

## The Great Stupa of Dharmakaya: Visual Expressions of a Tibetan Teacher's Path and Lineage in the Diaspora

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**Abstract:** With the Tibetan diaspora in the late 1950s, Tibetan Buddhism spread to nearly every continent on the globe and has begun transforming western landscapes through the construction of *stūpas*, Buddhism's principal architectural form. *The Great Stupa of Dharmakaya Which Liberates Upon Seeing*, located at Shambhala Mountain Center in Red Feather Lakes, Colorado and dedicated to the meditation master Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, is an especially rich example of Tibetan Buddhist visual culture in the diaspora. An iconographic analysis of the monument's exterior and interior architectural elements, sculptures and paintings, when viewed within their historical context, reveals an intimate biography of Trungpa Rinpoche's life. Specifically, the visual narrative conveys two main Tibetan Buddhist themes: the teacher's progressive path of meditation and his lineage affiliations within Vajrayāna Buddhism. In this way, the *stūpa* acts as a visual *namtar* (rNam-thar), a traditional Tibetan biography that emphasizes a teacher's personal journey to liberation and the masters who guided the way. Although located far from the Himalayas and its Tibetan heritage, *The Great Stupa of Dharmakaya's* affinity to traditional Tibetan Buddhist architectural and religious modalities provides a window into Tibet Buddhism's history prior to 1959. At the same time, the monument serves as coherent, visual documentation of Tibetan art during the diaspora's early period and will, no doubt, become an increasingly important part of the tradition's historical record.

**Keywords** Tibet; Diaspora; Buddhism; *Stūpa*; Shambhala; Chögyam Trungpa

The Practicing Lineage [Kagyü] places a lot of importance on the necessity to practice, to sit or meditate. Without practicing, without understanding the meaning of practice, no *real* communication or development takes place in your understanding of Buddhism, or the *buddhadharma*. . . . [I]t is equally important to have a great deal of devotion for your teacher, who actually embodies the symbolism or concept of practice.<sup>1</sup>

—Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche

With the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1959 and the subsequent exodus of Tibetans to foreign lands, the world beyond the Tibetan plateau witnessed the rapid spread of Tibetan Buddhism and a flourishing of Tibetan Buddhist art. Tibetan monasteries, meditation centers, and even magazines dedicated to mindfulness practices represent only a few of the modalities that increasingly heighten Western awareness of Tibetan Buddhism. The *stūpa*, Buddhism's most ubiquitous and principal architectural form, has also made its way into Western landscapes. It is often rural communities, such as Bendingo, Australia; Eskdalemuir, Scotland; and Barnet, Vermont, that host these reliquary monuments. The

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Figure 1. *The Great Stupa of Dharmakaya Which Liberates Upon Seeing*. Photograph by Janice M. Glowski, 2006.



United States alone is home to more than thirty Tibetan Buddhist *stūpas*, and the numbers continue to grow.

*The Great Stupa of Dharmakaya Which Liberates Upon Seeing* (hereafter, *The Great Stupa*), a 108-foot tall monument nestled in the mountains of Red Feather Lakes, Colorado, is an especially rich example of visual culture in the Tibetan diaspora, and serves as this study's architectural focus (Figure 1).<sup>2</sup> *The Great Stupa* was built as a reliquary for the charismatic Tibetan meditation master, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche (1940-1987), who fled the Kham region of Eastern Tibet in 1959 and subsequently taught in India, Europe, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada (Figure 2).

He went on to establish Vajradhatu (today called Shambhala), a large, international community of meditation centers and retreat locations.<sup>3</sup> Shambhala Mountain Center, one of the community's largest retreat centers, manages and maintains *The Great Stupa* on its 600-acre remote expanse of land.<sup>4</sup>

*The Great Stupa*, like other early diasporic *stūpas* built within the first decades following the Tibetan exodus, maintains aesthetic, symbolic, and functional continuities with most Buddhist *stūpas* as they existed in Tibet just prior to 1959. For example, the monument's overall form, including a large, square, multi-tiered base, the inverted bell-shaped dome, and the thirteen-disc spire surmounted by a sun and moon disc that rises from the dome, are iconic and widespread throughout Tibet.<sup>5</sup> Further, *The Great Stupa's* overall form, like that of other *stūpas*, symbolizes the body of a Buddha seated in meditation posture.<sup>6</sup> Rich with "standard" iconography and symbolism, this Rocky Mountain monument could be transcribed into Adrian Snodgrass's classic 1985 monograph, *The Symbolism of the Stūpa*, as an exemplar of Tibetan-style *stūpa* architecture.

*The Great Stupa* further maintains ritual and practice continuities with traditional Tibetan *stūpa* architecture. First, the monument contains the relics of a recognized teacher. In this case, Chögyam Trungpa's skull-relic is encased inside a large Buddha image located in the monument's interior first level. Second, like other Tibetan *stūpas*, the relic was ritually installed and consecrated by qualified Tibetan lamas. In August 2001, Tibetan meditation masters and other monastics donned regalia and conducted traditional rituals and ceremonies over several days to empower the structure (Figure 3). Shambhala's current lineage holder, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, installed the relic while throngs of Shambhala practitioners, honored Tibetan visitors, and curious others watched the delegates engage in

Figure 2. Chögyam Trungpa. Photographer unknown.



visual and musical pageantry commonly seen in Tibet.<sup>7</sup> Finally, in a manner similar to that of traditional Tibetan Buddhist communities, Shambhala (and other Buddhist) practitioners have made the structure a locus of practice. Circumambulation (the clockwise move-



Figure 3. Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, the current main lineage holder of Shambhala, at the third and final *stūpa* consecration ceremony. Photograph by Janice M. Glowski, 2006.

ment around a sacred object), *śamatha* (calm-abiding meditation), and other Buddhist practices engaged in throughout Tibet are ongoing at the site.

Although *The Great Stupa* shares visual and functional features with other Tibetan *stūpas*, like all sacred architecture it is a product of its time and place.<sup>8</sup> For example, *The Great Stupa*'s architectural form was constructed with a high capacity concrete intended to



Figure 4. The four gateways and entrances to *The Great Stupa*. Photographs by Janice M. Glowski, 2006.

last for generations. This material was developed through collaborative research between Trungpa Rinpoche's western students in consultation with academic specialists, government agencies, and the concrete industry.<sup>9</sup> Using concrete diverges from the traditional brick and stone construction of Tibetan *stūpas*. Further, the skull-relic rests inside a specially



designed, cylindrical aluminum reliquary that is lightweight, corrosion-resistant, and sealed to keep moisture away from the relics.<sup>10</sup> Although a new material in Tibetan Buddhist construction, aluminum furthers traditional Buddhist aspirations that a *stūpa* and its relics be preserved in perpetuity for the benefit of beings. Additionally, the monument's unique features include four large gateways at the cardinal directions, which mark entrances to *The Great Stupa's* interior first level (Figure 4).

Beginning on the east side and moving in a clockwise direction, the gateways are painted blue, yellow, red, and green, symbolizing the wisdom qualities of awakened mind.<sup>11</sup> The use of gateways to mark the cardinal directions and entrances to a *stūpa* or *stūpa* complex dates to at least the third century BCE, as evidenced by the extant remains of the large *stūpa* at Bharhut, India.<sup>12</sup> However, formal gateways, particularly ones that adjoin the monument, are less commonly seen on Tibetan *stūpas*. These examples illustrate just a few of the ways that *The Great Stupa's* rich display of architectural forms and community uses map the monument's Tibetan roots. The modified structural elements, like the gateways and innovative building materials, blend seamlessly with the traditional forms. The result is a visually coherent structure that can easily be categorized as a Tibetan Buddhist-style *stūpa*.

*The Great Stupa's* visual unity foreshadows the structure's iconographic and symbolic coherency. Its exterior symbolism readily integrates with the interior spaces, as will be apparent upon closer inspection of the monument's sculptures and paintings. Further, when the "outer" and "inner" iconographies are examined within their historical context, *The Great Stupa's* imagery moves beyond the generalized symbolism described in written guidelines,<sup>13</sup> and a more intimate picture is revealed. Upon closer analysis, *The Great Stupa* becomes a document that traces Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's personal narrative from his earliest years as a monk in a Tibetan monastery to the time of his death in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada.<sup>14</sup> In other words, the structure is a visual biography—a story that communicates through platforms, spires, sun discs, over-life-size Buddha sculptures, *maṇḍalas*, and vividly painted walls. Each visual element, thoughtfully selected and meticulously rendered, speaks the teacher's unfolding life story. In addition, the monument's art and architecture create a physical environment that, like a thoughtfully written biography, allows the viewer to engage in the teacher's life story.

All biographies are selective. No written narrative completely captures an individual's life. Instead, biographies highlight historical events or circumstances that the biographer deems most significant. In this case, the 20th century meditation master Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche was the final authority on the monument's iconography and construction, and he appointed Benchen Tenge Rinpoche to serve as the principal, hands-on guide.<sup>15</sup> One could say that these teachers served as biographers and, upon Trungpa Rinpoche's death, they, like authors of written biographies, reflected upon the master's life journey and identified aspects of it that were significant to communicate. In particular, they sought narrative details that would be of benefit to future practitioners. When one reads the visual biography of Trungpa Rinpoche's life, as told through the structure's iconographic program, a demonstrably traditional Tibetan Buddhist message becomes apparent. This Tibetan narrative conveys two overarching themes. First, the monument recounts the teacher's journey on the Tibetan Buddhist progressive path of meditation. This aspect of the story's symbolic communication begins at the *stūpa's* base and continues progressively up the monument, including the interior iconographies, to the top of the spire. The second major theme communicated through *The Great Stupa's* forms and iconographies is Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's lineage affiliations, conveyed mostly by the *stūpa's* interior iconography, located on the monument's three interior levels. Perhaps nothing more incisively character-

izes Tibetan Buddhism than lineage, which can be described as the historically unfolding relationships between teachers and students. Through this relationship, meditation practices and scholarly training are transmitted from teacher to student. Ideally, in Tibetan Buddhism, this process establishes an unbroken thread of teaching, learning, and practical training in meditation that can continue into future generations. During a lunar New Year address to his students in 1978, Trungpa Rinpoche acknowledged the direct relationship between awakening, meditation practice, and lineage when he spoke about the bond he had formed with his students. He stated, "...I possess *buddha-nature* because [of] my personal training, my personal discipline, and, of course, my lineage. And for you, from your American point of view, you have managed to cut through the spiritual materialism and [been] able to ... study with me."<sup>16</sup> In other words, Trungpa Rinpoche described that he was able to realize his inherent *buddha-nature* because of his meditation training and the instructions he received from his teachers. Likewise, Trungpa Rinpoche's American students were also able to overcome obstacles and authentically engage with the lineage tradition.<sup>17</sup> Although other Buddhist traditions, such as the Zen tradition of Japan, also convey the importance of the progressive path of meditation and lineage, these concepts are the hallmark of Tibetan Buddhism.<sup>18</sup>

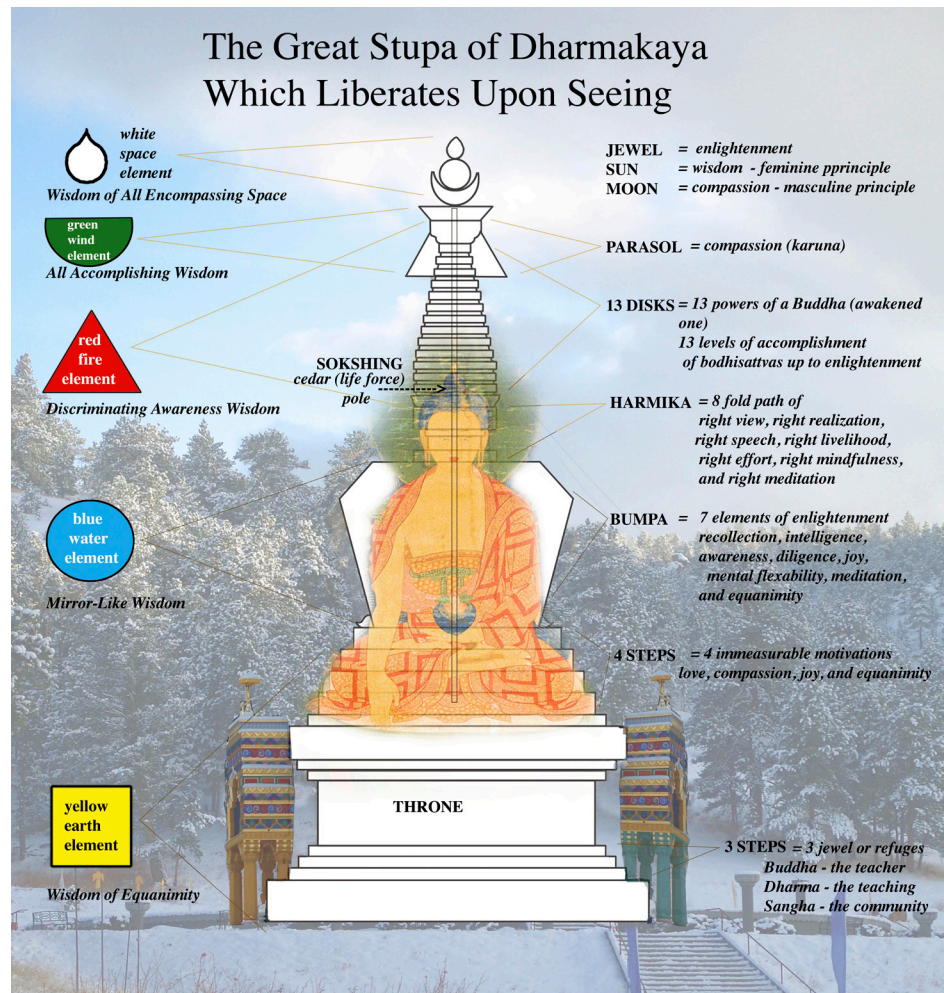
In this essay I suggest that *The Great Stupa's* emphasis on Trungpa Rinpoche's path of meditation and lineage affiliations, as communicated through visual biography, echoes the Tibetan Buddhist oral and written biographical tradition called *namtar* (Wylie: *rNam-thar*) or "complete liberation."<sup>19</sup> The term points to a *namtar's* emphasis on important life events related to an individual's progressive path toward awakening or enlightenment, including auspicious meetings with teachers, meditation transmissions, and life teachings. *Namtars* can be inspirational by showing that the great masters also encountered (and overcame) obstacles. *Namtars* also encourage practitioners to stay the course of meditation practice and remind them of the traditional sources of inspiration and refuge: the teachers, the teachings, and the community of practitioners,<sup>20</sup> rather than conventional, *samsaric* motivations. In the words of Tsaltrim Allione, a renowned Tibetan Buddhist lama of American descent who also studied with Trungpa Rinpoche, "The *namtar* are specifically geared to provide records for those on a spiritual quest, in much the same way that someone about to climb a high mountain should seek out the chronicles of those who had made the climb before."<sup>21</sup> For this reason, *namtars* play a prominent role in Tibetan Buddhist lineages.

The Kagyü lineage of Tibetan Buddhism, Trungpa Rinpoche's primary lineage affiliation, has produced some of the most beloved and colorful *namtars*. The story of Jetsün Milarepa (1040–1123/4), a great *yogi* who overcame tremendous obstacles of anger, hatred, and the effects of past harmful actions through an arduous path of practice and the tutelage of his strict and uncompromising teacher, Marpa Lotsawa (1012–1097), figures prominently among the Kagyü *namtars*.<sup>22</sup> Milarepa became renowned for his unwavering commitment to practice as a hermit in the Tibetan mountains, surviving for long periods of time on nothing but nettle soup, becoming a Kagyü lineage holder, and singing spontaneous songs of realization or experience (*dohās*) as a mode of teaching his students. Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche's (c. 1910 – 1928) autobiography, *Brilliant Moon*, constitutes a contemporary *namtar* written in the first, rather than third, person.<sup>23</sup> In the text, Khyentse Rinpoche, a respected teacher that served as the head of the Nyingma lineage for a time, first describes the place and circumstances of his birth, followed by the auspicious life events that allowed him to train as a *yogin*. The majority of the autobiographical portion of the book describes his encounters with great teachers who gave him instruction and transmissions of meditation practices, his twelve years of solitary retreat, the numerous *dohās* that he composed

along the way, and the important circumstances in which he taught. In sum, the book conveys the teacher's unfolding path of meditation over his lifetime, the lineage of teachers who guided and inspired him, and his subsequent role as a teacher. As seen in these examples, although *namtars* provide a general roadmap for Tibetan Buddhist practitioners, they are distinctive, with each story providing details of the individual's unique *karmic* unfolding and personal circumstances. As a visual *namtar* of Chögyam Trungpa's path of practice and lineage affiliations, *The Great Stupa of Dharmakaya* conveys the general, unfolding path of meditation as it is conceived in Tibetan Buddhism, and also includes specific practices and teachings that were central to Trungpa Rinpoche's progressive path, lineage affiliations, and later work as a teacher.

The visual *namtar* told at the *The Great Stupa* communicates Trungpa Rinpoche's

Figure 5. Diagram of *The Great Stupa*, showing the monument's exterior symbolism. Prepared by Greg Smith.



training in the three-*yāna* path of practice and study. The monument's exterior primarily symbolizes the Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna aspects of his meditation and study, while much of the interior spaces express the Vajrayāna or esoteric aspects of his training. To clarify briefly, Tibetan Buddhism follows a three-*yāna*, or three-vehicle, system. The *yānas* in this system include the Hīnayāna, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna methods for practice and study. These constitute training that is progressive, or unfolding in nature, rather than three separate "schools" of Buddhism, as the three-*yāna* system is sometimes described. Hīnayāna (Foundation vehicle) practice and study emphasizes important preliminary mind training and exploration of an individual's personal situation.<sup>24</sup> Its main practices, including *śamatha*, help stabilize the practitioner's mind, bring familiarity with how the mind works, culti-

vate physical and mental pliancy, and foster the capacity for one-pointed focus.<sup>25</sup> Tibetan Buddhists maintain that, on the path of meditation, individuals should attend to their own minds and circumstances before extending outward to others.

A more expanded view characterizes the Mahāyāna (Great vehicle). Here, the motivation for practice and study moves beyond individual concerns and emphasizes practicing for the benefit of other sentient beings. Mahāyāna practices, including *tonglen* (*gtong len*), or sending and receiving, are meant to cultivate one's innate compassion and ability to act skillfully in the world for others.<sup>26</sup> The Vajrayāna, though sometimes referred to as a distinct school in Tibetan Buddhism, is more accurately viewed as a subset of the Mahāyāna tradition. Having essentially the same overarching motivation as the Mahāyāna, this third *yāna* introduces practitioners to advanced meditation practices that often involve visualizations and are intended to help students move quickly along the path of practice. The close *samaya*, or vow-bound, relationship between an advanced teacher and student characterizes the Vajrayāna.

Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche trained in Tibetan Buddhism's three-*yāna* system, a process that began at an early age just after his identification as a rebirth of the tenth Trungpa *tülku* (title given to the rebirth of great masters). According to Trungpa Rinpoche's autobiography and oral tradition, the head of the Karma Kagyü lineage, the Gyalwang Karmapa, discovered the Trungpa *tülku* rebirth through visions. One vision located the new *tülku* in the Nangchen Kingdom of Kham. The second vision provided more specifics: "The door of the family's dwelling faces south; they own a big red dog. The father's name is Yeshe-dargye and the mother's Chung and Tzo; the son who is nearly a year old is the Trungpa Tülku."<sup>27</sup> Trungpa Rinpoche was quickly taken to Dütsi Tel, the monastic seat of the Trungpa *tülkus* from among the Surmang monasteries. After more testing and an installation ceremony, Chögyam Trungpa became officially recognized as the eleventh rebirth in the Trungpa line, which is traced to the 15th century meditation master, Trungmase Lodrö Rinchen.<sup>28</sup> Like most *tülkus* in Tibet, once the child was recognized and enthroned as the supreme abbot of Surmang, he began his meditation training.

The visual *namtar* of Trungpa Rinpoche's life on *The Great Stupa* begins at the base and moves upwards until it reaches the first golden disc on the 13-disc spire (Figure 5). The outer portion of the monument conveys key aspects of the Tibetan Buddhist path's Hīnayāna stage. The monument's base contains three tiered levels identified as the three jewels of Buddhism: the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Saṅgha. Marking formal entrance into Hīnayāna practices, these steps signify the Refuge Vow taken by any practitioner upon choosing to become a Buddhist. Trungpa Rinpoche's autobiography confirms that at the time of his enthronement, he took the Refuge Vow. The Gyalwang Karmapa served as preceptor for the ceremony. Trungpa Rinpoche's hair was cut and the following vow was recited: "From today I take refuge in the Buddha. From today I take refuge in the Dharma. From today I take refuge in the Sangha."<sup>29</sup> With this, the child officially entered the Buddhist community, the Hīnayāna path of practice, and the Kagyü lineage.<sup>30</sup>

Four tiered steps located above the *stūpa*'s base signify the four immeasurables, a set of aspirations for self and other that are introduced during the Hīnayāna and read and contemplated by practitioners. The four immeasurables are loving-kindness (*maitrī*), compassion (*karuṇā*), joy (*mudita*), and equanimity (*upekṣā*), and are expressed through the following aspirations: *May all beings be happy and have the causes of happiness, May they be free from suffering and the root of suffering, May they not be separated from the great happiness that is devoid of suffering, May they come to rest in the great equanimity that is free from passion, aggression, and aversion (prejudice)*. These well-known, foundational Buddhist



trainings appear in the early Pali Canon and later Sanskrit texts.<sup>31</sup> The four immeasurables are so central to Tibetan Buddhist practice that Khenpo Gangshar Wangpo, one of Trungpa Rinpoche's main tutors, invoked them during the Kham revolts. At a time when the Chinese were destroying monasteries, teachers were fleeing the country, and Kham rebels were engaged on the battlefields, Khenpo Gangshar instructed the monks to move beyond traditional ritual formalities and sectarian divisions and support the laity by offering the Refuge Vow and the four immeasurables, as a way to bring foundational mindfulness and awareness to the revolts. The intention was to bring awareness to all actions and to emphasize contemplation involving "human rights and non-violence" during these especially "anxious times."<sup>32</sup>

The bell-shaped dome, or *bumpa*, provides further Tibetan symbolism along the path of practice. The dome symbolizes the seven elements of enlightenment (*sapta bodhyaṅgā*) and the platform located below the spire (*harmikā*) symbolizes the eight-fold path (*āryāṣṭāṅgamārga*). The seven elements of enlightenment are translated as mindfulness, awareness, diligence, joy, mental flexibility, meditation, and equanimity.<sup>33</sup> Historically, texts discuss these as either the conditions that allow one to become enlightened or the factors that are concurrent with enlightenment. The eightfold path is the fourth "Truth" of Śākyamuni Buddha's first teachings, called the Four Noble Truths (*catvāri āryasatyāni*) that took place at Sarnath following the Buddha's enlightenment under the *bodhi* tree at Bodhgaya in eastern India.<sup>34</sup> Like the four immeasurables, the Four Noble Truths are foundational instructions given to students when they enter the Hīnayāna path of Tibetan Buddhist practice. As with all *tülku*, the seven elements of enlightenment and the eight-fold path were preliminary, foundational instructions in Trungpa Rinpoche's Hīnayāna studies. These also were some of the first instructions Trungpa Rinpoche imparted to his Western students when he taught in the United States.<sup>35</sup>

The tiered discs (*bhūmis*) that surmount the *bumpa* and *harmikā* make direct reference to the Mahāyāna path of practice. The thirteen *bhūmis* symbolize the path and attainments of the *bodhisattvas*, awakened beings that meditate and engage for the benefit of others. These discs, which emerge from the Hīnayāna levels of the *stūpa*, express the practitioner's shift into Mahāyāna. Taking the *bodhisattva* vow formally marks the transition from the Hīnayāna to the Mahāyāna view of practice. The vow signifies the practitioner's commitment to be reborn until all sentient beings no longer suffer.

Despite the infiltration of Chinese spies into the monasteries and the eventual, complete Chinese occupation of Tibet, Trungpa Rinpoche was able to maintain his three-*yāna* training in the monastery. Describing his work in a seminary during this time, Trungpa Rinpoche writes, "...I was able to go on working ... with about thirty other students under Khenpo Gangshar, and had more or less completed my studies in *Hīnayāna* (basic teaching) and *Mahāyāna* (wider teaching)..."<sup>36</sup> He briefly describes the circumstances surrounding his taking of the *bodhisattva* vow:

Since I was now eleven years old I had to spend my time on more advanced work. I was called back to Dūdtsi-til to take the Bodhisattva vow although I had already taken it informally at the time of the wangkur [empowerment rite]: the vow is as follows: 'In the presence of all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and of my teacher Rolpa-dorje, I vow to proceed towards Enlightenment. I accept all creatures as my father and mother with infinite compassion. Henceforth for their benefit I will practice the transcendental virtues (*paramitas*) of liberality, discipline, patience, diligence, meditative concentration, wisdom (*prajñā*) and skillful means (*upāya*), spiritual



power, aspiration, gnosis (*jnana*). Let my master accept me as a future Buddha, but as remaining a Bodhisattva without entering Nirvana so long as a single blade of grass remains unenlightened.<sup>37</sup>

Tibetan Buddhist practitioners who are empowered to teach typically also take the *bodhisattva* vow, becoming vow-bound, to ensure that they will only use the teachings for the benefit of beings, rather than for selfish or otherwise harmful purposes. Taking the vow at Dütsi Tel, the formal seat of the Trungpa Tülkus, underscored Trungpa Rinpoche's connection to the Kagyü lineage and his responsibilities within the Trungpa lineage.

The upper three golden discs on the *stūpa*'s spire symbolize attainments of the *bodhisattva* and are sometimes associated with Vajrayāna practice. *Stūpas* that represent only the Hīnayāna-Mahāyāna path of practice tend to include just the first ten *bhūmis*. Trungpa Rinpoche trained in the three-*yāna* system; thus, it is logical that *The Great Stupa* includes the additional three discs. A golden parasol, moon, sun, and, finally, a jewel surmount the spire of gold discs (Figure 6). The parasol indicates unconditioned compassion, while the sun and moon represent the inseparable union of wisdom and compassion, respectively. The jewel symbolizes complete enlightenment. Thus, when read from bottom to top, the monument's exterior forms communicate the three-*yāna* path to enlightenment. Like Trungpa Rinpoche's meditation path, the Hīnayāna serves as the foundational component, with an expansion into the Mahāyāna path of the *bodhisattva*. The *stūpa*'s visual biography clarifies the value Tibetans place on the Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna trainings. Tibetans widely accept that enlightenment can be attained through the Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna aspects of



Figure 6. The moon, sun, and jewel surmounting *The Great Stupa*'s spire. Photograph by Janice M. Glowski, 2006.



Figure 7. East (main) entrance to *The Great Stupa*. Photograph by Janice M. Glowski, 2006.

the path, although it is believed to be a slow process that can take innumerable lifetimes. Tibetan Buddhism incorporates Vajrayāna practices as skillful means that allow the practitioner to take a more expedient course of action, ideally allowing awakening to occur in one lifetime.

*The Great Stupa*'s visual *namtar* communicates the Vajrayāna aspects of Trungpa Rinpoche's life primarily through the sculptures and paintings located on the monument's interior upper levels. This "inner" symbolism reveals some important esoteric teachings and transmissions in the teacher's life. These areas of the *stūpa* are accessible to Vajrayāna practitioners. Preparation for Vajrayāna practices and teachings can take many years, as indicated by the *stūpa*'s outer symbolism, and not

Figure 8. Śākyamuni Buddha making a teaching gesture (*dharmacakramudrā*). Photograph by Greg Smith.



all Tibetan Buddhist practitioners choose to enter into the practices of this *yāna*. To access the *stūpa*'s Vajrayāna shrines, one first enters the main entrance on the monument's east side (Figure 7). Large glass doors with copper trim open into a spacious, publically accessible first floor, which houses meditation cushions and a small table for offerings of

water, candles, and incense. As a public space, practitioners can meditate, sit quietly, walk around the room, or listen to a recording that discusses *The Great Stupa*. An over-life-size, golden image of Śākyamuni Buddha, dressed in monastic robes and making a teaching gesture (*dharmacakramudrā*), serves as the monument's main public image and houses Trungpa Rinpoche's skull-relic and other sacred texts, including the Tibetan translations of Śākyamuni's teachings called the *Kanjur* (Figure 8).<sup>38</sup> The walls bear minimal decoration, save for regularly placed decorative pilasters, two of which frame the main shrine image. Behind the Śākyamuni sculpture, a closed door marks the entrance to a staircase that leads to the interior Vajrayāna levels.

Vajrayāna practices were central to Trungpa Rinpoche's training. According to his autobiography, despite the upheavals in Tibet and growing pressures by the Chinese, Trungpa Rinpoche was able to complete the rigorous *ngöndro* (*sngon 'gro*), or preparatory training, typically undertaken before Tibetan Buddhists enter into the Vajrayāna. He describes his *ngöndro* as including 100,000 full-body prostrations, 100,000 recitations of the Triple Refuge, 100,000 *mantra* recitations (likely the Vajrasattva *mantra*), 100,000 *maṇḍala* offerings, and 100,000 *guru yoga* recitations.<sup>39</sup> As with the Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna stages on the path, a vow formally marks one's entry into the Vajrayāna. The *samāya*, or Vajrayāna, vow indicates a complete and unbreakable commitment between a *guru* and the disciple, until enlightenment occurs. By becoming vow-bound with a

Figure 9. Four-Armed Mahākāla (Great Black One) located in *The Great Stupa*'s stairwell. Photograph by Greg Smith.





teacher, one also enters into an intimate relationship with the lineage and stream of teachings and practices that emerge from him or her. In addition to becoming a Vajrayāna practitioner of the Kagyü lineage, Trungpa Rinpoche eventually was empowered by the Gyalwang Karmapa as a Vajrāchārya, “a spiritual master of the highest level,” further confirming his authorization to lead students along the path and through the Vajrayāna.<sup>40</sup> Trungpa Rinpoche’s relationship to the Vajrayāna, therefore, included both his personal path of practice and role as a propagator of the Kagyü lineage. The door behind the Śākyamuni Buddha image is one of the structure’s functional elements. It allows those with permission to enter the monument’s interior Vajrayāna spaces. Within the broader context of a visual *namtar*, however, it can be read as both Trungpa Rinpoche’s personal entrance into the Vajrayāna, and the practice opportunities he provided for his students during his lifetime.

The steep, turning staircase that leads to the interior second level passes by a six-foot tall image of Four-Armed Mahākāla (Great Black One) (Figure 9). Four-Armed Mahākāla, a primary protector of the Surmang Trungpa *tülku*s, held significant import for Trungpa Rinpoche, as indicated by his flight from Tibet at the age of nineteen on April 23, 1959.<sup>41</sup> Leading a large party of approximately one hundred and seventy people, many of them women and children, he carried only his most precious items.<sup>42</sup> Among these was a gilt, copper alloy Four-Armed Mahākāla sculpture that he identified as a protector of Surmang Monastery.<sup>43</sup> This small sculpture was used as a model for the Four-Armed Mahākāla image located in the stairwell between the *stūpa*’s first and second levels. A nephew of Trungpa Rinpoche, Karma Senge Rinpoche of Kyere Monastery, part of the Surmang monasteries, further expressed Trungpa’s connection with this protector. In a 2005 interview, he told of Trungpa Rinpoche’s retreat at Kyere in 1959 and his encounter with Four-Armed Mahākāla shortly before he fled Tibet. When his retreat ended and he began preparations to return to Dütsi Tel, Trungpa Rinpoche had a premonition that his monastery would soon fall under Chinese control. He decided to delay his departure in response to a divination that warned of dangers, despite his monks’ urgent requests for his return and their confident messages that there were “no Chinese at Dütsi Tel.” According to Karma Senge, Trungpa Rinpoche soon thereafter “had a vision of Four-Armed Mahakala .... [at] a high pass called Yul La that you have to cross to get from Kyere to Dütsi Tel. Trungpa Rinpoche saw Four-



Figure 10. Cakrasaṃvara and Vajrayoginī. Detail of the main sculptures on the interior second level. Photograph by Greg Smith.



Armed Mahakala standing on the pass looking in the direction of Kyere, and Four-Armed Mahakala said, ‘Don’t go to Dütsi Tel.’”<sup>44</sup> Shortly thereafter, the Chinese overtook Surmang and seven Chinese officials entered the monastery asking for Trungpa Rinpoche. His monks felt the circumstances matched the prophecy, so they sent word for their abbot to remain at Kyere.

This example demonstrates a practical form of protection that vow-bound beings like Four-Armed Mahākāla offer to the Tibetan Buddhist lineage holders and Vajrayāna practitioners. Trungpa Rinpoche also taught a more inner understanding of the term “protection” when teaching his Western students:

‘Protection’ does not mean securing your safety, but it signifies a reference point, a guideline which reminds you, keeps you in your place, in the open. For instance, there is a mahakala protective divinity called Six-Armed Mahakala who is black in color and stands on Ganesha, the elephant-headed god who here symbolizes subconscious thoughts. The subconscious gossip is an aspect of slothfulness that automatically distracts you from being aware and invites you back to being fascinated by your thoughts and emotions. It especially plays upon the survey nature of your thoughts—intellectual, domestic, emotional thoughts, whatever they may be. The mahakala brings you back to openness. The intent of the symbolism is that the mahakala overpower subconscious gossip by standing on it. The mahakala represents the leap into penetrating awareness.<sup>45</sup>

The Four-Armed Mahākāla sculpture’s presence in the *stūpa*, then, does more than recall important moments in Trungpa Rinpoche’s life story and the *tülku*’s connection within the Kagyü lineage. As part of *The Great Stupa*’s visual narrative, it allows Trungpa Rinpoche’s

students to share in and appreciate aspects of their teacher’s life and his lineage that they also hold. Further, as practitioners entering the monument’s Vajrayāna areas, the Four-Armed Mahākāla sculpture reminds them to awaken into unbiased awareness when they enter the monument’s esoteric spaces.

The Vajrayāna interior spaces, located on the interior second and third levels, are shrine rooms dedicated primarily to Cakrasaṃvara and Vajrasattva, respectively. The *stūpa*’s artists<sup>46</sup> iconographically rendered a three-dimensional Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala (meditation diagram) on the interior second level. Although smaller than the main hall on the first

level, the second level provides Vajrayāna practitioners with enough space to walk about, meditate, study, and engage in group practice. The twelve-foot sculptures of Cakrasaṃvara and Vajrayoginī occupy the room’s central space (Figure 10). These precisely sculpted meditational figures, or *yidam* (*yi dam*), stand in close embrace, symbolizing the inseparable

Figure 11. Offering goddess of the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala. Painting detail located in *The Great Stupa*’s interior, second level shrine room. Photograph by Greg Smith.





Figure 12. Detail of the Vajrasattva and Vajrātopā sculpture on the interior third level. Photograph by Greg Smith.

union of the masculine and feminine principles: *upāya* (skillful means) and *prajñā* (best knowledge or knowing), or *karuṇā* (compassion) and *śūnyatā* (wisdom or emptiness). The experience of their inseparable nature is sometimes translated as luminosity-emptiness. Detailed paintings of offering goddesses and other key *maṇḍala* elements visualized during the practice of the Cakrasaṃvara Sādhana cover the room's walls and ceiling (Figure 11). Cakrasaṃvara symbolism at the *stūpa* also extends beyond the second interior level. The four large, colored gateways on *The Great Stupa*'s exterior signify entrances into a Cakrasaṃvara palace.<sup>47</sup> The symbolic overlay of *maṇḍalas* and *stūpa* architecture can be traced to Buddhist art's early history.<sup>48</sup> In the case

of *The Great Stupa*, the gateways' dramatic presence accentuates the *maṇḍala* symbolism and visually underscores the importance of the Cakrasaṃvara Sādhana in Trungpa Rinpoche's life and lineage.

Several other sources indicate that the Cakrasaṃvara Sādhana was an important practice in Trungpa Rinpoche's life. According to Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, a meditation master who guided Trungpa Rinpoche's students after his death, Trungpa Rinpoche achieved "awakening" on his progressive path through the meditation practice of Cakrasaṃvara.<sup>49</sup>



Figure 13. Padmasambhāva (second from the right) and the eight great Indian *vidyādhara*s. Detail of paintings on the ceiling beam in the interior third level shrine. Photograph by Greg Smith.

Indeed, Khyentse Rinpoche was responsible for specifying that *The Great Stupa* include the unique gateways.<sup>50</sup> The Cakrasaṃvara Sādhana was also widely taught and practiced at Surmang and was, and still is, a central Vajrayāna practice within the Kagyü lineage, in general. In a talk given by Trungpa Rinpoche and transcribed for *The Mishap Lineage: Transforming*



Figure 14. Jamgön Kongtrül of Shechen, Trungpa Rinpoche's root teacher. Photograph by Chögyam Trungpa. Used by permission of Diana J. Mukpo.



continues to describe the dance's main characteristics and symbolism in detail, his affinity for the dance practice, and his accomplishment of memorizing the entire dance. His aspirations to teach the dance, however, were never realized due to the Chinese invasion.<sup>52</sup> According to Fabrice Midal, one of Trungpa Rinpoche's students, in Trungpa Rinpoche's brief life he only transmitted a few of the countless esoteric practice transmissions he received in Tibet to his Western students. The Cakrasamvara Sādhana was one of them. He conferred the Cakrasamvara initiation for the first time in Spring 1986 despite his failing health,<sup>53</sup> indicating the importance of this practice to his own path, his connection to the Kagyü lineage, and his

Vajrāchārya commitment to his students.

The iconography in the *stūpa's* interior third level furthers the message of progressive path and lineage in Trungpa Rinpoche's life. Measuring nineteen feet in diameter and sixteen feet high,<sup>54</sup> the monument's interior third level provides a more intimate space for practice and contains fewer iconographic elements than the second interior shrine room. An over-life-size sculpture of white Vajrasattva and Vajrāṭopā, seated in close embrace, serve as the main image (Figure 12). In describing this *yidam's* symbolism, *The Great Stupa's* commemorative volume uses a quotation from *The Words of My Perfect Teacher* by

Figure 15. Chögyam Trungpa teaching in the presence of his *guru*, Jamgön Kongtrül of Shechen. Photograph by Blair Hansen.

Patrul Rinpoche (1808–1887). In the text, the famous Nyingma teacher states that Vajrasattva and Vajrāṭopā represent primordial purity, which is inseparable from the nature of one's root teacher.<sup>55</sup> The sculpture, therefore, constitutes a preeminent reminder of lineage. That the commemorative text uses a quotation from a nineteenth century Nyingma teacher to describe the image's lineage symbolism strengthens this





connection. Further, Trungpa Rinpoche's students sometimes describe this interior space as a Mahā Ati shrine room and their teacher as a Mahā Ati master.<sup>56</sup> The Atiyogā or Dzogchen (*rdzogs-chen*) practices are not exclusive to, but are often associated with, the Nyingma lineage.

Finally, Padmasambhāva and eight great Indian *vidyādhara*s are depicted in paintings on the ceiling beams (Figure 13). Today, many Tibetans refer to Padmasambhāva as the “second Buddha.” They acknowledge him, in part, for his skillful actions during the first propagation of Buddhism into Tibet, and view him as the first lineage holder of what is later identified as the Nyingma (ancient) lineage. The eight *vidyādhara*s, like Padmasambhava, are early teachers that figure centrally in the Nyingma tradition as holders of the Eight Great Sādhana teachings and are widely respected by the broader Tibetan Buddhist community. These iconographies point to an important non-sectarian aspect of Trungpa Rinpoche's life. Trungpa Rinpoche's connection to the Karma Kagyü lineage has been firmly established. His affiliation with the Nyingma lineage, as suggested by *The Great Stupa*'s interior third level, stems in part from his root *guru* (*tsawé lama, rtsa ba'i bla ma*), Jamgön Kongtrül of Shechen (c. 1901-1960). A prominent teacher from Shechen monastery, one of the six primary Nyingma monasteries, Jamgön Kongtrül had close associations with both Kagyü and Nyingma lineages (Figure 14). This dual lineage affiliation resulted from events that took place in the 19th century.

At a time when powerful monastic leaders refused to transmit teachings outside their lineage, thereby placing many teachings and practices at risk of being lost, three renowned masters—Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Tayé (Jamgön Kongtrül the Great) of the Kagyü lineage (1813-1899), Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo of the Sakya lineage (1820–1892), and



Figure 16. Kālacakra (Wheel of Time) Maṇḍala. Ceiling of the first level interior shrine room. Photograph by Greg Smith.

Chogyur Dechen Lingpa of the Nyingma lineage (1829-1870)—initiated a *ri-me* or “non-sectarian movement.” Their efforts in gathering texts and practice transmissions resulted in large, eclectic anthologies, such as the *Rinchen Terdzö*. Because of their actions, one of Jamgön Kongtrül the Great’s second incarnations, Jamgön Kongtrül of Shechan (Trungpa Rinpoche’s teacher) trained in a *ri-me*-inspired environment. Jamgön Kongtrül of Shechen similarly conferred the full *Rinchen Terdzö* transmission to Trungpa Rinpoche at Shechen Monastery.<sup>57</sup> In addition to his root teacher, Trungpa Rinpoche also studied with other important Nyingma teachers throughout his life, and stressed the significance of the *ri-me* movement to his students. It should be noted that the *ri-me* movement did not develop into an additional sectarian stream. Rather, it cultivated an attitude of tolerance and appreciation among the lineages and preserved many of the transmissions that were nearly lost. When describing the *ri-me* movement, Ringu Tulku states, “Each [lineage] is full of strong points and supported by valid reasoning. If you are well grounded in the presentations of your own tradition, then it is unnecessary to be sectarian.”<sup>58</sup> Trungpa Rinpoche remained rooted in the Kagyü lineage, while simultaneously training in and transmitting Nyingma teach-

Figure 17. Detail of Kālacakra and Vishvamata at the center of the Kālacakra Maṇḍala. Photograph by Janice M. Glowski, 2006.



ings and practices (Figure 15). Indeed, his training took place in *ri-me* milieus. It is not surprising, then, that *ri-me* attitudes permeate *The Great Stupa*’s practice environments. Vajrayāna students of any lineage affiliation

are permitted to enter and practice in the monument’s restricted upper shrine rooms. This non-sectarian setting also extends to the monument’s first level, where the iconography points to a distinctive aspect of Trungpa Rinpoche’s life.

*The Great Stupa*’s visual narrative returns the viewer to the interior first level, where the ceiling painting and main sculpture communicate a traditional Tibetan Buddhist story about an enlightened kingdom called Shambhala. The story symbolizes a unique aspect of Trungpa Rinpoche’s life teachings—the establishment of enlightened society through meditation and social engagement. The story’s symbolic importance in Trungpa Rinpoche’s life is clear, particularly given its iconographic prominence in the reliquary monument. The immense sculpture-reliquary of Śākyamuni, which simultaneously functions as the

main shrine image, commands the space. The towering golden figure draws the eye upward to the ceiling, which is covered by a depiction of the Kālacakra (Wheel of Time) Maṇḍala (Figure 16). Replete with lively figures, animals, wish-fulfilling vases, and other Buddhist symbols, the painting's plethora of color is accentuated by the simplicity of the adjoining white walls. The *maṇḍala*'s main figures, Kālacakra and Viśvamāta, stand in the center of an eight-petalled lotus that floats on a deep blue background (Figure 17). Their presence helps identify the painting as the Kālacakra Maṇḍala. Kālacakra and Viśvamāta hold each other in close embrace, mirroring each other's stance. The *yidam*'s complex iconography includes Kālacakra's twenty-four armed, four-faced, four-colored body (blue, yellow, red and white) and Viśvamāta's eight-armed yellow form.<sup>59</sup> This elaborate painting spreads canopy-like above the Śākyamuni sculpture.

When considered together, the Kālacakra Maṇḍala painting and the Śākyamuni sculpture iconographically reference a popular Tibetan Buddhist story of enlightened rulership and the Kingdom of Shambhala.<sup>60</sup> In a well-known Tibetan legend, King Dawa Sangpo, a great monarch and first ruler of the legendary Kingdom of Shambhala, requested teachings from the Buddha that would allow the king to advance spiritually without becoming a monk and foregoing his responsibilities as a monarch. The Buddha responded to Dawa Sangpo's request by imparting the Kālacakra Tantra to him, which he diligently practiced, thereby ultimately attaining realization. The citizens of Shambhala, benefitting from enlightened rulership, enjoyed great peace and prosperity. Dawa Sangpo's story describes a practitioner fully engaged in meditation training, while simultaneously remaining in society rather than entering a monastic path. This model matches the paradigm expressed in Trungpa Rinpoche's twentieth century Shambhala instructions that are among the most important practices and lineage threads in his *namtar*.<sup>61</sup>

The history of Trungpa Rinpoche's Shambhala-related teachings begins with his role as a *tertön* (*gter ston*) or treasure revealer. Trungpa Rinpoche is said to have received numerous *terma* (*gter ma*) or hidden treasures related to Shambhala throughout his lifetime, including introductory and advanced teachings and practices on the cultivation of enlightened society.<sup>62</sup> In Tibet, the recipient of *terma* becomes the first lineage holder of the practices that were transmitted. Trungpa Rinpoche, therefore, is the first lineage holder of the Shambhala teachings and practices that he received. Following Trungpa Rinpoche's death, his eldest son, Sakyang Mipham Rinpoche, became the main holder of the Shambhala lineage.

Although Trungpa Rinpoche continued to transmit the Buddhist teachings until the time of his death, he dedicated significant amounts of time during his last ten years transmitting the Shambhala teachings and practices he had received as *terma*. The Shambhala *terma* resonates with Tibetan Buddhism, but it has distinctively secular characteristics.<sup>63</sup> In this "sacred secular" path, individuals wishing to undertake meditation training can be from any religious tradition. Today, the Shambhala teachings and practices mark the community's commitment to social change,<sup>64</sup> as accomplished through personal meditation training and social engagement, which is referred to as a path of "warriorship."<sup>65</sup> Through practice and social engagement rather than monastic life,<sup>66</sup> the Shambhala community, like Dawa Sangpo, intends to engage fully in both meditation practice and society. The story of Dawa Sangpo, then, serves as a paradigm that exemplifies Trungpa Rinpoche's aspiration for the realization of enlightened society through a personal commitment to meditation.

Chögyam Trungpa's rich and varied life began in a remote, nomadic region of Eastern Tibet and unfolded as he travelled across the globe. Detailing only his major life events, including his work in a refugee camp in India, academic study at Oxford University in England, establishment of Naropa University in Colorado, and creation of retreat and medita-



tion centers throughout the world could fill volumes. Such work has already begun through written biographies, memoirs, and online chronicle projects, to name just a few.<sup>67</sup> But if one had to capture the most essential aspects of his life—from a traditional Tibetan Buddhist perspective—and convey their import through the mediums of concrete, clay and paint, the final product would look a lot like *The Great Stupa of Dharmakaya* in Red Feather Lakes, Colorado. This visual biography of a Tibetan *tülku*'s life, which spanned three continents, selectively focuses on the meditation practices and lineage affiliations that provided continuity throughout his journey. Like written *namtars*, *The Great Stupa* records these important aspects of Trungpa Rinpoche's life with the intention of teaching and inspiring future practitioners. Through its artistic forms, one can learn about key elements of this renowned teacher's biography while glimpsing two essential aspects of Tibetan Buddhism: lineage and the progressive path of meditation.

Readers of written Tibetan *namtars* connect to a teacher's life narrative through words and mental images, visualizing the journey in their minds. Visitors to *The Great Stupa*, on the other hand, physically encounter the teacher's presence and artworks that convey his life story. In walking through the eastern entrance, they enter the *guru*'s mind, as Tibetans often say. Religion scholar John Strong's suggestion that the Buddha's relics are "an expression and extension of the Buddha's biological process"<sup>68</sup> corroborates the notion that a Buddhist reliquary can function as biography. From this perspective, Trungpa Rinpoche's skull-relic could similarly be viewed as an extension of his biological life. *The Great Stupa*'s visual *namtar*, then, would be the biography that provides historical context for Chögyam Trungpa's ongoing life narrative.

#### NOTES

1. Chögyam Trungpa, *The Mishap Lineage: Transforming Confusion into Wisdom* (Boston & London, Shambhala Publication, Inc., 2009), 3.
2. Unless otherwise noted, the information contained in this paper is based largely on several site visits to *The Great Stupa*, which began in December 1999. I extend my appreciation to the Shambhala *saṅgha* for their generosity and numerous formal and informal conversations with me. I especially would like to thank Carolyn Gimian, Larry Mermelstein, Greg Smith, Joanne Fordham, Joshua Mulder, and Hellen Newland (editors, translators, artists and senior students of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche) for reading draft versions of this article and offering many invaluable suggestions. The research presented here is part of a larger, global study of Tibetan Buddhist *stūpas* in the diaspora.
3. Shambhala. <http://www.shambhala.org> (accessed December 21, 2012).
4. Shambhala Mountain Center. <http://www.shambhalamountain.org/> (accessed January 12, 2013).
5. The iconometrics used for *The Great Stupa* were taken from the teachings of 19th century Tibetan master Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Tayé. Personal communication, Larry Mermelstein. For further information on *stūpa* guidelines and other fine arts iconometrics, see Jamgon Kongtrül Lodro Taye, *The Treasury of Knowledge, Book Six, Parts One and Two: Indo-Tibetan Classical Learning and Buddhist Phenomenology*. Gyurme Dorje, ed. and trans., Kalu Rinpoche Translation Group. (Boston: Snow Lion Publications, 2012), 177-291.
6. Adrian Snodgrass, *The Symbolism of the Stūpa* (1985, reprint, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1992), 360-365.
7. A richly illustrated commemorative publication for the 2001 consecration ceremony describes the monument's history, construction and symbolism. See *The Great Stupa of Dharmakaya Which Liberates Upon Seeing* (Boulder, CO: Vajradhatu Stupa Publication, 2000).
8. This article addresses some of *The Great Stupa*'s formal and material innovations that resulted from its historical context. It should be noted that broader social, economic, political, and cultural circumstances affected Tibetan *stūpas* built in the diaspora. The impact of these factors on the monuments and their related communities is also an important research area. For an example of this emerging field of study, see Sally McAra, "Buddhifying Australia: Multicultural Capital and Buddhist Material Culture in Rural Victoria" in *Buddhism in Australia: Traditions in Change*, Cristina Rocha, Michelle Barker, eds. (Oxon, UK and New York: Routledge, 2011), 63-73.
9. *The Great Stupa of Dharmakaya Which Liberates Upon Seeing*, 43.
10. *The Great Stupa of Dharmakaya Which Liberates Upon Seeing*, 80.
11. *The Great Stupa of Dharmakaya Which Liberates Upon Seeing*, 53-55.
12. Sir Alexander Cunningham, *The Stūpa of Bharhut: A Buddhist Monument Ornamented with Numerous Sculptures Illustrative of Buddhist Legend and History in the Third Century BC* (1879, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1998).

13. See for example Jamgön Ju Mipham Gyatso's (1846-1912) writings on *Stūpa* construction in Robert Beer, *The Encyclopedia of Tibetan Symbols and Motifs*, 4th ed. (Chicago: Serindia Publications, 2004) and Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Taye noted previously.
14. Chögyam Trungpa was cremated at Karmê Chöling, a Shambhala retreat center in Vermont. The *purkhang* (*pur khang*), a *stūpa*-like monument used for the cremation, still stands as an object of veneration at the site.
15. Personal communication. Also see *The Great Stupa Which Liberates Upon Seeing*, 23-27.
16. Chögyam Trungpa, "First Shambhala Day Address: Year of the Earth Horse." 1978. *The Chronicles Project*. MP3 file. [http://www.chronicleproject.com/stories\\_342.html](http://www.chronicleproject.com/stories_342.html) (accessed December 3, 2012). For a thorough discussion of spiritual materialism, a term coined by Trungpa Rinpoche, see Chögyam Trungpa, *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism* (1973, Boston & London: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 2008).
17. Tibetans also acknowledge the attainments of meditators who are not part of Śākyamuni Buddha's lineage, such as the *pratyekabuddhas*. See Reginald Ray, *Indestructible Truth: The Living Spirituality of Tibetan Buddhism* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2000), 74, 81.
18. For a brief introduction to Tibetan Buddhism's historical place among Buddhist traditions in Asia, see Donald S. Lopez, Jr., "Introduction: The Buddhism of Milarepa" in *The Life of Milarepa* by Tsangnyön Heruka, Andrew Quintman, trans. (New York: Penguin Group, 2010), ix-xviii.
19. J. D. Willis, "On the Nature of rNam-thar: Early dGe-lugs-pa Siddha Biographies," in *Soundings in Tibetan Civilization*, Barbara Nimri Aziz and Matthew Kapstein, eds. (1982, Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1985), 304-319. For information on the Tibetan language transliteration systems used here, see The Tibetan and Himalayan Library, <http://www.thlib.org/reference/transliteration/> (accessed March 14, 2013).
20. These constitute the "three jewels" of Buddhism, the Buddha, the *dharmā*, and the *saṅgha*. These become the objects of refuge once a practitioner has taken the Refuge Vow. In the Vajrayāna context, the objects of refuge become the *guru* (teacher), the *yidam* (meditation being), and the *dharmapāla* or *dākinī* (protectors).
21. Tsaltrim Allione, *Women of Wisdom*, (Ithaca: Snowlion Publications, 2000), 131. Eva Dargyay discusses the inspirational power of *namtar*, particularly as they are used to describe the reigns of Tibetan kings who supported the *Buddhadharma* and became known as *dharmarājās*. See Eva Dargyay, "Strong-Btsam Sgam-po of Tibet: Bodhisattva and King," in *Monks and Magicians: Religious Biographies in Asia*, by Phyllis Emily Granoff, Koichi Shinohara, eds. (1988, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1994), 99-113.
22. Tsangnyön Heruka, *The Life of Milarepa*.
23. Dilgo Khyentse, *Brilliant Moon: The Autobiography of Dilgo Khyentse*, Ani Jinba Palmo, trans., Michael Tweed, ed. (Boston & London: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 2008).
24. The historical development of the three-*yāna* system in Tibet and its relationship to Indian Buddhism, including terms like *Hinayāna*, *Theravāda* and *Mahāyāna* is complex. For a summary discussion see John Powers, *Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism* (1995, Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 2007). For a thorough discussion of Tibetan Buddhism's three-*yāna* progressive path of meditation, including the view, practices and fruitions of each *yāna*, see Reginald Ray, *Indestructible Truth*.
25. For a detailed outline of the *Hinayāna* stages of meditation and their outcomes, see John Powers, 81-94.
26. For a detailed outline of the *Mahāyāna* stages of meditation and their outcomes, see John Powers, 94-109.
27. Chögyam Trungpa, *Born in Tibet* (1966, Boston & London: Shambhala Publication, Inc., 2000), 25-26.
28. Greg Zwahlen, "The Shambhala Sangha and Tibet: A Brief History," in *The Dot: The Newspaper of Shambhala* vol. 6, no. 1 (Spring 2008), 1, 6-7. See also Chögyam Trungpa, *The Mishap Lineage: Transforming Confusion into Wisdom*, 20-23.
29. Chögyam Trungpa, *Born in Tibet*, 29.
30. The actual refuge ceremony was likely more elaborate than Trungpa Rinpoche's simple description suggests, given that most Tibetan Buddhist ceremonies incorporate music, chanting, special dress, and the presence of meditation masters and other community members. But, as with most Tibetan biographies, the author conveys only the essential aspects of the teacher's life.
31. Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices* (1990, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 208-209.
32. Chögyam Trungpa, *Born in Tibet*, 121.
33. *The Great Stupa of Dharmakaya Which Liberates Upon Seeing*, 29.
34. For the Four Noble Truths as expounded in the Pali Canon, see Pali Canon Online. <http://www.palikanon.org/en/sutta-pitaka/transcribed-suttas/majjhima-nikaya/108-mn-141-saccavibhanga-sutta-the-exposition-of-truths.html> (accessed January 3, 2013).
35. Chögyam Trungpa, *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*, 177-194.
36. Chögyam Trungpa, *Born in Tibet*, 115.
37. Chögyam Trungpa, *Born in Tibet*, 56.
38. *The Great Stupa of Dharmakaya Which Liberates Upon Seeing*, 80. As part of the monument's speech consecration ceremony held in 2006, archival CDs of Trungpa Rinpoche's teachings, numbering approximately 3,000 lectures, ceremonies and other events, were installed elsewhere in the *stūpa*. Today, an MP3 player continuously plays Trungpa Rinpoche's teachings.
39. Chögyam Trungpa, *Born in Tibet*, 57.
40. Chögyam Trungpa, *Born in Tibet*, 261.
41. Chögyam Trungpa, *Born in Tibet*, 164.
42. Chögyam Trungpa, *Born in Tibet*, 205. Oral histories of the escape frequently state that three hundred refugees were in Trungpa Rinpoche's group.

43. For a photograph of the sculpture brought by Trungpa Rinpoche from Surmang, see [http://www.archives.shambhala.org/gallery\\_surm.php](http://www.archives.shambhala.org/gallery_surm.php) (accessed December 12, 2012).
44. Nalanda Translation Committee. <http://nalandatranslation.org/projects/articles/karma-senge-rinpoche-on-kyere-monastery-and-trungpa-rinpoche/> (accessed January 5, 2013).
45. Chögyam Trungpa, *The Collected Works of Chögyam Trungpa, Volume 3*. Carolyn Rose Gimian, ed. (Boston: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 2004), 172.
46. Trungpa Rinpoche's western students, with some assistance from Bhutanese sculptors, were the primary artists of *The Great Stupa's* artwork. Personal communication with Greg Smith.
47. *The Great Stupa of Dharmakaya Which Liberates Upon Seeing*, 53.
48. Adrian Snodgrass, 129-131.
49. Jeremy Hayward, *Warrior-King of Shambhala: Remembering Chögyam Trungpa* (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2008), 359.
50. *The Great Stupa of Dharmakaya Which Liberates Upon Seeing*, 53.
51. Chögyam Trungpa, *The Mishap Lineage*, 87.
52. Chögyam Trungpa, *The Mishap Lineage*, 89.
53. Personal communication.
54. Shambhala Mountain Center. <http://www.shambhalamountain.org/great-Stupa/great-Stupa-symbolism> (accessed January 2, 2013).
55. See Patrul Rinpoche, *The Words of My Perfect Teacher: A Complete Translation of a Classic Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism*, Padmakara Translation Group, trans. (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2004), 226.
56. Personal communications.
57. Chögyam Trungpa, *Born in Tibet*, 74.
58. Ringu Tulku, *The Ri-me Philosophy of Jamgön Kongtrul the Great: A Study of the Buddhist Lineages of Tibet*, Ann Helm, ed. (Boston & London: Shambhala Publications, 2006), Chapter 1.
59. For a didactic, three-dimensional visual modeling and discussion of the Kālacakra Maṇḍala, see The Kālacakra Maṇḍala. <http://www.cs.cornell.edu/~kb/mandala/> (accessed February 3, 2013).
60. For a discussion of western and traditional views about the Kālacakra, see Roger Jackson, "The Kalachakra in Context" in Geshe Lundup Sopa and Roger Jackson, *The Wheel of Time: The Kalachakra in Context* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 1985), 1-50.
61. For an oral history describing Trungpa Rinpoche's commitment to the cultivation of enlightened society, see Hayward, 246.
62. For examples of Trungpa's Shambhala *terma* transmissions in the United States, as conveyed through oral histories, see Hayward, 140-141, 250-253. In addition, according to oral histories, before Trungpa Rinpoche left Tibet he began receiving Shambhala *terma*. These included a several hundred-paged *terma* text, later referred to as *The Golden Dot: The Epic of Lha, the Annals of the Shambhala Kingdom*. The text, unfortunately, was lost during his escape from the Chinese. Trungpa Rinpoche rewrote only the first two chapters. Dr. Robin Kornman, a scholar of comparative literature who analyzed the chapters, states that they draw primarily on "...the creation myths found in Tibetan royal chronicles and in the *Epic of Gesar of Ling*. These literary works evoke the cosmology of indigenous Tibetan traditions, rather than Buddhism." The story of King Dawa Sangpo and his Shambhala Kingdom, as communicated through *The Great Stupa's* first level iconography, similarly draws on ancient metaphors of enlightened kingship. See Robin Kornman, "The Influence of the Epic of King Gesar of Ling on Chogyam Trungpa" in *Recalling Chogyam Trungpa*, Fabrice Midal, ed. (Boston & London: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 2005), 363-364.
63. To clarify, the Kālacakra Tantra was transmitted and widely taught in India and Tibet from an earlier date and is not part of Trungpa Rinpoche's Shambhala *terma*. See John R. Newman, "A Brief History of the Kalachakra Tantra," in Geshe Lundup Sopa and Roger Jackson, 51-91.
64. For a compelling discussion of Shambhala society through the lens of comparative social and political philosophy, see David Cummisky, "Comparative Reflections on Buddhist Political Thought: Aośka, Shambhala & the General Will" in *A Companion to Buddhist Philosophy*, Steven Emmanuel, ed. (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell Publisher, 2013), 536-552.
65. Shambhala. [http://www.shambhala.org/about\\_shambhala.php](http://www.shambhala.org/about_shambhala.php) (accessed January 23, 2013).
66. The Shambhala *saṅgha* includes a monastic community, located at Gampo Abbey in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, which hosts a three-year retreat center called Söpa Chöling. The majority of Shambhala practitioners, however, are householder-practitioners. Not all, but many, of the Shambhala householder-practitioners engage in Vajrayāna teachings and practices, including those visually articulated at *The Great Stupa*.
67. For example, see The Chronicles of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. <http://www.chronicleproject.com> and The Chögyam Trungpa Legacy Project. <http://www.chogyamtrungpa.com>.
68. John Strong, *Relics of the Buddha* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 5.