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The Metal Sculpture of the Khasa Mallas of West Nepal/ West Tibet [1a]

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Fig. 1

New discoveries in art historical research often result from the study of a work of art which seems to defy inclusion in a known art tradition. One such work of art is a striking gilt copper image of a seated female now in the collection of the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington DC. (fig. 1). The sculpture portrays a plump woman or goddess in voluminous robes, wearing a diminutive crown and seated upon a four legged throne-like base, her right hand in her lap, thumb and index finger joined in a meditative gesture, her left held before her chest as if grasping a now-lost object. The base is inscribed across the upper front in two parts: the first part a very brief inscription in Tibetan, "yum" ("mother"), and the second part in Sanskrit written in *Devanāgarī* script, "*dīpamālākrī*" ("made by Dīpamālā").

This sculpture exhibits stylistic characteristics which can be ascribed to various disparate traditions, without permitting firm attribution to any one of them. The lavishly gilded copper is typical of Kathmandu valley technique, while the four footed base, and to a certain extent the crown, would seem to suggest influences from Pāla dynasty India. The robe as well as the heavysset demeanor of the figure bring to mind no firm connection with any known Himalayan sculptural tradition. In addition, the iconography of the sculpture is unclear, for the simple gestures, lacking any attributes, permit no immediate identification of the figure. The two inscriptions, in two languages and two scripts, are a further puzzling element.

The work's stylistic and iconographical uncertainties have led those scholars who have studied and published it to various conclusions regarding the identity of the figure and its origin and date. The sculpture has variously been identified as Prajñāpāramitā [1]; a goddess [2]; or Umā, the spouse of the great Brahmanical god Siva [3]. It has been attributed to Tibet, India or India-influenced Tibet, and Nepal; and dated to the 13th c. [4], the 14th c [5], or "prior to the 15th c." [6]. The Tibetan inscription on the base has been misread several times as "*u-ma*", resulting in the identification of the figure with Siva's spouse; while the *Devanāgarī* inscription was at one time believed to be a later addition, as was the Tibetan notation. [7]

It was Ulrich von Schroeder who first understood the *Devanāgarī* inscription "gift of Dīpamālā" to refer to the true origins of the sculpture, explaining that it was the donation of one of the wives of the great Khasa Malla king Prṥhvīmalla, who reigned in West Nepal/ West Tibet in the middle of the fourteenth century. [8] Eventually the misreading of the short Tibetan notation as "*u-ma*" was corrected to "*yum*" by the Nepali scholar Dhanavajra Vajracarya [9], supporting Pal's identification of the figure as Prajñāpāramitā (often referred to in Tibetan as "*yum chen-mo*"). As we shall discuss later, it is not certain that the image represents Prajñāpāramitā or even a goddess, for it could represent Dīpamālā herself, and the Tibetan inscription may well have been added later when the image had been transferred from its original context. What is now clear is that the image dates from the mid-14th c., and was donated by Dīpamālā, one of the wives of Prṥhvīmalla of the Khasa Malla kingdom.

The Khasa Mallas must be counted among the least known and the most fascinating of all the Himalayan ruling families. They were a powerful clan: in their heyday from the 12th to the mid 14th century they ruled a sizeable kingdom made up of large portions of West Nepal and West Tibet. In fact they often controlled a larger territory than the far better known Mallas of the Kathmandu valley, whom they regularly terrorised with damaging raids. [10] Linguistically and probably ethnically the forerunners of the many Nepalese Hindu kings of later centuries, they themselves were devout Buddhists. They were also patrons of the arts, and as we shall see in these pages, they oversaw and encouraged a bronze casting tradition that produced metal sculptures of great beauty.

The origins of the Khasa Malla are obscure and the history of their rule is brief. To explain their presence in the Karnālī basin of West Nepal during the medieval period scholars have surmised that at some time during or before the 12th century an aryan-speaking tribe or tribes moved in from Northwestern India and took control of a large portion of West Tibet/ West Nepal. [11] It appears likely that the movement into the Karnālī area came via Tibet, rather than the other way around, although there is not by any means agreement on this subject. [12]

For the ethnic origins of the Khasa we are obliged for lack of other evidence to turn to the Sanskrit literature of India, which alludes to this group from time to time. [13] Ancient Indian texts almost invariably place the Khasa among tribal groups known to have inhabited the Northwestern reaches of India, and it is on the basis of these references that scholars have inferred the Northwestern origins of the Khasa. The references are often less than flattering; in one source they are suspected of cannibalism, while Manu groups them with tribes said to be either the descendants of outcast Kṣatriyas or outcast themselves through neglect of their religious duties. The Bhāgavata Purāṇa claims that, along with several other tribes of Northwestern India, they escaped their outcast status by becoming devotees of Kṛṣṇa. [14]

In further literary references, we see this tribe moving eastwards. They are prominent in the *Rājatarangīnī* of Kalhaṇa, which places them in several provinces of Kashmir and testifies to their military skill. [15] Later we find them inhabiting the Kedārakhaṇḍa, or Garhwal, which is identified as Khasamaṇḍala. [16] Finally, it is the Karnālī region centered on Semjā (modern Sijā) and Dullu which is named "Khasadeśa", as in the inscription in Bodhgaya from Aśokacalla's reign. [17] Whereas these Indian sources link the Khasa to these areas of Northwestern India, Tibetan historical sources trace a lineage of kings of Western Tibet linked to the later Khasa rulers from about the middle of the 12th c.

In the early 13th century the Khasa and their kings become historical in the person of Krācalla, the first of the Malla kings to leave us a surviving contemporary record, a copper plate inscription of S.S. 1145/ A.D. 1223. [18]

According to the history of the family found in the most important of the Malla inscriptions, Pṛthvīmalla's pillar inscription of 1354 at the Khasa winter capital Dullu in Western Nepal, [19] the dynasty was founded six generations before Krācalla by his ancestor Nāgarāja. This somewhat shadowy figure left behind no documents, although he is also listed in the Tibetan chronicles as the king of Western Tibet (usually as Nāgadeva or Nāgāde). According to the pillar inscription, it was this Nāgarāja who established the capital at Semjā (or, Simjā , Sijā , Sijjā), near modern Jumla, where it remained thereafter. [20]

The Tibetan chronicles place Nāgarāja (there found as Nāgadeva or Nāgāde) [21] in a line of Tibetan rulers of Western Tibet that goes back for several generations to the famous "Royal Lama" Ye shes 'od , and beyond him to the great Srong btsan sgam po. Ye shes 'od (ca. 11th c.) was co founder (with the great translator Rinchen bzangpo) of several important monasteries found within the area assigned to Malla control by the Tibetan chronicles, including Tholing (mTholding), one of the greatest monasteries of Gu-ge. [22] But the Malla genealogy found in the pillar inscription more nearly contemporary and perhaps more reliable in this connection trace no such connection to the earlier kings of West Tibet, beginning their lists with Nāgarāja himself. The Tibetan chronicles in fact contain wording which would suggest a disruption of the royal lineage, implying that Nāgarāja may have been the scion of an invading tribe which took control of Western Tibet some generations before Nāgarāja. [23]

Although Nāgarāja must have had predecessors, it is unlikely, considering what we know of the Khasa ethnic and linguistic background, that these predecessors would be found among the ancient Tibetan royalty of West Tibet, as the Tibetan chronicles might lead us to believe. The fact that his successor Krācalla had to have an interpreter for his conversations with a Tibetan Lama, would further argue against Tibetan origins for these kings. [24] It is however probable that Nāgarāja was a king of Tibetan territory; the Khari mentioned as the place he descended to Jumla from in the Dullu inscription may well be Takla-khar or Taklakot, the modern center of Pūrang. [25] Further, the decided Buddhism of these kings, along with their evident sympathy for Tibetan culture - reciprocated by the Tibetan chroniclers who frankly acknowledge them as the masters of West Tibet, speaks in favor of those who would suggest Tibetan or at least partly Tibetan origins for these kings. [26]

It is the view of Luciano Petech that Nāgarāja "was the non-Tibetan ruler of Western Tibet, and his hold in that country being weakened, he conquered a portion of Western Nepal as a haven or refuge for his descendants." [27] Petech's interpretation of the history of the reason is based on sound reasoning, but his conclusion that the movement of the capital to West Nepal signalled an end to Khasa control of Western Tibet does not account for the consistent reference in Tibetan chronicles to the later Khasa rulers as the kings of Western Tibet, nor for the evidence that later Khasa kings made royal donations to the Jokhang in Lhasa. Prayagraj Sharma, a Nepali scholar strongly disputes the idea that the Khasa kings came down into Nepal from Tibet, preferring to trace a movement in the other direction. [28]

The inconsistencies in the evidence suggest an unclear political situation in which the Khasa rulers, despite the fact that they may have lost total political control over their Western Tibetan dominions when Nāgarāja moved south, were accorded kingly status by the chroniclers as a matter of tradition and in the light of an unsettled situation in Western Tibet after the Khasa departure.

For several generations Nāgarāja's descendants took the name "calla" as the royal surname (we have already mentioned Krācalla and Aśokacalla), nomenclature which is linguistically puzzling and adds considerably to the mystery surrounding this family. After Aśokacalla, however, these kings adopted the name Malla by which we know them today. From Krācalla on, these kings left numerous inscriptions and documents, several of which contain the earliest use of Nepali (earlier known as the "khas" language), now the national language of Nepal. It is an irony of history that these devoutly Buddhist kings were responsible for the first written records in the language of a country later referred to as "the world's only Hindu kingdom".

In the early 14th century the line of Nāgarāja was threatened with extinction through lack of a male heir, but the family saved itself by bringing in the scion of another important family, named Pāla in the Dullu pillar inscription, who may have exerted some control in Pūrang. [29] This prince, known to the Tibetan chronicles as Sonam De, married the daughter of the last king of Nāgarāja's line and took the Malla name, calling himself Puṇyamalla (skt. puṇya = tib. sonam); he came from somewhere outside to rule at the Malla seat in Semjā /Dullu, but his true origins and from where he came is disputed. [30] Under his son, Pṛthvīmalla whose queen Dīpamālā was responsible for the Freer sculpture the kingdom reached the height of its power, only to descend into oblivion shortly after Pṛthvī's demise. [31]

In the great flow of culture across the Himalaya range and its middle hills, the Khasa Malla kings and their peculiarly mixed state and culture eventually disappeared, to be replaced to the north by the Tibetan Buddhist rulers of West Tibet and in the middle hills of modern Nepal by the orthodox Hindu chiefs - some perhaps Malla descendants - of the petty hill states, the Bāīsī (the 22) and Chaubīsī (the 24) and their successors, all of whom, Tibetan and Nepali alike, history has swallowed up save for the Shah house, previously of Gorkha and presently of all Nepal. [32]

Until now, the puzzling mid-14th c. Freer sculpture has remained alone as an example of the hitherto unknown bronze casting tradition of the Khasa Malla kingdom. Over the last several years, however, a group of bronzes has come to light which allows us to identify this tradition quite clearly. We are lucky to have two sculptures which can be directly attributed to several of Pṛthvīmalla's royal predecessors, and we should pursue our examination of this tradition with these images.

The Pritzker collection in Chicago is home to a delightful cast copper figure of a bodhisattva, probably Avalokiteśvara, who is shown seated in the position of "royal ease" on a lotus throne, his right hand before his chest in a gesture of protection or teaching and his left at his knee grasping the stem of a lotus (fig. 2). Traces of gilding remain on the figure, particularly on the throne back with its distinctive scroll work, resembling both flames and vegetation. The sculpture is inscribed on the back and also along the front rim. The inscription on the rear of the image is in an archaic script, with some resemblances to early *Devanāgarī* script, and appears to mention a donor, [33] while the inscription along the front, in *Devanāgarī*, reads "Donated (for?) śrī Aśokacalla, may he enjoy long life". [34] It may be that the image was ordered by the donor of the rear inscription on behalf of the king. [35] With this image we are approaching the beginnings of the documented Khasa Malla rule, for Aśokacalla was the successor of Krācalla, whose inscription of 1223 is the earliest Khasa Malla inscription. Aśokacalla left several inscriptions in Bodhgaya, dated 1255 and 1278, so we can place this image of Avalokiteśvara in the third quarter of the 13th century, or possibly somewhat earlier. [36]



Fig. 2

The Avalokiteśvara poses none of the stylistic problems of the Freer figure. Here we see a clear adaptation of the Kathmandu valley style; it would be difficult to find any Pāla influence in this sculpture. The modelling and proportions of the figure and

its adornments, the treatment of the face and the base all remind us of Nepalese work of approximately the same period. But there are anomalies which would lead us to find the image somewhat puzzling even if uninscribed. The treatment of the intermediate leaves of the five leaf crown is unusual in its simplicity, mirrored in the simple symbolic third eye in the forehead; and the earrings are of an unusual type, as is the sash lying across the god's lap. Above all, the stylized throne back is not of a type seen in the Kathmandu valley, and the rear of the throne where the back is attached is distinctive for its unfinished look (fig. 2 detail). These characteristics we shall see again.

The evident Nepali characteristics of Aśokacalla's Avalokiteśvara would certainly suggest that the sculptor was either a Newar from the Kathmandu valley or one of his pupils or descendants. It is likely that when the early Khasa Malla kings wished to employ artisans in the royal court they would have turned to the Kathmandu valley. In so doing, they would have followed a very popular trend in the Himalayas, for there is abundant evidence documenting the popularity of Newar painters and sculptors throughout the Himalayas. Not long after Aśokacalla's reign, the best known of the medieval Newar sculptors, Arniko, set off for an artistic career in Tibet and China that would eventually lead to his appointment as head of the Imperial workshops. In much the same way skilled Newar sculptors doubtless answered the invitation of the Khasa patrons and immigrated westward to the Khasa capital in the Karnālī basin.

The itinerant Newar artists were highly skilled and very flexible, adapting their mastery of technique to produce works in a style pleasing to the taste of their foreign patrons. This flexibility led to the development of subsidiary styles such as we see in this image of Avalokiteśvara and related sculptures examined below.

The Khasa kingdom provided an entry for this subsidiary Newar style into the art of Western Tibet, for the Khasa dominions contained many important monasteries that must have been a rich source of patronage for migrating artists and their successors. When the Khasa control of their territories waned, it is likely that the sculptors who served them in fashioning Buddhist images migrated towards the Tibetan Buddhist regions, just as the sculptures earlier generations produced usually ended up in Tibet (if they were not in fact produced there), as is evidenced by the "cold gold" found on several Khasa sculptures (see figs. 7 and 8 below).



Fig. 3

Our third royal image is a diminutive figure of a *dākiṇī*, perhaps *Nairātma*, in gilt copper, now in the collection of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (fig. 3). The *dākiṇī* is shown in a position shared by two important *dākiṇīs*, *Vajravārāhī* and *Nairātma*; but since *Vajravārāhī* is almost always shown with a pig's head protruding from her own, I have tentatively identified the figure as *Nairātma*. The sculpture bears a *Devanāgarī* inscription cast onto the front of the base, "may śrī Ripumalla live long", [27] which is reminiscent of the inscription on the Pritzker Avalokiteśvara. This wish for long life is a common element of the Khasa Malla inscriptions, but rarely found in dedicatory inscriptions from the Kathmandu valley.

Ripumalla was a distinguished king of the Khasa line, reputed to have extended the Khasa domain into India, and a devout Buddhist, as is evidenced both by a pilgrimage to Lumbini, where he left an inscribed graffito on the As'oka pillar very similar to the inscription on the *dākiṇī*, and also by the Buddhist subject of our little bronze. His dated documents and inscriptions are found from the years 1312 and 1314, while the last inscription prior to his reign is from 1299, and the first following his reign, 1321; [28] thus we may confidently place the *Nairātma* within the first twenty years of the 14th century.

Ripumalla's *dākiṇī* shares some characteristics with both the Avalokiteśvara of Aśokacalla and the figure donated by *Dīpamālā*. Like the Avalokiteśvara, the *Nairātma* appears to display Nepalese characteristics, being similar in many respects to *dākiṇī* figures from the Kathmandu valley; she also shares with the Avalokiteśvara a double lotus base with an empty area below where the inscription is found (though the *dākiṇī* has a row of pearls above), a relatively massive intergral aura of flames, (although these are incised and much simpler in design than the designs found on the Avalokiteśvara), and a plain and unfinished-looking rear to the base. Characteristics in common with the Freer sculpture include the lavish gilding, a plump and compact figure, and similarities in the diamond shaped pattern found inside the flames of the aura of the *dākiṇī* and the lozenge-shaped patterning found on the hem of the *Prajñāpāramitā*'s robe.

These three images span a century, from the middle of the 13th to the middle of 14th century, coinciding with the period when the Khasa Malla rulers come alive to us through their inscriptions and documents. They are not the only sculptures that this tradition has handed down to us. There are quite a few more: several have inscriptions which, while they do not mention known Khasa personages, are in the Sanskrit language/*Devanāgarī* script combination unique to the tradition. Although other Buddhist images from the subcontinent of course bear Sanskrit inscriptions, it was only in the domain of the Khasa that *Devanāgarī* was used at so early a period on Buddhist imagery. Other uninscribed sculptures display the stylistic peculiarities briefly examined above and because of this should be considered Khasa Malla.

The single most dazzling Khasa Malla sculpture to come to light is an extraordinary image of *Samvara* in an American collection (fig. 4). The impact of this little figure is considerably enhanced by the metals used: silver for the figure proper and gilt copper alloy for the base with its figures being trampled by the god. The figure bears an inscription declaring that the sculpture was the pious work of one "śrī padmarona". [29] This personage cannot for the moment be identified, but the telltale *Devanāgarī* script of the inscription clearly identifies it as a work of the Khasa Malla region.



Fig. 4

Here again a strong influence from Kathmandu valley Nepal is clearly evident. The deity depicted, *Samvara*, is the most popular of all the Buddhist tantric tutelary deities in the Kathmandu valley, and the way in which the multi-armed figure is portrayed is consistent with the Kathmandu valley canons. But it also displays characteristics which set it apart. The most important is the use of silver, very rarely used in the valley for icons; [40] but other Khasa characteristics are clearly evident. Again we see the relatively unfinished back of the base, in this case left without gilding, but also here with holes presumably for a separate aura, which may well have been in silver, accounting for the departure from the integral aura seen in our other two examples with throne backs (fig. 4 detail). The treatment of the petals of the lotus of the base, and the row of pearls above, are reminiscent of Ripumalla's little *dākiṇī*, even though the base here is a single rather than double row of petals. Another curious detail of this sculpture is the extremely careful and somewhat exaggerated delineation of the joints of the fingers and toes, accentuated in the case of the left foot of *Samvara*'s consort by the splayed position of the foot.

Certainly this exquisitely wrought little image must rank among the masterpieces of Himalayan metalwork. With its lustrous finish and spectacular combination of silver and gold, Padmarona's little tutelary deity dazzles the eye as much today as it did some six hundred years ago when he commissioned it.



Fig. 5

A small silver sculpture of Hevajra, now in a private collection in Switzerland, though uninscribed, can also be attributed to the Khasa Malla regions because of its many similarities with Padmarona's Saṃvara (fig. 5). Like the Saṃvara, the figure is cast in silver on a bronze alloy base, now missing the lotus which must have once supported it. Again we see a Kathmandu valley style with modifications, and again we notice the accentuated joints of fingers and toes, and the consort's splayed left foot; the treatment of the hair of the two images is also similar. It is possible that both images were made by the same atelier at approximately the same time, though exactly when during the hundred-year span from the mid 13th c. to the mid 14th c. is difficult to say.

Another Hevajra must be placed among the Khasa Malla corpus because of its Devanāgarī inscription, which records the donation of the figure by "śreṣṭhī ṭhagu" and "nigālhana devī", the unfamiliar names emphasizing a tradition foreign to the Kathmandu valley. [41] Even without the inscription, this gilt copper figure exhibits several traits that are by now becoming familiar to our eyes, most specifically the double lotus base so similar to that of the little dākinī of Ripumalla, the flame aura similar in design to the aura adorning the Avalokiteśvara of Aśokacalla, and the plain reverse of the base with the aura attached in the casting (fig. 6 detail).



Fig. 6



Fig. 7

Another sculpture, again in gilt copper, portrays a standing Padmapāñī Avalokiteśvara (fig. 7). Of all the sculptures so far examined this bodhisattva displays the Kathmandu valley style in its purest form, as though the archetype of this important deity was so imprinted upon the psyche of the sculptor (likely a Newar) who fashioned it that he felt disinclined to stray from the norms of his past. The god's gently swaying body, his sacred thread, his dhoti, adornments and crown all are consistent with the same subject from the Kathmandu valley of the 13-14th c. Only the treatment of the lotus flower issuing from his left hand seems unusual. But the Devanāgarī of the dedicatory inscription, crudely inscribed on the top surface of the base, clearly indicate the Khasa regions as the place of manufacture; [42] beyond that, the treatment of the base, particularly the back (fig. 7 detail) and the aura surrounding the god, are telltale clues of the Khasa origins. The 'cold gold' and blue pigment applied to the face and hair are evidence that the figure once had a home in Tibet.

It is worth noting here that the Khasa Malla bronzes so far examined display, with the exception of the odd figure in the Freer, a pantheon familiar to any student or practitioner of the Buddhism of the Newars. Saṃvara, Hevajra and Vajravārāhī /Nairātma are all among the most important Newar Buddhist cult deities, enshrined in the inaccessible and secret āgamas of the Buddhist monasteries of the Kathmandu valley. As for Padmapāñī Avalokiteśvara, there is hardly a deity more important to Kathmandu valley Buddhism: the festivals in his honor are among the most important of the Newars' yearly cycle of worship and celebration.

Our next two sculptures demonstrate the Khasa Malla connection with Tibet, a connection as important as the cultural impulses this tradition received from central Nepal. Both sculptures portray a form of Avalokiteśvara rarely found in Kathmandu valley imagery but as ubiquitous in Tibet as Padmapāñī is in the valley: ṣaḍakṣarī, or in Tibetan Chenrezi (spyan-ras-gzigs), the god whose mantra, "Ōm mani padme hūm", has become a symbol of Tibetan Buddhism and is found at the opening of many Khasa Malla inscriptions.

The first, now in the Ford Collection in Baltimore, is a tiny representation with a telltale Devanāgarī inscription on the otherwise empty back of the lotus base, recording the donation of the image by one Amuladevī, "for her own merit" (fig. 8). [43] This miniature is a delightful example of the skills of the Khasa metalworkers; despite the scale, the details of the face and jewelry are beautifully rendered. Notable Khasa characteristics are the base with its rounded lotus petals and upper bead border, and the empty (save for the inscription) rear of the base. The lush yellow gilding and the small crown set above the hairline are also reminiscent of similar features in Dīpamāla's sculpture. The "cold gold" applied to the face is a sure signal that, wherever the image was manufactured, its provenance is Tibetan.



Fig. 8



Fig. 9

The second image of Chenrezi is uninscribed, but because of its evident similarities with the Ford sculpture and others examined above, it can confidently be ascribed to the same tradition (fig. 9). The technique, color of gilding and style of the base are all in keeping with the Khasa style. A noteworthy stylistic quirk shared by both Chenrezis is the unusual treatment of the inward-turning upward hands, although the larger example has lost the attributes that were most likely attached separately.

Perhaps the least satisfying aspect of the quest for a unified description of what can be called a Khasa style is the enigma presented by the first sculpture to be definitely attributed to this region, the Freer figure. For none of the other sculptures examined in the preceding paragraphs exhibits the Indian influence and the other stylistic peculiarities evident in this image. As it turns out, there is another sculpture which displays an Indian influence. A two-armed image of Prajñāpāramitā now in the Pritzker collection (fig. 10 below), the image shows a form of the goddess which is familiar to us largely from Pāla illustrations in manuscripts, such as that shown on the second folio of a lovely Pāla manuscript in the Fournier donation to the Musée Guimet in Paris (fig. 11 below). In this form, the goddess is shown in a pronounced tribhanga, thrice bent posture, with her hands before her ample chest in the gesture of teaching, with books resting on the lotuses whose stems are held in each hand. The form of the goddess is quintessentially Pāla; there is no known sculptural example of this form from the Kathmandu valley. The Devanāgarī inscription on the base, recording the donation by "Amṛtaśrīkaya" [44] confirms the Khasa origin that is also suggested by the jewelry, gilding and fine workmanship of the sculpture, which contrasts with the relatively unfinished lotus throne.



Fig.10



Fig.11



Fig. 12

Aside from this image of Prajñāpāramitā and the enigmatic Freer sculpture, the corpus of Khasa sculptures examined above belong to the pantheon of Buddhist deities popular among the Newars and exhibit Newar stylistic characteristics. The anomaly presented by the Pritzker Prajñāpāramitā may be ascribed to the relative rarity of this deity in the Newar pantheon; although four-armed depictions of Prajñāpāramitā are known in Newar art, two-armed versions are never seen. It may be that, when asked to create a two-armed depiction of the Great Goddess, the Newar (or, Newar-descendent) artist had to turn to models from beyond his usual repertoire, and in so doing, modelled his figure on an illustration from a Pāla manuscript. In the case of the Pritzker sculpture we can certainly sense a Newar influence in the execution of the sculpture if not in its form, for the sensuous, naturalistic modelling of the body and the face seem to owe more to the Kathmandu valley style than to the Pāla school which so clearly served as the model for the iconography.

As for the eccentric details of the Freer sculpture, the Pritzker collection contains another diminutive sculpture which may provide a clue (fig. 12 above). This tiny figure is clearly related to the Freer image, in robes, hairstyle and jewelry, particularly the bracelets, necklace and earrings. Despite the lotus base, we must assume from the kneeling posture and praying attitude that the sculpture was meant to represent a human rather than a divine figure. The undeniable similarities between the tiny Pritzker donor and the Freer sculpture suggest that it may well be that Dīpamālā's gift is in fact an image of herself, as a donor figure. This would explain the robes, so unusual in the depiction of a goddess such as Prajñāpāramitā, who is almost invariably depicted naked from the waist up and adorned with the Bodhisattva ornaments, including armlets and a full crown with flags over the ears, as indeed the Pritzker Prajñāpāramitā from this same tradition is portrayed. The Freer image may show the queen, her right hand in a gesture of respectful meditation, while her left hand once held an object such as a flywhisk, seated upon a royal throne. Alternatively, it may be possible that this is a highly unusual portrayal of Prajñāpāramitā, as the Tibetan notation "yum" might suggest, and that the artist who created the queen's Prajñāpāramitā, in a time honored tradition of Asian art, based his portrayal of the goddess on the likeness of the royal donor.

The enigma of the Freer sculpture, one of the most elusive to come down to us from this hitherto unknown tradition, has not yet been fully solved. But at least we are now somewhat closer to reasonable solutions, and furthermore, we know the tradition from which she appeared, its location and its date. With the stylistic characteristics we have discovered in the ten images presented above to serve as signposts, it will be possible in the future to identify further examples of the short-lived but worthy bronze casting tradition of the Khasa Mallas of West Nepal/West Tibet.

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- Petech, Luciano, "Ya-tse, Gu-ge Pūrang: a New Study", in *Central Asiatic Journal*, vol. 14, 1-2

Endnotes:

1a. I have chosen to call these kings by the name they used for their country and people, 'Khasa'. This is the name that appears in the thirteenth-century Bodhi Gaya inscription from the time of Aśoka, who is described as the king of 'Khasadeśa' see Sircar (1983) vol. 2, p. 149. See also Vajracarya (Jumla, vs 2028, 1971 AD) p. 21. The *Gopalarāja vamsāvalī* refers to these people as the 'Khasiya', see Vajracarya, (vs 2028, 1971 AD), pp. 11-44. The name or term Khasa (or Khas) has long been used to refer to the Nepali language – Nepali, 'Khas Kura'; Newari, 'Khay' (from 'khasa'), 'Bhay' – and to that ethnic/caste group now known as the Chetris; even now the entire Nepali-speaking group, consisting of several castes, is referred to by the Newars as 'Khay', modern Newari for old Newari 'Khasa' or 'Khaśa'.

In modern Nepalese society, Malla is a name used in West Nepal by certain families of the Thakuri, the group to which the present royal family belongs. For a discussion of the modern ethnic make-up of the Karnālī region, see Sharma (1972), pp. 14 -16.

1. Pratapaditya Pal, *The Art of Tibet* (New York: The Asia Society, 1969) fig.51, p.146 147.
2. Beguín, *Dieux et Demons de l'Himalaya*, no. 16, p. 70; fig.16 p.73. dated "antérieur au XVe s.(?)"
3. von Schroeder, *Indo-Tibetan Bronzes* p.348, fig. 90B.
4. Pratapaditya Pal, *The Art of Tibet* (New York: The Asia Society, 1969) fig.51, p.146 147.
5. von Schroeder, *Indo-Tibetan Bronzes* p.348, fig. 90B.
6. Beguín, *Dieux et Demons de l'Himalaya*, no. 16, p. 70; fig.16 p.73. dated "antérieur au XVe s.(?)"
7. von Schroeder, *Indo-Tibetan Bronzes* p.348, fig. 90B.; von Schroeder wrote that the Tibetan inscription was "added later". This may in fact be the case; Pratapaditya Pal, *The Art of Tibet* (New York: The Asia Society, 1969) fig.51, p.146 147; Dr. Pal considered the Devanāgarī inscription to be later than the sculpture.
8. von Schroeder, *Indo-Tibetan Bronzes* p.348, fig. 90B.
9. personal communication. It is remarkable that it was a Nepali scholar who noticed that the first character of the two-character Tibetan inscription is "yu" rather than "u". Nepal is considerably impoverished by this great historian's death last year. This cleared up the conundrum of a Tibetan inscription, presumably applied in a Buddhist context, identifying the figure as a prominent Brahmanical goddess.
10. The accounts of the Khasa Malla incursions into the valley are found in the *Gopalarāja vamsāvalī*. For a discussion of the relevant passages of this chronicle, see Vajracarya, *Karnālī pradeśako Aitihāsik Rūparekhā*, pp.29-37.

11. Giuseppe Tucci, *Preliminary Report on two Scientific Expeditions in Nepal*, (Rome: Istituto Italiano il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1956) pp. 108-109
12. Tucci, *Preliminary Report on Two Scientific Expeditions in Nepal*, p. 108, Sharma, *Preliminary Study of the Art and Architecture of the Karnali Basin, West Nepal*, p. 17, note 40 strongly presents the arguments against this North-South movement, arguing that it would be more likely for the Khasa to have expanded northwards from their ethnic and linguistic base in the South.
13. These references are discussed in G.A. Grierson, *Linguistic Survey of India*, vol. IX, pt.IV, (2nd edition, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1968), pp.1-16. See also Sharma, *Preliminary Study of the Art and Architecture of the Karnali Basin, West Nepal*, p.14.
14. Grierson, *Linguistic Survey of India*, vol. IX, pt. IV; as cited by Gokul Sinha, *A Treatise on Nepali Language*, (Darjeeling: Uttaranchal Prakashan, 1978) pp. 48-50. This is presumably, as Prof. Sharma notes, an early instance of "Sanskritization".
15. Grierson, *Linguistic Survey of India*, quoted from Sinha, *A Treatise on Nepali Language*, pp.51-53.
16. Vajracarya, *Karnālī pradeśako Aitihāsik Rūparekhā*, p. 53
17. Petech, p. 86 ff
18. Tucci, *Preliminary Report on Two Scientific Expeditions in Nepal*, p. 66-67.
19. Petech, p. 87, Tucci p. 46 ff.
20. Tucci, *Preliminary Report on Two Scientific Expeditions in Nepal*, pp. 46-49. Several of the Tibetan chronicles say it was Nāgarāja's son who moved to Ya-tse or Semjā; Tucci, *Preliminary Report on Two Scientific Expeditions in Nepal*, pp. 51-60
21. Petech, p. 86
22. Tucci, *Preliminary Report on Two Scientific Expeditions in Nepal*, pp. 51-60. The fact that a much earlier king in the chronicles' line of descent was named Nāgarāja adds to the confusion of the situation. This king left behind an impressive collection of Kashmiri bronze sculptures inscribed with his name. For an outstanding example now in the Cleveland Museum, see Pratapdīpta Pal, *Bronzes of Kashmir* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1975) p. 100-101. Other examples known to this author are images of Padmapāṇī Avalokiteśvara in The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Acc. no., 68.8.42; another previously in the gallery of Wm H. Wolff, New York and since then sold at Sotheby's New York; and an example from Temple Art, New York (*Oriental Art*, July 1986, p. 3.) For the Tibetan chronicles, see Tucci, *Preliminary Report on Two Scientific Expeditions in Nepal*, pp.51ff. On Ye shes 'od and Rin chen-bzang po, see Snellgrove and Skorupski, *Cultural History of Ladakh*, vol. 2 (N. Delhi: Vikas, 1980) "the Biography of Rin chen bzang po", p.91.
23. Petech, Ya-tsé, Gu-ge, Pūrañ: A New Study, *Central Asiatic Journal*, 14 (1-2) p. 86-87. Tucci, *Preliminary Report on Two Scientific Expeditions in Nepal*, p. 51-60.
24. Petech p. 91
25. Petech, Ya-tsé, Gu-ge, Pūrañ: A New Study, p. 88 where he denigrates the equation of Khari with sTagla-mkhar but goes on to agree with the conclusions of such an equation.
26. We should also note that the names of several of Nāgarāja's successors had a distinctly Tibetan ring. The Krāśi of Krāśicalla, two generations before Krācalla, seems a transliteration of Tibetan bKra-shis, "fortune" or "good luck". Tucci, *Preliminary Report on Two Scientific Expeditions in Nepal*, pp. 69-70.
27. Petech. p. 88
28. Sharma, p. 17 n. 40.
29. Tucci, *Preliminary Report on Two Scientific Expeditions in Nepal*, p. 108 theorizes that the Pālas were another sovereign ruling house, a supposition supported to some extent by the genealogy of Prthvīmalla's Dullu pillar inscription and the Tibetan chronicles. But since there is no contemporary documentary evidence giving these princes ruling status and titles, it is more probable that they were feudatories of the Mallas.
30. There is much disagreement over the actual seat and the extent of power of Puṇyamalla's family. The crucial word Gela in the Dullu inscription is not a sure reading, and there is no way to accurately pin down what or where the term refers to. The Tibetan chronicles outspokenly place Puṇyamalla (or bSod nams lde, as he is known to them), as a prince of Pūrang, while the Dullu inscription set up by his son seems anxious to stress a long line of orthodox kṣatriya "Pāla"s stretching into the past. There is, as Petech notes, hardly any way to reconcile the two views, and subsidiary arguments, ranging from a warm letter from the great Bu-ston to the chos gyal bSod nams lde on the side of Tibetan origin to the increasing signs of Sanskritization and Hinduism leaning on the part of Puṇyamalla's descendants on the other side, create further confusion. Petech, Ya-tsé, Gu-ge, Pūrañ: A New Study, pp. 95-96, 110.
31. For a more detailed political and cultural history of this dynasty, see Tucci, *Preliminary Report on Two Scientific Expeditions in Nepal*, pp. 43 ff. and 129ff.; Sharma, *Preliminary Study of the Art and Architecture of the Karnali Basin, West Nepal*, pp. 17-18; and Vajracarya, *Karnālī pradeśako Aitihāsik Rūparekhā*, pp. 11-44, 53-55.
32. Sharma, *Preliminary Study of the Art and Architecture of the Karnali Basin, West Nepal*, p. 13; Tucci, *Preliminary Report on Two Scientific Expeditions in Nepal*, p. 108. The Khasa of course, still exist in the Chhetris of Nepal, the dominant Nepali-speaking group, while in a sense the Mallas still exist among the Thakuris, some of whom retain to this day that noble name. The Thakuris are the social group to which the present royal family of Nepal belongs, so in some way the royal house of West Nepal still lives on in the present ruling family, although of course the Buddhism of the Mallas has been replaced by the Hinduism of the Shahs. For a brief discussion of the Thakuris, see Sharma, *Preliminary Study of the Art and Architecture of the Karnali Basin, West Nepal*, p. 15-16
33. 1. śrīrīdhābhāṃḍārāni 2. dānapati, rākukāmi. This inscription clearly mentions a donor, probably one Rīdhābhāṃḍārāni. Dr. Gouriswar Bhattacharya (personal communication) remarks that the inscription resembles early Eastern Indian scripts, which is of course not what one would expect. We cannot exclude the possibility that this inscription, and thus the sculpture itself, is earlier than the inscription mentioning Aśokacalla. Further study may bring some light on this conundrum.
34. śrī aśokacalla prasādakiyo sadā (?hā)tmakasciraṃjayatu. This inscription is in early Devanāgarī.
35. It is possible that the donor of the rear inscription, and thus the sculpture itself, is earlier than Aśokacalla; see note 34.

36. see notes 34 and 35.

37. śrī ripumallaściraṃjayatu.

38. for Ripumalla's dates, see Sharma, *Preliminary Study of the Art and Architecture of the Karnali Basin, West Nepal*, p. 18, and Luciano Petech, *Mediaeval History of Nepal* (Roma: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1958) p.108, n.5

39. śrī padmaronaḥ yadatrāpunenaḥ, an abbreviated form of a common Buddhist dedicatory formula.

40. Petech mentions a donation of a set of statues made from silver by Ripumalla. Petech, p. 93

41. dānapati śre(?)ṣṭhi thagu: dānapati nigālhana devī.

42. The inscription is a brief dedicatory phrase beginning "deya dharmāya(m) jayapā(mā?)lāhva(?)ya (?)" and perhaps ending, in the letters stacked above the front part of the inscription "yadatra puṇamiti..." The inscription is crudely incised and difficult to read.

43. The inscription, in four lines, reads: 1. amu 2. la devī 3. svapunya 4. rtha kṛtamiti

44. deyadharmoya amtaṣī (?śrī)kāyā yadatrāpunyamiti. Again, an abbreviated version of the common Buddhist dedicatory formula.