

THE CULTURAL MONUMENTS OF TIBET
Volume I





MICHAEL HENSS

**THE CULTURAL
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TIBET
THE CENTRAL REGIONS**

VOLUME I
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This handbook on the cultural monuments of the Central Regions of Tibet is dedicated to all Tibetans inside and outside their country who are devoted to its historical, religious and artistic heritage, past and present.

Preface

Hardly any other high civilization in Asia has had its art and architecture explored as late as Buddhist Tibet. Both geography and history have made access to the land beyond the Himalayas difficult or even impossible compared with access to Silk Road Central Asia or to the Gandharan-based cultures between India and the Hindu Kush. Modern field research in the Central Regions of Tibet began as recently as the 1930s, with the pioneering work of the eminent Italian scholar Giuseppe Tucci and the British political representative Hugh E. Richardson, and lasted only for around ten years. Previous visitors, from Indian pandit masters to foreign envoys and trade agents, few and whom had a deep interest in or understanding of monuments and religious art, recorded a number of details on “monks and monasteries”, though after a hundred years of research these are usually of limited historical value. Due to well-known political circumstances, from 1949 to 1979 Tibet again became terra incognita for Western scholars. Thus any studies of Tibetan art and architecture were limited to objects in public and private collections outside China; to the monuments and historical relics in Tibetan cultural areas like Ladakh in India and Bhutan; or, as “home-made” textual research, to a few archaeological and historical sites such as the royal tombs in the Yarlung Valley.

When in 1980 Tibet was opened to the outside world, though still restricted in terms of time and itinerary, I was among the first foreign visitors, and for another five years apparently the only Westerner to study and document the historical monuments that were left intact, and the many more in ruins, after the devastations of the Cultural Revolution. On that first occasion, when I was allowed a mere seven days to visit Tibet, my only travel guide was Professor Giuseppe Tucci's *To Lhasa and Beyond* (1956), written after his last expedition to Lhasa and Shigatse in 1948. Thirty-two years after Tucci I could, with his help, identify Nyethang monastery, my first stop on the way to Lhasa and my earliest encounter with a historical monument in Tibet. While in the early 1980s a great many publications on Tibetan cultural history and religious art existed in the West, not a single book in Chinese, Tibetan or English was available on the cultural monuments and relics so far preserved in present-day Tibet. When my book *Tibet. Die Kulturdenkmäler* was published in 1981 as a first more systematic survey of the then surviving, or just reconstructed, monastic architecture and relics in the Central Regions of Tibet, not more than 12 monasteries and religious buildings in Ü and Tsang had remained intact.

I have continued my field studies in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) since then, making 23 visits between 1980 and 2006. The “survey” of those early years became

more and more a handbook on the art and architecture in Tibet, on which numerous individual studies have been published in the last 20 years by other authors in China and in the West. A reference work like *The Cultural Monuments of Tibet* might by its own method aim to be close to complete. However, the selection of sites and specific buildings, as well as of the individual cultural relics, limited access to locations and restrictions for in situ investigation, the unavailability of photographs and textual documents, and in many cases the general lack of information naturally mean some degree of incompleteness. Nevertheless, these two volumes may serve as a first extensive reference work to the cultural heritage preserved in the Central Regions of present-day Tibet, and so advance knowledge and encourage further research into what remains of Tibet's past for the Tibetans in China and abroad, for Chinese and Western scholars, and for visitors to the Land of Snows.

For assistance in Tibetan text studies and translations, I would like to thank Ven. Tsenshab (mTshan zhabs) Rinpoche in Küsnacht, as well as Loten Dahortsang and Tenzin Kalden in Rikon. I am grateful for academic assistance and insight provided by Olaf Czaja, Helmut Eimer, Karl-Heinz Everding, David Jackson, Andreas Kretschmar, Jeff Watt, and my scholarly Chinese colleagues in Beijing, Xiong Wenbin (Chinese Institute for Tibetology), Xie Jisheng (Capital Normal University), Luo Wenhua (Palace Museum), and Huang Chunhe (Capital Museum). For contributing several photographs, I would like to thank very much Rolf Koch, Christoph Baumer, and Walter Gross. For further help and encouragement I am indebted to Jürgen Aschoff, Felix Erb, Marco Walter and Hans Roth. I would like to thank especially my friend and colleague in Tibetan-Chinese studies Andreas Gruschke for his co-operation, inspiration and critical comments over 15 years; his pioneering and profound *Cultural Monuments of Tibet's Outer Provinces* on Amdo and Kham (4 volumes, 2001 and 2004), written from broad historico-geographical and social-anthropological perspectives, has set a standard for our knowledge of Tibet's cultural heritage. I also greatly appreciate the generous welcome of the abbots and monks in many monasteries and temples, especially in the Lhasa Jokhang and in Shalu, where my regular visits since 1980 resulted in close friendships, deeper knowledge, and hopefully a degree of enlightenment. I also remember with appreciation and thanks the warm welcome I received at the Tibet Museum in Lhasa since its opening in 1999, and from Püntsock Namgyal, the former deputy director of the Tibetan Cultural Relics Administration in Lhasa.

To others who were helpful for specific information, photographs or plans, credit is given in those chapters to which

they contributed. I am indebted to Gregor Verhufen for his detailed and most helpful scholarly corrections and suggestions with regard to Tibetan and Sanskrit names and terms. I owe special thanks first of all to Christopher John Murray for his thorough and painstaking editing of the entire English text, and I am indebted to the PRESTEL team, especially to Anja Paquin, Andrea Cobré, as well as to Katharina Haderer, Sandra Leitte and Constanze Holler, for their passion and patience in publishing this book. And not to forget the marvellous work of the typesetter Georg Lindner.

I am grateful for the essential financial support provided by the Familien-Vontobel-Stiftung, Zürich, and by Don-

ald and Shelley Rubin, New York. Last but not least, my very personal thanks are dedicated to my wife Ruth for her substantial part in bringing this work to completion after more than 15 years on the path of preparation (sbyor lam) until seeing the way of its realization (mthong lam).

Coming to Tibetan art and architecture, the reader may discover that what catches the eye may also, hopefully, change the mind.

Michael Henss
Zürich, July 2014

Introduction

In my early book on the cultural heritage of Tibet, *Tibet. Die Kulturdenkmäler*, published in German over 30 years ago, I gave an introductory survey of the few then available, and mostly brief, accounts of the country's art and architecture; more detailed research was then limited to the field studies and exploration reports which Giuseppe Tucci and Hugh Richardson made between 1937 and 1948 but which were not published in full at that time.

Since the late 1940s, Richardson's annotations to mKhyen Brtse's 19th-century *Guide to the Holy Places of Central Tibet* (1958), his *Corpus of Early Tibetan Inscriptions* (1985) and his various articles and minor surveys of the Lhasa Tsuglagkhang, the Yarlung Valley monuments and Tshurphu, and especially his very valuable photographs, along with Tucci's *Tibetan Painted Scrolls* (1949) and *Indo-Tibetica* in its English edition (1989), as well as his travelogues *To Lhasa and Beyond* (1956) and *Transhimalaya* (1973), have all become very useful guides to the situation before 1950. In the mid-1980s, some Chinese picture albums gave a first impression of a few prominent sites that had survived the years of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) intact, or had been restored afterwards, such as the Potala Palace (1988, 1994) and its thangka collection (1985), and the Tsuglagkhang and Norbu Lingka in Lhasa (1985). Subsequently, the first “modern” archaeological surveys in Chinese since 1959 (see Wang Yi 1960) were published, including a series on several monastic and early historical sites in Central Tibet by Tibetan and Han-Chinese scholars such as Sonam Wangdū (bSod nams dbang 'dus, 1985, 1986, 1992, 1993) and Huo Wei (1989, 1995). The photographic encyclopaedia *Buddhist Art of the Tibetan Plateau* (1988), compiled in China but written in English, documents many religious buildings and cultural relics that were not fully accessible to researchers.

Extensive first-hand reports and detailed plans of the Lhasa Jokhang by Richardson (1977) and by once high-ranking exiled Tibetans such as Jigme Taring and Tsepön Shakabpa drawn from memory (1979, 1982, in Tibetan) have for years remained essential contributions when no other research studies existed. Easier travel for foreign visitors resulted in several detailed monographic essays on the Potala Palace (Meyer 1987) and Samye monastery (Chayet 1988), and in some of the first in situ surveys of several hitherto unknown or unresearched monuments, as compiled with many text sources in Roberto Vitali's pioneering *Early Temples of Central Tibet* (1990). Comprehensive scholarly monographs of a high standard followed, such as those on the Gyantse and Nechung temples by Erberto Lo Bue and Franco Ricca (1990, 1993, 1999), while more detailed contributions on significant and so far inaccessible sites such as Drathang or Sekhar Guthog appeared (Henss 1994, 1997)

or have been summarized with architectural data and plans (*Southern Ethnology and Archaeology* 1991, Su Bai 1996).

An account of the first extensive modern building investigation and renovation of a major monument, namely the Potala Palace, was published with excellent plans and architectural drawings in two Chinese volumes (*Xizang Budala Gong* 1996), but because written in Chinese it has received little attention in the West. In this context, mention must also be made of the Tibet Heritage Fund, a very effective foreign-Tibetan joint-venture project for the safeguarding and conservation of residential and religious structures in the old city of Lhasa (Alexander 1999, 2005).

Some recent discoveries in art and archaeology have been reviewed, partly with detailed résumés of Chinese archaeological studies, in overviews of Tibetan art by Anne Chayet (1994) and Amy Heller (1999), and illustrated with superb photographs, and English text, in the five Chinese volumes *Precious Deposits. Historical Relics of Tibet* (2000). A landmark publication that is still important is Victor Chan's *Tibet Handbook* (1994), which, despite some problems of topographic order and organization, and a regrettable though hardly unavoidable lack of references, is an enormous mine of information on countless remote places; working closely with Roberto Vitali, Victor Chan created the most detailed descriptive guide to Tibet's historical sites so far produced. A very useful sourcebook for early Tibetan art and architecture, comparable to the 15th-century *Blue Annals* edited by George N. Roerich (1949), is Per Sørensen's profusely annotated *Tibetan Buddhist Historiography* (1994), the English translation of *The Mirror Illuminating the Royal Genealogies* of 1368. Chinese books on specific sites such as Tashi Lhünpo (1993, 1998), Sera (1995), and Drepung (1999), and on the Potala Palace wall-paintings (2000), were mainly helpful for their illustrations; later publications, with more informative texts, include Xiong Wenbin's *Kumbum of Gyantse* (2001), *The Mausoleums of the Tibetan Kings* (2006), and *Sakya Monastery* (2008). Due to problems of language and availability, however, the Western reader may find it difficult to access very informative and richly illustrated Chinese books such as Xu Zongwei's *Introduction to Tibetan Traditional Architecture* (2004).

Essential contributions by Western authors have been made during the last ten years on specific sites, individual monuments, and single cultural relics. That photography can document art with great accuracy, and even make it more “readable” than the original may sometimes allow, is shown by *The Dalai Lama's Secret Temple* (2000) by Thomas Laird and Ian Baker, which has proved to be a masterly example of the discovery and identification of some hidden treasures of exceptional and unique wall-paintings. Also of great value are

The Lhasa-Atlas by Knud Larsen and Amund Sinding-Larsen (2001); *Temples of Lhasa* by André Alexander (2005); the extensive historical studies of the Yarlung Valley and Lhasa region in *Thundering Falcon* (2005) and *Rulers on the Celestial Plain* (2007) by Per Sørensen and Guntram Hazod; as well as research on the lost chörten shrines at Densa Thil by Olaf Czaja (2006, 2010, 2013), and on prominent images, like those on the Kyrong Jowo Buddha by Franz-Karl Ehrhard (2004) and on the Lhasa Jowo Shakyamuni by Cameron David Warner (2008).

Other substantial publications have focused on hitherto unresearched areas; they include John Vincent Bellezza's large-scale field studies of pre-Buddhism in the Changtang Plains (2001, 2002, 2008), and Ulrich von Schroeder's fundamental documentation in *Buddhist Sculptures in Tibet* (2001). In 2006 an exceptional exhibition of 138 Tibetan art objects, many of them high-ranking masterpieces, was staged in Essen and Berlin in co-operation with the Administrative Bureau of Cultural Relics of the TAR: *Tibet. Klöster öffnen ihre Schatzkammern* ("Tibet. Monasteries Open Their Treasure Rooms"). Of these, a total of 112 works, of which 85 cannot be seen in their proper settings in Tibet, were shown for the first time outside China. They were lent by the Potala Palace, Norbu Lingka Palace, Lhasa Tsuglagkhang, the Drepung, Sera, Nyethang, Gongkhar Chöde, Samye, Mindröl Ling, Gyantse, Shalu, Tashi Lhünpo, and Sakya monasteries, and by the Tibet Museum in Lhasa and the Yarlung Museum in Tsethang. My own book *Buddhist Art in Tibet. New Insight on Ancient Treasures* (2008) was intended to present a detailed overview of our current knowledge of Buddhist statuary and painting preserved in today's Tibet, including the latest research in China. Mention must finally be made, with respect and appreciation, of a profusely illustrated compendium on the Lhasa Jokhang edited by Gyurme Dorje, *Jokhang. Tibet's most sacred Buddhist Temple*, with contributions by Tashi Tsering, H. Stoddard, A. Alexander (2010).

Despite the vast secondary literature in Tibetan studies, several basic and much needed reference works on religious and secular history are not yet available. Earlier books on Tibetan history are dedicated largely to the 20th century. In Hugh Richardson's *Tibet and Its History* (1962), only five pages refer to the period between the 13th and 17th centuries, and not more than 14 pages to the one thousand years of Tibetan history from the 7th to the 17th centuries, while Tsepon W.D. Shakabpa's *Tibet. A Political History* (1967) contains about 110 pages on the same period. Sixty years after Giuseppe Tucci's epochal *Tibetan Painted Scrolls* (1949), nothing comparable has been published in Tibetan historiography, apart from the *Blue Annals* (1949), that might be consulted as a reference book for *The Cultural Monuments of Tibet*. The three-volume compilation *The History of Tibet* (2003), edited by Alex McKay, does not include a single section or contribution on Tibet's history between the 11th and the 17th century! And we are still without a comprehensive history of the three major Buddhist schools, the Sakyapa, Kagyüpa and Gelugpa traditions. Essential and very helpful Tibetan texts like the complete biography of the Fifth Da-

lai Lama and of other important hierarchs have not yet been translated into English. As a result, for this present handbook on monuments and cultural relics, the time-consuming study of the often very extensive and not easily accessed Tibetan texts was naturally limited and so is far from being complete. Future research will certainly make more use of Tibetan text sources for the various individual monuments and cultural relics.

The historical geography of the "Central Regions"

The Cultural Monuments of Tibet aims to present most of the major historical sites and religious and secular buildings, images and paintings, ritual objects and other temple furnishings, archaeological sites and objects, petroglyphs and stone inscriptions of the 13 centuries from around the 7th century to the 20th that are preserved within the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR). This geographical definition and delimitation corresponds to the two traditional provinces of Ü (dBus, "centre") and Tsang (gTsang, "purenness"), which are usually identified with Central and Southern Tibet and equivalent here to the "Central Regions Tibet" or Ü-Tsang, corresponding to the "Wu Tsang" of the old Chinese orthography, excluding Western Tibet or Ngari (mNgari) and the entire east of Tibet, meaning Do-Kham (mDo Khams, "Low Lands"), the traditional provinces of Amdo and Kham, of which Andreas Gruschke has given an excellent geo-historical definition and cultural profile in his *Cultural Monuments of Tibet's Outer Provinces* (2004). A few sites in the north and east of the TAR are excluded from *The Cultural Monuments of Tibet*, such as Sog Tsanden and Chamdo, since they are located in the borderlands to Kham and are included in Gruschke's handbooks (Gruschke 2004, vol. I). The capitalized forms "Central" and "Southern" Tibet are understood here as historico-geographical entities, Ü and Tsang, not just as the central and southern parts of "Tibet", Böyül in Tibetan (Bod yul, Chin.: Xizang).

Volume I of *The Cultural Monuments of Tibet* focuses on Central Tibet (Ü) and so covers the upper Kyi Chu Valley area around Radeng monastery in the north, the Kongpo region up to Mount Bön Ri in the east, the Tibetan-Bhutanese borderlands of Lhodrag in the south, and the Yamdrog Lake at Nakartse and Taglung in the west. Volume II covers Southern Tibet (Tsang) from beyond the Kharu La pass and Ralung monastery in the east, the entire Himalayan range bordering Sikkim and Nepal from the Chumbi Valley in the south, and Kyrong and Pelkü Lake along the longitude of Kathmandu in the north. Within these two main areas of the Central Regions, priority is given first to the monuments of Lhasa and then to the three "state monasteries" of the Tibetan theocracy of the Dalai Lamas – Ganden, Drepung and Sera – through the centuries. The following two chapters, III and IV, are dedicated to the neighbouring areas along the Kyi Chu and Tölung valleys, while Chapter V looks at the Yarlung Valley and thus to the origins of Tibet, where myth and history meet and where the earliest monuments in Tibetan culture are preserved. To make *The Cultural Monuments of Tibet* easier to use, the historical sites have been arranged in topographical order within the 18 main geo-

graphical areas; in Chapter VI, for example, the movement is from the confluence of the Kyi Chu and Tsangpo rivers in the west to Densa Thil, east of Tsethang. The southern and easternmost parts of Central Tibet – Lhodrag, Dagpo, Kongpo, and Yamdrog Lake – complete the first volume (VII to IX). Volume II begins east of Tsang with the great cultural centre of Gyantse (XI), while the previous shorter Chapter X on Ralung already belongs, in terms of history and geography, to the southern province of Tsang.

Closely related to Gyantse topographically and historically are the monuments in Chapter XII, while Chapters XIII to XVI move west as far as the principal cultural centres such as Sakya and Lhatse. Chapter XVII comprises the major sites of southernmost Tibet along the Himalayan ranges from Kyirong in the west to Chumbi Valley in the east. Finally, in Chapter XVIII several prehistoric sites and those in the supposed Bön cultural milieu of the northern Changthang Plains – here incorporated into Southern Tibet – are briefly summarized.

There are a few places I was not able to visit; they include Mount Bön Ri (VIII 6), Menri monastery (XV 2.1), the Shang Valley (XV 3), Ngamring Chöde (XV 9.3), Kyirong (XVII 2), the Chumbi Valley (XVII 3), Gampa Dzong (XVII 4), Nyejel Chemo (XVII 5), and the prehistoric sites in the Changthang (XVIII). The year of my visits to all other sites is given at the beginning of the notes for each chapter.

The organization of the chapters

The sections of a chapter follow the standard system of a handbook and reference work: location and access, the names of the site and principal buildings (with an English translation whenever feasible); the history of the site or monument; and a description of the major building units within a monastic or palace complex, and of their principal art objects and furnishings. Priority is given to the entire architectural unit of an assembly hall, an individual sanctuary, or a single chapel in its historically developed status, not primarily to the overall chronology or to different inventory genres such as painting, sculpture, ritual objects, etc. Although *The Cultural Monuments of Tibet* may serve as a “guide” to the cultural monuments of Tibet in the sense that it is a topographically arranged reference work, it cannot be a “guide book” describing the various features “from the entrance to the main sanctum”. When they are of specific importance, and whenever possible, some lost structures or images are reconstructed in order to re-establish the original iconological or iconographic programme.

Within a single section and an individual building unit respectively, the furnishings are by preference grouped according to architectural characteristics and decoration, and also according to such genres as wall-paintings, statues, or various movable items. The selection may result from their historical or artistic importance, as well as from some specific iconographic or ritualistic significance. Iconological considerations in the sense of a comparative iconography may refer to the overall concept of a painting cycle, to a wider historical, religious or social context, or to literary or architectural elements.

Unlike a mainly synthetic view, analytic iconography – which is descriptive and classifying – aims to identify the individual subject and meaning of a work of art or image cycle.

Tibetan, Chinese, and Sanskrit names and terms

Special attention has been given to names and terms, and to their written forms and spelling. Tibetan architectural terms and names for various temple furnishings have been identified, systematized and explained – with the help of an additional index-glossary (III) – whenever convenient and feasible. In order to make this book accessible to the general public, phonetic or pronounceable transcription and exact transliteration are both used, with priority given to the former in the text (with the transliteration in parentheses when used for the first time) and captions, and to transliteration in the endnotes (both are used in the plans). Cross-references from phonetic forms to their transliterated equivalents can be found in the glossaries.

Another compromise is meant for the benefit of the English as well as for the non-English reader when writing the Tibetan *a* (as in *rgyal po* [“king”]) phonetically as an *e* (as in *gyelpo*) in order to allow a difference between the spelling when pronounced either as an English or as a non-English *a* (as in the case of the Pagmo Drupa ruler *Changchub Gyeltsen* [*Byang chub rGyal mtshan*]). For similar phonetic differences, vowels like *ö* and *ü* are pronounced and accordingly transcribed as in German. There is also a preference for real pronounced spellings, such as *Pagmo Drupa* (*Phag mo gru pa*), without the Tibetan aspirated *h* (*Phagmodrupa*), thus avoiding digraphs, which would make the Tibetan and English pronunciation very different from each other. Though the Tibetan *k* and *g* can be very similar in pronunciation, a better difference for certain names and terms appears to be more suitable, such as *Gelugpa* (*dGe lugs pa*) or *Taglung Thangpa* (*sTag lung Thang pa*) instead of *Gelukpa* or *Taklung Thangpa*.

To help non-Tibetan readers, and in order to have a more convenient alphabetical listing in the glossaries, we have usually capitalized the root letter of a Tibetan name, not the initial: for example, *rDo rje* instead of *Rdo rje*. Thus all names and terms are listed in English alphabetized order, which avoids searching, for example, for *Changkya Huthugtu* (*lCang skya Hu thug thu*) under “l” instead under “C”. Names and terms such as *tsuglagkhang* or *kumbum* are written with a lower-case initial when used for the general architectural type, but capitalized when referring to a specific temple or geographic place, for example Gyantse Tsuglagkhang, Gyantse Kumbum, or the Yarlung Valley.

A similar compromise, though of less consequence, relates to the use of Sanskrit names and terms like Shakyamuni, Manjushri, Vairochana or chakra, which appear in phonetic transcription, with their diacritical form in a separate listing (Appendix 3). Names of Buddhist deities and of corresponding shrines and chapels are given predominantly in Sanskrit instead of their less familiar Tibetan equivalents (though with cross-references in the glossary) when not specifically known by their Tibetan version. Chinese names

and terms are written throughout in official Pinyin transcription, so Yuan (dynasty) or Qianlong (Emperor) instead of the phonetic “Yüan” and “Chienlung”. Chinese equivalents for Tibetan place and temple names are given – when known – in the Tibetan geographical index-glossary (I) and in an additional listing of Chinese place name at the end of the same index-glossary.

Tibetan language sources

Because of problems of access, availability and time, Tibetan language sources could be consulted only to a limited extent for *The Cultural Monuments of Tibet*. Future studies and the discovery of related texts will no doubt add more details to the monastic history and inventories of the monuments included in these two volumes.

Typically, Tibetan texts are considered and interpreted as more or less authoritative and accepted *grosso modo* as “reliable” source material. But how reliable are these historical texts when seen from a modern perspective? Many of them reflect various religious, social and politico-historical conditions rather than merely record facts critically in a modern way. They are not just written reproductions of reality, but accounts determined by historical circumstances, and thus allow only a limited insight. Researchers are understandably delighted whenever historical texts provide some details associated with their research, and so they often neglect to consider the influence of their context and “ideology”.

Both the great teacher Tsongkhapa (1357–1419) and the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617–1682) attributed the consecration of many images to King Songtsen Gampo (d. 749). However, what is the historical validity of records made 700 and 1,000 years later respectively? Were Buddhist images consecrated in the 7th century? In two early texts, the Ramoche temple in Lhasa is described as both a “palace” (pho ’brang) and as a “temple” (“tsug lag khang”). But what may initially indicate an interesting dual function at the very origins of this important 7th- or 8th-century building might finally prove to be only two different names given by later authors. According to the historian Sumpa Khenpo (1704–1788), the Namgyel monastery was founded on the Potala-Marpo Ri in 1573, though in fact it was over 70 years later before construction began on the present palace, under the Fifth Dalai Lama.¹ According to a text on Shalu monastery from around 1671, during the foundation period of the 11th century, Nepalese artisans built a reliquary chörten “at the foot of the Zha lu [Shalu] mountain”;² a claim not confirmed by any other written or archaeological evidence; in fact, we can assume that this building is identical with the now reconstructed stupa at Ripug hermitage erected some 300 years later. Similarly, Kathog Situ (Kaḥthog Si tu, 1880–1925), in his very useful account of pilgrimages to the holy places in Ü-Tsang in 1918–1920, characterizes the images and paintings at Drathang as “Nepalese”;³ almost a hundred years later we can see that this is hardly a sound stylistic attribution, though some modern authors still accept it as a welcome art-historical definition from an “authoritative” Tibetan text source. And what of the historical accuracy of an 18th-century Tibetan text on an 8th-century event? In this case, we

may ask whether we can consider the native Tibetan historiographers of the 17th and 18th centuries as “historians” in the modern sense. It is well known that Tibetan texts were copied by later authors through the centuries (copying earlier scriptures was an essential feature of the Tibetan literary tradition), and that history and mythography, biography and hagiography, fact and fiction, have always been close intertwined. Modern scholars rightly pay much more attention to historical and typological questions and carefully consider problems of chronology and classification; but they rarely question the authenticity of the text sources when they seem, conveniently, to confirm their research.

Finally, the professional scepticism and mistrust that “textualists” show towards visual and art-historical criteria is, though of course by no means always, the converse of studying Tibetan art and architecture without properly taking into consideration epigraphic and literary documents.

Photographs, plans and drawings

With few exceptions, the great majority of the *photographs* in *The Cultural Monuments of Tibet* were taken by me between 1980 and 2006. In addition, and of especial value, are numerous rare and mostly unpublished *historical* photographs I have been able to collect covering the 50 years or so from the first photograph ever taken in Lhasa, by the Russian orientalist G.T. Tsybikov in 1901, to those in *Seven Years in Tibet* by Harrer and Aufschnaiter (1944–1950). Most of these historical photographs come from Sir Charles Bell (mostly between 1906 and 1921), Hugh Richardson (between 1936 and 1950), and Peter Aufschnaiter and Heinrich Harrer (1950/1951); others were taken by Syudam Cutting (1935 or after), Spencer Chapman (1937), Giuseppe Tucci and Pietro Francesco Mele (1937, 1939, 1948), and Ernst Krause during the Schäfer expedition (1938/1939).

Special mention must be made here of the Tucci photographic archives in the Museo Nazionale d’Arte Orientale in Rome. Most of the relevant photographs taken in Ü and Tsang have been published, though many of them would deserve new documentation and better reproduction (Tucci 1941, 1949, 1956, 1967, 1973, 1989; Lo Bue 1998). Sadly, a few of Tucci photographs of Sakya, Narthang and the Gyantse region are still “hidden treasures”, inaccessible in the Rome archive, and there are no other interesting visual documents on the Lhasa monuments, on Samye or Shalu, and nothing at all on sites like Radeng, Taglung, Tsechen, Nenyng, Drongtse, Lhatse or Rinpung. At a time when almost no Westerners were allowed to visit “forbidden Tibet” between 1950 and 1980, in 1956 the Czech travellers Vladimir Sis and Josef Vanis were able to take some rare photographs of Tibetan cultural relics.

Several Chinese photographs taken before the Cultural Revolution, in the mid-1950s, and published in books and periodicals, document buildings and a few of the contents of the Potala Palace, Jokhang and Norbu Lingka in Lhasa, at Gyantse and Tashi Lhünpo, as well as paintings and statues from Drepung, Sera, Shalu and Narthang (1955; Liu Yisi 1957), monuments and cultural relics in the Yarlung Valley and Tsethang area, and at Samye, Mindröl Ling, Jampa

Ling, Namse Ling, Gyantse, Kyangpu, Shalu, Tashi Lhünpo, Narthang and Sakya (1959/1960; Wang Yi 1960/1961). There have now also come to light other historical images by Chinese photographers of Samye, Namse Ling, Tsethang, Gyantse, Shonang, Shalu, Narthang, and Sakya (Su Bai 1996). Many of all these precious photographic records are the only testimonies we have of a lost cultural heritage.

Of the *plans* and *architectural drawings* that have been included in *The Cultural Monuments of Tibet*, which mostly come from “remote” Chinese publications, many have been revised. After some of the earliest sketches of Tibetan temples ever published in Chinese archaeological journals, such as those of Samye, Tsethang, Tradrug, Gyantse, Shalu, Tashi Lhünpo, and Narthang (Wang Yi 1960/1961), it was not until the mid-1980s that the first more precise plans became available, for example those for the Lhasa Tsuglagkhang. During the last 15 years, good quality plans have been published in the West and in China on the Potala Palace, the Lhasa temples, on Samye and Tradrug, Gyantse, Shalu, and on the Yarlung Valley tombs (Xizang Budala Gong 1996, Alexander 2005, Dorje 2010, Herdick 2010, Ricca/Lo Bue 1993, Chen Yaodong 1994). Many architectural plans and drawings were compiled by Xu Zongwei (2004). However, for various other sites, ground-plans and related materials are still missing, for examples for Ganden, Drepung, Nechung, Sera, and for practically all of the monuments in Chapters III, IV, VII, VIII, XV and XVII, as well as for those in parts of Chapters VI, XII and XIV.

The captions are meant to give basic information on the illustrated monuments and in many cases additional information about the sites and cultural relics. All photographs dated between 1980 and 2006 and cited without further details, and also all plans given without further details, are by the author.

Appendices

The Cultural Monuments of Tibet has six appendices.

1. The first is a **chronological list of dated and datable images** from the Central Region of Tibet (86 paintings and sculptures, six of which are in foreign collections) covering the over 1,000 years from the 8th to the 18th century. This is intended to provide a sound basis for identifying stylistic criteria and characteristics of individual cultural relics in *The Cultural Monuments of Tibet*. The designation “dated” is used of an image or a painting that can be attributed to a specific year by inscription, textual evidence, or any external clues; “datable” indicates a limited time span of not more than ten to twenty years during which a work must have been executed, as indicated by the building history, text sources, or by any indirect references. In order to establish a detailed and thus effective network of dated “Himalayan” works of art for a more comprehensive survey of Tibetan and Nepalese-style statues and paintings from the entire Tibetan cultural realm including Eastern and Western Tibet, and the neighbouring border regions to China, Nepal, Ladakh, and Spiti will be published separately.

2. The second appendix comprises four **index-glossaries**, which have been included to make this handbook as helpful as possible. These index-glossaries are listed in English alphabetical order and significant terms are given page references (which are selective rather than exhaustive, the aim being to focus on the main themes of the book). Tibetan terms in phonetic spelling (transcription) are given here with their exact transliteration and, whenever convenient and feasible, with the Sanskrit equivalent, and often with a few more details about their meaning and origin.

The four index-glossaries are:

I *Place names and geographical terms*

Contains place names, geographical terms, names of monasteries, temples and of principal individual buildings, as well as of various cultural and administrative sites. A separate list at the end gives a selection of Tibetan place names in their *Chinese Pinyin transcription*.

II *Personal and deity names, titles and schools*

Contains proper names and titles of persons, divinities and religious school traditions. Much information can be found here which is not given in the notes and the text.

III *Art and architecture: The iconology and iconography of the Tibetan temple*

Contains technical terms and iconographic names of temples and their furnishings, as well as of sculptures, paintings, ritual objects, and construction techniques.

IV *General terms*

Contains a range of names and terms not found in the other glossaries.

3. The third appendix is a list of **Sanskrit terms**. As Sanskrit names and terms are generally written in the main text without diacritical marks, they are all given here in their academically correct form as well.

4. In the next Appendix, there is a list of the **abbreviations** used in *The Cultural Monuments of Tibet*.

5. The fifth appendix, **Bibliography I**, consists of publications on monuments and cultural relics, on art and architecture, and on their religious and historical context in the Central Regions of Tibet and neighbouring areas. It includes earlier travelogues and reference works on art, iconography, and history related in one way or another to the monuments in Tibet. Chinese titles are listed either in Pinyin writing or in English translation, or, when possible in both. Modern Tibetan publications are given in transcription or transliteration, or, when published so, with their English title.

6. Appendix 6, **Bibliography II**, provides a selected listing of Tibetan Language Sources (TLS) classified in a general section and, in alphabetic order, related to some 34 major monasteries, temples, and other historical sites.

Tibet's cultural monuments: The future of the past

Working on *The Cultural Monuments of Tibet* in the field and at home was often like being an eyewitness of historical decay and neglect, of the countless acts of destruction and desecration in the 1960s, of restoration and reconstruction, recalling in parts a Buddhist perspective that nothing is permanent in the cycle of life and phenomena. While we are concerned with historical monuments and relics, the Tibetans themselves also encounter – again – the Sacred and the Essential in modern places and images, beyond history and the cataloguing of the past.

Restoration and documentation appear to be incompatible with Buddhist concepts according to which history and its cultural relics are seen as dimensions of change. Fortunately, however, over the last 30 years rebuilding and renovation have not been limited to the conservation of the past. Contrary to common belief in the West, the religious and cultural vitality of the Tibetans has proved enduring, despite all the losses and hardships of the past, and concerned more to reshape rather than merely to reproduce a living tradition after 50 years in the changing world beyond the Himalayas.

Over 30 years ago, when there were not more than ten active monasteries in the Central Regions of Tibet (Ü-Tsang), and not a single chörten building standing, I saw the great monasteries of Ganden and Tshurphu, Radeng and Taglung, Drigung and Densa Thil, Narthang and Ngor Ewam in ruins, with not a single sanctuary left intact. When visits were still restricted, I was able, while on a flight to Lhasa, to identify Samye as a square structure deprived of all its roofs and upper storeys. The largest Kumbum chörten in Tibet, Jampa Ling, was a huge heap of rubble, and the finest manor house, Namse Ling, a monumental ruin. I have seen Mao Zedong's portrait in the Ramoche, before its central Buddha, broken into two parts, was returned to Lhasa; and Red Guard slogans in Nechung and at the huge thangka tower in Tashi Lhünpo and on the remaining walls of Shigatse Dzong, years before they were removed or over-painted. During the "Cultural Revolution", hardly any cultural site was not damaged or destroyed, desecrated or deserted. While in those days reconstruction and repair were increasingly organized by monastic and governmental institutions, or in some cases sponsored by private individuals, the aftermath of 1966 could not easily be overcome from one year to the next.

Some time later, in 1985, I was also an eyewitness when the earliest wall-paintings in the Jokhang were removed (they later deteriorated in storage), and the well-preserved wall-paintings on the outer walls completely over-painted, though exactly in the old composition and style.

Replaced at the same time, "in the ancient style", was the unique 14th-century glazed-tile roof at Shalu, whose magnificent ceramics, once manufactured by Chinese artisans from the Yuan court, were stored in a basement chapel, while the new tiles and decorations, made in modern Sichuan, reconstruct the Sino-Tibetan past in the present. Prominent historical monuments totally destroyed in the Cultural Revolution were rebuilt, completely or in part, such as Ganden monastery, Narthang, Sakya North, Shigatse Dzong, and Densa Thil, without any conflict be-

tween "original and copy" – without any concern, in other words, whether the rebuilding of a lost building conformed to (Western) concepts of "historical authenticity". In 1994 I had the good fortune to be shown, in an especially requested open-air presentation at the Lhasa Jokhang, some extraordinary masterpieces of Tibetan and Chinese craftsmanship never seen by a foreigner before or since: two large embroidered thangkas given by the Yongle Emperor to Tibetan dignitaries in the early 15th century. Was this good fortune the karmic result of the regilding of the Jowo Shakyamuni I had sponsored a few days before? Later I was able to attend the consecration ceremony for the huge reconstructed "Butön Stupa" at Shalu Ripug, and also that for the newly built mausoleum for the late Panchen Lama in Tashi Lhünpo. I felt greatly encouraged to see there the most beautiful traditional architecture and artisanry "made yesterday", great testimonies of a culture still very much alive today.

During my last visit to Sakya, where years before the North Monastery was totally demolished, and where torn and dirty pages of sacred scriptures once littered the ground, I went to see the reconstructed temple halls and the new library building made in the ancient style, with its enormous written and printed treasures, another encounter with Tibet's future of the past.

The Cultural Monuments of Tibet is intended to be a study and documentation of Tibet's cultural history in art and architecture. By tracing this history from the distant past to the present day, my aim is to contribute to knowledge and research, and to help both to preserve Tibet's cultural heritage in Tibet and also to promote its continued active existence in Tibet and beyond.

Notes

1 Das 1889, p. 73, and TCT, p. 203.

2 Heller 2002, p. 47.

3 KS 1972, pp. 170f., and Everding 2014.



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The Central Tibetan Province of Ü – A definition of its historical geography

The Cultural Monuments of Tibet (CMT) covers the Central Regions of Tibet, which comprise the two main provinces in Tibet's historical geography, Ü (dBus) and Tsang (gTsang), the classical heartland of Tibetan history and culture, or at least of what is usually associated with “Tibet” in our common understanding. The Central Regions as defined for the CMT cover the middle part of the modern Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), which also includes the whole of western Tibet and, in the east, the western part of Kham, and is thus almost identical with the Tibetan territories once under the control of the Dalai Lamas' Lhasa government.

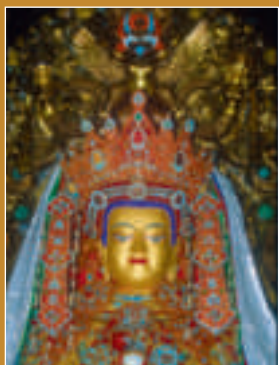
At least since the early Mongol overlordship in Tibet during the Chinese Yuan dynasty (1279–1368), and its administrative system of 13 myriarchies (khri skor) established around or before 1268, the entire ethno-cultural area of Tibet consisted of three principal provinces: Ü for central, Tsang for southern, and Ngari for western Tibet. From a Chinese perspective of influence and power-play, the entire east of the Tibetan realm naturally had less priority. Because of its neighbouring geography and its rather complicated historical “Sino-Tibetan” definition and identity, it was regarded in parts simply as “China” right up to the present day and so was not a political issue for the Mongols and Manchu in the way the Sakya-dominated Yuan period of rule in Tsang and the Dalai Lama theocracy, both in the Central Regions of Tibet, were later. As said in the *Crystal Mirror* by the Fifth Dalai Lama, there were “three districts into which the great Tibet was then divided”, Ü, Tsang, and the “outer Tibetan provinces” Do-Kham (mDo Khams), which is northeastern and eastern Tibet, Amdo and Kham.

The historical region of Ü, here understood more as a cultural and historico-geographical region than as a political-administrative province, corresponds to “Central Tibet”. In the CMT, Central Tibet is clearly defined in the south by the border areas with Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan along the Himalayan range, while towards the east the western section of the traditional Kongpo province is included as far as the confluence of the Tsangpo and Nyang Chu rivers around Mount Böñ Ri. These easternmost districts of Dagpo, Kongpo, and Nyang are considered by the Tibetans in Lhasa and beyond as a group located outside the core regions of Ü. The north comprises the upper Kyi Chu Valley around Radeng monastery and the southern Changtang lake area of the Great Northern Plateau. More clearly identifiable is the west of Ü around Yamdrog Lake represented by Samding and Taglung monasteries and Nakartse Dzong, and reaching to the Kharu La pass as its modern administrative border between Lhasa and Gyantse. Due to its geographical position, the area west of Yamdrog Lake up to Ralung monastery was once a separate Yuan myriarchy that historically belonged variously either to Ü or to Tsang. Thus the first of the nine chapters (Volume I) is dedicated to the monuments and cultural relics in Lhasa, the geographical, historical and cultural centre of Tibet from the 7th century to the 20th. The successive chapters are classified according to overall topographical units, most of which are located along the principal cultivated valleys of the Kyi Chu and Tsangpo rivers.



Chapter I

Lhasa and Its Historical Monuments



I | 1 Lhasa through the ages – An outline of its sacred and secular art and architecture

Lhasa's early history

A history of Lhasa and of its townscape (► fig. 1) through the ages has not yet been written. The following outline looks primarily at what might be called an architectural history of Lhasa and, with a topographical rather than chronological focus, on individual buildings of specific architectural, cultural or historical value. For the period of the early Tibetan kings in the 7th to the 9th centuries AD, no sufficient contemporaneous text sources exist to establish a survey of the foundation of Lhasa and its buildings.¹ In Tibet, history begins as myth and legend.

According to a well-known tradition, the first historical king, Songtsen Gampo (r. c. 629–649), constructed 12 geomantic temples, with the Lhasa Jokhang as the centre, in order to suppress a giant female demon (srin mo), who, lying on her back, represented the earth and the “map” of Tibet.² Thus subduing the whole area of central Tibet and taming the territory's border, the founding of Tibet's earliest Buddhist shrines received, most probably at a later time, a mythical legitimisation for the New Age in what was then still a largely pre-Buddhist Tibet (► figs. 2–4).

During the era of the early dynasty, Lhasa was called Rasa (Ra sa), which has been translated either as a “Walled Place”, “Enclosed Site” or even as the “Earth of the Goats”, a popular

interpretation and “an entertaining but purely imaginary later folk etymology”.³ The name Rasa is mentioned in the inscriptions of the Samye and Karchung stone pillars (rdo ring) of the late 8th to the early 9th centuries, and in some contemporaneous Tibetan texts from Dunhuang.⁴

The name Lhasa, “Place of the Gods”, can already be found in inscriptions of the later Pugyel dynasty period, quite probably associating the “place where the gods reside” with the Jo khang temple. Thus “lHa sa” was apparently the original name of this Tibetan sanctuary before it came to be used for the site around this building complex, which would be the heart of Lhasa till the present day. Whether the “Lhasa Palace” (lHa sa'i Pho brang) mentioned in the inscription of the Sino-Tibetan peace-treaty pillar from 822⁵ in front of the Lhasa Tsuglagkhang refers to a royal residence as part of the original Jokhang building or to a separate palace structure recorded as a “walled-up place” (? , ra sa) of an early fortified “camp city” remains uncertain. Tradition has it that the Marpo Ri hill was the site of one of Songtsen Gampo's personal residences. However, according to the nearly contemporaneous *Dunhuang Annals* the early Tibetan court cannot be associated with a single place of government. Very probably there was more than one residence, such as Tradrug and probably Yumbu Lakhar, as well

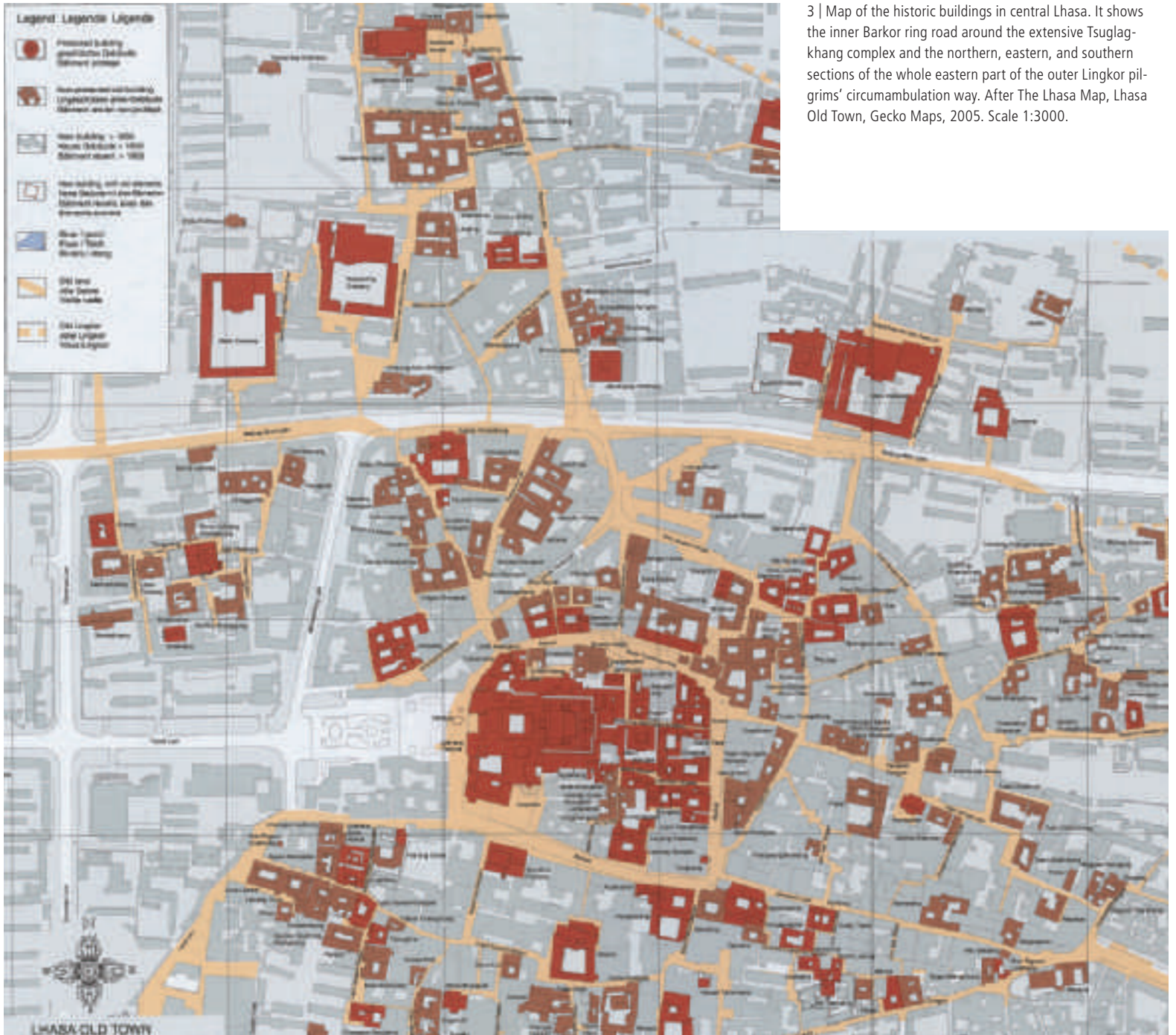


1 | Old Lhasa before 1950. In the foreground to the right is Yuthog Zampa, the Turquoise Bridge, and behind, Tengye Ling and Tsuglagkhang. Photo Hugh Richardson (late 1940s)



- | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| 1 Jowokhang | 32 Juyag Tharchen | 63 Zapdongchemo | 94 Dhunghsar | 125 Phurchok Labrang |
| 2 Tsuglagkhang | 33 Doring | 64 Rampa | 95 Sharkyaring (prayer flag) | 126 Changlochen |
| 3 Shogtri (Throne) | 34 Sabogzug | 65 Lho Ringsum Lhakhang | 96 Sharsur | 127 Yapshi Phunkhang |
| 4 Sungchoera | 35 Jedingling | 66 Nepalese Mission | 97 Shölkhang | 128 Sanding |
| 5 Kesang Tharchen | 36 Lubug Gyalgo | 67 Mosque | 98 Pangchel Khangserma | 129 Jamyang Sharnub |
| 6 Kashag (Government) | 37 Dekyi Wosnang (cinema hall) | 68 Kunsangtse | 99 Phala | 130 Thangpon |
| 7 Ngagkhang | 38 Tagtsa Tsang | 69 Rapsel Tashi Lho | 100 Kasharho | 131 Shhingsar |
| 8 Shekarling | 39 Norzin Kyitsel | 70 Rapsel | 101 Karmashar | 132 Chingurnang |
| 9 Thonpa | 40 Trogawo | 71 Paljorling | 102 Tatrom | 133 Lukhangwa |
| 10 Surkhang | 41 Senge Shar | 72 Nyarongshar | 103 Namseling | 134 Dherno Labrang |
| 11 Tara Jhang | 42 Lingsang Labrang | 73 Khangserma | 104 Japakhangsar | 135 Tengyeling |
| 12 Muru Nyingpa | 43 Phodang Sarpa | 74 Monkyiling | 105 Gegye | 136 Dakkhang (G.P.O.) |
| 13 Nepalese shop | 44 Khangser | 75 Chaktag | 106 Gotsang | 137 Nub Rigsum Lhakhang |
| 14 Numa | 45 Ragashar | 76 Kongpo Drokhang | 107 Kyungram | 138 Mentsikhang (Medical College) |
| 15 Sangra | 46 Kiyitod | 77 Gyachi Ling | 108 Trimon | 139 Seshing |
| 16 Jhamkhang | 47 Yapshi Sampho | 78 Tsangung (nunnery) | 109 Wongto Shhinga | 140 Shide Tratsang |
| 17 Nangtseshag (City Court) | 48 Phodargshar | 79 Derge Theji | 110 Sharlho | 141 Radeng Labrang |
| 18 Tspcheshar | 49 Kapsho | 80 Horkhang | 111 Yunring Lhakham | 142 Tsomon Ling |
| 19 Menthang (Mani wall) | 50 Kyakashar | 81 Namgyal Khansar | 112 Gorachemo | 143 Changgyapa |
| 20 Kanigoshi (stupa) | 51 Shatra | 82 Nangchung | 113 Mindrubug | 144 Khardo Labrang |
| 21 Chamick Shar | 52 Pondatsang | 83 Salung | 114 Banashol | 145 Jebumgang Lhakhang |
| 22 Shakapa | 53 Lhading | 84 Shar Rigsum Lhakshang | 115 Lakyil | 146 Lokhang (Power station) |
| 23 Lhogu Chumig | 54 Rampa Khangsar | 85 Tromsigang | 116 Tethong | 147 Gyume Dratsang |
| 24 Nepalese shop | 55 Mento | 86 Dharpoling | 117 Shongashar | 148 Muru Tratsang |
| 25 Shasarzur | 56 Khanna | 87 Dechen Raptan | 118 Phabongkha Labrang | 149 Mondong |
| 26 Gemang Khangsar | 57 Drumpa | 88 Mani Lhakhang | 119 Lhalung Surchi | 150 Dhedrug Labrang |
| 27 Palrap Khangsar | 58 Shamzekhang | 89 Gaden Tharchen | 120 Jangopa | 151 Thonpal |
| 28 Paljor Rabten | 59 Liushar | 90 Nepalese shop | 121 Wangden Palbar | 152 Thonwang |
| 29 Kundeling | 60 Tsogo | 91 Chapel | 122 Posho Phunkhang | 153 Lamoshar |
| 30 Doring (stone pillar) | 61 Phunrap | 92 Trelhun Khangsar | 123 Ringang | 154 Sadutsang |
| 31 Jowo Utra | 62 Trijang Labrang | 93 Tsongkhang Sarpa | 124 Sechung | |

2 | Map of old Lhasa (before 1959) from the Chagpo Ri to the eastern parts of old Lhasa, within the traditional Lingkor outer circumambulation road for pilgrims. Drawn (including the 154 identified features) by Zasak Jigme Taring in 1959 from memory. Most of the original 154 features named by this high-ranking Tibetan official can no longer be specified or properly identified after 55 years and after the many changes in the cityscape of Lhasa since then. For the 18 marked monuments, additional information can be found in Ch. I 1–9. After Nakane 1984. For a plan of the Shöi quarter, see fig. 213.



3 | Map of the historic buildings in central Lhasa. It shows the inner Barkor ring road around the extensive Tsuglagkhang complex and the northern, eastern, and southern sections of the whole eastern part of the outer Lingkor pilgrims' circumambulation way. After The Lhasa Map, Lhasa Old Town, Gecko Maps, 2005. Scale 1:3000.

3

4 | Map of the principal historic buildings in central Lhasa. After Alexander 2005, p. 20



5 | Shöl Doring (“Outer Shöl Pillar”, Zhol rdo ring phyi ma), erected 764. In front of the Potala Palace since 1693, it was moved to its present position in 1966. Tibetan inscription. Ht.: c. 5 m. Photo 1996.

5a | Shöl Doring, detail showing the Tibetan inscription on two sides. Photo 1983

6 | Shöl Doring in front of the Potala Palace. On the right is the Dzungar Edict Pavilion (see fig. 17). Photo Heinrich Harrer, c. 1948

7 | Inner Shöl Doring (Zhol rDo ring nang ma) at the foot of the Potala front stairway. Erected here in 1693. Ht.: c. 6 m, no inscription. Photo 1982



7



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5a



6

as mobile camps that allowed a temporary royal rule at the same time in the Yarlung Valley and in the Lhasa region. No archaeological evidence so far confirms the much later claims, in Tibetan historiography and wall-paintings, that there was a principal king's fortress on the Potala hill. Thus Lhasa can hardly be regarded as the (only) early “capital” of the Tibetan empire in the monarchic period. As Hazod observes: “The central position of Lhasa in dynastic times was presumably primarily of a symbolic nature ... We have no precise information of the early administrative function of Lhasa.”⁶

We know that the Chinese envoys met King Tride Tsugtsen (r. 704–755) in a sort of camp residence. The same king is said to have “built the fortress of Lhasa”⁷ (Butön, 14th century). Songtsen Gampo had already been credited in Chinese text sources with the construction of a “city wall” for the Lhasa residence of the Tang princess Wenchen Kongjo.⁸ It appears that Pugyel-dynasty Lhasa, at that time more or less identical with the Jokhang and some fortified residential buildings of the king, was, at least in the very beginning, only one of several “mobile” residences,⁹ and that, though becoming more and more a political centre, it was not the exclusive “capital” in the modern sense.

The still existing buildings of 7th- to 9th-century Lhasa include, more or less authentically preserved, the Jokhang and Ramoche temples, Meru Nyingpa monastery at the east section of the Tsuglagkhang, Pabongka sanctuary near Sera, and Drag Lhalu cave shrine at the Chagpo Ri hill; however, despite all literary, visual and oral claims “by tradition” that a royal castle (sKu mKhar) was built by Songtsen Gampo, no proper architectural remains can be identified with a real or actual “proto-Potala Palace” on the Marpo Ri.

One of the earliest historical monuments in Tibet, and the most ancient datable inscribed cultural relic of the Pugyel-dynasty era, is the **Shöl Doring**, the “Outer Shöl Pillar”

(Zhol rDo ring phyi ma) (► figs. 5, 5a, 6), in front of the Potala Palace, erected during the reign of King Trisong Detsen 763/764. About 5 m high, this memorial pillar, which was most probably dedicated to the general and minister Ngenlam Tagra Lukhong (Ngan lam sTag ra Klu khong), is the earliest extant document of Tibetan writing and once belonged to a high grave tumulus (65 x 45 x c. 12 m in height) in the Tri (Khri) Valley east of Lhasa, very likely the tomb of this general. Probably erected in front of the Potala Palace only in 1693,¹⁰ before 1966 it was installed directly in the outer enclosure of the Shöl quarter, later removed south of the modern road, and is now enclosed by a modern stone wall. Although the triratna emblem (dkon mchog gsum) on top clearly indicates Buddhist symbolism, as it would especially characterize the later reign period of Trisong Detsen, the Tibetan *inscriptions* on the east, south and north faces say nothing about Buddhism, nor do they refer to the original location of the doring. The purely historical text gives a detailed account of that minister, who according to the *Dunhuang Annals* was the second general of the Tibetan army to conquer the Chinese Tang capital of Chang'an (Xian) in AD 763.¹¹

Another doring of the royal-period type is the “Inner Shöl Doring” (Zhol rdo ring nang ma) (► fig. 7) at the foot of the Potala front stairway, which, without any inscription, was probably erected here at the completion of the Potala Palace in 1693. Its original function remains unknown.¹²

Lhasa's later history

For almost the next ten centuries we have hardly any reliable information from Tibetan or foreign sources about the history and development of Lhasa except that relating to the individual religious sites. Very likely an “inner city” around the central Jokhang and Ramoche temples did not exist before the 11th century. The layout of the city may not have changed much during the successive centuries until the period of the Fifth Dalai Lama. Except for the well-known drawing of the Potala Palace, later reproduced as an engraving (► fig. 160),¹³ the first Western visitors to Lhasa or “Barantola”, the Jesuit fathers Johannes Grueber (1623–1680) from Austria and Albert d'Orville (1621–1662) from Belgium did not provide any description of the town and its buildings after their one month's stay in 1661. The inner city and the Barkor can be traced back in their present setting to the 17th century, when under the Fifth Dalai Lama (1650–1682) the townscape of Lhasa was largely established – a townscape that would remain largely unchanged until the 1950s.

During the 16th and 17th centuries, Muslim traders from Kashmir and Ladakh settled in Lhasa. Around 1650 the Fifth Dalai Lama gave land to the Muslim community and a first mosque was erected about 3 km to the west of the Potala on the road to Drepung, at the site of the original Muslim cemetery and residential areas: Gyangda khang (rGyang mda' khang), the “House of the Far-Reaching Arrow”, which was enlarged in 1755 and replaced by a new building in 1989, **Khache Lingka Lhakhang** (Gling ka lHa Khang), “The Muslim Garden Temple”. While this mosque repre-



8

sents the Muslims from Kashmir, **Gya Khache Lhakhang** (rGya kha che lHa khang), also known as the “Grand Mosque”, or simply Gya Lhakhang, the “Grand Mosque of the Chinese Muslims”, had been founded in 1716, near the southeastern corner of the Lingkor by the Muslims who came from the Chinese provinces (► fig. 8). This ethnic difference is illustrated by a Chinese-style pailou entrance gate from 1766 with a six-character Chinese calligraphy added in 1852: “Forever enlightenment on the doctrine” (Xizang qingzhen dasi). This mosque, which has a total area of 285 sq m, is visited on weekdays by over 50 worshippers, on Fridays by over 500.¹⁴ In 1793 the mosque with its Islamic-style minaret was rebuilt after decay and destruction, and again in 1960. The mosque marked the extent of the city around 1700.

A third “Kha che mosque”, with two minarets, was built in the early 20th century south of the Tsuglagkhang and reconstructed in 2000. Both Muslim communities in Lhasa, who were governed by their own councils and leaders, had at their height a total of about 2,000 members (of which 197 were Kashmiri Muslims in the late 18th century), a figure that corresponds approximately to the present Muslim population of Lhasa.

Near Gya Khache Lhakhang mosque in the southeastern quarter of old Lhasa is **Ani Tsamkhang** (A ni mTshams khang), the “Meditation Cave Nunnery”. This principal nunnery of Lhasa, founded in the 15th century and enlarged in the 1920s, is traditionally connected with a “meditation cave” (mtshams khang) of Songtsen Gampo, which

8 | Lhasa, Gya Khache Lhakhang (rGya kha che lHa khang), the “Grand Mosque of the Chinese Muslims”. Founded 1716, rebuilt 1766 (entrance gate), 1793, 1852 (Chinese calligraphy), and 1960. In the later 1980s, a new trilingual sign in Arabic, Tibetan and Chinese replaced the Chinese calligraphy and a Muslim crescent moon was installed on top of the minaret, replacing the former Chinese communist red star. Photo 1981

9 | Lhasa, Lhalu Mansion. Founded in the 17th century, reconstructed 1762–1783 and c. 1950. Photo Charles Bell, c. 1920

10 | Lhasa, Lhalu Mansion. Photo 1981



9

was supposed to be a spiritual power-place whose function was to prevent the annual floods of the Kyi Chu river from entering the “town.” The appearance of female celestial beings in the king’s visions and the burial of a woman close to this meditation place may have formed the legendary background for the later monastery, which was erected here in memory of this sacred site by Tsongkhapa’s (gTsong kha pa) disciple Togden Drag lhünpa (rTogs ldan Grags lHun pa, 1389–1445) in the 15th century. The upper floor was added by Pabongka Rinpoche (1878–1941), whose image (from 1941) has been preserved on the altar besides a central thousand-armed Avalokiteshvara and a Vajra Yogi-ni, the chief tantric deity of the temple. Closed in 1959, Ani Tsamkhang was renovated in 1985 and 1996.

The actual meditation chapel of Songtsen Gampo is on the basement floor, a small room around a well and the cave used by the king, whose “true image” has now been replaced by a modern replica. Some old wall-paintings in the upper floor’s assembly hall illustrate the tantric iconography of the main Gelugpa protectors. A large and very fine oblong thangka of Tsonkhapa and his two disciples (dating from

the 18th century) is the only other ancient relic of some artistic value. After its recent reconstruction, Ani Tsamkhang has become an active religious site again, regularly visited and supported by the local people.

One of the early settlements in the northwestern outskirts of Lhasa, over 1 km north of the Potala, was **Lhalu Mansion** (lHa klu dga’ tshal), founded according to the Italian Jesuit Ippolito Desideri (in Lhasa 1716–1721) under the Fifth Dalai Lama as a “country residence ... containing beautiful paintings”¹⁵ (► figs. 9, 10). In 1706 it was the short-stay residence for the removed Sixth Dalai Lama and finally became the seat of the famous Lhalu family when in 1762, or as late as 1783, a new palace was built east of the former mansion. From this family, whose head once held the highest secular title of a “kung” (duke), came the Eighth and the Twelfth Dalai Lamas, the Forth Panchen Lama, and the ninth incarnation of the Dorje Pagmo. The present buildings of this “finest private residence in Tibet” (Percival Landon, 1905) date back to the late 1940s or early 1950s, while the old Lhalu mansion which served as the headquarter for the British Younghusband mission in 1904 was demolished



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11 | Yuthog Zampa (Turquoise Bridge). The Tibetan name Yuthog (g.Yu mthog) refers to the former nearby estate of the family of the Tenth Dalai Lama. Photo Hugh Richardson, before 1949



12

12 | Yuthog Zampa (Turquoise Bridge), with the Potala Palace in the background. Photo Spencer Chapman, 1937

13 | Yuthog Zampa (Turquoise Bridge). Photo 1981

14 | Yuthog Zampa (Turquoise Bridge), detail of the roof. Photo 1981



14



13

around 1992. Today this noble country house, which once had a large park and which was, according to a local saying, “one of the five beautiful things in Lhasa”,¹⁶ is used as a government office.

Tromsi Khang (Khrom gzigs khang), “the palace overlooking the market”, is a large building on the northern outer section of the Barkor, which according to Desideri was founded under the Great Fifth and served as the city residence for the Sixth Dalai Lama. In 1717 it became the government seat of the Dzungar Mongol ruler Lhazang Khan in Tibet and from 1728 to 1750 the first Yamen (official headquarters) of the Chinese Amban in Lhasa, which was moved in the early 19th century to the southern Lingkor near the Turquoise Bridge.¹⁷ In 1997, when, despite its still intact overall condition, the major part of the building, the northern courtyard complex, was demolished, five stone tablets were found with inscriptions in Chinese, Manchu, Mongolian and Tibetan commemorating the murder of the Tibetan King Gyurme Namgyal (‘Gyur med rnam rgyal) in 1751. In 1998 the remaining front sections were restored and new houses built behind. Except for the Old Courthouse (sNang rtse shar), Tromsi Khang is the only significant secular building to be renovated by the Lhasa authorities.¹⁸

Yuthog Zampa (g.Yu thog zam pa), the “Turquoise Bridge”, is a unique jewel of Tibetan civil architecture, “one of the five beauties of Lhasa” (Percival Landon, 1905) (► figs. 11–14). Built over an ancient side channel (nya mo) of the Kyi Chu river in the marshy grassland between the inner city and the Potala “outside” old Lhasa, it was for a long time the only link between these two areas. The name of this ex-

traordinary piece of architecture – literally the “Bridge with the Turquoise Roof” – comes from the turquoise-coloured glazed tiles of its Chinese pavilion roof. Measuring 28.3 m in length and 6.8 m in width, it was once decorated with small images set under the projecting roof.

With the exception of a Chinese text of 1792,¹⁹ no written pre-1800 records of the bridge seem to exist. Since Yuthog Zampa is depicted on the Lhasa “ceremonies wall-paintings” in the Potala Palace, which were executed around or before 1694²⁰ (see Ch. I 5.1), a construction date at that time is most likely, despite the fact that more substantial Chinese influences reached Tibet only during the 18th century. The rise and position of the Yuthog family can be traced back at least to the family of the Tenth Dalai Lama (1816–1837), whose parents received the Yuthog estate on the occasion of his installation as a Dalai Lama. In 1992/1993 the whole bridge was dismantled and completely reconstructed as a replica (!), the still relatively well-preserved glazed-tiles of the roof being replaced by new tiles, as was done some years before at Shalu monastery. Even the nearly intact original cintamani and ganjira emblems were replaced by new ones. Totally deprived of its original function, this famous landmark of ancient Lhasa is now used as a restaurant and billiard hall.

China’s cultural and artistic influence in Tibet is even more evident in **Gesar Lhakhang**, the “Temple of [King] Gesar”, on the Barma Ri hill (“Life Power Hill”, also Bong po ri (dBong po ri)) west of the Chagpo Ri (► figs. 15, 16). According to an inscribed Chinese-style stone tablet in the temple courtyard (dated 1793), it was built in 1792 by the

15 | Gesar Lhakhang on Barma Ri hill, west of Chagpo Ri. Also in Shigatse in the 19th century, near the former Amban’s residence, there was a Gesar temple for Chinese officials. Photo 1981

16 | Gesar Lhakhang on Barma Ri hill, central statue of Guan di (Chin.; Tib.: “Gesar”). Photo 1996



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16



17

Chinese officials in Lhasa to commemorate a victory over the Nepalese Gorkhas and dedicated to Guandi (Kuantu), the Chinese god of war and the protector deity of warriors, who is especially well known in northern China and Manchuria. In order to achieve greater popularity among the Tibetans, and thus for political purposes, as documented by a trilingual tablet inscription, Guandi is here identified with the Tibetan deity Vaishravana, the northern guardian king, who has been equated with Gesar Khan, the protector of the warriors associated with the royal family of Ling in northeastern Tibet and thus with Tibet's mythical hero Gesar of Ling. After the 16th century, Gesar's image was introduced into Buddhist temples in Mongolia, where in popular religious belief he was confused with Guandi.²¹ And it might have been for similar reasons that other Guandi temples were erected in the border areas of northern China and Manchuria. After the Cultural Revolution, this unusual Lhasa shrine was used for living quarters and then restored in the 1990s. New statues of Gesar alias Guandi with sword and horse were made for the sanctum. Although the destroyed *images* exhibited a distinctively Chinese style,²² they were regarded by the Tibetans as their own gods and kings, who thus "converted" an originally Chinese temple to Tibetan Buddhism, supervised by a monk of the once neighbouring Künde Ling monastery (no longer extant) at the foot of the hill. Today a monk-caretaker looks after King Gesar as before. Originally built for the Chinese minority in Lhasa, Gesar Lhakhang is now, among the Chinese majority in Tibet, an almost forgotten landmark of their former presence,



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though hardly of their modern return to Tibet two hundred years later.

One of the earliest and probably the first completely Chinese-style monuments in Lhasa is the **Dzungar Edict** of 1721, a large stone tablet (► fig. 18) on a carved tortoise enclosed by a purely Chinese roof pavilion with yellow glazed tiles (► fig. 17); possibly inscribed in China, it was originally erected in front of the Potala in 1724.²³ This important historical document of the Sino-Mongol-Tibetan relations, with an inscription in Chinese, Manchu, Mongolian and Tibetan on the "pacification of Tibet" by the Kangxi Emperor, records the victory over the Dzungar Mongols in 1720, who had devastated Lhasa during their invasion in 1718/1719. The claim that from then "all Tibet has been restored to peace and the rule of religion made to flourish" was, since the fall of the Yuan dynasty and the Mongol threat, another diplomatic justification for bringing Tibet under imperial "protection" and control. An eyewitness was Ippolito Desideri, who testified that the temporal sovereignty in the land "of the Dalai Lama passed under the rule of the Emperor of China".

Like the Dzungar Edict, the imperial **Gorkha Edict** tablet of 1792, with its very similar tortoise base and roofed pavilion, was after 1959, in the course of the construction of new roads, relocated to the eastern park area behind the Potala, though in 1995 reinstalled at the original site in front of the Marpo Ri. "Written by the Emperor" (Qianlong) the memorial inscription records in Chinese, Manchu, Mongolian and Tibetan the Sino-Tibetan victory over the Nepalese Gorkha

17 | Dzungar Edict Pavilion, 1721.
Photo 1981

18 | Dzungar Edict Pavilion, upper
section of the stone tablet.
Photo 1981



19

19 | Lhasa, Bargo Kaling Chörten (modern reconstruction). Photo 1996

20 | Lhasa, Bargo Kaling Chörten between Marpo Ri and Chagpo Ri, the traditional entrance gate in the west of old Lhasa. Photo Hugh Richardson, before 1949



20

invaders in 1789.²⁴ In their Chinese text version, both edicts are, beyond their factual content, masterpieces of Chinese historiography and diplomacy.

Around 1713 a **city wall** with nine gates was erected by Lhazang Khan (r. 1705–1717). It was described in 1717 by an early European eyewitness, the Jesuit Ippolito Desideri, just before it was pulled down by the Chinese in 1721: “In old days, Lhasa had no walls, King Ginghez Khang [Lhazang Khan] built those now existing ... The whole city as far as Potala was surrounded with new walls, gates, with strong towers.”²⁵

In the same year, Desideri, from whom we have “the first reliable description of Tibet ever given by a European” (Sven Hedin), recorded a principal landmark of Lhasa, the **Bargo Kaling Chörten** (Bar sgo bKag gling), the great “passageway stupa” between the Marpo Ri and Chagpo Ri hills and the western “city gate”, which was erected under the Tsangpa Desi in the 17th century and reconstructed, according the Fifth Dalai Lama’s autobiography, in the Fire-Horse Year 1666 (► figs. 19, 20). This landmark “Lhasa gateway” was flanked by two smaller chörten, which were all connected by iron chains (with bells). After its demolition in 1968, this monumental chörten was completely rebuilt in a different size and form in 1995. This architectural type is also known as Bargo Khang, “passageway [stupa] house”.²⁶ The four-door stupa connecting the Marpo Ri with the Chagpo Ri is also known as Drago Kani (Brag sgo ka rni) Chörten, literally “rock-entrance sub-passageway” stupa or Khanigoshi (Ka rni sgo bzhi) Stupa, the “four-door stupa”. A similar sacred entrance-gate stupa, through which one en-



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tered the city with, as it were, a clear, pure and enlightened mind – and so was analogous to a Christian baptistery in front of a cathedral – was built in Gyantse in 1414, on top of the former six-arcade bridge over the Nyang Chu river: a “Bodhisattva chörten through whose middle the road passed”.²⁷

In 1721 an aqueduct (ka gling chu, no longer extant) was constructed parallel with the northwestern Lingkor as a drainage channel to divert the regular floodwaters that inundated the northern and western parts of Lhasa during the summer season.

With the establishment of the Capuchin mission by Fathers Giuseppe d’Ascoli and François de Tours in Tibet in 1707 (1707–1711, 1716–1745), the first *Christian church*, or probably more correctly chapel, was built in Lhasa in 1725, but pulled down in 1745²⁸ after trouble with the government, when the few Tibetan converts to Christianity refused to attend the great religious festivals in Lhasa, which was compulsory for all Tibetan residents. When the Capuchin missionaries returned to Lhasa in 1716, they found the Jesuit Desideri, an apparently unexpected encounter that was not without problems. In 1741 the Seventh Dalai Lama issued an edict which allowed the “white-faced lamas” to practise their religion.²⁹ The “piccolo convento” or “ospizio” of the Capuchin fathers was located close to Meru Sarpa (Me ru gsar pa) monastery in the northwestern part of old Lhasa.³⁰ From there came the **bronze bell** bearing the Latin inscription “Te deum laudamus. Te dom[inum] inv[oc]o”; this bell was transferred to the Jokhang later, where it is still kept in storage³¹ (see Ch. I 3) (► fig. 21). Desideri did

not see this first and only Christian church in the Central Regions when he stayed in Lhasa from 1716 to 1721, to become the earliest Western scholar of Tibetan studies, learning Tibetan, reading the Tanjur, and discussing Buddhism with the monks at Sera monastery, where he was even permitted to “establish a chapel to celebrate a mass”.

The **Ganden Khangsar** mansion house (dGa’ ldan khangsar), located south of Ramoche, was established before 1549 (when it was renovated) to serve as a guest-house for visiting dignitaries such as the Second, Third and Fourth Dalai Lamas (1526, 1553, 1603), or Taranatha, and later became the residential palace of the Khosot Mongol king of Tibet (► figs. 22, 23), *Miwang Polhaneh*. Reconstructed in its later form by the Tsangpa Desi Karma Tenkyong (gTsang pa sde srid Karma bstan skyong) in 1634, from 1642 it served as the office of the local lord of Lhasa Valley and as the winter residence of *Gushri Khan* (1582–1655) – who here met the Fifth Dalai Lama in 1637 – and of his descendants when Lhasa had again become, after 800 years, the capital of Ü-Tsang. In one of the many courtyards, carpentry work for the construction of the Potala Palace was undertaken in the 1680s and 1690s.³² The largest residential complex in Lhasa,

21 | Bronze bell from the former Capuchin church (1725–1745) in Lhasa, with the Latin inscription: “Te deum laudamus. Te dom[inum] inv[oc]o.” In the 1950s it was hanging in the inner Jokhang below the lion frieze (see Sis/Vanis 1956, pl. 156), and is now in storage. Photo 1994

22 | Lhasa, Ganden Khangsar mansion house (no longer extant) with Ramoche temple to the right. Photo G.T. Tsybikov, 1901

23 | Lhasa, Ganden Khangsar mansion house (no longer extant). Until 2000 a low two-storey structure stood here, until it was pulled down in the same year. Photo G.T. Tsybikov 1901, Russian Geographical Society 1901, and in: Ovche Narzounof, *Trois Voyages à Lhasa* (1898–1901), part of the series *Le Tour du Monde* 7.5.1904, p. 231



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23



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it was subsequently used by the Mongol rulers, who were the titular kings of Tibet, such as Lhazang Khan (r. 1706–1717) and his follower Polhaneh (Pho lha nas bSod nams sTob rgyas, r. 1728–1747), as well as the “Tibetan King” Gyurme Namgyel (‘Gyur med rNam rgyal, r. 1747–1750), as a residence and government office until 1750, when in the years following – according to reports by the Capuchin missionaries – this most splendid palace in Lhasa became the enthronement place of the early Demo Tulku regents and the seat of the Chinese *Amban*, who represented the Qing Emperor in Tibet. In 1788 Ganden Khangsar was considerably enlarged to an unusually high (secular!) five-storey building (as shown by a photograph from 1901; ► fig. 23). Torn down in 1930, Ganden Khangsar was reconstructed and renovated in 1996, but demolished in the 20th century. Today only a modern four-storey dwelling house in the traditional style indicates the site.³³

Lhasa’s more recent history

Until the middle of 18th century, Lhasa had not expanded beyond the Lingkor, and with the exception of the Dalai Lama’s Summer Palace (1755), the Lhalu Mansion (c. 1700 and later), and the “extraterritorial” Khache Lingka in the west, the Outer Circular Road marked the town boundary till around 1900. Within this “invisible town wall”, the inner city of an-

cient Lhasa (c. 1.3 sq km) covered just the eastern half from the Turquoise Bridge and Ramoche to the Muslim mosque Gya Khache Lhakhang, whereas the other part towards the Potala and the Chagpo Ri was nothing more than marshy fields, gardens and plantations. Until the first half of the 20th century, the total population may not have much exceeded the 15,000 inhabitants of a census taken in 1854.³⁴ Since then the population of “old Lhasa” has increased from around 25,000 in 1948 to presently 50,000, while “new Lhasa” has now expanded to 400,000 inhabitants. In 1997 greater Lhasa covered 52 sq km, which is 17 times its size in 1950.³⁵ Even before 1959, very few major building complexes like those of the family of the Fourteenth Dalai, **Yabshi Sarpa** (Yab gzhis gsar pa, still extant) (► fig. 24),³⁶ and of the Yuthog (g.Yu thog) family, were located west of the Turquoise Bridge, leaving the surroundings of the Marpo Ri and Chagpo Ri hills entirely free from built-up areas.

Only a few of the beautiful mansion houses built during the early 20th century in the garden area between the southern Lingkor and the Kyi Chu river for well-known aristocratic families like the Tsarong and Taring still exist³⁷ (► fig. 25).

Lhasa’s historical buildings suffered the most serious losses and destructions after 1959 and mainly between 1966 and 1976. Out of around 600 sacred and secular buildings from before 1959 (1948: c. 900), some 300 were demolished and nearly 100 still existed in fairly intact condition in the 1990s. In 1984 the entire domestic quarter west of the Tsuglagkhang was pulled down to provide space for the present open square, followed by a large-scale “renovation” of the old town in the early 1990s. At that time, about 50 traditional residential compounds were demolished, among them **Surkhang House**³⁸ at the southeast corner of the Barkor (1992/1993). By 1999, 70 out of 330 old structures that had stood in 1994 no longer existed.³⁹ According to a survey of 1998, less than 100 (about 25 percent) of the pre-1950 buildings were left.⁴⁰

To prevent further destructions and neglect in the course of this “modernization” of the old town, the Tibet Heritage Fund (THF) was established in Lhasa by several Europeans, which has been able to undertake, with the assistance of local artisans and workers, substantial reconstructions and to save some remarkable old houses on the western Barkor, like Drapchishar and Chotrikhang. Since 1997, when the THF started to co-operate with the Lhasa City Mayor’s office and also with the Cultural Relics Preservation Bureau, a first conservation zone, containing 16 old houses and five new ones in modern Tibetan style, was established in the southeastern Barkor area. The following year, Tadongshar House was completed as the first rehabilitation project and 76 houses that the THF proposed for the status of protected historic building were classified as such. An extensive dossier documenting 37 listed buildings, training programmes for craftsmen, and a five-year plan under the supervision of the newly founded Lhasa Old City Protection Working Group were further steps to preserve the architectural and cultural identity of Lhasa, which has nowadays the official status in Tibet of a “protected historic city”.⁴¹

24 | Lhasa, Yabshi Sarpa (Yab gzhis gsar pa). House of the family of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama. Photo Heinrich Harrer, c. 1948

25 | House of a former aristocratic family near the Kyi Chu river in Lhasa. Photo 1981

I | 2 Barkor and Lingkor – The way of the pilgrims

Barkor – The sacred circuit and its monuments

The Barkor (bar bskor, or bar 'khor),⁴² “the intermediate circuit”, is the most popular sacred and secular road of old Lhasa, enclosing the whole Tsuglagkhang and its adjacent buildings. This “inner ring road” is in a double sense the real heart of the city, an architectural mandala in permanent motion for the countless pilgrims who came from all over Tibet to worship at the religious palladium of the Tibetan-Buddhist realm: the Jowo Shakyamuni in its holy shrine, the Jokhang. The initial construction of this principal Tibetan *via sacra* for the ritual circumambulation (bskor ra, or skor ra) of Tibet’s sanctum sanctorum, paved in its present form only in 1976, was set up during major rebuilding of the Jokhang in the early 14th century.⁴³ The current pattern of the circular street took shape after 1463,⁴⁴ while the present layout and townscape date back to the second half of the 17th century.

In 1984 numerous houses in front of the Jokhang façade were demolished to make way for a large open square for promenading and trade. Further residential compounds along the Barkor were pulled down during a comprehensive “renovation” that lasted until 1993, to be replaced by new buildings in the traditional style or by “modern” department stores, among them the remarkable *Surkhang House* at the southeastern inner corner.⁴⁵

A few significant historical buildings along the Barkor have been relatively well preserved: they include the **Nangtseshar House** (sNang tse shar (or shag), the “House of the Nangtse Family”; restored in 1995), which in the 17th century became a court (gSher khang) and prison in the northern section at the Ramoche Lam junction (► fig. 26);⁴⁶ and the **Shatra** (bZhad sgra) **Mansion**, a large dwelling-house complex, which before 1959 belonged to a Tibetan prime minister.⁴⁷ Opposite Nangtseshar is the small white **Mani Lhakhang**, with prayer-mills all around the outer walls; destroyed in the 1960s, it was rebuilt in 1989. The nearby two-storey yellow building neighbouring the eastern Jokhang section is **Jampa Lhakhang** (Byams pa lHa khang), which was founded in the 15th century. It is very popular for its tall clay statue of a Maitreya Buddha known as Jampa Tromsig (Byams pa Khrom gzigs), “the Maitreya watching the marketplace”. The now lost original 15th-century image commissioned by Chöje Lodrö Gyeltshen (Chos rje Blos gros rGyal mtshan) was relocated after 1959 and replaced by a new one in 1992. According to the *Crystal Mirror* (1645) of the Fifth Dalai Lama, the Maitreya was set up for geomantic auspices (sa dpyad) “as a means to counteract great damage done to the marketplace”.⁴⁸ The former “Four-door passage stupa” (Ka rni sgo bzhi mChod rten) was destroyed in the Cultural Revolution. In the southern section,



26 | Lhasa, Nangtseshar (sNang tse shar) House, on the middle section of the northern Barkor. The city court and prison since the 17th century. Photo 1981



27



27a



28

27 | Lhasa. Upper part of the Treaty Pillar (rDo ring) from 823 (erected) at the west Barkor opposite the entrance section of the Tsuglagkhang. East face. Ht.: 4.78 m, w.: 0.95 m, d. 0.50 m. Photo 1985
 West face: bilingual version of the Sino-Tibetan treaty (821) in 27 Tibetan lines and 6 Chinese vertical lines.
 East face: Tibetan edict of King Tritsug Detsen (r. c. 817–841) on the Sino-Tibetan relations with the date of erecting the pillar in 71 Tibetan lines. North face: bilingual names of 17 Tibetan officials. South face: bilingual names of 18 Chinese officials

27a | Lhasa. Detail of the Treaty Pillar (see fig. 27).

28 | Smallpox Edict Pillar at Barkor west in front of the Tsuglagkhang entrance section. Erected in 1794 by the Chinese Amban representative, it was reinstalled during the late 1990s within a stone enclosure (see fig. 35). The now very damaged Tibetan and Chinese inscriptions are politically very interesting instruction on health and hygiene education for the Tibetans as seen from a Chinese perspective. Photo 1981

the neighbouring Gorkha Nyingba Mansion, built around the mid-17th century and since 1750 the Nepalese embassy, was partly demolished in the 1990s and then reconstructed as a hotel.⁴⁹ Another noteworthy example of historical urban architecture is situated on the southern inner Barkor, west of the former Surkhang House, **Labrang Nyingba** (Bla brang rnying ba), reportedly – in its original condition (!) – the oldest existing secular residential building in Lhasa, where Tsongkhapa is said to have stayed during the Mönlam Chenmo festival in 1409, and later the Fifth Dalai Lama. Dating in its present form to about 1900, Labrang Nyingba was renovated in 1999.⁵⁰

An exceptional historical monument stands in front of the Tsuglagkhang façade, the Sino-Tibetan **Treaty Pillar** (rDo ring) (► figs. 27, 27a), dated to 822/823, according to its inscription, to commemorate the peace treaty – negotiated by a Tibetan monk-minister and sealed by an animal offering – between the “God Incarnate” King Tritsug Detsen (r. c. 817–841) and the Chinese emperor Muzong (r. 820–824), which was signed by the Chinese in Chang’an (Xian) in 821 and by the Tibetans in Lhasa in 822. This unique document of Tibetan-Chinese relations was probably originally installed at Dratötsel (sBra stod tshal) near Gya ma (rGya ma) in the east of Lhasa (where the treaty was signed on the Tibetan side) and probably erected at its present location only in the late 11th century.⁵¹ The Chinese-style tortoise pedestal was excavated in 1984, when the pillar was surrounded by a modern enclosure. Of the four inscribed faces, the western inscription records the actual bilingual treaty in six vertical Chinese and 77 horizontal Tibetan lines, while the east face bears the dates and the desire “to bring happiness to both Tibet and China [“Nephew and Uncle”] for ten thousand generations”.⁵² The Tibetan inscription is regarded as a translation of the Chinese text and mentions “the divinely manifested king” (phrul gyi bstan po), an early document of the Tibetan ruler as a divine manifestation! On the north face, the rank and the names of the Tibetan officials are written in both languages, and on the south face those of the Chinese ministers.

The triratna emblem on top illustrates the “Three Jewels” mentioned in the inscription on the west face, which, like “the sun and moon, planets and stars have been invoked as witnesses” (to the treaty agreement). Apart from this visual and verbal allusion to the new faith there are, as in the Shöl Doring inscription, no other references to Buddhism. And reading in and between the lines, we can discern the pre-Buddhist idea of sacred kingship and the concept of an omnipotent and all-knowing king that recall, even towards the end of the imperial dynasty, the traditional “Pugyel ideology” as we will find it in the monuments in the Yarlung Valley (see Ch. V 1).

Details like the tortoise base and the curved rooftop of the pillar with ornamental clouds were influenced by Chinese motifs, and similar obelisks of the Qi- and Tang-dynasty tomb architecture may well have been the models of these Tibetan memorial dorings.⁵³ Fragments of another 9th-century inscribed stele reassembled at Ramagang vil-

lage (“sKar cung rDo ring”) record “Tri Songtsen [Gam-po] practising the religion of the Buddha ... by building the Tsuglagkhang of Ra sa”.⁵⁴

Set up in 1794 very close to the Treaty Pillar at the beginning of the Barkor korlam was the **Smallpox Edict Pillar**, erected by the “Manjughosa Emperor’s”⁵⁵ Amban Ho Lin (► fig. 28). Surmounted by dragon carvings, this characteristic Chinese stone tablet was once framed by a stone masonry structure topped with a glazed-tile roof.⁵⁶ In the late 1990s it was reinstalled and walled-up, together with the Treaty Pillar, in front of the Jokhang entrance by a stone enclosure which leaves only the top section visible. The now almost completely unreadable Chinese and the nearly identical Tibetan inscriptions on this very interesting document relating to the health and hygiene education begin with a statement according to which during the Tang and Song dynasties Tibet was “not yet incorporated in its [the Chinese] territory”, and was “established as a vassal” only during the Qing dynasty. Detailed instructions are given on how to avoid disease and other “bad habits” like “heavenly burial” (exposing dismembered dead bodies to be eaten by vultures). Ho Lin had good reason to carve his educational ambitions onto a stone slab, so that future generations in this “land of barbarians” might always be aware of these announcements and so “civilize their customs”.⁵⁷ Yet the Tibetans interpreted these health instructions in their own way: countless stone particles were picked out of the tablet in order to serve as a kind of sacred medicine, thus putting its teachings into practice in a purely physical way.

For the Great Prayer Festival in 1409, Tsongkhapa is said to have commissioned 54 long **flagpoles** (dar chen, or dar lcog) to be erected along the “great (outer) circumambulation path, decorated with banners of the eight nagas, other deities and auspicious symbols”.⁵⁸ The central “Flagpole of the Good Policy”, Jüya darchen (Jus yag dar chen), was originally set up to commemorate Gushri Khan’s victorious invasion of eastern Tibet in 1634 and it was re-erected in 1984. Three other flagpoles on the Barkor were set up again in 1986: Ganden darchen (dGa’ ldan dar chen) at the northeastern corner, said to have been installed in memory of the Mongol army leader Ganden Tsewang Palsang’s victory over Ladakh in 1681; Kesang darchen (bsKal bzang dar chen) at the southeastern corner, erected in 1720 to celebrate the arrival of the Seventh Dalai Lama in Lhasa; and Shar Kyareng darchen (shar skya rengs dar chen) at the southeastern corner of the Barkor.⁵⁹

Among the extraordinary treasures of Tibet’s ritual art are the huge **butter decorations** (► figs. 29–34). They are installed over wooden scaffolding along the Barkor and on the Sung Chöra square on the south side of the Jokhang on the 15th day of the first Tibetan month during the Great Prayer Festival (Mönlam Chenmo).⁶⁰ Sponsored by prominent aristocratic Lhasa families, and manufactured by the monks of Drepung, Sera, the two tantric colleges, and some smaller monasteries in Lhasa, these colourful scenes were probably introduced during the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama as a kind of substitute for the flower offerings made in ancient India during similar Buddhist festivals. The most fa-



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Dieses reich bebilderte Werk dokumentiert in zwei Bänden die Kunst und Architektur der vergangenen 1.400 Jahre im heutigen Tibet. Es ist das Ergebnis eingehender wissenschaftlicher Forschung sowie zahlreicher Besuche des Autors vor Ort seit 1980.

Architektur, Kunst und Einrichtung aller wichtigen Klöster und Profanbauten werden detailliert beschrieben und interpretiert, unter Berücksichtigung historischer Quellentexte und der gesamten bisherigen Forschung im Westen und in China. Die meisten der über 1.200 Abbildungen, Karten und Grundrisse werden erstmals veröffentlicht, darunter viele historische Fotografien, die kulturelle Stätten zeigen, die der Zerstörung anheimgefallen sind.

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