



The Reflection of the Buddha in the World

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Over the past two and a half years I have been writing and researching a PhD thesis on the subject of self arising sacred objects. The thesis takes as its focus a white marble image of Avalokiteshvara at Triloknath in a valley of Lahul in the Western Himalayas.

Self arising sacred objects are referred to as rangjung in Tibetan Buddhism. These are images of deities in the rock or possibly a range of other things that seem to appear by themselves. Of course, according to Buddhist logic, nothing appears by itself, but the causes for these images of deities, etc., are not mundane. Therefore a study of rangjung images enables an exploration of Buddhist concepts of the permeability of this ordinary world to a divine world, inhabited by bodhisattvas with powers of intercession.

In this paper I will contrast the ideas of the power and origins of the Avalokiteshvara image at Triloknath described by pilgrims with the ideas that are used to justify the concept of rangjung within Tibetan philosophy as articulated by Tibetan lamas.