

Early Buddhist Wood Carvings from Himachal Pradesh

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Most of the mediaeval (tenth to fourteenth century) temples in the western Himalayas contain wood carvings as part of their decoration. The quality of these carvings is, however, quite different from place to place, and they may range from simple volutes on the capitals to elaborate door frames with an extensive iconographic programme. Free-standing sculptures and reliefs made of wood are also found in these temples. The importance of these carvings, and especially those in the earliest Buddhist monuments in the western Himalayas, in terms of both art and cultural history, was already noted by Giuseppe Tucci earlier this century (Tucci, 1935, pp. 89-90; 1973, pp. 92-93). However, since the publication of the wooden portals of Serkhang temple at Tholing monastery in the western part of what is now the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) of the People's Republic of China (Tucci, 1973, fig. 136; Klimburg-Salter, 1988, figs 1-3), Kojarnath monastery in the valley of Purang, south of Lake Manasarowar (TAR)

(Tucci, *Santi e Briganti nel Tibet Ignoto*, Milan, 1937) and Alchi monastery in present-day Ladakh (Tucci, 1973, figs 133-35, 138 [wrongly attributed to Tsaparang] and 139), as well as a small number of other pieces of relief carving and sculpture (Francke, 1914; Tucci, 1973 and others), very few other wood carvings from the western Himalayas have been made public.

The earliest Buddhist wood carvings published to date have been attributed to the time of the Kings of Purang-Guge, who from the tenth to the twelfth century ruled the area comprising the Ngari region (TAR), and the Spiti valley and upper Kinnaur (both in today's Himachal Pradesh). Established by a descendant of the royal clan of Central Tibet, the Purang-Guge kingdom witnessed a flourishing of Buddhism under the strong support of King Yeshe Ö (959-1036) and his great-nephew Changchub Ö (Byangchub-'od) in particular. Together with the most eminent lama of their time, the *lotsaba* (translator) Rinchen Zangpo

(958-1055), they are said to have founded most of the earliest Buddhist temples and monasteries in the region. In Tibetan history, this period covers part of the later or Second Propagation of Buddhism (*phyi-dar*). (For a more detailed historical account of this kingdom see Klimburg-Salter, 'A Decorated *Prajnaparamita* Manuscript from Poo', *Orientalists*, June 1994, pp. 54-60).

The purpose of this article is to introduce comparable Buddhist wood carvings recently discovered at various locations in Kinnaur and Spiti. Of special interest among the newly documented carvings is the decoration of a small but unique single-celled structure in Ribba in central Kinnaur – the Lotsaba lhakhang (Translator's Temple). The name refers to Rinchen Zangpo, but, despite its name, this temple apparently predates the rule of the kings of Purang-Guge. Omitted from this discussion are the carvings from Ladakh, including those of Alchi and related monuments, which require a separate study because of their different historical context.



(Fig. 1) Lintel
Kojarnath monastery, Purang, Tibet Autonomous Region
Purang-Guge kingdom, late 10th century
Wood
Photography by J. Poncar, 1993

While the wooden portal of Serkhang temple at Tholing has disappeared, the one at Kojarnath is, besides damage inflicted during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), still preserved (Figs 1 and 2). Due to a lack of evidence to the contrary, it is generally supposed that both portals date to the period of the foundation of these two monastic complexes by Yeshe Ö at the end of the tenth century. The portals thus serve provisionally in this article as a key to dating comparable wood carvings.

One unique and hitherto unknown wood carving can still be seen in Shal-khar, a village a few kilometres northwest of the village of Chango in upper Kinnaur. A.H. Francke (1914, p. 35), who called this village Kyahar, mentions that its monastery is connected by local tradition with Rinchen Zangpo. He was unable to see it himself, however. The monastery was unfortunately destroyed in an earthquake in 1975, and only a few carvings and some manuscripts remind one today of this once important centre

(Fig. 2) Detail of doorpost
Kojarnath monastery, Purang,
Tibet Autonomous Region
Purang-Guge kingdom,
late 10th century
Wood
Photography by J. Poncar, 1993



of Buddhism. One such piece, a carved wooden capital from the original monastery in a miraculously good state of preservation, is still in use today in the restored temple (Fig. 3). On the shorter sides, a lion stands on the head of an elephant, both of which are depicted frontally. The main images on its long sides are of Avalokiteshvara (Fig. 3a) and possibly Jambhala, the god of wealth (Fig. 3b). While Avalokiteshvara is depicted within a lotus flower, Jambhala (?) is surrounded by an architectural frame. Double columns, similar to those found at Kojarnath and as part of the frames of the seated images on the door of the Lotsaba lhakhang of Ribba (see below), support a rounded arch with two lobes at the sides. The frame culminates in a geometrical pinnacle with long, nearly horizontal streamers. This arch framing the Jambhala (?) image has its nearest comparison in two well-known wood carvings found at Tabo (Ta-pho) monastery in the Spiti valley (which, in the biography of Rinchen Zangpo, is mentioned as one of his twenty-one lesser foundations), each with a standing Buddha in the centre (Francke, pl. XVIII; Tucci, 1935, pls XLVI and XLVII; 1973, pl. 129). In the pieces from Tabo, a gabled roof, in one case with birds, has been added above the arch. On the other hand, this author knows of no piece in the Buddhist art of the region similar to the Avalokiteshvara encircled by a lotus. The motif itself, and its position at the top of a pillar, goes back to the fifth to seventh century caves at Ajanta and Ellora in India. The major change consists only in the form of the lotus petals.



(Fig. 3) Capital
Shalkhar temple, upper Kinnaur, Himachal Pradesh
Purang-Guge kingdom, late 10th/early 11th century
Wood
Height 32 cm, width 90 cm, depth 23 cm



(Fig. 3a) Detail of capital in Figure 3
showing figure of Avalokiteshvara

Both figures on the Shalkhar capital are depicted in an extremely lively manner, but this is especially true of Avalokiteshvara. His left hand rests on his left knee and holds the stalk of a lotus, while the right hand is raised to the shoulder

with the palm turned inward. A second lotus to his right seems not to be directly related to the figure, but rather fills the otherwise empty space. The figure that perhaps depicts Jambhala wears a crown with three crescents and with large knots

and streamers at the side, a *dhoti*, and boots that reach just below the knee. He has a large stomach with a thick fold above it and sits in relaxed fashion (*lalitasana*) on a cushion tied with a thick cord. The mongoose that would have been in the left hand – if the figure is Jambhala – has broken off, and thus the identification of the image remains uncertain. Also, the unusual way in which he holds his second attribute, which in a figure of Jambhala would be a lemon, on a stalk in his right hand, adds further doubt to the figure's identity.

The only images with expressive movements similar to the images in Shalkhar are, again, found in Tabo monastery. One well-preserved example is a small *bodhisattva*, contained in one of the floral rondels of a very fine door fragment (Fig. 4; see also Klimburg-Salter, 1994, p. 38, fig. 15). On the badly preserved door frame of the Maitreya temple in Tabo, the outlines of very dynamic dancing images can also be seen (see Tucci, 1935, pl. LXII, in which they can be faintly discerned).

To this group of closely related wood carvings from Shalkhar and Tabo is to be added a piece from The Kronos Collections in New York. In this beautiful carving, a standing image of an eight-armed Ashtamahabhaya Tara is framed in an architectural setting comparable to the two standing Buddha pieces from Tabo (see Lerner, p. 80, no. 29; Pal, 1989[b], p. 121, fig. 7). The addition of a second gable to the roof makes it even more elaborate than the Tabo pieces. At the base, the Kronos piece has small Atlantean images clearly related to bronzes attributed to Kashmir.

The Lotsaba lhakhang of Ribba is integrated into a larger structure with the same name (Fig. 5). Largely made of wood, the original temple, as far as it is preserved today, consists of a small, nearly cubical building with a shallow veranda on all four sides, which presumably once served as a circumambulatory path. It should be noted that not all the wooden elements of the structure as preserved today are original: some parts exposed to the weather have been replaced several times over, but it is still the practice in Kinnaur today that during the renovation of a temple, the original is copied as precisely as possible, as witnessed by this author on several occasions.

The key element for proposing a date for the temple is the wooden decoration, especially on the door frame. However, the whole façade, including the door



(Fig. 3b) Detail of capital in Figure 3 showing figure of Jambhala (?)



(Fig. 4) Detail of door fragment showing *bodhisattva* in rondel
Tabo monastery, Spiti, Himachal Pradesh
Purang-Guge kingdom, late 10th/early 11th century
Wood



(Fig. 5) Lotsaba lhakhang
Ribba, central Kinnaur, Himachal Pradesh

frame, is completely covered with a thick layer of whitewash (up to 1 centimetre deep). That one can still discern anything at all is due to the relative depth of the carving. A comparative analysis is therefore restricted to motifs and structural components, and a stylistic comparison can only be attempted in a few cases. It is hoped that this article will give further impetus to support proper cleaning and renovation of this unique temple.

The large wooden door frame comprising the east wall is the most interesting part of the temple. A detailed and complete description of all the decorative elements of the door frame is not intended in this article, which is restricted to some of the figurative elements and their architectural frames useful for comparison with the other carvings discussed, as well as for making a hypothesis

concerning the temple's approximate date. At the sides of the door, a row of deeply carved conch shells interspersed with small flowers is depicted (Fig. 6a). A similar band, but more complex and detailed, can be seen on the door from Kojarnath, on which the conch shells alternate with auspicious symbols emerging from a vase (see Fig. 2). On the engaged pillar in the middle of the doorpost at Ribba, three large standing Buddhas (Fig. 6b) alternate with three other smaller standing images above them. Both types of images are depicted in architectural frames with a double roof, with birds within the upper roof, which ends in a pinnacle. These frames can best be compared to the examples from the mid-eighth century sun temple in Martand, Kashmir (see Meister et al., fig. 717; Fisher, 1989[a], p. 34, fig. 6), and are found, with slight variations, in the later pre-Islamic monuments of Kashmir as well. The same frame is used on the wood carving in The Kronos Collections as mentioned above. The garments of the Buddha in Figure 6b are depicted in Gupta fashion, but with thick folds hanging down from the arms as is typical of the post-Gupta sculpture of Kashmir. The rounded, smooth forms of the body and the slight sense of movement give the figure a majestic appearance. Overall, the image refers stylistically to the mid-ninth century sculpture of Avantipur in Kashmir (Fisher, 1989[b], figs 7 and 9).



(Fig. 6a) Detail of doorpost showing conch shells
Lotsaba lhakhang, Ribba, central Kinnaur,
Himachal Pradesh
Early 10th century
Wood
Height of each unit 14 cm



(Fig. 6b) Detail of doorpost showing standing Buddha
Lotsaba lhakhang, Ribba, central Kinnaur, Himachal Pradesh
Early 10th century
Wood
Height of Buddha 27 cm; height of frame 61 cm

The upper figurative band of the lintel depicts the five Jinas, and between them, seated celestial figures or *bodhisattvas* with their legs crossed at the ankles and making gestures of discussion or offering (Fig. 7a). It is remarkable that of these five Jinas, only the central one, identifiable by the gesture of teaching

(*dharmachakramudra*) as Vairochana, is crowned and jewelled. Figure 7b shows the eroded form of another of the Jinas. His garment is visible, crossing his broad-shouldered torso from the left shoulder, and the facial features can also be vaguely discerned. This Jina is depicted with hair hanging in thick strands

to the shoulder, which is highly unusual. The type of attendant celestials or *bodhisattvas* represented here are only known to this author from late Gandharan sculpture, where they are most common on steles interpreted as the Miracle of Shravasti, and from later Buddhist monuments in historical northwest India, such as Bamiyan (in present-day Afghanistan). I do not know of this type of image in any other monument in Himachal Pradesh. The lower figurative band of the lintel is flanked by two female deities. Turned towards the centre, they each wear a high crown, a long shawl and a garland (*mala*) pendent to the ankles. Directly below them, on the capital, a small donor image in *anjali mudra* is depicted, also turned towards the centre. The large central standing image on this band is severely damaged: the head is broken off as well as the lower part of the legs (Fig. 7c).

Remarkable also are the architectural frames used for the figures on the lintel. These are not of the Kashmiri-type architecture with gabled roofs as found around the Buddha on the engaged pillar (see Fig. 6b). Around four of the Jinas (see Figs 7a and 7b), under a trilobed arch double columns support a roof divided into three horizontal ter-



(Fig. 7a) Detail of left side of lintel showing Jinas (including Vairochana) and *bodhisattvas*
Lotsaba lhakhang, Ribba, central Kinnaur, Himachal Pradesh
Early 10th century
Wood



(Fig. 7b) Detail of lintel showing figure of a Jina
Lotsaba lhakhang,
Ribba, central Kinnaur,
Himachal Pradesh
Early 10th century
Wood
Height of Jina 18 cm



(Fig. 7c) Detail of lintel showing standing figure at centre
Lotsaba lhakhang,
Ribba, central Kinnaur,
Himachal Pradesh
Early 10th century
Wood
Height of frame 52 cm

ances and culminating in an *amalaka* (doughnut-shaped finial). The frames around the female deities at the sides and around the Vairochana figure are basically the same, but these are much more deeply carved. This type of architecture is rendered in its most complex form as the frame around the main image of the lintel in Figure 7c, where a three-dimensional structure very similar to the *shikhara*-type tower is depicted. It has at least seven terraces, and an *amalaka* at the top: two smaller *amalakas* at the sides would seem also to indicate the presence of flanking smaller towers.

As noted above, some of the stylistic features found on this door frame from Ribba's Lotsaba lhakhang preserve elements from the Kashmiri artistic tradition of the eighth to ninth centuries. Certain other elements, such as the seated celestials or *bodhisattvas* with legs crossed at the ankles, their hair style and those of the donors and flying *apsaras*, and the *shikhara*-type framing, are unusual in Kashmir, and are unique in this cultural context. These other elements evidence cultural links to other regions as well. They refer partly (the *shikhara*-type architecture and the hair style) to the post-Gupta art of the lower hills and the Indian plains, partly (the seated celestial figures or *bodhisattvas*) to the art of the remote regions of historical northwest India.

Although local tradition ascribes this temple to the same period as Tabo or Shalkhar, (i.e. to the time of Rinchen Zangpo), a consideration of the stylistic features found on the door frame alone suggests an earlier date. Even if one can account for a relatively long delay until the particular confluence of Kashmiri and northwest Indian elements came about in such a secluded and remote place, based on the facts that the comparable carvings discussed above date from the mid-ninth century at the latest, and that many of the temple's particular features are no longer found in the known art of the Purang-Guge kingdom, the temple can be dated no later than the beginning of the tenth century. Thus, it can be safely considered the earliest extant Buddhist monument of Himachal Pradesh and seems to be a local creation based primarily on models from northwest India and Kashmir. The occurrence of such an unusual iconographic feature as the long hair on the Jina can also only be explained by a certain provinciality. In any case, this temple preserves a phase of Buddhist art and architecture previously unknown in Himachal Pradesh, and proves the existence of Buddhism in

this region prior to the establishment of the kingdom of Purang-Guge. It also evidences a strong local wood carving tradition in Kinnaur, which formed a basis for the works found in later monuments of the same region.

As a result of the study of Ribba, one is now able to see the other group of reliefs at Kojarnath, Tholing, Shalkhar and Tabo in a different light. Comparing certain elements at Ribba which occur in Kojarnath as well, such as the row of conch shells (see Fig. 2) and the *amalaka* on top of the frames of the standing images on the lintel (see Fig. 1), it appears that the door frame of Kojarnath is the earliest of the latter group. Thus, the attribution of the portal of Kojarnath to the founding of the monastery at the end of the tenth century is confirmed. The portal of Tholing, however, does not share such details with Ribba and is more similar to the carvings from Tabo and Shalkhar, and thus is somewhat later. These latter carvings therefore might be attributed to the last years of the tenth century and the early eleventh century.

The images in Kojarnath are, however, already depicted in a similarly expressive manner to the slightly later monuments of Shalkhar and Tabo. This new style may be the direct influence of artists coming from Kashmir, as mentioned in the biography of Rinchen Zangpo. Nevertheless, this influence can only be clearly ascertained if the cultural exchange during the period is clarified with the help of chemical analyses of metal sculptures, or if more murals, carvings and metal sculptures are found in the region and published.

In another small temple in Ribba, not far from the Lotsaba lhakhang, there is a free-standing, former Buddhist image now venerated as Durga (Fig. 8). This wooden figure is painted completely black with tar. That it was once a Buddhist deity can only be recognized today by the small Buddha images in the points of the crown. A pair of *garudas* with the same hair style as found in Ribba's Lotsaba lhakhang also remains in this temple, as well as a fragment of a stupa, thus attesting further to the temple's Buddhist origins. The Durga temple was rebuilt and redecorated in 1993 during this



(Fig. 8) Buddhist image venerated as Durga
Durga temple, Ribba, central Kinnaur, Himachal Pradesh, 1993
10th century
Wood
Height approximately 2 m



(Fig. 9) Detail of *mandorla* of Durga
Durga temple, Ribba,
central Kinnaur,
Himachal Pradesh, 1993
Wood

author's first visit to Ribba, when the photographs were taken. The condition of the image does not allow a stylistic analysis. It is framed with a large wooden *mandorla*, which is decorated with a beautiful running vine motif encircling horseshoe-shaped panels that were originally painted (Fig. 9), and is thus a cruder version of the marvellous metal frame in the Shri Pratap Singh Museum at Srinagar in Kashmir (see Pal, 1989[a], figs 14 and 15), discovered in 1931 in Devsar, a district in the south of the Kashmir valley.

Two standing figures from a temple in Ropa (Ro-dpag) in upper Kinnaur represent other examples of wood sculpture which do not really conform to the known artistic production of the Purang-Guge kingdom, appearing somewhat earlier (Fig. 10; see also Klimburg-Salter, 1994, pp. 71-73, figs 57-59). They have been attributed generally to the tenth century on the basis of comparisons

with mid-ninth century Kashmiri sculpture and later sculpture from the area. Despite the coarse repainting and the huge amount of dust on these sculptures, their grace is astonishing. Our conclusion that Buddhist artistic production existed at the Lotsaba lhakhang in Ribba prior to the establishment of the Purang-Guge kingdom now definitely supports the attribution of the two standing figures to a period earlier than the time of Rinchen Zangpo's building activity. However, the historical context remains obscure.

An even more astonishing sculpture of approximately the early eleventh century can be seen in the Lotsaba lhakhang in Poo (sPu), the main village of upper Kinnaur (Fig. 11). The thick layer of crude repainting had caused us to virtually overlook the life-size sculpture on earlier visits. Made of a single piece of wood, with a height of two metres (including the base) it is certainly the largest

sculpture of its kind. The figure stands to the proper right of the clay images of Shakyamuni and his followers on the main altar. A smaller, blue *bodhisattva* made of clay is his counterpart on Shakyamuni's proper left.

Although not seated on a peacock as described in the *Sadhanamala*, the large image can be identified as the *bodhisattva* Vajradharma, a form of Avalokiteshvara. Here he stands in a relaxed *tribhanga* pose with his left hand at his hip holding the stalk of a lotus, while the right hand teases the flower open at his heart (see De Mallmann, p. 108). Vajradharma wears a high four-pointed crown with four of the Jinas depicted in the points, the fourth point shown behind his high topknot (Fig. 11a). The description of this *bodhisattva* in the *Sadhanamala* mentions a five-pointed crown, however the fifth point, which should be at the back, has not been depicted. The front figure is presumably Amitabha, while on



(Fig. 10) Profile of Vajrasattva
Ropa temple, upper Kinnaur,
Himachal Pradesh
1st half of the 10th century
Wood
Overall height 120 cm



(Fig. 11) Vajradharma
Lotsaba lhakhang, Poo, upper
Kinnaur, Himachal Pradesh
Purang-Guge kingdom,
early 11th century
Wood
Height 2 m



(Fig. 11a) Head of Vajradharma image in Figure 11



(Fig. 11b) Feet and base of Vajradharma image in Figure 11

the central point Vairochana is recognizable and on the left point a Buddha with the right hand on his knee can be seen. To the sides of the crown are rosettes as well as knots with streamers descending to the upper arm, in front of which plait-like strands of hair fall to the shoulder. The *bodhisattva* has a round, full face with a straight, thick nose (probably restored) and a strong chin. In addition to the crown, the figure's sumptuous jewellery consists of three earrings, two bracelets each on the upper and lower arm and three necklaces. The *dhoti*, which was probably originally of unequal length on each leg, has a central fold ending in a point (Fig. 11b). A *mala* hangs down to the ankles and long, floating streamers, decorated towards the bottom with geometrical carvings, flank the legs.

A fragment preserved in the same temple was in fact originally a part of the Vajradharma image (Fig. 12). Unlike the latter, it was not repainted, and depicts the donor of the image in a long, tight robe (formerly painted red) with a simple belt. He has a moustache, and holds what may be either a twig with five buds or a flower with five leaves as well as a rosary in his raised right hand, and another rosary in his pendent left hand. This type of donor image with similar gestures (but different attributes) and often also with a moustache goes back to mid-ninth century Kashmir (see Fisher, 1989[b], p. 108, fig. 3; Pal, 1989[a], p. 93, fig. 20).

The end of the streamer and a part of the *mala* testify that this fragment once belonged to the Vajradharma image, and a foot of the donor can still be seen on Vajradharma's pedestal in Figure 11b.

Strikingly similar to this *bodhisattva* from Poo is a small wood sculpture at Ropa (Fig. 13). Except that Vajradharma is now shown seated, all the other details are similar to the Poo image. The comparative flatness of the Ropa figure and a few coarser details suggest that it is a well-made local variant of the Poo *bodhisattva*. As the first image retains all the stylistic features of the art of the Purang-Guge kingdom, such as the second pair of earrings at the top of the ear, the exaggerated central part of the crown (see Fig. 11a) and the braids falling from the top of the head, it most probably dates to no later than the second half of the eleventh century.

There are a few other early Buddhist wooden sculptures known in addition to those discussed above. Among them is the beautiful Amitabha from Johling temple in Lahaul, Himachal Pradesh, today housed in the British Museum in London (see Klimburg-Salter, 1982, pl. 85; 1994, fig. 30). A second figure from this temple is said to be in the Chamba Museum, Himachal Pradesh. Other sculptures are in the Rangrigtse monastery of Charang in upper Kinnaur, some 35 kilometres along a side valley of the Sutlej river, which it has not been possi-

ble to visit until now. The only published sculpture from Charang (Singh, fig. 117) shows a *bodhisattva* which is very similar to some of the murals at Tabo dating to the mid-eleventh century. Other sculptures from Charang have been shown at lectures given by Singh, and will soon be published ('Rangrigtse: An early Buddhist Temple in Kinnaur – Western Himalayas', in *Proceedings of the Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Seggau, 1995*, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, forthcoming).

Of all the free-standing images discussed above, the Durga from Ribba (see Fig. 8) and the pair of standing figures from Ropa (see Fig. 10) seem to be the earliest; all the others appear to date to the eleventh century. However, due to their stylistic divergence as well as to the fact that not all examples known to exist have been seen by the author, it is not possible to attempt a more detailed relative chronology for them here.

The extensive use of wood for the decoration of a temple or for images is, of course, not unique to Buddhist art. Rather surprisingly, many of the Buddhist wood carvings are found in an area too high, dry and cold for trees to grow. As evidenced by the eighth to ninth century Hindu wooden temples of Bharmaur and Chatradi in Chamba (see Postel et al., figs 37-42, 45-48) and the images from Gajan village in the Kullu district (ibid., figs 84-90), there is a strong wood carving tradition in Himachal Pradesh prior to the earliest Buddhist carvings preserved. In contrast to the earlier Hindu monuments, which are clearly in the



(Fig. 12) Fragment of Vajradharma image showing donor Lotsaba lhakhang, Poo, upper Kinnaur, Himachal Pradesh Purang-Guge kingdom, early 11th century Wood Height of donor 47 cm

(Fig. 13) Vajradharma Ropa temple, upper Kinnaur, Himachal Pradesh Purang-Guge kingdom, 2nd half of the 11th century Wood Overall height 84 cm

post-Gupta artistic tradition, the Buddhist carvings also show direct Kashmiri influence.

The Lotsaba lhakhang in Ribba seems to be the earliest Buddhist monument in Himachal Pradesh preserved today. The existence of the wood carvings from this temple contradicts the theory that the later Buddhist wood carvings from the region were influenced by the culture of Kashmir alone. Rather, its unique blending of influences from the art of Kashmir and the Indian plains attests, at least for wood carvings, to a local artistic school existing in Kinnaur prior to the kingdom of Purang-Guge. This local artistic school has to be taken into account when studying the later wood carvings of the Purang-Guge kingdom. On the other hand, the Lotsaba lhakhang and the pair of *bodhisattvas* from Ropa are evidence of a previously unknown cultural connection between Kinnaur and the region of Kashmir preceding the time of the Kings of Purang-Guge.

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Kojarnath in 1993, Ribba in 1993 and 1994, and other places only in 1994.

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Cover: Flying *apsaras*

North wall, Cave 1, Dungkhar, Tibet Autonomous Region

Early Guge kingdom, 12th century

Mural painting

Photography by Thomas J. Pritzker

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