BUDDHIST MONASTERIES IN THE WESTERN HIMALAYA

ROMI KHOSLA

RATNA PUSTAK BHANDAR
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ON THE CIVILIZATIONS AND NATURE
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Copyright: H. K. Kulôy
To my wife Kalpana
and our son Martand
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Wandering in the high valleys and passes of the Western Himalaya is always a very beautiful experience. If there have been dangers then one has only regarded them as dangers in retrospect. No doubt if one had been alone, the whole experience may have been different or even frightening. But I was fortunate in having excellent company on all my journeys and the whole business of getting organised to go, and the adventure itself, has always been memorable. For the success of the 1968 journey into the Western Himalaya, I am grateful to my brother Reggie and Ashok Pavate the well known structural engineer both of whom helped in measuring the structures, collecting local data and making many of the arrangements. The 1970 expedition to Ladakh was done in the company of Rasik Behl and Anil Loona, both architects who patiently and meticulously measured some very complex buildings and provided a lot of the framework on which the final drawings were subsequently prepared. The 1977 expedition to Ladakh was a slightly more elaborate affair. It included Dinesh Sareen, one of the leading architectural photographers in India, who agreed to take his precious Linhoff camera. He also took along a miniature dark room so that we could monitor our results on the spot. He nursed his camera like a baby and I was somewhat sad to hear that the dust in Alchi had clogged up the mechanism. There was architect Ronojoy Sen whose superb draftsmanship is reflected in the drawings of Alchi and Gomba. He measured both monasteries with the help of my wife Kalpana who was otherwise engrossed in recording the folk tales of the village of Alchi.

The amount of material that these three expeditions accumulated was fairly large, and converting it to final drawings was a lengthy process. I am grateful to architects Piyush Prakash, Uday Kapre, Sonia Bhatla and Bijoy Roy for having helped in the ink drawings. Other members of the Group for Rural and Urban Planning are my two partners Vasant Kamath and Narendra Dengle who coped with all the work that I left them with, before disappearing into Ladakh.

For the collection of information on Tibetan painting, I am obliged to Nawang Dorje, a painter of unbelievable skill who smiled at my constant intrusions and patiently explained the techniques and methods of thang-kha painting.

I also could not have done without Lucia Alvarez de Toledo who translated a whole volume of Tucci's Indo-Tibetica just to enable me to read the chapters on Tabo and Lha-Lun. The speed and perfection with which this was done never ceases to amaze me.
I also have debts to repay to Phillip Denwood, David Snellgrove, Tadeusz Skorupski, Gyatso Tshering, Tashi Rabgias, Gene Smith, Dr. Lokesh Chandra and other scholars in the field of Tibetan studies who were able to guide me and provide information to help me tabulate and understand a small part of the vast Tibetan Buddhist Culture.

My special thanks go to Hal Kulöy who was the first person to take the material seriously and suggest it for publication. His tremendous patience in allowing the illustrated material to be trebled in size from my original estimate has enabled the book to be illustrated rather more comprehensively than was visualized earlier.

The finance for the three expeditions was partly provided by the Architectural Association in London, my alma mater, which financed, largely through their system of travel and other scholarships, the trips to Spiti, Lahoul and Ladakh. The 1970 expedition into Ladakh was further sponsored by a scholarship from the John Levy Trust which provided for the total cost of photography on that journey. In 1977, Jawaharlal Nehru University sponsored an expedition to Ladakh to record, photographically, all the murals of Alchi and this gave me the opportunity to extend my physical study of that complex. Last but not least I would like to thank Gnanathesikan, another member of The GRÜP who has typed and retyped the manuscript with great efficiency.
Until very recently when Ladakh was opened up for tourists, the whole of the Buddhist borderland between Tibet and India (with the exception of Nepal) was comparatively difficult to approach. The specific regions touched upon in the present study are, in any case, hardly hospitable places for casual visitors. The high attitude, the difficult means of transport, added to the rigours of the permit system in force, have ensured their relative isolation. However, determined and intrepid scholars have managed to wander up and down the valleys of the Western Himalaya and have published extremely valuable material on the region and this present work has relied on the published works of Cunningham, Francke, Tucci, Goetz, Snellgrove and Skorupski for guidance.

The scope of this work has been defined by those places that it was possible to visit on three separate expeditions into Lahoul, Spiti and Ladakh between the period 1968 - 1977 and it presents a selected collection of the photographs and measured data that was collected on those occasions. It is not the intention of this work to provide a deep study into Tibetan or Western Himalayan architecture which is an extremely complex subject that could be studied innumerable works. Rather, it is the intention to provide a panorama of material that has been collected over an extensive area during the last ten years. The purpose of measuring the various monasteries and presenting their plans here was to tabulate, at a given time, the mud structures of this region which are constantly undergoing change. Further, it is hoped that this material could provide the groundwork for more work that can be done on the subject. Much has been written on the religious and doctrinal aspects of Tibetan Buddhism and much has also been written about various travels in the Western Himalaya, but there is little material available on the physical documentation of the monasteries that have already been described by many visitors. It is the intention of this work to broaden out the scope of the study of Tibetan culture beyond the confines of its religious and liturgical aspects; away from the study of religious objects and texts which have dominated most of the more recent published works. Much is known about the religious practices, the sacred symbols, the thang-kha paintings, the iconography and the doctrines of Tibetan Vajrayāna Buddhism. Museums in Europe and America have some of the finest examples of Tibetan paintings and religious objects which had been 'acquired' by some of the earlier travellers into Tibet and they have provided the basis of some of the more authoritative recent publications. Yet the field work necessary to provide for the physical background to this culture has been sadly neglected and it is hoped that a small part of this enormous gap can be filled by the study that follows.
The Introductory Chapter dealing with the early beginnings of Buddhist architecture in India was thought necessary to reinforce the strong cultural link that had existed between the Vajrayāna Buddhism of Tibet and the once flourishing Buddhist Centres of India. Moreover, the basic institution of the Vajrayāna Buddhists, the gompa or monastery, had been taken directly from India where it had developed earlier from very humble beginnings. It is the intention of this chapter to show how the origin of the Du-khang or assembly room of every Buddhist monastery in the Western Himalaya (and Tibet), had developed earlier in India from the need to provide for liturgical practices that institutionalised Buddhism was rapidly acquiring.

The subsequent three chapters deal with the Western Himalaya and the monasteries of the earlier and later periods in that region. It was not intended to study each and every major monastery that is functioning there, but rather to provide specific information based on selected field studies of a few structures which would clarify some of the major architectural characteristics of the monastery. The architectural and religious aspects of the temples are so inextricably intertwined, that physical descriptions have necessarily included descriptions of some of the murals, particularly of the monasteries of the earlier period.

A chapter on vernacular architecture was thought necessary to relate the larger architectural aspects of the monastery with that of the local house, and four houses in various valleys of the Western Himalaya have been illustrated to establish this link. The remaining two chapters on building construction and painting throw some light on the detailed physical aspects of construction and decoration, both of which give Buddhist Western Himalayan architecture its unique appearance.

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NEW DELHI
INTRODUCTION

THE DEVELOPMENT OF BUDDHIST ARCHITECTURE
THE INDIAN ORIGINS

The development of Buddhist Architecture

It is one of the ironies of the history of the Indian subcontinent that Buddhism, which was born here and flourished here for 1700 years (5th century BC to 12th century AD), disappeared very suddenly leaving behind only scanty ruins. These ruins are so widely spread across India and so rich and unique in content that they bear witness to Buddhism having been an inspiration and a patron to one of the most dynamic art and architecture movements of the world. This inspiration and patronage spread far beyond the boundaries of the Sub-continent and penetrated Burma, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Korea, China Vietnam and Indonesia on the eastern side; Nepal, Tibet and Mongolia on the northern side as well as Afghanistan and Central Asia on the western side. The subject of this study relates to the changes that Buddhism introduced in the art and architecture of a small part of the Tibetan culture centred in the Western Himalaya.

Beyond the subcontinent, the age of Buddhism brought with it fundamental changes in the various social organisations that had hitherto existed in the Eastern and Northern countries.\(^1\) Buddhism was instrumental in transforming the various autonomous tribal clans into centralised early feudal forms of society. This change and the role that the Buddhist kings played in overcoming the tribal chiefs can be seen in the history of Tibet. The expansion of the territorial boundaries of the kingdom of Lhasa concides with the rise and spread of Buddhism in the region. Later, when Buddhism flourished in the Western Tibet Kingdom of Gu-ge in the 10th and 11th centuries, the military expansion of the might of the Gu-ge empire from Tholing to the border of Kashmir in Ladakh was matched by the founding of forts and monasteries in these outlying areas. It cannot be assumed, that the times during which Buddhism was becoming a Pan-Asian religion (China, Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, the Islands of South East Asia between the 1st and 5th centuries AD, Nepal 5th century AD, Tibet and Mongolia 8th – 9th century AD) peace reigned in the region and Buddhism spread peacefully through missionary activity. On the contrary, one sees the Buddhist missionaries coming into contact with tribal clans, all of whom relied upon some form of violence to maintain territorial control. The missions were able to

gain their first footholds in the homes of these clan chiefs who were later referred to as Kings in Buddhist records. King Song-sen gam-po of Tibet was a clan chief and used his marriage pacts with two Buddhist princesses from Nepal and China to overcome his rivals and establish his claim as the first Buddhist King of Tibet.

This close link between the political and religious advancement of Buddhism was clearly reflected in architecture. Thus, the development and style of Tibetan monastery architecture must be seen in this context. The fortress monasteries of the later period (Chapter 3) grew directly out of a need to defend and administer territory through an administrative structure which centered on the monastery as a politico-religious institution. The architecture of the monastery, in its developed form in Tibet had emerged out of earlier Indian prototypes that had been directly imported in 8th and 9th centuries. The Tibetan monastery of Sam-ya built in the 8th century was based on Odantapura monastery in India. It is of interest to see how the Indian prototypes themselves had emerged out of much simpler origins that had at one time reflected the need to provide shelter to the wandering Buddhist almsman. Thus, the later Tibetan monasteries that housed complex functions such as Tashi Lemplo, Gandhen, and Dera were a logical projection of the development of early Buddhist architecture in India.

The doctrine preached by Gautama Buddha (born c. 566 BC) was certainly not unique or extraordinary in its contemporary setting. Both Mahavira and Gosala were contemporaries of Buddha and had stressed in their teaching the opposition to the orthodoxy of Hinduism and had turned towards more progressive forms of religion which struck at the elite social position of the Brahmins in Hindu society. Both Buddhism and Jainism effectively challenged the monopoly of the Brahmins' right to interpret the divine for the common man. Buddha's teachings laid down the 'middle path' which he numerically summarised as the Eight Fold Path. His emphasis on avoiding extremes is easy to comprehend if one thinks of those times when Brahmanical practices were steeped in rituals, some of which went to the extremes of self imposed physical tortures on the one hand, and semi-magical practices on the other. The examples of the other extreme, which were to be avoided, were provided by the newly emergent merchant class that was accumulating wealth and spending it on excessive luxury.

The core of the Buddhist network was the saṅgha\textsuperscript{2} – the order which was to eventually centre itself on the monastery (Vihāra) and university (Mahā-vihāra). This form of organisation, to which the converts inevitably belonged, was to become the single most important factor in developing Buddhist architecture. The refuge in the Triple Gem that the Buddha preached from earliest times was required by every disciple. The saṅgha developed into a very sophisticated organisation by the time Nalanda was flourishing and later too when the

large monasteries of Tibet such as Tashi Lumpo Ganden and Dera flourished. During Buddha's life time however the saṅgha was really a collection of almsmen bound together by certain oaths and seeking the refuge of the Triple Gem: Almsmen were common in India at that time as they are now. The bhikkhu was distinguished from the ordinary beggar as his motivation was considered "higher". This distinction between the beggar and the bhikkhu exists to this day and people would sooner give alms to a sadhu than to a beggar. Buddha took the lowest form of social organisation, the wandering almsmen community, as the model for his saṅgha, but he transformed their haphazard independent lives into an organised collective one with common aims and disciplines. The refuge of the Triple Gem, the Eight Fold Path and his other teachings were the sense of order which was placed in the life of the bhikkhu who was not allowed to own any form of property other than those things that were essential for his survival as a bhikkhu.

"A begging bowl, a water-pot, at most three pieces of plain, unembroidered patternless cloth (preferably pieced together from rags) for wear; oil jug, razor, needle and thread and a staff."^a

Buddha also framed the Vināya or rules of monastic life which stipulated that the monk could not seek the shelter of a house at night but had to rest by himself, away from lay folk and if necessary in a cave. Once a year however, there was a period of relief from this endless wandering and that was during the rainy season.

The monsoon put a stop to wandering, gave an opportunity for a retreat and the monks were encouraged to do this collectively. Whereas the traditional almsmen had also sought a resting place in the rains, Buddha specified that in the case of the Buddhist monks, this retreat was to have a communal and collective function. From this emerged the institution of the Vassāvāsa - the rain retreat. The individualistic hermetic attitude was positively discouraged in favour of the progressive collective life of the Vassāvāsa. Ideally of course the Vassavāsa was a temporary resting place which was disbanded once the monsoon was over and the monk was expected to resume his wanderings. But as time went on, the Vassāvāsa was not abandoned at the end of the monsoon and the elder or sick monks continued to stay on and be looked after by the local patron who had provided the space in the first place. Gradually two types of shelters began to develop. One was the āvāsa which had a rural setting, perhaps in a forest near a stream where the monks were required to subsist by themselves, by their own efforts, and the other type was the ārāma which had an urban setting, was enclosed and here the monks could subsist with the help of a patron. The āvāsa continued to have a temporary makeshift quality about it and the monks from it did disperse at the end of the rains. The ārāma however was different. Founded on urban land donated to the saṅgha by a patron, it had a boundary wall which enclosed the individual or collective dwellings of the

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monks. These dwellings were originally known as Vitraras - a term which developed its meaning as the institutions of the saṅgha became more complex. The enclosing wall of the ārāma too developed its functions and we find it accompanying many later Buddhist structures including the ones in the Western Himalaya at Alchi and Tabo. The advantage of the ārāma or saṅghārāma, as these permanent settlements began to be called, was that the basic subsistence of the inmates was looked after by the donor who could, in return, partake in discussions and learn about the higher teachings of Buddha. The discussions, by their very nature, were collective affairs and could not be held in the dwellings of the monks. They began, as they got bigger, to be formally held in the open. Gradually the need for an assembly hall arose and there developed the upatthāṇa-sālā or common meeting hall where a service could also be held.

Dutt has given a description of three of these ārāmas which have been excavated. Of these, the one at Jetavanarama is the most interesting. Legend connects this place with the Buddha having spent nineteen rainy seasons in the place. The description is interesting because it explains how quickly the architecture and function of the Vassāvāsa had transformed itself into a complex institution. The story tells of how a merchant bought the land to build an ārama for the Buddha and how he converted the place into a Saṅghārāma, providing it with all the amenities that a monk-settlement required—“with Vitraras, Parivenas, Kotthakas (chambers) upatthāna sālās (meeting halls), kitchens, store-houses, privies, promenades, open wells, covered wells, bathing places, bathrooms, ponds, mandapas (Pillared halls or awnings) etc.” Inevitably, these settlements were built by the emerging rich merchant class who not only sought the blessings of the Buddhists, but also identified with the challenge to the Brahmin community that the Buddhists were posing. Buddha’s life, as it has come down to us, is liberally sprinkled with episodes involving the merchants who sought his blessings. Like the institution of almsmen, this tradition of the rich merchants patronising the spiritual leaders of our country has come down intact to the present day. One of the inevitable forms that this patronage takes is the donation of land and buildings for the erection of ashrāmas. This fundamental social relationship between the dependent Buddhist monastery and the patron merchant or ruling class remained with every institution that developed in the course of the history of the religion. The grandeur of its art and architecture was only able to reach such heights because of the tremendous resources that were utilised in giving these institutions a grand and permanent form.

As the vassāvā developed into the Saṅghārāma, the material of construction changed from wood to brick and as the saṅghārāma developed into the lena the material changed from brick to stone and rock. Today nothing survives of the early timber architecture and only the foundations survive of the brick structures that followed. The complete Lena survives as the example of

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4 Dutt, S. : op. cit., p. 60,
5 Ibid, p. 64.
rock architecture. This transformation from timber to rock reflected the consolidation of Buddhism on one hand and the growing wealth of the merchant class on the other.

The *lena* emerged out of the āvāsa and ārāma reflecting the ever growing internal needs of the monkhood. There was a need to further formalise the training of the cadre and also to define more clearly those points where contact with the community was to be established. Thus, rules were laid down for the training of novices and arrangements were made for their cares and comforts. Space had to found where teaching was imparted, where the monks could hold discussions and have examinations. Moreover, space was also required to accommodate the monks and the community during times of ceremonies and collective rituals. The *Uposatha* was one such time when the monks and the rest of the community got together for a collective purpose. The *lena* was divided into five types of structures.¹

1. *Vihāra* — Communal dwelling place of the monks with huts.
2. *Addhayoga* — Bengali type of house with curled roof eaves.
4. *Hammiya* — a long block with three floors.
5. *Guhā* — the cave monastery.

But archaeology has identified the remains of only the *Vihāra* and *Guhā*. It is apparent that the distinction between the five types of *lenas* is based on the form of the structure. What is not clear at all is whether these differences in form reflect different internal functions or different locations. Certainly, the *Vihāras* were more prevalent in the Bihar region and the *Guhās* in the south whereas the *Addhayoga* has been identified with Bengal.

The local or regional patronage that Buddhism was receiving in its initial phase of development was transformed under the reign of Aśoka who succeed to the throne about 214 years after Buddha’s death in c 272 BC. During the period of these hundred odd years, the monk settlements had already developed into the early monastic *lenas* and Buddhism itself had begun to explore regions beyond the narrow confines of central India. Aśoka’s conversion was a major event and during his reign, under the strenuous efforts of Moggaliputta Tissa, Buddhism began to have an all-India base. The edicts of Aśoka which have been discovered in Kandahar and other parts of Afghanistan bear witness to this expansion. It was Aśoka who formalised Buddhist architecture into stone in his edicts, pillars and *stūpas*. With the political security under Aśoka’s reign and the patronage given by him in the form of land grants, Buddhism was able to locate its monasteries in far flung areas of India. Evidence from Ceylonese chronicles quoted by Dutt reveal that well organised missions were sent out not only to the provinces of India but also to Gandhara, Bactria, Burma and Ceylon. These missionaries took with them the rules of organisation and forms of monasteries which were necessary to establish as links within the network, though to-day it is not possible to identify the remains of

¹ Ibid, p. 93.
many of the monasteries that were established all over India during this period. Even more significant was the link established between the Buddhist Church and the State which was to remain a feature of the Kushān period right up to the end of the Gupta age. It was this link that helped Mahāyāna emerge as a socially more relevant philosophy than Hinayāna. The rise of the power of the Maurya dynasty from a state one to an all-India one had given Buddhism that all-India status. However it was also inevitable that, for Buddhism to survive in these far flung areas, it would have to alter its conceptual thinking in such a way that it could find a way to quickly absorb larger number of people for whom it was a new movement. It meant that the rate of expansion and consolidation would have to be speeded up. Following close behind the organisational problems that were being created by an all-India base, was the growing schism between the Mahāyāna and the Hinayāna systems of Buddhist philosophy which eventually came to a head in Kaniska’s reign in c 100AD. This schism had been growing wider and it was thought wise by Kaniska to convene a council to sort out the issues. But no reconciliation was possible at the council and the schism was formalised into a positive split between the Hinayana sect (Lesser Vehicle) and the Mahayana sect (Greater Vehicle). The division was not simply on doctrinal issues but had political overtones.

The philosophical doctrine preached by Mahāyāna was, on the face of it, more acceptable. It shifted the emphasis away from the need to abandon the world as a prerequisite for a believer and it was no longer necessary to be a Buddhist and disassociate oneself from secular activities. Mahāyāna thus became an accessible doctrine for a wide variety of people who could continue their secular lives undisturbed. In many ways this removed a contradiction in the life of a Buddhist King like Kaniska if one compares him to Asoka. Asoka was converted to the earlier unified school dominated by Hinayana philosophy and he had spent his life trying to reconcile his existence between attempting to be an ascetic arhaton one hand and a worldly king on the other. His abandoning of military conquests after the battle of Kalinga could not be reconciled with the need to maintain his armies to control his vast empire. He remained both a Buddhist, setting up edicts, and a king who ruled his empire with an iron hand against dissenters. For Kaniska these contradictions did not exist. He continued to be a Buddhist, a despot and a conqueror. He presided over the Fourth Council and subsequently gave financial and political support to the Mahayana sect. Kanishka saw himself as a dharma-pāla – a defender of the faith and Buddhism thereby embarked on a phase of its history which could be termed more militant than before. This militancy was to remain with Mahayana when it spread in Tibet. Later, when the Tibetan Buddhists began to split up into a number of sects (Nying-ma-pa, Ka-dam-pa, Drug-pa; Ge-lug-pa), they often attacked each other, with the monks taking an active role in the fighting. Kye monastery in Spiti has, to this day, a fine collection of weapons which the monks had used at one time.

The central issue of dispute between the followers of Hinayana and Mahayana was the relationship of the lay or common person to salvation.
*Hināyāna* believed that it was essential to lead the life of a *bhikku* (ascetic) renouncing the world as a prerequisite for salvation, whereas *Mahāyāna* believed that lay people could take the vows of discipline while maintaining their links with the world. The achievement of *Nirvāṇa* was no longer confined or available to an initiated *arhat* who sought his own salvation. *Mahāyāna* postulated the concept of the *Bodhisattva* as the one who held back his own final salvation to help others enter the path. The central theme of teaching in *Hināyāna* was replaced by the concept of “being saved” and the teacher became the “Saviour”.* It was only a logical development of the concept that this “Saviour”—the Buddha, be given superhuman powers and, as we shall see later, a whole complex pantheon of deities who were Saviours, was developed by *Mahāyāna*. This theoretical change in the foundations of Buddhist thinking was responsible for very fundamental changes in the art and architecture of Buddhism as it developed in India after the first century AD. The two major innovating factors that *Mahāyāna* introduced to the art and architecture was firstly the concept of divinity which changed the representational aspect of the Buddha and secondly the sharing of the teachings of Buddha with lay people, which intensified the contact between the monk settlement and the community. The practice of Buddhism under *Mahāyāna* became a much more open system which was freer to adopt practices which the earlier schools had not been able to do. The life and legends of Buddha began to get popularised, and in the process of this popularisation, his image was changed from a simple mortal being to a quasi-eternal god. In addition, divinity was also given to a large number of deities who would help as saviours in the process of salvation. The centre of importance shifted in favour of the devotee, the ordinary believer, who had at his disposal a very wide range of deities to turn to for help. These deities had to be invoked and had a royal status and they were arranged in a complex system of hierarchies. The main deity, in any of the many subsystems that emerged, was envisaged as a king or queen and was placed in the centre of the dwelling or palace which was surrounded by a number of lesser supportive deities and attendants. Contact between the devotee and the deity was established through the *mantra*. Each deity had its own set of *mantras* and the devotee had to invoke the deity of his choice by constant recitations. These changes in the formal representation of the Buddha, and the creation of a pantheon which had personified forms was radically different from the earlier representations of the Buddha that are found at Barhut, where the presence of Buddha is symbolised by devices such as his throne, his foot prints, the *dhamachakra* or the Bodhi tree. On the Eastern Gate at Sanchi, for instance, there is a pictorial representation of the “Great Departure” and while there is no personified image of Buddha, we find a Parasol, his two foot prints and the riderless horse which bore him away. Similar symbolical representation is given to Buddha at


Mathura, Gaya and Amaravati all of which date back to the last century BC. There are also other examples of similar representation of the Buddha image at Nāgarjunakonda (3rd century AD) where both personified and symbolic representations are found side by side.9

From the available evidence of excavations, it seems that the Buddha image was first personified in or around the first century AD. Whether this emerged in Mathura or Gandhāra is, so far, a matter of speculation, and scholars have argued intensively for each of the places. There is no identifiable date or record of commission which could be linked with the first human image of Buddha. There is little doubt however that the portrayal of the human image of Buddha in the plastic arts was accompanied by literature and stories that portrayed the life of Buddha in poetic and dramatic forms.

The growing popularity of Mahāyāna was accompanied by a tremendous multiplication of doctrines dealing with some or other aspect of Buddha. The newly emphasised role of the “Saviour” which was an important aspect of Mahāyāna, meant that the teachings had to be standardised to prevent their dilution. The vast territory that Mahāyāna covered in India and beyond, meant that the oral tradition of reciting texts had to give way to written texts which could be carried great distances. Although the scope of these texts was vast and ever growing, it did result in a sort of standardisation where authoritative interpretations were available for reference. The Sutras became, and do remain to this day, sacred canonical texts. The concept of sanctity was a Mahayana development and was bound to accompany the raising of the Hinayāna mortal Buddha to the level of the Mahāyāna Cosmic Being. This was achieved and communicated to the community of followers and lay people through the adoption of Bhakti or an intense devotional ritual which centred on the Saviour – The Buddha.10

Bhakti developed in Buddhism both as a congregation ceremony in the pillared halls (uppaṭṭhāna-sālā) of the monasteries and as an expression of individual ritual around the Stūpa.11 It was a necessary function of Bhakti

10 Dutt, S. : op. cit., p. 179.
11 The origins of the stupa are not at all clear and divergent views about its beginnings and subsequent function and purpose continue to be expressed. Certainly the older views that regarded the stupa as simply a burial mound have now been discounted by archaeological findings that hint at more complex and ritualistic origins. The linguistic similarity between stambha, stupa and ‘stump’ can be interpreted to indicate early totemic beginnings that symbolised the union of the earth and sky. John Irwin has recently revealed that the earth used to build a stupa was brought from another site and that the centre of the stupa contained an axial pillar of wood – a universal symbol of stability used by tribal cultures, by Christians as a cross, by Buddhists as the Tree of Enlightenment and by the Hindus as ‘Vanaspati’. The use of the stupa as a cult symbol could also have parallels in the Egyptian Ben and Pyramid, the Giri of the Vedas, Omphalos of the Greeks and Kabah of the Islamic people. In the course of the development of Buddhism, the stupa did undergo very radical changes within India and outside. The Asian countries to which it was introduced certainly adopted it into their vernacular style.
to provide the lay followers with a personified image of Buddha whose life could be illustrated to explain the events which the teachers were relating to the congregation. The canons developed rigid rules for the portrayal of deities and a wide range of proportional systems and liturgical descriptions covered the entire Buddhist pantheon.

The growing emphasis in Mahāyāna on the "Saviour" meant that the position of the monk teacher became synonymous with that of a monk scholar and research and scholarship assumed important functions in the monasteries. Later, many of these Indian monk scholars were to be glorified in China and Tibet. But this growth in the scholarly activities within the monasteries, which came to a peak during the Gupta age, was also accompanied by changes in the organisation and architecture of the monasteries. Organisationally, the emphasis in these monasteries moved away from doing missionary work and came closer towards concentrating on academic learning. The Gupta Kings were not Buddhists and yet they patronised Buddhist monasteries with generous land grants and money. Buddhist art reached one of its high points under the Gupta period. This patronage from non-Buddhist rulers was only possible because Buddhism no longer represented an aggressive expanding aspect. Undoubtedly the presence of the huge libraries in Nalānda and Vikramśīlā was proof of serious academic activity at these centres. By the time of Gupta rule, Mahāyāna had already developed vast canonical works that needed to be housed indexed and referred to easily. Apart from the earlier Pali texts which had been written before the schism, there were numerous Sutras and Tantras. Many of the authors of these texts were ācāryas or monk scholars permanently in residence at the monastic centres-Asvaghosa, Vasubandhu and Asanga Nāgarjuna were some of the better known of many. These canonical texts were to form the bridge over which Mahāyāna crossed beyond the boundaries of India. Monk-scholars came from China and Tibet hungering to carry away texts for translation. The Indian monks and ācāryas, who in turn went across to China and Tibet, took with them these texts. The accounts of Fa-hien, Hsuan-tsang and I-tsing have given us very valuable descriptions of the Buddhist centres of learning in India. Descriptions in the Tibetan Tanjur have also preserved a rare record of Buddhist India before its downfall in the 12th century. Some idea of the volume of scholarship that Buddhist centres of learning were generating can be got from the magnitude of the Tibetan canonical works. The Tanjur and Kanjur consist of some 4569 texts out of which the Kanjur contains 1108 and the Tanjur 3461 texts. The Kanjur has seven parts of which the Sutra has three (Vināyā concerning principles of morality, Sutantra concerning meditation and Abidhavma concerning transcendent meditation) and the Tantra four parts. The Tanjur has two parts (Tantra and Sutras). The Sutras deal with texts that claimed to be the direct word of the Buddha while the Tantras deal with texts which have identifiable authors and whose content is more in the nature of commentaries. Apart from these Tibetan texts, there are 2184 other identified texts that were
translated into Chinese and many more which have disappeared and remain only as references by name.

The architectural changes that took place in the monastic centres during the Gupta age reflected the golden period of Buddhism. The Viha'ras extended into Mahāviha'ras. Structures were enlarged, and the previous simplicity and austerity of the decorative work on the architecture was replaced by elaborate and rich rendering and painting. Hsuan-tsang's described Nalanda:

"Six kings built as many monasteries one after the other and an enclosure was made with bricks to make all the buildings into one great monastery with one entrance for them all. There were many courtyards, and they were divided into eight departments. Precious terraces spread like stars and jade pavillons were spired like peaks. The temple arose into the mists and the shrine halls stood high above the clouds......Streams of blue water wound through the parks, green lotus flowers sparkled among the blossoms of Sandal trees, a mango grove spread outside the enclosure. The monks' dwellings in all the courtyards had four storeys. The beams were painted with all the colours of the rainbow and were carved with animal designs, while the pillars were red and green. The columns and thresholds were decorated with exquisite carvings. The plinths were made of polished stone and the rafters adorned with paintings......In India there were thousands of monasteries, but none surpassed this one in magnificence and sublimity. Always present were 10,000 monks including hosts and guests, who studied both the Mahāyāna teachings and the doctrine of the 18 Hinayāna Schools as well as the Vedas and other classics. They also studied grammar, medicine and mathematics...The king gave them the revenues of more than 100 villages to support them, and each of the villages had 200 families who daily offered hundred tan of rice, butter and milk. Thus the students could have the four requisites (clothing, food, shelter and medicine) sufficient for their needs without going to beg for them. It was because of this support that they had achieved so much in their learning"11

Nalanda epitomised the flourishing Buddhist centres of learning in the Gupta age. It was more like a modern University with composite colleges. A number of monasteries that had been built at various times in close proximity to each other were formally merged under a central administration. I-tsing mentions 8 halls, 300 blocks of cells and more than 3,000 monks and an incoming revenue from 200 villages. As a prestigious centre of learning, it had no match and scholars from abroad came to it, hazarding the perils of extremely dangerous journeys over land and sea.

The internal hierarchies and disciplines were complex and one is reminded of the similar way in which some of the larger Tibetan Monasteries functioned (Drepung, Tashi Lumpo, Sera etc.) The working of academic discipline is well illustrated by Hsuan-tsang:

"He who can entirely explain one class of these books is exempted from the control of Karmadana. If he can explain two classes, he receives in addition the assignment of an upper seat or room; he

who can explain four classes has “pure men” lay followers allotted to him as attendants; he who can explain five classes of canonical books is allowed an attending escort....If one of the assembly distinguishes himself by refined language, subtle investigation, deep penetration and severe logic, then he is mounted on an elephant, covered with precious ornaments and conducted in a procession by a numerous suite to the gates of the abbey. If, on the contrary, one of the members breaks down in his argument, or uses poor and inelegant phrases, they proceed to disfigure his face with red and white and cover his body with dust and dirt, and then carry him off to some deserted spot to dump him in a ditch."

One is reminded of the functions held in the large monasteries of Bhutan and Tibet where the conduct of the young novices is constantly under the vigilance of a monk who walks up and down the rows brandishing a horse whip which is cracked down on whosoever lets his attention wander.

Similar centres existed at Odantapura and Vikramśilā and their sudden collapse at the end of the 12th century spelled the doom of Buddhism in India. Odantapura was razed to the ground in 1198 and Nālandā, just a few miles off, could not have survived much longer. Vikramśilā was destroyed completely in 1235 AD.

These three centres, more than any other in India, played a crucial role in the history of Buddhism in Tibet. Their destruction cut short a well established connection that had started in the 8th century AD with the departure of Padmasambhava for Tibet and continued right through to the end of the 12th century AD. For the Tibetans, the two important connection were the arrival of Padmasambhava in the 8th century from Swat and the arrival of Dīpankar Śrījñāna (whom they call Atiśa) from Vikramśilā. They were two of the Indian ācāryas that went to Tibet. The Tibetan scholars who came to India were many more and we shall see how one of them, Rin-chen Zango-po, left his mark in the kingdom of Gu-ge.
THE WESTERN HIMALAYA
1.

THE WESTERN HIMALAYA

LADAKH, SPITI AND LAHOUL AND THE
DEVELOPMENT OF TIBETAN INFLUENCES

The Western Himalaya is a loose term which describes a region that includes the Indian districts of Ladakh, Spiti and Lahoul. There are no specific physical or political boundaries which could coincide with the term and it has been used here more as a convenience than as a precise geographical definition. Correctly speaking, the whole of the ancient Tibetan kingdom of Gu-ge would also be encompassed by the Western Himalaya, but the scope of this study does not extend to any areas that come in Tibet. The whole region continues to be one of the most inaccessible parts of India even though both Ladakh and Lahoul have been opened up for limited tourist access. The general level of the valleys in the area varies between 10,000 to 16,000 feet above sea level (3,000 – 5,000 meters) and all three districts are sealed off in winter by deep snow at the high passes which give access to the valleys. The distances are enormous and the modes of transport, until as late as the 1950’s, were primitive. The choice of transport, even now, in many of the valleys lies between walking or riding a horse. The country is surrounded by massive mountain ranges, several valleys deep to the north, south and west. In the north west, the Kara-koram Range separate it from the main Tibetan plateau and to the south the Great Himalayan Range isolate it from India. The centres of Buddhist life lie along the intricate river networks that eventually feed the Indus (Senge) the Sutlej (Spiti) and the Chenab (Chandra-Bhaga) rivers.

Ladakh by itself is a vast area and judged by size it is the largest district in India (47,300 square miles. 119,820 square kilometres.) In contrast to its size, Ladakh has the lowest population density in India with under two persons per square mile. Extending between the latitudes 32° 15 to 36° and longitudes 75° 15' to 18° 15', it occupies a crucial strategic position which has kept it sealed off from casual visitors. Bounded on the north by Sinkiang, in the east by Tibet and to the west by Gilgit, Ladakh’s primary importance as a historical trading centre has now been turned into a strategic role. The

population is unevenly distributed about the many valleys that run diagonally across from the north west to the south east. The Indus river, which is amongst the twenty longest in the world, divides Ladakh down the middle, separating Nubra in the north from Zangskar in the south. Cunningham, in his work, had divided Ladakh into the 5 geographical regions of:¹⁵

(i) Nubra, the north western region which has the Nubra and Shayok valleys. North of it is the Kara-Koram Range and south of it the Kailash Range.

(ii) Ladakh, the central area around the Indus valley.

(iii) Zangskar which has the Zangskar valley and consists of an area stretching from Kargil to Lahoul. South of Zangskar lies the Great Himalayan Range and North of it the Transhimalaya Range.

(iv) Purig, Suru and Dras valleys which are now administered from Kargil

(v) Rukchu, the eastern part of Ladakh bordering on Spiti.

Although its physical isolation from the mainland of India has protected it from persistent occupation in the past, Ladakh has nevertheless a history full of wars. There are very few historical sources relating directly to the early history, but in the second century AD. it was part of the Kushāna Empire as evidenced by the Indian Kharaoshti script found at Khalatse. Reliance on the documented history of Baltistan gives some indications about the history of Ladakh before the tenth century AD. when Chinese, Tibetans and Kashmiri troops were criss-crossing the landscape in search of conquest and plunder. The Tibetans had conquered Ladakh and Spiti in the 7th century AD. By the time the independent western Tibetan Kingdom of Gu-ge had been established by King Kyi-de-nyi-ma-gon three centuries later, Ladakh had begun to import both Tibetan and Indian cultural influences. The oldest monasteries date back to that period. In 1842, an army from Kashmir led by General Wazir Ratra defeated the Tibetan Army at Leh and annexed Ladakh to the state of Kashmir. It was this historical war that eventually determined the devolution of Ladakh to India in 1947.

It is clear from the present Dardic (Indo-Iranic) and Tibetan (Mongoloid) racial stock that the early political history of the Western Himalaya has been complex. The Tibetan migration into this area took place after its conquest in the 7th century. Apart from the Dardic and Tibetan connections, there was a Chinese one in 722 AD. when 4000 Chinese soldiers came to help the ruler of Baltistan repel a Tibetan attack. The Indian contact was established from Kashmir when soon after 733 AD, King Lalitāditya Muktāpīḍa defeated both the Dards and Tibetans. We shall return later to the role of this great monarch of Kashmir who was a generous patron of the Buddhists. The initial control by the Tibetans over Ladakh in the 7th century

was never a firm one and Ladakh was more of an outpost than an integral part of the Central Tibetan Kingdom. It was later, in the 10th and 11th centuries AD with the rise of the Kingdom of Gu-ge that Ladakh became integrated into a Tibetan Culture.

Both Spiti and Lahoul are much smaller in size than Ladakh and they are confined, more or less, each to single river valley systems. Lahoul is separated from Chamba in the west by a branch of the Pir Panjal Range which continues south of Lahoul and separates it from Kulu. In the north, the Baralacha Range separates it from both Spiti and Ladakh. The Chandra and Bhaga are the twin rivers of Lahoul that meet at Tandi and continue to flow jointly through Chamba as the Chenab. Spiti, on its western side, is separated from Bushair by the Manirung Range and is served by the Spiti river which later flows through the plains of India as the Sutlej. More uncertainties exist about the history of both Spiti and Lahoul than that of Ladakh. However, it is known that Lahoul was part of the kingdom of Gu-ge at one time and continued to pay tribute till as late as the 17th century when it was annexed into the Kingdoms of Chamba and Kulu. The Sikh kingdom that took over Kulu in 1840, also annexed Lahoul and passed it over to the British in 1846 whence it devolved to India in 1947. Spiti was invaded by the Tibetans in about 1055 AD and in 1262 by Kublai Khan’s troops. By the 17th century it had come under the rule of Ladakh which, it seems, did not extend over the whole of Lahoul. The history of Spiti is much closer tied to that of Ladakh, and the Baltistan penetration into Ladakh in 1740 extended through to Spiti as did the 1840 kashmiri invasion of Ladakh by Zorawar Singh. However Spiti’s annexation into the Kingdom of Kashmir, was traded off by the British who wanted an uninterrupted access to the shawl wool regions of Chang-Tang and they included it within their administrative framework that was locally centred at Kulu.

In all these political and cultural cross currents that went through the Western Himalaya, the one that made the deepest impact was inspired by Gu-ge which sponsored the spreading of Buddhism in this region. Buddhism brought with it changes that began to develop a primarily tribal culture into a feudal one. The nomadic life, which is still characteristic of some of the Ladakhi and Spiti tribes (Chang-pas), is a remnant of their origins which go back several centuries to the Chiang tribes which used to roam the pastures of Central Asia. Fragments of these tribes broke off from the main body at some stage and drifted south eventually to settle into agricultural communities, while others of them continued in their nomadic way, moving across the country from pasture to pasture with the changing seasons. Thus, very early in the history of this region, long before Buddhism came to stay in the 10th century, two basic ways of life had been established which relied upon each other for their survival. The farmers traded their agricultural produce in exchange for the dairy produce of the nomads. This fundamental division in these

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occupations came about for climatic and economic reasons. Most of the year round the severe climate of the country restricts movements of cattle and people. In the late spring and summer, the whole country bursts into a spasm of activity which means that the land has to be tilled, buildings repaired, fresh land brought under cultivation, the cattle grazed on fresh grass and the sheep sheared before the freezing winter sets in again. The pastures for the cattle are generally located on the slopes of the passes above the tree line whereas the agricultural land lies along the valley floor, irrigated by the waters of the melting snow. So while the peasants dig and plough the earth, the nomadic herdsmen pack their tents and move their yaks and goats up to the mountain slopes and passes which are green with the first grass of spring. This two-fold aspect of early tribal life in this region is so deeply rooted and necessary that the advent of Buddhism and feudalism could not replace it wholly. Buddhism was superimposed by the rulers of Gu-ge onto the local tribal religions as part of the political consolidation of the local clans into the kingdom. There are many references to this conquest of the indigenous tribal Bon faith in the Buddhists Tibetan texts which surely refer to just this confrontation that early Buddhism met. The overcoming of the indigenous tribal beliefs, which are collectively referred to as Bon, was nothing other than the replacement of tribal totemic nature worship by an institutional ‘Church’ religion—a symbol of the emerging power of the political rulers of Gu-ge.

The introduction of Buddhism into the region of the Western Himalaya is closely tied up with the expansion of Buddhism in Central Tibet and also with the contacts that were established with India via Kashmir. The history of the spread of Buddhism in Central Tibet falls into two phases. The first was its introduction and propagation and the second was, what the Tibetans term, their Second Advancement. This Second Advancement was centred in the Western Tibetan Kingdom of Gu-ge and created a renewed link between India and Tibet. The first Buddhist links between Tibet and India were formed very indirectly in about 640 AD. when King Song-san gam-po married princess Wen-cheng, daughter of the Chinese Emperor T’ai-tsung of the Tang dynasty, and princess Brikuti, daughter of king Amcuvarman of Nepal. Both the princesses came from Buddhist families and their arrival at the Tibetan court was followed by the building of Buddhist temples in Tibet to house the images that both of them had brought. The original structures of these temples have of course been modified, but these two which came up in Lhasa - the Phrul-snang and the Ra-mo-che temples (later called the jo-Khang) remained the most sacred temples in Tibet. Song-tsen-gam-po, under the implied alliances of both the marriages, was able to consolidate his kingdom over a large area of Central Tibet. Under his successors, Buddhism received ample royal patronage and the new religion began to gain a foothold in Tibet. As the political boundaries of the kingdom expanded outwards, Buddhism overcame the indigenous tribal cults, absorbed them and replaced them with a pantheon of deities of Indian origin. This process was accompanied by the building of forts, monasteries and temples which became the regional centres of the new
religious and political system. The introduction of Buddhism was therefore not achieved in one fell swoop. It grew and expanded with the political expansion of the feudal monarchs and was accompanied by constantly renewed contacts with India which was the prime source of doctrinal inspiration. The Tibetans went and studied at the Mahāvihāras of Nālandā, Odantapura, Vikramśilā and others.

The first monastery to be built in Tibet was called Sam-ya which was founded in the reign of king Khri-song-de-stan in about 779 AD. The founding of Sam-ya is closely connected with the Indian Panditas Sānta Rakṣita and Padmasambhava. The arrival of Padmasambhava in Tibet, his subsequent scholarly efforts and his liak with the founding of Sam-ya are regarded as some of the greatest events in the Buddhist history of Tibet. Sam-ya was to become, after its founding, one of the most important symbols of the Indo-Tibetan connection. The Tibetans maintain that Sam-ya was built on the model of Odantapura in India, but so little of the Indian counterpart survives that no verification is possible. It is also clear from various accounts that Sam-ya had caught fire more than once. So an attempt to trace an architectural link between the two monasteries is, in any case, a hazardous task. What was important, however, was the introduction of the institution of the monastic system into Tibet by both Sānta Rakṣita and Padmasambhava. Compared to the spreading of Buddhism in Ceylon (3rd century BC.), Central Asia, China and Japan (4th Century AD.), Tibet received Buddhism at a much later date (8th century AD.) The result of this late introduction was that it received developed Buddhist institutions and traditions of the Indian model. Thus, the Indian Buddhist monastery, which had already developed from the simple āvāsa into the Mahāvihāra (see Introduction), came to Tibet as a complex and mature institution. Odantapura, in the 8th century, was a complex of academic buildings intended for the training of monks, and it was this aspect of it which was reproduced at Sam-ya and since Sam-ya became the prototype of the Tibetan monastery, it also meant that the subsequent structures that were built all over Tibet, had the multifunctional activites of the Indian Mahāvihāras. The central temple rooms were only a small part of the whole complex. Waddel has given an account of Sam-ya:

"Its full title is ‘bsam-yas Mi'-guyur Lhun-gyis grub-pai Tsug-Lug k'an' or ‘the academy for obtaining the heap of unchanging meditation’ it was built about in 74 by Thi-sron Detsan with the aid of the Indian monks Padmasambhava and Santa Rakṣita, after the model of the Odantapura temple monastery of Bihar. But the building is believed to have been altogether miraculous......The monastery, which contains a large temple, four large colleges and several other buildings, is enclosed by a lofty circular wall about a mile and a half in circumference, with gates, facing the cardinal points, and along the top of the wall are many votive brick chaityas of which the explorer Nain Singh counted 1030 and they seemed to be covered with inscriptions in ancient Indian characters. In the centre of the enclosure stands the assembly hall, with radiating cloisters leading to four chapels, facing at equal distances the four sides of the larger temple......In the vesti-
The chief temple, to the left of the door, is a colossal copy of the pictorial Wheel of Life. The Large image of "Buddha" over ten feet high, seems to be called 'the Sam-ya King!'

The library contains many Indian manuscripts, but a great number of these were destroyed in the fire about 1810 AD.

In a temple close by among the sand is a celebrated chamber of horrors, built by large boulders, and containing gigantic figures of the twenty five Gon-po demons. The images are made of incense and are about twenty feet high, of the fiercest expression, and represented as dancing upon mangled human corpses, which they are also devouring. And great stains of blood are pointed out by the attendants as the fresh stains of bodies which the demons have dragged to the place during the night."

Other accounts of Sam-ya also confirm the total mandala symmetry of the plan and its orientation to the cardinal points. The central temple was three tiered and corresponded to the three building styles of India, China and Tibet. Many of the features and elements described in these accounts recur in the monasteries of the Western Himalaya. The chotens along the outer walls, the wheel of Life, the enclosing walls, the colossal figures, the room with the demons and others can easily be identified in the monasteries of the later period.

The initial phase of the spreading of Buddhism came to an end when King Lang-Dar-ma (836 – 842 AD) ascended the throne. He went out of his way to persecute the Buddhists and prevented their influence from growing in the court and elsewhere. He dismantled much of the Buddhist organisational network that had been set up by the earlier kings and he also stopped royal patronage to monasteries. Together with his Prime-Minister, Batagna, Lang-Dar-ma enacted new laws by which monks were required to get married. Buddhist records describe him, understandably, in a very derogatory manner. Particularly condemned was his desecration of the image of Buddha that princess We'n chang had brought from China, and his subsequent portrayal of her as an evil goblin. How much physical destruction took place, is hard to determine, because later Tibetan accounts generally describe the inability of Lang-Dar-ma to destroy any sacred images which had magical powers of survival. Lang-Dar-ma was assassinated in 842 AD, and there followed a long period of political instability in which Tibet broke up into petty Kingdoms. His descendants quarrelled with each other and one of them, Kyi-de-nyi-ma (900 – 930 AD) was defeated in a war of succession and came south to, carve out for himself a kingdom in the western part of Tibet, in Purang. His three sons further divided the Purang kingdom into the petty kingdoms of Ladakh, Purang and Gu-ge, Zangskar and Spiti. Subsequently these divisions were mixed up and re-divided many times over the


years. At the time of the Second Advancement of Buddhism, the kingdom of Gu-ge, which played a crucial role in it, certainly included Spiti, Zangskar and Lahoul, though Ladakh seems to have had an independent king. The Tibetan records of the ruination brought about by Lang-Dar-ma and the subsequent Second Advance in Western Tibet tend to portray the role of the kings of Western Tibet, in the 10th and 11th centuries, rather dramatically. There is, however, no doubt that Lang-Dar-ma was not able to completely destroy the organisational network of the Buddhists and whatever damage he had done to their institutions and organisations was short lived – more so for the political chaos that followed his reign. There is also very little doubt that the Buddhist groups were able to recover from this setback remarkably quickly and the religion continued to make territorial advances by overcoming the tribal clans and beliefs. The revival of Buddhism was thus part of a continuing process. There is an account of just this process going on in Western Tibet in the translation of Tibetan texts given by Sarat Chandra Das.

"A goat herd named Kargyal, under inspiration from a certain Naga of the same name, preached a strange religion (a form of Bonism) which was inimical to Buddhism. Rin-chen Zango-po overcame him, and also suppressed some of the Tantriks who were in the habit of abusing the Tantrik ritual by committing obscenities under the garb of religion. Thus, by purifying the sacred religion, he gained the sincere love and confidence of the dwellers of the snowy mountains."10

Rin-chen Zang-po (958 – 1055), the great 'translator', was one of the vehicles of the Second Advancement and is highly revered by the Tibetans because, as we shall see later, his new translations of Indian Buddhist texts eventually led to the founding of more sects amongst the Tibetan Buddhists.

The political units of Western Tibet were Gu-ge, Purang, Rutok, Upper Kunawar, Zangskar, Spiti, Lahoul and Ladakh. All these were dominated at one time or the other by the long arm of Lhasa during the 7th and 8th centuries AD. The Central Tibetan kingdom in Lhasa, after Lang-Dar-ma's reign, had broken up and some of the inheritors of the religious doctrines, who were followers of Acarya Santa Raksita, escaped to Eastern Tibet (Kham) and consolidated their base in the eastern mountains. Subsequently they returned to Lhasa and reconstructed the damage that had been done by their persecutor. In the west, under the patronage of the Gu-ge kings, this initial period of reconstruction lasted between about 970 AD upto 1200 AD. Many new temples were founded during this period. The majority of them

10 Ibid, p. 70.
being concentrated in Gu-ge, Spiti and Kunawar. Around 970, another king of Gu-ge named Ye-she-ö, continued to give Buddhism strong patronage. He sent twenty one young men, including Rin-ch'en Zang-po, to India to learn Sanskrit, study with Indian masters and bring back Buddhist texts from India. Rin-ch'en Zang-po, having spent seventeen years in India along with the surviving members of his party, returned to Gu-ge in about 990 AD. Ye-she-ö was, by then, well on his way to becoming a monk, and together with Rin-ch'en Zang-po, he founded the monastery of Tholing as a place to spend his last days in seclusion. Rin-ch'en Zang-po was Tholing's first abbot. The design of the monastery was said to have been inspired by Sam-ya, with a golden stupa to the east. Tholing continued the traditions of the early Tibetan monasteries, being inspired directly or indirectly by Indian prototypes (Ra-mo-che was based on Vikramaśilā, Sam-ya and Tholing on Odantapura, Drepung on Dhanyakataka).²⁰

It seems that Ye-she-ö, having handed the throne to his nephew, spent his remaining years as a monk building and financing monasteries. Together with Rin-ch'en Zang-po, he founded Tabo in 996 and also Chang-chupling. King Ö-de, who came to the Gu-ge throne some time between 1010 and 1030, ruled together with his two monk brothers. One of them, Chang-chub-ö, invited the great Indian Ācārya Dīpaṅkara Srijñāna, whom the Tibetans call Atisa, to Tibet. Ö-de not only restored Tabo Monastery but also founded Mangang Monastery. All the monasteries founded during the reign of the early kings of Gu-ge came to constitute the nucleus of the ka-dam-pa sect which was later taken over by the Ge-lug-pa order. The monasteries of this early period, some of which are discussed in the following chapter, are quite unique if one considers them in the context of their later counterparts erected during the 15th and 16th centuries in the Western Himalaya. They remain the only surviving examples, from a period of Indo-Tibetan collaboration, that was totally devoid of any Chinese influences. The most interesting aspect of this Indo-Tibetan link, forged by the rulers of Gu-ge, was the close contact that was established with Kashmir. It is difficult, to-day, to visualize the powerful cultural effect that the Kashmiri connection had on the Western Himalaya because the remains of Buddhist Kashmir have, more or less, been reduced to rubble. There are, however, a few remaining ruins at Parihatspura, the Sun Temple of Martand and the Temple of Avantipur and they give us the most extraordinary clues about the west Asian art influences that had penetrated deep into the Western Tibetan Kingdom of Gu-ge via Kashmir.

Kashmir, which had been part of the Kushân Empire that had stretched over Afghanistan, Gandhāra and North West India up to Mathura,

has a very ancient Buddhist history. Under the Kushān patronage, Gandhara had developed into a major Buddhist cultural centre rivalled only by Magadha which had much older roots. The centre at Gandhara was virtually destroyed by the white Hun invasion that took place between 500 – 520 AD. Mihirkula the Hun (518 – 529) went into Kashmir and dismantled the entire political and religious network in Gandhāra and Kashmir. For Buddhist Kashmir it was a terrible blow and recovery was slow. Even then, somehow, the Buddhists were able to revive themselves and rebuild some of the infrastructure that had been destroyed. Temples were rebuilt, the saṅgha collected again and the work started again. By the time Hsuan-tsang visited Kashmir in 630 AD he found the Buddhists centres of learning in shambles though in the process of repair. Between the first destruction of the Buddhist temples by Mihirkula, the Hun, and the second destruction by Sultan Sikander (1389 – 1413), the Buddhists were given a brief respite by Lalitāditya Muktāpīda (725 – 756 AD) who ascended the throne of Kashmir and provided a flood of patronage to the Buddhists and Hindus. Lalitāditya Muktāpīda was, by all accounts, a most extraordinary man who rose like a meteor to disappear equally fast without having made any fundamental impact on the course of events in the history of India. He had been preceded on the throne by his two elder brothers Chandrapīda and Tarāpīda, both of whom had short and eventless reigns. But Lalitāditya led successful campaigns into Kanauj, the Deccan, the Konkan, Gujarāt, Kathiawārd and Rajputana, Punjab, Afghānistan, Central Asia, the Tarim Basin, Taqlamakan, and possibly Kuch and Turfan and accumulated enormous wealth, a large part of which was used to finance the construction of temples, monasteries and stūpas all over Kashmir. Kashmir was a small kingdom quite incapable of financing, through its own revenues, such lavish programmes of temple building, and his lightening campaigns into India seemed to have been intended more to collect booty than to gain permanent territorial expansion. His work was facilitated by the fragmentation of the classical kingdoms of India which had more or less faded into oblivion. Goetz credits the success of Lalitāditya’s Indian campaigns to their timing which took place in the “void” created between the end of the “classic” civilisation associated with the names of the Guptas, Vākātakas, Yasōdharmāna and Harsha, the Chālukyas and Pāllavas and the rise of the medieval civilisation heralded by the Prathīhāras, Pālas, Rashtrakūṭas and Cholas. Certainly, the lavish patronage of Lalitāditya Muktāpīda introduced the age of medieval art and culture to Kashmir. The numerous temples founded in his


22 Ibid, p. 8
reign at Parihāspura, his capital, Mártānd, Buniyar, Narastān, Vāngath, Loduv and Takht-i Sulaimān introduced into Kashmir new building styles and art motifs which were alien to Kashmir but whose prototypes are to be found in such diverse sources as Gandhāra, Syria and Byzantium. Very little research has so far been done to link up medieval Kashmiri art to its Indian and Central Asian sources and it would be difficult to give any detailed analysis of art motifs and building types of Kashmir and Central Asia. Kak, in his “Ancient Monuments of Kashmir,” has illustrated only a few of the rich art motifs from Pandrethān, Parihāspura, Mártānd and Avantisvamin in his book but the sites provide such a rich collection of motifs that are wholly un-Indian in style that one cannot but be amazed at the eclectic nature of medieval Kashmiri art.

More than any other individual building which survives from that period, Mártānd, the Sun Temple, probably provides us with the greatest number of clues to the European and Central Asian origins of 8th century art of Kashmir. The temple is situated on a high plateau that overlooks the vale on three sides, and the sheer natural beauty of the surroundings gives the monument a unique atmosphere. In plan form, it follows closely the Buddhist monasteries of Gandhāra which must, surely, have provided the builders with a prototype. The Gandhāra monasteries were in turn, of course, inspired by their earlier Greek counterparts, but that is an indirect link that does not concern us here. The temple shrine itself is placed inside a large courtyard 220' x 142' (67.00 m. x 43.25 m) which is defined by a continuous wall of small chapels forming a colonnaded peristyle. The arrangement of these small chapels goes back directly to the Gandhāra monasteries in which the central shrine was surrounded by the cells of the monks. The earlier Buddhist monasteries of the Gupta period in India also had a similar arrangement of cells, but the colonnaded peristyle found at Mártānd and later at Avantisvamin (See fig. 15) certainly has no known Central Indian prototype.

The peristyle at Mártānd consists of 79 chapels facing the courtyard – 25 each are placed along the two longer peristyles, 6 each on either side of the vaulted entrance and the remaining 17 along the rear wall. Each of these chapels is framed within a trefoliated stone arched facade which has, over it, a triangular gable motif. In front of the chapel facade, and situated between the adjacent chapels, there are 84 fluted columns decorated and fluted in a variety of ways. These motifs, some of which are repeated on the engaged columns at Avantisvamin, must surely be one of the richest sources for tracing the inspiration of medieval Kashmiri art. The trefoliated arch (see fig. 14)

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itself is one of the most interesting motifs that are clearly identified with the art of Kashmir. At Mártánd this arch has been exploited to the full, and apart from providing a decorative motif, it has also been used structurally across the entrance to the sanctuary where metal dowels have been used to secure the keystone. Inside the sanctuary the Súrya image is framed within the same trefoliated arch, defined within a double triangular gable, separated by a horizontal band. This building element, – the trefoliated arch within a triangular gable – is clearly alien to Indian buildings. The trefoliated arch which is found in Gandharan, Arabian, and European architecture could have a very diverse origin, whereas the triangular gables are very reminiscent of Byzantine buildings in Syria and Europe. The combination of the gable and trefoliated arch is clearly identified in most of the temples of medieval Kashmir of this period, and it was copied and elaborated upon in wood, at Alchi Chos-khor in Ladakh (Plate 28). At Alchi, the trefoliated arch has been reduced from a structural form to a purely decorative motif which is improvised upon. Over the entrance porch of the Sum-tsek, it appears in wood in different forms surrounding three separate deities. The carved beams and engaged stub timber columns that appear between these figures, also show the strong influence of Kashmir architecture that developed during the reign of Lalitāditya Muktāpīḍa. For instance, the beam placed between the lion end joists and the stub columns in the Sum-tsek façade, has a carved miniature arcade of the type which is found at the Caitya at Parihāspura and also on the Kirtimukha cornice of Avantisvamin Temple. The geese placed in each of the chapels in this Kirtimukha cornice are also found in a continuous border above the murals of all the Alchi Chos-khor temples. The familiar triangular gable is found roofing the three niches of the Sum-tsek (See Plates 35, 36, 38) and these timber gables have a trefoliated arch painted on them.

Very little of the structural elements of the stone architecture of Kashmir could be taken over as building elements in Ladakh or Spiti, where the materials of construction consisted of mud and timber. Thus, the Roman and Byzantine barrel vault which was built at Mártánd over the Vimāna is wholly absent in the architecture of the Western Himalaya. The Pyramidal roof too is uncommon, and except at the temple of Guru Ghantal (Plate 153, 154) it is not seen anywhere to-day. It is interesting that the pyramidal roof and dormer window found at Guru Ghantal, does come very close to the type of gable roofs found on the temples of Pandrethan, Buniyar and Patan, in Kashmir. Thus the builders of the Buddhist mud temples in the Western Himalaya, particularly those belonging to the earlier period, freely used motifs from the stone architecture of Kashmir without giving them any structural logic. Lalitāditya Mukhtāpīḍa had, under the sheer force and dynamism of his personality, stamped out a recog-
nizable style of building within his life time. He employed artists from wherever he could get them, and his buildings combined diverse styles and techniques which, despite being eclectic, had a uniqueness of their own which came to be identified with Kashmir. In the later years when the dynamism was no longer present, artists continued to use these motifs as symbols of a Kashmiri style, and by the time they were taken to Gu-ge they were, surely, mere symbols of grandiose architectural embellishments. A brief list of motifs and building elements that appear at Alchi Chos-khor in the Sum-tsek, gives some idea of the diverse art influences that were flowing through the Western Himalaya without any clearly recognizable Indian origin except their earlier presence in Kashmir.

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<tr>
<td>Large standing figures in stucco</td>
<td>Syrian Byzantine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single and double triangular gables</td>
<td>Roman Byzantine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vertically fluted columns</td>
<td>Roman Doric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column capitals</td>
<td>Roman Syrian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denticular abacus cornices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column bases</td>
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</table>

There were also influences in plan form which were carried from Kashmir to the Western Himalaya. Unfortunately, the buildings at Parihaspura have been completely destroyed, otherwise surely, more links could have been verified. There is, however, a close similarity between the layout of Tabo (fig. 1) and the enclosed peristyle temple exemplified at Martand, Avantisvamin (fig. 15) and others which followed the Gandhara monastery and earlier Greek temple layout. Similarly, the large stucco figures of Avalokiteśvara, Vairocana and Mañjuśrī which stand inside the niches in the Sum-tsek (Plate 35, 36, 38, fig. 10) closely resemble the colossus at Bāmiyan. Many of the prototype structures that have influenced the motifs of the temples associated with Rin-chen Zang-po in Ladakh and Spiti have been illustrated in the murals in these temples and, no doubt, when a detailed study is made of these murals, much information will emerge, to positively establish something that one can only conjecture about to-day.
THE EARLY PERIOD

THE TEMPLES AND MONASTERIES OF THE EARLIER PERIOD (1000 AD – 1300 AD)

The earliest temples in Tibet that had been built during the reign of Song-san-gam-po had, during the following centuries, undergone considerable change. The Phrul-nang temple, ascribed by Tibetan tradition to the Nepalese wife of the king, had become incorporated into the Jo wo-Khang, one of the famous edifices in Lhasa. From descriptions of visitors to the Jo wo-Khang, one gathers that it was not unlike many a ‘Du-khang that one finds in a large monastery. There is an ample description of it in Waddell and, in many ways, it typifies the description of the ‘Du-khangs which were built into each monastery complex in the rest of Tibet and the Western Himalayan region.

"Its entrance faces the east, and before it, in a square, stands a flagstaff, about forty feet high with yak’s hair and horns of yak and sheep tied to its base. The main building is three storeys high and roofed by golden plates. The entrance is in the shape of a hall, which rests on six wooden pillars, very handsomely decorated with engravings, paintings and gilding. The walls are covered with rough pictures out of the biography of the founder of the religion. In the centre of the hall is a swing door which is decorated on the outside with bronze, and on the inside with iron reliefs. Through this you pass into the ante-court which is covered by the first storey. In the wall, opposite the entrance, is a second door, which brings you inside, on both sides of which stand the colossal statues of the four guardian kings; two on the right and two on the left. This brings us into a large pillared hall, which has the form of the basilica, and is divided by colonnades into three long and two cross-aisles. The light comes from above in the middle or broadest aisle, where a transparent oil cloth serves instead of glass. Through this the whole temple is lighted, because there are no side windows. On the outside of the two side aisles, i.e. on the north and south side, is a row of small cells or chapels, fourteen to the right and just as many to the left. The two cross-aisles form the background, and are separated from the long aisle by silver lattice work. Here are the seats of the lower priests for common prayer meetings. From the west cross-aisle a staircase leads into the holy of holies. On the left of this we see, by
ascending behind silver rods, fifteen plates of massive silver, which are covered with innumerable precious stones, and contain representations of the Buddhist dogmatics and mysticism. From the stairs above we came into a cross-aisle, which has just as many pillars as the two lower ones, and also the inner front hall of the sanctuary. The latter has the form of a square in which there are six chapels, three on each of the north and south flanks. In the middle is the place for the offering altar, which, however, is only erected on certain occasions. On the other side of the altar, on the west side of the holy of holies, also in the lower depth of the whole edifice, is the quadrangular niche, with the image of Śākyamuni.”

This account of the most sacred temple in Lhasa describes an extremely elaborate complex of rooms. If one considers that the Jo wo-khang was desecrated in the 9th century then it is obvious that in the rebuilding process much was added to the original Phrul-nang founded by the Nepalese princess. The only unusual element of the Jo wo-Khang, which is not usually repeated in other Tibetan temples is the row of cells surrounding the main courtyard. This relative location and arrangement of the cells goes back to Indian prototypes that included the cave monasteries of Central India. Most of the other features like the pillared halls, rooflights, altars and the niches can be found, in some form or the other, in most monastery ‘Du-khangs.

In considering the Western Himalayan region it would be useful to make a clear distinction between the monastic complexes that were formed in the earlier period, under the patronage of the kings of Gu-ge, and the later period when these complexes were established, with the coming of the reformist Ge-lug-pa sect, in the 14th and 15th centuries. The commonly known style of Tibetan religious architecture emerged during this later period when the decorations and construction elements became somewhat standardized. By the time the larger monasteries of Ladakh and Bhutan were built, the Tibetans had already got used to running large monasteries with complex functions. Monasteries of the later period had, by then, become centres of rival political power which manifested itself in the disputes between the rival sects. Monasteries used to protect themselves against physical attacks and they assumed, in many cases, fortress like forms. The larger extended agglomerations that are seen at Drepung and Tashi Lunpo became consolidated into compact and easily defenced fortress monasteries perched on hill tops. In contrast to this later development of religious architecture, where influences are directly connected with the religious and political developments in Central Tibet, the architecture of the earlier period was inspired directly from Indian sources.

The architectural conception of the monastery complexes of the earlier period in the Western Himalaya is unique. It bears very little resemblance to the hill-top monasteries of the later period. The difference can best be seen in a comparison of the ground plans of Tabo and Alchi (fig. 1 and 7) belonging to the earlier period and any of the later ones such as Hemis or Phiyang (fig. 16). Today, these temples can be seen in various states of decay, enclosed by a wall which defines their territory, because very little survives of the monks' residential cells. Out of all that survives in India from the temples ascribed to the great Rin-chen Zang-po, Tabo, Lha-lun and Alchi are the most important, and their rare state of preservation has enabled us to get an insight into the art and architectural style of Western Tibet. The ancient temples of the Tibetan kingdom of Gu-ge, many of which were visited and described by Tucci in his classic 'Indo-Tibetica,' have certain identifiable architectural and art forms which are typified at Tabo, Lha-Lun, Alchi, Mang-gyu and Senge sgang. There are other isolated temples belonging to this style, which are located near Phiyang, and at Sumdo, but it was not possible to visit them or illustrate them in the present study.

Broadly speaking, the physical and other characteristics of the temples of the earlier period can be enumerated thus:

*A surviving legend which ascribes the founding of the temples to Lotsawa Rin-chen Zang-po* (958 – 1055). Rin-chen Zang-po was one of the greatest translators and builders of temples that Tibet has known and his name is associated, by the Tibetans, with the second spread or resurgence of Buddhism which was inspired in the kingdom of Gu-ge around 1000 AD. Indeed the Tibetans identify him as one of the apostles of this resurgence. His patron was King Ye-she-o (light of wisdom) who, it will be remembered, had sent twenty one young Tibetans for Buddhist studies to India. Part of the reason why Rin-chen Zang-po was able to acquire such fame is that only two of those twenty one scholars survived their stay in India—he and another monk called Lek-pai she-rap. Rin-chen Zang-po spent a total of seventeen years in India on three separate visits, visiting various Buddhist centres of learning in Central and Northern India and concentrating particularly on tantric knowledge. His personal knowledge of the tantra texts acquired in India and his translations of many of these texts into Tibetan enabled a vast body of scriptural knowledge to be transferred from India to Gu-ge. This transference proved extremely providential if one considers the total eclipse of Buddhism in India that followed soon after. The other great contemporary figure in Gu-ge who was engaged in that providential transference of Buddhist texts from India was Dipankara Srijñana (Atiśa 982 – 1054) who was persuaded by a Tibetan delegation from Gu-ge to leave his home in Vikramaśīlā, in Eastern India, to give
further guidance to the second spreading of Buddhism. This second spreading was, of course, accompanied by an expansion in the political power of Gu-ge and the religious establishments, that were founded by Rin-chen Zang-po and his successors, were built along the route from Kashmir to Gu-ge which was, by King Ye-she-ō’s time, a well consolidated part of the kingdom. Tradition credits the great translator with the founding of 108 temples in this region and Tucci, in 'Indo-Tibetica,' lists the names of those temples which he was able to identify. Perhaps more sites can be located once the long biography of Rin-chen Zang-po comes to light. Rin-chen Zang-po belonged to the Ka-dam-pa sect, which was founded by Dromton ('Brom-ston) (1008 – 64) on the teachings of Dipaṅkara Śrījñāna.

The dedication of the temples to the Omniscient Buddha Vairocana (rNam-par Snang-mdzad):

Vairocana is the central white Buddha of the five Tathāgatas (Akshobhya-blue to the east, Ratnasambhava-yellow to the south, Amitābha-red to the west and Amoghasiddhi-green to the north). Manifestations of his images dominate the temples at Tabo, Alchi, Lha-lun, Mang-gyu and Senge-sgang, which are illustrated in the present study, and also other temples of this period visited by Tucci at Tsaparang and Tholing. The physical representation of Vairocana, the four other Tathāgatas, and the rest of the divinities of his parivāra can be seen in figs 2, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11 which enumerate the arrangement of the deities at Alchi, Tabo and Lha-Lun, and their relationship with Vairocana. The cult of Vairocana was certainly rare in Tibet, though outside India he is most commonly represented as the central and Omniscient Being in Japan where he is known as Dai-Nichi-Nyorai. There is also a prevalent theory, strongly supported by Lokesh Chandra, that the missing central gold image at Barabudur was also Vairocana. Certainly, his representation as the Omniscient Being at the centre of a cult must have been very prevalent in India during the closing period of Buddhism, and this explains the importance given to him by the patrons of Gu-ge during the 11th century. At Alchi, Vairocana is represented in numerous forms and colours, but his basic form remains white in colour sitting cross legged on a lotus throne borne by lions, his hands are in the dharmachakra mudrā (turning the wheel of law) where the index finger of the left hand is held by the right hand, his head is crowned by a five leafed crown. In the large stucco images of Vairocana at Tabo and Lha-lun, the Omniscient One is represented in quadruple form, sitting back to back, and looking out in four directions.

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The Parivāra (entourage) of Vairocana can be enormous, but the basic deities are as follows:26

The 37 Basic Divinities of the Vairocana Mahāyāna (Their arrangement in a mandala can be seen in fig 10)27

One Sarvavid (gtso-bo):
1) Vairocana as the Ominiscient Lord Centre (Dharmacakra)

Four Tathāgata (Buddhas):
2) Akshobhya. East (Vajra)
3) Ratnasambhava. South (Ratna)
4) Amitābha. West (Padma)
5) Amoghasiddhi. North (Visvavajra)

Four Śakti (Main Goddesses):
6) Locani. South East
7) Māmkī. South West
8) Paṇḍuravāsini. North West
9) Tārā. North East

Eight Subsidiary Goddesses:
10) Vajralāsya. South East
11) Vajramālā. South West
12) Vajragni. North West
13) Vajrāryā. North East
14) Vajradhūpa. South East
15) Vajrapuṣpā. South West
16) Vajralokā. North West
17) Vajragandhā. North East

Sixteen Bodhisattvas:

Vajra family
18) Vajrasattva
19) Vajrarāja
20) Vajrarāga
21) Vajrasādhu

Ratna family
22) Vajraratna
23) Vajratejā
24) Vajraketu
25) Vajrahāsa

Padma Family

26 This list of the 37 Basic Divinities can be seen in Snellgrove and Skorupski’s book (note 27), and in Tucci’s Indo Tibetica, Volume III, where a number of Vairocana cycles are enumerated.

The predominant influence of Kashmir on the art and architectural motifs:

The temples of this early period are inevitably a blend of the local Western Himalayan style of construction consisting of stone foundations, mud walls, a timber and mud roof, and completely Indian decoration. In contrast to the paintings in the temples of the later period, after the 14th century, those in the temples of the early period are not influenced by the Central Tibetan style, which emerged later under a strong Chinese influence. There is ample evidence to show that this Indian influence was more specially identified as a direct influence from Kashmir. Rin-chen Zang-po’s biography mentions the employment of 75 painters and craftsmen from Kashmir who were taken to Gu-ge for the specific purpose of helping to build temples. Today however, unfortunately, the physical evidence of the proliferation of this school of painting in Kashmir is totally absent. So complete was the destruction of the Buddhist centres of learning in Kashmir, that no trace of any Buddhist painting can be seen there today. The strongest links that are available to us are the motifs on the ruined stone edifices of Parihaspura, Mārtānd, Pāndrethan, Malot and Avantisvamin, that are clearly reflected at Alchi. The link can be positively established by the decorative motif of the trefoliated arch used freely in many versions at Alchi, and the gabled roof motif which is clearly evident at Mārtānd, Parihaspura and again at Alchi (fig. 14). At Parihaspura, for instance, one of the images of the Buddha sits inside a trefoliated arch, a theme which is repeated in the wooden carvings above the entrance porch of the Sum-tsek at Alchi. Elsewhere, the details of the peristyle columns found at Avantisvamin closely resemble the short stub columns

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that support the trefoliated canopy above the central wall images at Lha-Lun. The peristyle columns, which abound in the arched cells of the periphery walls of both Mārtānd and Avantisvamin, are seen in modified form, in the wood work above the entrance of the Sum-tsek, at Alchi (Plate 28). They also support the canopy structures above Ratnasambhava, Akshobhya, Amitābha and Amoghasiddhi in the central niche of the ‘Du-khang at Alchi, which houses the central image of Vairocana (Plate V). At Tabo, the same type of pillars are seen supporting the canopy above the Buddha panel. Particular similarity between the carved stone details of Kashmir and the Western Himalayan wooden details can be seen in the capitals of these elaborately decorated columns. In both cases the capitals are generally square and in two or three successive courses that are wedged shaped, narrowing down to the column head. In Kashmir this can be seen clearly on the columns on either side of the Sūrya image at Mārtānd and on the relief image of Kāmdeva and his consorts at the Avantisvamin Temple. Another common link can be seen in the interweaving lotus stems that surround the deities in a continuous sequence which is seen most clearly on the walls of Lha-lun, in Spiti, and provides a direct link to a similar type of interwoven stem motif on the border of the frame for a Buddha image, dated around 900 AD, that was found in Divsar village in Kashmir, and is now on display at the Shrinagar Museum. This motif, commonly found on Byzantine bowls, came to Kashmir and then to the Western Himalaya. At Avantisvamin, the entrance portico, on ascending the main steps, has the identical motif surrounding the nine Vishnu images that are portrayed in a horizontal sequence below the large image framed by a gable, but eroded beyond recognition.

Kashmir, of course, was not the originator of these themes and features which were borrowed by the temple craftsmen working in the service of the kings of Gu-ge. The extraordinary reign of Lalitāditya Muktāpida had patronised such a vast variety of styles and craftsmen, that it is possible to trace Gandhāran, Roman-Byzantine, Syrian and Coptic Egyptian themes happily mixed together to form the unique eclectic style of the art of medieval Kashmir. Goetz identifies the real source of all non Indian elements, in the art of Kashmir of this period, as 7th century Byzantine Syria.

29 Goetz, Hermann : op. cit , plates XXV, XXVI, XXVIII.
The temples were built on relatively flat open ground and the whole area enclosed by a wall.

The influence of medieval Kashmir art on the early temples of Ladakh and Spiti extended into the architectural conception of the complexes too. The layout of both Avantisvamin and Mārtānd temples consists of a central temple placed within a rectangular courtyard which is defined by an enclosure of cells. In the case of Avantisvamin, the central temple is surrounded by four corner shrines. The whole complex faces due east and is approached through an elaborate doorway located in the centre of the east wall of cells surrounding the complex (fig. 15). The origin of this type of layout goes back to the Buddhist monastic centers which thrived in Central Asia and Gandhāra in particular. Some resemblance to this layout can be seen at Tabo and it is easy to trace the basic similarity between the architectural conception of Avantisvamin and Tabo, even though the cells around the periphery have been reduced to a simple mud wall and the elaborate entrance is nowhere to be seen. This similarity, however, does not extend to Alchi which has a much more informal layout with the entrance chotens placed at an odd angle to the main temples. However, to positively identify the medieval temples of Kashmir as the source of the layout would be hazardous as we should remember that Sam-ya too had a similar conception.

The similarity between the Chos'-khor of Tabo and Alchi is immediately apparent if one considers the location of the later hill top monasteries built under the Ge-lug-pa hegemony. The temples of this early period were inevitably located on relatively flat ground and they were also surrounded by a high wall known as cags-ri which still stands preserved at Tabo (Plate III) but traces of which are only evident at Alchi. Lha-lun and Senge-sgang are individual temples and any traces of such a wall are not evident today. However, it is significant that both temples are built at a low level and in the case of the Senge-sgang one has to descend well below the level of the present Lamayuru monastery that towers above. The enclosure wall, the cags-ri, apart from physically isolating the temples, also serves as a symbolical boundary that divides the sacred territory within from the profane territory outside. This use of symbolical barriers is most commonly found in the diagrams of all sacred mandala which are circumscribed by a band of flames, lotus petals and the belt of diamonds. Thus, within the context of Buddhist beliefs, such a physical enclosure has its symbolical meaning and is not simply an imported element. It would be useful to take a closer look at some of these temples which have been ascribed to Rin-chen Zang-po and belong to the earlier period.
**TABO CHOS-KHOR**

**Architectural Description**

The village of Tabo is approached by a footpath that goes along the steep banks of the Spiti river. The village itself, like many in Spiti, is a random collection of houses spread over a large area that is interspersed with cultivated fields. The monastery is clearly visible as heaps of ruined, windowless mud structures that are formally placed in a row and surrounded by a mud wall enclosure which is about six feet high. Just outside the wall, near the north-western corner of the wall, stands a tall Pipal tree (Ficus Religiosa) which seems extremely aged. Local legend has it that this tree has sprouted from the staff of Rin-chen Zang-po which he dug into the ground to mark his presence. The same vareity of tree is also growing outside the compound of Alchi Chos-'khor though that seems much older and in an even further state of decay than the Pipal at Tabo. The mountains on either side rise up steeply and the monastery is built on a flat piece of land that has been defined by a large bend in the river. The footpath, which remains north of the river, makes its way into Tabo village and beyond, passing well below the rocky cliffs and the ancient caves that are attached to the monastery. These caves are totally dark from inside and have been neglected for many years although their walls still have the ancient paintings which were done by the Indian craftsmen who decorated the temples of the Chos-'khor. Unfortunately these paintings are in a terrible state and, without considerable, renovation it is not possible to discern very much on the rocky walls.

**The layout**

Tabo Chos-'khor consists of the following temples, reading from south to north (see fig. I Plate III)

1) *Ser-khang*
2) *Kyil-khang*
3) *Brom-ston Lha-khang C'enpo*
4) *Sug Lha-khang*
5) *Go-khang*
6) *Gon-khang*
7) *Byam-Pai Lha-khang*
8) *Brom-ston Lha-khang*
9) *Kar-byun* which is situated to the west of the rest of the temples and touches the boundary wall, into which it’s doorway opens.
The whole compound is enclosed by a rectangular wall which has clearly been extended on its western side to include the doorway of the Kar byun Temple. On the eastern side of the wall, a house for the monks shares its side wall with the boundary wall. The enclosure within the compound measures approximately 279' by 244' (84.7 m x 74.30 m) excluding the 36' extension to the wall which has been added on the western side, at a later date. The complex is entered through a plain gate in the eastern wall which is not located centrally. However, the southern nib in the wall at the gate does line up with the two nibs in the portico between the Gon-khang and Sug Lha-khang and it is possible that the original gate was wider and placed directly opposite the entrance door into the Sug Lha-khang. The compound itself is strewn with the remains of chotens which have been built over the many years of the life of the temples. Many of them have the more ancient form that is associated with Rin-chen Zang-po and are
found at Nyar-ma and Alchi. The temples themselves are arranged in a row, each facing east. The Kyil-khang or "Initiation room" is however, tucked away behind the central row which contains four of the temples.

Physical description of the temples

The Ser-khang Temple, situated at the southern end, consists of a square hall measuring approximately 27' x 27' (8.2 m x 8.2 m) which is 19' (5.8 m) high. The entrance passes through the traditional portico that is a symbolical and physical lobby between the outside world and the inner sanctum. This lobby or portico can be seen at the entrance of most Buddhist temples in the Western Himalaya and indeed in the whole of Tibet. In the case of the Ser-khang, unlike that in the Byam-pai and Brom-ston Lha-khang, the original high roof of the portico seems to have been preserved. The inner sanctum, which contains the murals of a number of deities which are described later, is spanned across in three bays of 9' (2.7 m), each of which is supported on two rows of four rounded columns. It is clear from the structure that the outer four columns, which are placed along the side walls, are a later addition which were necessary to strengthen the roof, which even now seems on the point of virtual collapse. The superstructure is constructed from sun-dried bricks, which have been cruelly plastered over in a very patchy manner. The average wall thickness is as much as three feet, which is common for all the temples in the Chos-'Khor, but the walls of the southern and western side have been considerably reinforced with additional thickness and measure 6' to 7' (1.8 m - 2 m) in thickness. The thickening of the west wall of all the temples to a depth of up to 8' (2.4 m) is common for all five temples that are exposed on the western side. Although it was not possible to verify this at the time of the visit, it is very likely that this additional thickness has been added to prevent the effects of wind and snow erosion that result from the wind rushing down the valley of the Spiti river.

The Kyil-khang is a small temple without the customary portico and it is entered through a low doorway which leads one to a lower level than the surrounding land. The sanctum itself measures 17' x 17' (5.0 m. x 5.0 m.) and is 15' (4.5 m.) high and is spanned across by three bays, two of which are 4' each (1.4 m.) and the third which is 8' across (2.4 m.). The roof is supported by four rounded columns that are placed eccentrically. These columns have been repaired at some time during the life of the structure and, even now, seem to be holding up the roof rather precariously. The western wall of the temple is about 8' (2.4 m.) thick and extends beyond the side walls by some 4' (1.2 m) on either side.
The central block, consisting of the "Brom-ston Lha-khang C'enpo, Sug Lha-khang, the Go-khang and the Gon-khang is, to-day, an irregular shaped building, which has all the evidence of additional construction, which has been done at a later date than the original Sug-Lha-khang. The location of the Sug Lha-khang in relation to the original boundary wall is interesting. The centre of the Sug Lha-khang is also the centre of the compound along the east–west axis. However, along the north-south axis, the centre is eccentrically placed nearer to the south side by some 12 (3.6 m). The entrance into the Sug Lha-khang is indirect and via the Go-khang which serves as a kind of ante-room leading into the main Sug Lha-khang and the more recent Gon-khang. A climb of three steps brings one to the entrance of the Sug Lha-khang which is an enormous rectangular hall measuring some 41 (12.4 m x 10.9 m.). There is a large opening in the western wall, which leads to the inner sanctum or apse beyond which it contains a cell surrounded by a circumambulating passage. It is clear from its ground plan that the Sug Lha-khang has an individual external architectural character which has now been obscured by the addition of the Go-khang, the Gon-khang and the room to the east of the Go-khang, which is deserted. Thus, it is extremely likely that, the Sug Lha-khang was entered directly from the outside and that its entrance door was directly opposite the gate in the boundary wall some 100 (30.4 m.) away. The hall itself is spanned across its 40 (12.0 m) length by four equal bays of 8 (2.4 m.) each and the last bay which is 9 (2.7 m.). The four bays across its width are unequal and measure, from north to south, 5 (1.5 m), 6 (2.0 m), 12 (3.6 m), 9 (2.7 m), and 3-6 (1.0 m.). The large 12 (3.6 m) bay in the centre is a particularly unusual one because, for construction in these parts, the timber required for such a span was not easily available and had to be brought from Kunawar. The cell of the inner sanctum measures 8 (2.4 m) x 7-6 (2.4 m x 2.2 m) and the circumambulation path behind this cell is 5 (1.5 m) wide on all the three sides. The western wall behind the cell is again about 8 (2.4 m) thick, and like the rear wall of the kyil-khang, it projects beyond the side walls by some 4 (1.2 m.)

The Go-khang is a rectangular hall measuring 22 (6.6 m x 6.0 m) which is spanned by three bays each way, supported on four columns that are, more or less, symmetrically placed. These columns too, like many of the others in the subsidiary temples, are precariously propped up with crude capitals which distribute the load of the roof beams onto the columns. The Gon-khang measures 16 (4.8 m x 4.2 m) and is divided into three unequal bays across its length by two circular columns. The "Brom-ston Lha-khang C'enpo is attached onto the Go-khang and Sug Lha-khang on the south side but is separated by, what seems an enormously thick wall, measuring 18.
(5.4 m.) at its thickest point. There is evidence of some kind of a sealed room which exists in this gap which was probably entered through the store room attached to the Brom-ston Lha-khang C'enpo. It was not possible to verify the reason for the discrepancy of the measurements. However it is also possible that the whole thickness of the wall contains rubble and has been sealed off. At Alchi, where a similar inaccessible space exists between the walls of the court of the Du-khang and the Lotsawa Lha-khang, we were able to gain access from the top and discover nothing else but the rubble of an abandoned house. The Brom-ston Lha-khang C'enpo is the second largest hall out of the complex and measures 33' x 24'. (10.0 m. x 7.3 m.). Behind the main hall the room narrows down to form a niche similar in principle to the one in the Sug Lha-khang, but without the cell. This niche measures 9' x 18'. (2.7 m. x 5.4 m.). Two rows of four columns each divide the hall into three bays across its width, each measuring about 8'. (2.4 m.). Accurately measured, the bay dimensions in all these temples vary somewhat to allow for the slight variations in the timber sizes that must have been obtained. In the case of the Brom-ston Lha-khang C'enpo the bay sizes are close to 8'. (2.4 m.) each but are actually 7', 8-3" and 8'. (2.33 m., 2.51 m., and 2.4 m.). The entrance portico of the temple is wholly non-discr ipt and has a wooden ladder which takes one to the upper level rooms built above the portico and Go-khang. Like the Sug Lha-khang this temple too has a double height.

The Byam-Pai Lha-khang shows signs of substantial renovation both inside and outside. The entrance portico which, at present, has a low roof, is certainly a patched up version of the original one. The external walls (Plate 44) show all the signs of collapse and it is almost certain that the roof of the entire structure was replaced, at some time not easy to determine. The paintings on the inside walls are also recent, which would confirm that the original structure suffered heavy damage. The timber beam, which has been placed over the entrance to the porch, is a rough and ready tree trunk and certainly does not have the better finish that the beam has over the entrance to the portico of the Ser-khang. The Ser-khang, Byam-pai Lha-khang and Brom-ston Lha-khang temples, all have the same architectural conception in terms of form. There is a well defined portico roofed over at about 7' or 8' which leads to the timber door of the inner sanctum which is a hall roofed at a height of about 12'. (3.6 m.) Thus the 'box' of the sanctum hall is seen to rise some five to six feet above the roof of the portico. The original portico of the Byam-pai Lha-khang can now only be traced to the side walls which are also in a severe state of collapse. The internal room measures 27'-6' x 25'. (8.3 m x 7.6 m.) and the niche given into the central wall measures 9' x 20-6" (2.7 m x 6.2 m.). The combination of round and square columns suppor-
ting the roof are a clear indication that the whole structure has been renovated more than once. Moreover, only one of the columns has the carved stone base with lion motifs, which must surely have been placed under other columns in the temples. It’s isolated presence in this temple only shows that it has been used to prop up a column which would otherwise have been too short. The external indentations to the wall around the niche, however, go back to the original structure and resemble the similar treatment of stone walls on the Hindu temples in Kashmir and other places, confirming the derivation of ground plans from squared diagrams resembling *mandalas*.

The ‘Brom-ston Lha-khang is named after the famed Dromton (1008 – 64), who was a disciple of Atisā, a contemporary of Rin-chen Zang-po and the founder of the *ka-dam-pa* order which had maintained Tabo from earliest times till it was taken over by the *Ge-lug-pa* order. The inner sanctum is a near square measuring 15’-6” x 17’ (4.7 m x 5.1 m.) with just one column placed centrally which is round and resembles the old ones. The approach to the inner room is, however, unusual as one has to pass through a 10 long vestibule after entering the portico. The portico itself is ‘L’ shaped, which seems to suggest that the configuration of the portico has undergone some changes. The rear wall is 8’ thick (2.4 m.) and protrudes out beyond the side walls as in the case of the *kyil-khang*. The timber door frame of the temple room is an elaborately carved piece of wood work, which has clearly been done by the craftsmen who were brought from Kashmir. It resembles, in style, the doorway leading to the ‘Du-khang at Alchi’ which is, however, a much more elaborate one and in a better state of preservation. Such a carved door also leads one into the *Byam-pai Lha-khang*, although this piece has suffered more from the ravages of time. The only other craftsmen, contemporaneous at this time, capable of handling such intricate wood carving were the craftsmen of Chamba who had created the 7th and 8th century wooden temples of Lakshana Devī, Sakt Devī, and Markulā Devī. But since we have no reason to link Gu-ge with Chamba and many reasons to link it with Kashmir, it is almost certain that the work was carried out by craftsmen from Kashmir. The motifs of the trefoliated arch, the triangular gables and the plaited stems around figures can be seen carved in wood on the entrance doorway of the Markulā Devī Shrine in Udaipur (See illustration of this in Goetz’s ‘Early wooden Temples of Chamba’).

The remaining temple that peeps into the complex from the western side, the Kar-byun, was used by the nuns according to the local monks. It is a small low hall measuring 17’ x 15’-6” (5.1 m x 4.7 m.) with a height of 9’ (2.7 m.) and the roof is supported by four round columns which are propped up very precariously. The paintings inside are all recent and one enters it directly without entering a portico.
Out of all these temples, the most interesting one is the largest of them all, the *Sug Lha-khang* which serves as the 'Du-khang or 'assembly room' for the scant group of monks that look after the place. The entry is through the *Go-khang* which has murals around the walls which have been done more recently in the well developed style of Central Tibet and bear no connection with those inside the *Sug Lha-khang* which are wholly Indian in origin. A number of deities are represented in the *Go-khang* including a partially over painted image of Sakyamuni, a faded image of Tsong-kha-pa, the founder of the Ge-lug-pa sect, and a rather more dramatic *yab-yum* image of Guhyasama. The *Gon-khang* has an image of Vajra Bhairava the chief protective deity of the Ge-lug-pa sect.

The *Sug Lha-khang* is entered through a portico which is plain and undecorated. The sanctum itself is lit from an opening in the roof which is covered over with a flat stone that can be removed to admit a shaft of sunlight. Immediately striking is the row of stucco images that are set into the wall, at about a height of six feet. These stucco images, which are smaller than life size, belong to the entourage of Vairocana which has been enumerated above (see page 33). The total number in the main hall amount to 33, including the central four fold image of Vairocana which is now partly obscured by an elaborate timber altar that some patron seems to have donated to the monastery. The Eight Subsidiary Goddesses are placed on the eastern and western walls, both of which have openings in them. Thus, as you enter, to your left is the protective deity *Vajrapāsa* (see fig. 2). On the opposite wall, facing the opening which leads one to the inner cell, *Vajrāphoṭa and Vajraghānta* guard the entrance to the inner cell. Beyond these four protective divinities, the Eight Subsidiary Goddesses are arranged in pairs of two, in a symmetrical manner. The two long walls have the images of the four remaining *Tathāgatas* and the sixteen *Bodhisattvas* evenly divided between the two, to give ten images on each wall. The four missing divinities are the Four Main Goddesses. There is however ample evidence of the *Sug-Lha-khang* having been repaired and renovated a number of times. One of these repairs is evidenced by an inscription which tells about work carried out 46 years after its founding, which would date the first major repairs to around 1046 AD. In the course of these repairs, work was also been done on the 33 stucco images. In some cases the image has been replaced by a deity which does not belong to the set of the 37 Fundmantal Deities listed above. For example, the place of Vajraghānta is occupied by a much more recently made image of a *dharmapāla* which does not relate stylistically to the rest of the stucco images.
2. TABO Arrangement of Stucco deities in *Sug Iha-khang*
The stucco deities are cantilevered from the wall with the help of timber studds that are embedded into the wall, and are concealed in the lotus throne, over which each deity sits crossed-legged. The colour, hand mudra and symbols held by each of these deities varies according to its identification. Though Tucci has observed that most of the original symbols which these deities once held, have long since disappeared, making the problem of positive identification of them, a rather difficult one to solve. Behind each of them, painted and bordered in light relief stucco, are the halos that are characteristic of Mahāyāna deities. The style and form of these halos is, however, ancient and typical of the type found in the temples of the earlier period built during the reign of the kings of Gu-ge. The size of the halo is still relatively small and circular in these images and symbolises the divine aura of the deity (known as Prabhamandala in Sanskrit). The halos of the later period are often shown in two parts, a smaller circular halo behind the head and a larger oval halo around the rest of the body. In Tabo, the outer ring of the halo is in relief and resembles flames of the type that encircle the mandala diagrams. Inside that there is a beaded string of pearls, and inside that a further two simple borders.

The seated image inside the cell or apse, beyond the main hall, depicts Amitābha sitting on a throne supported by lions. This is the traditional vehicle of Vairocana, and symbolises "supreme merger" between the five Tathāgatas into one single Being. He is attended by four lesser deities paying him homage. Behind the cell, enclosing the passage for circumambulation, the walls are painted with representations of the Thousand Buddhas, similar to those found on the ground floor of the Sum-tsek temple at Alchi.

Below the stucco deities, the walls of the Sug Lha-khang are covered with miniature paintings done completely in the Indian style, with no influence of the Central Tibetan style which was developing, at this time, on the main Tibetan plateau. The subjects of these paintings merge with one another to form a continuous narration of the familiar scenes in the legend of the Bodhisattva King Nav-S'ang and that of Gautama Buddha and the Twelve Fundamental Moments in his life which are also illustrated at Alchi. These paintings, in the Sug Lha-khang, are the oldest in the whole of the temple complex. Those painted in the subsidiary temples are done at a much later date.

The second largest temple room, called the 'Brom-ston Lha-khang C'enpo, is completely abandoned and has obviously not been used for a long time. The murals on the walls represent the Eight Medicine Deities which are often represented in the older temples of the Western Himalaya.

Tucci hazards a guess at the date of the paintings as the 17th century, which would confirm that considerable over-painting must
have been done on the original work. However since it is impossible to determine the date when this part of the building was added on to the Sug Lha-khang, the date for the paintings must remain uncertain. Out of all the other temples, the Ser-khang contains the most interesting murals which, both Tucci and Snellgrove, have identified as sixteenth century paintings done during the second great patronage of Buddhism in Gu-ge under the king Senge Namgyal, of Ladakh. The walls are covered with images which are done in a much later style of painting but seem to be influenced more by the Indian style than that of Central Tibet. Each of the walls is dominated by a set of three deities which are represented in the more easily identifiable aspect. These deities, beginning from the left hand side, as you face inside the temple, on entering the doorway, are as follows:

LEFT HAND WALL (South)
1. Sman bla Bhaisayyagun
2. Amitābha
3. Vajradhāra

CENTRAL WALL (West)
4. Maitreya
5. Sākyamuni
6. Mañjuśrī

RIGHT HAND WALL (North)
7. Vairocana
8. Tārā
9. Vijaya

WALL WITH THE ENTRANCE DOOR (East). All in their terrible or protective aspects.
10. Hayagriva
11. Vajrapani
12. Vaiśrāvana
13. Tārā
14. Avalokiteśvara

It is interesting to note that Vairocana has been portrayed together with his Parivāra of 36 deities some of which are identically represented on the stucco images of the Sug Lha-khang.

The Kyil-khang was intended for the final initiation of the monks and is located due south of the central apse of the Sug Lha-khang. Tucci explains in Indo-Tibetica how such an initiation room is used:

"The Kyil-khang represents or should have represented amongst all the religious buildings of the monastery, a sort of 'sanctum sanctorum'. In fact the Kyil-khang is not open to the public or faithful, as is the habit with other temples, but is the sacred place where the mandala are found, i.e. the mystical symbols which translate, in the initiated language of colour or lines or
figures, a certain level of mystical experience. The *Kyil-khang* is the hall of initiation, the shrine where the master reveals to his disciple the manner of realizing the truth which, in the lengthy years of apprenticeship, he has been explaining to him. In the *Kyil-khang* a master confers to the neophyte the initiating baptism (*abhiseka*). From this shrine the disciple will leave renovated, or born anew because the *abhiseka* is the consecration of a final possession of spiritual truth. Therefore, in the *Kyil-khang* no image and no altar are to be found. There is no longer a reason for the offering to the deity, the gods themselves vanish as images. God is in the master, and one of the complex rites of the initiating liturgy consists in meditating on the guru himself as the deity, and during the second moment on oneself as a transformed god. Therefore, the *Kyil-khang* cannot contain any other decoration than the *manḍala* which is the symbolical expression of that world into which the initiated has been reborn.  

The central image in the *manḍala* of the *Kyil-khang* represents The Omnipresent Vairocana shown in white colour and with four faces similar to the representation of Vairocana at Alchi. The date and style of the paintings of the *Kyil-Khang* are however much later than those of the *Sug Lha-khang*, perhaps dating back to the revival that was patronised by the kings of Ladakh in the 16th century.

Of the remaining temples, the *Byam-pai Lha-khang* contains an enormous stucco statue of Maitreya which certainly does not date back to Rin-chen Zang-po’s, time and some paintings. The ‘*Brom-ston Lha-khang* contains the images of Amitabha, Vairocana and Tara but the state of the paintings is extremely poor. The *Kar-hyun* is attached to the enclosure wall, on the western side, with just its door peeping into the main *Chos-’khor* (Plate 47). The local monks told us that it was for the use of the nuns and hence could not be part of the main complex. It is however decorated from the inside (Plates 48, 49), though the paintings are insignificant from the stylistic or iconographic point of view. The *Kar-hyun* is a much later temple than the other eight and one has every reason to believe that the founder of this little temple was not able to persuade the monks to allow him to construct it within the sacred compound of the *Chos-’khor*. Instead they allowed him to open a door into the compound and partake of the sanctity of the place.

Like many temples of the early period, Tabo *Chos-’khor* faces east and it is located on the floor of an open valley. If the doors are left open, the first rays of the sun, as it rises over the distant range, strike the rear walls of the *Ser-khang*, *Byam-pai Lha-khang* and the ‘*Brom-ston Lha-khang* with very dramatic effect. Unfortunately, subse-

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quent constructions have blocked the direct line of the sun’s rays into the *Sug Lha-khang* (a similar construction obscures the sun’s rays in the ‘*Du-khang* at Alchi) but there is every reason to believe that the image of Amitābha (which is located in the west and symbolises fire) would have been lit by the first rays of the sun. Similarly the central image of Vairocana in the Alchi ‘*Du-khang* too would have caught the rays of the early morning sun. In the upper storey of the *Sum-tsek* at Alchi, for example, the head of Maitreya, which is located in the niche, faces east and has a door opposite which allows the morning sun to light it up rather dramatically. The effects, if intended, were certainly not for dramatic purposes. Had the entrance door of *Lha-lun* temple not been obscured too by a subsequent construction, one would have found the rays of the evening sun lighting up the image of Śākyamuni which is placed centrally on the middle wall, facing west. Unfortunately one was never able to explore these ideas further since they require extremely accurate measurements of the sun and cross-sections of the temples, to correlate the two.\(^{32}\) It seems certain however that there was some physical link between the sun and the images within these temples—a link which has been established at Angkor Wat.

**LHA-LUN TEMPLE**

The village of Lha-Lun is situated a short march away from Dhankar, the ancient capital of Spiti. There is nothing very distinctive about the village, and its historical importance really lies in the fact that it was chosen by Rin-chen Zang-po, or his successors, as the site for a temple. No geographical or other pattern is discernible for the location of the 108 temples that the great translator is supposed to have constructed, and the reason why an obscure village along the Lingti River should have been chosen as a site for the Lha-Lun Temple.

\(^{32}\) Another feature of these early temples is a specific orientation which is either easterly (Tabo, Alchi) or westerly (Lha-lun). However, the philosophical reasons for the choice of the orientation is not at all clear though extremely important to the whole conception. Possibly the link in the Life-Death Cycle with an east-west Orientation is important. Sani Monastery in Zangskar (fig. 21) has a west orientation and the importance given to the Kanika choten in the layout must certainly be connected to the orientation particularly since its location interrupts the line of the setting sun. *Lha-lun* (fig. 3) also faces west and has, nearby, the four fold Vairocana image with its doorway facing east. Some important link between the sun and the orientation of the temples, of this early period, is confirmed by the fact that there are few true cardinal orientations. The narrow valleys and irregular mountains mean that the rising sun seldom reaches the valley floor and by the time the sun hits the temple, its azimuth and altitude have changed from the true cardinal point where in any case the sun rises on the two solistice days only.
remains a mystery. However, the temple is important because it is in an excellent state of preservation – that is to say that the stucco images inside are in an excellent state. Unfortunately, the murals on the walls behind the images are only a poor replica of what must probably lie buried behind the overlays of paint that generations of monks have attempted. H. L. Shuttleworth had visited the temple in 1924 and made an accurate measured drawing of the building as it then existed (fig. 3). The central Ser-khang had already got some subsidiary structures attached to it, including the covered circumambulatory passage. The present measurements, made in 1969, show that a further structure in front of the entrance to the Ser-khang had already been added, since his visit. This kind of constant adding and demolition of structures to the central temples, is a permanent feature of every Buddhist monastery in the Western Himalaya, which makes the work of guessing the date of the original structure, an extremely hazardous affair.

The entrance hall or Dhayang measures 26' x 24' (7.9 m. x 7.3 m.) and gives access to the Tawr room which is 15' x 12'. (4.7 m. x 3.6 m.). The all important Ser-khang which measures almost a square of 18' x 17' (5.5 m. x 5.2 m.) some 15' (4.5 m.) high, is a column free room. This enormous span is very unusual in the architecture of this region, where timber lengths dictate spans more than any other factor. However, with the use of cantilevered brackets set into the walls, the roof has been constructed with a series of interesting devices, some of which can be seen in Plate VII. Brackets and cantilevered beams are used essentially to reduce the basic span to about ten feet (3 m.), and then a series of joists are placed over them to take the planking, which is profusely decorated on the underside.

Plan 3. LHA-LUN

Plan according to Shuttleworth 1924.
The entry hall, called Dhayang by the local monks, serves as a kind of ‘Du-khang on special festive days or when some villager sponsors a prayer recital. It is totally bereft of images except on the walls which it shares with the Ser-khang and Tanjur-khang, where the four Guardian Kings have been painted in an extremely simple and amateurish way. The Tanjur-khang contains some selected volumes from the Tanjur, an enormous prayer wheel drum and other extremely badly proportioned images of Avalokitesvara and Tārā. The long room to the south of the Ser-khang is used as a store room and contains broken building materials and utensils, and is double storied with a grass store above.

The Ser-khang is totally dark and lit only from the indirect light admitted through the entrance door. One can use a sequence of mirrors to bring the direct sunlight inside to examine the images within. Like the Sug Lha-khang at Tabo, the Ser-khang is dominated by the stucco images that are fixed to the wall with cantilevered timber studs. The arrangement of the images is however completely different. Whereas at Tabo, the stucco personifications of the Vairocana Parivāra are fixed to the walls, at a height of about six feet from the ground, in a continuous row, the images at Lha-Lun have a different arrangement (fig. 5, 6, 7). There are 27 figures fixed to the wall. The altar, however, has two additional figures painted in a similar gold colour and made from stucco. Amongst the ancient wooden chōtens that are lying on the altar, there is also a small wooden image of Rin-chen Zang-po which closely resembles his portrait in the Lotsawa Lha-khang at Alchi (Plate 40). From the arrangement of deities on the three walls, it can easily be seen that they all belong to the same series of the Vajradhatumandala in which the central deity is Sarvavid Vairocana. The left hand wall, as you stand in the door facing inside, has 17 stucco images that are stacked one above the other in two rows of two and separated by a larger image of Vairocana seated in his “palace”. Like the central larger images on the other two walls of Mañjuśrī, Vajrasattva and Parājñāpāramitā, Vairocana sits on an elaborate throne borne by lions and a dwarf, and is surrounded by lotus stems spiralling into patterns which are woven together with peacock and makara motifs that are very similar to the more elaborate decorative structure erected around the Vairocana image in the ‘Du-khang at Alchi. On either side of Vairocana, and close to him are the four other Tathāgatha. The Four Main Goddesses-Māmakī, Pāṇḍuravāsini, Locana and Tara are placed on top and at the bottom of the row of the four Tathāgatha. The outside rows are taken up by the Eight Subsidiary Goddesses stacked vertically in two rows of four.

The central wall is dominated by the image of Sakyamuni, which is somewhat separated from the wall behind him, which has 10 deities in two sets of 5 on either side of him. The main image of the group
of five to our left, as we face it, is identified by Tucci as Manjuari Vagisvara. The main image of the right hand group is Vajrasattva. Both images are sitting inside elaborately structured alcoves consisting of pillars and gables that are clearly intended to define a 'palace' or the heart of the mandala. The motifs on these 'palaces' are extremely interesting and recall the Central Asian and Indian influences that had pen-

4. LHA-LUN Arrangement of deities on left hand wall.
treated the art of Western Tibet. Above the colonnades, which are framing the standing lions, for instance, there are bell shaped roofs surmounted by successive tiers that could easily recall the Buddhist structures of Central India. Separated from the building of this temple, there is a house which has, within it, a badly preserved four fold stucco image of Vairocana of a similar type to the one in the Sug Lha-khang.

5. LHA-LUN Arrangement of deities of central wall.
at Tabo. It has been crudely painted white, and the room which houses it, barely allows space to move around the base of the image. The present state of preservation is either evidence of severe damage to the old image or that of a later creation altogether. However, the entrance door does face east (the door of the Ser-khang faces west) and the four images face the cardinal points.

6. LHA-LUN Arrangement of deities on right hand wall.
Architectural Description

Alchi village, which is approached from over a bridge on the Indus, is really a conglomeration of four villages grouped together in clusters of ten to fourteen houses over a distance of over a mile. One of these four clusters, the last one to be reached, is known as Chos-'khor or ‘religious enclave’ and it is dominated by the five temples that are strung out in a row, on terrain which is sloping down towards the Indus. The architectural conception of these temples and their general arrangement is not as formal as that at Tabo. Tabo, which is situated on a flat piece of land, has a clear rectangular boundary wall which encloses the compound and the temples, too, seem more formally arranged in a row (fig. 1). Alchi Chos-'khor, on the other hand, is a much more informal place, where even notional formality has been disturbed by the helter-skelter construction of monks' houses, cattle pens and store rooms. The whole site is dotted with apricot trees and in the lower part of the compound, behind the Lotsawa Lha-khang there are some terraces which the monks cultivate for vegetables. Unlike Tabo, there is no physical evidence of this compound being treated as sacred ground undisturbed by secular use. Another unusual feature at Alchi is the presence of three large and two smaller entrance chotens which the monks there refer to as Ka-ka-ni chöten. Another large one also stands somewhat isolated from the main complex in the grounds of the local minister who is known as the lon-po. The interrelationship between these entrance chöten or the logic of their particular positions in the general layout of the Chos-'khor is not at all clear. At any rate, it is neither symmetrical nor obviously geometrical in its location in relation to any one of the temples. However the presence of these entrance chöten in pairs clearly suggests that they were used to define the path leading the ‘Du-khang', which is the core of the whole enclave. Chöten 1 and 2 (fig. 7) clearly define the entry and exit to the final lap of the approach to the Du-khang and similarly chöten 3 and the one located in the lon-po's compound were also, surely, a pair which were used similarly for entry and exit.

The layout

Alchi Chos-'khor consists of the following temples—reading from south west to north east (fig. 7)

1. Lha-khang Soma
2. Sum-tsek
3. 'Du-khang
4. Lotsawa Lha-khang
5. Mañjuśrī Lha-khang

This sequence also reflects the relative physical ground levels of the temples with the Lha-khang Soma located on the highest ground and the Mañjuśrī Lha-khang situated at the lowest level of the compound. This difference in level is almost 16.′ (4.8 m.) (Fig. 8). The complex has however four clearly identifiable houses which have been built more recently. Two of them stand independently, and one of them is attached to the 'Du-khang structure. The house located to the south east of Lha-khang Soma is referred to as the Kanjur Lha-khang by the monks there, and it does contain volumes of the Kanjur. However any doubts about the sanctity of this place are dispelled by the presence of cattle in the adjoining room and the storage of fodder in the hollow remains of a chöten. The third house, which is situated in the south west corner of the complex, is an altogether different structure with a series of rooms, cattle pens, and vegetable gardens around it. The fourth house, which butts onto the present entrance into the complex from the south west, adjoining chöten 3, houses the local monks from Likir Monastery who are the care-takers of the Chos-khor. This house has not been marked in fig. 7 but simply shown in part outline. Apart from the entrance chöten mentioned above, the whole place is dotted with other smaller chöten which do not have the stature or form of the more ancient Ka-ka-ni. These smaller chöten, in varying degrees of deterioration, are located all over the compound, but particularly closely around the outside of the compound wall. The compound wall is not as well defined as the cags-ri of Tabo. There are two parts to this compound wall. The part which encloses the lower ground around the 'Du-khang, Lotsawa Lha-khang and the Mañjuśrī Lha-khang, is more formal, rectilinear and better preserved. It turns south east behind the 'Du-khang and rapidly changes into an informal continuous semi-ruin which encloses the gaps between chöten and the houses. It looses its rectilinear quality and becomes a kind of village boundary wall that encloses irregular pieces of land. It seemed to us that the rectilinear part of the wall was, in all probability, closer to the original cags-ri which must have enclosed the compound. It is likely that the south western part of this wall touched chöten 1 and 2 which gave entry and exit into the original compound that enclosed the 'Du-khang. This compound wall would have measured 150.′ x 114.′ (45.7 m. x 34.7 m.) along its inside. It is interesting that the difference between the length and breadth of the compound wall at Tabo is 34.′ (10.3 m.) whereas at the Alchi it is 36.′ (10.9 m.)
However one needs to go much deeper into the whole matter of the laying out procedures of these temples before one can come to any significant conclusions. At any rate the procedure quoted in chapter 5 for the layout of the site is more likely to reveal insights into this than purely abstract number ratios. For, as we shall see later, even the internal sizes of the ‘Du-khang at Alchi and the Sug Lha-khang at Tabo do not share any obvious proportional relationships. The largest numbers of chotens and *mani* walls have been erected along the outside circumambulation path that skirts the rectilinear portion of the boundary wall. Speculating about the original position of mud walls that were built over eight hundred years ago can be very wishful. But one cannot help speculating, because the Buddhists in the Tibetan world have a tremendous reverence for ancient things and the preservation of Alchi against the ravages of time for so many centuries has given this whole area a kind of unique sanctity which is now often associated with the tradition of Rin-chen Zang-po. Thus, it would not be unreasonable to assume that the south west portion of the boundary wall was taken down to include the later *Sum-tsek* Temple within the compound and that the two smaller entrance chotens that face the *Sum-tsek* (S.W. of chotens 1 & 2) were the entrance and exits into the compound from the south east after the wall had been extended to include the *Sum-tsek*. The location of the *Lha-khang Soma* is very similar to that of the *Kar-byun* at Tabo as it also does not have the traditional entrance portico and is somewhat removed from the main complex.

**Physical description of the temples**

*Lha-khang Soma* is a squarish room of exactly the same size as the *Ser-khang at Lha-lun* measuring 18’ x 17’ (5.4 m x 5.1 m.) with a choten placed in the centre of the floor. On the entrance and middle wall sides of this choten, two round columns support the roof structure. The beams rest on lion faced brackets which are embedded into the mud walls. The choten in the centre is, in all probability, a later addition as there does not seem any evidence of this kind of an element in other temples associated with Rin-chen Zang-po. At any rate, *Lha-khang Soma*, meaning ‘New Temple’, is a later addition to the *Chos-khor*. Chotens are also located inside the *Sum-tsek* and ‘Du-khang’. The mud walls of the *Lha-khang Soma* are about two and a half feet (0.76 m.) thick as in most other temples of the enclave. The extremely thick walls measuring upto 8.’ (2.4 m.) which are found at Tabo, are not seen at Alchi. Here the general external state of preservation is much better than at Tabo, the walls are in plumb, the corners sharp with less evidence of wind and water erosion. The opening in the roof is covered over with a removable flat stone of the type found in many Western Himalayan temples. Like the other temples at Alchi,
the *Lha-khang Soma* has a three foot wide band of red colour painted on the exterior of the parapet wall, on the roof. This band is defined between two cornices of flat stones projected out beyond the walls. This feature, which is also found at Lha-lun, is totally absent in Tabo probably because of the tremendous erosion that has taken place on the external walls there and the poor state of maintenance.

The *Sum-tsek* is architecturally the most interesting of all the temples, of the earlier period, in the Western Himalaya that are covered in this study. *Sum-tsek* literally means “Three tiered” and this unique aspect of the temple can best be seen in the section (fig. 8). All the three levels of the roof parapet are expressed in red bands which emphasise the three tiers. The third tier is a clear storey admitting light into the central space that is open above the choten. The ground floor is approached through a 10' (3 m.) deep open portico whose roof, on the open side is supported by two major round timber columns that divide the openings into three parts measuring 6' (1.8 m.) 7 (2.1 m.) and 6' (1.8 m.). The column near the notched staircase leading to the top has been propped up with additional columns of about 4" (100 mm.) diameter which are more recent, and support the beam above the capital, where the join has given way. Both the original columns, some 8" (200 mm.) in diameter, are beautiful examples of the woodcraft of Kashmir, although the inspiration for the ionic columns is totally alien even to Kashmiri tradition, as it is also found in the Jandial temple at Taxila. However the immense variety of Syrian Byzantine motifs on the stone columns of the peristyle niches of the enclosures at Mārtānd and Avantisvamin confirm that foreign masons were working on those edifices. Some of the motifs that have been brought to the *Sum-tsek* must surely go back to a tradition, short lived though it was, contemporary to the reign of Lalitāditya Mukhtāpīda and the stone temples founded under his patronage. The roof of the portico is supported by two levels of columns (Plate 28). The first set of columns rises up to support a beam at about 8' (2.4 m.) with ionic column capitals with a spiral volute on either end. This used to be set out by the Greeks with the aid of a whelk shell. The second set of columns is shorter, about 2'-6" tall (0.76 m.), and is divided into two sets of three columns each which are capped by a consolidated ionic capital with an identical volute that is found on the lower capitals and also on the ones inside the *Sum-tsek*. The three open spaces between the columns, at this upper level, are filled with three triangular gable motifs in timber which enclose three carved wooden figures in seated positions, each surrounded by a variation of the trefoliated arch (fig. 14). The central point of the gable is emphasised with a lion’s head which repeats, just above, on the exposed ends of the rafters. The timber work on this facade of the *Sum-tsek* is extremely rich and provides an excellent base
for research into the Indian and European motifs that have been amalgamated in the timber architecture of the Western Himalaya.

According to Goetz, the reduplicated plaitwork that is found on the frame of the Guru Ghantal doorway and on other timber work in the Western Himalaya, originated in the early medieval European art of the Ostrogoths, Visigoths and Longobards who had come down from the South Russian steppes into the territories occupied by a crumbling Roman Empire. The Guru Ghantal temple in Lahoul is part of this same tradition (figs. 26, 27). Unfortunately the general nature of this study does not permit one to discuss the details of the wood carvings. However, if one were to take the stone temples of Kashmir built during the height of its medieval period, the timber work carried out on the wooden temples at Chamba, Udaipur and Brähmor, the wood work at Trilokinath and Guru Ghantal Temples, and the wood work of the Buddhist temples associated with the name of Rin-chen Zang-po, one would be in a position to define more clearly, the characteristics of Western Himalayan architecture. A recent measured study done on the Hidumba temple at Manali and on other local timber shrines in Kulu and Manali, has confirmed that this intricate craft was very much alive even in the sixteenth century. It was carried out in the Kulu valley by a sub-caste of craftsmen known as Tavi whose descendants are still alive and carrying on the trade, though in a more inferior manner. The principle of construction on which the timber pagoda style temple of Hidumba has been constructed is identical to the principles employed by the Japanese in building their smaller timber pagoda shrines. All that is left as evidence of these skills in the Indian mainland are preserved in a few isolated shrines in the Western Himalaya and their recording and preservation in of extreme importance.

Returning to the Sum-tsek, one enters the ground floor through a low doorway which is framed by plain, uncarved timber. The room inside measures 18\text{'} x 19\text{'} (5.4 x 5.8 m.) and has three niches let into it, each of which measure (from left to right) 9\text{'} x 6\text{'} (2.7 m. x 1.8 m.), 7\text{'} x 9\text{'} (2.1 m. x 2.7 m.) and 7\text{'} x 9\text{'} (2.1 m. x 2.7 m.). These niches contain the stucco statues of the standing Avalokitesvara, Maitreya and Mañjuśrī. The roof is supported on four timber columns with an 8\text{'} (2.4 m.) square space between them which is open to the floor above. The three niches are roofed with gables which rise above the ceiling of the ground floor temple. Access to the floor above is gained by a precarious traditional notched log ladder. Above the door on the ground floor there is a low doorway which gives access to the upper temple. The central points of the three gables of the niches can be seen just above the floor and the heads of all three standing stucco deities can also be seen. The head of the central deity, Maitreya, rises higher than the other two and the full gable above it can be seen (Plates 35 – 38). The four columns on the ground floor
are repeated above and are also of the ionic type. The beam spanning
the space between the two columns on either side of the Maitreya head
has failed and is propped up by two slanting columns of recent origin.

The third level clear storey of the whole ziggurat is relatively
inaccessible and is roofed over with a small mud dome supported on
timber planks.

The ‘Du-khang whose entrance is now obscured by a house, is
entered through a courtyard measuring 48' x 24' (14.6 m. x 7.3
m.) more than half of which is roofed over with a colonnade. Over the
central pathway leading to the door of the ‘Du-khang, a chöten is
suspened over-head which is hollow and contains murals. This type
of hollow suspended chöten is also found inside chötens 1, 2 and 3.
The doorway to the temple is recessed back, at the end of a six foot
wide passage that gives access to two side temples. The south east
wall of the ‘Du-khang is flanked by four small rooms. The two,
interconnected ones on the south west side measure 10' x 12'.
(3.2 m. x 2.6 m.) and 8' x 8'. (2.4 x 2.4 m.) and the remaining
two measure 7' x 10'. (2.1 m. x 3.0 m.) and 10' x 14'. (3.0
m. x 4.2 m.). The main hall of the ‘Du-khang which is profiled
like the Tabo Sug Lha-khang is actually much smaller in scale and
measures 25' x 26'. (7.5 m. x 7.9 m.). The niche let into the
central wall and housing the image of Vairocana measures 11' x
8'. (3.3 m. x 2.4 m.). Like the Sum-tsek, Lotsawa Lha-khang and
Mañjuśrī Lha-khang, the ‘Du-khang too has four central round timber
columns. These columns are also fluted and terminated with ionic
capitals like the ones in the Sum-tsek. The beams that rest on these
columns are embedded into the walls over lion faced brackets. Subsi-
diary columns have been placed across the opening into the niche,
though their plain style seems to indicate them as later additions. It
is characteristic of all these later props and columns to have totally
undecorated shafts and a diameter that seldom exceeds three to four
inches. The wood too is usually Lombardi poplar whereas the original
timber structure in all the temples of the earlier period is pine, which
has, in all probability, been brought from the forests of Kunawar. The
‘Du-khang is divided into three bays along its length and width
measuring 6', 11', 8'. (1.8 m., 3.3 m., 2.4 m.) and 8', 9', 9'. (2.4 m., 2.7 m.,
2.7 m.). The central bay between the columns therefore measures 11' x
9'. (3.3 m. x 2.7 m.), Again, as in the case of Tabo, the perfect
square is unusual in the plans. Two small chötens are placed around
a corner of the subsidairy altar which is a later timber addition, and is
placed between the two further columns next to the niche. Light is
admitted into the room from two openings in the roof, which are
usually covered with flat stones.
The Lotsawa *Lha-khang* and the Mañjuśrī *Lha-khang* are located on a flat piece of terraced land some 11′ (3.3 m.) away from the north east wall of the ‘Du-khang court. Each of the temples measures 19′ x 19′ (5.7 m. x 5.7 m.). Both have four centrally placed columns supporting their roofs though in the case of the Mañjuśrī *Lha-khang* the columns rest upon a three foot high platform that forms the base to the four fold image of Mañjuśrī whose head rises into the clear storey above. Both temples have a clear storey which, in the case of the Lotsawa *Lha-khang* is surmounted by a suspended choten of the same type as we see in the entrance court of the ‘Du-khang. The clear storey above the Mañjuśrī image is however of recent origin and surely replaces the original one that must have been there once. This new clear storey has glass fixed in it which has been brought from Shrinagar as a gift from the family of the lon-po.

The three large chôtens outside (fig. 7) are in a serious state of ruin. Their original ziggurat forms have been reduced to conical protrusions rising above the square poduim which has an entrance passage through it. Suspended under each of these conical roofs, which were surely sharply tiered at one time, are the ancient painted chôtens that go back to the age of the *Sum-tsek*. Chôtën 3, which is the largest of them, measures 24′ x 23′ (7.3 m. x 7.0 m.) at the base and has four turret like remains of chôtens on the four corners while the central tier rise up to be capped by the remains of another choten. The whole structure has a West Asian ziggurat character to it which is totally alien to the chôtens that were to develop in the rest of Tibet (See Plates 166 – 173). However, we were unable to do justice to the structures of the chôtens, particularly chôtën 3, which is very intricately constructed from the inside. The system of spanning the open spaces inside by placing successive layers of planks across the corners of the opening to get a sort of dome, is extremely common to the stone architecture of Central Indian temples. As the central tower rises, it consists of a series of chôtens placed one above the other and there is no doubt that the excavation of this structure will reveal valuable historical information. It is possible that the paintings inside the upper chôtens, which have been totally sealed off till now, are in an excellent state of preservation.

The internal realm of the temples

In comparison to Tabo, the temples at Alchi are so well preserved, and therefore, so rich in content that they must surely be one of the richest historical sources about medieval Indian history in the whole of India. Much of the rich iconographical material has been discussed in detail by Snellgrove and Skorupski in their ‘Cultural Heritage of Ladakh’, volume I, which is one of the most important books to have
been published about Ladakh in recent times. In both the ‘Du-khang and the Sum-tsek, the central iconographic image is that of the Omniscient Vairocana in one or the other of his manifestations, accompanied by his entourage of 36 divinities mentioned earlier. There are six large manḍalas in the temple, two on each of the three walls. The fourth wall has the niche which contains a central stucco image of Vairocana accompanied on his flanks by the four remaining Tathāgata. The image of Mahakala above the door has a smaller manḍala placed above it. The arrangement of the manḍala is illustrated in fig. 9 and illustrates the various cycles of Vairocana showing him, usually, immediately surrounded by the four other Tathāgatas and four main Sakti followed by the Subsidiary Goddesses, the Bodhisattva and the Guardian Deities. A detailed identification of one of the Vairocana manḍala in the upper level of the Sum-tsek is illustrated in fig. 10. The niche of the centre wall contains the stucco images of the five Tathāgata, which are very close in conception to the three dimensional images found at Lha-lun. The Vairocana image in the centre is heavily robed in silks but the structure of the ‘palace’ around him is clearly visible with the lotus stems coiling upward on either side supporting the makara (sea-monsters), which are often found carved or painted on column capitals (Plate IV). The Tathāgatas who flank Vairocana (Ratnasambhava above Akshobhya on his right, and Amitābha above Amoghasiddhi on his left) are conceived very much in the style and form of the Tabo and Lha-lun stucco images. The important difference from Tabo, however, is that here, in the ‘Du-khang, each of the four is framed within a kind of shrine which is supported on columns and shaped in various decorative arched motifs, some of which are illustrated as variations of the trefoliated arch in fig. 14. It is clear, in the motifs done in stucco and carved wood, that the artists of that time were using the trefoliated arch as a kind of decorative motif, rather freely. In Alchi alone, there are many versions of this trefoliated arch. We see the development of a motif which is formally expressed in stone as the surround of the Buddha figure on the base of Parihaspura Stupa, and at Alchi, an altogether relaxed motif which takes on a variety of geometric shapes. The whole conception of the ‘palace’ which surrounds the deity and is made in Stucco at Alchi (and also for the central figures at Lha-lun) can be seen painted on the robe of Avalokitesvara in the Sum-tsek. Here a variety of structures have been shown with different trefoliated versions with garlands suspended from them in typically Indian style.

The decoration and expression of religious symbols in the Sum-tsek is altogether more sumptuous and better preserved if one compares them to the sombre paintings in the ‘Du-khang. The arrangement of the painting and their conception is divided clearly between the upper two levels, which have manḍalas, and the lower level, which has multiple
images of Amitābha, Akshobhya, Mañjuśrī and Sākyamuni. The arrangement of the paintings at the lower level is shown in fig. 10b and the set of four upper level walls is illustrated in plates 35–38. Apart from the paintings, the most unusual aspect of the Sum-tsek are the three 12 (4 m.) high stucco images of the standing aspects of Avalokiteśvara, Maitreya (which stands higher at 15' (4.60 m.) and Mañjuśrī. Each has a different body colour (Avalokiteśvara is white, Maitreya is terracotta and Mañjuśrī is pale yellow), different mūdras (hand gestures) and different robes. The robes are painted onto the lower half of each of the three deities and resemble the dhoti which is commonly worn in India today, except that the Sum-tsek dhoti clings to the legs.
IDENTIFICATION OF DEITIES IN VARIOUS MANDALAS OF SUM-TSEK ALCHI CHOS-KHOR.
and is shown without a crease. The decorative motifs on these dhotis are extremely beautiful and provide one of the richest sources for historical research into both the architecture and costumes of 9th and 10th century Kashmir and Central Asia. The large stucco figures are also accompanied, in their niches, with other stucco guardian deities which are smaller and fixed to the side walls of the niche. These deities are reminiscent of ones in Tabo and Lha-lun.

The multiple image paintings which occupy the inner corners of the temple are extremely interesting. A large image of the deity is placed in the centre of each of the panels and is elaborately represented (Plate 31). Surrounding this image on all sides are the smaller miniature versions of the same image. For example, wall 1 (See Plan fig. 7) has two panels on either side of the Maitreya. The left hand wall (facing Maitreya) has 381 images of Akshobhya and the right hand wall has 331 images of Akhosbhya. The 381 images are arranged in the panel in 27 rows of 15 figures each with the large Akshobhya seated in the centre within an elaborately painted shrine some five times larger than the surrounding figures. The 331 images are arranged in the panel in 25 rows of 14 figures each, with the central space occupied by a larger Akshobhya seated inside a shrine. The number game is important in the overall conception though it is not easy to decipher the reasons why these variations have occurred. However, careful observation of the panels does reveal a hidden pattern which is reflected on the smaller images, by changes in body colour, hand position and also in the colour of the prabhamandala. It is extremely likely that numbers have been used to give identification to these various figures. Thus, taking the panel of 331 Akshobhyas, there is clearly a complex pattern by which the different aspects of Akshobhya have been arranged on the panel. It is possible that if some work were done by numbering identical figures with common numbers, a sort of magic square pattern would emerge. The idea of magic squares was commonly used by Islamic builders to arrange their tiles.32 The same hidden patterns are apparent in all the panels including the entrance wall which has 1063 images of Sakyamuni and the Mahākāla over the entrance door way.

The upper floor of the Sum-tsek has 10 mandala all of which are illustrated in plates 35 – 38. A typical identification of one of them is shown in fig. 10 The clear storey has another three mandala of Vairocana as Sakyamuni, Manjuśrī and Vairocana.

In the Lha-khang Soma, the style of painting is altogether different from that found in the ‘Du-khang and Sum-tsek. No doubt that the style is Indian, but certainly not clearly identifiable as a style from Buddhist Kashmir. If the age of the temple is later, as it’s name im-

plies, then this style must have been brought to Alchi in the 13th century when a similar style prevailed in Bengal and Nepal. Wall 3 (fig.7) is dominated by three maṇḍalas which progressively increase in size from left to right. The first and smallest maṇḍala represents Amitābha attended upon by the Bodhisattva. The central one represents Vairocana in his quiet state as Sakyamuni and the third and largest one is dedicated to Vairocana attended upon by the entourage of 36 divinities and the 60 guest divinities. These latter 60 consist of three sets of 16 Bodhisattva, Arhat and fierce divinities as well as 12 Pratyeka Buddhas. There are other images around the maṇḍala including those of Vajrapani and Vairocana. Wall 1 has a large central image of the calm Vairocana in his state as Sakyamuni accompanied by irregular rows of framed images of Vajrapani, Mañjuśrī, Avalokiteśvara, Maitreya etc. which have been clearly identified by Snellgrove and Skorupski. Wall 4 is badly damaged on one side and is dominated by the central figure of the Medieval Buddha with multiple images of Akshobhyā around him like in the ground floor of the Sum-tsek. Wall 2 is the entrance wall which is covered over mostly by the same type of Akshobhya figures that cover wall 4. In the lower part of wall 2 some scenes from Buddha's life are shown, the Mahākāla guards over the door, and the rest of the images represent various deities including Vajrapani and Vijaya.

The Lotsawa Lha-khang has also got later style paintings like those in the Lha-khang Soma except that the work and general sense of composition is not as well developed as in the Lha-khang Soma. Here in the temple dedicated to Lotsawa Rin-chen Zang-po, the brushwork is excellent and the lines defining the figures (Plate 39) have a certain ease, but the colour work is not as complex as that of the Lha-khang Soma. At any rate the condition of Lotsawa's temple is very poor and suggests very strongly that the base preparation of the wall surface has not been properly executed. Wall 3, the entrance wall, has been particularly damaged with water that has leaked down from the roof. Wall 2 (fig.7) is dominated by the image of Amitābha who is placed between two maṇḍalas of Avalokiteśvara and Amitābha, but in a raised position. The space between these three large motifs is covered with multiple images of Amitābha. Above the paintings, like in all temples of this period, there is a border of drapery which is topped, just under the ceiling, by a row of white geese. These geese are found in Lha-Lun (Plate VII) where later touching up has changed their colour from the original white to various shades of red. Wall 1 has three large images of Rin-chen Zang-po, Sakyamuni and Avalokiteśvara. The lower portion of the wall is painted with a row of five Prajñāparamitā. There is an amusing border of demonic faces below the lotus throne of Rin-chen Zang-po which Snellgrove has suggested are Garuda heads. Howe-
ever a careful examination of them reveals that the hair style, and the pointed ears resemble the Lotsawa and that the four images are in fact caricatured versions of the Lotsawa himself. The excellent brushwork of the artist can be seen in plate 39 which is one of the 9 goddesses below the throne of the Avalokitesvara image. The two rows of 7 Buddhas that are placed vertically one above the other on either side of the Mahakala figure in the ‘Du-khang are repeated on wall 1 in a double row with 7 Buddhas on the left of Rin-chen Zang-po and to the right of Avalokitesvara. Wall 4 is in a very bad state of preservation and the two mandalas, on either side of the small window looking into the adjoining Manjusri Lha-khang are virtually beyond recognition. Above the window is an image of Akshobhaya. The rest of the wall is covered with multiple images of Akshobhaya. Wall 3 has the entrance door guarded by the Mahakala image and multiple images of Sakyamuni which show clear signs of over-painting. In both corners one can see the earlier multiple images which were smaller and there is therefore clear evidence that recent overpainting has been done to cover a damaged wall. The clear storey of the temple (fig. 8) has three images. The panel parallel to wall 4 has the image of Akshobhaya, thus corresponding to the images which are centrally placed on the main walls below. Above the clear storey there is a suspended choten reminiscent of those suspended in the larger chotens in the compound that have been mentioned earlier.

The Manjusri Lha-khang is almost entirely filled with the four-fold image of Manjusri. All four walls are painted with multiple images arranged in the same way as those of the ground floor in the Sumtsek with larger central images in each panel. Wall 3 has a mandala instead of an image on the right side of the doorway (facing the door); the left hand side has been repainted by the Achi lon-po with large images of Tsong-Kha-pa, Manjusri, Avalokitesvara, Sakyamuni, Tara and two dharamapala. These images are crudely painted with modern poster paints and were done as an act of devotion on a part of the wall which had virtually collapsed some years ago. The general condition of all the paintings is extremely bad due to the water which has leaked from the roof and eroded away the painted surface. The timber work in the Manjusri Lha-khang is in an excellent state of preservation. The four columns that rest on the central platform under the stucco image of Manjusri have got carved bases which resemble the pot motif bases seen in the rock cut caves at Karli in Bombay dating back to the first century BC. and which had developed subsequently in Buddhist architecture in Central India. Similarly the column capital too has the amla motif found in the early rock temples. The combination of the peristyle Ionic fluted columns with Indian type bases provides us with a fascinating mixture of influences that had culminated in medieval Kashmiri architecture extending into the Western Himalaya. The
lower lvl. plan

11. ALCHI
upper lvl. plan

du-khang

courtyard

terrace

upper temple

terrace

light well

section S-S

feet 0 3 6 9 12 15
metres 0 1 2 3 4

GOMBA
ceiling panels in the Mañjuśrī Lha-khang are certainly ancient though not as well conceived as those in the Sum-tsek. Although Snellgrove has dismissed the temple as having little interest, there is every evidence to show that the timber-work of the columns certainly dates back to the same age as those in the Sum-tsek, and that the structure of the temple is certainly much older than the paintings which adorn the walls. It is quite possible that, like at Tabo, the original temple had suffered severe damage and was reconstructed at a much later date and painted over with murals done by local artists without the skill or the style of the earlier painters from Kashmir.

Other temples with legendary associations of Rin-chen Zang-po

Apart from the Chos-'khor of Tabo and Alchi and the temple at Lha-lun, there are some other sites which have a positive association with Rin-chen Zang-po, and some features that certainly connect them with the general style of architecture and iconography of that period. Out of these, the ones briefly considered here are the Senge sgang at Lamayuru and the temple at Mang-gyu (figures 12 and 13) and also the temple complex at Gomba in Alchi village (fig. 11 ), which has one temple built in the style of the Sum-tsek but decorated with far inferior workmanship. In the case of Gomba, there is no clear identification or association with Rin-chen Zang-po but since its conception has been so influenced by the neighbouring Chos-'khor at Alchi that one can conveniently include it in the general category of the earlier temples.

SENGE SGANG LAYMAYURU

The main monastery complex of Lamayuru occupied by the Ka-gyu-pa Sect is so conspicuously placed on the main Leh–Shrinagar route that it provides a very convenient resting stage for travellers. For this reason it has also been the site of military camps that accommodated the armies that frequented this route in the earlier period, right upto the 19th century when Zorawar Singh led his forces into Ladakh. The original traces of antiquity have therefore long disappeared. Not only have armies camped there in the past, but even today the process of demolition and re-construction is carried
on under the direction of the monks. (Plate 177). We watched them demolish an entire temple and stack the mud bricks neatly on one side for reconstruction. Each of the bricks had parts of the wall mural still attached to one side. In the rubble there were broken and crushed stucco figures of Naropa and Jig-ten Gon-po, the founder of the 'Bri-gung-pa sub sect to which Lamayuru belongs. The whole operation was being conducted in a well organised manner with the monks directing the voluntary force of villagers and any trace about the sanctity of the place was extremely difficult to discover. Sanctity, however, seemed to be attached to a small temple located well below the main monastery complex which is among some of the monks’ residences. The narrow 3’ (900 mm) wide doorway is rather plain and opens in two shutters like most traditional doors in the area. The carving on the frame is notional and shallow though the lotus stem motif certainly hints at age. However, since one of the characteristics of the older monasteries was to have deep wooden carvings, one can assume that the doorway certainly does have the antiquity of the Rin-chen Zang-po temples. Inside the doorway are two rooms connected to each other through a 5’ (1.5 m.) opening (fig 12). The Seng-e-sgang into which one enters is a room measuring 14’-6” x 14’ (4.4 m. x 3.2 m.) with an opening in the roof which is locted centrally. The adjoining Gon-khang measures 8’ x 14’-6” (2.4 m. x 4.4 m.) and also has an opening in the roof which is somewhat eccentrically placed. Two clear signs give a clue about the temple’s antiquity. The first is the central stucco image of Vairocana seated on a lion throne enveloped within a shrine of stucco symbols consisting of Garuda who is centrally placed above the figure, and two makara with their usual open mouths turned upwards. The Vairocana image is framed within a trefoliated arch

12. SENG-E-SGANG Plan.
which is made of decorative stucco ornamentation (Plate 54). The throne itself is interesting and is a continuous altar that also seats Akshobhya surmounted by Ratnasambhava on the left hand side (facing Vairocana) of Vairocana and Amoghasiddhi surmounted by Amitābh on the right hand side. There are stucco images in relief of pairs of lions and elephants that alternate on it. Under Akshobhya’s portion of the throne, a pair of lions is placed within simply decorated niches followed by a pair of elephants that face each other. The elephants, however, are only partially made with the rear legs and tail missing. These are then followed by another pair of lions which are slightly larger and with wider open mouths than the first pair, and these later ones are placed directly under the central Vairocana figure. The earlier arrangement of half elephants and a pair of lions is then repeated again, thus giving a set of five pairs consisting of three pairs of lions placed on either side and the centre, and two sets of elephants placed between them. These five pairs symbolise the vehicles of the five Tathāgata Buddhas placed above the throne even though by usual iconographical rules the elephant is Akshobhya’s vehicle. The intermixing of the mūdras of the five Buddhas was also done in some of murals at Alchi and in the ‘Du-khang. One of the maṇḍalas on the wall has got images of the Five Buddhas where the mūdras have been interchanged. There Akshobhya makes the preaching gesture of Vairocana. The representation of just the elephant and lion vehicles in the Senge-sgang is again found on either side of the central Vairocana figure which has an elephant surmounted by a white lion facing away from the figure, thus expressing the supremacy of the Central Buddha Vairocana above the other four Buddhas. The lions have elaborate foliated tails that curve upwards to touch a flaming band that separates the upper Garuda and makara motifs. The four other Buddhas are placed on either side and the lower ones, Akshobhya and Amoghasiddhi, are framed within recently constructed timber porticos.

The second sign of antiquity is provided by the clearly ancient column capital which caps a recent roughly made capital (Plate 52). The deep carving of this piece and its ionic motif link it up directly with the column capitals of the Sum-tsek at Alchi. The presence of this capital assures age on the one hand and also confirms the rebuilding of the present Senge sgang. The Vairocana image itself could well date to a later period when Lamayuru was still under the control of the Ka-dam-pa order.

The murals on the walls of the Senge sgang are in a very bad condition and make it difficult to identify content or style. Snellgrove and Skorupski have identified a mural of the 11 headed Avalokiteśvara, and a maṇḍala of Vairocana. Plate 53 shows a part of the painting below the Vairocana maṇḍala.
The adjoining Gon-khang has large stucco images of the Dharma-pālas probably Yamantaka, Yama and Begtse or Hayagriva. (Colour photographs of these can be seen in Madanjeet Singh's 'Himalayan Art') The walls of the Gon-khang are unadorned apart from a dancing skeleton. There is also a small wooden choten cramped into the room.

THE TEMPLES AT MANG-GYU

Mang-gyu is a seldom visited village which is approached along a narrow gorge from the bridge across the Indus that also gives access to Alchi. The village itself is perched high above the river bed and the remains of a few chôtens on the outskirts of the village do give the place an air of antiquity. The temple with association of Rinchen Zang-po is now part of a complex of four temples arranged in a row facing south east (See fig. 13). It is difficult to guess the real antiquity of the temples, but the irregular plan form certainly confirms the later addition of the two side temples dedicated to Vairocana and a smaller one, with a niche, devoted to Avalokitesvāra measuring 17’ x 12’ (5.1 m x 3.6 m.). The Vairocana temple is spanned across its larger sides by three bays measuring 5’ (1.5 m), 11’ (3.3 m) and 6’ (1.8 m.) and there are four round columns, more or less centrally placed, in it. The central image of Vairocana is accompanied by the usual four Tathāgata. The walls are painted with maṇḍala of Vairocana and multiple images of Buddha. The Champa khang, situated to the south west of the Vairocana temple, measures 13’ x 10’ (4.1 m. x 2.0 m.) and contains a stucco image in the style and fashion
of the Sum-tsek Maitreya. The walls are adorned with multiple images which are extremely badly damaged but which certainly date back to a period before the 14th century. The Dorje C'enpo temple is a tiny shrine which crowds the image of the deity into a room measuring 6' x 6' (1.8 m. x 1.8 m.). The walls of this room are also adorned with multiple images which are in a very poor condition. Like at Senge sgang, the antiquity of the Mang-gyu temples is to be found in the wood work and the two door-ways leading to the Vairocana and Cu-cig-zhal temple which have their door lintels carved with lotus flowers surrounded by the squared border of a mandala which also forms the basis of the plan of the Sum-tsek at Alchi. This lintel is surmounted by a timber beam which has makara faces carved in a row linked together with a garland that passes through their mouths. Another relic of the antiquity of Mang-gyu is the eroded chöten with windowed shrines around it (Plate 56), which could possibly provide the link with the age of Rin-chen Zang-po, if it was excavated and not left to ruin as it seems to be doing. The historical and archaeological importance of the early temples with associations of Rin-chen Zang-po cannot be exaggerated. If their descriptions here, particularly of Tabo and Alchi seem lengthy, it is justified by their uniqueness and importance. From the architectural point of view they represented a style of construction that was highly formalised and linked directly with Indian prototypes. In their iconographical treatment these temples, dedicated to the Omniscient Vairocana, were conceived as homogeneous entities exploring, elaborating and describing the various cycles of Vairocana. Both these characteristics were to disappear from the monasteries and temples of the later period which were built after the Ge-lug-pa order had begun to exert its influence in Ladakh and Spiti. The styles of painting and wood carving and stucco work that are to be found at Tabo, Lha-lun and Alchi were to disappear forever with the muslim invasion of Kashmir in 1337 A.D. The traditions that had already been imported from India by the Gu-ge kings were mastered by few people who soon dispersed to other parts of Tibet. The short revival that was patronised by the king of Ladakh, Tashi Namgyal (1500–1532), was felt even at Alchi where inscriptions quoted by Snellgrove and Skorupski speak of the repairing of the Sum-tsek. However, with the destruction of the Buddhist centres in central India and Kashmir, the direct link that the monasteries of the Western Himalayan had with India were severed and, from then on, they looked towards Lhasa for their inspiration and guidance. With the hegemony of the Ge-lug-pa sect extending over Ladakh, the socio-cultural links with Lhasa were strengthened further.
3.

THE LATER PERIOD

THE MONASTERIES OF THE LATER PERIOD
(1400 ONWARDS)

The historical researches into the early history of the Western Himalaya have not been able, as yet, to produce any definitive work that could help one accurately date historical events. Even less light has so far been shed on the social and political developments that went hand in hand with the spread of Buddhism in the area, and one has to await a time when archaeological work starts in the area to confirm or reject much of what is pure conjecture to-day. For this reason the early publications of Francke and Tucci remain standard works even to-day and apart from ‘The cultural Heritage of Ladakh’, which sheds much light on the earlier period of events in Ladakh, nothing else has been published recently about the later period which can be said to start around 1300 AD when cultural contact between Gu-ge and India was disrupted by the invasion and conversion of Kashmir into a Muslim kingdom. This invasion cut off the Indian cultural sources rather suddenly and the kings of Western Tibet had to turn to Central Tibet for their cultural inspiration. This was to affect, very fundamentally, the art and architecture of the region as embodied in the monastic institutions that were to dominate the landscape of Ladakh and Spiti.

The most important aspect of the monastery, that of being an extension of the political arm of the king, was of course preserved and both the earlier and the later period saw the development of the monasteries as part of a programme of territorial expansion. In the earlier period, the development of Buddhist monasteries in the Western Himalaya was dominated by the territorial expansion of the kingdom of Gu-ge The founding of monasteries was always accompanied by the building of a defensive fort nearby. Thus Nyar-ma, now reduced to ruins, which was financed by king Ye-she-o of Gu-ge, and has associations with Rin-chen Zang-po has, above it, the ruins of a fortress. Alchi Chos-'khor, similarly had a small fortress overlooking the Indus and so did Lamayuru. Military occupation and religious conver-
sion went hand in hand and the earlier Buddhist kings of Lhasa as well as Gu-ge were able to conquer the tribal chiefs by defeating them on the battleground with superior arms and tactics which were available to them through the Buddhist cultural links that were forged by them with both China and India. The most remarkable example of this politico-religious connection can be seen in the meteoric military career of king Lalitaditya Muktāpīda (725 – 756 AD) who had a Chinese Prime minister by the name of Chankuan (Tsiang-Kiun), an ardent Buddhist and a brilliant military tactician under whose guidance Lalitaditya Muktāpīda re-armed his forces with superior armour and weapons of Chinese designs. The campaign tactics, which were closely supervised by Chankuan, were so superior to those prevailing in India that Lalitaditya was able to bring back booty from as far away as Konkan and Gujarat as well as Central Asia. Lalitaditya rewarded his Prime-minister well and the great stūpa at Parihāspura, which is now all but ruins, was built to satisfy the ardent beliefs of Chankuna. The Shrinagar museum contains two Chinese influenced statues of standing Bodhisattva that were found in Parihaspura and for which Chankuna was responsible, as they clearly show T'ang influence. Lalitaditya Muktāpīda, the greatest temple builder of Kashmir was also one of the most feared military rulers of that kingdom.

In Tibet, as in the regions of the Western Himalaya, the Buddhist kings planned their territorial expansion around units of civil and military administration which were centred on the fort and monastery. In the earlier period the fort and the monastery were physically separated, but in the later period they began to be combined. The civil administrative functions of the monastery were discharged through a system of land ownership that extended over the unit of administration. Thus, each monastery had a number of villages under its control and it also owned land in each of these villages which was let out to tenants for a two third or half share of the crop. The monastery did not confine the weapon of its economic and cultural hold to crop sharing. It began to exercise a whole variety of functions including money lending, trade, rent collecting, mortgaging and bartering. Moreover, in the cultural realm the tribal festivals and customs were converted to Buddhist ones and the monastery became the focal point of all cultural events. In addition, in the realm of education, a more pragmatic and less superstitious basis was introduced through a tiered system of formal education that included literacy, medicine, fine art, religious philosophy and astrology. It was imperative for the Buddhists to replace the entire collective body of tribal beliefs and knowledge with a totally new one and the speed with which it was done was due primarily to the introduction of literacy which replaced oral traditions. The administrative functions that centred on the major gompa of the region were discharged through a series of smaller monastic units that were situated at village level.
The following table taken from Dr. Harjeet Singh’s ‘Ladakh—Problems of Regional Development in the Context of Growth Point Strategy’\(^{34}\) ranks the monasteries in order of their importance:

### TABLE SHOWING RANKING OF GOMPAS IN LADAKH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monastery</th>
<th>Monks attached to the monastery</th>
<th>Villages attached to the monastery through ownership of land</th>
<th>Land owned (acres)</th>
<th>Persons owing allegiance to the monastery</th>
<th>Lower level monasteries situated in villages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hemís</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>1998.3</td>
<td>15661</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiktsé</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1307.8</td>
<td>5969</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likir</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>263.3</td>
<td>4865</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phiyang</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>360.0</td>
<td>5909</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chendey</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>375.8</td>
<td>3420</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spituk</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>582.8</td>
<td>5852</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamayaru</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>234.5</td>
<td>6574</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ri-dzong</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>496.4</td>
<td>1408</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakna</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>516.7</td>
<td>1071</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karsha</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>239.9</td>
<td>3569</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ma-tro</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>242.1</td>
<td>955</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thantak</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>40.3</td>
<td>1098</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takrimo</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>64.3</td>
<td>731</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The military defeat of the tribal chiefs in the earlier period was therefore accompanied by the setting up of a religious infrastructure that was far more institutionalised than the totemic Bon. In the later period, and particularly after the 15th century, this infrastructure was wholly consolidated.

The share-cropping role of the monastery was to bring to it tremendous wealth. The surplus of this was converted to silver and gold and other treasures of art. This naturally made them a target of attack not only by iconoclastic invaders but others in search of booty. Basgo, for instance, was attacked and laid under seige for three years by a Tibetan army in the late 17th century and it was able to hold out successfully because of the reserves of food and valuables that were at its disposal. It was therefore inevitable for the monastic complex and the fortress to become combined as a single defensible unit, and since the fortress could not move down into the valley, the monastery moved up to the hill-top and merged with the fortress to form one identifiable physical

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unit. This can be clearly seen in most of the later monasteries that are illustrated here—Tiktse, Bardun, Spituk, Phiyang, Likir, Rangdum, Basgo, Lamayuru, Karsha, Kye, Tanjur and Dhankar. These later monasteries began to develop more along the patterns that were being set by the larger Central Tibetan monasteries at Sera, Tashilumpo, Drepung and Gandhan. They in turn were influenced by the complex institutions that existed in India before the 13th century. Thus the numbers of rooms, their specialised functions and residential quarters of the monks all combined to make these structures very imposing. They became quite different from the individual temple complexes that were built and surrounded by a wall which we have already seen at Tabo and Alchi. The newer hill-top monasteries became multistoreyed in parts and began to cater to the comforts of the community of monks which was gradually expanding under the primogeniture system which claimed novices from every family in the villages.

The ‘Du-khang or assembly room continued to be the single most important room as well as the largest space in the complex. However, the rigid arrangement of deities according to canonical laws and mandala practice was abandoned in favour of a haphazard arrangement of deities on the walls and altar. Nowhere is the totality of conception that was created in the ‘Du-khang and Sum-tsek at Alchi Chos-khor, seen in the ‘Du-khang of later monasteries. The style of painting and creation of three-dimensional images is also markedly different in the later monasteries. The Indian influence is no longer apparent and the Chinese style seems to dominate the formal concepts. Thus the figures are much more Mongoloid in their features, the decorative aspects of the mural such as clouds, flowers and landscape also begin to dominate (see plate XII and compare with plate 39). However, one should remember that Tabo, Alchi and Lha-lun, which we have dealt with in this work, are examples of fluke survivals and they have given us a very accurate picture of the art and architecture of 11th century in the Western Himalaya. The later monasteries have all been in such a fluid state of being demolished (see plate 174), rebuilt and repainted that positive dates for structures are extremely hazardous, and dates for murals are even more so because of the constant over-painting (plate XII) that has gone on over the years. For this reason, the sequence of arrangement of these later monasteries in this chapter does not follow any historical or territorial sequence, but is based upon an arbitrary choice ranged roughly according to physical size and importance. It has not been possible to carry out measurements of all the monasteries that are illustrated here, but there are probably a sufficient number of plans to indicate the general characteristics of the later monasteries. The plans also do not go into the details of the residential quarters which are attached to the temple rooms. Each householder’s family has its
particular cell (drab-shag) in the monastery which remains a sort of family property for which the monastery takes no responsibility. The family to whom the area is allotted within the monastery premises, is expected to build the cell at its own cost to provide shelter to those members of the family who join the monastic order as novices. Thus nephews, uncles and brothers of an extended family often stay together in the cell and preserve a kind of joint family system. Moreover, food for them is also provided by those relatives who till the land. Each family in the village becomes economically as well as socially linked to the monastic institution.

In considering the monastery structures of the later period, one is confronted immediately by a complex of buildings that are substantially different in character from those of the earlier period that were built on flat ground on the floor of the valley. Essentially, of course, all the Buddhist monasteries continued to be built around the temples which do form the core of any monastic complex. However, the relationship between the temples and other buildings which housed the growing complexity of functions of the monastery, did undergo fundamental changes. In order to understand this change it is worthwhile to categorise the Tibetan Monastic complex into convenient types. The earliest type is represented by Sam-ya which is a symmetrical four-way orientated temple with a wall defining its compound. In this, it closely resembles the manḍala which also has gates at the cardinal points as well as protective barriers such as the ring of flames and Vajra. However, this type of four-way orientated temple is extremely rare, and Sam-ya is about the only known surviving example. Certainly, there are none in the Western Himalaya. The type that is more commonly associated with the name of Rin-chen Zang-po can be seen at both Alchi and Tabo. The main characteristics of this type of temple is a fixed one-way orientation with the opening confined to a single entrance door opposite the altar. These temples usually face an easterly direction, are isolated structures and can form part of a temple complex. The Hindu counterparts of this type of complex can be seen in Kashmir at Mārtānd and Avantisvamin (fig. 15), which in turn are influenced by the Buddhist monastery complexes of Gandhāra. The manḍala concept is still apparent in these temples even though the four-way orientation is not adhered to. Thus the Sug Lha-khang at Tabo has the deities of the Vairocana Dharmadhatu manḍala placed around the wall (fig. 2) as does the Ser-khang at Lha-lun (figs. 4, 5, 6). One common feature within this type of temple is the niche which houses the central deity and the altar. This niche is on three sides in the Sum-tsek at Alchi (fig. 10), on one side only in the 'Du-khang at Alchi, the Sug-Lha-khang, Byam-pai Lha-khang and Brom-ston Lha-khang C'enpo at Tabo (fig. 1), the Cu-cig-zhal at Mang-γyu (fig. 13) and also the Tsog-khang at Phiyang (fig. 17) though this is a much later building. In all
these second type of temples, the buildings containing the cloisters and other communal facilities are not immediately apparent and certainly do not form part of the temple complex as they exist to-day. Thus, there is a clear physical division between the realm of the temples which is enclosed by a wall and the buildings housing the other functions which were placed outside the wall. In Alchi, there have been later additions to the ‘Du-khang and the monks residences situated next to this temple are certainly not parts of the original structure.

The third type of monastery layout consists of a court defined by a wall of rooms on all sides with the temple placed in the centre. This type of Tibetan monastery preserves a certain amount of symmetry and defines the temple and other functional rooms of the monastery as a single entity. However, there are no known monasteries of this type in the Western Himalaya though they can be seen as a typical type of Dzong in Bhutan (Simtokha, Tashi-cho-dzong Paro and others). Bhutanese terrain, with its wide valleys and heavy rainfall, lends itself more readily to 'lump' buildings that can easily be roofed over with a continuous covering that disperses the rainwater efficiently.

The fourth category of a monastic complex is the one most commonly found in Ladakh and Spiti. This type of complex belongs to the later period and consists of a conglomeration of separate buildings spread across the top or side of a hillock with no symmetrical axis or arrangement, and a general mixing of the functions of the temples, cloisters and other rooms whose location and aspects are more determined by the physical terrain than symbolical considerations. These complexes tend to be large establishments which are extremely compactly built to afford excellent defence from attacks.

The first of such conglomerate monasteries that were perched on a hill, was built in Ladakh during the reign of King Grag-bum-de who received a deputation from Tsong-kha-pa (1357–1419), the reformer who founded the yellow hat Ge-lug-pa order in central Tibet. The deputation signalled the growing influence of the Ge-lug-pa order which had already achieved considerable political control in Tibet with the help of the Mongols. Spituk monastery was founded as the base of the new Ge-lug-pa order, and very soon, with the patronage of the kings of Shey, this order was able to establish itself as the dominant sect in both Ladakh and Spiti. Much of the territorial control of the monasteries was achieved by taking over the old Ka-dam-pa order, and Tabo, Alchi, Mang-gyu, Lha-lun and the other older temple complexes were taken over and placed under Ge-lug-pa control. A considerable amount of reconstruction of temples must have taken place during the two centuries after the founding of Spituk, and to-day the Ge-lug-pa order is found at Tiktse, Likir, Ri-dzong, Rangdum, Kye, Dhankar and also some of the other large monasteries not dealt with
in this study, including Sankar in Leh and others in Nubra and Eastern Ladakh. There is a clearly identifiable style of architecture in the conglomerate structures of these hill-top monasteries. The white sloping walls, the small window openings framed in black, the timber balconies at the upper level, the rising hierarchy of buildings with the temples at the highest levels, and the flags and 'umbrellas' on the roof. All these lend themselves to a style of architecture that is basically Tibetan, though also clearly identifiable as the later style of Buddhist architecture in the Western Himalaya. Some of the commonest features of these later Tibetan style fortress monasteries are:

1. The courtyard which plays an important part in the physical layout and religious life of the monastery. The entrance to the main temple is always made across the courtyard which is used during festivals and the cham dance invariably takes place in this courtyard presided over by the senior lama seated on a high pedestal throne under the protection of a colonnade (plate 74). The location of the monastery on a high perch often makes the courtyard the only flat open space in which villagers can be accommodated to witness the religious ceremonies. These courtyards are a later development in Tibetan architecture as none of the monasteries of the early period has this type of space.

2. The circumambulatory passage which is often built into some of the monastery temples as a covered passage. It has been added to the central temple room at Lha-lun (fig. 3), and can also be seen at Rangdum (fig. 18), Shashur (fig. 20), Sani (fig. 21), Maning, (fig. 24), Tayul, (fig. 28), and Khardung (fig. 29). The act of circumambulation goes back to the earliest Buddhist times when the first stūpas were built. The important temples in Tibetan monasteries often have a narrow passage (never more than 5 (1.5 m. wide), which surrounds the temple. Often it has a continuous row of prayer wheels attached to the inside wall at elbow height which are rotated as the pilgrim walks around. Circumambulation may be done once, thrice or a hundred and eight times before or after entering the temple. Other large monasteries including Hemis and Phiyang which do not have built-in circumambulation passages, usually have a rough track around the perimeter of the building which the pilgrim follows on his round.

3. The entrance portico which gives access to the 'Du-khang or other important temple rooms. This portico is placed as a symbolical link or lobby between the outside profane world and the inner sanctum of the temple. This feature too goes back to the earliest Buddhist architecture and can also be seen in a modified form in the mandala (fig. 10) where the dwelling of the deity opens out
in four directions into four gates and the neck forms such an entrance portico. On either side of the central doorway leading into the sanctum, there are usually murals of the Four Guardians. These Four Guardians are:

East: Dhritarāshtra who is also the king of the Gandhārva demons. His symbol is the stringed instrument and his colour—white.

South: Virūdhaka, who is the king of the Khumbhanda demons. His symbol is the sword and his colour—blue or green.

West: Virūpākṣha, who is the king of the Nāgas or snakes whose symbol is the chōten or a jewel and serpent, and his colour is red.

North: Kuvera or Vaiśravana, who is the king of the supernatural yakshas. His symbol is the banner which is held in the right hand and a mongoose in the left. His colour is yellow.

These Guardians (lokapāla) are responsible for protecting the gates at the cardinal points of the sacred place and in the large Buddhist monasteries in India, some of the most senior monks were appointed lokapālas and it was their responsibility to scrutinize and interview aspiring candidates. During Dīpankara Śrījñāna time the northern lokapāla at Vikramaśīlā monastery was Naropa. In addition to these Guardians the Eight Glorious Signs may also be painted in the entrance porch. These eight are:

1. The two golden fish
2. The umbrella
3. The conch-shell trumpet
4. The lucky diagram
5. The victorious banner
6. The vase
7. The lotus
8. The wheel of law

The Wheel of Life (Plate 72) is also often found in the portico to remind believers of the un-ending cycle of life and re-birth.

4. The chapels ‘Du-Khang and Lha-khang. The inner rooms housing the images of the deities are the most sacred parts of the whole complex of temples. The chapels are considered to be the residences of the deities. A chapel may be of any size, and either square or rectangular in plan. If it is rectangular, then the altar and images are placed in the centre of the shorter wall which is invariably directly opposite the entrance door. This is an old pattern that was taken over from Indian prototypes and can be seen even in the ‘Du-khang of the early temples of Tabo and Alchi. In case of a square room, a number of variations can occur and the Sumtsek of Alchi Chos-khor (fig. 7) is one such exception. In the temple rooms (Lha-khang) of the later monasteries, such a variation is extremely rare. The larger ‘Du-khang found in Hemis (fig. 16),
Phiyang measuring 35 x 31 (10.6 m x 9.5 m.) and a larger Tsog-khang measuring 54 x 32 (16.4 m. x 9.7 m.) , Rang-dum measuring 45 x 45 (13.7 m x 13.7 m.), Sani measuring 40 x 40 (12 m. x 12 m.) and Tayul measuring 30 x 33 (9 m. x 10 m.) are spanned across in a number of bays with parallel rows of columns. Where no larger central aisle is taken, this span varies between 6 (1.8 m.) and 8 (2.4 m.). In the case of a larger central aisle, the span of this can go upto 12 (3.6 m.) though obtaining timber rafters for such a span must have become very difficult. When Lha-lun was built, the forests of the adjoining region of Kunawar provided much sturdier timbers that enabled a 18 (5.5 m.) span to be constructed in the Ser-khang. Access to such timber sources became increasingly difficult and this resulted in thinner girth columns supporting shorter spans. In the smaller chapels there are often only two columns in each row so that the four columns form a square. This can be seen in the Gon-khang at Phiyang (fig. 17), the second floor zimchung at Kye (fig. 19), the Gon-khang at Pin (fig. 23) and the ‘Du-khang at Khardung (fig. 29). Considering the limits imposed by the timber rafters, these square four columned chapels vary in size between 18 (5.5 m.) and 24 (7.3 m.) The other most common rectangular size of chapel consists of a space supported by two rows of three columns each giving a total of six columns. This can be seen in the Nupu-kursum at Kye (16. x 27 (4.8 m. x 8.2 m.) (fig. 19), the Gon-khang and ‘Du-khang and Kanjur, Lha-khang at Shashur (25. x 20) (7.5 m. x 6.0 m.) and (28. x 28) (8.5 m. x 8.5 m.) (fig. 20) the Lha-khang Samdru-chos-ling at Pin (25. x 29) (7.5 m. x 8.8 m.) and (26. x 22) (7.9 m. x 6.7 m.), and the ‘Du-khang and Zugsdan at Maning (fig. 24).

Although a logical mandala like arrangement with the image in the centre might be expected since the main purpose of the chapel is to enable ceremonies to be performed, this would not be convenient, particularly for the ‘Du-khang, which acts as an assembly room. By placing the images and altars against the end wall, two or more rows of monks can face each other across the central aisle. The leader of the ceremony sits on the right of the image on a raised platform or chair facing either down the aisle or across it. The main image varies in size and is placed on the altar which raises it to a height of about three feet, and the bowls of water and other offerings are also placed around it. Flanking the central image there may be other subsidiary images, often housed in wooden cabinets with open fronts. Some of the later monasteries too have gigantic images of either brass or stucco and these can be seen at Maning which has a 6. (1.8 m.) high stucco image of Padma-
sambhava, Basgo which has a seated image of Matireya; Suspool, Tiktse, Shey too have large images. The presence of these larger images establishes a long link of artistic tradition which goes back to the monasteries of the earlier period (see images of Avalokitesvara, Maitreya and Mañjuśrī in the *Sum-tsek* temple at Alchi), and further back to the Buddhist region of Bamiyan and even further back to prototypes that have been destroyed in India.

The *zimchung* is the personal room of the head or incarnate lama. It is usually located in such a position that it has a clear view of the courtyard and gets included either with the main temple complex or it may also be placed above the cloisters. This relationship between the *zimchung* and the courtyard can be seen at Hemis (fig.16), Rangdum (fig.18); Kye (fig.19), Maning (fig.24) and Khardung (fig. 29). Casual visitors are not permitted to enter this room unless a special audience is sought, though most of the monasteries have more than one room which they call a *zimchung* which is usually abandoned and empty. The *zimchung*, which is being used by the head lama, as is the case in Ri-dzong, is usually a very clean room which has its own small altar, a bed and an attached toilet, as the head lama is not expected to perform his toilet chores in the communal spaces used by the other monks.

The *Gon-khang* is a chapel room which is used to keep all the guardian deities, and particularly those in their terrifying aspects. There are usually some protective devices on the door to emphasize the special aspect of this room (see Plate IX). The room itself has often to be entered after knocking to ‘warn the deities of the intrusion’. But access to these rooms is not easy and, more often than not, it is initially refused. However, the chances of entry really depend upon the mood of the keeper and whether one is able to establish some kind of bonafide status with him to go within. The room itself is usually rather dark and forbidding, and can be cluttered up with weapons, cham masks and other protective devices and paraphernalia which are used in various ceremonies and are associated with magical aspects (Plate X). The choice of the images of the deities within varies according to the sect or wishes of whoever financed the construction of it. Tiktse, for instance, has two *Gon-khang* and one of them is entered through a porch decorated with the symbols of those deities which are within and include Vajra-Bhairava, Mahākāla, Dharmarāja, Lha-mo and Khi-jitra. The large *Gon-khang* at Phiyang contains murals of monks of the Ka-gyu-pa hierarchy that have neither terrifying nor magical aspects to them and include Vajradhāra, Tilopa, Nāropa, Marpa and Mi-la Ras-pa.

The monk cells are the small rooms of the cloistered monks. The size and facilities in a cell depend upon the wealth of the
monastery. Usually, however, there is a stove for cooking, a place to store fuel, which is either wood or dung, and a sleeping platform with perhaps a few shelves or a cupboard for the utensils. The arrangement of these rooms at Rangdum (fig. 18) is somewhat unusual for these later monasteries because they are formally placed in a line, along the western side of the courtyard, which reminds one of the arrangement of cells in the Gandhāra monasteries. In most of the other monasteries, however, Tiktse (plate 70), Spituk (Plate 79), Ri-dzong (Plate 97), Lamayuru (Plates 103, 104), Karsha (Plate 122), Kye (Plates 117, 118) and Dhankar (Plate 145) these cells are really small individual family houses that are scattered below the main temple complex. It is interesting to note that the photograph of Kye monastery taken by Francke\(^{88}\) shows monks’ houses that have long fallen into decay and therefore do not appear in the photograph shown here (Plate 117).

8. The kitchens are usually used for the communal cooking of food. Enormous fires are lit and tea is made in gigantic cauldrons and served continuously throughout the day on occasions when recitations and prayers are being done in the ‘Du-khang. Near the kitchen, there are also store rooms with small windows in the thick walls that are necessary for such construction, to make conditions suitable for the storage of grain and milk products.

9. Chôtens are not, strictly speaking, parts of the monastery but are independent structures varying in size. However the monasteries of both the earlier and later period have a profusion of them in the vicinity of the buildings and they could be considered here as structures which usually accompany monastery buildings. Much has been written about the chöten and it’s earlier Indian counterpart the stūpa and one needs to only briefly touch on the subject in the present study. The stūpa or caitya had developed into a well-established cult symbol long before the arrival of Buddhism into Tibet. It had, in India, undergone significant changes in form which had made it much more than a tumulus containing the relics of the Buddha. Indeed, recent research has confirmed the existence of a timber column in the centre of the stūpa which implies that it was a symbol of the tree of life so frequently depicted in the early stone carvings of the Buddhists at Sanchi and Amarvati. Once the stūpa had become a cult-symbol amongst the Buddhists in India, it underwent changes in scale also and began to get miniaturised so that it could be reproduced and even carried about without much effort. The building of a stūpa was already a well accepted way of accumulating meritorious deeds for a Buddhist in Aśoka’s time

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and by the time the Tibetans acquired that habit, India had already lost most of them to the ravages of time. Beyond India, Mahāyāna had carried with it, the cult of the stūpa to Central Asia and China, and also to Korea, Japan Tibet, Ladakh, Sikkim, Bhutan, Mongolia, Nepal, Burma, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, Cambodia and Sri Lanka. In all these countries, well developed forms of the stūpa have been found (Svayambhunatha in Nepal, Mingalazedi Pagoda in Burma, the chōten in Tibet, Barabudur in Java, Dagobas in Sri Lanka.) Inevitably the form of stūpa changed markedly in these countries from its original Indian counterpart. During this movement out, the shape of the anda or semi-sphere began to undergo changes. For instance, the original chattraya-shīti placed over the dome found at Sanchi developed into a cluster of umbrellas placed one over another and symbolised by the thirteen tiers in the Tibetan chōten. The anda itself elongated upwards and developed into a bell in the dagobas of Ceylon and the pinnacles of the many tiered bases of the Mingalazedi Pagoda and Barabudur.

The Tibetan chōten is an easily identifiable structure and though the early ones at Tabo, Alchi, Basgo and Shey have got a different structure, the ones of the later period, almost always, conform to the patterns and proportions indicated in plates 166 – 173.

There are basically eight different forms of chōten which are:

1. Differentiated unity
2. Magic power
3. Divine manifestation, descent from heaven.
4. Emanation of happiness
5. Victory
6. Nirvana
7. Enlightenment, Illumination
8. Heap of Lotuses.

Of these eight, the most common ones that are found are Divine manifestation and ‘Enlightenment’ and these can be seen along pilgrim routes and especially around places regarded as sacred. The chōtens are constructed in various sizes and materials which include stone masonry with mud plaster, mud brick and mud plaster, timber, silver, gold, brass and other metals. The inside of the bell shaped portion usually contains some form of relic. The death of a senior or other venerable monk is often followed by the building of a chōten into which his remains are placed. The chōten in Karsha monastery has got the mummified body of an incarnate monk sealed inside it. The silver sheet covering the choten was looted during a recent Indo-Pakistan war and this had opened up the whole timber encasement which has now been nailed back into place and painted white. Other relics
that are sometimes placed in the chöten are the votive clay tablets called 
\textit{tsa-tsa} and the hollow chöten at Alchi are cluttered up with these tablets. Often discarded and damaged manuscripts which are not to be destroyed are placed inside a chöten and a window is left in the bell portion to allow storage after the chöten is finished.

Various reasons have been given to explain the number eight which is associated with the chöten, and the reasons include the eight events in the Buddha’s life, the eight cardinal points, the eight Buddha manifestations and the eight original \textit{stūpa} that were made in India. The proportions of the chöten are laid down in the Tibetan texts and have to be sanctified by a monk. The usual practice for one wishing to construct a chöten is to refer the matter to the monastery who deputes one of it’s monks, who is aware of the ritual and practice involved with chöten construction, to guide the person. Often the monk decides on the type of chöten that has to be made and gets a drawing prepared (Plates 166 – 173). This drawing clearly shows the proportions which have to be followed: the basic square consisting of 40 x 40 units is divided vertically and horizontally into four parts each of 20 x 20 units. Diagonals are then drawn and another square at 45° to the first one is placed inside. All the axis lines meet in the centre which is also the centre of the bell portion. Once this basic proportion is established, the artist sketches the selected chöten type onto it.

In considering the structure and context of the monasteries of the later period, only a few of them are taken up here. Unlike the monasteries of the earlier period, which were conceived as single creations that were part of a unified conception of the various cycles of Vairocana, those of the later period present a helter-skelter arrangement of structures and images which do not relate to any unified concept. Moreover, as we have already seen, these later monasteries present, to-day, a history of continual addition and removal of structures so that it is impossible to date any part of the monastery. Hemis monastery (Plates 59 – 69 fig 16) which is one of the most popular monasteries with visitors, is located some 35 kilometers from Leh towards the south-east of the Leh-Manali route. Compared to the other larger monasteries like Spituk (Plate 79) and Tiktse, Hemis is most inconspicuously tucked away up the Shang valley and is hidden from view till one is at its door. The date for its founding has been given by Schlagintweit as 1620 AD and its completion as 1640 based on the texts found in the monastery by his brother. However, it is not clear what parts of the monastery were built then and what was added later. To-day, undoubtedly, it represents a conglomeration of rooms, many of which

\footnote{Schlagintweit, E.: \textit{Buddhism in Tibet}. Susil Gupta, 1968, p. 183}
have been added later. Ladakh's famous king Senge Namgyal (1570 – 1642), who founded Hemis, endowed it with extensive land holdings which have given it the status of one of the richest monasteries in the Western Himalaya (See table on page 77). The construction was entrusted to a monk by the name of Paldal Sara, though the first grand lama (Suku-shog) who took over its control was Tag-thsang-Ras-pa whose image is found in one of the temples within (Plate 66).

The monastery which is south facing, is approached through the eastern gate which gives access onto a large courtyard measuring 165 x 64 (50.2 m. x 19.5 m.) which is also the scene of the summer dance festival. The building itself is dominated by the two ground floor assembly halls called Tshog-khang and 'Du-khang. Both of them are approached independently up steep steps that lead into porticos. The portico outside the Tshog-khang which measures some 28 x 13 (8.5 m. x 3.9 m.) is painted with the usual Guardians on either side of the door and the Wheel of Life. It was interesting to note that since the last visit there in 1977, all these paintings had already been redone and the illustrations here. (Plates 62, 63) are dated to an earlier visit in 1971.

The Tshog-khang measures 54. x 62. (16.6 m x 19.0 m.) and is spanned by seven bays on either side giving 36 columns. The central 16 columns go higher to support a roofing which lights up the interior. The altar and the area around and behind is cluttered up with figures and thang-khas, though the large guilded image of Sakyamuni, which is centrally placed, dominates the room. In addition, there are other brass and silver choten, and an image of Tara. The Tshog-khang is used more often for ceremonies in winter. The 'Du-khang which is the same size as the Tshog-khang is approached through a smaller portico measuring 22. x 12. (6.7 m. x 3.6 m.) which also has the murals of the Four Guardians. The walls inside are painted with the more aggressive deities, which include Hevajra and Samvara. The other temple on the ground floor is tucked away on the western side of the building and is simply called the 'old temple or Lha-khung Nying-Pa. This clearly suggests the older date of this part of the monastery and the murals within it confirm the greater antiquity of the place. The statue and mural image of Shambunath are dated by Snellgrove and Skorupski to the mid 18th century and the Mi-la Ras-Pa image to the mid 16th century. However, trying to date murals is, in many ways, a force of habit that in the case of Buddhist monasteries in this region, can be so hazardous as to be quite meaningless.

Much of the ground floor of Hemis is not in use and consists of dusty store rooms lying empty. The grain stores fill up after the harvest season is over but the plan (fig 16) reflects the non-descript use
of many rooms which the monks identified loosely as 'store rooms'. Access to the upper floors is gained from three separate points, though the one outside the Tshog-khang is most commonly used by visitors. There are a number of temple rooms on this upper level, the most important of them being the Lha-khang Tag-Sang-Ras-pa (Plate 66) where the image of the first Sku-shog is kept including the silver choten with his remains. The 'ten pillared hall' or Ka-cu-pa which measures 34. x 32. (10.3 m. x 9.7 m.) is in fact a twelve pillared hall that could not have been dusted for years and contains tang-khas and images of various lamas and deities. There is a small Gon-khang measuring 31. x 7. (9.4 m. x 2.1 m.) on the northern side of the roof of the Tshog-khang, but surprisingly, it contained very few of the fearful images that one usually associates with these rooms. The cham masks and costumes were stored in another room. There are two zimchung, the larger one of which is kept unused since the Drug-pa incarnate lama of Hemis is living in Tibet. The adjoining Zab-khang is also a temple room with a number of fine Kashmir bronze figures which are placed on the altar.

The southern face of the upper floor is punctuated with balconies where senior monks sit to watch the festival dances. The cham is a fascinating dance and a long description of the one at Hemis appears in Herber's book37.

The newest monastery in the Western Himalayan region is Ri-dzong (Plates 97, 99 - 102) situated near Suspool in Ladkah. It was founded on a brand new site by a Tibetan and his son in 1872 neither of whom were ordained monks. Separate re-incarnate monks of both father and son have continued to be recognized to this day and the discipline and exemplary conduct of the resident monks is well known all over Ladakh. The elite landowing families in Ladakh who adhere to the Ge-lug-pa sect often aspire to send a son to Ri-dzong to be ordained as a monk, because they feel that out of all the Ge-lug-pa monasteries in the region, this is the only one which offers disciplined education and training. The complex contains the usual Du-khang, Gon-khang, zimchung and Tanjur Lha-khang. But particularly interesting in this monastery is the excellent timber construction, which is unique. The framing of timber members, the willow ceilings (Plate 102), the brush wood parapet (Plate 101) are so meticulously made and maintained that the whole complex is worth a deep study in construction techniques because it exemplifies much that is embodied in the construction of Tibetan architecture.

The Ge-lug-pa expansion into Lahoul was very nominal and the monasteries there remain under Drug-pa control. Perhaps, historically

speaking, the most interesting of them is the small one situated above the confluence of the Chandra and Bhaga rivers at Tandi called Guru Ghantal\textsuperscript{38} (fig. 26, Plates 153, 154) which must surely be the oldest Buddhist structure in the Lahoul valley. The monks attending to this abandoned monastery come from Stakna monastery in Ladakh. The present structure has got a slate roof which was brought in from Kangra but

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{plan_first_floor.png}
\caption{Plan First Floor}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{plan_ground_floor.png}
\caption{Plan Ground floor}
\end{figure}

17. PHIYANG

\textsuperscript{38} The temple of Guru Ghantal is undoubtedly an old structure and its inclusion in the chapter dealing with the monasteries of the later period, is perhaps misleading. However as it does not share any of the characteristics of the temples associated with Lotsawa Rin-chen Zang-po, it has been excluded from the earlier chapter.
when Whistler saw Guru Ghantal in the last century it had a timber sloping roof of the type found on the wooden temples in Chamba and the Hidumba Temple at Manali. The structure was extensively repaired in 1959, though the monks quarters and other rooms built haphazardly
about the place are in complete ruins. Within the building there is a ‘Du-khang on the ground floor measuring 24. x 29. (7.3 m. x 8.8 m.) which contains a neglected altar. The room has in any case been substantially repaired and there are no murals on the walls. The sealed room at the rear of the ‘Du-khang is intriguing and one would be tempted to imagine it containing all sorts of treasures except for the fact that on many occasions one has found only rock outcrops within. Many of the monastery structures that are built up on rocky outcrops have got these sealed off spaces and only some systematic archaeological excavation can reveal whether there are historical relics of importance within them.

Above the ‘Du-khang is the Zugs-dun which is also plain and undecorated. However, from the Zugs-dun one gets a view into the underside of the peak of the pyramid roof which is profusely painted with *mandala* that are clearly very old. A dormer door which leads into this pyramid roof is also decorated with highly unusual wood carving patterns (fig. 26, 27) that are clearly European in origin. The intertwined circle motif is surely very close to the Celtic patterns that are seen on their early Christian manuscripts. Similarly, the reduplicated plaitwork of serpents (fig 27) is associated more with Celtic, Hellenistic or Byzantine traditions than with anything Indian. We have already noted that a substantial number of Byzantine craftsmen entered the service of Lalitāditya Muktāpīda (725–756 AD) and it is very likely that there is some connection between the influx of European and Central Asian
craftsmen into North India and the presence of these unusual motifs in Lahoul. Two of the adjoining states, Kishtawar and Chamba had been conquered by the Kashmir monarch Anantadeva (1028 – 63) and, if Lahoul too was under his reign, it is certain that a whole tradition of Kashmir, wood carving was imported into Chamba and Lahoul during this period. His queen Suryamati was, at any rate, a devout shiva worshipper and the founder of many temples. It might have been assumed that the carved door at Guru Ghantal could have been brought to the site from another part of India but there was a very rich tradition of wood carving as evidenced in the temples of Lakshanā Devī and Markula Devī which surely confirm the presence of a whole tradition of wood carving of Kashmiri origin even though it was probably influenced by cultural influx from Central Asia when it was formulating in Kashmir.

The overall dimensions of Guru-Ghantal are 38’ x 57’ (11.5 m. x 17.3 m.) and this 1:1\(\frac{1}{2}\) ratio is also found at Sani monastery (fig. 21, plates 137, 138, 143) in Zangskar which measures 156’ x 92’ (47.4 m. x 28 m.).

Plan Ground Floor  Plan First Floor  Plan Roof

20. SHASHUR

M.1: Much valuable information about the tradition of woodwork in the Himachal valley is contained in Hermann Goetz's 'The Early Wooden Temples of Chamba' Leiden 1955. Particularly the plates of the inner shrine door of Markula Devi (XI, XII) make it obvious that Kashmiri wood craftsmen were creating these temples in the 7th and 8th centuries. The Lakshana Devi temple facade (Plate II) is capped with a large trifoliated arch, carved in wood, just under the gable.
22. TANJUR

23. PIN
Sani monastery has very ancient links and the plan and layout of it certainly suggest influences from the early period though there is nothing within to suggest this age. The two significant links are the Kanika chöten, which is centrally placed in the rear courtyard and the Nāropa image which is locked up in a tiny shrine also placed in the same courtyard. Sani is an extension of the cave monastery located up the Sani riverlet where Nāropa is said to have spent a substantial part of his time in meditation. The ‘Du-khang measuring 40’ x 40’.
(12 m x 12 m.) and the court at the rear are enclosed within an unusually wide (9') (2.7 m.) covered circumambulation path. There are two unidentifiable rounded structures which protrude out of this passage and could be the remains of other chotens though any guess, without excavation, is extremely hazardous. The whole complex is surrounded by a mud wall of the type seen at Tabo measuring

26. GURU GHANTAL Wood Carving motif on door
and there are six chôtens placed along two sides and a central one over the entrance gate in the wall. Like at Alchi, it is worth considering, here at Sani, some sort of connection between the orientation of the complex and the penetration of the sun's rays into the heart of the building. The clear unobstructed opening that passes right through the central axis of the temple from north-west to south-east to the Kanika chöten and the Nāropa shrine certainly seems to suggest that it is not interrupted for other reasons than just symmetry. Sani is not used very much by the monks except on certain festival days in winter.
All these monasteries, including others of this period, have had very little research work carried out on them. It is possible that in some of them there are records of the detailed history of the area upto fairly recent times. This, at least, is likely for those monasteries where the flames of plunder have not consumed all records as is likely the case in Lamayuru, Basgo, Shey and Leh. Much research needs to be done and the relevant material brought to light before one can gain an accurate historical record of these monastic institutions.

28. TAYUL

29. KHANDUNG
4.

VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE

THE LOCAL HOUSE

Amongst the Buddhist families of the Western Himalaya, the ‘house’ is the family property which is usually passed onto the eldest son even before the father dies. One of the most moving sights that we saw was in Zangskar where an old father had given the family house to his eldest son and had moved to the outskirts of the village to construct a shack for himself and his wife to live in till the end of their days (Plate 17). There has been, in all the three regions that have been considered in this study, an old custom, obviously started by the Buddhists, of sending the younger sons to the monastery for being ordained as monks. Thus, an undivided property is inherited by the eldest son. The custom worked very well in the past because it was based on the economic and social realities of the old feudal past. The land under cultivation was limited and could not be easily extended because the terrain was very difficult. There is meagre rainfall and the irrigation system is dependent upon the streams which come down from the melting snows. The mountains are steep and any flat piece of cultivable land has been fully exploited in the past. Within these natural constraints a custom, which did not subdivide the land by inheritance, was bound to survive as an extremely successful and pragmatic solution. The problem of depriving the younger sons of their share of the family property was easily solved by the monasteries which eagerly recruited them for full time study and ordained them as monks. The maintenance of the younger brothers in the monastery was looked after by the eldest brother, but his was never a strain on the family income because this maintenance was small, as one would expect, for a monk. This custom also ensured that a family owned only one house which is a kind of ancestral property and the anchor to the whole family. The eldest brother, who often grew his hair long (Plate 21) in the old days (the younger ones shaved their heads when they entered the monastery), was also “burdened” with the social responsibility of marriage and procreation. With such a large percentage of the male population being absorbed by a
celibate occupation, (though some monks of the older orders could marry, ) it was not uncommon to find polygamy taking place. It is very common in Ladakh to find the householder married to all the sisters of a family. The institution of the nunnery was not developed to any significant level so it attracted a very small percentage of the female population and there was a surfeit of females who were absorbed into the polygamous system.

The size and grandeur of the house was, of course, related to the family's economic status and some of the big landlords had enormous rambling houses with servants and their families staying in the premises. In this present study, however, we have confined our attention to two smaller houses in villages and two houses in the towns of Leh and Kyelang. One can get some idea of how the large aristocratic houses functioned in Tibet from the account given by Rinchen Dolma Taring in her book 'Daughter of Tibet' - it contrasts markedly with the ordinary houses studied here.

"Tsarong House, where all of us children were born, was a three storied stone building. On the first floor, in the east wing, my mother had her own suite or rooms—a small prayer-room, sitting room, bed room, dressing room, lavatory and a hall that was her servant's sitting room. From the dressing room a secret staircase descended to the treasury room. In the centre of the house—which faced south, like all Tibetan houses, to get the sun, was my father's private prayer room where he used to receive visitors. On the western side was another suite of rooms, the gon-khang (Deities house) another visitors' hall and a small hall from which a staircase led to the roof. The main staircase branched into two on the second floor, where there were guest rooms and a big hall called Tsomchen—containing a huge image of Tsong-kha-pa—where new year ceremonies, wedding ceremonies and other important events took place. As Buddhists believe that the prayers of holy people are always answered, we had the custom of inviting monks from various monasteries to read prayers in this hall for the prosperity of the house. My father's prayer room had a big altar against the wall facing the windows......... Next to this room was a small hall where the room—servants waited; the head servant had to be ready to come at once when the call bell rang. A heavy, iron-studded, wooden double gate led from the street into the main courtyard, which was paved with stone slabs. Around the courtyard were stables for fifteen horses, the grass-storage rooms, the syces room and the chang room where our chang-girl made all the beer required for the family."

Besides this house, the Tsarong family had a country estate:

"Our house on the estate was a big three storied building with a huge courtyard. Some special rooms, including the prayer room, were not used by the steward but were kept clean and ready for any of the family who came to stay."39

This was the type of house at one end of the social strata of Lhasa where the landed aristocracy enjoyed the same types of privileges that were common to the Russian aristocracy under the Czars. In contrast to this description is the one given by Harcourt* for the regions of Lahoul and Spiti based on observations which Egerton made in 1870, which describe the houses of small landlords living in the villages of the Western Himalaya:

"The upper storey consists of three large apartments, all opening onto the courtyard or balcony. The outer room is the one usually occupied by the family, and here were the hand-mill, the water-pail, pestle and mortar, tea pot, and the other domestic utensils, and the store of parched barley. The room on the left is the dining room, and is hung round with the best clothes of the family including sundry cloaks of white sheep-skin. The apartment on the right is the chapel or oratory. In this are the images of Lhooang and Losodorg, the popular god and goddess, which like the Hindoo goddess Doorgah, are both beneficent deities."\[49\]

About the construction of the house, Harcourt says:

"The walls of a Spiti house (which is often three stories high) have generally the first three or four feet of stone, and the whole of the remainder of sun dried bricks a foot and a half long, eight inches wide and six feet deep, cemented together with mortar. In no case are roofs sloping and this more probably from the difficulty in procuring timber than any dislike to that style of architecture, or necessity for the flat roof, which is universal.

Across the walls solid beams of the width of the apartment are placed, and willow or juniper sticks peeled off their bark form the connecting links, tamarisk twigs and earth being placed over the surface and evenly smoothed down: this description of a roof in such a dry climate answers all protective purposes. On the top of the roofs are ranged great layers of brushwood for winter consumption and in some of the houses long poles are inserted in the walls, from which poles flaunt out black yaks' tails. The smoke from fires colours the ceilings a deep coal tar hue, for chimneys are not part of the Spiti house-holder's domestic economy. The upper portions of the walls are daubed on the outside with a grey coloured mare, and by way of ornament, broad irregular bands of reds and chrome are traced just under the line of the roof and round the windows. By each house is the open walled-in enclosure for yaks or ponies."\[44\]

The most common feature of all village houses in the Western Himalaya is the provision of internal and external space for the cattle. Like in any agrarian society, cattle forms an integral part of the economic life of the people. In the case of Ladakh, Spiti and Lahoul, this cattle

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48 Harcourt, A.F.P. op., cit. p. 48
49 Ibid.
44 Ibid, p. 49
usually consists of a mixture of *yaks* or *dzos*, sheep, goats and perhaps pony or two. The *yak* is the most fascinating of animals which is used by the villagers to carry loads (Plate 16), provide rich milk and its fur for coarse weaving. In Lahoul and in some parts of Spiti, it is common to find a cross breed between the *yak* and cow which is called a *dzò* and is considered a better animal for milk and ploughing at altitudes below 10,000 ft. (3000 m.). Self sufficiency for the villager in milk products is really an essential part of their existence, though the poorer families who have only sheep and goats have to rely on the nomads to supply them with butter. The severe winters and the pleasant summers in the region means that the temperature difference between the two seasons is enormous with winter temperatures dropping down to −30°C and summer temperatures rising to a comfortable +35°C. This variation has a strong impact on the pattern of living. In winter, when all the cattle owned by the family are down from the pastures, the wind and snow make it imperative to house the cattle indoors. Thus, almost universally, the ground floor is used exclusively for tethering cattle and fodder storage. Located immediately outside the door of the ground floor stables is the enclosed yard where the cattle come out to enjoy the sun on fine winter days. This is also the space to keep those cattle that have not been sent up to the pastures in summer. This fundamental division between the lower stable floor and the upper living floor, is an extremely important functional device. It serves, first of all, the need for all the householders to have a close and intimate proximity to their animals who are their only form of moveable wealth and property. The internal staircase ensures a prompt and easy access to the stables. Secondly, the collective body heat of the cattle which is enclosed into the lower floor, serves to provide warmth to the winter room of the house. In the case of the local houses at Aberan (Zangskar) (fig. 33), Kaza (Spiti (gun sa) (fig. 34) and Kyelang (Lahoul) (thap-sang) (fig. 55) the winter kitchen is actually located on the ground floor and is a corner room (except in the case of the house at Aberan) on the leeward side surrounded on the other sides by cattle stables. In winter, when all aspects of life outside the house are in hibernation, the cattle move inside and the family moves down to live in close proximity with each other. Significantly the *chang* (beer) store is located next to the winter kitchen and this, more then anything else, provides the villagers with the warmth that is so desperately needed at that time of the year. The functioning and planning of the first floor, which contains the summer rooms, seems to vary from valley to valley and it can be seen from the plans of all four areas that there are a considerable number of variations which are discussed more in detail below. Four typical village houses have been considered in this present study. They are all located in different environments. The house at Leh (Plates 186-189) is situated near the centre of the town, the one at Aberan in
Zangskar, is situated all by itself (Plates 190, 191) in the middle of some fields, the house at Kaza in Spiti is located on the outskirts of the village (Plates 192, 193), while the house at Kyelang in Lahoul (Plates 194, 195) is situated amongst the fields as one approaches the large extended village of Kyelang which is now a district headquarter of government administration. These houses do not in any way represent typical houses in the region because we found a tremendous variation in their size and planning that spanned across the economic and social positions that families have in villages in the region. The Leh house, for instance, is a medium sized house that dated back to a period before the town had expanded to its present size. At one time it was located on the outskirts of the town though today, it is in the centre of a built up area. The house in the village of Aberan was one of the biggest houses in the village and it's owner, the lambdar, or ‘village headman’ was certainly one of the better off people in a very poor village. By contrast to the headman’s house, the smallest house in Aberan consisted of a single room placed over another room of the same small size which housed two goats. The Kyelang house owner was taking advantage of the growth of the village and had rented out a number of his rooms to administrative and other junior officers in the government. Thus the word “typical” can hardly be applied to them. A special study of a particular village would have to be done to place a house, such as any of the ones taken here, in its correct perspective, and that has not been attempted in the present study.

The local house at Leh (Ladakh) (fig. 32 Plates 186-189). The enclosure defining the line of property consists of a mud wall over 6 (1.8 m.) high measuring 75 x 81 (22.8 m x 24. 77m.) and contains, within it, the house and a number of open cattle stalls with feeding troughs divided off with low stone walls. The house itself measures 33 x 46 (10 m. x 14 m.) and has a clean rectangular shape which rises up two floors. The ground floor is divided off into six stables, a fodder store with a separate entrance and a space under both the toilets which provides rich manure for the fields. This too has an independent access from outside. The larger stables are for the dzo and cows and the smaller ones for goats and sheep. Narrow windows with openable wooden shutters admit light and ventilation through the 2 (600 m.m) thick mud walls which rest on stone foundations. Access to the upper family living spaces is provided by an external staircase and a landing which also serves as a kind of portico for the entrance into the tang-ra for cattle. The heart of the family space on the first floor is the chensa or kitchen which measures 20 x 22 (6.0 m. x 7 m.). Here there is every evidence of the antiquity of the family house with open wooden cupboards stuffed full with old traditional utensils inherited from father to son over some generations.
For daily use, the family was already familiar with the enamel and plastic ware that has come into Leh bazaar from the plains of India. On one side of the chensa is located the traditional Ladakhi stove with its flue going up through the ceiling. This is a kind of smokeless "chula" which was introduced by the Moravian missionaries in the last century, to reduce the smoke which would otherwise fill the room from an open hearth. The person cooking, in this case she was a poor relative being employed as a servant, sat by the stove as one would at a piano, fanning the flames and stirring the food in the pots. The tin flue was very successful and the rafters, though black, did not have the soot deposits found in the houses at Aberan and Kaza. Around the walls, the traditional Ladakhi seats with the low tables (chok-tse) were arranged where we all sat between sessions of measurements, to sip excellent first draught chang. The whole family, consisting of parents and two children, slept in the chensa which is used as the family room. A little alcove partitioned off with a timber partition adjoining the store (dzod) serves as an additional sleeping space for guests. The lobby measuring 8 x 7 (2.4 m. x 2.1 m.) also gives access to the family prayer room or Lha-khang which measures 9 x 18 (2.7 m. x 5.5 m.) and this
is a simple temple with an altar having a stucco image of Sakyamuni and a few thang-kha that were commissioned for various family ceremonies. Like a miniature 'Du-khang in a monastery, this family Lha-khang has got two rows of seats along the middle of its length where the monks sit and recite prayers when they are called upon to do so by the family. The dzod or store measuring 7 x 11 (2.1 m. x 3.3 m.) is used for the storage of miscellaneous items but mainly sacks of grain and dried meat and fruit. The chag-ra or toilet simply consists of a square opening in the floor over which one squats to relieve oneself. The excreta is collected in the space below from where it is periodically removed and used in the fields as a rich form of manure. The chag-ra, even in the grandest of structures, is at best a rather unpleasant, smelly place and the opening in the floor is invariably so large that it attracts an updraft and one uses the place with great trepidation. The other chag-ra is located on the roof to which which access is gained by a staircase placed in the lobby and the potential manure from this one too goes directly to the ground floor. Otherwise the roof is without any rooms and is simply a flat terrace where fire wood and juniper shrubs are dried and stored for the winter. It is also the place where clothes are dried and where, often in winter, the family comes up to enjoy the sun. The roofs of all vernacular buildings and nearly all religious buildings in the Buddhist region of the Western Himalaya are flat. Harcourt has commented on this though his supposition about the reason for it is quite erroneous:

"In no case are the roofs sloping, and this is more probably from the difficulty is procuring timber than any dislike to that style of architecture, or necessity for the flat roof, which is universal."

In fact the reason for not having sloping roofs is that no material is available which could form a covering membrane to the roof such as slates, planking, or tiles. Moreover the flat roof, which is easily covered over in mud is really an essential part of the household function in winter. With the snow lying deep all around the house, the roof is the only easily accessible flat space for catching the sun which warms the body and dries the food and fuel. Snow, when it falls on the roof is removed daily with large wooden 'lollipop' or shovels because the rafters cannot withstand a heavy snow load. Thus, while the snow builds up to a deep level in the surrounding area outside the house, the roof remains relatively snow free.

The local house at Aberan (Zangskar) (Fig. 33 Plates 190, 191). This house, measuring 34' x 35' (10.3 m. x 10.7 m.) on the outside, belongs to a small peasant family in the village of Aberan situated below the Pensi pass on the Zangskar side. It’s isolated location on the plain afforded it no protection from the cold wind which blows
down from the north and north-east and this is reflected directly in the windowless walls which face this direction. In contrast to the house at Leh, this one had tiny openings on the south side only. The ground floor had, typically, the stables for the cattle. In this case the family possessed a horse, a dzo and some goats, and their stables were clearly demarcated. The winter room (gunsā) measuring 10' x 14' (3.0 m. x 4.2 m.) had within it a chang (beer) storage space and was otherwise a totally windowless room without any form of ventilation. Here, below the Pensi La, right in the path of the severe cold winds, the villager simply could not afford to have ventilation. Indeed the chang store provided a further insulation to the gunsā from the outside. One feature in this house, which is also encountered in many other places, is the room for the feed which is roofed over by the first floor roof. Thus fuel and cattle feed, which is dried in summer on the roof, is thrown into this room, which is really a kind of storage shaft, with access through an openable shutter in the room.

On the first floor the family room or chensa measuring 10' x 14' (3.0 m. x 4.2 m.) is located directly above the gunsā and it has the feed shaft on one side and a large store of the same size as the chensa on the other. Two other sleeping rooms measuring 14' x 7' (4.2 m. x 2.1 m.) and 14' x 6' (4.2 m. x 1.8 m.) are also provided on this floor. One of these rooms, along the south eastern edge of the house is so placed that it is convenient for the use of guests (we too slept there) and is quite separated from the rest of the family space which has access through a single door into the chensa. In using this guest room and the chag-ra, we did not come into contact with
or disturb the family life of the householder. The peasant family occupying this house had very little surplus wealth to tie up in a Lha-khang and the odd thang-kha or two with the sacred seven water bowls were tucked away in a corner of the family room adjoining the Chensa.

The local house at Kaza (Spiti) (fig. 34 Plates 192, 193) The description given by Harcourt of the Spiti zamindar’s house in 1870 still holds good for to-day and his account of one such house closely resembles the one illustrated here.

“The Spiti house is far from an uncomfortable one, and is both roomy and spacious; few of the villages are of any size, but even in the smallest the poorest classes are lodged in residences that are far from contemptible and are very solidly put together. This care in construction is absolutely necessary in a country where the climate is so rigorous for the greater portion of the year. At Losur I put up in a zamindar’s house which may be taken as a sample of the style of dwelling in common use. The one in question occupied an area of forty feet square, the entrance being by a strong, though low doorway, a flight of stone stairs leading to the family rooms up above, very clean and commodious stalls being reserved underneath for the cattle and sheep. The upper storey was composed of a court walled in, a third of which was roofed, and off it lay a spacious appartment furnished with small windows protected by wooden shutters, the roof being supported by uprights from the flooring, which I should add, was scrupulously clean.”

The Kaza house that was selected, more or less, at random in the village measures 43.′ x 51.′ (13 m. x 15.5 m.) on the outside and faces due south where it has an enclosed cattle yard (nin da) measuring 20.′ x 30.′ (6 m. x 9 m.) with feeding troughs along the shorter sides. Like the Aberan house, the windward side of this house is also totally windowless and the walls to the north and west are 3′ (900 mm.) thick mud barriers against the severe winter winds. The ground floor houses the cattle stables which are divided off into various compartments for the various animals. A large fodder store (trah) is located in the north-western corner of the house and part of this store becomes a shaft going right through to the roof from where the fodder is dropped down. The other typical room of the ground floor is the gun-sa or winter room measuring 11.′ x 14.′ (3.3 m. x 4.2 m.) with a little niche set aside for the storage of chang. During the summer months, the gun sa is used as the brewery and distillery of the house and the drink is stored in earthen pots in the chang store.

Access to the upper level family rooms is gained from an outside stone staircase and also from an inside winder which opens into a tiny lobby upstairs. The characteristic feature of the Spiti house on the upper level, is the open court or tang-sa which faces south and catches all the summer and winter sun. There are three family rooms
off this open court of different sizes all of which are used in summer by the family. The cooking and feeding is done in the squarish shaped byar-sa measuring 18 x 16 (5.5 m. x 4.9 m.) the roof of which spanned across by four columns made of the usual Lombardi poplar tree trunk, which are eccentrically placed. The small Lha-khang or Chos-khang which measures 9 x 9 (2.7 m. x 2.7 m.) contained images of Tsong-ka-pa and Avalokitesvara and the family took it’s refuge with the Ge-lug-pa monastery at Kye.

Access to the roof is gained by the central winder staircase which is covered over with a roof above the roof terrace where all the fodder and food is dried for the winter. Like the houses at Leh and Aberan, this one at Kaza too is an ancestral property which has been improved and marginally extended over the years. It’s large size of over 4000 Sq. ft. (370 Sq. m.) of plinth area (i.e. including the walls) did not in any way reflect the fortunes of the family inhabiting the place. In contrast to the house in Leh the chensa of the Kaza house was not endowed with such a splendid collection of copper and brass utensils. Many of them had been bartered away in times of hardship or given to the monks of the monastery in return for performing rites that are obligatory on various occasions.

First Floor

Ground Floor

34. LOCAL HOUSE (KAZA)
The local house at Kyelang (Lahoul) (fig. 35 and Plates, 194, 195)
The Kyelang house illustrated here is larger than the ones seen in Spiti and Zangskar and it belongs to a fairly affluent family which explains its three floor size. Houses in Lahoul, in any case, tend to be larger because the joint family system is commonly found with the married sons and their families staying in the family house. Unlike in Ladakh and Spiti, it is not so common to find all the younger sons secluded into monastic life though this custom is prevalent in some villages nearer the Baralacha pass on the border of Spiti and Ladakh. The house measures 40 x 56 (12.0 m. x 17.0 m.) and is constructed out of random rubble and mud mortar with a thick coat of mud plaster. There are two kitchens, one for summer use on the ground floor and the other for winter use in the semi basement, each measuring 19 x 19 (5.8 m. x 5.8 m.) with four centrally located columns. The rest of the basement is taken up by stables and fuel storage. The store (dzod) above the winter kitchen (thap-tsang) is used for storage of food stuff and also gives access to the winter kitchen so that the family, even in the depth of winter, can easily have access to the dried fruit, meat and barley stored in sacks. The first floor, which houses all the

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**First Floor**

**Basement**

**Ground Floor**

35. LOCAL HOUSE (KYELANG)
family rooms, also has the prayer room (chos-khang) and the small altar room (Iha-khang) which is used for private prayers. The chos-khang is a large hall measuring 29 x 18 (8.8 m. x 5.5 m.) which is used for important religious functions when the monks from Shashur monastery are invited for recitations which last for many days. The monks are also fed in this room, during the ceremonies, from food prepared in the kitchen. The size of the Chos-khang in a Buddhist house in this region is a rather accurate gauge of the wealth and status of the family, as religious ceremonies are expensive to conduct and this expense is directly related to the number of monks who are invited to conduct the ceremony and the number of days over which the ceremony lasts. It is quite common for local families to discuss amongst each other the status of the recital ceremony that a householder has held and this is generally measured by the number of monks who attended the ceremony.

Local houses in Ladakh, Spiti and Lahoul are still being constructed by traditional techniques and the only modification that can be seen relates to the joinery and carpentry which has became somewhat more sophisticated in the larger villages. The government buildings being put up by the officials are all, without exception, insensitive blocks relying on imported materials and aesthetics and stand out as examples of architecture which wholly ignore the environment. Tin sheets, concrete, steel trusses, cement plaster and white wash are the essential elements of government buildings which are brought in by trucks. The local inhabitants have learnt nothing from this and the economics of this process are so ludicrous within the local context that no local householder could even dream of affording the imported techniques. The public works department has “type” buildings which are designed by engineers who are sitting either in Shrinagar or Simla and these ‘type’ buildings are being reproduced all over the Western Himalaya to provide accommodation to the ever growing governmental functions regardless of local traditions and economics.
5.

BUILDING CONSTRUCTION

TECHNIQUES AND METHODS

There is an unextricable link between pragmatic experience and sanctified practice in the building traditions of the Tibetan culture. The construction activity has a twin aspect to it and the physical and the ritualistic aspects seem to blend together. Thus, in a ritual that may be prescribed in the texts for testing the soil for foundations, it will be difficult to distinguish the point where the building ritual departs from the religious aspect and enters the pragmatic aspect. The pragmatic and religious aspects are so closely interwoven together that one must see them as a whole. Generally speaking however, the ceremonial and ritualistic practices assume importance in the building operation at the beginning and end, while the period of the erection of the structure is generally uninterrupted by such practices. In the case where important temples have been built, there is inevitably a legend which forms a part of the history of the temple. In this legend, supernatural and real phenomena are completely intermixed together so that it is difficult to distinguish between fantasy, symbolism and real fact. A fine example of this kind of legend has been quoted by Waddell in connection with the founding of Sam-ya monastery in Tibet:

"To consecrate the ground and procure supernatural works St. Padma made the magic-circle of Do-rje P'ur-pa with coloured stone dust and having the 'Kro-wo of the five kinds, and all the necessary offerings arranged in his presence, he worshipped for seven days. Then the five Jinas (Dhejani Buddhas) appeared to him, the king, being empowered, also saw the faces of these five. Then the Guru created several incarnations of himself, some of whom entered the mandala, while some flew up into the sky. These incarnations caused the Tibetan devils to bring stone and wood from the hills and rivers, and thus the foundation of Bsam-yas academy was begun. Human beings built it by day, while the devils worked at it by night, and so the great work rapidly progressed.

Wadell L.A.: op. cit., p. 266
When the king saw the great piles of gathered wood he was surprised and was awestruck and asked the Guru to explain. The Guru thereon made the mandala of the “Five” and worshipping for seven days, the Five transformed themselves into five kinds of Garuda birds, which were visible to the king. And at that very time the Guru himself became invisible, and the king saw in his stead a great Garuda holding a snake in his clutches and beak, but not seeing the Guru, the king cried out in fear. Then the Garuda vanished and the Guru reappeared beside him. The country of Samye was then, it is said, inhabited by Savage “Kla-Klo” tribes, which the Tibetans, through their Indian pandits, termed Nagas. The next day, a Naga, having transformed himself into a white man on a white horse, came into the presence of the king and said, “O, King! How much wood do you need for building Sam-ya as I will supply you with all you want.” On being informed of the requirements, the Naga collected wood to an enormous extent.

The building of Sam-ya academy swallowed up the wealth of the King. So the Guru, accompanied by the king and his ministers, went to the bank of Mal-gro lake and keeping the ministers concealed in a small valley, the Guru began to make a mandala of the “Five” and worshipped for seven days after which Avalokita Sinhada, with Amitabha on his head, stood at each of the four directions, where dwell the four gods of the ‘Five’. On this the Nagas of the depth became powerless and the Guru, addressing them said, “The wealth of my king being exhausted, I have come to ask wealth.” Next day the banks were found lined with glittering gold, which the Guru caused the ministers to carry off to the palace. On this account all the images of gods at Sam-ya are made of solid gold and of a quality unequalled in any part of our world of Jambudvip”

Rituals apart, the construction activity of a timber and mud or stone temple is divided into seven phases, as would any building activity today. These seven phases are:

1. Selection of site
2. Laying out and digging of foundation trenches
3. Erection of superstructure
4. Erection of timber columns
5. Construction of timber floors, balconies and roof structure
6. External and internal plastering
7. Decoration.

Under the symbolical references it is clear in this story that the Kla-klo tribes were the non-Buddhist clans that were subjugated by the Buddhist king. The story explains the manner in which the tribes were overcome and their wealth used to build the monasteries and temples. It is also apparent that the role of the Indian acaryas who went to Tibet, and particularly that of Padmasambhava and Atisa was not confined to translation work but extended beyond that into an active participation in the physical expansion of Buddhism in central, and later, in Western Tibet.
SELECTION OF SITE AND DIGGING OF FOUNDATIONS:

The selection of a suitable site for the location of a temple is usually done by a monk who has managed to gather together sufficient funds or patrons for the building. The texts do lay down the various rituals and practices which have to be observed for site selection. However, the founder of the temple will primarily be guided by very basic requirements such as easy accessibility, availability of water close to the site, availability of building materials, particularly timber, and of course proximity to some settlement. Thubten Legshay Gyatsho in his "Gateway to the temple" mentions:

“One should seek out a place for a temple’s building site in such a places as have the following: a tall mountain behind and many hills in front, two rivers converging in front from the right and left, a central valley of rocks and meadows resembling heaps of grain...."

Orientation is important and the earlier temples generally faced east to catch the early morning sun and so the same text prescribes "a wide expanse in the east..." Various defects are also mentioned whose functional reasons are not immediately apparent. For instance:

“The five defects which bring harm are of the sky, rock, earth, water and wood. The sky defect is where the earth and sky meet in a sharply pointed curved shape like the fangs of Yama. The rock defect is a window-like natural tunnel. The earth defect is a ravine in the shape of a spear’s point. The water defect is that which is known as the "thin valley of the sun." This is where the morning or evening rays of the sun are reflected from water onto land. The wood defect is a solitary stand of trees which waves like a beckoning hand."

It is clear that, (apart from the sky,) rock, earth, water, and wood are the basic building materials to be used during construction. The ambiguous definition of their defects is not immediately clear but obviously identifies those materials which should be free from defects. In other places in the same text, the directions have a clearly functional and pragmatic purpose.

“It is good if the centre is elevated and the land is lower in the east and north. Also there is a digging test, whereby one digs a hole in which the ground level is about at knee height to someone standing in the middle of the whole. Then refilling the hole with the earth previously dug out, if there is more than enough to fill it, that is good. If the earth is not sufficient to

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46 Ibid,
47 Ibid.
refill the hole, that is bad. Then to test its characteristics dig again and pat smooth the sides of the hole. Fill it up with water and then walk one hundred paces away. Returning back look into the hole and if the water has not subsided, but remains full it is extremely good."

This simple test prescribes a practical way to test the quality of soil and whether it is likely to take the load of the building. If, during the test, the pit does not refill up with the excavated earth, it means that the soil is either too light or airy and hence unsuitable for load bearing. The water test is a simple way of determining whether the soil is sandy or good clay. A sandy soil cannot retain the water filled up in it and hence will not be suitable for building whereas a good firm clay soil will retain water and provide excellent load bearing capacity. The foundations upto plinth level are generally made from random rubble. Roughly dressed stone is bonded together with mud mortar to a thickness which varies from three feet to about a foot and a half. The normal method of constructing the random rubble foundation wall is to fix a double line of strings along the length of the foundation trench to fix the outer edges of the wall. Dressed stones are then used to build up the inner and outer edges of wall with the centre part being filled in with loose stones that get bonded together with the layers of mud mortar that hold the whole wall together. In the case of rocky sites on hilltops or cliffs, no foundation trenches are dug. The foundation masonry is laid directly onto the irregular rock base and the stonewalls are taken up to the desired level where an adequate flat space can be made for the floor of the room. Once the foundation walls have been brought upto plinth level, joists are fixed across them to provide the structure of a timber floor (Plate 176). Timber floors are expensive and are only used for the ground floor where the terrains is so uneven that the effort of levelling it by cutting or filling is impractical. Invitably those in buildings which are built on relatively flat ground, stone foundation walls are built only to take the load of the walls and the floor is made out of compacted earth and is either paved or plastered down with clay. In the case of buildings located on difficult ground (Plates 70, 79, 117) a series of parallel foundation walls a few feet apart are constructed to take the joists which get placed over them. The joists are then covered with planking. Essentially, it is necessary to use stone walls in the foundations to prevent rising damp from the subsoil as well as to ensure that a firm base minimises the risk of uneven settlement. Even before the stone masonry courses are laid inside the trenches, the earth

below is compacted by flinging down large stones from a height. These stones are picked and flung down into the trench a number of times till the earth at the bottom of the trench is well compacted.

ERECTION OF THE SUPERSTRUCTURE:

The use of coarsely dressed stone and sun dried mud bricks in construction which is followed all over the Western Himalaya and in Tibet is also characteristic in Afghanistan, Iran and a large part of Central Asia. The dry climate in these regions enables the local inhabitants to rely upon mud as a basic bonding and building material. Throughout the Western Himalaya, traditional superstructure construction, of the walls is carried out in one or more of the following methods.

i) Mud walls from sun dried bricks

ii) Stamped mud walls from in-situ mud laid between timber planks or basket shuttering.

iii) Random rubble with mud mortar

iv) Stud walls with timber framing and mud or stone infill.

The choice of each method of construction is determined solely by the local availability of material. However, as a broad generalisation it would be true to say that mud walls are used for construction in Spiti and Ladakh whereas random rubble walls are commonly found in Lahoul.

The building activity itself is a very relaxed one and the whole family takes part in it. In the case where a temple is being constructed, the family will be working to fulfil their quota of help. In the case of a village house, families join in to help out. The building site is a chaotic hub of activity with the singing of songs, giggling and games of hide and seek going on together with the construction. It is always difficult to determine who is in charge and whether if he is, he is able to exercise any authority. This kind of help by the villagers is, of course, limited to only part of the building activity which consists of either demolition work, foundation trench digging or preparation and cartage of mud. The specialised parts of the building operation are supervised by experienced persons who may be monks in the case where a temple is under construction. The moulding of sun dried mud bricks is, for instance, a fairly skilled job and is usually contracted out to the local village expert who charges a piece rate per hundred bricks which he moulds (Plate 183). The mould is a simple wooden box with extended sides to help lift it up. Mud which is made to a sticky consistency with water, is mixed with a spade or shovel and placed inside the mould. It is then patted down by hand and the mould is lifted up immediately. After a short while the moulded brick is stood up on its edge to dry. The drying of the brick on edge minimises the risk
of cracking. It is however extremely rare to find any brick which has not cracked because the quality of clay used for this work is extremely poor in quality. Where the mud is exceptionally bad, it is customary to mix the mud with the chopped chaff of barley stems to give additional bonding quality. The chaff is mixed into the mud and water is added to the heap which is allowed to stand for about a week to let the chaff start decomposing. The whole mixture is then turned over and re-mixed to give an excellent bonding mix. However, apart from removing the roots and stems from the mud, no sieving is done. The mud is mixed up as a mortar and stamped on to get an even mix before the moulding work starts. The whole operation is often accompanied by a song in a slow rhythm.

The sun dried bricks are laid in the same fashion as other bricks, usually using the flemish bond and are held together with mud mortar.

Stamped mud walls, which are very common in Spiti and Zangskar, are made from the same mixture of mud and water that is prepared for mud bricks. However, at Kaza in Spiti, for instance, both practices of stamped mud walls and sun dried bricks is prevalent in the village so that the locational aspects of this technique are not at all clearly defined. The technique of stamped mud walls consists of erecting a plank or basket-woven shuttering (Plate 179) along the length of the wall with the help of a removable frame. The wet mud mix is then shoelled between the shuttering and stamped upon. After a brief period to let the water drain down, the shuttering is removed and moved forward. In this way the wall comes up in long continuous courses of stamped mud which are about a foot high. The frame which holds the planking together is pulled out after each operation and leaves behind the holes which are often seen in contemporary concrete construction. The principle is the same (Plate 182).

Random rubble walls which are found almost universally in Lahoul follow a tradition which is prevalent in the adjoining regions of Kulu, Chamba and Kangra. The original form of construction of the random rubble wall in this area was to alternate three to four courses of stone with a continuous course of timber. This helped stabilize the stone wall against earthquake dangers. Buildings constructed in Manali village and the 16th century Hidumba temple are essentially timber structures with stone rubble in-fill, and this was certainly the prevalent form of construction in Lahoul at one time, as can be seen from the remains of the Thakur’s fort at Gandhola (Plate 8). But to-day, with the acute shortage of timber in Lahoul, the interlacing timber members are getting left out of the construction and straight masonry walls are commonly seen. The stone wall which is generally a foot and a half thick, is often not even bonded together with mortar. Mud
mortar was not necessary when the wall, was acting as an infill in a timber structure, as the sheer compression of the wall held the stones in place. But with the removal of the wooden courses and the less accurate dressing of stones for the walls, mud mortar is being used more and more to even out the courses.

The most common system of making internal partition walls is similar to medieval English studding. Head and cill beams are joint by vertical posts, often with a further beam at waist level, joined by mortice and tenon joints. The intervals may be filled with wooden panels or mud plastered willow basket work (Plate 178), or half section logs or stones placed horizontally.

Stud walls are generally used on the upper floors of vernacular construction to minimise the wall load onto the ground floor structure. Hence, they may be used for the erection of partition walls between rooms where there is no wall below to take the weight of the normal thick wall. A timber frame is erected and braced with subsidiary members. The gaps are then filled with small cut stones and the whole is plastered over.

FITTING OF DOORS AND WINDOWS:

Door and window frames are prefabricated and brought to the site because carpentry skills are rarely available locally at the village. One has found carpenters from the Punjab, Kangra and Chamba at work in Kyelang and Leh.

It is not uncommon to see the trade caravans crossing into Spiti from the Kulu and Kunawar carrying with them, prefabricated door frame members and also the door and window shutters. Joinery is a skilled craft found in areas where timber is plentiful and if the timber members are sawn, planed and jointed together properly, it means that the technology has been imported from outside the Buddhist region of the Western Himalaya. In Lahoul, these prefabricated timber parts including cupboards are brought to the site before the masonry walls are erected. These are then placed in position and walled around subsequently (Plate 176). The lintels are inevitably made from timber. This placing of the door and window frames is often done for the construction of sun dried mud brick walls also but it is certainly not absolutely necessary. Often, the openings are left in the walls and timber lintels placed. The frames are fitted subsequently because mud construction facilitates patching up work without any difficulty. Thus if the opening left for the door frame is too large or small and the frame, when it arrives on the site, does not fit exactly into the opening, it is placed in position and its edges matched with the wall by either cutt-
ing or filling the wall. Where the mud wall is being stamped in-situ, it is the usual practice to lay timber lintels in the required position into the mud. The openings for the doors and windows are then subsequently gouged out of the wall under the lintels (Plate 182). However, if the builder has managed to assemble his timber work prior to construction, he may choose to erect the frame in position during the construction of the wall too. There are no hard and fast rules about the practice. Doors and windows for temples are generally more elaborate and require some basic carving work to be done on them (fig 26,27 Plate 184) and the joinery and profiles of these doors is complex and relates directly back to Indian practice.

THE ERECTION OF TIMBER COLUMNS FLOORS, BALCONIES AND ROOF STRUCTURE

The column, together with the main entrance door in a temple is a highly symbolic building element. In vernacular construction both the door and column have a simple form but in the case of temples the carved and painted motifs give them both a special place (Plates 180, 181). Thubten Legshay Gyatsho mentions in his manual the following:

"Before putting a top the pillar, a block (bre) and “small bow” (gzhu chung) which support the bottom of the pillar’s capital, first one or two” benlog block are (in some cases) installed. If two ben log are employed, atop the first there are placed three small blocks and atop the second benlog five small blocks. Atop that the “long bow” capital is placed. This is traditionally decorated with the design symbolizing the “seven jewels of a kingdom” (that is, the king, queen, minister and so on). Atop that are placed (sometimes) seven small blocks and above that comes the lintel (main beam) which itself is notched along the bottom to make a this strip called the beam seat.”

The most common symbols found below the column capital, on the main shaft are the petals of the lotus flower which also open outwards along the door frame. On the capital, the most common symbol is the head of the makara or water demon. In other cases a lotus flower or a mantra may also be shown. The column capital is one of the most important sources for tracing the influences of external forces on the architecture of the Western Himalaya. Alchi for instance, has ionic capitals with fluted columns which have a clearly Hellenistic origin (Plates 29, 32). The variety of carved decorations on the columns along the niches in both Mårtând and Avantisvamin temples reveal the Greek, Byzantine and Central Asian influences that were prevalent in

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*Gyatsho, op. cit.,*
Buddhist Kashmir in the 8th and 9th centuries AD. Stylisation did not simply mean painted or carved decoration, it also meant more elaborate building elements. The simple column and capital developed into a complex system of a series of capitals placed over the column. As the desire to build higher and better temples arose, these features developed for functional and symbolic use. The difficulty of procuring timber ensured that the length of a column was more or less determined by the availability of timber. Thus, it became a convenient way to raise the internal height of the temple to have an elaborate base and a double or triple capital. The roof structure which is supported by the columns is a multilayered construction with each layer closing the gap further so that eventually the gaps are so small that mud can be laid over and plastered. Gyatsho mentions in his manual:

“Atop the lintel (main beam) is a plant called nagaline” and atop that two levels of woodwork consisting of the lotus and dharma stack. Ordinary temples may be decorated with twelve levels of fine architectural woodwork or should a cathedral be extremely great and elaborate, it may be beautified in the above fore mentioned way but with a total of sixteen to eighteen tiers of architectural detail.”

Some of the finest recent construction of roofs can be seen at Ri-dzong in Ladakh (Plates 101, 102). Here, Lombardi poplar columns and joists have been used for the primary structure and the secondary and tertiary structures have been constructed out of willow branches. There is very little reliance placed on sawn planking which has to be imported. Where the roof construction has not been carefully done or has shown signs of deterioration, it is common to hang a printed cotton sheet suspended from inside, under the beams, to catch the fine debris that keeps dropping down when people walk about on the upper side. The extremely dry climate of the region has enabled the local architecture to have flat roofs with simple mud plastered terracing over it. During the winter the inhabitants clear the snow off the roof as it accumulates, not only because the roofs cannot stand the additional load of heavy snow but also, so that on a sunny day, when the snow melts the water should not seep into the roof structure. For this purpose, it is common to find in Ladakh and Spiti those enormous wooden ‘lollipops’ which are used to push the snow off the roof.

Balconies are generally shallow, consisting of floor joists cantilevered outwards and sometimes supported from below by a series of capitals or brackets cantilevered from the wall. The parapet, a wooden frame or sometimes a mud wall may get connected by long upright supports which hold up the roof in the form of a canopy.

50 Ibid.
They are used on the main facade to lend the building importance, and are usually covered with a roof as is the case with the balconies of Leh and Shey palaces. As a feature it is not confined to vernacular architecture but is also found on temple and monastery buildings (Plate 59). Shashur monastery in Lahoul has a rather elaborate balcony which is supported by unusual brackets which have been done in the Chinese style (Plate 131).

EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL PLASTERING AND DECORATION

The external plastering of walls is common but not inevitable. In Lahoul, for instance, the houses of the rich and the temples and monasteries which have stone walls are usually plastered with a thick coat of mud. But local village houses belonging to the poor are often left unplastered. Mud for plastering may not be easily available and is generally better clay than the local mud used for mortar. In the case of Tayul monastery, the mud for plastering was brought from a distant river bed and it has a high content of mica which gives the building a rare luminosity (Plate 156). Where the walls are made in in-situ stamped mud, very often the plastering is left out as in the case of Tanjur monastery in Spiti (Plate 141) where the mud courses can easily be seen. In other cases such as at Kye monastery, the whole complex is plastered over. The mud used for plastering needs to have a rich clay content so that it does not crack on drying but provides a continuous membrane of protection from the wind erosion and wind swept snow. The plastering is done by hand and trowels are not used because the mud wall has a rough and irregular surface that can readily be plastered with mud. The final rub down of the mud plaster is done with a wet hand to get a slippery smooth surface on the wall. It is very common to mix the chaff of barley stems in mud plaster after it has decomposed. Internal plastering too is done in the same way except on surfaces where murals are to be painted where additional surface preparation is required (See Chapter 6). Mud craft is not as well developed as one would suppose in such a region and the art of pottery is very rarely found. In Ladakh, for instance, the village of Likir is one of the few villages that has a tradition of pottery although the earlier images if the deities which adorned the temples of Rin-chens Zang-po were constructed in the stucco style which was extremely common in Gandhara.
PAINTING AND DECORATION

Most of the decoration of religious rooms and buildings in a temple monastery or private home, consist of mural paintings and coloured stucco statues. Apart from the decoration on the walls and ceilings there are also numerous objects of worship including the banner paintings known as *thang-khas*. The murals are usually contained within a series of rainbow bands that are painted horizontally above and below the murals. Where the walls are simply mud plastered, plain colours or floral decorations are not uncommon. This painting of images on the walls of the temple rooms, both in the entrance porch and within the inner sanctum is highly symbolic. The architectural elements are inextricably bound up with the illustrations and the colours that are applied onto them. To discuss the painted symbols and images and their meaning is synonymous with discussing the architecture. The mere representation of a *mandala* in three dimensional form as a *Lha-khang*, is in itself, a powerful link between building, symbolism and the Buddhist philosophy centering on the achievement of *nirvāna*. The single most important aspect of Tibetan architecture is the presence of the painted and moulded image inside the *Lha-khang*. The evocation of the mystical atmosphere of a Tibetan painting is not the creation of the painter’s mind. The painted image does not seek to represent the fancy of the painter nor his own interpretation of events or experiences. It is a record of visions, mystical experiences and teachings of Indian *ācāryas* and Tibetan monks who have laid them down in the texts. All the paintings and indeed all the contents of the Tibetan temple are concerned with the triple aspect of man’s existence – life, death and after life. They represent, symbolically and visually, the spiritual planes of man’s existence as interpreted by the various lineage of great Buddhist teachers. It is therefore imperative for the Tibetan painters to comply to the rigid rules of geometry, iconography and colour which are elaborately described in the texts.
To discuss Tibetan painting is, of course, to dwell upon its role in the service of the Buddhist religion which has wholly dominated its content. Tibetan painting began by following Indian Buddhist styles and techniques used for the portrayal of the representation of the Buddhist Pantheon which was wholly absorbed by Tibet and subsequently greatly enlarged upon. In form it still follows the original Indian pattern of being symmetrical in arrangement with the main divinity painted in the centre on a larger scale. It is very likely, however, that the common practice of representing the central figure as a monk or teacher rather than a divinity, is of Tibetan origin. This change probably occurred when the Tibetans represented their deep reverence for some of the Indian ācāryas who had gone to Tibet such as Padmasambhava, Atīśa and others. When however such a revered teacher is represented, the relationships of the subject with a divinity is clearly established by a number of devices. The most common one is to represent the concerned divinity in a smaller image above the lama. Alternatively the lama may hold, or have about him, symbols which link him to specific deities of the pantheon. The general name given to Tibetan paintings (both murals and thang-kha) is zing-kams. which literally means ‘realm’ (kṣetra) and implies the sharing of the realm of Buddha. Paintings also have a functional name which is thong-'grol which translates as ‘liberation through sight’ implying, that the person viewing the painting (and of course comprehending it) will be ‘liberated’ through his vision of the spectacle. The role of painting in this process of ‘liberation’ is simply to act as an aid to enlightenment. Functionally, the paintings are performing the equivalent function of a diagram in a science book which visually explains a theoretical solution. Hence the figures represented in the paintings are not bodies or even representations of these bodies, but rather ‘essences’ which have embodied themselves, within the line which define their form, on the illustration. The drawn line, by following the prescribed path, describe a figure which is ‘cut out of the void.’ Ideally, of course, the artist should, through meditation, arrive at the plane of experience which will put him directly in touch with the deity before, during and after the painting process. Thus, the two fundamental principles which are utilized to conceive a Tibetan painting are evocation and line.

Most Tibetan painters are laymen according to Tucci though one has more often come across monks who have received the basic training in painting and are entrusted with the work of decorating the temples (Plate 162). The training used to be long and intensive. Painting is considered one of the branches of knowledge dealing with the intellect together with grammar, rhetoric and mathematics. The
artist, as a boy is usually apprenticed at the age of about eight and then undertakes basic training for three years. He then joins the studio of a master and works under his guidance for a further period of eight years. Under the master he is expected to learn about the use and control of colours, particularly the important ones relating to the sky, fire, and vegetation. He is required to do endless exercises on his chalk painted board on eye expression, hair styles, ears, hands, feet, proportions and all the other features of the face which are required to be represented in a painting. When the training with the Master has finished, the trainee can launch out on his own and take commissions. Painters did, however, move from place to place because much of their work had consisted of painting murals on temple walls. Rinchen Zang-po had with him painters from Kashmir who travelled about with him, illuminating the walls of the temples that he was organising and building. It is this tremendous capacity to travel that Tibetan painters had that has led to the diffusion of styles which is broadly represented by Tibetan paintings to-day.

The fundamentals of painting, throughout the training period of the painter, centre upon the thang-kha. The Tibetan scroll painting is called thang-kha or than-suk or sku-thang and literally mans “rolled up”. It is always rolled up to carry or store away in the temple and it is important, from the liturgical point of view, that the thang-kha is correctly rolled up. It should always be rolled up from the bottom to the top along the path, if one is to avoid committing a “grave sin”. As an art form, the thang-kha was borrowed directly from India where the corresponding representation was the pata which was used by the wandering story tellers who used to move from village to village carrying this pata rolled up. It was usual for the story teller to gather a crowd about him in a public place and the unrolled pata, which hung behind him, announced his presence. The pata illustrated the incidents in the story and its surface was freely interwoven with figures and landscapes. The most significant patas were used to spread the teachings of Buddha and it was a work of great accumulating merit for the teacher to wander and preach the doctrine by relating incidents in the Buddha’s life. The early wandering almsmen who were the earliest teachers of Buddhism, before the saṅgha had settled down to a monastic life, had adapted the pata for their own use to preach the dharma. The impact, on a largely illiterate audience communicating the story through illustrations, was tremendous and the origins of the symbols used to represent Buddha that are found in the earlier Hinayāna centres at Bahrut and Amarvati probably go back to these patas.

The painting on these patas, as an indentifiable style, goes back to the 8th and 9th centuries AD, originating during the art of the renaissance which the Guptas patronised. The Buddhist mahāvihāras,
which were thriving during this period, were certainly centres of creative religious art in the service of Buddhism, and systematic methods of teaching and painting, which were later to be taken by the Tibetans, were responsible for the emergence of an identifiable style. The most powerful of the identifiable styles was much earlier and belonged to the Ajanta period and this was later mixed with the regional styles of Kashmir and South India. In Nepal and Bengal too the Pala and Sena patronage had produced an identifiable regional style. The early painting styles that were introduced to Tibet emerged from these regional styles, particularly those of Kashmir and Nepal. The tremendous cultural impact that the monasteries founded by Rin-chen Zang-po had was difficult to match. His leadership and the craftsmen brought from Kashmir produced, in the Western Himalaya, an identifiable style which Tucci called the “Gu-ge School”. This school of painting was wholly free from Chinese influences which were to begin entering Tibetan paintings much later in the 17th and 18th centuries. As long as the Indian and Nepalese centres of Buddhism continued to flourish, the Tibetan patrons could meet their requirements of tang-kha and figures from Indian craftsmen. Both casting and painting were totally new activities for the Tibetans and they took great pains to learn the crafts in a meticulous manner from their Indian teachers. The collapse of Buddhism in India cut off this link and the Tibetans were left more or less on their own to develop what had already been imbied from India. Tibet was invaded in 1706 AD by Lha-bzang of Mongolia with the full blessings of the then Manchu emperor at Peking. This invasion brought central Tibet into much closer contact with Peking than had been the case earlier. As the contacts between the Manchu court and Tibetan court intensified, the cross currents of cultural influence began to take effect. Apart from influencing the dress and food, Chinese influence was felt in the painting styles too. China had a very rich heritage of painting too and it was natural that when the Tibetans, who had been cut off from their Indian sources for over four hundred years, should absorb readily from the Chinese. Particularly noticeable in the early thang-khas showing Chinese influence, was the revolutionary change that took place in the conception of the landscapes portrayed in them. The cliffs, stylised trees, clouds whirls, flames and portrayals of animals were quickly absorbed from Chinese styles. The Indian conception of landscape had been comparatively more rigid with a symmetrical arrangement of smaller figures around the central one. Under Chinese influence, painters began to arrange a free unfolding of events. Although the Indian tradition of the largest figure being the central one continued, the lines became more stylised and graceful, the pose of the

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52 Ibid.
figure more dynamic and animated. Greater attention began to be given to the painting of the facial details like hair, eyes and expressions. Tucci has called the school of painting which crystallised in Lhasa, as a result of the Chinese connection, the Tsang School although others have identified two clear schools - the north-eastern school centred in the province of Dorge with predominantly Chinese influence and the south-eastern school centred in Shigatse and Tashi Lunpo which had predominantly Indian influence. In fact, any clear identification of schools is an extremely difficult and hazardous process. Tibetan painting is impossible to relate to any chronological sequence or event in history unless specific references are found on the painting or elsewhere. Not only is it anonymous, but also subject to rigid cannons that prevent any pure style to take over. There are, of course, some examples of arhats being represented in a purely Chinese conception with a three quarter view of the figure who is not located in the centre of the painting either. Kye monastery in Spiti has a fine set of these arhat thang-khas woven in the tapestry workshops in Peking in the last century. But these are clearly purely Chinese representations of Buddhist figures and this particular set at Kye does not have any identifiable Tibetan features. The network of trade and pilgrimage routes that criss-crossed the entire southern plateau of Tibet helped painters travel from monastery to monastery so that no opportunity was ever given to any particular area, to consolidate and develop a so called recognisable regional style of painting. Certainly, there is a clear stylistic difference between the earlier Gu-ge style which had no Chinese influence and the later period when Chinese influence is clearly discernable, but whether one can distinguish concurrent regional styles within the overall Tibetan framework is a difficult question to answer.

THE PREPARATION OF THE THANG-KHA

Typical of the cannonical directions of the great Indian religions, the Buddhist cannons stipulated very precisely the whole business of making a thang-kha. The instructions were not confined to the definition of the subject matter of the painting alone. The thang-kha is to be painted on coarse linen or cotton which has been cut in the proportion 4:8 or 2:5. The required size of the fabric is washed and dried and then four separate bamboo struts are sewn with a coarse thread, to the edges of the cloth. The cloth, with the bamboo struts, is then stretched onto a wooden frame which is already constructed, with the aid of a coarse string that is threaded between the struts and frame (fig 30). The cotton is then treated with base lime, a whiting mixture mixed with animal glue and rubbed into the fabric with the help of a rag. While

the primed cloth is wet with this application, it is stretched further by tightening the coarse string which is pulling the struts outwards towards the frame. The prepared surface is then allowed to dry for a while longer and then placed on a flat hard surface and polished vigorously with a smooth stone or sea shell or even with a broken piece of crockery. This rubbing procedure is aimed at compressing the whiting which is repeated till the painted surface is even and smooth. The number of applications of whiting depends upon the coarseness of the cloth. The test for the finish of the priming is to hold the cloth up against the sun to ensure that there are no perforations in the surface and that the linen diffuses the sunlight evenly. If there are uneven patches of light then the application and polishing is repeated.

30. The *tang-kha*. Prepared for painting
The preparation of wall surfaces to take the murals is also done in a meticulous manner. Slaked lime is soaked in water for a week and then mixed with two portions of sand and then ground to a paste. The application which consists of thin layers, up to a thickness of an eighth of an inch, is put on with a trowel. The final coat which receives the paint is applied over this coarse application and consists of fine slaked lime which has been soaked in water for many months. The mixture is
strained through muslin (sometimes yoghurt in the proportion 1:80 is added) a couple of times and then applied onto the wall surface. After the applications is dry, the surface is rubbed vigorously with a smooth river stone or shell and the painting commenced (Plate 165).

Before the lines of the images are drawn on the thang-kha, the canvas is “centered”. This process of centering has symbolical meaning as well as a geometrical necessity. It is important to determine the diagonals the central vertical line and the central horizontal line. These basic reference lines are essential for every composition and may be drawn on the reverse side of the prepared surface. The lines are drawn in the following manner:

1) The diagonals are marked with a string loaded with coloured powder. It is stretched between diagonally opposite corners of the canvas, and held tight under the thumbs. The painter then draws the frame up to his face, grips the middle portion of the string between his lips and pulls it, as in a bow string, and lets it go suddenly. The 'twang' of the string causes a line of dry powder to be released onto the primed surface. With the marking of the two diagonals in this way, the central point of the canvas is fixed.

2) A large circle is then defined with a compass (Plate 49) from the central point. Traditionally this compass is made from a split bamboo or from a straight piece of wood which allows a marker and a point to slide up and down its length.

3) The circle now cuts the diagonals at four points which are then used as centres to define intersecting arches outside the circle.

4) The vertical and horizontal lines are then drawn to meet opposite intersecting arcs.

5) The point of the compass is then pushed through the canvas, from the rear to the four outer extremes of the lines drawn in 4 above. These perforations are then used as guide points to transfer the horizontal and vertical lines to the surface which is to be painted. The front of the surface thus appears with two crossed lines linked by the perforations and the geometric process of arriving at them remains at the back of the surface to be erased out later.

The vertical line is of deep symbolical meaning. It is the Bhrama line of the Hindus which the Tibetans call tshanTHING. It is the axis of life and considered the cosmos around which the universe revolves. In the physical world, this line is the spinal column which contains the centres of experience which rise up from the genitals (the centre of samsaric life) to the forehead (the centre of realisation). The vertical line thereby seeks to link the cosmos to the individual. The horizontal line governs the proportion of the figure according to the cardinal rule
that the height of the body is equal to the distance between the two extended arms. Geometrically it defines a square containing the circle and reminds one of Leonardo da Vinci's famous drawing.

The artist sits on the floor while painting (Plate 165) and holds the easel frame on his knees while his disciples sit around him mixing colours and listening to his teaching. They can really be regarded as disciples more than apprentices because the young novices used to live with the painter and also attended to his other needs such as helping in house chores and running errands.

Where figures and motifs are to be repeatedly painted on a large thang-kha or mural, the drawing method is altered to suit the needs of mass production. Use is made of a stencil which is simply the required line drawn on a piece of paper which is perforated with pin-holes along all the lines. This paper is then held up against the surface which is to receive the image and rubbed over with coloured powder or coal dust. This dust penetrates the pin holes and thereby transfers the dotted image onto the wall or canvas. The dots are immediately connected through with an ink line to obtain the outline of the figure or motif. No doubt that many of the murals in Alchi Cho-skor which are repetitive (for instance the thousand Buddhas on the ground floor the Sum-tsek) were drafted on by using various stencils. One has also come across cases where the monks of a monastery have borrowed a stencil from a painter because they did not trust their ability to draft well, but thought that their capacity to apply paint was at an acceptable level (Plate XII). If the rules of painting are followed closely, the painting process is linked inextricably to religious ceremony.

"The ceremonies to be observed are most numerous and various; there are certain days proper for the commencement of a particular picture, and others again on which alone the eyes are to be painted, these being considered the most important part of the whole picture; besides which during the various stages of progress of each picture other ceremonies and prayers are requisite. Thus, benedictory ceremonies have to be performed immediately after the entire completion of the image, in order that in the meantime no malignant spirit (which beings are considered to be always on the watch to do mischief to man) may take possession of it whereby the prayers would be rendered utterly valueless."

THE COLOURS:

Tucci specifies that there are six predominant or pure colours from which the range of the Tibetan palette is composed thus:

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54 Schlagintweit, E.: op. cit., p. 203
1. Indigo. extracted from the plant.
2. Green. extracted from Vitrol.
3. Red. extracted from the earth.
4. Yellow. extracted from arsenic.
5. Vermillion. extracted from carmine.
6. White. which is simply a whiting or lime.

In addition there is gold powder. But this uniformity is not found everywhere and there is no definitive list of colours. Professor Raghu Vira has given a list of colours and their sources which he had noted in Lhasa:

1) Blue and green was extracted from some mineral rocks around Lhasa.
2) Yellow was extracted from utapal lohis.
3) Reds were extracted from the oxides of mercury.
4) Vermillion came ready prepared from India.
5) Gold powder came from Nepal.
6) Black was made from crushed pinewood which has been burnt.
7) Blue was made from the crushed lapis lazuli stone which came from Persia and India.
8) Indigo came from India where it was extracted from the Niti plant.

There are no hard and fast rules. One had the opportunity to study the whole process with an excellent Tibetan painter called Nwang Dorje who now lives in India. There is little doubt that he is one of the finest painters of the Tibetan tradition alive and he had spent his early years in Lhasa studying the art since childhood. Plates 163, 164 show examples of his line work. His descriptions of the colours and their preparation is given below:

1) Blue. This is extracted from the ultramarine stone found with malachite. The stone is ground by rubbing it against a flat stone which reduces the colour to powder. The powder is then collected and put into a wooden pestle and pounded with a mortar in a circular action. Water is then added and the slow mixing of the colour and water continues on and off for a week. At the end of this period, the lightest blue shade being the finest grain, floats up to the surface from where it is drained off and dried. The remaining paste is pounded and ground further to let a darker blue come to the surface which has a coarser grain than that of the sky blue which was extracted first. The grain remaining at the bottom of the pestle is ultramarine.

2) Green. Like the blue, this too is extracted in three shades by the same process. The stone gives the palest green, a darker green and the darkest green.

3) Red is extracted from a stone and only gives one colour.

4) Yellow is an ochre and is extracted from a soft stone which
crumbles in one’s hands easily. There is a brighter shade of yellow which
too is extracted from a similar soft stone.

5) Black is lampblack and is scraped off a burnt or smoked
surface.

6) White is whiting.

The traditional binding media for colours in the Indian tradition
was usually gum arabic (babul ki gond) made from the fine crystals of
the acacia tree sap. But in Tibet, size is almost exclusively used as it
is an animal extract and readily available whereas the tropical acacia
tree is totally unknown.

To-day Tibetan painters like Nawang Dorje have easy access to
the modern commercially manufactured range of colours, and it was
not surprising to find a Reeves paint box in Dorje’s studio although he
still identified the colours in it by their traditional names. He did
however demonstrate an interesting test for proving the ‘inferiority’ of
these commercial colours. He first dissolved some stone colour with
water and then applied it to his palm. After allowing it to dry, he
wiped it off briskly in one stroke with the palm of his other hand.
All the colour came off immediately and left no trace behind. But
when he repeated the process with the commercial colour, despite con-
tinuous rubbings, a light stain remained on his skin showing clearly
how the skin had absorbed the colour. Dorje’s brushes were a mixture
of the traditional hollowed pine twigs with rabbit or goat hair,
Chinese bamboo stem brushes and modern sable brushes and he used
all three types although he seemed to prefer the fine sable brushes for
the intricate details involving hair and eyes.

THE PROPORTION SYSTEM

The Tibetan proportion system which governs the ratio of all
drawings and figures had been imported wholly from India.

Indigenous Chinese painting was primarily free from mathematical
proportions and thus the Indian iconometrical system survived intact
in Tibet. The two basic units of measurement applied in the Indian
system were angula or finger and tāla which is the span of the hand
or the distance between the tips of the thumb and the forefinger of
the open hand with outstretched fingers. The tāla was divided into
twelve angulas. In the composition of large statues or paintings, the
larger unit of navatāla or nine talas was used thus introducing a dis-
cipline on the extended use of the smaller unit. A standing figure is
composed of nine tālas and the numerical nine is a symbolical link
between the structure of the universe and the body of men so that the
divisions and proportions link up the structure of the universe to the
body of man. The mathematical divisions were aimed at providing a link between the precise geometry of the universe and the body of man which seemingly has no apparent geometrical discipline. The fundamental principle followed is that the universe at the macro-level is in essence condensed in man at the micro-level, nirvāṇa then becomes the “blowing out” of the micro-universe into the macro-universe. The Tibetans used the proportional systems which were being used all over India for iconometric purposes. Some modifications were carried out, particularly in the case where images of deities outside the Indian pantheon had to be made. The angula is known as sor-mo in Tibetan and the tāla as cha-chen or thal-mo. According to the notes kept by Dorje, the following is a very common proportional system used for the representation of the seated Buddha:

**VERTICAL DIVISION:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Ratio</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top knot of Buddha</td>
<td>(2+4)</td>
<td>6 Sor-mo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hair</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neck</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chest</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdomen</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naval to gentials</td>
<td>(4+4)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genitals to throne</td>
<td>(4+4)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>66</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**HORIZONTAL DIVISION:**

Taken from the centre line upto the edge:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Ratio</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Centre of face to armpit</td>
<td></td>
<td>12 Sor-mo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armpit to elbow</td>
<td>(4+2)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elbow to edge of crossed knee</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total width of figures...</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>52 Sor-mo.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tucci has indicated other proportional system in his work and has given six groups of proportions for various images thus:

1) Deified lamas 125 Sor-mo.  
2) Yidam or tutelary gods 108 ”  
3) Buddhas 125 ”  
4) Bodhisattva 120 ”  
5) Dharmapala 96 ”  
6) Lokpala and local gods 120 ”

The canonical directions are not universal or rigid and a number of parallel proportion systems function in close proximity to each other.
and the artist may choose from them according to his preferences. Although the conceptualisation of the figures is laid down in the texts, the artist has certain freedom to create inventive landscapes which fill the painting between the figures. His conception of cliffs, waterfalls, lotus flowers, animals, clouds and flames is often part of his own world. The murals and thang-khas and metal or stucco images are the most important iconographical elements of the temple (Plate 175) but the painter's role always extends beyond these functions and he has been required to extend his work onto the architectural elements. Thus columns are often decorated with a lotus petal pattern surmounted by the makara (Plates 180, 181), the lintels of doors and windows have floral decorations and the ceilings, particularly in the earlier temples, were profusely painted (Plate VII).
POSTSCRIPT

The Buddhist culture of the Western Himalaya, like any other, is a part of history and hence involved in the constant process of change. Those who want to seal off this region and preserve the old ways of life, ignore the revolution of rising expectations that post colonialism has brought to India. No country which is in the grip of the process of modernisation can afford to seal off regions, within its boundaries, to prevent change from occurring. To-day Ladakh, Spiti and Lahoul are connected to the plains of India with broad roads which serve both economic and defence purposes. The changes that this opening up has brought to this area are profound and inevitable and the speed of decline of Buddhism, as an active force in the lives of the people, has increased. The monasteries, once the administrative and cultural centres, are fast becoming museums with skeleton teams of monks whose level of learning in the ancient scriptures has almost vanished. Yet one cannot afford to watch what is going on under the eyes of the authorities. The opening of this region has brought with it the pirates of antiques who are involved in large scale smuggling operations aimed at selling removable antiques from the monasteries to collectors in India and abroad. Ladakh is to-day one of the richest sources of Buddhist antiques in the world and it is not a coincidence that Phiyang monastery has already begun to thin out its rich collection of bronzes from Kashmir.

It will be difficult to over-emphasize the historical importance of the Buddhist monasteries of the Western Himalaya. The ones of the earlier period are important for archaeological and historical reasons because they are the only surviving Buddhist structures that India possesses. The eclipse of the Buddhist centres of learning was so complete in India that not a single Buddhist manuscript has ever been excavated from the ruins. Nalanda and Odantapura were razed in 1198, Vikramasila in 1235 and Jagaddala in 1207 and all the monks who fled, took with them the remaining texts and manuscripts. These have been hidden so effectively that they have not been discovered till to-day and China and Tibet have, so far, been the chief sources for Buddhist scriptures that originated in India. This makes it imperative to preserve the murals, texts and objects of worship which remain in the Western Himalayan Monasteries because they alone testify to the powerful
cultural links that existed between the Buddhist centres in India and the entire Tibetan world. The cultural heritage of Buddhist India now lies in this region and unless it is systematically tabulated in every one of its aspects, it will be too late to prevent the plunder which is already well underway. Apart from this, the climate of this area too is changing and unprecedented floods and rains have brought their own share of havoc on the mud structures. At Alchi, for instance, rains in the last few years have already destroyed parts of the murals which were seen intact in 1971. Tabo too has had a severe earthquake which has caused a number of cracks in the mud walls of the temples. Added to the antique thefts and climatic havoc, the monks too have added their share of destruction by demolitions (Plate 174) and the repainting of murals (Plate XII). Unfortunately the importance of the preservation of ancient timber and mud structures has not been fully realised by the archaeologists and the meagre funds set aside for this work in Ladakh will more or less ensure that natural and man made destruction is carried to a point of no return. It is almost unbelievable to see, in this day and age, that at Alchi one of the most unique structures in the world, the temples that are beginning to crack, the murals flake away and the mud walls bulge dangerously close to collapse. At Tabo these forces have already taken their toll and the Sug Lha-khang alone stands today as the only structure that is more or less intact since its original conception.

It has been the intention of this study to identify the architectural and artistic heritage of this region which must be tabulated and preserved before it dissolves into the dust as did Harwan and Parihaspura in Kashmir and all the centres of learning in Central India.
## APPENDIX

**THE LOCATION OF IMPORTANT MONASTERIES IN LADAKH**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Monastery</th>
<th>Approximate distance from Leh in kilometres</th>
<th>Approximate direction from Leh</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Alchi Chos-‘khor</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Anle</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Bardun</td>
<td>250 from Kargil</td>
<td>SE of Kargil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Basgo</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Chendey</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Chigtan</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Chemur</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Deskit</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Hemis</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>SE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Karsha</td>
<td>200 from Kargil</td>
<td>SE of Kargil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Lamayuru</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Langna</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>SE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Likir</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Lingshet</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>SW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Mang-gyu</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Ma-tro</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>SE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Nyema</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>SE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Phiyang</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Rangdum</td>
<td>140 from Kargil</td>
<td>SE of Kargil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Ri-dzong</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>W</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khoslao, Gopal Das</td>
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<td>Leitner, G. W.</td>
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1. The Spiti river at Kaza.

2. The village of Dhankar, ancient capital of Spiti. The old fortress and monastery are located on top.
3. The pastures for the cattle are generally located on slopes of the passes above the tree-line. Here the nomads pitch their tents and spend the summer collecting butter from the rich milk of Yak. These grasslands also feed the herd of horses which Rangdum monastery owns and uses to transport its own share of the grain from the surrounding villages. Pensi La.

4. Route down into Suru valley from Pensi La.
5. Rock folds on the way to Hang-gur village in Ladakh.

6. Dzo-mo carrying willow branches for roof construction on Symba-Brasa plain in Zangkar.
This condor, fortress guarding the entrance into the valley, has been removed and the masonry core has been exposed. Once, the timber galleries which projected out of the interior.
The background is spiltuck monastery near Leh in Ladakh.

10. Digging for mud, the basic material for construction.

9. Looking down from Khaksa monastery towards Padum across the Zanskar River.
11. Chang street in Leh with Tashi Namgyal's palace fortress in the background

12. Entrance porch to the palace fortress showing old woodwork with composite columns made from willow branches (see plate 20 for detail).
15. Ruined choten at Basgo claimed to have been built by Rin-chen bzang-po. See plate 24 for a similar structure at Alchi.

16. The Yak is the most sure-footed beast of burden in the rocky landscape of Ladakh. It transports both men and materials across enormous distances.
17. Primogeniture is still prevalent in village society in Zangskar. The eldest son inherits all the land including the family house. His younger brothers may go to the monastery to become monks. His parents leave to build themselves a house outside the village.

18. Zangskar villagers at Padam doing a folk dance.
The eldest son and householder from a Kana family in Sijil.

A Râte-ma-pa Lama from Pnak monastery in Sijil.

A woman in traditional dress from Leh.
22. Sum-tsek, the three tiered temple at Alchi Chos'kor.

23. Alchi Chos'kor. Lotsawa Lha-khang and Manjusri Lha-khang entrance, doorway and porch.
24. Entrance Choten 3 (see plan). Alchi.
25. Alchi. Detail of wooden column capital in entrance porch of Lotsawa Lha-khang.

26. Details of wooden columns outside Manjusri Lha-kaehng. Identification of the figures on the capital is difficult but could possibly be Manjusri in the same aspect as the large figure in the Sum-tsek.

27. Details of wooden columns outside Manjusri Lha-khang. Identification of the figures on the capital is difficult but could possibly the Manjusri in the same aspect as the large figure in the Sum-tsek.
28. Alchi. Detail of wood work in the entrance porch of Sum-tseng. The trifoliated arch so common in the wood work at Alchi can also be seen in stone at the Martand Temple in Kashmir built by Lalitaditya-Muktapida.

29. Detail of column capital in entrance porch of Leh Palace.
30. Alchi. Entrance doorway into 'Du-khang. Directly over the opening are the five Buddhas with Vairocana in the centre.
31. Alchi. View looking down from the upper level in the Sum-tsek. Corner of walls 2 and 1 (see Plan).

32. Alchi. Column and ceiling in Sum-tsek. Upper level looking towards the skylight. In the background is wall 1.
33. Alchi. Wall 1 (see Plan). Central figure of Vairocana above the stucco image of Maitreya standing below. Mandalas of Vairocana and Vajrasattva on either side.
34. Achi. Wall 2. Central figure of eleven headed Avalokitesvara above the stucco image of Avalokitesvara. Mandalas of Vairocana on either side.
1. Wall 2. Central figure of eleven headed Avalokiteswara above the stucco image of Avalokitesvara. Mandalas of Vairocana on either side.
35. Aichi. Wall 3. Entrance doorway with figure of Mahākāla above and four mandalas.
Wall 3. Entrance doorway with figure of Mahâkâla above and four mandalas.
36. Achi. Wall 3. Central figure of Prajināpāramitā above the stucco image of Manjuśri. Two Mandalas of Vairocana on either side.
36. Alchi. Wall 3. Central figure of Prajñāpāramitā above the stucco image of Manjusri. Two Mandalas of Vairocana on either side.
37. Achi: Divinity on wall 4 of upper level in Sum-tsek. One of the 24 figures of the outer square in the Vairocana Mandala on the right side of Prajñāpāramitā, the lady perfection of wisdom.
38. Alchi: Ceiling panel in Sum-tsek lower level.
39. Alchi. One of the attendant deities below the image of Prajnapāramitā in the Lotsawa Lha-kh wall facing the door.
40. Achi. Image of Rin-chen zang po on the wall facing the door in Lotsawa Lha-khang.
41. Alchi. Image in Lha-khang Soma holding up a vase.
42. Tabo. View towards rear of Brom-ston Lha-khang and Byams pai Lha-khang from kar-Byun. (See Plan).

43. Tabo. View of side of Tsu Lha-khang.
44. Tabo. Entrance of leading to Byams Pai Lha-khang.

45. Tabo. View of Bromston Lha-khang
46. Tabo. View of entrance into ser Khang.

47. Tabo. Doorway of Kar Byun which is located away from the main complex of temples.
48 & 49. Tabo. Internal murals inside the Kar Byun temple. Plate 48 shows image of sakyamuni with his two favourite disciples Maudgalyayana and Sariputra on either side of him.
50. Rear side of Lha-Lun temple showing covered circumambulation passage around the perimeter of the Lha-khang.

51. Front view of the Lha-Lun temple showing added portions after Shuttleworth's visit in 1924.
52. Senge-Sgang the old temple at Lamayuru. Original column capital on a recently made column. Clearly the structure has been renewed and only the capital has survived.

53. Senge-Sgang. Mural in the old Vairocana temple in a state of neglect and decay.
54. Senge-Sgang. Image of Vairocana going back to the origins of the temple which has associations with Rin-chen zang-po.

55. Senge-Sgang. This detail of the timber frame around the entrance door is much simpler than anything seen at Alchi or Tabo.
56. Ancient Chöten with Rinchen zang-po associations at Man-

57. Gomha group of temples at Alchi showing the three tiered
The Chhagang on the left hand side which is clearly a copy of
the Sam-tek of the Alchi chos lha.
59. Entrances to the two main Du-khangs of Hemis viewed from the portico leading into the front court.

60. Hemis. The court, a common feature of all large monasteries in the Western Himalaya. The festivals and dance known as cham takes place in this courtyard.
61. View of Hemis monastery from the top of the hill showing the multilevel roofs of this complex building.

62. Hemis. Entrance porch of Tshogs-khang. Frescos show the eight auspicious emblems, and two of the guardian kings Virūpāksha and Virūdhaka.
63. Heifs. Entrance Porch of Tshog-khang with staircase leading to upper level and Vikrapalsha image on the wall.

64. Colonnade around Heifs courtyard with images of arhats painted on stones on the left side.
65. Hemis. Roof of Tshogs-khang showing the timber structure.

66. Hemis. Image of Stag-tshang Ras-pa in the centre with a silver choten housing his relics.
67. Stucco image of the Lama Shambhunath in the Lha-khang Nying-pa at Hemis Monastery.
70. View of Tiktse monastery with temple rooms at the highest level.

71. Tiktse. Entrance porch of Gon-khang. Mural shows guardian kings Dṛitarāṣṭra and Kuvera and also symbols of deities housed within the temple room. These are shown painted over the doorway.
72. Tiktse. Entrance porch of main 'Du-khang. Mural showing wheel of life (Bhavachakra) from which Avalokitesvara liberates.

73. Central court at Tiktse showing raised platform where the reincarnate lama sits during festival celebrations. Central image of Sakyamuni with two disciples.
74. Head lama of Bardun monastery in Zangskar with tang-kha of Amitābha with Sakti Pandara in Yab-Yum attitude.
75 & 76. Two views of Spituk showing chöten entrance gate.
77. Spituk. Entrance door of Du-khang guarded by lion images.

78. Spituk. Steps leading up to the Du-khang from the main court.
79. Looking up towards the monks' houses in Spituk. A fine integration of rock and building.

80. Spituk. Main court seen from above. Many of the larger monasteries built on rock outcrops manage to create functional spaces in impossible locations.
81. General view Phiyang monastery.

83. Phiyang. Staircase leading upto 'Du-khang Sar-pa (new one) from the central courtyard.

84. Phiyang. Lama looks down into the court from the steps leading upto the Kanjur Lha Khang.
Masonry wall.

Poor joints can be seen protruding out from the wall.

86. Phyang. Part of the circular path around the monastery.

87. Phyang. Timber detail of window at upper level.

89 and 90. Column capitals in Phyang. It is not always possible to maintain a high level of decorative paintings on the newer construction (plate 88).
91. Likir. Entrance porch of the 'Du-khang. Above is the room of the acting head Lama known as Zimchoong View from court.

92. Likir. Entrance steps leading to the court above.
93. Likir. Elaborately decorated lintel of doorway showing a number of lotus flowers in different colours.

94. Likir. A plain but impressive capital decorated with Ying-yang motif.
96. Ilik. Mural of a monastery in Tibet.

The Indus Valley.

95. Saltuq. Monks on the roof looking therat hours across.
97. Ri-dzong. General view of monastery which is a recently built one.

98. Carved wooden book cover at Rangdum monastery in Zangskar.
This monastery, a colonnade above the kitchen rooms, excellent timber construction can be seen in...
Colonnade ceiling.

102. Rz-Dzong. Willow branches and trunks on underside of the ceiling.
103 and 104. General views of the Lamayuru monastery complex.
107. General view of Rangdum monastery.


110. Rangdum. Rear court around monks' residence.
111. Rangdum. Entrance porch of 'Du-khang with Lamas at their mid-day meal.

112. Detail from an old Kashmiri tang-kha at Rangdum in Zangskar.
be determined.

brother from Tibet. Its function and symbolism could not

II4. Head Lama of Kharsha holding a staff which has been

outside the old Du-khang of Kharsha monastery.

II5, Head Lama reading from gilded pages of sacred book.
117. General view of Kye monastery and village. Society was divided between the educated elite of monks whose power emanated from the monastery, and the farmers who lived in the village below.

118. Side view of Kye monastery showing lamas' houses at the lower level.
119. **Kye.** The highest position is always occupied by the temples and the lower levels by the houses of the monks.

120. **Main entrance into 'Du-khang at Kye.**
21. Main entrance into Du-khang at Kye.

22. General view of Karsha monastery in Zangskar.
123. The young reincarnate of Kye, recruited in childhood as a sacred born. He has been brought into the seclusion of the monastery and is being tutored.

124. Monks being served tea during their prayers in the Du-khang at Kye.
125. Part of old wooden ceremonial headdress of senior Lama tied to a column in a store-room in Kye.

126. Kitchen utensils in Kye monastery.
127. Unusual column capital at Kye which has been carved recently.

128. Ritual spoon used in ceremonies crowned by a vajra at Kye.
130. General view of Shushur Monastery.

129. Stone steps leading from the lower court to the monas-
131. Timber balcony outside Shashur at first floor level.

135. View of Du-khang above Leh town located near the fortress.

136. Decorated timber work at Leh Palace.
137. Front view of Sani monastery showing covered circumambulation passage. Note the guardian lions inset into the corner of the building. For detail see plate 143.

138. Rear view of Sani showing the unusual Kanika choten. The monastery has associations with Naropa. Note the curious circular structure protruding beyond the covered circumambulating passage which could have been circular towers at one time.
139. General view of Tanjur monastery in Spiti showing characteristic painted stripes of a Sa- kya-pa Compa.

140. Tanjur. View of Nono's house seen from the courtyard.
141. Window wall of Tanjur showing how it has been constructed in successive courses of in-situ mud, a very common mode of construction in both Ladakh and Spiti.

142. Tanjur. Entrance steps from courtyard leading into the Du-khang. The Gon-khang is on the right as you climb.
Please read the entire text to understand the image content.

Warning to the visitor that the Gon-Khang is not a very
demonic figure stays out from the door. There is ample
ery. A studded snow leopard hangs from the roof while a
144. Protective deva outside Gon-Khang at Tashi Monastery.

All four corners have this protective device.

144. Protective lion inset into corner of Tashi Monastery.
45. General view of Dhankar monastery and fort. The temple room on the left hand side on top contains the renovated mural shown in colour plate XII.

46. Large tang-kha of a fierce deity suspended from the roof of Pin monastery piti. This is a Nying-ma-pa monastery.
147. General view of Pin complex. Much of it has been very recently rebuilt.

148. Rear view of Jo Wo Lha-khang at Pin.
149. View from court looking towards entrance door of Maning Lha-khang in Lahoul.

150. Side view of Maning showing construction on a steep slope.
151. View of abandoned monks' cell attached to main Lha-khang at Gondla.

152. Detail of entrance doorway showing how a wide lintel is necessary for mud construction. This lintel can at times be very elaborately built and painted. See plate 93.
153 and 154. General view of Guru Chantal Lha-khang in Lahoul showing rear and front views. The slate pagoda roof and the carved wood-work here are very unusual.
155. Guru Ghantal. Carved door frame at upper level. The interwoven serpent motif is almost certainly of European origin.
156. General view of Tayul monastery in Lahoul.

157. External view of Tayul Monastery.
158. Tayul. Window detail with modestly decorated lintel.

159. Internal door into a monk's cell at Tayul. The entire building has been plastered with a mica sand mix which gives it an unusual shine.
160. Tayul. Large Padmasambhava image in Du-khang with the canonical library behind.

161. Tayul. Mani wheels fixed into side walls of circumambulating passage.
163. The line of the painting or mural cuts into the void and extracts from it the 'essence' which is the visible form.
Jame's image at Kyö monastery in Kyoto and are laid down in the manuscript texts. Derived from a grid lines, these sacred proportions to the draw...
166-173. The eight auspicious types of choten together with their Proportionate drawings. The miniature chotens are all at the monastery in Kharsha in Zangskar. The drawings were done by a Tibetan Lama at Dharamsala.
174. The building and demolition of temples is a perpetual process that has been continuing for centuries. Here a temple is being knocked down for rebuilding. Many valuable murals have disappeared into the dust in this way. Lamayuru in Ladakh.

175. Tibetan workshop at Dharamsala. A silver image of standing eleven-headed Avalokitesvara is in the process of assembly. Note the drawing hanging in the corner; it determines the proportions.
Lamayuru, the old one has been demolished.

177. Floor joists being laid for the new Kham-sa.

179. Woven willow shuttering for in-situ mud wall construction. As this section of the wall dries, the shuttering is moved up, and so the process continues. Padam in Zangskar.
80. Shashur. Timber column capital with makara motif.

81. Similar motif on Mussoorie Lha Khang column. This column is made out of concrete and plaster. Timber forms were copied into stone in the earliest Buddhist rock temples of Central India.
182. House under construction in Spiti. The technique of laying in-situ mud walls and punching windows out afterwards can clearly be seen. Lintels are cast in place during the in-situ process.

183. Lamas making sun dried mud bricks for repair work at Kye monastery in Spiti. Mud bricks are used for construction throughout the Western Himalayas.
184. Construction of typical door frame for main door showing decorative motifs of the lotus petal and canonical text.

185. Detail of the same at Mussoorie Lha-khang.
186. External view of Leh local house showing smaller windows at lower level meant for cattle and storage.

187. Leh local house. Twin entrances to the house, the lower one leading to the stable and the upper one to the living rooms.
188. Private Lha-khang of house owner in Leh.

189. Chensa or kitchen which is the large central room in most houses in Ladakh. It is the warmest room because it has the cooking stove.
190 and 191. Local house in Aberan (Zangskar). General views of local lambardar's house showing blank wall protection from the winter winds which come howling down the valley from the Pensi Pass.
192. Local house in Kaza (Spiti). Front view showing cattle enclosures at lower level.

193. Rear view of local house in Kaza with larger window for kitchen.
194. Local house in Kyelang, Lahoul. Entrance lobby giving access to upper level. Note the grain being sacked for winter storage.

195. Local house in Kyelang. Assembly room (Du-khang) outside the private Lha-khang, where monks sit during the ceremonies. Some of the larger houses have very richly decorated temple rooms and elaborate arrangements for feeding monks during the times they are called to recite prayers.
196. Lha Khang for Ladakh scouts, built by the army at Phiyang.

197. Newly constructed Lha-khang at Mussoorie. Already the mud and timber architecture have been frozen into concrete and steel.
198. Rangdum plain in Zangskar.