TREASURES FROM MONGOLIA
Buddhist Sculpture
from the School of Zanabazar

exhibition
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Monday to Saturday
9:30 am to 6:00 pm
Sunday 12 noon to 5:00 pm

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Introduction
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We are delighted to present this exhibition of Mongolian sculpture from the school of Zanabazar. The 17th and 18th centuries were a period of cultural reinvention in East Asia, much of it inspired by Mongol ideas. Zanabazar (1635-1723), a direct descendant of Chinggis Khan (ca. 1162-1227), was an inspirational and important figure, remarkable as a monk, artist and engineer. He became the religious ruler of Mongolia and had a great influence on religious, social and political affairs and significantly contributed to the development of the arts in the country. It is rare for artists to be identified in Buddhist art and undoubtedly Zanabazar was one of the greatest. He was highly skilful in bronze casting and his long and prolific career exemplifies a cultural movement that swept over Mongolia, Tibet and the Manchu court of China.

This catalogue and exhibition offer an extraordinary opportunity to see a considerable number of outstanding Mongolian sculptures of various Buddhist subjects. The gilded sculptures, made for both private devotion and for monasteries, are all in fine condition. Formerly in a private collection, the sculptures are unpublished and have never before been exhibited.

We would like to thank Gilles Beguin, Conservateur General du Musée Cernuschi, Paris, for writing the introductory essay. The entries to the catalogue are by Inne Broos, Sylvie Sauveniere has translated the inscriptions on cat. no. 16 and Edward O'Neill has helped with identification of Iconography. The whole text has been edited by Donald Dinwiddie. We would like to thank also Sir Robert Bruce-Gardner and Keith Mitchell for the skilful conservation work and Colin Bowles for the mounting. Keith Davey at Prudence Cuming is responsible for the sensitive photography, Silvia Gaspardo Moro has designed the elegant catalogue. Finally, we wish to thank Sophie Weldon for her support and Barbara Mathes for her friendship.

Anna Maria Rossi
Fabio Rossi
March 2005
ZANABAZAR ET SON TEMPS

Zanabazar (1635-1723) domine l'histoire de la Mongolie du XVIIe siècle. Pontife de l'église lamaïque mongole, il s'illustra dans de nombreux autres domaines dont la politique, les belles lettres et les arts, à la manière des personnalités protéiformes de la Renaissance occidentale. Si son œuvre picturale semble à tout jamais disparue, on lui attribue un petit nombre de sculptures au style caractéristique. Afin de mieux les apprécier, il convient de dresser un court panorama historique.

LA MONGOLIE AU XVIIe SIECLE

Trois grands traits caractérisent la Mongolie au XVIIe siècle.

MUTATION POLITIQUE AU TIBET
L'implantation de l'ordre de dGe-lugs-pa fut dans un premier temps difficile. La nouvelle église se heurta à la secte des Karma-pa, très puissante au Tibet méridional (province du Tsang). Cette rivalité dégénéra en conflit armé à partir de 1610, l'aristocratie du Tibet central (province du dBus) soutenant les dGe-lugs-pa s'opposant à celle du Tibet méridional favorable au Karma-pa.
La multiplication des liens avec les khans mongols s'explique en partie par la recherche d'alliés politiques hors du Tibet même, et non exclusivement, par la nature universelle et missionnaire du message bouddhique. Dans cette recherche, le dGe-lugs-pa se montrèrent plus habiles que les autres ordres monastiques.
Les troupes de Güskri-khan (1582-1655), chef des Koshüt, unifieront le Tibet en 1642 pour le compte du Ve Dalai-lama (1617-1682). Cette campagne victorieuse permettra d'imposer la théocratie des Dalai-lamas, mais cette alliance mortifère avec les Oïrats, fut l'une des causes de l'intervention chinoise de 1720, première étape de la perte de souveraineté du Tibet.

TARANATHA EN MONGOLIE
C'est dans ce contexte de domination du Tibet par des dGe-lugs-pa qu'il faut interpréter le voyage en pays khalkha de Taranatha (1575-1634?), le supérieur de l'ordre des Jo-nang-pa, à la fin de sa vie. On ignore les circonstances qui entourèrent cette invitation mais on presse le climat qui marqua son départ du Tibet. Taranatha, considéré comme l'incarnation d'un des disciples du bouddha Sakyamuni, fut l'une des figures les plus brillantes de son temps. Il avait repris le nom d'un antique historien indien. Comme ce dernier, il rédigea une Histoire du bouddhisme indien, œuvre la plus célèbre de son importante production littéraire. Son monastère, Jo-nang, était célèbre entre autres pour son sku-bum, consacré en 1330.
1635-1650 : L’ENFANCE DE ZANABAZAR

La biographie de Zanabazar nous est connue par deux textes principaux : tout d’abord La Vie du Pontife, rédigé en tibétain par Ngag-gi dbang-po en 1839 et dont une traduction en mongol est conservée à la Bibliothèque nationale d’Ulan Batar. Également L’Histoire des Sept premiers Jetsün dambo-khutukhnu dont le manuscrit est conservé à la bibliothèque de Hohhot (Köke-khota) en Mongolie intérieure. Ces textes hagiographiques à la manière tibétaine comprennent cependant trop d’événements miraculeux et de contradictions pour être utilisés sans de grandes réserves.

Un an après la mort de Taranatha naîssait, en 1635, le futur Zanabazar. Son grand père, Abaï-khan, avait introduit le bouddhisme tibétain en pays khalkha.

Son père, Gambo-dorji, régnait sur le Tughietu’-khan qui comprenait les terres sacrées des Mongols. À l’âge de trois ans, l’enfant fut reconnu comme l’incarnation du prestigieux maître tibétain. Il reçut alors le titre de Jhanaka Vajra, « Vajra de Connaissance », soit en mongol « Zanabazar ». Désigné dans la tradition lamaïque mongole par l’héritière Jetsün dambo-khutukhu, il ne sera appelé par le seul nom de Zanabazar, le plus modeste de sa riche titulature, qu’au XXe siècle par les historiens commu-
nistes. C’est sous ce vocable qu’il est aujourd’hui internationalement connu.

Le frère aîné de Zanabazar succédait à Gambo-dorji comme khan du Tughietu’-khan à la manière d’un deva roja, lui-même, en tant que dharma roja, assurant la souveraineté spirituelle.

Vers 1639, le monastère de Puchuglin sur lequel régnait l’enfant changea d’obédience et devint dGe-
lugs-pa. Il portera désormais le nom de Gamdan, allusion au célèbre monastère de dGal-idan, fondé par Tsong Khapa en 1409 au Tibet central et l’une des principales institutions dGe-lugs-pa. Dans quelles conditions eut lieu cette mutation ?

Les textes parlent d’une conversion « avec violence ». Cette remarque correspond elle à la réalité histo-
rique ou n’est-elle qu’une volonté de dramatiser le récit ? De quels moyens disposait le Ve Dalai-lama avant sa victoire incontestée de 1642 pour imposer sa volonté aussi loin de Lhasa ?


Les problèmes que pose son inscription au cycle textuel et rituel de Mahakala sont du même ordre. De quelle forme de Mahakala s’agit-il ? La présence à Erdeni-zü et au musée des Beaux Arts d’Ulan Batar de statuettes de style « népalais » en soapstone de Gur-yl mgon-po attestent de la présence en Mongolie à date ancienne de cet aspect précis du dieu, considéré comme divinité protectrice des Sa-
skya-pa, donc des jo-nang-pa.

1649-1651 : LE VOYAGE AU TIBET

Un « grand tour » sur le plateau tibétain devait achever la formation du jeune moine et faire authenti-
fier sa vérité de sa filiation spirituelle. Ainsi en 1649, Zanabazar et sa suite s’éloignèrent en A-mdo. En 1650, il se rend en pèlerinage à sBu-rbum (Taer-sil), lieu de naissance du réformateur Tsong Khapa. En 1651, il gagne bKa’ra-shis lhun-po au Tibet méridional.

Il y est reçu par le premier Panchen Lama, maître du Ve Dalai-lama, bLo-bzang chos-kyi rgyal-mtshan (1569-1662) qui l’initie au cycle du dieu tutélaire Mahavajrabhairava et le reconnaît comme l’incarna-

Le jeune mongol parcourut ensuite le Tibet, visitant les monastères qu’il avait fondé dans ses diverses vies antérieures et bien évidemment les couvents fondés ou dirigés par Taranatha lui-même. En 1651, ce périple achevé, Zanabazar regagna la Mongolie accompagné de cinquante moines dGe-
lugs-pa, dont plusieurs artisans dont un peintre, originaire de sPyaangs-yas au Yar-klungs.
1651-1688 : LES ANNEES DE MATURITE

Les années qui suivent le retour de Zanabazar au Tibet seront les plus fertiles. En tant que chef (head) de l'église mongole, son action religieuse prime sur toutes les autres : fondation de nombreuses communautés, telles celle de Tökvin à sud de l'Altai, enseignements et, en 1657, création à Erdeni-zü de la grande procession de Maitreya, le bouddha des Temps futurs, accompagné d'un ‘Cham’. Quatre domaines retiennent également son attention: Comme la plupart des pontifes tibétains de l'époque, il consacre une part importante de son temps à la rédaction d'ouvrages religieux et spéculatifs. Afin d'aider à la traduction de textes sacrés en mongol, il créa un alphabet (éphémère!) qui permettait de transcrire de manière phonétique le sanskrit, le tibétain et le mongol.

Sa renommée en tant qu'architecte fut grande. Les nombreuses mentions de lieux dans ses biographies et leurs descriptions posent de délicats problèmes d'interprétation puisque les communautés monastiques étaient itinérantes, tributaires des aires de parage des troupeaux qui leur assuraient leur survie. Ainsi le monastère de Yekhe (Da) Küriye changea seize fois d'emplacement de 1719 à 1778, date de son implantation définitive à Urga (Ulan Batar). Ces constructions ont pu être de deux ordres : soient fixes à la manière d’Erdeni-zü, la communauté campant à des périodes plus ou moins régulières près de ces petits bâtiments « en dur » entourés de vastes enclos. Soient mobiles, donc démontables et transportables. Lors de la création de son propre monastère de Yeke Küriye (1654), plus connu sous le nom de Da Küriye, il conçut une salle de réunion, la Bat Chagan, « La Blanche et La Solide » qui pouvait abriter jusqu'à deux mille personnes. On sait par les textes que de telles tentes existaient à la période Gengiskhanide mais Zanabazar, avec habileté, pouvait élargir un volume central grâce à des auvents. Cette salle servit de modèle à des constructions véritables à la fin du XVIIIe et au XIXe siècles.

Les peintures exécutées par le maître étaient louées par les contemporains mais rien ne subsiste de cet aspect de l’œuvre. Les thang-ka présentée comme des copies d'originaux de Zanabazar sont bien décevant.

A l'opposé, une partie de l’œuvre sculptée est conservée. Malgré le petit nombre de références dans ses biographies, le souvenir en est conservé vivace jusqu'à nos jours, même durant la période communiste. Les communautés nouvellement fondées étaient dotées d'un ensemble complet de statues en métal doré, parfois relativement de grande taille, toutes fabriquées sous la supervision du maître, si ce n'est par lui-même. Zanabazar possédait en effet des connaissances techniques approfondies dans l'art de la fonderie, de la reparture et de la dorure. Il exécuta en 1652 un stûpa afin de conserver les reliques de Taranatha. On peut supposer qu'il réalisait un grand mChod-rten portatif, permettant à la communauté de Gandan de l'empporter partout avec elle sur un chariot. D'autres statues étaient offertes. On relate entre autres plusieurs envois à Boshgotu, chef de mongols occidentaux Jüüngar (r. 1671-1697). En 1683, il offrit une statue au monastère de Bya-khyung en A-mdo.

1688-1723 : LA CRISE DE 1688 ET SES SUITES

Au XVIIe siècle, l’est de l’espace mongol dû faire face à trois dangers. Au sud tout d’abord, les Mongols méridionaux qui occupaient les terres les plus riches tombèrent sous la coupe des Mandchous in 1634-1635. Lorsque ces derniers prirent le pouvoir en Chine en 1644, ils organisèrent la Mongolie méridionale en Mongolie intérieure, jouissant d'une organisation administrative spécifique au sein de l'Empire chinois.

Au nord, à partir des années 1670, la pression de plus en plus grande de la Russie constituait une menace latente. Parallèlement, les Mongols occidentaux, de plus en plus agressifs, entreprénaient d’unifier l’ensemble des tribus, premiers pas vers la reconstitution de l’Empire de Gengis Khan.
En 1688, les Oirats se lancèrent à l'assaut du pays khalkha, mettant en déroute les seigneurs locaux, pillant et détruisant tout sur leur passage, atteignant même Erdeni-zu. La situation était désespérée, Zanabazar conseilla à son frère de faire appel à l'empereur de Chine. Kangxi (r. 1672-1722) réunit en 1691 les seigneurs khalkha à Dolon-nûr, important centre lamaïque de Mongolie intérieure et résidence d'été du Grand Lama de Beijing. Lors de cette convention, les seigneurs khalkha reconnurent la suzeraineté de l'empereur. La Mongolie septentrionale entra alors dans l'orbite chinoise. Elle y restera jusqu'en 1911, désignée par l'expression « Mongolie extérieure ».


L'ŒUVRE SCULPTÉE
La quarantaine de sculptures conservées dans les musées d'Ulan Bâtar et au monastère de Gandan constituent le « noyau dur » de l'œuvre. La plupart de ces pièces a été sélectionnée dans les années trente par un comité d'experts avant la destruction quasi-totaile du patrimoine religieux durant la période stalinienne. Toutes ont été exécutées selon une technique bien particulière et témoignent d'un style original, bien reconnaissable. Cette technique et ce style contrastent avec la production artistique du Tibet central à la même époque. Cette période voit l'agrandissement du Jo-khlang de Lhasa (1642 à 1653), l'érection du Palais blanc du Potala (1645-1648), puis du Palais rouge (à partir de 1682). Le style des nombreuses sculptures de ces aménagements pourrait être défini comme une sorte de « classicisme éclectique ». Elles se distinguent également de la production sino-tibétaine habituelle, exécutées dans les ateliers de la région de Beijing et de Dolon-nûr. Les divinités de Zanabazar sont fondées d'une seule coulée. De fines soudures les relient à leurs socles. Cette techni- que ne se rencontre pas alors en pays lamaïque. Ainsi au Tibet au XVIIe siècle, les statues entière- ment coulées sont de petite taille. Des tenons permettent de les fixer sur leur socle.

Depuis la fin du XVe siècle, on privilégia pour les pièces de grande taille l'assemblage de plaques mises en forme par le procédé du repoussé ou une juxtaposition de parties coulées et d'éléments au repoussé. Les praticiens des manufactures chinoises usent des mêmes procédés. Les statues de Zanabazar sont dorées. Une dorure vive, à l'amalgame de mercure, recouvre les parures, les vê- tements et les soubassements. Quant aux chairs, elles sont recouvertes d'une peinture à l'or mat, rehaussée sur les visages d'une discrète polychromie.

La perfection plastique de ses œuvres, le raffinement et la variété des bijoux, la subtilité des drapés en font l'un des sommets de l'art lamaïque. Le nombre limité de déités concernées et l'aspect paisible de leur iconographie ne couvrent qu'une infime partie du vaste panthéon lamaïque.
Cette constatation est en contradiction avec les sources écrites qui rapportent la fabrication de nombreux personnages à l'aspect courroucé dont une dakini rouge, buveuse de sang, aussi grande qu'une fillette de trois ans et un Mahakala. On peut supposer que cet aspect partiel de l'œuvre résulte de choix de la commission d'experts communistes, déroutés par des formes artistiques jugées alors laides, indécentes ou d'apparence « diabolique », témoignages des superstitions les plus extrêmes. Stylisliquement, les statues de Zanabazar présentent une synthèse d'esthétiques anciennes, modulées en fonction de l'iconographie. Ces inflexions subtiles renvoient à des modèles différents qui ont inspiré le « classicisme éclectique » de l'art du Tibet central. Elles renvoient à des poncifs « pala international » et népalais, en particulier pour la joaillerie. Ils témoignent d'une connaissance de l'art bouddhique chinois dans le rendu des drapés et dans le traitement de certains socles en forme de lotus épanoui. Aucun lien cependant avec le style bien reconnaissable des bronzes des époques Yongle (r. 1403-1425) et Xuande (r. 1426-1435) n'est décelable.

Telle quelle l'œuvre pose de nombreux problèmes : tout d'abord la formation de Zanabazar et le rôle qu'à pu jouer dans sa connaissance des styles anciens de l'art tibétain l'héritage intellectuel de Taranatha, grand esthète au goût archaïsant. Ensuite les conditions d'exécution des statues, nécessairement entre autre l'accumulation d'une grande quantité de combustible, s'accordent mal avec le caractère itinérant des communautés monastiques dont Da Kūrīye. Il est possible que les longs mois d'hiver où les troupeaux étaient rassemblés aux pieds des montagnes aient permis de résoudre cette énigme : séditionarisation temporaire, abandon de bois et de minéraux dans des massifs tel l'Altai. L'œuvre apparaît d'une cohérence parfaite sans qu'il soit encore possible d'établir une chronologie relative. Par leur taille, la plupart des œuvres conservées dans les musées d'Ulaan Batar ont dû participer à l'aménagement des salles d'assemblées et des chapelles majeures des communautés monastiques les plus importantes dont Da Kūrīye elle-même située depuis 1788 à l'emplACEMENT du centre d'Ulaan Batar. À ce corpus initial, s'ajoutent un nombre toujours plus grand, grâce à l'acquisition de nombreuses œuvres de qualité réalisées par les plus grands artistes du monde lamaïque.

Gilles Béguin
Paris, 2005
ZANABAZAR AND HIS TIMES
Zanabazar (1635-1723) dominates the history of Mongolia of the seventeenth century. He was leader of the Mongolian lamaistic church and distinguished himself in numerous other domains—for example, politics, literature and the arts—in the way of the great multifaceted Renaissance masters such as Leonardo Da Vinci. Although his pictorial œuvre seems to be completely lost, a small number of sculptures, in a characteristic style, are attributed to him. To better understand these pieces, one needs to present a short historical overview.

MONGOLIA IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Three great movements characterised sixteenth-century Mongolia. Around 1500, the different Mongolian clans made a definitive division of the immense territory of Central Asia that fell under their control. In the western regions, the most powerful of the clans, amongst which were the Torgut and Koshut, formed the Western Mongolia (Oirat). At the eastern edges of Mongol land, near the territory of the Chinese Ming empire (1368-1644), the Tumet, Chakhar and Ordos formed the Southern Mongols. The Khalkha, the dominant population of the Mongolian republic today, settled in the northern regions, which include the holy lands of the Orkhon basin. All the clan heads entertained a profound nostalgia for the glorious era of Ghenghis Khan and the period of empire. They still attributed a great prestige to the title of ‘Khan’ and dreamed of assembling all the tribes in order to reconstitute a unified empire of the Steppes. Amongst all these great clans it was the Borjigin who held direct descent from Ghenghis Khan and who would in time eclipse all the other aristocratic houses. The conversion of the Mongol Khans to Tibetan Buddhism can be interpreted as a desire to renew the example of Khubilai Khan (r. 1260-1294), one of the greatest of the Khans of the empire and the first of the Mongol emperors of the Chinese Yuan dynasty (1279-1368). This conversion spread gradually in the late 16th century. Among the Eastern Mongols, the ebullient Khutukhtai-sechen-khongtaiji (1540-1586), prince of the Ordos, was the first to convert in 1566. His uncle Altan-khan (1507-1582), chief of the Tümet, followed in 1578 during a meeting with bSod-nams rgya-mtsho (1543-1589), the first Dalai Lama and third successor of Tsong Khapa (1357-1419), founder of the Geluk order in Tibet. Abdiil-Khan, sovereign of the Khalkha, also converted around 1585. In 1585-1586 he founded Erdeni-Zuu, the first monastery in Northern Mongolia, near the ruins of Karakhorum, ancient capital of the Ghenghiskhanides, which was destroyed by the Chinese at the end of the fourteenth century.

POLITICAL CHANGES IN TIBET
The Geluk order was established at the beginning of a difficult time in Tibet’s history. The new Buddhist order competed with the Karmapa sect, which was extremely powerful in southern Tibet (Tsang province). From 1610 this rivalry descended into armed conflict, with the aristocracy of Central Tibet (Ü province) supporting the Gelukpa and opposing the Southern Tibetan aristocracy who favoured the Karmapa. The close links with the Mongol Khans can be explained partially by the Gelukpa seeking political alliances outside Tibet proper, rather than exclusively by the universal and missionary nature of the Buddhist message. In this search, the Gelukpa proved more skilled than the other monastic orders. The troops of Guskri-khan (1582-1655), chief of the Koshut Mongols, unified Tibet in 1642 under
This vigorously sculpted figure is Vajrapani or the Thunderbolt Bearer, a wrathful and powerful deity and remover of obstacles. As a fierce protector of the Buddhist faith he is often portrayed near the entrance to shrine halls in Tibetan and Mongolian temples. This deity is of special importance to Zanabazar, who was initiated in the mysteries of Vajrapani by the Dalai Lama in Tibet in 1649. In the Geluk order, influential in Mongolian Buddhism, he is often grouped with Avalokiteshvara and Manjushri. Together these three celestial bodhisattvas are thought of as archangelic protectors and represent the power (Vajrapani), compassion (Avalokiteshvara) and wisdom (Manjushri) of all the Buddhas of the past, present and future.\(^1\)

Vajrapani is standing in the militant pose or pratyadhasana, holding the vajra (thunderbolt) in his right hand. His left hand is alertly poised in a threatening gesture. He has flaming red hair, three popping eyes and his moustache and eyebrows have flame-like forms. His long snake necklace and tiger skin loincloth are typical of wrathful deities, but generally his ornaments are those of the benign bodhisattvas: a jewelled five-pointed crown, elaborate earrings, bracelets, necklaces and anklets. His active posture, arm gestures, toes that are curled upwards, hair standing on end and swirling scarf loosely draped around his shoulders all convey a suggestion of imminent movement and agitation. The snake necklace probably refers to another form of Vajrapani as a ‘spell-deity’, which is the deified form of a snake charm, and specifically as a protector against snakebites.\(^2\)

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1. Rhie and Thurman [1996] p. 68
2. Getty [1962] p. 53
Amitabha, the Buddha of Infinite Light, is seated on a double lotus base in the diamond attitude (vajraparyankasana) with his hands in the gesture of meditation (dhyana mudra) holding an alms bowl (patra). He is portrayed wearing a monk’s robe that covers his left shoulder. His robe is elaborately draped and has an incised decorated hem; a pleated drape is arranged in front of his legs and over his shoulder. He displays some of the thirty-two characteristic marks (lakshanas) of the Buddha – signs of his beauty and spiritual nature show in his triple-lined neck, a hair curl (kusa) between his eyebrows and curly hair that is painted blue. His elongated earlobes denote his exalted status, as large heavy earrings were attributes of royalty in ancient India; his cranial protuberance, topped by a jewel, is considered indicative of his enlightened state. The Buddha’s slender body with its smooth sleekness, his youthful features with highly arched eyebrows, sharp-ridged nose and full lips are all characteristic of the style of Zanabazar and his school which has its origins in Newar sculpture and sculpture from Pala India. Rather unusual is the ornate base of the sculpture with an incised band of floral decoration. Atop the lotus petals, the stamens are incised under a row of pearls. A small Manjushri image (see cat. no. 7) features a similar incised band.
Amitabha is seated on a double lotus base in the diamond attitude, holding a patra and wearing a monk’s robe. The Buddha of Boundless Light is the ethereal form of Shakyamuni and presides over the Western Paradise, a luxurious heaven, Sukhavati, bestowing immortality on his subjects. Amitabha held special meaning in Tibet and Mongolia, as a number of important figures in Tibetan Buddhist history are associated with him. He manifested himself in Padmasambhava, an Indian guru who played a key role in converting Tibet to Buddhism. After a vision in which his teacher merged with Amitabha, the Great Fifth Dalai Lama (1617-1682) enthroned his teacher at Tashilunpo and named him the first Panchen Lama (see cat. no. 14). Ever since then, the Panchen Lamas have had their permanent seat at Tashilunpo and have been considered emanations of Amitabha, consolidating their close relationship with the Dalai Lamas, who are emanations of Avalokiteshvara. Although it is impossible to say whether this particular sculpture¹ was once part of a group, Amitabha is one of the Five Transcendental Buddhas or Tathagatas. The others are Vairocana, Asokhoba, Amogasiddhi and Ratnasambhava. They are also called Dhyani or Meditation Buddhas and are the mystical counterparts of those Buddhas who had earthly incarnations. Each of these Buddhas is characterised by a vehicle, colour, element and direction in which they are located.² An exquisite group of five Transcendental Buddhas, cast in 1683 by Zanabazar, are among his finest works and show the five Buddhas in their princely glory, wearing all the ornaments of a princely bodhisattva and displaying all the characteristics typical of Zanabazar and his school.³

¹ Or any of the other Buddhas in this catalogue.
² For an elaborate description of the Dhyani Buddhas, see Getty (1962) pp. 27-42

Amogasiddhi, the Buddha of Infallible Magic and the fifth of the Transcendental Buddhas, is seated on a double lotus base in vajra-parayanakosana. His right hand is extended in the teaching gesture (vitarka mudra); his left hand, resting in his lap, holds an alms bowl. Amogasiddhi wears a monk’s robe covering his left shoulder; it is elaborately draped and has an incised decorated hem. His triple-lined neck, hair curl between his eyebrows, curly hair that retains traces of blue paint, elongated earlobes and cranial protuberance topped by a jewel are all characteristic marks (lakshana) of the Buddha. Although this sculpture deviates from the normal depiction of Amogasiddhi, it can still clearly be identified as this Buddha. He normally holds his right hand in the gesture of protection (abhaya mudra), but numerous other sculptures and paintings present Amogasiddhi with his right hand in the vitarka mudra.¹ Amogasiddhi’s symbol is a double vajra, not a bowl (this is Amitabha’s symbol). However, in Mongolian sculpture Buddhas are often depicted holding a bowl, which seems to be a general feature rather than an identifying attribute.

¹ see for example www.tibetart.com, items nos. 70309, 74994 and 94334
The structure of this stupa follows a model that developed in Tibet, Mongolia and Manchuria under Mongol patronage. One of the earliest examples of this type of bulb-shaped stupa was the Baïa or White Pagoda of the Miaoying monastery in Beijing. Designed by the Newar artist Anige and dedicated in 1271, it had a tremendous influence on the stupas of seventeenth and eighteenth century Mongolia. Anige was the official court artist of the Mongol Khans during the Yuan dynasty (1279-1368); he became Khubilai Khan's Director-General for Management of Artisans. He brought Newar artistic influence to the Mongol court; Newar sculptural styles and artists subsequently enjoyed significant patronage in both Tibet and China. Very little Mongolian art preceding Zanabazar now remains. However, though we cannot be sure Zanabazar ever saw works created by Anige himself, works in Anige's Newar style certainly still held currency. Also, we do know Zanabazar and his advisers were familiar with the history of the Mongolian Empire under Khubilai Khan and his political and religious adviser, the Tibetan Sakya hierarch Phagspa. It is therefore highly likely Zanabazar was aware of Phagspa's patronage of Anige and sought inspiration in the earlier Newar aesthetic.

The history of Erdeni-Zuu records that Zanabazar cast eight silver stupas in 1683. The number eight refers to the traditional group of eight, each with a specific form, built to mark the most important events in Shakyamuni's life. This stupa probably is the fifth one, commemorating the Buddha's victory over the evil forces that tried to prevent his enlightenment. It houses an image of the Buddha Shakyamuni, seated in vajraparyankasana, holding a bowl in his left hand and his right hand touching the earth in the bhumisparsa mudra. A flaming petal torana surrounds the niche in which he is seated. He faces east; above a multileveled platform, each side of which is marked by the animal vehicle of the Buddha of each of the four quarters. Depicted to the east is Akshobya's elephant, west is Amitabha's peacock, south Ratnasambhava's horse and north Amogasiddhi's garuda. Each animal vehicle is flanked by lions and the sides of the base are supported by columns. The top and bottom tiers of the platform are decorated with concentric circle jewel patterns. Long ornate garlands fall from the umbrella above. The decoration of this stupa is engraved in a somewhat stylized manner; a similar piece by Zanabazar himself shows the designs cast into the stupa with opulent and fine detail.

3 Berger, op. cit., p. 270
4 This bowl is a general Mongolian feature and does not identify the Buddha (cf. cat. no. 4).
5 Typically, Ashkhey is the Buddha of the east, but his attribute is a thunderbolt (vajra). The hand gesture clearly identifies this Buddha as Shakyamuni.
6 Suburgan (skt Stupa)
Gilt copper, Mongolia, late 17th – early 18th century, height 20 cm - 8 in

This delicate bell-shaped stupa is the memorial monument commemorating the Buddha's attainment of the highest nirvana, and the last one in the series of eight. It is the only one with a bell-shaped dome; the seven other types have bulb-shaped domes. An extremely similar stupa can be found in the Chokjin Lama Temple Museum in Ulan Bator.1

All stupas, being Buddhist reliquaries and symbols of the enlightened mind of the Buddha, observe an essential basic structure and encompass a multitude of symbolic meanings. The basic structure consists of a square foundation – the lion throne – that symbolises the earth and a dome that symbolises water. The conical spire of thirteen umbrellas represents the thirteen circles of Buddhist teaching and the element of fire; the upper lotus parasol and crescent moon stand for the element of air, and the sun (here topped with a jewel) symbolises the element of space. The stupa is a representation of the Buddha's body and is measured to the same iconographic proportions. The three parts of the stupa – the throne base, dome (anda) with square harnika and spire (chhatravali) – also symbolise the body, speech and mind of the Buddha.2

1 see Tsultem (1982) p. 90
7. **MAṆJUSRI (Skt. Manjushri)**

Gilt copper with painted details. Mongolia, late 17th – early 18th century, height 9.4 cm - 3 2/5 in.

Manjushri, the bodhisattva of Wisdom, is seated in **vajraparyankasana** on a lotus pedestal, his right hand wielding the double-edged sword that cuts through the veil of ignorance and delusion, and dissipates the darkness among men. In his left hand he holds the stem of a budding lotus and the **Prajnaparamita Sūtra**, the Treatise of Transcendent Wisdom. His body is slender yet muscular; his face is full and elegant. The sculpture possesses a remarkable sense of three-dimensionality; the right upper arm stretches backwards, the forearm bends forwards and the sword swings back behind his head. It finds its origins in much earlier Nepalese and Eastern Indian sculpture. Early depictions of Manjushri show the book held in the hand, whereas later it is normally placed on the lotus at his shoulder. It is this reference to the classical art of Nepal and India that defines the inspirational sculptural style of Zanabazar.

1. see Linrothe [1999] p. 152, fig. 143

8. **PORTRAIT OF ZANABAZAR**

Gilt copper, Mongolia, first quarter 18th century, height 16.8 cm - 6 1/5 in.

This sensitively executed portrait shows Zanabazar (1635-1723) seated on a pile of cushions in royal ease, holding his attributes – a **vajra** (thunderbolt) in his right hand and a **ghanta** (bell) in his left hand. He wears the typical sleeveless Tibetan monk attire, his left shoulder covered by a cloak that falls in beautifully draped folds around his body. The front and sides of the cushion pedestal are decorated with an incised floral pattern; the back is decorated but has two slots in the upper surface that would have secured a now missing **lorana**, suggesting the delfied status of the master. Unlike the longstanding and prolific Tibetan tradition of lama portraiture, in Mongolia only the Panchen Lamas and the Bogd Gegen, of which Zanabazar was the first, are regularly depicted. Zanabazar, who was initiated in the mysteries of Vajrapani by the Fifth Dalai Lama in 1649, expressed a deep and continued devotion for the deity that might appear as Vajrasattva, Vajrapani or Vajradhara. He is often depicted holding Vajrasattva's attributes, the bell and thunderbolt. These attributes are specific to Zanabazar and not associated with any other lama. This is a striking example of realistic portrait sculpture: the master has a friendly and benevolent expression on his chubby face, thick eyebrows and a full head of hair, multiple chins and fleshy cheeks, much as he is represented in a painted portrait now in the Fine Art Museum, Ulan Bator. Flesh rolls at the back of his head are so realistic they are almost pinch-able. The body shows some stylisation, as it obviously is leaner than the physique of the face suggests. Although the revered hierarch maintains a commanding presence, his portly appearance suggests advancing years, perhaps towards the end of his illustrious life. With such superb observation of his facial characteristics, the bronze may be considered a Ngadroma (taken from life) image, thus dating this rare sculpture to the first quarter of the eighteenth century.

2. Berger and Bartholomew [1995] p. 276. Zanabazar's exact spiritual affiliations are rather murky; although textual sources only confirm his initiation in the Vajrapani mysteries, he is mostly depicted with Vajrasattva’s attributes.
3. see Tsultem [1982] pp. 25-6, nos. 3-5; and p. 102, no. 85
4. see Tsultem [1986] no. 211. Other portraits also show him with a full head of hair (see Tsultem [1982] p. 119, no. 103), although some idealised portraits depict him with a receding hairline (see Aubin [1993] p. 100, fig. 3)
9 QOMSIM BODI SAPWA (skt Avalokiteshvara)
Gilt copper, Mongolia, late 17th – early 18th century, height 39 cm - 15 1/3 in

This sculpture depicts an eleven-headed, eight-armed Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva of Compassion. The two upper heads are a rather fierce head and the head of the Buddha Amitabha. The attribute in his top right hand is missing; in his upper left hand he holds a lotus bud. Two more hands on the right hold a prayer wheel and display the varada mudra or the gesture of giving. In his two other hands on the left he holds the elixir of immortality and one implement is missing. He holds the two hands in front of him in the namaskara mudra. The missing attributes are probably a bow and arrow.

The sculpture features elegant proportions, elaborate princely jewellery, traces of blue paint in the hair and flowing garments with attention to textile patterns. The facial features are distinguished by highly arched eyebrows, tilted eyes with eyelids curving in a shallow S-shape, sharp nose and full lips – all trademark characteristics of the Zanabazar sculptural style.
The bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara is portrayed here as Sadakshari Lokeshvara in the four-armed form. He is seated in vajraparyankasana on a stepped double lotus pedestal. He holds a sacred thread and a lotus flower in his two raised hands, and his two front hands in the gesture of prayer (namaskara mudra) or possibly the mahidhara mudra. The latter is the gem-bearing gesture, which alludes to the wish-fulfilling jewel promising enlightenment — this remains concealed to the unattained and might be enclosed within the palms of the deity. He displays the facial features typical of Zanabazar and his school; the stepped pedestal refers to Indian Pala sculpture. Shadakshari Lokeshvara is also called the Six-syllable bodhisattva. He personifies the mantra om mani padme hum (Hail the Jewel in the Lotus), a magical sound said to reverberate throughout the universe pronouncing the bodhisattva's vow to save all sentient beings. The Dalai Lamas are said to be emanations of this important iconographic form of Avalokiteshvara. Avalokiteshvara is one of the most popular Buddhist entities; in Tibet and Mongolia he is looked upon as the representative of the Buddha and guardian of the Buddhist faith, and he is considered Tibet's tutelary deity. According to tradition, his worship was introduced into Tibet during the seventh century, and King Songtsen Gampo was proclaimed as his incarnation. In the Geluk order, he forms a triad with Manjushri and Vajrapani (see cat. nos. 7 and 1).
Maitreya, the Future Buddha, is depicted standing in *tribhanga* or the triple bend posture. Currently a bodhisattva, he resides in Tushita Heaven until the time he will descend into this world as the next Buddha. He raises his right hand in the *vitarka mudra* (teaching gesture) and holds the *kundika* with the elixir of immortality in his left hand. His hair is piled high, his *ushnisha* is topped with a jewel and a miniature *stupa* rests against the *ushnisha*. An antelope skin is draped over his left shoulder; a long skirt with simple incised decoration clings smoothly to his legs, revealing their shape. Pleated details on both sides lend a sense of movement to the sculpture. A sash is slung diagonally from his left hip to the right one; a sacred thread hangs across his chest and loops over and under his sash, in a way extremely similar to much earlier Newar examples. The style of this image goes back to earlier representations of Maitreya that are prevalent in Newar sculpture and have their origins in Gupta India. It follows Newar ideals: Maitreya is depicted as a princely bodhisattva draped in antelope skin, with a slender figure and high chignon. Typical Mongolian characteristics specific to Zanabazar and his school are the energetic youthfulness, facial features and soft sleekness of the form.

Maitreya held a deep significance for the Gelukpa, whose power was rapidly spreading in Mongolia during Zanabazar's time. Tsong Khapa, the first Gelukpa hierarch, held the first Maitreya festival in 1409. He named his first monastery Ganden, which is also the alternative name for the Geluk order, and Tibetan for Maitreya's Tushita Heaven. Maitreya was the chief object of Zanabazar's meditations. Zanabazar established the Maitreya festival in Mongolia, first held in 1657 at Erdeni-Zuu. At least two Maitreya images, now in Ulan Bator and very similar to this one, are attributed to Zanabazar himself.2

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1 see for example Von Schroeder [1981] pp. 318-9, fig. 81f; and a 9th-10th century Maitreya at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York: http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/ho/06/ssh/fod_1982.220.12.htm

2 see Berger and Bartholomew [1995] pp. 280-1
Red Amitayus is a special form of Amitayus, the longevity principal of Amitabha, Buddha of the Western Paradise. He is presented in this standing sculpture as a bodhisattva, standing with his hands in the dhyana mudra, holding a patra or alms bowl. His scarf, which is draped around his shoulders and arms, and his dhoti, which has a decorated hem, flay out sidewas. Red Amitayus is adorned with jewellery; he wears a five-pointed crown, earrings, necklaces, a girdle, armbands and anklelets. Traces of paint are still visible on his face and hair. His ushnisha is topped with a jewel. His blue hair falls down to the ground (it is visible in between his feet) as a sign of his longevity. A rectangular consecration plate is inserted in the back of the statue and is decorated to blend in with the rest of the figure. Again, the facial features of the statue are characteristic of Zanabazar and his school: a sharp nose, full lips and tilted eyes with eyelids gently curving in a shallow S. Very little is known about the worship of Amitayus, although it is likely that all Buddhists would have venerated this deity to promote health and long life. The subject of Red Amitayus is incredibly rare and its iconography not well-known.¹

¹ For a Tibetan thangka with Red Amitayus identified by inscription and depicted as a subsidiary figure, see Sotheby’s Indian and Southeast Asian Art, 26 March 2003, pp. 92-3, Cat. no. 71
This sculpture probably portrays Surya, the Hindu sun god, an extremely rare subject. Surya is seated in the diamond attitude on a double lotus base. In his right hand he holds a vase, his left hand is extended in the charity or varada mudra and holds the stem of a budding lotus flower that is topped with a sun disc. His dhoti with incised border is neatly arranged around him on the pedestal. He is adorned with tantric jewellery: a five-pointed crown, necklaces, arm bands, anklets and the sacred thread. His face is painted gold, with his lips highlighted in red and his eyes with black, blue and white. His hair is painted blue and his ushnisha topped with a jewel. The stepped lotus pedestal, which goes back to Newar and Indian examples, retains its consecration plate with a gilded double dorje incised in it. A similar sculpture, part of a series of statues the Qianlong emperor (r. 1735-1796) gave his mother for her birthday, is inscribed and identifies the deity as Chandra, the moon god. He holds the kalasha in an identical position in his right hand. The object on top of the lotus flower he holds in his left hand is missing, but would very likely have been a crescent moon. Similarities between these two pieces prompt a tentative identification of this sculpture as Surya.

1 The Buddhist counterpart of Surya is the goddess Marici. However, sculpture of Zanabazar and his school generally emphasises the female form and accentuates curves, rendering the identification of this sculpture as Marici quite impossible.

2 This mudra and attributes also belong to Padmapani, the main form of Avalokiteshvara. The Indian text Koranda-Vyutha mentions that Chandra and Surya emanated from Padmapani's eyes. However, Padmapani is usually depicted standing and his distinctive mark is an image of Amitabha in his crown, which is absent here. (See Getty [1962] pp. 62-5) Although there is clearly a link between Surya and Padmapani, the identification of this sculpture as Padmapani is rather unlikely.

3 see Clark [1937] p. 182, fig. 58 55, 456
14 **PORTRAIT OF PANCHEN LAMA**
Gilt copper with painted details, Mongolia, late 17th – early 18th century, height 22 cm • 8 3/5 in

Losang Chökyi Gyaltsen Pelzango (1570-1662), the first Panchen Lama, is seated in vajraparyankasana on a lotus throne. The round pedestal, decorated with three rows of lotus petals and incised stamens with a pearl top border, features exclusively in the sculpture of Zanabazar and his school. The master wears monks' robes, a heavy cloak that is beautifully moulded in realistic folds around his back and legs, and a sharply angled Hutuktu cap with multiple layered flaps. He holds his right hand in the vitarka mudra or teaching gesture and an alms bowl in his left hand. This is another superb example of realistic portrait sculpture (cf. cat. no. 8), depicting the Panchen Lama with a distinctive jaw-line, pronounced cheekbones, large hooked nose and full lips.¹

Losang Chökyi Gyaltsen Pelzango was an outstanding scholar, teacher, author, mystic and statesman. The Fifth Dalai Lama bestowed the title of Panchen Lama upon him and declared him to be an incarnation of Amitabha (cf. cat. no.3), spiritual father of Avalokiteshvara, of whom the Dalai Lamas are earthly manifestations. He was also the fourth incarnation of Kedrup Je (1385-1438), one of Tsong Khapa's closest disciples. Therefore the numbering of the Panchen Lama incarnations sometimes begins with Kedrup Je, making Losang Chökyi Gyaltsen Pelzango the fourth incarnation. The Panchen Lama was given Tashilunpo monastery as a permanent seat for him and all his future incarnations.²

¹ For sculptures and paintings depicting the Panchen Lama with the same distinctive facial features, see Dinwiddie [2003] pp. 316-23; Jackson [1996] p. 233; and Rhie and Thurman [1999] pp. 362-3. Other images show him much more stylised, see Tsultrim [1982] pp. 32-3; fig. 75 shows a hint of prominent cheekbones, but is still idealised.
² Dinwiddie [2003] p. 316
Machig Labdrön (c.1031-1129) is one of the most important and popular female yoginis of Tibet. Her teachings, along with those of her guru Padampa, first formed the basis of a separate order, the Shijepa (peacemaking) order, but later became accepted in all the Tibetan orders. She is especially noted for teaching the Chöd yoga, or spiritual self-dissection method of meditation.

She is seated in lotusana on a double lotus pedestal, with a double-sided damaru (hand drum) in the right hand and a large kapala (skull cup) in the left hand. A scarf, loosely draped over her shoulders, lends quiet energy to the image. Her tantric jewellery – skull crown and bone aprons, necklaces and anklets – is decorated with Buddhist wheels and sun and crescent moon motif. A Buddhist wheel also tops her elegant chignon. Machig Labdrön is mostly depicted as a dancing yogini in Tibetan art; however, examples of her seated also exist. Although the implements in her left hand may differ – bell, bone flute, skull cup – she always holds the damaru in her right hand. Images of Machig Labdrön are incredibly rare in Mongolian art; this exceptional bronze shows the same exquisite gilding and sensibility towards the female form that is so typical of the best Mongolian sculpture and of the Zanabazar school of sculpture.

2. see Rubin Collection, item no. 711 (www.tibetart.com)
16 **MANDARAVA**
Gilt copper with painted details, Mongolia, late 17th – early 18th century, height 14 cm - 5 1/2 in

Mandarava is seated on a circular lotus throne, offering a *kapala* (skull cup) in her right hand, her sensuous body slightly inclined to the right, and wearing a thin *dhati* and a scarf loosely draped around her shoulders. She is adorned with elaborate jewellery – crown, earrings, necklaces, arm bands, anklets and girdle. Her hair, with traces of blue paint, falls in long tresses over her back and shoulders, and caught up in a chignon topped by a jewel. The lotus pedestal shows all the sculptural characteristics typical of Zanabazar and his school with distinctive round shape. The petals are scalloped and special emphasis is placed on the lotus stamens, carefully incised in vertical striations below the rim of pearl beading. The base of the sculpture is inscribed in Tibetan, positively identifying this sculpture as Mandarava. This figure bears strong resemblance to the many images of Tara cast by Zanabazar himself, who allegedly modelled this female deity on his teenage consort, the Girl Prince. The Girl Prince was renowned for her beauty, saintliness and artistry, but died when she was only eighteen years old. Zanabazar’s White Tara depicts her at puberty, while his Green Tara portrays her as a mature and voluptuous woman.³

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1 The figure is inscribed with the following words: *tha-lcog-mandarava-la-namo*, which means “Salutation to the consort Mandarava”.
2 see Tsultrim [1982] pp. 63-84
3 Berger and Bartholomew [1995] p. 59

17 **MANDARAVA**
Gilt copper with painted details, Mongolia, late 17th – early 18th century, height 20 cm - 8 in

This sculpture also represents the Indian princess Mandarava. Compared to the previous image, her body is somewhat more slender yet still voluptuous. Notice the detail of the lotus petals on the pedestal and how they differ from the pedestal of the previous sculpture; this variation is unique to the Zanabazar school of sculpture. Mandarava was an Indian princess and the daughter of the King of Zahor. She and the Tibetan Yeshe Tsogyal were the principal consorts of Padmasambhava – also known as Guru Rinpoche or “The Precious Teacher”. Mandarava assisted Padmasambhava in attaining the *siddhi* of immortality, by which the *siddha* gains the power of prolonging life or of entering upon another life with uninterrupted awareness. Both Mandarava sculptures would originally have been part of a group, depicting Padmasambhava flanked by Yeshe Tsogyal and Mandarava. A Padmasambhava statue without consorts can be found in the Erdeni-Zuu monastery.¹ A similar figure representing one of the consorts was on the Swiss art market in 1979 and is one of only a very small number of Mongolian sculptures in Western collections.²

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1 see Tsultrim [1989] no. 126, the smaller sculpture in between the two tall ones
2 see Aubin [1993] pp. 80-81
Gilt copper, Mongolia, late 17th – early 18th century, height 23.3 cm - 9 in

Sitapatra – Goddess of the Glorious White Parasol – is here depicted in her simplest form, with one head and two arms. She is seated in vajraparyankasana on a double lotus base, with her right hand in the abhaya mudra. The parasol she originally held in her left hand is now missing. Her full, sensual body is slightly inclined to the right. She wears a dhati and a scarf that is loosely draped around her shoulders and is adorned with delicately modelled jewellery – a five-pointed crown, earrings, necklaces, armbands, anklets and girdle. Her long hair retains traces of blue paint and falls in long tresses over her back and shoulders. Her high ushnisha is topped with a jewel. Although she has the third eye, which is often a feature of wrathful manifestations, her expression is gentle. This figure bears strong resemblance to a group of twenty-one Taras attributed to Zanabazar himself. Characteristic of his sculptural style are the rich gliding and painted details, attention to jewellery design and textile patterns, sensitive modelling of the face and the voluptuousness of the female body, allegedly inspired by his teenage consort, the Girl Prince.1

1 see Tsultem [1982] pp. 63-84
2 Casey, Ahuja and Weldon [2003] p.168
19 CHAGAN SAMBHAR-A (skt Sitasamvara)
Gilt copper with painted details, Mongolia, late 17th – early 18th century, height 24.3 cm - 9 1/2 in

Sitasamvara or White Samvara is a benevolent form of the popular tutelary divinity. He is shown here embracing his consort Vajravarahi. They are joined in mystical union, symbolising the merging of wisdom and compassion – the essence of enlightenment. Sitasamvara is seated on a double lotus pedestal, his petite consort sitting in his lap. He holds two jars with the elixir of immortality in his hands; she holds two skull cups. Both deities are beautifully crowned, coiffed and bejewelled. Traces of paint remain on their hair and on his face, highlighting the full lips and tilted eyes with eyelids gently curving in a shallow bow shape."1

1 For a Sitasamvara sculpture attributed to Zanabazar, see Aubin [1993], pp.140-3
20 Chagan Ayusi (Skt Caturbhaja Sita Amitabha)
Gilt copper, Mongolia, late 17th – early 18th century, height 22 cm – 8 1/2 in

This exquisitely and sensually modelled sculpture depicts Amitabha in yab-yum with his prajna on a round pedestal with multiple layers of delicate lotus petals. The base is sealed with a consecration plate displaying the typical gilded double dorje motif. Amitabha is seated in the diamond attitude, his patterned dhoti arranged in neat folds on the pedestal in front of him. Two of his four arms are folded in his lap in the dhyanas mudra and hold the crystal vase (kalasha) with the elixir of long life, his attribute. His other arms are raised; he holds a vajra in the right hand and has crystal mala or prayer beads wrapped around his left hand. His consort Padmakundali, sitting in his lap, has her legs firmly wrapped around Amitabha's back and mimics his arm gestures. With two of her arms she holds a ruby vessel with the elixir behind his head, her two other arms are raised and hold a bell (right) and coral rosary (left). Both deities are abundantly adorned with jewellery. They personify wisdom and compassion: the female element and bell symbolising wisdom, the male element and thunderbolt compassion. This specific tantric form of Amitabha is extremely rare and not well documented. The crystal attributes held by the male figure likely represent the white bodhichitta held in the crystal vessel, while the female's ruby kalasha symbolises the red bodhichitta. Both elements are requisite for conception, either in biological terms or as the basis of spiritual rebirth. Amitabha is the crowned form of Amitabha, the Buddha of Eternal Life; his worship was introduced into Tibet by Padmasambhava in the 8th century.

1 For the iconography, see Chandra [1991] p. 398, no. 1081
2 Huntington and Bangdöl [2003] pp. 300-1
Vajrabhairava (or Yamantaka) is depicted with sixteen feet, thirty-four arms and nine heads, stepping to the right.¹ He has a skull diadem, a belt of heads and a third eye. His long orange hair sweeps upward like a fierce flame framing his many heads, each of them crowned with a skull diadem. The first head is that of a bull, seven more heads have a ferocious expression and the top head is that of Manjushri, with a slightly irritated expression. Bone ornaments adorn his body and he wears a long necklace of severed heads. In his hands Vajrabhairava holds all the tantra symbols.² His central hands hold a chopping knife (kartrīka) and human skull bowl (kapala). In the other hands he holds a magical knife (phurba), arrow, shield, ritual sceptre (vajra), lance, axe, double drum (damaru), wheel of law (dharmachakra), dagger, swirling flames, ritual bell (ghanta), skeleton staff (khatvanga), banner, various magical knives and stakes, a noose and other tantric weapons. He is accompanied by his prajna Vajravetali, who holds a chopper and a skull cup. Vajrabhairava is the Conqueror of Yama, Lord of Death (see cat. no. 25). As an archetype Buddha, he is of special importance to the Geluk order. He is a wrathful manifestation of the bodhisattva of wisdom, Manjushri, who took this form in order to defeat Yama. Hence he symbolises the victory of Wisdom over Death, death being associated with ignorance.³

¹ Vajrabhairava is often portrayed with his right foot treading on animals and the left one on birds, or he may be treading on demons under or above which are animals and birds.
² www.tantraworks.com/yama
³ Rhie and Thurman (1996) p. 287
Hayagriva, the Horse-necked One, is depicted with garuda wings, in yab-yum with his-prajña. He can be identified by the horse emanating from his head. Hayagriva has three heads, four legs, six arms, a third eye, a necklace of heads and wears a lion and elephant skin. Some of the attributes he originally held in his six hands are now missing. In his upper four hands he would have held a thunderbolt, mace, khatvanga and sword. With his lower arms he encircles his prajña and holds the kapala and vajra chopper. The consort has a third eye, a crown of heads and holds a skull cup and chopper. A sow’s head protruding from her cranium identifies her as Vajravrahì.² Both figures have traces of red paint in their hair. They are adorned with jewellery – belts, anklets and arm bands – and Hayagriva also wears snake-shaped arm bands. The pedestal is sealed with a metal plate, on which a double darje is incised and gilded. This gilding is typical of the works of Zanabazar and his school and does not appear elsewhere. The two deities were cast with their lotus pedestal; the separately cast torana is now missing.

¹ Getty (1962) pp. 162-3
² In Indian iconography and the early Tibetan tradition, Vajravarahi is the consort of Samvara. Hayagriva and Vajravarahi are found together in the fourteenth century biography of Padmasambhava (Stein (1995), pp. 126-144). A thirteenth century text by Pekshi Shakya Ø is the earliest known mention of the two deities together in yab-yum, suggesting Vajravarahi became Hayagriva’s prajña around that time (Dudjom (1991) p. 663). For a fourteenth century image of the pair, see Sotheby’s Indian and Southeast Asian Art, March 26, 2003, New York, p. 68, no. 50
The tantric deity Achala, “The Immovable One” or “King of the Wrathful” is depicted in his characteristic kneeling pose (achalasana) on a rectangular lotus base. He is wielding a sword in his right hand to smite the guilty; with his left hand he makes the gesture of menace (tarjani mudra) and holds a vajra rope to bind the wicked. The rope is made of silver and is probably an interpretation of tantric implements, which were normally made from iron. His hair stands upright like flames of fire and his expression is ferocious. He wears a tantric crown and jewellery, and an animal skin around his thighs. A scarf draped loosely around his shoulders flays sideways. Achala is the destroyer of delusion and the protector of Buddhism, especially of the practices of Manjushri. His immovability refers to his insensibility to temptation. In tantric traditions, his consort is Vajrayogini. Achala is one of a group of wrathful deities who enable practitioners to overcome obstacles; he may be invoked to eliminate both inner and outer hindrances. His chief role, however, is to awaken the initiated to their own negative aspects and to transform these into compassion and wisdom. He is sometimes described as a wrathful form of the Celestial Buddha Akshobya, a symbol of the Buddha’s unshakable resolve to attain enlightenment.
Begtse, "he who wears a hidden shirt of mail", stands in the archer pose (pratyalidhasana) with his right leg bent and his left leg extended, a posture typical for wrathful deities in Tibetan art. As a warrior, Begtse is clad in chain mail. He wears a crown of five skulls, a long garland of freshly severed heads, his lower limbs are covered by a tiger skin and on his feet he wears Mongolian boots. His hair and facial features are highlighted with paint. He has a fierce expression: his eyebrows consist of red flames, his wide, round eyes are painted black and the third eye on his forehead is topped with flames. His flaming hair stands upright and suggests bold movement. With his right hand Begtse brandishes the scorpion-handled sword. The implements from his left hand are missing, but he would originally have held a human heart in his hand, as well as a banner, bow and arrow in the crook of his arm. The pedestal of this sculpture has not been preserved, but normally he would step on two corpses, a horse and a human figure, lying on the pedestal. Begtse was the chosen spiritual protector of Zanabazar. A shamanistic nature deity he originally was an opponent of Buddhism. According to legend, when the Third Dalai Lama went to Mongolia in 1577 or 1578 to convert Altan Khan, Begtse tried to obstruct his path with demons in the guise of various animals. The Dalai Lama then took the form of a four-armed Avalokiteshvara, and his horses' hooves left prints in the shape of the sacred mantra om mani padme hum, at which point Begtse admitted his defeat and converted to Buddhism. Begtse is protector of both the Dalai Lama and the Bogd Gegen and he was made a special protector of Tibet by the Fifth Dalai Lama.

1 Berger and Bartholomew [1995] p. 244
2 Halén [1987] p. 132
Yama, "King of the Dead", stands in the archer pose (pratyalidhasana) with his right leg bent and his left leg extended. He holds both his arms outstretched with his hands in the gesture of menace (tarjani mudra) – his attitude and expression showing great excitement and fury. He is represented with a bull's head, third eye, tantric crown, hair rising in a flame shape, and is naked but for a belt of severed heads and elaborate jewellery. On his breast is an ornament representing the Buddhist wheel, his distinctive mark, for Tsong Khapa appointed Yama protector of the Geluk order. More Buddhist wheels can be seen in his necklace. The base of the sculpture is missing; originally Yama would have stepped to the right on a bull, under which there would have been a woman. The sculpture has a rectangular hole in its back for consecration; a plate matching the rest of the sculpture would have covered it. Like Digtse (see cat. no. 24), Yama was subjugated and turned into a protector of the Dharma. The origin of the bull head is ascribed to the tradition, which speaks of a Bönpo ascetic who was attaining the final stage of nirvana after a successful meditation period of nearly fifty years. As he was about to achieve his objective and enter nirvana, two thieves with a stolen bull entered the cave and slaughtered it. When they saw the ascetic, a witness to their crime, they beheaded him too. To their astonishment, the victim lifted the head of the bull and, replacing his own severed head with it, became the ferocious form of Yama. He devoured the two thieves and his rage threatened to destroy the whole of Tibet. The Tibetans called upon Manjushri, their tutelary deity, who assumed the form of Vajrabhairava (cat. no. 21), subjugated Yama after a fearful struggle and made him a protector of the Dharma.

1 Halén [1987] p. 122
26 WCIR-A BANI (SK M VAIJAPANI)
Gilt copper with painted details, Mongolia, late 17th – early 18th century, height 28.5 cm · 11 1/3 in

The wrathful Vajrapani – the Thunderbolt Bearer, remover of obstacles and protector of Buddhism – is standing in the active warrior pose with a scarf draped around his shoulders. He holds the vajra in his right hand, his left hand alertly poised in a threatening gesture (see also cat. no. 1). Vajrapani has three popping eyes; his orange-red hair, moustache and eyebrows all sweep upwards like fierce flames. His tiger skin loincloth is typical of wrathful deities, but generally his ornaments are those of the benign bodhisattvas: elaborate earrings, bracelets, necklaces and anklets. Notice in particular the delicate and meticulously rendered U-shaped and floral details of his crown. This deity is of special importance to Zanabazar, who was initiated in the mysteries of Vajrapani. In the Geluk order he often forms a triad with Avalokiteshvara and Manjushri.
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