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# The Spatial Order of the Area of Yangthang and its Affiliated Monastery Ridzong in Ladakh

## Preliminary remarks

This article deals with the idealised spatial ordering of the village of Yangthang in West Ladakh<sup>1</sup>, including the area surrounding it, as an enclosed living space. In a previous article concerning this settlement (Herdick 1999), particular attention was given to the village's economic situation (including its irrigation system), social structures and the way in which it had been laid out and developed. These aspects will be taken up only marginally here to the extent that they enable a better understanding of the topic at hand.

The small village of Yangthang has 97 inhabitants. Originally there were eight "main houses" (*khangpa*), and two others were added later. The village lies some 11 km from the Indus River. From Uletokpo, on the Indus River, it is an approximately three-hour ascent northwards on foot up a side valley. Along the first third of this passage, a second valley, small and narrow, branches off from the side valley, and the monastery lies two to three kilometres into it. Where the valley branches there is a small nunnery called Culicen, which has a number of fields, many apricot and poplar trees, as well as pasture land. Between Culicen and Yangthang lies Labas, where two nuns live in a single house with a few fields and trees. The convent and village are some 10 km apart.

An analysis of the ordering of settlement space and man-made structures is widely accepted as a specifically architectonic subject: fixed spatial functions and "acts", and the "overlying" of space with meanings, for example, come under such an architectural analysis. The

idealised concept of the settlement is what will be dealt with here. The background to this cultural sphere of the Himalaya is sufficiently well known – for instance, the harmonisation of the living space with cosmic powers, protective measures against negative influences and the paradigmatic shaping of the living space in accordance with notions of the cosmos. Various spatial systems or the overlapping of systems occur, and they do not necessarily contradict one another. In the background these are often the manifestations of different historical periods or developments, whose place within assigned values must be treated with utmost caution.

## Overview

One feature of my earlier analysis of the settlement (*ibid.*) in the previous contribution was the close socio-economic nexus between the village and its Gelugpa monastery Ridzong, brought about by the fact that the monastery and village came into being at the same time, around 1841 (see Chhostok 1981: 5). In this article it will become clear that the idealised concept is also attuned to the two "units" in important ways, though both display concomitantly independent systems of their own. (The internal sacred ordering of the monastery complex is not intended as an object of the study.) In the previous study on Yangthang, various social structures could be assigned to particular spatial orderings. The coverage of the spatial systematics by ritual acts will not be expanded in this article to the stages of festivals, since

<sup>1</sup> The gathering of data for this analysis of the village, as well as a survey of the settlement and its surroundings, took place from the middle of October to the beginning of December 1996. Knowledge of and former contacts with Ridzong were the decisive factors in selecting the village. Information collected for the plan drawings was compared with drawings from the Preliminary Report of Ladakh Settlements (1908). Various checks were run during the data collection. This study would not have been possible without others' help. I should like to thank Thupstan Chhostok, Murup Rigzin and various other villagers, Wangchuk Fargo of Nurla and Wangchuk of Uletokpo, Phunchok Dolma and Yangchan Dolma, as well as Nina Walcher, Monika Krenzel (for a number of stimulating suggestions during her detailed commentary at the colloquium), Veronika Ronge, Peter Schwieger and Philip Pierce.

I did not observe these myself. In order to reflect better the spatial orderings of Yangthang and of the area around the monastery, comparable situations in Lamayuru will be pointed out in several places on the basis of earlier studies.

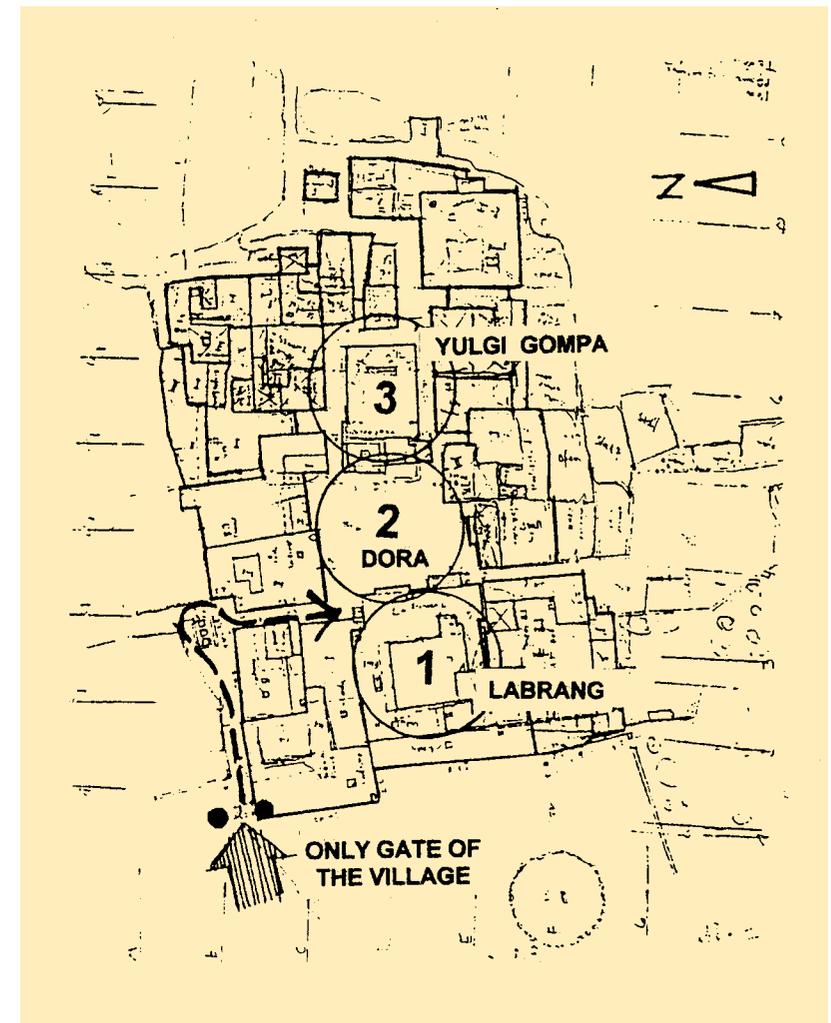
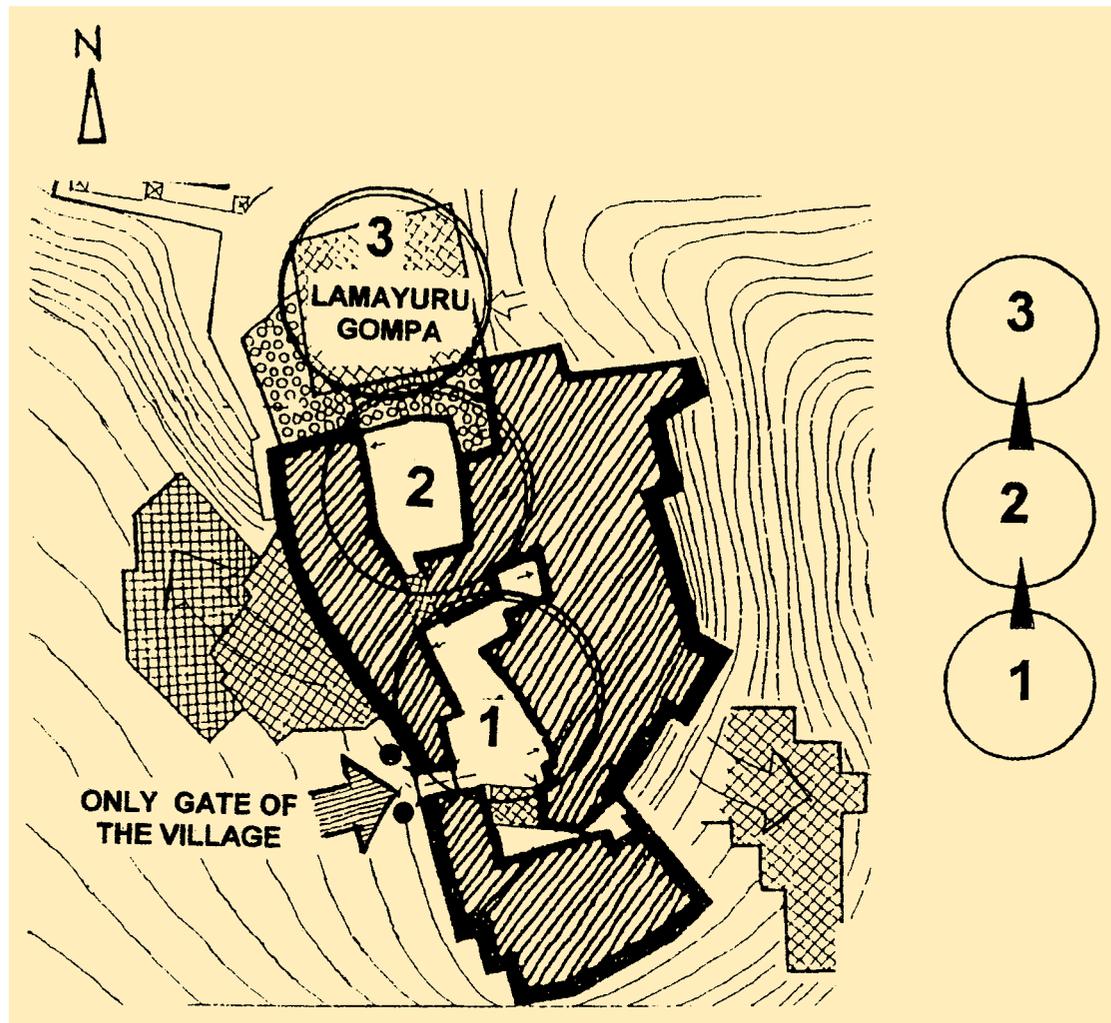
There are various protective zones, sections and enclosed spaces in and around Yangthang and the monastery. Along the important access routes in the valleys there are staggered opportunities for entry, protecting and delimiting the individual sections, without, however, using walls – only symbolic portals. The small, inconspi-

cuous shrines and demarcations in the area around the monastery and settlement (and in the settlement itself) play a particularly prominent role within the landscape.

The objects under consideration here refer, in particular, to three groups of “beings” in the Ladakhi supernatural world, which exist outside the orthodox Buddhist pantheon (e. g. Kaplanian 1995: 101). They are: a) particular local gods or “sky” demons (*stanlha*), b) gods of water and the underworld (*yoklu*) and c) “spirits” of the human world (*barsten*), which are endowed with both good and bad qualities

*Yangthang: view from the north-east. The compactness of construction in the form of a rectangle is apparent. The labrang with its courtyard for the New Year's festivities stands out by reason of its great height. In front are the fields, and north of the fields is the site of the lhatho on a hill (about where the photo was taken). The small shrine on the upper left is a tshatshakhang.*





(see also Brauen 1983: 111 – citing Tucci; Stein 1972: 203). Moreover there are small buildings for cremation (and ancestor worship) and also buildings for protecting the fields and the monastery. Also worth noting, finally, are small man-made objects that are linked with the position of the sun.

#### Spatial partitioning of the village lay-out

Generally speaking, and with less direct reference to Yangthang, there is a concept of concentricity at work. According to Brauen, the village square becomes the centre of the cosmic world on the occasion of marriage festivals. He refers to particular features during the course of the festival. For example, a world mountain is symbolically erected

in the centre of the square, and embodied in a mountain made from butter, flour etc. (*drang-gyas*); or a circular procession around the festival square with an arrow, called *dandar*, is identified with the world mountain (1983: 109-12). An additional feature in Yangthang consists in the sitting arrangements at the marriage square. The bridegroom sits directly in the middle of the square, at the flagpole (*dar-che*), while – in this village, in particular – the bride and the women remain in their houses (Herdick 1999: 205). The social component aside, this may also be seen as a spatial representation of the cosmic opposition between male and female.

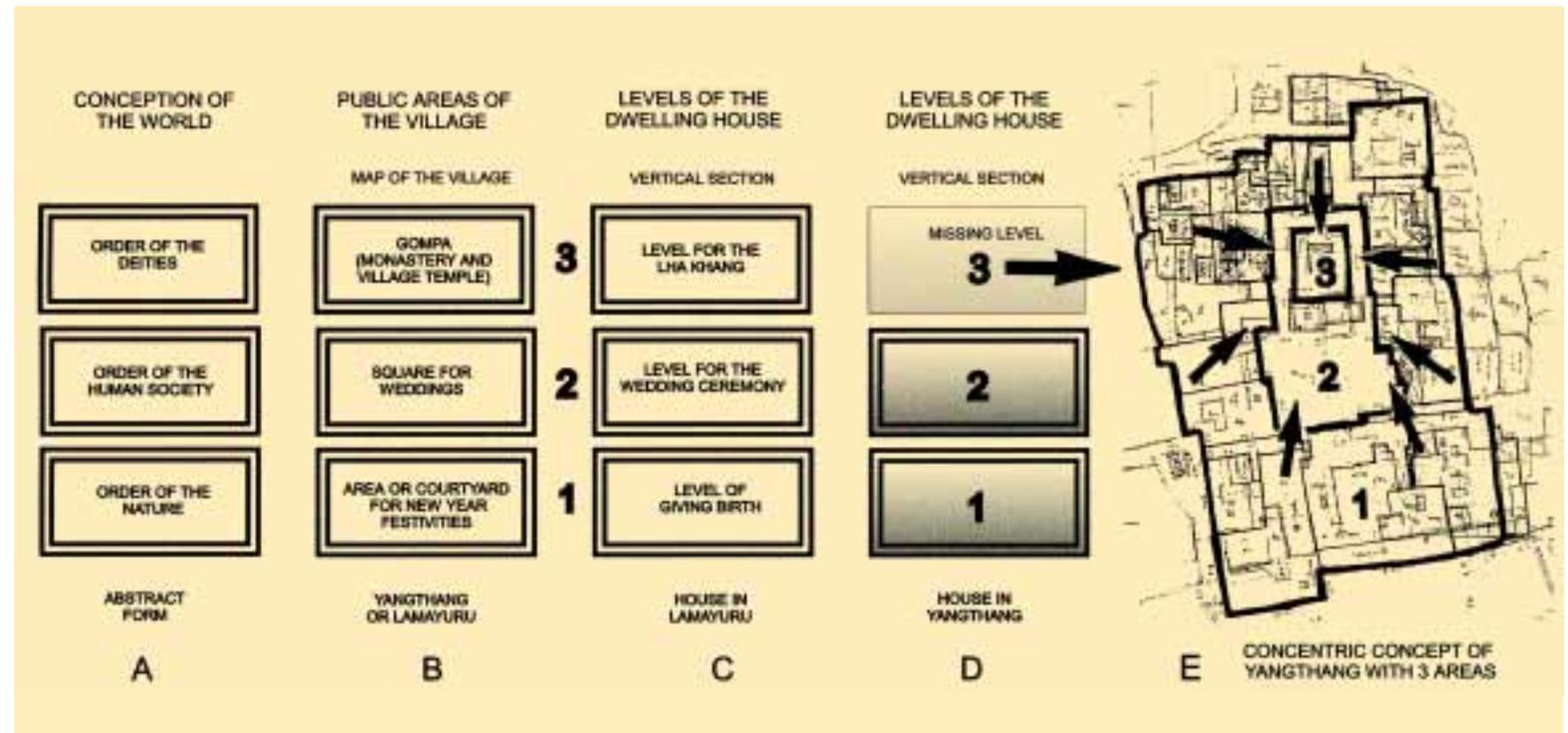
The village structure itself exhibits within the enclosed built-up area both areas that are privileged for certain social groups, based upon the cardinal directions<sup>2</sup>, and a single symbolic portal. The compari-

*Lamayuru (left) and Yangthang (right): the scheme of both villages shows a horizontal spread of three characteristic areas – 1 public area for New Year's festivities (in Yangthang it was originally at the courtyard of the labrang), 2 public area for weddings, 3 the gompa in Lamayuru or Yulgi Gompa in Yangthang. In the ordering of space within the village, the only symbolic gate is at the same spot.*

<sup>2</sup> NW, N and NE, with NW being the privileged zone; see on Yangthang, Herdick 1997a: 208-9; 1999: 199-200, 205.

Schemes of symbolic functions: in abstract form as to compared with the situation in Yangthang and Lamayuru

A: according to M. Brauen the world (as represented in wedding songs) has three spheres of natural order (a), the order of society (b) and the order of deities (c). B: a repetition of the maps of the villages in one scheme. For the horizontal level, see maps of Yangthang and Lamayuru defining three public areas. C: a small schema of the houses in Lamayuru with three levels. The same levels are seen to serve comparable functions in a vertical order from bottom to top: 1 level of giving birth, 2 level of wedding ceremony, 3 level of the house shrine. D: the same schema for a house in Yangthang with one level missing. Contrary to the case in other villages, the houses in Yangthang have no house shrine on the third floor. Usually the shrine is connected with the family of the house, e. g. in laying out corpses (death). E: in a symbolic order, the village of Yangthang is seen as a 'house'. The missing third level can be found in the spatial concept of the village in a concentric horizontal order. All functions of the shrine are transferred to the village temple. That temple corresponds to the usual third level of a house.



son between the plans of Yangthang and Lamayuru. is made because there is a spatial ordering, worth emphasising, that functions analogously in the two villages. In each case there are three horizontally functional areas following one after the other: a) a public area for New Year's festivities<sup>3</sup>, b) a public area for marriages in which the entire village participates, and c) the village temple Yulgi Gompa, with space for gatherings (or in Lamayuru the monastery complex itself).<sup>4</sup> The arrow on both maps marks the single symbolic portals of each village. The location is characteristic - in each case in the same place.<sup>5</sup> The location has to do with the fact that the greatest symbolic threats are expected from this direction.

This scheme of ordering, with three spatial realms or levels that follow on and relate to one another, can be pursued in various ways. The three public areas of the village can also be brought into a connection with the ordering system that reflects the world. A corresponding ordering occurs, for example, in traditional marriage songs. In his analysis of a song collection Brauen demonstrates that three vertically hierarchical orderings also recur: a) the ordering of nature, b) the ordering of human society and c) the ordering of the gods (1980: 73). This tripartite world ordering can be reidentified by assigning the functions of each level to the three areas of the village described

above; for example, the ordering of nature proceeds analogously to the New Year's festival.

According to earlier studies in Lamayuru (Herdick 1997b:415), furthermore, a comparable assignment of roles to the three storeys of a house can be demonstrated in a vertical succession from bottom to top: a) the level for the birth of a child<sup>6</sup>, b) the level for the marriage ceremonies taking place in a house, and c) the level for, among other things, the "house temple" (*lhakhang*)<sup>7</sup>, communication with the gods being the easiest on this upper level. A very similar assignment of roles exists in comparable spheres of Tibetan culture. The three levels of a house are, in Tibet, bound up with the three planes of the world (Stein 1972: 203), these three realms - underworld, earth and heaven<sup>8</sup> - admitting comparison with the previously designated levels (Murdoch 1981: 264 on Zanskar; Jest 1984: 183 on Dolpo).

This ordering of three storeys of a house is not found in Yangthang, since all houses have only two storeys. The missing third level, however, is to be found in the spatial conception of the village. All religious functions of the *lhakhang* are here transposed to the village temple, and the corresponding acts take place there. This means, for example, that the dead are laid out not in the *lhakhang* but in the village temple. In this way the settlement becomes, in a manner of speaking, a

<sup>3</sup> In Lamayuru, the *cham* dances of the monks previously took place on the New Year's dance square, but have now shifted to near the monastery. In Yangthang, by contrast, the New Year's dance and festivities originally took place in the *labrang* (Square "1" on the map). For lack of space, the celebrations were later moved to the main square.

“house”: the settlement embodies a three-tiered horizontally concentric spatial concept, with the village temple located in the centre, corresponding to the third level of a house.

Finally, the cardinal number eight appears to be decisive in the systematisation of the inhabited areas. Thus there were originally eight main houses in Yangthang and in Lamayuru, and eight main *lhatho* in the old part of the village (*lhatho* in this context signifies a territorial deity). Further examples may confirm this tendency.

#### Orientation by means of conspicuous solar positions

In her article “Zeit und Raum in der Geomantik” (1969) Eleanor von Erdberg-Consten comes to the conclusion that spatial orderings are

closely connected with chronological orderings, with, in terms of historical development, the chronological orderings playing the prime role, and spatial orderings evolving out of them. Transpositions of the life and year cycles to vertically layered storeys of houses and to the horizontal staggering of open space in a village has already been discussed. There is still one other transposition of a chronological ordering onto space, namely, onto the nearby land surrounding the settlement.

For the choice of settlement location within the terrain, the solstice points at sunrise and sunset are of importance in Ladakh generally, and in Yangthang in particular. From a fixed observation point in the village, there are natural or artificially constructed demarcation points for these solar positions on the horizon (so-called *nyitho*); fic-

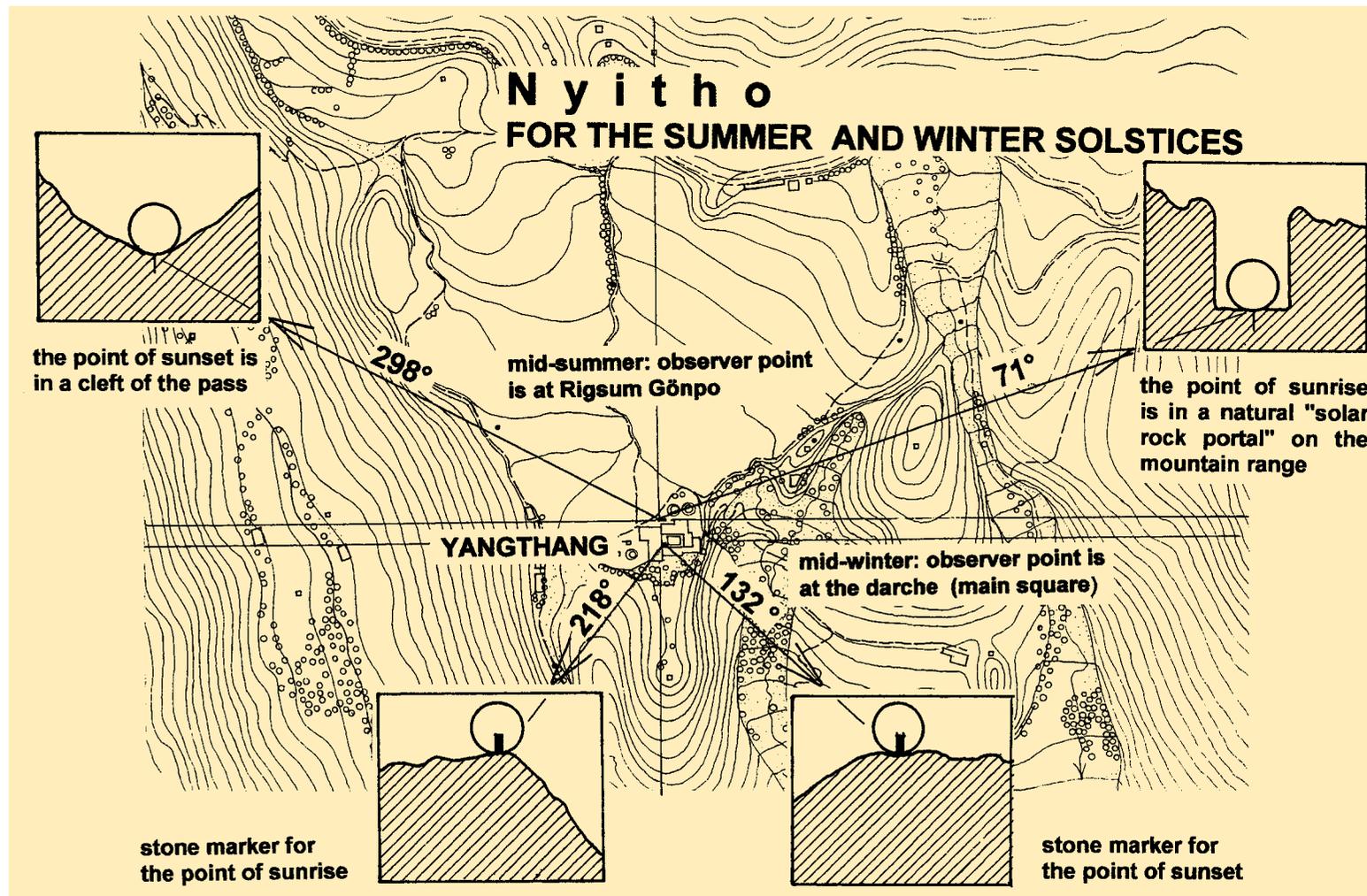
4 There are almost identical zones around the monastery of Ridzong, although no marriages are celebrated in the middle zone, which is assigned to the edifices for the serpent spirit (*lu*) and the associated water source, while further out, and precisely confined to the corresponding (first) zone, the New Year’s festivities are likewise held in the presence of the villagers.

5 To my knowledge, the lone city portal in Lo Manthang/Mustang is also located in the corresponding place, if one considers the most important elements of the settlement.

6 Kim Gutschow reports on one particular aspect in Zanskar that, in a figurative sense, creates a functional connection with the special use of the ground floor in Lamayuru. (According to a custom that is apparently unique to Lamayuru, the ground floor, which contains a special bed *rolang-gu*, is used to provide ‘temporary living space’ for women who are about to give birth.) In Zanskar, the entire family of a house gathers on the ground floor and waits out the coming of the New Year. The New Year is, so to speak, “born” there. The further analogy with the dancing square is obvious.

7 In its sacral adornment and in the significance of its deities, the *lhakhang* is identical with a “small monastery.”

8 According to Brauen (1983: 108), these three realms are the earth, the region between earth and heaven and heaven itself. (This is similar to what is found in Jest and Murdoch, if the first two realms are taken as a differentiation into what is above and below earth).



Yangthang: sun markers (*nyitho*) for the summer and winter solstices

9 Michael Khoo (together with Kim Gutschow) studied the sun markers in Lamayuru (among other things) in the same year that I did. I was earlier aware of the special marker at sunset during the summer solstice, but he was the first to identify and document the marker as a “sun portal” (see 1997: 262f.).

10 The axis “cuts”: two *jangchub chörten* (very important portals), a *mani* wall lengthwise, a large, regularly shaped *mani* hill, one group of *chörten* with small objects of recent origin and a second one of five large *chörten* from the Alchi period and, finally, the open area beyond the *chörten* and settlement for *metho*, where “evil” is banished from houses on New Year’s.

tive lines thus exist between the demarcation and observation points. Natural features of the landscape may in this way have a considerable bearing on the choice of location (e. g. a conspicuously large “solar rock portal” in a stretch of mountains in Yangthang’s surroundings where, in the notch of a pass, the sun exactly rises or sets at the summer solstice); thus the village lies at the intersection of the two lines. These points, which recur as part of the landscape in many cultures, are objects of very controversial speculation. In Ladakh, however, there are close links between these *nyitho* and the phases of agricultural cultivation (for these phases, see Friedl 1983: 238). The demarcations are used by husbandmen as regular calendrical systems of farming. The observation points for these particular sunrises and sunsets are variously chosen for practical reasons, since the angle of elevation to the corresponding points on nearby ridges may be very wide in winter, so that they can be seen over the tops of houses from the central square between the village temple and the *labrang*, whereas in the summer the angle of sight is narrow, and the houses block the view, so that the event is observed from the Rigsum Gönpo at the edge of the village. If a comparison is made with the solstice points in Lamayuru, however, the relationship between the village’s most signi-

ficant cult objects and the notable points of the sun on the horizon seems to have been established deliberately (Herdick 1997a: 211 ff.). The line of sight runs from the observation point – the important Sengegang Lhakhang – through numerous cult objects all the way up to a true “sun portal” on the ridge on the horizon, through which the sun shines at the summer solstice.<sup>9</sup> It is particularly the roof of the temple and the square in front of it that serve as observation sites for the solstice points. The line of sight “cuts” numerous cult objects diametrically.<sup>10</sup> Thus the intentional linear disposition of cult objects as a system becomes clear.

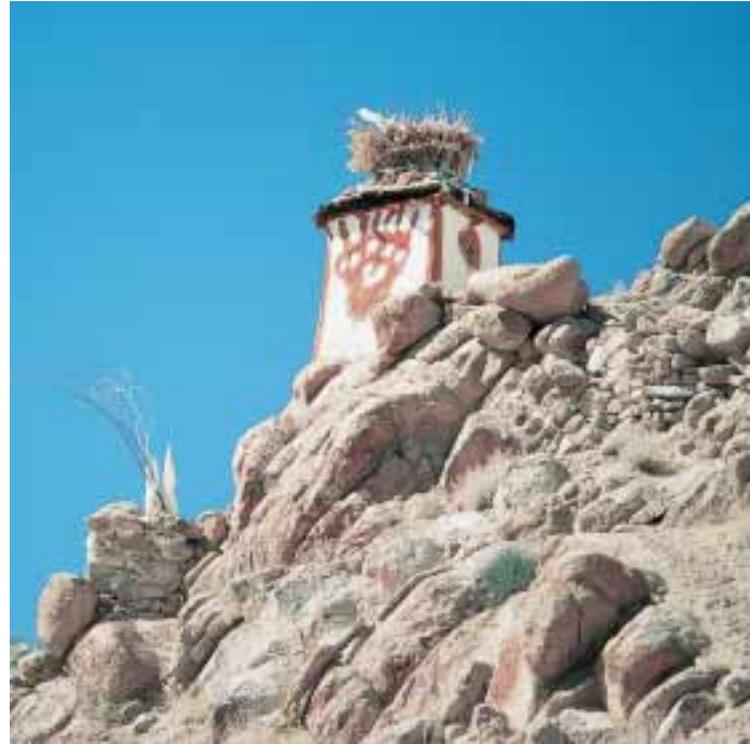
Charles Ramble discussed interesting parallel structures in his public remarks during this colloquium. He termed such lines of sight “vertical movement in a line”, and spoke of a vertical ordering relating to an act of “opening”. He compared one such line of cult objects in the area of his study, interpreting it as symbolically leading to heaven – or as having this intention behind it (for further details see Ramble 1997).

#### The ordering of three groups of local gods and beings that cannot be assigned to the orthodox Buddhist pantheon

The three groups of “beings” and deities mentioned previously will now be discussed in more detail. The systematisation undergone in spatially ordering the cult squares is very characteristic of Yangthang. Group a) with particular “heavenly” gods is embodied in the *lha*, these being territorial deities. Deserving of special mention are the *lhatho* of the village and the *lhatho* of the monastery, which are linked with or refer to each other. According to local history, these are supposed to be the opposite way around, with a red *lhatho* (Trashig Tenkyong) being assigned to the village, and a white one (Trashig Zingkyong) to the monastery.<sup>11</sup> Both are to be viewed, among other things, as key tutelary deities for the settlement area, with further systematisation taking place within the monastery.<sup>12</sup> The village *lhatho* enjoys the additional reputation among the villagers of “spreading peace,” while the monastery *lhatho* is associated with respect and worship. (Interestingly, the nuns of Culicen find themselves being assigned to the village *lhatho*). Another closely bonded pair of *lhatho* (Skt. *upāsaka*), performs a function approximating to that of a guard or



*Lamayuru: the ‘stone portal for the sun’ serves to observe the setting sun at the summer solstice. The observation point is the important Sengegang Lhakhang and on the line between both points all the way up to a true ‘sun portal’ on the ridge on the horizon are placed numerous cult objects: two Changchub Chörten, two mani walls and many small chörten. Further, the line runs through the middle of the group of five old chörten dated to the early Alchi period.*



Right  
Yangthang: the red lhatho named Trashi Tenkyong is associated with the village.

Left, above and below  
Ridzong: The white lhatho named Trashi Zingkyong is associated with Ridzong Gompa. The lhathos of Yangthang and Ridzong are the main territorial deities for the village or monastery and are linked with each other. Local tradition says that their original identity has been exchanged.



threshold, being located at the last valley entrance to the monastery and facing the fields of Culicen. Yangthang's *lhatho* is at the same time linked with another local deity, the *yul-lha* (Trashi Tenkyong)<sup>13</sup>, and this comes out particularly during the annual ritual acts of worship. The *phalha* (Trashi Zekyong), on the other hand, "sits" at the village monastery in the centre of the village.<sup>14</sup>

An interesting observation with regard to the spatial location of key protective and tutelary deities was made by Franz-Karl Ehrhard in his presentation during this colloquium. He noted that in the case of Mustang they are always found outside and never inside the settlement (or the monastery). This principle of spatial ordering is also met with in the placement of the *lhatho* within the local landscape of Yangthang and Ridzong.

Highly typical is the second group of *lu* deities, who are associated with water or the underworld, and manifest themselves essentially through small shrines (*lubang*). These snake deities play an important role throughout the whole of the Himalaya (and India), being associated with fertility and well-being; in Ladakh (and Tibet), they are further closely linked with the "lord of the earth" (*sadag*).

The group of four *lu* centring on the very first complex of old fields to be brought into use (*mazhing*), which they are said especially to

11 The red *lhatho* associated with the village, given its colour, may be an indication of animal sacrifices that were performed in the past, whereas such sacrifices are impossible at a white *lhatho*, i. e. at the monastery. The village *lhatho* contains only one wall opening, on the back side, while the monastery *lhatho* has two corresponding openings, at the front and back. According to statements by villagers, there are *thangka* in both *lhatho*. And according to still others, there is a vessel (*dhusna*) filled with precious metals in each of them. Interestingly, both *lhatho* are practically the same in size and in the form of their roof, even if the added top structure of annually restored holy shrubs etc. is not found at the monastery.

12 The internal protective deity of Ridzong Gompa, for example is, Palden Lhamo who is represented on a *thangka* in the south-western corner of the *zimchung*.

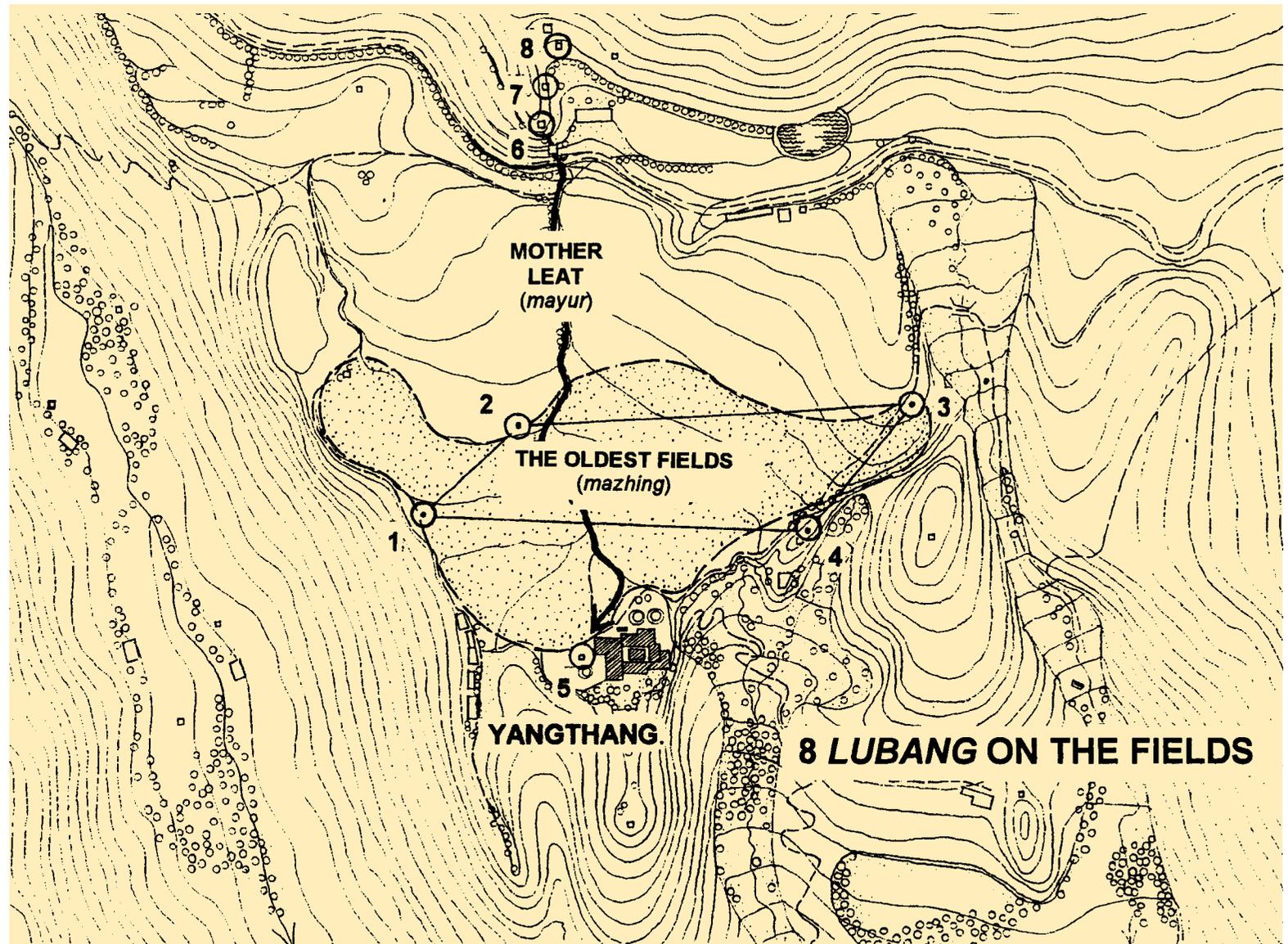
13 The name of the *yul-lha* matches the one recorded by Pascale Dollfus and kindly made available to me. Her reference reconfirms that *yul-lha* and *lhatho* are identical.

14 The information on the location of the *phalha* could not be personally verified, since the research relating to it was not conducted on site.

15 The system of four *lubang* surrounding the oldest fields - the so-called "mother fields" (*mazhing*) - was given prominence, to the extent that the villagers pointed out the system of four shrines to the author, showing him these rather inconspicuous shrines in the fields and how they were related. They denied, however, that the four shrines were ritually worshipped or kept up. (They must have been treated with circumspection, though, since they have not been damaged for around 150 years in spite of being made of unburned clay material.) Given that the other four *lubang* are assigned to the same period of origin and, together with the previously mentioned group of four *lu*, systematically "embrace" a somewhat enlarged connected tract, if terrain profile is considered, one must be prepared to acknowledge the closed "ring" of an earlier intentionally erected group of eight. Such a group likewise includes the old fields, while highlighting the key area of (life-bringing) irrigation water.

16 In one old house in Lamayuru there is likewise an example of a *lu* shrine on the same floor (in the old part of Lamayuru there is always at least a second floor). No systematic survey was carried out on *lu* shrines, but of approximately 25 houses visited it was only in a closed-off room of this one house that a shrine was found. The rooms surrounding the *lu* shrine were for storage (animal feed etc.).

17 The definition of what a *lu* shrine is there was given by the monks. The two shrines directly at the water source may, given their location, be *pungpa* shrines, which are similar in meaning and appearance. This possibly needs to be cleared up.

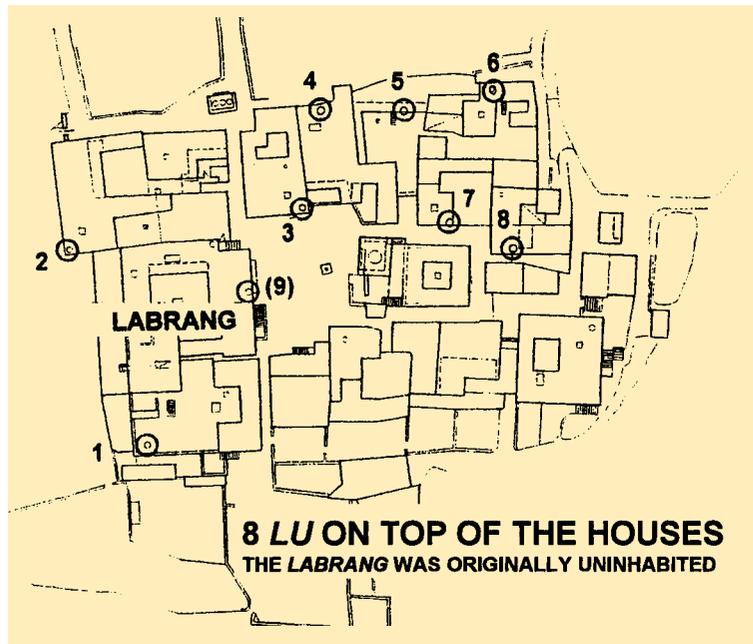


protect, may be highlighted here.<sup>15</sup> According to statements made by the villagers, they were erected by the founder of the monastery and village, Lama Tshultrim Nyima. Another group of four *lu* dating from this foundational period stands along the main irrigation channel for the fields (*mayur*): three at the important fork in the channel near the *lhatho*, and another at the end of the channel at a threshing floor on the outskirts of the village. In the area around the village, then, there are eight *lu* objects.

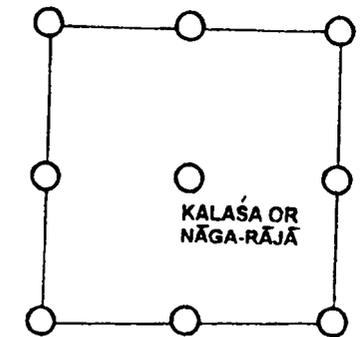
A further feature of the village, in this connection, is to be seen in the

similar cult furnishings of houses. A *lu* shrine<sup>16</sup> is found on the roof of every main house (*khangpa*), without any preference shown to cardinal direction. There were eight *lu* shrines corresponding to the original eight main houses. Here, obviously, there is the same cardinal number for the surrounding as for the village - in each case eight shrines. Directly in front of the monastery there are four additional *lu* shrines marking the small fertile area around a water source.<sup>17</sup>

Of interest (because it possibly served as a background) is the related notion, applied in the region, of the quadratic ordering of eight *lu*



Yangthang: location of eight shrines dedicated to water deities (*lubang*) around the village (opposite) and eight more within the village itself. Four are placed around the oldest complex of fields (*mazhing*), four along the 'mother leat' (*mayur*) and eight on the roofs of the original eight main houses (*khangpa*). The scheme shows a configuration of nine *lu* on the ground in the shape of a *maṇḍala* for a rite worshipping the *lu* during house construction or in front of a *lu* shrine. The photo shows the *maṇḍala* of eight *lu* during ritual performances and the eight *lu* as depicted in a textbook of an *önpo*.



objects in the form of a *maṇḍala* during house and temple foundation ceremonies, and also during other forms of worship of the *lu* in temples or on the surface of the earth in front of a *lu* shrine. The side of a square includes three objects, with the central ninth object being represented either by a sacred vase (*kalaśa*) filled with medicinal substances or by a *lu* king (*nāga-rāja*) – according to a monk from Rinzong; the notion is also documented in a similar form in a figure in the textbook of an astrologer (*önpo*) from Lamayuru. There is a possible association of the eight above-mentioned groups with *maṇḍalas* for village space and expanses of fields. At least the similarity of structures is easily recognisable.<sup>18</sup>

Further, given the demonstrable simultaneous erecting of the *lu* shrines at the foundation of the village and monastery, a singular feature becomes evident during the clearing of associated farmland. During the discussion of his presentation at this colloquium, Charles Ramble remarked that the sacralisation of a landscape by the establishment of *lu* systems and the (controlled) supply of water often occurs in the Tibetan cultural sphere in the person of the ruler of the realm; it is only through this act that normal land becomes sacred land – a sacred landscape. A motif that appears in many Tibetan and Hima-

layan mythologies is the subjugation of subterranean serpent spirits as a prelude to human habitation or cultivation (see Ramble 1997: 194–98).

A number of features in Yangthang are assignable to the second level, that of the 'human world'. The first one is a well-known element, the "earth-door sky-door" (*sago namgo*) that protects the human "middle world" from other worlds. In the figure, however, only the *sago namgo* visible on house walls, and featuring the head of a (male) sheep, are documented, since the other types of *sago namgo* are buried in the floors of rooms and at thresholds.<sup>19</sup> The *sago namgo* appearing on the map have the function of keeping the gates to heaven and the underworld securely closed (in order to ward off bad influences arising there), while also assuring the protection of animals from wolves. Their location in the village is systematised. They have all, with one exception, been installed on the walls of houses on the outer border of the village. Moreover, they are always, again with one exception, installed on the corners of houses in pairs. The one exception is explained by the impossibility of a corner placement due to neighbouring houses; in the second case, the second object is missing, presumably because a new building was erected there. The pairwise

<sup>18</sup> Various structures in the ordering of the *lubang* in a way similar to *maṇḍalas* may be highlighted (these apply equally to *tshatshakhang*, repositories of moulded clay images, and the Gyalchen Shi, the Protectors of the Four quarters dealt with below). It is noteworthy that the idea of circular or square figures associated with a *maṇḍala* need not be transposed in a strict geometrical fashion to the landscape or settlement; rather the protected area is adapted to elements of the settlement and landscape, and also perhaps to old cult sites. Only the cosmos exhibits ideal geometric structures, in accordance with the world view; for some cult buildings there is often a nearly idealised form, representative of the cosmos in the guise of a model.

<sup>19</sup> Wangchuk Fargo from Nurla notes three other buried *sago namgo*: 1) the head of a wolf, buried in the (house) stall, ensuring that the sheep and cows give milk; 2) the head of a camel, buried under the sill of the main door, for the protection of the children; and 3) the head of a fox for the success of business dealings, in a place determined by astrologers. For further discussion see Dollfus 1994.

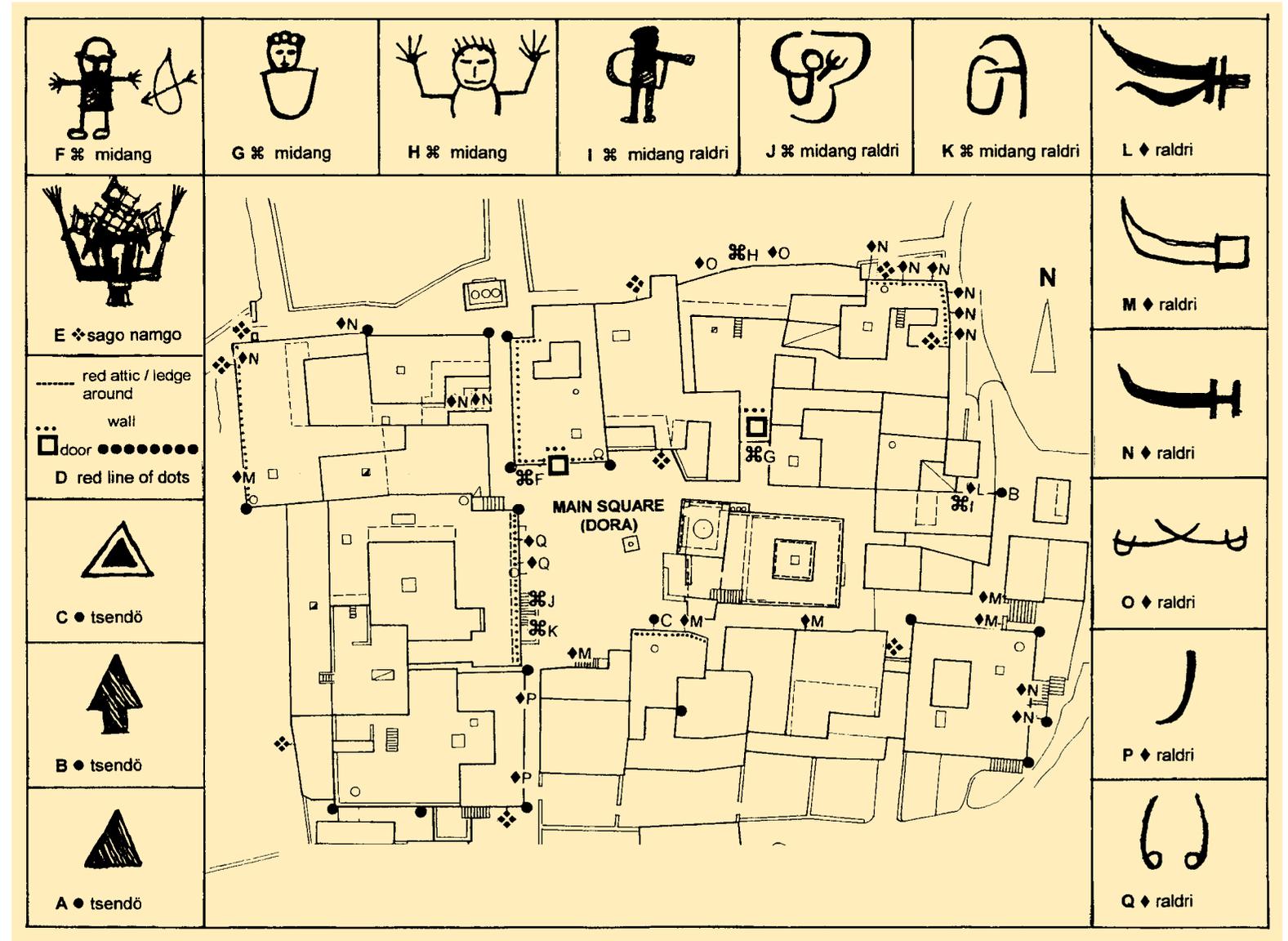
ordering is seen by Wangchuk Fargo as serving the need to protect each house twice (from heaven and the underworld).

Dotted lines along the wall of the house are likewise meant to provide protection. They may be found on the wall next to the symbolic village portal and on houses leading up to and on the main square (among others, the *labrang*); similar protection is offered by the red-painted attic moulding on the two sacred buildings (*labrang* and village temple). Dotted lines over entrance doors have to do with household rites: (symbolically) evil objects are first taken and thrown

outside, and finally the border (i. e. door) is “closed” by means of the dotted line.

A further group of supernatural beings, the *tšen* (Ladhaki *tsan*), a kind of spirit<sup>20</sup>, lives between the upper world of the gods and the underworld of the *lu*, and thus is found within the realm of the “human world”. *tšen* are split beings termed “anti-men” (Kaplanian 1995: 101), having both positive and negative qualities.<sup>21</sup> Apart from a *tšen* king (Yamshü), they are regarded as not being organised socially, and all symbols having to do with *tšen* are considered to serve a

Yangthang: signs of protection on house walls



20 Other spirits assignable to the human world are the yellow *nyen*.

21 In most cases, negative qualities are ascribed to *tšen*, as bringers of disease and death or as the souls of the dead who rove around at night (e. g. Riaboff 1997, and also variously in Brauen 1980). From the front they look like beautiful men or women, but from behind like horrific beings without any spine (Wacker 1997: 53, referring to Riaboff). Wangchuk Fargo says, with regard to Nurla, that they may, along with negative things, also bring happiness and well-being. In Lamayuru it has been observed that *tšen* stones are occasionally set up in pairs, a stone painted white standing next to one painted red, the former embodying the “good” qualities.

protective function; spirits are kept away by them. In Yangthang, the only corresponding symbols are ones on walls (*tseñdö*), which are painted not from the outset, but only as the situation dictates, and according to the instructions of the astrologer (*önpö*). There are regularities in the ordering of *tseñ* in the village area, but no clear systematisation, even if numerous examples exist. The most frequent location in the older part of the settlement is on the corners of houses. Moreover, there are the stylised figural representations of the so-called *midang*, depicted either with or without a sword. Along with the various types of bare representations of swords (*raldri*) they are seen by the monks as having the same meaning as the *tseñ*.<sup>22</sup> The *midang* on the northern outer extremity of the village are worth noting. The two hands with spread fingers present an impressive apotropaic gesture. In general, the apotropaic symbols are most frequently seen at the village square and along the north-east corner of the village. They are also located along the remaining border areas, all except for the south.

A more detailed discussion of the three groups follows, beginning with the *lhatho* (see page 81). Characteristic of their location with respect to the village is their inclusion of the fields that lie between the *lhatho* and the village. This spatial position is reconfirmed by the ordering and function of the corresponding social group, the lone *cutshog* group in the village. The group exhibits a horizontal social partitioning, in which economic, social and political concerns of the village, along with religious ceremonies, come particularly into play. The village *lhatho* thus symbolically embodies political power within the village. Through its mutual relations with the *lhatho* of the monastery, the village *lhatho* manifests the power of the monastery in a certain sense. This intimate bond between the two *lhatho* is strengthened by their identical period of origin. There is a third component as well: one main house (*khangpa*) of the *cutshog* group and a monk from the monastery are responsible on a rotational basis for the organisation of the annual ceremonies during the Ladakhi New Year's festival (*Losar*). It is for this reason, interestingly, that the inhabitants of Yangthang judge their *lhatho* (or *yul-lha*) to be more powerful than the corresponding shrine(s) of the large neighbouring village of Hemis Shugpacan. Of decisive importance for the status of the *lhatho*, however, is its superordinate function as *yul-lha*; this means that, in the case of Yangthang, *yul-lha* and *lhatho* are identical, as shown in the ritual context of the New Year celebrations.

Of further interest is the placement of the *phalha* deity, which is assigned to the vertical social grouping (*phaspun*):<sup>23</sup> the object is located in the centre of the village; the *phaspun* group has nothing to do, for

instance, with the economy and the fields but rather plays a supporting role in important family celebrations<sup>24</sup>; the worship of the *phalha* again occurs at New Year.

To return to the *tseñ*: along with their relatively unsystematic placement, the striking feature in Yangthang is the complete lack of *tseñ* stones. The sacred, red-painted stones (also called *tsag*) not only have the effect of keeping spirits away but are also manifestations of the *tseñ*. In the first place, stones in the area surrounding houses are not possible in Yangthang, given the density of construction; secondly,

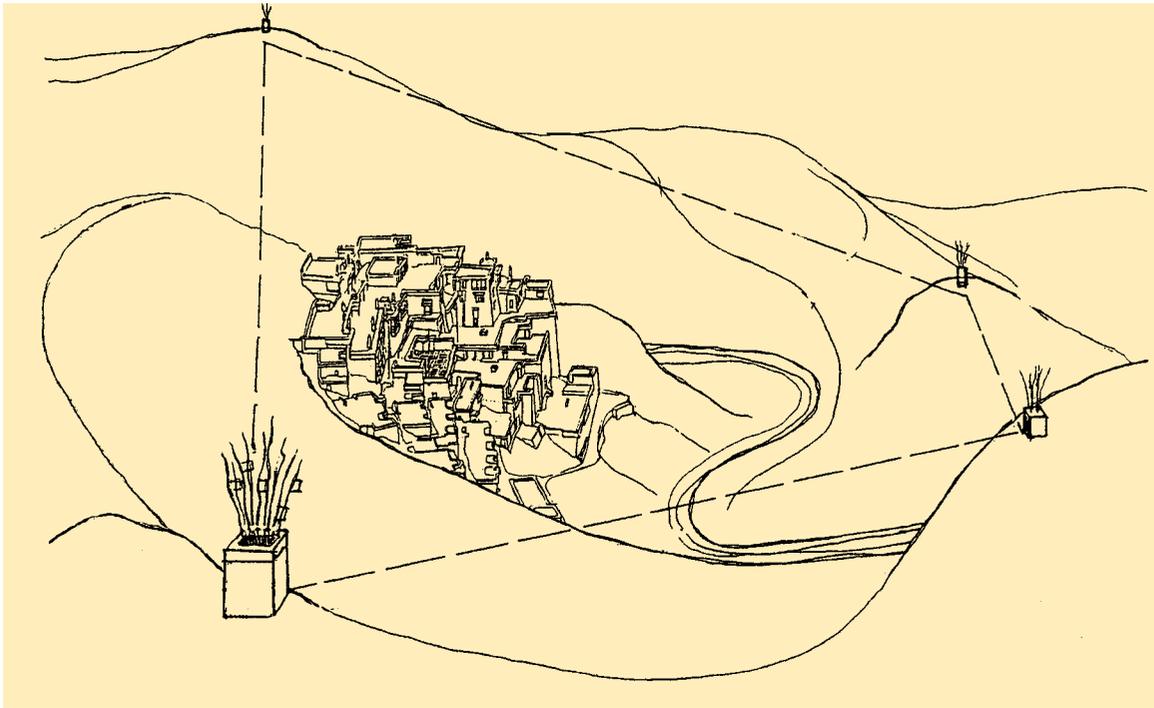


One of the four red painted *tseñ* stones in front of Phyang monastery

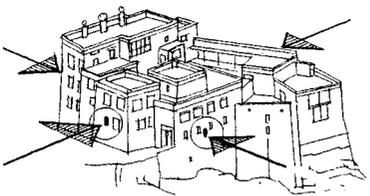
22 The pronouncements of the monks ought for the most part to be accurate. Several villagers were questioned by one monk, but a more exact study among the villagers would be desirable.

23 The *phaspun* group has no particular name in Yangthang.

24 According to Brauen (1980: 25), a particular *phaspun* group is associated with a particular *lhatho*, though the situation is possibly different in other villages. In Lamayuru it is clear that certain *lhatho* proved to be viewed in connection with territorially organised *cutshog* groups, whereas the territorial ordering of the *phaspun* groups there is the exception (Herdick 1997a:214–21). Generally, though, the *phalha* is also bound to the settlement.



Ridzong: Gyalchen Shi (skt. lokapāla) shrines located on four hills surrounding the monastery



Lamayuru: Gyalchen Shi shrines on the outer walls of the monastery, oriented towards the cardinal directions

there may have been a lack of interest on the part of the founder of the monastery and village, since not everyone in Ladakh believes in *tсен*. In the upper Indus valley, the placement of four *tсен* stones around houses (e. g. on garden walls) is common; they protect and give a cosmic overlay to the space around a house, in correspondence with the four cardinal points. In Lamayuru, the village strongly influenced by the *Drogpa*, a single protective red *tсен* stone on the roof is common. (In the vertical hierarchy, it is thus on a par with the *lhatho*, and directly follows the “orthodox Buddhist gods” in the *lhakhang*). In both cases, the stones are part of the important ritual structure of a house, which is incomplete without them. The installation of four large *tсен* stones around the monastery of Phyang is worthy of note; there the stones serve the same function as for a house.

One final remark remains to be made about Yangthang and its monastery: a) the *lha*<sup>25</sup>, as territorial tutelary deities, are found at notable points in the north along the periphery of the most directly indispensable living space containing either man-made structures alone (monastery) or both man-made structures and fields (village); b) the *tсен* objects referring to a house are found exclusively within the village; whereas c) the *lu* objects occupy, on the one hand, the village space, fields and water channels and, on the other, the water source in the area in front of the monastery.

The three interrelated groups of the *lha*, *tсен* and *lu* may, in a less obvious sense, be linked in meaning to the previously discussed three public domains and the three levels of a house.

In the horizontal ordering of the landscape, two forms (*tсен* and *lu*) appear in the centre, while in the area around the village there follows first the systematisation of the *lu* and then, further beyond, that of the tutelary deities (*lha*). It is particularly in Yangthang that the *lha* objects are not found in the village itself. In the vertical ordering, however,



Lamayuru: the iconographic representation of Gyalchen Shi in the form of a basrelief in the outer wall of the monastery.

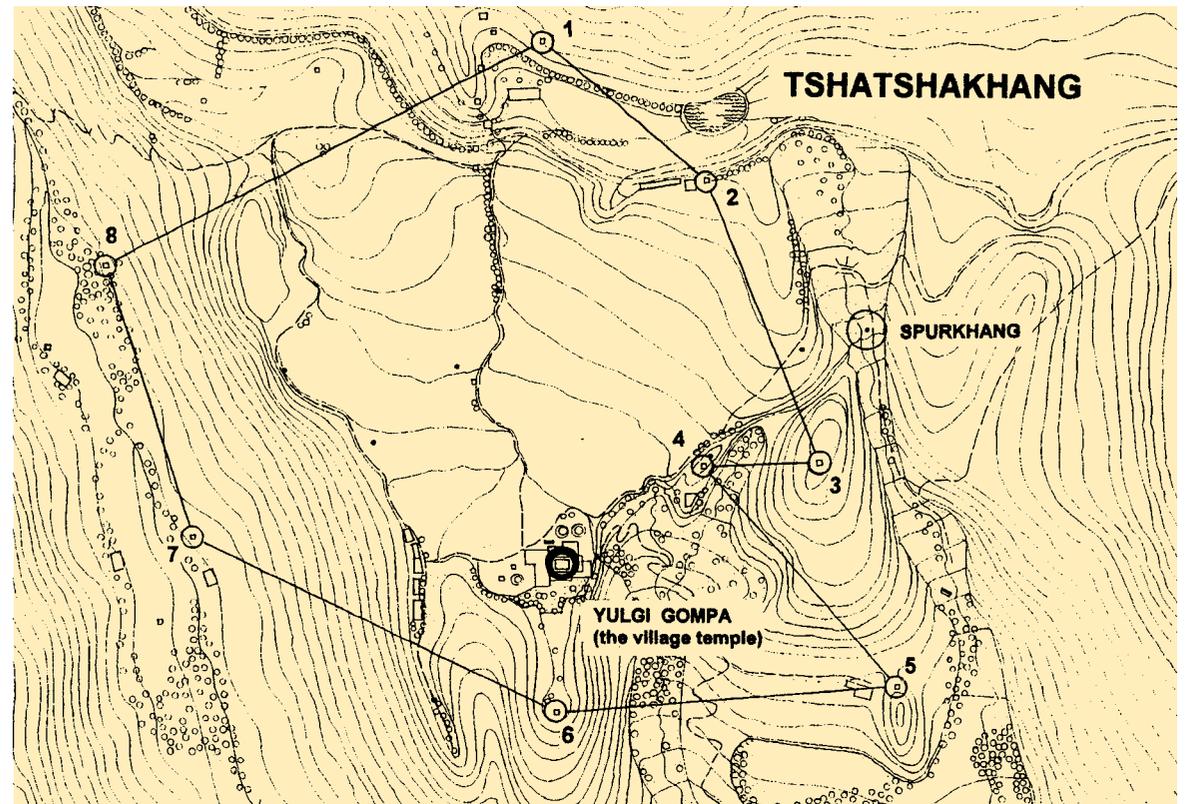
25 The term *lha* means simply “god”, and is almost always used for local and hardly ever for the “orthodox” deities.

there is one additional feature. The gods of the *gompa*, and the *lhakhang* in houses and the village temple, are placed higher in the hierarchy (even though their plane corresponds to that of the *lha*), which emerges in the fact that a *lhatho* is generally never allowed to be built on a roof of a house shrine (*lhakhang*). In the end, however, the local significance of the tutelary deities is such that they are of equal status or even “more important”, as made clear by their position on the highest hill in the region. In the case of the monastery of Ridzong, furthermore, the four *Gyalchen Shi* (who are, among other things, the guardians of the cardinal directions) are placed on higher surrounding hills than those of the monastery *lhatho*, but this may be accounted a local idiosyncrasy.

### The particular form around the monastery

First I should like to refer once more to the previous section. At the monastery of Phyang, four large *tse*n stones have been set up at the foot of the hill on which the monastery sits. According to a number of monks from Ridzong, there is a relationship between the four so-called *Gyalchen Shi* shrines around the monastery and the four *tse*n stones around houses, the latter being merely a “more primitive” variant of the former.<sup>26</sup> This view is undoubtedly disputed, and no textual evidence has so far been found. What is interesting in this context, though, is the example just mentioned in Phyang. One can recognise by way of a parallel structuring between the *Gyalchen Shi* and the four *tse*n stones the fact that the object (the monastery or the house) is both cosmically oriented and protected by the four objects.

At Ridzong Gompa, four simple *Gyalchen Shi* stone shrines sit on four surrounding hills. Insofar as the monastery itself is viewed as a *maṇḍala* structure, they stand as guardians of the four cardinal directions, together with the corresponding portals. As the first act during meditation at Ridzong, the monks invoke these four *lokapāla* and ask for their protection. The convent of Culicen also has four simple corresponding stone shrines on four surrounding hills or rock ledges.<sup>27</sup> In Lamayuru, apart from the pictorial representation of the four *Gyalchen Shi* on the outer wall of the *dukhang*, there is a spatial system of the four objects. Unlike in Ridzong, the four *Gyalchen Shi* have not been placed on surrounding hills but are located as bas-reliefs in the four outer walls of the monastery, at a height of two to three metres above the floor. The iconographic presentation of the approximately 20x30 cm relief can clearly be distinguished on the photo (see page 78). As in other locations, the sacred structure in Lamayuru faces almost imperceptibly inward.



### Spatial ordering in connection with death rites and ancestral cults

The cremation ovens for the dead (*spurkhang*) of both village and monastery lie each in peripheral areas of the “nearby surroundings” beyond the fields (in the same ringed zone as the *tshatshakhang* described below). The examples known to me from the cloisters of Ridzong, Culicen and Lamayuru are always situated in the north for the monks (or nuns). Their corresponding villages have their *spurkhang* in the north-east or north-west, along the banks of a stream or a channel for irrigated pasture (in Yangthang, in the north-west). In every case, however, they lie beyond (i. e. north of) the fictive observation lines between the rising and setting points of the summer solstice and the corresponding fixed observation point in the village (see above for the location of the line). The cremation site (*spurkhang*) functions additionally, contrary to orthodox Buddhist notions, as an ancestral cult site; space has been assigned to the ancestors in the areas surrounding the village just described. Worship of ancestors, which involves feeding them, takes place during the Ladakhi New

*Yangthang: the system of eight repositories of moulded clay images (tshatshakhang) around the village and fields and the location of cremation ovens for the dead (spurkhang) in the north-east. Both types of object are related to death. A ninth repository of tshatsha is located inside the village temple.*

<sup>26</sup> The names of the *Gyalchen Shi*, the four guardian kings (Skt.: *lokapāla*), are Yulkhorhrung, Namthohre, Phagkyebu and Migmizang.

<sup>27</sup> One of the four shrines has now fallen into decay. Basically it may be said otherwise that there are the same small cult buildings around the nunnery, but that they have been much more simply constructed, at half the number or with additional ties to the surrounding fields.

Year's festival. As for the *lhatho*, which is likewise worshipped at New Year's, it is more the origin of the community (*phaspun* group) that is the connecting point; according to Brauen, the ancestors are also worshipped in spring at the demarcation stones of the "mother field" (*mazhing*), when the latter is ploughed for the first time in the new year (1980: 123). Of interest, too, is the time of day in which the festivities for the *lhatho* and *spurkhang* occur: for the former, towards the end of night when the morning star rises; for the latter, in the morning.

Further, in connection with the death rite, a group of eight of the small *tshatshakhang* buildings are of significance. As stated above, these are set up in the peripheral area. These shrines are linked at the same time with life and the "universe" (other functions are passed over here). There are no conscious directions of ordering for particular persons. There is a closed ring around the fields and village of Yangthang, while in the case of Ridzong Gompa there is a group of four so-called *tshatshakhang* at and beneath the monastery, and two other such groups in Culicen and in Labas (so that in these places, too, a system is formed around the number eight). Also worth mentioning is the ninth place in the centre of the ring in Yangthang: in the superstructure (lantern tower) above the main chamber of the village temple (*Yulgi Gompa*).

All *tshatshakhang*, according to Brauen's account, must be placed at a symbolic "pure" site. Pure sites are hills, *chörten*, house cult rooms or mani walls (1980: 86). In Yangthang, in almost all cases, either hills were chosen, a shrine was set next to the lone *chörten*, or the temple was used. Two exceptions are the shrine at the edge of the cultivated river valley, but these lie somewhat higher and form the extension of the ring form. The central ninth place for the *tshatsha* in the village temple again makes it clear that the temple functions as a substitute for the third level of house cult rooms, as already demonstrated by the laying out of the dead. On the fourth day after the cremation of the corpse, a ceremony (*ruschog*) with small bone fragments from the deceased takes place in the temple. These are parts – usually kneecaps, elbow joints and skulls – left over from the cremation. Brauen (*ibid.*) notes that a monk meditates on the "emptiness" of the pieces of bone, summons the consciousness of the dead person and finally sends it to a pure, holy land (*dagzhing*). Afterwards the bones are ground into powder and mixed with earth, and in the end pressed as a paste into the forms of three to eleven *tshatsha*. It is important that the holy grass *tshvakusha* be stuck into the top of the *tshatsha*. Normally, the *tshatsha* are kept in the *lhakhang* of a house for about one year and then laid in one of the *khang* in the peripheral area (the

choice of shrine is of no importance). In Yangthang, only the village temple (*Yulgi Gompa*) comes into question as a temporary storage location, as is seen in the fact that the *tshatsha* there still have their fresh coat of white paint. Additionally, the *tshatshakhang* serve as the final resting place for discarded (holy) texts.

Wangchuk Fargo remarked that the *tshatshakhang* have the pure, sacred status of a "small monastery" since, in contrast to the *lubang*, they can be adorned with flags, and also have the relevant roof shape and an opening in it. In her commentary during the colloquium, moreover, Monika Krenzel raised the question whether the three sacred "fields", like the third level of a house containing the cult room (*lhakhang*), the village temple and the monastery are all connected with the function of "death". As in the case of the *tshatshakhang*, these three "fields" have in common the fact that they are regarded as higher, spiritual, transcendent planes, and so, for example, are a place for the gods and – in some cases a waystation preceding rebirth – for the spirits of the deceased. In the case of the *tshatsha*, though, the spatial ordering within the landscape is of interest: first the *tshatsha* are made and left for a while in the centre (house or temple), and then an eightfold circular distribution occurs on the periphery, where their gradual decay takes place. According to H. H. Drikung Kyabgon Chetsang, in Lamayuru the *tshatsha* are finally placed, without a shrine, beyond the village border and outside of view from it. The *rimpoche* of Ridzong, interestingly, enjoys a privileged status in connection with the spatial ordering: he is the only "lama" to be cremated not in an externally located *spurkhang* but at a *jinseg* site directly on the upper floor of the monastery (on the roof of the main assembly room); his rebirth is held to be different.

#### Orientation and placement of other special objects

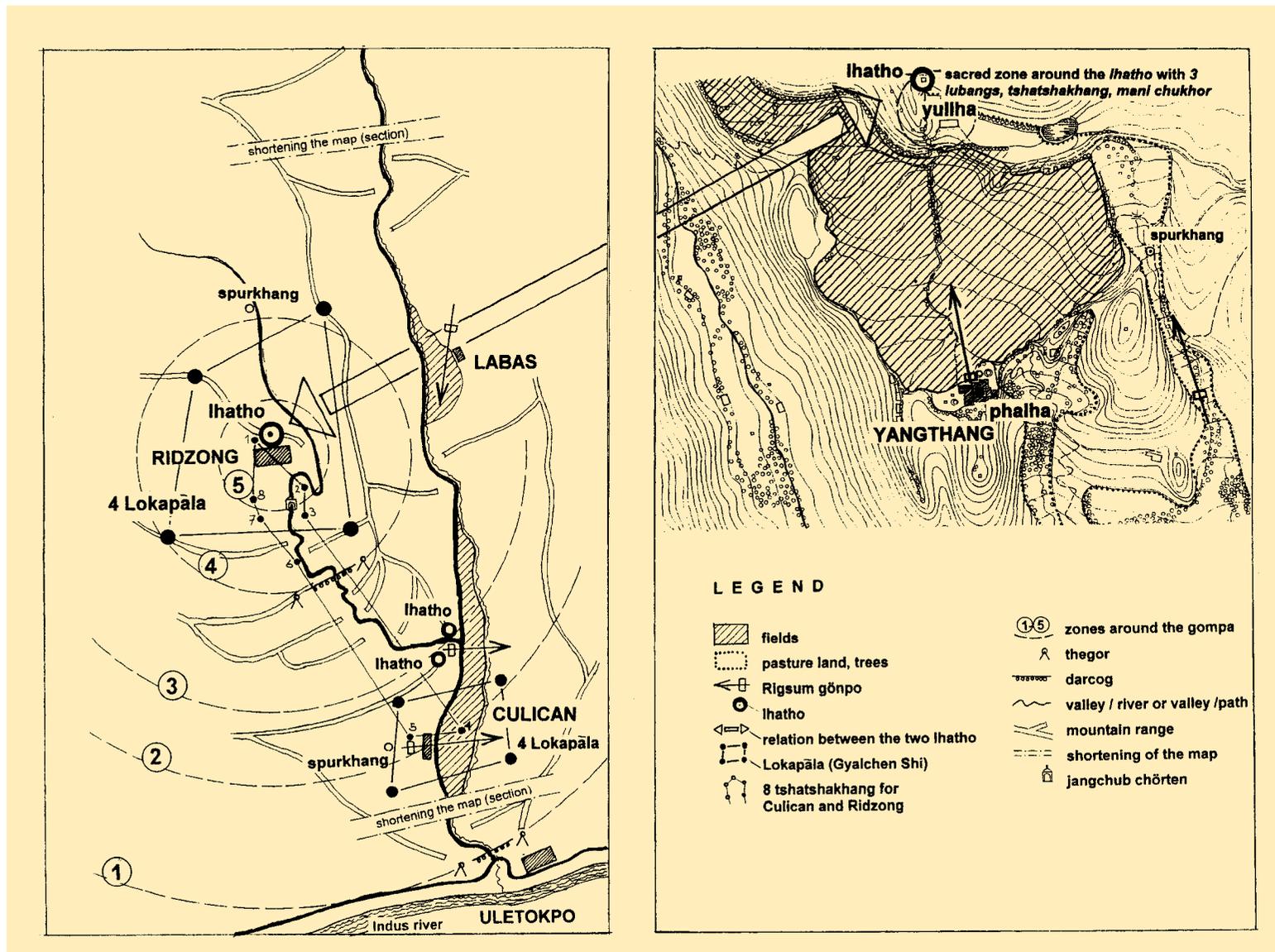
Mention should be made of the group of four Rigsun Gönpo<sup>28</sup>, two of which are found in Yangthang itself and two in Culicen (one for Ridzong and one for the convent). By virtue of the sequence and an occasional back wall, there is a front and a back side. Along their line of orientation they in any case protect fields and irrigated pastureland which contains trees. At the same time, they are placed at entrance sites and passages, and thus protect what lies behind: for example, the most important entry point to the village of Yangthang, the beginning of the side valley leading to the monastery, the passage of a side valley leading to Yangthang, or the entire valley at Labas (an additional, totally isolated fifth shrine on a small hill). In the case of the nuns in Culicen and Labas, it is striking that the shrines always point both

28 Shrines with three differently-coloured *chörten*, which symbolise the bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuśrī and Vajrapāṇi (Cenrezi, Jampeyang and Chagna Dorje).

towards settled areas and fields. According to information supplied by villagers, the shrines are erected during or after natural disasters, epidemics or other calamities. In such cases it is not permissible to erect them as a quaternary or quinary system. Nor is there any question in Yangthang of orientation to the four cardinal directions serving a protective function (see the works of Niels Gutschow in this volume).

Further elements of demarcation for the sacralised area around the monastery are the flagpoles (*darche*), which are popularly believed to

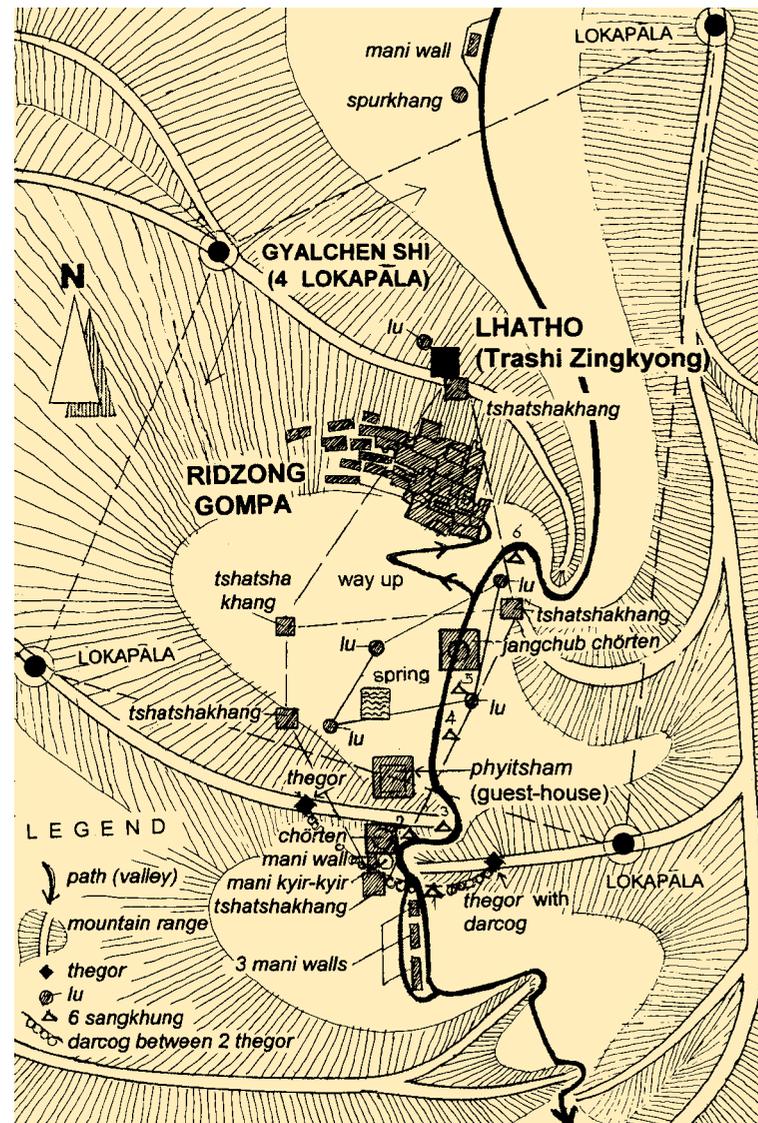
have their origin in the Bon religion. Altogether, there is again a systematisation of eight objects, with the number being largest at the monastery, and important sacred squares being marked by their presence. There are three in front of the *tshogkhang*, two in front of the *dükhang*, one at the first threshold of the monastery building, one more at the branch to a side valley containing a Śākyamuni sculpture, and the last one at the entrance to the convent of Culicen. The number of mani walls (*mani kyirkyir*) – of which there are six on the way to the monastery – is systematised. The lengths of the mani walls



Ridzong (left) and Yangthang (right): the sacred structure around gumpa and village

are also systematised: after the first, which at 16 m is the longest, they became shorter and shorter (the second is 3.9 m; the third 3 m; the fourth 2 m and the fifth 1 m in a round form – the sixth is located after the monastery). Finally, there is the same number (six) of *sangkhung* on the way to the monastery. There are simple stands for incense, which is burnt when the *rimpoche* returns from a trip. Further demarcations along the way are two *chörten* (a *kakani* and a *jangchub chörten*), various paired arrangements of “stone dwarfs” (*thegor*) on the flanking side of the valley and streamers of prayer flags along the entire route along the gorge. At key places where

Ridzong: configuration of cult objects around the gomba



water is introduced to the fields in Yangthang and Culicen there are, moreover, so-called *mani chukhor* (small houses with “water prayer mills”).

#### Further discussion of the systematisation of landscape and built-up areas

There are various systems of spatial ordering, which either refer or run parallel to one another, are not mutually contradictory, and conform to their respective situations. The important protective *lhatho* objects are in both cases similarly placed within the proximate landscape surroundings (see page 81) and constructed in an analogously proportional manner, so that the bondedness of the two *lhatho*, asserted by the monastery and the population, is supported both spatially and visually. Thus at both sites, on the northern edge outside the area of construction, the *lhatho* are set on hills. In both cases, the *lhatho* become, so to speak, important “outer guards” of the territory which is the narrower living space of the monastery or settlement, and their surroundings, that needs to be protected. The inhabitants of Yangthang, furthermore, associate the particular strength of their tutelary deity with a demonstration of power. The deity’s position is additionally fortified by a host of other cult objects that form an accentuated point of reference within the landscape. Thus *tshatshakhang* may be found there, and along with a number of *lu* shrines; moreover, in Yangthang, the *lhatho* and *yul-lha* (village deity) are identical. Further, the *lhatho* in Yangthang is set at the important spot where the main irrigation channel branches off to the local fields.

At both sites, the relationship between the territory and the externally situated *lhatho* has also to be viewed as a (linear) relationship between the built-up area (or spatial centre) and the *lhatho*. The fields of the settlement which need protecting and the row of four *lu* shrines along the main irrigation channel lie in between, and the pole opposite to the *lhatho* is also situated within the settlement: this is the *phalha*, which stands at the apex of a vertical social structure.

The opposite pole in the extended area leading up to the monastery is another *lhatho*, or rather a pair of *lhatho*, at the entrance to the side valley; this valley is thereby protected, as if by a portal, along its facing side. It is interesting that the adjoining zone in the main valley, containing the nunnery and fields (Culicen), enjoys protection from the *lhatho* in Yangthang, since the nuns, according to the inhabitants, accept the village *lhatho* as their tutelary deity.

A further schematic feature is the space defined by the nearly circular arrangements of small cult buildings into ring systems. These may

represent, on the one hand, an area requiring protection, or else may merely demarcate one area on the threshold of another; or they may “take possession” of an area. That the objects correspond in number to the cardinal and intermediate directions again suggests an intention to order space cosmically, though this notion need not be undergirded by an exact orientation of the objects according to the compass.

Special note is to be taken of the four *lubang*, which demarcate and protect the first mother field (*mazhing*), and also the extended site with eight *lubang*, which take under their fold and protect the mother field, additional land (corresponding to the contour) and the irrigation channel. The *tshatshakhang*, by contrast, encompass fields and settlement together and thus demarcate the truly crucial space for the life and economy of the villagers, and make the village the centre of this defined space. Since the *tshatshakhang* possess a sacred quality, each of the order of a small *gompa*, they additionally sacralise the space they enclose. At the same time, they represent a threshold for the “spiritual presence of the dead”, who hover at the edge of this living space (slowly leaving it and passing over to the universal realm).

The eight *tshatshakhang* in the region of Ridzong and Culicen likewise refer to the living area of the monastery buildings and to the fields. They do not enclose the whole space (except the sacred rooms of the monastery), though, but merely “occupy” it. Four *lubang*, on the other hand, surround the area fronting the monastery around the vital source of water (there are no further studies on the *lu* in the Culicen region).

One other ring-like protective system conforming to the four cardinal directions is, however, of great significance in both Ridzong and Culicen. The *Gyalchen Shi* shrines placed on four hills surrounding the monastery buildings mark out the particularly sacred space of the monastery complexes, and one can interpret this space as a *maṇḍala*. As noted above, the *Gyalchen Shi* are invoked for protection during meditation.

In Yangthang, one other principle of ordering – “as inside so without” – can be pointed out very clearly. The *lu* shrines (originally eight in number) on the main houses of the village are represented by the same number in the fields. Or the *tshatsha* objects, relating to the dead, are first placed in the centre and later in the shrines of the surrounding area.

A final important spatial principle remains to be noted: concentrically ordered zones around the village and monastery. The particular centre, whether monastery or village, appears as an imaginary moun-



Yangthang: the shrine dedicated to water deities (*lubang*) within the ‘mother-field’

tain and displays the highest sacred qualities. Of key significance here is the path to the centre, leading over various thresholds into ever more compact zones; passing over these thresholds is a ritual act.<sup>29</sup>

When proceeding to the monastery or the village from the direction of the Indus, on the first stage of the way one passes through common thresholds and zones. The first threshold lies at the beginning of the side valley of the Indus at Uletokpo, at the entrance to the monastery and village. This spot is marked by a series of prayer flags that span the narrow valley and by “stone dwarfs” (*thegor*), which are placed to the left and right far up the side valley, on the hills that front on the higher mountain ridges. The nunnery Culicen represents the second threshold. A portal-like demarcation is established merely by the previously mentioned *lokapāla* on the mountain crests and by numerous small cult buildings, which, though arranged in pairs north to south in front of and behind the building complex (*lubang*, *tshatshakhang*, etc.), are not recognisable as symbols of passage, because they are out of view. One further demarcation point is the flagpole on the path in front of the convent.

The third very important threshold is located at the narrow entrance to another, broader side valley, giving access to Ridzong. The way to the village, dealt with below, takes a different route, but here too there is a demarcational flagpole. By contrast, at either side of the entrance to the gorge-like side valley a (red) *lhatho* is found today<sup>30</sup>; occasionally a *darco* is hung across the valley. The fourth threshold is a short distance from the area in front of the monastery, and is again marked by two *thegor* on flanking hills and by a transversely hanging *darco*. In this region, too, a delimitation exists by means of the four *Gyalchen Shi* shrines standing on the tops of hills. The fifth threshold

<sup>29</sup> Hildegard Diemberger noted that certain territories in East Nepal and South Tibet come to be viewed as sacred space only because of their “doors” (*go*). Ritually, the way through the doors is regarded as an opening of the present-day area, in the sense of an original magic opening, and the purification of the relations between human beings and the gods. In this connection she also mentions the fact that mountains represent the holiest part of the landscape (1994: 145).

<sup>30</sup> A *lhatho* was located in a prominent position on the right side of the valley floor, directly behind the outermost irrigation channel, which ran parallel to the river. This channel was viewed as the actual threshold. A transposition occurred because of the re-laying of the road to this spot, which today serves as a turning space for vehicles.

is at the water source, and is marked by a “passage gate” (*jangchub chörten*). In the monastery itself, there are three thresholds along the way to the *tshogkhang* (or any other cult room): a first portal near the stalls, which are linked with the monastery complex, a second portal to the actual complex, and finally an entrance portal to the *tshogkhang* itself. Altogether there are eight zones or eight thresholds on the way to the centre.

To return to the continuation of the route to Yangthang: the fourth threshold is situated at the symbolic gate to the settlement, or at each entrance to the village exhibiting an enclosed rectangle of buildings; a fifth threshold on the courtyard in front of the village temple; and a sixth into the temple (or one threshold into the *labrang* and another one into the cult room). The number of thresholds into the village differs depending on the access route, and thus cannot be determined as accurately as for the monastery. Coming to the village from the north, one passes by the entire complex around the *lhatho*, which is likewise a threshold realm.

Now to the several meanings, in the understanding of the monks. A particularly important threshold is the third, which is distinguished by one with the pair of *lhatho*. During the *yarne*, a period of 2½ months of special fasts and meditational practices, the monks are not allowed to cross over it. The name of the two *lhatho* also indicates that the Buddhist devotee (*genyem*; Skt. *upāsaka*) is expected to adhere to the corresponding rules<sup>31</sup>. The fourth threshold, demarcated by the *lokapāla*, represents the spiritual “protective ring” invoked prior to meditation. The second threshold in Culicen marks the edge of a narrower zone around the monastery within which women may not tarry at night (it is sometimes reduced down to the third threshold). The fifth threshold, at the *chörten*, carries a ban on eating, drinking alcohol and smoking for all visitors. Beyond this threshold, the villagers may not hold their monastery-related festivals, even those of the (Ladakhi) New Year’s celebration.

### Summary

The small village of Yangthang, comprising some one hundred inhabitants, lies in Western Ladakh, in a side valley of the Indus river valley. The village was founded around 1841, together with the associated monastery of Ridzong. This is a key historical datum, since the sacred structures would thus have arisen simultaneously and as part of a coherent system, whose development can be regarded as largely “secure”. The subject of this article has been the identification of a model for spatially ordering a “sacred landscape” and the representa-

tion of mutual relations and correspondences between various elements and areas within this “sacred realm”. The spatial units encountered are connected with socio-economic structures described in a previous article (Herdick 1999), in which the monastery and village were shown to be closely intertwined with one another. The strong, sacred spatial meshing of the two areas manifests itself, for instance, in two related territorial tutelary deities (*lhatho*).

A space-time relationship is expressed in a tripartition of life and yearly cycles being superimposed on spatial realms: for example, on the three vertical levels of a house or the three horizontal areas in the village, the settlement becoming thereby structured like a family house. Further, there are natural and artificially erected landscape markers which, in connection with the seasonal position of the sun, establish a relationship between village and landscape (and phases of agricultural cultivation). Certain relationships during the solstice have also apparently influenced the choice of the settlement’s location.

The noted tripartition is further linked to the threefold world order and the local deities assigned to these three spheres (*Iha*, *tsen* and *lu*). Small shrines of and “demarcations” by these deities, and also special shrines associated with death rites or located in the monastery precinct powerfully structure, define or protect the landscape. It seems important, for example, that the living space was able to become a “sacred landscape” and its fields made suitable for cultivation only thanks to the erection of the *lu* shrines by the founder of the village and monastery.

Various ordering principles come out, such as the relationship between “inside and out”, individual “guardians” situated on the exterior (in front of the area to be protected), rings and protective zones, concentric models with numerous thresholds and zones (with the monastery or village forming the imaginary elevated centre, or central area), the orientation of the system of shrines to the cardinal directions, and the sequencing or repeating of features and objects in connection with symbolic numbers.

The *Gelugpa* school, which is regarded as strict, has had particularly great influence in these matters, while the old regional tradition has played an additionally important role, since the villagers originally came from the surrounding settlements. The small size of the village, its simple social structures and the possibility of placing it within a well-defined period of origin allow conclusions to be drawn with regard to the development of other settlements, even if each village exhibits its own sacred systems. There is an accord among the economic, social and ideational order which is bound up with the world view.

<sup>31</sup> As made clear by my informant Tubstan Chhostok, this has to do with categories and the observance of rules in Mahāyāna Buddhism.