Mural of the Lama Shambhunāṭh in the ‘Old Temple’ at Hemis
THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF LADAKH

VOLUME ONE

CENTRAL LADAKH

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TEXT

p. xiii last para. and note 3: d’Almeida NOT d’Almeira
3rd line up: Ippolito NOT Ipolito.
p. 16 line 20 beginning Mongol Court, “there is no evidence to my knowledge of there ever having,”
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p. 42 line 19: for attendant READ attendant.
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p. 54 Caption to ill. 40: for Right-hand READ left-hand.
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p. 107 para. 2, last line but one: we had NOT we have
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p. 122 Caption: Dam-chos NOT Dam-can
p. 132 line 8: Ka-gyü NOT ka-gya.
p. 143 line 20: After: This may prove difficult to obtain. DELETE: “Professor Petech” up to “important work.” INSERT: “But see his new work The Kingdom of Ladakh, c. 950-1842 A.D., Rome Oriental series LI, Rome 1977.”
line 26: for A Cultural History of Ladakh READ A Cultural History of Tibet.
NOTE ON TRANSCRIPTION

In a book of this kind the rendering of names and terms always requires careful consideration. Here we have tried to be helpful rather than consistent.

In the case of Tibetan names and terms we give a phonetic form, whenever no one is likely to suffer by it, but only when it seems worth while making such a change. Thus we write Tashi Namgyal and not bKra-shis rNam-rgyal, Spituk and not dPe-thub, Sagti and not gSer-khri, although with names such as these we give the correct spelling in the Index beside the phonetic form. Thus they can easily be found. But it seems undesirable to put in phonetic form a name such as sKal-idan Shes-rab, the founder of Alchi, because this represents new information, and should be given in an accurate form. Rin-chen bzang-po is well known to readers of Tibetan history, but it would be superfluous to give this a phonetic form. As for names of religious orders, we retain rNying-ma-pa because there is little use in changing it, but we write Ka-dam-pa instead of bKa'gdams-pa, which might demand rather too much of someone unacquainted with Tibetan. Similarly we write Sum-tsek instead of gSum-brtsegs for the ‘Three-Tier’ temple at Alchi, but we retain ‘Du-khang’ for ‘Assembly Hall’. Hyphens are retained for words written in correct Tibetan romanization, but are used in phonetic spellings simply to help, as seems necessary, with the pronunciation.

Names of divinities and Buddhist terms are given in Sanskrit. These are written in italics only when they occur in brackets in a supplementary capacity, or when we wish to emphasize them in any way, e.g. the first time they appear. Their meanings can normally be found through the Index. Readers unfamiliar with Sanskrit are asked to note that the letter c represents a palatal surd pronounced rather like ch in English cheese, and not like c in cat, a sound represented by the letter k. For example, Vairocana is to be pronounced rather as Vairochana (accent on 2nd syllable), and not as Vairokana.

NOTE ON ILLUSTRATIONS AND PLATES

The black and white illustrations are arranged throughout the book as close as has proved practicable to the text to which they refer. When an illustration appears on the same or the opposite page, no reference is normally given to it. When it appears on any other page, the illustration number is given in small Arabic figures in the margin. Coloured plates are numbered according to Roman figures (I to XX) and reference to them is given likewise in the margin, level with the textual reference. Illustrations and Plates are also listed in the Index.

With the three or four exceptions noted in the List of Illustrations all photographs were taken by the authors and mostly at temperatures noticeably below freezing point. They are included in the book for their illustrative importance and not necessarily as examples of brilliant photography.
Foreword

The materials for this book have been collected in Ladakh by Tadeusz Skorupski and myself, and since our return to England we have sorted, selected and identified, consulted other relevant publications, and each produced draft sections of the text. The task of writing up a coherent version has fallen to my lot, but even at this stage there is great advantage in having available a co-author who will check already well-known material and assist with illustrations and all the supplementary parts which go into a book of this kind. Thus there is scope for joint activity up to the end.

We are dedicating this book to our friend Mr Gene Smith, and this we do both for personal reasons in recognition of the great help that he has been to us, and secondly out of sheer respect for the vast amount of tireless and self-abnegating work that he has done over the last fifteen years and more in order to render himself so thoroughly competent to Tibetan language and in Tibetan ways of thought, and then to assist in a great work of making available a considerable part of that manifold and extensive Tibetan literature, of which the rest of the world still knows so little. Since 1959, when 80,000 or so Tibetans chose exile to Communist rule, the more learned of their community have been republishing, often under very great difficulties, Tibetan literary works of all kinds, which were brought from Tibet, as well as those works which were fortunately available in monasteries and private collections in lands bordering on Tibet. Aided by funds obtained in advance from potential buyers of these reprints, Gene Smith has been able to help considerably in promoting the work. Moreover, his considerable knowledge of Tibetan literature enables him to establish priorities in the work, and this is of inestimable value. His house in Delhi has become a meeting-place for scholars, for enthusiasts and for those who are simply his friends. We are merely two of many who have enjoyed his prodigious hospitality, and benefitted both before and after our journey to Ladakh from his advice, his precise references to relevant materials, and his own impressive library. In putting our materials together for publication we wish to record how much he has helped us.

The present volume is limited to an overall presentation of the largely Buddhist heritage of Ladakh and to a special study of the paintings of Alchi Monastery, which provide the most important witness to the great cultural value of this heritage. Since this book began to take shape Mr Philip Denwood has also spent several months during the summer of 1975 in Ladakh, and he has collected many interesting materials, some of which have already been essential to us in the preparation of this volume. He was accompanied much of the time by Mr Ricardo Canzio, who is preparing a doctoral thesis for the University of London on Tibetan music and liturgy, and who will thus have much information to add which will be of a completely independent nature. Finally Mr Tadeusz Skorupski is making a return visit to Ladakh during the summer months of 1976 in order to visit places of importance, especially in Zangskar, which we were deterred from visiting, mainly for climatic reasons, during our winter stay of 1974/75. Thus we propose to follow this present volume with a second one, which will contain a coherent collection of specialized and detailed studies. I should perhaps further add that the materials collected by Mr Skorupski have direct relevance to a separate work of his own, a study of the

1. We have in mind especially the Tibetan inscriptions at Alchi, most of which he has copied and photographed.
Sanskrit and Tibetan versions of a canonical tantric work known as 'The Purifying of all Evil Rebirths' (Durgatipariśodhana). This work contains descriptions of rites and of 'mystic circles' (maṇḍala) centring upon the Buddha Śākyamuni in his forms of the 'Omniscient' (Tibetan: Kun-rig) and the 'Resplendent' (Skr: Vairocana). It is precisely such 'circles' which form a large part of the mural decoration at Alchi and other early sites in Ladakh, and without the relevant textual references, complex iconography of this kind would remain largely unexplained.

Our thanks are due to those who have made possible the interrelation of these various studies and who have financed several journeys to Ladakh, namely the School of Oriental and African Studies in the University of London, which has supported all of us in different ways, and the British Academy, which helped to finance the difficult winter visit of 1974/75 and which has contributed generously to the costs of publication. We are all much beholden to Mr Madmud-ur-Rahman of the Indian Administrative Service, who as Development Commissioner in Ladakh, has taken a kindly and protective interest in our academic activities, as well as to Mr Konchok Chospail, the Superintendent of Police in Leh, and to Mr Akbar Ladakhi of Srinagar who gave us good initial advice and very helpful introductions. Nor do we forget our kind hosts, Mr & Mrs Joldan of Leh and Sonam Dorje of Alchi and other members of his family. Then we would thank Mr Paul Fox for all he has done so painstakingly to help us prepare our photographic materials for publication, and our friend Mr. Anthony Aris for his extraordinary efficiency in putting this book together and in co-operating so readily in the insertion of corrections and additions sent in the final stage of preparation from Ladakh by my co-author. Finally we must thank personally Monsieur & Madame Jean Riboud for the magnificent hospitality of the Château de la Carelle, where the work was brought to completion and for the useful suggestions that Madame Krishnā Riboud herself has given us concerning Central Asian art motifs. A great deal of detailed work still needs to be done on the iconography, especially on the mandalas, but to clear all doubtful points would cause quite uncertain delays, and they are best left for later investigation. Much of the material is so little known, that it will be helpful to hear the comments and criticisms of competent scholars, before formulating definitive statements in every case. The second volume of this work, which we are already planning, will allow scope for further elaboration.

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Tring, 30th September 1976.
Ladakh is nowadays a remote district of the State of Jammu & Kashmir, which since 1947 has been divided unequally between India and Pakistan. Despite the efforts of the United Nations the State remains a major bone of contention between these two countries and neither recognizes the right of the other to hold any part of it whatsoever. Jammu, the smaller but historically the senior member of this unified state, is mainly Hindu. By marked contrast Kashmir is predominately Muslim. Ladakh, like its western neighbour Baltistan, was added to the State as a result of the fierce campaigns of the ruler of Jammu, Gulab Singh, to whom the British subsequently made over in 1846 the land of Kashmir. Until its final subjection to the rulers of Jammu in 1834 Ladakh was hardly part of India. It was an independent kingdom, generally oriented in its sympathies towards Tibet.

One often reads in general histories and encyclopaedias that Ladakh was formerly part of Tibet. This misleading statement springs from a general Western vagueness about what the name Tibet may signify in rather different contexts. Used in a broad cultural sense the term Tibet covers a far wider territory than was ever subject to the Dalai Lama's administration in Lhasa. Thus in eastern Tibet there were several independent principalities, over which the Chinese claimed and were generally acknowledged by interested Western governments to exercise a far more direct control than they exercised in central Tibet. To the south the kingdom of Bhutan has stoutly maintained its political independence of the Dalai Lama's regime ever since its inception in the mid-17th century. Nevertheless Bhutan belongs to the Tibetan cultural world. Other southern fringe territories, clearly Tibetan in culture, have since the end of the 18th century become part of Nepal. Of these the lands of Mustang and Dolpo are historically the most important.

Moving back in time to the 13th and 14th centuries we note that central and eastern Tibet was vaguely unified under the suzerainty of the successors of Genghiz Khan, who having taken over China as well, remained the imperial rulers (the Yuan Dynasty) until 1368. Ladakh may have been a nominal inclusion in this vast Mongol empire, but effectively it was probably still a separate kingdom as constituted by another great Ladakhi king, Utpala, towards the end of the 11th century. Prior to this it belonged to a kind of confederacy of western Tibetan states, of which Gu-ge with its great cultural centres of Tholing and Tsaparang was the most important. The foundation of Ladakh's earliest surviving monastery, Alchi, belongs to this period, and so this will be treated in detail in a later chapter.

By about 1000 A.D. Tibetan language and culture became all pervasive throughout Ladakh and even further west throughout Baltistan, which in the mid-8th century became the western outpost
of a great Tibetan empire including the whole of what is now Chinese Turkestan. Ladakh itself does not seem to have been affected by this general Tibetan cultural penetration until the 16th century, but since then a western dialect of Tibetan has become the regular language of the people of Ladakh. The Baltis were forcibly converted to Islam by the rulers of Kashmir at the beginning of the 15th century, but the Balti language, which is also a Tibetan dialect, continues to bear witness to the earlier Tibetan connection. From the 15th century onwards Ladakh has been open to Moslem penetration, often ferocious and destructive, but sometimes peaceful. The main Sunni mosque in Leh was constructed in the latter half of the 17th century as part of an agreement with the Moghul rulers in Delhi and Srinagar who later (1683) assisted the Ladakhis in driving from their country a Tibeto-Mongol army which carried war and destruction to Ladakh at the behest of the 5th Dalai Lama. This Tibetan onslaught marked the beginning of the end for Ladakh as an independent kingdom. Ladakh not only lost to the Lhasa government all the intervening lands between Ladakh proper and the western boundary of Tsang Province, but from now on they were increasingly beholden to their Moslem neighbours to the west, who having come to their assistance were not so easily disposed of. However, the final destroyers of Ladakh's independence were the Hindu rulers of Jammu, who invaded in 1834 and carried their destructive warfare into those areas of western Tibet which had formerly belonged to Ladakh. Under this Hindu domination the Moslems of Kashmir and the Buddhists of Ladakh continued to live peaceably together, although Moslem pressures have never ceased on Ladakh. Of the two Ladakhi provinces of Kargil (in the west) and Leh (in the east), Kargil is more than ninety per cent Moslem, and Leh is about half and half. One should also mention a small Christian community, entirely Ladakhi and about one hundred strong, started by Moravian missionaries at the end of the 19th century.

Since we are concerned in this book with Ladakh's cultural heritage, it is with the Buddhists that we are almost exclusively concerned, for it is Buddhist culture which remains typical of Ladakh. Even where it has been largely effaced in the Moslem areas, no higher Islamic culture has come to take its place. The village mosques are mostly simple adaptations of normal flat-roofed stone and mud Tibetan-style houses. In Kargil and Leh one sees a rare dome and small minaret. It is Buddhist culture and mainly Tibetan Buddhist culture that is all-pervasive, and even in the main mosque in Leh the most precious relics are the staff and the boots of Lama Stag-tshang Ras-pa, first hierarch of Hemis Monastery, founded by royal decree in the early 16th century as the most favoured religious establishment in Ladakh. It is pleasant to relate that personal relations between Buddhists and Moslems in recent times have generally been good, and intermarriage has become not at all unusual, each partner respecting the faith of the other. Lack of caste-consciousness in Ladakh has rendered social intercourse far easier between Buddhists and Moslems, than has ever been possible elsewhere in India between Hindus and Moslems.

The first Westerner to reach Ladakh was a Portuguese layman named Diogo d'Almeida who spent two years there probably about 1600. Next came the Jesuit priests, Fathers Francesco de Azevedo and Giovanni de Oliveira, who travelled there from Tsaparang in 1631. Their stay was a very brief one and de Azevedo's account is interesting mainly for his description of the great Senge Namgyal, who received them in audience. A far more circumstantial account is given by Ipolito Desideri, who passed through Ladakh in 1715 on his long journey from Srinagar to Lhasa. He was recalled from Lhasa 1721 and soon afterwards all such missionary activity in Tibetan lands came to an end. It was not until

2. Tibetan, like many other languages, is characterized by fixed literary forms of universal use and by a large number of local dialects, many of which are spoken in frontier areas which may never have been part of a politically centralized Tibet. There is nothing unusual about this. Thus in the Ticino district of Switzerland Italian is in current use. Again Austria and most of Switzerland have their own forms of German dialects, and in both countries regular literary German is in use. A close linguistic parallel to Ladakh in modern times is provided by Alsace, where local German dialect is still prevalent despite strong French cultural pressure. Thus in Ladakh a Tibetan dialect is still in general use, despite the strong pressure of Urdu, as taught in government schools.

a hundred years later that Europeans again penetrated Ladakh, and this time they were two Englishmen, William Moorcroft and George Trebeck, employees of the English East India Company, who stayed there mainly on their own responsibility and have left interesting descriptions of the royal family and governing circles in the last decade of Ladakh's independence.4

Since Gulab Singh, ruler of Jammu, took forceful possession of Kashmir and Ladakh in agreement with the British, who were then the paramount power in India, other Englishmen began from now on to appear on the scene. In 1846 Alexander Cunningham and others fixed the frontier between Ladakh and the domains of the Dalai Lama, and a year later the frontier of Ladakh and Spiti to the south. In agreement with Gulab Singh, Spiti was detached from Ladakh and included in the district of Kulu, which came directly under British administration. Such was the misrule to which Kashmir and dismembered Ladakh were subjected by their Hindu rulers that the British authorities politely intervened and, as a result of a commercial treaty made between the Governments of India and of the Jammu-Kashmir State in 1870 it was arranged that a British representative known as Joint-Commissioner should be resident in Leh and thus be able to supplement the authority of the Wazir appointed by the Jammu-Kashmir Maharaja. In practice the Wazir usually remained in Jammu and appointed a deputy. An exception was an English soldier, an ex-corporal named Jonson who won the confidence of the Maharaja and was appointed Wazir from 1871 to 1883. He was remembered locally for his fairness and for the pleasure he took in climbing the mountain summits around Leh.

It was the Government of India through the offices of the Director-General of Archaeology, which sponsored the first cultural mission of a high scholarly character in 1909. This was carried out by Dr. A. H. Francke of the Moravian Mission Board, which had already established a small Christian mission in Leh. Dr. Francke was a German scholar of repute, proficient in Indian languages and in Tibetan, a language unknown by earlier travellers in Ladakh. Dr. Francke's several articles and his two-volume work Antiquities of Indian Tibet remain to this day the most useful handbook for the scholarly traveller. There are many gaps in his itinerary, thus leaving several important sites unvisited, and many of his findings have been challenged in detail by Professor Giuseppe Tucci and Professor Luciano Petech who since the 1930s have become and still remain the chief authorities on the history and culture of old western Tibet.5 In this region Professor Tucci has concentrated upon the ancient cultural centres of Gu-ge, namely Tholing and Tsaparang, since Gu-ge rather than Ladakh was responsible for the remarkable flourishing of Buddhism which took place in western Tibet from the late 10th century onwards. Ladakh was affected by this incidentally and in a rather different manner, as will be seen. Professor Petech has concentrated on historical sources, correcting and adding to Francke's earlier work. Thus to this date the only attempt at a systematic description of monasteries and castles and even more ancient archaeological sites in Ladakh is that of Francke, published in 1914 (vol. 1) and 1926 (vol. 2), thus long since out of print, until it was republished recently in New Delhi.

More recently because of India's frontier troubles with Pakistan and Communist China, Ladakh, a sensitive frontier area, confronting Pakistan on one side and Chinese-occupied Tibet on the other, has remained closed for many years to outside visitors. This ban was suddenly lifted in the summer of 1974 just before Tadeusz Skorupski and I arrived in Delhi on our way to Nepal. We thus changed our plans as expeditiously as we could and made in September a short ten-day visit into Ladakh and back. Communications between Kashmir and Ladakh have been totally transformed since work began in 1962 on constructing a motorable road some 435 kilometres in length from Srinagar to Leh. This is blocked by very heavy snowfalls on the Zoji La every winter, and thus this road remains open normally only from June to November. During these months Leh can be reached with a jeep in a single day's journey from Srinagar, and by local bus, which halts at Kargil for a night, in two easy days' travel. This means a very great change indeed from earlier times when the normal travelling period by

horse from Srinagar to Leh was two weeks and when a series of postal runners might do the distance in six days. Tourists and travelling scholars are now able to make short excursions into Ladakh and back within the ten days which we spent on our first visit or even within less time. Such a short visit remains very superficial in its impressions, and we resolved at once to arrange a much longer stay as soon as we could retrieve from Kathmandu our winter-travel necessities, which in accordance with earlier plans had all been sent direct to Nepal. Thus it was already the end of October when we travelled again from Delhi to Srinagar, and arranged eventually with a jeep to carry us and our luggage into Ladakh. Having made the journey once already, we now planned to visit the Monastery of Lamayuru en route and then establish ourselves at Alchi, so that we might make a thorough study of this important place before continuing to Leh, whence most other places of interest to us could be reached by a day’s excursion.

This second stay in Ladakh, whence most of the materials presented in this book derive, lasted from the 29th October 1974 until the 10th February 1975, a period of nearly three and a half months. There are advantages as well as disadvantages to spending a winter in Ladakh. The chief disadvantage is the bitter cold with temperatures in Leh falling to about minus 35 Centigrade. Also during the winter we spent there the sky was more overcast than usual, thus producing very low day temperatures, and there were heavy and prolonged falls of snow. On clear days the sky is a clear Alpine or rather Tibetan blue, and the rays of the sun strike comfortingly warm. With the disappearance of the sun bitter cold invests one’s whole body, attacking especially the stomach. The people of Leh are as much subject to epidemics of cold-viruses as we are, and such attacks are a continual hazard. Conditions such as these restrict one’s travel considerably. We did well to arrange our stay in Alchi during the first half of November when winter was only just beginning. Some leaves still clung to the willows and poplars. The first snow had not yet fallen, although the streams were already partly frozen. Wood is relatively plentiful at Alchi, and the Alchi Lonpo (see p. 22) in whose house we stayed provided us with a stove which kept us sufficiently warm after sunset. Most of our time was spent photographing and copying details of the iconography in the various temples, and this was very cold work, but happily bearable on sunny days.

Having left Alchi on 15th November, we established ourselves far more comfortably in the ‘Circuit House’, the government guest-house in Leh, where we kept one room tolerably warm by burning about a gallon of parafin daily in an Army-adapted iron stove. Parafin is imported in large quantities during the summer months and is issued on ration during the winter to the Indian troops, who are there to guard the frontiers and to those civilians who are fortunate enough to obtain permits. Wood is scarce and expensive in Leh, and the poorer Ladakhis made do with very little wood and such dried animal-dung as they can obtain. Most families procure some parafin, and primus-stoves and even pressure-cookers have recently become very popular. We heated water for washing and for our bucket baths on a primus-stove we had brought with us, and with our sleeping-bags and blankets, our own winter clothing and boots, usefully supplemented by the Ladakhi or rather Tibet style gowns of heavy lined serge (chu-pa) which we wore during the day-time, we were remarkably comfortable, so long as we always came ‘home’ in the evenings and did not attempt to sleep in some other outlying place, where sufficient means of warmth were absent. Such is the main disadvantage of spending a winter in Ladakh, namely the intense cold and the limitations which this sets upon one’s choice of place of sojourn.

The advantages, however, are considerable. Because of the enforced economic idleness, people have more time for social and religious activities. Thus all the monasteries of Ladakh with the one exception of Hemis, hold their major festivals during the winter months. The Ladakh New Year is celebrated traditionally on the 1st of the 11th Tibetan lunar month (in 1974 this fell on the 14th December) and the Great Festival of Leh (sLe dus-mo-che) takes place at the end of the 12th Tibetan month. Marriages are performed towards the end of the old year, and Buddhist households regularly invite monks to perform propitiatory ceremonies in their houses over the same period. Thus for anyone interested in the cultural life of Ladakh winter is the time to stay there. Despite the snow, travel is possible by jeep, equipped if need be with chains, and thus one can make day-visits to places within a range of 50 kilometres with ease, and if one is prepared for a very cold drive home, even further afield.
Also during the autumn and early winter food supplies are at their best. Wheat and barley and imported rice are plentiful. Meat, either of goat or of sheep, is abundant, for this is the time of the year when the owners feel the need to dispose of them. Potatoes, onions, cauliflower and cabbage are stored efficiently underground, and are thus available most of the winter. Dried tomatoes are useful for cooking, and the little local dried apricots, soaked and cooked with sugar, make an excellent compôte. Apples, imported from Kashmir, are available in the Leh market until the end of November, and one can find local merchants with supplies of local walnuts to sell throughout the winter. Tea, the staple drink, can be made in Ladakh (viz. Tibetan) style with butter and salt, or infused in a more delectable manner. A type of ‘ale’ (chang) is made locally from barley in the normal Tibetan way, and spirits (arak) are produced by distillation of fermented grain. Indian Army rum also finds its way into some shops in the bazaar. Living conditions are certainly not so easy outside Leh, but in Leh itself, as one time in Lhasa, one can live very comfortably in the winter.

We also enjoyed the privilege of being the only foreigners in the place over the winter months. Thus we were able to establish our own reputation for what this was worth, and we certainly enjoyed a great deal of local good will. The only people who disliked our presence were the local military Intelligence, who continued to profess a conviction that we were really spies. It was certainly because of their ill will towards us that we were unable to obtain for some time permission to fly out of Ladakh on an army plane, despite the efforts of the civilian authorities to help us. When the road is closed over the long winter months, the only practicable way out of Leh is by air, and all flights are under army control. A direct appeal to Mrs Indira Gandhi finally settled this matter for us, and so we left in February just after the Festival of Leh. In the event the road out to Srinagar was not opened in 1975 until the 12th June and this would have meant a very much longer stay. It is possible that civilian flights will be instituted eventually, and then Leh will become even more accessible than it is at present. It is certain that already large numbers of visitors are touring Ladakh during the summer months; and this is likely to create a new interest in a land which with the disappearance of Tibetan Buddhism and Tibetan culture in Chinese-occupied Tibet remains now as the most significant representative of the greater Tibetan cultural area that once existed.
II  Stucco image of the Buddha Vairocana in an old temple (Senge-sgang) at Lamayuru
CHAPTER ONE

CULTURAL BACKGROUND

GEOGRAPHICAL FACTORS

Ladakh is not a unified geographical area, and only with great difficulty can it be transformed into a single political one. Travelling from Srinagar one crosses first the Zoji La and descends to the village of Dras. From here one descends north-eastwards to a river junction a few miles below Kargil, whence one ascends the adjoining river south-eastwards through Kargil and on to Mulbek. The valley between Kargil and Mulbek with the various hamlets contained therein is properly known as Purig. Yet another river descending towards Kargil from the south is known as Suru. It was by the pass at the head of the Suru valley that the troops of Gulab Singh of Jammu invaded Ladakh in 1824. The three valleys of Dras, Purig and Suru, being connected along river valleys, are comparatively easily unified. Nowadays, apart from a few Buddhist families in and around Mulbek, this whole western region of Ladakh is Muslim. The only early Buddhist remains of note in the whole area are some images carved in relief on stone blocks which stand by the wayside near Dras, and an impressive rock-cut image at Mulbek. The images at Dras represent Maitreya and Avalokiteśvara with subsidiary designs of a lotus-flower, a man on horseback, and a stūpa which is carved on the reverse of the Avalokiteśvara block. The image at Mulbek is of Maitreya, the great Bodhisattva designated as a future Buddha. These images may be related to the late Gupta period in India, namely the 7th century or even later, for it was not until then that images of such divinities became popular.

Travelling directly eastwards from Mulbek one ascends to the Namika La (12,200 feet), whence one descends to a northwards-flowing tributary of the Indus. Historically the most important place in this valley is Chigtan, with its fort and deserted monastery, probably constructed when Tibetan influences began to penetrate Ladakh from Gu-ge from the 11th century onwards. It was visited and described by Francke in 1909. Instead of following the river downwards towards Chigtan, the traveller to Leh ascends the valley and passing through the village of Bod-kharbu, begins the ascent to the Photo La (13,432 ft), the highest of the three main passes on the road from Srinagar to Leh. Despite their height these two passes which rise above the Bod-kharbu Valley to the west and the east, remain open during the winter, and thus the inhabitants have been easy victims to the rulers of Purig on one side, and the rulers of central Ladakh on the other.

Descending eastwards from the Photo La one reaches the monastery of Lamayuru, of which the foundation goes back to the 11th century, and descending still further one comes to the village of Khalatse (written as Khalsi on modern road-signs), where Francke discovered an inscription from Kushāna times (see p. 6). Here one is in the main Indus valley, which one follows through to Leh and beyond to Hemis. This limited area is Ladakh proper.

The local bus, which nowadays does the two-day journey, Srinagar to Kargil, and Kargil to Leh, stops at Khalatse on the second day’s journey for a lunch-time halt. It is a very beautiful village, especially during the summer months when the willows and poplars are in leaf. Not far beyond Khalatse one comes to Nyur-la and some three kms north of here is the old citadel of sTing-mo-sgang.
1. The ascent to the Zoji La from the Kashmir side.

2. The old track as it approaches Lamayuru descending from the Photo La.
one of the ancient local 'capitals' of Ladakh. The road now ascends the right bank of the Indus, passing through Saspol, a long straggling village which owes its existence to an unusually wide side-valley descending from the north. Cutting across this valley and following the earlier track, the road leaves the Indus which disappears from view into a deep gorge to the south. Beyond the gorge the valley widens again and here lie the scattered hamlets and temples which make up the complex known as Alchi (A-lci).

About a kilometre below the first Saspol houses there is a bridge, whence a track leads to Yul-'khor, the largest of the Alchi hamlets. On the crags above the bridge the ruins of an ancient fort are visible. An inscription in the main Alchi temple (the Du-khang) informs us that both the bridge and the fort were built by a wealthy prelate named sKal-idan Shes-rab. He belonged to the clan named 'Bro, often mentioned in the royal accounts of the old Tibetan kingdom (7th to 9th century A.D.), and occurring again in the later Tibetan kingdoms established in Western Tibet (10th to 11th century). The other main clusters of buildings at Alchi are the hamlet of Shang-rong, just beyond Yul-'khor, the complex of temples and houses, which hang over the banks of the Indus about a kilometre further on, simply known as Chos-'khor (= Sacred Enclave), and on the hill-side above Chos-'khor, another ancient temple surrounded by closely built houses and known as Gompa (dGon-pa = monastery). Alchi represents an extraordinary survival from the past in a land where there has been so much destruction and warfare. Its survival is quite fortuitous and can be attributed mainly to geographical reasons, namely that the wide Saspol valley has provided an easier route than the main Indus Valley just at this point, and thus Alchi has gone largely unnoticed.

Beyond Saspol the road rejoins the Indus Valley, passes through a narrow gorge, cuts across higher ground and then descends to the river again at Basgo, another ancient citadel and one-time 'capital'. Now a sad ruin apart from two summit temples, Basgo was once the strongest fortress in Ladakh. In the late 17th century it was besieged for three years without success by an invading Mongol-Tibetan army. Just beyond Basgo there is the shell of a ruined temple, attributed to Rin-chen bZang-po and his times (see p. 93). It was noted by Francke. Mani walls and series of chöten line the few kilometres of route which lead to the next village of Nye-mo (spelt as Nimmu on new road-signs). Here the road leaves the Indus, climbing up the side of the gorge with good views of the junction of the Indus with the Zangskar River. This important tributary is named after the region of Zangskar, which comprises nowadays a collection of hamlets and small religious settlements south of Ladakh proper. The road to Leh cuts across the mountains, passes within sight of the Monastery of Phiyang, and then descends again towards the Indus, as it approaches Spituk Monastery, about twelve kilometres from Leh.

Leh (sLe) is essentially a hill-top fortress like Basgo, descending to a small walled citadel towards the foot of the crags. Since the latter part of the last century a small town with a wide bazaar has developed below the fort. As a 'royal capital' Leh is linked closely with Shey, another fortress-like residence, still standing on the crags some twelve kilometres further up the right bank of the Indus. From historical references Shey would certainly seem to be by far the older site. The first and higher fort at Leh, known as the rTse-mo (= The Peak) was built at the beginning of the 16th century, when the Basgo line of rulers usurped the position of the Shey line and united these two parts of the land. The larger and more imposing fort-like palace, which dominates the present town was completed by the greatest of Ladakhi kings, Senge Namgyal in the first part of the 17th century. Although far less imposing in its present derelict state, it resembles architecturally the Potala, the palatial fort built at Lhasa later the same century by the 5th Dalai Lama. The crags on which the Leh forts are built and the small town sprawling below them are situated in a small enclosed valley descending from the north towards the Indus. Thus the route from Spituk crosses twelve kilometres of relatively flat ground across the mouth of the side valley. Unhappily this whole area is now entirely disfigured with Indian Army military encampments. Below the crags on which Spituk Monastery is built an air-field has been constructed.

6. See p. 81 and note 42.
The fifty kilometres or so of the Indus Valley from Spituk and Leh upstream may be considered the heart-land of the Ladakhi kingdom over the last five to six centuries. Twelve kilometres beyond Leh is the ruined fort-like palace of Shey, overlooking what was once a beautiful natural lake, now reduced in its neglect to a swampy waste of pools. There are interesting temples by the palace and in the village below. The whole area is strewn with chotens of various shapes and sizes. Across the Indus a few kilometres to the west is the royal estate of Stok, another towering fort-like residence, where the descendants of the royal family have made their home since they were driven from the throne by the Dogras of Jammu in 1842. Continuing beyond Shey up the right bank of the Indus one comes to the Monastery of Tikse (Khrig-rtse), one of the most imposing in the whole of Ladakh. Eight kilometres further on one sees the Monastery of Stakna (Stag-sna) on a crag-top the other side of the river. Here on the left bank the valley widens considerably, and with efficient irrigation might well be very fruitful. Where crags rise up on the western limits of this small plain stands the Monastery of Ma-tro (Mu-spro), the only representative of the Sākya (Sa-skya) order of Tibetan Buddhism in Ladakh. The oldest site on this part of the valley, of which imposing ruins remain, are the fort and the monastery of Nyar-ma, which may be reached by leaving the road just beyond Tikse and crossing the fields. The empty earthen shells of the monastic buildings and a number of derelict chotens cover a site quite as large as that of the Alchi monastic complex. Nyar-ma (earlier written Myar-ma - the pronunciation is the same) is named as one of the three first monasteries founded by Rin-chen-bzang-po, and thus may be dated round about a 1000 A.D. It is mentioned in an Alchi inscription in a way which indicates that it already existed when Alchi was built. The castle ruins are perched on the crags immediately above the monastery. Like other early monasteries, such as Alchi, Tabo (in Spiti), Tholing and Tsaparang (in Gu-ge), it is built in the valley. Only in a later period, from the 15th century on, were monasteries built in Ladakh as places of defence and thus on high summits.

Beyond Stakna the Indus Valley begins to close in gradually until some fifteen kilometres higher up one crosses a bridge to the left bank and climbs steeply (a winding jeepable track now exists) to the Monastery of Hemis, which is concealed within a rocky ravine. Since the time when Europeans became more frequent visitors to Ladakh, from the latter part of the 19th century onwards, Hemis has become the best known of Ladakhi monasteries, probably for the quite accidental reason that its main festival takes place in the early summer, when the climate is pleasant, whereas all the other monasteries hold theirs during the winter when few foreigners willingly remain in the land. Hemis was one of the monasteries founded by Senge Namgyal in the early 17th century and belongs to an order of Tibetan Buddhism which was then in the process of becoming predominant in Bhutan, namely the Brug-pa subsect of the Ka-γyü-pa (bKa'-brgyud-pa) order. Stakna belongs to the same order, as does Chendey (Ice-'bre) which stands in an opposite side-valley on the way up to Sagti (gSer-khri). Just beyond Sagti is the only rNying-ma-pa monastery in Ladakh, namely Trak-thok (Brag-thog).

To the north of this small heart-land of Ladakh lies the region of Nubra, reached by crossing the Khardong Pass. On the way to the pass there are ruins of yet another monastic foundation attributed to Rin-chen-bzang po. It is still known just as Chos-khor (= Religious Enclave), a term suggesting a place of some importance (see p. 28).

Travelling southwards beyond Hemis one comes to Rukshu, the highest and wildest part of the whole of Ladakh, whence high passes lead to the districts of Lahul and Spiti, all part of the realms of the kings of Ladakh until the 19th century, although they had already been much ravaged by the neighbouring rulers of Kulu and Kunawar.

From this survey one realizes that Ladakh in the major sense covers a very large area, most of which is quite unknown to the outside world. However, since religious penetration has usually followed
established trade-routes, the areas through which Buddhism entered the country and became firmly established are not so extensive. Moreover, as might be expected, most of the important monastic foundations are found in the heart-land of Ladakh, near enough to the royal palaces of Shey, Leh, Basgo and sTing-mo-sgang to benefit from the proximity of wealth.

HISTORICAL SURVEY

From the 10th century onwards, when the first consecutive historical records become available, slight as they may be, Ladakh is clearly regarded as part of the general Tibetan scene. Already an early Alchi inscription, referring to the founding of the Three-Tier (gSum-br~s~gs) Temple there, makes this quite clear:

'Towards the north of Jambudvīpa is this snowy land with its high mountains and good soil, sPu-rgyal’s Tibet. It is filled with religious practisers who possess the Thought of Enlightenment'. It is the source of many clever and noble men in Upper Nga-ri (West Tibet), and here in Alchi this precious tiered temple has been founded by the Teacher and Benefactor Tshul-khrims-'od, who is of noble lineage, of high rank, of the 'Bro clan.'

This was written at a time when the imposing Central Asian Tibetan kingdom, centred on Lhasa, had disintegrated, and when some of the descendents of the last king of a united Tibet (Glang-dar-ma - assassinated in 842 A.D.) had migrated westwards, carving out small kingdoms for themselves in the remote region west of Kailasa, known as Nga-ri (mNga'-ris). This name itself could simply mean 'royal domain'. Ladakh which may not have been part of the old Tibetan kingdom, certainly became part of this new western one. It is interesting to note that the newly established rulers in Western Tibet assume themselves to be in all senses the true representatives of the great empire, which had now disappeared. Thus being part of their territories, Alchi is clearly named as being in Tibet. The great translator and builder of temples, Rin-chen bzang-po (958-1055) was sponsored by the same royal dynasty, and since the foundation of Nyar-ma Monastery is ascribed to him, it would seem that the earliest known Buddhist religious houses in Ladakh were founded under direct Tibetan inspiration.

Buddhism certainly reached Lhasa under the protection of some of the aristocracy in the 7th century A.D. and began to gain a hold from the following century onwards. The collapse of the old kingdom in 842 A.D. put an end to the hope of any royal protection of the new religion in central Tibet even before the immense task of converting the whole country was properly under way. Thus the royal descendents who established themselves in western Tibet, took up the task anew, and this involved sending trained groups of scholars and artisans to India, mainly to Kashmir and the surrounding area of north-west India, in order to build up collections and translations of Buddhist literature and to import Buddhist cultic and artistic traditions. So one notes that while the inspiration for the foundation of these monasteries in Ladakh and elsewhere in western Tibet came from the new Tibetan rulers, the cultic and artistic requirements were inevitably largely Indian. This state of affairs continued in Tibet itself up to the 12th century or so, when Buddhism disappeared from India, and the Tibetans were left to develop into an art which is peculiarly Tibetan all that they had received earlier from abroad. A large number of temples and monasteries which survive in Ladakh from the 16th century onwards, are
decorated entirely in the later Tibetan style. The only places surviving where the Indian and Indo-Tibetan styles are preserved, are to our knowledge in a temple, presumably 11th century, at Lamayuru, in the whole Alchi complex, also at Mang-gyu, at Sumda (in Zangskar), and in various caves.

Ladakh has always occupied an ambivalent position between India and Tibet. In its cultural impact Tibetan pressure has been extraordinarily uniform. From the point of view of language it has provided Ladakh with a western Tibetan dialect, which despite influences from the Indian side, is still generally spoken to this day by Ladakhi Muslims as much as by Buddhists. As for literature, the regular styles of literary Tibetan have remained current in Ladakh from the 10th century to the 20th. As for religion, several of the orders of Tibetan Buddhism are represented in Ladakh, and there has never been anything resembling a separate Ladakhi Buddhist 'church'. Tibetan cultural influence has been uniform simply because Tibetan civilization as a whole has become so remarkably uniform largely as a result of its determined adherence to certain forms of Buddhist religion. By marked contrast cultural influences from the Indian side have varied considerably in accordance with the kind of religion and the kind of language and culture which happened to be prevalent in India and especially in Kashmir, Ladakh's closest neighbour on the Indian side.

It would seem very likely that Buddhism first appeared in Ladakh from the Indian side long before the Tibetan rulers of western Tibet gave it so great an impetus. But of this early pre-Tibetan Buddhist period very little remains. From approximately the 1st century B.C. to the 5th century A.D. the Kushānas, a people of Central Asian origin, ruled over a large territory comprising eastern Afghanistan and all of north-western India. They very soon became converted to Buddhism, which had already reached north-west India in the 3rd century B.C., and thanks to their patronage, Gandhāra, the name by which the central part of their wide domains was known, became a kind of second Buddhist holy land, rivaling ancient Magadha in the central Ganges Valley, which was the first home of Śākyamuni's religion. The existence of Kushāna interest in Ladakh is proved by an inscription in the Indian Kharoshṭi script which they used, found by A. H. Francke as far inside this difficult mountain land as Khatlase. There is no direct evidence of Buddhism at so early a period, but Buddhist monks from Gandhāra certainly travelled wherever the royal Kushāna writ ran. It is generally assumed that the inhabitants of Ladakh at this early time were Dards, a people of Indo-European stock, already known to Ptolemy as the Daradrai, who may have sought refuge in these high mountain valleys from the victorious advance of the Kushānas. In the 5th century the Kushāna dynasty finally collapsed under the attacks of invading Huns, once again from Central Asia. They carried death and destruction to vast tracts of north-west India and Kashmir became one of their strongholds. When the famous Chinese Buddhist scholar Hsiian Tsang passed through Kashmir in 631-3 he found Buddhism somewhat restored by a local dynasty. But it was during the following century under the rule of an extraordinary warrior-king Lalitāditya-Muktāpida (c. 725-756) that Kashmir achieved its greatest power and prosperity.9 Religious treasures, both Hindu and Buddhist, were plundered from all over northern India and craftsmen brought in from distant lands, thus building up what might have proved an amazingly rich heritage. But even as it was being built up, it was already being ravaged by raiding Tibetans, who were then the main power in Central Asia, and scarcely yet converted to Buddhism. Moreover Lalitāditya's successors were unable to hold the kingdom together, and several centuries of political turmoil and disruption, of internal strife and foreign invasion must have resulted in the dissipation of what must have been an extraordinary civilization long before the country finally fell to a Muslim dynasty in 1337 A.D. Little more than the foundations of a Buddhist monastery, a large temple and a stūpa, may still be seen at Lalitāditya's one-time capital of Parihasapura, some thirty kilometres north of Srinagar. Ladakh must surely have been subject to him, and thus it is to the 8th and subsequent centuries that we may attribute the Buddhist rock-reliefs, which represent the most important traces of pre-Tibetan, i.e. direct Indian Buddhist


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3. Rock-carvings by the way-side at Dras, from right to left: Maitreya, a lotus-flower, a horseman and Avalokitesvara. We have noted on the stones some badly damaged Tibetan inscription.

4. Rock-carving of Maitreya at Mulbek. These earlier rock-images are carved in a deep rounded relief, very different from the far more common shallow carvings illustrated elsewhere (see IIs 5, 82, 100, 109)
Cultural Background

Influence in Ladakh. The existence of even more ancient pre-Buddhist rock-carvings there suggest that this form of artistic representation may be something peculiar to Ladakh, but the Buddhist divinities who are represented are clearly of Indian origin, and for iconographic as well as historical reasons they are unlikely to be much earlier than the 8th century.

With the establishment of a Muslim dynasty in Kashmir very different influences began to penetrate Ladakh. Even under its Hindu rulers, when Buddhism and Hinduism existed side by side in Kashmir, cultural influences from neighbouring Muslim lands, especially Persia and western Central Asia, must already have been present. An indication of this is the type of Buddhist art found in Alchi, which was largely carried out by Buddhist craftsmen from Kashmir. But after the political triumph of Islam in Kashmir in the 14th century Buddhist and Hindu art simply ceased to exist except for a few temples left in ruins. Thus there is no Kashmiri painting of the Hindu-Buddhist period which might be compared with what still exists in Alchi. It would seem certain, however, that from this time onwards cultural influences were less readily accepted from Kashmir by the Buddhists of Ladakh, who now turned for help to Tibet, where Buddhism in all its aspects, doctrinal, administrative and artistic, was already a flourishing concern.

From the 15th century onwards Ladakh had to submit to Muslim raids and to a steadily increasing conversion to Islam, which as would be expected has moved steadily from the west to the east of the country. Thus the western part of Ladakh up to Mulbek, where the first Buddhist chortens begin to appear, is almost entirely Muslim. These Ladakhi Muslims continue for the most part to speak their western Tibetan dialect, but Tibetan literature has disappeared from their midst together with the Buddhist religion. Their sacred texts are written in Arabic together with which they have adopted Urdu as their everyday written language. In the 17th century the Moghul emperor in Delhi became the protagonist of the Ladakhi king against the great Tibetan invasion, instigated by a new and powerful government in Lhasa ruling in the name of the 5th Dalai Lama, and efforts were made, not for the first time, to turn the Ladakhi king into a Muslim. It was not until the 19th century when Kashmir, together with Ladakh, was taken over by the Hindu rulers of the little state of Jammu, that the political pressure of Islam began to ease in Ladakh, and although the king was driven from his throne and the old aristocracy impoverished, the Buddhist monasteries of Ladakh managed to achieve a comparatively privileged position for themselves, which has continued to the present day.

PHASES OF BUDDHIST DOCTRINE

Buddhism appears in the form of a monastic order and of a religion in the wider sense of the term from the 5th century B.C. onwards. All the later literary and archaeological evidence associates its beginnings with the Buddha (Enlightened One) Śākyamuni, who spent his life meditating and teaching in the central Ganges valley. Some two centuries later this same area became the centre of the great empire of the famous Aśoka, whose capital was at Pataliputra (modern Patna). Buddhist tradition names Aśoka as the chief instigator of the many religious missions which carried Buddhism to Sri Lanka in the south and to the far north-west of the Indian sub-continent in the north. Already in this early period the centre of the Buddhist cult was the stūpa (reliquary mound), believed to contain relics of Śākyamuni himself, of his chief disciples, and even of former Buddhas. One of Aśoka's own inscriptions bears witness to the existence of such a stūpa dedicated to the former Buddha Kanakamuni. 10 Aśoka's empire disintegrated soon after his death, but Buddhism continued to flourish in monastic centres established close to trade-routes across the length and breadth of India. The foundation of the Kushāna empire, to which reference has been made above, gave a further impetus to the spread of Buddhism in the far north-west, and it began to spread across Central Asia into China. The region then known as Gandhāra,

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corresponding nowadays to northern Pakistan, was an especially favoured Buddhist land, for it was here and in the neighbouring region of Mathura that the first anthropomorphic Buddha images were produced. Both Gandhāra and Mathura belonged to the Kushāṇa empire, and the incentive to create such images of a transcendent being who had never been previously portrayed, probably came from Hellenistic influences. These were strongly felt in the northern reaches of the Kushāṇa empire, where they had spread since the time when the great Persian empire had collapsed before the advance of Alexander the Great. The Greek satraps, who were his successors, brought Hellenistic civilization to the border-lands of India. The Hellenistic influence is very strongly marked in the Gandharan images. By contrast the craftsmen of Mathura produced a type of Buddha image which is a deliberate adaptation of early Indian images of local gods (yaksha).

These first Buddha images produced during the early Christian centuries some four to five hundred years after the Buddha Śākyamuni had actually lived, usually show him seated in meditation or more often either seated or standing with the right hand raised in a gesture of blessing. Already two centuries earlier the great Indian stūpas had been decorated with carved reliefs, illustrating events from his last life when he had achieved universal buddhahood, and also more frequently scenes from his previous lives, when he was progressing towards buddhahood as a Bodhisattva, 'one who is intent on Enlightenment'. On these earlier reliefs his august presence was indicated by an empty space or by such significant symbols as an empty throne beneath a tree (he had achieved enlightenment under a sacred tree) or by a pair of foot-prints. But now that his anthropomorphic representation had become acceptable, it was possible to show him on the later carved reliefs of various scenes just as it was possible to show him as a free-standing image. The early Gandharan images portray not only Śākyamuni, but also sets of previous Buddhas together with the Bodhisattva Maitreya, who according to an early system of reckoning will be the eighth Buddha. As a free-standing image the earlier Buddha Dipaṇkara appears to have been very popular, for it was at his feet many aeons ago that a Brahman youth named Sumegha vowed to achieve buddhahood and thus eventually became the Buddha of our world-age, namely Śākyamuni. The Bodhisattva ideal, which is a matter of committing oneself under vow to achieve buddhahood for the good of all sentient beings as a result of a succession of self-sacrificing lives in all kinds of existence, belongs to the earliest recorded form of Buddhism known to us, but in the earlier centuries such an ideal was felt to be beyond the reach of ordinary mortals. The title Bodhisattva was in practice reserved mainly for Śākyamuni in his previous lives and even in his last one, for he was technically a Bodhisattva up to the moment of his Enlightenment at the age of 35 years. However, with its application to Maitreya as the next Buddha to come, its use was greatly extended in implication. It was already the practice to show Śākyamuni attended by various divine beings, for he was superior to all the gods of Hinduism. Brahma and Indra were shown presiding over the lustration ceremony soon after his miraculous birth from his mother's right side. On many reliefs he is shown accompanied by a small divinity, holding Jove's weapon, a thunderbolt (vajra). This divinity Vajrapāṇi (Vajra-in-hand) was soon raised to the rank of Bodhisattva together with a companion divinity which appeared holding a lotus-flower (Padmapani). From a cultural as opposed to a philosophic point of view, the cult of Bodhisattvas as the great gods of Buddhism marks the main difference between the earlier teachings, and the later form of the religion, known as the Mahāyāna or the Great Way. It is 'great' because in theory it is open to all to make the vow to become Buddhas, and thus it preaches a Bodhisattva ideal which aims at the highest personal sanctity. In fact, however, only few adherents are able and willing to take their religion so seriously, and thus for the majority of Buddhists the Bodhisattva ideal became a cult of favourite gods, strong to save, who under Buddhist names found their way into an ever increasing Buddhist pantheon. Thus the great Hindu god Śiva with his title of Lokeśvara, 'Lord of the World', was transformed into the mighty Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, 'He who looks down' in pity on the world. Iconographically he was identified in the first instance with Padmapani (Lotus-in-hand), but later many other variant forms were devised.

The north-west of India seems to have been responsible for other buddhological changes, which are best described as 'cosmic' as distinct from 'historical'. The conception of a plurality of Bud-
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dhas is an essential part of Buddhism in all its various forms. During the first few centuries this took the form of belief in a series of supposedly 'historical' Buddhas who had appeared in the world in previous ages and of whom Sakyamuni was the latest in the series. Seven such Buddhas are often named and in the earliest iconography they are represented by a row of seven sacred trees or a row of seven stūpas. As has been noted, they are represented in Gandharan art by a row of seven Buddha figures with Maitreya, the Buddha-to-be as eighth. However, Indian Buddhism, like all other Indian religious and philosophical schools, was affected during the early Christian centuries by 'cosmic' conceptions of the relationship of the phenomenal world to absolute being. Time and historical sequence ceased to matter as an ultimate. Buddhahood is the pure absolute beyond time and space, and the Buddhas who appear in tangible form begin to be conceived of as spacial manifestations from an absolute centre. The idea is best represented on a cosmic pattern with Buddhas radiating to the various points of the compass. Their concern for the world is no longer expressed as an historical sequence of manifestations, but as an instantaneous spacial manifestation in the various cosmic directions. A certain realism appears in the system with faith in Amitābha (Boundless Light), the Buddha of the West, whose paradise was really believed by many of his devotees to lie in the western quarter. He certainly became one of the favourite Buddhas of north-western India, whence his cult passed across central Asia to China. He is balanced by Akshobhya (Imperturbable), the Buddha of the East, who is closely associated with the Buddha of Enlightenment at Bodhgaya. It is here some sixty miles south of Patna that Sakyamuni is believed to have obtained enlightenment, like all the other Buddhas of the past, and the typical gesture of a Buddha at the time of Enlightenment is that of touching the earth with his right hand, thus calling the Earth-Godess to witness his fitness for the task in hand. Challenged by the hosts of Mara, the Evil One, the 'Satan' of Buddhism, a Buddha remains imperturbable at this great moment of his career. The central Buddha is Vairocana (Resplendent), and he makes the gesture of preaching. He too was very popular in north-western India, and as will be seen the Monastery of Alchi is filled with his manifestations. The Buddhas of the North, Amoghasiddhi (Infallible Success), and of the South, Ratnasambhava (Jewel-Born), appear rarely outside the cosmic set of five. These Five Buddhas are distinguished by their hand-gestures, their colours, and the creatures associated with them as 'vehicles':

```
west

Amitābha
RED peacock

Māmakī

Pāṇḍuravāsini

NW

Ratnasambhava
YELLOW horse

South

VAIROCANA
WHITE lion

north

Amoghasiddhi
DARK GREEN garuda

Tārā

NE

elephant

BLUE

Akshobhya

east

elephant

BLUE

Akshobhya
```
5. Rock-carving of the Five Buddhas below Shey. From left to right they are: Ratnasambhava, Akshobhya, Vairocana, Amitabha and Amoghasiddhi, who should have his hand raised in a gesture of blessing or 'fearlessness' (abhaya). They are distinguished by their five 'vehicles', horse, elephant, lion, peacock and garuda.
The different traditional hand-gestures, which distinguish the Five Buddha manifestations, are:

- **Vairocana**: the gesture of preaching for which the technical Buddhist expression is ‘turning the wheel of the Doctrine’ (*dharma-cakra-pravartana*), both hands being held in a circular pattern in front of the breast.

- **Akshobhya**: the gesture of ‘touching the earth’ (*bhumi-sparśana*) with the fingers of the right hand, palm inward, in order to call the Earth-Goddess to witness of the Buddha’s fitness for enlightenment.

- **Ratnasambhava**: the gesture of ‘giving’ (*dāna*), signified by the right hand held low with palm open outwards.

- **Amitābha**: the gesture of meditation (*samādhi*), both hands resting together in repose in the lap.

- **Amoghasiddhi**: the gesture of ‘fearlessness’ (*abhaya*) interpretable as a sign of bestowing confidence or blessing, signified by holding the right hand upwards with palm outwards.

With the Five Buddhas is associated a set of Four Goddesses, who occupy the intermediate points of the compass. Locanā is normally blue and is linked with Akshobhya, Māmakī is yellow and linked with Ratnasambhava, Pāṇḍuravāsīnī (her name actually means ‘white clad’) is red and linked with Amitābha, and Tārā (‘Saviouress’) is green and linked with Amoghasiddhi. In the later Mahayana period, when-tantric notions and terminology began to prevail, resulting in what is known as the Vajrayana (‘Adamantine Way’), a sixth Buddha was added as the absolute supreme one, known as Vajradhara (‘Holder of the Vajra’) or Vajrasattva (‘Vajra- or Adamantine Being’).

This set of five cosmic Buddhas is known in Indo-Tibetan tradition as the Five Tathāgatas. The term *tathāgata*, literally ‘thus gone’, is an early synonym for Buddha, meaning one who has attained to just such a state which transcends all verbal definition. So the noun *tathatā*, ‘thus-ness’, formed from the adverb *tathā*, ‘thus’, is used as a term referring to the ineffable absolute. The maṇḍala, literally ‘circle’, is used in later Buddhist tradition as a symbolic representation of the transcendent absolute (*tathatā*) in its relationship with the phenomenal world. This relationship is expressed in a cosmic pattern, viz. the centre and the various points of the compass, by representing the Five Tathāgatas as spatial manifestations from the centre. The way was prepared for such symbolism by a fundamental change which occurs in Indian philosophical thought about the turn of the Christian era. The earlier cosmological ideas had conceived of phenomenal existence as consisting of various strata or ‘realms’ (*dhātu*) in which dwelt various living beings, animal, human, superhuman and divine, representing an ever purer nature, until there was reached the sheer purity of Buddhahood. These strata were arranged into three main groupings, known as the ‘realm of desire’ (*kāmadhātu*), the ‘realm of form’ (*rūpadhātu*), and the ‘formless realm’ (*arūpadhātu*). Thus ‘threefold world’ is the most common Buddhist term for referring to phenomenal existence (*samsāra*) in all its various forms, lower and higher. Buddhahood was conceived of an entirely transcendent, as the ‘extinction’ (*nirvāṇa*) of the whole ‘threefold world’. Later philosophical theory, which is fundamentally monistic, or to use the more common Buddhist term, non-dualistic, denies any absolute difference between *samsāra* (phenomenal existence) and *nirvāṇa* (its extinction). The two are essentially identical, and it is only the inherent power of worldly attitudes and involvements and of wrong ideas that obstruct a human being from realizing the state.

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11. This set of five Buddhas is often referred to in western works as the ‘dhyāni-buddhas’, which would mean ‘meditational Buddhas’. This term has no basis in Indian or Tibetan usage. It was introduced in the 19th century by Brian Hodgson, who presumably heard it used in Nepal as a kind of popularizing reference. No traditional justification for the term has ever been found, and it would seem best to discard it.
Cultural Background

of nirvāṇa. Thus the obstructions (dāvarana) to enlightenment are said to be of two kinds, which we may define as moral and philosophical. 12

The maṇḍala illustrates diagrammatically this newly conceived relationship of Buddhahood to phenomenal existence. While still essentially transcendent in its purity, Buddhahood is continuously active in the phenomenal realms for the welfare and ultimate release of all living beings. There is, as it were, a continual movement from the centre to the outside and from the outside to the centre. Buddhahood, manifesting itself as various Buddha-bodies, teaches and converts. Living beings, striving towards Buddhahood, may themselves pass through the stage of being 'future Buddhas' (Bodhisattvas) before they pass into Buddhahood.

Whereas the stūpa in the earlier tradition represents the 'essential body' (dharma-kīya) of Buddhahood, since it is the sign and symbol of a Buddha’s departure into final nirvāṇa, the maṇḍala by contrast represents the continual activity of Buddhahood on behalf of living beings. The stūpa was the symbol of an activity withdrawn from the world. The maṇḍala is the symbol of Buddha-activity in the world. In the later Indian Buddhist tradition the stūpa was adapted to this new symbolism, and many readers may be familiar with the great stūpas of Nepal with the eyes which look forth over the dome and with the cosmic Buddha manifestations enshrined at the points of the compass and thus inset into the periphery of the dome. Thus the later stūpa, like the maṇḍala or like a four-sided temple, at the centre of which the divinity sits enthroned, is the sacred sphere of beneficient activity. It may be observed that the maṇḍala is arranged rather like a four-sided temple seen from above with four portals and with guardian divinities at the four quarters. The five Buddha-figures are often provided with an entourage of goddesses, Bodhisattvas and other attendant beings. The presence of goddesses need cause no surprise. They even adorn the portals of some of the earliest stūpas. 13

Since there is no difference between nirvāṇa and samsāra, the progressive stages of emanation from the centre may be conceived as taking place at different levels. At the highest it is manifest as the Five Tathāgatas with their glorious entourage. At its lowest level it appears as the various realms of living beings who continue to live in the false worlds of their individual and mutual imaginings. Thus the process of salvation consists essentially in learning to unravel and free oneself from such a net of illusions, and thereby to make a spontaneous return to the undifferentiated centre which is the omniscience of Buddhahood. The maṇḍala is designed to serve as a mental support for this process. On the one hand it represents the fivefold manifestation of Buddhahood, but on the other hand it represents the manifestation of the five main evils, namely ignorance, desire, wrath, malignity and envy, which are the root-causes of the false conceptions of phenomenal existence. As a mere symbolic device each of the Five Buddhas is associated as a saving power with a particular evil, and depending upon the predominance of any particular evil in a man’s character, so he may be identified as belonging potentially to a particular Buddha ‘family’ (kula). These families are known by the names of the symbolic instruments associated with each of the Five Buddhas, the wheel of the law (dharma-cakra) of Vairocana, the ‘power-bolt’ (vajra) of Akshobhya, the gem (ratna) of Ratnasambhava, the lotus-flower (padma) of Amitābha, and the double crossed vajra of Amoghasiddhi (viśvavajra) whose family is known as the karma-family, that of ‘action’.

The maṇḍalas are designed in accordance with certain canonical texts, known as tantras, and these texts have been arranged traditionally into groups, depending upon the circles of divinities

12. The technical terms for these two classes of obstruction are klesa-dāvarana and jñeya-dāvarana. Kīrā, meaning literally ‘trouble’ or ‘torment’, refers to all those worldly involvements, unkindnesses and evils, which obstruct one’s moral advance. Jñeya, meaning ‘knowledge’ in the sense of what should be known, refers to all the wrong ideas and false notions, which obstruct a philosophical clarity of mind.

13. In maṇḍalas associated with a later class of tantra, of which the Havajra-tantra may be regarded as typical, goddesses as symbols of wisdom (prajñā) become the partners of Buddhas, conceived as a means (upāya). We are not concerned with this class of tantra in this particular work.
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The mandala with its elaborate symbolism has been fully comprehensible only to the initiated, and for the majority of believers there was always need for direct pictorial representation of the more popular Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, goddesses and protecting divinities, as well as famous men of religion, who may indeed be thought of as having achieved Buddha-rank. Of the Five Buddhas the three most popular, who are often represented individually are Vairocana, Amitābha and Akshobhya. These three originate from particular manifestations of Sākyamuni, namely preaching, meditating, and achieving enlightenment, and thus unless a specific colour is used (e.g. red for Amitābha and blue for Akshobhya) an image may often be identified simply as Sākyamuni. The especially close relationship between Sākyamuni and Vairocana has already been mentioned. Of Bodhisattvas the three most popular are Mañjuśrī, ‘Lord of Wisdom’, Avalokiteśvara, ‘Lord of Compassion’, and Vajrapāni, ‘Lord of Power’. These three are closely associated with the three Buddhas in the order just listed above. As a set they are known as ‘Protectors of the Three Families’ (tib. rigs-gsum mgon-po), the three families being those of the wheel (the Tathāgata family), the lotus and the vajra, of which the three corresponding Buddhas are the heads. A special case in the Bodhisatta Maitreya, who according to the earlier conception of Buddhahood as manifesting itself in an historical sequence of religious teachers, was named early on as the next Buddha to-be. Because of this earlier quasi-historical association with Sākyamuni, Maitreya too belongs to Vairocana’s family, which is also known as the Tathāgata family.  

Of goddesses the most important are the ‘Perfection of Wisdom’ (Prajñāpāramitā) who like the divine Sophia of Christian tradition is a feminine personification of transcendent wisdom, and Tārā, the ‘Saviouress’, who in origin is likely to be the same goddess under a more popular name. However, Prajñāpāramitā, because of her very nature tends to be brought into relationship with Mañjuśrī, ‘Lord of Wisdom’, while Tārā, because of the function suggested by her name, is brought into relationship with Avalokiteśvara, ‘Lord of Compassion’. Tārā also occurs as one of a set of four goddesses, who often occupy the intermediate points of the compass in the circle of the Five Buddhas illustrated above.

Of protecting divinities the oldest in Buddhist tradition is certainly Mahākāla, the ‘Great & Black’ god, and he is reproduced inside the doorways of most temples, thus guarding the way in and out. Others will be mentioned as occasion demands, so as not to burden the reader in this introductory chapter with too many names.

It will be noted that Buddhist iconography takes account both of the needs of the well instructed initiate and of the more simple worshippers. Manḍalas and carefully ordered sets of images

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14. Giuseppe Tucci has identified the main tantras in his study of the temples of this period, especially Tabo, Tholing and Tsaparang. See Indo-Tibetica, vol. III, part 1, pp. 30–68. See also note 28 below.

15. All the five families are Buddha-families or Tathāgata-families. The special application of Tathagata-family to the one associated with Sākyamuni/Vairocana goes back to an early period when there were only three families, that of the Buddha or Tathāgata, that of the gods, as represented by Avalokiteśvara, and that of powerful beings, as represented by Vajrapāni. See Snellgrove, Buddhist Himalaya, pp. 56–8. 
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and paintings satisfy the needs of the former, while mural decorations which illustrate sometimes in quite haphazard order the more popular Buddhas and divinities answer to the needs of the latter, who may often be seen going round the inside of a temple, putting their foreheads at the feet of each divinity in turn, as they mumble a prayer.

EXTERNAL CULTURAL INFLUENCES

With the possible exception of simple rock-carvings of animal forms and perhaps a consequent propensity to carve Buddhist effigies in rock-relief when Buddhism was introduced into the land, there is nothing within the purview of this volume which can be regarded as wholly indigenous to Ladakh. At the same time Ladakh has gathered within its small highly cultured areas a remarkable collection of differing art styles, and to ascertain their provenance is not a straightforward matter. The first important cultural impact of which widespread traces remain is the Tibetan one of the 10th and 11th centuries A.D. Earlier cultural impacts there certainly had been, but far too little remains of them for a coherent account to be given, and apart from the rock-carvings already referred to, they remain outside the scope of this present volume. When the Tibetans arrived, they built hill-top forts, of which many ruins remain, and they built Buddhist monasteries in the valleys below the forts. Thus there is the monastery ruin below the fort at Chigtan, another below Basgo, a very imposing one below Nyar-ma, and most important of all that of Alchi, because it remains intact.

All these early religious sites are attributed popularly to the great Tibetan scholar-translator and temple builder, Rin-chen bzang-po (958-1055), who was sponsored primarily by a religious king of Gu-ge, namely Ye-shes-’od. The only ancient monastery in Ladakh which is firmly attributable to Rin-chen bzang-po is Nyar-ma, which therefore provides an approximate date for this collection of ruined buildings about 1,000 A.D. 16 We also know from an Alchi inscription that its founder, sKal-ldan Shes-rab, had studied at Nyar-ma, and thus Alchi could have been built in the second half of the 11th century. No date is available, but the calligraphy and the poetic style peculiar to this early Tibetan period, suggest such a date. While the impetus for the construction came from the new Tibetan rulers, and while the building-style of stone and solid mud-brick was entirely Tibetan, the cult objects, the decorative wood-work and most important of all, the elaborate paintings which adorned the walls, were bound to be importations. This came about, because the new rulers of western Tibet and Ladakh were intent on reintroducing Buddhism into their domains, following upon its eclipse together with that of the royal line in 842 A.D. in Lhasa itself. Their prodigious efforts are well known to indigenous Tibetan historians as ‘the second spreading’ of the Buddhist religion in Tibet. Rin-chen bzang-po himself made three visits to India, where he spent a total of seventeen years. He is only one, although one of the most famous, of many Tibetans of this period, seeking texts and initiations in India, and then on their return, buildings temples, some of which flourished into large and famous monasteries, and establishing schools, some of which developed into the later great religious orders of Tibetan Buddhism. India inevitably provided not only the literary, but also most of the cultic and artistic needs.

One must note that literature when put to the service of a particular religion tends to be more orthodox than art. A particular religious literature is normally a product of scholars or at least of devotees, whose main object is to spread their religion in one form or another, and whatever disagreements there may be between different schools, and whatever changes may take place in the teachings over long periods of time, Buddhist literature is always avowedly and usually quite identifiable Buddhist. Art is very much more flexible and adaptable, and this has been so from the very early Indian Buddhist period, when local gods and goddesses adorn quite unashamedly the great stupas of Bharhut and Sañcī. Craftsmen and artists have usually felt themselves at liberty to introduce into a

16. See note 7 (p. 4).
commissioned work decorative motifs of a kind in which they are already expert, although they are usually careful to preserve the accepted traditional form of Buddhas or major Buddhist divinities, whose reproduction represents the main part of their commission. When they are painting lay-scenes they have an almost complete freedom to draw upon their natural resources.

It may be taken for granted, and we think quite rightly, that the main source of artistic work in Western Tibet and Ladakh from the 10th to the 13th centuries was north-west India, and especially Kashmir, which was then still a Hindu-Buddhist land, and which is often specifically mentioned in Tibetan sources. However, we have the great problem, that except for a few stone-ruins nothing now remains of Hindu and Buddhist religious art in Kashmir, and thus we have no direct means of controlling what is merely an assumption, however plausible. At the same time we are fortunately not entirely ignorant about the sort of art that was likely to have been prevalent in that land, at least from the 8th century onwards, when the warrior-king Lailitaditya-Muktapida brought works of art and craftsmen to produce new ones not only from all over northern India but also from Persia and from the western parts of Central Asia. Thus Kashmiri art must have been already extraordinarily eclectic, and the effects of this would have continued into succeeding centuries. This particular monarch was, however, giving impetus to a complex process of cultural and artistic exchange, which was already typical of all the countries which lay along the great trade-routes from Persia through Central Asia to China, and already from the early centuries A.D. Indian influences, largely in Buddhist guise, had added an appreciable contribution as they spread up from north-west India onto the main Central Asian trade-routes. The presence of Indian styles of painting amongst the ruined remains of ancient cities, which have been excavated in Central Asia since the beginning of this century, has often been noted, and it has sometimes been rather misleadingly referred to as ‘Nepalese’ or as ‘Tibeto-Nepalese’ in so far as Tibetan craftsmen seem to have been responsible for continuing these Indian traditions. \(^{17}\) While it is true that a clear connection with Nepalese art is there for all to see and while there may indeed have been occasional direct operation of Nepalese craftsmen even in Central Asia, the fundamental connection which endured for many centuries was with north-west India and Kashmir, whence tradesmen, missionaries and craftsmen made their way into Central Asia either in the cause of their religion or to make a better living for themselves. Yet another and entirely accidental reason has led to the doubtful use of the term ‘Nepalese’ for these Indian cultural influences. Nepal, having continued to the present day as

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17. An almost respectable currency might seem to have been given to this doubtful term by Heather Karmay in her excellent book, _Early Sino-Tibetan Art_, Warminster, England, 1975, to which we shall have several occasions to refer later on. From her page 12 onwards the term Tibeto-Nepalese occurs several times, and she explains it in her note 61 on p. 32. She is referring to murals found at Tun Huang towards the eastern limits of the Central Asian main route into China. She writes ‘Although there is very little doubt that the paintings in Dunhuang were executed actually by Tibetans, the style reflects Nepalese or Indian influence to such an extent that they may be called Tibeto-Nepalese. As has been said Nepal was under Tibetan domination at this time, and the Tibetan kings often used the valley of Lho-bal (Nepal) as the site for their summer residence in the last half of the 7th and the first half of the 8th century.’ This note which should justify her use of the term does not bear careful examination. Having referred to what she defines more carefully as Nepalese or Indian influence, she seems to opt for Nepalese and overlook the Indian component. The second statement would seem to suggest that because the Tibetan kings may have sometimes stayed in Nepal, this itself could account for cultural exchanges, despite the vast distances involved. A trade-route doubtless existed across the main Himalayan range from the Nepal valley to Lhasa, and in the following centuries Nepalese craftsmen certainly operated in Central Tibet. One of these was passed on to the Mongol Court in 1260 by the Grand Lama of Sakya Monastery, ‘Phags-pa, who was at the time the vassal-ruler of Tibet under the overlordship of Kublai Khan. This story is often quoted nowadays as typical of the close cultural relations which existed between Nepal and China. In fact the presence of Nepalese craftsmen can only have been occasional and the close relations that resulted were primarily Tibetan/Mongol and only at second remove Nepalese/Chinese. For a well annotated reference to this particular event, see Heather Karmay, _op. cit._ p. 21. While such Nepalese craftsmen might occasionally visit the Mongol Court, there is no evidence to my knowledge of there ever having operated in the remote city-states of Central Asia. Many travellers from north-west India reached there, but a Nepalese would have been rare indeed. It is even doubtful whether Tibetan kings did spend the summer months in the Nepal valley, which climatically would be an odd and rather uncomfortable resort for them at such a time of year. As authority for this Heather Karmay quotes Lhemiville, _Le concile de Lhassa_, but there is no certainty that Lho-ba does in fact refer to Nepal in this context. See G. Tucci, _Minor Buddhist Texts_, part II, Rome 1958, pp. 33–6, and also his article ‘The Wives of Sroh btsan sgam po’, _Oriens Extremus_, 9 (1962), p. 125.

One certainly needs far more solid evidence than this for arguing the presence of Nepalese cultural influences, let alone Nepalese craftsmen in Central Asia. In place of the term Tibeto-Nepalese, we would suggest Indo-Tibetan, a term which has been given very respectable currency indeed by Professor Tucci himself.
Cultural Background

a Hindu-Buddhist land, has preserved a substantial part of its earlier Hindu-Buddhist heritage. Kashmir has not. Therefore one has hastened to see direct connections between the pieces that still actually exist, and one tends all too easily to overlook the real historical connections with Kashmir just because there now exists so little that is relevant to such connections. There it has been destroyed and replaced by a very different Moslem culture, which has continued to draw on Persian influences while excluding everything Hindu-Buddhist.

Thus we have the extraordinary situation that everything relating to Kashmiri Buddhist culture that has survived into the 20th century, has survived because it was taken into Ladakh and even further afield into Tibet by the Tibetans themselves, who from the 10th to the 13th centuries, were salvaging everything they could of Indian Buddhist culture, wherever it was still accessible to them. Their main areas of activity were Kashmir, Nepal, and eastern India, precisely because these were the areas in which Buddhism continued to survive until the early 13th century, and in some places even to flourish. Again these last strongholds of Indian Buddhism, and this certainly includes Nepal, were the recipients and maintainers of pan-Indian Buddhist iconographic traditions, which with certain local varieties had once spread over not only the whole of India, but also over much of South East Asia.

After the 13th century when Buddhism finally disappeared from India, the Nepalese continued to develop quite alone the traditions which they had received, and thus eventually it becomes possible to talk of specific Nepalese styles, just as later it becomes possible to speak of specific Tibetan ones, of which more will be written below. The development of specific Kashmiri traditions, which had already certainly begun, was however, rudely cut short. Thus when we refer to the survival of Kashmiri art in Ladakh, we are not making any specially great claims for Kashmir as against Nepal or any other neighbouring lands with Buddhist traditions, with which the Tibetans could make contact. We are merely emphasizing the pan-Indian nature of all these Buddhist traditions, noting however that north-west India and Kashmir were especially open to contacts with Persia and Central Asia, whereas Nepal and eastern India were far less so.

Although north-west India by the very nature of the case was likely to have been the main source of cultural influences in Ladakh and Western Tibet, there is another likely source which must not be overlooked, and here Nepal comes into her own. To some extent from the 7th century onwards and with great enthusiasm from the second half of the 8th century until the eclipse of the Lhasa royal family in 842 A.D., Tibetan kings and queens and many of the noblemen had sponsored 'the first spreading' of the Buddhist religion in Central Tibet. Craftsmen certainly came from Nepal and from some of the Central Asian city-states, which were at that period part of a quite impressive Tibetan empire. Some of these foreign craftsmen as well as Tibetans who had learned their craft from them may very likely have followed the royal descendents of the old Lhasa line of kings, when they carved out new kingdoms for themselves in Western Tibet. These new Tibetan rulers in the western parts of the vast Tibetan uplands already possessed, we may presume, a fair amount of Buddhist culture as a result of the 'first spreading' of the religion and before they embarked upon the 'second'. From a cultural point of view, the process would have been continual. It merely changed its centre of activity from Central to Western Tibet, carrying over with it much that had already been learned during the 'first spreading'. This would have included Indian Buddhist traditions as learned from Nepal and from Central Asia. Here again one must note that whereas the Nepalese traditions were bound to be largely Indian at this early period, quite independent styles were already in existence in Central Asia, precisely because its main routes were open to so many other extraneous influences from Persia and even beyond to Byzantium in the west and to China in the east.

The general survey of probable influences given above may help us to place in context the earlier paintings and images, as preserved mainly at Alchi, but in order to decide what may be earlier or later, we must go on to consider the effects of later influences. Even after Kashmir became a Muslim land from the 14th century onwards, close relations continued to exist with Buddhist Ladakh,
and although they were seldom friendly, cultural influence certainly persisted. Buddhist craftsmen would still draw and paint the main Buddhist figures in the traditionally accepted style, but they felt as free as they always had been to introduce local variants in the subsidiary decoration. Just as Chinese motifs, small landscape scenes and Chinese styles of building, begin to appear as subsidiary elements in Tibetan religious painting as a result of increasing cultural contacts with China from the Mongol period onwards, so the Persian styles of miniature painting which had already penetrated Kashmir even when it was a Hindu-Buddhist land, continued to exercise an influence in Ladakh, even when the religion had changed to Islam. Towards the end of the 16th century Kashmir became part of the Moghul empire, and Moghul styles of dress which were presumably already in fashion in Kashmir, were adopted by the kings of Ladakh. Moghul works of art were certainly prized, just as Chinese ones were prized in Lhasa, and their influence has clearly affected Ladakhi and Tibet art in completely analogous ways. Thus we may take into account the continuing influence of Persian and Moghul culture in Ladakh even after Ladakh could no longer turn to Kashmir for the enrichment of her Buddhist traditions.

Then finally we have the last period, certainly from the 16th century onwards, if not before, when Ladakh turned increasing eastwards to Tibet, and thus received her fair share of those Tibetan Buddhist traditions which had been developing independently in Tibet, ever since she too had been cut off from the possibility of continuing cultural contacts with an India, which no longer had anything Buddhist to offer. From this time on the temples and monasteries of Ladakh are decorated in this later Tibetan style, into which Chinese influences as noted above had already been absorbed.

The carved wooden doorway of the 'Du-khang at Alchi
CHAPTER TWO

EARLY MONASTERIES OF THE
TIME OF RIN-CHEN BZANG-PO

As stated (p. 4) the only monastery in Ladakh genuinely attributable to Rin-chen bzang-po is Nyar-ma, which is now merely a collection of empty shells of temples and of ruined stupas. However, his name is rightly so much acclaimed in western Tibet, that we may fairly adhere to the living tradition, which continues to see him as primarily responsible for all the impressive Buddhist works in western Tibet during the 10th and 11th centuries. The title of this chapter may also be rather misleading, for of the several early monasteries which certainly existed, the only one to be described here in detail will be Alchi. This, however, is because Alchi has survived by a happy chance, and thus we should not forget that it was once one of several. Since the monastery of Sumda in Zangskar will be described in the forthcoming volume, we are concerned here only with an old temple which survives at Lamayuru, otherwise almost entirely rebuilt after the destruction it suffered during the Jammu (Dogra) invasions of the early 19th century, and the monastery of Mang-gyu, which lies three hours climb up a rocky valley which descends to the Indus at the hamlet of Sge-ra, which is five to six miles below Alchi. The centre of the cult in all these places, as at Tabo in Spiti, another assured foundation of Rin-chen bzang-po, is the central Buddha Vairocana (Resplendent) together with his circle of self-manifesting Buddhas, attendant Bodhisattvas and divinities. This cult is represented textually by the tantras and their commentaries in which Rin-chen bzang-po and his collaborators took such an especial interest, and which have ever since formed parts of the Tantra section of the Tibetan Buddhist Canon.
Lamayuru

This monastery occupies a fantastic position built on rocks half-way down from the Photo Pass (13,432 ft) to Khalatse in the Indus Valley (here c. 9,700 ft). The descent by the new motor-road from Lamayuru to the Indus, for the sheer wonder of the rock formations and the changing panorama as presented at ever lower altitudes, is perhaps the most extraordinary part of the whole journey from Srinagar to Leh. This is some small compensation for the unfortunate speed at which one can travel nowadays, resulting in the by-passing of Lamayuru Monastery itself. In former days of horse-back travel, that is to say until 1962, this place would have been one of the necessary halting-places. Travelling by jeep, we broke our journey for two hours there, and it is one of the few places described in this book, where we were unable to make at least a second visit.

Lamayuru belongs to the 'Bri-gung-pa' branch of the Ka-gyü-pa (bKa'-brgyud-pa) Order of Tibetan Buddhism. This order traces its origins back to two Indian tantric masters, Tilopa and his disciples Nāropa. The relevant traditions were brought to Tibet by Marpa, who received them from Nāropa, whence they passed to Mi-la Ras-pa, and thence to sGam-po-pa (1079–1153) whose direct disciples founded as many as six famous schools, based on his teachings. The 'Bri-gung-pa' school is named after the Monastery of 'Bri-gung, which was founded by 'Jig-rten mGon-po (1143–1212).18

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18. For a brief account of the origins of the various Tibetan religious orders, see Snellgrove and Richardson, A Cultural History of Tibet. pp. 118–137. Professor Petech has kindly pointed out to me that 'Jig-rten mGon-po is referred to by name in the La-dvags rGyal-rabs (in Francke's edition Antiquities, vol. II, p. 36, line 10.) Francke has missed this in his translation on p. 98. This will alter by a hundred years the dates proposed by him for the king who made presents to 'Jig-rten mGon-po.
This monastery played a very important place in the political life of Tibet. In the 13th century it was the main contender against Sa-skya Monastery for the favour of their Mongol overlords and thus for acknowledged supremacy throughout Tibet. Like other successful religious orders it established over the centuries by the zeal of its members a large number of dependent religious houses, all following the 'Bri-gung-pa' pattern. It was not unusual for zealous monks to 'colonize' older foundations that had fallen into neglect, and this was later done by the dGe-lugs-pa (Yellow Hats) on a large scale when they in turn (1642 onwards) became politically predominant. Thus at some time Lamayuru was presumably colonized by some enterprising 'Bri-gung-pas. The only other 'Bri-gung-pa' Monastery in Ladakh is Phyidbang (pronounced: Phiwang) about 16 kilometres west of Leh, and this was founded in the 16th century by King Tashi Namgyal who invited the Grand Lama of 'Bri-gung. There is no reason, however, to connect the two events, as the places are a long way apart. Local tradition at Lamayuru asserts that the monastery there was founded by Naropa himself, but this is likely to be a 'Bri-gung-pa' story, which is merely taking account of the undoubted age of the place.

Its age is indicated by one small temple which from its iconography may be placed in the time of Rin-chen bzang-po. The main image is a very well preserved Vairocana, seated on a lion-throne, with garuda (the mythical bird of Indian mythology) and a pair of makara (sea-monsters) forming a canopy to Vairocana's outer halo. The four main Buddha-emanations (see p. 10) are seated against the back wall, two on either side. The left wall has mural paintings of 11-headed Avalokitesvara and a manadala of Vairocana. Another manadala on the right wall is so destroyed as to be unidentifiable. The wall to the right of the door as one enters, is painted with protecting divinities, and to the left with miniature scenes from the life of Sakyamuni, similar to those in the Lhakhang Soma at Alchi. In a small side-temple on the right there are three human-size stucco effigies of protecting divinities. As mentioned above, the cult of Vairocana is typical of Rin-chen bzang-po's times and especially of monasteries associated with him. These were later absorbed into the Ka-dam-pa (bKa'-'gams-pa) Order, founded by Bromston (1008-64) on the basis of the teachings which he has received from his master, the great Atiša. Atiša came to Tibet from the famous monastery of Vikramāśīla in eastern India in 1042 and remained until his death until 1054. He met Rin-chen bzang-po, who worked under royal patronage primarily as a scholar. The Ka-dam-pa Order (meaning literally 'Bound by command') was never very popular, as it was perhaps too strict for Tibetans, and most of its religious houses were later taken over by the reforming dGe-lugs-pa (Yellow Hats). Thus Lamayuru may have been Ka-dam-pa, and having fallen into neglect, was eventually taken over, as an exceptional case, by some 'Bri-gung-pas.

Other signs of age are provided by some old chotens below the monastery at the exit from Lamayuru Village along the old track towards Mulbek. In some of them the murals reveal decorative motifs similar to those in the old Alchi chotens (pp. 77-9). We have seen nothing of an ancient shrine identified by Francke certainly quite wrongly as an ancient Bon-po temple. A former visitor to Ladakh of our acquaintance actually witnessed an old temple being knocked down by the villagers in 1971. The main assembly-hall ('Du-khang) has been entirely redecorated with new paintings, which are quite good. In the right wall there is a small cave, known as Naropa's cave. It contains his statue together with those of Marpa and Mi-la Ras-pa. On the upper storey there are four small rooms, two of them for the Head Lama, one containing printing blocks, while the last is a mGon-khang, temple for fierce protecting divinities. Standing separate from the 'Du-khang is a temple, some ten metres square, dedicated to Avalokiteśvara. This too has been recently but very well painted. In an alcove there is a collection of old stucco images, including a large one of Avalokiteśvara, 2.2 metres high, and a smaller set of eight Bodhisattvas.

19. See Francke, Antiquités, 1, p. 98. G. Tucci pointed out over forty years ago (see Indo-Tibetica 1, pp. 67-9) that such a theory is scarcely tenable, but we were assured in Leh by educated English-reading Ladakhis that there were Bon paintings at Lamayuru. Francke of course can be easily read there (in English): Tucci (in Italian) cannot. We have here an easy example of how visitors can be given quite false information locally. Francke bases his argument on the colour of the garments, but we can see similar striped garments on Indian (Kashmiri) Buddhist teachers as portrayed here an easy example of how visitors can be given quite false information locally. Francke bases his argument on the colour of the garments, but we can see similar striped garments on Indian (Kashmiri) Buddhist teachers as portrayed.
Early Monasteries

Mang-gyu

Local tradition associates this place together with Alchi as a foundation of Rin-chen bZang-po. There is no reason for accepting it, but once again we find an undoubtedly old site, of which the main shrine-room, as at the old temple of Lamayuru, contains a central image of Vairocana with the four Buddha-manifestations of the directions around him. On the walls there are manālas of the Vairocana (Kun-rig) cycle, but they are painted, probably repainted, in a poor style and they are very much the worse for wear. To the left of this main temple there is a smaller one dedicated to Avalokiteśvara in his 11-headed, 1,000-armed form (bCu-gcig-zhal) and on the wall behind his shrine, and unfortunately obstructing it, is a very fine painting of Śākyamuni. Unlike the old temple of Lamayuru and unlike Alchi, this whole place is much in use, as it serves as the temple of the villagers of Mang-gyu, and is looked after by their village lama who is a rNying-ma-pa ('Old Order'). Both these temples are hung with ragged thang-kas (religious banners) and festoons, and photography is well-nigh impossible. Up the slope through the village there are two other temples, manifestly rNying-ma-pa with images of Padmasambhava and new mural paintings, all garish and unpleasing.

Mang-gyu may once have been as good as Alchi, but it has paid the inevitable penalty of being a local religious centre, which the villagers have presumably been at pains 'to improve'. We would probably not have accounted it worth a visit but for the pleasant company of our host from Alchi, the Alchi lonpo (A-lci blon-po). The title of 'lonpo', meaning 'officer of state', is retained by the descendents of such local officers, who lost their power together with the royal family, when Jammu annexed the land in 1834. We stayed in his house at Alchi, and made the visit on horse-back to Mang-gyu, spending a night on the way at his father-in-law's house in sGe-ra. We were interested to note that his father-in-law's family is polyandrous in the sense that the younger brother is associated with the elder in a joint marriage. Town-bred Ladakhi's in Leh, who may have experienced a certain amount of Indian scorn at the mention of this quite normal Tibetan practice, are reticent on the subject, but it seems that the custom is still quite common throughout the villages of Ladakh. It has the one serious disadvantage that, combined with a willingness of other Ladakhi Buddhists to adopt a celibate religious life (although these numbers are declining), it helps to produce a serious decline in the birth-rate of Buddhists, whereas the Muslim population, assisted by polygamy, which has just the opposite effects, is very much on the increase. We also remember sGe-ra, perched as it is on the southern side of the Indus gorge and where the last comforting rays of the winter sun disappear soon after noon, as being one of the coldest places in which we ever stayed, despite the warmth of the hospitality of our kind hosts.
Alchi - general description

Unlike most place-names in Tibet proper, Ladakhi place-names can seldom be interpreted intelligibly, because although written in Tibetan script from presumably the 10th century onwards, many of them must be pre-Tibetan place-names, of which the Tibetan spelling can be only an approximate phonetic version. Recently the Chinese have been producing their versions of Tibetan place-names in Tibet itself with exactly analogous results. Similarly Himalayan place-names have often been written in English or more recently in Hindi forms with similarly distorting results. Thus Leh, a spelling which we preserve for convenience in this book, is now spelt both in English and in Hindi with an -h for no better reason than that the German Moravian missionaries who established themselves there at the end of the 19th century, decided to write the name in this way. In Tibetan it is spelt sle or occasionally sles and pronounced simply lé, as earlier European travellers tended to write it. Its meaning is uncertain. We are using the anglicized spelling ‘Alchi’, although this is comparatively recent, because for most readers it provides an adequate guide to the pronunciation. The Tibetan spelling is a-lci or occasionally al-ici, and such a word can only be a pre-Tibetan (perhaps a Dard name) reproduced in

10. General view of the Alchi Valley from the east. Gomba centres on the tall white building centre left. Chos-khor is on the extreme right overhanging the Indus gorge.

20. Francke suggests the meaning of a 'cattle enclosure', citing the Tibetan word hías, which has such a meaning and seemingly inventing an alternative spelling lhes in order to produce a form nearer sles (= Leh). See Antiquities, II. p. 99. He might with more plausibility have suggested the word sás, which can mean a royal court, but this too has a different vowel, and the difference is quite distinct in western Tibetan pronunciation. Such speculation is rather useless. Similarly no satisfactory meaning can be given to the name Lá-dvogs, written quite unjustifiably in English as Ladakh with a final -h. In Ladakhi the final -s is usually pronounced in combinations with postpositions, and there is never a trace of an aspirate -h. However we have retained this spelling, as it has now gained almost universal acceptance on maps everywhere. An earlier and better anglicized spelling was simply Ladak.
PLAN OF ALCHI CHOS 'KHOR

SCALE 1cm = 2m

A  Thok-khang
B  Courtyard
C  Sum-tsek
D  Thok-khang
E  Main Hall
F  Latsawa Thok-khang
G  Kanjur Thok-khang
H  House
J  Jop Chöten
K  Maitrīya Thok-khang
11. Ploughing at Alchi.

12. Yul-khor of Alchi, as seen from the east. The foot-path leading from the Alchi bridge is central on the photograph. A new track possible for jeeps crosses the hillside on the left.

13. Gomba as seen from the south-east.
14. View from Shang-rong across the fields towards Chos-khor.

15. Chos-khor as seen from the west. On the far left are the Mañjuśrī and Lotsawa Temples; next is the 'Dus-khang, then the Sum-tsek, and the Lhakhang Soma on the right.

16. Alchi Chos-khor: the entrance choten is on the left. The Alchi Lonpo's house, now outside the compound, is on the far right.
Early Monasteries

Tibetan script. Presumably there was already a settlement here, when the new Tibetan rulers arrived, and when sKal-l丹 Shes-rab (see above p. 30) built his fort and his bridge.

The name of Alchi is given to a small valley, inhabited for the length of about two kilometres and the width of at the most one, and extending east-west along the left (south) bank of the Indus. Approaching Alchi, the river, flowing below steep rocks, twists southwards before turning west again, and thus separates Alchi from the nearest village on the far side, namely Saspol. The main route from Khalatse through to Leh, 64 kms distant at this point, avoids the southerly twist of the river, and passes from Saspol across the mountains, descending once again to the Indus at Basgo. Half-way across this mountain stretch and two kilometres up a subsidiary valley to the north stands the Monastery of Likir (Klu-dkyl), which also has some claim to be an ancient establishment, although no sign of anything ancient remains. Since the 15th century it has been taken over by the dGe-lugs-pas. Just under a hundred years ago, according to our local information, an arrangement was made with the villagers of Alchi, whereby Likir, accepted responsibility for the care of the main Alchi religious buildings, the Chos-khor or 'religious enclaves'. Thus if there are any records of the history of Alchi, they are likely to be held at Likir, but through lack of interest they may have been lost or destroyed at some time. Nothing seemed to be known of them, and the monks there were very kind to us, producing a copy of Rin-chen bzang-po's biography which we were able to microfilm. Two or three Likir monks are detached as custodians of the Alchi Chos-khor, and it was with these whom we dealt on friendly terms during our stay. We pleased them by replacing the worn and disreputable parasol, which hangs over the chöten in the Sum-tsek Temple, with a fine new yellow one, edged with red and blue silk. They insisted that it had not been replaced since the time of Rin-chen bzang-po, but such a story is scarcely creditable. A pipal tree standing near the entrance to the monastery is said to have been planted by Rin-chen bzang-po himself. The place rings with his memories, and it is odd that he is scarcely mentioned in the surviving inscriptions. However, many are defaced and so quite illegible.

The Alich valley is referred to locally as a complete unit by the name of 'Alich sjii-so zhi'. This presumably means the 'four places of ten (homesteads) of Alchi. These four hamlets are, as already named above (p. 3), Yul-khor, literally the 'village enclaves' where we counted some fourteen houses, Shang-rong, of uncertain meaning, where there are another fourteen or so, Chos-khor, where there are ten around the 'religious enclave', and Gomba, 'the monastery' where there are another ten houses. On a small rocky outcrop near Gomba, there is a group of chötens and a small much defaced temple, known as Sku-bum, 'a hundred-thousand images'. Approaching Chos-khor from this direction, one passes the ruins of a quite large stūpa, containing in what were once side-chapels traces of murals. The whole area has enormous interest.

The temple at Gomba is in general use and a local lama is in charge. Like Mang-gyu, it pays the penalty of having been thus maintained over the years. Old paintings and probably inscriptions have been submerged, but it must be said that some of the recent work here is very good indeed. At Shang-rong there is a small temple dedicated to Padmasambhava. His statue is flanked by those two fierce counterparts, the Tiger-God (sTag-lha) and the Lion-Headed Goddess (Senge Dong-ma). On the facing wall behind the main image is a mural of the Supreme Buddha Vajradhara and on the walls to left and right are other Buddha manifestations. This temple belongs to the Brug-pa Ka-gyū-pa Order and is looked after by a monk from Chendey. This suggests a late date for it (p. 86).

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21. It is mentioned in the La-dvags rgyal-rabs (see Francke, Antiquities Vol. II, p. 95 (translation) and p. 35, line 22 (Tibetan text) as having been founded in the time of Lha-chen rGyal-po, 'his great majesty the king', which Francke takes as a proper name. Petech, op. cit. pp. 109-110, has pointed out that this can scarcely be so. Any reference made to these early kings and their dates is extremely uncertain.

22. There is little doubt about the correctness of this interpretation, as 'sjii' (Tibetan bcu) is certainly 'ten' and 'zhi' (Tibetan zhi) is certainly 'four'. Sa or so means 'place'.

23. The term Chos-khor is an interesting one, as it is used only of the more important monasteries of the time of Rin-chen bzang-po. Giuseppe Tucci has suggested that the name may have used of monasteries where special 'assemblies' were held, as 'khor means assembly or entourage rather perhaps than enclaves, as suggested here by me. See Indo-Tibetica, vol. II, p. 72–3. Gomba (Tibetan: dgon-pa) is the normal Tibetan word for 'monastery', but we use it more in the sense of a local place-name. Thus whenever we refer to the Monastery of Alchi, we mean the Chos-khor.
Alchi Monastery (*A-lci Chos-'khor*)

From the bridge below Saspol it is about a half hour's walk to Yul-'khor, which is approached along a row of chôtens leading through an impressive entrance-chôten. A further twenty minutes' walk by a track leading between terraced fields brings one to the Monastery, which is built over the banks of the Indus. Gomba with its single temple and its cluster of houses can be seen about four hundred metres on one's right.

The monastery enclave, which is about a hundred metres long south to north, where it overhangs the Indus, and some forty metres wide at the southern end, is more or less enclosed by a wall, although on the centre section of the western side one can easily clamber in and out between the chôtens and the walls of the buildings which back onto it. At the southern end of the compound there are houses (marked H on the plan), of which one near the entrance belongs to a monk of Likir, named Lobsang Tenzin who lives here together with his mother, when not at his monastery or away on other religious offices. The other houses are occupied by villagers, just like the several others outside the compound on the southern side. The furthest distant of these exterior houses, but only by sixty metres or so, is the one belonging to the Alchi Lonpo, and in its grounds there is a large entrance-chôten similar to the one that stands just inside the present southern entrance of the compound. It is evident that the track to the Monastery must originally have passed through this and then through the second chôten. It is likely that the villagers have been encroaching on the ground of the neglected site, and maybe even taking over buildings at the southern end. One may note too that the house adjoining the Assembly Hall (A) and its courtyard (B) is occupied by an old monk and two women as well as by the appointed custodian. Here too a normal village life seems to be the order of the day with their cattle penned in the courtyard nearby.

The temples containing mural paintings are the Assembly Hall (*Du-khang*) together with its courtyard, the Sum-tsek (*Tibetan gSum-brtsegs*, meaning 'Three Tier', as indeed it is) marked C on the plan, the Lhakhang Soma (the 'New Temple' - it is certainly old, but presumably built a while after the two main ones), marked D, and two other small temples at the far northern end, known as the Jampal Lhakhang, which contains a four-fold image of Maitreya. (= *Jam-dpal* in Tibetan), marked E, and the Lotsawa Lhakhang, marked F, which is dedicated to the Great Translator (= *Lo-tsa-ba* in Tibetan) Rin-chen bzang-po. The last temple, marked G, is known as the Kanjur Lhakhang, and it contains volumes of the Tibetan Canon (Kanjur) and an image of Maitreya; it has no paintings.

Apart from the temples, the three chôtens, marked J1, J2 and J3, contain ancient apparently untouched paintings. They are all entrance-chôtens, known locally as ka-ka-ni chôtens, through which one can walk. However, the main one J1 has been walled up on one side, so although one can enter it, one cannot go through it. These three chôtens are quite elaborate, as each one contains, poised above one's head, as it were, a subsidiary interior chôten, hollow and four-sided at its base. There has thus been scope for quite a large amount of painting, not only the interior walls of the entrance-chôtens themselves but also the interiors walls of the base of each of the smaller interior chôtens. It is in two of these interiors that paintings of Rin-chen bzang-po exist, together with Kashmiri teachers. There are many other smaller chôtens distributed along the walls and over the whole site. The remaining large one, which stands in the grounds of the Alchi Lonpo's house is similar to that marked as J1, but it is in a far worse state of preservation.

We spent in all twenty days at Alchi Monastery, seventeen on the first major visit at the beginning of November, when it was already very cold, and three days in January, in order to check some of our information. No one locally knows anything about the paintings, except for the most obvious identifications, that of the main divinities and the fact that the manḍalas refer mostly to Vairocana in his form of Kun-rig (Omniscient One). Before leaving we made a substantial offering of butter for the
temple-lamps and of buttered tea for the three monks who were there, and paid them a fee for reciting an invocation of Vairocana and the divinities of his mandala. We had already used the text, kindly lent us by one of the monks, to check identifications on some of the mandalas, but it must be exceptional for it to be used as liturgy nowadays. 24 With the passing of the Ka-dam-pa order, popular interest in the Kun-rig cycle has waned, although serious scholarly work was done on the subject, notably by Tsong-kha-pa himself, as well as within the Sakyapa Order.

The Assembly Hall ('Du-khang)

An 'assembly hall' is the place where Buddhist monks assemble for the performance of ceremonies and for incidental meals served during intervals. It is the primary building of any monastic complex, and thus usually the first to be built. Inscriptions on the back wall inside this temple attribute its building to the religious devotion and vast generosity of a man of religion named sKal-idan Shes-rab.

'Being worthy (= sKal-idan; this is a play on his name), he was possessed of a pure human body, and being also wealthy, he was a great dispenser of gifts. Possessing wisdom (= Shes-rab, viz. the second component of his name), he understood profound teachings, and progressed at one go along the ten stages (towards Buddhahood) from the first one, known as 'Joyful' onwards. This teacher who is so correctly named, knew the characteristic of worldly existence (saṃsāra) to be that of a mirage, and that wealth and possessions are quite non-substantial, and so in order to instruct people in the essentiality of relativity (śūnyatā), he asked for this monastery to be built as a place for meditation and study. With this purpose in mind, he expended wealth and possessions.'

His life is described in very general eulogistic terms:

'He entered as a youth the religious life and underwent austerities, and was one of the noble ones who found a Middle Way between Sūtras and Tantras. - - - Exerting himself at the monastery of Nyar-ma in Mar-yul, by the favour of the abbot and other wise men, he sucked like a bee at the essence of their thoughts. - - - Having accumulated merit in a previous life, now in this one he is wealthy. Free from avarice in his thoughts, he made gifts without distinction of persons. Remembering favours done, he did favours in return. In order to help living beings he constructed with difficulty the fort and the bridge. Disinterested acts of virtue and strict meditation he practised continually. - - - He built here in the Alchi valley this great monastery, his faith being the main factor and his wealth the secondary one.'

Unfortunately no clear references are made which would relate sKal-idan Shes-rab with any firm dates. The monastery of Nyar-ma, where he studied, now a ruin some twenty kilometres up the Indus Valley beyond Leh, is one of the more famous ones founded by Rin-chen bzang-po. (see p. 19). We may deduce that when Alchi was founded, Nyar-ma was already a going concern, so it can scarcely be earlier than the mid-11th century.

Architecturally the Alchi 'assembly hall' resembles that of Nyar-ma (now only an empty shell) and of Tabo and the other early temples attributed to Rin-chen bzang-po. It consists of a hall, more or less square with a kind of sanctuary let into the far wall (see diagram pp. 24-5).

The main features, which we shall describe in detail, are the following:

24. The title of the text is: 'The order of recitation of the liturgy of the Lord, the Purifier of Evil Rebirths, the King of Splendour, the Omniscient One Vairocana'. (bcom ldan 'das ngan sngon thams cad yongs su shyong ba gri briid kyi rgyal po kun rig rnam par snang mtsad kyi cho ga'i ngag 'don gyi rim pa.)
the statue of four-headed Vairocana together with the stucco statues of his entourage, which are in the sanctuary (A);
various mandalas of Vairocana and his manifestations and entourage, two on each of the side-walls (B & C) and two on the entrance-wall (D); since the temple is about eight metres square; these mandalas are each some three metres in diametre; inside over the door a mural of Mahâkâla surmounted by a small mandala of Akshobhya; miniature paintings of religious and lay scenes on the lower sections of walls near the sanctuary (A1 & A2) and of the walls near the entrance (D1 & D2); it is here also that inscriptions exist;
paintings of the ‘thousand buddhas’ on the upper sections of walls near the sanctuary (A1 & A2) and of Mañjuśrī and of Prajñāpāramitā, set in rondels between the large mandalas on the side-walls (B & C).

As a first general comment one may observe that there is nothing in this temple which does not fit perfectly into the times of Rin-chen bzang-po. It has been decorated as a coherent whole, and there is no indication or any reason to suggest that it has since been touched in any way. The inscriptions are all of an archaic type, but apart from the name and some eulogistic details of the life of the founder, as quoted above, no other precise historical information can be gained from them, in so far as they are still legible. In the inscription to the right of the door there is a clear reference to royal interest, but no names are given.

25 The passage in question reads:

sngon ubs ba bsod nams ba  gsags pa d la t 'byor pa ldan (/or us la ser s na myed pas sbyin pa phyogs med stong (f or gton g) 
byas pa rin 'du bzo 'bas zhu ? (? for gzhu 'la drin lan baags) / 'gro ba skyab phyir dka' bas r dzong dang zam pa mdzad //
dmigs myed dge ba sgo 'n ra yang dang yang du mdzad // bsod nams bsam myi khyab pa' ri rgyal yun grangs kyi s byal//
yab zhu'i mdzad 'tshal snag phyir rtseg lag khang chen 'di //dad pas rgyu byas 'byor byas rgyun byas nas//
sbyor ba d mas al l ci yul 'di dzhegs//

Except for the sixth verse and part of the next, this passage has just been translated above. We have hesitated over the royal reference, seeking an alternative meaning for the term grangs kyi s byal, which would normally be taken as a polite expression meaning ‘to be cold’. However, having pondered this painting in relationship to this expression, we think the meaning is clear enough:

'The king and queen (rgyal yum) of vast merits were refreshing themselves. He asked the king, who wished it done, and in order to hasten the matter, he built here in the Achi valley at much cost this great monastery, his faith being the main factor and his wealth the secondary one.' We may deduce that the royal party was having refreshments while on a tour in the Achi area, attended by their staff.

Francke makes a quite unsatisfactory reference or maybe two references to this painting (Antiquities, vol. II, pp. 95 and 96). With regard to a king with the title ‘His Great Majesty the Bodhisattva’, which Francke interprets as a proper name he writes: ‘His portrait (probably) is found in Alchi monastery together with an inscription by himself’. There seems to be little sense in what he has written here, as he may have suspected himself when he inserted in brackets the word ‘probably’. Dealing with the next king Lha-chen Rgyal-po (this again is a title: see note 21 above) Francke writes again: ‘The king’s portrait (probably) as a young man is found at Alchi, where he is represented together with his father’. Presumably he refers to the prince in our painting. It must be emphasized that we are dealing with royal titles and not names, and that dates are quite uncertain. In the present state of our knowledge there is no way of knowing the name of the king depicted on this Alchi painting. We have the same problem with regard to other such paintings in the Sum-tsek Temple. See below p. 59.

26 For a Tibetan minister similarly clad in a 7th century Chinese painting see Heather Karmay, op. cit. p. 17. Concerning the white cloak worn by the queen, see Hugh Richardson, More on ancient Tibetan costumes in The Tibetan Review, New Delhi, May–June 1975, and the article to which he refers by Dejin Zangmo [Heather Karmay], Tibetan Royal Costumes in Dun-huang Wall-Paintings, id. Feb–March 1975. The term Sassanian refers specifically to the Persian dynasty of that name ruling from the early 3rd cent. A.D. until the mid-7th century, when the whole of West Asia became subject to Islam, thus resulting in the destruction of Zoroastrian religion and of much of the eclectic (including Christian, Manichaean and Buddhist elements) culture of the area. However, the earlier Persian (viz. Sassanian) period was one of maximum cultural penetration across Central Asia, many of the characteristics of which survived long after the fall of the Sassanian dynasty itself, and thus they came to be inherited by the Tibetan rulers of Central Asia in the 7th to 9th centuries.
17. Alchi 'Du-khang: main image of Vairocana in the sanctuary.

IV  Mural of the Goddess ‘Perfection of Wisdom’ on the first storey of the Sum-tsek Temple at Alchi

V  A mandala of Vairocana (no. 6) on the first storey of the Sum-tsek Temple at Alchi
Details of the robe of the Bodhisattva Maitreya in the Sum-tsek Temple at Alchi, representing scenes from Sākyamuni's life.

VI above: the practice of austerities; below: the renunciation of the world

VII above: Mahāmāyā giving birth miraculously to the future Buddha Sākyamuni; below: ablutions of the boy by the gods Indra and Brahma

VIII manly prowess of the young prince

IX Sākyamuni preaching
The robe of Avalokitesvara in the Sum-tsek Temple, Alchi
XI The robe of Manjùryì in the Sum-tsek Temple, Ačhi
consisting of a silk turban with loose hanging ends is especially interesting, as we shall meet it elsewhere
in the murals of Alchi. Colourful silk, if we may assume the turban is silk, is used for the royalty, and
usually white silk or cloth for others. Other forms of head-dress may be noted, round caps, and a raised
crown-like piece (in the top left-hand corner) which may remind one of head-dresses in Central Asian
Manichaean miniatures. 27 Here as elsewhere in Alchi, we may observe connections with the ruined sites
near Turfan, especially Kharakhoto. Such a painting scarcely reflects the political situation of the 10th
to 11th centuries kings of Western Tibet. It would seem to derive from an earlier period, up to the 9th
century at the latest, when the kings of Central Tibet were still the rulers of Central Asia. Thus we have
here an 11th century painting by a court-artist who portrays his royal master within the context of the
grandeur of former great kings. The literary style also, as indicated by the short quotation on p. 30,
also deliberately harks back to the same early period. This is presumably the work of a Tibetan artist,
drawing on those Central Asian traits which had become then part of Tibetan culture. In clear contrast
with other Alchi paintings, most of them on religious themes, it has nothing directly to do with Kashmir
and north-west India.

We have dealt with this little scene out of turn, since together with the accompanying inscription it throws light on the historical background, or rather the cultural historical background, into which the foundation of this monastery fits. There are other miniature lay scenes along the lower sections of the entrance-wall (D1 and D2) but like the strips of inscription which accompany them, they are in such a deplorable state, that little use can be made of them here. We now treat the other main features as listed.

Entering the temple, which is very poorly illuminated by window-lights in the ceiling, one’s attention is first drawn by Vairocana enthroned in the ‘sanctuary’. The four faces are gilded and the body luxuriantly dressed, and so there is no possibility of seeing it in its pristine form. We may surely presume, however, that like the entourage and the decorations that surround it, this image has been there since the founding of the temple. The four main Buddha-manifestations are arranged seated against the left and right hand walls of the ‘sanctuary’, on the left Akshobhya below and Ratnasambhava above, on the right Amitabha above and Amoghasiddhi below. Each is of the appropriate colour and makes the appropriate hand-gesture (see p. 12). Placed to the left of Akshobhya’s throne, and thus to the right of the central throne of Vairocana, other images have been placed, Maitreya seated and making the gesture of preaching, an image probably of Tārā and in the far corner an unidentified crowned image. The presence of drappings makes identification difficult, and these additional images, which might seem to upset the symbolic arrangement of the whole complete, were probably added later as marks of more popular devotion. We never attempted to interfere with the images, as we were already taking what seemed to us maximum liberties in investigating the place. To the right of Amoghasiddhis’s throne is an image of a high lama, identifiable as Atiśa. This again is an addition.

Vairocana’s throne is decorated with lions representing his traditional ‘vehicle’ (see p. 10) and surmounted by thin snake-like makara (sea-monsters), between the coils of which gandharva (heavenly musicians of Indian mythology) are sporting with trumpets. Arranged symmetrically to the sides and above the throne are eight goddesses, who may be identified in terms of the two sets of four, who regularly appear in Vairocana’s mandala (see below p. 34). Like all religious places Alchi must have collected a good share of additional votive offerings over the centuries, but at present there is very little indeed extra to what we may regard as the original depositions. One has the impression that the whole place has lain neglected for a very long time indeed, and most of what was removable has been removed. An old table with an offering bowl and a white scarf which we had laid upon it, stands at the foot of the

27. See Albert von Le Coq, Die Buddhisiche Spätantike in Mittelasien II, Die Manichäischen Miniaturen, Graz (Austria) 1973, especially Pl. XXVII. Here the general grouping of figures is similar, and there is also a large flower like the one to the right of our picture. We are pressing no actual direct connections between Alchi and that distant Central Asian site. Both places happen to preserve motifs where would have been much more general throughout Central Asia and which were developed by Tibetan artists. See pp. 64 & 67 and note 35.
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throne, and by its side is a votive plaque to Tsong-kha-pa, which might have been placed there any time by a dGe-lugs-pa adherent.

The Manḍalas

The six manḍalas which occupy the major part of the three walls B, C and D, portray various circles of divinities centring on the ‘Omniscient Lord’, in Sanskrit Sarvavid, in Tibetan Kun-rig. The central theme is the ‘Resplendent’ (Vairocana) manifestation of omniscience, its power of conversion through preaching, as manifest in Śākyamuni, its power of eradicating all falsehood, as symbolized by the Lord of Wisdom Mañjuśrī, and its essential identification with the ‘Perfection of Wisdom’ (Prajñā-pāramitā). It will be noticed that the favourite divinities throughout the Alchi temples are precisely these four: Vairocana, the preaching Śākyamuni, Mañjuśrī, and the ‘Lady Perfection of Wisdom’.

The central divinity of the 'Du-khang manḍalas is Sarvavid in one of these forms. The inner set of manifestations consists either of duplications of the central divinity to the four quarters and sometimes also to the intermediate points of the compass, or of manifestations in the form of the set of Five Buddhas and Four Goddesses, as already illustrated on page 10. The set of Five Buddhas and Four Goddesses are a fundamental Buddhist tantric set and thus are simply incorporated into the Sarvavid tradition. However, we should note the presence of a variation in the colours of the Buddhas and Goddesses in accordance with a special tradition of the Durgatiparīśodhan Tantra, one of the Sarvavid series. Here the eastern manifestation of Sarvavid, known as the ‘King who purifies evil rebirths’ (Durgatiparīśodhanarāja) is white, and so too is the Goddess of the south-east Locanā, instead of their usual blue colour. The southern Sarvavid manifestation is blue, and so too is the Goddess of the south-west Māmakī, instead of their usual colour yellow. Here the changes end, for the western Buddha and north-west Goddess remain red or at least red-yellow, according to some identifications, and the northern Buddha and NW Goddess remain dark green. Both colour arrangements will be found at Alchi.

Apart from the four main Goddesses, Locanā, Māmakī, Pāṇḍuravāsīnī and Tārā, there are two sets of four subsidiary goddesses of the offerings, as their names, when translated, will make quite clear:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inner Circle</th>
<th>Outer Circle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SE Vajralāvā</td>
<td>Vajra-Incense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SW Vajramālā</td>
<td>Vajrālocākā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NW Vajragāti</td>
<td>Vajra-Flower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NE Vajranṛtyā</td>
<td>Vajrālamp</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the Five Buddha manifestations, the Four main goddesses, the Eight goddesses of the offerings, we must include also Sixteen Bodhisattvas and Four Guardians of the Four Quarters. These come to a total of Thirty-Seven, and they are known as the Thirty-Seven Fundamental Divinities of Kun-rig. 28

28. Apart from the main tantras themselves, these divinities are listed and described in a large number of liturgical and commentarial works. Especially useful is a ‘Compendium of Tantric Works’ (rGyud-de Kun-btus), Texts explaining the significance, techniques and initiations of a collection of one hundred and thirty-two manḍalas of the Sa-kye-pa tradition, edited by ‘Jam-dbyangs Blo-gter-dbang-po under the inspiration of his guru ‘Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse’ dbang-po, and reprinted from the sDe-dge edition by N. Lungtok and N. Gyaltsan in Delhi, 1971. Volume 6 of this work deals with the Durgatiparīśodhan tradition, and includes ten such works. It was on some of these that Professor G. Tucci has largely drawn for his lists in Indo-Tibetica III, 1, pp. 30 ff. (see note 14 above). There is no need to list all the references in this useful volume, where the same divinities are listed. For the main divinities of the manḍala one may refer to folio 210 (in accordance with the enumeration established in the Delhi reprint), for the Sixteen Bodhisattvas of the Good Age, the Arhats, Pratyekabuddhas and Sixteen Fierce Divinities, folio 214 onwards, and for the lesser divinities, Brahmā and Indra etc onwards, folio 216, line 2.

One may see also Raghu Vira & Lokesh Chandra, A New Tibeto-Mongol Pantheon, vol. 12, item 22, and vol. 13, items 27–38.
The Sixteen Bodhisattvas are grouped in four sets of four, representing the Families (see above p. 13) of the Vajra (power-bolt), Rarna (Gem), Padma (Lotus) and Karma (Action).

1. Vajrasattva, white, holding vajra and bell,
2. Vajrarāja, yellow, a hook,
3. Vajrarāgā, red, a bow and arrow,
4. Vajrasādhū, green, a five-pointed vajra,
5. Vajaratna, yellow, a gem and a bell,
6. Vajratejā, red-yellow, a solar disk,
7. Vajraketu, blue, a banner of victory (dhvaya)
8. Vajrahāsa, white, a rosary of ivory,
9. Vajradharma, red, a lotus-flower,
10. Vajratikṣa, blue, a sword and a book,
11. Vajrahetu, yellow, an eight-spoke wheel,
12. Vajrabhāsa, copper-colour, a tongue-tip in form of a vajra,
13. Vajrakarma, variegated, a crossed vajra and bell,
14. Vajrarakṣa, yellow, a vajra-talisman,
15. Vajrayakṣa, black, with a large belly and protruding fangs,
16. Vajrasandhi, yellow, holding two crossed vajras.

It may be noted that the first of each set of four has a colour corresponding to the Buddha of the family concerned, except possibly for Vajrakarma, first of the fourth set. On the Alchi maṇḍalas he is usually a dark blue or green, corresponding to the Buddha of the northern direction, but he occurs at least once as a yellowish-white. By and large the items they hold characterize their family, allowing for the inevitable prevalence of vajra and bell. Thus the first four suggest the power of attack, remembering that the Buddha of the east bears a relationship with Śākyamuni's defeat of Māra, the Evil One. The second set suggest wealth and splendour. The third set suggest the power of the doctrine, and the fourth set suggests defence against the foes of the doctrine.

The four guardians are:

Vajrākuśa, white, holding a hook East
Vajrapāśa, yellow, a noose South
Vajrāsphota, red, an iron chain West
Vajrāghaṇṭa, green, a bell North.

To this basic set of thirty-seven divinities others may be added. Thus we find a supplementary list of sixty 'guest divinities' (mgon thabs kyi lha drug cu.). These include the Sixteen Bodhisattvas of the Good Age, the Sixteen Arhats, Twelve Pratyekabuddhas and Sixteen Fierce Divinities. This second set of Sixteen Bodhisattvas needs to be distinguished from the primary set as listed in detail. It may be sufficient to note here that the second set is also divided into four groups of fours, the first set all white, the second set all yellow, the third set all 'white red' and the fourth set variegated. Here 'variegated' is explained as 'face and legs white', neck to waist 'light red' and rest of the form 'blue'. In fact when they appear, they are given the dark green colour corresponding to the northern quarter. Amongst such complications one has to allow for occasional simplifications even on the part of the experts.

29. This is supported by the text just quoted above, folio 214, line 4, while our liturgical text (note 24 above) supports the 'variegated' tradition. The term bodhisattva has been explained for readers unacquainted with Buddhist terminology. See p. 14. Arhat, literally 'worthy' refers to disciples (śrāvakas) who have achieved nirvāṇa. Pratyekabuddha, literally 'all alone Buddha', refers to those to achieve buddhahood but keep their knowledge to themselves. The Mahāyāna, teaching the path of the Bodhisattva as the one true way, disapproves of these earlier categories, but includes them as ready listeners at the great discourses given by Buddhas in the Mahāyāna texts, since they too are beings fit for conversion. Hence their presence around maṇḍalas.

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19. mandala no. 1.

20. mandala no. 5.
21. mandala no. 6.
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The extra Twelve Fierce Divinities appear on a number of the manḍalas and thus we list their names in translated form. There are two male and two female divinities for each quarter:

**East:** Manifestor of the Threefold World
with (on his right): Churner of Elixir,
(on his left): Demoness of Time,
(behind him): Lady of the Time-Hook,

**South:** Queller of the Threefold World
with: the One with the Blue Rod, Lady of the Time-Rod and Lady of the Time-Noose,

**West:** Binder of the Threefold World
with: Imperturbable, Lady of the Time-Token and Lady of the Time-Fetter,

**North:** Destroyer of the Threefold World
with: the Horse-Head God (Hayagrīva), the Yakshinī of Time and the Lady of the Time-Bell.

Around the manḍala there may also be a large number of lesser divinities, representing the gods, sprites and demons of Indian tradition. Thus we may list:

Ten protectors of the directions (eight points of the compass plus zenith and nadir)
starting with Brahmā and Indra,
Eight great gods led by Maheśvara (= Śiva),
Eight great serpent-divinities (nāga),
Eight major planets,
Twenty-eight lunar constellations,
Four Great Kings with their followings,
Nine great Fearful Ones (Mahābhairava),
gods of pure lineage, yakshas, rākshasas, women, witches, yoginīs,
mountain-gods, country-gods, village-gods, etc.

Such a greatly increased entourage is conceived in terms of the vast concourse of beings of all stages of spiritual progress, who are described in the basic tantras as listening to the teachings of the central Buddha, Śākyamuni or Vairocana or however he may be named. Thus they go beyond the needs of symbolic and symmetrical arrangement as provided by the basic set of Vairocana's Thirty-Seven.

We take the manḍalas in turn, beginning with the left-hand wall, then moving across to the right-hand wall, and so on to the entrance-wall, numbering them, as we make the rounds:

**Maṇḍala No. 1** (wall B2) is based upon the set of Five Buddhas and Four Goddesses. The central Vairocana is white, four-headed and two-armed, as in the main sanctuary of the temple. Special attention is given to Akshobhya in the east, who alone in this set of major manifestations in four-headed and eight-armed. The other Buddha-manifestations are one-headed and two-armed. All are of the regular colours. In accordance with the arrangement of the ‘Maṇḍala of the Adamantine Sphere’ (Vajradhatumāṇḍala), each of the nine major figures (Five Buddhas and Four Goddesses) has a subsidiary set of four Bodhisattvas or Goddesses, as the case may be. Around the nine central squares, there are two enclosing squares, the first one filled with attendant goddesses of appropriate colours and the second one with a selection of attendant figures drawn from the lists given just above.

**Maṇḍala No. 2** (wall B1) shows a triumphant form of Maṇjuśrī as 'Lord of the Elemental Sphere' (Dharmadhātumāṇḍala), and he appears seventeenfold. In the centre he appears white, four-headed and eight-armed. Immediately around this central figure is a circle of eight manifestations, one-headed and two-armed and again all white. To the four main directions he appears in the regular Buddha colours,
blue (E), yellow (S), red (W) and dark green (N). These four Buddha-figures are also four-headed and eight-armed, and they are each surrounded by four Bodhisattvas of the appropriate family (see above p. 35). To the intermediate points, in what are in effect the four corners of a square, are yet another four manifestations, also four-headed and eight-armed, but with the colours of white (SE), blue (SW), yellow (NW) and red (NE). There are thus a total of seventeen major manifestations. In two outer squares are arranged the rest of the entourage, namely a total of sixty goddesses, 52 in the inner square, and the remaining eight arranged on either side, two by two, of the four guardians of the cardinal points in the outer square. Sixteen Bodhisattvas (of the Good Age), symmetrically arranged, complete the entourage in the outer square.

This particular maṇḍala is largely obscured by bulky book-cases of the heavy solid kind necessary for large Tibetan volumes. With some difficulty we persuaded the two monks who accompanied us, to dismantle with our help the whole dusty contraption. Unfortunately the weighty wooden framework has rubbed heavily not only against the maṇḍala on wall B1, but also against some legible inscriptions and some very fine miniature paintings, which were now revealed on wall A1. These took our attention from the maṇḍala, for we were anxious to photograph them, while the opportunity was available, and more time was needed for the work than our overseers had patience for. Add to this the need to work with electric torches in what is almost complete darkness, and the reader will have some idea of the difficulty under which work had to be carried out in this place. The temperature was also well below freezing point. Moreover it is not possible to rely upon photography in the 'Du-khang, because the walls are often badly scratched, and also because they are overcast especially in the upper reaches by the grime of centuries, and badly defaced in places by damp which has seeped down from the roof.

Maṇḍala No. 3 (wall C1). This one is in a very bad condition. It represents Sarvavid according to the Durgatiparśodhana (compare Pl. XVII from Lhakhang Soma). The Sixteen Bodhisattvas, as listed on p. 35, are arranged in a circle around the Five Buddhas and Four Goddesses. The eight goddesses of the offerings appear, four in the four corners of the square which encloses the circle of Sixteen Bodhisattvas, and four more in the corners of the next outer square. This square contains the Sixteen Bodhisattvas of the Good Age, seemingly duplicated, while the outer square contains the sets of Sixteen Arhats and Twelve Pratyekabuddhas. At the four quarters are the Guardian Divinities.

Maṇḍala No. 4 (wall C2) represents Vairocana in what may be known as his 'tranquil' (chi-ba) state, that is to say as a preaching Śākyamuni, seated on a lion-throne in the centre of a lotus-flower design. To the east, viz. towards the lower part of the lotus he appears in a six-armed manifestation. In the circle around the lotus he appears as eight directional Buddhas, white (E), red-yellow (SE), blue (S), red-brown (SW), red (W), dark blue (NW), green (N) and yellow-white (NE). The eight goddesses of the offerings appear as usual in the corners of the square enclosing the inner circles and in the corresponding corners of the outer square. Instead of fierce guardians there are four Bodhisattvas of appropriate colours, white, blue, red and green at the centres, viz. at the cardinal points, of the sides of the outer square. Between these and the goddesses at the corners there are two Bodhisattvas at every place, making a total of sixteen. This 'tranquil' maṇḍala is thus characterized by the absence of the four main goddesses and of fierce guardians. It also occurs on the top storey of the Sum-tsek (III. 53).

Maṇḍala no. 5 (wall D2) is a comparatively simple one. The central Sarvavid is white, one-headed and six-armed, similar in appearance to Prajñāpāramitā and seemingly identical with the Sarvavid figure, which is enthroned above the Five Buddhas on the upper floor of the Sum-tsek Temple (see III. 42). This same maṇḍala also occurs on the top storey, right-hand wall, of the Sum-tsek (see III. 54). To the four quarters are the Four Buddhas in their usual colours, but with transferred gestures. Thus Akshobhya makes Vairocana's preaching gesture, Ratnasambhava makes the 'Earth-Witness' gesture of Akshobhya, and Amitābha makes the gesture of 'Generosity' of Ratnasambhava. Amoghasiddhi
retains his normal gesture of 'blessing' (*abhaya* = fearlessness). To the intermediate quarters are the Four Goddesses in the main circle of Buddha manifestations, and four more in the first enclosing square. The two outer squares are occupied by Sixteen Bodhisattvas and Sixteen Buddhas arranged more or less symmetrically.

21 *Maṇḍala No. 6* (wall D1) corresponds in general arrangement to the *Durgatiparīśodhana* tradition. A central Sarvavid with four heads and two arms is surrounded by Four Buddha manifestations and Four Goddesses. Around them are arranged in a circle the Sixteen Bodhisattvas, as listed on p. 35. The eight goddesses of the offerings appear quite regularly in the corners of the two outer squares. As a variation sets of Bodhisattvas of appropriate colours, blue, yellow, red and dark green, according to their directional position, complete the outer square. All the divinities hold swords.

As for the style of painting of these maṇḍalas, we are left with two possibilities. Either they are the work of Tibetan artists already trained in these Indian iconographic traditions in Central Asia, where the cult of Vairocana was already very well established, or they are the work of Indian (viz. Kashmiri) craftsmen and their Tibetan helpers, who had been concerned with Rin-chen bzung-po and others in importing precisely these traditions into Tibet from north-west India. As nothing quite of this kind has yet been found in Central Asia, and as the second possibility would fit the actually existing situation in Ladakh and Western Tibet at this period, we must clearly opt for this second solution. We should bear in mind, however, that those Tibetan artists who had come from Tibet with certain developed traditions (note the royal scene already described above p. 31) would often be those who would apply themselves to the purely Indian traditions which were now being introduced. There would be nothing to prevent them using in a subsidiary capacity the motifs with which they were familiar, and this is precisely what we can observe. Around the outside of the outer circle, which represents an enclosing 'vajra-wall' one sees decorative coils with large red lotus-flowers between them exactly of the kind that adjoin the royal scene by the door-way. It is also interesting to note the different choice of birds: geese (the sacred *hamsa* of Indian tradition) appear around the maṇḍala, whereas three jolly but rather nondescript birds sit surveying the royal drinking party.

22 We now turn our attention to the painting of Mahākāla, the 'Great Black' god, favourite guardian of Indian Buddhist monasteries long before Buddhism ever came to Tibet. 30 His iconographic form is completely Indian in the widest Buddhist sense, and a similar painting in Nepal or even Bihar and Bengal, if any had survived there, would not be surprising. But regarding the entourage we find ourselves once again in a world that recalls Tibetan Central Asia with maybe more recent Kashmiri influence, taking into account that this also brought with it well recognizable Persian motifs. The king, who is the subject of the drinking-scene (this fits in at the bottom right hand corner of the illustration now under consideration), appears again on horse-back at the top right with a more limited entourage. The same birds are there again. It may be the queen, who approaches also on horse-back with a small following in the bottom left-hand corner. The figure in the bottom right-hand corner can only be the fierce goddess Mahādevī (regarded as the feminine form of Mahākāla although she exists in her own right as a Buddhist adaptation of the Hindu goddess Durgā), surrounded by signs of sacrifice and death. The animals in the top left may be characterized as Persian/Kashmiri, and of these we shall see many examples throughout Alchi. The Buddha figures placed in rows on either side can only be Kashmiri workmanship. The question immediately arises: who would have produced such a complexity of styles in Ladakh in the 11th century? Probably Tibetan painters who while preserving much that had been learned in Tibetan Central Asia, had by this time been already working for several decades side by side with Kashmiri artists. Only such a combination of skills and sometimes lack of skills (for some of the local painters had clearly not yet mastered the new styles perfectly, as we shall note) can explain

22. Mahākāla

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satisfactorily the variety of painting found at Alchi, much of which goes back, we are now convinced, to the 11th or 12th century. Even when redecorating, that is to say, repainting of the original, has been carried out, the earlier styles have been generally preserved. Since there is no trace of this having occurred in the 'Du-khang, the styles here serve as some measure of comparable antiquity noted in the other temples.

Of the various miniature paintings which we have mentioned on the lower sections of walls A and D, those at A1 are the best preserved, although even they are in a very poor condition and scarcely adequate for photographic reproduction. But at least the scenes are clearly identifiable. To the extreme left is a rather unusual tree, but a brief inscription above informs us that this is the Tree of Enlightenment. Just to right of this there is a finely painted preaching Buddha, seated on a throne, surmounted by an umbrella. Another brief inscription says: 'The Lord is preaching to the fourfold assembly', and indeed arranged around in rows are monks, princes, laymen and women. The men wear turban-like head-dresses similar to those in the royal scene described above (p. 31). The women have long garments with their heads covered with veils. The postures of the listening figures correspond exactly to those which we shall meet again in the Sum-tsek Temple (p. 59), face turned towards the Buddha and the upper part of the body, naked in the case of the laymen, held back in a pose of rapt and enthusiastic attention. To the right of this scene we see a Buddha standing beneath an umbrella held over his head by attendant figures. He is surrounded by monks and laymen and probably also by gods, as this scene apparently represents the descent of Śākyamuni to earth after his visit to the Heaven of the Thirty-Three Gods, where he had preached to his mother who had already died and been reborn in this heaven. The scenes further to the right are in a very bad condition, but one can make out groups of worshipping figures. Immediately above this series of miniatures is a long inscription, nearly all quite readable, which discourses on the impermanence and the miseries of the normal worldly life and described in details the joys of Akshobhya's paradise. We are also usefully informed that the text was composed by sKal-ldan Shes-rab, founder of the monastery. The paintings and the inscriptions were clearly conceived together and produced at the same time. The scenes continue on wall A2, where one can make out preaching and listening figures and groups of trees. It is possible that here Akshobhya's paradise of Abhirati is represented, but the preaching scenes on wall A1, which we have just described, belong to the same order of thought, namely the delight of being always present in such an assembly intent on the Buddha word.

The courtyard, which one crosses in order to gain access to the 'Du-khang, contains some very fine wood-carving, both the door-way into the temple and a kind of suspended arch, under which one walks to approach the door. The door-way is carved with the Five Buddhas and accompanying divinities and embellished with floral, bird and animal designs. The walls of the courtyard are painted rather crudely with representations of stories of Śākyamuni's previous rebirths. It is likely that underneath the present crude repainting the earlier murals would be found, representing identical scenes. To the sides of the door-way into the 'Du-khang, are subsidiary shrines, one on the left and two on the right. The one on the left contains a gilded image of Eleven-Headed Avalokiteśvara (bCu-geig-zhal). The first on the right contains a triad of divinities (Jo-bo gsum) with a central Avalokiteśvara and a bodhisattva on either side, and the second on the right an enormous standing four-armed Maitreya. These images are not very interesting in themselves, but at the feet of the large image there was standing, just by chance, an interesting carved wooden stupa of precisely the early design which one sees on the Alchi murals.

31. Once again one can find a similar tree in Central Asian sources. See A. Grünwedel, Bericht über archäologische Arbeiten in Edikutshari, München 1905, p. 152, fig. 144a, where one may note both the preaching Buddha and the tree.

32. A photograph of the door-way appears in G. Tucci, The Ancient Civilization of Transhimalaya, Geneva 1973, where it is erroneously said to be from Tsaparang, plate 133. Note also plate 134, which is a very good photograph of the suspected arch in front of the door-way.
24. Carved wooden arch in the courtyard.

25. Upper part of the doorway.

27. Aichi Sum-tsek Temple: façade of the Sum-tsek temple with two entrance-chhôtelns in the foreground

28. Side view of above

29. Ornamental wood-work on the façade
Sum-Tsek (gSum-brtsegs)

We now turn to the ‘three-tier’ temple. Viewed from the side it still looks solid enough, but
the front porch which rises to a second storey, supported by wooden pillars and carved wood work, is
in a fragile state. Protruding beams here as well as inside the temple, are carved with lion-heads, and set
between short supporting wooden pillars are carved Buddha-images arranged within triangular surrounds.
The same type of wooden surround occurs also inside the temple over the heads of the main images. One
may note that it is of exactly the same pattern as that of the triangular head-pieces that survive on ruined
Hindu and Buddhist temples in Kashmir. In all cases we have before us the original wood-work, and we
may class this as Kashmiri in influence, if not in actual workmanship. The same type of carved wood-
work occurs along the Himalayas from Kangra to the Nepal Valley, and thus a suitable general term
might be Western Himalayan architecture. However, at the time Alchi was built, Kashmir was presum-
ably a flourishing centre for such building crafts.

Entering the low door-way, over which there are some faded murals of seated Buddhas, one
confronts immediately a central chōten, which occupies most of the floor space in a small interior some
seven metres square. On the three sides there are raised alcoves each about two and a half metres wide,
and in each of these stands a large Bodhisattva image. As one moves around the chōten one views them
each in turn, first Avalokiteśvara on the left, then Maitreya opposite the entrance, and finally Mañjuśrī
in the alcove on the right. The chief image and the tallest one is that of Maitreya, whose face cannot be
seen from the ground floor, because it reaches beyond and thus surveys from its carved surround the
floor above. This image is 4 metres 63 cms in height. The other two are just four metres high, and it
would be possible to see them complete from the ground-floor, were their faces not partly obscured by
decorated cross-beams. These Bodhisattva images are naked from the waist up except for ornaments,
and from the waist downwards they wear, all in painted stucco, elaborately decorated lower garments.
Each has an entourage of small divinities in stucco. Each is four-armed and this produces at some angles
a rather grotesque effect. The main walls and the walls of the alcoves are colourfully painted in extra-
ordinary detail.

Ascending to the next storey by a notched ladder in the porch, one reaches an upper porch
or kind of balcony, from which one enters through a double door the upper part of the temple. This is
very well illuminated from the open doors, and here work was easy. The walls are decorated by large
paintings of Vairocana (over the head of Maitreya), 11-headed Avalokiteśvara (over the head of
Avalokiteśvara) and Prajñāpāramitā (over the head of Mañjuśrī), by ten maṇḍalas and smaller paintings
of the Five Buddhas and of Vairocana in particular. The third tier rises immediately above the second
without any intermediate flooring. One can climb up to it from the ‘balcony’ and study the interior
through a large opening. The three walls to left and right and immediately in front are occupied
completely by three maṇḍalas. The interior of the wall on the entrance side is painted with three fierce
protecting divinities and beneath these rows of religious. They are all robed as monks except for the
three figures on the top to the left, and these are dressed in the style of Indian (Kashmiri) religious
masters. This last is the only wall in the whole temple which cannot be photographed without consider-
able risk to oneself and to the structure of the building.

There are several inscriptions around the Maitreya image which tell something of the history
of this temple. An inscription near his head praises the Buddhas, the Buddhist Doctrine, Bodhisattvas
and the Buddhist Community in general, and then Lamas. After a reference to the ‘Adamantine
Throne’ (vajrāsana), viz. Bodhgayā, at the centre of the world, where Buddhas gain enlightenment, it
goes on to say:

‘Towards the north of this world (Jambudvīpa) is this snowy land
with its high mountains and good soil, sPu-rgyal’s Tibet.
It is filled with men of religion who possess the Thought of Enlightenment,
30. Image of Avalokiteśvara
31. Image of Maitreya as seen from the ground-floor

32. Image of Mañjuśrī
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and the source of many clever and noble men is Upper Nga-ri. Here in Alchi in Ladakh in lower Mar-yul, this precious tiered temple has been founded by the Benefactor, the Teacher Tshul-khrims-'od, of noble lineage, of high rank, of the 'Bro clan.'

Another inscription low in the alcove to the left of Maitreya's feet, laments the transitoriness of life and urges the practice of religion. Then after a series of anagrams based on the founder's name, it continues:

'Tshul-khrims-'od, in order to demonstrate that possessions are non-substantial and to inculcate the essentiality of universal relativity, has set up these three receptacles of Body, Speech and Mind. In order to remove bodily impurities and to obtain a 'human' Buddha-Body (nimrnakāya), he has set up Mañjuśrī as a 'Buddha-Body' image. In order to remove vocal impurities and obtain a 'glorious' Buddha-Body (sambhogakāya), he has set up Avalokitesvara as a 'Buddha-Speech' image. In order to remove mental impurities and to obtain an 'absolute' Buddha-Body (dharma kāya), he has set up Maitreya as a 'Buddha-Mind' image.'

We are also informed that this inscription was composed by the Monk Grags-ladan-'od, whose name also occurs as author of an inscription in the 'Du-khang. Thus we may deduce that the Sum-tsek was built soon after, if not at the same time as the Du-khang by a relative of sKal-lidan Shes-rab. Both belonged to the influential 'Bro clan. These inscriptions are written in a suitably ancient script and ancient literary style.

Very different is an ill-written inscription to the right of Maitreya's feet just inside his alcove. This praises various people, a certain mChog-las rNam-rgyal and Shes-rab Chos-bzang, both men of religion, then Tashi Namgyal, who ruled Ladakh in the 16th century, and finally lists those who participated in a work of repair (see below p. 79).

Except for two of the maṇḍalas on the first floor, which have been seriously damaged by damp from the roof, the paintings throughout this temple are in a remarkably good state, and the various stucco images show little sign of damage. All we learn from the various inscriptions is that the temple was set up more or less as it is now arranged, and that at least once, over four centuries ago, some repair work was carried out. Thus the dates of the actual paintings, as they now are, must remain uncertain, and the most one can assert is that there is no evidence of anything being redone since the 16th century. However, style of painting and date of workmanship can here scarcely be the same thing, as there are clear indications that the 16th century redecorators repainted the temple as it was originally, simply giving fresh colour to what was already there. One of such indications is an apparent exception, which occurs in the alcove behind the large standing image of Mañjuśrī. Here amongst other miniature scenes a king is represented with a royal lady on either side. Behind the king's figure part of the original painting is missing, and now appears as a blue patch, and the king himself may have been deliberately redrawn differently. Perhaps the redecorators were consciously replacing an earlier king with a representation of

33. The text of these two translated extracts is thus:
First passage:
'dzam gling byang phyogs kha ba can gyi ljongs // el mtho sa rtsang spu sgyl bod kyi yul //
byang chub sms ladan grub thob rnams kyis gang // mkhas btsun du ma'li byung gnas nga ris (b)stod/
mar yul smad kyi la dags a ici 'di // rtsug lag khang chen rin chen rtseg pa 'di //
bzhengs pa'i yon bdag slob dpon Tshul-khrims-'od // gzung rus che x. ya rabs 'broi sde //
Second passage:
yon bdag dge slong Tshul-khrims-'od // longs spyod snying po myed pa la //
stong ba'i snying po bung ba'i phyir // sku gsam thugs kyi gzung rten bzhengs //
lus kyi sgrib pa sbyang ba dang // sprulud skh thob par bya ba'i phyir //
sku'i rten du 'jam dpal bzhengs // ngag gi sgrib pa sbyang ba dang //
long sku thob par bya ba'i phyir // gnang rten sphyi rgs gi bzhengs //
yid kyi sgrib pa sbyang ba dang // chos sky thob par bya ba'i phyir //
thugs kyi rten du byams pa bzhengs //
XII Maitreya's head, as seen from the first storey of the Sum-tsek Temple

XIII Mural of the Great Translator Rin-chen bzang-po inside chöten J2 at Alchi
XIV  Mural of Manjusri on the right-hand wall of the Sum-tsek, ground floor.

XV  Mural of a fivefold manifestation of the Goddess 'Perfection of Wisdom', Sum-tsek Temple, ground floor, left-hand alcove.
XVI  Mural of Mahākāla in the Sum-tsek, ground floor
XVII Section of the left-hand wall of Lhakhang Soma, showing a mandala of Vairocana with the Bodhisattvas Samantabhadra and Vajrapani below
Tashi Namgyal, who is praised in the relevant inscription. However this may be, they are clearly treating with great respect the rest of the paintings. There is also the question of the styles of painting that we would expect to find, if the styles here were indeed 16th century. Now we have available 16th century styles of painting in the royal foundations at Basgo and Leh, which will be considered below (pp. 93 ff.), and they are entirely different. Here in the Sum-tsek there is far closer accord with what we have already seen in the 'Du-khang, at least so far as the iconography is concerned. In subsidiary motifs there are noticeable differences, which must be taken into account. This is best done by considering separately the various iconographic elements which go to compose this quite remarkable temple. We shall thus treat in turn:

the three main images and especially the decorations of their garments,
the main divinities depicted on the walls, wherever they may be,
the miniature religious and 'historical' scenes, showing royalty, groups of religious and layfolk,
and the maṇḍalas on the upper floor.

The three main images are likely to be original, although they have probably been repaired and repainted. However, Maitreya's head-dress, which one can study by climbing to the first floor, is a remarkable piece. It consists of a five-pointed crown with a four-headed Vairocana on the central point and the other four Buddhas on the other points. They are distinguishable by their appropriate gestures. Their bodies in every case are bronze-colour and their garments are blue. The predominant colours of the whole piece are blue (for some decorative motifs as well as for garments), red (for background colouring) and white (for the halos and stud-like ring of flowers around the base of the head-dress). On either side of the head is a small four-armed flying figure (gandharva) skilfully suspended from the wall. If these have remained firm for so many centuries, it is amazing, but not impossible. Again they have probably been repaired and left much as they were. Returning to the ground-floor, one can study the body. The upper part is naked except for regular Bodhisattva ornaments, necklace, pendants and bracelets. What attracts immediate attention is the lower garment. This is decorated with rows of rondels, linked with one another by a motif rather like a tied bow or even an elementary vajra. There are about fifty such rondels in all, separated into two lots by a row of four preaching Buddha-images, also in similar rondels, where the robe hangs between the legs. All the other rondels illustrate in delightful detail the various events of Śākyamuni's life. These are referred to generally in Tibetan tradition as the 'Twelve Acts' (mdzad-pa bcu-gnyis), all of which occur but with much else besides. Thus one of the future Buddha's 'acts' was his prowess in all manly arts, and thus several rondels are devoted to this theme, showing him on horse-back, on an elephant and otherwise at sport. No particular order seems to be maintained, but most of the scenes are clearly identifiable. We may note especially the one below of the future Buddha about to cut off his hair, which gods wait to receive, and the one above representing his long bout of austerities ended by the offering to him of a bowl of curds. We would claim that the ancient style of these particular rondels is indicated both by the figures, especially the gods, but also by the archaic form of stūpa (chöten) which appears on the right of the lower rondel. Rows of such stūpa occur in the old-entrance chöten at Alchi, and they are found here and there in the 'Du-khang as well as the Sum-tsek.

Maitreya's four hands are making gestures corresponding with those which can be seen more clearly on a Lhakhang Soma mural (see Ill. 57). The upper right hand makes the gesture of 'blessing' or 'fearlessness' (abhaya), and the lower right one of generosity (dāna). The upper left hand is raised as though grasping a flower. The lower left one is turned palm inwards as though it might once have held the water-pot which is one of the symbols of Maitreya. One wonders if these arms are in some cases replacements, as they lack graceful coherence. Set against the side-walls level with the lower hands are two guardian-divinities, and above these and level with the upper hands are two goddesses. The colour of Maitreya's body is red bronze or even terra cotta. It is a pity that one cannot see the whole image at once, so that any photograph is bound to give the appearance of a decapitated body. Large Tibetan statues often reach up into a higher storey, but seldom just removing the head from view, as occurs here.
33. Guardian divinity at Maitreya's side.

34. Attendant goddess at Maitreya's side.

35. Guardian divinity at Avalokiteśvara's side.
Avalokiteśvara, white in colour, is wholly visible. His upper right hand makes the gesture of 'blessing'. The others, palm outwards and fingers downwards, indicate generosity. A lotus-stalk crosses the palm of the upper left hand. Set into the sides of his alcove are four small guardian-divinities, and just above his shoulders against the back wall are two goddesses. Once again, what claims most attention is the lower garment with its decorative motifs. We have pondered it again and again, but it is difficult to say precisely what is intended.34 The whole consists of a series of small scenes, depicting palaces and shrines. It is possible that they represent places of pilgrimage in Kashmir, which were well known in the Hindu/Buddhist period. It is not unusual for Tibetan paintings to represent sets of places of pilgrimage. However, once these paintings are better known, others may have plausible explanations. The design of the shrines with their double doors open may recall to readers reliquary caskets in the Christian, especially the Byzantine world. But very similar doors give access to the central shrine-room in Nepalese temples, and thus what we have here, is presumably a common feature of Himalayan religious architecture, as prevalent in Kashmir up to Moslem times. Once again, the palaces, of which there are two, approximate to the type of building which can still be seen in the Kangra Valley. One such palace here, rather in the form of a tower, shows the image of a green goddess, perhaps Tarā, standing in the upper storey. Immediately adjoining it is a shrine containing a nāga divinity, surmounted by a triple domed structure of a kind that can still be seen in India and Nepal, crowning religious buildings. The other palace has two royal couples seated in the upper storeys. One questions oneself in vain, who these might be.

Two other shrines contain images of Prajñāpāramitā, the Lady Perfection of Wisdom, much as she appears in the Alchi murals. Another shrine to the top right contains a fully clad 'Bodhisattva' figure, standing firmly with feet apart. Level with this and slightly to the left there is an enshrined head. Then there are two examples of decorated stupas in shrines with the usual double doors open and elaborate decorative architecture above, manifestly of Indian pre-Muslim style. To the bottom left is an enshrined image of Mañjuśrī. Around and between these various 'holy places' are a variety of men and gods. First there are the Indian shrine-attendents with red and yellow robes and with their black hair taken behind the ears to fall over the neck. Then there are Buddhist monks bringing offerings. Then there are richly dressed laymen blowing trumpets as though in religious procession, and there are figures on horse-back, probably hastening to pay their respects, as often thus portrayed on the murals. Suspended in the air around the shrines are goddesses, bearing flowers and garlands. Finally in the space between the legs there stands a delicate enshrined image of Šākyamuni with two devotees before him and gods worshipping above.

We are left to guess the date of this remarkable composition, but the very theme would seem to set severe limits. What is depicted here can only have existed on nearby Indian territory while that was still Hindu-Buddhist in culture. Palaces, shrines and figures such as these would have been too unfamiliar to the 16th century painters, who as we know from an inscription, carried out repairs. Thus if these designs have been repainted, they can only have been repainted just as they were.

The image of Mañjuśrī in the right hand alcove need not detain us so long. His body is a yellowish colour. His hands are making gestures of 'explanation' (vitarka) and as with the other two images, the upper right hand is raised so as also to be making a gesture of 'blessing'. He is surrounded by four small goddesses, two on each side of the alcove. His robe is decorated with miniatures of the Eighty-Four Tantric Masters (mahāsiddha) of Indo-Tibetan tradition, set within a neat design of small squares.

34. A small section of paintings on the robe, showing the royal palace and Prajñāpāramitā in her open shrine, to which we shall be referring, appears as plate 125 in G. Tucci, The Ancient Civilization of Transhimalaya, where it is described as 'a wall painting from Alchi showing details from the life of the Buddha'. There must have been some confusion of identification with the paintings on Maitreya's robe. A photograph of the whole robe with an extracted dstail of a horseman also can be seen in Madanjeet Singh, Himalayan Art, pp. 72–3. The author has entitled quite gratuitously this horseman as the 'Invader', and he informs us on p. 96 that this robe tells 'a tale of bloodshed, of fights between warring armies, of ephemeral hegemonies'. There is not the slightest justification for such an extraordinary interpretation, as must be apparent to anyone who studies the details.
36. detail of the Avalokitesvara’s robe: a decorated chöten

37. Left-hand wall decorations: Amitābha miniatures.

38. detail of Avalokitesvara’s robe: a palace
In itself this too is a remarkable piece of work, but it lacks the extraordinary complexity of the other two robes, and also the power of imagination required for their realization. What is remarkable, is that these three robes are so different, each from the other, and this can be only explained by assuming that different painters from different backgrounds worked on them. There is nothing in the content or style of Mañjuśrī's robe that would date the work with anything like the precision of the other two. It is in fact isolated from the rest of Alchi paintings, whether the robes or the murals, both in style and content. Was it the whim of a particular craftsman, who was expert in painting this set of figures, and whose suggestion was accepted by the benefactor who paid for the work? This is a possible answer.

We turn now to the main divinities depicted on the walls. The whole of the left-hand wall, where Avalokiteśvara stands in his alcove, is decorated with miniature images of Amitābha, 'Boundless Light', with whom he is always closely associated. In the centre of each section of the wall on either side of the alcove is a rather larger representation of the same Buddha Amitābha, set into a circle and elaborately framed. This device is used both in the 'Du-khang, where Prajñāpāramitā and Mañjuśrī are shown in just this way on walls B and C between the mandalas, and also here in the Sum-tsek, where it is used as the typical unifying feature for the wall decoration of the whole ground-floor. One may notice the royal figures making obeisance at the bottom of the Amitābha 'plaque'. They resemble closely the royal figures already discussed in the 'Du-khang (see p. 31) and they are likely to represent the same king and queen. If this is accepted, then once again we are confronting an 11th/12th century mural. The whole of the central wall, where Maitreya stands in his alcove, is similarly decorated, but with images of the Buddha Akshobhya and with two of them of larger size and similarly framed. The right-hand wall is decorated in exactly the same way, but with miniature images of Mañjuśrī himself. It should be mentioned that the three Bodhisattvas enshrined in this temple are the three most popular ones of the early Indian Mahāyāna, and we may assume that their popularity continued as long as Buddhism survived in that land. Each, as it were, stands in his own right, as a 'Great Being', and they have never been reduced to a coherent set like that of the 'Three Family Protectors' (rigs-gsum mgon-po), where Avalokiteśvara, Lotus Family, is associated with Amitābha, Mañjuśrī, Buddha Family, is associated with Vairocana, and Vajrapāṇi, Vajra Family, is associated with Akshobhya (see p. 13). Maitreya, the 'future Buddha' of earlier Buddhist tradition, belongs if anywhere to the Buddha Family of Vairocana, and this is because of his close connection with Śākyamuni, whose most characteristic gesture in Buddhist iconography is that of the 'Earth-Witness' gesture, also reserved for Akshobhya. There is really no contradiction in such connections, when one remembers that Vairocana is essentially a glorified form of the preaching Śākyamuni, and that Akshobhya is a glorified form of him at the moment of enlightenment. It was such associations as these, which the painters had in mind, when they decorated this temple, and it was clearly conceived as a coherent whole, solving as well as they could the problem, of which they must have been aware, that two of their main Bodhisattva figures belonged to the same Buddha Family. Avalokiteśvara's connection with the Lotus Family of Amitābha caused no problem. Akshobhya had to be represented as one of the three main leading Buddhas, but he could scarcely be depicted on Mañjuśrī's wall, as he has no traditional connection with Mañjuśrī. However, because of his close connection with Śākyamuni, he could appear on the wall where Maitreya stands, and this is what was done. This left the problem of the third wall, and here it was decided to reproduce miniature images of Mañjuśrī instead of a particular Buddha. The only one suitable would have been Vairocana so far as Mañjuśrī is concerned, but this would have relegated Vairocana to a side-wall, when his position is both central and supreme through the Alchi temples.

Thus going upstairs we see a magnificent mural of Vairocana on the wall above the alcove enshrining Maitreya's head. Above Avalokiteśvara is shown the triumphant 11-headed 1000-armed form of the same divinity, and above Mañjuśrī is Prajñāpāramitā, the Lady Perfection of Wisdom. These two powerful divinities represent Means (which is Compassion) and Wisdom in late Mahāyāna tradition, and they are the co-efficients of the Omniscient Buddhahood of Vairocana. Thus all the elements are brought together in this temple in a coherent whole.
39. Facing wall on the first storey of the Sum-tsek: Vairocana mural in the centre.

40. Right-hand wall on the first storey: mural of eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara.
41. Mural of the Five Buddhas.

42. Mural of Sarvavid, flanked by bodhisattvas, and with the Five Buddhas below.
To the left of the large Śākyamuni/Vairocana mural in the upper storey are depicted low down on the wall the set of Five Buddhas, each presiding over his particular paradise. In a corresponding position low down on the right we see Sarvavid, flanked by two Bodhisattvas attendants and by two multi-headed forms of Avalokiteśvara. Immediately below are the Five Buddhas in a row. This Sarvavid figure also presides over maṇḍala no. 5 in the 'Du-khang and over a similar one on the right-hand wall of the top storey of the Sum-tsék. Painted here as a mural over the Five Buddhas, it can be studied more carefully. Several of the features relate to Prajñāpāramitā: the central position of two hands making a teaching gesture, a rosary in the top left hand, and the book on a lotus-flower just above. However, the lower left hand holds a water-pot, and the lower right-hand a garlanded wand. The throne is clearly the lion-throne of Vairocana.

We have already drawn attention to the frequent depicting of Prajñāpāramitā, the Lady of Perfection of Wisdom. One of the most beautiful murals of her is to be found on the left of the alcove of Avalokiteśvara. She is seated in a six-armed manifestation on a lotus-flower, holding a book and blue lotuses. This central figure is enclosed in a circle, and this in turn in an elaborate frame; this last is of similar pattern to those which we have already noticed on the main walls of the ground-floor of this temple as well as to the two we have noticed in the 'Du-khang. The Five Buddhas appear in little circles amidst the coils of the top of the frame, and here Amoghasiddhi is given primary place in the centre. Ratnasambhava (yellow) and Akshobhya (blue) are to the left, and Amitābha (red) and Vairocana (white) are to the right. This is the only example which we have noticed in Alchi of a change of position, and it is significant that it should occur over this elaborate mural of Prajñāpāramitā, who here as elsewhere at Alchi is dark green in colour. Thus both by colour and by membership of Amoghasiddhi's family, she is explicitly identified with the Goddess Tārā, the 'Saviouress' (see p. 12). At the bottom of the decorative surround and to the left is a monk, possibly the founder of the temple, and to the right a lady, possibly the queen who assisted. To the left and right of the frame there are a total of four subsidiary manifestations of Prajñāpāramitā. Beyond to the top left is a standing Śākyamuni and to the top right a stūpa (chöten), both of early style. Below these are other royal persons approaching. Their style of dress accords with what we have noticed in the 'Du-khang. This whole mural must also be attributed to the 11th/12th century, and once again we doubt if it has in fact been repainted. It is interesting to compare it with the much larger mural of Prajñāpāramitā on the right hand wall of the first floor, to which we have already referred in the matter of her relationship with the image of Mañjuśrī below. While this painting preserves some early elements, such as perhaps the wide white cloak of the royal lady to the bottom left, we have here what is quite likely to be a 16th century repainting. The small figures around the goddess certainly suggest a kind of Kashmiri Moghul art, which is totally different from the earlier styles which we have been noticing. A particularly good example of this later Kashmiri Moghul style of painting is provided by the mural of Mahākāla over the doorway on the ground floor.

Likewise the painting of Mahākāla over the door-way of the upper storey, is likely to be a repainting. The two royal figures in the lower corners do not appear to be dressed in the earlier style which is so frequent elsewhere in Alchi murals, and much of the other detail has been rather clumsily done presumably by a local artist, who once again has been influenced by the same type of Kashmiri Moghul art. He has introduced yaks into the composition, none of which is drawn very well.

Nor are we very impressed with the 11-headed 1000-armed Avalokiteśvara on the left-hand wall. The goddesses to left and right suggest a much later Indian world than the one we are familiar with in the earlier paintings. They would scarcely be out of place in Moghul miniatures or for that matter in Nepalese painting of the 16th century and later. The painting is clearly rather clumsy compared with what is certainly earlier work.

An interesting test of what may be new and what may be old is provided by the other main painting on this floor, namely that of Vairocana in his central position above the carved frame which enshrines the crowned head of Maitreya. The figures here are clearly dressed in ancient style, both lay
43. Mural of Mahākāla.

44. Attendant goddess: detail of III. 40

47. Mural with inscription on left-hand side of the Maitreya alcove.
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and religious. Their postures, as they sit listening to the preaching Buddha, are similar to those of the listening assembly in the beautiful little mural of the preaching Buddha on wall A in the 'Du-khang (p. 42). Yet we are conscious of the same crudeness of detail, as we have noticed elsewhere on the upper storey of this temple. Here we have good reason to suggest that a later and inferior artist has worked over an earlier painting. Noticing such difference in skill, we would indeed be surprised if it could be shown that such a painting as that of Prajñāpāramitā in the alcove downstairs has ever been retouched.

Further light on this problem is provided by the several miniature religious and 'historical' scenes, where occur elsewhere in these three alcoves. We have already referred to the inscription, which praises Tshul-khrims-öd as the founder of this temple together with its three main images. This is 'framed' with miniature scenes on the left-hand side of the Maitreya alcove. The central upper scene shows a six-armed Mañjuśrī on a lion-throne, surrounded by gods on the right of the picture and by men and women on the left. The leading figure amongst the human worshippers is a queen clad in the wide white cloak with which we are familiar. Hastening forward behind the queen is a row of three monks followed by a layman with a white scarf. To the right of the central scene we again see a royal lady standing with a royal male figure, king or prince, seated behind her. Garlanded chōtens adorn the place, up to which a ladder seems to lead. In a separate scene on the lower left hand side of the alcove and thus level with the inscription there are two rows of seated figures, one of monks and laymen, and the other of royal ladies with white cloaks. The leading religious wears a yellow flattish concical hat of a type we have noticed elsewhere. It is quite possible that this complex of miniatures illustrates the founding and consecration of the temple. Taken in conjunction with the inscription, it can scarcely refer to anything else. To the right of these scenes there is a mural of Mañjuśrī with six heads and ten arms, thus completing this left-hand panel.

On the right-hand side of the Maitreya niche, where the 16th century inscription recording repairs has been inserted, we see a similar set of miniature scenes. Here Akshobhya sits enthroned surrounded by monks and devotees. Monks approach by a ladder from the left, and a princely couple from the right. Below we see an assembly of seven monks, of whom the central one is enthroned as presiding. Below them is a row of layfolk. To the left of these scenes there is another triumphant form of Mañjuśrī with two heads and eight arms. The postures, costumes and the shrines and decorations suggest an early period. The later inscription probably occupies the space of an earlier one which would thus have been covered over.

The mural of Prajñāpāramitā on the left side of the Avalokiteśvara niche has already been described. On the right-hand side we see Amitābha on a peacock throne set into an elaborate frame of coiling makara and animal designs, and surrounded by an assembly of gods, bodhisattvas and monks.

The Mañjuśrī niche contains scenes of the greatest interest. On the left-hand side we see a king, who has certainly been repainted, with a royal lady on either side, and a general assembly of monks and courtiers. The courtiers have the early style of costume and turban-like head-dress, of which a strand hangs down, as on the small inset royal drinking scene in the 'Du-khang. On the right-hand side a queen, clearly the same one as we see on the left of the king in the scene just described, holds the centre of the scene. The queen is looking towards her right at a monk who is seated beside her. On her other side the crown-prince is sitting. The same king, still holding court, but with only one royal lady now making a gesture of obeisance by his side, is relegated to a separate adjoining scene to the right of the panel.

These scenes probably represent the act of royal assent as bestowed upon Tshul-khrims-öd and his proposal to build the Sum-tsek Temple. In this case the king, queen and prince will be the same as those portrayed in the 'Du-khang drinking scene. The differences in style can be explained by a difference of origin of the painters who did the work in the first instance. Here we have a more elegantly balanced composition, which follows closely the style of the exclusively religious paintings, and was
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49. mandala no. 3.

50. mandala no. 4.
presumably the work of painters thus trained. Some of these alcove murals must also have been retouched during the 16th century redecorating. However they show no trace of those later Mughul/Kashmiri influenced which are prevalent in the repainting on the next floor (see p. 56). We would assume that essentially they are 11th/12th century work.

The maṇḍalas on the first storey of the Sum-tsek are simpler and more uniform in composition than those which we have described in some detail in the 'Du-khang. However, we will take them briefly one by one, beginning with the left-hand wall, where there are two, to be numbered 1 & 2, moving then to the central wall opposite to the entrance where there are again two, numbered 3 & 4, and so on to the right-hand wall, again two, numbered 5 & 6. Turning then to the entrance-wall, we see two on either side of the door, to be numbered 7 & 8 on the left and 9 & 10 on the right. We shall thus have completed the rounds of this floor.

As will be seen from the illustrations, all these maṇḍalas have a central divinity with manifestations to the four quarters and the immediately quarters, making a total of nine divinities arranged in squares within a first square enclosure. Some of the maṇḍalas have small guardian divinities at the four entrances. Around the outer square a total of twenty-four divinities are arranged with seven on each side of the square. Since the one in the centre of each set of seven counts as a guardian, he or she is sometimes moved out into the door-way and shown in smaller size. The one exception is no. 4, Vajrasattva’s maṇḍala, where we see seven plus one small guardian on each side.

Maṇḍala no. 1 is a regular Five Buddha arrangement with Vairocana central and Akshobhya to the east (lower part of the painting) and the rest arranged accordingly. In the south-east is the goddess Locani with the other three in their appropriate positions (see diagram on p. 10). In the four corners of the outer square there are goddesses of colours corresponding to the inner set, and yet a further four are shown outside the maṇḍala. Thus here we have the eight goddesses of the offerings. Taking the four figures to the four directions in the centre of each side of the outer square as guardians, despite their benevolent form, we are left with sixteen figures, who begin with Vajrasattva on Akshobhya’s side of the maṇḍala, and show clearly throughout the appropriate colours and implements of the Sixteen Bodhisattvas (see p. 35). All that is odd about them is that they are apparently depicted as feminine. This uncertainty between male and female representation affects other maṇḍalas in this series. The ‘bodhisattvas of the four quarters’, if thus we may term them, are white (to the east, although Akshobhya is blue), yellow (south), red (west) and dark green (north).

Maṇḍala no. 2 is identical with no. 1.

Maṇḍala no. 3 shows a central Four-Headed Vairocana with four goddesses, white (E), yellow (S), red (W) and green (N). A second set of four begins with white (SE) and continues as a similar series. A third set occupies the four corners of the outer square. Bodhisattvas occupy four by four the sides of the outer square, maintaining appropriate colours, white, yellow, red and green.

Maṇḍala no. 4 is that of Vajrasattva with self-emanations to the quarters and goddesses to the intermediate quarters, thus composing the central square. Goddesses occupy the corners of the outer square, as in all these mandalas, and bodhisattvas of appropriate colours the sides.

Maṇḍala no. 5 is the same as no. 1, except that the Sixteen Bodhisattvas are clearly masculine in appearance.

Maṇḍala no. 6 is again the same as no. 1, and the Sixteen Bodhisattvas here tend to appear as goddesses.
51. mandala no. 9.

52. mandala no. 10.

54. Sum-tsek: top storey: left-hand mandala of Sarvādī.  

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Manḍalas nos. 7 & 8 are in a deplorable state, and barely enough is visible to indicate that we have here the two manḍalas, one above the other, of Amitābha and Amoghasiddhi. This identification is confirmed by the following pair.

Manḍalas nos. 9 & 10 are those of Akshobhya and Ratnasambhava. The same pattern reoccurs with these, namely four Buddha-manifestations and four goddesses in the inner square, with Bodhisattvas along the sides and goddesses in the four corners of the outer squares.

It is likely that all these manḍalas have been repainted, together with the other main murals on this floor, when the temple was repaired. A certain confusion between Bodhisattvas and goddesses may date from a time, the 16th century or even later, when the cult of Vairocana and his cycles of divinities were no longer a living tradition for local people. There may, however, be other explanations, which later researches will suggest.

The top storey of the Sum-tsek has already been described (p. 45) apart from the details of the three manḍalas which adorn the three walls, as visible from the opening. Those to the left and the right can only be photographed at an acute angle, as movement is very restricted. The manḍala on the left-hand wall is that of Sākyamuni or of Vairocana in his ‘tranquil’ (zi-ba) state. This corresponds with manḍala no. 4 in the Du-khang (see above p. 39). The one on the right-hand wall corresponds to some extent with no. 5 in the Du-khang, and its central divinity, who appears as a mural on the first floor of the Sum-tsek has already been described (p. 56). Here we have identical manifestations to the four main directions, distinguished only by the different ‘Buddha Family’ colours, blue, red, yellow and dark green (here actually a greyish colour). The Four Buddhas, Akshobhya and the rest, are placed in the intermediate directions. The eight goddesses of the offerings occupy, as usual, the corners of two outer squares. Bodhisattvas occupy positions in the two outer squares, thus totalling eight, two white (E), two yellow (S), two red (W) and two a greyish colour (N). Eight meditating Buddhas occupy the rest of the two outer squares, arranged alternatively, one by one, between goddesses and Bodhisattvas in the inner of the two squares, thus totalling eight, and two by two alternatively in the outer of the two squares, thus totalling sixteen. Their faces are white, and they wear robes alternatively red and blue.

The manḍala on the facing wall is that of Maṇjuśrī, Lord of the Elemental Sphere (Dharmadhātu), and thus corresponding to manḍala no. 1 in the Du-khang. Thus in this Sum-tsek Temple, dedicated to Maitreya, pride of place at the topmost central position goes to Maṇjuśrī, not simply in his own right however, but in terms of the Sarvavid (Vairocana) tradition, which controls all the Alchi iconography.

Lhakhang Soma

The Lha-khang So-ma, the ‘New Temple’ might almost seem to represent a world of its own at Alchi, although it has some connections in styles of painting with the Lotsawa Lhakhang, which we shall be considering next. The fact that it is called ‘new’ suggests a later date for its building and decoration, and the style of painting relates it undoubtedly with 12th to 13th century works, already sufficiently well known both in Central Asia and in Western Tibet. An inscription of the wall to the left of the entrance, as one enters, has been totally defaced, and unless subsequent work on fragmentary
55. Lhakhang Soma: outside view.

56. Lhakhang Soma: central mural, Sākyamuni/Vairocana.
57. *Lhakhang Soma:* left side of the facing wall:
left to right, top row: Vajrapāṇi, Manjūvajra, Kālacakra; second row: standing Maitreya,
Padmapāṇi, Avalokiteśvara; bottom left-hand corner: two Vajrapāṇi, next Amitāyus;
bottom right three forms of Manjusri above and of Avalokiteśvara below.
pieces of inscription at Alchi, reveals some information, we seem to have no guide-lines in this respect. From without this temple is quite unimposing, being a small square flat-roofed construction some six metres square. The only light to enter the interior comes from the open doorway. Inside it is bare apart from a central chôten, and one has the impression of finding oneself in an art-gallery rather than a temple. The four walls are covered with paintings, in which the colours red, blue and white predominate. This we have noticed elsewhere as typical of the earlier phases of painting at Alchi (p. 49).

The main image on the wall opposite the door represents a seated Buddha making the preaching gesture with his hands. A bodhisattva stands on either side, and thus we name this central Buddha as Vairocana, bearing always in mind the close relationship between the Buddha Vairocana and the preaching Śākyamuni. However, whenever Śākyamuni is clearly intended, he is accompanied usually by his two chief disciples, Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana, and not by a pair of bodhisattvas. The group as we see it here, shows an immediate relationship with paintings as far removed from one another as Kharakhoto in eastern Central Asia, Western Tibet, and even perhaps Nepal. We probably have before us a well established late Indian style of Buddhist painting, which spread with other Buddhist traditions into all those surrounding areas that received so much cultural influence from India. There is scarcely a trace in the Lhakhang Soma of the Persian and later Kashmiri-Moghul influences, which have affected the Sum-tsek. The rest of this wall is best studied from the illustrations, where we have given identifications as far as possible. We would draw special attention to the painting of Maitreya on the far left with his strangely shortened legs, and to the Bodhisattva immediately under Vairocana, whom we would identify as a form of Avalokiteśvara. Avalokiteśvara and Mañjuśrī appear in a variety of manifestations on either side of this figure, but the predominating image in this temple is certainly that of Vajrapāni who is linked with Vajrasattva in an extraordinary variety of manifestations, notably on the left-hand wall.

One may note the resemblance between this figure and that of Plate 74 of Stella Kramrisch, The Art of Nepal. See also her illustration Avalokiteśvara 'of the infallible noose' (amoghapáśa) on p. 104. Avalokiteśvara is sometimes shown holding a noose, with which he draws living beings out of the pit of the phenomenal world (jīvaṁsāra). It is a mere epithet of course, but is often applied as a proper name of the divinity in our museums.
The left-hand wall is occupied mainly by three mandalas; of Amitayus (Boundless Light) surrounded by an inner and outer circle of Bodhisattvas, of Vairocana in his 'tranquil' state, as already described above (p. 39) and on the right-hand side there is the mandala of Vairocana and all the accompanying divinities, the basic set of 37 and the accompanying set of 60, as detailed on pp. 34–5.

The right-hand wall is taken up by a large mural of the 'Buddha Master of Medicine' (Bhaishajyaguru), who is surrounded by miniature paintings of Akshobhya.

The entrance-wall is also covered in its upper reaches with Akshobhya miniatures, but from just above the doorway downwards it is covered with a great variety of paintings. Six rows of miniatures to the far left, as one faces the door going out, represent in their upper reaches the events of Śākyamuni's life, but lower down they are in a very poor condition and so indistinguishable. Immediately above the doorway is the usual painting of Mahākāla, and to the left of this, there are two rows of curious horsemen, three in a row. Balancing them on the other, right-hand, side of the doorway is a royal figure on horseback, together with attendants. The one behind, carrying a ceremonial umbrella, has an elephant head and is riding a deer. These lay figures to the left and the right are portrayed as coming to pay respects and make offerings to Mahākāla. We have already drawn attention to the other royal figures approaching Mahākāla in the 'Du-khang' (clearly 11th/12th century), in the Sum-tsek (probably 16th century), and now we have this rather differently clad 'king' here, who may with the rest of this temple be placed in the 13th century. The rest of the right side of this entrance-wall may be studied in detail from the illustration. Beneath the eight-armed goddess Vijayā and the two Vajrapāṇis with their surround of miniature divinities, we have scenes of preaching Buddhas seated under trees. This strip of mural is in far better condition than the very similar one in the 'Du-khang' on wall A2. Beneath these scenes is a defaced inscription and below this again groups of laymen, but the poor state of the wall here makes description very difficult.
61. Lhakhang Soma: left-hand wall, detail of Vajrapāṇi

62. Lhakhang Soma: mural of horsemen near the doorway.

63. Lhakhang Soma: lower part of back wall: Vijayā, two Vajrapāṇi and scenes of Sākyamuni preaching.
Lhakhang Soma: mural of royal figure near the doorway.
The Lotsawa Lhakhang and the Mañjuśrī Lhakhang

These two temples were clearly added at some time towards the northern end of the enclosure (E & F on the plan). Age is indicated by the carving on the doors, on the pillar-capitals inside and out, by the lion-head beam-ends inside and by the general scheme of decoration, resembling in different respects both the Lhakhang Soma and the upper storey of the Sum-tsek. The iconography also fits in with the ritual interests of the earlier period, which probably came to an end in the 14th century, corresponding with the time more or less when the dGe-lugs-pa (Yellow Hat) Order began to become established in Ladakh. It is unfortunate that the inscription on the left-hand wall of the Lotsawa Temple was erased, apparently deliberately, leaving nothing but the opening verses. From these very little can be gleaned, except possibly from the first verse:

'Lamas who come into the world in succession like Buddhas of the Good Age, the 'Lord of Religion', protector of living beings, Father and Son with their great unequalled love, Rin-chen, the Jewel, king of initiations, giving contentment to living beings, I bow in salutation to these peerless lamas, the leaders of living beings.'

Thus here we would seem to have an invocation to Atiśa, his disciple and spiritual son, 'Brom-ston, and to Rin-chen bzang-po (see above p. 21). The other surviving verses praise in fulsome phrases the Buddhas, the Religion and the Community, and add nothing of interest.

The more we ponder on these temples in the Chos-khor of Alchi, the more persuaded we become that they have survived as they were, not only because they were off the main track, but also because they probably fell into general disuse at a very early period. The dGe-lugs-pa monks, who must have taken over Likir Monastery soon after their arrival in Ladakh, clearly took no interest in Alchi, or these would be sure signs of the change of ownership to that of a new and self-conscious religious order.

65. Lotsawa and Mañjuśrī Temples: outside view

37. bla ma bka’ rgyud snying rgyas skal bzangs dang mthun bzhin ’dzam gling byon //
chos rtse ’gro ’gon (for mgon) yab stas mnyam med rtse ba chen po yis //
rin chen nor hu dhang gi rgyal pos ’gro rnams tshum po rnams //
bla ma mthun bzhin ’gro ba’i ded dpon rnams la (b)skyabs su mch'i //
66. Lotsawa Temple: central image and mural of Sākyamuni
Nothing substantial has been added and no changes have been made that suggest any religious preoccupations than those of Rin-chen bzang-po and the short-lived Ka-dam-pa order of 'Brom-ston. A few inscriptions may have been erased by the lesser brethren of a new and powerful order, who may have disliked for sectarian reasons some of the attributions which they read on the walls, but that is all. One can deduce from the 16th century inscription in the Sum-tsek, to which we have already referred, that the repairers of this temple were local people, who were perturbed by its condition. Because of its high structure, it is the most fragile of all the temples here. The praises bestowed upon the reigning king, Tashi Namgyal, would have been conventional practice, and there is no suggestion that he himself took any interest in the work.

Thus when it comes to dating these two temples, we can attribute them to about the same period as the Lhakhang Soma, although they may even be earlier. They have clearly not been touched until very recently indeed, when some local amateur has tried his hand at repainting one of the walls of the Mañjuśrī Temple.

Entering the Lotsawa Temple, one is confronted with a table on which there reposes a
golden stucco image of Śākyamuni in the ‘Earth-witness’ posture. On his right is a small image of Rin-chen bzang-po with unduly large ears, and on his left a small image of Avalokiteśvara. The wall behind
is decorated likewise with paintings of Śākyamuni in the centre, Rin-chen bzang-po on his right and Avalokiteśvara on his left, thus corresponding with the arrangement of the statues. These paintings suggest the work of local artists, who have combined with some rudimentary knowledge of Buddhist iconography a certain amount of more playful Tibetan inventiveness. They have had great fun with
garuda heads as a decorative motif. These they have arranged in rows, often mixing them with little demons and rather crudely drawn animals. It is interesting to note that their interpretation of the
makara (sea-monster) motifs, which appear over all the images, are derived from or at least very similar to the magnificent piece of stucco work of playful gods swinging in coils, which surmounts the main image of Vairocana in the 'Du-khang. But the reproductions in the Lotsawa Lhakhang are simple and crude by comparison, especially perhaps those over the image of Amitābha on the left wall. The decorations with geese and looped hangings are similar to what may be seen in Sum-tsek, and thus if

68. Lotsawa Temple: one of the goddesses (Prajñāpāramitā) on the facing wall, low down.

38. See the similar motifs as illustration in Olshak, Mystic Art. Reference in note 35 above.
the Sum-tsek was indeed so very much repainted, we have yet another indication that the earlier styles were preserved. Below the three main images on the back-wall and the playful motifs that surround them there is a row of two goddesses and three bodhisattvas. Between the haloes one recognizes as another decorative motif the large red flowers which we have noticed elsewhere (p. 40).

The left wall is occupied by a central image of Amitābha and by two manḍalas, that of Avalokiteśvara on the left and that of Amitābha on the right. Studying carefully the patterning of the manḍalas, the outer rings of vajras, enclosed in a single-stranded reddish loop, and the shape of the entrances with their ‘wheels of the law’ and pairs of deer, as well as the decorative motifs to the sides of them, one observes a close relationship between the manḍalas of the Du-khang, the Sum-tsek and the Lotsawa temples, and a distinct difference from those of the Lhakhang Soma. There is also a close connection between the emphasis on squares in the central part of the Amitābha manḍala in the Lotsawa Temple and all the manḍalas in the Sum-tsek. Once again, we may deduce, that in so far as the Sum-tsek has been repainted, the earlier style has been preserved.

The right-hand wall of the Lotsawa Temple is in a very poor condition, but one can distinguish an image of Akshobhya over a small window, connecting with the Maṇjuśrī Lhakhang, and the traces of two manḍalas, one on either side of him. Miniature Akshobhya figures cover the rest of this wall, just as miniature Amitābha figures cover the intervening spaces on the left-hand wall. As usual, Mahākāla surmounts the door, and two figures on horse-back come to do him homage. This temple has a super-structure built up from the ceiling, and here again we see Amitābha on the left wall, Śākyamuni on the back wall, and Akshobhya on the right.

The Maṇjuśrī Temple next-door is distinguished only by its fourfold image of Maṇjuśrī, each aspect facing one of the quarters and painted in the appropriate directional colour, blue, yellow, red and dark green. This large structure occupies most of the room in the small square place, which is also very dark. The walls are in a poor condition with little of interest to show. As already mentioned, there has been some recent repainting done here, the only thing of its kind in the whole of the Chos-khor. This image, which must have remained undisturbed for so many centuries, doubtless belongs to the foundation of the temple.
70. Lotsawa Temple: Mahākāla over the doorway.

The Chôtens

Chôten (correct Tibetan spelling: mChod-rt'en) may be interpreted as 'support for worship', or even more succinctly 'cult-symbol'. This term was specially devised by the early Tibetan translators as the equivalent of the Sanskrit term stûpa or caitya, both of which in Buddhist usage had come to refer to a shrine in the form of a tumulus, which represented the final nirvāṇa of the Lord and thus by direct implication his Dharmakāya, a term often clumsily translated as 'Body of the Law', and perhaps more intelligibly rendered as 'Essential Body'. With this basic interpretation, it has remained the primary cult-symbol of Buddhism throughout Asia, and although it has adopted variant forms in different Asian countries, its true pedigree is never in doubt. In this book we have tended to use the Indian term stûpa, when writing in a general historical sense, and the Tibetan term choten, when describing actual examples in Ladakh. The multiplication of these 'cult-symbols' was certainly already from Asoka's time onwards considered a work of special religious merit, and when they adopted Buddhism the Tibetans devoted themselves with particular zeal to this expression of their faith. Already variant styles of stûpa had been produced in India which were considered typical of the eight main places of Buddhist pilgrimage there, and these slightly differing forms have been produced in great profusion in Ladakh. Here again we may assume that what is now typical of Ladakh must once also have been typical of Kashmir, when Buddhism still flourished there, but stûpas are usually fragile things, built mainly of brick and mud and plaster. A special variant is the 'entrance choten', consisting in origin simply as a choten constructed over an arch. However, once built four-square, such a choten tends to become a little shrine in its own right, and thus it may be constructed not only at the entrance to a religious compound, but also inside wherever an appropriate place might be found. It is to three chotens of just such a kind at Alchi Chos'khor that we should now give some attention (see also p. 29).

39. See G. Tucci, Indo-Tibetica, vol. I, which is concerned precisely with mChod-rt'en and small clay models known as tsha-tsha, of which many examples are illustrated from Ladakh. See especially pp 22–4 and 73–9.
The largest one, about 7½ metres square and marked J1 on the plan, stands now in what has become a rather odd position just inside the present southern entrance to the monastic compound. This entrance consists of a mere passage between stone-walls, and as we have already observed above, the villagers by encroaching on what may once have been the monastery grounds, have distorted altogether the original layout at this end. As this chōten is now blocked up on the far side, one cannot even pass through it. As previously observed, a second and smaller chōten is balanced above one’s head inside the main structure of these solid entrance-chotens, and thus on looking upwards, one has above one two ceilings and side-walls to study. Here a manḍala occupies the main ceiling surrounded by lotus-flower decorations set in circular patterns very similar to what we have seen in the Sum-tsek Temple. The walls are covered with miniatures paintings of Maṇjuśrī repeated again and again on the northern side and with similar paintings of Akshobhya on the other three walls. It is the inside of the inner chōten as seen from below which offers most interest. Here we see a portrait of Rin-chen bzang-po on the southern side, and on the other three sides Indian (Kashmiri) pandits under whom he must have studied. The one opposite him on the northern side wears a dark brown robe, on the eastern side a red one, and on the western side a white one.

Exactly the same set of Rin-chen bzang-po and three Indian pandits appears inside the base of the inner chōten of one of the two smaller entrance-chotens, marked J2 on the plan. These are both about 5½ metres square each. Here, however, they are provided with quite an elaborate entourage. Rin-chen bzang-po, who is on the south side as before, is seated on an elephant-throne and is flanked by a pair of goddesses and a pair of Bodhisattvas. Above him extending towards both sides of the mural are Buddhas and teachers. An Indian teacher appears on either side of the throne, and below there is a row of seven guardian divinities. Such a painting would certainly seem to pay Rin-chen bzang-po full honours as an acknowledged Buddha-manifestation. Opposite him on the northern side is an Indian pandit with a dark brown robe, as in chōten J1. Arranged around this pandit, above and to the sides are five preaching Buddhas, who all may be regarded as the artist’s own variants of Śākyamuni/Vairocana. Three have a bronze coloured body and a red robe and a blue halo. One is white but with a blue robe and a red halo, and one is reddish with a blue robe and a white halo. On the eastern side there is an Indian teacher with a white robe, as in chōten J1, except that he has changed sides with the west. He has three Buddha figures above him, of which the centre one is spoilt, while the other two make the gestures of preaching and of explanation. To his sides are monks clad in yellow with the flat yellow hat which we have seen on early murals inside the temples. Opposite him on the western side is the Indian teacher in the red robe who is surrounded above and to the sides by the regular Five Buddha manifestations, while below him are seated six monks in the earlier yellow monastic dress.

This extraordinary collection of scholarly figures, the clear intention of which is to do honour to Rin-chen bzang-po’s activities in collaboration with Indian teachers, themselves the repositories of the highest Buddhist doctrines, and with his own Tibetan disciples who assisted in his work, appears inside the comparatively restricted space of the base of the inner chōten. The main chōten is painted inside with miniatures Buddhas, some white, some blue, but all in the ‘Earth-Witness’ posture. This general form of decoration is interrupted on the northern side by three small windows and on the east and west sides by inset manḍalas of Avalokiteśvara and maybe of Tārā, who is not clearly identifiable. The ceiling has a Vairocana manḍala, but with a preaching Buddha to each of the four directions, and is otherwise decorated as in the Sum-tsek Temple. The lower walls have a much worn frieze of a row of old-style stūpas and below this a row of Buddhas. There are also traces of worn inscription.

The third chōten, marked J3 on the plan, is the least complicated in its decoration. Thus the four interior walls of the main chōten are covered with miniatures of Śākyamuni in the ‘Earth-Witness’ posture. The ceiling is covered with miniature Buddha-figures, all white with red robes, and
making a variety of different hand-gestures, the 'Earth-Witness', or Preaching (dharma-cakra-pravartana) or Explanation (vitarka) etc. The base of the inner choten has Akshobhya on its ceiling, Vairocana reproduced identically on the north and south sides, a four-armed seated figure of Avalokitesvara on the eastern side, and what may be the remaining traces of an Indian pandit on the western side. This, however, is so defaced as to be uncertain.

Two plausible deductions can be made from the presence of Rin-chen bzang-po and his Indian teachers arranged in what can only appear as a quite spontaneous manner amidst an almost haphazard selection of major Buddha manifestations. These were painted when Rin-chen bzang-po's relationships with his Indian teachers on the one side and his Tibetan assistants and disciples on the other were known as an actual living tradition. They were painted by the same order of master-painters, who had worked on the temples, but here they had worked, as it were, of their own accord, and thus without the controlling expertise of masters of tantric iconography which had directed their work in the 'Du-khang and the Sum-tsek. We may assume from the inscriptions in these temples, which we have already quoted, that in the temples themselves the monk-scholars sKal-ladan Shes-rab and Tshul-khrims-'od had watched over the work. The chotens are likely to have been erected as an expression of local enthusiasm and as extras to the major works of construction.

Summary of plausible datings for the Alchi murals

The Monastery of Nyar-ma, founded by Rin-chen bzang-po himself, was already a going concern, when Alchi was built, since we know that its founder, sKal-ladan Shes-rab had earlier studied at Nyar-ma. At the same time the style of the early Achi inscriptions and the vividness of the living traditions concerning Rin-chen bzang-po to which some of the paintings bear witness, suggest that Alchi was founded as part of the great impetus given to Buddhism in western Tibet and Ladakh precisely during the 11th century. However, a 12th century date would not be impossible, and thus we have dated all the earlier work noted in the 'Du-khang, on the walls and alcoves on the ground-floor of the Sum-tsek, and in the entrance-chotens, as 11th/12th century. The Lotsawa and the Mañjuśrī temples were probably early additions and may be safely dated to the 12th century. The Lhakhang Soma was added later, as its name the 'new temple' suggests, but its iconography can scarcely suggest a date later than the 13th century. We consider that none of this earlier work has been touched through the centuries.

The elaborately painted lower garments of the three Bodhisattvas in the Sum-tsek, which we have described in detail (pp. 49, 51) probably represent rather later work, but two of them at least have been painted within the context of a living Buddhist art tradition of Kashmiri origin. When Kashmir finally fell to a Muslim dynasty in 1337 A.D. some Buddhist monks and layfolk may have found refuge in Ladakh. In any case there would certainly have been available during the 14th century Buddhist artists who were still capable of painting in the Kashmiri Buddhist tradition. Soon after that their craftsmanship would have died, just as it had already died over the rest of northern India. Its works would be defaced and only ruins would remain. It is hardly conceivable that a strand of such a tradition should somehow have survived into the 16th century, when, as we know from the inscription which praises Tashi Namgyal, the Sum-tsek Temple was repaired.

What the repairers actually did on that occasion we can surmise with some accuracy. The ground-floor is solid enough even nowadays, but they probably had to repair the limbs of the stucco images. The upper storeys, just as nowadays, are the parts which demand most maintenance, and here they probably repaired the structure and repainted. It seems to have been a work carried out on the initiative of local layfolk under the leadership of someone named Shes-rabs bsod-nams, who had obtained the good will or consent of an official (drung-pa) named Kun-bzang. Since this fact is
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mentioned immediately after the verses praising Tashi Namgyal, one might assume that this official belonged to the king’s staff. Shes-rabs bsod-nams seems to say that “urgent representation is made as an act of merit that the Chos-’khor should be repaired in its traditional form”, and this intention was seemingly carried out, as we have noticed. Wherever they repainted, they have simply redone as well as they could what was there originally.

Those who would argue later dates for the murals at Alchi have to answer the question of whose interests could possibly have been thus involved. It is quite clear that no other religious order has taken over Alchi since the old Ka-dam-pa order was absorbed by the dGe-lugs-pas. The temples would then soon have been repainted to their better liking and to the glorification of their own particular traditions. There is not a sign of this having happened. The other alternative would be the interest of the villagers in so far as they were keeping the temples going for their regular use. This is the case, as we have noted at Mang-gyu and at the nearby temple known as Gomba at Alchi. Once again there is no sign of this having happened either. Alchi Chos-’khor shows every indication of centuries of neglect. It has remained most fortunately just as it is, because no one has bothered overmuch about it. It was probably already in a state of virtual abandonment, when Shes-rabs bsod-nams and his friends decided to repair the Sum-tsek Temple in the 16th century. The inscription reveals the interest of no particular religious order, and its grammar and misspellings leave no doubt that the written record at least was the work of simple villagers. They refer to the place as ‘the monastery of the reverends’ (tsun pa rnams kyi rtsug lhag khang) but this could be either with reference to the past or to the presence of one or two keepers who continued to live there, precisely as one still finds nowadays. Nothing suggests the existence of an active community, nor in the 16th century could one expect one here, unless it had been dGe-lugs-pa, and the dGe-lugs-pas were clearly content with their establishment at Likir, just as they have remained content with it to this day. Alchi probably has no written records. It has been forgotten just as almost everything else that happened in Ladakh before the 15th century has been forgotten. Preserved as it is, Alchi Chos-’khor is a fantastic chance survival from the past, and as such truly one of the wonders of the Buddhist world. One only hopes that some means will be found to ensure its continued preservation.

40. The ill-written texts reads: drung pa kun bzangs rtse cas (?= with the good will of the official Kun-bzang) chos skor rgyud pa’i lugs la (= the Chos-’khor in its traditional form) Shes rab bsod nams bdag gis (= 1, Shes-rab bsod-nams) bu ? gon cog skyabs (=? the Precious Ones protecting) zhib bsob ca ba la dge ba’i skul ma bye(?) = (made representation for the repainting as a virtuous act).
XVIII  Royal drinking scene, the best preserved of a set of such royal scenes in the 'Du-khang at Alchi.

XIX  Scene of a queen with a prince and a monk, who is presumably Tshul-khrims-'od, founder of the Sum-tsek Temple, Alchi. Mural in the right-hand alcove of the ground floor.
CHAPTER THREE

CITADELS AND ROYAL RESIDENCES

THE EARLY PERIOD

The personalities of the Tibetan kings and chieftains who established themselves in the whole western area, known as Nga-ri \( (m\text{Nga}\text{-}\text{ris}) \) from the tenth century onwards are unknown, and very few names seem reliable. The last king of Central Tibet, Glang-dar-ma, who was assassinated in 842 A.D., had two sons, whose rivalries brought the kingdom to an end. Eventually the grandson of one of them, escaping from the confusion into which the central part of Tibet was thrown for a century and more, conquered quite a large kingdom for himself in the western regions, and this must certainly have included Ladakh. On his death the kingdom was divided between three sons, but even how this was done, early historical records are uncertain. The most likely division is the one formulated in the 'Chronicles of Ladakh', where one received Mar-yul (= Ladakh) from Ruthog in the east to the 'Kashmir Pass' \( (kha\text{-}che'\text{i} \text{la}) \), presumably the Zoji La in the west, the second received Gu-ge and Purang, and the third Zangskar and Spiti. 41 According to this version it is the eldest brother who received Ladakh, but such an attribution of seniority might be expected in these Ladakh Chronicles. The Alchi inscriptions, quoted above (pp. 5 & 30) may reflect a situation where Ladakh was a separate kingdom, known for geographical and hence political reasons as the Upper and Lower. An inscription found by Francke at Shey might suggest that this was then the capital citadel of the whole kingdom. 42 We know that sKal-ldan Shes-rab built a fort at Alchi, and there were many others, of which the ruins, perched on the summits of high crags can still be seen today. One thinks at once of Chigtan, Khalatse, sTing-mo-sgang, Alchi, Basgo, Shey, Nyar-ma and Sakti, and there are certainly others. sKal-ldan Shes-rab and Tshul-khrims-'od were members of the aristocratic 'Bro clan, and we may assume that most of these citadels were built by other Tibetan chieftains, who would often have been interrelated. As is quite clear from the more recent history, where more adequate records are available, it was difficult to maintain firm united control over such mountainous areas, and periods of subjugation must have been followed inevitably by long periods of effective local rule, even when the overlordship of a particular chieftain was recognized. It is interesting to reflect in such a context, who the 'king' so well portrayed in the Alchi 'Du-khang might be. From the style of his representation he would seem to be a figure of major importance, and thus quite possibly the King of Ladakh travelling from his citadel in Shey or sTing-mo-sgang some time during the 11th century. The first king of Ladakh to emerge with a plausible name is Utpala, who probably ruled in the 11th century, seemingly the latter half. He extended his kingdom south and south-east along the Himalayas, conquering Kulu (which would imply also control over Zangskar), Purang and as far east as the kingdom of Mustang \( (Blo\text{-}bo) \). His Indian name accords with the close cultural contacts with North-west India we have so often noticed. His father is referred to simply as 'His Great Majesty the King' (see note 21) and maybe it is this anonymous ruler who is portrayed at Alchi. To him is attributed the foundation of Likir Monastery, and perhaps it is significant that Alchi Chos-'khor

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41. See Francke, Antiquities II, p. 94 (Tibetan text p. 35, 1.13 ff), and Petech, A Study on the Chronicles of Tibet, p. 108.
42. Francke, First and second collection of Tibetan historical inscriptions on rock and stone from Western Tibet, Leh 1906 and 1907, inscription no. 10. See also Petech, op. cit. p. 109.
Citadels and Royal Residences

despite its apparent importance in the early centuries, is never mentioned in the Ladakh Chronicles. Presumably it was simply unknown to the later compilers at a time when Likir had become a flourishing dGe-lugs-pa establishment, worthy of mention. Any kind of confusion is possible, and the paucity of information concerning this whole early period is indicated by the absence of any mention of such an important citadel as sTing-mo-sgang in the Chronicles. All the citadels of the early period are total ruins, since at those places where a royal court existed in later times (15th century onwards) new fortress-like palaces were built, sometimes on not quite such lofty summits, which must have been very inconvenient places to live.

THE LATER PERIOD

This extends from the 15th until the 18th centuries, after which the rulers of Ladakh finally begin to lose control over their own destiny, and no more great works can be undertaken on their initiative. When this period opens Ladakh is clearly divided into parts with King Grags-bum-lde ruling in Shey and Leh (they are only 12 kms apart), and King Grags-pa-bum ruling from Basgo. Leh may then have been only a very recent royal interest. It is recorded that Grags-bum-lde's father built a row of chotens there, and he himself built there the 'Red Temple' (gTsug-lag-khang dMar-po). This contained an image of Maitreya, flanked by Mañjuśrī and Vajrapāṇi. The image of Maitreya is said to have been 'of the size that he would be if eight years old' (dgung lo brgyad pa'i sku tshad). Furthermore the walls were painted with Buddhas, Guardians, and divinities to whom the king was especially devoted. This is the earliest record of a temple being built there, and which one it might have been we shall consider below (p. 102).

He also built a three-tier (gsum-rtsegs) temple 'on the model of Tholing' (mTho-gling gi dpe ru), and presumably not dissimilar to the Alchi one, but if this statement is true, such another Sum-tsek Temple does not seem to be identifiable in Ladakh. Another record of his reign in the large ruined stūpa, known locally as Tiserru (Te'u gser-po), some 3 kilometres from Leh and just beyond Sankar Monastery. This is now a ruin, but it must have been impressive in its day. 'Since there were harmful occurrences in Leh, he built over Tiserru, so that outside it was like a stūpa, and inside it had 108 chapels'. Previously it may have been a site sacred to some local divinity. He also received a small deputation from Tsong-kha-pa (1357-1419) and Spituk (dPe-thub), the first dGe-lugs-pa monastery was established. It is interesting to note how rapidly this new Tibetan religious order established itself even as far away as Ladakh.

Hereafter the Basgo line of rulers unites Ladakh. The grandson of Grags-pa-bum of Basgo, Bhagan by name, deposed the successor of Grags-bum-lde of Leh.44 Ladakh was by now subject to attacks from a neighbouring Kashmir which had become since the previous century a self-conscious Muslim state. Baltistan was forced to submit to Islam, and Ladakh was in a disordered state and could only be held together by strong determined leadership. This was provided by Bhagan's son, Tashi Namgyal, who is thus praised in the Alchi inscription:

'Born in Tibet by the power of your merits,
you, O king, are a manifestation of Avalokiteśvara.
You are like everyone's head-ornament, joyful as the shining sun.
May Tashi Namgyal be ever victorious!
You have subdued the valley-people (Mon) and the Mongols (Hor).

43. See Francke, Antiquités II, p. 99-100 (Tibetan text, p. 36, 1.18 ff). Only from here onwards do the Ladakh Chronicles begin to contain any useful detailed information.
44. Francke, op. cit. p. 102 (Tibetan text, p. 37, 11.12-14).
73. The ruined stūpa of Tisseru (Te'u gser-po)

74. The Namgyal Peak (top left of photo) and ancient chōten on the outskirts of Leh.
Citadels and Royal Residences

As far as Ruthog and Spiti, as far as Suru and Dras, Nang-gong, Nubra and Zangskar, Ngari is subject to you.' 45

An obscure preceding verse seems to suggest that Tashi Namgyal was born at the Alchi fort. Whether this is actually so or not, he was presumably well known in Alchi, which being so close to Basgo, was certainly a dependency of it, and as a young man he would often have been in the area, before his father took over Leh as well as holding Basgo. Tashi Namgyal’s subsequent successes are thus quite understandably acclaimed at Alchi.

Tashi Namgyal built the upper fort at Leh, known as the ‘Peak of Victory’ (rNam-rgyal rTse-mo). 46 From this time on the kings of Ladakh regularly use Nam-gyal as the second part of their name and it becomes in effect a family-name for all male offspring. Thus the fort might perhaps better be known as the Namgyal Peak. It is now a ruin, but some of the floors are still standing and there are traces of murals on the walls. It contains a small neglected temple. Just below it stands the mGon-khang, ‘Temple of Guardian Divinities’, also erected by Tashi Namgyal, whose portrait can be seen as one of the miniature murals on the wall to the left of the door, as one enters. He is dressed in Kashmiri/Moghul style, very differently indeed from the royal attire which we have seen in the Sum-tsek at Alchi, although this was repainted or at least repaired precisely in this period.

It seems unlikely that there should have been no fort at Leh until the 16th century, but this is certainly the first mention of one. Until the reign of Grags-bum-lde, the rulers of Upper Ladakh were perhaps content with Shey as a capital, and it has ever since continued to be their primary home, as is indicated by the insistence that the royal off-spring must always be born at Shey. Just below Tashi Namgyal’s mGon-khang there is a Maitreya Temple. Nowadays one looks up at a rather gaudily painted image reaching up to some six to seven metres. The walls are completely bare, having been covered recently with the usual plaster wash previous to repainting. It is thus unhappily no longer possible to confirm Francke’s finding of a painting there of Grags-bum-lde and his wife and son together with an accompanying inscription. Francke thus claims that this is the ‘Red Temple’ referred to just above, and in that case it would have been there before Tashi Namgyal built his fort and the mGon-khang. It seems rather unusual to build a Maitreya Temple all alone in so lofty and remote a spot. Local information identifies the ‘Red Temple’ as one much further down the mountain-side, but since the walls there too

45. The whole passage relevant to Tashi Namgyal reads:
   gling gi mchog ‘gyur lho’i mdza’ bu gling //
   khu’u khab sbyer nam sa gnyis kyi bar // mthong ngam mdzes pa’i sku mkhar mtho la bitsan //
   thos pas bzhi non a lci ‘bri’ gunm’ dir // nam lcags thog ‘bebs sing ge’i rtsal dang ‘khrungs //
   pha rol gra sde ’joms-x- dpur rtsal rgya(?) // rang sde gnyen ’go skoyong zhih drin can pha bas lhag //
   mi dbang gong ma bkra shis rnam rgyal la // lus nag yid gsum gus pas phyaq ’tshal lo //
   bod yul bsod nams slob las legs ‘khrungs pa’i // sypan ras gzigs dbang sbrul pa’i rgyal po khyed //
   kun gyi gtsug tu khur bas skyid pa’i nyi ma shar // bkra shis rnam rgyal stag tu rgyal ’gyur cig //
   The first part might be translated:
   This best of continents, the southern one of Jambudvipa,
   With its covering of snow, between heaven and earth,
   With its citadel high and mighty, so beautiful to see,
   Overpowering just to hear of it, here in ‘Bri-gum of Alchi,
   Thunderbolts striking, with the dexterity of a lion, he was born,
   Overcoming the opposing side - (?) hundreds of corpses.
   Protecting his own side, even kinder than a father,
   To the Lord of men, Tashi Namgyal
   We make salutation with body, speech and mind.

   The rest is translated in the text. The whole piece is badly modelled on the older 11th century heroic style, and the spelling is often erroneous. The word ‘khrungs, translated as ‘he was born’, might be read perhaps as mtshungs, meaning just ‘similar to’, thus producing a translation: ‘with dexterity like that of a lion’. But then there would seem to be no purpose in a specific reference to Alchi. ‘Bri-gum may be a name of some kind, perhaps of the Alchi fort, but it seems to have no plausible meaning.

46. Francke, op. cit. p. 103 (Tibetan text p. 37, 1.23 ff).
are quite bare for reasons given below (see p. 102), epigraphic evidence is altogether missing.47

Basgo was certainly maintained as a royal residence, as is indicated by the interest of future Ladakhi kings in it. The elder brother of Tashi Namgyal seems to have been left in charge of Lower Ladakh, and although his eyes had been put out by his ambitious younger brother, it was his eldest son, Tshe-wang Namgyal who succeeded to the whole kingdom. During the latter part of Tashi Namgyal’s reign, Ladakh suffered disastrously from a Turko-Mongol invasion instigated and partly led by the Khan of Kashgar as a holy war against Buddhist infidels.48 His best commander Mirza Haidar pressed forward into Tibet itself, and when forced to retreat, he established himself at Shey, where he stayed for two years. Tashi Namgyal’s involvement in a local uprising against this Muslim occupation resulted in his execution. Fortunately for the Ladakhis Mirza Haidar and his companions found their residence in the country so unprofitable that they left of their own accord, but the destruction of religious buildings must have been serious. The ruin of what must have been the impressive stūpa of Tiserru might well date from such a period.

Tshe-wang Namgyal had to cope with not only the continued attacks of Mirza Haidar, who had now established himself in Kashmir, but after his death with the subsequent invasion organized by Ghazi Shah, king of Kashmir.49 This fortunately failed and Tshe-wang Namgyal was able in turn to extend his kingdom into Baltistan in the west and to Gu-ge in the east, or what is more likely, he carried out successful raids. The royal interest in Basgo was maintained, for he had built there a new Maitreya Temple, which after Alchi is perhaps the most beautifully painted temple in Ladakh. His portrait is there in the usual place on the entrance-wall to the right, and he is shown together with his two younger brothers, who succeeded him in turn as king.

75. Portrait of Tshe-wang Namgyal and his brothers and family-members in the Maitreya Temple at Basgo.

47. Francke, op. cit., pp. 100 and 101. The claim is broken into two parts in a rather doubtful manner. Thus on p. 100 we read: ‘The ‘red college’ is probably the one on the rNam-rgyal rTse-mo hill at Leh’, and quite separately on the next page he writes: At the Byams pa dMar-po monastery we find a picture representing this king together with his wife and his son Blo-gros’. Concerning the doubtful nature of some of Francke’s attributions, see also note 25.
49. ibid pp. 129–130.
During the reign of the youngest brother Jamyang Namgyal Ladakh suffered perhaps the most destructive of all invasions, this time conducted by Ali Mir, ruler of Baltistan. Ladakh now became the dependency of a Muslim neighbour and Jamyang Namgyal was forced to marry a daughter of Ali Mir. It is remarkable with what persistence the Ladakhis held to their religion, certainly in Upper Ladakh, despite such determined Muslim pressures, which were still far from over. Thus Jamyang Namgyal, despite his subjugation, seems to have found the resources for making substantial offerings to monasteries in Central Tibet, whither he sent his two sons by his first Ladakhi marriage, and also for inviting the Grand Lama of the 'Brug-pa Ka-gyū-pa Order, a connection which would be greatly fostered by his successor.51

This was Senge Namgyal, (c 1570–1642), son of Jamyang Namgyal and the Balti princess, and certainly the best known of the kings of Ladakh. The weakness of Ali Mir's successors in Baltistan left the country free for a while from attacks from that side, and Senge Namgyal involved himself in a long war with his neighbour in the east, namely Gu-ge, a land which was so closely related in language, culture and religion. Some fifteen years war ended in 1630 with the total defeat of Gu-ge, but this led eventually to Senge Namgyal finding himself in conflict with Gu-ge's next eastern neighbour, the kingdom of Tsang, just at a time when the King of Tsang was fighting to hold his own against Mongol interests in the central province (dBus) of Tibet who were championing the interests of the dGe-lugs-pa order towards political control over the whole of Tibet. This led eventually in 1642 to the victory of the Mongols in the person of Gu-shri Khan and the emergence of the 5th Dalai Lama as the ruler of a new and unified Tibet.52 By destroying Gu-ge and weakening Tsang at a most crucial time, Senge Namgyal, all unwittingly, prepared the way for the final eclipse of Ladakh. His kingdom was already feeling on the western side the new pressures of a strong Moghul empire, which had absorbed Kashmir and Baltistan. Now on the eastern side he was undermining potential buffer-states which later might have saved Ladakh from being overrun by the troops of the 5th Dalai Lama. Senge Namgyal is often described as the greatest of Ladakhi kings, but this is only true on a very short view and simply because he himself died, actually after the exhausting campaign at long range against the King of Tsang, before the consequences of his military successes became apparent. While he cannot be blamed for failing to foresee what no man could have foreseen at the time, he can scarcely be congratulated for his long war against the related state of Gu-ge, where the Tibetan religion and culture, clearly so much valued by the people of Upper Ladakh, were identical. The real foes were the Muslim invaders from the north and the west, whether Turco-Mongols from Central Asia, Baltis from Baltistan and the rulers of Kashmir, whether they came from the direction of Iran or from Moghul India. Of this any ruler of Ladakh should by now have had sufficient experience.

The main works of Senge Namgyal in Ladakh were the construction of the great fort-like palace, which now a hollow ruin, dominates the little town of Leh, and the promoting of the 'Brug-pa Ka-gyū-pa Order in the land.53 The 'Brug-pa was one of the six Ka-gyū-pa schools, to which we have referred above, and is named after the Monastery of 'Brug in Central Tibet. The chief of this order, the Grand Lama of Ralung, had already been invited to Ladakh by Senge Namgyal's father, as we have noted. In Tibet itself this particular order was soon to fall foul of the religious and political pretensions of the 5th Dalai Lama, but it held its own in Bhutan, which maintained successfully its independence against Central Tibet, and it has remained independent to this day. Three 'Brug-pa monasteries were founded south-east of Ladakh, Hemis some forty kms distant up a remote side-valley above the left bank of the Indus, Stakna about half-way between Leh and Hemis in the Indus Valley itself, and Chandey (Ice-bde), less than ten kms from Hemis and on the way up to Sagti (gSer-khri). As a great work of religious merit Senge Namgyal had the Tibetan Buddhist canon (Kanjur) with its commentaries (Tenjur) copied, the Kanjur being done in gold, silver and copper letters. The enormous work, running

52. For a brief account of these well known events see Snellgrove and Richardson, A Cultural History of Tibet pp. 193–5.
into some 335 volumes, can still be seen at Basgo in the Serzang (gSer-zang = 'Gold & Copper') temple, which he presumably also had built at the time. At Shey he erected another new temple containing image of Śākyamuni, which reaches up through two storeys, as well as chöten and prayer-walls (men-dong or mani-walls) in various places.

bDe-lidan rNam-rgyal inherited from his father and maintained for the thirty or so years of his reign an empire, the extent of which corresponded to the old western Tibet (Nga-ri) of the 10th and 11th centuries. It was separated into the same three main parts of Ladakh, Gu-ge together with Purang, and Zangskar together with Spiti. The two younger brothers of bDe-lidan were put in charge of Gu-ge and Zangskar. The Moghul Emperor Aurangzeb asserted claims of suzerainty over Ladakh, but apart from agreeing to the building of a mosque in Leh (1666-7), bDe-lidan seems to have withstood further Moslem pressures successfully. He too erected at Shey an enormous image of Śākyamuni two storeys high, and both his and his father's can be still seen today. At Leh he erected a temple dedicated to Avalokiteśvara at short distance from his father's new palace, and that too still remains.

His son bDe-legs rNam-rgyal presided over the dissolution of Ladakh and this western Tibetan 'empire'. The way was prepared for this not only by his grand-father's successful campaigns, but also by the close relationship which had now developed between the royal family of Ladakh and the 'Brug-pa religious order. It is scarcely possible that Senge Namgyal had envisaged such a connection as linking in both religious and political interests such distant lands as Bhutan and Ladakh, which both had a major interest in maintaining their independence vis-à-vis the newly centralized Tibet, then in the process of coming into being. But this is probably how the 5th Dalai Lama and his advisers, with their far greater acumen, envisaged the situation, when they later found themselves at war with Bhutan, by now a 'Brug-pa stronghold, and when the King of Ladakh threatened to intervene on Bhutan's behalf, the immediate result was the invasion of Ladakh by a Tibeto-Mongol army, which pressed forward as far as Basgo, where it was blocked for three years by the impregnability of the place. An appeal sent to the governor of Kashmir, then part of the Moghul empire, resulted in the arrival of a relief army (1683) which put the Tibetans and Mongols to flight. However, Ladakh was the loser on both sides. At the peace treaty with the Dalai Lama's representative, at which a high 'Brug-pa lama was tactfully chosen, Gu-ge and Purang, now in an entirely ruined state, went to the Tibetans, and Ladakh's eastern frontier with Tibet was fixed where it has remained to this day. Towards their Moslem neighbours in the west, the Ladakhi were even more beholden. From now on tribute had to be paid regularly to Kashmir, and the king of Ladakh had to declare himself, at least nominally, a Muslim. Nevertheless throughout the 18th century Ladakh managed to maintain effective independence, and the royal family, amidst the internal feuds which now seem to have become the order of the day, found time for meritorious Buddhist works, the buildings of chöten and prayer-walls, the setting-up of images, the copying and printing of religious books. It was now quite usual for the male members of the royal family to become heads of monasteries, not only of the 'Brug-pa foundations, but also of local dGe-lugs-pa ones. With Tibet close trading relations and religious connections were maintained, and until 1959 there was quite a large Ladakhi community in Lhasa. During the 18th century the Moghul Empire disintegrated and when early in the 19th century Ladakh was again subjected to foreign invasion, it came from the Hindu rulers of the little state of Jammu, who having purchased Kashmir from the British, fast now becoming the paramount power in India, pressed on into Ladakh, and with less success even into Tibet. Unwelcomed as Hindu rule certainly was to the Muslims of Kashmir and Baltistan, it has presumably benefitted the Buddhists of Ladakh, if only in a negative way. The royal family and the aristocracy were deprived of all their possessions, it seems, but after the invasion was over monasteries and temples were no longer despoiled, as in the previous centuries, and they even succeeded in securing for themselves freedom of taxation from the Jammu & Kashmir Durbar. Monasteries we shall consider in the following chapter. As for citadels and royal residences, what one still sees today, is that which remains

54. ibid. p. 113.
Citadels and Royal Residences

from the 15th to 17th centuries, when Shey, Basgo, Leh and sTing-mo-sgang were still maintained. The royal family has never ceased to own these properties, even after they were forced from power in 1834 and took up what has become permanent residence now for over 140 years in their smaller residence at Stok, some ten kms from Leh. With no means of maintenance they have fallen into ever greater disrepair and eventually ruin, except for some of the temples inside them, where monks from Hemis Monastery, because of its close royal connections, take turns to serve as sacristans (sku-gnyer). Only in the temples on Namgyal Peak and in one temple at sTing-mo-sgang have we met dGe-lugs-pa keepers, presumably because the religious foundations here predate the close Brug-pa connection with the royal family.

76. The royal residence at Stok, the only one still in use.

77. The Rani of Stok and her youngest son.

78. The turban-like crown of Ladakh with long streamers which hang to either side.
Citadels and Royal Residences

Shey

Shey (written Shel in Tibetan = ‘crystal’) like all other early Tibetan sites in Ladakh, began as a hill-top fortress, the ruins of which may be seen as several higher levels above the present palace. Like the larger palace-fort in Leh, this too is now little more than an empty shell. In front of the palace was once an artificial lake, and although this through neglect has become a watery swamp, one can still envisage the place as it must have been in times of royal splendour. Shey must have been magnificent as the capital of this small kingdom. It occupies a central position towards the middle of one of the widest stretches of these upper reaches of the Indus, which here flows south-east to north-west. Just to the south-east in the great monastery of Tiktse and further on the three ‘Brug-pa monasteries of Stakna, Hemis and Chendey. To the north-west is Leh, concealed in a side-valley, and beyond is the dGe-lugs-pa monastery of Spituk built high on summit-crags. The interest which successive kings and queens took in Shey is indicated by the hundreds of choten and the various temples, which were built all around. Yet what remains is only a small part of former endowments. These were royal foundations, and with the removal and subsequent impoverishment of the royal family in 1834, there have been no adequate funds available to maintain them. The temples here and there are looked after by a local sacristan, but he can seldom be found easily, and doors remain locked. It requires many visits to discover all that there might be of interest in one place or another.

Adjoining the palace is the temple containing the two-storey high image of a seated Sākyamuni, a benefaction probably attributable to bDe-lidan (see p. 87). It is impressive only by its size, for it is not very beautiful. The walls of the upper temple, level with Sākyamuni’s shoulders, are entirely blackened by the fumes from the vast number of butter-lamps which have been offered here over the centuries. The lower part of this enormous image is approached through a lower temple with a separate entrance. Here the walls are painted with murals of Buddha-figures, making various hand-gestures, that of preaching, the ‘earth-witness’ gesture, or the gesture of blessing. We have drawn attention to similar sets in other ‘Brug-pa Ka-gyii-pa temples sponsored by the royal family (e.g. pp. 96–7). To the right of the door which leads to the feet of the large Sākyamuni statue is a mural of Shambunātha, exactly as at Hemis (p. 130). We note that the monks often identify this particular image as sTag-tshang Ras-pa himself, founder of Hemis.
80. View towards the east from the ruined palace-fort of Shey, showing the vast area strewn with chönts. Central in the photograph between two trees is the two-storey temple containing a large image of Sakyamuni.

81. Chöten by the palace-fort of Shey.
The second large Śākyamuni image, presumably the one set up by Senge Namgyal (see p. 87), is in a separate religious enclosure below the palace and some 400 metres distant. It is surrounded by chöten of various shapes and sizes. By one of these stands an interesting collection of Buddha and Bodhisattva images carved in relief. They must certainly have been collected from various places and deliberately arranged here as a meritorious work. To give any date to such works seems to be quite impossible. We have suggested already that the oldest of them, such as those standing at Dras, might well go back to the 8th century. But similar images have been carved over long periods of time, since they require little more skill than is needed to inscribe OM MANIPADME HUM on a mani-stone. Such things can have been done at any time during the royal period, when there were benefactors ready to pay for such works of religion.

The image of Śākyamuni is again seated, and is so large that one walks round the base of the image on the ground-floor, and then around the shoulders and head, when one ascends to the next storey. This place has by no means attracted so much attention, and the walls of the upper temple are in very good shape. The wall behind the image has pleasing paintings of Śākyamuni’s two chief disciples Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana, and also of Padmasambhava and Tsong-kha-pa. The side walls are painted with the 16 Arhats, eight on each side. We have already noted the presence of this group on some of the Alchi manḍalas (p. 35), but here they appear with quasi-historical connotation as the leading representatives of Śākyamuni’s early monastic following.

Opening off from the courtyard in another small temple is an image of the Buddha Amitāyus (Boundless Light). In front of his crossed legs has been placed a small image of Tsong-kha-pa. There is some good wood-work in this neglected temple and the walls are pleasingly painted with miniature Buddha-figures, the Thousand Buddhas, as they are popularly known. This smaller temple is likely to be a benefaction of Kalzang, the Balti princess whom Senge Namgyal married, and who is so often associated with him in his religious works (see p. 97).
84. Gigantic image of Śākyamuni, as seen from the upper storey.
Basgo

This is certainly the most impressive of Ladakhi citadels despite its ruined state. In earlier times it must have been also well-nigh impregnable, as was illustrated by the three-year siege that it withstood in the late 17th century (see p. 87). There is here no possibility of building a more comfortable palace at a lower level, as at Shey and at Leh. One has had to build either on the top of these precipitous rocks or at the foot. Also the Indus Valley begins to narrow at this point, so that Basgo must always have been a major point of defence. It is first mentioned in the Ladakh Chronicles in the early 15th century as the capital of Grags-pa-bum, whose descendents were to become the Namgyal Dynasty of Ladakh (p. 82). Here it is known by its Tibetan name of Rab-brtan lha-rtse, 'Divine Peak of Great Stability', and Basgo, written various ways in Tibetan, is probably an old Dard name. Below the fortress down in the valley just to the east there stand the bare walls of a temple of the kind that belongs to the time of Rin-chen bzang-po, and this in itself might be taken as a sufficient indication that a Tibetan fort was built there together with a monastery, just as at Chigtan, Alchi and Nyar-ma. No local information seems to be available about any of these old places. It is as though they had been totally forgotten.

Amidst the ruins of the fort there are two large temples and adjoining one of them is a small shrine. They all contain images of Maitreya in due proportion to their size. The most beautiful one is the higher one, which is known as the Chamba Lhakhang (Maitreya Temple) and which was built by Tshewang Namgyal, son of Tashi Namgyal, about the middle of the 16th century. Apart from old temples dedicated to guardian divinities (mGon-khang) which are always small and usually deliberately limited in their iconography, this is probably the only temple in Ladakh to have survived with some of its murals intact from the 16th century. Thus after Alchi, which is exceptional, and Mang-gyu which has been redecorated clumsily in the original style, the Basgo Maitreya Temple is likely to be the oldest available to us for comparative study. Like the temples attached to royal property elsewhere, it is now in the care of a monk detached from Hemis, and thus it is included as a Brug-pa Ka-gyii-pa possession. However, since it was founded long before the Brug-pa order became established in Ladakh (see p. 86), it is possible that it was connected originally with the Bri-gung-pa branch of the Ka-gyii-pas, who had already become established at Phiyang (Phyi-dbang) in the reign of Tashi Namgyal.

This is one of the very few Tibetan Buddhist temples that we can recall, where fierce divinities appear in such an entirely subservient role. Instead of Mahākāla over the entrance we see the Bodhisattva Vajrapāni, holding both vajra and bell. On either side of him are arranged the Kings of the Four Quarters, two by two below, and above two by two probably Indra and Brahma, Vishnu (in Tibetan: Khyab-'jug) and Śiva (dBang-phyug). Below four small fierce divinities can be seen in an entirely subservient position. The decoration of the double halo is different from anything that we have seen in Alchi. Below this group are miniature paintings. To the right we see Tshe-wang Namgyal and his two brothers together with ladies of the royal family and attendants. To the left are depicted the traditional scenes of Sākyamuni’s life. I think that we may safely assume that this wall has remained untouched since Tshe-wang Namgyal’s reign, namely about the middle of the 16th century. As in the case of the painting of Tashi Namgyal in the mGon-khang on the Namgyal Peak at Leh, the royal dress is Kashmiri/Moghul, as would be expected in this period. What we see here on this entrance-wall of the Maitreya Temple at Basgo provides interesting points of contrast with work that was carried out at Alchi, probably only two to three decades earlier. We refer to the renovations of the Sum-tsek Temple during the reign of Tashi Namgyal, Tshe-wang Namgyal’s uncle and predecessor. Moreover Alchi is only some sixteen kilometres from Basgo and must have been one of the closest dependencies of the ‘second citadel’ of this then recently united Ladakh. The work done at Alchi clearly reproduces social styles and religious content of an age that had passed and may no longer have been understood. There are no intrusions by any of the Tibetan Buddhist schools that had come into existence since Alchi was founded, and there is no adaptation to what were now in the 16th century the accepted styles of court-dress.
85. The Basgo Fort: the Maitreya Temple built by Tshe-wang Namgyal is on the right; Senge Namgyal's Serzang Temple is the white building towards the left.

86. A view down from the Basgo Fort.
Alchi reflects the existence of a Buddhist Kashmir and a Buddhist India, which now no longer existed. By contrast the Maitreya Temple at Basgo and everything that follows hereafter in the way of temple decoration, reproduces styles introduced direct from Tibet by the various Tibetan Buddhist religious orders which from now on built new monasteries and occasionally took over old ones.

On the two longer side-walls there are a total of eight major figures represented, but the arrangement seems to be quite haphazard as is often the case in these later-style Tibetan temples. Training in manḍalas induces a sense for the coherent arrangement of the sacred figures, and a whole temple could be conceived and laid out as an actual maṇḍala. In later times popular devotion begins to have a greater influence in these matters, and then one paints on the walls those figures whom one wants to see portrayed there without any necessary relationship between them. However, there is always for the tendency to preserve certain sets, such as the Five Buddhas whom one can see in the 'Du-khang at Phiyang, or sets of the main tantric divinities, who are popular in all the later monasteries.
On the left wall, moving from the door inwards, we see a seated Buddha image, in the posture of meditation and holding a bowl; next a similar figure holding a bowl and making the gesture of explaining (vitarka) with the right hand. The series then seems to be broken by the presence of Atiśa, and next we have another Buddha-image, too damaged by damp from the roof for his hand-gestures to be identifiable. On the right wall, as we make the rounds and move back towards the door we see Vajradhara, the 'Vajra-Holder', supreme Buddha manifestation of the Ka-gyū-pa Order. Next comes a Buddha-image similar to those mentioned, but making the 'Earth-Witness' gesture. Next comes Padma dKarpo, a great Brug-pa Ka-gyū-pa scholar of the 16th century. Lastly we note the presence of Avalokiteśvara. On the far wall to the right of the main trio of images there are paintings of Padmasambhava above and of Mila Ras-pa below. The wall on the left is obscured by hanging banners (thang-kas) Certainly the presence of Padma dKarpo suggests repainting at a later date.

The main image of Maitreya on account of its slenderness and delicacy is one of the most attractive we have seen. Such large images are seldom fine works of art. On either side of him stands an attendant Bodhisattva image, one making the gesture of generosity (dāna) on his right, and one making the gesture of preaching on his left. The space behind Maitreya is hung thick with banners.

In all it is a very beautiful temple which has probably remained untouched for three centuries or so; one is aware of a certain mellowness and a sameness of style and of colouring throughout. The ceiling is also delicately decorated with rosettes and circles of sacred syllables.

By comparison the Serzang (gSer-zangs = 'Gold & Copper') Temple, which adjoins what were once the royal quarters, is by no means so impressive. This temple is named after the manuscript copy of the Tibetan Buddhist Canon, written (in part) in gold, silver and copper letters, and paid for as an act of merit by Senge Namgyal. The Kanjur (Buddha Word) is arranged in large racks on the left-hand side of the temple. The Tenjur (Indian commentaries and works of Indian masters) are stuffed in a chaotic state in similar shelves on the right-hand side. The place has every appearance of neglect. The main image is another large Maitreya, whose head reaches up into a kind of windowed enclosure, which can be approached from the roof. A tumbledown gallery edges the roof, and there is a destroy-

88. Main image of Maitreya in the Maitreya Temple at Basgo. 89. Bodhisattva image by Maitreya's side at Basgo.
ed inscription, which was apparently still readable when Francke saw it in 1909. By Maitreya's head on the back wall of the windowed enclosure are mural paintings of the leaders of the Ka-gyü-pa hierarchy, namely Tilopa, Naropa, Marpa and Mila Ras-pa. The walls inside the temple are painted with Buddha-figures, similar to those in the upper Maitreya Temple, and presumably representing the Five Buddhas and Vairocana as supreme. However, as in the other temple, they are distinguished by their hand-gestures only and not by directional colours. They are all a grubby yellow colour, and in any case difficult to see, because of the high book-racks and hanging banners.

Our attention was drawn by a sealed case with glass front which stands in the middle of the temple between the rows of seats intended for celebrants. It contained three brand-new rather nondescript Buddha-images, and two delightful little Kashmiri bronzes. As these were wrapped in scarves and they could not be removed from the case, we photographed them as well as we could where they were. We learned that the new ones were presented only a few years ago by a well-known Ladakhi of Leh, who had taken in exchange three small old images. 'What is the use of these old things to you', he had said, when you have these fine new ones instead?" In their simplicity local people agreed. One of the three was retrieved, and that is the larger of the two still in the case. In Ladakh we constantly heard of foreigners blamed for such thefts, but foreigners are usually only to blame at a very distant remove, and any museum in the West which buys such a piece can have no idea how it was obtained. There is little doubt that a few local people, who have learned how much such items of their heritage can be worth, are with few exceptions responsible for these dealings.

Opening off a courtyard near the Serzang Temple is a small shrine containing yet another image of Maitreya, although a far smaller one. An inscription informs us that this was dedicated by bskKal-bzang sGrol-ma on the 25th day of the 2nd month of the Water Horse year (= A.D. 1642). This is the Balti princess Kalzang, (incarnation of) the Goddess Tara, married to Senge Namgyal. It will be recalled that he himself was the son of one of the daughters of Ali Mir, who had overrun Ladakh during his father's reign in the last part of the 16th century. This double infusion from such a vigorous and warlike stock probably played a large part in keeping the royal family of Ladakh going for still a while to come.

90. Kashmiri bronze images preserved at Basgo. 91. The small Maitreya image in the temple of Kalzang, wife of Senge Namgyal.
92. The Namgyal Peak with Tashi Namgyal's fort, the mGon-khang, and the probably later Maitreya Temple.

93. General view of Leh. The Namgyal Peak is high up on the right. Senge Namgyal's palace-fort dominates the town. Just below it to the right is a building with no windows; this is the Avalokitesvara Temple. Close to this is a much smaller reddish building; this is the Maitreya Temple.
Citadels and Royal Residences

Leh

The oldest surviving royal property in Leh are the castle and the mGon-khang. Temple of Guardian Divinities, high up on the Namgyal Peak. As already said (p. 841), these were built by Tashi Namgyal in the earlier part of the 16th century, and we doubt whether the nearby Maitreya Temple formed part of the complex at that time. According to the Ladakh Chronicles: ‘He founded the Namgyal Peak Castle at Leh and the township of Chubhi. When a Mongol army appeared, he killed many Mongols, and having founded the mGon-khang on the Namgyal Peak, he brought many Mongol corpses beneath the feet of the Guardian Divinity. Furthermore after building the mGon-khang he controlled the demons who repulse armies.’

These fierce Guardians are regularly shown trampling on foes, and thus the reference to Mongol corpses may be taken in a figurative sense. The main Guardian in the temple is a Six-Armed Mahākāla, referred to in Tibetan as mGon-po Phyag-drug-pa, the ‘Six-Armed Guardian’. Also present in a subsidiary capacity are Vaiśravaṇa, one of the Four Kings of the Quarters, the Great Goddess (Mahādevī = Durgā of Hindu origin), a fierce divinity riding a dog, known as Khyi-tra. and another draped with red cloth and unidentifiable. One runs the greatest risk in approaching such wrathful manifestation of divine power, and under the watchful eyes of a sacristan, who has kindly opened the temple for one, it is wise in any case to be on one’s best behaviour. The divinities certainly represent the same set as we saw far more closely in the mGon-khang at Spituk Monastery (see below p.109) and it is interesting to record that of all the former royal property only the Namgyal Peak is looked after by monks of the dGe-lugs-pa Order. A monk appointed to the task comes up daily from Sankar Monastery in order to light a butter-lamp and intone some prayers in the dark interior. On the wall to the left of the door as one enters is the portrait and inscription of Tashi Namgyal, already mentioned. On the other side are various guardian divinities. We also recognized in the gloom some worn paintings of Śākyamuni and Tsong-kha-pa, who are keeping strange company here. Reading Francke’s description of the place one would assume that this temple was dedicated to the Four Kings of the Four Quarters with Vaiśravaṇa foremost, in which case it might have had originally a rather more ‘gentle’ aspect rather in the manner of the mural over the doorway of the Maitreya Temple at Basgo, which we have described in some detail (p. 93).

The township (Tibetan grong-khyer) of Chubhi is represented nowadays by a group of houses built low down on the northern side of the Namgyal Peak. They are quite separate from the rest of Leh which has grown up subsequently on the southern side around the foot of Senge Namgyal’s more imposing edifice.

Apart from the impression of lordly importance that its facade gives still to the little town of Leh, this nine-storey fort-like palace has now little of interest to show. Inside it is fast becoming a tumbledown ruin with traces of decorations, such as the symbols of the Eight Auspicious Signs, on cracked and falling walls. A monk from Hemis lives there alone as keeper and he seemed to us all but insane. Shouting that foreigners only came to steal (a story we have sadly heard so often before), he descended at last from the roof, whence he had been abusing us, withdrew the wooden bar which locks the main doorway from within, and then ran ahead up the broken-down passage and stairway. We were visiting the place not only with the consent of the present ‘Queen’, referred to officially nowadays as the Rāni of Stok, who is still the legal owner, but we also took the precaution of asking the Assistant Police Superintendent of Leh, who was helpful to us on other occasions, to accompany us. We only saw one temple which showed signs of regular maintenance. It contains a central stucco image of Ushnishaśītātpatārā, known in Tibetan simply as Duk-kar (gDugs-dkar), the Lady of the White Parasol. She may be accepted as a triumphant 1000-armed form of Tārā. Of undoubted Indian origin, her cult seems now to be largely a dGe-lugs-pa one. On her left there is a statue of Śākyamuni. There are no mural paintings on the lower walls, but above in the cupola one can see Śākyamuni and miniature scenes, presumably of his life.

94. Close-up view of the ruined palace-fort of Leh.

95. The main entrance with its carved lion end-beams.
We saw nothing of an image of Śākyamuni 'two storeys high made of gold and copper' which is attributed to Senge Namgyal's son and successor bDe-ladan, who reigned approximately from 1642–75. No other observant visitor to the Fort seems to have seen it. Also attributed to him is a long mani-wall below Leh, and a 'two-storey' image of Avalokiteśvara which is mentioned together with an assembly-hall ("du-khang"). The term 'two-storey' (thog-tshad gnyis) means in effect no more than a large image reaching to the ceiling above, and what we would regard as a two-storey image, such as the ones set up at Shey, are referred to in the Ladakh Chronicles as 'three-storey' (thog-tshad gsum). Thus the image of Śākyamuni mentioned in this text may perhaps be the rather modest one which we have seen next to Duk-kar. The assembly-hall with the image of Avalokiteśvara stands to the east of the Fort, and also slightly below it, so that from below it appears to stand on the same elevated platform. The main image, with a single head and ten arms, stands in the usual position towards the end of the hall. This is quite pleasingly painted, and the iconography resembles that which we have already noticed at Basgo and Shey. The wall behind the image has murals of Śākyamuni with his chief disciples Sāriputra and Maudgalyāyana together with the Sixteen Arhats, eight on either side. To the right of this set we see the supreme Buddha Vajradhara and the Indo-Tibetan succession of the Ka-gyü-pa hierarchy, Tilopa, Nāropa, Marpa etc. There are eight figures on the side walls, seven of them Buddhas, all yellowish in colour and distinguished by their different hand-gestures. The eighth represents Avalokiteśvara. High up in the cupola above is Padmasambhava with the Tiger-God (sTag-lha) and the Lion-Headed Goddess (Senge Dong-ma) and Padmasambhava's eight manifestations. A door in the back wall behind the main image gives access to a small mGon-khang.

96. The image of Avalokiteśvara in his temple by the Fort.

58. Francke, Antiquités II, p. 113; Tibetan text p. 41. lines 14–8. The other works attributed to him are all identifiable. For the dates of his reign see Petech, op. cit. p. 154.
59. These are listed in Snellgrove, Buddhist Himalaya, pp. 228–9.
Close to the Avalokiteśvara Temple and just below it on the southern side is the Maitreya Temple, which according to our local information is the 'Red Temple' built by Grags-'bum-lde of the previous dynasty in the early 15th century. As mentioned above (p. 85), the walls are bare, having been covered by fresh mud-plaster, ready for new painting. We are informed that twenty years ago the old walls collapsed, leaving the main image standing. Local people rebuilt the walls inside the old ones, and a section of these can still be seen between this temple and the neighbouring temple of Avalokiteśvara. Traces of mural paintings of Buddhas can still be seen on it. The only images in the newly constructed temple are the enormous and not very beautiful Maitreya, recently repainted and two smaller attendant Bodhisattvas.

There is yet another Maitreya Temple, nearer the foot of the rock on which the Fort stands, but still on its southern side, and surrounded entirely by close-built flat-topped houses, which go to make up the old walled city of Leh. Here the main Maitreya image is flanked by two pedestals, one of which now has on it a rock-relief of Mañjuśrī, and the other a rock-relief of Avalokiteśvara, together with a recent Padmasambhava image. The wall behind the main image is painted with miniature Buddha figures, and the side-walls with various Buddhas, such as Vajradhara, Vairocana, Amitābha, Akshobhya and Śākyamuni. Tsong-kha-pa is also there. Just below the large choten by the western end of the fort (i.e. on the left as one looks from the bazaar) is another small temple dedicated to Padmasambhava. Nearby was the house of the Chief Minister (bKa'-blon), of which now only some stone walling remains. It can be seen complete on the frontispiece in Moorcroft & Trebeck, vol I.

Immediately below the Fort on the upper 'platform' is the Gomba Soma (d Gon-pa So-ma) or the 'New Monastery' It contains a number of bare rooms and a very small temple containing a main image of Śākyamuni. Smaller images of two 'Brug-pa lamas were visible amidst the dirt and the gloom. The left wall is painted with the Sixteen Arhats, and the right wall with the light manifestations of Padmasambhava.

We were glad to be in Leh on the occasion of the 'Great Leh Festival' (sle dus-mo che) which takes place on the 28th and 29th of the 12th Tibetan month. This corresponded to the 8th and 9th of February in 1975. Monks from the dGe-lugs-pa monastery of Tiktsa and the rNying-ma-pa monastery of Trak-thok (Brag-thog) played the main parts, the ones with their monastic dances and the others with the elaborate preparation of 'thread-crosses', which having been infested ritually with all harmful demons are destroyed on the second day at the edge of the town. The Gomba Soma provided the base for all these operations, and the happy crowd of colourfully dressed Ladakhi men, women and children, who sat in a large circle around the rocks in order to watch the dances, brought life again, at least as far as the doorway of the Fort. The Incarnate Lama of Tiktsa presided. In former times, the royal family would have presided from the Fort. Following an earlier Tibetan system, going back before the time of the 5th Dalai Lama, the Buddhists of Ladakh celebrate the New Year on the 1st of the 11th month. This is celebrated at night by a torch-light procession which descends from the Namgyal Peak to the Fort and on down to the town. The running men move at great speed, whirling burning branches above their heads. This is a totally lay event, followed by singing and dancing in the streets.

sTing-mo-sgang

Like Shey and Basgo, sTing-mo-sgang was also an early royal citadel of primary importance. An inscription in the Maitreya Temple there connects the site with King Grags-pa-'bum, whom we know to have been ruling from Basgo in the early 15th century (see p. 82), and thus at least from this time onwards we may assume that the two places were joint western capitals of central Ladakh just as Shey and Leh were eastern ones. The grand-son of Grags-pa-'bum united the two parts of the kingdom, and it is clear from the state of other temples at sTing-mo-sgang that successive kings of the Namgyal dynasty
97. General view of sTing-mo-sgang

98. The Maitreya Temple at sTing-mo-sgang

99. Image of Padmasambhava in the Padmasambhava Temple
Citadels and Royal Residences

continued to take at least occasional interest in this old royal possession. It is situated up a side-valley north of the Indus, about an hour’s walk from the present motor road, where it passes through the village of Nyur-la, approximately half-way between Khalatse and Saspol. The castle ruins at sTing-mo-sgang are particularly impressive, since the whole site is still encircled – at least on three sides – by fortifications stretching up to the higher levels on the northern side. The castle-ruins and the temples stand out on high crags, about 100 metres higher than the level of the houses clustering below. There are two temples near the summit, separated from one another only by a wooden partition, one of them dedicated to Avalokiteśvara and the other to Padmasambhava. The Avalokiteśvara temple which is on the left and is about nine metres square, contains as central image a small figure (40 cm high) of Lokesvara in Indian marble. Nothing but the face is visible, since the image is dressed and enclosed in a shrine, which in itself with its designs of gilded flowers and animals is a very beautiful piece of work. The title of Lokesvara, ‘Lord of the World’, is originally that of the Hindu God Shiva, and tends to be applied to Avalokitesvara, the Buddhist equivalent (see p. 9), in the later Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna periods, as the two religions drew rather closer together in their cultic expressions. This is likely to be one of the many images brought from India before Buddhism finally went into eclipse there. On either side are other statues of Avalokiteśvara in different manifestations. The two Eleven-Headed manifestations are identical, about two metres high and very beautiful pieces. The Padmasambhava Temple, which is about ten metres square, has as main image Padmasambhava himself, about two metres high, flanked by his two goddess wives. On either side there is a miscellaneous collection of popular divinities, Avalokiteśvara, Padmasambhava (again), Tārā and Maitreya. The upper part of the facing wall, behind the main row of images, has a step-like shelf with many smaller stucco images of Buddhas and Ka-gyü-pa lamas. The walls are covered with murals of Śākyamuni and his two disciples, Padmasambhava and his two wives, of Vajrapāni and others, all very recent work. Both these temples belong to the 'Brug-pa Ka-gyü-pa Order and like other royal foundations of the 16th/17th century, which we assume them to be, they are looked after by monks from Hemis.

Just below these temples some 20 metres to the north is a two-storey Maitreya Temple. An inscription by the door of the upper storey, already mentioned above, lists the donors who contributed to the repair of the temple. The praises of Tsong-kha-pa connect this activity with the dGe-lugs-pa Order, and in fact this temple is still the responsibility of monks from Likir. Thus the decoration accords mainly with dGe-lugs-pa traditions, although some murals of Marpa, Mi-la Ras-pa and sGam-po-pa in the upper storey may suggest earlier more eclectic associations. The statue of Maitreya, which is seven to eight metres high, reaches up into the upper storey. It is one of the most beautiful representations we have seen of this very popular divinity. The ceiling of the lower temple with its pleasing floral and circular patterns is reminiscent of the Maitreya Temple at Basgo. This is the only part of the present decoration which may be original. In the upper storey there are some subsidiary images of Tārā, actually three of these, and one of Vijayā.

At the head of the valley to the north-west of sTing-mo-sgang is the village of Gte-ya, and an hour’s walk northwards from here brings one to another temple known as Katsa Gomba. It belongs to Hemis and is looked after by a monk from there who lives in a small adjoining house. The facing wall, as one enters the temple, is constructed in a series of steps. At the top are statues of Padmasambhava and his two wives, presumably original. Below is a rather miscellaneous collection of images, Avalokiteśvara, Padmasambhava (again), Śākyamuni, Tārā, crowned Buddhas and Ka-gyü-pa lamas. Against the left-hand wall volumes of the Tibetan Canon are arranged in racks. The walls are either bare or despoiled.

All the earlier royal foundations around the old citadels have an air of abandonment, now that there is no royal family who can effectively maintain them. However the later monasteries, most of which were founded by separate royal donations, to which they have been able to add, are clearly in a more thriving condition.
XX Tashi Namgyal; mural in the mGon-khang on the Namgyal Peak at Leh.
We survey briefly in this chapter those monasteries which have come into existence or which have been revived since the 15th century. All of them have been established in some kind of dependence upon Tibetan religious orders, and since their foundations they have been closely connected with Central Tibet and in the case of the 'Brug-pa Order especially with Bhutan. Whereas Alchi and other early monasteries were founded by Tibetans at a time when the Tibetans themselves were still drawing direct upon living Indian Buddhist traditions, these later monasteries drew upon those Buddhist traditions, mainly originally Indian it is true, which the Tibetans had already absorbed and transformed into living traditions of their own. Thus they are best considered within the categories of those Tibetan Buddhist orders, to which they belong.

Apart from the Ka-dam-pa Order, which we have discussed above (p. 21) and which represents the old order, so far as Ladakh is concerned, the first Tibetan Buddhist Order to become established in Ladakh is that of the dGe-lugs-pa (‘Model of Virtue’). This was founded by Tsong-kha-pa (1357–1419) as a revivified Ka-dam-pa school, whose proper rules of monastic discipline might perhaps put to shame the laxity and worldly interests of the other older orders. The fact that these, particularly the Sa-kya-pa and the more powerful of the Ka-gyū-pa schools, had not already established themselves in Ladakh, may well indicate to what extent Ladakh was independent of Central Tibet in the 13th and 14th centuries, when Genghiz Khan and his successors (first in their own right and later as the Chinese Yuan Dynasty) exercised suzerainty over Tibet. When the dGe-lugs-pas first arrived in Ladakh in the early 15th century, they came purely as men of religion and with no political aspirations at all. These did not develop until the latter part of the following century, when leading dGe-lugs-pas began to establish religious and political links with Mongol groups, just as the older orders had done so successfully in the 13th century. This was to lead to the triumph of the dGe-lugs-pas under the leadership of the 5th Dalai Lama in 1642 as the predominant religious order in Tibet. The dire political consequences that this had for Ladakh we have already noted (p. 86). But in the 15th century the dGe-lugs-pas came purely as men of religion, and Ladakh must have proved an easy mission field to them, as the existing monasteries can then only have been Ka-dam-pa. It is regrettable that there is no hint of information about the state they may have been in at that time, but one may deduce that with the eclipse of Buddhism in India and Kashmir and in the absence of the Tibetan connection on which they depended subsequently so exclusively, they can scarcely have been very flourishing. Such a state of affairs would certainly have included Alchi, and since this was one place that the dGe-lugs-pas did not ‘colonize’, one might guess that there has been very little religious life there since a very long time, maybe the last six hundred years. Writing about Ladakh, one is aware of an extraordinary lack of precise information, and thus the need to speculate on the basis of the little that one has. Compared with the vast amount of precise historical information that the Tibetans have accumulated over the centuries about events, particularly religious events, in Tibet itself, one must assume that either the Ladakhis were little affected by this particular aspect of Tibetan culture, or that countless records have been destroyed in the course of the many iconoclastic invasions which have devastated the country. The latter would seem the most likely solution, or maybe a combination of both. When one’s monastery is continually pillaged and burned, one must after a while lose interest in keeping records. All one’s efforts are required for the task of rebuilding anew. Thinking thus,
one does not find it so strange that an important monastery such as Nyar-ma can be reduced to a ruin with no records of how this came about. This could have occurred when Ladakh first suffered an iconoclastic invasion from Moslem Kashmir in the early 15th century, and no one would have been so witless as to rebuild a monastery in the river-valley, and with the eclipse of the old Ka-dam-pa Order, from now on absorbed into the new dGe-lugs-pa, there was now no one interested in the acts of leaders of an order which no longer existed. The main incentive to Tibetan history-writing has been the glorification of the teachers and benefactors of one’s own religious tradition, and not of outsiders.

Beginning with Spituk (dPe-thub) built early in the 15th century during the reign of Grags-'bum-lde, these new dGe-lugs-pa monasteries were built like fortresses on the summits of crags. Tiktsê (Khrig-rtse) was probably built soon afterwards on the other side of Shey, and these two fortress monasteries were doubtless regarded as extra defences in the heart of the kingdom. Certainly the Tibetans involved in their construction would have had by now long experience of the use of monasteries as military defence works, since already for two centuries and more religious factions in Tibet had been warring against one another. Likir (Klu-dkyil) may also have been started by the dGe-lugs-pa in the 15th century. It is situated about half way between Basgo and Alchi up a rocky side-valley, and at the time of its ‘colonization’ it may have been still in reasonable shape. It must be said, however, that Likir as one sees it today bears no apparent relationship to monasteries of the time of Rin-chen bzang-po, and the story of its earlier foundation, based entirely upon what may be a mistaken reference in the Ladakh Chronicles, remains doubtful. Again one must add that all these three main dGe-lugs-pa monasteries have suffered subsequent devastation, and thus by Tibetan standards are all modern in appearance.

100. Spituk from the Indus Valley.
Later Monasteries

Spituk (dPe-thub)

This is separated from Leh by what was once several kilometres of stony desert, but what is now a sprawling Indian military encampment of which an air-strip forms part. Thus the view in this direction, from which it is normally approached, is scarcely pleasing as one looks back. However, climbing round to the other (southern) side of the monastery, one finds oneself on the top of precipitous crags, which drop down to the Indus. Nesting at the foot of the crags are the flat-topped houses which go to form the village of Spituk. The name is probably Tibetan in origin, introduced by the first dGe-lugs-pa monks. It means: ‘Effective as an Example’ (dpe-thub) and is thus a suitable name for their first monastery in Ladakh. The local pronunciation of Spituk easily results from the tendency in Ladakhi dialect for prefixed letters (d- in this case), which have become silent in Central Tibetan, to be pronounced here as an s-.

Inside the monastery, which includes several courtyards and temples of various sizes, has been built at different levels, following the shape of the rock. Thus having ascended and descended flights of rough stone stairs, one finds oneself in the main courtyard, where the great festival of monastic dances ending with the destruction of the sacrificial cake (gTor-ma) take place on the 26th and 27th of the 11th Tibetan month. This is known as the Spituk Gu-stor (dPe-thub dGu-gtor), that is to say, the Spituk Festival of the Sacrifice of the 29th day. This took place in 1975 on the 9th and 10th January amidst a light falling of snow and with an overcast sky which kept the day temperature well under -20° Centigrade. However, the monks of Spituk were very kind to us, and we have many occasions to visit them, apart from that one great occasion.

The main temple, which is approached by a steep flight of steps from this courtyard, is laid out in regular Tibetan style with two rows of low seats running the length of the hall from the entrance to a high throne at the far end. This is reserved now for the Dalai Lama, but he has only made one visit since India became his home. To the left of the throne is a large image of Vajra-Bhairava (rDo-rje ‘Jigs-byed), the fierce tutelary divinity of the dGe-lugs-pas. To the right is an eleven-headed Avalokitesvara

101. Façade of the 'Du-khang in the Spituk Monastery.
103. Monks of Spituk.
(bCu-geig zhal). Doors to either side of the central throne lead into a low dark chapel behind. Here in the central position are images of Tsong-kha-pa and his two chief disciples, and a fine image of Sākyamuni. We see the eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara again on the left and Atiśa on the right beyond a case of small images. The walls have no paintings of any interest. The main entrance-wall displays the usual fierce protecting divinities.

At a higher level there are several smaller temples. One of these contains the three great tantric divinities. Samvara, Vajra-Bhairava and Guhyasamāja, arranged at the end of the small hall to the left. A finely made chöten stands near them, and on the right is an image of Atiśa. Another small temple contains an image of Tsong-kha-pa and volumes of his complete written works. Here another favourite dGe-lugs-pa guardian-divinity keeps watch, namely Shugdan (Shugs-ldan). Yet another small temple is devoted to the twenty-one manifestations of the Goddess Tārā, and opposite this is a small temple containing just one large chöten.

When we were there, work was progressing on the building of a new 'du-khang (assembly hall). Being so near a large Indian military encampment, Spituk attracts the visits of Indian soldiers, most of whom are Hindus here. They come especially to visit and make an offering at the 'Kāli Temple' which stands just above the other monastic buildings near the crest of the rocks. This of course is not really dedicated to the Hindu Goddess Kāli at all, but they are content to confuse with Kāli the enormous image of Vajra-Bhairava who presides here in the mGon-khang of the monastery. Together with him are images of other fierce guardians, the ‘Six-Armed One’ (a form of Mahākāla), the ‘White Guardian’ (mGon-dkar), the ‘Brother & Sister’ (lCam-sring), Khyi-tra on his dog, and the Goddess (lha-mo) on her horse. This last one is in fact derived from the Hindu goddess Durgā/Kāli, but she enters the Buddhist pantheon in a very subsidiary capacity. The images of Vajra-Bhairava and of the Six-Armed Mahākāla are carved out of black stone, and are probably of some appreciable age. We asked the sacristan why he allowed Indian and more lately European visitors to persist in the belief that this is a Kāli temple.

’What does it matter’, he said, ’so long as they are content?’ A main problem is inevitably that of lack of communication. Most of the monks speak only Ladakhi dialect. A few of the older ones who had the opportunity of studying in Tibet in earlier years, also speak Central Tibetan dialect. A very few of them speak a little Urdu, but scarcely enough to discourse to Indian visitors on the names and distinctions of various divinities. With other foreigners they usually have no means of communication at all, and these are often left with the most erroneous ideas.

The head of Spituk is Kusho Bakula, named after one of the Sixteen Arhats, who is believed to reincarnate in this particular series of lamas. As Member of Parliament for Ladakh, he spends most of his time in Delhi. There are three smaller religious houses dependent upon Spituk, Sankar, Stok and Saphud, all close to Leh and each with about 20 monks. Spituk may be able to count 120 or so, but one will only see them assembled on the occasion of a major festival.

Of these smaller dependent monasteries Sankar (gSang-mkhar) serves as Kusho Bakula’s private residence when he is in Leh, and is very well maintained. The arrangement of the main temple is very similar to that of Spituk. Thus there is a throne at the end of the hall, and to the left of this an image of Vajra-Bhairava. In a ‘chapel’ behind, entered by doors to the side of the throne are central images of Tsong-kha-pa and his two chief disciples. In front of them are images of Atiśa and Sākyamuni. In the corner to the left is an image of Eleven-Headed Avalokiteśvara, and to the right is a case filled with small bronzes, seemingly all of Tibetan origin. The ‘White Guardian’ (mGon-dkar) is against the right wall. The main temple has recent paintings of various Buddhas on the side walls and Guardians on the entrance-wall. The porch has paintings of the Kings of the Four Quarters, a Wheel of Life, and the Old Man of Long Life. Above this temple there is a veranda pleasingly painted with symbols and illustrations of the monastic rule. All this is new. Opening off the veranda on the far side of Kusho Bakula’s private apartments. At the back another door leads from the veranda into a small temple with a large
104. Inside the Spituk mGon-khang: the spouse of Dam-can Chos-rgyal (Dharmarāja)

105. Inside the Spituk mGon-khang: The Great Goddess (tha-mo) and attendant.
106. General view of Sankar.

107. Mural illustrating the rules of monastic life; on the upper veranda at Sankar.
image of Duk-kar (Ushnishaśītapatṛā). To the front over the porch is another small temple, containing a copy of the Kanjur (Tibetan Canon) and images of the Three Buddhas of Past, Present and Future (dus gsum sangs-rgyas). The main temple with all the subsidiary parts, as described, is reached across a picturesque courtyard, off which open the rooms of the individual monks. As mentioned elsewhere (p. 99), one of these serves as sacristan (sku-gtyer) to the temples on the Namgyal Peak, of which there is a good view from here, enclosing the small Leh valley on its southern side. Approaching Sankar one passes a chöten under which there is a kind of simple shrine containing a number of Bodhisattva images carved in relief in stone and painted. They are similar to those we have noted elsewhere (p. 91).
109. Stone carving of Maitreya at Changspa
110. General view of Tiktse.

111. Image of Maitreya in the 'White Du-khang' at Tiktse.
Tiktse (Khri-gtsed)

This is the most impressively positioned of monasteries in Ladakh with its buildings arranged at various levels, leading up to the private apartments of the Incarnate Lama on the summit. From here one commands a magnificent view of the whole heart-land of Ladakh from Spituk in the north-west to the gorge that leads up to Hemis in the south-east. However, it contains little of any apparent interest. The most pleasingly painted of the temples is the large long one which stands less than half way up the slope. This is known as the White Assembly-Hall ('Du-khang dkar-po). It contains along one side images, Šākyamuni, Maitreya and so on, set against a wall which is elegantly painted, and all of which might have been done as late as the 19th century. The main 'Du-khang is right at the top. It contains racks of books on both sides set against poorly painted walls. In a 'chapel' behind there is a large image of Šākyamuni flanked by two smaller Bodhisattva images, and on the right is the ubiquitous Eleven-Headed Avalokiteśvara. Nearby there are two mGon-khang (temples of guardian divinities); one contains Vajra-Bhairava, Mahākāla, Dharmarāja (Dam-can Chos-rgyal), the Goddess (dPal-ladan Lha-mo) and Khyitra; the other has two images of the Goddess with Vaisrāvana and the 'Brother & Sister' (lCam-string). Near the summit and over to the right we noticed a pleasant little temple dedicated to Maitreya. The main image itself is well executed, and the decoration of the walls is provided by a series of small images of lamas, each placed in a separate wooden rack with thang-kas (banners) arranged behind. An enclosed veranda, which is actually over the main 'Du-khang, leads to the head lama's private quarters, all of which are newly decorated entirely in Tibetan style. The inside wall of this veranda is decorated with rather clumsy modern paintings of the Eighty-Four Tantric Masters (Mahāśiddha). ¹⁶⁰ On the far side of the veranda a low neglected temple has some older paintings of the Sixteen Arhats and the Kings of the Four Quarters. Its central piece is an enshrined thang-ka, a very good one indeed, of the Guardian Shugdan.

Like the other monasteries of Ladakh, Tiktse only seems to come to life on the occasion of some festival, especially of the yearly offering of the sacrificial cake (Khri-gtsed dGu-gtor), which takes place on the 17th and 18th of the 12th Tibetan month, just about three weeks after the corresponding Spituk festival. The divinities who appear in the masked dances are the same as those of Spituk, but with the addition of Shugdan. They are in any case the ones we meet everywhere in these dGe-lugs-pa mGon-khang. The chief ones to appear are Dharmarāja (Dam-can Chos-rgyal) and his spouse, accompanied by two Guardians, a blue and red pair, next a pair of white Guardians and two fierce goddesses, two manifestations of the 'Brother & Sister' (lCam-string), two of Vaisrāvana and two of Khyi-tra. To these we must add the Deer and the Yak, the Lion-Headed Goddess and the Makara-Headed Goddess, and an interesting group representing the gods, nāgas, yaksas, māras and rākṣasas of Indian traditions. The sacrifice of the linga, the cake-offering moulded in grotesque human form, is performed by a ring of Black-Hat Dancers in the usual style of this well-known performance.¹⁶¹ From the beginning of the New Year onwards, that is to say from the 11th Tibetan month onwards, a whole series of such festivals provide entertainment over the long and cold winter months, and they attract crowds of local people from all around. Little stalls are set up below the monastery concerned, selling food and refreshments, and the whole events, at least so far as the layfolk are concerned, becomes a colourful fair. After the Tiktse celebrations comes the great festival of Leh, which we have already mentioned. Thereafter come festivals at Stok, Ma-tro and Phiyang. These all take place during the winter. The only such festival to fall in the summer is that of Hemis.

60. Madanjeet Singh in his Himalayan Art (London 1968) illustrates on pages 90, 91, 93 miniature paintings of an older set, ascribing them to Tiktse Monastery. This is a mistake, for he has in fact photographed another set in the court-yard of Hemis Monastery. Scattered through his book he has some excellent illustrations of murals belonging to the first of the two mGon-khang, which we have just mentioned above: pp. 77, 79, 82, murals on the walls of the first porch; pp. 24, 25, 76, murals inside the mGon-khang.

112. Fresco of Śākyamuni and a chöten in the 'White 'Du-khang at Tiktse.

113. Façade of the main 'Du-khang at Tiktse.
114. Images of lamas arranged in racks in the Maitreya Temple at Tiktse.

115. Monastic dances at Tiktse.
116. General view of Likir.

117. Temple façade in Likir.
Likir (Klu-dkyil)

Likir, which we visited on two rather brief occasions gives every impression of being a well-ordered monastery, although its head lama, a younger brother of the Dalai Lama, is permanently absent. We have already referred above (pp. 28 & 106) to traditions concerning the founding of this monastery. Further investigations should elucidate this problem, as well as that of the more recent connection of Likir with Achi, for the care of which it now has direct responsibility. We would certainly have spent longer at Likir, where the monks were very friendly to us, but the Indian Army Intelligence, who persisted in checking so misguidedly all our movements and contacts throughout our whole stay, came strangely into the open on this occasion and wrote a formal letter protesting against our going there, as it was just beyond an arbitrary limit set for foreign visitors. On both our visits to Likir we were accompanied by Tashi Rapgyas from Leh, one of the most knowledgeable Ladakhis concerning the history and culture of his country, and also a very good scholar of Tibetan. Our continued relationship could have been of no little mutual benefit, but he disappeared from our circle, and we learned subsequently that the military authorities had prevented him from having further contacts with us.

The main 'Du-khang at Likir has been recently decorated and is well maintained. It contains two impressive choten on the left, and to the centre and right at the far end of the hall images of Sakya-muni, Maitreya, and Tsong-kha-pa with his two disciples. A smaller and even newer 'Du-khang contains a main image of Eleven-Headed Avalokiteśvara, and the walls here are painted with the Thirty-Five Confessional Buddhas on the left, and the Sixteen Arhats on the right. Above are the Head Lama's apartments, decorated with thang-kas and images, many of them quite new.

We were present at Likir for a general ceremony of atonement (bsKang-gso) and we were interested to note the presence of lay musicians, who sat outside the temple-door and provided music with their drums and shawms whenever a procession of monks went in or out. We were to see these local musicians, known as Mon and quite distinct racially from the Ladakhis, however mixed they themselves may be, at every other festival, lay or religious that we attended in Ladakh. In no way surprising in themselves, for similar players and instruments can be seen easily in neighbouring Himalayan areas, such as Kangra and Kulu, the initial surprise and pleasure merely consisted in seeing them thus participating in a Buddhist ceremony.

Ri-rdzong

The most recent of dGe-lugs-pa monasteries is Ri-rdzong, founded 105 years ago by a layman who turned religious and his son. Both continue to be represented as reincarnating lamas. Like the heads of so many other monasteries in Ladakh they were spending the winter in warmer parts of India and we did not therefore meet them. The monastery has been built picturesquely at the head of a gorge reached by a side-valley running north from the Indus near a village named Uludrokpo (U-lu-grog-po). This is about half way between Khalatse and Saspol and on the opposite bank from the hamlet of sGe-ra, which we have already mentioned (p. 22). Ri-rdzong has the reputation of being nowadays the best disciplined monastery in the whole of Ladakh, and this is likely to be true. Like the head-lamas, most monks absent themselves most of the time for one reason or another, often of course quite legitimately in order to perform ceremonies where they have been invited by layfolk. By contrast Ri-rdzong seems to maintain a regular if limited complement of monks.

The 'Du-khang contains the usual well known images, Sakya-muni, Maitreya and Amitāyus, Tsong-kha-pa and his two disciples, and Avalokiteśvara. The volumes of the Tibetan canon cover with their cases most of the wall-space. Another smaller temple contains a large choten with Maitreya on one side and Aṣṭa on the other. The lamas' apartments (gzim-chung) contain a good collection of thang-kas. Another room contains a large chōten which enshrines the relics of the founder Tshul-khrims Nyi-ma.
Later Monasteries

Ri-rdzong has the distinction, rare nowadays in central Ladakh, of being only reachable on foot, although this is little more than ten kilometres there and back from the main highway. The other monasteries we visited are by now all connected to this by rough jeepable tracks, always thick with dust in the summer and autumn and often blocked with snow in the winter.

The other Tibetan religious order which has exercised great influence in Ladakh is the Ka-gyü-pa (bKa'-brgyud-pa). Two of its schools are established here. First in time came the 'Bri-gung-pa branch which at the invitation of King Tashi Namgyal built Phiyang Monastery in the mid-16th century and also at some unrecorded time 'colonized' the older site of Lamayuru (see p. 20). The next to arrive was the 'Brug-pa branch which established itself in the mid-17th century at the invitation of King Senge Namgyal and became at once the most favoured religious order in the land as the one to which the members of the royal family personally adhered (see p. 86).

118. Two large chöten in the 'Du-khang at Likir.

119. Thang-kas and images (Tsung-kha-pa and his two disciples) in the apartments of the head-lama of Likir.
120. Monks of Likir in the course of a ceremony.

121. Musicians at the temple-door.

122. General view of Ri-rdzong Monastery.
123. Image of the previous head-lama Dam-can 'gyur-med at Phiyang.
Phiyang (*Phyi-dbang*)

This occupies a hill-top up a side valley north from the Indus some twenty kms west of Leh. Its position is remarkably similar to that of Likir in that it occupies a strong position, without however being on the summit of precipitous crags, and with a village near-to-hand. The main ‘Du-khang’ contains as main image Vairocana accompanied by Śākyamuni and various Ka-kyü-pa lamas, and the walls are painted pleasingly with murals of Vajradhara and the Five Buddhas. One is aware at once of close iconographic associations with the royal temples at Basgo, although here the paintings are very much later. Monasteries possess ready funds for redecoration. A second ‘Du-khang’ known as the ‘new’ one (‘Du-khang gsar-pa’), which serves primarily as the library, possesses some interesting images. Among the larger ones in stucco we noticed Kun-dga’ Grags-pa, founder of Phiyang, and Dam-chos ’gyur-med, the 31st and last incarnation, apart from the present one. His relics are also enshrined here in a choten on the right. Most interesting of all perhaps was a small group of Kashmiri Buddhist bronzes, which by the very nature of the case cannot be later than the 14th century or so. Apart from the two items seen at Basgo (see p. 97), the only other such collection we saw was at Hemis. This monastery also possesses the most pleasant mGon-khang we have seen, for these are seldom intended as particularly pleasant places. Its back wall has some very good paintings of Vajradhara and the main Ka-kyü-pa hierarchy, Tilopa, Nāropa, Marpa and Mila Ras-pa. We doubt if this monastery is very well run nowadays. Its head-lama is married against the rules of the order, lives away from Ladakh much of the time, certainly during the winter, and is perhaps more interested in politics than religion.

124. Phiyang Monastery and village.
Kashmiri bronzes at Phiyang.
Kashmiri bronzes at Phiyang.

130. Hemis: mural in the 'Du-khang, the fierce divinity Tshe-bdag.
Hemis

Hemis is not an easy monastery to get to know. It seems to attract far more visitors than any monastery in Ladakh, and very few of them have any idea of what they are looking at. This tends to produce on the part of the monks a supercilious attitude and even outright contempt, and they seem convinced that all foreigners steal if they can. There have in fact been quite serious losses of property in recent years, which were still being investigated by the Superintendent of Police while we were there, and as usual foreigners are not in fact responsible. Hemis suffers greatly from the absence of its head lama. Discovered as a reincarnation in Tibet as a boy, he was brought to Hemis. He returned to Tibet as a young man for his studies, was enveloped in the Chinese occupation of the country, and has not come out since. Strict adherence to the principle of reincarnation seems to make it unthinkable for a replacement to be found, until he is known to have died. The brother of the recent 'king' of Ladakh (he died in 1974) is Treasurer (phyag-mdzod) of Hemis and so in charge of all its properties during the absence of a religious head. 62 As foremost of the three 'Brug-pa monasteries, founded by Senge Namgyal, Hemis must once have been very wealthy, and despite presumed losses, it must still be the wealthiest monastery in Ladakh. We were told that other monasteries, availing themselves of its concealed position, had often in the past brought their treasures there for safe keeping, and there is certainly a considerable collection locked away in a safe room, known as the 'Dark Treasury' (mdzod nag) which is said to be opened only when one treasurer hands on to a successor. But apart from such things, which are not meant to be expendable, the real wealth of a monastery consists in its lands, and the right to these is still protected by Indian Law.

Arriving at Hemis past the choten and mani-walls, one enters a large rectangular courtyard, where the monastic dances take place. Two large temples, approached by flights of stone steps, can be seen at once on one's right. The fronts have wooden verandas of Kashmiri style, rising to two storeys. The temple on the left, as one faces them, is known as the Tshogs-khang (simply another term meaning 'assembly-hall') and the larger one on the right as the Du-khang. It is in the latter that ceremonies are held. When we visited it, the head-lama's throne and the two rows of seats for the celebrants were arranged in the far left-hand corner, thus occupying less than a quarter of the space of this enormous hall. Tall wooden pillars rise up in the centre to a square cupola with windows which supply the source of light. A few monks, no more than ten or so, were in the process of a ceremony in honour of the fierce divinity Tshe-bdag, and the right hand far side of the hall was occupied by a shrine set up for the occasion. His presence was represented by a hanging painted scroll (thang-ka) and in front of this was a collection of ornamental sacrificial cakes. To the sides were arranged ancient weapons of various kinds, such as one often sees in mGon-khang. The rest of the vast room, which would hold several hundred of seated monks was bare and derelict in appearance. The walls have new and rather tawdry paintings on them of Śākyamuni and other Buddha-figures, and of tantric divinities, Hevajra, Samvara and Tshe-bdag we noticed again.

The Tshogs-khang adjoining is very much more impressive. This contains in the central position a fine image of Śākyamuni and behind this is a large choten said to have been founded by Lama Shambhunātha, probably third in the series from the founder stTag-tshang Ras-pa. Towards the back there are other chōten, adorned with silver and gilt, some of them very beautiful indeed, and on the left next to an unidentified 'Brug-pa lama is a pleasing human-size image of Tārā. Standing towards the front on the right and looking rather incongruous amidst so much Tibetan splendour, is a throne made of exquisitely painted and lacquered wood, a present of a former Mahārāja of Kashmir to a former Incarnate Lama of Hemis.

62. We noticed that he was referred to by Indian officials as the 'Manager', which seems scarcely the best title for his appointment.
131. Image of sTug-tshang Ras-pa and his relic chöten.

132 & 133. Kashmiri bronzes in the gZab-khang.
134. Houses of the monks.

135. Domestic arrangements of a Hemis monk.
Leaving the rectangular courtyard, onto which these two temples front, one passes through a passage at the far end, braving a fierce mastiff who guards it, and one finds oneself in front of a third temple known as the 'Old Temple' (Lha-khang rNying-pa). This has every appearance of disuse and neglect, but it contains some of the finest murals which we have seen in any of the later monasteries. Since one of them is of Lama Shambhunath, they can scarcely be earlier than the mid-18th century. One at least may go back to the foundation of the monastery, that of Mila Ras-pa in a cave, skilfully painted into a central alcove. Unfortunately an image of Tara, standing immovably in the alcove, largely blocks the view of it, and certainly makes photography impossible. On either side are pleasing miniatures. The left wall is decorated with Vajradhara and the leading members of the Ka-gyupa hierarchy, as already listed several times.

To the side of the Tshogs-khang a stone staircase leads up to the large roof covering both this temple and the Du-khang, and here there are quite a number of smaller temples. One contains an image of the founder sTag-tsong Ras-pa by the side of a large gilt and silver chöten containing his relics. This room is hung with many thang-kas, presumably dating from the 17th century onwards. Diagonally opposite this and over the roof of the Tshogs-khang are the private apartments of the absent head-lama. Here as would be expected there is every sign of abandonment, and the only interesting items are some old photographs from the time of the previous Incarnation. Next to the lama's apartments (gZim-chung) is a long almost empty room, which used to serve as the royal apartment in ancient times. It is known by the imposing name of the 'Very Clear Palace-Fort' (MKhar rab gsaI). The only item remaining there of any interest was a thang-kha illustrating the chief places of Buddhist pilgrimage in the Nepal Valley. At the far end of the roof we were kindly shown another temple known as the 'Elegant Room' (gZab-Khang), said to have been constructed by the Lama mTsho-skyes rDo-rje. Here our attention was drawn at once by a remarkable collection of Kashmiri Buddhist bronzes. Above arranged in racks were images of Vajradhara, the Ka-gyupa hierarchy and various Brug-pa lamas. Towards the near-end of the roof where we had ascended and thus right to the back of the roof of the Tshogs-khang there is long low room known as 'Ten-Pillared' (Ka-bcu-pa). This must be the grubbiest and least cared for of all, made worse by the fact that it is filled with a variety of dust-covered images, all apparently of Tibetan origin and of the most various standards of workmanship. There was no intended arrangement of them, as though they were there simply for storage. We learned that there is yet another temple called the 'Gallery' (Tshoms) which we did not see, and there is also the 'Dark Treasury' already mentioned. Of books we saw scarcely a trace. It was not possible to produce even a copy of sTag-tsong Ras-pa's biography, of which the printing blocks are held at Hemis, and this we particularly wanted to photograph. This was, however, happily made up for in Delhi, where a copy was available. Probably very few Ladakhi monks have more than a most rudimentary knowledge of literary Tibetan, and since books play no part in their lives except as symbols of the Buddha-word and thus as objects of awe, one can rarely make any progress in literary matters with their help. Elsewhere we met the occasional monk or lama who understood the nature of our interest, but in Hemis we met no one of this kind. It is also fair to note that there were very few monks around at the time. One sees their houses built up the mountain-side behind and to the right of the main courtyard. When not required at the monastery for any major ceremony they seem to lead a free and vagrant life, but some discipline has to be in existence, if only to keep the rota of resident sacristans (sku-gnyer) which Hemis has to maintain for temples on the old royal properties at Basgo and Leh. We took shelter from the intense cold in the house of one of the monks appointed soon to leave for Basgo and he was certainly very well disposed to us. A photograph gives in this case a better indication of their modern styles of living, than any description could provide. Readers of this book, who visit Hemis, are likely to see it only in summer, and this is doubtless the best time to see it, when its yearly major festival brings its members together in some joint religious effort.

63. See Madanjeet Singh, op. cit. pp 82, 84, 93.
Stakna (sTag-sna)

At this monastery we remember especially the kindness and helpfulness of the present head-lama, Stakna Rinpoche. He is one of the few men of religion in Ladakh who takes a knowledgeable interest in his own library, who gladly discussed its contents, and put books at our disposal. His private apartments at Stakna (meaning the ‘Tiger’s Nose’) which is built on the summit of a high rock in the middle of the Indus Valley, present in winter a fantastic view of snow-clad mountains all around, of the frozen Indus, which can be crossed in places at this time of the year, and in the distance of Tiktse and Shey on their cliff-tops. Nor is it cold indoors behind glass windows which let in the welcome sunshine, which relieves the cold of the many overclouded days.

Stakna is a small monastery, comprising the private apartments, all newly decorated in good Tibetan style, a ’Du-khang and the rooms of monks and attendants. The ’Du-khang contains a silver gilt chöten, some seven feet high, set up by the present head-lama only twenty-three years ago, and it well illustrates the standard of workmanship that could still be attained at that time. Other items of interest were the images of three Brug-pa lamas, Padma dKar-po, Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal, the strong man of Bhutan in the 17th century, and of Ngag-dbang rGyal-mtshan.
Later Monasteries

Chendey (*Ic-bde*)

The other monastery closely associated with Hemis is Chendey, which occupies an imposing position just to the south of Sakti village, where again there are ruins of imposing fortifications. The 'Du-khang contains images of sTag-tshang Ras-pa, founder of Hemis and Chendey, and of the last but one head-lama in this series of reincarnations. Behind the images are murals of Sakyamuni flanked by his two chief disciples and by mandalas of Kālacakra and of Akshobhya. The other walls are covered with other manifestations of Sakyamuni Buddha as we have noticed elsewhere in these 'Brug-pa Ka-gyü-pa temples (see p. 89). A second temple, known as the Lama Temple (*Bla-ma Lha-khang*) contains a collection of images of various Ka-gya-pa lamas and of Buddhas and divinities, as well as a copy of the Tibetan Canon. A third, very much smaller temple, contains again a few statues and Tibetan volumes.

Apart from the dGe-lugs-pa and the Ka-gyü-pa orders, which have clearly been predominant in Ladakh over the last five centuries, the only two other Tibetan religious orders represented, are the rNying-ma-pa who possess Trak-thok Monastery just beyond Sakti, and the Sa-ky-a-pa (*Sa-skya-pa*) who own Ma-tro, which is built on cliff-tops to the left of the Indus midway between Hemis and Stakna.

**Trak-thok (*Brag-thog*)**

This monastery is a fairly flourishing establishment with a competent head-lama and a community of some fifty monks. Its name means ‘Top of the Rocks’, and the heart of the foundation is a cave about six metres square, which is supposed to have been visited by Padmasambhava himself. There are so many caves the length of the Himalayas all the way from Ladakh to Bhutan, which are likewise associated with his travels towards Tibet in the late 8th century, that one tends to give little credence to such traditions. However, we may notice in passing that there are quite a number of ancient Buddhist caves in Ladakh, to which we shall refer in more detail in the second part of this work. In this cave very little remains of the earlier painting which was originally there, and the walls are blackened with smoke. In the centre there are images of Padmasambhava and of Avalokiteśvara. It is approached through a small antechamber, recently painted with the Kings of the Four Quarters. Above is another small cave-temple, containing a few images and books. The main temple, which also serves as 'Du-khang, and is about nine by seven metres in size, contains on the right-hand side images of Padmasambhava and his two fierce manifestations, the Tiger-God and the Lion-Headed Goddess. The walls have all been newly painted with images of fierce divinities. Finally there is a smaller Kanjur Lhakhang, containing a copy of the Tibetan Canon and images of Śākyamuni and his two chief disciples.
Ma-tro (Ma-spro)

This is a small establishment, possessing so far as we could see on a brief visit, no great works of art. We were mainly impressed to find here for once an effective head of the monastery, if only an acting one, is the person of an exiled Tibetan lama. When we met him, he was personally engaged in conducting a ceremony in one of the nearby village houses, assisted by some twelve monks or so. Locally Ma-tro seems to be renowned mainly for its yearly festival, which takes place on the 25th and 26th of the 2nd Tibetan month, thus in late March or early April. It is known as Nag-hrang after the name of a local god (sa-bdag) who is said to take possession of one of the monks and do the most extraordinary things. As is often the case, we found it impossible to get a precise description of what occurs. An inadequate account of a monk in a kind of trance sticking swords through himself and being perfectly fit after the event, regularly ended with pressing advice: 'This really is an amazing god. You must stay and see what he does.' However, we did not stay.

Visitors to Leh will probably find their way to a new Buddhist temple just off the market, which was built about eighteen years ago. With proper ecumenical spirit, this is intended for use by any Buddhist order. Its main image (in a case) is a crowned Śākyamuni. On the left is a copy of the Tibetan Canon (Kanjur). In the cupola above there are some well painted murals of the Twelve Events of Śākyamuni's life and of Avalokiteśvara on the right.

139. Ma-tro Monastery: general view.
140. View down onto Leh from the Namgyal Peak and looking towards the Indus Valley.

141. The main bazaar in Leh during the winter. The mosque is the central building at the end of the road. High up on the right is the Fort.
CHAPTER FIVE

PRESENT-DAY LADAKH

The withdrawal of British power from India in 1947 resulted almost immediately in a complete break-up of the stability which had been achieved along the northern Himalayan frontier during the earlier part of the 20th century, and one of the many sufferers was Ladakh. Hostilities between the new India and the new state of Pakistan, provoked by the secession of the Hindu Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir to India, led to the invasion of Baltistan and Ladakh by Pakistani forces early the following year. In their drive on Leh the Pakistanis captured the ancient fort of Basgo, where they are ill remembered for having shot some local villagers in retaliation for a successful Indian 'commando-style' raid on heavy artillery which the Pakistanis had managed to drag there. India saved the situation only by maintaining the airstrip in Leh, which had been hastily improvised, and by flying in troops over a dangerous and then scarcely known Himalayan air-route. A determined Indian effort pushed the Pakistanis back far enough to free once more the 450 kms of mountainous track connecting Leh with Srinagar. Visitors to Ladakh, who travel now so much more easily by the new motor-road, have occasion to reflect, as they spend one night en route at Kargil, how very close the Pakistanis still are at this point. From 1948 onwards Ladakh has become an area of major military concern to the Indian Government, and like so many other Himalayan areas, which had been freely open to travel in British days, it was from then on closed firmly against all outsiders.

However, these unhappy events were only a prelude to even more serious trouble. Having reason to fear no adverse reactions from the new independent Government of India, the newly established Chinese Communist Government proceeded in 1950 to the effective occupation of Tibet. They base their claims to this country on the argument that since Tibet had acknowledged Chinese imperial overlordship in the past, especially during the Manchu period, it was by that fact alone part of China. This is a strange argument, which if universally applied, would deprive many present-day independent countries of their rightful independence. It would hardly be admitted nowadays, if put forward by former western imperialistic powers with regard to their previously owned territories. Yet the use of this argument by China has remained largely uncontested, and the Tibetan case for independence has been based all too often on arguments trying to disprove the claimed extent of earlier Tibetan dependence upon her more powerful neighbour. The real argument in favour of the Tibetan cause is the argument which has applied everywhere else, where independence has been demanded, namely linguistic, racial, cultural and religious difference. Between China and Tibet the differences are very great.

The enforced return of the Tibetans to the Chinese fold in 1950 had immediate repercussions. Up till this time Ladakhi merchants and monks, like other neighbours of the Tibetans, had travelled and lived quite freely in Tibet. Now restrictions and difficulties began to become the order of the day. At the same time Chinese restrictive policy in Sinkiang and the closure of the Indian Consulate in Kashgar, an appointment that went back to the old British days, resulted in the cessation of Ladakh’s centuries-old trade with Central Asia. Moreover in order to assert their hold over Tibet the Chinese constructed a road from Yarkand through to western Tibet, crossing thereby the remote north-eastern corner of Ladakh due east of the Karakoram Pass. The construction of this road was necessitated by the guerilla warfare being waged at that time by Khambas and other like-minded independent Tibetans in
Tibet's eastern border areas with China, which harassed the arrival of Chinese reinforcements from that side. Only in 1958 did the Indian Government take official notice of this Chinese intrusion into Ladakh. Not only was their protest unavailing so far as their own territory was concerned; thanks to the existence of this circuitous western approach into Tibet the Chinese might now be confident of their military hold on the country, and India thus lost finally any hope of having a genuinely autonomous and peaceful neighbour on her north-west and north-east frontiers.

Worse was still to come with the Tibetan uprising against the Chinese in Lhasa in 1959 and the flight of the Dalai Lama to India. The ever increasing bitterness between India and China resulted in the eventual cessation of trade between Ladakh and western Tibet, from which the Chinese occupiers had become in any case the chief beneficiaries, and the ill-treatment and imprisonment of many Ladakhis who were at that time in Tibet. It was from this period that dates the loss to Ladakh of the grand lama of Hemis, who had been born in Tibet and had returned there for study. Most Ladakhis were eventually released, their Indian citizenship having been conceded by the Chinese authorities, but quite apart from their personal hardships, from which many have not yet recovered, the total rupture of the close trading and religious connections which have existed between Ladakh and Tibet over the last thousand years, have resulted in the most unhappy consequences. Former wars and local aggressions have never had this disastrous effect, for once fighting was over, simple people had always been free to continue their peaceful activities, maybe changed to some extent by new agreements, but still workable for those with the will to continue. Thus the occupation of Ladakh by the State of Jammu & Kashmir in the 19th century scarcely interfered at a personal level with Ladakhi interests in Tibet. They were free to trade as before, free to live and work in Lhasa, free to study and occupy posts in Tibetan monasteries. By violent contrast, the Chinese occupation of Tibet has resulted in more or less closed frontiers. This is presumably primarily for ideological reasons, as in the case of other Communist régimes. Tibetans are no longer free to travel abroad, and foreign neighbours who are judged friendly are allowed occasionally to enter under official control. Thus between Chinese Tibet and Nepal a limited amount of trading and mutual intercourse is still possible. However, since the Chinese invasion of India in 1962 the whole length of the Indo-Tibetan frontier has remained on a war-footing. Ladakh plays an essential part in India's defensive positions, and the frontier remains therefore resolutely closed. Such in brief are the sad facts which account for Ladakh's present-day situation.

The general effects are twofold, the total cessation of the many trading operations, on which Ladakh's prosperity has depended in the past, and the permanent stationing there of a large Indian army numbering perhaps over 40,000 as compared with a total indigenous population of about 110,000. Thus from being largely economically independent in the past, Ladakh has become an almost total liability for India. Many Ladakhis, certainly those who live within easy reach of Indian establishments, have profitted materially from the present unusual situation. Both the military and civilian administrative services offer wide opportunities for employment, and direct benefit also comes from the vast quantities of stores and supplies of all kinds which have to be poured into Ladakh in order to maintain so large an army in good fettle. In fact the army has come to play such a predominant rôle in the country, and its senior officers are so aware of their responsibilities, that one can understand their resentment against any civilian interference, and even perhaps their hostility towards two foreigners who elect to spend most of a winter in their midst. It was certainly not our concern, however, to pry into military matters, and all that might be tactfully noted on this score, is the apparent popularity of the army with local people, even with some of the Buddhist monks who were also friendly with us.

In the past the people of Ladakh have obtained so easily by trade, whether from Central Asia, from Tibet or from India, all the articles they required, everyday ones and luxury ones, that there seems to have been little incentive for them to be creative themselves. One can still see in Ladakh magnificent carpets from Yarkand (we think especially of the mosque in Leh) and carpets and carved tables and silverware from Tibet. The crafts of carpet-weaving, metal work and wood-carving were inevitably
142. Four generations of the Aichi Lonpo family.

143. Monks and village children at Lamayuru.
neglected in a trading centre, where so much of the very best of its kind could be so easily obtained from outside. Thus Ladakh is now doubly poor in this respect. They cannot obtain those things, which were once so prized, and very few locally can now produce anything good (see p. 131). It is due to the Indian initiative of the present Development Commissioner that a handicrafts centre to encourage such cultural interests has now been started. Even now the occasional Tibetan carpets that one sees in the market have been made by Tibetan refugee-groups in India, and they reach Leh at a rather high price. Silverware and silks come from Bhutan, and even dried noodles in packets come from Kalimpong some 3000 kilometres away. Noodles, that favourite Tibetan and Ladakhi dish, are sometimes made fresh in Ladakhi homes, but nowhere in Leh are they made fresh for sale, except ready cooked in one or two small restaurants run by Tibetan exiles. Such a lack seemed to us to typify the present economic improvidence of Ladakh. Local trade of Indian commodities in Leh is mainly in the hands of Panjabi merchants, some of whom have achieved residential rights in Ladakh. A few local shops selling traditional articles, such as Ladakhi style clothes (made usually nowadays of Indian cloth) are in Ladakhi hands, and so too is the Leh taxi service, which disposes of a number of Indian jeeps, run mainly, it seems, on Indian Army petrol.

All in all the present-day situation in Ladakh is so totally different from anything known in the past, that it must be difficult for Ladakhis to think in terms of anything but short-term gains, and the opportunities for these are considerable. If an eventual reduction of tension with Pakistan on the one side and with China on the other permits the withdrawal or at least a substantial reduction of the Indian Army in Ladakh, then the impoverished state of the country is likely to become apparent very quickly. The Indian Government can scarcely be expected to continue bolstering the economy of a remote area, in which there is no longer any interest of higher state policy. The only hope for Ladakh rests with the possibility of a relaxation of the present Chinese hold on Tibet and Central Asia and the restoration of normal trading and cultural relations between neighbouring countries. As the normal state of human affairs to which all these various peoples are accustomed by centuries of experience, it is likely that eventually this will come about, but it could be several decades before this happens.

Economic and religious situations are often very closely interrelated. In the past Buddhism became the major religion of the whole of Asia by following the routes of merchants, whether across Central Asian deserts, or across South East Asian seas. It was blocked and forced to retreat only when it encountered in the west another ideology strong enough to oppose it by force. Thus the spread of Islam in West Asia and its subsequent penetration of both western Central Asia and the Indian sub-continent resulted in a drastic withdrawal of Buddhism from these areas. After the conquest of northern India Moslem merchants gained control of the ports of the coasts of India, and this led from the 13th century onwards to a further substantial loss of Buddhism and of Hinduism to Islam in South East Asia. Now after five centuries or more of relative stability Buddhism is again on the retreat, confronting this time in Eastern Asia an adversary equally determined upon its eradication, except perhaps in so far as a politically devised 'Buddhist Association' can serve the interests of its Communist promoters. Traditional forms of Buddhism with their higher sense of religious and moral values as much as with their more popular and less worthy superstitions are to be totally eradicated. Many harsh criticisms have been brought against Tibetan Buddhism in particular, and no account has been taken of the extraordinary high culture in religious and philosophical concepts, in literature and art, which it has engendered, and the great extent to which it has given a sense of direction and purpose in life to countless believers, while at the same time enriching culturally the actual quality of their lives. This last is something that Western educationalists talk about so very much, often forgetting that past civilizations have achieved this very objective quite spontaneously. Also it would seem to be indisputable that the effects of Buddhism have been largely humane over the centuries, even more so perhaps than the effects of Christianity have been humane, despite the cruel treatment meted out in the past, whether in Europe or Asia, by those in power to opponents and law-breakers and by ill-disposed masters to defenceless dependents. This is sadly all too typical of mankind everywhere. Yet
144. Winter occupations.


146. A Pashmina goat on the left; an Angora goat on the right; their off-spring in the centre.
Communism has made great use of such stories in its attacks on the old Tibetan way of life and on Tibetan religion, conveniently forgetting that they themselves indulge in comparable cruelties without there being any hope in their case for the victims to appeal to values of another order, where religion serves as a check and not as an incentive to wrong-doing.

The frontiers of Tibetan Buddhism, which once embraced the whole of Mongolia and Tibet as well as the Manchu Dynasty of China itself (until 1911), have been pushed right back over the last fifty years to the Himalayan ranges. Thus Ladakh remains as one of the isolated cultural units in which this religion still survives. But just as the cessation of trade with Tibet has ruined Ladakh's economy, so the cessation of those religious and cultural connections with Tibet, on which Buddhism in Ladakh has depended for the last six centuries or so, can only lead to its inevitable stagnation, unless some other source of inspiration is discovered. The connections which the dGe-lugs-pa monasteries of Ladakh seek to encourage with the exiled 14th Dalai Lama and the remnants of his dGe-lugs-pa régime may be of some help so long as it does not lead to a greater cleavage in Ladakh between the dGe-lugs-pas on the one hand, and the members of other Tibetan religious orders, especially the Ka-gyû-pas on the other. If Buddhism in Ladakh is going to survive, let alone flourish, a first requirement is unity at home. Here it must be noted that the Indian authorities have made a generous gesture in the right direction by setting up a Buddhist Philosophical School at Choklamsar just outside Leh. This is intended for young monks from monasteries all over Ladakh, and courses are given in Tibetan, Sanskrit, Buddhist philosophy and English. Such a School needs a very learned and thoroughly competent head, well read in Tibetan as well as Sanskrit, and who also has sufficient personal prestige and government backing in order to overcome the disruptive influences that such a new venture inevitably confronts. These requirements are difficult to satisfy, and as matters now are, this School offers little hope for the future, unless the heads of monasteries themselves realize how useful it could be. There is really a desperate need for it, when one considers the abysmally low reading standards in Tibetan that exist in Ladakhi monasteries, without even considering the other subjects now so hopefully pioneered.

It is here that we confront another serious cultural problem. The everyday language in use in Ladakh is Ladakhi, but this is a Tibetan dialect, and its corresponding literary form is normal literary Tibetan. An exactly similar situation exists in Europe as far as Switzerland is concerned. Here the everyday language is Swiss dialect over the greater part of the country, and of this the acceptable literary form is normal German, and no one finds such a situation as extraordinary or in any way undesirable. But official attitudes are very different in Himalayan border-lands, where to suggest that a local dialect is a form of Tibetan and can thus only be written in Tibetan is often heard with much alarm, as though this were an invitation to the Chinese to extend their Tibetan empire even further. Thus a kind of pretence is maintained that the language is so different that the term Tibetan should be avoided altogether. One meets Indian officers in Ladakh who refer to the 'Ladakhi' books of the monasteries and refuse to admit that they are Tibetan at all. Official Indian policy is more enlightened, and Tibetan can actually be chosen as an option in government schools in Leh, but it goes under the name of Bodhic and not Tibetan. Such hesitation results inevitably in the official neglect of the language, even though it is still the everyday language of the country. One will scarcely see a name or a notice proclaimed in Tibetan script anywhere in the Leh bazaar, unless perhaps very modestly outside a small Tibetan restaurant in a back-street. Everything else is in English or Urdu or Hindi. Neglect has gone so far by now, for the process began long ago before Jammu and Kashmir (with Ladakh) became part of the new India, that even if Tibetan were used, very few Ladakhis would recognize the written forms. For the layfolk who are effectively literate, Urdu is the language most commonly used for business purposes and personal correspondence. Thus the corresponding literary form of spoken Ladakhi, namely Tibetan, survives only as a medium for religious instruction and for religious ceremonies. Here the minimum necessary is usually learned orally in so far as it is required for ritual use. Thus monks can recite liturgies that they have learned by heart. A few of them are capable of following the text. Only one in a hundred would be capable of opening a Tibetan work that he had never seen before, and of reading intelligibly. Here much could be done by competent head-lamas, but unhappily the process of
selection does not take competence in account, let alone any sense of devotion to duty. There are of course reasons and excuses for this sad state of affairs. The undermining and the final removal of royal authority towards the mid-19th century left individual monasteries as arbiters of their own fate, and they have certainly survived difficult periods remarkably well. But the heads of monasteries have thus become all powerful in their small domains, and as is only too well known from history everywhere, irresponsible power usually corrupts. Thus there is not much hope for the future in this quarter.

The independence of monasteries of any higher authority has other implications, which need to be taken into account. Several foreign visitors to Ladakh have spoken to us of the need to preserve and restore such a remarkable heritage as the monastery of Alchi, and we are among the first to recognize the urgency of this task. But Alchi is not Government property, on which one might hope to set to work with the permission and good will of the Indian Government. Since it is private property, it is with Likir Monastery that the necessary arrangements must be made, and Likir would doubtless prefer to have money to spend on its own renovations rather than restorations at Alchi. Much the same situation applies to the efforts now being made by interested members of the civil administration, especially the office of the Superintendent of Police, to prevent images and thang-kas and other such 'art-treasures' from being smuggled out of Ladakh and sold at high prices through Indian art dealers. Most of these items are the property of monasteries and without the full co-operation of those responsible in the monasteries, not very much can be done. The protection of Ladakh's cultural and artistic heritage would require the operation of entirely new powers by the Indian authorities, powers that might well be resented and misunderstood by the heads of monasteries and the monks. It would require a Leh office of the Archaeological Survey of India or some such official body, and this would have to be led by someone well acquainted with this rather specialized field of knowledge. The same difficulty would also exist as in the case of the Buddhist Philosophical School.

Moreover Indian officials probably feel that they have problems enough in Ladakh, and in any case the civil authorities are working on a strictly limited budget. Determined efforts are being made to improve the standards of agricultural and animal products, and we have met young Indian officials, often Kashmiris, working with keen interest and devotion. Thus the quality of wool in Ladakh is being gradually improved by introducing Merino sheep from Kashmir and distributing them free to the villagers in spring and summer so that they may cross-breed with local sheep. Experiments are also being made in crossing the Pashmina goats, famous for the fine inner coating of wool that they produce, with imported Angoras, so as to produce in Ladakh a usable outer wool on the resultant cross-breed. We heard that these Angora goats are a special import, sanctioned by the Jammu & Kashmir Government, for the benefit of Ladakh. These pleasing animals can all be seen, in a condition that should delight any Buddhist's heart, in animal-farms by Tiktse and Ma-tro. The male Merinos are kept at Tiktse over the long hard winter-months, ready for distribution in the spring to the villagers, one Merino for fifty local ewes. Similar efforts are being made with milk and egg-production. Thus at another animal-farm near Changspa Jersey bulls and various high-grade Indian bulls, especially from Sind, are crossed with local cows, resulting in a considerable increase in the milk yield. One might expect that such efforts as these would win the ready cooperation of Ladakhi villagers, but this is not so easy to gain, although they are gradually being convinced by the obvious results. The villagers of Ladakh, just like the monks, have been left so long to fend for themselves, and have learned, with justification so far as the past is concerned, to be suspicious of any government interference, that it takes time for them to accustom themselves to the existence of benevolent-minded officials. If the villagers are thus hesitant in co-operating, where it is clearly to their economic advantage to do so, one may expect even more hesitancy on the part of the monasteries, if they foresee their present rights being circumscribed in any way.

Yet their time for a decision for self-improvement is likely to be limited. Not only do the great Buddhist centres in Tibet, on which they depended in the past for their literary and cultural training no longer exist, but with the deterioration of the opportunities that they can now offer to a youth of keen intellect, the numbers and the quality of their intake is bound to be considerably reduced.
Employment with the Indian army and civil administration, or with All India Radio, which maintains an imaginatively run station in Leh, might seem to offer far more interesting possibilities. To be proficient in Urdu or Hindi or in English is likely to be a more useful accomplishment than literary Tibetan. It is certain that the many young men who fifty or even thirty years ago might have entered the religious life with the prospect of study and travel and maybe monastic appointment in what was then still an extensive Tibetan Buddhist world, are nowadays going elsewhere. The whole situation for the reasons given above is now so totally changed.

Yet the monasteries are probably still in a position to save themselves, if only they can take united action and foresee where their best interests lie. They still have a considerable function to perform in the eastern part of Ladakh which remains Buddhist. The villagers require their services for domestic ceremonies, and they continue to welcome the meritorious effects of the larger ceremonies performed in the monasteries. What is also required is the ability and the willingness to teach, that is to say to teach not only a new generation of monks, but also to give instruction in religion to the villagers. This is a kind of programme which could be brought into relationship with the teaching given in government schools, and there is little doubt that Buddhism is far behind Islam in this matter.

It may be observed that Islam is by far in the stronger position, not only in numbers which are relatively continually on the increase, but also on account of a greater single-mindedness concerning the nature of their faith and the sheer fact of the enormous potential backing which they possess. Ladakhi Muslims can draw upon the strength of Islam in Kashmir and ultimately upon a vast Muslim world. Ladakhi Buddhists are now literally driven into a small corner between Islam on one side and Chinese Communism on the other. It is altogether absurd that they should waste time and effort in sectarian disputes or personal intrigues, but unhappily we humans everywhere continue to do things that are absurd and in our long-term worst interests.
For a detailed description of many important sites in Ladakh, set against an historical background, A. H. Francke, *Antiquities of Indian Tibet*, 2 vols, first published, Calcutta 1914 & 1926, reprinted New Delhi 1972, is a very useful work when corrected against later findings. For a later descriptive travelogue, written in a less scholastic and more enthusiastic manner, see Marco Pallis, *Peaks and Lamas*, first published London 1939, reprinted 1975 especially pp. 207 – 340. However, he does not mention Alchi, a place of major interest to us.

On the religious art, which is our main interest in this volume, see above all (if you read Italian) Giuseppe Tucci, *Indo-Tibetica*, vols I – III, Rome 1932–6. An English edition is in preparation. Here one will find detailed descriptions of temples in Western Tibet contemporary with Alchi, and of chöten (stūpa) in Ladakh. For a recent but slighter work, see his *The Ancient Civilization of Transhimalaya*, Geneva 1973. For those who wish to study Tibetan art in general and especially the history and symbolism of religious paintings, see his *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, first published, Rome 1949, and now in process of being reprinted. On the mandala in particular see his *Theory and Practice of the Mandala*, London 1961 (English translation of the original Italian published, Rome 1949). See also our important references in note 28, especially if one is able to read Tibetan.

On early Tibetan art in Central Asia see Heather Karmay, *Early Sino-Tibetan Art*, Warminster 1975, and her very full and useful bibliography. We would also draw attention to our occasional references in notes 9, 26, 27, 30, 31, 35, 36 and 60. On the history of Ladakh, apart from Francke’s *Antiquities* (mentioned above) and his *History of Western Tibet*, London 1907, which treats Ladakh, probably wrongly, as the leading power in the whole area, see Luciano Petech, *A Study of the Chronicles of Ladakh*, Calcutta 1939. This may prove difficult to obtain. Professor Petech is now completing work on a new History of Ladakh, and this will be a most important work. A recent article by F. A. Peter ‘Glossary of Place Names in Western Tibet’, *Ethnologische Zeitschrift*, Zürich, II, 1975, pp. 5-29, draws mainly upon the above works for its many historical notes. Unfortunately quite a number are suspect. A very well drawn map is attached. Concerning the life and work of Rin-chen bZang-po, see Giusepppe Tucci, *Indo-Tibetica*, vol II, Rome 1933. We intend to translate one of the versions of his biography in our next volume. For a brief history of the whole Tibetan cultural area, of which Ladakh is part, see Snellgrove and Richardson, *A Cultural History of Ladakh*, London 1968, and further references in the bibliography there. A very recent work on the history of Ladakh has been published for Tibetan readers by S. Skyabdan Gergan, *La-dvags rgyal-rabs bchi-med gter*, Srinagar (Kashmir) 1976. This follows generally the traditional order of the *la-dvags rgyal-rabs*, as edited by Francke, supplemented by other Tibetan traditional and epigraphical material.


