

## TRAVELS IN MUSTANG, VISITING TEMPLES AND MONASTERIES IN THE UPPER KALI GANDAKI

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On 23<sup>rd</sup> September, we advanced to Kagbeni from the east, down along Muktinath valley (Dzong Chu). Kagbeni is not only our starting point of our journey to the upper Kali Gandai but the real administrative gateway to the northern restricted area, where all foreign travelers are obliged to be checked by the government staff. Apart from our first objective to explore the lesser known mountain ranges in northwestern or western part of Lo Manthang in which we had having a special interest of the topography, I myself had the another plan to visit the old temples and monasteries of there as extensively as possible.

Early in 1970's, I had a coincidental fortune to meet with a book, "Himalayan Pilgrimage", by Prof. David Snellgrove, one of the learned on the Tibetan Buddhism. The book was written on his scholarly travel in 1956 through the remotest land beyond the Great Himalaya, and when I got through the book, it tempted me into the mysterious charm of the land where unsophisticated Tibetans widely living. In so poor and severe physical circumstances, they live with much of spiritual wealth that, I learned, their characteristic strength had been fostered by traditional Tibetan Buddhism as the basis of their living life. Since then, it had been one of the strong desires through my life to visit Dolpo or Mustang, following after the author's route, and see with my own eyes the land and people in the world surrounded by the abundant heritage of Tibetan Buddhism.

According to a common view of historians, the spread of latter Tibetan Buddhism into Mustang, began at the time when the king of Mustang A-ma-Pal invited Ngor-chen Kun-dga'-bzan-po (1382-1456), the great scholarly teacher of Ngor-pa sect, to Lo Manthang in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century. (1427?)

The following kings, A-mgon-bzang-po and bKra-shis-mgon were ardent Buddhist and gave great support to spread the doctrine in Mustang. Kun-dga'-bzang-po visited Mustang three times (during 1427 to 1447) in his life for propagation. During these times, the doctrine of latter Tibetan Buddhism was in its golden age, and all of the wealthy Buddhist cultures in highest level including art and architecture, were brought into Mustang. Now, we can see some of its vestiges among the old monasteries and temples of Lo

Manthang and the vicinity.

On the attached sheet of map, MUSTANG, we dotted consecutive numbers (such as with Swastika) to indicate the location of the monastery, which referable to each section number of the following papers.

(1) Thini Gompa: ( visited 4<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Sept. )

Bon temple. Main deity is Welse Ngampa (tib.: *dBal gsas rngam pa*) in dark blue, with nine heads and eighteen arms, embraced by his consort, Ngamo Yumchen (tib.: *rNgam mo yum chen*) in green color. Left is Kunzang Gyalwa Dupa (tib.: *kun bzang rgyal ba'dus pa*) in white, five heads and ten arms. And small statue of Padmasambhava is in between. At the right is a beautiful bronze Vajradhara. This temple is now holding "Five Treasures" still told by the tradition of Padma-sambhava, which in 1956 D. Snellgrove investigated them at Kutsapternga. Now, the "Treasures" are not opened for foreign visitors. Left and right walls are painted with large eight auspicious symbols singly and a few religious ancestors between them.

(2) Ku-tsap-ter-nga: ( visited 13<sup>th</sup> Sep.)

This Nyingma-pa monastery was founded in the end of 17 century by Urgen dPal bZang to whom "Five Treasures" had been given by his Guru, bDud'-dul rDo-rge, the rTer-ston (Treasure discoverer). Legend has it that this monastery was founded by Padmasambhava in the beginning of 9<sup>th</sup> century. The local name of the monastery "Five treasures of Bodily Representation", (tib.: *sku-tshab gter-nga*) is derived from this story. The monastery is built on the top of remarkable hill looking down the villages of Marpha, Shang and Jomsom on the opposite bank. The monastery once destroyed by fire in Nepal-Tibet War (in 1854-56) and was rebuilt by Sangye Zampo, a Buddhist teacher from the eastern Tibet. The main hall was again rebuilt in 1957 by the contribution of 15,000 Rupees by Lama of Shang who was one of the characters in Snellgrove's book and other local influential persons. Deities enshrined in the main hall are Sakyamuni, Amitayus, Manjusri, Avalokitesvara, Padmasambhava, Maitreya and etc. They are a common set of Nyingma-pa deities. Wall paintings were largely repainted by Thakali painters, late Kamal-Dhoj Tulachan and his son, Shashi-Dhoj Tulachan. We met seven young monks, from ten to twenty age, who served us with a cup of buttered tea.

(3) Old Jomsom: (not visited,)

Small Bon temple in northern part of Jomsom (old Jomsom). The Tibetan name of the temple is "Phun-tsogs Yung-drung-gling." in Tibetan. It is told that in the chapel, there are enshrined images of Welse Ngampa, Kun-gzang gyal ba 'dus-pa, Chamma (tib.: *Byams ma*), Thaklha Mebar (tib.: *sTag-la-me-bar*), Drempa Namkha (tib.: *Dran-pa-nam-mkha'*), a common set of the Bon-po deities.

(4) Kagbeni: (visited 23<sup>rd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> Sept, and 13<sup>th</sup> Oct. )

Kagebeni is situated as the most important town at a cross point of two main roads, namely one from Dolpo to Neshan or Nar (west to east), and another from Lo to southern valley of Kali Gandaki (north to south), and. as the capital town of the old kingdom of Kak (Tib.: *bKag* ). Now there are a ruined fort and a monastery, in the town with houses closed together.

At the northern edge of the town, placed the main check post of the Kali Gandaki route. All foreign trekkers has to be checked here. According to a list on the board, numbers of foreign trekkers into the restricted areas of Mustang last year, in 2000, were as follows: (numbers in 1999 are shown with bracket). Total number were 977 (1057), France 245 (224), USA 188 (184), Italy 76, Japan 57 (38), Swiss 85, Germany 94, Britain 70, Austria 32, and etc. This year, 2001, these number would be reduced by the New York terrorism, as we hardly met American trekkers after the incident.

Facing the current of Kali Gandaki, there is a monastery at western corner of the town, called "Kak-chos-de", traditionally said it had been founded in 1477. In the main hall, bronze statues of Sakyamuni with his two disciples are on the central throne and left of them, Sakyamuni and Sakya-Pandita, and Maitreya, Ngorchen Kunga-Sanpo on the right. Both end of the front row, are occupied by stocked Buddhist Scriptures. Three walls is fully painted with images of Ngor-pa order. The center of ceiling is stairwell. After the observation in the hall, I ascended alone onto the roof of three storied building, and enjoyed the view toward north, the way to Lo Manthang, and back toward Lower Kali Gandaki.

(5) Tingri gompa: (visited 13<sup>th</sup> Oct.)

Located the right bank of Kali Gandaki, about 1km north of Kagbeni and

50m above the village of the same name by the river. Originally founded as nunnery, named Samdoup Choe-ling (tib.:*bsam-grub-chos-gling*), now being cared by a couple and two children. Restoring process went on in most of the wall paintings and stone plaques of the front room, there are number of images of old religious ancestors and guardians of four directions, which are line carved on the stone plate with wooden frames. In the main hall, are main three statues of Padmasambhava with his two consorts, Mandarava and Ye-she-tso-gyal in center, and the founder and successive lamas of this temple are in glass protecting. This temple is built on the high hill in splendid tranquil atmosphere and with the superb view looking down the meandering streams on the river bed of Kali Gandaki and Kagbeni..

(6) Dzar-dzong Gompa: ( visited 16<sup>th</sup> Sept.)

One of the villages on the way to Muktinath. There are a Buddhist monastery and a ruined fort. Dzar (Jharkot) was the leading village having a fortress and monastery, guarding the six villages along Dzong Chu at the south. Six villages are Kheng-Khar, Dzar and Purrang on the left bank(south) and Chhenkor, Dzong and Puttra on the right (north). These villages were once called "Dar-rDzong-yul-drug" as a community. The fort of Dzar is now almost ruined except a few rooms being used by villagers.

The monastery was founded in Kagyu-pa (tib.:*bKa'-brgyud-pa*) order in the middle of 15<sup>th</sup> century, Deities of the main hall are Sakyamuni, Sakya-Pandita (tib.:*Sa-skya pandita*) and Gorchen-Kunga-Sand-po (tib.:*Ngor-chen Kun-dga'-bzhan-po*) protected by glass plates. Images of Sakyamuni, Sixteen-arhats, Three Times of Buddhas, Mahavairocana, Amitaba, Avarokitesvara with four arms, and Four Guardians are on the walls, repainted in 1950's. In the courtyard of the monastery, there is "The Tibetan Traditional Medical Center" built by the cooperation of a Japanese T. Watanabe 12 years ago.

(7) Temples and shrines in Muktinath: ( visited 16<sup>th</sup> Sept.)

Muktinath is a center of the sacred place in Lower Kali Gandaki for both Hindu, Buddhist or Bon-po. The inner Hindu temple is called Muktinath Mandir in which enshrined a image of Vishnu. As there are so many Indian and Nepalese Hindu pilgrims coming from far distant places in India and Nepal, a lot of simple hotels for them were newly built or now in construction in the vicinity. This pagoda styled temple with three fold roofs is surrounded

famous springs and another building. Spring water flowed out through the 108 of cattle head shaped spouts. Originally this springs called "Chumik-gyatsa" (tib.:*chu-mig brgya-rtsa*, means "place of one hundred springs") by Buddhist and Bon-po, which was not the place for Hindu before eighteenth century. The sanctuary in the grove along a stream was a sacred place for their meditation of the ancient Indian and Tibetan Buddhist yogis, such as Padmasambhava, Mila-repa and other most of famous Tantric ancestors.

There are another famous temple, named Menbal, in which are burning stone, flaming water and blazing earth and enshrined Nyingma-pa deities on the altar. Mar-me Lhakang (Hall of Butter Lamp) is another small Nyingma-pa temple, holding statues of Padmasambhava and two consorts, Pemadakpo, Seng-Dongma and Nyiingma-pa ancestors. One Hindu temple, named Shiva Mandir in the courtyard is for God of Shiva and his consort Parbhathi.

(8) Chungar(Nepal map:Chhengar):Gompa: ( visited 16<sup>th</sup> Sept.)

Located at upstream of Dzong Chu. This small village temple is also Nyingma-pa one and enshrine Padmasambhava and Nyingma-pa deities in the single hall.

(9) Dzong monastery: ( visited 22<sup>nd</sup> Sept.)

Dzong is the leading village of north side of Dzong Chu (Muktinath valley), where is a ruined dzong (fort) dominating the north side of the valley. The village is called simply Dzong, the Tibetan word means fort. In old days, it was called Rap-gyal-tse (tib.:*rab-rgyal-rtse*), means "Peak of Supreme Victory." The monastery has been called by villagers "Dzong choede gompa," enshrined Sakyamuni as a central deity protected by glass plate, with large number of deities and small Buddhist towers. Wall paintings has the theme of Vajrayana, Five Deities of Vajrayana, Amitayus, Hevajra, Avalokitesvara with four arms, Padmasambhava and etc.

(10) Tangbe village gompa: (not visited)

(11) Gompa Khang. (not visited)

Regards to the above two gompas, I passed by them on the way to north, on 15<sup>th</sup> Sept., expecting to visit on the return way. With my great regret, however, especially to the latter, I missed the chance to visit because of the

afternoon flood of Kali Gandaki River at Chuksang on the return march.

(12) Chuksang (Nepal map:Chhusang), Mentsi Lhakang: (visit 12<sup>th</sup> Oct.)  
The name of this temple, Mentsi Lhakang (Tib.:*sman-rtsi lha-khang*) means "Temple of Medicinal Juice." Located easterly above the Chhusang village. In one of the caves in conglomerate layer, we can find a tiny entrance guarded by piled stones, which leads us to the chapel by unsteady stair case. Main image of this cave temple is a beautiful terracotta image of Maitreya (tib.:*Byams-pa*), abnormally white face and body of which was faintly floating in the dark room. In 1956, Snellgrove admired this temple as "one of the most impressive places in the whole region." The most attractive is the embossed wood carved nimbus of the Maitreya, which is composed of mythological animals, elephant, yaksha, unicorn, makala, garuda and etc. On the left and right shelves, are images of Five Buddhas of Vajrayana. In another cave room, I could find several dusty terracotta images carelessly treated, which placed disorderly beneath the excellent but quite stained wall paintings.

(13)-(A) Chhoknam (Nepal map: Chhomnag) .Upper temple  
( visited 15<sup>th</sup> Sept.)

(13)-(B) Chhoknam(Nepal map: Chhomnag). Lower temple ( not visited )  
Located 1.5km east from Kali Gandaki, on the right bank of Narsing Khola. These two gompas are in same Chhoknam (Nepal map:Chhomnag) village. Lower temple was not visited, because the time was too late in the afternoon. Upper gompa is in good atmosphere surrounded by poplar trees and a few of apricot. However, inside the room of the gompa, every thing is kept carelessly in the most lamentable condition and the room itself is used as a store room, The old fine but stained wall paintings were remained behind the piled tacks of straw. They has been kept for nearly a half century in quite same condition as Snellgrove had ever seen them 45 years ago. The damage of paintings by the leak from the roof, would supposedly has advanced year by year since then. It is said both gompas were built in same Nyingmapa order. Upper gompa was built after the Lower had been founded.

(14) Tetang Gompa: ( visited 15<sup>th</sup> Sept.)

From Chhoknam(Nepal map:Chhomnang) village, we proceeded along the

stream (Narsing Khola) for a short distance to Tetang. This village gompa is 50m above the river bed and was built rather recently and deities were a set of common Nyingma-pa ones.

(15) Ranchun Cave Gompa: ( visited 27<sup>th</sup> Sept.)

This cave gompa is still a favorite place for Tibetan pilgrims and even recent foreign trekkers toward Lo Manthang. Parting the main track from Samar to Geling, another path led us to Ranchun Cave (tib.:*gcong-gzhi rang byung*). At the gate of a stalactite cave, small temple was built by piling stones. Legend has it that the Guru Rinpoche (Padmasambhava) once came here, and after the meditation here for three years, three months, and three days, went to Kutsapterunga to remain the "Five Treasures" and made three miracle fires at Chmik-gyatsa (Muktinath), buried rock salts at three places near Tetang, and again came back to this place to construct the Cave.

Beside the temple, there is a naturally produced Chorten and inside the cave, there are self-produced images growing from the back walls. At front of the cave behind the temple, there are four "Man-made Chortens" with colorfully painted images of Amitabha, Avalokitesvara, Padmasambhava and Sakyamuni. I made a circuit around those chortens in the cave, though every details could not be observed in the darkness.

(16) Geling Gompa: ( visited 27<sup>th</sup> Sept.)

After passing by Shyangmochen, the main road cross a pass, where a remarkable chorten is standing, looking down Geling village to the right. The village itself seems to be rich with surrounding extensive terraced field, and houses are beautifully dotted among groves of willow. The Gompa in the village, which founded in Ngor-pa, was mostly renewed and neatly cared. Wall paintings were beautifully repainted. by Shashi Dhoj Tulachan in recent ten years.

(17) Gemi (Nepal map:Ghami) Gompa (visited 28<sup>th</sup> Sept.)

Gemi (Nepal map:Ghami) also was once a castled town guarded by a fort, and still remained the temporary palace belonging to the king of Lo. I have heard too that there were two small gompas near the village which are now deserted or no man lives to care them. We visited the monastery in the village, at the front of which are a small courtyard and lodging rooms for the

monks. This monastery was founded in Ngor-pa, enshrined in the main hall, images of Sakyamuni, Vajradhara, Akshobhya, Ngorchen-Kunga-zanpo and other ancient Sakya-pa teachers. Like as Geling gumpa, this monastery was restored and repainted the inside walls several times since 1950's by painters of Tulachan family.

(18) Chharang: (visited 28<sup>th</sup> Sept. and 5<sup>th</sup> Oct.)

There are two alternate routes from Gemi(Nepal map:Ghami) to Lo Manthang, one to Chharang, and another to Lo Gekar toward north via Trakmar (Dhakmar). Snellgrove took the latter route to Lo Gekar in 1956. Our way was taken by the former, passing by the new hospital, built recently by the cooperation of T.Kondo, and Nepal's longest "mendani" just like a big snake crawling up toward the red crags behind. Crossing a few ravines with no water, we stood at the last hill top from where whole view of Chharang came into my eyes. This familiarized sight has been kept in my mind for a long time. Chharang was the longing and adorable place since the days of my youth. Exactly a hundred two years ago, Ekai Kawaguchi arrived at Chharang from Kathmandu, by way of Pokhara, Tukche, Muktinath, Kagbeni, Samar and Gemi (Nepal map:Ghami), and stayed here for about ten months. Our adventurous mind had been much encouraged by his book "*Travels in Tibet*" (in Japanese.pub.1904, Tokyo) and by its English edition "*Three years in Tibet*" (pub.1909, Madras/London.) he gained the world fame at that time.

Two important places worth to see in Chharang are King's Palace and the Chharang Gumpa. The five storied, white Palace was still standing on the northern hill in the village. which was built in the middle of 16<sup>th</sup> century by the king at that time, Tundup-Dorje (tib. *Don-grub-rdo-rje* ). Most part of building are now deserted, except a few small rooms, holding old and fine images, paintings and sutras. At the south of the Palace, is the Chharang Gumpa, called "Chharang Dorje-den Gampa". Founded in Ngor-pa, probably by the king Ama-pal who was one of "Three Excellent Men"(tib.:bzang po rnam gsum, namely, Ngor-chen Kun-dga'-bzang-po, King A-ma-pal- bzang-po, and the minister Tshe-dbang-bzang-po) according to a historical source of Chharang Molla. The monastery now holding a hundred and more monks. In the main hall, great image of Maitreya of bronze is in the center with two images of Sakyamuni and Vajrasattva, and there are other few rooms,



"Defenders Room"(tib.:srung khang) and others. Including all superb images, excellent frescos and many old tankas, composed by the form of traditional Ngor-pa order, all of which are the brilliant religious heritage in the golden time of Kagyu-pa order.

(19) Luri Gompa (visited 8<sup>th</sup> Oct.)

From Chharang, an uneasy route lead to Surkhang and Yara on the eastern side of Kali Gandaki, partly through the main river bed. There is a lonely cave gompa called Luri about 2km beyond Yara village to where the foreign trekkers scarcely visit as the location is out of the main road of Mustang.

The gompa is situated on high craggy peaks faced to Pyon Khola, and to the opposite bank, curiously eroded cliffs of red stone pillars extend for several kilometers along the khola. The foundation of this gompa is not known. However, it is said that this cave gompa was founded in Duk-pa (tib.:*Brug-pa*, one of the sect of Kagyu-pa) in the middle of 13<sup>th</sup> to early 14<sup>th</sup> century.

In a small main cave hall, there enshrined some of the terracotta images of Padmasambhava and Duk-pa religious ancestors. A narrow path led us to the round "Chorten Hall." This small room is mostly occupied by a big beautiful chorten, locally called "A Hundred Thousand Dragons (tib.:brug-bum) Chorten", which has symmetrical proportion and painted every side from the plinth to its canopy about five meters high by the superb images. There is only a tiny square hole to take in the outer light on southern wall, but room is quite dark. The rounded ceiling of the room and walls of four directions are also beautifully painted only except damaged part of the west wall. Every thing in the room seems to be valuable treasures of Buddhist art of the highest quality. to which we only gazed one by one and were fascinated in absent mind. These paintings are unfamiliarly styled with those of other Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in Mustang, and gave us an impression or illusion that we were seeing them somewhere in the ancient cave temple in Ladakh or Central Asia.

Some of the images are explained in captions on attached photograph album.

(20) Lo Gekar. Ghar gompa (visited 5<sup>th</sup> Oct.)

The monastery in Lo Gekar is called Ghar gompa by local villagers which placed in the most earliest time in Mustang, probably the former Tibetan Buddhism had spread into there in the middle of 8<sup>th</sup> century. It was founded

in Nyingma-pa order. Lo Gekar is located at the eastern foot of the mountain divide with Dolpo and an oasis between Gemi(Nepal:Ghami) 8km to the south and Lo Manthang 10km to the north. Lo Gekar means "Pure virtue of Lo"(tib.:*gLo Dge-dkar*) by Snellgrove, and a legend has been said that, the place is one of the sacred place where Padmasambhava and Bodhisattva had ever visited in 8<sup>th</sup> century. I was much impressed by the land itself as the most ideal place for meditation, blessed with grove of poplar trees and abundant pure streams among the bare deserted land, and magnificent southeastern view looking down the lower valley of Marang and Chharang far distance.

North and east side of two storied main building, there are long chains of mani-wheel and the south side is opened for the entrance. Inside the main building, there are two rooms. Walls of the first room are fully adorned by large number of colored stone plaques with wooden frames. They are various Nyingma-pa deities. In the dark small room of the right wall, are two protective goddesses on the horse and ox. Snellgrove described them "ama leg-ldan" and "legs-ldan drag-mo" according to the identifying by his accompanied monk. In inner hall, there are two bronze images of Padmasambhava with his two wives and many other terracotta deities of the both sides illuminated by continuously burned butter lamps. Every other things including ceiling and walls of three directions, are covered thick soot of smoke and only two small spots of the entrance wall were cleaned and restored the original fresh color paintings. One of the rooms of second floor, I could find several stone plaques same as the entrance room.

(21) Chudzong Gompa: (visited. 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct.)

In the middle stream of Sao Chu, the uppermost eastern tributary of Kali Gandaki river, there lies a cave gompa called Sao gompa or Chudzong gompa, at lonely place not any living village thereabout at present. About the origin or founder's name were not known, but once here was a grand monastery at the same place probably in 13-14<sup>th</sup> century. It is said that because of an outbreak of some disastrous incident, the monastery was destructed together with nearby village and a nunnery. After that, Khyung-po Gelon, a Buddhist teacher from Eastern Tibet, restored and rebuilt the present cave gompa In 1992, probably the second foreign visitors reached there, P.Matthiessen and T.Laird narrated in their interesting and well illustrated book "East of Lo

Monthang" about the legend of Sao Gompa (Chudzon gompa) and the areas of upper Sao Chu, of which Lama of Choede Gompa in Lo Manthang told them. According to the story, the upper valley of Sao Chu had ever been largely inhabited and even covered by thick forest in some places. He said that, in old times the land was called "Bayul" (Hidden Valley), namely the paradise. In 1960's, this valley were crowded by armed Kampa soldiers who concealed themselves in a lot of caves, and they had stolen many of the valuable old Tankas, the properties belong to the gompa.

To visit this gompa from Lo Manthang in one day is really a forced march. It takes nine to ten hours to go back and forth between them. No village exist along the way, and to get the gompa one has to ascend some 100m steep and meandering poor path among the craggy ravines from bottom of the river. The entrance is skillfully constructed on one of the ledges of the cliffs. Inside the small chapel, there enshrined three main deities of the past, present and future, Sakyamuni in center and other lots of small images. There also are the old wall paintings and Tankas of successive lamas of Kagyu-pa and other images. The high light of this gompa is another inner room, "Protector's Room" (tib.:mGon-Khang), to which a narrow path lead us from the chapel in utter darkness, because of that there is not a small hole to take in the outside light. Only depending on the lamp, we were suddenly aware of being among the six terracotta deities of life-size, fresh colored fierce face, crowded in narrow and close room. Looking around the three walls by the light, we were still more astonished to know that we were surrounded by the eight superb frescos which were quite excellent. Inevitably for a while I admired the highest level

masterpiece of Buddhist art in Tibet, that displayed the artist's skill in the most prosperous days of Tibetan Buddhism in 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century. The theme of these images is Sakya-pa one,. although images in the main chapel and curious deities were Kagyu-pa ones. The fact means that this cave gompa itself was originally founded by Sakya-pa order, but at later time, the chapel was reconstructed in Duk-pa, one of the Kagyu-pa branches, and that monster-like deities were brought into this Gong-Khang still more later.

Names identified of each deities are explained in attached phograph album.

(22) Garphu Gompa: (visited 1<sup>st</sup> Oct.)

(23) Niphu Gompa: (visited 1<sup>st</sup> Oct.)

After crossing a stream at northern edge of Lo Manthang, we proceed toward north on the vast plateau along the Chinese motor road. Soon the road joins by the wide valley flow down from the north and on the opposite bank of the broad riverbed, Nenyul (Nepal map: Nyanol) village come into the sight. The hill side on the left of the road are entirely arid desert in grey color, contrary with the abundant terraced fields just after harvest beyond the river on the right. Advanced for one hour, we passed by a road side chorten lead to Arka village. Beyond the stream to the east, several villages successively with the dotted line of green poplar groves, were visible beneath the red rock cliffs behind them, on the top of which, a ruined fort is dominating the valley.

Echenbu and Garphu are the northern end of the line of the villages, behind those are numerous caves still used by villagers probably from the old time. Garphu gompa is located among the assembly of village houses. It is said the found of this gompa was not so old. In the main chapel is enshrined by Nyingma-pa deities, Padmasanbhava and his two consorts on the altar protected by glass protected altar.

Niphu gompa is located a short distance from the village going up along Phu Chu (Nepal map: Sichapuhu khola), among the caves on the foot of cliffs. The original name is Nyi-Puk (tib.: Nyi-phug ) means "Cave of the Sun" or Sunny Cave of Lama". The red wall of the gompa is clearly visible from everywhere in the broad valley. The foundation of this gompa was not later than the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, evidenced by the historical fact by the autobiography of Lo O-Kenchen Sonam Huntoup (tib.:Glo-bo mkhan-chen Bsod-nams-lhun-grub, 1456-1532) that he had ever resided in this gompa.

(24) Puwa (not visited)

(25) Namgyal Gompa (not visited)

(26) Lo Manthang. ( stayed from 30<sup>th</sup> Sept. to 4<sup>th</sup> Oct.)

At the time Prof.G.Tucci made the first journey for researches in Lo Manthang in 1952, most of the monasteries there were visited at the first time. Some of the historical sources of Mustang, which had been discovered in Mustang, were collected and corroborated with his profound knowledge of the historical source of Central Tibet. The origin of the religious establishments of there and many of other historical facts were partly

confirmed by the result of this expedition.

In Lo Manthang now, a large scale of restoring of the Buddhist building is starting. We could visit two of the monasteries this time, Chamba Lakhang (under construction) and Choede Gompa. We were much surprised to witness the piles of voluminous lumber for the construction which has supposedly been brought by the truck through Chinese road from the north, not supplied from the south. In Upper Mustang, more of daily necessities of Chinese products and foods, even Nepalese rice can be obtained. For that, rice or cereals of Nepalese product are more over falling in price by around thirty percent less than before in Lo Manthang.

(26) - (A) Chamba-Lhakhang: (visited 2<sup>nd</sup> Oct.).

One of the three famous monasteries in the castled town of Lo Manthang, Chanba (Maitreya) Lakhang is located just the west of King's Palace. In the year of 2001, a construction for reinforcement, financially supported by the King Mahendra Fund has started. On the ground facing the entrance was occupied with heaps of earth and the visitors are directly led to the corridor of second floor, which was repaired by new lumbers. To see the huge statue of Chamba was only possible from the second floor. Only the upper part of the statue is visible from the second floor. Lotus throne and its foundation are in the first floor and the grand images of wall paintings are now not possible to see interrupted by the lumbers placed and confused inside of the hall.

This monastery was founded by the king Amogon Zan-po in 1448, the year when Ngorchen Kunga-Zanpo had stayed in Mustang on his third and the last visit. Additional construction was made fifty years later since the foundation. Inside the second floor is surrounded by full of the superb wall paintings of various kind of Mandala. The paintings of the third floor in which I could not enter, are regrettably said that most Mandalas with increasing damages are in irreparable condition and clearly on the way to disappear.

(26) - (B) Choede Gompa: (visited 30<sup>th</sup> Sept.)

In the morning of the next day after arriving at Lo Manthang. we at once visited this grand monastery at northern part of the town. The building were composed of the Center Hall named "Tsuk-Lakhang" and the neighbouring Assembly Hall. In the main hall, there are beautiful images of Vajradhara,

Buddhas of Three Times and Tara as the center deities.

This monastery was founded in 1710 comparatively later than others. The founder was the King Chewan-Puntsok Gyen-Norbu (tib.: *Tshe-dbang*, also known as *Gtsug-rgyan-nor-bu*.) and was rebuilt in 1822, by Jam-Pal Dan-dul (tib.: '*Jam-dpal-dgra-'dul*) and his queen after destroyed by fire.

(26) - (C) Tupchen Lhakhang: (visited 4<sup>th</sup> Oct. not successful)

For an unexpected trouble, we missed to enter the inside of the gompa, in spite of my long aspiration for admiring the treasury remained the highest Buddhist art of 15<sup>th</sup> century. This gompa was also built in the style of three storied and is said that founded by the king Tashi-gun (tib.: *Bkrs shis-mgon*) in early 1470's in Kagyu-pa order. This is the grandest gompa in Lo Manthang.

(27) Samar (not visited)

(28) Lubra Gompa (not visited)



The wooden prayer shrine of Chhawang with the village in background. (14)



The ancient Khar's palace in Chhawang. (15)



Wide view of Khar's village from the east. (17)



Yak jumps, at the top of disturbed cliff with loss of erosion, a good for vegetation or shrubbery. (19)



White case of yak groups from the north, La Galan. (25)



Yak jumps, at the top of disturbed cliff with loss of erosion, a good for vegetation or shrubbery. (19)





*Gandhara sculpture  
of a deity, Gandhara, 1st-2nd c.*



*The view to the north from the Gandhara valley, Gandhara, 1st-2nd c.*