

# THE POLITICAL ROLE OF TIBETAN BUDDHISM AT THE MONGOL COURT

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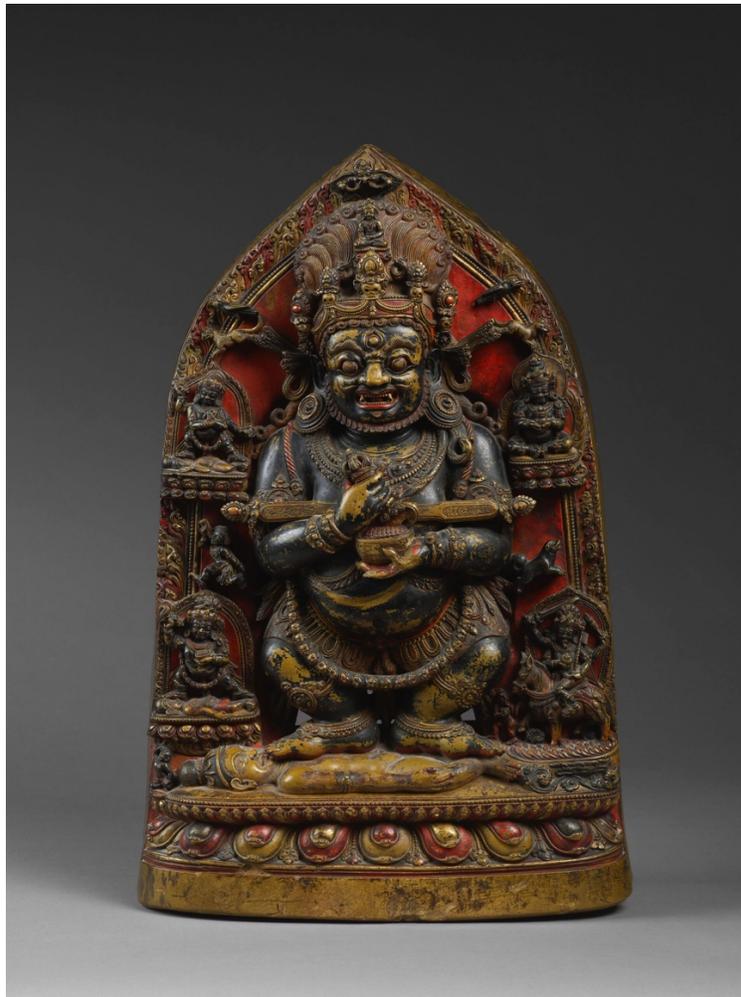


Fig. 1 Panjara-natha Mahakala; Beijing, China, and Sakya Monastery, Tsang region, central Tibet; dated 1292; lithographic limestone, partially gilded and polychromed; 18½ × 11¼ in. (47 × 28.5 cm); Musée national des arts asiatiques–Guimet, Paris; gift of L. Fournier; MA 5181; image © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY; photograph by Thierry Ollivier

## MAHAKALA STONE SCULPTURE

Tibet  
dated 1292

## SUMMARY

This powerful Buddhist protector deity is a manifestation of divine wrath employed to remove internal and external obstacles—including political adversaries. Art historian Karl Debreczeny connects this statue that names Qubilai Khan and his Tibetan imperial preceptor to the tradition of tantric war magic used by Tibetan ritual masters to help the Mongols conquer China. Such images become potent symbols of Qubilai Khan's rule and Mongol imperial power.

A powerful Buddhist protector deity, Mahakala is a manifestation of divine wrath employed to remove internal and external obstacles. This wrathful deity is considered especially effective in military applications. Beginning in the thirteenth century, the Mongol state employed Tibetan Buddhism as a means to power, both symbolically, as a path to legitimation via sacral kingship, and literally, as a ritual technology to physical power through the use of magic, which was most clearly demonstrated in Mahakala rites. The Mongol court singled out the wrathful figure of Mahakala in his form as Panjaranatha ("Lord of the Pavilion") as state protector and focus of the imperial cult. This form of Mahakala came to symbolize Qubilai Khan (1215–1294), the famous Mongol emperor and founder of the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368), as the wrathful destructive power of the universal sacral ruler (chakravartin). The Nepalese master artist and head of the Yuan imperial atelier Anige (1245–1306) made a sculpture of Panjaranatha Mahakala for Qubilai Khan's final conquest of China, and it became a potent symbol of both Qubilai's rule and the Yuan imperial lineage. The association was so strong that even four centuries later, when the Manchus, who conquered China in the seventeenth century, were positioning themselves as Qubilai's rightful inheritors, they installed what they claimed was the same statue of Mahakala in the Manchu imperial shrine at Mukden in 1635.<sup>1</sup>

## THE STONE SCULPTURE DATED 1292

Although Qubilai Khan's Mahakala sculpture disappeared after the fall of the Qing dynasty (1644–1911), the limestone version in the Musée Guimet, dated 1292, is a product of the same context and reveals much about the tradition. Mahakala's power is conveyed through the deity's fierce appearance—bulging eyes, bared fangs, hair standing on end, a crown of skulls and bone ornaments—and his pose, squatting on a human corpse. Images of wrathful deities are commonly carved in black stone (fig. 2), a color closely associated with wrathful activity. Here, the stone figure of Mahakala was painted black, in keeping with the deity's iconography (fig. 3).



Fig. 2 Panjarnatha Mahakala; Tibet; 15th century; stone with pigments; 10 1/8 × 7 1/8 × 4 1/8 in. (25.7 × 18.1 × 10.5 cm); Rubin Museum of Art; C2002.10.2 (HAR 65085)



Fig. 3 Panjarnatha Mahakala; Tibet; 18th century; pigments on cloth; 23 3/4 × 18 3/8 in. (60.3 × 46.7 cm); Rubin Museum of Art; gift of the Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation; F1998.15.1 (HAR 649)

An inscription on the back of the sculpture (fig. 4) names Qubilai Khan and his Tibetan Imperial Preceptor, Pakpa Lodro Gyeltsen (1235–1280), placing it at the very center of Mongol imperial interests:

As for this sculpture, in order to spread the precious teachings of the Buddha far and wide and endure for a long time; to pacify obstacles to the lives of all the great patrons and priests; and to destroy all enemies, the one called Atsara Pakshi, close attendant and cared for by the kindness of the dharmaraja called Pakpa, eminent guru and second Buddha of [this] degenerate age, and protected by that widely renowned great khan called Qubilai, king who rules nearly all of the world, acted as patron. The master artist unrivaled in this field of knowledge (craft), called Konchok Kyab, having served, successfully accomplished it in the Water Male Dragon Year (1292). May you enjoy great prosperity!



Fig. 4 Back of Panjaranatha Mahakala; Musée national des arts asiatiques–Guimet, Paris; gift of L. Fournier; MA 5181; image © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY; photograph by Thierry Ollivier; inscription: *om svasti siddhi sku 'di ni sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa rin po che dar zhing rgyas nas yun ring du g.nas par bya ba dang/ yon 'chod (=mchod) chen po thams cad kyi sku tshe'i bar chad zhi zhing phas kyi rgo/ ba thams cad tshar gcod par bya ba'i phyir du/ sa'i bdag po 'dzam bu'i gling phal che ba la dbang rgyur (=sgyur) ba'i rgyal po chen po go pe la zhes yongs su grags pa de nyid dang snyigs ma'i dus kyi sangs rgyas gnyis pa bla ma dam pa chos kyi rgyal po 'phags pa zhes bya ba'i bka' drin gyis bskyangs shing thugs kyi bzung ba'i 'phrin las pa a tsar pag shi zhes bya bas yon gyi bdag po dgyis (=bgyis) nas sprul pa'i lha bzo rig pa'i gnas 'di la 'gran zla dang blal (=bral) ba dkon mchog skyabs zhes bya bas zhabs tog byas nas chu pho 'brug gi lo la legs par grub ba 'o/ shin du (=tu) bkra shis par gyur cig/*

## THE PATRON'S IDENTITY

There has been some speculation as to the identity of the patron of this famous statue.<sup>2</sup> Atsara Pakshi, mentioned in the inscription, is not a name but rather an epithet meaning the learned master or sorcerer.<sup>3</sup> One intriguing attribution that elucidates Tibetan Buddhism's political role in the Mongol court is Qubilai Khan's primary Mahakala ritual specialist at court, Ga Anyen Dampa Kunga Drak (ca. 1230–1303) (fig. 5), a close disciple of Imperial Preceptor Pakpa and often described as *pakshi* in both Yuan Chinese and Tibetan sources.<sup>4</sup> Dampa, recognized as an emanation of Mahakala walking on earth, was credited with intervening in several key battles in Mongol military campaigns, including the momentous final fall of the Chinese Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279), and erected several imperially sponsored temples and images of Mahakala.<sup>5</sup>



Fig. 5 Statue of Ga Anyen Dampa (ca. 1230–1303); Degonpo Protector Chapel (founded 1284); 1980s re-creation; clay; Kardze, Kham region, eastern Tibet (Ganzi, Sichuan Province, China); photograph by Karl Debreczeny, 2001

Dampa served the Yuan imperial court and Qubilai Khan directly. The Persian historian Rashid al-Din, who wrote his famous history about 1300, specifically mentions Dampa as someone of great authority and importance in the great khan's eyes.<sup>6</sup> The calligraphy for Dampa's epitaph stele (1316) was written by the most famous Chinese artist of his time, Zhao Mengfu (1254–1322), and highlights Dampa's importance at the Mongol court.<sup>7</sup> It has even been suggested that Zhao Mengfu's famous painting *Red-Robed Monk of the Western Regions* (1304) (fig. 6) commemorates him.<sup>8</sup>



Fig. 6 Zhao Mengfu (1254–1322); *Red-Robed Monk of the Western Regions*; 1304; ink and colors on paper; 10 1/4 × 20 1/2 in. (26 × 52 cm); Liaoning Museum, Shenyang; public domain via Wikimedia Commons

Several historical sources attest to Dampa's applications of Mahakala in the service of the Mongolian military machine; in recognition, many temples and images dedicated to Mahakala were built throughout the empire. Numerous Mongol victories were attributed to Dampa's summoning of Mahakala. For instance, when the Mongol army first marched south, the Chinese petitioned their martial god Zhenwu to save them, but the Chinese god of war fled, leaving a message that he too had to hide from the Great Black God leading the Mongol army. In another battle Mahakala was sighted on the

battlefield. Dampa's Chinese biography concludes, "This is proof of how he aided the state."<sup>9</sup>

Most famously, in 1275, when Qubilai asked his Imperial Preceptor Pakpa to induce the protector deity Mahakala to intervene against the Southern Song, the Nepalese artist Anige constructed the temple south of Beijing with its statue facing south (that is, facing the Song), and Dampa consecrated it.<sup>10</sup> The Song capital fell soon thereafter. When the captured Chinese emperor and his courtiers were brought north, they were astonished to see the image of Mahakala just as they had seen the deity among the Mongol troops.<sup>11</sup> These accounts of the fall of the Southern Song via the ritual intervention of Mahakala are recorded in both Chinese and Tibetan sources.<sup>12</sup>

### **THE ARTIST'S IDENTITY**

The artist Konchok Kyab is thus far unidentified. It has been variously suggested that the sculptor was a Tibetan trained in Anige's Newar-inspired workshops at the Yuan court, or that he might have been a Newar, or even Anige himself.<sup>13</sup> This sculpture in fact bears Newar artistic features, while also showing conservative eastern Indian/Pala aspects.<sup>14</sup> However, the horns placed on the *garuda* bird (Tibetan: *khyung*) (fig. 7) at the top of the sculpture are a small yet very specific Tibetan cultural reference, which suggests that the sculptor Konchok Kyab was Tibetan.

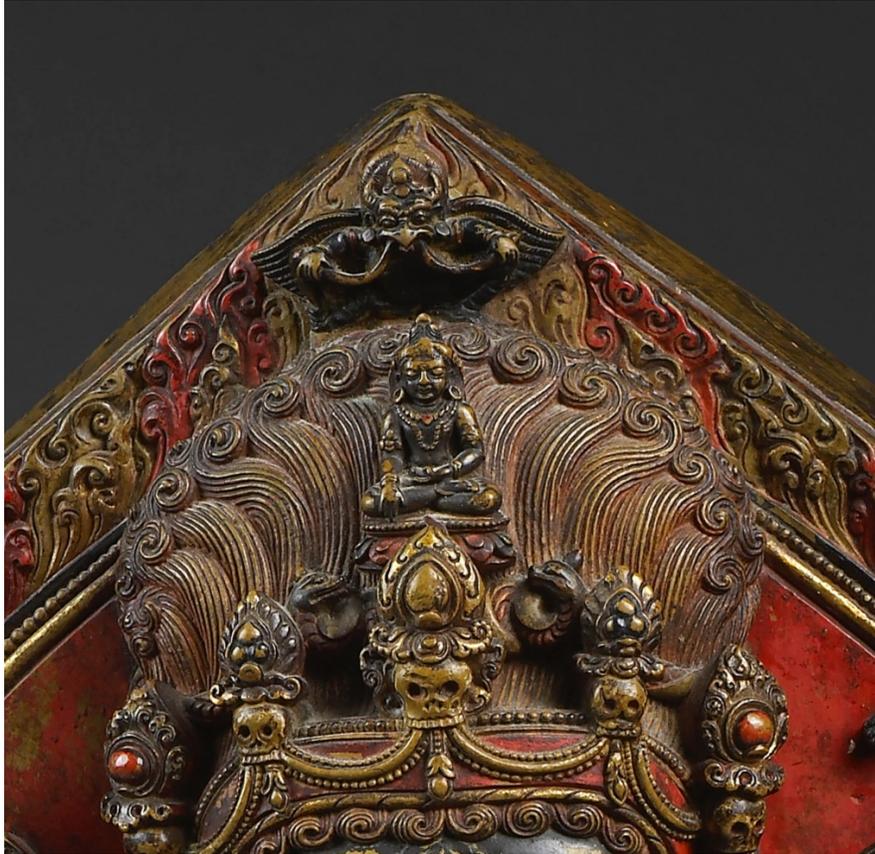


Fig. 7 Horned garuda; detail from the top of Panjaranatha Mahakala; Musée national des arts asiatiques–Guimet, Paris; gift of L. Fournier; MA 5181; © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY; photograph by Thierry Ollivier

The kind of hard beige-green stone that composes the sculpture is known to have been used in Burma and eastern India.<sup>15</sup> Of those found in Tibet, most are believed to have originated from these places.<sup>16</sup> Such small stone sculptures often follow a stele, or plaque, format, with an image carved into the front of a slab of stone in deep relief, while the broad back remains flat. These sculptures were often painted, as seen here.

Extant Chinese stone sculptures of this deity reveal an entirely different aesthetic, as evident in one example related to the Yuan state cult of Mahakala and found at Baochengsi (dated 1322) (fig. 8), a sculptural niche in Hangzhou, the cultural heartland of China.<sup>17</sup> This sculpture must have been made by a Chinese artist, for Mahakala resembles a bearded Chinese general.



Fig. 8 Mahakala niche; Baochengsi, Wu Shan, Hangzhou, China; dated 1322; photograph by Karl Debreczeny

## RETHINKING YUAN DYNASTY ART

The sculpture of Mahakala featured here, and the inscription it bears, embodies the religio-political relationship at the heart of Tibetan involvement at the Mongol court. Two years before its creation, in 1290, Dampa was recorded sculpting images from clay with his own hands, which Chinese sources specifically described as “Indic” (*fanxiang*).<sup>18</sup> Tibetan sources also refer to Dampa as the principal sculptor directing a group of artists—some sources specify Chinese artists<sup>19</sup>—in creating large-scale images of the same form of Mahakala in 1284.<sup>20</sup> If Dampa was indeed the patron, could this sculpture have been produced by a Tibetan or Newar artist in Beijing in an “Indic” style under his direction? Considering the diversity of cultural traditions brought together by the Mongols, including the prominent role of Tibetans, Newars, and Tanguts in visual production (for example, Feilafeng, the White Stupa, and more), this stone image signals a need to further rethink what characterizes Yuan dynasty art.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Samuel M. Grupper, "Manchu Patronage and Tibetan Buddhism during the First Half of the Ch'ing Dynasty: A Review Article," *Journal of the Tibet Society* 4 (1984): 76n19; Isabelle Charleux, "From the Yuan to the Qing Dynasty: The Career of a Famous Statue of Mahākāla, Lord of the Cemeteries," in *Han Zang Fojiao Meishu Yanjiu 汉藏佛教美术研究 / Studies in Sino-Tibetan Buddhist Art*, ed. Xie Jisheng 谢继胜 (Beijing: Shoudu shifan daxue chubanshe, 2008), 188.

<sup>2</sup> Heather Stoddard, "A Stone Sculpture of MGur MGon-Po, Mahakala of the Tent, Dated 1292," *Oriental Art* 31, no. 3 (Autumn) (1985): 278–82, 281; Elliot Sperling, "Some Remarks on sGa A-gnyan dam-pa and the Origins of the Hor-pa Lineage of the dKar-mdzes Region," in *Tibetan History and Language: Studies Dedicated to Uray Géza on His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Ernst Steinkellner (Vienna: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien, Universität Wien, 1991), 455–65, 457n7; Leonard W. J. van der Kuijp, "'Bayši' and Bayši-s in Tibetan Historical, Biographical and Lexicographical Texts," *Central Asiatic Journal* 39, no. 2 (1995): 275–302, 287; Amy Heller, *Tibetan Art: Tracing the Development of Spiritual Ideals and Art in Tibet, 600–2000 A.D* (Milan: Jaca Book, 1999), 87–88; Roberto Vitali, "Sa skya and the mNga' ris skor gsum legacy: the case of Rin chen bzang po's flying mask," *Lungta* 14, no. (Spring) (2001): 5–44, 37–38n45; Karl Debreczeny, "Imperial Interest Made Manifest: SGa A Gnyan Dam Pa's Mahākāla Protector Chapel of the Tre Shod Maṇḍala Plain," *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* 31, no. 10 (February) (2015), [http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/ret/pdf/ret\\_31\\_10.pdf](http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/ret/pdf/ret_31_10.pdf), 132–33.

<sup>3</sup> Leonard W. J. van der Kuijp, "'Bayši' and Bayši-s in Tibetan Historical, Biographical and Lexicographical Texts," *Central Asiatic Journal* 39, no. 2 (1995): 275–302, 275, 287.

<sup>4</sup> Elliot Sperling, “Some Remarks on sGa A-gnyan dam-pa and the Origins of the Hor-pa Lineage of the dKar-mdzes Region,” in *Tibetan History and Language: Studies Dedicated to Uray Géza on His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Ernst Steinkellner (Vienna: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien, Universität Wien, 1991), 455–65, 457n7; Roberto Vitali, “Sa skya and the mNga’ ris skor gsum legacy: the case of Rin chen bzang po’s flying mask,” *Lungta* 14, no. (Spring) (2001): 5–44, 37–38n45; Karl Debreczeny, “Imperial Interest Made Manifest: SGa A Gnyan Dam Pa’s Mahākāla Protector Chapel of the Tre Shod Maṇḍala Plain,” *Revue d’Etudes Tibétaines* 31, no. 10 (February) (2015), [http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/ret/pdf/ret\\_31\\_10.pdf](http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/ret/pdf/ret_31_10.pdf), 132–33.

<sup>5</sup> On Dampa, see Herbert Franke, “Tan-Pa, a Tibetan Lama at the Court of the Great Khans,” in *Orientalia Venetiana* I, ed. Merio Sabatini (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1984), 157–80; Chen Qingying 陈庆英 and Zhou Shengwen 周生文, “Yuan dai Zangzu mingseng Danba guoshi kao 元代藏族名僧胆巴国师考 [Textual research on Danba, a famous Tibetan monk in the Yuan dynasty],” *Zhongguo Zangxue 中国藏学 / China Tibetology* 1 (1990): 58–67; Elliot Sperling, “Some Remarks on sGa A-gnyan dam-pa and the Origins of the Hor-pa Lineage of the dKar-mdzes Region,” in *Tibetan History and Language: Studies Dedicated to Uray Géza on His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Ernst Steinkellner (Vienna: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien, Universität Wien, 1991), 455–65; Huang Hao 黄颢, *Zai Beijing de Zangzu wenwu 在北京的藏族文物* [Tibetan cultural relics in Beijing] (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 1993); ‘Jigs med bsam grub, “Sde Mgon Khang Gyi Lo Rgyus [A History of SDe Mgon Khang],” in *Khams Phyogs Dkar Mdzes Khul Gyi Dgon Sde so so’i Lo Rgyus Gsal Bar Bshad Pa Nang Bstan Gsal Pa’i Me Long* [A Luminous Mirror of Clearly Explained Histories of Each Individual Monastery of Ganze County, Khams], ed. ‘Jigs med bsam grub, vol. 1 (Kangding: Krung go’i bod kyi shes rig dpe skrun khang, 1995), 153–63; Shen Weirong, “Magic Power, Sorcery and Evil

Spirit: The Image of Tibetan Monks in Chinese Literature during the Yuan Dynasty,” in *The Relationship Between Religion and State (Chos Srid Zung 'brel) in Traditional Tibet: Proceedings of a Seminar Held in Lumbini, Nepal, March 2000*, ed. Christoph Cüppers, LIRI Seminar Proceedings, Series 1 (Nepal: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2004); Karl Debreczeny, “Imperial Interest Made Manifest: SGa A Gnyan Dam Pa’s Mahākāla Protector Chapel of the Tre Shod Maṇḍala Plain,” *Revue d’Etudes Tibétaines* 31, no. 10 (February) (2015), [http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/ret/pdf/ret\\_31\\_10.pdf](http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/ret/pdf/ret_31_10.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Herbert Franke, “Tan-Pa, a Tibetan Lama at the Court of the Great Khans,” in *Orientalia Venetiana* I, ed. Merio Sabatini (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1984), 157–80, 79, and Herbert Franke, *Chinesischer und Tibetischer Buddhismus im China der Yuanzeit* (Munich: Kommission für Zentralasiatische Studien, Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1996), 53–63.

<sup>7</sup> Wang Yao, “A Cult of Mahākāla in Beijing,” in *Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the Sixth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Fagernes*, ed. Per Kvaerne, vol. 2 (Oslo: Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture, 1994), 958; Herbert Franke, *Chinesischer und Tibetischer Buddhismus im China der Yuanzeit* (Munich: Kommission für Zentralasiatische Studien, Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1996), 42–46, 175–217; Zhixin Sun, “A Quest for the Imperishable: Chao Meng-Fu’s Calligraphy for Stele Inscriptions,” in *The Embodied Image: Chinese Calligraphy from the John B. Elliott Collection*, ed. Robert Harrist Jr. and Wen C. Fong, Exhibition catalog (Princeton, NJ: The Art Museum, Princeton University, 1999), 308.

<sup>8</sup> Hong Zaixin 洪再新, “Zhao Mengfu Hong Yi Xiyu Seng (Juan) Yanjiu 赵孟頫《红衣西域僧(卷)》研究” [Research on Zhao Mengfu’s Red-Robed Monk of the Western Regions Scroll],” in *Zhao Mengfu Yanjiu Lunwenji 赵孟頫研究论文集* (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 1995), 519–33; James C.Y. Watt, ed., *The World of Khubilai Khan: Chinese Art in the Yuan Dynasty*, Exhibition catalog (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2010), 198; Shane McCausland, *The Mongol Century: Visual Cultures of Yuan China (1271–1368)* (London: Reaktion, 2014), 141.

<sup>9</sup> Nian Chang 念常, “Fozu Lidai Tongzai 佛祖历代通載, Chap. 22; Fozu Lidai Tongzai [A Comprehensive Registry of the Successive Ages of the Buddhas and the Patriarchs]. Chap. 22 (before 1340). CBETA 電子佛典 大正新脩大藏經 Taishō Tripitaka大正藏第 49 冊 No. 2036 佛祖歷代通載 [0725c14] (十一).,” CBETA (Tokyo 東京: Also Taisho Shinshu Daizo Publishing, 1988), [http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/ko/T49n2036\\_022](http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/ko/T49n2036_022); Shen Weirong, “Magic Power, Sorcery and Evil Spirit: The Image of Tibetan Monks in Chinese Literature during the Yuan Dynasty,” in *The Relationship Between Religion and State (Chos Srid Zung ’brel) in Traditional Tibet: Proceedings of a Seminar Held in Lumbini, Nepal, March 2000*, ed. Christoph Cüppers, LIRI Seminar Proceedings, Series 1 (Nepal: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2004), 204; Herbert Franke, “Tan-Pa, a Tibetan Lama at the Court of the Great Khans,” in *Orientalia Venetiana I*, ed. Merio Sabatini (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1984), 161–62.

<sup>10</sup> Wang Yao, “A Cult of Mahākāla in Beijing,” in *Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the Sixth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Fagernes*, ed. Per Kvaerne, vol. 2 (Oslo: Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture, 1994), 957–64, 958; Shen Weirong, “Magic Power, Sorcery and Evil Spirit: The Image of Tibetan Monks in Chinese Literature during the Yuan Dynasty,” in *The Relationship Between Religion and State (Chos Srid Zung ’brel) in Traditional Tibet: Proceedings of a Seminar Held in Lumbini*,

*Nepal, March 2000*, ed. Christoph Cüppers, LIRI Seminar Proceedings, Series 1 (Nepal: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2004), 204; Karl Debreczeny, “Imperial Interest Made Manifest: sGa A Gnyan Dam Pa’s Mahākāla Protector Chapel of the Tre Shod Maṇḍala Plain,” *Revue d’Etudes Tibétaines* 31, no. 10 (February) (2015), [http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/ret/pdf/ret\\_31\\_10.pdf](http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/ret/pdf/ret_31_10.pdf), 137.

<sup>11</sup> Shen Weirong, “Magic Power, Sorcery and Evil Spirit: The Image of Tibetan Monks in Chinese Literature during the Yuan Dynasty,” in *The Relationship Between Religion and State (Chos Srid Zung ’brel) in Traditional Tibet: Proceedings of a Seminar Held in Lumbini, Nepal, March 2000*, ed. Christoph Cüppers, LIRI Seminar Proceedings, Series 1 (Nepal: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2004), 204.

<sup>12</sup> For instance, the *Fozu lidai tongzai; the Protection of the Nation Temple Stele (Huguosi beiming)*; and the *Rgya bod yig tshang*. See Herbert Franke, “Tan-Pa, a Tibetan Lama at the Court of the Great Khans,” in *Orientalia Venetiana I*, ed. Merio Sabatini (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1984), 158, 161–62, 175; Elliot Sperling, “Some Remarks on sGa A-gnyan dam-pa and the Origins of the Hor-pa Lineage of the dKar-mdzes Region,” in *Tibetan History and Language: Studies Dedicated to Uray Géza on His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Ernst Steinkellner (Vienna: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien, Universität Wien, 1991), 455–65; Shen Weirong, “Magic Power, Sorcery and Evil Spirit: The Image of Tibetan Monks in Chinese Literature during the Yuan Dynasty,” in *The Relationship Between Religion and State (Chos Srid Zung ’brel) in Traditional Tibet: Proceedings of a Seminar Held in Lumbini, Nepal, March 2000*, ed. Christoph Cüppers, LIRI Seminar Proceedings, Series 1 (Nepal: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2004), 204.

<sup>13</sup> Heather Stoddard, “A Stone Sculpture of MGur MGon-Po, Mahakala of the Tent, Dated 1292,” *Oriental Art* 31, no. 3 (Autumn) (1985): 278–82, 281–82; Amy Heller, *Tibetan Art: Tracing the Development of Spiritual Ideals and Art in Tibet, 600–2000 A.D* (Milan: Jaca Book, 1999), 87; Gilles Béguin, *Art ésoterique de l’Himalaya: Catalogue de la donation Lionel Fournier au Musée national des arts asiatiques* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 1990), 52–56; <http://www.guimet.fr/collections/himalaya/mahakala-sous-son-aspect-gur-gyi-mgon-po/>; Tsangwang Gendun Tenpa, “Tibetan Buddhism and Art in the Mongol Empire According to Tibetan Sources,” in *Faith and Empire: Art and Politics in Tibetan Buddhism*, ed. Karl Debreczeny, trans. Eveline Washul, Exhibition catalog (New York: Rubin Museum of Art, 2019), [http://issuu.com/rmanyc/docs/faith\\_and\\_empire](http://issuu.com/rmanyc/docs/faith_and_empire), 115.

<sup>14</sup> Thanks to Elena Pakhoutova, Gautama V. Vajracharya, Kerry Lucinda Brown, and Ian Alsop for sharing their thoughts on the Newar stylistic qualities of this work.

<sup>15</sup> Heather Stoddard, “A Stone Sculpture of MGur MGon-Po, Mahakala of the Tent, Dated 1292,” *Oriental Art* 31, no. 3 (Autumn) (1985): 278.

<sup>16</sup> Other examples are largely made from a softer pyrophyllite, such as one in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2015.500.4.23, and one in the Palace Museum, Beijing. See Luo Wenhua 罗文华, *Gugong jingdian: Zang chuan fojiao zaixiang 故宫经典: 藏传佛教造像* [Gugong classic: Tibetan Buddhist sculptures], Reprint (Reprint, Beijing, 2009), 138–39, pl. 72.

<sup>17</sup> Su Bai 宿白, “Yuan dai Hangzhou de Zang chuan mijiao ji qi you guan yiji” 元代杭州的藏传密教及其有关遗迹,” in *Zang chuan fojiao siyuan kaogu 藏传佛教寺院考古* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1996), 365–87, 368–72; Xiong Wenbin 熊文彬, *Yuan Dai Zang Han Yishu Jiaoliu 元代藏汉艺术交流* [Yuan Dynasty Sino-Tibetan Artistic Exchanges]

(Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 2003), 162–68; Karl Debreczeny, “Imperial Interest Made Manifest: SGa A Gnyan Dam Pa’s Mahākāla Protector Chapel of the Tre Shod Maṇḍala Plain,” *Revue d’Etudes Tibétaines* 31, no. 10 (February) (2015), [http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/ret/pdf/ret\\_31\\_10.pdf](http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/ret/pdf/ret_31_10.pdf), 138–40.

<sup>18</sup> Song Lian 宋濂 (1310–1381), *Yuanshi* 元史 [The History of the Yuan, 1370] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1976), chap. 202, 4519; *Fozu lidai tongzai*, chap. 22; Herbert Franke, “Tan-Pa, a Tibetan Lama at the Court of the Great Khans,” in *Orientalia Venetiana* I, ed. Merio Sabatini (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1984), 166.

<sup>19</sup> *Hor Chos Rje Sku Phreng Gong Rim Gyi Rnam Thar = Hor Chos Rje Dbyangs Can Snyems Pa’i Lang Tsho. Hor Chos Rje Sku Phreng Gong Rim Gyi Rnam Thar* [The Biographies of the First and Second Hor Cho-Rje Ṅag-Dban̄ Phun-Tshogs (1668–1746) and Skal Bzan̄ Mthustobs Dpal-’bar (1747–1796) with Sketches of the Lives of Their Predecessors, 1849] (Delhi: Tibet House, 1983) 34 (fol. 17v); Khang dmar pa, “Tre Shod Ye Shes Mgon Po’i Brnyan Mthong Grol Chen Po’i Lo Rgyus [A History of the Great Image Which Liberates through Sight, the Ye Shes Mgon Po of Tre Shod]” (Manuscript, n.d.), fol. 11b, line 3.

<sup>20</sup> *Sde mgon po’i dkar chag = Hor Chos rje ngag dbang phun tshogs, ed., Sde Mgon Po’i Dkar Chag* [The Descriptive Catalog of Degonpo]. Full Title: *Bla Chen ’phags Pas Lung Bstan Cing/ Rgya Yul Nas Phyang Nas ’thor Bar Grags Pa’i Tre’i Mgon Khang Ngam Yongs Grags Sde Mgon Po’i Dkar Chag Hor Chos Rje Ngag Dbang Phun Tshogs Kyis Mdzad Pa. In Dga’ Ldan Khri Pa Tre Hor Byams Pa Chos Grags. Rigs Dang Dkyil ’khor Rgya Mtsho’i Mnga ’dbag* [Sic] *Nges Pa Don Gyi Rdo Rje ’chang Khang Gsar Skyabs Mgon Blo Bzang Tshul Khrims Bstan Pa’i Rgyal Mtshan Dpal Bzang Po’i Rnam Par Thar Pa Dad Pa’i Pad Mo Bzhad Pa’i Nyin Byed* [The Biography of the First Tri Hor Khang Gsar Skyabs Mgon Blo Bzang Tshul Khrims Bstan Pa’i Rgyal Mtshan, 1838–1897], vol. fols. 244r–247v (Dharamsala: Library of

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