

Another *Rin chen bzañ po* Temple?

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Various Lahuli traditions and the secondary literature contain references to temples connected with the time of *Rin chen bzañ po*: Gemur⁽¹⁾, Johling⁽²⁾, Chokhor⁽³⁾ and Gumrang⁽⁴⁾. However, several authors doubt these traditions⁽⁵⁾ and only one of these places, namely Johling (*Žo gliñ*), might be identified with a monastery mentioned in *Rin chen bzañ po*'s biography (cf. Klimburg-Salter in this issue)⁽⁶⁾. Although mentioned several times, none of these temples was described or discussed in detail until now.

Gemur (*Gye mur*)⁽⁷⁾, in the upper part of the Bhāgā valley, was destroyed by

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The spellings of the place names are given as they are locally pronounced today. Established usages in the secondary literature and on signposts at the different places are taken into consideration. The Tibetan spelling is given in brackets according to the transliteration system used at the University of Vienna.

(¹) 'Gamur in Lahaul' is only mentioned once by Singh 1983: 124 in a list of monasteries 'connected with Rin-Chen-Sang-po and his time'.

(²) Lauf 1971: 369; 'Juling' Singh 1983: 144; 'Jholing' Handa 1987: 185 and my informant. All of my information about oral traditions in connection with this paper is mediated by or received from *Tshe riñ rdo rje* of Guskayar. I would like to thank him here for the time he spent with me and for his valuable information and help.

(³) Francke 1926: 218 attributes Chokhor to the time of Atiśa. Francke 1929: ii; Lauf 1971: 369 and Tobdan 1984: 85.

(⁴) Francke 1929: ii; Lauf 1971: 369; 'Gungrang' Peter 1975: 12; 'Gumrang' Singh 1983: 144; Tobdan 1984: 85; Handa 1987: 185 and my informant; Lauf 1971: 369 also mentions *Bar dgon pa*, a place I do not know.

(⁵) Singh 1983: 124, 202; Tobdan 1984: 85 and Handa 1987: 78, 185. They follow, often word for word, Francke 1929: ii who mentions temples other than those discussed here as cases where he doubts the tradition. There he seems to rely on contradicting local traditions. The former authors, however, attribute some of these four temples to 'founders' or 'fathers' of the *bKa' brgyud pa* school without giving any source or reason for their attributions.

(⁶) Tucci 1933: 71-74 and Snellgrove & Skorupski 1980: 95, 108.

(⁷) Francke 1926: 155, 160; *dGe smur* Lauf 1971: 373, 375 and Peter 1975: 11-12.

an avalanche and rebuilt on a safer spot ⁽⁸⁾. Only a few traces of the walls are left from the old monastery. The surviving sculptures were brought over to the new temple. Johling (*Žo gliñ*) ⁽⁹⁾ is today a ruin but still considered a holy building (see Klimburg-Salter in this issue). Chokhor (*Chos 'khor*) ⁽¹⁰⁾ is today a hamlet composed of two houses and a very small, newly built temple near Sissu in the Chandrā valley ⁽¹¹⁾. A preliminary description of the small temple at Gumrang, the most interesting and best preserved of them, is the subject of this paper ⁽¹²⁾.

Gumrang (*Guñ rañ*) ⁽¹³⁾ is a small hamlet on the north slope of the lower Bhāgā valley (*Gar*) ⁽¹⁴⁾, about half an hour's walk from Kyelong (*Kye lañ*) ⁽¹⁵⁾. It is found on the mountain slope to the east of Kyelong, divided from it only by a small stream. On this slope there are three hamlets: along the road to Ladakh Guskylar and Yūrnath, and higher up Gumrang and the monastery of Bokar which is today in charge of the village temple at Gumrang. A path leads from Guskylar to Gumrang and Bokar. Gumrang is the seat of a Thakur's family ⁽¹⁶⁾ of the same name. During the rule of Rājā Mān Singh of Kullu (1688-1719) ⁽¹⁷⁾ this family originated from the division of the territory of the family of Kolong (*Ko loñ*) ⁽¹⁸⁾, in the upper Bhāgā valley) between

⁽⁸⁾ According to my informant, this occurred about 1973. Lauf 1971: 375 mentions some sculptures 'in Stucco-Technik', namely Vajradhara and Vajravārāhī, which he attributes to the 12th century. However, a picture of the Vajravārāhī, published by Madanjeet Singh 1968: 109 does not confirm this early attribution.

⁽⁹⁾ Francke 1926: 160; *rDzo gliñ* Lauf 1971: 369, 376.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Francke 1929: ii; Francke 1926: 214 '(probably *sTod rgyal mtshan chos 'khor*)' followed by Peter 1975: 24; '*Chos skor*' Lauf 1971: 376.

⁽¹¹⁾ There is a highly venerated Tārā image, which is said to have fallen from heaven and/or come from Bodhgaya. Besides this image and a few smaller and older bronzes, which are all portable, nothing indicates an early date.

⁽¹²⁾ The field work here was carried out in two stages. At first, with the help of *Tsbe rin rdo rje*, I visited Gumrang, as I was travelling in the Candrā and Bhāgā valleys of Lahul. Then, because of the importance of this temple, the archaeological team of the IsMEO — University of Vienna joint expedition visited the temple again during its survey in Lahul.

⁽¹³⁾ Francke 1926: 210, 218, 376; *dGuñ rañ* Lauf 1971: 369, 376 and Peter 1975: 12.

⁽¹⁴⁾ Gar cannot be identical with Garja, Tib. *Gar za / dKar zva*, because this term is used for the whole of Lahul (Francke 1926: 47, 195, 246, 279 and Tobdan 1984: 9; the Chandrā and Bhāgā valleys up to Thiroṭ' Peter 1975: 29a). In contrast Gar means only the lower Bhāgā valley up to Stingri and Pyukar, while the upper valley is called *sTod* (Tobdan 1984: 4-5 and my informant). This division is also reflected in the respective dialects (Harcourt 1972: 42; Tobdan 1984: 9 and Bajpai 1987: 35) and cultures. I happened to observe some differences at two burial ceremonies of the same social group (Lohars) at Kardang (Gar) and Shangbar in the upper Bhāgā valley. The form Gara, as used by Bajpai 1987 throughout his book, is a mis-spelling.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Also *Kye glañ* Francke 1926: 218, 221-23 and Peter 1975: 16.

⁽¹⁶⁾ Thakur is (like Rana) a title of local rulers. Although the territories of the five Lahuli Thakurs are very small, they do have a long history.

⁽¹⁷⁾ Hutchison & Vogel 1919: 166-68.

⁽¹⁸⁾ Francke 1926: 194-210, 222-23.

two brothers ⁽¹⁹⁾. This seems to be also the earliest reference to the village's name ⁽²⁰⁾. The hamlet consists today of the Thakur's house (which was being rebuilt at the time of our visit), two big farmhouses, the temple and several smaller buildings. In addition, there is a big *mchod rten* in the middle of the village and two smaller ones made of stone slabs at its entrance.

The temple ⁽²¹⁾ is situated at the top of the hamlet, at the same height as the roof of the farmhouse just in front of it. Only the Thakur's old house, which cannot be older than the founding of his lineage, is higher. The temple and all the main structures of the village face southwest ⁽²²⁾. The carved wooden door is protected by a veranda (partly used for storing wood and a loom) supported by four square pillars with big asymmetric capitals (Fig. 1). The platform in front of it, a part of which is the roof of another structure, has a building to the left side, which was used at the time of our visit to brew *chañ* and to store other things ⁽²³⁾. How these different structures and the temple are connected, and what their respective functions were could not be studied during this short visit.

The temple structure is very simple. It is made of stone walls interspersed with wooden beams, as is common in Lahul ⁽²⁴⁾. It is a nearly square building with four pillars, which make another square in the middle, supporting the ceiling (Fig. 3). The octagonal pillars are each supported by a stone base shaped like a squat pot with a thick round lip resting on a square socle. The capitals are of a simple trapezoid shape with volutes on either side. The pillar and the capital in the eastern corner are new. A rope runs from pillar to pillar to form a square and pieces of coloured cloth, *kata* (*kha btags*) and dry flowers hang there as offerings. Above the door and the roof of the veranda is the only window of the temple. The door is only 90 cm wide and the window above it is a square of 90 cm ⁽²⁵⁾. The roof slopes to the left and touches the Thakur's house to the right (Fig. 1).

Dr Noci informed me that there is a space between the ceiling and the roof about 1.50 m high with no entrance. Similar additions are found in *La luñ* ⁽²⁶⁾ and above

⁽¹⁹⁾ Francke 1926: II, 202-3. At that time this family seems to have ruled over the whole Bhāgā valley.

⁽²⁰⁾ Peter 1975: 12 mentions a document of 1618, which I have not yet been able to find.

⁽²¹⁾ According to the names preserved, it once must have been a monastery: Francke 1929: ii calls it *sTon pa me me'i dgon pa*. Lauf 1971: 369, 376 calls it *dGuñ rañ ston pa dgon pa* and says: 'dGung-rang ist in seiner urtümlichen Art am besten erhalten und läßt die Planung des Rin-chen bzang-po vermuten'. He is followed by Peter 1975: 12. Neither of them mentions a source.

⁽²²⁾ Information from Dr Noci who studied the architecture of the building.

⁽²³⁾ It seems that the people had to use all the free space to store the Thakur's possessions as he was just rebuilding his house. A few vessels of *chañ* were stored in the *Lha khañ* itself.

⁽²⁴⁾ Khosla 1979: 118.

⁽²⁵⁾ Information from Dr Noci.

⁽²⁶⁾ Since Shuttleworth 1929 in scholarly literature generally written *Lha luñ* (cf. Klimburg-Salter in this issue).

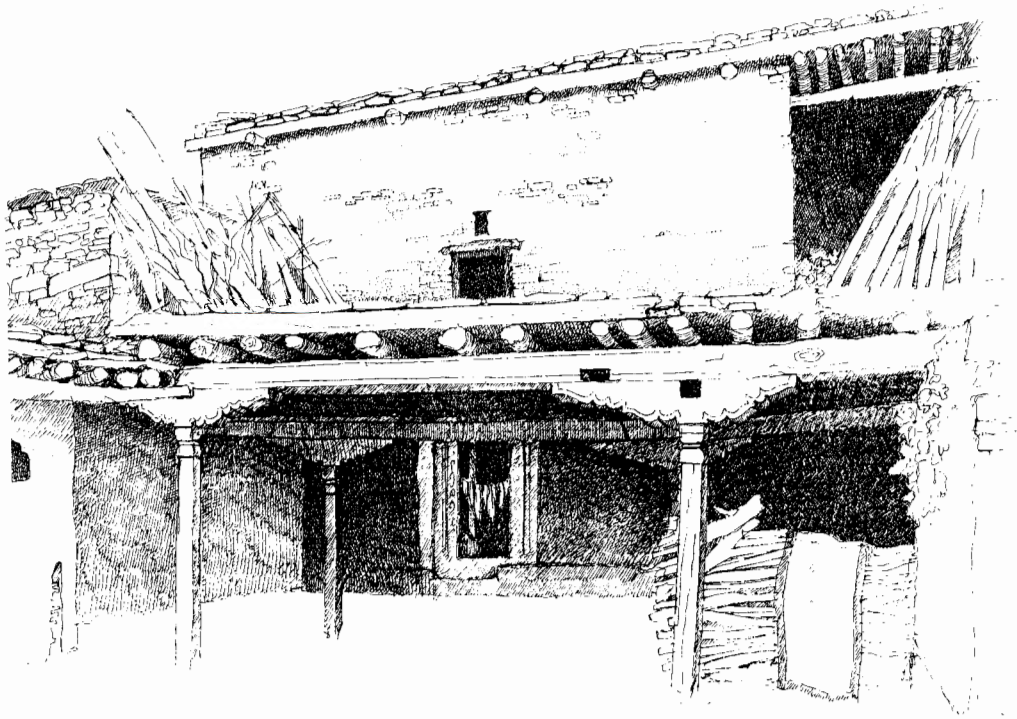


Fig. 1 - Temple at Gumrang, veranda and temple (Drawing by P. Smith).

the *mGon khañ* at *Ta pho*. These superstructures might be for protection. The temple itself is about 5.40 m long, 5.70 m wide, 3.90 m high and the entrance wall is about 70 cm thick. The veranda is 5.50 m deep and 5.20-6 m wide. The sketch of the ground plan including the veranda is drawn on the basis of Dr Noci's measurements (Fig. 2).

At least the rear- and side-walls of the building have suffered considerable damage over the years. As is also indicated by the new pillar and its capital in the eastern corner, the ceiling has been recently repaired⁽²⁷⁾. Some of the beams used in the ceiling bear traces of rough painting⁽²⁸⁾. Others, however, must have had painted cloth fixed on them before the renovation, as is testified by one example said to be taken from the temple (see below). Only the front wall, up to the height of the window, is certainly older as it bears the only traces of painting.

On a ledge along the rear-wall are eleven earthen sculptures, i.e. sculptures of unbaked clay, which are in very poor condition. In front of the ledge, in the middle

⁽²⁷⁾ According to my informant, this happened about 60 years ago.

⁽²⁸⁾ Similar to *La luñ*, *gSer khañ* Khosla 1979: pl. VII, facing p. 24.

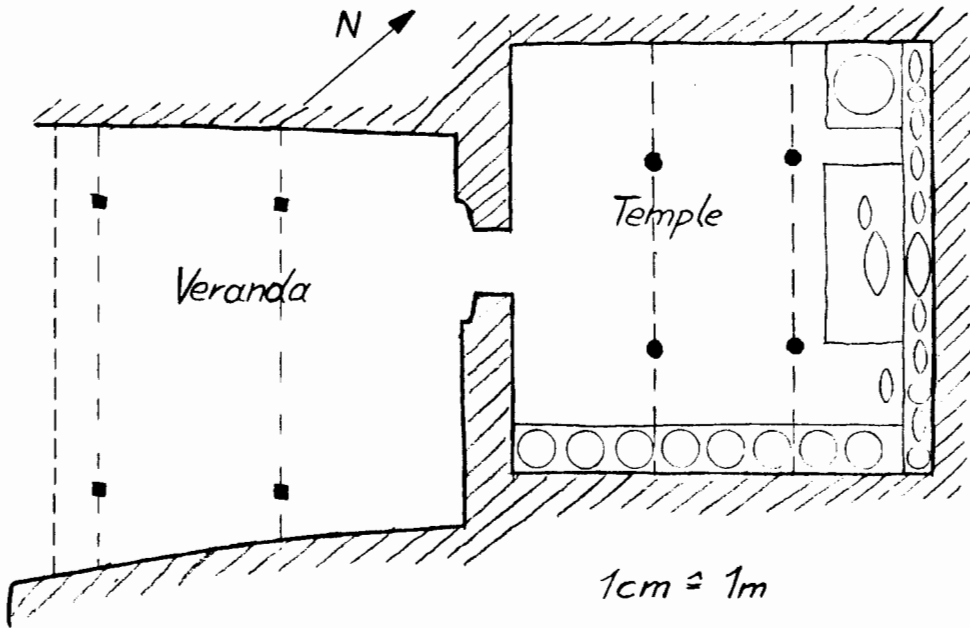


Fig. 2 - Temple at Gumrang, sketch ground plan.

of the wall, is a small platform with an image of Śākyamuni and smaller images completely covered with cloth. To the left, in the northern corner, is a wooden prayer wheel with the *mantra* written on a piece of cloth attached to it. Along the wall to the right of the small platform, are eight *mchod rten* and between the first of them and the platform is another clay sculpture (Figs. 2, 3).

As the temple is still very much venerated and cared for by the people, it was some time before we were allowed to work there. Without *Tshe rin rdo rje*, who had explained the purpose of our work at length, our task would have been impossible. Even then our study was restricted and the following description should be seen in this light. We had to keep some distance from the clay sculptures and it was therefore impossible to examine them more closely, e.g. to observe the colour on the images, to examine breaks and cracks, to identify the technique, or to photograph their profiles (not to mention cleaning off the dust, looking at their backs, etc.).

Below I shall give a careful description of those remains of the temple which I consider to be medieval and to belong to a conceptually uniform state of the *lHa khañ*. These observations are based on comparison with other chapels elsewhere in the western Himālayas which are better preserved, *Ta pho*, *La luñ* and Alchi (*'A lci*) being the most famous. This does not mean that all the elements composing this hypothetical state were executed exactly at the same time. Indeed, at this stage of my research I am not able to answer the question of chronology or to propose different

phases of construction ⁽²⁹⁾. The purpose of this paper is rather an attempt to define the historical and cultural setting of the temple as a whole.

The most striking feature of the temple are the twelve badly damaged clay sculptures, mainly placed on the ledge along the rear wall. They can be divided on the basis of their iconography into the following groups:

— the main image of a Sarvavid Vairocana / *Kun rig rNam par snañ mdzad* (height c. 100 cm) (Fig. 4);

— three other *jina*; only one of which still retains its arms and shows the *varadamudrā* (i.e. Ratnasambhava / *Rin chen 'byuñ ldan*), but its colour could not be ascertained; the others are red (Akṣobhya / *Mi bskyod pa*, Fig. 4) and blue (Amoghasiddhi / *Don yod grub pa*) respectively (height c. 70 cm);

— four goddesses, two of them showing *vitarkamudrā* (height c. 70 cm) (Figs. 5-6);

— two standing Bodhisattvas (height c. 70 cm);

— one Buddha image (height c. 40 cm) (Fig. 7);

— a torso of another image.

As is well known, the appearance of Vairocana as the main image is a major characteristic for temples attributed to *Rin chen bzañ po* ⁽³⁰⁾.

Their location is certainly not original. This is indicated not only by the fact that their configuration makes no iconographical sense, but also by the presence of two lion heads (the *vāhana* of Vairocana, Fig. 4, shows one of them), a head of a *makara* and other fragments lying between the sculptures. Furthermore, the very fact that the sculptures are so badly preserved itself suggests that they had been moved. As sculptures of unbaked clay are very fragile, they had to be made on the spot, i.e. constructed around the armature already fixed on the wall. Therefore, even if they are made in the round, they are not painted on the rear ⁽³¹⁾. At some point, a serious disturbance must have forced the people to remove the sculptures from their original places. This must have happened at a time when the people were no longer able to repair them and too poor to replace them with new ones of another material. Furthermore the people's claim that the sculptures were originally fixed to the wall strengthen this hypothesis. The comparatively small size of the images and their respective differences in size suggest an original composition similar to *La luñ*, Alchi, etc., on one wall or in an apse ⁽³²⁾.

⁽²⁹⁾ To answer these questions, it would also be necessary to clean some parts of the temple.

⁽³⁰⁾ Already stated by Francke 1929: iii.

⁽³¹⁾ This can be observed in *Ta pho* as well as in Alchi; cf. also Stein 1921: 1212 describing a fragment of a camel from Ming-oi, Karašahr (pl. CXXXVI, Mi.xii.0025.); 'worked in the round though not painted on R. side'. Yaldiz 1987: 145 points out that none of the clay images of the northern Silk Route are finished on the rear side.

⁽³²⁾ E.g. *La luñ*: Tucci 1988: pls. LXIII-LXX; Alchi '*Du khañ*': Singh 1968: 42; Snellgrove & Skorupski 1977: figs. 17-18; Khosla 1979: pl. IV, facing p. 9 and Pal 1982: D3; Lamayuru: Snellgrove & Skorupski 1977: pl. II.



Fig. 3 - Temple at Gumrang, inside view (Photo F. Noci).



Fig. 4 - Temple at Gumrang, image of a Sarvavid Vairocana (Photo C. Luczanits).



Figs. 5-6 - Temple at Gumrang, a goddess (Photo C. Luczanits).



Fig. 7 - Temple at Gumrang, a Buddha (Photo C. Luczanits).

They may have formed a mandala-like composition, as found in *La lun*, Alchi/'A lci, etc., where the *makara* head would be included in a structure framing the main image, while the lions, shown frontally in this case, would support the throne⁽³³⁾. The images usually sit on a lotus base of the same material, which might have existed here as well, as many of the legs are seriously damaged. The standing Bodhisattvas are said to have been fixed to the pillars⁽³⁴⁾.

The style of the images is unusual. The round face with the small pointed nose and the small mouth, the wide, round cheeks and the soft edge forming the eyebrow have no direct terms of comparison in the known art of the region. They recall one of examples of Central Asian clay sculptures of comparable small size as found in Tumšuq⁽³⁵⁾ and Šorčuq / Karašahr⁽³⁶⁾. The bodies and limbs are slender, elongated⁽³⁷⁾ and sometimes a little out of proportion⁽³⁸⁾. The upper body is clearly divided into three parts: the swelling breast, the straight line of the lower chest and the swelling belly continuing into the hips (Figs. 4, 5)⁽³⁹⁾. The female images show a slim waist just at the navel, which interrupts the continuity between the chest and the hip. Their breasts are small and the belly swells forth below the navel (Fig. 5).

The images sit on a comparably narrow ledge (only about 35 cm). They have a rather flat body, which is not meant to be seen from the side. They show a *dhyānāsana*, the knees being spread wide apart while the heels of the crossed feet nearly touch each other⁽⁴⁰⁾. Consequently the *mālā*, which in Kashmiri and Himachal bronzes usually hangs down between the crossed legs⁽⁴¹⁾, here hangs down in front of them⁽⁴²⁾.

⁽³³⁾ As in Sumda (*gSum mda'*; Snellgrove & Skorupski 1980: 63, fig. 57), in the throne of some Kashmiri and related bronzes Pal 1975: pls. 21, 23, 41, 73, 75-76, 84.

⁽³⁴⁾ I do not know any other example of a standing image affixed to a pillar; sitting ones are known to me from Nako (Kinnaur) and the *Sroñ brtsan gam po* 'cave' in the Potala, *Lha sa*.

⁽³⁵⁾ Especially the reliefs of temple B in Toqquz Sarai (Hambis 1964: pls. LXVII-LXVIII etc.), which are made of unmixed clay (M. Hallade in Hambis 1964: 142). This material is unique in this area but, as the reliefs were found on the outside of the temple, this kind of clay seems to be more weather-resistant (Yaldiz 1987: 145, 148, fig. 92).

⁽³⁶⁾ Härtel & Yaldiz 1987: pls. 42-43; Stein 1921: pls. CXXXII-CXXXIV.

⁽³⁷⁾ This elongation is brought to an extreme in later clay sculptures of historical Northwest India as, e.g., in Fondukistān or the Nāgas at Tapa Sardār (Rhie 1988: figs. 36, 38, 40, 42-43, 46; Taddei & Verardi 1978: figs. 218-19). The roundness and smooth continuation of the body is missing in West Tibet and Central Asia, where similar, often awkward, forms of elongation can be found.

⁽³⁸⁾ E.g. the heads and hands on the smaller images.

⁽³⁹⁾ Cf. later Kashmiri bronzes: Pal 1975: nos. 48-49, 51, 53 etc.

⁽⁴⁰⁾ Cf. paintings from Dunhuang, mainly of the 'Himālayan Style': Klimburg-Salter 1982: 117-18, pls. 55, 61-63, 66-67; and Alchi: Goepper 1982: pls. 10, 15, 17; Pal 1982: nos. D5, D14-D19, D21 etc.

⁽⁴¹⁾ Pal 1975: nos. 30, 43, 49, 57-58, 69-70, 88-90.

⁽⁴²⁾ As found in one bronze only (Schroeder 1981: fig. 26G) in a typical Himachal style and in

The *jinas* and standing Bodhisattvas wear a long *luṅgī*, a crown without rosettes, large leaf-shaped earrings, a necklace, bracelets on the upper and lower arms, a string of pearls ending in an ornamental knot as girdle and anklets. There is a large knot behind the crown, whose band hangs down to the elbow⁽⁴³⁾, and a painted string of pearls hanging down to the navel (Fig. 4). The Sarvavid Vairocana is further distinguished by a five-pointed crown (instead of the three-pointed crown of the other images), the sacred thread and an additional garland of pearls along the girdle⁽⁴⁴⁾. This might be the only image which was partly repaired, as is indicated by the slightly different style of the heads (Fig. 4).

The female images wear the same costume, but instead of the knot behind the crown, they have a cloth hanging down their back, the wavy edges of which reach the elbow⁽⁴⁵⁾. Both sides display a hairknot with flowers⁽⁴⁶⁾. Instead of the straight locks of the male images, their hair is indicated by a sharp wavy line (Fig. 6)⁽⁴⁷⁾. In addition to the *luṅgī*, at least one goddess wears a painted corset (Fig. 5)⁽⁴⁸⁾.

The Buddha image, the most curious of the clay figures, wears a red patchwork *samghāṭī* clinging to the body in Gupta fashion. It has a sleek undifferentiated hairdress and a large U-shaped *uṣṇīṣa*, both unusual features in the western Himālaya⁽⁴⁹⁾. Its former function in the temple remains a mystery (Fig. 7).

Due to the poor state of preservation of the figures, one can partly see how they were made. The core is a wooden armature, around which coarser clay mixed with some filling material (straw and hair can be recognized) is fixed with a rope or strips

some paintings of Alchi 'Du *khañ* (usually only in the form of a thin line: Pal 1982: D5, D14-18, espec. D24) and the sculptures of Alchi (Singh 1968: 58; Snellgrove & Skorupski 1977: figs. 33-35, 71 and Pal 1982: ML1-ML4).

⁽⁴³⁾ This detail is very similar to the painted Bodhisattvas in the ambulatory and 'Du *khañ* in *Ta pho* and the related paintings at *Mañ nañ*. Here also, the earrings stick out in the same manner (Klimburg-Salter 1982: figs. 58-59; 1985: figs. 2, 4, 9-10). The sculptures in *Ta pho* are in every respect more delicate and detailed than the ones at Gumrang and thus cannot be used for direct comparison (cf. Tucci 1988: pls. III-XIX, XXII).

⁽⁴⁴⁾ It is interesting to note that there is no special rule for distinguishing the main image. In *Ta pho* a string of pearls hanging over the breast to the navel, the garland at the girdle and two anklets were used; in *Ropa / Rō pag* (cf. Klimburg-Salter in this issue) a second necklace and the sacred thread is used.

⁽⁴⁵⁾ No direct comparison could be found for this detail.

⁽⁴⁶⁾ Hairknots are also found, but without flowers, in mandalas at Alchi (Goepper 1982: pls. 25, 27 and Pal 1982: S53-S60).

⁽⁴⁷⁾ This difference in hair style can be seen in several late Kashmiri bronzes: e.g. Klimburg-Salter 1982: pl. 38 (where the goddess wears also a small veil or cloth at the back) and Pal 1975: nos. 49, 51a.

⁽⁴⁸⁾ Cf. Pal 1975: 9, 49, 51, 68-69, a manuscript painting from Tholing / *mTho glin* (Klimburg-Salter 1982: pl. 102). Most of these elements are found in slightly different forms or variations in Alchi 'Du *khañ* and *gSum brtsegs* (cf. Goepper 1982 and Pal 1982).

⁽⁴⁹⁾ The sleek hair of Buddha images is common in Central Asia, although the *uṣṇīṣa* is smaller; cf. Yaldiz 1987: 144, figs. 90-91, 98-101; Klimburg-Salter 1982: pl. 55.

of a very flexible plant. Hair also appears, at least once, in bundles wrapped around the wooden armature. The use of hair in clay sculptures is recorded for Central Asia and Fondukistān⁽⁵⁰⁾. Bands of a plant also form the core of the *mālā*. A thick rope is wound around it and plastered with clay⁽⁵¹⁾. This core is covered with other layers of clay, the last of which being very fine⁽⁵²⁾. This final layer is then painted, most probably with a white priming coat, upon which the other colours were applied.

The preserved painting was sometimes crudely executed and the colours are (at least today) dark and dull. Besides the respective colours of the bodies, their *luṅgī* were decorated with stripes or a circular pattern and some additional jewellery (a second necklace and a string of pearls) was applied. The corset of the female image was also painted. In addition, the hairline and all the 'dark' corners of the body and jewellery (e.g. the inside of the ears, the corners of the eye and mouth, the neck etc.) were painted red⁽⁵³⁾. Some of them appear to have been repainted, especially in the heads of the Vairocana.

It is certain, even from the photographs, that moulds were used for the flowers and the jewellery. Fig. 6 shows that the same mould was used for parts of the crown, the earring and the necklace⁽⁵⁴⁾. In Gumrang the number of moulds is very small; in addition to the string of pearls, only two moulds were used for the ornaments and two for the flowers. Since these moulded forms could be used in different combinations and painted differently, even such a limited number offered a great variety⁽⁵⁵⁾. The protruding ears indicate that a mould which included the ears was used for the heads⁽⁵⁶⁾. On the whole, the workmanship of the sculptures is simple but fine⁽⁵⁷⁾.

As mentioned above, there are also fragments of painting preserved on the

⁽⁵⁰⁾ Varma 1970: 147 says about the images of Central Asia: 'the use of animal hair is almost unknown in all the centres but for two or three'. Yaldiz 1987: 143 states that in eastern Central Asia most of the images are made of a 'Lehm-Häcksel-Tierhaar Mischung'. Concerning Fondukistān Klimburg-Salter (1989: 177) notes: 'The statues [...] were made of clay mixed with animal hair and straw [...]'.
⁽⁵¹⁾ Cf. Stein 1921: 1223 (pl. CXXXVII, Mi[= Ming-oi, Karašahr].xxvi.008) 'Wreath, made of thin core of four grass stalks tied round with grass of fibre [...]. To this are applied flowers in stucco [meaning unbaked clay]'. These flowers were painted and in four shapes i.e. made with four different moulds.

⁽⁵²⁾ This layer can be recognized by the sharp edges at the cracks.

⁽⁵³⁾ The white priming coat, the red painting along the hairline, etc. are found in historical Northwest India and Central Asia (cf. Verardi 1983: 489-90; Härtel & Yaldiz 1987: pls. 31, 48-49).
⁽⁵⁴⁾ A repetition of the same motif in two or more places (e.g. earring, necklace, *luṅgī*) can be seen in bronzes as well (cf. Pal 1975: 5, 9, 18 and Klimburg-Salter 1982: pl. 30).
⁽⁵⁵⁾ This can also be seen in *Ta pho*, *La luṅ*, etc.; although in these places more moulds were used. By comparison, Gumrang was a small commission for the craftsmen.

⁽⁵⁶⁾ 'ears may not stand with the natural angle' (Varma 1970: 155).

⁽⁵⁷⁾ In my view, no chronological information can be gained from the appearance of only a few moulds and their use in places where they appear out of proportion (the earrings, the heads of smaller images). But it indicates that the sculptures are the work of a small group of craftsmen possibly from a distant region. The same moulds could not be found in other places in the western Himālaya.

entrance wall. The paintings too are in poor condition and covered with clay. At least one square meter between the entrance and the *mchod rten* awaits cleaning and documentation. The few visible parts, mainly red and beige on a dark green-blue background, are an insufficient basis for further discussion at present. The *mchod rten* are certainly a later addition since painting is found behind them.

The door frame must be at least as old as the murals on the entrance wall since these continue along the door frame itself. Here a painted border motif (different colored triangles) is recognizable on both sides of the entrance. On the outside, the door frame is carved with ornamental motifs with two images at the bottom. In the middle of the lintel, what was presumably another image was covered at the time of our visit. The relief-carving is flat and simple. Starting from the inside, the ornaments are a running vine with leaves, rows of about 13 parallel lines at opposing angles, a semicircular band covered with flowers and ending at the top in an engaged capital (Fig. 8, from the left to the right). The image at the bottom, to the left of the entrance, is presumably a male donor figure with a one-pointed high hat or crown with rosettes, square earrings and a necklace. The hands are raised in *arjālimudrā* and the figure wears a long coat. On the other side, a female image with the same headdress, a long skirt and a *mālā* is depicted. In her raised right hand she is holding a vase, in the left hand a flower with a long stem (Fig. 8) ⁽⁵⁸⁾.

It is said that paintings on cloth were fixed to the ceiling before renovation ⁽⁵⁹⁾. The one piece I saw, now in private ownership, is so similar to ones at *Ta pho* that it may have been produced by the same painter. These paintings were adjusted to the space between the beams and therefore must have been executed on the spot ⁽⁶⁰⁾.

The key elements for dating the temple lie in the style and construction technique of the sculptures, i.e. in comparison with the sculptural remains in the same material from historical Northwest India (including Afghanistan), Central Asia and other sites in West Tibet. While the round features of the face resemble only Central Asian examples (Tumšūq, Šorčuq etc.), most of the costume details clearly display Kashmiri features. The tendency towards a slender and elongated body can be seen in both regions. Preliminary comparison of technical elements also shows influences from both sides and does not allow us to suppose a direct predecessor. However, according

⁽⁵⁸⁾ This image might derive from one of the river goddesses Gaṅgā or Yamunā, although the vehicle, umbrella and secondary figures are missing. A reduction and simplification of these elements is already recognizable at the temple of Bajaura, Kullu (Viennot 1964: 147-48, pl. 13 B) and is carried further in the wooden temple of Udaipur (Goetz 1955: pl. XII) and a stone slab of Sālhi (Chamba) (Vogel 1911: 216-24, pl. XXXI).

⁽⁵⁹⁾ At that time, only some of them were preserved, as other parts of the ceiling were decorated by painting directly on the wooden boards (see above).

⁽⁶⁰⁾ Cf. Klimburg-Salter in this issue. Other original pieces of the temple might be found in the village, especially in the Thakur's house temple, which we could not visit due to the rebuilding. This chapel is said to be quite large and important (cf. Lauf 1971: 376).



Fig. 8 - Temple at Gumrang, a detail of the door-frame (Photo C. Luczanits).

to the latest dating of the comparable sites ⁽⁶¹⁾, there is a gap of at least 200 years between the Central Asian and Indian examples and the earliest clay sculptures from West Tibet.

Just as one can differentiate the extant clay images of Northwest India and Central Asia by their style, one can as easily distinguish from both of them a West Tibetan group. While the two former groups are characterized by their highly similar features over long distances (e.g. Ushkur-Fondukistān) ⁽⁶²⁾ and periods of time ⁽⁶³⁾, the West Tibetan examples demonstrate a wide range of individuality in style and details of costume. Here the iconography and composition of the sculptures are more constant. In contrast to the paintings, the clay sculptures have not been studied since Tucci and only a few of them are published ⁽⁶⁴⁾.

Although I can not yet suggest a date for the temple due to the numerous unusual features, it is precisely these elements which make it worth publishing, despite the very early stage of research. On the bases of iconography, technical and stylistic features, the temple clearly belongs to the time of the second diffusion (*phyi dar*) of Buddhism in Tibet. Due to its iconography and the mandala-like composition, one cannot dismiss the tradition that attributes it to *Rin chen bzan po*. Although, for Alchi (and the related temples) this tradition can be reasonably refuted, and even in the case of *Ta pho*, the recent studies call this attribution into question (see Klimburg-Salter in this issue).

Seen in this light, the question in the title appears to be even absurd for the few remains at Gumrang. Nevertheless, it makes one aware, that the Lahul valley might have been more important for the diffusion of Buddhism in Western Tibet than previously thought. This is also indicated by the manuscripts found in Gondhla, the rock engravings (see Klimburg-Salter in this issue) and a few wooden sculptures. Therefore, a careful study of this temple would be an important element for our understanding of the cultural history of Western Tibet ⁽⁶⁵⁾.

⁽⁶¹⁾ For Tumişuq Yaldiz 1987: 111-12 does not give a specific date, but compares several details with sites dated to the 8th century. The sculptures of Şorçuq are not dated in Yaldiz 1987: 113-17, but in Härtel & Yaldiz 1987: 108-13, pls. 42-45 the 7th-8th century is given. Fondukistān is dated to the late 7th and 8th century by Klimburg-Salter 1989: 86, and to 700-720 by Rhie 1988: 36. Rhie 1988: 32-33 dates the related clay sculptures of Tapa Sardār (the Nāgas of chapel 37, fig. 34) and Adžina Tepe to the same period.

⁽⁶²⁾ Cf. Klimburg-Salter 1982: 110-11; 1989: 181, fn. 99 and Verardi 1983: 503-4.

⁽⁶³⁾ The form of the heads in Central Asia was handed down for centuries with hardly any changes (Yaldiz 1987: 143-44).

⁽⁶⁴⁾ E.g. Alchi by Snellgrove & Skorupski 1977 and *Ta pho* by Klimburg-Salter 1982 and 1985. In addition, the Inst. für Tibetologie und Buddhismuskunde and IsMEO have some documentation from their recent study (cf. Klimburg-Salter in this issue).

⁽⁶⁵⁾ I plan to carry out a more thorough study there in the spring of 1993, which will be conducted under the supervision of Prof. M. Taddei.

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