CHAPTER III
EARLY HISTORY OF LADAKH AND ITS CULTURAL TIES WITH BUDDHIST TIBET

The history of Ladakh prior to the birth of the kingdom in the 10th century is limited. This is partly because the period has not received the attention of scholars, except Luciano Petech.

The present-day population of Ladakh is composed of mixed races. The main among them are the Indo-Iranic race, the Tibetan race and the Mongoloid race. According to the Ladakhi Chronicles and some other sources, the earliest inhabitants of Ladakh were composed of the Mons and the Dards.\(^1\) They migrated to Ladakh at an early time, but it is difficult to fix an exact date. According to Petech the earliest population of Ladakh was composed of the Dardis.\(^2\) According to A. H. Francke the Mons came from India.\(^3\) As far as the Dards are concerned, they migrated to Ladakh from Gilgit.\(^4\) The remains of contemporary Dardis are still found in Dha-Hanu, Darchik and Garkon in Lower Ladakh. The Dards are believed to belong to the Aryans race. The last ethnic group mainly Mongols of Tibetan origin came in the 8th and 9th centuries, and which is the dominant ethnic group in Ladakh at present.

It is believed that Buddhism was first introduced to Ladakh from Kashmir during the reign of the emperor Ashoka. The great Ashoka who adopted Buddhism as his state religion, zealously spread it throughout not only his own empire but also sent

\(^3\) A. H. Francke, op. cit. 1, p. 50.
\(^4\) Ibid. p. 31.
missionaries to neighboring countries. It is believed that Ashoka also sent missionaries to Ladakh.\(^5\) When the third Buddhist council was held by king Ashoka (272-232 B.C.), it was resolved to send Buddhist missionaries to Yarkand, Kashmir and many other countries. Buddhism got such a firm foothold in Kashmir that the fourth Buddhist council, under the King Kanishka (125-152 A.D.), is said have to been held in Kashmir. According to Francke, either after the third or the fourth council, Buddhism must have been carried to western Tibet, situated between Kashmir and Yarkand.\(^6\) The remains of the Kashmiri influence can still be seen in Ladakh. The Kanishka Stupa at Sani and the ancient sculpture at Padum in Zanskar are believed to be from that period. The statue of Maitreya Buddha at Mulbhe, which is about 40km before Kargil, is another monument of Kashmiri influence.

In the 7th and 8th centuries, the Tibetan cultural influence took place in Ladakh. “This is shown by the fact that Chinese Chronicles of those years refer to the areas east of Baltistan as Tibet; and Ladakh is what exists east of Baltistan”.\(^7\) In fact it is quite possible that the inhabitants of Ladakh felt the Tibetan influence even earlier, for the nomadic Tibetans of Changthang would have good reason to have contacts with the Mon and Dard, exchanging grain for animal products. The Tibetan nomads occupied the higher pasture ground for their animals and the Aryan tribes (Mons and Dards) irrigated in the lower plains. At any rate, by the mid-seventh century, during the reign of the King Songstan Gampo in Central Tibet, Ladakh became increasingly

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\(^6\) A. H. Francke. op. cit, 1, p. 20.

aware of her eastern neighbour. During this period the Tibetan nomads of Changthang probably inter-married with the Mon and Dard population and allowed a trading or bartering system to develop between the two groups of people. According to Francke, the products of the fields were as welcome to the Tibetans as were the produce of the flocks to the Dard peasants. But the real Tibetan influence in Ladakh started with the origin of the first Ladakhi Kingdom. Its origin is connected with the decline and fall of the Tibetan monarchy. The King Glan-der-ma who had openly persecuted Buddhism in Tibet was killed by a Buddhist monk. After his murder in 842 A.D. Tibet disintegrated into a number of principalities. The central power of Tibet disappeared and the old aristocracy plunged into a struggle for power. Under such circumstances, Skid-ide Ni-ma-mgon, a royal prince migrated to western Tibet. Western Tibet in those days called Naris (mNgar). There is a popular tale in the Chronicle of Ladakh why the Ladakhi king used a giant napkin. On his way to western Tibet, Skid-ide Ni-ma-mgon was once in such straitened circumstances that he had nothing to eat but fish and eggs. His servant brought him this dish covered with a large napkin and ever since it has been used by the Ladakhi king. Within a short period of time Skid-ide Ni-ma-mgon conquered the whole of western Tibet and thus laid the foundation of the first (Ladakhi) Lha-Chen dynasty.

Before the origin of the first Ladakhi dynasty in the 10th century by Skid ide Ni-ma-mgon, it is said that Upper Ladakh was under the descendents of Gesar and Lower Ladakh was divided into small principalities. According to the Chronicles of Ladakh, Skid-ide Ni-ma-mgon had three sons, dPal-gyi-ide-mgon, bKra-sis-mgon and

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8 A. H. Francke. op. cit, 1, p. p.47.
De-gtsug-mgon, called collectively “the three STOD-mgon”. The kingdom was divided among three the princes. The first son got Ladakh; the second son got Guge and Pu-ran and the third son got Zanskar and Spiti. As the Chronicles mentioned:

Che-wa dPal- gyi- mgon la mNgaris Maryul, bar- pa bKar-sis mgon-la Guge, Pur-ran, chung-wa De-gtsug -mgon la Zans-dkar Spiti.\textsuperscript{10}

Its translation means, eldest son, dPal-gyi-mgon got Ladakh, middle son, bKar-sis mgon got Guge and Pur-ran and the youngest son, De-gtsug -mgon got Znaskar (Zans-dkar) and Spiti. The actual conquest was affected by dPal-gyi-mgon himself. He was the real founder and organizer of the Ladakhi Kingdom, and the Chronicle gives a sketching description of its boundaries.

The most important role played during this period to spread Mahayana Buddhism in Ladakh was by Lotswa Rin-cen bzang-po (958-1055 A.D.)\textsuperscript{11}. But long before that, Guru Padmasambhava is believed to have visited Ladakh in the 8\textsuperscript{th} century A.D.\textsuperscript{12} Caves where he is believed to have meditated are still found in Ladakh. The most famous one is Brag-tog Gonpa or monastery, which is about 45 km towards northeast of Leh. The Cave in this monastery is the oldest part of the monastery. This monastery belongs to the rNin-ma-pa sect of Tibetan Buddhism in Ladakh. This sect is known as the oldest sect of Mahayana Buddhism.

Coming back to the period of Lotswa Rin-cen-bzang-po, whose contribution to Ladakh in spreading Tibetan Buddhism was enormous. Not only in Ladakh had he

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid. p. 35. Also see Tashi Rabgias. Maryul La dvags Kyi Snon Rabs Kun gsal melong Zhes bya ba zugso: History of Ladakh Called the Mirror which Illuminates All (Delhi: Jayyed Press, 1984), p. 59.


\textsuperscript{12} Tashi Rabgias, op. cit. 10, pp. 50-51.
played a vital role in terms of spreading Mahayana Buddhism but also in other areas including Guge and Lahul Spiti. In fact, he along with Atisa, were the main persons who were responsible for the reintroduction of Mahayana Buddhism in Tibet. In his lifetime Lotswa Rin-cen-bzang-po had built 108 monasteries in Western Tibet. In Ladakh, he built about three monasteries. The most famous of them is Alchi, which is about 75 km west of Leh. This monastery is famous for its painting, which is the mixture of Tibetan and Kashmiri influences. It is said that Lotswa Rin-cen-bzang-po invited many artists from Kashmir. The other monastery is Mangyu monastery. This monastery is about three hours walk from Sgera village, which is about five miles below Alchi along the Indus river.

With the opening of Ladakh for tourists in 1974, Alchi monastery has been visited by many tourists. One of the most important benefits of such visits is that many people have studied and written about it, and it also created awareness among the local people about the importance to preserve the monastery in particular and Ladakhi culture in general. The Alchi monastery is looked after by the Likir (Lhu-k-yil) monastery and it now belongs to Ge-lug-pa sect of Tibetan Buddhism. There were two monks in-charge of the Alchi monastery in August 2003. These monks are from Likir monastery and every one or two years a new in-charge takes over. As far as Mangyu is concerned, not much study has been done on this monastery. One of the reasons may be that it is far from the main jeep road, and secondly, it has not been highlighted, unlike Alchi. In August 2003 the Maitreya Temple of the monastery has been badly damaged. It is a very nice walk up along the stream. The size of the monastery is smaller than Alchi but the paintings are similar in age and style.
Another old monastery in Ladakh is Lamayuru or gYun-drun-dgon-pa. This monastery is about 120 km west of Leh, on the way to Kargil road. It is believed that its site is said to have been selected by Naropa (956-1040 A.D.), the famous teacher of Marpa, who drained away a lake to make it accessible. The cave where Naropa is believed to have meditated is still found in the main assembly hall of the monastery. This cave is probably one of the oldest parts of the monastery. The Sen-ge-lha-khang, a small room below the main building of the monastery, is another part of the oldest part of the monastery.

According to the Chronicles of Ladakh and Luciano Petech, about sixteen kings succeeded dPal-gyi-mgon, till the end of the first Ladakhi dynasty i.e. till Lha-cen-grags-bum-ide. The information about these kings seems to be remembered in folklore. But it is certain that during this period the cultural influences in Ladakh were coming mainly from Tibet.

dPal-gyi-mgon had two sons, named Drogon and Chosgon. Nothing has been mentioned in the Chronicle of Ladakh about these two princes. It seems that Drogon had succeeded his father as the king of Ladakh. His son Lha-chen-dragspa-ide succeeded him. The next king who came to throne was Lha-chen Jang Chub Semspa who succeeded his father Lha-chen dragspa-ide (1075-1100 A.D.). According to Tashi Rabgias, during the reign of this king, the dKa-dam-pa sub-sect of Mahayana Buddhism developed in Ladakh. As he mentioned:

Gyalpo Lha Chen Jang-chup Semspa, de
skaps su La-dvags su dKa-dam-pai chos lugs

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14 Tashi Rabgias, op.cit. 10, p. 67. See also A. H. Francke, op. cit. 1, p. 63.
15 A. H. Francke, op.cit. 1, p. 63. See also Tashi Rabgias, op.cit. 10, p. 86.
It means that during this period, the Cave temple at Saspol, the old temple of Yan-drun or Lamayuru monastery and the Cave temple locally known as ‘drag kung kha-bo chey’ of Spituk (dPe-t’up) monastery belong to dKa-dam-pa sect of Mahayana Buddhism. This sect is the first reformed sect in Mahayana Buddhism in Tibet.

The reformation of Mahayana Buddhism was started by the Indian monk Atisa, who visited Tibet in 1038 A.D. Atisa started the reform by emphasizing strict monastic discipline. He also began to enforce celibacy and high morality. So, this new sect is called bKa-dam-pa or “those bound by orders (commands)”.

The chief disciple of Atisa was Dom-ton, who was from Tibet. He succeeded after his master as the head of the bKa-dam-pa sect. He built the Ra-Deng monastery in 1058 A. D. This monastery, which is situated to the northeast of Lhasa was the first lamasery of the dKa-dam-pa sect. The monastery of T’o-din in Pu-rang, built in 1025 A. D. is considered to have become a dKa-dam-pa institution by Atisa’s residence therein. Following this sect, many sects and sub-sects of Mahayana Buddhism developed over time in Tibet.

The next Ladakhi king who succeeded his father Lha-chen drags-pa was Lha-chen Gyal-po (1100-1125 A. D.). The most important work during his period in

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16 Tashi Rabgias, op.cit. 10, pp. 86-87.
17 Austine Waddell, op. cit. 5, p. 54.
18 Ibid, p. 56.
19 A. H. Francke, op.cit. I, p. 63. See also Tashi Rabgias. 10, p. 90.
terms of religion and culture was the founding of the Likir monastery at Likir village. According to the Chronicles:

Lha-cen Gyal-po adiyi dus su klu-k’yil gi
dgon-pa btab nas dgen adun gi sdey btsugs.20

It means the king Lha-cen Gyal-po founded the monastery and encouraged a brotherhood of Lamas to settle down there. This monastery is about 50 km to the west of Leh. In earlier times Likir village was connected with the trade route between Leh and villages below Likir. Also, the local route connecting different villages like Hemis Shukpachen and Timosgang goes through Likir village.

The next ruler was Lha-Chen-Utpala (1125-1150 A. D.).21 He succeeded his father Lha Chen Gyalpo. He brought Purang, Purig, Kulu (which included Lahul-Spiti also) under his dominance.22 According to Luciano Petech, Ladakh was for a short time the greatest power in the western Himalayas during Lha-Chen-Utpala’s reign.23 Lha-Chen-Naglug (1150-1175 A. D.)24 succeeded his father Lha-Chen-Utpala. This king is credited with the construction of palaces at Wamle and Khalatse. According to the Chronicles of Ladakh, the Palace at Wamle was built in the Tiger year and the Palace of Khalatse in the Dragon year.25 Both Francke and Tashi Rabgias not only agreed with Petech regarding the construction of the above Palaces but they also added that during the King Lha-Chen-Naglug’s reign, there was the building of the bridge across the Indus at Khalatse.26 Tashi Rabgias further added that the reason for building

20 A. H. Francke, op. cit. 9, p.35. See also Tashi Rabgias. 10, p.90.
21 A. H. Francke, op.cit. 1, p. 64. Also see Tashi Rabgias, op.cit. 10, p. 90.
23 Luciano Petech, op. cit. 2, p.18.
24 Tashi Rabgias, op.cit.10, p. 93.
25 A. H. Francke, op. cit. 9, p.36.
26 Tashi Rabgias, op. cit. 10, p. 93. See also A. H. Francke, op. cit. 1, pp. 65-66.
the bridge was to promote trade and thus to collect the taxes.\textsuperscript{27} This bridge connects central and the areas in the west and southwest of Ladakh to Kashmir. Thus, it means during this period, the trade among different areas in Ladakh and also with her neighbours was quite developed.

The next king was Lha-Chen dGe-bhe.\textsuperscript{28} He succeeded his father Lha-Chen Naglug in 1175-1200 A. D.\textsuperscript{29} Lha-Chen Jo-Idor succeeded his father Lha-Chen dGe-bhe (1220-1225 A.D.).\textsuperscript{30} According to Francke, he succeeded in 1200 A. D.\textsuperscript{31} The next king who succeeded Lha-Chen Jo-Idor was his son Lha-Chen bKra-is-mgon. Not much has been written about the above three kings. Lhargyal was the next king to follow. He was the son of bKra-sis-mgon.\textsuperscript{32} Lhargyal ruled Ladakh around 1250-1275 A. D.\textsuperscript{33} The name of this king has been preserved on a sculpture near the village of Taru. Vajrapani was the favourite deity of this king. Besides this, he ordered two voluminous Lamaist works to be written in gold. As Tashi Rabgias said:

\begin{quote}
Gyalpo dyi skor la Taru drong gSyb ki mTsams na dao-wa bKros pai yig cha tang Sky adra yod. Gyalpo di Chang-dor la mos shay ying. Chag-dor gyi gryud dser yig la bZha-yings. gZa-n yang Sung rab mang po dser yig la bZha-ngs.\textsuperscript{34}
\end{quote}

It means that the name of this king has been preserved on a sculpture near the village Taru and his favourite deity was Vajrapani; besides this, he ordered two voluminous Lamaist works to be written in gold. According to Francke, during the reign of this

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid. p. 93.
\textsuperscript{28} Luciano Petech, op. cit. 2, p. 17.
\textsuperscript{29} A. H. Francke, op. cit. 1, p. 66.
\textsuperscript{30} Tashi Rabgias, op. cit. 10, p. 95.
\textsuperscript{31} A. H. Francke, op. cit. 1, p. 66.
\textsuperscript{32} A. H. Francke, op. cit. 9, p. 36. See also Tashi Rabgias, op. cit. 10, p. 105.
\textsuperscript{33} A. H. Francke, op.cit. 1, p. 67.
\textsuperscript{34} Tashi Rabgias, op. cit.10, p. 105.
king, there was the first recording of the introduction of Lamaist literature into western Tibet.\textsuperscript{35}

The next king who came to the throne was Lha-Chen Chosphel, who succeeded his father Lhargyal and he ruled around 1275-1300 A. D.\textsuperscript{36} He was known to have promulgated religious edicts as well as defined the socio-administrative laws and ensured their perfect implementation. In a popular song the happy days under this king are described:

"Under this king people become so rich that they wore hats of gold and their mouth never empty of tea and beer. Masters and servants alike spent their days in frolic and merriment."\textsuperscript{37}

Lha-Chen dNos-grub (1300-1325 A. D.) ascended the throne after the death of his father, Lha-Chen Chosphel. During his reign, the custom of sending novices from Ladakh to various monastic centers of learning in dBus and the dTsang provinces of Central Tibet was introduced.\textsuperscript{38} According to Luciano Petech:

"This custom had a baneful of effect in the long run. It meant absolute spiritual dependence from central Tibet, it hindered the rise of an original philosophic and literary life in Ladakh."\textsuperscript{39}

But on the other hand, the introduction of this custom provided the opportunities to get the best monastic education, as Tibet became the leading Mahayana Buddhist Centre and the residence of leading Lamas who taught Mahayana Buddhism.

\textsuperscript{35} A. H. Francke, op. cit. 1, p. 67.
\textsuperscript{36} Tashi Rabgias, op. cit. 10, p. 109. See also Nawang Tsering Shakspo, \textit{An Insight into Ladakh}, Francesca Mirritt (eds.) (Sabu-Leh: Ayu-Changchug, 1993), p. 17.
\textsuperscript{37} A. H. Francke, op. cit. 1, p. 67.
\textsuperscript{38} A. H. Francke, op. cit. 9, p. 36. See also Nawang Tsering Shakspo, op. cit. 36, p. 17.
\textsuperscript{39} Luciano Petech, op. cit. 2, p. 166.
King dNos-grub's other contributions in the field of cultural developments in Ladakh included the repair and renovation of the monasteries that his ancestors had built. He also ordered two sets of the bKa-gyur (the words of Buddha), probably from Tibet. One set of the bKa-gyur consists of 108 volumes. Not only this, according to the Chronicles of Ladakh, King dNos-grub also acted as patron to C'os-kyi-rje 'Jig-rt'en gsum-gyi-mgon-po.40 This is C'os-rje 'Jig-rt'en-mgon-po, alias Dharmasvamin or Rinc'n-dpal, who was the founder of the monastery of Bri-gung and the sub-sect of that name in Tibet.41

dNos-grub son was Lha-Chen Gyalbu Rinchen. Not much has been written about him. Unlike others he did not succeed his father, and the exact reason has not been mentioned anywhere. According to Francke, Gyalbu Rinchen left for Kashmir after a son had been born to his wife, and embraced Islam, and he came to be known as Raichan Shah.42 The next king was Lha-Chen Shesrab or Ses-rab. He was the son of Lha-Chen Gyalbu Rinchen. He is known to have built a castle on the top of the Han-rtse-mo in Sabu village, known as Sen-ge-sgan.43 This village is about seven kilometers southeast of Leh. His son Lha-Chen Khri-gtsug-ide (1375-1400 A. D.)44, succeeded to the throne. He built a row of 108 chortens (stupas) at Leh, and two rows of 108 chortens at Sabu to earn religious merit.45 Many people settled there at Sabu. During this period, a disciple of Zur-Phug-pa called Bharva, a well educated lama

40 A. H. Francke, op. cit. 9, p. 36. See also Tashi Rabgias, op. cit. 10, p. 110.
41 Luciano Petech, op. cit. 2, p. 19. Also see Austine Waddell, op. cit. 5, p. 69.
42 A. H. Francke, op. cit. 9, p. 70.
43 A. H. Francke, op. cit. 9, p. 36. Also see Tashi Rabgias, op. cit. 10, p. 117.
44 Tashi Rabgias, op. cit. 10, p. 119.
45 A. H. Francke, op. cit. 1, p. 72.
from Tibet, made a visit to Zanskar and blessed the site of the present Bardan Gonpa (monastery), predicting that a Gonpa would be built there.\textsuperscript{46}

Lha-Chen Khri-gtsug-ide had two sons, Grags-pa-bum-ide and Grags-pa 'bum. The two brothers were of different characters. Grags-pa-bum-ide was of mild and merciful disposition and was religiously inclined. Whereas the younger brother, Grags-pa-bum was fierce and did not care in the least about his future state. The elder son, Grags-pa-bum-ide (1400-1440 A. D.)\textsuperscript{47}, succeeded his father. He was a great builder of temples and images. He first built the 'Red Temple' on the rNamgyal-semo hill at Leh and on the same hill, the statue of Maitreya or future Buddha escorted by Manjushri and Vajrapani.\textsuperscript{48}

During his reign, two monks as envoys from rGyal-ba Tson-k'a-pa (1357-1419 A. D.), the founder of Ge-lug-pa sect in Tibet, came to Ladakh.\textsuperscript{49} According to the Chronicles, Tsong-kha-pa sent with the two monks an image of the Buddha with the instruction that it should be handed over to the king of Ladakh. As the monks reached Nubra, the northern region of Ladakh, they met with the younger brother of the king. The two monks offered the scared image to him. He, however, did not care even to look at it and the two monks then went to the king at Leh. The King treated them courteously and received the sacred image with outmost reverence. In order to commemorate the event the King is said to have built the monastery of dPe-t'up for the Ge-lug-pa sect.\textsuperscript{50} According to Luciano Petech, the monastery of dPe-t'up had

\textsuperscript{46} Nawang Tsering Shakspo, op. cit.36, p. 18.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid. p. 18. Luciano Petech, suggested (1410-1435), op. cit. 2, p. 22.
\textsuperscript{48} A. H. Francke, op. cit. 1, p. 75.
\textsuperscript{49} D. L. Snellgrove and Skorupski, op. cit. 11, p. 82.
\textsuperscript{50} A. H. Francke, op. cit. 9, p. 37.
been actually founded in the 11th Century. The King must have assisted in a thorough restoration and to the transference to the Ge-lug-pa School.

Not only the above, the king also built two Maitreya Statues, one at Timosgang, and the Maitreya of Byams-pa-dmar-po next to the palace at Leh. These two images along with the one that was built on Tsemo hill were popularly known as “Byams-ba-rnam-gsum”, the three Maitreya statues. Besides, this king is also said to have built four Byang-Chub Chortens at Timosgang, each one for the four points on the compass on the Lion-shaped mountain. He also built what locally is called as “Tiseru or Te 'u gser-po. It looks like a stupa from outside but it said that it had 108 chapels inside. Ruins of that structure may be seen about three kilometers above Leh. Recently, the Archeological Survey of India has started to reconstruct this monument.

Meanwhile, Grags-pa-bum-ide’s younger brother, Dragspa was ruling in the lower valley of Ladakh. According to Francke, his principal seats were Basgo and Timosgang in lower Ladakh. He is called the builder of the royal city of Tomosgang and also made it his Capital. He is also said to have improved the fortification at Basgo, to make it a stronghold of the first rank. In the meantime, the conversion of Kashmir to Islam created a new element of instability in the western Himalayas. There were several invasions of Ladakh by Kashmir. The first Muslim force from Kashmir to cross the Zoji-la (pass) and to invade the country beyond the pass was led by Rai Madari, in the reign of Skinder (1394-1416 A. D.).

51 Luciano Petech, op. cit. 2, p. 18.
52 Nawang Tsering Shakspo, op. cit. 36. p. 18.
53 D. L. Snellgrove and Skorupski, op. cit. 11, p. 82.
54 A. H. Francke, op. cit. 1, p. 80.
55 Luciano Petech, op. cit 2, p. 25.
56 Ibid. p. 22.
The next king who comes to the throne was Blo-gros-mc’og-idan. He succeeded his father Grags-pa-bum-ide in 1440 A.D and reigned until 1470 A.D. He sent presents to the first rGyal-ba (Dalai-Lama) dGe-dun-grup (1391-1474). According to the Chronicles, he conquered mNagris rKor-gsum and from there he brought to Ladakh turquoises, saddles, horses, swords etc. Blo-gros-mc’og Iden was the last king of the first dynasty of Ladakh. His reign ended disastrously. According to Luciano Petech, he was deposed and imprisoned by a prince descending from a side branch of the family. It was the end of the first Ladakhi dynasty.

The important monasteries built during the first dynasty

As I mentioned earlier in my first chapter, the Tibetan polity and culture have been decisively shaped by Buddhism. The monasteries are the most important aspect of Buddhism. Following are some of the important monasteries that have built during the first dynastic rule in Ladakh, and which had direct encouragement, guidance and support from Tibet.

Lamayuru Monastery:

Lamayuru monastery is one of the oldest in Ladakh. It is also known as gyun-drün (Swastika). As the legend goes, Lamayuru was a lake. It was blessed by a Lama after which the water of the lake reduced, leaving place for the monastery. It was founded in the 10th century. Its age is indicated by one small temple, from whose iconography the period may be placed in the time of Rin-cen-bzang-po.

57 Ibid. p. 23.
58 A. H. Francke, op. cit. 9, p. 37.
60 Thupstan Paldan, op. cit. 13, p. 9.
61 D. L. Snellgrove and Skorupski, op. cit. 11, p. 21.
The main assembly hall or Du-khang has been repainted. In the same hall there is small cave known as Naropa’s cave. It contains his statue along with those of Marpa and Mi-la Raspa. Naropa is believed to have meditated in this cave and the cave is one of the oldest parts of the monastery. Connected to the same assembly hall is a small room, dedicated to the protecting divinities. Sen-ge-sgang is another oldest part of the monastery. The main image in this temple is Vairocana, seated on his lion throne.

This monastery belongs to the Bri-gung-pa a branch of the bKa-gyud-pa sect. The Bri-gung-pa sub-sect is named after the monastery of ‘Bri-gung’, which was founded by Jig-rtan mGon-po in Tibet. According to Snellgrove and Skorupski, Bri-gung monastery played a very important role in the political life of Tibet. In the 13th century it was the main contender against the Sa-skya monastery for the favour of their Mongol overlords.

In Ladakh, Lamayuru and Phyang are the main monasteries of the Bri-gung-pa sub-sect.

Alchi Monastery:

The monastery of Alchi is also one of the oldest and most famous in Ladakh. It is called A-lci-chos-khor or ‘religious enclave’. It is believed that Rin-cen bzang-po built many monasteries in Ladakh including Alchi. The other monasteries are Nyarma, now a ruin some twenty kilometers up the Indus beyond Leh, Mangyu and Sumda.

The monastery of Alchi is about 75 kilometers west of Leh. Built over the banks of the Indus, it has many rooms containing beautiful paintings. These paintings

62 Ibid. p. 20.
63 Luciano Petech, op. cit. 2, p. 18.
64 D. L. Snellgrove and Skorupski, op. cit. 11, p. 21.
65 Thupstan Paldan, op. cit. 13, pp. 7-8.
are a mixture of Kashmiri and Tibetan influences. There are four main rooms in this monastery. The first one is the Assembly Hall or Du-Khang. In this Du-Khang the Buddhist monks assemble for the performance of ceremonies. According to Snellgrove and Skorupski, architecturally the Alchi assembly hall resembles that of Nyar-ma (now ruined), and that of Tabo and other temples attributed to Rin-cen-bzang-po. The main statue in the assembly hall is Vairocana enthroned in the Sanctuary. The paintings are still very well preserved.

The next room is called Sum-Tsek or gSum-brtseg (three-tier temple). This temple contains three impressive images, well decorated with painting on it. The first image is of Avalokitesvara or Chanrazig (Buddha of Compassion) on the left, then Maitreya (future Buddha) opposite the entrance and finally Manjusri (Buddha of Wisdom). These three stand for peace and prosperity. The style of the paintings especially on the lower part of these images shows the Kashmiri influence.

The Lotswa Lhakhang is another room where one can see a small image of Lotswa Rin-cen bzang-po. On his left side is the image of Buddha Sakyamuni in the earth-witness posture, and on his right side is the image of Avalokitesvara. Next to the Lotswa Lhakhang is the Manjusri temple. Inside are the fourfold images of Manjusri, each aspect facing one of the quarters and painted in the appropriate directional colour; blue, yellow, red and dark green.

Alchi Chos-khor is one of the wonders of the Buddhist world. One hopes that some means will be found to ensure its continued preservation.

66 D. L. Snellgrove and Skorupski, op.cit. 11, p. 30.
Mangyu and Sumda:

Mangyu and Sumda are the other monasteries that have built during Rin-cen bzang-po’s period. Mangyu monastery has been described earlier in this chapter.

As far as Sumda is concerned, it is a small one and comprises of three temples. The main temple is the assembly hall or Du-khang. The image of Vairocana in this hall is well decorated and preserved. The other two temples, which are smaller than the assembly hall, are the temples of Maitreya and Avalokitesvara. The style of paintings in this monastery is similar to that of Alchi monastery.

Likir Monastery:

This monastery was founded during the reign of King Kha-chen Gyal-po (1100-1125). This monastery has been described in detail earlier in this chapter. To add little more, this monastery was initially associated with the dKa-dam-pa sect and in the 15th century it was taken over by the Ge-lug-pa establishment. The present monastery dates back to the eighteenth century, as its earlier structure was destroyed in fire. The head of this monastery is a brother of the Dalai Lama. The present monastery is quite big. In Du-khang or the assembly hall, there are seats for about seventy monks. The images of Buddha Sakyamuni and Maiterya are in this hall. It also contains on either side on wooden racks the volumes of the Buddhist holy books. There is another smaller Du-khang, which has the image of Avalokitesvara. Upstairs is the private apartments of the head Lama. The Gon-khang is on the same floor, and this temple is dedicated to the protector divinities. These images are normally covered and opened only during the time of the monastery festivals. This monastery has its

67 A. H. Francke, op. cit. 1, p. 63.
festivals in winter. The Museum is on the top floor. It has an interesting collection of
old thankas from Tibet, old religious and domestic costumes, some official letters,
different coins and implements.

**Phugtal Monastery:**

Phugtal monastery is the most picturesque in the whole of Zanskar\(^69\) and
perhaps also the most isolated in the region. It is accessible from the Padum-Darcha
(Manali) tracking route through a seven kilometers long trail that branches off from
the Purney Bridge on the main trail. We got an opportunity to visit this beautiful
monastery a few years ago with a trekking group. According to Snellgrove and
Skorupski, Phugtal monastery was founded by a Zanskar translator named Phags-pa
Shes-rab.\(^70\) The date of the Zanskar translator was more or less contemporary with Mi-la-ras-pa (1040-1123 A.D.).\(^71\)

There are many interesting temples in the monastery. The assembly hall or Du-khang is decorated with murals of Sakyamuni and Tsong-kha-pa. Another room called
the sTon-pa Lha-khang contains interesting murals from several periods. The oldest is probably from the time of Rin-cen-bzang-po and it resembles those at Tabo (rTa-po)\(^72\)
monastery. Tabo monastery is in Lahul Spiti and is believed to have been built by Rin-cen-bzang-po. The use of stucco in the images in Phugtal monastery resembles those at
Alchi and Sumda,\(^73\) suggesting an earlier period. The next sets of murals are probably

\(^69\) A region in the South of Leh.


\(^71\) Ibid. p. 38.


\(^73\) D. L. Snellgrove and Skorupski, op. cit 70, p. 53.
from the sixteenth century. The Gon-khang has the images of the protector divinities and collections of old weapons. There is also a fine library in Ka-gyur lha-khang. About forty monks inhabit this beautiful monastic establishment.

Important Lamas who visited Ladakh during this period

Many important Lamas had visited Ladakh from Tibet and other places. Following are some of the important early Lama missionaries who visited Ladakh and they played an important role in establishing Mahayana Buddhism in Ladakh.

Padmasambhava:

Padmasambhava is believed to have visited Ladakh in the 8th century. According to Tashi Rabgias, besides Central Ladakh, Padmasambhava visited Baltistan, from where he went to Phokar rZong, a place to the west of Leh and then to Zanskar.

Rin-chen bzang-po:

Lotswa Rin-cen bzang-po played a vital role in laying a firm foundation for Mahayana Buddhism in Ladakh. At the age of eighteen in the year of the Pig (i.e. 975 A.D), Rin-cen bzang-po visited Kashmir. After studying many years in Kashmir, he visited many places in western Tibet including Ladakh. Many temples attributed to him are still found in Ladakh.

74 Ibid. p. 53.
75 Tashi Rabgias, op. cit, 10, pp. 50-51.
76 Ibid. pp. 50 & 51.
77 D. L. Snellgrove and Skorupski, op. cit. 11, p. 5.
Zanskar Lotswa:

Zanskar Lotswa was one of the great learned men from Zanskar. His name was Phas-pa Shes-rab,\textsuperscript{79} and he was born in Zanskar. He left his native place to go to western Tibet, probably to Guge for higher studies. It is difficult to fix his exact dates. According to Snellgrove and Skorupski, he was more or less contemporary with Mi-la Raspa (1040-1123 A. D.).\textsuperscript{80} He studied and worked with several Tibetan, Indian and kashmiri teachers.

Phags-pa Shes-rab translated many books from Sanskrit into Tibetan including part of the bstan-gyur, the Tibetan Canon.\textsuperscript{81} His reputation as a translator and teacher gained him a considerable following not only in Ladakh but also in Tibet. He came to be called as Zanskar Lotswa, the translator from Zanskar.\textsuperscript{82} He played an important role in establishing the Mahayana Buddhism not only in his native place but also in Tibet. He was also well known as a teacher and his students were from many areas including Baltistan. One of his students was from Skardo, known as Balti Lotswa.\textsuperscript{83}

rGod-tsang-pa:

rGod-tsang-pa mGon-bo dPal (1189-1258 A. D.) was another Lama who visited Ladakh.\textsuperscript{84} He received instructions both at Rva-Lung and ‘Brug Monastery in

\textsuperscript{79} Tashi Rabgias, op. cit. 10, p. 87.
\textsuperscript{80} D. L. Snellgrove abd Skorupski, op. cit. 70, p. 38.
\textsuperscript{81} Tashi Rabgias, op. cit. 10, p. 87.
\textsuperscript{82} Nawang Tsering Shakspo, op. cit. 36, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{83} Tashi Rabgias, op. cit. 10, pp. 88 & 89.
\textsuperscript{84} Nawang Tsering Shakspo, op. cit. 36, p. 16.
Tibet and took ordination from his teacher.\textsuperscript{85} His teacher was rTzang-pa rGya-ras who was a prominent master of the Brug-pa sub-sect of Tibetan Buddhism.\textsuperscript{86} sGod-tsang-pa traveled many places in the west Himalayan region including Ladakh. His visit had resulted in the propagation of 'Brug-pa tenets and tradition in these West Himalayan regions. He stayed and meditated in several places in Central Ladakh. First he resided in the upper Igu. From there he is said to have 'flown' to Martselang and finally went to upper Hemis, popularly known as sGod-stang.\textsuperscript{87} Even now caves and hermitages named after him are found in Central Ladakh.

\textbf{Conclusion}

This chapter has surveyed the Ladakhi history from early years to the end of the first dynasty rule in Ladakh. It is certain that before the Tibetan influence, the cultural influence on Ladakh was from Kashmir but far too little remains except some rock-carvings.

The first important and widespread cultural impact from Tibet came with the establishment of the first Ladakhi dynasty rule in the tenth century. During this period emphasis was on the patronage and support of construction of monasteries and stupas in Ladakh. Besides, the Kingdom's patronage of Tibetan Buddhism, Lama missionaries also played an important role in the spread of Mahayana Buddhism. Ladakh's religious and spiritual ties with Buddhist Tibet during this period were close and consistent.


\textsuperscript{86} Ibid. p. 25.

\textsuperscript{87} Tashi Rabgias, op. cit. 10, pp. 99 & 100.