculptures kept in the *Li ma lha khang* in Lhasa, a Tibetan researcher from the Potala Palace notes that Western Indian images include statues from Kashmir (Tib. *kasmir*), *Ti li dza* (?), and Xinjiang (Tib. *yu gur*); see *bDe-skyid*, "Pho brang po tA la'i li ma lha khang gi li ma'i sku bryan skor cung zad gleng ba", *Pho brang po tA la*, 1, 2012, 45-49.

38 Meritorious inscriptions usually bear the name of a donor and the reason for its commissioning (e.g. the death of a relative). Conversely, a devotional inscription may simply give the name of the figure portrayed but would usually be accompanied with expressions such as ‘I bow down’ (Tib. *phyag ’tshal lo*) and ‘homage to’ (Tib. *la na mo*).

39 The writing style of the inscription on the Rietberg Bodhisattva differs significantly from Tibetan inscriptions datable to the eleventh century with their rounded letters /la/ and /’a/, stretched vowel *gi gu*, and typical subjoined /ya/. For example, the Kamru Avalokiteśvara bearing the name of the eleventh century translator Vryabhadra (Tib. *Byi rya ba dra*); see Amy Heller, “Observations on an 11th century Tibetan inscription on a statue of Avalokiteśvara”, *Revue d’Études Tibétaines*, 14 (2008): 107-116; many engraved sculptures in the possession of members of the royal family of Guge, such as the Buddha from Dangkhar offered to Lha bla-ma Zhi ba’od; see Lobsang Nyima (Yannick) Laurent, “Lha bla ma Zhi ba ’od’s Eighth Century Bronze from Gilgit”, *Revue d’Études Tibétaines*, 26 (2013): 195-214; a statue of a Buddha in Kashmiri style acquired by King rTse-lde;
text, the singularity of the formula supports the assumption that Tibetans were aware of metal sculptures of non-Tibetan origin – possibly even workmanship – either past or present. This would explain, perhaps, why it was felt necessary to label both the identity and artistic affiliation of this image. With his face painted in cold gold, it is reasonable to believe that the Bodhisattva image was worshipped and preserved alongside other Buddhist memorabilia and curiosities of a distant past, which so often fill up Tibetan shrines.

In the same way, the goddess Mālā in Lhasa was equally revered as a ‘religious artefact’. As most sacred metal images in the hands of the Tibetans, her hair was painted blue, her face covered with gold, and her facial features redrawn out of devotion. But this image had also been a gift before being installed in the Li ma lha khang. The wafer seal attached to her scarf attests to a tradition of gift giving whereby religious hierarchs or rulers would generally bestow sculptures of spiritual significance; due to their symbolic value, provenance, or history. A small thread was then attached with the personal seal of the donor – whose identity is now lost in the case of Mālā – and sometimes even listed in an official document dispatched along with other presents. 40

As memorabilia and Buddhist relics, Bodhisattva Vajradhvaja and the goddess Mālā ended up in Tibet at a time that can no longer be specified. Nonetheless, their identical size and stylistic resemblance call attention to a similar artistic trend and even workshop production. More importantly, these elements strongly suggest that the two

Amy Heller, “Indian Style, Kashmiri Style: Aesthetic of Choice in Eleventh Century Tibet”, Orientations, 32, 10 (2011): 18-23; and also sculptures belonging to the royal prince Nāgarāja (Tib. Na gar a dza) amongst which the standing Buddha from the Cleveland Museum of Art; see Deborah E. Klimburg-Salter, The Silk Route and the Diamond Path: Esoteric Buddhism Art on the Trans-Himalayan Trade Route (Los Angeles: UCLA Art Council: 1982), 103. I am grateful to Amy Heller for sharing the visual material needed for these comparisons.

40 On the general practice of precious gifts, including old gilded statues; see Emma Martin, “Fit for a King? The Significance of Gift Exchange between the Thirteenth Dalai Lama and King George V”, Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, 25, 1 (2014): 71-98. A well-documented case is the famous Buddha image offered by the Thirteenth Dalai Lama to Russian explorer and agent Pyotr Kuzmich Kozlov (1863 – 1935). The body of the statue was wrapped, sealed, and marked with the message “To be offered to Kozlov” (Tib. kho dzo lob par sprod rgyu). The sacred image was then entrusted to Agvan Dorzhiev (1854 – 1938) with a letter from the Dalai Lama in which the religious monarch requested his emissary to ensure that the statue would arrive according to the attached list of gifts (Tib. ’bul rgyu tho). For a photograph of this Buddha; see Yulia I. Elikhina, Abode of Charity: Tibetan Buddhist Art (Saint Petersburg: The State Hermitage Publishers, 2015), 120. For the Thirteenth Dalai Lama’s letter; see Jampa Samten & Nikolay Tsyrempilov, From Tibet Confidentially: Secret correspondence of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama to Agvan Dorzhiev, 1911 – 1925 (New Delhi: Library of Tibetan Works & Archives), 52, 89, 121.
pieces were initially part of a set of images. In this respect, it is worth
pointing out that these two figures are not the most common deities
of the Buddhist pantheon, nor do they figure prominently in popular
Buddhist imagery. It seems only reasonable to locate the production
of these two sculptures within the sphere of higher esoteric Buddhist
praxis. In fact, there is little doubt that they had once belonged to the
same ritualistic context before being scattered to the four winds.

In effect, these two metal figures would not have had much of a
presence outside a three-dimensional maṇḍala. It is generally believed
that such meditational supports – and the esoteric texts that accom-
panied them – were available in North-Western India, Kashmir, and
Central Asia by the tenth century, if not earlier. Series of individually
cast deities of small sizes, which are usually ascribed to the broad
category of Western Indo-Tibetan images, highlight the development
of three-dimensional arrangements of particular maṇḍalas during the
following centuries.41 If the textual tradition suggests the use of a
large array of root texts and esoteric imagery, an important number
of artistic depictions known to us today points to the visual represen-
tations of Buddha Vairocana’s maṇḍala.

The rise of Buddha Vairocana from the mid-sixth century onwards
did not only turn him into an iconic figure in China and Central Asia,
but also contributed to promoting the royal cult of the Tibetan
Tsanpo (Tib. btsan po) in Tibet by the eighth century.42 The rapid vis-
ual transformation of Vairocana, linked to the development of esote-
ric literature, eventually culminated in a distinctive period of architec-
tural and artistic expression during which Vairocana’s maṇḍalas
 gained popularity in Central and then West Tibet.43 Not so surpris-

41 For an example of free-standing figures of a three-dimensional maṇḍala, see four
of the sixteen vajra-bodhisattvas attributed by Ulrich von Schroeder to Kashmir
schools in Western Tibet. These images measure between 17-18 centimetres and
date from the eleventh century; see Von Schroeder, Buddhist Sculptures, 1, 170-
171, 49B-E.

42 For the multifaceted aspects of the artistic development of Buddha Vairocana; see
Christian Luczanits, “The many faces of Buddha Vairocana”, Jan Van Alphen
13-23.

43 A relevant evidence from Central Tibet is provided by the main temple of bSam
yas monastery. According to the description in the rGyal rabs gsal ba’i me long, it is
recalled that the principal image of the third floor is Sarvavid Vairocana hence at-
testing to a general depiction of a vajradhvajamandala. It is worthy of note that the
sixteen vajra-bodhisattvas of his retinue are all subsumed under the mention of
Vajradhva; steng khang gi gtso bo sangs rgyas rnam par snang mdzad kun tu zhal re
re la ’khor gnis re’ byang chub sens dpa’ nye ba’i sras bgyad 1 nang gi lha byang chub
sens dpa’ rdo rje rgyal mtsshan la sogs pa phyogs bcu’i sangs rgyas byang sens1 kho bo
mi g.yo ba dang phyag na rdo rje 1 bzo rgya gar gyi lugs su bzhengs1; “In the upper
chapel, the main [image] is Buddha Sarvavid Vairocana – each head having two
retinues –, the eight close sons, the inner deities [of the maṇḍala] Vajradhva and
ingly perhaps, Bodhisattva Vajradhvaja and the goddess Mālā feature amongst the core assembly of this deity.

According to prescriptive expositions found in tantric literature, the root mandala of Vairocana known as vajradhūtumandala is usually composed of thirty-seven deities, namely five tathāgatas or jinas, sixteen vajra-bodhisattvas, eight offering goddesses, and four gatekeepers. Within this arrangement, Vajradhvaja features as one of the sixteen vajra-bodhisattvas, whilst Mālā with her garland is usually depicted as one of the eight offering goddesses.\(^{44}\) Traditionally, they both reside in the southern quarter of the vajradhūtumandala. The question therefore arises whether the number fourteen in the inscription could refer to a set of free-standing images and their position within this specific mandala. From a simple structural arrangement, whereby each tathāgata is surrounded by four vajra-bodhisattvas, Vajradhvaja would indeed occupy the fourteenth position as part of Ratnasambhava’s retinue.\(^{45}\) But in some Tibetan painted representations his position is swapped with Bodhisattva Vajrabhāṣa’s (Tib. rdo rje bzhad pa) and thus Vajradhvaja comes fifteenth. This way of counting the deities of the vajradhūtumandala does not conform, however, to the textual traditions established in Tibet. In the Sarvatathāgata Tattvasaṃgrahanām Mahāyānasūtra (Tib. de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi de kho na nyid bsdus pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo) Bodhisattva Vajradhvaja is listed sixteenth. Likewise, if we follow Ānandagārabha’s commentary, the list of deities exactly coincides with the Tibetan ritual practice of Kun rīg rnam par snang mdzad (Skt. sarvavid vairocana).\(^{46}\) Here again, Vajradhvaja occupies the sixteenth position.\(^{47}\)

This last arrangement, for instance, served as the basis for the iconographic programme of the main temple at Tabo in 1042. It replicated a three-dimensional architectural and artistic expression of the vajradhūtumandala of Sarvavid Vairocana.\(^{48}\) It is worth noting some iconographic divergences between our metal images and the clay...
sculptures in Tabo, particularly in the ritualistic hand gestures (Skt. *mudrā*). If it is difficult to say whether these iconographical departures are based on different textual traditions or due to regional and artistic variations, they raise once again the knotty problem of the provenance of our images.

In the course of this paper, several pieces of evidence challenge the view that the ‘Bodhisattva with *gada’ in the Rietberg Museum should be attributed to Kashmir or to Kashmiri workmanship in Western Tibet. The presence of a closely related bronze in Lhasa shows that both images were likely to belong to a same set of free-standing metal sculptures used to provide visual support for the visualisation of a *vajradhātumāṇḍala*. This type of artistic expedient, as we have seen, is linked to the rise of esoteric literature and the representations of *mandalas*. The production of these two metal images is thus in line with religious praxis and artistic depictions well-established in the tenth and eleventh centuries.

From a stylistic point of view, the Rietberg Bodhisattva and the goddess Mālā generally conform to a trend of metal images datable to the turn of the first millennium. As expressed earlier, a series of stylistic features are however at variance with well-known examples of sculptures produced in Kashmir and Western Tibet around that time. In particular, the exceptionally fine depiction of Bodhisattva Vajradhvaja displays bodily proportions and facial features that cannot be easily categorised. Furthermore, the oversimplification of the sacred thread on both images raises justifiable doubts as to the Kashmiri origin of these statues. Finally, and to compound matters, the uniqueness of these metal works is further emphasised by a choice of lotus seats quite unusual for the regions of Kashmir and Western Tibet, although largely attested in Central Asia and China.

What is certain, however, is that the Rietberg Bodhisattva was acquired by Tibetans in later times as the writing style of the inscription cannot be attributed to the eleventh century. They correctly identified the bronze as Bodhisattva Vajradhvaja, which suggests that the banner in his right hand was not broken when they engraved his name, and recognised the foreign provenance of this image. His face and neck were covered with gold, his hair painted blue. It was probably installed on a shrine and the number fourteen was assigned to him, perhaps as part of a list of religious items (Tib. *brten deb*) belonging to a particular chapel or monastery. I am of the view that the unusual inscription incised at the feet of Vajradhvaja eventually operated as

49 In the case of Mālā’s hands, they are turned towards her chest in the metal image from Lhasa, whilst they used to hold the garland outwards in Tabo. Likewise, the left hand of the Rietberg Bodhisattva rests on the upper thigh, whilst Vajradhvaja/Vajraketu’s left fist is held upside-down at the thigh in Tabo.
the caption of a museum showcase. It helped pilgrims and non-
monastics to identify a rather secondary deity.50 Most importantly, it
drew attention to its foreign workmanship production, highlighting
its sacred and most revered origin as a metal image from West India.

Combining stylistic observations with a review of the term ‘West-
ern li’, we cannot exclude the possibility that the Rietberg Bodhisatt-
va and the goddess Mālā in Lhasa were produced further East, in
regions that once fell under the general conception of Western India.
The actual presence of copper ore deposits located north of the Kun-
lun Mountains between Yarkand and Khotan,51 the recurring ac-
counts of Khotanese artistic influence in Tibetan sources, and the
long political history and cultural connections between Tibet and the
ancient Buddhist kingdom of Khotan provide a valid contextual
framework to locate the production of these images. As we have
seen, Tsong-kha-pa’s gift to the Yongle emperor underlines the fact
that Khotanese sculptures were still familiar in Tibet in the fifteenth
century. Together with those from Kashmir and North-western India,
Khotanese statues were soon to be categorised as nub li in specific
Tibetan texts discussing the metal casting of images.

Notwithstanding a dearth of material vestiges and artefacts at-
tributed to the latter phase of Khotanese Buddhist art, from the
eight to the beginning of the eleventh century, Khotan had long
been a pilgrimage destination and transit point for the spread of
Buddhism between India and China.52 Luxury goods, Buddhist texts,
and devotional objects circulated through the southern and northern
routes of the Silk Road along with traders, monks, and pilgrims.
Portable shrines and statues retrieved from Khotan demonstrate in-
teractions between Kashmir, Gilgit, and surrounding cultures. A
Kashmiri statue of a seated Buddha excavated in Domoko, for in-
cidence, bears witness to the vitality of cultural exchanges in the re-

50 The labelling of deities and religious figures – in particular statues – for the sake
of pilgrims and worshippers is still a current practice inside Tibetan chapels and
temples today. Their names are usually handwritten or printed out on paper and
these modern captions are variously fixed, taped, or glued to the religious imag-
es.
52 Erika Forte, “A Journey ‘to the land on the Other Side’, Buddhist Pilgrimage and
Travelling Objects from the Oasis of Khotan”, Patrick Mc Allister et al. (ed.), Cul-
for instance, with other great Bodhisattvas of the bhadrakalpa in a Khotanese translation of the Sumukhasūtra commissioned in 943.54 More significantly, he grants protection against the red-faced Tibetans by pronouncing a dhāraṇī for the safeguard of Khotan in the Tibetan recension of a text known as the Vimalaprabhāparipṛcchāsūtra.55 Despite these brief literary occurrences, the statue of Bodhisattva Vajradhvaja in the Rietberg Museum should likely be connected to the development of esoteric literature and the figure of Vairocana, as we have seen.

The cult of Buddha Vairocana had strong roots in Central Asia and China even before the emergence of tantric literature. As a Buddha of cosmic dimensions he features prominently in the Avatamsakasūtra literature, a corpus of Mahāyāna texts fully translated into Chinese by the Indian monk Buddhhabhadra (359 – 429) from an original Sanskrit version acquired in Khotan in the fifth century. In it, the Gandavyūhasūtra already announced in essence the doctrinal concept of dharmadhātu. With these texts, images of Vairocana started to circulate by the mid-sixth century. The cosmic Buddha thus became an important theme in Khotanese and Central Asian paintings where he is depicted as the source of all existing phenomena in the universe.56 Whilst painted representations of maṇḍalas have not been found amongst Khotanese vestiges, minor iconographic themes suggest that the ancient Buddhist kingdom acted as “a transitional stage in the evolution of the art of Vajrayāna”.57 However, there is material evidence of representations of vajradhātumanḍalas produced under the Tang in the late eighth and ninth centuries. Esoteric Buddhist art at Dunhuang, where the activity of Khotanese Buddhist patrons is largely attested in the tenth century,58 underscores “a unique blend of cross-cultural iconographical themes and styles (…) that are often

58 Williams, The Iconography of Khotanese Painting, 116.
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strongly informed and influenced by those of India, Tibet, and the Uighur kingdom in Turfan”. The Islamic takeover of Khotan by the Qarakhanids around 1006 likely prevented an artistic expansion of some of the most sophisticated forms of esoteric imagery, which were to flourish in Western Tibet in the following centuries.

As a result of these epigraphic and stylistic considerations, I propose to read the inscription engraved on the statue of the Berti Aschmann collection as follows: “A metal image of Bodhisattva Vajradhvaja from Western [India]”. The singularity of this formulaic phrase confirms the great mobility of religious objects within the Buddhist world. It underscores the Tibetans’ fascination for Buddhist images from the holy land of India, a geographical notion that was extended to the Buddhist kingdoms of the Silk Road. By exhibiting a combination of features reminiscent of the art of Western Tibet and the art of the Tarim Basin, the Rietberg Bodhisattva reminds us of the complex artistic interplays at work by the turn of the first millennium. Last but not least, it recalls once again the important role attributed to Khotanese imagery and artists in the Tibetan literary tradition, a recurring trope that still awaits more tangible evidence.

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Figure 1

Figure 2
In the Bosom of Khotan?

Figure 3

Figure 4
Figure 5

Figure 6
In the Bosom of Khotan?

Figure 7

Figure 8
Figure 9

Figure 10
In the Bosom of Khotan?