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**RHYTHMS OF THE GODS:
The Musical Symbolics of Power and Authority
in the Tibetan Buddhist Kingdom of Ladakh**

by

Arthur Mark Trewin

Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD
at City University, London
Department of Music

October 1995

ཡུལ་ལྗོངས་ཀྱི་རྒྱུ་རྐྱེན་

ལ་དུགས་ཀྱི་ཚོས་ཀྱི་སྤྱི་བུ་དུ་
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ལྷོ་ལོ་

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Abstract

This thesis is a cultural study of music in Ladakh ("Indian Tibet"). Drawing upon interdisciplinary theories in symbolic anthropology and musicology, the study stresses the primacy of symbolic action as a means of defining and controlling social reality, and proceeds to examine the relationship between the activation of musical structures and the social construction of power and authority, in terms of the generation of meaning.

Ladakhi music is particularly suited to this kind of study because the instrumental genre of **lha-rnga** (literally "god-drumming") was once closely linked to the structure of Ladakhi society as a feudal monarchy legitimated by Buddhist authority. This music, associated with the personification of deities or the divine aspects of certain mortal beings, constitutes a 'code' which, in the context of public ritual and royal ceremonial, represents and sustains political authority by embodying aspects of the ideal, transcendental order. Building upon Sherry Ortner's concept of cultural schemata, it is shown how music provides the key to 'naturalising' or 'grounding' these more or less predictable programmes of symbolic action in emotional experience, so that through the patronage of performance, those in authority can manipulate the conduct of their subjects or rivals in expected ways.

In supporting cultural schemata, public musical performance also constitutes a mechanism for dealing with conflict and change, as historically demonstrated by the way in which the later dynastic kings used music to negotiate the perceived Islamic threat from Kashmir and Turkestan. Supported by the analysis of rhythmic structures, in conjunction with historical, organological and iconographic evidence, it is proposed that forms of military and chivalrous music of West Asian origin have been accommodated by the indigenous Buddhist tradition: to the external Mughal authorities, this represented the incorporation of Ladakh into their political framework, but the Ladakhi monarchs presented this phenomenon as the meaningful incorporation of the symbols of Islamic rule into a theoretically immutable Buddhist cosmological order.

The research is intended, in part, to complement existing work in Indian and Tibetan music, which has hitherto mainly concentrated on liturgical or classical traditions, and which has tended to overlook the role of the 'living', regional traditions in Indo-Tibetan culture. On a theoretical level, the study also aims to further understanding of the dynamics of culture change and continuity, and to develop lines of enquiry aimed at bridging the gap between musicological and anthropological contexts of explanation.

Explanatory Notes on the Orthography and Pronunciation of Ladakhi and other Foreign Terms

Ladakhi is a colloquial form of Tibetan, and since it differs from Central Tibetan dialects in terms of phonology, syntax and vocabulary, there are a number of problems associated with the transliteration and phonetic representation of Ladakhi words appearing in the text.

It is only since the 1950s, when Ladakh became isolated from Tibet, that Ladakhis have worked towards the use of Ladakhi in written form. Since Ladakhi Buddhists have traditionally used Classical Tibetan for literary expression, it is natural that they should use the Tibetan script (both block and cursive forms) for this purpose. However, in accordance with their social and educational level, literate Ladakhis demonstrate various degrees in which they have been influenced by Tibetan orthography. This lack of standardisation, and the tendency to spell words more or less 'phonetically', is compounded by regional and social differences within the Ladakhi speech community itself.

A further problem is that Ladakhi has a vocabulary somewhat different to Central Tibetan, a fact which attests to Ladakh's marginal social, cultural and political situation. From at least the early part of the seventeenth century, Ladakhi - especially as spoken by Muslims - has borrowed a number of terms from other languages, principally Urdu, Persian and Turkish. In modern times, Ladakhi has become further enriched by neologisms derived mainly from Hindi, English or Anglo-Indian (e.g. Ladakhi **phi-lim glu**, Hindi **filmī gīt**, English 'film music'). Some literate Ladakhi-speakers who do not know written Tibetan, mostly non-Buddhists, have even elected to use the more familiar Persio-Arabic or Devanāgarī scripts for writing Ladakhi.

In conformity with Tibetological practice, most Ladakhi words in this thesis are transliterated according to the standard literary Tibetan spellings. Wherever possible, however, ways have been sought to reduce the burden upon the non-specialist reader. Firstly, the generally simpler Ladakhi spellings are preferred in cases (usually of words drawn from a

more distinctly 'Ladakhi' vocabulary) where the orthography of the literary Tibetan equivalent, if known at all, is doubtful or inappropriate. It would be particularly cumbersome, for example, to persist with the 'correct' Tibetan spelling **brda-man** for the kettledrum more simply written **da-man** (although more strictly **lda-man**) in Ladakhi, when the latter has been borrowed directly from Persian (**damāma**), while the Tibetan seems to have been corrupted by a reading through an altogether different word (meaning 'sign' or 'signal'). Secondly, proper names are given only in their common 'phonetic' forms, except where they first appear in the text: thus the name of Ladakh's capital is given as it appears on maps (Leh, for **gle** or **sla** etc). Similarly, Tibetan words used by Ladakhis which are current in English (e.g. 'lama' for **bla-ma**) are given in their Anglicised form. Other Tibetan-Ladakhi words which have more commonly known Sanskrit synonyms, and which have in turn passed into the English language, are also given as they appear in English dictionaries without diacritical markings; these are mostly Buddhist terms such as mandala, karma, swastika and so on (rather than **dkyil-'khor, las, g.yung-drung, etc.**).

Tibetan words are spelt as given in the standard dictionaries such as Das (1902) and Jaeschke (1881); the latter also gives some of the Ladakhi words which the lexicographer regarded as 'legitimate' spellings. Other foreign language terms are rendered in the form given in the sources referred to. Unless clearly indicated by the context of discussion, the parent language of all foreign words, written in bold type, is determined by the appropriate affix, viz. L (Ladakhi), T (Tibetan), S (Sanskrit), P (Persian), U (Urdu), Tk (Turkish), A (Arabic) and H (Hindi).

Ladakhi and Tibetan words are transliterated according to the standard system of Wylie (1959) with the exception that, as with the Tibetan script itself, no letters are capitalised. Syllable boundaries within lexical units are marked by a hyphen (-). As shown in the following table, the Tibetan writing system comprises an alphabet of thirty consonants and four vowel signs. This alphabet also functions as a syllabary: most phonemes in Ladakhi occur as syllables that may be simply represented by basic letters plus vowels, with only a few being represented by certain combinations of letters in syllable-initial clusters.

Tibetan Letter/ Transliteration	Phonemic/Phonetic Transcription	Notes on Pronunciation
vowels		
ཨ' or འ' a or ' ཨ' ཨ' ཨ' ཨ'	/a/ /i/ /u/ /e/ /o/	[a~e] [a] [i] [u] [ɛ] [e] [ɔ] [o]
initially/medially, as in "ago"; finally, as in "bat"		
as in "beet" (short)		
as in "boot" (short)		
initially/medially, as in "bet"; like French "é"		
initially/medially, as in "hot"; finally, as in "boat"		
plosives		
པ' ཕ' བ'	/p/ /ph/ /b/	[p] [ph] [b]
as in "spill"		
as in "uphill"		
as in "bill"; fricative after /r/		
ཏ' ཅ' ཇ'	/t/ /th/ /d/	[t] [th] [d]
as in "stand"		
as in "right-hand"		
as in "damned"; fricative after /r/ or /l/		
retroflex [t] in some initial positions, as in Hindi khāt (<i>'cot'</i>)		
retroflex [th] in some initial positions, as in Hindi thīk (<i>'right'</i>)		
retroflex [d] in some initial positions, as in Hindi ḍar (<i>'fear'</i>)		
ཀ' ཁ' ག'	/k/ /kh/ /g/	[k] [x] [kh] [g] [g]
as in "scanned"		
retracted in absolute final position, like ch in "loch"		
as in "backhand"		
as in "gander"; fricative after /r/ or /l/		
affricates		
ཅ' ཇ' ཉ' ཏ' ཐ'	/tʃ/ /tʃh/ /dʒ/ /ts/ /tsh/ /dz/	[tʃ] [tʃh] [dʒ] [ts] [tsh] [dz]
as in "chill"		
as in "church-hill"		
as in "Jill"		
as in "pizza"		
as in "it's hot"		
as in "adzuki"		
fricatives		
ས' ས' ས' ས'	/s/ /s/ /ʃ/ /z/ /ʒ/ /h/	[s] [s] [ʃ] [z] [ʒ] [h]
as in "seat"		
retroflex [s] in some initial positions, as in Sanskrit ṛṣi (<i>'sage'</i>)		
as in "sheet"		
as in "zeta"		
as in French gîte		
as in "heat"		

trills					
ར'	r	/r/	[r]		as in "rat"
			[r̥]		voiceless in some initial positions before /ts/
laterals					
ལ'	l	/l/	[l]		as in "lap"
			[l̥]		voiceless in some initial positions before /p/, /t/ or /t /
		/ɬ/	[ɬ]		murmured [l] in some initial positions, like Welsh "ll".
nasals					
མ'	m	/m/	[m]		as in "map"
ན'	n	/n/	[n]		as in "nap"
ལྷ'	ny	/nj/	[nj]		as in "new"
ང'	ng	/ŋ/	[ŋ]		as in "sing"
semi vowels					
ཡ'	w	/w/	[w]		as in "ward"
ཡ'	y	/j/	[j]		as in "yard"

As the spelling rules are common to Ladakhi and Tibetan, these are not specifically treated here. However, since the Ladakhi phonological system is quite different from Central Tibetan, a summary is given here of the principal differences; for a more detailed analysis, the reader is referred to Koshal (1976).

1. Unlike many Tibetan dialects, stress, duration and tone have no phonemic value in Ladakhi, and therefore have no bearing upon musical settings. However, free variation at phonemic and sub-phonemic levels, especially between voiceless/voiced and unaspirated/aspirated consonant pairs and between the vowels [a~ɛ~ø~ə], seem to be especially prominent in song, compared to speech.
2. As in Tibetan, the prefixes, **g**, **d**, **b**, **m** and **'**, are not usually pronounced, except in some cases where they follow an open syllable, e.g. the **m** in **rna-mchog** ('ear'). The special combinations involving **d** before **b** are pronounced as in Tibet, i.e. **db** as /w/, and **dby** as /y/; thus **dbang** ('power') is pronounced [waŋ] and **dbyangs** ('tune') as [yɑŋs]. Additionally, in Ladakh, **dp** has the value /sp/ or /ʃp/; e.g. **dpoid** (the season 'spring') is pronounced [spit] or [ʃpit].
3. Unlike Tibetan, the head letters, **r**, **s** and **l**, that may surmount certain basic letters always affect Ladakhi pronunciation. In general, these consonant combinations have the expected sound values resulting from the combination of the component phonemic units, subject to the small phonetic changes given in the table; thus /r+/d/ = /rd/ [rd̥], as in **rdung**, the verbal stem meaning '(to) beat' (e.g. a drum), which is pronounced [rd̥uŋ]. Exceptions to this general rule are:
 - r above **k**, **m**, **n**, **ny** and **ng** becomes /ʃ/ [ʃ], giving /ʃk/ [ʃk], /ʃm/ [ʃm], etc
 - s above **b**, **d** and **g** becomes /z/ [z], giving /zb/ [zb], etc.

s above **ts** becomes /r/, giving /rts/ [r̥ts]
l above **k** becomes /ʃ/, giving /ʃk/ [ʃk]
l above **b** becomes /r/, giving /rb/ [r̥b]
l above **h** gives /t/ [t̥]

Note that, in the absence of a prefix, the pronunciation of head letters may be preserved when following an open syllable; thus **lha-rnga** is pronounced [t̥aŋa] whereas **rnga** ('drum') is pronounced [ʃŋa].

4. In dialects of Upper Ladakh (including Leh), the subjoined **y** has the same affect as in Tibetan, thus:

y below **m** gives /njy/ [njy]
y below **p** gives /tʃ/ [tʃ]
y below **ph** gives /tʃh/ [tʃh]
y below **b** (except when prefixed by **d**, see note 2)
 gives /dʒ/ [dʒ]

The subjoined **r** or **l**, however, affects Ladakhi pronunciation somewhat differently:

r below **k, t** and **p** gives /ṛ/ [ṛ]
r below **kh, th** and **ph** gives /ṛh/ [ṛh]
r below **g, d** and **b** gives /ḍ/ [ḍ]
r below **s, h** and **sh** gives /ṣ/ [ṣ]
r below **m** becomes /ʃ/, giving /ʃm/ [ʃm]
l below **k, g, b, r** and **s** gives /t/ [t̥]

N.B. **l** below **z** gives /lz/, not /d/ as in Tibetan

5. As a general rule, the pronunciation of final letters is preserved in Ladakhi. The letters **b, g,** and **d** tend to become voiceless plosives (i.e. /p/, /k/ and /t/), especially when followed by an extra final (always **s** and always pronounced).

Most of the isolated examples of Ladakhi words given in the text are one of three types with characteristic forms. Nouns (e.g. **lha-rnga**) have an invariant stem, usually of one or two syllables, and may include noun particles. Adjectives (e.g. **snyan-po**, 'sweet-sounding') have an invariant monosyllabic stem and, usually, a lexically-specific adjective particle (here **-po**). Verbs typically have a variant, but always monosyllabic, stem; here they are usually given with the 'nominalising' particle (**-byes** or **-shes**, equivalent to the Tibetan **-ba** or **-pa**) which may be taken as being the 'infinitive' form. For a detailed account of Ladakhi syntax, readers may consult Koshal (1979).

N.B.

- References to Francke's (1926) edition of the Tibetan text of the Ladakh Chronicles (**la-dwags rgyal-rabs**, LDGR) and Minor Chronicles (MC) are indicated in the form: LDGR [chapter number]-[page number].[line number] or MC.[document number]-[page number].[line number].
- Dates are indicated using the Common Era (CE or BCE) convention.

Preface

When I recall my first musical impressions of Ladakh in 1985, I am reminded of the way that Victor Turner, author of *The Drums of Affliction* and one of pioneers of modern symbolic anthropology, was inspired by the seemingly constant beating of ritual drums among the Ndembu of Zambia. For any visitor to Ladakh cannot fail to be struck by the sound of drum and reed music resounding around the mountain valleys whenever some event of 'special' significance is occurring. One soon learns that this music, known as *lha-rnga* (which translates as "god-drumming"), is always regarded by the Ladakhis as "auspicious" (*bkra-shis*), and that it is somehow considered to bring about a change of state in the person and in the community, perhaps both. One readily appreciates that this is a musical genre which is deeply embedded in systems of symbolic action, from the personal to the social level. A number of difficult questions almost clamour for attention with the same din which the drums themselves at first seem to make: why is it that the music sounds the way it does? Does it have to be this particular arrangement of sounds, or would something similar have the same effect in its place? What are the processes of musical signification? At what level of communication do specific musical structures become socially meaningful?

These are some of the central questions which at least characterize, if not define, the field of ethnomusicology as the study of music in relation to culture. It is, however, perhaps easier to define the discipline by what it fails to answer, rather than the questions it sets itself. Indeed it has almost become a well-worn line of criticism that many ethnomusicological studies tend either to describe the meaning of musical events without probing the musical ways in which that meaning is communicated, or else - and this is especially true of the 'Great Traditions' of Asiatic systems - they define the operational principles of musical structures without considering their effects in the performance context. The field has not helped itself in the past by driving a paradigmatic wedge between music as a system of relations with its own, apparently autonomous, principles of organization, and music as a mode of patterning set in a matrix of social structures and events.

This study makes no claim to resolve this problem, but it does aim to bridge these two polar contexts of explanation by exercising a timely exploration of their common ground: the processes of symbolization. The study of symbols, because of their very nature, can be notoriously speculative and capricious, and I have attempted to avoid this by heeding Firth's (1973:27) call for an empirical approach to the investigation of symbolism:

The anthropological approach, fully applied, has as its objective to provide a systematic description and analysis of...a symbolic act in its verbal and non-verbal aspects; to distinguish those parts of the action held to be significant from those which are incidental; to mark the routine or standard elements as against those which are personal and idiosyncratic; to get elucidation from actor, participants and non-participants of the meanings they attach to the act; and to set all this in its general conceptual and institutional framework, and in the more specific framework of the statuses and group relationships of the people concerned.

This is indeed an ambitious task, but the kind of methodology proposed, and adopted here as far as practicable, sets a challenge which is a familiar one in ethnomusicology. That it is expressed with reference to symbolic systems in general, and not only to music, should reassure us that the scientific study of the relationship between musical and other forms of communication is possible through intensive ethnography.

The definition of symbolics in relation to the range of entities - even just musical ones - it encompasses is a large and abstract enough topic to fill a study of this nature in its own right. The present research, of course, has a musical and cultural focus which suggests the adoption of a more particular set of terms and perspectives appropriate to it. It will become evident that the word 'symbol' is used in a dualistic sense to refer to an entity which (to paraphrase the Oxford English Dictionary definition) represents (or re-presents) or recalls an idea or affective quality, either by association in fact or thought, or by possession of analogous properties. In other words, it includes an ideological dimension where the idea referred to relates to principles of social organization and social values, and a sensory dimension relating to aspects of emotional life. This definition also implies different modalities of relationship, ranging

from one of identity (iconic), logical necessity (indexical) to arbitrary association (symbolic, in its narrower sense).

This definition is broad enough to admit the linkage between the human organism and social structure in pursuit of the aim of this thesis, which is to understand some of the ways in which the use and interpretation of symbols ('symbolic action') involving music relates to the realities of social structure and social process, and particularly political power. The notion that symbols are invoked to explain the social order and justify its institutions of power has, since Weber, been a persistent paradigm in Western social theory. Weber (1958) himself saw the elaborate cosmological systems of the major Asian religions as intimately linked to the creation and support of stable social orders ruled by priests and 'charismatic' rulers; he characterized their cultural procedures as practical tools for orienting themselves in a world which, for their followers and subjects, remained a symbolically rich 'enchanted garden'. His theory of legitimation has had an important influence on the study of symbolic communication as a means of social control, not only in traditional societies (e.g. Geertz 1980, Wechsler 1985) but also in modern industrial ones (e.g. Cohen 1976). In each case, the *fundamental* legitimating principle is that power - which may be defined as the capacity of an actor to modify the *conduct of others in ways intended by the actor* - is most effective when justified (i.e. gains authority) by the beliefs, expectations, and values of those who comply.

This study will, then, attempt to demonstrate how an anthropological approach can show how musical structures can become socially and politically significant. Ortner's (1989) perspective of symbolism as a system of meaning anchored to social structure has proved particularly useful, as her analysis is both theoretically and culturally relevant. However, like most of the anthropological literature on symbolism, there is a tendency to emphasize the ideological interpretation of symbols, without accounting for how symbols become empowered with their dynamic properties. I hope to show that music can play a role in energizing the social order, and that the study of its own modes of organization can equally inform the study of symbolism in other disciplines.

A second principal aim of this study is to document a musical tradition which has never been studied before. In fact, very little has been published on Ladakhi music of any kind, partly because of the political conditions which kept the region's borders closed to outsiders between 1948 and 1974. Between 1896 and 1906 the Moravian missionary August Hermann Francke collected a number of traditional songs, and published a few musical transcriptions (Trewin 1992), but he barely mentions the existence of **lha-rnga**. In modern times, published studies have only addressed the 'Great Tradition' of Tibetan monastic music and dance (e.g. Helffer 1980; Tsukamoto 1980), whilst a growing group of Ladakhi scholars have only studied their musical traditions from a literary or cultural perspective (e.g. Ayu 1986; Dorje 1976; Rabgias 1979; Shakspo 1985a, 1985b; Tshering 1977). Anthropological studies of Ladakhi culture (e.g. Brauen 1980; Dollfus 1989), invaluable ethnographic sources as they are, only mention **lha-rnga** in passing. Surprisingly perhaps, none of the published sound documents of Ladakhi village music (Crossley-Holland 1968; Helffer 1978; Larson 1983; Lewiston 1978a) or of the instrumental music of the broader region (Lewiston 1978b, 1978c) contains a single example of the genre, and McCormac's (1980:327) observation that Ladakh is "a culture in need of continuing documentation" is as true now as it was then. This is especially true of **lha-rnga**, which is so closely tied to a political system which is defunct, and a ritual one which is in a state of decline.

The present research is particularly timely in the light of the disruption brought to Ladakh by the political violence in Kashmir, which surfaced during the 'ethnographic present' of this study in 1989, and which at the time threw the whole project in jeopardy. Fieldwork, conducted in March-April 1988, February-July 1990, and July-August 1992 (following preliminary studies in July-September 1985 and August-September 1986) was a vital part of this research, and it is unfortunate that circumstances did not allow me to cover the entire annual cycle of ceremonies and rituals as intended. This meant that more music was recorded out of context than I would have wished, but it has to be said that many performance contexts have in any case changed to such an extent, or ceased to exist, as to render a significant portion of the **lha-rnga**

repertoire redundant, and much of my endeavour in the field was devoted to 'recovering' as much extant musical material as possible, though I have no doubt there is yet more. My dependence upon secondary sources for the investigation of historical contexts of musical performance, to complement the field material, had always been part of the research plan.

After an introductory chapter describing the ethnographic setting and introducing some key themes relating to the aims of the thesis, Part One presents the general conceptual framework of the study, examining the nature of musical symbols and their manipulation. Chapter Two shows how musical sounds are ordered by cosmological concepts, and how in social contexts music can be used to represent aspects of the ideal order. In contrast to this schematic framework, Chapter Three examines the transformative power of symbols by exploring the dynamics of musical and ritual performance in the context of the ritual drama and the ceremonial gift.

Part Two turns to the material basis of music-making in Ladakh, and offers a detailed analysis of the political economy of musicians and musical instruments. These two chapters focus specifically on the cultural and historical contexts of drum and reed music in Ladakh, and draws upon a range of literary, iconographic and ethnographic sources. Chapter Four deals with the ways in which the social organization of music-makers is controlled through the manipulation of ritual symbols, and the implications this has for musical behaviour. Chapter Five explores the history, symbolism, and use of musical instruments in the Kingdom of Ladakh against the background of cultural contact with neighbouring powers and the processes of state formation.

Part Three presents a descriptive analysis of the **lha-rnga** repertoire, based upon material collected during fieldwork. Chapter Six details the role of music in each performance event, and its social and political significance in terms of the ideas so far developed. Chapter Seven is a systematic analysis of the musical repertoire, supported by transcriptions and recorded examples, which shows how this significance is underpinned by

principles of musical patterning. The main arguments and key themes are finally summarized in a concluding chapter.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: THE KINGDOM OF LADAKH



Plate 1: Ladakh: view north from the Nimaling Plain (c.5500 m,
in the Zaskar mountains above Matho, marked + on map)

1.1: Ladakh: Land of High Passes

The Ladakh region of trans-Himalayan Kashmir was formerly an independent kingdom which in modern times has become a politically integral part of India. However, geo-physically, and to a large extent culturally, it belongs to the greater Tibetan region. Indeed, it has variously been referred to as Little Tibet, Indian Tibet, or Tibetan Kashmir, for its people are predominantly of Tibetan stock, speak a variety of Tibetan and mostly follow Tibetan forms of Mahāyāna Buddhism. [1]

While a Tibetan element remains a strong component in their composite identity, the Ladakhis have over the centuries acquired a sense of their own nationhood which developed as their country successively gained prominence in various domains: firstly, it played a key part in the transmission of Buddhism from India to Tibet; secondly, it became a major entrepot of international trade, connecting India and Tibet with the Central Asian caravan routes; and latterly, it has been a zone of great strategic interest to a number of the great Asian powers. Ladakh's music, being one of the means by which this sense of nationhood is expressed, accordingly testifies to the strong cultural, economic, and political ties which the region has historically sustained with Central Asian countries, notably Kashmir, Afghanistan and Turkestan, besides Tibet itself. [2]

As cohabitants of a vast mountainous plateau, the Ladakhis share with the Tibetans a harsh environment which places severe constraints upon social and cultural life (Plate 1). Ladakh (*la-dwags*, also *mar-yul*) has a trans-Himalayan climate characterised by low precipitation and long, cold winters where the temperature can fall as low as -40 C. The apparently inhospitable terrain of bare mountains, dusty plains, and deep ravines covers an area of some 98,000 sq. km, accounting for more than two-thirds of the entire (unpartitioned) state of Kashmir. Ranging in elevation from about 2,900 to 7,700 m, all but the very lowest of the life-supporting areas lie in the alpine zone; there is little plant life and only a few trees (principally willow, poplar and juniper), while its animals (including marmots, ibex, wolves, lynx and snow-leopards), are generally inconspicuous. Ladakh's human inhabitants mainly occupy scattered

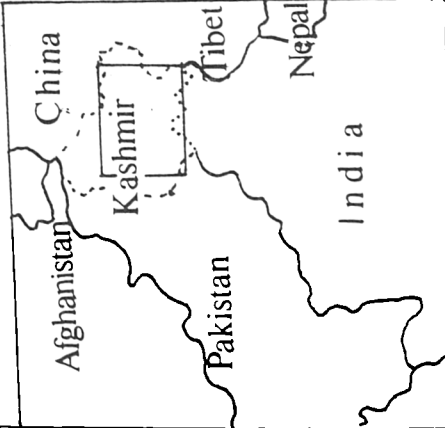
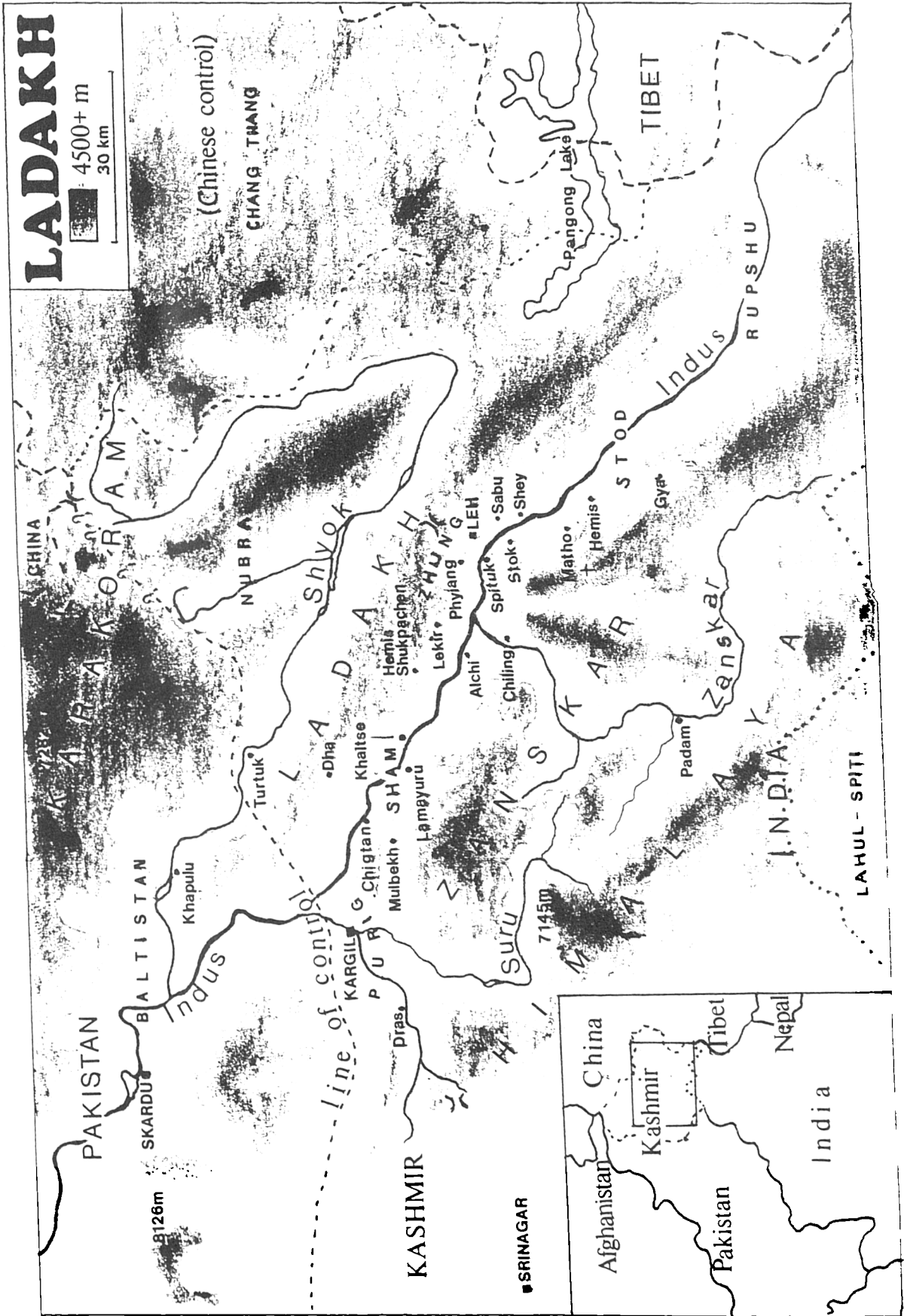
settlements in the valleys below 4,500 m; with a total population of approximately 134,000 (Census 1981), Ladakh is by far the most sparsely populated district of India.

Although Ladakh has a geographic unity deriving from its position in the Upper Indus basin between the watersheds of the Himalaya and the Karakoram, the region is subdivided physically - and to some extent ethnically and culturally - by a series of parallel mountain ranges running northwest to southeast (Map). The southwestern boundary is formed by the Great Himalayan Range, separating Ladakh from the Kashmir Valley in the west, the Punjab hills in the south, and the rest of the Indian subcontinent. Zaskar, Ladakh's southernmost district, is a remote valley lying between the Himalayan and Zaskar ranges, while the Dras and Suru valleys in the northwest constitute the area of Purig.

Flowing between the Zaskar mountains and the Ladakh Range, the Indus River (**seng-ge kha-phab**, "falling from the lion's mouth") intersects the entire country, from the point where it enters from Tibet in the southeast to its confluence with the Suru River just beyond Purig in Pakistan-held Baltistan. Approximately 400 km long and up to 15 km wide, the Indus Valley is Ladakh's heartland, for it has tracts of fertile soil and a relatively mild climate, especially in Lower Ladakh (Sham), which make it suitable for agriculture and amenable to human settlement. These relatively populous stretches of the valley are dominated from its central portion (Zhung) by the city of Leh, the region's cultural, economic and administrative capital. The highest reaches of the river, above the villages of Upper Ladakh (Stod), bifurcate the remote plains of Rupshu and Changthang (**byang-thang**) in the southeast. Beyond the Ladakh Range in the northeast, the Shyok and Nubra valleys make up the region of Nubra, separated from Chinese Turkestan (Xinjiang) in the north by the Karakoram Massif. To the east, the desolate and virtually uninhabited Aksai Chin plains stretch across the Changthang plateau to the Kun Lun mountains. Since 1959, this area has been under Chinese control.

LADAKH

4500+ m
30 km



1.2: Ethno-linguistic and Religious Affiliation

Unlike many Himalayan districts, Ladakh is not inhabited by a great number or variety of clearly differentiated ethno-linguistic groups. The contrast is particularly marked when compared with the more densely populated southern slopes, where, generally speaking, caste has played a far greater role in regulating patterns of human interaction. Nevertheless, even beyond the Himalayan divide, a number of racial strains representing successive layers of settlement are present, and this ethnic composition is reflected in the diversity of musical influences arising from waves of assimilations, migrations and conquests that have swept through the region. [3]

Most of the population consider themselves to be Ladakhi (**la-dwags-pa**), although this ethnic identity is actually a composite, in varying proportions, of Mongoloid (Tibetan) and Caucasoid (Irano-Afghan and Indian) components. Only in the case of certain sub-groups, where for one reason or another extensive intermarriage between these strains has not occurred, are any of the component races distinctly identified. These groups - Dard, Mon, and Tibetan - are normally perceived by the Ladakhi majority as being ethnically distinct; only in a broader political sense might they be considered as Ladakhi.

Although the prevailing stock of the Ladakhis is Tibetan, the earliest layer of the population to have settled in Ladakh probably consisted of the so-called Dards, an arguably distinct Irano-Afghan race found throughout northern parts of present-day Afghanistan, Pakistan and Kashmir. [4] There is evidence that Dardic-speaking groups colonised this larger region during the second millennium BCE, developing a relatively advanced material culture based on collective hunting and trade, agriculture, animal husbandry and the use of iron and bronze. Recent research suggests that they might have broken away from the mass migration of Indo-Aryan speakers to India, remaining in the mountains of the Hindu-Kush and Karakoram region; the Dardic languages still spoken in these areas have, for example, been shown to be archaic forms of Indo-Aryan which evolved from Sanskrit less quickly than other Indian languages (Fussman 1989). Dardic groups from

Gilgit, perhaps migrating further up the Indus Valley to escape invading hordes (Huns then Turks) from the northwest, probably reached Ladakh during the early centuries CE. Locally, they once inhabited a far greater area than they currently occupy, and some of the beliefs, customs and musical traditions they brought to the region have survived in Ladakhi culture. Today, the only distinctly identified Dards in Ladakh, numbering a few thousand, are to be found in the remote valleys of Lower Ladakh (Plate 2). These Brokpa (**brog-pa**), as the Ladakhis call them, speak a dialect of Shina, a Dardic language also spoken in Gilgit, and they maintain a number of oral traditions which they claim to have originated in that region. Most are nominally Buddhist but some, like their related neighbours living to the north in Baltistan, have converted to Islam.

A number of traditions maintain that the Mon were an Indian race that settled in Ladakh during prehistoric times, even before the Dards. However, given that the word **mon** is a rather vague term used by Tibetan-speakers to denote a number and variety of sub-Himalayan groups, there is some doubt as to whether such a distinct race ever existed. Nevertheless, it is clear that Indian migrants from the southern slopes of the Himalaya have been coming to Ladakh for at least several centuries, and that they are likely to have contributed to the racial composition of the Ladakhis. The caste-like group of musician-carpenters today known as **mon-pa** (Plate 3) are probably not, as it is sometimes claimed, an aboriginal group but are more likely to be relatively recent migrants whose ethnic identity is perceived to be unique. In several ways, though, these **mon-pa** are not categorically distinct from the Ladakhis; numbering only a few thousand and widely distributed throughout Central Ladakh, they have for the most part adopted the language and culture of their Ladakhi patrons.

The earliest Tibetans to arrive in Ladakh were herders drifting westwards across the Changthang plateau, and at least some evidently entered into alliances with the Dardic settlers. Similar nomadic or semi-nomadic groups called Changpa (**chang-pa**) by the Ladakhis still inhabit the high plains of Rupshu and Changthang in southeastern Ladakh, but on the whole they have only marginal contact with the Ladakhis, and



Plate 2: Brokpa **brongopa** musician, playing **gring-jang**

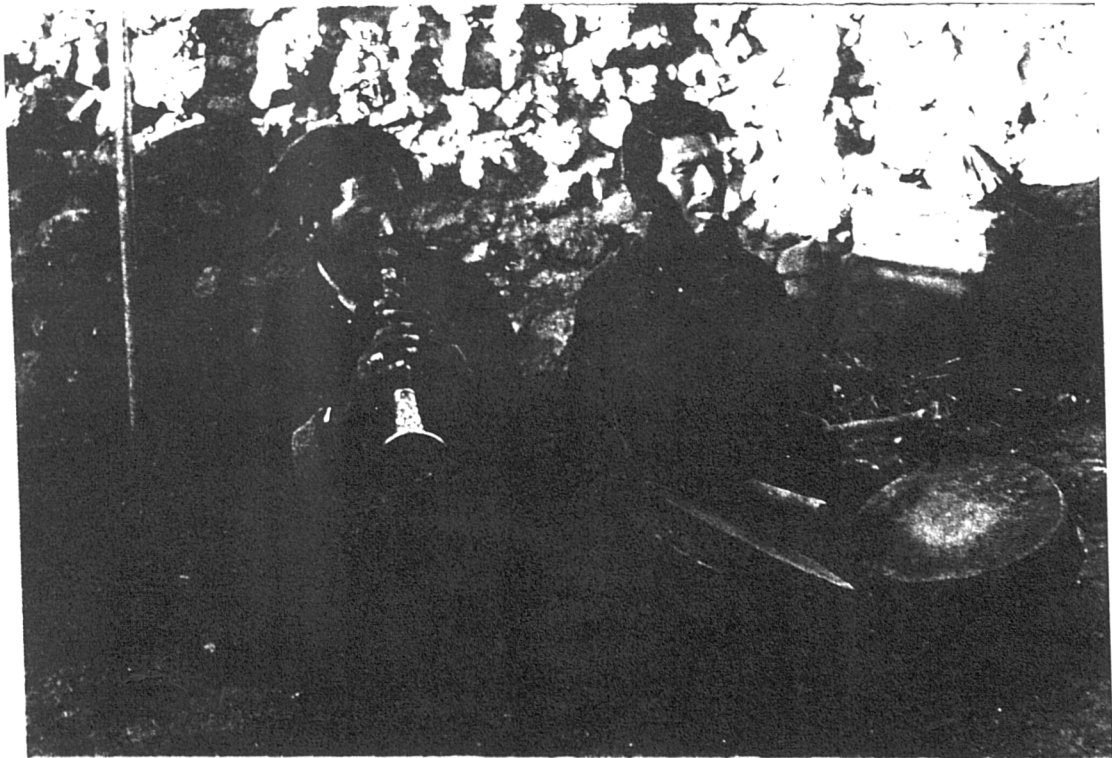


Plate 3: Mon-pa musicians, playing **sur-na** (oboe) and **da-man** (kettledrums)



Plate 4: Changpa **sgra-snyan** (lute) player with female dancer

retain a dialect and life-style that has more in common with the nomads of Western Tibet. They are, however, partly responsible for introducing a number of Tibetan elements of musical culture to Ladakh, including the Tibetan lute (*sgra-snyan*), the *a-che lha-mo* folk theatre, and the *zhabs-bro*, together with other types of songs and dances (Plate 4).

The first Tibetans likely to have had any lasting impact upon Ladakh's hitherto mainly Indo-Iranian population arrived in the wake of the expansion of Tibetan dynastic rule under King Songtsen Gampo (*strong-brtsan sgam-po*, ruled c. 627-650). By 720, Tibet had established some kind of suzerainty over Ladakh and Baltistan; their further advance into Gilgit was checked by the Chinese, who with their Kashmiri allies were at that time unsuccessfully defending their dominions in Central Asia against the Arabs. It seems that Tibetan rule over Ladakh was maintained until the collapse of the Central Tibetan dynasty in 842, after which Ladakh apparently fragmented into a number of petty Tibeto-Dard principalities. The extent of this early period of Tibetan influence is difficult to assess, but the Tibetan language was probably introduced to Ladakh and Baltistan at this time, Ladakhi and Balti being closely related languages which probably arose from an ancient Tibetan dialect (Bielmeier 1985).

The main Tibetanization of Ladakh occurred in all but the remotest valleys still exclusively occupied by the Dards after the tenth century when, as a result of the internecine feuds that followed the collapse of the Central Tibetan dynasty, a branch of its ruling family migrated to Western Tibet. One of its members, Palgyi Gon (*dpal-gyi mgon*), whom the Ladakhis claim to be a direct descendant of Songtsen Gampo, founded a kingdom in Ladakh in about 930. The Tibetan settlers who sought refuge in Ladakh have clearly been assimilated by the local population over the centuries; recent Tibetan refugees, on the other hand, are considered to be ethnically related to, but by no means identified with, the Ladakhis.

This historical overview underlines the profile of Ladakh's present-day population (Table 1a). Those in Leh tehsil (*U.tahṣīl*), Ladakh's eastern administrative district, together with the Zanskaris in the southwest, are clearly the most Tibetanised: they are predominantly Tibetan Buddhist and

Ladakhi-speaking (Plate 5). By contrast, the inhabitants of Purig, which makes up most of the western Kargil tehsil, are mainly Muslim (Shī'ite), and they exhibit a much stronger Irano-Afghan admixture than the Ladakhis to the east (Plate 6). Their dialect is closer to Balti than Ladakhi, and is classified, by the census enumerators at least, as Balti. Indeed, on cultural and political as well as ethno-linguistic grounds, the eastern Ladakhis tend to identify the western Purig people with the Baltis; their traditional songs, for example, are called "Balti songs" (**sbal-ti-glu**) rather than "Ladakhi songs" (**la-dwags-kyi-glu**).

The composition, in terms of religious and linguistic affiliation, of Ladakh's small urban population (about 9%) differs significantly from that of the rural districts (Table 1b). Kargil's population has a profile which probably reflects or enhances that of Purig in particular, rather than Kargil district as a whole, since the latter includes Zaskar. The Leh community, however, has a characteristic urban pattern which countervails the composition of Leh region in general, for there is a sizable minority of Muslims, and a collectively significant number of other religious minorities. Most of the Muslim minority are, unlike their co-religionists in Kargil district, predominantly Sunni and Ladakhi-speaking; they are mixed-race descendants, called Argon (**'ar-gon**) by the Ladakhis, of Central Asian peoples (**kha-che** - Kashmiris, **hor** - Turki-speaking Kashgaris, Yarkandis, Khotanese etc, and **ta-zik** - Persian-speaking Tajiks, Afghanis etc) who have, over the centuries, settled in the capital and taken Ladakhi wives. The small Moravian Christian community of Ladakhi Buddhist converts dates from the last century, while the Sikh, Hindu and the remaining Muslim population are mainly recent Indian migrants, many temporary, who speak their own native languages (Kashmiri, Punjabi, Hindi etc.). Outside the capital there are only a few local concentrations of Muslims in otherwise exclusively Buddhist areas, including Balti (Shī'ite) communities in Chushot and Phyang (both near Leh) and in the Chorbat area of Nubra, and a number of Sunni Dogris, called Gulamzade (U."sons of Gulam (Singh)") in Padam, Zaskar.

	Ladakh		W Ladakh (Kargil)		E Ladakh (Leh)	
Area (km²)	96,701		14,036		82,665	
Population	134,372		65,992*		68,380	
No. of Villages	242		129		113	
Religion (R) / Language (L) (%)	R	L	R	L	R	L
Buddhist/Ladakhi	51	52	19	19	81	84
Muslim/Balti	46	35	78	67	15	4
Other	3	13	3	14	4	12

*includes 8,317 in Zanskar

(a) Total and Regional Populations (Rural and Urban)

	Kargil Town		Leh City	
Area (km²)	2.1		9.2	
Population	3,527		8,718	
Urbanization (%)	6.1		12.7	
Religion (R) / Language (L) (%)	R	L	R	L
Buddhist/Ladakhi	2	1	52	72
Muslim/Balti	91	83	34	11
Other	7	16	14	16

(b) Urban Populations

Table 1: The composition of Ladakh's population by religious and linguistic affiliation (Census 1981)



Plate 5: Ladakhi dancer from Leh district



Plate 6: Balti musician from northwest Ladakh

1.3: Religious and Cultural History

Although there are roughly equal numbers of Buddhists and Muslims in present-day Ladakh, the official religion of the Ladakhi state during dynastic times remains dominant in the areas, principally Central and Upper Ladakh, over which its rulers had most control. Buddhism permeates the thought and behaviour of the Ladakhis, and is thereby closely linked with their social organisation, economy and polity, in addition to their conceptualization and practice of music-making. A descriptive analysis of Ladakh's musical culture would nevertheless be inadequate without acknowledging the impact of pre- or non-Buddhist religions upon the culture of Ladakh, and especially the profound influence that Islam and its attendant culture has progressively had throughout the region. [5]

Descriptions of traditional Tibetan religion, and its hold over the people, broadly extend to Ladakh. The assessment that it generates a characteristic tension in the Tibetan consciousness could also be maintained in the Ladakhi context; Tucci (1967:73-4) described this ambiguity as being composed of "on the one side the fear of capricious spirits that was inherited by Lamaism from the country's original religions and, on the other, the conviction that man possesses the means to control these dark vengeful forces demanding propitiation." Like the Tibetans, Ladakhi Buddhists draw a notional distinction between the orthodox tradition of monastic Buddhism (*lha-chos*, "the religion of gods") and the religious beliefs and practices of the lay people (*mi-chos*, "the religion of men"). The latter is represented in Ladakh by a belief system rooted in Dardic culture, whereas in Tibet it is represented most strongly by what became the institutional Bon religion. What these religious substrata have in common, and have survived as a dual undercurrent running through Buddhist practice - musical and ritual - in both Ladakh and Tibet, is an animistic world-view combined with a set of shamanistic techniques; the first current calls for the appeasement of the worldly gods for mankind's damage to nature, while the second current seeks a higher knowledge by which nature may be controlled.

A comparison between the religious practices of the Ladakhi Buddhists and the Brokpa of Ladakh shows a number of continuities along both of these themes. In the first instance, their traditional belief systems share animistic elements of mountain, river and fire worship, animal sacrifice and the belief in ancestral spirits. But at the same time, there is a strong tradition among the Ladakhis, as among the Dardic-speaking peoples of Ladakh and the areas to the north, of witchcraft, shamanism and other 'powerful' possession phenomena. [6]

Buddhism among the Ladakhi laity has therefore been shaped in a particular way by this underlying belief system. One feature of the cosmological framework that seems to have been inherited by the Ladakhis from the Brokpa is its relationship with the natural environment, most strikingly apparent in the way in which vertical space acts as a metaphor of ritual status. The Ladakhi belief in purity goes beyond orthodox Buddhist concepts of merit (**bsod-nams**, S **punya**) and demerit (**sdig-pa**, S **papa**), and is characteristically interpreted through the belief in paranatural polluting forces which dwell in the streams, and supernatural protective beings which inhabit the mountain-tops. The variety of ritual practices designed to bring about purification clearly reflects the needs of an agricultural people whose immanent concern is avoiding disease, pollution and misfortune, rather than accumulating merit for liberation, but the two are not irreconcilable. Indeed, the mutual accommodation of the lay and clerical forms of religion, together with their associated musical traditions, becomes socially and politically problematic once the issue - central to this study - of the culture-based validation of secular and religious authority is raised.

The interaction between these traditions probably dates to at least the Kuṣāṇa period (first to third centuries CE), when Buddhism flourished in Kashmir and spread from there through Ladakh and the other centres of the Central Asian trading routes (Khotan, Yarkand, Kashgar) to China and beyond. The gods, myths and ritual practices of the Brokpa, some of which correspond to Vedic forms, suggest that the Dardic inhabitants of Ladakh may even have been bearers of earlier Indian religions, and were

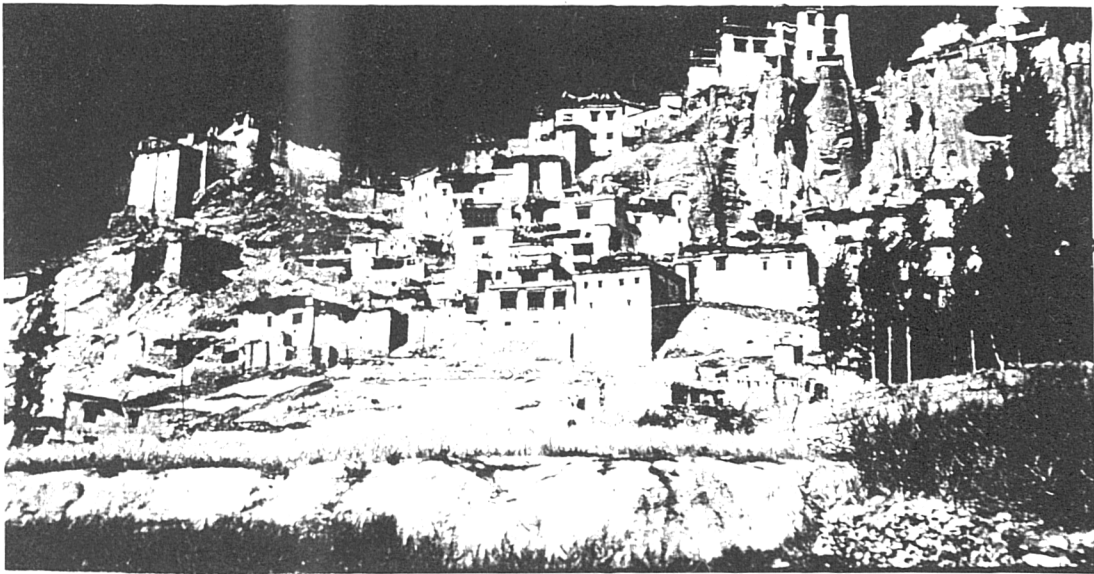


Plate 7: Lamayuru monastery (g.yung-drung)

well placed to accommodate elements of Buddhism to their traditional belief system (Schetelich 1990; Ripley 1990; Staal 1982).

The main cultural elements of Ladakhi life continued to come from Buddhist Kashmir after the foundation of the Lhachen (**lha-chen**, "great god") dynasty in about 930. Tibet had yet to embrace Buddhism fully, and the styles of the earliest Buddhist monuments in Western Ladakh show that the Lhachen kings continued to be patrons of Indian Buddhism until the thirteenth century. During this period, within the time-frame of what the Tibetans call the "second spreading" (**phyi-dar**) of Buddhism, Ladakh played a substantial role in the restoration of the religion in Tibet. The Kashmiri yogin Nāropa (956-1040), the spiritual figurehead of the Kargyupa (**bka'-rgyud-pa**) school, was active in Ladakh and is said to have selected the site of Ladakh's oldest monastery at Lamayuru (Plate 7). The renowned "translator" (**lo-tsa-wa**) and saint Rinchen Zangpo (**rin-chen bzang-po**, 958-1055) built several temples in Ladakh using Kashmiri craftsmen, notably those preserved at Alchi. Together with the influential Indian scholar Atīśa (982-1054), who came to Western Tibet partly at Rinchen Zangpo's initiative, he brought about a number of musical and artistic developments that were continued by their school in Tibet, the Kadampa (**bka'-gdams-pa**).

With the decline of Buddhism in India, and the rise of Muslim power in Kashmir, Ladakh instead looked in spiritual matters to Central Tibet, which had now developed a major Buddhist civilisation of its own. In doing so it potentially became politically dependent upon Lhasa as well. The later kings of the Lhachen Dynasty came under the influence of the Drigungpa (**'bri-khung-pa**), a sect of the Kargyupa, but no single school ever gained complete ascendancy in Ladakh, and its monarchs often patronised a number of sects simultaneously. The earlier rulers of the second, Namgyal (**rnam-rgyal**, "victorious") Dynasty (c.1460-1842) even managed to resist the growing power of the new Gelugpa (**dge-lugs-pa**), the reformed Kadampa school which became the basis of theocratic rule in Tibet. From the seventeenth century, the Ladakhi monarchy, like the rulers of Bhutan, maintained its autonomy in close association with the Drukpa (**'brug-pa**), another sect of the Kargyupa. [7]

The earlier part of the Namgyal Dynasty, which could be described as the kingdom's 'Golden Age', saw a great deal of cultural activity, including the building of Ladakh's principal palaces and monasteries, and the inauguration or revitalisation of its spectacular monastic festivals and royal pageants. Ladakh's religious dependence upon Central Tibet meant, however, that it harboured few original philosophical, literary or artistic developments that it could call its own, and the 'high' religious arts, including painting, calligraphy, music, and dance strictly followed the Tibetan style. Nevertheless, unlike the Tibetan monastic ruling elite, the Ladakhi lay monarchs enthusiastically supported the secular as well as the religious arts, and patronised numerous artisans of foreign provenance. King Sengge Namgyal (**seng-ge rnam-rgyal**, ruled 1616-42), for example, is said to have brought Newāri metalworkers from Nepal; their alleged descendants in the village of Chilling still manufacture luxury items in silver and gold, including musical instruments. Meanwhile, the musicians who are supposed to have come to the Ladakhi court during the reign King Jamyang Namgyal (**'jam-dbyangs rnam-rgyal**, ruled c. 1595-1616), were Balti Muslims.

Thus, whilst the monastic culture of Ladakh closely followed the Tibetan tradition, the influence of the flourishing Islamic cultural centres of Kashmir and Turkestan is clear only in Ladakh's secular arts and crafts. Yet the profound impact of the alien civilisation is barely acknowledged by the Ladakhi Buddhists themselves. This is hardly surprising given the geo-political situation of their country: historically, they have been characteristically oblique in their apprehension of the perceived imperialistic threat posed by the Muslims' Holy War (A **jihād**). In fact any acknowledgement of the cultural implications of this critical position rarely goes beyond an explanation of why Ladakh's oral traditions are less literary in orientation than those of Tibet: one Ladakhi scholar states that "as a frontier state, defence was foremost in the popular consciousness and consequently the traditional folk songs tended to incline more towards bravery and chivalry than morality and religion" (Shakspo 1985:4).

Accordingly, the official Ladakhi Chronicles give no account of how Islam was introduced to the region, and they frequently omit accounts of Muslim raids or even make spurious claims of victories over Ladakh's neighbouring Muslim states. [8] Although the Arabs record a victory over the 'Tibetans' in 814-5, the earliest inroads of Sunni Islam brought by their expansions of the eighth and ninth centuries probably had little direct impact upon Ladakh, but some Muslims in the Gilgit and Chitral area preserve traditions which date their conversion back to the Arab conquest of Badakhshan, and some measure of early indirect cultural influence from West Asia cannot be ruled out. The more thorough Islamization of the region occurred much later: the mainly peaceful propagation of Shi'ite Islam from Persia in Baltistan and parts of Ladakh post-dates the establishment of the Kashmir Sultanate (1326), and is usually attributed to the 1379 mission of Amīr Qābir Sa'īd 'Alī Hamadanī. However, the prevalence of Nur Baksh, a sect unique to Purig and southern parts of Baltistan, might indicate that Islam did not reach Ladakh until the arrival, from Iraq via Kashmir, of the teacher Mīr Shams ud-Dīn 'Irāqī in 1438 or 1448.

This missionary activity coincided with a period of military incursions from Kashmir and Turkestan which undermined the stability of the Ladakhi kingdom and which probably brought about the collapse of the Lhachen Dynasty in about 1460, although none of these events are recorded by the Ladakhi historians. On the contrary, they boasted that Ladakh had once ruled Kashmir before its Muslim rulers came to power, claiming that their king Lhachen Gyalbu Rinchen (**lha-chen rgyal-bu rin-chen**) was its last Buddhist ruler. In reality the Kashmiri rulers, notably Sultān Zain ul-'Ābidīn (1420-70), plundered Ladakh on several occasions and exorted whatever tribute they could. Although these raids proved to have no lasting impact, they heralded the rise of a major foreign Muslim power on Ladakh's western borders. Ladakh now found itself a buffer state between two imperial powers - the Mughal and the Tibeto-Mongol - with rival economic interests and conflicting traditions and belief-systems. Consequently its own autonomy rested upon a political system, revitalised under the Namgyal Dynasty, which necessarily depended upon cultural symbols for its authority.

During their rule of Kashmir (1589-1752), the Mughals wished to consolidate their northern frontier not so much by the outright military subjugation of the difficult trans-Himalayan areas, but by symbolic means. In particular, they exploited Ladakhi-Balti conflicts over the disputed area of Purig by alternately threatening war or granting imperial favours, to whichever side they deemed necessary in order to contain their power. Thus the Ladakhi kings, and their Balti rivals, were themselves drawn into a dual strategy of conflict and alliance in order to assert their independence. Ladakhi history of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries is therefore rich with periodic pacts, usually following direct intervention by the Mughal authorities in Kashmir, which were subsequently disregarded by the Ladakhis.

Ladakh's relations with its eastern neighbours were no less turbulent during the same period. Ladakh had cause to be concerned by the rise of Mongol-backed Gelugpa power in Tibet, and it came into direct political conflict with Tibet after the Ladakhi conquest of the western Tibetan kingdom of Guge (1615-1633), when a dispute arose with the Lhasa government over the position of the Gelugpa in the territories held by Ladakh. Tibet was meanwhile worried by Mughal interference in Ladakh. Relations finally deteriorated after 1677 when Ladakhis pledged to aid the Drukpa rulers of Bhutan in their war with Tibet. The ensuing Ladakh-Tibet war (1679-1684) turned into a three-sided conflict when the Ladakhis, facing defeat by Tibet, opted to seek Mughal protection. Unfortunately for Ladakh, the outcome was that it had to submit not to one, but to two, foreign powers.

Ladakh's binding treaties with the Mughals (1683) and the Tibetans (1684) achieved a measure of stability in Ladakh, at least in terms of its external relations, but at a heavy political and economic cost. Now deprived of its supremacy as a political power in the northwestern Himalaya, Ladakh's rulers relied more and more upon cultural means of asserting their authority and defining their identity. This in itself was no easy task: to appease their Mughal superiors, the Ladakhi kings upheld a fictional front of Islam by incorporating the symbols of Islamic rule. But at the same time they carefully guarded their own religion and culture,

and, partly on behalf of the Tibetans, kept a watchful eye on their non-Buddhist neighbours, particularly the Afghans (1752-1819) and the Sikhs (1819-1846) who controlled Kashmir. The peace they attempted to consolidate was nevertheless fragile or intermittent; when the Dogra invasion led to Ladakh's final loss of sovereignty in 1842, the Ladakhi monarchy could do little more than cling to symbolic vestiges of its authority.

The Ladakhi rulers of the Namgyal Dynasty, since the Mughal period, have consequently encouraged the creation of a 'high' secular culture which, though borrowing extensively from the Islamic world, they could present as their own. A similar ambivalence may be identified in the interaction between ordinary Buddhists and Muslims within Ladakh, for despite there being much scope for open conflict, this appears to be a comparatively recent phenomenon. One would not otherwise expect to find Islamic cultural influence in areas as diverse as painting, carpet-making, costume, cuisine and music. In areas of mixed population, notably in the Mulbekh-Bodh Kharbu region of Lower Ladakh, Islam and Buddhism even produced a syncretic system under which people frequently took mixed names, and freely took part in common cultural and religious activities. As one commentator suggests: "not the least valuable contribution of the settlements of Muslims in the Buddhist heartland of central Ladakh...has been to give the opportunity for the practical expression of Buddhism's tolerance towards other faiths" (Rizvi 1983:6).

To whatever extent this particular opportunity may now have been lost in the wake of recent events in Kashmir, what has been realized - and not quite lost - is a unique musical tradition arising from the complex interaction of two very different cultural systems.

1.4: Social Organization

The organization of Ladakhi society is shaped by a Buddhist value-system adapted to the limiting environmental conditions of life on the Tibetan plateau. The dualism in the Tibetan consciousness, rooted on the one hand in the passive fear of nature and, on the other, the active desire to overcome it, is socially manifest in the tension between communally-committed compassion and world-renouncing wisdom. The former generates an ethic of egalitarianism (other-power) in which mundane tasks and scarce resources are shared, while the latter creates a status-seeking tendency (self-power) legitimated by ranked ritual practice. This principle of interacting horizontal and vertical relationships is widely applicable throughout divisions of society at all levels, and the theme of unequal reciprocity is one which recurs in a variety of contexts (Stein 1972:94; Samuel 1978; Ortner 1989:33-34). In Ladakh, music-making - an activity which can undermine human order as much as create it - has a particular role in articulating these relationships. In some communal contexts, most simply in work songs, it engages participants on an equal level, while in others, where it^{is} used as a hierarchically-valued symbolic offering, it forms a basis upon which prestige is generated and maintained.

Ladakhi society is patrilocal and patrilineal, and the traditional practice of male primogeniture coupled with fraternal polyandry ensures that the ancestral home, and its economic potential, is kept intact. [9] In the absence of a male heir, sororal polygyny achieves the same aim. This system not only produces large, efficiently-run households, but also maintains the population at a low enough level such that the resources of the land are not over-stretched. The extended family unit (**nang-chang**) is therefore also the basic economic and residential unit, its members being identified by the name of the ancestral "big house" (**khang-chen**) rather than by any family name. Within the family, domestic and agricultural duties are shared, and all work is divided according to the needs of the group. Privacy is not highly valued, but commonly understood norms of supportive behaviour ensure that interactions are mostly free and easy. Gender relations are not strongly asymmetric. The primacy of household solidarity extends to a belief in a household deity (**khyim-lha**) residing

behind the central hearth. Most homes also have an upper prayer-room (**mchod-khang**).

The majority of Ladakhi families are engaged in subsistence farming. The main crop, especially at higher altitudes, is barley; a large proportion of the yield is used in the domestic manufacture of beer (**chang**), for this has a number of practical and symbolic functions in regulating social relationships both within and beyond the level of kinship (Dollfus 1985). As the growing season is short, agricultural work is intense, and demands a high level of concerted human endeavour. By contrast, there is little to do in winter apart from routine maintenance work, so this is when most festivals, marriages and other communal celebrations are held. Due to the problem of maintaining the fertility of the land, animal husbandary is a prerequisite for agriculture; even human waste is saved for manure. The cows, goats and sheep owned by each family are also kept for their milk, meat, and hide or wool. Yak-cow hybrids (**dzo**) are used for ploughing, threshing and other heavy agricultural tasks. During winter, the family's livestock is kept indoors, in the lower part of the house.

Beyond the immediate household, familial ties are maintained with an exogamous kinship group, called **rgyud** ("lineage"), which often extends to members of both male and female lines connected through several generations. A smaller, but culturally more important unit, known as **pha-spun**, operates as a 'fictive' or 'ritual' kinship group at the village level. Typically including about five to ten neighbouring households, membership is defined according to the worship of a common ancestral deity (**pha-lha**). The group owes its solidarity to an extension of paternal authority into the supernatural realm, rather than to a shared blood ancestor, although the institution may well have its origins in some kind of clan structure. In several ways they treat one another as if they were of the same kin: besides being responsible for one another's mundane welfare, for example by sharing labour or lending livestock, they carry out certain ritual duties, particularly on the occasion of death. Membership of a particular **pha-spun** also defines an individual's religious affiliation, for the **pha-lha**, being in communication with the higher gods, is thereby associated with a particular monastic sect. The **pha-spun** system is therefore an effective

way of enforcing communal solidarity, as well as relieving individual families of excessive economic and psychological burden.

A similar reciprocity is evident in the relationship between households and the monastery (**dgon-pa**) of the village. The clergy do not form a hereditary class, but are drawn from the community; traditionally each family would send a younger son at an early age to live in the monastery as a monk, while surplus females, though usually residing at home, would work in the monasteries as nuns. This system reduces the size of polygamous marriages, helps to keep the population low, and ensures that relationships between the monastery and the village are closely maintained. In return for spiritual services to the community, and for the upkeep of the monastery, each household has to provide a certain amount of labour to work the monastic estate during the year, in addition to donating a proportion of its own yield. Some of this surplus goes towards maintaining a grain store from which individual families may borrow in times of hardship.

As a result of this reciprocal socio-economic system, there are no obviously vast discrepancies in economic status. Social rank (**rigs**) is, however, a matter of great status-pride and relationships of inequality in Ladakhi society are generated, marked, and sustained in a number of ways, not only economically through the exchange of wealth, but also symbolically through the exchange of hierarchically-valued cultural products, including language, dance, music, food and costume. The concept of **rigs** ("extraction, species") includes the notion of birth and is sometimes translated as 'caste' but although implied, endogamy is not always important in practice and the symbols and values associated with these (essentially four) groups are in any case somewhat different from the Indian **varna** model. Except for the lowest artisan class (**rigs-ngan**, "those of low extraction"), which are essentially endogamous, the term stratum, which may be defined as a group of individuals occupying the same social position, is preferable (Table 2).

	Lalty (phal-pa)	Clergy (bram-ze-rigs)
	royalty (rgyal-rigs) nobility (rje-rigs) commoners (dmangs-rigs)	incarnate lamas (bla-ma) religious specialists and elders (dpon, mdzad, gnyer-pa)
	physicians (am-chi) astrologers (dpon-po) lay priests (lha-bdag) oracles (lha-ba, lha-mo) court musicians (mkhar-mon) metalworkers (gser-gar) weavers (thag-mkhan) carpenters (shing-mkhan)	novice monks (grwa-pa)
artisans (gdol-ba'i-rigs)	blacksmiths (mgar-ba) musician-carpenters (mon-pa) beggar-minstrels (bhe-da)	low castes (rigs-ngan)

Table 2: The Stratification of Ladakhi Society

The clergy (**bram-ze-rigs**) are not usually considered to be part of the Ladakhi social order, but the ranks of its own hierarchy tend to reflect all but the lowest strata from which its community derives. The highest of these, **rgyal-rigs** ("those of royal extraction"), consists of families related to the king and his vassals, followed by the small but influential class known as **rje-rigs** ("those of noble extraction") or **sku-drag** ("noble body"). Like the monasteries, they often owned large estates upon which villagers were required to work, and they served as ministers and tax collectors in the king's government. These positions were frequently hereditary in practice, although the king had the theoretical right to determine who could be admitted to this privileged class. Under the monarchic system, they exercised a virtual monopoly on long-distance trade, and they enjoyed certain rights of dress: at one time, they alone were allowed to wear the maroon **gon-chas** (traditional woollen cloak), but when ordinary Ladakhis started to use the dyed wool, they instead monopolised the wearing of Chinese satin (**gos-chen**) and velvet hats and boots from Turkestan. Religious members of **rje-rigs** families frequently rose to high positions within the monastic hierarchy, notably **rin-po-che** ("precious jewel", i.e. high lama).

The vast majority of Ladakhis belong to a general class of householders called **dmangs-rigs**, sub-divided into **tong-chen** (large households) and **tong-chung** (small households). The former once paid taxes to the king, but they were sufficiently wealthy to be able to employ servants and labourers, rent out land or livestock, and enjoy a relatively more luxurious life-style: their houses were larger and had ornamental doors and windows; they adorned their **mchod-khang** with paintings and statues from Tibet, and their kitchens were well-equipped with decorous stoves and fine utensils. They could also afford to have meat (goat or sheep mutton mainly eaten as **mok-mok**, spiced filled dumplings), rice (sometimes prepared as **phu-la** (Tk **pillāv**), i.e. pilau), tea, silver jewellery, and fine clothes. The smaller households were simpler, and lived on **thuk-pa** (noodle soup) and barley products such as **kho-lag** (roasted flour mixed with butter, curd or beer), **skyu** (plain dumplings with vegetable curry), **ta-gir** (flat bread of the chapatti type), and **tan-dur** (hard bread baked in a tandoor oven).

At the level of village organization, in which the royal and noble classes are not necessarily represented, the concept of **rigs** is applied somewhat differently. The villagers use the term **gdol-pa'i-rigs** to describe those whose livelihood depends not upon land ownership but upon the provision of certain services on the basis of a patron-client contract. On the whole, Ladakhi households are resourceful enough to be virtually self-sufficient, so there is not any large scale division of labour; most families, for instance, can construct their own buildings (made from sun-dried mud bricks and wooden beams), make their own clothes and shoes, and mill their own flour. For more specialised tasks, however, these artisans, also known as **lag-shes**, are engaged. Although a functional group, rather than a social one, they tend in practice to be hereditary (ideally patrilineal). They are also ranked according to occupational status, with the lay religious specialists **am-chi** (physician), **dbon-po** (astrologer) and **lha-bdag-pa** (official in charge of the cult of the village deity) uppermost. While these practitioners belong to the same social stratum as the ordinary villagers, the lowest ranking occupations (musician, blacksmith) are, in fact, exclusively represented by members of the endogamous groups of the **rigs-ngan**.

In the case of the musician (**mon-pa**) and blacksmith (**mgar-ba**), then, their status is ascribed, for they are grouped with other members of their kind who are unskilled. Traditionally, their houses were very small, wore black wool and ate only barley. The lowest group of all, the **bhe-da**, were once tent-dwellers and lived as beggars.

1.5: Political Economy

The environmental constraints upon Ladakh's village organization, which lead to a high value being placed on the ownership of land in scattered settlements, do not favour the formation of a tightly centralized political structure. Himalayan states in general are characterized by rural economies managed by the common consent of tough independent communities, and Ladakh is no exception; the essentially egalitarian organization of the village secures at least a subsistence level of

agricultural production, for every member of the community. The process of state formation in Ladakh has therefore depended upon gaining control of the economic surplus deriving, firstly, from the development of an efficient agricultural base, and secondly, from the exchange of goods resulting from domestic manufacture or transit trade. [10]

The development of settled agriculture is severely limited in Ladakh because of the scarcity and unpredictability of rainfall. According to the theory put forward by Wittfogel (1957) concerning the relationship between ecological factors and forms of political organization, this places Ladakh in the category of the 'hydraulic state': the cultivation of available soil, accounting for less than 0.25% of the total land area, is only possible through highly intensive irrigation. Even the banks or flood plains of the larger rivers cannot be used because the seasonal and diurnal variation in water volume is too high. Instead, melt-water from mountain streams is brought over long distances through a carefully regulated network of irrigation channels, so that as much as possible of the lower hillsides and side valleys can be cultivated. The dependence of Ladakh's agriculture upon the close co-ordination of labour and transport in the construction of canals and bridges means that human resources must be mobilised on a scale larger than kinship alone can provide.

As Emerson (1984) shows in the case of neighbouring Baltistan, the establishment of units of authority at the level of village polity is a process which may account for the earliest phase of state formation (colonization) in Ladakh. Even today, Ladakhi villages are essentially corporate social units under the leadership of elected headmen (**mgo-pa**) whose main duties are to organise labour rotas and to monitor irrigation and grazing. Furthermore, these operations are traditionally co-ordinated by the **lha-bdag-pa** who, as the incumbent of the village deity, oversees the performance of fertility rituals at the start of the agricultural season. Among the Brokpa, these roles are combined: the village 'council' consists of several **lha-bdag-pa**, drawn from different **pha-spun**, each being responsible for certain agricultural and ritual duties.

These observations support the idea that Ladakhi civilisation demanded a higher level of social cohesion and central authority than in Tibet. Although the early Tibetan kingdoms were described as "river states" (**chab-srid**), the Tibetan political economy had a mixed agricultural-pastoral base leading to a system that has been characterized as stateless (Samuel 1982). The agrarian system of Ladakh, however, favoured the formation of levels of social organization with authority over wider groups of people. One of the clearest ways in which the emergence of central authority became manifest is in the social organization of Ladakh's music-making: here, it is traditionally a formally organized activity co-ordinated from the political centre, and its musicians are professional specialists whose status is socially ascribed. In Tibet, on the other hand, there was a predominance of amateur or semi-professional, especially itinerant, musicians whose status depended more upon personal qualities and individual artistic skill (Vandor 1979).

The complex relationship between the music of the village and that of the state is bound up with the more general problem of state-formation, and particularly the transition from a kinship-based tribal social system to one based on higher levels of social organization. A key factor in the development of the Ladakhi state apparatus was the control of the economic surplus deriving from agriculture and trade. Economic control of this production was one of the principal means by which Ladakh's rulers generated their power, and by which the local population was incorporated into the political economy of the state.

Some surplus trade in Ladakh has traditionally been conducted at the local level, particularly between regions with different resources. At lower altitudes it is possible to grow wheat, vegetables and fruit, and so the people of Lower Ladakh have traditionally traded these items locally with the inhabitants of Baltistan, Zaskar, Nubra and Upper Ladakh in exchange for wool, salt, borax and sulphur. It was mainly the larger surplus-producing households who were engaged in this barter trade, and some men even went on longer summer expeditions to Changthang to trade in pashmina (P **pashm**), the prized raw material of Kashmir shawl wool.

Larger scale transit trade probably dates to Ladakh's pre-dynastic period, when it had already established trading links with the merchant centres of Central Asia. Long-distance trading expeditions, involving the extensive organization of human and animal labour, and of supplies, were major undertakings, and during the period of the Ladakhi kingdom, most long distance trade, and all foreign trade, was strictly controlled by the state. From Lahore, Amritsar and Ludhiana in the Punjab, through Kashmir and Rupshu, the main imports were opium, rice, spices and textiles while from Yarkand, Kashgar and Khotan in Eastern Turkestan, over the Karakoram and through Nubra, came hashish, tobacco, carpets and silverware. Tea and silk were mainly imported from China via Tibet. All these routes converged on Leh, which served as a staging post for traders of many nationalities as well as a centre of trading in its own right.

The Ladakhi government generated wealth from this trade in numerous ways. Some trade was conducted directly, principally (under the terms of the 1684 treaty) the triennial **lo-phyag** mission to Lhasa which included letters and gifts for the Dalai Lama. It was led by an official of Hemis monastery but managed by Muslim Ladakhis. In return, the **cha-pa**, or tea caravan, was brought by a Tibetan official from Lhasa each year. In addition, the government had control over the pashmina wool trade between Western Tibet, Changthang and Kashmir. Other official missions, which also could benefit from the use of compulsory local portorage in the name of the state, included trade between selected monasteries of Ladakh and Tibet. In addition to these monopolies, a tax was levied on Muslim traders and brokers residing in Leh, and duty was collected by customs officers on all goods passing through the kingdom.

Although most Ladakhis were not directly involved in this trade, they were incorporated into the political economy through a fiscal system which combined taxation with concessions. The bureaucracy required by this system was supported by the exchange of goods, services, rights and obligations at all levels of the social hierarchy. The supreme head was the king (**rgyal-po**), who theoretically had complete authority over the granting of rights and privileges to his subjects. He collected the property taxes levied on them through a state administration, headed by the Prime

Minister (**bka'-blon**) and the Chief Treasurer (**bka'-mdzod**). Under their control there were a number of district governors (**blon-po**) in Central Ladakh, together with up to eight feudal 'chiefs' of the regions under indirect rule (principally Purig, Zanskar and Nubra). These officials, drawn from the **sku-drag** nobility, were themselves exempt from taxes and enjoyed certain trading rights. They held considerable power in the villages in which they normally resided; in other villages for which they were responsible, government business was delegated to lesser officials and the village 'go-pa.

There can be little doubt that this system of taxation, softened by pecuniary concession, was a precarious one which the Ladakhi population were not automatically willing to accept. Given that geo-political factors made centralized rule difficult, this kind of political authority clearly could not be established merely by imposing brute force or by appealing to financial motives. In terms of Weberian legitimation theory, popular support is in this instance more effectively achieved by appealing to popular moral beliefs and sentiments, and it follows that a good deal of the manipulation of power and authority was provided by symbolic means. As Macdonald (1987) argues for the Himalaya in general, this manipulation need not depend upon Hindu or Buddhist ideology. In the case of Ladakh, the early Dardic chiefs apparently acquired charismatic qualities that gave them the mandate to rule; their heroic attributes were celebrated in myths and legends, and in certain festivals they had a special role as guarantors of fertility and prosperity. It was only after Ladakh became a Buddhist kingdom that it developed more elaborate religious ideologies, and even then the new Tibetan-style rule had to be 'de-alienized' - the second phase of Emerson's state formation model - by adapting it to local conditions.

Although Ladakh, like Tibet, could be described as being a 'civilisation without cities', in the sense that the main concentrations of population occurred as rural monastic centres rather than urban ones, their political organization was quite different. Broadly speaking, whereas the monasteries in Tibet were political institutions in their own right, those in Ladakh had a legitimating function towards secular rule (Samuel 1984).

The religious establishment thus played a substantial role in the symbolic construction of kingship, for example by officiating at royal ceremonies and public festivals, and by condoning his sacral character in the perception of local people.

Another aspect which distinguished the political system of Ladakh from that of Tibet was the role of militarism, the third and final phase of state formation. The dual strategy of conflict and alliance which characterized the relations between rival political forces competing with one another for political authority and economic control meant that warfare and defence were uppermost in the legitimating functions of the state. Since the nobility acted as military commanders responsible for mobilizing local armies in time of war, it was expected that potential leaders, and above all the king himself, should be in possession of the charismatic qualities of the ideal guardian-warrior.

In accordance with this symbolic construction of kingship, the king lived in appropriate splendour. A proportion of the state's wealth was allocated for the maintenance of the royal palaces and the luxurious life-style of the royal family. The royal court (**mkhar**) was itself served by a number of stewards and attendants, under the control of the Prefect of the Palace (**mkhar-dpon**). It was their duty to ensure the personal comfort of the king and his family by maintaining sufficient stocks of fuel and provisions, which were supplied directly by selected crown villages.

Among the specialists in the service of the king were the royal musicians (**mkhar-mon**). Performing whenever he appeared in public, they played a vital role in the ceremonial life of the court, a life which acted out something akin to what Geertz (1980:13) has termed the 'exemplary centre': "the court-and-capital is at once the microcosm of the supernatural order...and the material embodiment of political order". The music of royal ceremonial and public ritual was, in its own way, also a statement of this idea, for it provided the model of an ideal order which gave shape and meaning to Ladakhi life, rather than merely reflecting it.

1.6: Leh: Court and Capital

Leh's prominence dates from the early seventeenth century, when Ladakh was at the height of its paramountcy in the northwestern Himalaya. [11] Before then, the ancient capital was at Shey, fifteen kilometres further up the Indus Valley, where the palace continued to be used as the summer residence by successive generations of the Namgyal dynasty. The massive nine-storey palace at Leh (**slal-chen dpal-mkhar**), which towers above the city from the hill to its north, was built by King Sengge Namgyal in about 1620, but since the Dogra invasion has stood semi-derelect. Further up the hill (known as **rnam-rgyal rtse-mo**, "the peak of victory"), are the remains of an earlier fort and temple built by Tashi Namgyal (**bkra-shis rnam-rgyal**) in the mid-sixteenth century, probably ruined by the Tibetan invasion during the 1680s, and which may have occupied a site of much earlier Dard fortifications (Plate 8).

At an altitude of 3505 m, the city is situated about 10 km north-east of the Indus in the alluvial fan of a fertile side valley below the Khardung-La, the main pass leading to Nubra and Turkestan. Lying at the junction of the major trading routes, the town became Ladakh's commercial centre in addition to its seat of royal power. In attracting numerous foreign traders, many of whom were Muslim, it soon acquired an urban character, and Leh also became Ladakh's cultural centre: enhanced by the spirit of city life, and encouraged by royal patronage, the arts and crafts flourished in a cultural environment quite unlike any other in Ladakh. All three of the traditional hereditary musician-groups of Ladakh are still represented in the capital although, since the last century, their roles have undergone a great deal of change: few present-day members of the traditional **mkhar-mon** and **mon-pa** families are active musicians, and the current generation of urban professional musicians are nearly all **bhe-da**.

Leh in some respects resembles the typical pattern of a pre-industrial Central Asian city: it once had surrounding walls with a number of towers and gateways to control the entry of people and goods. All that remains today, in what is now the centre of the city, is the south gate, or "horse-



Plate 8: Leh, with palace and old city in background

gate" (**rta-sgo**, probably so-called because it was large enough to pass through on horseback), adjoining a portion of the old wall. Together with the north gate, these were monitored by customs officials who registered all incoming merchandise. Use of the eastern gate, or "king's gate" (**rgyal-sgo**), on the road leading to the palace, was reserved for members of royalty and nobility. Within the city walls, in an area which now forms the labyrinth of the 'old city' below the palace, there were clusters of houses reserved for the nobility and servants of the royal court, including the homes of the head **mkhar-mon** (called **ti-chong**) and the **no-chung**, the leading family of court dancers (**drag-shos-ma**). At the edge of the city there were two gardens or leisure sites for the royal family's use: Murtse, a stretch of desert to the southeast, containing the original royal polo ground (P? **shagaran**) believed to have been built by King Sengge Namgyal; and, to the west, the fine garden of Karzo.

The ceremonial life of the royal court at Leh lost most of its real splendour after 1842, when monarchic rule was abolished under the terms of the Ladakhis' treaty with the Dogras. Although stripped of all formal political authority, the royal family and the nobility nevertheless retained their popular esteem. As one Western visitor in 1938 remarked: "the ancient Ladakhi political organization was still in existence at the time of my visit, but was divested of all powers, and only survived because of the prestige it still enjoyed in the eyes of the people" (Prince Peter 1963:³⁴¹). The king was still allowed to hold court in Leh on ceremonial occasions, and the **mkhar-mon** continued to serve as royal musicians, albeit on a reduced scale. After 1846, when Ladakh became a part of the princely state of Kashmir under British protection, the symbols of the king's authority were increasingly incorporated within the framework of newer, wider political entities, for the Ladakhi royalty and nobility took part not only in their own traditional festivals, but also in the ceremonial functions of the state and imperial administration. After 1870, Leh became the summer capital of a regional administration jointly governed by a Kashmiri Wazīr (Governor) and a British Joint Commissioner, who annually invited the king and Ladakhi nobles to take part in lavish festivities in the Commissioner's compound, formerly the king's garden (Karzo). In 1886, King Sonam Namgyal, and a delegation of Ladakhi nobles and artisans took

part in the coronation ceremonies of Mahārāja Pratāp Singh in Jammu, in the presence of the British Viceroy of India.

The modernization of Leh began in earnest after Ladakh's loss of sovereignty. The main bazaar, a grand avenue extending southwards away from the base of the palace was built in the king's "mother field" (**ma-zhing**) by the Dogras in 1842 (Plate 9). A new bazaar was laid out by the British in 1897, encouraging further expansion away from the old city. They also built a 'charas house' near the North gate, under the management of a resident British trade officer, for controlling the trade in hashish from Turkestan. Nearby is the Moravian Church, dating from 1885. The present-day polo ground, also used for other sports and lying adjacent to the National Archery Stadium, was built in the same year. Nearby are the cinema, which has a daily programme of Hindi movies, a small auditorium where plays and concerts are occasionally performed, and a conference centre. Most of the other more modern buildings, including the main secondary school, the hospital and the radio station are situated to the south along the road to the airport, while the richer land to the west, on the banks of the Sankar stream, is an area occupied by a large number of the higher-grade hotels and guest houses. Spreading eastward into a small side valley used as a cremation site and tipping-ground is a housing colony somewhat disparagingly referred to by the Ladakhis as **bhe-da gling**, the "**bhe-da** district", for this is where the 40-50 families of **bhe-da** have recently been housed by the state government.

Much of Leh's commerce and cottage industry is still conducted by the Argon Muslims. They carry out their traditional trades as jewellers, tailors, bakers, butchers and barbers in an area concentrated around the seventeenth century Sunni "Kashmiri mosque" (**kha-che mas-jid**) at the end of the main bazaar beneath the palace. Some of these families who once were involved in long-distance trade are still relatively wealthy, and are considered by citizens to belong to the upper class. Others, particularly the Kashmiri 'antiques' dealers, are more recent settlers from the Kashmir Valley attracted by the lucrative summer tourist trade. The Buddhist storekeepers, mainly from trading families in Lower Ladakh, are few in

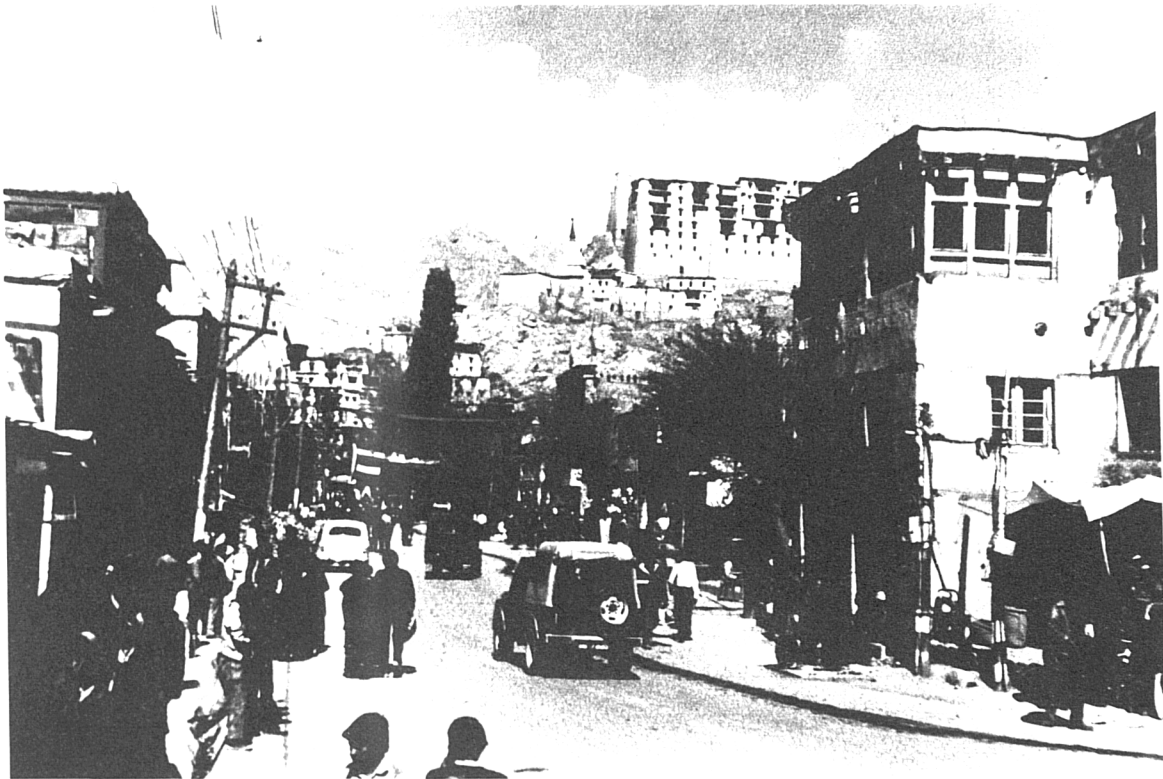


Plate 9: Leh bazaar in 1988, with palace above

number, but some are turning to selling jewellery and other crafts in order to profit from tourism.

The impact of the modern world has also brought with it a wide range of modern goods and services, including motor vehicle repair, restaurants, video and cassette shops, and even beauty parlours, but although some enterprising Ladakhis have set up business in these expanding areas, many engaged in these trades are immigrants from the plains. Remarkably, it is the Tibetan refugees who have been more successful, especially in the new bazaars spreading along the Old Road.

Despite the influence of modern capitalism, and the profound social and political changes which have been brought about since Indian Independence in 1947, Ladakh's royalty and nobility still enjoy a good measure of prestige, and even some political influence. Ladakh's first representatives elected to the Kashmir state legislative assembly in 1934 included King Jigmet Dadul Namgyal (**'jigs-med dgra-'dul rnam-rgyal**) and a nobleman, Kalon Tsewang Rigzin (**bka'-blon tshe-dbang rig-'dzin**), who also became the first president of the Young Men's Buddhist Association in the same year. Now called the Ladakh Buddhist Association, this semi-political organisation, under the leadership of the present king's younger brother, has been at the forefront of recent political demands for Ladakh's separation from Kashmir. It has also campaigned for greater direct political representation: even though India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, visited Leh during the country's first parliamentary elections in 1949, Ladakh did not get its own Member of Parliament until 1968, a position which became held by Queen Disket Wangmo (**bde-skyid dbang-mo**) in 1977.

As in other parts of India, the royal traditions of Ladakh came under public ownership at the time of Independence. The royal musicians were officially disbanded, but some of their offspring have served as Staff Artists at the local station of All India Radio, which made its first broadcast in 1972. Under the terms of the so-called Leh Settlement, provisions have also been made for festivals and ceremonies formerly sponsored by the king to be funded by the municipal administration.

Inevitably this transfer in patronage will have changed Ladakh's royal musical traditions in ways that are difficult to assess. At present, however, it does seem that most have survived if, in some cases, only in a somewhat degenerate form. For a number of political and economic reasons, government (state or national) support of the arts in Ladakh is neglected, and the single government-funded cultural institution, the Leh branch of the Jammu and Kashmir Academy for Art, Culture and Languages (established 1969), is unable or unwilling to directly support the training of new musicians. For the most part, these skills are still passed on by traditional means whose continuity is threatened.

PART ONE

SYMBOLOGIES OF POWER

Rhythm is the creator and upholder of the world. It is the law of periodically flowing order...

Music,...so long as it has not fallen victim to a chaotic way of thinking, has always been regarded as the archetype of the cosmic order.

Marius Schneider, **Klangsymbolik in Fremden Kulturen** [1979]

CHAPTER TWO

ORDERED SOUNDS: MUSIC AND SYMBOL IN BUDDHIST COSMOLOGY

2.1: Music and Cosmos

Music lends itself to symbolic analysis because it embodies, in moral and aesthetic terms, conceptions of the social order and its relationship to the natural world. In Ladakh, music is intricately connected with their cosmological conceptions: to the Ladakhis, all perceivable entities, including sounds, which belong to the phenomenal world represent manifestations of the ideal natural order. To them, this transcendent order (**lha-chos**, "the religion of the gods") is more or less embodied and empowered in the social order (**mi chos**, "the religion of men").

To the outsider (analyst), this cosmology represents a mental construction of the type that all human beings use to orient themselves within their world (Neisser 1976). Set in terms of human action, **lha-chos** encompasses the 'ideal types' through which everyday experiences are assimilated to form higher levels of meaning; it forms the basis of all logics of form upon which the generation of meaning depends. **Mi-chos**, on the other hand, represents the 'prototypes' which determine individuals' immanent action and behaviour in dealing with material and social reality (Ripley 1990).

Both insider and outsider views place the realms of **lha-chos** and **mi-chos** in a dialectical relationship: they are complementary and mutually defining. To the Ladakhis, human affairs are, in one (contrastive) sense distinguished from those of the gods, but in another (inclusive) sense, the two realms are both considered to belong to the domain of "religion" (**chos**). The world of the gods is both transcendent and immanent: divine beings and their sounds properly belong to the other world, yet are ever present in the everyday concerns of mortals. Anthropologists, meanwhile, would typically regard such a cosmological model as a creation of human consciousness in order to adapt themselves to their biosocial world, generating and classifying symbols to attribute meaning. Insofar as musical sounds attract cultural meanings on account of the conventions which govern their performance contexts, music therefore takes its respective place in relation to the social behaviour of its producers, patrons and listeners. Music may thus be subject to the same methods of

social analysis as other cultural symbols, and can be similarly demonstrated to explain and justify the social order; one of its primary social functions is to present and process information which society has about itself.

One can thereby identify structural equivalents - such as music and, perhaps, religion - across different cultures, although comparison is rendered problematic because these forms are defined, classified, and otherwise socially contextualized in different ways. In the case of Tibetan 'religion', for example, several authors adopt a contrastive approach, similar to the division between the Great and Little Traditions of India advanced by Singer (1972). They draw a categorical distinction between the orthodox religion of monastic Buddhism (**lha-chos**), and the beliefs and practices of the lay people (**mi-chos**): Tucci (1980:182) and Stein (1972:191), for instance, respectively describe the latter as the "folk religion" or the "nameless religion" of Tibet. Alternatively, an inclusive approach seeks a synthesis of these two complementary aspects of Tibetan Buddhism (**chos**) in terms of the continuous, dynamic exchange of ideas and beliefs (Samuel 1978; Snellgrove 1987; Miller 1993). Staal (1982) even rejects the idea of religion as a universal term altogether, in favour of a critical examination of the underlying living traditions, an approach which is more likely to inform the study of Tibetan belief-systems as a means of legitimating local socio-political structures (Macdonald 1987, Ortner 1989).

Music, however, recommends itself as a universal category by virtue of the unique forms and principles by which humans organize its constituent sounds. Nevertheless, in its social setting, problems of definition and classification arise in the same way as they do for 'religion'. Thus these issues go beyond the question of what types of sound count as 'music', but extend to the definition of repertory classes, and performer categories, by reference to social criteria. The problem is highlighted here in the case of Ladakhi **lha-rnga**, which is categorized by a wide range of more-or-less transcendental-oriented activity (ritual, ceremonial, entertainment): it defies any attempt to classify it as 'secular' or 'sacred'.

Although a structuralist-functionalist approach to the study of musical symbolism is prone to be static and over-schematised, there are good reasons for adopting such an approach, from both outsider and insider perspectives. Firstly, for ethnomusicology to be a scientifically valid discipline, it must approach the problems of symbolism from an empirical perspective, and treat musical phenomena in the first instance as social facts; there is no reason to exclude music from the instrumental aspects of signification. The structuralist-functionalist method is a useful tool for descriptive analysis, from which levels of meaning in different contexts may subsequently be discerned. Secondly, Tibetan Buddhism offers its own theory of symbolism which asserts that cultural symbols are employed with some purpose in mind. Moreover, public music is invariably regarded as "auspicious" (*bkra-shis*), implying that some kind of transformation is considered to take place. Even at the popular level, music is regarded as being goal-oriented, even if the interpretations offered are not always consistent.

2.2: Symbolic Models in Ladakhi Buddhism

One of the most abstract models in Tibetan Buddhism is the mandala. As a cosmogram, it is a highly schematic representation of the sacred realms, a vision of perfected reality as pure form; as a psychogram, it is considered to be an expression of the transcendent energies of the enlightened mind (buddhahood). Being an ideal type or meta-design, it may be realised in a number of ways, through mental visualization, visual representation (in two or three dimensions), and even in sound. In one of many possible visual forms (Fig. 1), the mandala is portrayed as the sacred realm of the Five Dhyānī (Transcendent) Buddhas, each representing the transformation of certain human emotions into one of the perfect principles or energies of nirvana (Snellgrove 1982:70-73). The cosmic centre is occupied by the Vairocana (buddha principle), and is surrounded at each of the four cosmic directions by the remaining Buddhas (thunderbolt, jewel, lotus and action principles). Each of these 'parent' Buddhas are surrounded by a 'family' of four Great Bodhisattvas, sixteen in all. A class of lesser female deities is similarly generated: Vairocana is

surrounded by a retinue of four peaceful Buddha-goddesses, considered to be manifestations of the Perfection of Wisdom (S **prajñāpāramitā**). Eight lesser offering goddesses are placed in two outer circles: the inner offering 'gestures' are love, garland, song and dance; the outer ones are incense, flower, lamp and fragrance. Each cardinal direction is additionally assigned a Guardian King (S **lokapāla**), and the entire group may, hypothetically, be encircled by a retinue of the 360 minor protective deities (**lha- sum-brgya-drug- cu**).

All these beings are ascribed particular characteristics, which form the basis of a number of symbolic and numerological classifications explaining the qualities and origins of entities in the sense realm, including colours, elements and sounds. For example, 360 occurs not only as the number of days in the Tibetan Buddhist calendar, the number of races and languages in the world, the number of transcendental kings, and the total number of songs originating in its four quarters (Ellingson 1979^a:236), but also as the ideal number of **lha-rnga**.

The primary numerological symbolism, however, is dual: enlightened deities evoke pairs of wrathful-peaceful principles symbolising the complementary qualities of perfect beings. These qualities constitute a range of binary oppositions that are manifest in the phenomenal world, but which ultimately form an essential unity in the enlightened mind. For example, the male Method principle (S **upāya**) signified by the drum (S **ḍamaru**, T **ḍa-ma-ru**), in conjunction with feminine Wisdom (S **prajñā**) signified by the bell (S **ghaṇṭa**, T **dril-bu**), represents the masculine power which is sublimated into compassion for sentient beings. In Vajrayana (Tantric Buddhism), these dualities are most clearly represented visually as the union of sexual energies portrayed by **yab-yum** ("mother-father") figures, notably the wrathful protectors of the dharma (S **dharmapāla**) with their female consorts (S **ḍākinī**). They destroy the obstacles (the four Māras) to the true path to enlightenment and seduce those who fall from it. In union, these deity-pairs include all five buddha-principles, and they have their own associated characteristics and retinues: for example, the **ḍākinī** assume the appearance of the mythological guardian creatures who protect the four cosmic directions (tiger, snow lioness, dragon and garuda

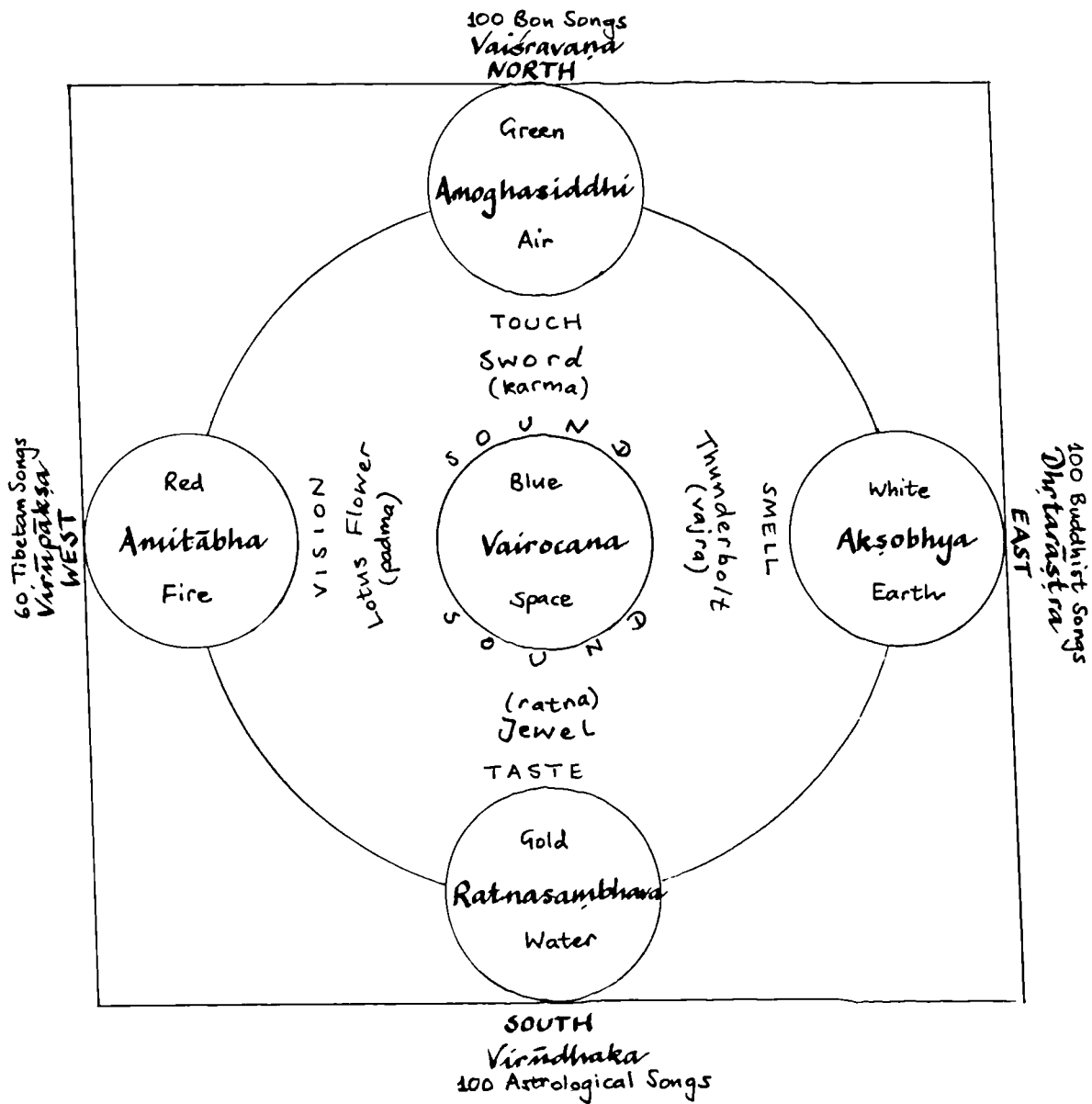


Figure 1: The Mandala of the Five Dhyani Buddhas
[after Snellgrove 1982:71]

bird); and the retinue (numbering up to a possible 180) of of the protector Paldan Lhamo (**dpal-ldan lha-mo**, S **Śrī Devi**, "Glorious Goddess") includes the Five Sisters of Long Life (**tshe-ring mched-nga**), each of whom rides a wild animal.

Another dual distinction, which again is ultimately undifferentiated, is made between the transcendent Buddhas (S **sambhogakāya**) and those which are manifest in the world (S **nirmānakāya**). The latter include historical figures who have gained enlightenment; besides the historical Buddha, Sakyamuni, these include the eighty-four Great Adepts (S **mahāsiddha**, such as Naropa), the sixteen Saints (S **arhat**), gurus (e.g. Padmasambhava), pandits (e.g. Atīśa) and lamas.

One cosmic zone in which these beings may reside is that of the celestial paradise (S **tusita**, T **mtho-ris**), a less transcendental model of ideal reality than the mandala, and one which more directly impinges on the lived-in world. It is the sacred realm (S **devaloka**, T **lha-yul** or **steng-gyi nam-mkha'**, "the heavens above") of the minor deities (**lha**), but is also a sense world to which the enlightened Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, may descend from their higher realm of pure form to indulge in blissful pleasures and to teach the dharma. Sakyamuni, for example, is supposed to have been preaching the dharma there before his descent to earth. Visual representations of these 'Pure Lands' often take the form of the mandala in combination with elements of realism inspired by an idealised image of the world. For instance, the land of Shambhala is portrayed as a sacred mountain (Meru) in the centre guarded on all sides by the four Guardian Kings. At its summit stands the celestial palace of the god-kings, taking the form of a perfect vision of court life: its inhabitants live among splendid, dream-like galleries, towers and halls, and are entertained with dance and music of the most sublime beauty.

In a still more immanent model, these Pure Lands are identified with a celestial realm which constitutes the highest tier of a zonal cosmos occupied by anthropomorphic gods and spirits of different ritual status (Brauen 1980, Day 1989, Dollfus 1989). According to this model, the fully

enlightened Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are the most superior, universal 'gods' (**lha**) of a much larger, locally-oriented pantheon.

In Ladakh, the upper, transcendental, realm of their three-tiered animistic cosmos is conceived as the spiritual domain of the mountain-tops, whose birds (sky-lark, cuckoo), animals (snow-leopard, ibex) and trees (juniper) are held as sacred. This realm is also where the ancestral spirits - the mountain gods of Ladakh's pre-Buddhist belief system - dwell.

The 'worldly' gods (**btsan-lha**) of the middle tier are 'domesticated' beings who live in the human world. Although they are converts to Buddhism, they have yet to achieve enlightenment and are considered to possess human-like characteristics, taking the form of spirits riding on horseback: to a greater or lesser extent, they participate in village life. Essentially benevolent, they are nevertheless likely to be offended by the deeds of human beings, and may be the cause of illness or misfortune; to keep them happy, and to gain their protection, they are therefore in need of frequent propitiation. To the villagers, they are the 'gods' (**lha**) invoked in their rituals and festivals; some of the more important ones, mainly **yul-lha** (village gods), **pha-lha** (ancestral gods), and **khyim-lha** (household gods), have personal attributes and individual names.

Finally, there are the malevolent 'undomesticated' spirits (**klu**) of the underworld, who need to be 'civilized' or destroyed; they fall into general categories such as the 'lords of the earth' (**sa-bdag**), water demons (**sbrul**), and 'goblins' (**'dre**). They sleep during the winter, but are regarded as a major cause of infertility, disease and pollution during the agricultural season.

The order of the cosmos is also represented in time. Duration, like space, belongs to the human world of perception and cognition, and is an attribute of its inhabitants' condition of suffering as part of the cycle of death and rebirth. The basis of temporal classification and symbolism is again numerological, and allows smaller divisions of time to operate as metaphors of successively larger units. The Tibetan Buddhist calendar, like that of the Chinese, consists of 12 months of 30 days each (Jaeschke

1881:254-55,490-91; Das 1902:632-65; Ribbach 1986:18-19). This 360-day year is assimilated to the solar year by a system of intercalary reckoning calculated by astrologers. Cycles of 12 years are identified by the 12 calendrical animals, each linked with one of the five elements to generate larger cycles of 60 years. These cycles of historical time are themselves set within ever-larger cycles of cosmic time, such as the three epochs of the Buddhas of the three times (past, present, future).

The annual cycle is divided into four seasons of three months or, originally, three seasons of four months, subdivided into six seasons of two months; each is associated with a goddess, just as each day is assigned one of the 360 protective deities. The 12 months are again named after the 12 animals, or are simply numbered. As in the Indo-Aryan system, the seven days of the week are named after the five planets known to ancient peoples, together with the sun and moon; they are also associated with the five elements and their associated symbolic sets. The day is divided into 12, each unit being named after the 12 animals; like the year, these 12 units are grouped into three periods of four units each, and are subdivided by five to generate 60 smaller units per day. The latter in turn are divided into 360 "breaths" (**dbugs**), equivalent to four seconds. Each breath corresponds to 300 proto-units, considered to be of the smallest perceivable duration.

2.3: The Classification of Sound and the Concept of Music

Music falls within the scope of these symbolic models because it belongs, in space and time, to the sense-realm; it shares the same characteristics as other human and natural phenomena. To the Ladakhis, and Tibetan Buddhists generally (Ellingson 1979a:118-29), sound (**sgra**, S **nāda**), like other perceivable forms, is regarded as a manifestation of the transcendent order, for it embodies and expresses aspects of the ideal in the here-and-now. As in Hindu theory, from which Buddhism drew its main theoretical constructs, a distinction is made between unmanifest (S **anāhatanāda**, "unstruck") and manifest (S **āhatanāda**, "struck") sound: the latter gives

rise to all worldly sound everywhere, but ultimately derives from the former (Danielou 1968:87-88). Thus the five "perceptual powers" (**dbang-po lnga**) or senses with which sentient beings are endowed are ideally related to the five transcendent Buddha principles: these encompass not only the five transcendent senses, but also the five cognitive powers (faith, assiduity, memory, contemplation and wisdom, also called **dbang-po lnga**) and the five elements (**'byung-ba lnga**) of earth, water, fire, air and ether.

Originally, sound was associated with the central element, aether (**mkha**), considered to be superior to the usual four (Jaeschke 1881:398): sound is thus also connected with the dominant symbol of the eight-spoked wheel (signifying the eight types of ether) which, when set in motion, spreads the dharma. This is because sound, when articulated, provides the five vowels (**dbyangs-lnga**) which are the basis of all communication and understanding; ultimately, it is thereby the instrument of political control (**dbang-po** also means temporal power, and the wheel and the 'drum of dharma' are Indian symbols of sovereign rule).

In Tibetan classifications, knowledge of sound has the status of one of the five major sciences, and the parent of the five minor sciences, of which music (**rol-mo**, S **saṅgīta**) is but one of the five branches of the performing arts (**zlos-gar**). As in cultures generally, Tibetans regard 'music' as a particular type of sound: in their conception, music is sound which has both "meaning" (**don**) and "beauty" (**snyan**) (Ellingson 1979^a:351-369). Although these qualities do not easily lend themselves as criteria for defining absolutely what may be counted as music, they do establish a hierarchy of values which determine whether one sound is more or less musical than another. Music which is rich in meaning and beauty, is more musical than sounds which are meaningful but not beautiful (e.g. drum-signals) or which are beautiful but not meaningful (e.g. the sound of a rippling brook). Yet even some sounds which are seemingly neither meaningful nor beautiful in the usual sense (e.g. the sound of an earthquake) might in some contexts be considered to have 'musical' qualities.

The Ladakhis, then, evaluate the correlation between musical form and the transcendent order in terms of these two criteria, for these, like levels of perfection in the cosmos, are relative values. From an ethnomusicological point of view, Buddhism fully encourages human music-makers to transform the sounds of the lived-in world in seeking ever-higher levels of meaning, and leads musical (i.e. humanly-organized) sounds to acquire a symbolism limited only by the human imagination; music accordingly expresses, in aesthetic and moral terms, their conceptions of their world, and their relationship with it. In Western terms, the Tibetan or Ladakhi concepts of "beauty" and "meaning" accordingly correspond to various dimensions of the signification process that have been the subject of much debate on symbolism, in both musicology and anthropology.

For the purposes of the present discussion, the following explanations are necessarily of a preliminary nature. At the most basic level, beauty is understood to be the attribute of musical sound which evokes a pleasurable emotional response: **nyan-po** (T **snyan-pa**) may be defined as "well-sounding, sweet to hear, pleasant to hear" (Jaeschke 1881:197). The concept is thus broadly consistent with Indian aesthetic theory, which defines music, **saṅgīta**, as "a particular arrangement of sounds which is pleasing [to the ear]" (Danielou 1968:87). Musically structured sound is a sensually pleasing stimulus which, consciously or not, provokes a heightened psychological state that is typically accompanied by physiological reactions (facial expression, body posture, etc.) displaying satisfaction.

However, as in Western conceptions, a purely sensationist definition of beauty is inadequate because real musical experience, whilst incorporating elements of biologically determined reactions, is also structured by cognition: arousal is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the occurrence of emotional responses to music, since this type of experience is invariably influenced and appraised by learned (i.e. socioculturally determined) sets of behaviours (Sloboda 1985:1-3).

Hence in Indian and Tibetan aesthetics, beauty is considered to be more than just a pleasurable sensation, or affective state, but a feeling which is in part directed by the evaluation, or affective meaning, of that

experience. The Indian concept of **rasa** (literally "taste"), roughly translatable as 'mood', 'ethos' or 'aesthetic attitude', thus describes an experience which is partially cultivated by the experienced performer or listener. As one tenth-century Indian theorist commented: "the aesthetic process...and the resulting relish of **rasa** could only be initiated if meanings could be communicated" (Lath 1978:20). Similarly, the Tibetan concept of **snyan-pa** has connotations of good taste, elegance or moral virtue. The same sense is also expressed in the symbolic terms of the model of celestial paradise, whose music is blissful not orgiastic: the king of the celestial musicians, Sunanda, is said to have only become "completely joyful" (S **sunanda**) having learnt the dharma from Śākyamuni himself (Ellingson 1979:180).

In Tibetan conceptualizations, then, "beauty" incorporates elements of "meaning", although they remain nominally distinct. These concepts are a dialectical description of what Langer (1951:188-89) argues to be two distinct ways in which music connects with emotion or feeling. Firstly, the formal congruence between music and emotive experience enables music to reveal, through the articulation of form, what she calls "the morphology of feeling"; its significance lies in its abstract expressiveness rather than the expression of denoted meanings. This second type of signification - the representation, by denotation or connotation, of particular meanings - places music in a similar relation to types of meaning as other symbols (linguistic, ritual and so on), including the meaning of particular emotions (affective meanings). For Langer, however, the idea that music refers to the external symbolic world is assigned a low rational priority: her idealism leads her to implicitly deny that music can be located in socially constructed reality (Shepherd 1991:57-60). Rather, although notionally distinct, the emotional experience of music and the meanings assigned to them are, in the context of the human cognitive-affective network, interactive: music represents a superimposition of two semiological systems, intrinsic and extrinsic (Nattiez 1990:126).

2.4: Musical Symbolism and Knowledge

The Tibetan concept of "meaning" (*don*), in relation to music, encompasses various kinds of meaning of this second type, where the relationship between musical signifieds and their signifiers is determined by convention. This is evidently the case even though the Tibetan cosmological system of musical semantics suggests that this relationship is in some sense a 'natural' one. Rather, this merely reflects the general principle that conventional codes, once internalized, tend to assume this appearance, or feel real, to those who have become conditioned to them (Nattiez 1990:123), and this by no means even includes, in this instance, all members of Tibetan civilization. Most Ladakhis, for example, are not aware of many of the specific meanings assigned to musical sounds by Buddhist music theorists, much in the same way that musicians in western cultures are largely unfamiliar with the Greek *ethos* system or comparable symbolic sets. Similarly, it is hard to believe that the distribution of the pitch intervals (S *śruti*) of Hindu musical theory into the five "classes" (S *jāti*) of emotional expression, and more especially Danielou's (1968:38-48) interpretation - that they derive from two sets, one 'active' (ascending) and one 'passive' (descending), of five series of fifths - has the psychological reality which he claims.

Nevertheless, such concepts do provide a point of entry for the outside observer seeking to gain an insight into what another's music means and feels for members of that culture. These concepts, for both insiders and outsiders, are no more than possible, available terms for translating or 'making sense' of musical experience: they are not that experience, but they do connect with it in a way which allows a measure of access to it, albeit in a non-specific way.

If these concepts are to be adopted as a starting point for investigating the nature of musical meanings, it becomes necessary to set the limits of such a search for knowledge. That the Ladakhis believe that the relationship between musical sounds and their meanings is somehow a natural reflection of a higher reality does not mean that it is necessary to adopt a similar position in order to understand their music. It is not a

question, as some would like to believe, of having "to penetrate the mysteries of music" to gain "initiation into those fathomless mysteries of man and cosmos" (Godwin 1989:9). But nor is it the case, as Shepherd (1991:57) assumes, that "the notion that music forms an integral aspect of socially constructed reality is incompatible with the idea that musical significance is derived from the 'open secrets of the universe'". Rather, the issue here is one of epistemological status: that music is anchored in social reality is not incompatible with the idea that it expresses the transcendent, provided that the latter is itself understood as a type of symbolization (of an idea) and not as (a belief in) a unique way of knowing. In this respect, Tibetan cosmological concepts of musical meaning are no different to western analytical discourses about music (Nattiez 1990:133): both are symbolic forms equally open to semiological examination. An enquiry into the social significance of musical symbolism is therefore delimited by the approach of anthropologists who

concern themselves more with the knower than the known, with the social position of claimant and claim rather than with the question of the objective reality of what is claimed...A claim that symbolization offers a unique path to truth not only has no validity in itself; it invites consideration of why such a claim has been made (Firth 1973:83).

In the context of Tibetan symbolics, one does not therefore have to accept the possible sense of the word **don** as "the true sense" (Jaeshke 1881:259), i.e. the quintessential validity, of a claim or idea, musical or otherwise. If, for example, the mandala is invoked to explain the meaning of different types of sounds and their possible combinations, it is not necessary to give these musical symbols the same status as that sometimes claimed for the mandala itself - by Jung (1958:), for example, who treated it as a form arising spontaneously from the human psyche.

Nor is it useful, for the present purpose, to pursue the idea that certain musical symbols may be 'natural' in the sense that Douglas (1970) uses the term to describe those which derive from the human body. For example, both Hindu and Buddhist musical theory maintain that the "five musical sounds" (S *pañchatūryanāda*, T *rol-mo'i sgra lnga*) are derived

from the series of energy centres (**S cakra**, "wheel") in the meditative body, and thus related to the five colours, sense-realms, elements, emotional categories and so on. Of these, the three principal (upper) centres (heart, throat, cerebrum) prescribe the three "sense levels" (**dbang-po'i rim-pa gsum**) which, in practice, are expressed through the musical parameters of pitch (octave register), intensity and tempo. It is tempting, therefore, to interpret these types of meanings as instances, by no means unique to Tibetan traditions, of 'musical spatialism': the localization of sounds according to resonances in particular parts of the body (Nattiez 1990:121). However, the symbolic sets associated with each **cakra**, which themselves take the form of a mandala, are not consistently distributed in the two theoretical systems: Buddhism chose to place the **svādhīsthāna cakra** in the navel rather than the genital region, thus displacing the members of the series by one step. The relationship between body and symbol, as in western perceptions (ibid.:122), is therefore probably quite arbitrary, though no less effective as a codified system of musical sound.

Given that the aim of this study is to investigate the social significance of musical symbolism, and that the focus should be on the "social position of claimant and claim" rather than the "naturalness" (in whichever sense) of the claim itself, a more important question raised by the issue of the arbitrariness of symbolization is the position of consciousness: that is, to what extent consciousness is involved in the process of representation (Firth 1973:63).

2.5: Cognition, Language, and the Meaning of Music

According to Ellingson (1979a:148-58,358-62), Tibetan symbolic theory provides its own account of the nature and operation of consciousness (**zin-pa**), suggesting a number of ways in which consciousness intersects with the generation of musical meaning to give rise to a cognitive model of perception between objects of reference and human consciousness. Any given sound has both 'external' and 'internal' aspects: a physical component, or sound object, and a mental counterpart, or sound image.

The "meaning", in the sense of the word **don** as "the sense or signification of anything" (Das 1902:642), of a sound is therefore not an innate quality of the sound object, but is derived from the assimilation of sound objects by human consciousness. Indeed, **don** may also be understood to mean an "idea, notion, conception" (Jaeschke 1881:259). In other words, this type of meaning is cognitive, for it is synthesized and analysed by central cognition; it involves the active, arguably conscious, operation of thinking. It is, moreover, determined, learned and shared among socially and culturally interacting perceivers.

The mandala, as a mental model, assigns meanings or symbolic qualities to transformed sounds that are typically associated with a variety of concepts and sensations. This is because cognition operates centrally, integrating the perceptual input through the other sense media, which likewise have an external sense 'body' and an internal sense 'image'; and also because the mind typically apprehends music in combination with other performing arts (dance, drama, costume and recitation) and with ritual performance. In Hindu theory, for example, the seven scale degrees (**S svara**) are each assigned a colour, deity, a bird or animal, and one or more of the nine aesthetic attitudes (**S nava rasa**) (see, for example Mahajan 1989:32). A similar symbolism is to be found in Tibetan Buddhist and Bon musical writings, where the seven scale degrees are apparently related to the alternately five or seven fragrances (**dri**, **S gāndha**, upon which the celestial musicians, **dri-za**, **S gāndharva**, are supposed to 'feed' (Das 1902:653)) and where, in Bon literature, the nine chant types (cf. the nine **rasa**?) are associated with the sound properties of nine animals (dog, horse, eagle, parrot, lion, lark, tigress, dragon, cuckoo) (Ellinorson 1979a:101-2).

In each case, these attributes are symbols or 'translations' of the affective meanings which the various sounds ideally represent, and span a range of emotional categories. Although some of these (e.g. the **rasas** of fear, disgust) are unpleasant as feelings in themselves, they are not unpleasant as aesthetic concepts (but nevertheless difficult to communicate musically).

The attribution of qualities to specific pitches does not, in any case, entail that the scale degrees in themselves provoke the sentiments which they represent, for these are dependent upon the structural relationships between the notes formed according to musical principles, not to the notes as abstract entities. Nevertheless, as Shepherd (1991:126) argues from his cultural analysis of functional tonality in western music, "no music can be regarded as a closed system having internally sufficient laws". A theory such as Langer's, which does regard music as a largely autonomous system, cannot explain why certain musical forms are selected, or how they might be manipulated in socially meaningful ways. Thus the Hindustani music system likewise depends upon the properties of tones, and of their intervallic relationships and movements, but these structures are organized and developed according to principles derived from socially constructed reality. For example, the four-fold hierarchic distribution of the scale degrees which establish the **rasa** of a particular melodic type (**rāga**) are related to the ideal social structures of a kingdom:

king	= sonant (vādī)	= principal ("tonic")
minister	= consonant (samvādī)	= secondary ("dominant")
subjects	= assonant (anuvādī)	= other admissible degrees
enemies	= dissonant (vivādī)	= inadmissible degrees

Similarly, the four types of melodic movement (S **varṇa**, "caste" or "colour") could be viewed as a reflection of social mobility or status aspiration: stable (**sthāyī**), ascending (**arohī**), descending (**avrohi**) and fluctuating (**sanchārī**).

One reason that Buddhist music expresses meanings through quite differently organized sound structures could well be that Buddhist social ideals were quite different from those of Hinduism. Principally, Buddhism rejected the idea that an individual's karma would determine their rebirth in terms of a particular caste (**varṇa**) and sub-caste (**jāti**), rather that it would only place them in a more or less favourable position with regards to obtaining liberation from karma (nirvana). Thus, broadly speaking, categories of affective meaning are expressed through proportional and qualitative musical values rather than through measured quantities or units.

The three sense levels of pitch-register, intensity and tempo were retained in Buddhism because movement between and within these levels, for each parameter or combinations thereof, may represent transitions across the three cosmic realms (states of consciousness) or, in worldly terms, spatiotemporal movement. However, the four types of melodic movement (**yar-mar**, stable; **yar**, ascending; **mar**, descending; **'gyur**, fluctuating) are not anchored within a modal system as they are in Hindu theory, for it is the relative level (contour) which is important. The same is true of rhythmic movements, which represent the same four transient types: **tshir**, "in order" (regularly measured or grouped); **bsdu**, "contracting", or **phab**, "falling, coming" (accelerating); **rgyas**, "extending", or **'phos**, "migrating, going" (decelerating); **'phar**, "rebound, flutter" ('rubato').

Another area of musical expression to which Buddhism assigns specific values and meanings is timbre. As 'external' sound-bodies, different types of instruments and their sounds have 'internal' sound images or meanings. Thus the five ideal sounds are manifest in real sound according to the categorical perception of different timbres. In one sense, as in Hindu theory, this defines the five material agencies (instruments) of musical sound (S **pañchatūryavādya**, T **rol-mo'i sgra so-so'i 'byung-khung bstan-pa**): strings (chordophones), wind (aerophones), leather (membranophones), metal (idiophones) and the voice. Thus, on a phenomenal level, instrumental music (**rol-mo** in its more specific sense, cf. S **vādya**) is distinguished from melodic vocalization (**dbyangs**). A more particular realisation of the concept of the five sounds, within the context of instrumental music, is an orchestral ensemble which produces harmonious textures by using the characteristic timbres of five particular instruments (S **pañchatūryanāda**, T **rol-mo'i sgra lnga**): e.g. conch (**dung-dkar**), trumpet (**dung**), cymbals (**sil-snyan**), drum (**rnga**) and gong (**'khar-rnga**). But as with the mandala itself, alternative numbered sets and combinations are possible: one source, for example, describes the "eight divisions of music" (**rol-mo'i cha-brgyad**) and the "eighteen types of musical accompaniment" (**rol-mo'i bye-brag bcu-brgyad**) (Das 1902:1194-95).



Plate 10: Gyal Yulhorsrung playing **sgra-snyan**, from a wall-painting
at Lekir monastery

Individual instruments are also associated with particular ideal qualities or deities according to the nature of their sound. For example, they may be classed as peaceful or wrathful, as indicated in some instances by their names: e.g. the cymbals (**sil-snyan**, "sweet-tinkling") and lute (**sgra-snyan**, "sweet-sounding"). The latter is accordingly associated with the peaceful deities Yangchenma (**dbyangs-can-ma**, S **Sarasvatī**), who represents the supreme beauty of the Speech of all Buddhas, and the Guardian King (S **lokapāla**) of the eastern direction, Gyal Yulhorsung (**rgyal yul-'khor-bsrung**, S **Dhṛitarāṣṭra**, Plate 10), among others (Collinge 1991:34-36). The wrathful-peaceful dichotomy is also represented by instrument pairs: in tantric ritual, the skull-drum (**thod-rnga**) or its wooden version (**da-ma-ru**) is held and played by the right hand, and the hand-bell (**dril-bu**) by the left; the two complement one another musically and symbolically because they are both capable of executing similar types of rhythmic patterns (tremolos, repeated formulae), yet render distinct sonorities (Helffer 1989). A similar principle is manifest in instrument pairs of the same type, exploiting the psychoacoustic phenomena (combination tones, aural harmonics, beats, and spatial rotations) that arise when two slightly dissimilar sounds are superposed (Roederer 1979:25-40). Empirically, these are either first order (mechanical) or second order (neural) effects which are consciously controlled and analysed, but they are interpreted as transcendent qualities uniquely formed out of the unity of opposite components, manifesting themselves without conscious intervention (Ellingson 1979a:189,653).

A range of sonorities available on individual instruments are also classified and given significance. The long trumpets (**dung-chen**), for example, are recognized as having three basic types of sound associated with three registers: **'dor** (a rough sound), **rgyang** or (in one religious tradition) **pho-skad** (the "male", full-sounding natural register), and **ti** or **mo-skad** (the "female" or thinner-sounding upper register, rarely used) (Helffer 1994:37-39). In the case of drums and cymbals, whose circular faces may be visually and acoustically treated as mandalas, different timbres are obtained by striking them at specific locations (Ellingson 1979b).

Drums have a special place in Buddhist music not only because they are capable of producing a number of distinct sounds, but also because these sounds can be sequenced in complex, meaningful ways. Drum patterns in Tibetan monastic ritual in due course came to be organized by the abstract numerical logic of the mandala, using their derivative sets of combinations, permutations and products (Ellingson 1979b), and it is perhaps this type of formulaic organisation to which the ideal of the "300 sounds of the drum" (**rnga-skad gsum-brgya**), referred to in one Bon text (Ellingson 1979a:100), relates. However, both Bon and early Tibetan Buddhist sources indicate that the Hindu theory of **rasa** was modified and reinterpreted by Buddhist theorists, assigning cognitive-affective meanings to particular drum patterns or styles of drumming. In Bon, these appear to be functionally related to four successive categories, ranging from wrathful to peaceful, in which the nine chant types were distributed by wrathful-peaceful pairs (ibid.:103-4). Buddhism identified three or four similar categories or styles of drumming, again ranging from wrathful to peaceful (only in reverse order), and also associated with particular aesthetic qualities (**nyams**) (ibid.:196,385; cf. below, p.112):

1. peaceful (**zhi-ba**) = "slowly and loosely"
2. vast (**rgyas-ba**) = "clearly and ringingly"
3. powerful (**dbang-po**) = "pleasantly and beautifully"
4. wrathful (**drag-po**) = "falling like a meteorite"

Of even greater significance is the idea that such distinct sounds, in association with onomatopoeic syllables, may be sequenced to form mantras (Ellingson 1986); this suggests that drumming not only can accompany (sung, recited) text, but could itself operate as a 'drum language', communicating quite specific (albeit 'secret') meanings by the coded association between particular sound-signifiers and lexical signifieds. Perhaps, then, as Ellingson (1979a:199-201) suggests, the "drum of dharma" was more than a cultural symbol of the idea of spreading the dharma by sound, but actually a means of encoding it for this purpose. If so, then this represents a form of organized sound whose status as music is questionable. In native terms it is, like language, highly meaningful - perhaps even more so than ordinary language if its meaning is considered

to be the "design" (**don**, in yet another sense) of its conscious invention. But it is doubtful that it would, in the normal sense, be counted as music because even drum-signals (which are less specific in their meaning, and are not 'drum languages' in this sense), would not be considered to be beautiful, or to provoke much in the way of a pleasurable emotional response. Just like a signalling code or a game, these forms are so completely and consciously rule-bound that they are deprived of much of their musically expressive potential.

This is so because, in semantic terms, music is usually highly redundant. If music were normally this explicit in conveying specific messages then it would, as Nattiez (1990:127) puts it, "speak directly to us, and the distinction between music and language would disappear". Drum languages thus represent this threshold, for the possibility of alternative interpretations, experiences, or misunderstandings is purposefully minimized as they are in speech - provided one is familiar with the code, that is.

2.6: Musical Mirrors: the Social Significance of Style

In its social setting, music can operate as a repository of meanings and values because these are socio-culturally determined and shared among conscious perceivers. For although music is less specific than language in the meanings it conveys, it is nevertheless located in socially constructed reality and refers to the external symbolic world: music acquires and generates these extrinsic meanings in relation to the contexts in which it is performed; its symbolism is socially defined and socially embedded. In the public domain of collective sentiment and coherent meaning, musical symbols, like other "public symbols" (Firth 1973:83-84), can therefore be selected, invoked and manipulated in socially significant ways. In particular, since music is associated with the symbolism of the transcendental, it can be used as a symbolic declaration, or mirror, of the cosmic order in the lived-in world.

The hierarchy of musical sound, evaluated in terms of beauty and meaning, does not therefore exist in a vacuum, but takes its meaningful place in the social order: it is intricately bound to the symbolic construction of the world, and the social relations of its inhabitants. Even the most perfect music of the celestial realms is rendered audible and understandable (i.e. acquires shared meanings) because it is considered to be revealed in the phenomenal world - through the appropriate channels of authority. Musical style thus reflects the status of those who perform it, or on whose behalf it is performed, and presents aspects of the ideal order, invoked to justify and sustain the social order within which, in time and space, the performance is grounded. At each level and sublevel of the human world, the order of the cosmos is replicated - partly through music - to create microcosms of the transcendent order. The hierarchical pantheon is embodied in the world, appeasing or gaining the protection of the beings in each tier by 'housing' them at the appropriate level of three-dimensional space, and by temporally empowering them through the performance of the corresponding sounds.

In the vertical plane of social space, the purest level is placed uppermost: the monastery is built on a hill high above the village, and above any palace or fort (Plate 11); this reflects the superiority (legitimizing function) of the former towards the latter. Generally, the protective deities of the monastery (**mgon-lha**) or the palace (**rtse-lha**) are housed in shrines (**lha-tho**) built on their roofs, or on the hillsides above them; typically fully enlightened beings, these divinities are appropriately housed in special shrines which may take the form of a temple or prayer room (**lha-khang**), in emulation of the archetypal celestial palace (also called **lha-khang**). The music (**rol-mo**) associated with these deities, and with kings and lamas, is also of a particular, 'high' nature, performed either by monastic musicians or royally-appointed musicians. It is believed that their music is superior because they manifest the perfect sounds of the celestial realms; objectively, the music represents the emulation of the symbolic model, reflecting the human ideals of meaning and beauty. In either interpretation, the music of the monastery is ranked above that of the palace, just as the mandala represents a higher reality or ideal type than the celestial paradise.

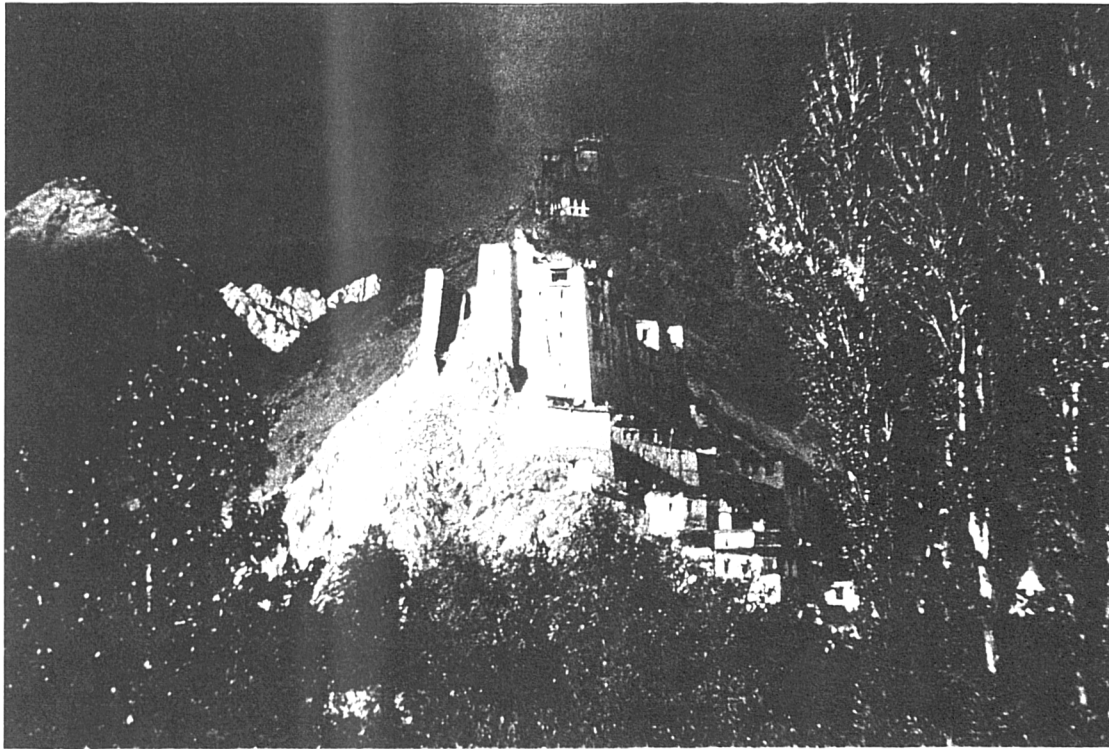


Plate 11: The Great Palace of Leh, with monastic complex above

The more modest shrine of the village gods (**yul-lha-tho**), in the form of a simple stone structure, is usually erected on a mountain pass above the village, at or near its boundary; and the village itself is nestled in a ravine above the valley floor, and away from the river. According to the hierarchy of the hydraulic state, the 'top' of the village - that which receives the purest water from the channel furthest upstream - is generally occupied by the highest-status households, or those inhabited by members of the highest social strata. The music (**lha-rnga**) played by the village musicians in connection with the village gods, and with the nobility, is accordingly ranked below that of the monastery or palace, but above that of the common people, and is of a more general nature.

The **lha-tho** of the ancestral gods (**pha-lha**) may be situated either in the prayer-room (**mchod-khang**) of one of the member households, or in the vicinity of the village sector they occupy. Within the ideal household itself, the three tiers also constitute a microcosm: the highest, household divinities (**khyim-lha**) are housed in the **mchod-khang** on the roof; the living quarters and the hearth-god (**thab-lha**) are on the middle floor; and the stables and stores - abodes of the lesser spirits - are on the ground floor. The more harmful, or potentially harmful, supernatural beings (**btsan** or **klu**) are kept at bay in small stone structures (**btsan-khang**, **klu-khang**) placed alongside irrigation channels or fields. The rituals associated with these lesser gods and spirits are generally organized within the boundaries of kinship (real or fictive), and only occasionally involves public forms of music-making.

In the horizontal plane, the quadrangular form of the mandala is also represented at each world level, especially by the architectural form of social institutions and, on the occasion of musico-ritual performance, their members and participants. Even the village itself is, ideally, subdivided into four quarters of ten households each (**bcu-cho**), with the monastery-palace complex on a hill at the (cosmic) centre. At its periphery, entry-points are marked and guarded by sacred monuments, especially stupa (**mchod-rten**) in their gateway (**khag-ga-ling**, "hanging") form: these define the boundaries of ritually pure space, averting evil. In the case of the

walled citadel at Leh, the four gateways were also a means of social control, one being reserved for the use of the king and his family.

On a smaller scale of spatial organisation, the four-cornered microcosm is represented by the main assembly rooms of a building (monastery, palace or house) or, if outside, by the principal gathering places: the village festival arena or the courtyard - even the roof - of the monastery or palace (Plate 12). In each case, the cosmic centre is marked by an object or collection of objects which act as connecting symbols: they are symbolic transformations of one another, representing the connections between the three world levels, and evoking the image of the tree of life or the sacred mountain i.e. the central source of fertility, prosperity and victory. These include the main decorated pillar of a house, to which offerings are attached, a three-sectioned arrow (**mda**) 'planted' in a pot of barley, or, in courtyards, a large prayer-mast (**dar-chen**); the latter is often decorated with the victory-banner (**rgyal-mtshan**), one of the "eight auspicious signs" (**bkra-shis rtags-brgyad**) consisting of a cloth cylinder bearing the five colours. Smaller flag-poles (**dar-shing**), to which prayer-flags (**dar-lcog**) are attached, are also 'planted' in the four corner-turrets on the roof of a building: spreading the message of the prayers to the four corners of the earth, they are declarations of the building's inhabitants' allegiance to Buddhism (Kaplanian 1980:137-38).

The Buddhist order is similarly declared not only by the performance of the appropriate forms of music, but also by the spatial arrangement of its performers and participants. At festivals and gatherings - monastic, royal or village - the cosmic centre is marked through dance, which encircles it clockwise, i.e. in the directional sense of the mandala, and of the circumambulation of Buddhist sites. Besides the **dar-chen**, other objects placed at the centre of the dance-arena during rituals and ceremonies might include a "mountain" of offerings (**'brang-rgyas**), a large beer-barrel and a "centre-carpet" (**gzhung-gral**), which is itself a quadrangular microcosm and typically bears cosmic symbols such as the swastika and the endless knot (**dpal-beu**, another of the eight auspicious signs), both symbols of prosperity. The highest ranking guest - the first

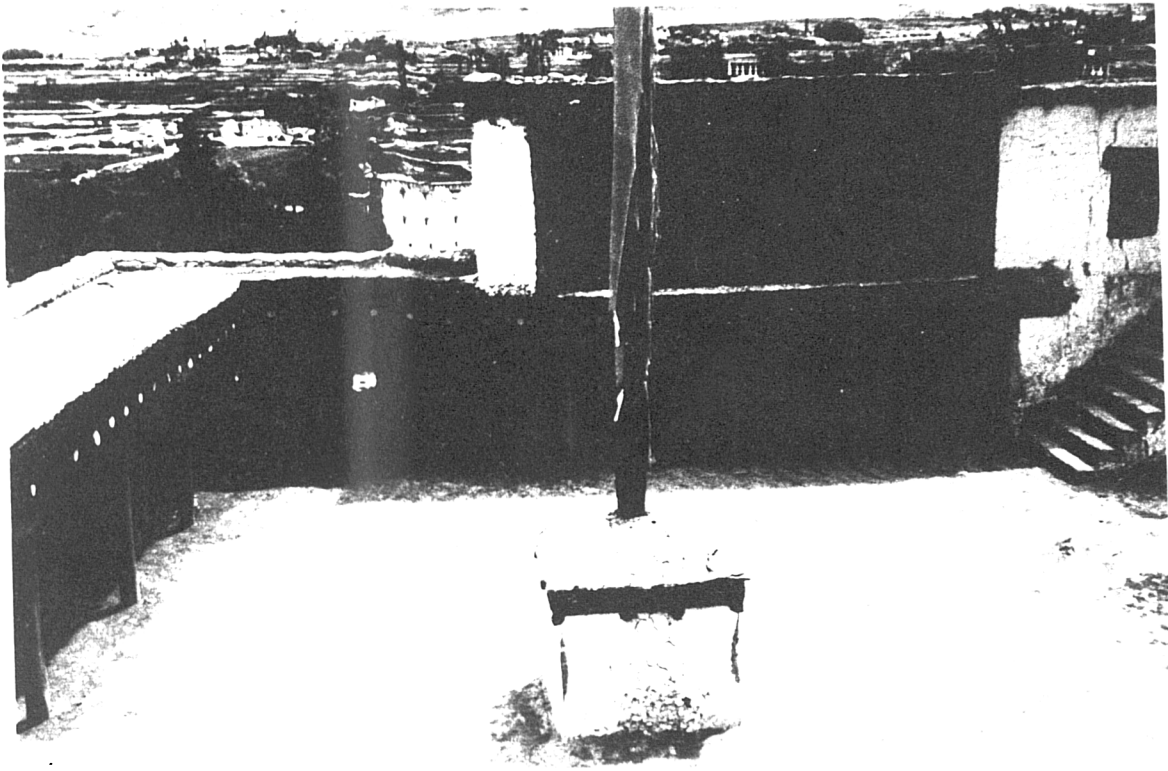


Plate 12: Courtyard at Stok Palace, with **dar-chen** and balcony for dignitaries

to receive offerings (food, beer, money, music) and the first to lead the dance - is seated upon the centre-carpet. Thereafter, the order of seating and dancing follows social rank: at the periphery, others present are seated on carpets in rows according to social status, again in a clockwise direction with the highest monks in the top position, and the musicians (**mon-pa** or **bhe-da**) in the lowest. Their status is also marked in the vertical dimension: the highest-ranking (and ritually purest) monks sit on raised carpets before higher tables, while the musicians sit directly on the floor or ground, and without tables. Within each row, there is a graduation of status, marked in the same ways. Similar types of rules are in force, whether indoors or outdoors, and whether in the monastery, palace or in a village setting.

Throughout society, musicians of appropriate status take up their ascribed position among others in the social hierarchy. At each level, the music they play also reflects, through musical values, social relations of authority and submission between groups of different status, a pattern which has its ideal in the relationship between a deity and its attendant retinue. Just as this principle is replicated in the mandala to produce derivative sets of divine beings, so at each level of the human world, those in authority over certain social sub-groups are placed at the centre of their respective microcosms, created and supported through the symbolism of ritual and music.

Accordingly, any attempt to classify musical styles or performance categories purely on the basis of the social institutions (monastery, palace, village) in which they occur, while appealing to western descriptive classes, would ignore their significant interrelationships, and distort native conceptualizations. It would, for example, be somewhat fruitless to seek a distinction between 'religious' and 'secular' music, because although the laity and the clergy require musical specialists with their own individual roles, all music is essentially Buddhist, whether it is the music of the monastery, palace or village; each form serves similar goals and fulfils similar functions. Again, native terminology does not make the kind of distinctions that are made in western music culture: the term for monastic music instrumental music, **rol-mo**, is also used to described non-monastic

instrumental music, as well as music in general; the term for monastic chant, **dbyangs**, is similarly used to describe non-monastic song. If there is a need to make any kind of distinction, or to clarify the level of reference, then music as a general category, rather than monastic instrumental music in particular, may be referred to as **rol-mo-dbyangs** ("instrumental music and song"), or song as a general category, rather than monastic chant in particular, may be referred to as **glu-dbyangs** ("vocal melody").

For the purposes of the present study, the social significance of musical style is necessarily bound to the meaning of similarities and differences in form and content as perceived by different groups within society. Thus, although the distinction between the music of the monastery, palace, and village is retained, the model adopted here to represent performance categories necessarily emphasises the relationships between these categories: for each domain, it focuses upon the modality, public or private, of the musical generation of meaning, and the social identity, insiders or outsiders, of those who create and process that meaning.

A preliminary consideration of the music of the monastery and that of the palace will hence show that the relationship between the indoor and outdoor music of the palace mirrors the relationship between their corresponding forms in the monastery. Furthermore, each institution in turn demonstrates its superior position in society as a whole, and gains prestige and wealth, by ensuring a positive evaluation through forms of music which are removed enough from the public domain to create an aura of transcendence, but not so different that it alienates worldly perception and understanding. Each is necessarily dependent upon forms of public music-making as repositories of cultural values, and each represents their 'high' transformations of them back into the public arena to generate support - and ultimately power.

2.7: Music of the Gods: Monastic Ritual Music

Given that music is considered to have varying levels of perfection corresponding to degrees of purity in the cosmos, the most perfect music is accordingly regarded as a manifestation of the purest divinities, belonging to a realm beyond the normal perceptual domain of human beings. This music of supreme beauty and meaning, ideally characterized in Tibetan literature as "the drum of dharma" (**chos-rnga**) or "the drum of the gods" (**lha-rnga**), need have no reality in sound, for it does not belong to the human world: in its ideal form, the music of the gods can only be mentally recreated, just as their image is mentally visualized. Buddhism thus supposes that the most perfect musical sounds, and the most perfect qualities generally, are in fact those which exist only in the enlightened mind.

Nevertheless, in the human world, the music of the gods is rendered manifest to human ears in several ways. Although enlightened beings in their transcendental state have no need for music, in their phenomenal state in which they may 'appear' to humans, they have their own music of which human beings may gain some understanding. As in Hindu traditions, the music of the religious elite, like the Vedas themselves and the subsequent Hindu and Buddhist scriptures, is believed to be timeless and immutable, revealed to saints, adepts and visionaries by divine beings, not composed by humans:

That [music] which, sung by celestial musicians or by those who know the theory of sacred music, which has come to them through the tradition, which knows no beginning, and which is the sure means of attaining Liberation, is known to the sages as Celestial (**gāndharva**). (Danielou 1968:87)

The **gāndharva** (T **dri-za**, or **lha'i rol-mo mkhan**, "musicians of the gods") were formerly a class of Vedic deities connected with song as revealers of divine wisdom through sound. By the late Epic period, they were clearly established as Hindu tutelary deities of music and dance, later incorporated into the Buddhist pantheon after their "conversion" by Vajradhara (Lath 1978:61-64; Genoud 1982:47). Aesthetically, their music has consistently, in whichever belief system, reflected the human ideals of meaning and

beauty: it ranks supreme because it is associated with the revelation of the dharma, and the summoning of the faithful; and also because it entertains the enlightened deities when they descend to the celestial paradise to take part in its sublime pleasures.

In its social setting, these ideals are embodied in the music of the religious establishment, enhancing its position of authority on account of the superior values which the music expresses, and because the closely guarded revelation and historical continuity of these musical styles appeals to the sanctity of tradition. The music of the monastery therefore not only supports the authority of the religious establishment, but also depends upon the institutional organisation of the latter (e.g. the use of notation and instructional manuals) for its effective production and transmission.

This is made possible because the music of the monastery is intricately bound to ritual prescription and scriptural regulation in the context of monastic discipline (Plate 13). As a means of supporting ritual procedure, music not only punctuates modes of ritual action, but also serves as a vehicle for the delivery of religious texts - uses of music commended by Śākyamuni himself. Instruments of the **pañchatūryanāda** were certainly being used in the Theravada tradition at an early date, and in all probability, in the Mahāyāna tradition soon afterwards (Ellingson 1979:177,186-187). Initially inspired by existing forms of Indian devotional music adapted to Buddhist practice, Tibetan instrumental music reached new heights in the service of Vajrayāna practice: in association with the special powers of the wrathful deities, certain sound structures - including unpleasant (i.e. unmusical or 'noisy' sounds in the usual sense) - came to represent the most esoteric form of musical symbolism.

Although this music reflects the ideal, transcendent order, it could not support the authority of the monastery if it were so truly transcendent that it could not be heard or understood to some extent by those outside the monastery over whom the establishment of authority is sought. Indeed, just as the clergy is socially and economically dependent upon the wider lay community, its music cannot^{be} isolated from the monastery's identity as one social institution among others. Hence the

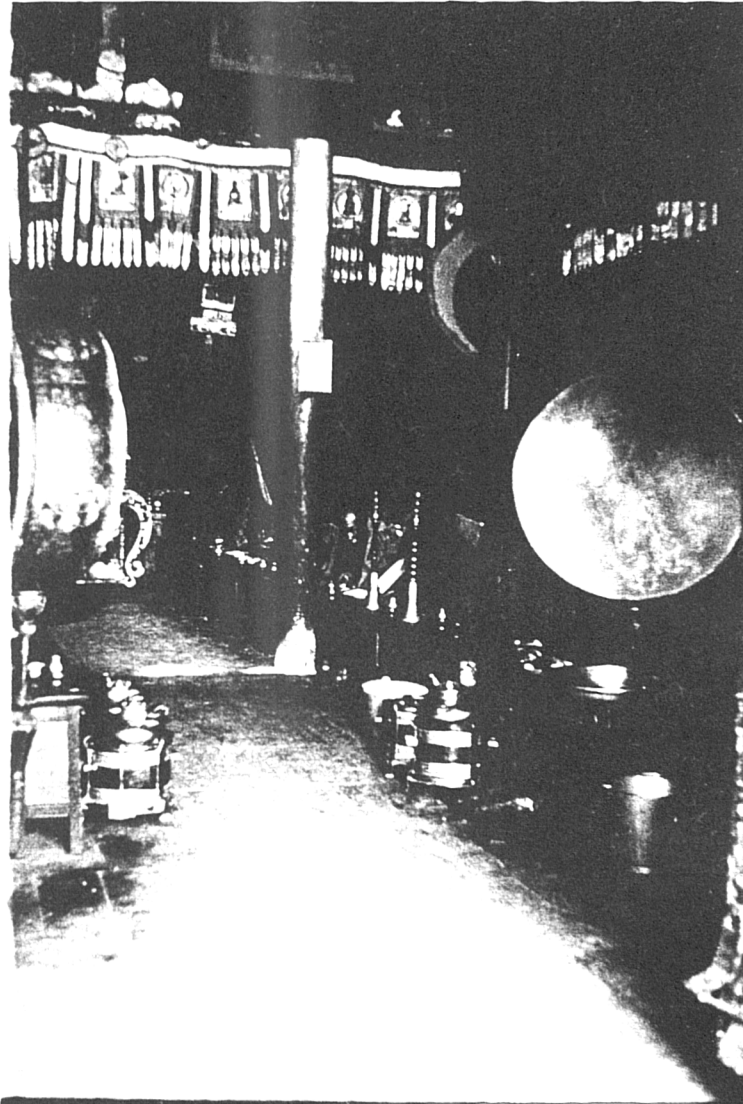


Plate 13: Lunchtime prayer service at Lekir monastery, with
rnga (frame-drum) and **rgya-gling** (oboe)

transcendental model which its music emulates actually incorporates worldly elements, and serves familiar social functions. For example, though used in distinct, transformed ways, the instruments of the **pāñchatūryanāda** are ancient military signalling instruments: the celebration of the transcendent victory of enlightened beings over the cycle of death and rebirth reflects the worldly desire to conquer the causes of human suffering. Within the monastery, as outside, its own styles of communal chanting promote social solidarity among its members and, in invoking the protective deities associated with the sect - particularly those incarnated in the sect's founders and abbots - give a stable identity to the ideal of the **saṅgha** (S, religious community). Periodic services of this kind also offer a means of distributing worldly goods (food and tea) that are universal symbols of prosperity and communality (Ellingson 1979:307-309). The performance of certain tasks (musical and other), particularly at such assemblies, at the same time reflects aspects of the internal hierarchy of the clergy, which often interrelates with the social hierarchy as a whole. Even novice monks attain a measure of prestige in the wider community that they might not otherwise enjoy, while senior dignitaries are often treated as highly charismatic figures: in public, they are appropriately musically escorted with instruments of the monastic ensemble.

In terms of the evaluation of musical style, monastic music would not be regarded as superior to that of village ritual were there insufficient continuities between them to render them comparable. Indeed, the hierarchy of sound ranks ritual practice among and between both clergy and laity: to the former, it incorporates village ritual into the Buddhist pantheon so that their own superior, legitimating, position is maintained; to the latter, it contains and limits monastic ritual within their own sphere of interest, and gives them access to higher transcendental powers.

Accordingly, the music of village ritual, while musically inferior to that of the monastery, nevertheless exhibit stylistic similarities and differences which are interpreted through the symbolism of the wider cosmic order. Just as the local village gods have been incorporated or converted, and ranked, within the Buddhist pantheon, so their sounds are subject to the principles of Buddhist musico-ritual performance. At the

same time, this elevates the ritual status of the village deities, while their music, in acquiring higher levels of meaning, anchors the music of the monastery in the more immanent cosmos. Thus the sounds of super- and para-natural beings in the animistic world of **mi-chos** have become, and identified as, the music of the gods (**lha-rnga**); their ideal number of 360 indicates their incorporation into the Buddhist pantheon as minor enlightened deities. Also, both **lha-rnga** and many of the chants and instrumental pieces used in monastic ritual are also said to have their origin in, and are imitative of, animal sounds. For example, the song of the sky-lark (**lco-ga-mo**), said to have served as a prototype for **lha-rnga** in Ladakh, features in Tibetan musical theory as the basis of the Bon (and subsequent Buddhist) 'fluctuating voice' ('**gyur-skad**) style (Ellingson 1979:100), while the cuckoo (**dbyangs-snyan** "sweet-voiced"), is often identified, in both Tibetan and Indian traditions, with the celestial musicians.

Such meanings and interpretations have only arisen because of the historical existence of performance contexts in which both clergy and laity can perceive and re-interpret one another's music. Indeed, monastic Buddhism has long encouraged a tradition of public performance, and the sponsorship of vernacular arts. Even the Theravada tradition, which emphasises the ideal of the saṅgha and monastic self-discipline, allows for merit to be shared at the village level between clergy and laity, and on such occasions chants texts from the Maṅgala Sūtra ("Discourse on Auspiciousness") (Lester 1987:108). But it is the Mahāyāna tradition, with its emphasis on sharing merit in the belief that the path to enlightenment is open to all, that is noted for its cultural inclusiveness, encouraging wide participation in commonly-shared genres. Mahāyānists point out that, according to legend, Śākyamuni himself encouraged public festivals (**S samāja**) through his own attendance and participation; it is also recorded that various arts and spectacles were taught in the great Indian Buddhist monastery at Takṣaśīla (Saletore 1985:16,20).

Tibet adopted and developed public performance genres of its own. From at least the thirteenth century, storytellers (**mañi-pa**), often monks, would put on public shows with the aid of scroll-paintings (**thang-ka**) and

music; by the fifteenth century, music-theatre performances (**a-che lha-mo**) had adopted episodes from the Gesar epic and other ancient popular narratives as a means of propagating the message of Buddhism (Ellingson 1979:226-29,291-92). Both these traditions have been continued in Ladakh to the present century, only to be eclipsed by modern stage-play versions in recent years. But still the predominant form of public religious performance in Ladakh is the '**cham** dance-drama which features in winter monastic festivals, often in conjunction with displays of tantric possession, large-scale exorcism rituals, and even **lha-rnga**, and folk music. These dances were developed in Tibet, as a combination of private Indian Tantric dance (**gar**) and the indigenous public concerted Bon dances ('**cham**): they thus represent the re-presentation of the otherwise esoteric facets of Vajrayana practice in the public domain, rendering the visions of the Tantric masters available to all (Ellingson 1979:226-29).

2.8: Music of the Celestial Palace: Royal Music

The music associated with the institution of kingship played an important symbolic role in placing the ruler at the cosmic centre, legitimating his authority at the top of the social order by invoking the symbols of the ideal order. Indeed, Ladakhi kingship shares a number of features with the archetypal holy ruler (S **dharmarāja**) of Indian Buddhism, especially in the form represented by the early Tibetan kings (from whom the Ladakhi kings claimed descent). The official title of the Ladakhi king, **chos-rgyal chen-po**, "Great King ruling according to the Holy Law", reflects the dual role of the monarch as both "holy ruler" (**chos-rgyal**) and "political ruler" (**rgyal-srid**), exercising the respective forms of authority: the transcendental (**chos**, S **dharma**, holy law) and the worldly (**srid**, S **artha**, state polity) (Petech 1977:153-54). The monasteries accordingly had a legitimating function towards monarchic rule, a function largely carried out through the use of cultural symbols, including music.

Many of the symbolic aspects of Ladakhi kingship are comparable to the Tibetan notions of majesty (**mnga'-thang**) or 'magical power' (**dbang**), which circumscribe the king's charismatic qualities as supernatural

protector and guarantor (Tucci 1956/7). Early Tibetan descriptions of his exemplary character include "a picture of cleverness and heroism" and "an example to men"; his position at the "exemplary centre" of the cosmic order, guaranteeing the principal legitimating function of the hydraulic state (the regularity of rainfall), is also characterized by the description of him as one who "falls from heaven like fertilising rain". The same symbolism is expressed by the royal "helmet" (**dbu-rmog**), referred to in accounts of both the early Tibetan kings and the Lhachen kings of Ladakh as the principal component of the ruler's regalia: like the arrow, sacred tree, or mountain, it is a connecting symbol of the celestial and terrestrial realms between which the king mediates. Also, the sun - highly valued for its life-giving properties - is an important religious symbol in Ladakhi culture, recurring in winter rituals, in folk songs, and as an epithet of the king (as archetypal solar deity?) while his queen was identified with the moon.

The very name, **lha-chen** ("Great God", cf. S **mahādeva**), of the first Ladakhi dynasty indicates their identification with the divine, inviting comparison with the Tibetan royal title **lha-sras** ("son of the gods", S **devaputra**), an epithet of the national hero Gesar with whom the Ladakhi kings were also identified. The symbolism of kingship, however, is strongly overlaid by Indian Buddhist ideas: the monarch's supernatural power and majesty (**dbang-thang**, "fortune") is accordingly interpreted as a transcendent principle reincarnated in the line of kings as a consequence of their former meritorious actions. The title, **rnam-rgyal** ("Victorious"), of Ladakh's second dynasty also refers to the power (merit) represented by Śākyamuni's own transcendent victory over suffering and death.

Largely following Indian cosmology, the Ladakh Chronicles narrate the mythological origins of the wordly kings of men and non-men, and the kings of gods (pure Buddha rulers), who together constitute the "360 royal families" (**rgyal-rigs gsum-brgya-drug-bcu**, LDGR 22.18, Francke 1926:67). The royal race (**rgyal-rigs**), as distinct from other human races, is supposed to derive from the semi-transcendent kings of mountains, animals and spirits (cf. the Tibetan royal titles **sprul rgyal-lo**, **btsan-po**, **lde-sras**, etc.), over whom the king of Mount Meru reigns from the palace of the

gods. During the reigns of the five kings of the first **kalpa** (S, period of cosmic time), all things came into worldly existence, including the divine mandate of rule (in the form of the **rin-chen sna-bdun**, the seven emblems of royalty) and the "beautiful sounds [music] and echo" (**sgra-snyan dang brag-cha**, LDGR 23.24, Francke 1926:69) which reflect the celestial sounds of paradise.

The music of the celestial realms, as revealed to the religious establishment, therefore confers legitimacy upon worldly Buddhist rule. As shown by the declaration of the Indian Emperor Ashok (ruled 260-232 BCE) - later hailed as the archetypal holy ruler - to rule by the dharma, the military symbolism of religious music (the conquest of suffering) was an important factor in the establishment of temporal authority:

The Kalinga country was conquered by King [Ashok] in the eighth year of his reign [c.252 BCE]. One hundred and fifty thousand persons were carried away captive, one hundred thousand were slain, and many times that number died...But now, because of King [Ashok's] practice of Dharma, the sound of war drums [**bhērighosa**] has become the call to Dharma. (Ellingson 1979a:164)

Monastic music, as the transformation of military music, thus became used in the service of political rule. From the Indian Buddhist period, there are among the earliest of many references (e.g. in the Mahājanaka Jātaka story) to the **pañchamahāsābda** as an ensemble not only of temples and monasteries, but also for providing processional and escort music for rulers and officials (Fox-Strangways 1914:77). The same practice persisted in Ladakh into modern times: the instruments of the monastic ensemble were used in procession to escort the king, ministers and nobles. In much the same way, the music of village ritual (**lha-rnga**) was also publicly performed in their honour, enhancing the perception, on the part of the people, of divinely-protected rule.

This public, outdoor music of the royal palace was a means of communicating their prestige and status, both to the ruler's subjects and to potential rivals. Its transcendental symbolism projects the king's authority above the real conflict of the battle-field. As king ruling

according to the holy law, his worldly power is certified by spiritual authority and his political violence sanctioned by his superior skill and wisdom. In terms of the symbolism of the cosmic order, this music represents the day-time realm of the wrathful male hero who achieves the protection of his loyal (faithful) subjects by conquering the enemies of legitimate (holy) rule.

Following the same symbolism, the music of the court itself belongs to the complementary aspect of the duality, the private night-time realm of the peaceful female. In emulating the music of the celestial palace, the indoor music of the court is not so far removed from that of the temple or monastery: as the recipient of offerings, the divine king is entertained and honoured with the most sublime music. It personifies him as a perfect, benign being acting in accordance with the dharma, and endorses popular feelings of ritual purity surrounding his person.

The primary social function of performances at court gatherings, like monastic ritual music, was to generate solidarity among the members of the assembly, and to provide an opportunity for commanding tribute and loyalty from them. Praise-songs celebrating the past victories of previous rulers and legendary heroes with which he is identified, glorified the institution of kingship. Buddhist rulers, like the ancient Indian kings, were accordingly supposed to have the superior qualities of enlightened beings, as judges of taste as well as the law, with the ability to be:

discriminating between dancers,...appreciative of even slight merit, interested in entertain-ments, eloquent,...clever in jokes, intelligent, dignified, skilled in arts, well-versed in *śāstras* [learning],...versed in the three branches of *saṃgīta* [music]...possessed of all instruments,...capable of distinguishing deficiencies and excesses,..capable of aesthetic appreciation, full of *rasa*. (Banerji 1976:65).

The Ladakh Chronicles contain descriptions of similar qualities, referring to the reign of Nima Namgyal in terms of archetypal Buddhist rule:

In accordance with the rule of acting upon the model of the biographies of the ancient kings of faith [*chos-rgyal*]...

He lauded the virtuous
And showed honour to excellent men

Old men were respected
 And devotion was shown to the lamas
 Evil-doers were suppressed;
 The laws were purified
 He was impartial towards the nobility,
 And his subjects he loved like children.
 He was appreciative to both master and servant.
 Sacrifices were offered to the gods on high,
 And alms were given to the poor below. [12]

That this account is given in verse form (with six syllables per line) suggests that it may have been a Ladakhi praise song (**gzhung-glu**), sung at court assemblies as a way of showing "honour to excellent men". Composed by monks and scholars in honorific language, using rich literary imagery, these songs created harmony and good feeling and, like the earlier Tibetan **mgur** praise songs contained in the Dunhuang documents, resolved potential conflict by celebrating another's good deeds (Ellingson 1979:67-70): similar Ladakhi praise songs, sung in honour of lamas, **chos-glu**, may in fact have been a form of dedication. A particular class of praise songs, sung in honour of the king, **'gying-glu**, drew upon the poetic imagery of the Gesar Epic, identifying the characteristics of the ruler with those of the warrior-hero and supernatural protector, who conquered the four continents with his magic arrow. These songs are repositories of cosmological knowledge (e.g. the creation of the world, genealogies of supernatural ancestors and mythological beings), and place the king at the centre of the world order.

Certain praise-songs enhance the popular perception of the royal palaces as celestial palaces on earth. A recurrent theme expressed is the belief that their construction was no mere human achievement:

Through perfect good fortune
 The happiness containing Karzo [the palace garden at Leh]
 Not being built, was completed by itself.
 It is the house of the gods and the sun. [13]

Or:

The multitude of the gods having gathered,
 Built the palace of the never-dying gods,
 The Palace of Stok, where blessing and welfare grows.
 It was completed in a wonderful way without man's work. [14]

And again:

On the boundary of heaven and earth,
There is a castle raised by [a] lion.
If you ask where that is, where that is.
It is the youths of middle age in our godly land.
If you ask where that is, where that is.
It is all the gravel-plains of the beautiful [castle]
shag-mkhar. [15]

Political life was also evaluated by reference to symbolic ideal of the celestial palace: even official documents are dressed in a narrative style which appeals to the musical appreciation of the sublime:

In order to tell clearly the services rendered [by the General Tshultrim Dorje], and in accordance with the authorities (?), let us tell them as if the voices of the Kinnaras were mingled with the beautiful sounds of the [many-stringed] **tambura**. You all must lend an attentive ear, and enjoy [the tale]! [16]

Although it is unlikely that such Indian instruments associated with the celestial musicians were actually ever used at the Ladakhi court, their local equivalents filled these symbolic roles in emulation of the same ideal: in the style of court music which the Tibetans call "soft music" ('**jam-rol**), flutes (**gling-bu**) and lutes (principally the **sgra-snyan**, which was regarded as the 'Tibetan **vīṇā**') were preferred to the noisy instruments of the outdoor ensemble, although the respective repertoires had a good deal in common.

That this distinction was mainly one of musical style and/or instrumentation, demonstrates that, as with the symbolic categories they represent, they are mutually defining: the meaning of one is circumscribed by the meaning of the other. Just as the music of the indoor, private realm is a sublimation of public music, it is in turn re-presented in the public domain as the emulation of the sublime. Thus much of the court music and dance tradition appeals to popular sentiment, and a good deal of this repertoire has passed into the oral tradition as a culture-wide expression of of an ideal order to which all Ladakhis aspired.

CHAPTER THREE

ORDERING SOUNDS: MUSICAL PERFORMANCE AND RITUAL ACTION

3.1: Music and Ritual in Ladakhi Buddhism

Lha-rnga supports a range of ritual functions in Ladakh, and virtually no form of ritual activity occurs without musical performance of some kind. This is because the Ladakhis evidently believe that music somehow contributes to the goal of ritual: to effect a transformation of the lived-in world. In Buddhism, such transformations are consciously evaluated in terms of the degree of transcendental merit generated by the performance, corresponding to the transforming power of the performance upon the performer. The primary function of ritual music, as distinct from other forms of music, is to transform consciousness in the pursuit of religious merit. The cosmological symbolism of musical sound is thereby located in the dynamics of social reality, through the positioning of the musical-ritual event: just as musical values and qualities are assigned symbols of the transcendent order, so their modes of performance are directed and regulated by types of ritual action designed to have beneficial effects upon their human actors. The symbolic model of the cosmic order is therefore not simply an ideal type, or the result of transformation, but also a prototype, or part of the means of transformation: the cosmic order is invoked through performance to act upon (to model) sustain and justify the social world and its modes of organisation, while at the same time the performance re-creates and restores the ideal cosmic order.

Broadly speaking, there are two modes of action, or functional types, through which Buddhism encourages the use of music in the service of ritual, although both have pre-Buddhist antecedents which survive in Ladakhi folk ritual. Each type of music is accordingly defined by the function or purpose of its performance, in the contexts of which each acquires corresponding forms of ritual symbolism. Furthermore, in the performance setting, specific musical structures are governed by the appropriate set of techniques to bring about the intended transformations of consciousness.

The following survey of musical-ritual practice would be inadequate without prior clarification of the terminology employed, since this has been subject to considerable confusion in the literature. The term 'trance'

(from the Latin **transire**, to "cross over") is used in the sense it has in medical and social anthropology, i.e. to refer to a psychophysiological change of state. It can take a variety of forms, identified by particular sets of observable behaviours, and can occur to various degrees: fully heightened states, for example, include ascetic trance, characterized by immobility and silence, and ecstatic trance, accompanied by frenzied behaviour. These conditions correspond to what Rouget (1985:3-12) calls, respectively, "ecstasy" (French **extase**) and "trance" (**trance**). The term 'possession' refers to a form of cultural explanation or representation - the embodiment of a deity in a human medium - of experiences which typically involve trance: it describes a system of ritual symbolism assigned to the practice of trance, as distinct from the trance behaviour proper. The term is used in a broader sense than by Rouget (ibid.:17-25), who makes a categorical distinction between possession, where the deity visits the practitioner, and shamanism, where the practitioner visits the deity. Here, usage follows Lewis (1989:8-9), who argues that this dichotomy is fundamentally flawed, since these phenomena can often co-exist. As it happens, the confusion created by Rouget's rigid distinction between these two ritual schemes is most clearly exposed in his treatment of Tibetan oracular possession, where he suggests that:

trance is produced by voluntary behaviour using a form of self-control, an ascetic practice that is much more reminiscent of shamanic practices than those used in possession...Perhaps we could say that whereas the possession of the Tibetan oracle, seen as a religious practice, falls within the domain of possession, the corporeal technique he uses in trance falls within the domain of shamanism. The Tibetan oracle would thus provide a particularly striking example of a situation intermediate between these two major forms of trance religion (ibid.:138).

In the case of Ladakh and Tibet, at the very least, it is therefore more productive, as Day (1989) has demonstrated, to apply the term possession to the entire gamut of ritual practices considered to involve embodiment of some kind, even including certain phenomena not associated with trance behaviour.

For the purposes of this study, possession and/or shamanism constitute the first mode of ritual action, which may be described as active/positive

(Ellingson 1979a:53). In the context of Ladakhi village ritual, which has its roots in pre-Buddhist belief systems similar to those of Central Asian pastoral cultures as a whole, this mode of action is represented in the practices of lay ritual specialists who enter into ecstatic trance associated with sensory over-stimulation including loud music, vigorous dance, and the consumption of alcohol and hallucinogenic agents. Their primary function is to acquire and transmit (by means of oracular proclamation) higher levels of knowledge through which the cosmos may be manipulated. The music associated with these practices, the archetypal **lha-rnga** ("god-drumming"), is both the result and means of consciousness transformation: as the "drumming of the gods" (**lha'i-rnga**), it is the sound received from the paranatural and supernatural realms in states of altered consciousness, sounds which are apparently unmotivated by human consciousness (animal, bird and other natural sounds); as the "drumming for the gods" (**lha-la-rnga**), it is reused by practitioners at will for returning to those states, and for reaching higher ones. In the case of the **lha-rtses** ("god-dancing") accompanied by these sounds, the same is said of *dance-movements*. Thus, in both of these (semantically undistinguished) senses of **lha-rnga**, the genre (re-)presents and (re-)enacts the encounter between human practitioner and supernatural being, whether initiated by the former (shamanism) or the latter (possession). The music is the same in either scenario: indeed, it can support both symbolic meanings simultaneously. Musically, the transcendental and the worldly are juxtaposed: **lha-rnga** is identified as the music of the gods, having a level of meaning and beauty beyond the grasp of humans, but at the same time it is no more than an emulation of this ideal, and is merely an immanent ritual tool with familiar (humanly-derived) properties. By using sounds derived from nature, humans have the potential to control the forces of nature which threaten them.

In the context of Buddhism, related ritual practices encourage human music-makers to transform the products of the wider phenomenal sound-world with which human consciousnesses are normally connected, so that they may liberate themselves from that world. In order that humans may ultimately attain freedom from the cycle of death and rebirth and the condition of suffering this entails, humanly produced music can be

liberating because of the power of sound to transform consciousness. This type of usage has a special place in Vajrayāna (or Tantrayāna), a subdevelopment of Mahāyāna Buddhism based on the tantras (ritual manuals) rather than the sutras (sayings of the Buddha). This school of thought maintains that nirvana may be attained in a single lifetime through the use of special techniques, many regarded as dangerous to the uninitiated, which bring about (usually ascetic) trance. The music associated with these tantric practices is also regarded as particularly 'powerful' in the context of the control of trance and its behavioural effects.

Again, these phenomena are interpreted through the symbolism of possession: the music associated with a particular deity is 'revealed' to practitioners whilst possessed by that deity. Once acquired (learnt) in this way, the same music may be used to re-enter this, and higher, transformed states in conjunction with the appropriate meditation techniques of the visualization (**mngon-rtogs**) and realization (**sgrub-thabs**) of the enlightened being. Through elaborate melodic vocalizations (mantras), in combination with prescribed gestures and these meditational techniques (yoga), the individual assumes the identity of the deity: in imitating the perfect musical characteristics of that deity, the practitioner may replace his own consciousness with the enlightened mind of that deity, placing him in a closer position to enlightenment by virtue of the merit of his selfless action.

In the case of tantric possession, the aesthetic tension between the transcendental and the worldly presents an apparently acute contradiction: as enlightened beings, as distinct from the lesser divinities invoked in folk rituals, they are liberated from any desire or need for music; yet if human practitioners are to benefit from (or to gain possession of) their superior knowledge, these beings have to manifest themselves through sound. To some degree, these interpretations can be supported by certain sound structures (particularly 'fierce' sounds) which can communicate meaning to the initiated but whose "beauty" clearly appeals to divine, rather than human, ears. However, it will be recalled that all sound need not be manifest, and the most perfect sounds are in fact imaginary: in cognitive

terms, it is the internal sound image, rather than the external sound object, which is regarded as the ideal characterization of enlightened beings; it is the image, not object, which is regarded as the source of enlightenment.

To return to the symbolism of the mandala, but in the context of meditational practice, the mandala is now the prototype for the action of realized sounds on consciousness whose goal is silence. Music and dance are therefore no more than the means of 'ascent' through the three sense (energy) levels of body (instrument, movement, posture, gesture), speech (recitation, melody, song) and mind (image) to reach the state of ascetic trance. In this condition, the body becomes motionless and the only sound that is 'heard' is hallucinatory. It is only through such practice that individuals can perfect their understanding and cognition; then they, like enlightened beings, can gain liberation and have no further need or desire for 'real' music.

The complementary mode of action, offering, is not usually associated with heightened states of trance and is not normally, therefore, directly connected with the ritual symbolism of shamanism or possession. Offering is essentially a type of ritual action with a symbolic system of its own, and may be described as passive/negative (Ellingson *ibid.*). It too has its roots in pre-Buddhist ritual, but it is characteristic of traditional agrarian societies whose concerns are averting disease, famine or other calamities through appeasement and propitiation rather than by direct control. Music is in this case employed as a form of sacrifice rather than a means of altering consciousness: it transforms the state of the cosmos rather than the individual. By offering musical sounds to the spirits and gods, the cultural products of civilization are still symbolically transformed, but offering these products repairs the damage done to earth by exploiting it through agriculture, and ensures the continual return and renewal of the means of production upon which civilization depends.

In Buddhism, musical offering has a ubiquitous presence in Mahāyāna, which teaches that enlightenment is open to all, and not just those who follow monastic discipline; in particular, all sentient beings may share in

the merit of Bodhisattvas, i.e. those beings who have sacrificed their own enlightenment for the benefit of others out of compassion for their suffering. Śākyamuni himself taught that meaningful music not only serves the propagation of the dharma (by committing its message to memory, and making it accessible to others), but also that, as a form of offering, beautiful music pleases the ears of enlightened beings, and gains their protection.

In aesthetic terms, one is again confronted by the juxtaposition of the transcendental and worldly. For although the primary function of musical offering is to please the ears of the gods, its worthiness as offering is evaluated essentially in terms of human aesthetic qualities: the highest gods have no need for music, but they appreciate the music offered to them, and are pleased by the intentions shown by humans who choose to offer the best (in their terms) music they have. Although emulating the perfection of the music of the gods, the music chosen is therefore also a reflection of worldly motivations and values: when Ladakhis say that **lha-rnga** makes the gods happy, then it is because the music they offer is of a type which they consider to be the most "auspicious" (**bkra-shis**, S **maṅgalam**); in popular conceptions, it would be unthinkable to please the gods without making them dance to music, just as humans do when they are joyful. The **lha-rnga** offered to the gods, in being directed at them, is accordingly different to human dance music but it is ultimately for the benefit (merit) of human beings: the music shows them the gods' admirable characteristics, and helps them work in the world for the benefit of all sentient beings.

Like other Mahāyāna Buddhists, the Ladakhis believe in principle that almost any form of music, if motivated by these virtuous objectives, can be used for the good of others. At the village level, the essential requirement is that the music should create shared experiences of good feeling, reassurance and solidarity; it is invariably associated with positive emotions of happiness and prosperity. Any transformation of consciousness is usually at a diffuse, collective level: dancers or singers often claim to experience quasi-meditative states which they attribute to the blessing (merit) generated through performance (Plate 14). When they describe



Plate 14: The Ladakhi male dance (**pho-rtses**)

music as **bkra-shis**, it is as though the Ladakhis are saying that the decision taken to initiate the processes which concur in producing the musical event is itself of prophetic significance: just as the desire to participate in the musical process anticipates the pleasure it will produce, so the wish to please others through offering music foretells the favourable outcome, in terms of the dedication of the religious merit generated, once the music has run its preordained sequence.

3.2: Orchestrating Experience: the meaning and control of transformation

Whether used in the service of possession, or simply as a means of offering, musical experience plays an important role in supporting the meaning and structure of ritual performance. The design - both the form and purpose - of ritual is evidently somehow related to purely musical processes, but this raises a number of questions relating to the relationship between music and ritual, and between form and performance. The discussion will therefore return to some of the fundamental issues of music, meaning and cognition addressed earlier. Foremost among these is the question of the positioning of the participant's self in relation to the performance process: that is, to what extent conscious intention or motivation is involved in the generation of meaning *and, more pertinently* in the performance context, to what extent consciousness is affected, or transformed, by the performing experience.

Earlier, it was explained how extrinsic meanings (e.g. linguistic, ritual) arise from the assimilation of sound objects by consciousness, setting out only in broad terms how Tibetan aesthetic concepts point to a reverse process: according to the same cognitive model, the distinction between the experience of music and the meanings assigned to it admit a bottom-up - rather than top-down - process in which sound acts upon consciousness. That is, music has the potential to provoke emotions that cannot be named, to induce experiences that are unfamiliar, and to affect behaviour in unexpected ways. As Blacking (1977:4) explains:

Performers and audiences do not...have complete control over musical situations and their interpretation...Once people have agreed to participate in a musical event, they must suspend a range of personal choice until they have reached the end of the sequence of action that was determined by their original decision. Whatever the meaning of that decision was to the participants when they made it, whatever meaning they attributed generally to the music they decided to perform,...once the performance is under way the intrinsic meaning of the music as form in tonal motion may affect the participants.

In other words, it is largely because music unfolds in time through its intrinsic form, that it structures experience outside the perceptual norms of everyday social reality. Music transforms participants' experience and behaviour in ways outside their conscious awareness and control, and apparently quite independently of the cognitive-affective meanings attributed to the music. One is again presented with the 'intrinsic-extrinsic' dichotomy, between the personal, subjective experience of music, or its abstract expressiveness, and the collective, objective meanings expressed by it.

However, as already argued, the distinction is not as clearcut as Blacking, among others (including Langer), here implies: to reiterate, it has been demonstrated how more-or-less conscious and specific meanings are assigned to particular musical phenomena, and how in some cases musical structures are organized according to socially-derived principles. Were this not the case, as these authors suggest, then it would not matter, for a given musical event, what the "intrinsic meaning" of the music is - i.e. what form the music takes, whether familiar or not - so long as there is some reason why the participants decide to perform it; nor would it matter what this reason is so long as one exists, for it would be irrelevant to the effect of the music.

This cannot be the case because the conscious relationship of performers to what they perform is much more complex. For if a performance event is to be identified (i.e. named, defined) in a way that separates it from other modes of activity, with a modality and purpose of its own, then this alone shows that performers establish a conscious

relationship with what they perform, irrespective of how this relationship may change during the performance itself: regardless of the extent to which consciousness is transformed or suspended during performance, it is never extinguished and is always restored to its normal state. Even in cases of fully heightened trance, where the subject cannot subsequently remember his or her experience, it is still inevitable that the outcome of the performance itself is consciously evaluated with reference to the intention to participate in it. This evaluation will in turn affect decisions regarding future performances, whether to perform them in the same way, or whether to take part in them at all. Moreover, those who do not share the same transforming experience as performers, but who are in a position to perceive its effects (e.g. trance behaviour) as observers or listeners, are also in a position to make evaluations regarding the nature of their performance.

The relationship between form and performance is therefore a dialectical one. Musical performance is in this regard similar to ritual, whose structure and practice are also conditions of one another: in both cases the structure of performance and the performance of structure are mutually defining (Handelman 1990). In each instance, the overall design is anchored to emergent, even unconscious, habits and practices - Handelman's "proto-events" - to which the experience of emotional arousal is closely tied, as more aptly suggested by Langer's phrase, the "morphology of feeling". At the same time, these basic dynamic forms are structured by what Handelman calls "the logic of forms through which the doing is done", that is, the conscious design by which experience is organised and enacted in the performance event, and which is moulded to symbolic reality. In ritual, as in music, arousal activates cognition and cognition makes sense of arousal.

The structure of performance, as conscious design, is thus bound to the intention and motivation of the performer in the context of the wider symbolic world with which he or she interacts. Tibetan symbolic theory indeed recognizes that the significance of the decision to perform a particular form of music constitutes part of the wider meaning of that form: the motivation for performing that music connects with its meaning

because the reason for initiating the performance is motivated by the musical nature of what is performed and experienced. This motivational meaning is thus different in type from the affective-cognitive meanings more specifically assigned to particular forms within the music, and from the expressive significance of those forms themselves. It constitutes the broader meaning, in the sense of **don** as "intent, purpose" (Jaeschke 1881:259), which is, to use Blacking's words, "attributed generally to the music [which the participants] decided to perform"; it is the significance of the motivation or aim which brings certain sounds together with their producers and perceivers in a musical event, or what Ellingson (1979a:356-57) calls "meaning-and-function". It thus represents another way in which consciousness interacts with music in the generation of meaning: the value of music, and the purposes for which it may be used again rests upon the relationship between sound and consciousness, but in terms of socially-located action and behaviour.

It is especially because music produced by humans can affect them in ways outside their conscious awareness and control, that the uses to which music is put, and the ways in which it is evaluated, are moral concerns: musical action has consequences which are potentially meritorious or sinful. It is no different from other kinds of human action insofar as it too is believed to be subject to the principle of karma, i.e. "the consequence or residual energy created by action, particularly, human thoughts, words and deeds" (Lester 1987:152). The consequence of musical action is therefore evaluated by reference to the meaning of the decision which caused it. It is described in terms of the relative merit or demerit initiated by the agent of musical action, generated in proportion to the value of the musical nature of that action, and which subsequently accrues to the agent. In the further sense of **don** as "the profit, advantage, the good...or blessing" (Jaeschke 1881:259), of something - clearly allied to the concept of merit - the meaning of music is both socially organized and socially embedded.

Given that music is supposed to generate merit in this way, and that both musical and ritual action operate as the performance of form, it is not surprising that they typically occur together in time and space, but

this begs the question of the nature of their interrelationship in the performance event, particularly whether the structure of one regulates the form of the other. If, as it has been proposed so far, that both are anchored in the "morphology of feeling" and moreover that both are organised by the conscious logic of design, one would be inclined to conclude that they are isomorphic. Clearly, as in the case of music and language, this situation could arise in some special situations where sounds have been so consciously and minutely organized by ritual procedure that it would be possible to speak of 'ritual sound', but again, this would be counterintuitive to the idea of what constitutes music. However, the very co-existence and simultaneity of the two performance media suggests that music serves a purpose that ritual cannot fulfil, at least to the same extent. That is, the expressive dimension of ritual would be diminished without music.

This would appear to be so because ritual events involve a number of media which appeal to the range of *human senses*, and which organise sensory experiences in different ways. Music may therefore share organizational principles and some structural forms with other means of expression, but its inherent nature and its impact may be quite unique. If this is the case, music would represent just *one of several ways*, but arguably one of the most effective ways, of grounding ritual performance through the orchestration of experience.

One brief, but important, example will serve to support the idea that music naturalizes ritual symbolism by rendering its symbols dynamic. As Rouget (1985) has strongly argued, music creates the enabling condition for trance, and maintains it, because of its unique *emotional power*, yet it is only in conjunction with symbols (such as the identification with the divine) that trance is actually triggered. Music does not, contrary to many people's instincts (including many Ladakhis), induce trance by some automatic mechanism, but nor is it redundant: rather, *cultural patterns call upon the affective and aesthetic properties of music to stimulate and develop their behavioural effects*. Music is assigned the meanings of other, extrinsic, symbolic systems such as ritual and language, but it is the collective effervescence of subjective experience which^{it} provokes that

enables shared meanings and beliefs to become internalized in the individual. Only then can ritual transformation have the fully heightened effect on human experience and behaviour that it does.

In order to direct and control the impact of music on its perceivers, and to see that it is competently performed for their benefit (merit), music is identified not only as a science, but also as a discipline. It is more than just a branch of understanding, but also a form of technique and control, directed as far as possible to bring about the beneficial results which are intended. This principle applies even - in fact especially - when the participant's conscious awareness is at a minimal level during performance, for unless these techniques are thoroughly internalized through sustained, prior, learning or instruction, the desired outcome of the performance will not necessarily occur. For an effective performance to be guaranteed, it has to be regulated and rendered repeatable. Were this not so, then the performance would break down into chaos and would indeed hardly be considered as a performance at all (at least to conventional minds): as will become clear from an examination of their mythology, the Ladakhis are fully aware that if performance is not regulated in the usual way, then it can degenerate into a licentious form of activity with potentially threatening consequences for the social order.

Given that performance events can be unstable, an analysis of their impact on modes of social organization must establish a classification of performance types by identifying the boundaries of performance in relation to the social order. For the purpose of the present study, these boundaries are defined by the following four parameters, each to be now considered in turn:

- 1 The overall function of the performance.
- 2 The means of enactment.
- 3 The status of the participants.
- 4 The role(s) of the participants.

3.3: Musical Designs and Ritual Schemes

The discussion will firstly turn to the conscious design through which musical and ritual activity is organised in the performance event. Having established performance as a mode of activity located between the participant's experience and his or her wider social domain, attention can now focus on the two aspects of the performance event which define, in greater detail, its relationship with the external symbolic world: i.e. its overall purpose, or the logic of forms through which musical structures are formally developed to serve the conscious design of ritual action; and the means of its enactment, or how these forms operate as a vehicle of both expressiveness and meaning.

Earlier, two types of ritual action were identified as being the principal symbolic systems supported by ritual music, i.e. possession and offering. In abstract structural terms, these represent distinct 'designs' of ritual performance, each calling for a different form of music: either to reach higher states of awareness, or to gain protection through sacrifice. However, both are complementary means (active and passive) of generating merit, and in ritual performance, the symbolism of offering complements that of possession because the act of offering music to a deity is a prior prerequisite for attracting and inviting it into the phenomenal realm, where only then can it subsequently possess a human medium. In terms of performance practice, then, the overall function of the performance is identified as the direct outcome of a particular arrangement of structural elements, each with their own contributing purpose, sequenced in time. The whole is the result of its parts, and its parts serve the whole: the performance event strikes a course between its conscious design at the most abstract level, frozen in time, and the operation of its forms, unfolding in time. In Buddhist theory, this principle is expressed in terms of the generation of merit: the merit of the performance as a whole is generated by the appropriate arrangement of each and every element, and at all levels of musical movement.

The discussion which follows concerns itself with monastic ritual performance rather than Ladakhi **lha-rnga**, but only because this will more clearly elucidate the basic principles which are essentially common to all Buddhist music performed in the pursuit of merit.

Ritual performances are characterized and classified by their means of enactment. Buddhism identifies four types of ritual (**'phrin-las rnam bzhi**) according to the nature or means of ritual action, ranging from peaceful (passive) to wrathful (active) (Das 1902:854):

- 1 pacifying (**zhi-ba**) pollution or evil
- 2 extending (**rgyas-ba**) merit or wealth
- 3 powerful (**dbang-po**) means to overcome opposing forces
- 4 wrathful (**drag-po**) methods for destroying life.

These modes of ritual action partly determine the form that the accompanying music shall take, e.g. which instrument(s) should be played, and in which style. It will be recalled, for example, that these four categories correlate to the four aesthetic qualities (**nyams** or **rasa**) of peace, grace, passion, and harshness associated with four prescribed drumming styles. However, it must also be remembered that these associations are also partly motivated by the timbral and expressive potential of the instruments themselves. At the more abstract level of design, musical sounds are certainly organised by ritual procedure, but it is the unfolding of purely musical elements in time that underpins ritual as performance, and that anchors its cognitive and motivational meanings in real experience.





In terms of practice, then, the ritual scheme is an abstract design enacted with musical formulae which structure emotional experience. It can only do this, and make ritual performance a dynamic experience, because of the formal congruence between tonal-rhythmic movement and the 'stream of feeling'. It is the relationships between different sounds arranged in time which are the basis of musical expressiveness, in the same way that it is the transient nature of the environment generally which stimulates emotional life: feeling and mood arise in the tensions and resolutions which impinge upon consciousness from one instant to the next.

Different kinds of musical movement thus constitute a "morphology of feeling", or grammar of the emotions, which structures experience across time. At the level of the performance as a whole, Hindu theorists for example identified six types of movement ("limbs of modulation", *S kaku*); although associated with the *rasa* of dramaturgical theory and the *cakra* energy centres of the meditative body, these symbolic sets merely represent conscious ways of formalizing underlying dynamic musical principles of much wider significance:

viccheda	pause
anubandha	continuity, flowing
arpana	presentation, extending
visarga	cadence, emphasis
dipanam	climax, stirring
prasamanam	release, calming

(Mahajan 1989:47-48)

Hence, though clearly belonging to different (but not entirely unrelated) musical systems, similar kinds of basic principles can be seen to be operating in Tibetan Buddhist ritual, from the level of particular beat groupings - the four drumming styles or modes - to the form of the performance as a whole. Ellingson (1979 :196-98), working from syllabic notations given in an eighth century Tibetan text (and its later commentary), based upon an earlier Indian one, suggests the following beat structures for the four modes:

1. <i>sāṃ pa ta</i>	=	
2. <i>ghūṃ</i>	=	
3. <i>ho dhu ma</i>	=	
4. <i>kha tvam</i>	=	

Just as the drumming modes are associated, through their aesthetic qualities, with types of ritual action, so the overall design of the ritual event consists of a basic pattern of ordered elements, each of which has its own ritual meaning or function: the musical elements refer to the ritual sections they accompany. But these musical structures also

constitute dramatic features within the unfolding structure of tension-and-resolution as a whole (e.g. Ellingson 1979 :368):

gsol-'debs	invocation
mngon-rtogs	visualisation
spyan-'dren	invitation
phyag-'tshal	salutation
mchod-pa:	offering:
khrus-gsol	ablution
gdan-'bul	offering of seat
byin-brlabs	blessing of offerings
gsol-mchod	presentation of offerings
bstod	praise
sdig-pa bshags	confession
bskul	exhortation
gsol-ba	request
gsheg-gsol	dismissal
bsngo	dedication

Ideally, there are seven "limbs of ritual" (**yan-lag bdun**) which form the basic linear scheme of combinatory, or syntagmatic, elements. However, different permutations of substitutive, or paradigmatic, elements are arranged according to the particular type and function of the ritual: some elements receive different degrees of emphasis or elaboration with sub-elements, while others may be replaced or inserted. More elaborate Tantric rituals, for example, recognize nine rather than seven basic elements.

In the more usual monastic rituals (**chos-spyod**), concerning the regular worship of lamas and protective deities belonging to the monastery's lineage, the scheme is at its simplest: the deity is visualized or characterized but not realized or embodied, for it is merely requested (**gsol**) to turn the wheel of dharma. The music used is essentially of the peaceful-graceful type: this includes "invitation music" (**spyan-'dren-gyi rol-mo**) for attracting the attention of the deity, and "offering music" (**mchod-rol**), which together with other sensually-pleasing gifts pleases the deity, gains its protection, and thus generates merit (Ellingson 1979a:610-34).

Special rituals (**cho-ga**), on the other hand, usually involve the full realization and embodiment of Tantric deities. These possession-offerings require the deity to be enticed into the phenomenal world with special invitations and offerings, whereupon it can be exhorted (**bskul**) to perform its "fierce work" (**drag-po'i las**) for the benefit of sentient beings. At the climax of propitiation or healing rituals (**bskang-gsol** or **gtor-bzlog**), for example (ibid. 682), evil spirits are summoned into special offering-receptacles (**gtor-ma**) which are then destroyed. This requires elaborate forms of powerful or harsh music, including the "summoning music" (**'gugs-pa'i rol-mo**) which calls the spirits, and the "expulsion music" (**L skrad-rnga**) played at their destruction.

Individual rituals may therefore be considered to fall into sequence types within a general ritual scheme resembling the tripartite 'underlying arrangement' of classical ritual theory (van Gennep 1960). The field of ritual activity thus belongs to the central liminal phase, separated to a greater or lesser extent in time and space from the mundane world. The transition to this phase is accomplished by the preliminal aspects of the ritual, such as purifying the site, assembling the offerings, and putting on costumes or masks; the return to the ordinary world is generally marked by a dedication (**bsngo**) of the merit accumulated by the ritual to the enlightenment of all sentient beings, consolidating the change of status effected by the performance.

The more specific arrangement of the constituent elements of the performance depends not only upon the mode of ritual action, but also upon the status of the event in terms of its temporal setting in the ritual calendar. Hence the significance and complexity of any ritual, and the corresponding degree of its transforming power, is determined by the frequency (status) of the period it marks: daily rituals are the simplest and least important, whilst rituals conducted on a monthly, annual or even twelve-yearly cycle are increasingly elaborate and significant.

Structurally, in terms of ritual and musical procedure, the temporal status of the performance is most obviously manifest by its duration. Monthly monastic rituals, for example, are conducted in concise form

(**bsdus-pa**), and culminate at the end of the lunar year with the ritual performance in elaborate form (**rgyas-pa**) (Ellingson 1979a:700-1). Some of this elaboration takes the form of internal repetition - for example where groups of deities are invited individually in turn according to the arrangement of the mandala- but it may also include the incorporation of added details. In general, the complexity and quantity of music corresponds to the complexity and importance of the ritual: daily rituals need not include any instrumental music, whilst the more important monthly rituals will be accompanied by instrumental pieces (e.g. **spyang-'dren-gyi rol-mo, mchod-rol**) at the appropriate stages. As with the ritual procedures they accompany, these compositions may assume greater or less importance, according to whether they are played in long (**sgra-ring**) or short (**sgra-thung**) form, the number and types of instruments used, and the amount of repetition or elaboration incorporated. At annual rituals, especially where they coincide with public festivals, the musical material will be at its most complete and elaborate, and may include special pieces (e.g. for accompanying **'cham**) and extra tunes (**dbyangs**). Clearly, these events feel special because they include or treat musical material in a different way than at other times of the year; rituals performed at the end of each month point towards (anticipate) those conducted at the end of the year. It is in the context of the cycle of ritual performance that interconnected musical structures gain related significance.

There is, however, a more profound, musical way, in which the experience of time interacts with the meaning and effect of performance. This arises because music structures experience in time, and transforms the experience of time: the tension and resolution enacted within the perceptual present of the performance frame can dramatize larger scale periods of experience, be it a year or a lifetime. What is significant about the duration of a performance, then, is not its absolute time-length, but the internal organization of its temporal structure: the longer the performance, the more complex is the organization of the musical material if it is to retain coherence. This means that longer, more complex, pieces contain elements which relate across a wider range of levels of rhythm and form, from the grouping of individual beats (even micro-elements within one sound-event) to entire formal sections. Symbolically, a musical

performance can recreate a microcosm of the temporal order, referring to periods of time outside the boundaries of normal perception. The performance event can place past and future human worlds in the present: it can be used to re-enact and re-affirm the victory (conversion) of Buddhism and to symbolize the forthcoming 'end of time' at the rebirth of a new cosmic cycle. It can also re-establish the status of the individual in the cosmos: through performance, the participant accumulates merit by ridding himself or herself of the burden of sins acquired during the past (year or lifetime), thereby gaining a more favourable position for achieving liberation in the future (year or lifetime).

Such precise meanings consciously attached to any one performance event will depend upon its particular context, according to which the relevant set of ritual symbols, and the appropriate musical structures and techniques, will be invoked and brought into play. In every case, however, the underlying arrangement, or basic ritual-dramatic scheme of the performance, remains essentially the same. It represents a cultural routine for acting out the symbols of the ideal order in social reality, an idea developed by Ortner (1989) through her concept of cultural schemata, which she defines as "preorganized schemes of action, symbolic programs for the staging and playing out of standard social interactions in a particular culture" (ibid.:60). The essential scenario of ritual performance is thus an ordering principle found across a range of social situations: it is a means of materializing the relationship not only between gods and people, but also between different groups of people. As one of the key means for grounding these schemata in real experience, and for making them feel 'natural' ways of dealing with social reality, music becomes meaningful for its participants.

3.4: Commanding Performance: the role and status of participants

One of the key scenarios, or cultural schemata, which operates throughout Ladakhi culture, as in other Buddhist cultures, is the 'hospitality event', a program of action which is used to structure a wide range of encounters, from possession ritual to social etiquette (Ortner *ibid.*, see also Ripley 1990). In each case, the general shape and meaning is the same, so that the encounter is directed in a more or less predictable way, i.e. to make it beneficial, or less likely to end in chaos. Typically, music gives substance and expression to the mutual encounter embodied and enacted during such events: it materializes the relationship between the the actors in these cultural dramas, whose roles are also defined in similar ways. Ritual and musical specialists stage these events, re-creating order along familiar, controllable, lines. They bring symbols to life in the social domain, their performances acting upon its modes of organisation in a dynamic, meaningful, way: it is only through the transformation of consciousness in performance that power (merit) is generated and allocated among the participants. In the same way that particular ritual-musical performance structures, whilst unfolding in the same general way, vary according to the event's status and purpose, the role and ^{status} of individual practitioners also depends upon the particular setting of the performance event in terms of the mode (possession-offering) and the modality (public-private) of the performance.

In the case of the archetypal ritual performance, the subject (Ego) of the hospitality event is the practitioner and its object (Alter) is the deity. As an offering or sacrifice, music is the gift or medium of offering (**mchod-rdzas**), exchanged between the practitioner as sacrificer (**mchod-byed**) and the being in whose honour the sacrifice is performed (**mchod-bya**). Particular musical styles and genres therefore reflect the ritual status of those who perform them, and of those in whose honour it is performed, because musical performance process involves a transformation of ritual status through the generation and exchange of merit. According to the aesthetic value of the musical offering, when correctly performed, the appropriate degree of merit is conferred in return by the deity upon

the practitioner as an act of blessing or dedication: the ritual status of the latter increases at the expense of the former. The exchange, however, is only temporary because of the continual operation of evil, polluting forces in the world: performances therefore have to be frequently repeated in order to renew the contract between humans and gods, and to restore their status in the transcendent order. It is, of course, the repeatability of musical performance which lends itself to the guaranteed regeneration of merit.

Musical offerings are thus more than mere declarations of ritual status, or revelations of divine qualities, but are also the means of transforming and re-establishing the relationship between agents of different ritual status. Deities of high ritual status can demand musical offerings of high aesthetic value if they are to be sufficiently satisfied and flattered before offering their protection, or interceding in the phenomenal world for the benefit of human beings: they ensure that the offerings are of sufficient quality, so that they can ascertain that the motivation of the sacrificer is sincere. Fully enlightened deities are accordingly worshipped principally in monastic rituals, where only the music of the highest quality will gain their protection: in return, a relatively high degree of merit is accumulated by the practitioners.

Where there is a unique relationship between a particular practitioner and deity, these individuals are frequently identified and named in a way that indicates high ritual status, and the encounter is typically interpreted as one of possession: the practitioner identifies with the divinity, or the divinity becomes embodied in the human vessel. The nature of the music whose role is to bring about and control trance behaviour in connection with this type of ritual action is therefore, in this scenario, particularly closely associated with the ritual status of its actors. Elaborate kinds of divine music, reflecting the particular qualities of unique enlightened beings are 'received' in a form which can subsequently, and repeatedly, be used in rituals as as a means of 'inviting' those deities back into the world. Were the music not uniquely associated with the identities of these actors, the desired encounter would not occur.

In the context of monastic ritual, these encounters are usually esoteric: aimed at achieving nirvana in a single lifetime, the embodiment of transcendental deities in the self is the primary goal of tantric practice. Learnt by initiates under personal instruction, a high degree of self-discipline and motivation is required. The music in this case is self-administered and private, whereby the merit accrues to the performer in pursuit of his own enlightenment.

Possession phenomena also occur, however, in the village setting, but they are typically socially marginal and are associated with supernatural beings and music of lower status. Often interpreted in the first instance as being due to demonic possession arising from witchcraft or supernatural affliction, certain cases of abnormal behaviour (pathological trance, as it were) are treated with suspicion until sanctioned by, and brought within, monastic-oriented practice: persons afflicted by spirits may be 'cured' by monastic specialists, by performing private exorcisms, or by taming their powers. In the latter case, the supernatural beings are 'converted', or are replaced by divinities of higher status, so that the individual susceptible to becoming possessed can control their behaviour by operating as a private household oracle-healer (**lha-ba**, if male, or **lha-mo** if female) for the benefit of other villagers. Music evidently plays an important part in gaining this control: oracles apparently believe that they 'receive' their music from the gods (usually village or household gods) - it is, in an ideal sense, considered to be a form of **lha-rnga** - each time they wish, or are requested, to go into trance. Music is considered essential for inducing trance, acting either as a vehicle for the practitioner's flight into the higher spiritual realms or as a means of inviting the gods to embody their human medium. It seems, however, that they have learnt this music from monks during their training: the instruments used by to make their own music, the hand-bell (**dril-bu**) and hand-drum (**damaru**), are identical to those used by tantric practitioners, and are employed in similar ways.

There are good reasons for believing that possession rituals at the village level also occurred in the public domain on a far greater scale than is now the case. In the past, it seems that it was common practice for the official in charge of the cult of the village deity, the **lha-bdag-pa**, to

become possessed by the deity at the time of the annual renewal of the **yul-lha-tho** shrine, in order to reveal the deities' instructions and predictions to the community. Nowadays, **lha-rnga** are performed by village musicians at this time as an offering rather than as a means of possession, but it is probable that one of the foremost duties of musicians in former times was to provide public possession music as part of a regular pattern of ritual service. The separation of the role of the music-maker and ritual practitioner constitutes an important distinction between private and public possession phenomena, for the ecstatic trance behaviour of the practitioner is supported and controlled by village musicians (**mon-pa**); the merit generated through performance, however, still accrues to the practitioner, through the symbolism of patronage.

Lha-rnga are nevertheless still played as part of public possession rituals in special cases where the village deity has the status of a monastic protective deity (**mgon-lha**) and/or a crown deity (**rste-lha**). In these instances, unusually for **lha-rnga**, there is a unique relationship between particular a named deity (or deities) and a certain musical form. The performance context, however, is limited to annual celebrations held by certain monasteries where oracles appear in public to make major proclamations and prophecies. Since the gods embodied in the mediums are high-ranking protective deities, they are regarded with much greater awe and respect than lay oracles, and have powers worthy of control by the religious establishment. They also differ from village lay oracles in their institutional organization: the male mediums (also called **lha-ba**) are often monks, elected to perform this role only in the period leading up to, and during the festival, although some may act as oracles on several occasions during their lifetime. Again, they do not provide their own music, but the musical roles are, significantly, negotiated between the monastery and the village: monks supply the music which brings about the trance, prior to the oracle's public appearance and usually after weeks or months of retreat; only when he appears before the crowds gathered in and around the monastery courtyard, do the local **mon-pa** perform the **lha-rnga**, which takes the form of a **lha-rtses**, to which he dances. These special forms of **lha-rnga**, then, are not considered directly responsible for the oracle's possession, but are popularly thought to maintain trance and help

the god stay in the world for a little while longer for the benefit of the village community.

Other special forms of **lha-rnga**, here called **dus-su lha-rnga** ('festival' **lha-rnga**), are played at annual monastic festivals which do not have possession oracles, but which include public performances of '**cham**'. These dances are performed by monks dressed in special costumes and masks representing various deities (Plate 15), and are accompanied by the monastic ensemble, which 'invites' each deity into the public courtyard. Although the dancers do not become possessed by the deities they represent, these performances, as realization-offerings (**sgrub-mchod**), imitate their characteristics in every respect, through recitation, music and movement. Where these performances include **lha-rnga**, their role is quite incidental from the point of view of monastic ritual practice, and are performed by the **mon-pa** and only exceptionally by monks. They usually take the form of preludes or interludes, played as offerings in honour of the protective deities (**mgon-lha**) of the monastery's lineage prior to their appearance in the courtyard. In the case of the **bskrad-rnga** expulsion music, this **lha-rnga** functions as a 'ritual signal' which conveys the significance of the final exorcism at the climax of the dance-drama, but which does not, from the monks' perspective, actually match the power of the monastic version to bring this ritual action about. To the villagers, however, these particular **lha-rnga** provide an important means of gaining a share of the superior merit generated by the performance as a whole.

The majority of **lha-rnga** are performed in honour of lesser divinities, where the encounter takes the form of an offering between the village community and their local gods (**lha**). Apart from the special cases already described, there is no possession involved, and the ritual and musical practices are clearly ranked below those of the monastery: these divinities are satisfied with music of lower value. Their protection is accordingly gained more easily, and the merit they confer is proportionally smaller. Again, this public form of musical practice is collectively administered through the patronage of the **mon-pa**, and the merit accrues to the community of patrons (who may participate as singers and/or dancers) rather than the instrumental performers. The symbolism and



Plate 15: Masked 'cham dancer at the Stok gu-ru tshes-bcu
monastic festival

mechanism of offering music (**mchod-rol**) is well understood and widely shared throughout the community (through enculturation, though, rather than training) and their motivations are bound to more worldly concerns. These gods are not so much 'invited' into the world to engage in meritorious acts, for they are already considered to be willing participants in village life. Rather, offerings are made to appease them, or to make them feel welcome so that they are not angered. In some cases, the performance of **lha-rnga** is considered auspicious because the music helps the spirits on their upward path to liberation, as well as the villagers themselves.

Village celebrations and gatherings invariably commence with the performance of a **lha-rnga**, and close with an "auspicious song" (**bkra-shis-pa'i glu**), immediately followed by a dance in which everyone present, apart from the musicians, participates. The **lha-rnga** played on such occasions do not formally correspond to particular (named) deities, or even to particular classes of deities. The ideal relationship between the supposed 360 kinds of **lha-rnga** and the 360 protective deities, for example, is not borne out by actual practice. With the exception of the aforementioned cases, if a connection is made between any one form of **lha-rnga** and one or more identifiable deities, then it is only because it is suggested by the context of the ritual in which it is performed, rather than by the structure of the music: when asked which deities are being invoked by a **lha-rnga**, villagers are likely to respond by naming the most important gods of their village. Nevertheless, regional variations in playing styles may be interpreted as being due to the different identities of village gods, but these observations do not constitute a prescriptive system relating particular instrumental 'compositions' to individual deities.

The scope of **lha-rnga** is therefore broadly conceived, and somewhat vague and precarious in its ritual application; this might represent some degeneration in ritual and musical practices now considered by some Ladakhis to be 'superstitious', but worldly gods are in any case regarded as notoriously capricious beings, and their response to **lha-rnga** is not entirely within human control. If a **lha-rnga** falls short of pleasing the gods - especially if it is badly performed - then they may take revenge, and the

ritual will be judged to have failed in its purpose. On the other hand, it is said that a **lha-rnga** may prove so effective that it can unintentionally cause unprepared individuals to become spontaneously possessed. These unpredictable outcomes, and the possibility of conflicting interpretations, are evidence of the relatively inferior status of lay rituals, but they also form the basis for justifying the purpose of their continued performance in reducing social and divine disorder.

The performance of **lha-rnga** ranks ritual practice and separates public ritual from other types which deal primarily with situations of personal crisis or transformation. In the public domain, where the interests of the monastic and village communities are negotiated, **lha-rnga** symbolically re-creates and re-presents the cosmic order in a concerted arena of widely shared sentiments and values. By transforming the experience of human participants, it internalizes a ritual framework which places them in an upwardly shifting cosmos, constantly seeking greater levels of order that shape and give meaning to their social existence.

3.5: Doing Good and Feeling Big: music as ceremonial gift

Cultural schemata are used not only for controlling and making sense of encounters between gods and mortals, but also for consolidating social relationships between human beings. The hospitality event is also an ordering principle used in social etiquette for shaping social encounters between human actors, especially in a formal, ceremonial setting: relations between individuals and/or groups which would otherwise be more precarious are 'stage-managed' in order to bring about a more-or-less predictably favourable outcome. Hence the overall shape and meaning of ceremonial performance is essentially the same as that of ritual performance. The latter may indeed be regarded as an idealized form of cultural practice, the protocol of sacrificial offering being likened to inviting a guest to one's home and offering the best one has (Ellingson 1979:351); the name for ritual, **sku-rim**, is also the honorific term for "reverence, respect" (Jaeschke 1881:22) in the ceremonial setting.

In the case of ceremonial offering, though, the exchange between the human participants has a real economic component through the exchange of wealth, as well as a ritual component through the exchange of merit. Status and prestige are thus reinforced by ritual symbolism: as in ritual generally, ceremonial performance is not merely a declaration of status, but is transforming because it involves the generation and exchange of transcendental merit. Ceremonial performance restores and justifies the social order by invoking the symbols of the cosmic order: failure to observe the correct procedure of ceremonial and etiquette would upset not only those whose worldly authority would be thus challenged, but also the gods themselves.

As in ritual performance, music can be used as a gift offered by the donor (Ego) to the recipient (Alter) in ceremonial, where both of these roles are assumed by humans. Again, in order that the bond between them be effectively re-formed, the nature of the musical gift is appropriate to the identity of the donor(s) and of the person(s) in whose honour it is performed. Hence the aesthetics and ethics of ceremonial musical performance is essentially the same as it is in ritual. Music is 'good' when offered, whether to gods or to human beings, because *it has to be* 'beautiful' and 'meaningful' to be worthy of offering. While the music offered cannot be perfect, the intention to please that is demonstrated by offering the best one can produce is what matters most since, as with other virtuous thoughts and actions, it is the combination of the motivation, behaviour and action involved in offering good music that is meritorious with respect to the donor.

In the context of ceremonial, merit is generated by pleasing other human beings: social harmony is created through the exchange of goods (food, drink, money) and the sharing of goodness (such as music). In general, gifts therefore have a material as well as a ritual value, and in honorific language the verb "to offer", **don-byes** (T **mchod-pa**), also means "to eat, drink, take" (Jaeschke 1881:166): hence, as demonstrated by the Ladakhi ceremonial feast (**don-thang**), musical offerings invariably occur alongside other media or substances, just as they do in ritual.

As a particular type of hospitality event, the ceremonial feast has a similar form to a ritual performance, and unfolds in the same manner with comparable participant roles. One of its primary functions, in fact, is to provide an opportunity for gaining merit through the sacrifice of wealth: the 'sacrificer' (Ego) is the host or patron and the 'object of worship' (Alter) is the guest(s) invited to the host's home. Like a deity and its attendant retinue, each guest is received and treated in turn according to status: each is first greeted in an appropriate manner, then offered to take up position in the seating arrangement, and invited to wash. When all the guests are seated, the first of ideally seven courses of food and drink (cf. the seven "limbs" of offering) are served, again by rank: for each course, the best is served first to the highest ranking guest. Each dish is accordingly first 'blessed' by offering it to the gods, sacrificing a small portion by casting it in the direction of the gods in a gesture of offering (**gsol-mchod**), repeated three times. This frees the remainder for human consumption, starting with the most honoured guest. Like the gods, who do not easily submit to human will, the guest is supposed to politely refuse the offerings three times, after which he or she submits to the host's insistence; the guest can only then be satisfied that the host's desire to please is genuine. If present, the **mon-pa** musicians receive the last (lowest) share of the food and drink, but nothing is wasted: any left-over food ('spent offerings') is distributed among the guests to take home (to expel the pollution associated with the 'spent offerings', just as in ritual sacrifices the **gtor-ma** may be given to the **mon-pa**, **bhe-da**, beggars or left for birds or animals).

The use of music as a form of ceremonial offering follows a similar pattern, and no grand feast or celebration would be complete unless the host hires the **mon-pa** to provide the appropriate forms of music. As with other forms of offering, a **lha-rnga** is first offered to the village or household gods: this inauguration invites the gods to take part in the ceremonies and to gain their blessing, creating harmony and solidarity, and anticipating the worldly pleasures that are to follow. It also operates as a symbol of the merit that the host will gain in return for the sacrifice of the event as a whole. Then, in the case of human guests of royal, noble or senior clerical status, each is received in turn by rank with the

appropriate form of **lha-rnga** played as they are greeted and seated, rank and gender being marked musically. These offerings, considered to be "welcome blessings" (**byin-la legs**) conferred by the invoked deities, are thus a worldly form of ritual salutation (**phyag-'tshal**). [17]

As the meal is served, the offering (**gsol-mchod**) of the portion of each course to the gods is accompanied by a short **lha-rnga** (also called **gsol-mchod**) played three times in synchrony with the offering gestures. In the case of serving beer, which needs to be periodically replenished throughout the celebrations and which has a special significance as a symbol of communal prosperity and happiness, each new barrel is first offered to the gods as it is brought from the beer-room (**chang-khang**) by means of a special dance (**mon-sgrol** or **mon-mgron**), in which the dancer dances with it around the (cosmic) centre before placing it there in readiness for human consumption.

Status and gender are also marked through dance and its accompanying music: etiquette dictates that the host should invite the most senior dignitary present to lead the first dance, which may be male (**pho-rstes**) or female (**mo-rtses**), or one of several categories of select dances formerly reserved for the royal and noble classes. Subsequently, others present (except the musician castes) may participate in the dancing, but even here due deference is shown to the senior members in the gathering before, and in honour of, whom the dance is performed: many dances will begin with a brief prelude in the manner of a **lha-rnga**, and the dancers make the appropriate gestures of respect as the dance progresses from one stage to the next, and at its conclusion. In the case of court ceremonies, performances of this kind would have included the singing of praise songs (**gzhung-glu**) in honour of the king or his ministers or nobles who were present in the assembly. In this regard, these songs may be compared with the Hindu **maṅgalagīta**, or "auspicious songs", which like their Ladakhi namesakes, the **bkra-shis-pa'i glu**, are sung at the conclusion of communal gatherings in honour of the principal dignitary present.

High-ranking persons additionally enjoy, or enjoyed, the right to have special forms of **lha-rnga** played before them whenever they appear in public. These include not only the aforementioned **lha-rnga** offered as "welcome blessings", but forms of processional music, similarly distinguished according to status, which escort senior dignitaries into the public domain, personifying them as quasi-divine beings entering the phenomenal realm. Called '**phebs-rnga**, i.e. drumming for the "auspicious descent" ('**phebs-pa bkra-shis**), they may be compared with the musical invitations (**spyan-'dren-gyi rol-mo**) of monastic ritual which bring deities down from their celestial domain into the human world to act upon their behalf. A similar set of processional pieces played upon departure (**skyod-rnga**), though musically identical to the '**phebs-rnga**, are understood to symbolize the dignitary's return, again like the dismissal (**gshegs-gsol**) of a deity at the end of a ritual after the generation and dedication of merit.

These particular forms of ceremonial music therefore enhance the popular perception of those in authority as beings "possessed" of divine qualities. In the case of the king, Ladakhis appear to have been sympathetic to the idea of a truly divine king, i.e. an incarnation of a supernatural being: the early Tibetan kings were said to have been "invited" (again **spyan-'dren**) into the human world to rule its inhabitants (Ellingson 1979^a:60-61), while members of the Ladakhi ruling family were sometimes identified as reincarnations of particular beings. It is not particularly important, however, whether a cult of divine kingship as such ever existed or not in Ladakh: what is real, even today, is a feeling of piety towards the royal family, and a belief in a divine aura surrounding their person. This is because the idea of "possession" (**bzhugs**) in the broader sense extends to the concept of any living being as an embodied soul; the cycle of life and death is indeed itself a kind of shamanic journey between levels of existence (trance). What distinguishes kings and incarnate lamas from ordinary beings, then, is the belief that their superior qualities are manifestations, in their present state of consciousness, of a superior transcendental principle or power arising from the merit accumulated during previous lifetimes. Given the culture-wide basis of these beliefs, it is appropriate that, musically as socially, these human beings are treated in a manner worthy of their ritual status: kings are

duely regaled and enthroned, incarnate lamas (**sprul-sku**, "emanation bodies") are addressed with reverence (as **rin-po-che**, "precious jewel"), and nobles (**sku-drag**, "noble bodies", addressed **sku-shog**, "your honour") treated with respect.

Music played in honour of these dignitaries declares their superior ritual status and acknowledges their divine mandate to rule on account of their possession of, or access to, divine powers. It enhances their prestige because it demonstrates compliance among their subjects, just as a deity might expect from its worshippers: music is offered out of a desire to please, to pledge loyalty, and to show the need for their protection and leadership. The performance of **lha-rnga** therefore reinforces the symbolism which legitimates worldly power: those in authority can expect their subjects to act in accordance with their requests (e.g. on mundane matters of taxation, land tenure, trading rights, enforced labour service), in the knowledge that their subjects believe in, and admire, their superior wisdom; conversely, disobedience would lead to the withdrawal of their protection and the breakdown of the social order.

The degree to which rulers can manipulate their subjects is limited, however, by the expectations and values of those making offerings, for the motivation for offering is the anticipation of benefit or merit as counter-gift in return for this act. Musical performance in honour of those in authority does not merely personify and re-present their divine sanction, but transforms it: as in worship, donors temporarily gain power (merit) by doing good or offering goods. Sponsoring a musical performance as part of a ceremony in honour of someone of higher ritual status is thus a means of gaining merit at their expense: the host gains self-worth and prestige, or to use Ortner's (1989:163) phrase, acquires a sense of "feeling big". Ceremonial performance is thus not simply an instrument of legitimation for rulers, but also a means of "valorization" (ibid.:153), i.e. self-empowerment and the enrichment of status pride, by actors at any level of society. In political terms, it represents a potential challenge to illegitimate domination, for it reminds those in authority of the responsibility of office, and of their need to act in ways seen to be

beneficial to their subjects, lest they lose their prestige and popular support.

The continual round of sacrificial feasts throughout Ladakh society during the period leading up to the New Year thus ensures that everyone engages in the restoration of their status in the symbolic order through the distribution of wealth and prestige. It is because music can support different meanings simultaneously, that the performance of ceremonial **lha-rnga** tends to render the encounter between individuals or groups of different status as beneficial to either party: it materializes the bond between them as non-arbitrary and mutually desirable. Musical performance enhances the chances of a favourable outcome because of its expressive power to naturalize the relationship between the symbolic order and its actors: it anchors in real experience those programmes of action which are most likely to result in communal harmony, and the maintenance of the status quo.

3.6: Music in the Public Arena: ritual dramas and the resolution of conflict

Ceremonial **lha-rnga** clearly demonstrate how musical performance can be legitimating for those in political authority yet at the same time can encite a challenge to illegitimate domination, depending upon the identity of the participant(s) and the circumstances surrounding the performance. It is a striking example of what Ortner (1989:76-81) shows to be one of the most pervasive contradictions in Buddhist culture, between power and merit: that is, between merit-generation as an act of self-interest, and as an act of selflessness; or between self-empowerment (claiming power) and other-empowerment (renouncing power). This ambiguity is, Ortner claims, a cultural embodiment of the inherent structural tension in Buddhist society between inequality (e.g. of status or wealth) and equality (of economic or political opportunity), an ambiguity that is played out and temporarily resolved by the performance of cultural schemata.



Plate 16: Statue of Guru Rinpoche (Padmasambhava) at Hemis monastery

One of the key scenarios of this structural conflict is the rift between the ideal order (transcendental merit) and its worldly realisation (temporal power) as constituted in the institutions of kingship and priesthood. This "inner conflict" of the archetypal Hindu-Buddhist state (Heesterman 1985) is well represented by the musical traditions of court and temple, both of which, significantly, adopted the music of conflict (military music) in order to define and negotiate their relationship with one another, and particularly in relation to the populace whose support they sought. That is, they necessarily compromise one another in their worldly projections - most especially those which reach into the public arena of the festival-drama, pageant or tournament, where in Ladakh the genre of **lha-rnga** comes into its own.

At a deep symbolic level these public events centre around this inner conflict. The following narrative from the biography of the Guru Rinpoche ("Precious Master") Padmasambhava (Plate 16), the "Padma Scrolls" (**padma thang-yig**), neatly summarises the archetypal *conflict* between king and priest in verse against the background of what is apparently a 'cham festival, where the tantric master met the Tibetan king Thrisong Detsen (**khri-srong lde-brtsan**, 742-797):

The King had set up his camp by the Lohita [Palace], and he sent his representative Lhazang [to receive Padmasambhava], who had an entourage of five hundred horsemen in armour. When they met...they could find no water for making their tea. Padmasambhava...stuck his staff into the side of the Tolung pit, and he said: 'Lhazang, the water has come out. Hold up a bowl', and so the place is called the 'Holy Water of the Bowl'.

Then he went to meet the King...[who] was surrounded by all his courtiers... The two queens were surrounded by their women... They went to the meeting with drummers and singers, with masked dancers and a lion procession...

Padmasambhava...thought to himself: 'I am not born from a womb, but was magically born. I am a Religious King who ruled the land of Uryyan... This King must certainly salute me first. But I wonder, shall I return his salutation or not. If I return it, the greatness of the Buddhist religion will be lost. If I don't return it, he will be displeased. However although he is a great king, I cannot salute him.'

King Thrisong Detsen was thinking: 'I am the lord of all the people of Tibet. The Bodhisattva Abbot made me salutation first. In the same way this teacher should salute me.'

Thus disagreeing about the act of salutation...the Teacher sang [a song] about his own strength and might... Then the King confessed his fault and made salutation, saying: 'Please remove such sin as I have committed in not saluting so worthy a person as yourself.' The Teacher replied: 'Listen, O King, in order to atone for this sacred convention you have broken, you must construct five wonderful stupa...

So they were erected adorned with lotus-flowers in the middle, and the Great One of Urygan concealed sacred treasure in each of them.

(Snellgrove and Richardson 1968:97-98)

The summary features of the narrative, in terms of the underlying cultural schema, are: the initiation of a dispute between two rival powers, here a powerful military ruler and a lama with conspicuous, miraculous powers; a 'ritual battle' between them, in this case enacted through song and etiquette; the inevitable defeat of the lesser of the two, in this instance the worldly ruler who does not submit to the higher power of his religious patron; a meritorious action (the sacrifice of wealth in building the stupas) as a pledge to act in accordance with the holy law (the public good), and as a means of consolidating worldly wealth and power through divine blessing (countergift).

In general, this cultural schema underpins an abundance of narratives in the theatrical repertoire (and other cultural discourses) which act out the essential contradiction at the root of the conflict: the king only gains authority (institutionalized power) through the loss of absolute power, for in order to gain support and legitimacy from the religious establishment and his believing subjects, he must publicly declare his weakness by continually seeking divine protection. In general, the schema unfolds through the following stages (Ortner *ibid.*:67-71):

1. Rivalry between two politically dominant or aspiring individuals, competing for the same wealth or prestige.
2. The withdrawal of the eventual hero, acquiring the necessary qualities to defeat his rival by gaining the personal protection of a charismatic figure.

3. Ritual/magical battle, the hero emerging triumphant over his rival, and attracting popular support.

4. Expulsion of the loser, by death or humiliation.

5. Institutionalization of power gained (dedication of merit) by founding monasteries or religious monuments.

As Ortner (ibid.) shows, the schema temporarily resolves, but ultimately perpetuates, the contradiction by expressing power-through-strength as non-egotistical rather than tyrannical, and impotence-through-weakness as benevolent rather than pathetic: it legitimates his authority and at the same time limits his power so that he is compelled to seek further legitimacy.

Hence, just as offering rituals need to be repeatedly performed in order to combat the human propensity for death and decay, large-scale public performances which confer legitimacy upon the institutions of power also are required to be repeatable. It is significant, then, that the contest between Padmasambhava and King Thrisong Detsen may have occurred in the context of a '**cham**' festival, for this event is believed to have anticipated the foundation of Tibet's first monastery at Samye in 779.

Perhaps despite initial appearances, '**cham**' and other related events clearly belong to the realm of theatre: they are 'staged' through strict, well-established procedures which make the performances repeatable and even rehearsable (Plate 17); the public show is framed by private, elaborate pre- and post-liminal rituals which prepare the principal actors. Even the gods which are 'tamed' and brought down by music to embody their human mediums are willing participants in the drama: they are already converts to Buddhism who are prepared to re-enact their conquest for the benefit (merit) of their human audience.

The ritual battles in these events (e.g. Helffer 1980) are usually between the local pre-Buddhist gods and the tantric masters, notably Padmasambhava, who disciplined (converted) them and incorporated them into the Buddhist pantheon. The transformation which occurs is the

powerful engagement of the Buddhist deities with the yet-unconverted forces of evil in the phenomenal world: the performance reaches its climax with a spectacular exorcism in which the demons (contained in a **gtor-ma** sacrifice) are ritually killed - i.e. temporarily expelled - with sacred weapons (arrows, swords, daggers) or by fire. Similar exorcisms are enacted in the performances of the **a-che lha-mo** and **mani-pa**, notably in the "breaking of the stone" (**pho-bar rdo-gcog**) ceremony, still to be observed in Ladakh [18]: here, the practitioner, like an oracle, displays his miraculous powers in a sword dance in which he balances his body on the tips of the swords, and draws them across his arms or tongue without producing blood; he then destroys the demons in a huge stone placed on the chest of an actor in trance, by smashing it with a small boulder, and then engaging in a chase and fight with the human 'scapegoat'.

In celebrating the victory of Buddhism, the onlookers at such performances are reminded of their own conversion (conquest) and of their allegiance to the true path: the religious establishment thereby acquires legitimacy in the eyes of the people. In some cases, the enemy of Buddhism is quite openly identified as the illegitimate power of the tyrannical ruler: in one form of the '**cham** dance-drama, where again the sacrifice is a human effigy-**gtor-ma**, the ritual contest takes the form of the battle between a Buddhist monk disguised as a shaman and the last, apostate king of Tibet, Langdarma (**glang-dar-ma**, c.803-842), who is supposed to have been assassinated by a monk disguised in this manner. In this case, the performance legitimates political rule by exposing and curbing its illegitimate excesses: it confers legitimacy only upon those rulers who live up to the reasonable expectations of their subjects, and who submit to the rule of the dharma.

As in many cultures, the theme of royal sacrifice is a recurrent one in Tibetan public ritual and folklore, again structured around the same schema. One legend recounted in theatrical performances and in **mani-pa** narratives, for example, relates how Padmasambhava as a child in a former life in ancient India was subjected to a series of testing ordeals by an evil king, from which he emerged victorious by turning man-eating demons on the king and his government. The king was killed, the demons converted,

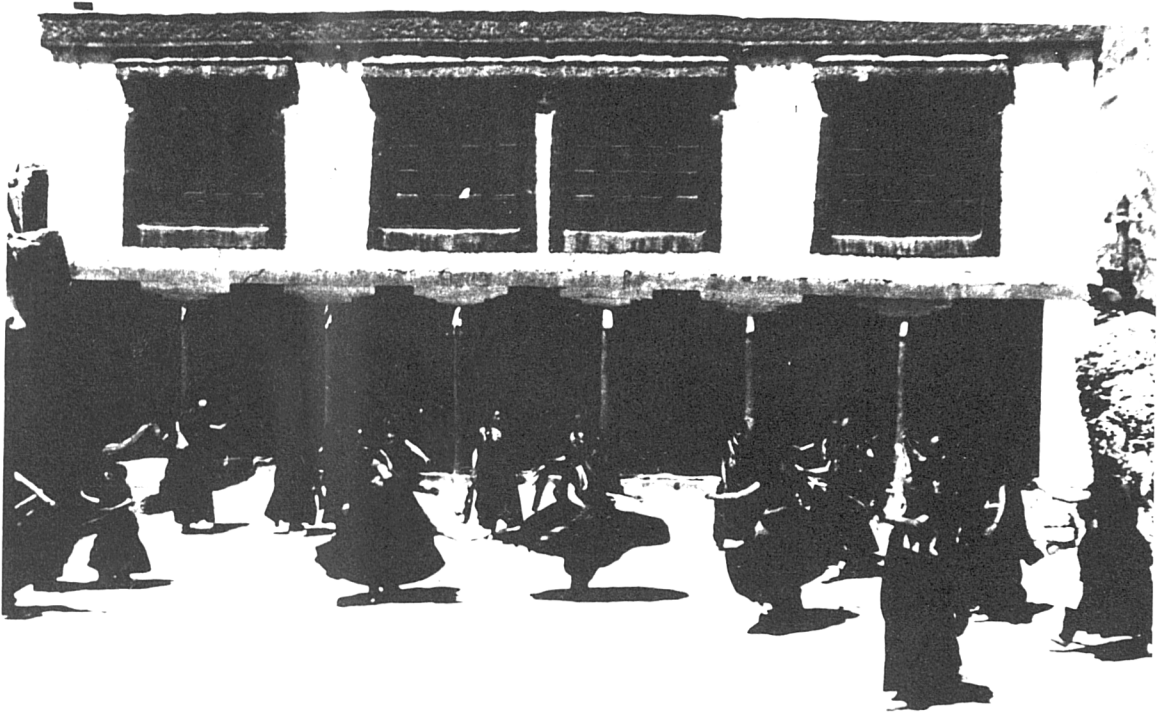


Plate 17: 'Cham rehearsal without costumes and masks, just prior to the **ka'-brgyad** festival at Lamayuru monastery

and Buddhist rule was established (Blondeau 1986). In Tibet, the king may have been truly sacrificed when his successor had attained the mandate to rule (Tucci 1956/7), an act which in Ladakh was sometimes symbolically re-enacted by the abdication of the king in favour of a monastic life upon the prince's assumption of the royal title.

The Ladakhis have their own body of folklore concerning a legendary 'evil king', Bagatham (**ba-ga-tham**), whom they sacrifice (in the form of a **gtor-ma**) annually at the New Year (**lo-gsar**) fire ceremonies (**me-tho**): according to different versions of the myth, he is variously described as a man-eater, a fire-worshipper, as having a 'heart of snow', or as a 'donkey-foot king' who was an accomplice of the erstwhile Langdarma during their former lives.[19] In each case, the legitimate ruler (the hero), with the support of the people conspire to overthrow his wicked regime, by luring him into a pit through various means - usually under the pretext of a dance - and then either throwing torches into it, or by clubbing him to death. The annual ritual sacrifice re-enacts the scenario, symbolically expelling the evil of the 'old' king and welcoming the 'new' king for the forthcoming year. The ritual thereby legitimates the authority of the genuine holy ruler by presenting its alternative as violable; but the inversion at the same time contains his power and sanctions the potential for popular rebellion. [20]

The same theme of royal sacrifice also emerges in contests in which the Ladakhi monarch himself use to participate, notably at New Year. These included competitions and spectacles which are still popular as sports (**rtses**, "play, recreation") among the Ladakhis, such as archery, horseracing, polo and swordsmanship. Vestiges of folklore, music and dance associated with these events - including the performance of **lha-rnga** - would suggest, however, that these events were not merely the diversions they now tend to be, but that they probably took the form of sacrificial contests in the past.

Such events have a long tradition in Indian civilization, and played a significant role in the legitimation of the holy ruler's authority through competition. Vedic sources, for example, describe sacrificial chariot races

which unfold along the same cultural schema (Saletore 1985:4-5). The race-course was first marked out by shooting arrows, and kettledrums (**duṅḍubhi**) were mounted on the chariots. The start of the race was indicated by the beating of the drums and the singing of Saman hymns by a Brahman priest; the contestant thus acquired the supernatural means to gain victory. Emerging triumphant, the hero would mount his throne to the accompaniment of blessings. The ritual battle, in which the hero-to-be is pre-ordained to win, thus generates merit (expels evil) and gains popular support through his display of heroic qualities. Without possessing these, or at least without the popular belief in his possessing them, his claim to have the divine mandate to rule, and his ability to destroy the enemies of holy rule, would be threatened. Victory, like salvation, can only come, or believed to have been attained, after a suitable struggle.

According to Buddhist legend, Śākyamuni himself only gained enlightenment after a ritual battle with the enemies of religion (the four Māras): miraculously, whatever weapon was directed against him immediately blossomed into flowers. The historical Buddha may indeed be regarded as the archetypal charismatic figure among his followers: as Prince Siddharta, he won the hand of Princess Yaśodhāra in marriage - itself a form of ritual 'conquest' - against a rival prince through a display of miraculous feats (including elephant-throwing); at a **samāja** festival at Rajagaha, he blessed an outstanding acrobat; and he won a music competition at Jetavana for his superior **vīṇā** playing (Saletore 1985:19-20). Various kinds of ritual contest have accordingly had a valued role in Buddhist culture. A number of early Buddhist sources, including the Jatakas, for example, describe the **samāja** as an elaborate seven-day festival which originally took place on mountains that had been consecrated with animal sacrifices, flowers and incense; tiered seating was filled by rank, the king taking his place uppermost on the throne to the accompaniment of kettledrums (**bherī**) and conches. Besides purely musical contests, a number of other displays and tournaments were apparently accompanied by cymbal-clashing (Pali **pāṇissaraṁ**) and the beating of earthen pot drums (Pali **kumbhathūnaṁ**), including: military manoeuvres and reviews; animal dances; equestrian feats such as displays of different types of movement in response to signals; acrobatics; and archery contests such

as shooting blind at a sound-target (Pali **sadda-vedhi**) (Saletore 1985:14-20, 27-28).

As in Ladakh today, outstanding performers in contests would be appropriately rewarded with gifts and blessings. Competitive performance - especially that which taps into 'epic' discourse - is thus an important means of gaining favour and support, be it divine or human, and as shown by Padmasambhava's 'conquest' of King Thrisong Detsen, song is perhaps one of the commonest ways of achieving this. Indeed, the presence of songs of insult (**mchid**) alongside praise songs (**mgur**) in early Tibetan sources suggests that song-contests had a significant role in the provocation and resolution of conflict (Ellingson 1979^a:67-70). In Ladakh, these take the form of sarcasm songs (**tshig-glu**), riddle songs (**tho-glu**) and drinking songs (**chang-glu**). Part-improvized, these songs formed part of the cerebral equipment of ministers and nobles, testing the qualities of eloquence, wit, and learning that were considered to be the essential characteristics of leadership; these musical displays of cunning and repartee identified potential candidates for political office by outwitting rivals, and thereby gaining political influence and prestige.

In the village setting, similar elements of musical competition are a feature of song-contests (**glu-ltan**, "song display") in which participants, in two antiphonal groups, challenge one another's knowledge of song-texts and their tunes: melodic figures or metrical settings, for example, may be disputed, as might the accuracy or completeness of the poetry. Overtly taking the form of a game for the singers' own amusement, these contests disguise a more important function, for they provide an arena for the transmission of the folksong tradition, testing and preserving the musical and verbal expressions deemed valuable for the survival of the community. Since deviations are generally rejected by the opposing chorus, musical innovation is limited by narrow boundaries set by communal consensus: these events serve to maintain the traditional song heritage, identifying and licensing its most able bearers, rather than its innovators or revolutionaries; according to one Ladakhi writer, traditional songs, once learnt, should be sung "spontaneously and without pride" (Rabgias 1979). Village song-contests thus contrast with the 'charismatic' performances and

original compositional or extemporized forms characteristic of courtly protocol (Trewin i.p.).

Although concerted in nature, village song-contests restore order and reduce conflict by re-enacting cultural contradictions along the lines of the same recurrent schema: any substantial challenge to the 'authoritative' performance - in the collective perception - is likely to be declared illegitimate, and unacceptable alternatives are rejected. All this, again, occurs unconsciously under the pretext of 'play', for it is the acting out of these contradictions in performance which makes the re-presentation of traditional authority, in the form of musical authenticity, appear fresh and desirable.

This suggests that the role of music in reducing conflict is acknowledged and put to use in certain situations of potential crisis, even though its mechanism may remain largely unconscious. Riddle-songs (**tho-glu**), for example, are sung as a contest between the groom's party and the bride's family in order to reduce the emotional tension involved in the change of status upon marriage; like similar songs in the Gesar Epic, these question-and-answer songs 'test' the qualities of the groom-as-hero before his 'victory' over the bride (and the consequent release of fertility and prosperity) is assured. The groom's procession consists of a group of five "messengers" (**gnya'-bo-pa**) whose leader (**sna-'khrid-pa**) bears the ritual arrow (**mda'-dar**), followed by five "heroes" and five "heroines" (**dpa'-bo** and **dpa'-mo**, respectively attendants of the groom and bride), and the contest is initiated when the party reaches the bridal home and is refused entry by the woman's relatives. In the words of Ribbach's (1986:65-79) account from the turn of the twentieth century, the two groups:

"performed a musical drama whose meaning was as follows. The five Nyaopas [**gnya'-bo-pas**] had come to purchase the bride according to the agreement with the groom's father. They claimed to be the sons of the gods of the high glacial mountains. The people in the house were suspicious. According to them no one could escape from that kingdom because it was guarded in all four heavenly directions...The people in the bride's house jokingly posed the Nyaopas a series of questions in the form of songs. If the answer was not satisfactory [to the song-master (**glu-dpon**) of the bridal group] the door was immediately opened from the inside and the boys and girls

rushed out to beat and insult the [groom's] party. Then they retreated and shut the door again almost as soon as it had been opened...

Again and again the people of the [bridal] house poured out and beat the Nyaopas with willow rods but they were always repulsed by the assertion that the rods were not made of the correct wood. They, the Nyaopas, were sons of the gods and could only be beaten with twigs of the world-tree [from which the shaft of the magic arrow is made] which had its roots in the spirit world beneath the earth and grew up through the earth, the world of men, and into heaven, the world of the gods.

The [bridal] party made further attacks, this time armed with other 'woods' - cooking spoons and ladles, wooden pokers with charred ends - all to the delight of the crowd, both inside and out...

After further songs to test the Nyaopas, the final questions and answers came in this song:

Some achieve rank through their wisdom,
some only from their background.
Some there are who can't do anything
So it's important to test for ourselves...

With this song, the nineteenth in the whole series...the scene in front of the bride's house was finished. Her relatives were satisfied with the answers to their questions, and the door was opened and the [groom's] party followed the Nyaopas into the yard and up to the front door. There the female relations, friends and bride's maids...pretended to be angry and beat the backs of the bride-abductors with willow rods. The sNatrirdspa [sna-'khrīd-pa] calmed their pretended anger by distributing a few rupees and he was then allowed to enter the house with the Nyaopas and a few close relations.

Through this contest, the **gnya'-bo-pa** gain supernatural protection and hence legitimate control over the bride on behalf of the groom. Their ritual ordeal, however, is not over: before they can take up their ascribed place at the ceremonial wedding feast, they must solve the "riddle of the carpets" through a further song-contest; more riddle-songs then follow about the origin and supernatural properties of the magic arrow, which is later used to bless the couple (along with offerings of food, beer, song and music) before they return to the groom's house for further festivities (ibid.: 83-90).

As with the wedding ceremony as a whole, its constituent song-contests are 'staged': even apparently 'real' abductions are "often a put-up job pre-arranged by the two family heads who want to bring about the marriage in the cheapest and simplest way possible" (ibid.:106). The ceremonies and contests, then, are symbolic activities structured by cultural schemas in order to reduce the crisis of the passage rite. Even the most playful elements, the songs themselves, are not improvised - as a 'real' song-contest might be - but are actually among the most literary compositions in the folksong repertoire (Paldan 1982); but in being performed as if they were extemporized, they are recreated to bring order upon the uncertainty of the moment. In all the cultural dramas described here, music 'plays' with the symbols of order so that its representational meanings (linguistic or ritual) are re-presented as new. Through the performance process, order is re-established in individual experience, and in the wider community through concerted participation, by imposing a structure on play. Chaos is averted by acting out in emotional life those contradictions of the lived-in world which threaten to bring chaos about.

Predictably, elements of play - satire, license and bawdiness - are at their most prominent during the New Year celebrations, recalling the ancient Buddhist **samāja** or the earlier Vedic **samana** and **mahāvratā** erotic festivals (Saletore 1985:13-14); here, the inversion of the social order acts out the challenge to illegitimate domination and re-establishes the belief in, and support for, the traditional regime. Even in the apparently most profound drama, the '**cham**' (Plate 18), includes similar elements of play: the otherwise intense atmosphere of the performance is occasionally broken by the anarchic antics of the **a-tsa-ra**, a comic, grotesquely masked character (see also Plate 26) who disrupts the performance by running wildly among the participants and spectators, shouting, joking and mimicking. The figure represents more than a diversion, however, but rather a similar inversion, for he is identified as a tantric master (**a-tsa-ra** is a corruption of the Sanskrit **ācārya**, an ideal practitioner (Cantwell 1987)), a sort of Tibetan "Abbot of Misrule". [21] His principal function is probably to allow spectators to identify in a humorous way with their own inability to complete their struggle for enlightenment (Cantwell *ibid.*). His foolery acts out in individual experience the tension between the ideal



Plate 18: Spectators at the Stok **gu-ru tshes-bcu** monastic festival, in an attitude of prayer

and its realisation in the here-and-now, yet restores belief in the ongoing ritual battle against human frailty because the alternative anarchy would be intolerable. The inversion thus serves to generate popular support of religious authority in much the same way as the New Year ceremonies generate compliance with monarchic rule.

In whichever cultural drama, the underlying schema creates a world of make-believe: through performance, the presentation of things to be believed (*credenda*) and things to be admired (*miranda*) (Cohen 1976) are at their most convincing because of the suspension of disbelief and the manipulation of sentiment. In 'cham, for example, the ecstatic trance behaviour of oracular possession is highly spectacular and has considerable theatrical appeal: their movements, as with the music which accompanies them, are frenzied and hysterical; their actions - leaping around high parapets, leaning on sharp swords or drawing them across their tongues - are potentially highly dangerous, yet they never (it seems) end in calamity. The social impact of such events lies in the psychological potency of the performance: it unconsciously orchestrates the experience and behaviour of participants and observers, yet it is always subject to a predictable process in which aspects of symbolisation can be controlled by actors in an intentional manner.

Public performance recommends itself as an instrument of legitimacy because, in the context of heightened experience, the behaviour and conduct of subjects can be manipulated in ways intended by those in control, but in ways which do not appear to be contrary to the expectations or values of subjects. Oracular statements, for example, are always made in such a way that are not too feeble to be incredible at the time, but vague enough to allow any subsequent challenge to its authority to be disclaimed. Similarly, in the case of sacrificial contests, the hero-to-be always 'wins' as a result of performance procedures which are not so obvious during the event that they undermine the belief in a real, fair victory, but which are regulated enough to secure the intended result.

All the narratives and dramas described here demonstrate the principle that performance must be controlled and regulated to be

effective in restoring order: to paraphrase Marius Schneider (in the head quotation), music can only be regarded as an archetype of the cosmic order if it does not fall victim to chaos. The transformative power of performance derives from its capacity to contain play by implementing the rules which permit play: through the support of behaviours which are perceived to be awesomely real, the performance experience has the property of feeling precarious, yet is structured in a predictable way that re-creates the ideal order and reassures the individual's relationship with it - it is fun rather than threatening. Its impact upon emotional life arises from the dialectic between the objective logic of form through which feeling is organised and the subjective experience through which feeling is sensed.

As a grammar of the emotions, music may itself be regarded as a form of drama, irrespective of whether it is performed in the context of ritual or theatre. Through its own mode of organizing sensuous activity, it has the power to provoke emotional tension (climax) even though its subsequent release (cadence) is inevitable. The rules of a coherent musical system are a prerequisite for the dynamic recreation of forms which, in the experience of their progression, transcend the apprehension of those rules. **Lha-rnga**, as one such system, may indeed be considered as an abstract expression of the same cultural schema which, in its more explicit manifestations, is supported by the genre in the performance of ritual dramas. Its congruence - but not identity - with other forms of symbolic discourse is the key to understanding how cultural schemas are 'grounded', or 'feel real' for members of Ladakhi culture. Its own systematic organization is an integrating force for assimilating the range of cultural expressions in a single, fundamental and familiar programme of experience.

Lha-rnga is therefore socially and politically significant because it animates the symbols invoked to restore order. As part of public performance events positioned between the social order and individual patterns of behaviour, musical phenomena are able to act upon modes of social organization. On the one hand, the roles, actions and decisions that actors exercise in reproducing the hierarchy of form are predetermined by

socially anchored principles; on the other hand, these social configurations are transformed and renewed by the shared experience of the performance itself. As rule-bound play, musical performance activates the external symbolic world, empowering it to break, remake and re-present that world in such a way that sustains an enabling condition for human survival.

PART TWO

INSTRUMENTS OF AUTHORITY

When a drum is beaten, you cannot grasp the sounds that issue from it; only by grasping the drum [itself] or the drummer can you grasp the sound.

Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upaniṣhad [II,4,7]

CHAPTER FOUR

MUSICIANS IN LADAKHI BUDDHIST SOCIETY

4.1: Music-Making in Ladakh

Music-making in Ladakh, as in other societies, is a cultural phenomenon patterned by the same rules, values and concepts which pertain to other social activities. At the level of human action, it is social processes which determine what music is appropriate in any given context, and who may participate. These processes give social, religious and political meanings to the activation of particular musical structures within a shared cultural system; they attach specific functions and values to different categories of music, and assign specific roles and identities to musical specialists.

Within this framework, however, music has the capacity to structure experience and affect behaviour in unexpected ways. Its power to transform consciousness means that it can be used in support of a ritual system that acts upon the lived-in world in a variety of ways, depending upon the social identity and circumstances of the perceiver: as its position in relation to cultural schemata shows, it has the potential to legitimate the authority of those in power, yet also to incite rebellion against outright domination. Ladakhi myths and rituals demonstrate that musical performance is essentially a precarious activity that can potentially create or subvert the social order.

It is proposed that it is because music has fundamental affective attributes that the identity of musicians in Buddhist Ladakh conforms to a widespread pattern observed throughout many cultures which otherwise advocate different consciously-derived theories of music. In Ladakh, as elsewhere, there is a fundamental paradox between the ideal conceptualization of music and the working practice of it, in terms of the high value attached to the music itself and the low social status of the majority of those who profess it. As a performance activity positioned between the external cosmological order and individual patterns of experience and behaviour, music-making exhibits the same contradiction between the ideal and the real that it purports to resolve: it is a transcendent activity designed to generate liberating merit, yet it can only achieve this through the social division of labour. Music-making, like the

exercise of political power, is most effective in the support of order when institutionalized within the symbolic world upon which it is directed to act. It is precisely because music is so highly valued, then, that its practitioners are subject to social control: by gaining control of the means of production ("by grasping the drummer", as the head quotation puts it), those in positions of political power can increase their authority.

The dependence of Ladakh's social and cultural life upon a constrained agrarian economy means that the stable existence of essential specialists making their livelihood other than by the ownership of land inevitably entails unequal relations of power. In the case of the court musicians, these professionals are linked directly to the centre of political power, but in village Ladakh, the musicians are necessarily engaged in a patron-client relationships with the agricultural communities whom they serve. In presenting the social dimensions of music-making, the present focus of the study therefore aims to go beyond merely documenting the social context of musical performance in culture, in two related ways. Firstly, the social organization of musicians, and the social relations of musicians among themselves and with other groups are important factors contributing to a full and proper understanding of the ways in which particular musical structures operate in Ladakhi society, so the ethnography of music-making provides the specific social framework within which musical processes operate and become socially and politically significant. Secondly, a descriptive analysis of the ritual and economic dimensions of musical patronage - especially considered over historical time - establishes how the ideology of domination over musicians is institutionalized, and defines the context in which the production of music is open to manipulation in the pursuit of political authority.

4.2: The Concept of Musicianship

That musicians in Ladakh have a clearly distinct social identity may be attributed to the fact that there is a coherent concept of music within a broadly-shared value system, and that music-making is a category of behaviour which has widely-recognized and historically well-established social functions. Hence, although the identity, organization and evaluation of musicians in Ladakh may appear to have several parallels with those of other cultures - justifiably so in at least the cases of the Hindu and Islamic ones with which the region has been in contact - the institution of musicianship in Ladakh is well-adapted to serve the particular functions of music in Buddhist culture.

In broad terms all Buddhist musicians, whether monks or laymen, are considered to share the same type of knowledge, ability and skill, and to have similar aims and motivations with regard to the concept and practice of music as a general category. The Buddhist theory of musical performance again amounts to a cognitive model, not dissimilar to the tripartite concept-behaviour-sound model proposed by Merriam (1964:32-3): firstly, musicians have "wisdom" (**mkhas**) relating to what music is or should be, of the properties, values and functions it has, and of the kinds of behaviour and action which are likely to bring about the desired musical result; secondly, they have the "ability" (**shes**), or enactive knowledge, to demonstrate this wisdom in terms of behaviour, for example by verbalising what they do; finally, they have the necessary "skill" (**phye**), especially the technical motor skill, to realize musical sound.

In the minds of most Ladakhis, the concept of musicianship is closely linked to the concept of music as instrumental music. In folk concepts, knowledge of music is not dissociated from the idea of being able to perform it instrumentally, and the terms **mkhas**, **shes** and **phye**, or their derivatives, are used almost interchangeably to indicate possession of the specialised skill. Music is "performed" (**byo-byes**, T **byed-pa**, from **phye**), whereas song is simply "rendered" or "uttered" (**tang-byes**, T **gtong-ba**), and thus a musician, as **rol-mo-mkhan** - one who has "wisdom" (**mkhas**) about instrumental music - is distinguished from a singer, simply **dbyangs-**

pa. Alternatively, a singer, like a story-teller, actor or poet, may be described as a **kha-shes** ("oral performer", from **kha**, "mouth") while a musician, like a craftsman, is a **lag-shes** ("artisan", from **lag**, "hand"). Whether in the monastery or in society as a whole, a musician is usually thought of as an instrumental specialist, for singing is a non-specialised activity potentially undertaken by all Ladakhis, both monks and laity; there are no professional singers as such.

Although there is a common understanding of what a musician is, inside or outside the monastery, their particular identities are defined by social values. Musicians tend to be evaluated not only in terms of the instrumental nature of their work, but also in terms of their wider social role, although in practice this corresponds to the value of the music they produce. Musical practice becomes ranked, as well as motivated, by ritual practice: specialists who are monks who use music only in the direct service of special ritual activity, are not normally identified as musicians, except within the monastic community; in most eyes, they are monks first and foremost (Ellingson 1979:298-350). By contrast, **lha-rnga** ranks below the ritual music of the monasteries and serves quite different aims: like the instruments themselves, the musicians who play them are functionaries in the service of others' motivations, not their own. The merit they generate therefore accrues to their patrons rather than themselves.

To most Ladakhis, a musician is virtually synonymous with **mon-pa**: he is a hereditary professional who plays kettle drums (**da-man**) and/or oboe (**sur-na**), predominantly for **lha-rnga** and dance-music, neither of which normally involves singing. Music is a specialized, even foreign, craft known only to the (predominantly male) professionals of the artisan groups. Singing, on the other hand, is not usually accompanied, but when it is, the instruments used are typically those of Tibetan origin (mainly flute and lute) which have no repertoire of their own and which may be taken up by anyone; along with story-telling, epic-recital as well as dancing, singing is a form of 'native' musical knowledge shared, in principle if not entirely in practice, by all Ladakhis irrespective of religion, gender and status.

In these respects, the identity of professional musicians in Ladakhi Buddhist society invites comparison with those of the Muslim world (e.g. Sakata 1983, Baily 1988), where they are predominantly also regarded as instrumentalists of low-ranking, foreign provenance, and where sacred song genres are on the whole excluded from the category of music. Indeed, mutual cultural contact between Buddhist Ladakh and Islamic areas has nourished a number of common values, and traditionally there appears to have been little difference between Buddhist and Muslim Ladakhis in their attitudes towards musicians.

This suggests that particular religious ideologies of music are not the primary factor in determining the social identity and organization of musicians in the societies where they prevail, and casts doubt upon the tendency in the West to interpret the low status of musicians throughout the Islamic world in terms of Islam's alleged prohibition of music. For even though the lawfulness of music has been the subject of debate among Muslim theologians for centuries (Farmer 1929), there is no clear Qur'ānic injunction against music, and in any case similar moral arguments have run throughout the history of Buddhist thought as well. Both systems acknowledge the power of music, and both provide a strong ethical dimension to musical aesthetics: but such theories are as much a response to musical behaviour as a determinant of musical practice, and they represent but one type of many possible discourses about real musical phenomena. In the end, they may in fact reveal more about the stance of individual theorists than the culture-wide attitudes in the societies around them (Nattiez 1990).

Even a brief survey of Muslim Ladakhis' attitudes to music-making reveals that the supposed Islamic prohibition of music, as elsewhere (al Faruqi 1979:59) is little more than a central ideological trend whose impact is relatively recent. Before the 1990s, most did not openly express experiencing any conflict between Islam and Ladakhi culture, pointing out that although predominantly Buddhist, Ladakh had absorbed many influences of Islamic culture in the past. Historically, the Shī'ite majority of Purig were enthusiastic patrons of music and, as in Baltistan, regularly required the services of instrumentalists, while in the mixed Muslim-Buddhist areas

bordering Kargil and Leh districts, where intermarriage was common, villagers freely participated in, and borrowed from, one another's musical culture; a similar phenomenon occurred among the mainly Sunni minority in Leh. [22]

Individuals nevertheless did offer private opinions which expressed deeper attitudes and prejudices, but these reflected local political and ethnic tensions rather than absolute adherence to supposedly orthodox religious views. One Muslim informant suggested that music was "in the blood" of Muslim musicians and that the theological suspicion of music-making actually made them more dedicated than their Buddhist counterparts, and therefore more competent; at the same time, he invoked the prohibition on alcohol as a far more important moral issue, denouncing the behaviour of Buddhist musicians who were apt to drink too much (although not all Muslim musicians were observed to be abstinent). Another Muslim expressed the view that Buddhists underrated the Muslims' contribution to Ladakhi culture, most particularly in the field of music, implying that there was no reason for Buddhist Ladakhis (or anyone else) to regard Islamic musical culture to be in any way inferior. A recurrent accusation arising during discussions was that the Buddhists were caste-conscious with regards to musicians, a Hindu attitude which they should reject as the Muslims do in order to be true to their faith.

Buddhist Ladakhis, meanwhile, offered alternative views of their own. Some were prepared to agree that some of the best musicians were Muslim, but they attached little significance to the suggestion since there was a tradition among Tibetan peoples of employing "outsiders" (*phyi-pa*) for certain tasks, not because they themselves could not do them as competently, but because it suited them that way. Buddhists were also ambivalent in their perception of the Islamic attitude towards music and musicians, compared to their own. A well-educated Buddhist playfully quoted a saying that "in Buddhism, art goes up, whereas in Hinduism, art goes down; but in Islam it does not exist!"; and yet many Ladakhis still maintain attitudes towards music-making (e.g. its association with drinking and prostitution) which they use to justify their domination of musician groups in similar ways to those in Muslim and Hindu parts of Asia.

4.3: Musicianship and Caste

The attitudes of Ladakhis - Buddhist or Muslim - to their musicians suggests that they have adopted aspects of ideologies in order to serve their own interests and justify their control over music-makers, even though these 'ethnotheories' may conflict with orthodox religious ideologies. In the past, shared cultural values, rather than orthodox religious doctrine, determined attitudes towards musicians. This again supports Staal's (1982) proposal that the universalist notion of religion should be rejected in favour of local, dynamic networks of ideas and beliefs. 'Orthodox' theologies, like music theories, are just one type of discourse whose relationship with living traditions is problematic: they also may represent a mirror of real practice, or (as in the case of 'fundamentalist' movements) an attempt to remodel it.

The issue of caste-consciousness in relation to music-making lies at the heart of this problem. The observation that the traditional village musicians of Ladakh are members of the lowest, and essentially endogamous, social stratum has led several authors to describe them as castes (e.g. Kaplanian 1981:176-189; Erdmann 1983). However, the use of this term, rather than stratum, needs clarifying in this particular case because caste is not a dominant feature of Ladakhi society and is alien to Buddhist theology.

Although the indigenous concept of **rigs** implies race or birth, and is invoked, for example through creation myths, to explain the existence of different human 'types', Ladakh's social structure cannot be identified with the caste system as it operates in Indian plains villages. Only the lowest artisan groups (**rigs-ngan**) in which the musician 'castes' are included are theoretically endogamous, while the possibility of social mobility among the upper strata is broadly acknowledged. Since caste ideology does not prevail over all groups, caste rules pertaining to the lower groups are not as rigid as on the plains, or as formally applied, and its symbolism is rather different from the Hindu **varṇa** quadripartite model.

Superficially, the distinction between high, pure agricultural/clerical groups and low, polluted artisan castes resembles sub-Himalayan societies where the upper Brahmin-Rajput castes share dominance of what are presumed to be aboriginal artisan groups (Berreman 1963:197). In the case of Buddhist Ladakh, however, the duality is not so much between ritually pure and polluted castes, but between two contradictory principles: among the lower groups, which exhibit organizational features of Hindu castes, birth remains the main determinant of status, but among the upper strata, royal arbitration was the theoretical sanction of status. In other words, the contrast represents a particular institutional formation of the fundamental structural tension in Buddhist society between legitimate, 'natural' hierarchy (especially by birth) and the equality of opportunity (of gaining favour). Hence, the theory of reincarnation cannot explain the presence of some castes and not others, or why some occupations are not specified by caste; at the same time, among the upper strata, status was often in practice ascribed by inheritance rather than achieved by competition.

Since Buddhism theoretically rejects caste, the caste-like organization of musician groups in Ladakh cannot have been institutionalized directly by the religious concept of pollution. The Ladakhis' popular beliefs nevertheless justified feelings of impurity with regard to artisan groups originating from the lower hills, and legitimated their power over them. As a group, the **rigs-ngan** are generally associated with a range of related skills (music-making, leatherwork, metalwork and carpentry) which are in rural India ascribed to the low castes (Phunsok 1976), but the internal divisions among the once homogeneous (and possibly indigenous) subjugated group seem to have followed the expectations of the dominant strata, or their only partial adoption of plains attitudes. For example, certain tasks such as carpentry which ordinary Ladakhis were able or prepared to do but which were also undertaken by some **mon-pa** were not occupations by which the caste was usually identified. The association between occupation and caste is consequently less well-defined than in Hindu India, and it appears that caste occupations have changed according to the economic demands of the upper strata, while highly specialized labour that was not required on a large scale was not organized by caste. [23]

The idea that the adoption of caste has been motivated by the need to secure artisan labour is also supported by the fact that musicians do not form caste groups throughout the entire geographical region of Ladakh. In areas away from the historical centre of Buddhist rule, musical specialists of some kind are recruited in other ways. In Zanskar, where the population is far less status-conscious than in Upper Ladakh, there are no professional musicians and it is quite common for male Zanskari farmers to play the **sur-na** or **da-man** in public without compromising their social standing (Larson 1985); this is also true of remote Ladakhi villages where there are no **mon-pa** such as Chilling (Rigal 1979:262). A similar situation apparently once prevailed in the mixed Muslim-Buddhist villages of the Mulbekh-Bodh Kharbu region of Lower Ladakh, although in practice instrumental skills tended to be passed on patrilineally. [24] The Brokpa **brongopa** (T **bro-mgo-pa**, "leader(s) of the dance"), who are the musicians (male) and singers (male and female) who sing special songs or who play **da-man**, **gring-jang** (a cylindrical drum) and **sur-na** for important festivals, are selected and trained during each generation according to interest and ability rather than by birth (Vohra 1989b:61-62).

With these minor exceptions, it is the **mon-pa** who are almost exclusively responsible for traditionally providing public music in Buddhist Ladakh, and their organization has provided the degree of stability required by the common population living in its heartland. As in most traditional cultures, kinship is the means by which musicality is sustained and group identity maintained (Blacking 1973:47), and Ladakh's organisation of its musicians conforms to a wider pattern observable in a number of societies: music is an occupation characteristic of low-ranking, frequently identified (named) groups with their own cultural characteristics, and their members are often excluded from free social relations with higher groups and denied power or privilege. Moreover, of all specialities, music is an occupation most consistently restricted to a single group, or a small number of related groups, in a given society: music cannot, or is not, taken up by members of higher groups, while these lower groups cannot easily abandon it (Merriam 1964:140-144).

Certain caste-like features of the organization of Ladakh's musicians therefore need not necessarily be directly attributed to Hindu caste ideology. Even within the Indian subcontinent, although some scholars have clearly demonstrated that the concept of caste is a useful construct for describing and analysing the organization of its mostly Hindu musician-groups (e.g. Lamsweerde 1969, Hoerburger 1970), others have argued for the existence of a set of 'Indic values' which apply equally to musical institutions whose patrons and/or clients are not necessarily Hindus (Wade and Pescatello 1977; Neuman 1980). For the purposes of this study, an appropriate working definition of caste which is not necessarily confined to the context of Hinduism follows Berreman (1963:198): a ranked endogamous division of society in which membership is hereditary and permanent. With regard to the musician castes of Ladakh, this implicitly isolates those features of their identity and organization, now to be considered in turn, which are more specifically Indic in character:

- 1 the claim that they have a distinct ethnic origin and cultural identity;
- 2 the existence of a **jajmāni** (H) system of patron-client relationships;
- 3 the observance of a ritual status, determined by concepts of purity and pollution (linked ultimately to the doctrines of karma and dharma) which is reflected in patterns of behaviour with other groups (e.g. commensality, sexual contact);
- 4 the explanation of their identity and status in terms of religious, mythological and historical rationalizations which legitimate the status quo and prevent social mobility.

4.4: The Identity and Origin of Musician Castes

The Ladakhis claim that the **mon-pa** and **bhe-da** musician castes belong to the Mon race, often believed to be among the earliest settlers in Ladakh. These and other apparently related cis-Himalayan populations have proved so mobile and vulnerable that it is difficult to identify any coherent pattern of distribution, but this has done nothing to temper speculation about their nature and origin.

The Ladakhi belief that the Mon were an aboriginal tribe is supported by a number of writers. Das (1902:976) considered them to be Kirata, an ancient Himalayan group of hunters; Francke (1907:19-21) suggested that they were Kashmiri missionaries sent by either the third or fourth Buddhist Councils (third century BCE and second century CE); Tucci (1935:103-20) thought they could be an Austroasiatic group who spread across the southern Himalayan slopes and, in the northwest, over the Himalaya to settle in the ancient West Tibetan province of Zhang-Zhung. Addressing the Mon tradition which exists along the Himalayan chain from Baltistan to Burma, Murty (1969) considers evidence that the autochthonous peoples of India, with whom the *Ḍōm* and *Jāt* (frequently musician) groups throughout the subcontinent may be identified (Sakata 1983:82), were either pushed away from the Gangetic plain or subjugated by the invading Indo-Aryans, and tentatively suggests that the Mon once represented a distinct pan-Himalayan culture that has since been absorbed, scattered or eliminated by Tibetan or Indo-Iranian (e.g. Dard, Pahari) groups. Francke's claim that the Buddhist Mon of Ladakh were enslaved by the Brokpa colonists is therefore congruent with this theory, as is the alternative idea that they were subjugated by the later Tibetans (Kazmi 1993:161), a belief also expressed in Ladakhi folklore (e.g. Grist 1980:211).

The proposition that the Mon were a distinct aboriginal Himalayan group is, however, undermined by the fact that the term **mon** has been used indiscriminately by Tibetan-speaking groups to refer to any sub-Himalayan hill people, to the extent that it could simply indicate 'foreigner' (Jaeschke 1881:420; Stein 1972:34-5). Certainly it does not necessarily imply the existence of a unique race in each area where the

name is used, or indeed in different periods of any one such area. On this basis, Petech (1939:99) refutes Francke's theory of pre-Dardic Mon settlement, arguing that the archaeological relics referred to as 'Mon castles' were so-called only because local informants did not know their origin. There is no justification, therefore, in directly connecting the **mon-pa** caste with the Mon who allegedly settled in Ladakh in ancient times, since the name could just as easily refer to later immigrants from the Punjab hills who came to Ladakh as artisans. In fact many Ladakhis incline to the latter view (Phunsok 1976) and the implication made by Larson (1983, 1985) that the traditional musicians of Ladakh settled there during the pre-dynastic period is quite unfounded. It is most likely that they migrated to Ladakh much later, perhaps no earlier than the seventeenth century, and offered their services as musicians, accepting the conditions and status as determined by the Ladakhis in order to be allowed to settle in village communities that had already formed. These later migrations would probably connect them with a local pattern of distribution extending as far north as Gilgit and Hunza, where they are variously called Doma (i.e. Ḍōm) or Bericho; they might even, therefore, be part of the more general migration of the 'gypsy' populations from the Indian subcontinent through the Near East and into Europe. [25]

Although the **mon-pa** may be only indirectly related to the archetypal Mon, this is not clearly borne out by their ethnic identity. The perception of them as a distinct group, by some authors as well as the Ladakhis, is not easily verified, and in many cases they amount to little more than racial stereotypes. According to Murty (1969:292), the **mon-pa** of Ladakh, except for being slightly shorter, resemble the Mon [26] in being "fair in complexion, of sturdy build and medium height, with fine noses and little trace of the epicanthic fold. The heads are almost entirely dolichocephalic, while the cheek bones are high occasionally." While there might be a grain of truth in this, the genetic admixture among the different racial strains of Ladakh has apparently eliminated most of the differences that may have once existed, and anthropometric measurements carried out by Dainelli in the 1920s failed to establish any significant differences between the **mon-pa** and the remainder of the population (Petech 1977:5).

If the **mon-pa** cannot be clearly identified on the basis of physiognomy alone, consideration of their language, culture or religion likewise gives little indication of their supposed origin. Although the **mon-pa** conduct their conversations with others in Ladakhi or Hindi-Urdu, informants reported that, among themselves, they speak a Tibetan dialect similar to that spoken in the Lahul-Spiti region of Himachal Pradesh, south of Ladakh, but this assertion has not been tested scientifically.

The religion of the **mon-pa** is continuous with the Ladakhis, for although their own **pha-lha** (in their case also a caste god) is a deity with a 'Hindu' name (Akhten Nārāyan) which may perhaps be identified with a village god (Nārāyan) worshipped in the mixed Buddhist-Hindu district of Kinnaur, Himachal Pradesh (Singh 1990:249), the Ladakhi Buddhists are also reported to have **pha-lha** with "Hindu" names. [27] In Baltistan, a dance called **mon-chos**, "Mons' creed" indicates that they may once have had their own religion before adopting the religion (Islam) of their patrons (Kazmi 1993:161). In Hunza, the Doma musicians retain a language (Domaaki) with an Indo-Aryan core, now being eroded by the Dardic identity of their patrons (Fussman 1989:54). Perhaps, then, the **mon-pa** were a Hindu caste from the south of the Himalaya who, in Ladakh, then adopted the religion of their Buddhist patrons and became socially assimilated through the local **pha-spun** 'clan' system. What is clear, however, is that although the **mon-pa** are considered to be outsiders by the Ladakhis, they are in fact for the most part culturally integrated.

The Ladakhi claim that the **mon-pa** and **bhe-da** are Mon cannot therefore be upheld with any certainty, except insofar as these occupational groups probably originate in the low castes of the sub-Himalayan hills, and that these in turn were perhaps once aboriginal tribes (the archetypal Mon) initially displaced or subjugated by Indo-Aryan groups. The Ladakhis' beliefs concerning their origin nevertheless seek to explain their provenance or justify their position in Ladakhi society. In the final analysis, their identity as musicians can only be said to be incidental to their supposed ethnicity, and it is proposed that their specialization was the result of specific economic and cultural requirements arising in dynastic times.

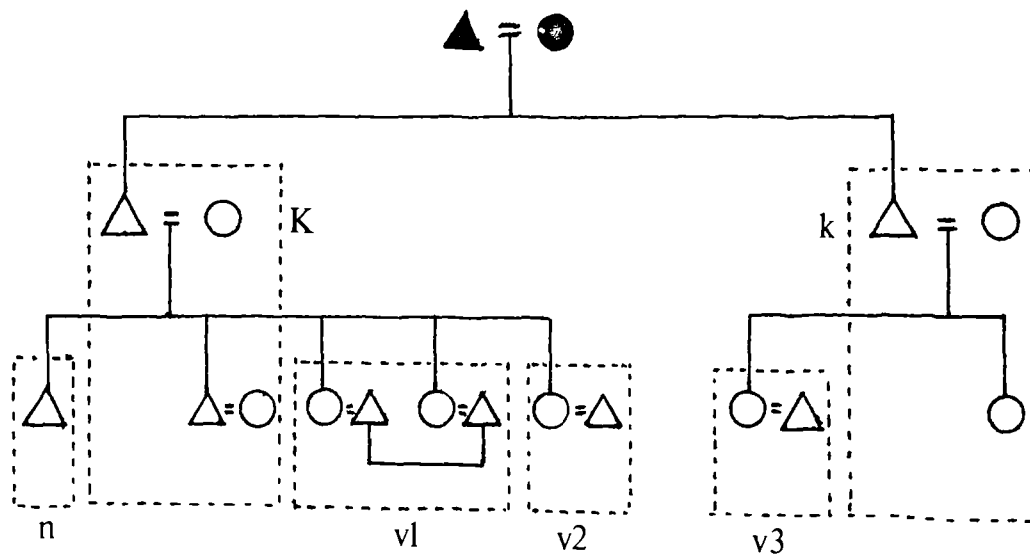
4.5: The Social Organization of Musician Castes

4.5.1: Professional Village Musicians: **mon-pa**

The social and economic organization of the **mon-pa** conforms to the standard arrangement for work and remuneration characteristic of the **jajmāni** system of occupational service between Indian castes, modelled on the ritual-economic exchange between the patron-sacrificer (H **jajmān**) and his client-priest (H **kamin**) (Wade and Pescatello 1977). The personal relationship between patrons and clients is ideally fixed and interdependent: the villagers are guaranteed the provision of essential services, while the artisans' livelihood is assured.

The **mon-pa** are bound by social obligation to the village in which they live; any Ladakhi family can demand their services at any time, and the **mon-pa** cannot withhold them for fear of punishment. As outsiders, they have no automatic right to own land in the village, but are allowed to do so in recognition of their service to the community. The **mon-pa** are in effect 'owned' by the village, for they do not normally play outside the village, nor can they easily move away from it.

The basis of the Ladakhis' dominance over the **mon-pa** is demographic, economic and political at the village level. Although the **mon-pa** are only to be found in Central Ladakh, they are sufficiently dispersed throughout the villages, which number about hundred with typically one or two **mon-pa** families in each, to remain heavily outnumbered. The ratio of Ladakhis to **mon-pa** is probably at least 50:1, and the total **mon-pa** population cannot number more than a few thousand, of whom perhaps a few hundred are musicians. [28] As an example of how a village's musical life depends upon the social and economic control of its musicians, the case of Hemis Shukpachen will be considered. This is a relatively large village with a population of 761 (Census 1981), remotely situated a half-day's march north of the Indus valley at an altitude of approximately 3800 m, about 80 kms west of Leh.

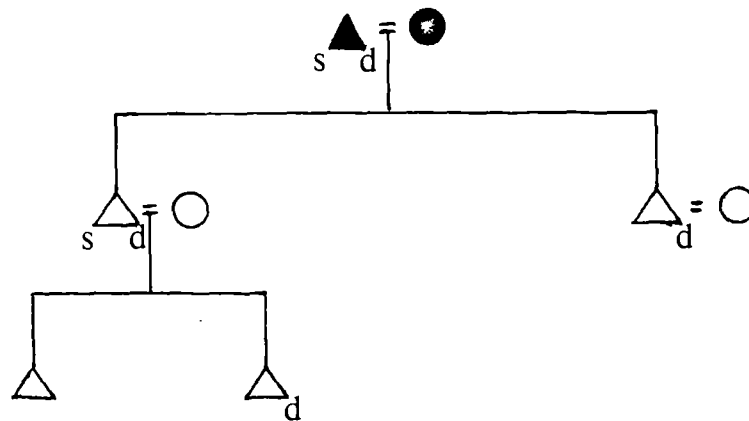


Key
 △ = male ○ = female ●* = deceased

residential units (---):
 K = **khang-chen**
 k = **khang-chung**
 n = neolocal home
 v1 }
 v2 } virilocal homes
 v3 }

village:
 Hemis Shukpachen
 Hemis Shukpachen
 Stakna
 Temisgam
 Saspul
 Spituk

(a) Full lineage, showing residential groupings (**nang-chang**)



Key: d = **da-man** s = **sur-na**

(b) Patrilineal group, showing musical specialization

Figure 2: Kinship of the **mon-pa** musicians of Hemis Shukpachen

There are two related **mon-pa** families in the village, whose homes are located within the main residential quarter, but south of and below the castle-monastery complex situated on a small hill at its centre. As with the other **mon-pa** of rural Ladakh, they have no ancestral house-name, referred to as simply 'Monpa'. Contrary to traditional practice, the younger brother has split away from the main home (**khang-chen**) to set up a secondary "small house" (**khang-chung**), a division normally exercised by Ladakhis across two successive generations. This may reflect modern changes in land tenure which have encouraged many Ladakhis to form establish neolocal homes, but this was perhaps never uncommon among the artisan castes since, unlike farmers, two or more musicians can work together as a joint economic unit regardless of residence. In this case, one of the two possible working pairs (the elder brother and his son) is co-residential while the other (the two brothers) is not (Fig. 2a).

The main income of the **mon-pa**, like that of other artisans such as the village blacksmith (**mgar-ba**) and monks whose livelihood also depends upon the villagers, is received shortly after harvest from each household in the form of an obligatory gift, or **bsod-snyoms** ("alms"), of unthrashed grain. The quality and quantity of the gift varies according to the status of both the donor and the recipient. The **mgar-ba**, for example, receives a fixed amount of 1 **khal** (13.5kg) and 5 **'bre** (3.5kg) from each **khang-chen**, whereas smaller amounts are determined for the **mon-pa**: the 'head' **mon-pa**, the owner of the main Monpa home, receives 7 **bo** (10kg), while the **khang-chung mon-pa** household is given half this amount. In all cases, these quantities are fixed only for **khang-chen** donor households, and **khang-chung** owners give as they see fit. Additionally, a discretionary amount of flour, oil or butter, is donated by every household according to economic status at New Year. [29]

In fulfilling these annual obligations, any family engaging the **mon-pa** for feasts on the occasion of birth, marriage or death can expect to hire them without further payment, but they do provide the musicians with a plentiful supply of food and beer throughout the celebrations. In addition, at marriage feasts, each guest who receives the honour of being invited to lead a dance will in return donate a small denomination banknote (e.g. five

or ten rupees) to the musicians. At the village springtime archery festival, the **mon-pa** also receive a small share of the cash prize awarded to the winning team, raised by subscriptions from all the participants (Plate 19). The only time when the **mon-pa** expect to be paid on a piecework or barter basis is when they are employed by people outside the village, usually members of neighbouring villages. The Hemis Shukpachen **mon-pa** may thus be required to work in adjacent Yangthang, which has only eight households of which none are **mon-pa**, or at large-scale festivals in nearby Temisgam, if it is felt that the **mon-pa** there are insufficient in number. In such cases they might be paid up to Rs.100 (about £2.50) per day per musician by the head of the host household or monastery. All additional income generated in these ways is shared equally among the participating **mon-pa**.

Although the **mon-pa** possess their own musical instruments, the villagers were traditionally partly responsible for their acquisition and maintenance. The **da-man** are particularly costly, and the villagers would normally pay the **mgar-ba** for making the large brass or copper bowls, which may weigh up to 16 kg. These days, most new **da-man** are machine-made **nagārā** (H) purchased in Srinagar or Delhi, but these are still expensive, a medium-sized pair typically costing a hefty Rs.4000 (about £100). Fresh animal-skins for the drum-heads, which should last for five to ten years, are traditionally donated by families when they hire the **mon-pa** for a ceremonial feast - normally the only occasion that animals are slaughtered for their meat. The **mon-pa** themselves prepare the skins and lace them to the drum-shells, and keep any surplus hide for making shoes or clothes. The shafts of the **sur-na** are usually turned from apricot wood, from Skyurbuchan in Lower Ladakh, by those master-carpenters (**shing-mkhan**) - often themselves **mon-pa** - who have received special training in instrument-making. The routine metal parts (lip-disc and mouthpipe) may be made by the village **mgar-ba**, but if a more elaborate instrument is desired (one whose bell is covered with silver and decorated with semi-precious stones, for example) then a **gser-mgar** metalworker might be commissioned. [30] In return for the repair of their musical instruments and (where applicable) carpentry tools, the **mon-pa** provide the **mgar-ba** with music at their passage rites, a special intercaste



Plate 19: **Mon-pa** musicians playing at an archery competition in Sabu (with target and scoreboard in background)

arrangement which operates in lieu of the contract which exists between each caste and the villagers.

Many **mon-pa** musicians can play both **da-man** and **sur-na**, although in practice most assume a regular instrumental role. The greater difficulty of mastering the latter also entails that specialization occurs asymmetrically: most **sur-na**-players can play **da-man** to an acceptable standard, whereas **da-man** specialists tend to be unable to play **sur-na**; few can demonstrate equal proficiency on both instruments. Moreover, **sur-na**-players are numerically less well-represented and, perhaps consequently, are musically ranked above **da-man**-players. The former invariably keep possession of their own particular instrument, but **da-man**-players quite often share their drums with one another, *not least because they are both heavy and expensive.*

Instrumental skills are transmitted informally among the **mon-pa** patrilineally. In general, women are regarded as being physically too weak to play these musical instruments, even though they carry out most agricultural work: with the primary exception of ploughing, instrumental music-making is in fact one of the few physically demanding tasks where male domination is so openly maintained. In Hemis Shukpachen, **da-man**-playing has passed down all but one of the male lines over three generations, but none of the latest generation has taken up the **sur-na** (Fig. 2b). In the past, if not now, the fact that marriage is both village exogamous and virilocal has ensured that a high degree of musical continuity has been retained within the village. With the exception of the eldest son, only the female offspring have left the village, and to observe rules of caste endogamy they have sometimes had to look far afield for a suitable partner (up to 70 kms in one case). Conversely, no male **mon-pa** from any other village has any right to take up residence or offer his services as a musician and only outside females, upon marriage, can settle in the village. Social contact between the **mon-pa** of different villages is relatively closely maintained because their **pha-spun** groups, unlike those of the Ladakhis, necessarily extend beyond the village boundary: those of Hemis Shukpachen, for example, form a **pha-spun** with the **mon-pa** of neighbouring Temisgam, to whom two of its females are married. Being a

ritual group, this also entails a degree of musical contact between neighbouring **mon-pa** because, besides occasionally joining forces at major village festivals, they will provide music for one another at their own rituals and feasts.

There is little rivalry among the **mon-pa** of a single village, for even where there is more than one family, as in Hemis Shukpachen, it is in their own interests to work together. Unlike Indian villages where the low-caste population is proportionately greater, there is no need for musicians to compete for patrons; moreover, the traditional Ladakhi system of male primogeniture and fraternal polyandry stabilizes the number of patron households, ensuring that the size and composition of the patron population - and hence the artisans' income - remains essentially fixed. The patron-client relationship is accordingly inflexible, but well-understood and informally applied. Disputes concerning the remuneration of musicians seem to be rare, and the relationship seems to be a paternalistic-submissive one: in the traditional village setting, the Ladakhis do not overtly exploit the **mon-pa**, and the **mon-pa** rarely challenge their position.

4.5.2: Itinerant Beggar-Minstrels: **bhe-da**

Traditionally, the **bhe-da** were part of Ladakh's small landless minority and played a minimal role in the musical life of rural Ladakh. As migrant tent-dwellers with few material assets, they were excluded from the system of exchange monopolised by the **mon-pa** and had no social or musical function valued by the Ladakhis. However, some may have believed that they possessed unusual powers; in any case they offered an opportunity for Buddhist Ladakhis, believing that it was meritorious to relieve a beggar's suffering, to gain merit through the sacrifice of wealth, and accordingly rewarded them by giving them food. Ladakhi informants stated that formerly the **bhe-da** would turn up uninvited at marriage feasts or other communal celebrations, but otherwise their routine was probably similar to that of the perhaps-related **bēdā** singers and dancers of the

One family of this caste.....(two men and one or two women) visit [Bhatbair district] about once a year, staying three or four days in each village and going from house to house entertaining with songs and dances. For this they receive 2 to 4 seers of grain from each house (Berreman 1963:68). [31]

The Ladakhis consider that the **bhe-da** are more recent migrants than the **mon-pa** and that they probably share the same ethnic and cultural origin in the sub-Himalayan hills. Mann (1986:10) states that they are **mon-pa** who have converted to Islam, yet he admits that some **bhe-da** are Buddhist. Although it is true that most **mon-pa** are Buddhist, while a large number of **bhe-da** are Muslim, any implication that their caste identity or pattern of patronage was determined by religious affiliation cannot be upheld in modern times. Until the late 1980s, both **mon-pa** and **bhe-da** played for both Buddhists and Muslims alike; in 1985, for example, Buddhist **bhe-da** were observed touring Muslim homes in Leh on the occasion of 'Īd-ul-Fitr (celebrating the end of Ramaḍān), playing a brief **lha-rnga** at the doorway of each house in return for a small sum of cash.

There are nevertheless certain musical differences between the two musician castes, in terms of instrumental specialization and repertoire, which indicate that religious affiliation may have been a factor in defining their respective musical roles in the past. Whereas the **mon-pa** are (male) performers of **da-man** and **sur-na** with functions, such as the performance of **lha-rnga**, regarded as essential by the Buddhist Ladakhis, the **bhe-da** (male) and **bhe-mo** (female) are traditionally regarded as singers, dancers and entertainers, accompanying themselves mainly with the **ḍaph**, a frame drum commonly associated with Muslim entertainers in Asia. Their repertoire, though including a simple form of **lha-rnga** for this drum, is characteristically Islamic, being made up of **ka-si-da** (U **qaṣīdah**), **ga-zal** (U **ghazal**) and **ka-wa-li** (U **qawwālī**) forms of the hybrid Balti-Ladakhi Muslim type.

If it is the case that the **bhe-da** are 'landless **mon-pa**', then some common organizational features may be historically significant. Some Ladakhis believe that, before they were allowed to settle in the villages, the **mon-pa** were landless migrants like the **bhe-da** who earned their living by rambling from village to village. A remnant of this routine perhaps survives in some practices of the **mon-pa** who, within their village, still go from door to door at New Year and harvest, stopping and playing briefly at each house in return for their payment. Since becoming settled in Ladakhi villages, however, these have become symbolic acts representing the mutual rights and obligations which bind them to the community whom they serve, and which primarily distinguish them from the **bhe-da**.

4.6: Ritual Status and Musical Behaviour

Besides the different nature of their musical function and social organization, the divisions between the **mon-pa** and the **bhe-da**, and between them and the rest of Ladakhi society, are traditionally marked by the observance of their ritual status. Their social status, and their behaviour, both musical and non-musical, then, is closely linked to the pollution associated with their caste identity.

The ritual status of musicians, as members of castes, is paradoxical since Buddhism historically developed as a reaction against the Brahminical caste system, but belief in the polluting nature (**sgrib**, "contamination") of outsiders, still deeply held by the Brokpa, has survived from the indigenous religion of Ladakh, and has proved to be a convenient way of offering religious justification for the control of occupational castes. While the mainly Muslim **bhe-da**, like other Muslims, are considered to be "outsiders" (**phyi-pa**) and thereby ritually impure, the fact that the **mon-pa** are Buddhists, and therefore by the usual definition "insiders" (**nang-pa**), poses a special problem. Ladakhi Buddhists do, however, seem to believe that membership of a caste is indicative of attitudes or actions (karma) associated with an individual's previous incarnations, and that their current low social status is therefore legitimate. [32] Hence, while orthodox Buddhism maintains that enlightened deities are not caste-conscious, in

practice the hierarchical Buddhist pantheon can be socially legitimating, as in Hinduism (Fuller 1988).

It is thus because the **mon-pa** share the same religion with the Ladakhis that they can be assimilated and ranked within the social hierarchy. In the case of the **bhe-da**, on the other hand, it does not matter to the Ladakhis whether or not they are Buddhist since they do not need their services, and have no social or economic motive to integrate them. Indeed, it is less clear that birth is in their case such an important factor in their caste identity. The ideology of ritual status thus enables the Ladakhis to consolidate their unequal socio-economic relationship with the **mon-pa**, and secure the provision of musical services which they need in order to generate and maintain prestige. Ritual rank renders the inequality of the patron-client relationship permanent and irreversible.

As in the Hindu caste system, the caste identity of the **mon-pa**, and their association with the music profession, is socially effected through the ideological control of kinship. Caste endogamy ensures that the caste population remains low compared to the Ladakhis, and in a position of socio-economic dependence. This is possible in Ladakhi society because ritual kinship, as it operates through the institution of **pha-spun**, is used to mediate between real kinship ties (**rgyud**) and wider social groups (**rigs**). The special social position of the **mon-pa**, in relation to the Ladakhis, thus depends upon their formation of their own distinct **pha-spun** groups.

The **pha-spun** of the **mon-pa** differ from those of the Ladakhis in two essential ways. Firstly, the relationship between **rgyud** and **pha-spun** among the **mon-pa** tends to be mutually inclusive, whereas among the Ladakhis they tend to be mutually exclusive. This is necessarily so because the **mon-pa** population is so small and scattered, compared to the Ladakhis, that they have to form **pha-spun** groups with the **mon-pa** of neighbouring villages, who for the same reasons are likely to be members of the their **rgyud**. Thus they tend to form small groups, like the **birādarī** (H "band of brothers") of Hindu castes, which exist beyond the village level and whose kinship is both real and ritual. The Ladakhis, on the other hand, are less restricted in their choice of kin (real or ritual),

and form **pha-spun** within their village among fellow villagers who, since marriage is village exogamous, are unlikely to be members of the same **rgyud**. As a result, the **mon-pa** cannot fully participate in their village's sense of social solidarity, and are entirely dependent upon the provision of musical service for their personal security.

Secondly, the **pha-lha** of each **mon-pa pha-spun** are identical, whereas those of the Ladakhis' are generally unique to a particular **pha-spun**. As the Ladakhi **pha-lhas** are village-local gods which have been 'converted' to Buddhism, they define an individual's regional affiliation to a particular village, and his or her religious affiliation to a particular monastic sect. Being equally ranked in the middle tier of the pantheon, these deities only confer a ritual status that is socially legitimating insofar as they collectively identify potential kin as ordinary Ladakhi Buddhist villagers (**dmangs-rigs**); the perception of Ladakhi **pha-spun** boundaries tends to be regional and sectarian rather than social. In the case of the **mon-pa**, however, there is a direct correlation between their **pha-lha**, Akhten Nārāyan, and their endogamous caste-group, for all **mon-pa** of any village in Ladakh, or of any **pha-spun**, worship this same deity: it constitutes, in other words, a 'caste god'. This **pha-lha** has its own rank in the Buddhist pantheon, and sanctions the social status of the **mon-pa** below the Ladakhis (**rigs-ngan**). It also identifies who the **mon-pa** are, and their potential kin as only other members of their caste; the perception of their **pha-spun** boundary is social rather than geographic. In ensuring that the **mon-pa** form a group collectively ranked below the dominant Ladakhi majority, this gives stability and cohesion not only to Ladakhi society as a whole, but also in a more specific way to the practice of music-making within it.

Although not all **mon-pa** are musicians, the fact that village musicians are usually **mon-pa** means that there is a correlation between musicianship and the worship of Akhten Narayan. There is no evidence, however, that this deity has any ritually significant relationship with music - equivalent, say, to the protective role of the Hindu-Buddhist goddess of euphony, Yangchenma, or the caste gods of certain Hindu musician-castes. [33] Unlike many Indian or Nepali musician-castes, the **mon-pa** musicians do not perform any 'musical rituals', i.e. rituals specifically relating to the

acquisition or execution of musical skills; their rituals, different only in scale and style, have the same general form and content of the Ladakhi Buddhists'. Nevertheless, as performers of ritual music (**lha-rnga**) designed to gain the protection of the **yul-lha**, the **mon-pa** musicians do feel personally responsible to these deities, believing that their performances are judged by them. Like the Bajantri musician-caste of Kinnaur (Sharma 1990), for example, they believe that village gods are at liberty to inspect them and oversee their musical expertise at any time. This feeling is especially strong in villages such as Shey, where the **yul-lha** is of high ritual status, in this case the crown protective deity (**rtse-lha**) Dorje Chenmo (**rdo-rje chen-mo**, S **Mahāvajra**); the **mon-pa** there believe that any failure to fulfil their musical obligations will bring divine retribution upon them or their families, in the form of death, illness or other misfortune. [34] The **mon-pas'** sense of duty to perform whenever required (**dus-su**, "at the right time") therefore extends to the fear, and a very real one among all Ladakh's Buddhists, of supernatural powers. The converse is also sometimes true: to play when not required, i.e. outside the appropriate context (**dus-min**, "at the wrong time") might anger the same deities. [35]

Ritual status thus reinforces the Ladakhis' socio-economic pressure on musical behaviour. Just as they might fear the Ladakhis' gods in providing music of sufficient quality, they have reason to feel afraid of upsetting their Ladakhi patrons. If the **mon-pa** are unhappy with the payment or treatment they receive from an individual patron, there is little they can do in terms of social action since the patron can command the support of the whole village. They might, however, be tempted to provide an inferior musical performance, but if, for example, the **mon-pa** were to play in such a way (e.g. by playing the wrong form of **lha-rnga**) that undermined the status of their patron, or dared to refuse to play when expected of them, then the entire village could boycott them (provided they perceived it as an illegitimate musical challenge) and they would lose their livelihood. On the other hand, if a patron is dissatisfied with the musicians' performance, there are usually no other **mon-pa** from the village he can employ instead, and he risks losing the service he requires to maintain his status. The socio-economic position of the musicians thus rests upon the exchange of

goods and services, rather than musical prestige per se: patrons do not usually reward the musicality of the **mon-pa**, but only remunerate them for adequate musical labour. Occasionally, a patron may 'tip' his clients in order to encourage them to provide a superior performance which enhances his status in the perception of rival patrons, but the scope for enhancing it without the latter noticing what they might describe as a 'bribe' is small compared to the more obvious illegitimate challenge that would be mounted if the **mon-pa** attempted to favour himself by openly undermining the authority of his patron through his performance. In the end, the **mon-pa** serve the competitive ethic of status-acquisition in Ladakhi culture without themselves being permitted to participate in it.

Music-making for a **mon-pa** musician is therefore an activity very different from that among his patrons, and is anchored to his social position by hierarchical ascription rather than by equal competition: he stands to gain very little in the way of either religious merit or social prestige by participating in, or himself patronizing, musical performance. Unlike his Ladakhi patrons who can acquire merit from the music he provides for them through patronage (sacrifice of wealth), and who may gain prestige through participation in song-contests, his own competitive musical behaviour impresses no-one but his caste-peers. Many **mon-pa** musicians evidently do take pride in their own performance and engage in playful rivalry with their fellow musicians, but this establishes a pattern of musical ranking amongst themselves that goes largely unnoticed by their patrons. As a result, broadly speaking, the **mon-pa** do not deliberately perform badly yet do not feel highly motivated to provide a better performance than that expected of them by their patrons. Many Ladakhi informants complained of poor musical standards, but appeared to resign themselves to expect no better: they did not offer any suggestions as to how standards might be improved, and were reluctant to admit the possibility that such standards might be caused by a lack of opportunity for the **mon-pa** to gain, either socially or musically, the favour of their patrons.

In accordance with their ritual status, musicians are also expected to perform certain non-musical duties in the context of musical performance. This particularly applies to the New Year **lo-gsar** festival, an occasion associated with rebirth and renewal, and the time when the special rights and obligations of the **mon-pa** musicians and the village community whom they serve are ritualized. When the **mon-pa** visit each household in the village to receive their New Year's gift, they perform an appropriate **lha-rnga** according to the status of the patron and present the family with a arrow shaft; the **ngar-ba** blacksmith, meanwhile (who tends to keep company with the **mon-pa** during communal activities), offers the tip of the ritual arrow, or some other sharp metal implement such as a needle or a nail, again depending upon the status of the recipient. During the celebration period, the **mon-pa** observe specific ritual prescriptions, including bodily purification by washing in a bath infused with juniper, abstaining from sexual intercourse, maintaining impeccable behaviour and smart traditional dress, and not speaking.

The polluted status of the **mon-pa** also entails the observance of a number of social rules pertaining to non-musical behaviour, regardless of whether or not they happen to be musicians. Although, unlike the Hindu **śūdra** 'untouchables', they are not excluded from places of worship, or from receiving spiritual services from priests or lamas, they cannot themselves take monastic vows: the avenues for gaining religious merit are limited, but not to the same extent as their Hindu counterparts. Also, unlike 'untouchables', they are not prohibited from sharing the same water supply with villagers, but otherwise, contact between the two groups is traditionally avoided wherever possible. Ladakhis, except monks, do not normally attend their rituals, nor do the **mon-pa**, other than musicians, usually attend those of the Ladakhis. All sexual relations with the Ladakhis are taboo - they evidently occur, but would not lead to marriage even in the event of pregnancy. They are usually required to live at the edge of the village, and have their own cremation site; a **mon-pa** may be obliged to carry the corpse of a Ladakhi, considered to be defiling to all but members of the deceased's **pha-spun**, if none of these is available. They are also excluded from holding office as a village headman ('**go-pa**'), having any say in the affairs of the village, or from taking part in archery

competitions as contestants. They cannot share cooking or serving utensils, clothes (including bed-clothes), cigarettes or, in former times, a hookah-pipe (**hu-ka**, U **huqqah**) with Ladakhis. They are also expected to warn Ladakhis of becoming polluted through accidental contact in any way.

Ladakhis are reluctant to enter the homes of the **mon-pa**, and the **mon-pa** do not visit Ladakhi households unless specifically invited, for fear of being made the scapegoat of any illness or misfortune (e.g. Ribbach 1986:173). If there has been a death in a Ladakhi household, then they are completely barred entry for forty nine days (during which the soul is believed to be in its vulnerable **bar-do** state between death and rebirth). When they are invited to enter a Ladakhi home, they wait at the doorway until verbal greetings ("**ju-le-ju**") are liberally exchanged, and the appropriate gesture of salutation - the crossing of wrists, followed by the raising of right hand to the forehead - is offered. Traditionally, the personal names of **mon-pa** are not used and are simply addressed as "**mon-pa**" (if male), "**mon-mo**" (female) or "**mon-phrug**" (child); these terms are now regarded as insulting, but many Ladakhis still do not know the names of individuals, preferring a more neutral occupational term (such as **rol-mo-mkhan**). The shaking of hands, though not considered defiling, is avoided and the **mon-pa** will not speak unless invited to do so. They sit away from the hearth, near the door, either on low cushions or on the bare floor itself. These places are without tables and food or drink is taken in their hand, or in a cup they keep in the folds of their **gon-che**. If other castes are present, then the seating order follows caste rank, i.e. **mgar-ba**, **mon-pa**, **bhe-da**. These rules are also followed at outdoor festivals.

Intercaste relations between the lower castes are also characterised by mutual avoidance based on concepts of pollution. As far as the Ladakhis are concerned, the **mgar-ba**, usually considered to be ethnic Ladakhis, are clearly ranked above the **mon-pa**. Their **pha-lha** is a Buddhist deity, Dorleg or Dorje Legspa (**rdo-rje legs pa**, S **Vajrasadhu**), ranked above Akhten Nārāyan, and legitimates their position in the social hierarchy. This is borne out by a Ladakhi proverb (Dollfus 1989:38) which invokes the cosmological symbolism of the mandala-carpet:

**bla-ma lha-rje mgar-ba mon
slan-pa gru bzhi dang mthan-ne 'dug**

Monk, physician, blacksmith, musician
These four are corners of a piece of cloth.

The **mgar-ba** openly show their superiority over the **mon-pa** and it is clear that their higher status is more important to them than it is to the Ladakhis; intercaste marriage, for example, is severely disapproved of by the higher caste members themselves, including the **mon-pa** with regards to the **bhe-da**.

Caste status corresponds the same general pattern of occupational caste ranking found in multi-caste systems in North India: musician-castes, even if they also follow other occupations (e.g. carpentry) believed to be less defiling than music, are placed below artisans who have occupations considered to be ritually purer (e.g. blacksmiths), but above other castes, who incidentally may be musicians also, whose occupations are thought to be more defiling (e.g. leather-workers or beggars) (Berreman 1963:214). The Ladakhis also consider some of the occupations of the low castes to be intrinsically defiling to some degree. The **mgar-ba**, for example, are considered impure because the metal mined from the ground, and the implements made from it, disturb the abode of vengeful earth-spirits. Carpenters are implicated because they might cut down sacred trees (**lha-lcang**) where higher-ranking spirits live, although these are actually collectively avoided, and even monks may only collect their fallen branches (Kaplanian 1980:131). Leatherworkers are regarded as polluting because the use the skins of slaughtered animals. Contact with musicians, meanwhile, might be treated with extra caution because of their role in possession rituals (CULE 1977:59).

Despite these observations, however, these occupations, when ranked by caste, do not reflect any clear order of occupational impurity; there is little reason to suggest that this actually predetermines absolute caste rank. Rather, caste-ranking follows relations of material or economic dependence: as one folksong explains, for example, the **mgar-ba** are ranked above the **mon-pa** because the latter need the skills and materials of the

blacksmith (for manufacturing and maintaining musical instruments) in order to pursue their profession. The same is true of the other occupations clearly ranked below the **mgar-ba**, but which are not necessarily avoided by music-makers. The only other clear distinction, in fact, is between the **mon-pa** and the **bhe-da**, but this is because, despite being musicians as well, the latter are principally regarded as landless beggars. The social position of the **mon-pa** merely reflects, and is justified - not determined - by the ritual component associated with the general nature of their work, whether it be music, or with the functionally-related crafts of carpentry and leatherworking with which they are sometimes associated.

The Ladakhis do not, then, seem to believe in the polluting nature of performing certain musical instruments. Such beliefs are quite often held in Hindu society, and perhaps in others (e.g. Sakata 1983:78-81), and are sometimes offered as explanations as why musicians are ritually impure. This is usually because they are in various ways associated with human fluids (saliva, semen) or animal products (skins) regarded as polluting: oboe-players are polluted because of their oral contact with their instrument, sometimes identified with a phallus, while their women are often thought to be prostitutes; drummers are even more polluted because of their contact with animal-skins. In Buddhist Ladakh, however, there is little evidence that any of these associations are consciously made: for although ritual status extends to instrument symbolism, physical (and even visual) and contact with them is usually evaluated positively. Monks may play drums (even **da-man**) and **mon-pa** are free to play the **sgra-snyan**, the lute sometimes associated with deities of high ritual status (notably Yangchenma). There has been a suggestion that the **bhe-mo** or **mon-mo** were prostitutes, but this belief appears to be connected with the Ladakhis' appraisal of the alleged sexual proclivities of the low castes in general, not directly as a result of their occupational identity as musicians. [36] A ritual component certainly relates to the social rank of musicians as **mon-pa**, and controls their behaviour, musical as well as non-musical, but the specific link between their caste status and occupational role is essentially socio-economic rather than ritualistic.

4.7: Myth, Ritual and Musicianship

The ideology of ritual status which ideally renders the socio-economic position of the **mon-pa** permanent and irreversible, in relation to the Ladakhis and the other artisan castes, is additionally rationalized by mythological interpretation. Myths are used to explain the existence and origin of these castes and are invoked, in historical narrative and through ritual, to justify the control of their conduct, thereby maintaining the status quo and limiting both social and musical change. At the same time however, caste ideology provides the musician castes with a stable group identification which forms the basis of potential social challenge or subversion; the same myths are interpreted differently by members of these castes in ways which seek to explain away their low status or highlight the injustice of it. Furthermore, given that caste ideology distinguishes between the (mainly social) behaviour over which the **mon-pa** musicians have little or no control from that (mainly musical) which they can voluntarily manipulate to some degree, musicians potentially have an additional, purely musical means, of challenging authority.

As in other societies, myths are used throughout the Tibetan cultural region to rationalise the existence of different human 'types'. Versions of the Tibetan creation myth, for example, say that the six kinds (**rigs**) of people found in different regions of Tibet, or alternatively the six kinds of creatures ranging from gods to demons that fill the world, are descendants of the six children produced from the union of the monkey Trehu (**spre'u**, regarded as an incarnation of Chenrezig (**spyang-ras-gzhigs**, S **Avalokiteśvara**)) and the man-eating ogress Senmo (regarded as an incarnation of Dolma (**sgrol-ma**, S **Tārā**)) (Norbu & Turnball 1972:30-1). Ladakhi cosmology, as given in the Ladakh Chronicles, incorporates a version of this myth in a broad (and somewhat incoherent) account of the supernatural origin of the various nations and races, including the four Indian **varṇas** (Brāhman, Kshatriya, Vaiśya, Śūdra) and the Mon (=Indian?) race, listed as one of the 'types of dwarfs of the frontier' (**mtshams-kyi miu rigs**, LDGR-21.20, Francke 1926:66). Similar types of stories are recounted in neighbouring areas to explain the origin of musician castes: in Hunza for instance, the five different races are said to be drawn from five

soldiers under the command of one of Alexander the Great's generals who were stranded there when the Greek and Macedonian armies were routed; they all intermarried with the exception of the ancestor of the Doma, thus explaining why no-one else will marry with the musician caste (Dani 1989:116).

In Ladakh, the ritual status of the **mon-pa**, in relation to the **mgar-ba** and the Ladakhis, is justified in myths which are often invoked in ritual. [37] Myths and rituals concerning these two castes are dominated by their association with the ritual arrow. The symbolism of the **lo-gsar** gift-giving, in which the **mon-pa** are identified with the arrow shaft, and the **mgar-ba** with the tip, draws its significance from a myth relating to a dispute between the two castes, settled by shooting an arrow into the air and observing which part landed first; the **mgar-ba** are superior to the **mon-pa**, it is argued, because the tip struck the ground directly, even though the shaft helped it do so. The role of the **mgar-ba** is thus explained as being more directly purposeful, whilst that of the **mon-pa** musician is regarded as being supportive and intermediary. At a deeper level, however, this signifies their difference in ritual status, even though they are functionally dependent upon one another, for the arrow, as a fertility symbol of the 'tree of life', represents the cosmic hierarchy. (This is also why there is a restriction on **mon-pa** taking part in archery). Also, in crossreference to foundation myths in which the firing of an arrow is a (related) symbol of the colonization of territory by legitimate conquest, this also means that the **mgar-ba** have more right to own land in the village than the **mon-pa**. The annual gift of an arrow thus reaffirms the reciprocal, but unequal, relationship between them, and denies any basis for social challenge to their status.

The gift also symbolizes their relationship with the Ladakhis, because the villagers later use the arrows presented to them for the ritual of 'welcoming the new moon' (**zla-ba bsu-shes**) soon after **lo-gsar**. Just as the initial gift demands a counter-gift - the exchange of a token amount of food symbolising prosperity - by the Ladakhis, so its re-presentation by firing it at the moon expects (of the gods) a return of prosperity, upon which the survival of the whole community depends, in the forthcoming

agricultural year. It is important, then, that the reciprocal, but unequal, relationships between the **mon-pa/mgar-ba** and the Ladakhis, and between the Ladakhis and the gods, is maintained so that the natural order is not disrupted. To this end, the New Year rituals remind the artisan castes of their low ritual status in the cosmic hierarchy, and of the importance of the continual provision of their services, by playing on their fear of an unfavourable rebirth. In the case of the **mgar-ba**, the presentation of the arrow refers to a myth about one of the Buddha's disciples who in a previous life had refused to give someone a needle, for which act he was punished by being reincarnated as a blacksmith. In the case of the **mon-pa**, the traditional requirement that they remain verbally mute throughout the New Year period apparently relates to the fear - presumably very real to a Buddhist whose livelihood depends upon music-making - of being reborn deaf. [38] It is, then, only by accepting their status in their current life, and by performing their musical duties as expected of them, that the **mon-pa** may hope for a more favourable status in the next life.

The belief that physical deformities such as deafness are indicative of a low birth is justified, according to the Ladakhis, by the perception that they are more common among the **mon-pa** and **bhe-da**. If this perception contains any real truth, then it is perhaps because rules of endogamy tend, for such a small population, to produce genetic degradation: the rule of caste endogamy cannot always be compatible, in their case, with rules of kin exogamy, so some alliances might thereby be deemed incestuous. [39] In the Ladakhi perception, however, any deformities created by this enforced situation are taken as signs of their inherited polluted status, arising directly from the breaking of the moral code in a previous life: for example, in the Bagatham myths, the evil king is often identified as being 'donkey-footed' (**bong-rkang**) on account of his previous incarnation as a donkey who dared to be angry at not being rewarded for carrying materials for the construction of the great stupa in honour of Śākyamuni at Bodnath. [40] Again, in Gilgit, there is a tradition that if anyone were to break the taboo of not looking back at the drummer performing in honour of their protective deity, then their head would become permanently twisted round (Biddulph 1880:95). In Ladakh, the expression "head-turned" (**mgo-log**) is a term of abuse (Heber 1903:21) which derives from a taboo

relating to front-back body symbolism, an idea also expressed by temperamental **btsan** spirits with 'open backs' (Kaplanian 1980:135-136); it is also a euphemism for the fornication supposed to be characteristic of the musician castes. [41] Thus the ideology which the Ladakhis use to control them is self-legitimizing, for it is justified on the basis of the perception of its results.

Ladakhi myths relating to the **bhe-da** also contain an element of alleged sin which entails the bad karma leading to their inherited status. Most of the stories of the origin of the **bhe-da** are semi-historical narratives which mythicise the folk etymology of their name from the verb **be-byes** (T 'bye-ba) meaning "to divide, separate" (Jaeschke 1881:398), for example in the sense here of the division of human beings according to their karma (see also Das 1902:926) - in this case, their separation from royalty. Remarking that the term **bhe-da** is a Sanskrit word (**bhēdā** or **bēdā**) with the latter meaning [42], Francke (1907:78) proposes that the **bhe-da** are the descendants of the servants of the ancient Mon, just as they in turn were subdued by the Dards (ibid.:27).

A similar idea is contained in a Ladakhi folktale which relates that the **mon-pa** were originally kings ruling from Gya (in Upper Ladakh) before the Tibetans conquered them and established dynastic rule at Shey (Grist 1980:211). Another Ladakhi tale says that the **bhe-da** are the descendants of a king who, having had a violent dispute with his two elder brothers, was dispossessed and sent to Lahul-Spiti in exile; the king is usually identified with the Tibetan ruler, Palgyi Gon, who founded the Lhachen Dynasty in Ladakh in about 930 (Petech 1977:14-6). In another story, a queen of Ladakh is said to have had an affair with the Prime Minister; upon discovering this, the king banished them from the royal palace, condemning them to roam the kingdom, singing and dancing for their pittance. This account perhaps relates to the exploits of King Tsewang Namgyal (r.1753-82) who is said to have gone mad (the Ladakh Chronicles say "the devil entered the king's mind") by marrying a **bhe-mo**. This provoked a popular rebellion in which the woman, mockingly called **bhe-mo-rgyal** ("the **bhe-mo** queen") was ousted, imprisoned, and murdered (Francke 1926:122, Petech 1977:116); Francke (1907:124) also implies that

this incident suggests a general resistance to some sort of fin de siècle trend in which low-castes were attaining positions of authority.

In the Ladakhi interpretation, these myths are considered to justify the low status of the **bhe-da** on the basis of their alleged past wrongdoing, and to disclaim as illegitimate any challenge the low castes might be tempted to launch. But caste-members may themselves interpret them differently, pointing to the status they have lost through no fault of their own and which, by implication, should rightly be restored. Significantly, the claim that that the musician castes were connected, either directly or indirectly, with royalty is not disputed. What is disputed, however, is the moral evaluation of the original actions which are supposed to have brought about their 'fall'. This is a conflict which highlights the fundamental contradiction between caste-consciousness and the Buddhist dharma - another instance of the tension between the ideal and real which must be resolved if the existing social order is not to collapse as a result of a real political challenge.

These myths therefore constitute further instances of a cultural schema which temporarily resolves the various conflicts within the narratives which all relate to critical challenges to legitimate rule, i.e. change of dynasty, disputes of succession, the corruption of kings, or low castes gaining political power. Re-telling the narratives re-enacts these inversions of the order and, as in ritual performance, demonstrates them to be illegitimate alternatives: the former high status of the lower castes is in fact asserted in order to render their 'fall' to their current status as justified. The same theme of inversion emerges in certain aspects of the New Year ceremonies where the **mon-pa** are, temporarily, permitted to reverse their status, acting like 'kings' (Brauen 1980:17-19). Kaplanian (1980:185-186) cites another example of the opposition in a proverb relating to the taboo placed on pointing one's foot at a sacred person or object: "even a **mon** would not be able to tolerate a king pointing his foot at him". One may interpret the structural similarities between the kinship of the **rgyal-rigs** and the **mon-pa** as another instance of the same opposition: the royal 'race' also does not form **pha-spun** groups with ordinary Ladakhis, for they have their own '**pha-lha**' (in the form of a

rtse-lha) and tend to be marry among themselves or with foreign ruling families (Grist 1980:216). This suggests the existence of a corresponding element of 'caste' ideology in kingship [43], insofar as hierarchically ascribed status is used as a legitimate ruling principle, be it of the king over subjects, or of subjects over artisans.

This is not the place to consider the isomorphism of these oppositions in structuralist terms, [44] but it may be noted that such an interpretation does not go far enough to explain why the musician castes are specifically incorporated into the symbology of power in this way. For if they were so despised, or perceived to be a such a threat to the social order, as Ladakhi myths and attitudes suggest, why were these 'outsiders' not actually subjected to the forms of political violence (conquest, exile, incarceration, murder) these narratives condone?

The evidence presented here supports the hypothesis that the **mon-pa** were in fact incorporated into the Ladakhi social order precisely because they possess a highly valued means of supporting that order through the use of musical forms which are complexly related, in moral and aesthetic terms, to conceptions of the external symbolic world. The Ladakhis need their services in order to maintain their own status within the symbolic order, but they cannot secure the provision of those services without ranking the **mon-pa** within the same order. (The **bhe-da**, on the other hand, remained essentially 'exiles', but always had the potential to attain the position of in the **mon-pa**.) In assigning this responsibility to the **mon-pa**, they are therefore given the opportunity for mounting a challenge to their place in the order: the social order is at the same time the basis for their domination and for their challenge to it.

Myth, ritual and ideology therefore seek to resolve the contradiction, by giving legitimacy to the Ladakhis' power over the **mon-pa** and control over the means of musical production; yet they actually perpetuate the paradox by allowing the **mon-pa** themselves to temporarily "feel big" through their drawing of conflicting interpretations and their participation in ritual inversions. While socio-economic factors have reduced the possibility of an actual challenge by these means - of them becoming

really "big" - musical performance represents a unique way through which challenges can, in fact, be initiated. The power of performance is ultimately the very reason for their social domination, and is at the same time one of the most effective means of confronting it.

That musical phenomena have effects which, in the hands of the **mon-pa**, may prove to be politically subversive is allegorized by the following narrative: it concerns the migration of the Brokpa from Gilgit to Ladakh, said to have been initiated by three brothers who thought up a scheme to escape the cruel regime of the king who had placed them under house arrest:

The Mon musician in the assembly at once recognised the youngest brother, and as they were friends, he began to signal through gestures. The Mon was familiar with such incidents and when the brothers were asked to dance he played a melody through which he indicated that their situation was dangerous and that they were going to be killed...The youngest brother...danced in an unruly manner pushing the bystanders with his elbows. This style of dancing was copied by the other two brothers and...there was soon confusion among the enamoured spectators...The brothers took advantage of this situation and while pretending to continue dancing they moved slowly towards the exit. In this manner they were able to make their escape from the intriguing king (Vohra 1982:74).

Although it would be hard to imagine that incidents with such dramatic results have ever really unfolded in this way, the narrative nevertheless highlights the very real phenomenon that music can affect the experience and behaviour of perceivers in ways outside their conscious awareness and control, but in ways intended by those who control the means of production. The reason that outright challenges of the kind related here are not observed is implied in the story, for musical signals of this specific type are set by cultural conventions of the Ladakhi majority, not by the **mon-pa**. Indeed, the narrative (as cultural schema) may be taken as a warning not to allow agents of subversion gain knowledge or control of 'secret' musical messages: the meanings of military drum-signals were, in fact, designed to be disguised from potential foreign enemies. Even so, the fact that the **lha-rnga** repertoire does, by cultural convention, constitute a 'code' - though less specific than musical signals - which refers to status and gender entails that the **mon-pa**, as

manipulators of the musical parameters by which these qualities are symbolically marked, are in principle able to mediate their social impact in the performance event.

In practice, the scope for exercising this power is limited by the fact that these musical symbols are consciously assigned by culture-wide conventions. The performance of an inappropriate **lha-rnga** would therefore be taken as an open, and quite illegitimate, social challenge: the **mon-pa** are, then, restricted in their selection of particular rhythmic and melodic patterns by which individual **lha-rnga** are identified. They are nevertheless able to manipulate more expressive aspects of musical performance which do not have specific social meanings (except, arguably, amongst the **mon-pa** themselves) but which nevertheless are elements crucial to the social impact of the performance. To a certain extent, they can even hold their patrons to ransom by withholding a more 'powerful' performance unless a suitable gratuity (**bag-shis**, U **bakshīs**) is offered. The **mon-pa** might fear their patrons, but they also aware of their patrons' fear of loss of status. The **mon-pa** can therefore influence their audience, by exercising a certain degree of voluntary control over their own musical behaviour, in ways they cannot bring about purely by social means.

For all the social limitations placed upon the **mon-pa**, they still have at their disposal the purely musical means of potentially challenging the authority of their patrons: indeed, those limitations may actually encourage such a challenge. But in order to ensure that music is directed in ways which ultimately support and maintain the social order, rather than undermining it, it is necessary that music is contained by conventions of performance, and music-makers controlled by that order. If the **mon-pa** are to support the same social order of which they are part, and if both musical and social stability is to be maintained, then the symbolism by which the musician castes are socially contained is necessarily bound to the symbolism they sustain through musical performance.

4.8: The Royal Musicians (mkhar-mon): state patronage under the Namgyal Dynasty

The symbolic connection between the **mon-pa** and the king - the 'exemplary centre' of the social order which their music supports - suggests that the functional relationship between instrumental music-making and the institutions of Ladakhi Buddhist society was not restricted to, nor did entirely grow out of, the apparently autonomous organization of the village. For although village musicians are bound to their particular village and, in the first instance, serve the immediate needs of the villagers upon whom their livelihood depends, the essentially uniform content and structure of musical specialisation within the social and regional boundaries of historic Buddhist rule reflects not the unchanging order of a small self-contained village republic, but the progressive stratification of a rural society in which the village formed the basic unit of a centralized agrarian state. It is therefore appropriate to address the dynamic relationship between music of the state and that of the village, and to consider whether this interaction correlates with the processes of political centralization during the Namgyal Dynasty.

From the scant data relating to the musicians directly patronized by the state it seems that, in being directly linked to the centre of political power, the "palace **mon**" (**mkhar-mon**) operated within a quite different structural framework from the village **mon-pa**. It appears that they formed a corporate group resembling a mercantile guild which, unlike caste, had an economic emphasis rather than a ritual-ideological one. In fact the royal musicians probably had similar rights and obligations to the palace traders (**mkhar-tsong-pa**) and other specialists who were also Muslim (Sunni) and were allegedly brought from Kashmir by King Jamyang Namgyal in the early seventeenth century (Sheikh 1989). Like them, they fulfilled certain duties on behalf of the state in return for money, land and other privileges, and although in practice they formed a hereditary group, it was their occupational status, rather than these caste-like features, which was the defining factor. The use of the word **mon** in their group name, simply meaning 'musician' in this context, did not have the pejorative connotations of the **mon-pa** caste, and despite the claim that

they were traditionally Balti Muslims (Shī'ite), they enjoyed a relatively high status. Unlike the **mon-pa**, their behaviour and activity was regulated on the basis of their occupational status, since all members of the group served as musicians exclusively for the royal family, and they tended not to follow any other occupation. The patron-client relationship was therefore a close reciprocal one whose inequality was reaffirmed by the demonstration of personal allegiance in return for remuneration directly from the Treasury (**dkor-mdzod**).

Although the royal band continued in some form beyond the end of the Namgyal Dynasty, serving the royal family throughout the colonial period, reliable information about them is hard to obtain. One source reports that at the time of Independence in 1947, there used to be ten **mkhar-mon**, five players each of **sur-na** and **da-man**, of whom half were Buddhist (Shakspo 1985b:98). Other (Muslim) informants contacted during field research for this study recalled there being up to twenty royal musicians, mostly Buddhist, during the 1930s, claiming that in former times, presumably before the end of monarchic rule in 1842, there were said to be as many as sixty, mainly Muslim. They apparently received a fixed annual salary, and Ladakhi tradition maintains that they were collectively housed in the village of Phyang, some 15 km west of Leh, from the time of Jamyang Namgyal. Some, however, evidently had homes in Leh, including, within the walled citadel itself, the ancestral home of the head musician (**ti-chong**), a hereditary title still maintained by the current (Buddhist) incumbent. In this and other **mkhar-mon** families, musical skills were passed on patrilineally, and their musical competence is said to have been higher than that of most musicians today, musical as well as social discipline being strictly enforced by the Palace Prefect (**mkhar-dpon**). Those descendants of **mkhar-mon** who are still practising musicians are regarded as being amongst Ladakh's finest, and they still enjoy prestige in the urban musical community, and even now (largely due to radio) amongst Leh's citizens at large.

The **mkhar-mon** were in constant attendance at the palace, whether or not they were required to play. The instruments they played were superior to those of the village **mon-pa**, and were supplied and maintained

by the palace; only they were permitted to use them. Their primary function, entailing the performance of certain **lha-rnga**, related to the king's public duties and ceremonies. Besides a threefold set of musical 'watches', there were a number of musical announcements signalling the king's movements, processional music, and music which announced and accompanied the monarch's participation in polo, archery and horse-racing. At royal feasts held in the palace, they would also accompany special dances for the king and his ministers, and sing songs in his honour, accompanying themselves with **sgra-snyan** and **gling-bu**. The female court dancers (**drag-shos-ma**) were provided by selected noble families: according to Heber (1903:210), each family was obliged to provide a dancer for the king whenever he called for their services, and they were rewarded by food and drink. Their duty, however, was also a privilege because it was considered an honour to be invited to dance before the king, and royal guests other than the **drag-shos-ma** were required to ask their permission if they wished to take part (Shakspo 1985a:11). One of the principal designated households, considered to be the head of the **drag-shos-ma**, the **no-chung**, still stands below the palace in Leh, but this apparently hereditary tradition has since disappeared. Even in Heber's (ibid.:211) day, the number had apparently fallen from about thirty to just seven, and it is unclear whether performing ability (not to mention age or beauty) was as important a factor in their selection as birth (see also Brauen 1980:114).
[45]

With regards to either the **drag-shos-ma** or the **mkhar-mon**, the apparent conflict between the criteria of birth (a feature of caste organization) and performing ability (a feature of guild organization) may not simply be due to lack of sufficient data. For in India as a whole, caste and guild may have common roots (in the context of music-making, at least) in regular patterns of ritual service, be it at the level of the village or of the royal court (Wade and Pescatello 1977). Although neither is clearly the origin of the other, the evolution of occupational castes, as distinct from the caste system as such, may well have been brought about by the formation of professional guilds during the Indian Buddhist period. In other words, caste and occupation may have become linked through ritual and ideology as a result of extending central requirements to a pre-

existing tradition of hereditary specialization at the rural level. As a link between the centre and the periphery, widespread artisan specialization was, according to this interpretation, an important facet of the broadening of state authority to a rural base, and kings exercised control of the status, rights and obligations of caste groups in the territories - usually small - which they ruled. Reflecting the national order, "village organization was the result of [the] secular politicization and ruralization of the divine king, kingdom and palace town" (ibid.:285).

The Arthaśāstra (S "Treatise on Polity"), a work written by the minister Kauṭilya for a Buddhist ruler in the fourth century BCE, makes it clear that musicians were one of various groups of specialists of particular interest to the state, giving both positive and negative reasons for their control on moral, political and economic grounds: for example, public entertainers were taxed, and restrained from having too much freedom in rural areas, where they could distract villagers from their work or be a burden on their meagre resources; income from dancing-girls employed in brothel-cum-music-clubs (**goṣṭhī**) was taxed to pay the wages of policemen, and foreign artisans were required to pay a licence fee in order to hold performances. On the other hand, musicians were valued at court to such an extent that they, like other specialists trained in the "use of symbols" (**samjñā**), could also usefully serve as spies (Saletore 1985:16,33,236,291, 295).

From the Indian Buddhist period, there emerges a recognizable pattern of state musical patronage characterised by the division of musical labour between a series of dual contrasts: local-foreign, rural-urban, public-private and caste-guild. Broadly speaking, drummers (Pali **bherīvādaka**) feature in the first instance as local, rural musicians already part of a tradition of hereditary specialisation in the service of village rituals and festivals, but who, to judge from the Bheri Jātaka, were also employed at court centres for public ceremonies and festivities on an occasional basis (Wade and Pescatello 1977:304-5).

Other musical specialists, however, were employed more closely and regularly by the state. Kauṭilya says that trumpeters (S **tūryakara**) served as night-watchers, announcing the king's retirement and waking him at dawn, that their instruments were kept in the harem, and that they should be paid twice the salary of ordinary court musicians (S **gāndharva**) who already had a prominent position in the private life of the court. The latter were primarily employed for the purposes of ritual service and entertainment. As Kauṭilya explains: "song, instrumental music,...dancing,... playing on the **vīṇā**, flute (**venu**), and drum (**mrdāṅga**)...those who know all these and can teach them to cou^rtesans...should be provided with livelihood by the state" (quoted by Fox-Strangways 1914:80). Acting also as confidants, these musicians were close to the person of the ruler and could win favour and influence at court. Musical excellence was highly valued and rewarded, and these musicians were often from other kingdoms, exchanged as royal favours or as spoils of war (Saletore 1985:36-39).

As Wade and Pescatello (ibid.:282-3) point out, the growth of musician guilds in Indian city states of the Buddhist period arose not only from court patronage, but was part of a wider urban phenomenon because rural or itinerant artisans could not be expected to meet the specialized needs of large, socially mobile populations. The formation of musician guilds was thus just one aspect of an expanding urban network of services and trades with the royal court at its centre, yet it remained part of a system of unequal relations of power and status which had its roots in rural traditions of ritual service.

An examination of the ethnography of music-making in Ladakh from a historical perspective supports the hypothesis, as proposed by Wade and Pescatello, that caste and guild with regards to musical patronage were parallel developments arising from state interest in political and social integration, and that they continued to shape one another. Oral tradition has it that King Jamyang Namgyal was not only responsible for establishing artisan and mercantile guilds at Leh, but that he also decreed that a band of musicians should be made available to every village. Royal musical patronage of some sort no doubt existed before the flowering of the Namgyal dynasty, and this claim may be an example of one of "deeds

attributed to Jamyang Namgyal [which] bear all the marks of a legend, some being copied from tales of early Tibetan kings" (Petech 1977:36). Nevertheless, the time-depth suggested by the distribution of both musical instruments and their players endorses the view that it would have been well within the authority of a Ladakhi king at this time to institutionalize the caste status of the **mon-pa**, for example by the granting of village land rights. Whatever the true historicity of this development, the claim nevertheless demonstrates the salient point that the state took an interest in rural music-making, and attempted to nourish and mould it according to central requirements.

The claim cannot, however, be taken to show that rural musical specialization was an outright creation of central government. There are several reasons for believing that the Ladakhi kings, like Indian regional rulers, personally patronized musical specialists that already existed at the rural level, and that the distinction between the **mon-pa** (as caste) and the **mkhar-mon** (as guild) was actually less well-defined than the traditional model upholds. First of all, it should be borne in mind that the court-and-capital was not historically a single, fixed geographical centre, but rather a symbolic, 'exemplary' centre which could be relocated as required. [46] Artisans in certain villages who normally served the local community may therefore have had a special relationship with the royal family, receiving land and other privileges in return for their service. In villages with direct historical connections with the crown, there are several traditions attesting that the **mon-pa** are descendants of **mkhar-mon**, and although these may be fanciful claims upon the prestige of the royal musicians, in some cases they may contain a grain of truth. For example, the ancestors of the current **mon-pa** at Shey, the one-time capital and the summer seat and birthplace of successive Namgyal kings, might well have served as **mkhar-mon** as it is claimed, since there are far more families - eight in all - than one would expect for a village of this size (1136 in the 1981 Census). There are also four hereditary Ladakhi families who are responsible for providing dancers at the Shey **shrub-lha** festival attended annually by the king, an arrangement not dissimilar to the **drag-shos-ma** in Leh.

Again, the claim of the **mon-pa** in Hemis Shukpachen that their forebears once served the royal family may not be far from the truth, because the castle there, entrusted to a royal representative (**mkhar-dod-pa**), also required the services of local specialists on certain occasions: the local **mon-pa**, for example, would have received the **mkhar-dod-pa** with the appropriate **lha-rnga** upon his entry to the village, just as they would have done, of course, if the king himself arrived. [47] The emergent rural hierarchy of regional rulers and nobles, as prestigious representatives of the government with duties at the village level (e.g. tax-collection, military conscription, portage), would have themselves required the services of rural musicians, not only in the villages where they lived, but in all those for which they were responsible and where they might visit on official business (a practice which persists in some degree to this day). Given the problems of communication and transportation in Ladakh, a well-organised local infrastructure has always been vital for the efficient operation of central government. The observation made by Biddulph (1880:86) in Gilgit that "every man of consideration has his own band [of Dom musicians], which attends him whenever he moves" probably applied in Ladakh. For example, the Jesuit priests Ippolito Desideri and Emanuel Freyre describe how, during their journey through western Ladakh in 1715, a Muslim 'kinglet' - presumably one of the Purig feudal chiefs (**jo**) who were famous for their patronage of music - invited them "to see an exhibition of cavalry exercises and games" (quoted by Rizvi 1983:203). In such cases it seems that the musicians required for such an event would have been local musicians, conforming to a pattern not uncommon in other parts of Central and West Asia. [48]

Finally, the geographical pattern of **mon-pa** settlement points to a system of musical specialization that was fostered by state interest, for they are concentrated in the Indus Valley villages of central Ladakh, notably around the capital itself, whereas hereditary specialists in peripheral territories do not meet the criteria of caste adopted here. In the urban catchment area of Phyang, Stok, Spituk, and Shey, the number of **mon-pa** families is high relative to their individual village populations, supporting the idea that, as in India generally, residential wards of artisans grew out of village sectors, or in villages surrounding court centres (Wade

and Pescatello 1977:282-3). Phyang in particular recommends itself to this designation, for its large Shi'ite Muslim population claim descent from **mkhar-mon** families even though very few are now practising musicians; those that are, however, still serve as village musicians besides working in the neighbouring villages around the capital. This phenomenon to some extent represents a process of urbanization incidental to state patronage, for increasing numbers of musician families of all types have settled in the vicinity of Leh in order to serve a growing urban population. Even today, the **mon-pa**, **bhe-da** and former **mkhar-mon** of surrounding villages travel into the city for work, or may be engaged by patrons coming to the capital from outlying areas. The scale of urbanization in Leh, however, has historically never been such that, as in the larger centres of northern India, the city could no longer support a system of caste specialization: during the Namgyal Dynasty, the number of patron households only rose from about eight hundred to one thousand and, traditionally at least, its citizens were probably served by the **mon-pa** of their sector in much the same way as at the village level. [49]

All the evidence, then, points towards a parallel development of guild and caste specialization linked to the reinforcement of central rule at the village level. To the villagers, courtly life was upheld as a model to which could aspire; potentially, the patronage of more specialized village music was one way in which they could participate in the exchange of wealth and prestige in order to compete for status. To the state, the extension of its competitive ethic through conspicuous patronage to the village administration represented an integrating force through which its rural base could be incorporated into a wider network of hierarchical relations.

4.9: Social Mobility and Musical Change

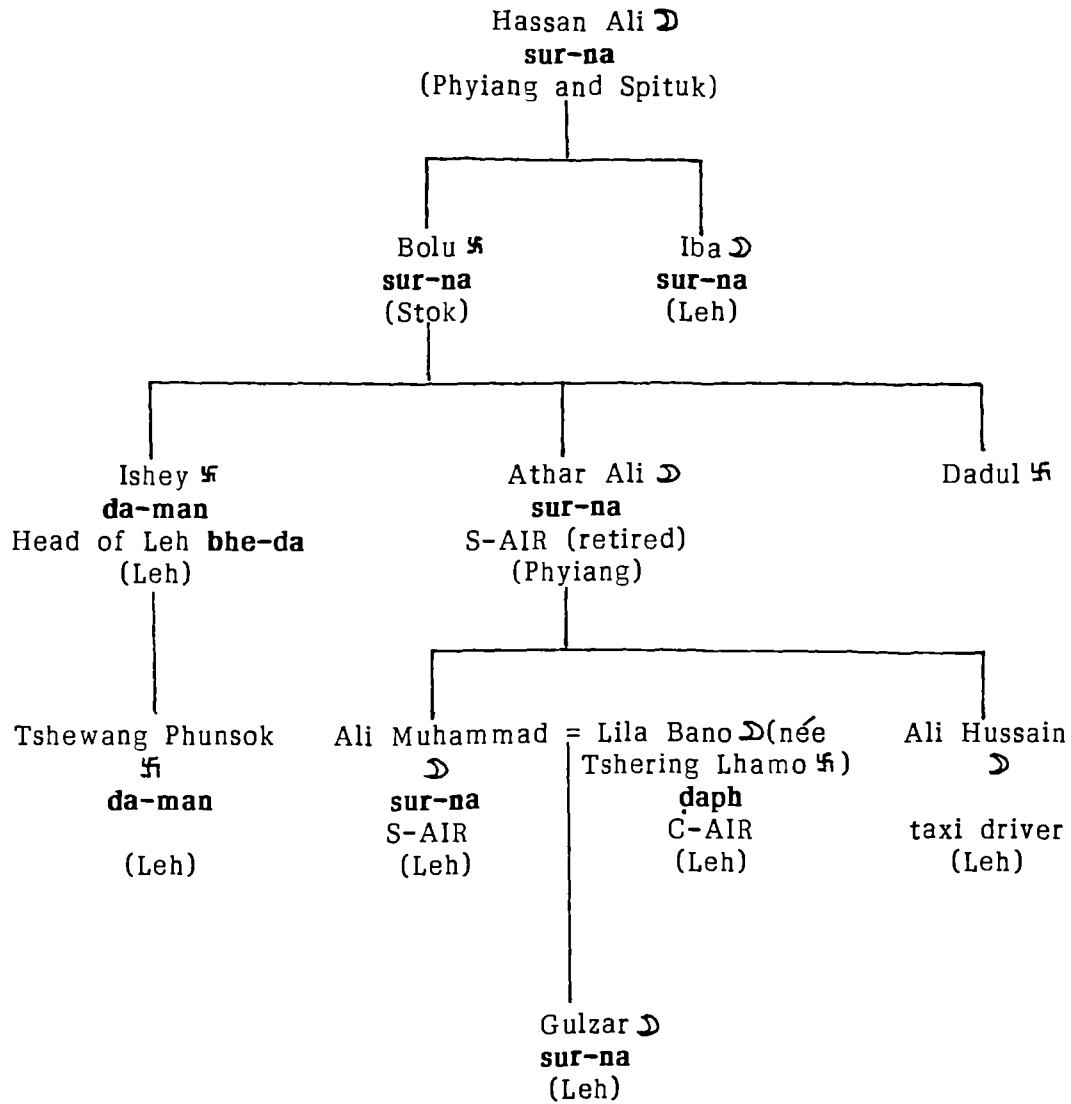
During the period of dynastic rule, the organization of music-making and the self-regulating interaction between social and musical action resisted social or musical change. Nevertheless, the dependence of caste organization upon an ideology that was fundamentally incompatible with Buddhism has always provided scope for potential mobility and change. Traditionally this has meant that the relationship between the **mon-pa** and the Ladakhis, though stable, has been less formal or exploitative compared to the Indian caste system. Although the low ritual status of the **mon-pa** is justified by popular Ladakhi Buddhism, the conflict between religious law (dharma) and the striving for upward mobility does not assume the character of Hindu casteism: here the low castes may consider their status to be wrongly ascribed, but there is little they can do - except perhaps by converting to Buddhism - to challenge the principle of caste as such. In Ladakh, on the other hand, it is widely known that Buddhism theoretically rejects caste, so there has always been the potential for an open challenge following the abolition of monarchic rule.

Since Ladakh's loss of sovereignty in 1842, the rapid urbanization and modernization of its capital has provided a number of opportunities for the **mon-pa** and **bhe-da** to escape from their state of economic dependence and potential exploitation. It is significant that this challenge has had an urban focus, for in rural areas, social pressure still tends to keep the **mon-pa** in a submissive role. Their bond to village communities in which they form tiny minorities prevents them from collectively challenging the denial of their full political or economic participation. They cannot easily break away from their ties with the village, or from the occupation which is expected of them. In the Leh area, however, urban migration, particularly of low-status groups, has brought about a relatively high density of the musician-caste population: the **mon-pa** and **bhe-da** of the Leh area are in close enough contact with one another to form a relatively cohesive group. This, together with the growing cosmopolitan character of the capital itself, has enhanced the renegotiation of traditional roles; since the 1840s, the upward mobility of the low castes has been made possible by the

diversification of occupational roles, and by the more flexible attitudes of an urban community increasingly at variance with the rural population.

Few **mon-pa**, however, have achieved upward social mobility while remaining musicians. Being unable to dissociate musical performance from the social obligation involved in providing it, or knowing that Ladakhis will still make the association, there is little they can do musically to improve their status. They do not stand to gain much in social or material terms from becoming better musicians, for it is not upon musical values that their social status is normally judged. It is easier, therefore, for them to abandon music as a profession altogether and take up a more lucrative and respectable occupation less strongly linked to caste. Of the five to seven traditional families of **mon-pa** in Leh, none are regular professional musicians any longer, and all have managed to improve their social status through other means [50]. One **mon-pa**, known as **mon-lha-ba**, became an oracle (**lha-ba**) and his son has become a monk; another took up residence in the old quarter of the city, and was given an 'ancestral' household name (**lang-drang**) by a lama; a third (**nag-po**) entered the police force. Many of the others are full-time carpenters (**shing-mkhan**), for even though carpentry is traditionally an occupation associated with the **mon-pa**, the construction boom in the city has ensured that many carpenters are in fact drawn from a range of social and ethnic groups; the vastly increased economic demand for their carpentry skills, compared to their musical ones, has meant that the association between occupation and caste has dissolved far more rapidly in the case of carpentry than in the field of music-making.

The upward mobility of the **mon-pa** has allowed the **bhe-da** to become mobile also, for most of them have settled in the Leh area, taking the place of the **mon-pa** as players of **sur-na** and **da-man**. The dynamics of this trend are not well understood, for it appears that the distinction between the musician-castes has been eroded over recent generations. Inter-marriage has evidently been far more frequent than the traditional picture of caste endogamy upholds, largely due to the shortage of available partners and also because Ladakhi Muslims are less caste-conscious than the Buddhists. One noted family of former **mkhar-mon**, for example, has



Key: (☿ = Buddhist ☽ = Muslim)
 S-AIR = Staff Artist, All India Radio (Leh)
 C-AIR = Casual Artist, All India Radio (Leh)

Figure 3: Genealogy of a former **mkhar-mon** family, showing occupational status, religious affiliation and residence

kinship ties with both musician castes, and demonstrates considerable mobility with regards to residence, religious affiliation and occupational status, at least over recent generations (Fig. 3).

This mobility might account for the confusion in contemporary literature relating to the traditional musical role and religious affiliation of these two groups. Marx (1892) states that the **bhe-da** musicians were only recently entitled to possess houses and land, and were Muslims of Balti origin, while the Buddhist **mon-pa** were carpenters. The Hebers (1903: 138,189) add that both musicians and carpenters are "generally of Mon descent", although the musicians employed at wedding feasts on a piecework basis are described as **bhe-da**. Meanwhile the 1911 Census (Mann 1986:10) designates the **mon-pa** as 'pipers' and the **bhe-da** as 'drummers'. In each case, these designations may be interpreted as generalizations which attempt to make sense of a changing urban pattern in terms of familiar multi-caste systems where musical labour may be subdivided by caste. Given that the **bhe-da**, in their traditional role, played only drums (**daph** mainly, and perhaps **da-man**) and have only relatively recently assumed the musical role of the Leh **mon-pa**, these observations from the early part of the century appear to represent a transitional phase: as the **mon-pa** became upwardly mobile, abandoning first **da-man**, then **sur-na**, in favour of more highly-ranked occupations, notably carpentry, the **bhe-da** have taken up the vacancies left by them, first working with them as drummers and then replacing them as musicians altogether.

This hypothesis would be consistent with the view that, at some point in the past, the **bhe-da** were a Muslim group. As their traditional musical repertoire was essentially Islamic, and many of them are still Muslim, the suggestion that the **bhe-da** played mainly for Muslim patrons may contain some truth, at least in a past urban setting: in Leh the Muslim community was large enough to form a coherent group in need of musical services of their own, whilst remaining a minority within a dominant Buddhist culture. Muslim patronage may then have been the impetus for them securing a livelihood which they could not otherwise obtain. Since it was common to change religion (notably in the event of a mixed marriage, an example of

which is represented in Fig. 3) there is no reason why many of the **bhe-da** should not have converted to Buddhism if it proved convenient to do so when the **mon-pa** relinquished their monopoly on musical services for the Buddhist majority. Alternatively, the apparent change in religious affiliation could be due to the fact that the **bhe-da** attracted by the demand for work would, since partition in 1947, have come from the mainly Buddhist areas of Ladakh and Lahul-Spiti, and not from Muslim Baltistan.

After the **mon-pa** abandoned the music profession, it was thus the case that, until the 1990s, the **bhe-da**, both Muslim and Buddhist, served Muslim and Buddhist patrons alike. It is a testimony to the rapid mobility of the urban population, however, that this situation has already changed within the time-frame of the 'ethnographic present'. The rise of Kashmiri Islamicism in the 1980s has affected the musical culture of Ladakh in two major ways. Firstly, the Muslim community in both Purig and - albeit to a lesser extent - in Leh has come under pressure from its leadership to abandon its musical culture; on the whole, Muslims no longer need musical services, and Muslim musicians have tended to either convert to Buddhism in order to continue playing music for Buddhists, or have given up their occupation in order to retain their esteem as Muslims. [51] Secondly, the rise of Buddhist political assertiveness in response to what they perceive to be Kashmir state favouritism shown towards Ladakhi Muslims culminated with the imposition of a social and economic boycott of Ladakhi Muslims during 1989-93: this meant that even those musicians who had, already with difficulty, remained Muslim could no longer secure employment as musicians.

Even in rural areas, some **mon-pa** have abandoned their musical occupation, and here too their place may be being taken up by **bhe-da** in villages where there are no longer any **mon-pa**. Some **mon-pa**, like other Ladakhi villagers, have migrated to Leh to find better employment, while others have remained in the villages, seeking greater independence there by supplementing their income with tasks paid on a piecework basis. Many **mon-pa** now own enough land to support themselves through agriculture, while others have taken on non-traditional jobs. In Hemis Shukpachen, for

example, the head of the **khang-chen mon-pa** is also the village postmaster whilst his elder son, having trained in Srinagar as an engineer, has now left the village permanently to work for the hydroelectric power project in Stakna (see above, Figure 2). This has inevitably accelerated the fragmentation of an already fragile musical culture.

The Ladakhi response to these changes has been one of a feeling of resistance: they fear for the loss of their musicians, for not only does this deprive them of ritual services whose efficacy is believed to be essential for their material and spiritual well-being, it also signifies the erosion of their village identity as expressed through their music. There is also an element of jealousy in the fact that those who once showed deference towards them stand to gain a higher economic status; the new-found independence of the low castes is privately considered by many rural Ladakhis to be inappropriate and disrespectful.

Nevertheless, an attitude of anti-discrimination, as a social as well as a Buddhist ideal, has generated new rules of intercourse between the **mon-pa** and the Ladakhis, and made these changes possible. It is no longer acceptable to express caste feelings, or to openly resist the social mobility of the low castes. For a number of reasons, post-Independent Indian ideals of democracy and socialism have been taken more seriously in Ladakh than in many parts of rural India. The endorsement of these ideals by the emergence of a new pan-Buddhist ideology has meant that Ladakhis are less inclined to make any religious justification for inequality. Caste is now, like polyandry, animal sacrifice and some other traditional practices, considered to be inappropriate for a modern Buddhist society, and the observable denial of these 'social evils' is seen as a way of gaining political favour. The precedent for the rejection of caste came in 1985 when a group of Leh **mon-pa** and **mgar-ba** made a petition to the Dalai Lama on the occasion of a visit to Ladakh; they complained that, as Buddhists, they were allowed to partake in the same worship as the Ladakhis, yet were treated as inferior, and that while Buddhism rejects caste, their status was primarily determined by birth, and not by profession or wealth. The Dalai Lama took the opportunity of publicly condemning the Ladakhis' acceptance of caste by entering a **mgar-ba** household and

playing a **da-man**, an act that effectively silenced criticism of the upliftment of the low castes (Plate 21).

The same processes of modernization and urbanization that have fostered the social mobility of the **mon-pa** has also brought about musical change. Since the 1950s, music has played an important role in "consciousness raising" (**spyi-tshogs-la yar rgyas-pa**), a role that has been actively encouraged by Indian Government policy and which has largely been carried out by song-writers belonging to Leh's religious-cum-intellectual elite. Although they perceive themselves as operating in a traditional role of moral guidance and instruction, the musical idiom of their songs (**de-ring-gi glu**, "songs of today" or **glu gso-ma**, "new songs") is distinctly modern, and strongly influenced by the Hindi film **ghazal** style (**phi-lim glu**, H **filmī gīt**) (Trewin, forthcoming). The emergence of new technologies (principally radio, latterly cassette production) and the partial development of an urban 'concert culture' has also promoted a new generation of self-taught professional musicians whose identity is self-confidently modern: they call themselves **rol-mo-mkhan** or **ustād** (U), or even the borrowed English **mu-si-shen** or the Anglo-Indian slang 'music-wallah', and in the late 1980s there were plans to establish a "union of musicians and artists" (**kha-shes glu-dbyangs tshogs-pa**). They have achieved a measure of respectability for the music profession, and a few individuals enjoy something of a 'star status' according to the values of modern Indian popular culture.

These modern developments, however, have been slow to filter through Ladakh's musical culture at the grassroots level. Since the modernizing influences on Ladakhi music have largely come from outside, rather than from within, its new forms of music-making have struggled to find a middle way that taps into its traditional heritage. Very few members of the musician castes have been able to gain employment in the modern, politically neutral, context of the local radio station (the family represented in Fig. 3 is a notable example), and the new generation of musicians tend to distance themselves from them, for example by playing only **tabla**, guitar, violin or flute rather than traditional instruments.



Plate 20: The Dalai Lama playing **da-man** in Leh, 1985

Traditional music-making is therefore still essentially organized by caste. Even among the **bhe-da** in Leh, the association between music and caste is proving slow to erode. Their caste organization has only been modified somewhat in order to serve a larger, modern urban community, for patron-client ties have inevitably become looser. From at least the end of the last century, the growth of a cash economy has enabled musicians to earn money on an individual piecework basis, rather than being paid in kind on an annual basis. [52] At present, the services of the musical community are contracted through an elected representative (currently a member of the same family in Fig. 3) who negotiates personnel and fees. This means, in principle, that individual musicians can compete for patrons and can be more fairly remunerated according to musical rank.

In spite of these modest developments, the most characteristic musical change of the traditional repertoire is degeneration, even abandonment. This is most true of all in the case of **lha-rnga**, whose complete repertory is now not regularly performed, and is less hierarchically organized: the end of the old monarchic system has brought about the decline of the musical forms which were institutionally associated with it, while the Ladakhis are able to serve their status pride in more materialistic ways not formerly available^{to} them. Yet it is because of the strength and complexity of the historically well-established and culturally deep-rooted association between public music-making and the institutions of power that the ceremonial **lha-rnga** tradition is available for investigation.

It is suggested that, historically, there are two major related reasons why this type of genre has survived in Ladakh, compared to other parts of northern India. Firstly, the monarchy did not have to secularize its institutions - including the patronage of music - in order to maintain popular support because Ladakh was never subject to outright Muslim rule. Secondly, effective political control of this remote, sparsely populated region was difficult to maintain, so the processes of urbanization and political centralization - largely responsible for modern patterns of musical specialization - were a relatively late development. This time lag is

indicated by a greater continuity between the urban and rural musical domains than is found in most parts of the sub-continent today, and the Ladakhi situation may arguably be representative of the more formative stages of musical specialization as they occurred historically in northern India as a whole.

Thus, many of the latter-day musical developments brought about by the unique contact between the Mughal rulers and their Indian subjects did not extend to this corner of the sub-continent. It has, for example, barely witnessed the rise of the 'soloist as artist', or the development of a sophisticated art music in which music-making was taken out of the domain of ritual performance (Wade & Pescatello 1977:310-11). Even today, music-making has for the most part remained a traditional hereditary occupation whose practitioners are apprehended in terms of the nature of their work, rather than the aesthetic qualities of their product. Ladakh's distance from the major centres of Indian political and cultural ascendancy during the period of the Namgyal kings may have meant that it did not share a great deal of the well-known florescence attributed to this era in the history of Indian civilization, but its isolation enabled it to accommodate external influences without losing its cultural and political independence altogether. In modern times, it is still possible to observe in Ladakh the vestiges of a uniquely interesting musical culture in which the patronage of music represents and embodies relations of power throughout the social system.

CHAPTER FIVE

INSTRUMENTAL TRADITIONS OF THE PALACE AND THE TEMPLE

5.1: Instrumental Music and State Formation

Having concentrated mainly upon the relatively stable intricacies of the musical life of the village, it has been suggested, particularly by the rapid mobility of music-makers since the end of dynastic rule, that the social organization of village musicians was fundamentally linked to the needs of the state. The focus of study can now turn specifically to the development of instrumental traditions associated with the formation and expansion of monarchic and monastic rule, with the aim of understanding the dynamics of the complex relationship between the music of the village and that of the state. This relationship is inevitably bound to the more general transition from a kinship-based tribal social system to one based on higher levels of social organization. Just as the polities of the village and the state were closely linked, continually shaping and influencing one another, the development of instrumental music arose as an interaction between the patterns of ritual service already existing at the village level and the ceremonial needs of the emerging royal court and monastic establishment.

The analysis of these interactions adopts a perspective from Weberian legitimation theory, which maintains that forms of symbolic communication are politically significant because political control is not usually effected by outright physical coercion, but through symbolic means. In general, an authority system is most stable and effective where it appeals to the beliefs and values of its subjects: people comply with the decisions of their rulers most readily where they believe that their compliance will bring beneficial results. Rulers can therefore increase their political power by establishing a belief that they make decisions which accord with the expectations of their subjects. That is, they attain authority - the institutional right to exercise political power - by the manipulation of cultural symbols through which ideals, values and moral principles are expressed.

In Ladakh, music features strongly in the pursuit of power and authority because of the way that the sensory 'power' of music is linked to the symbolism of ritual purity. It will be recalled that, according to

Buddhist concepts as well as theories of cognitive science, musical sounds are innately 'powerful' because they have the capacity to influence the consciousnesses of perceivers. Furthermore, this musical power, described by the Ladakhis as 'auspiciousness', is socially significant because music-making is delimited and ranked by ritual practice. In particular, music is assigned the symbols of transcendentalism: music-making generates religious merit, and can enable higher states of consciousness to be reached. Since ritual status, determined by the accumulation of merit, legitimates social status, musical power is manifest as real political power: it creates and supports social prestige, and maintains the inequalities of social relations.

The Ladakhi political system thereby depended upon musico-ritual symbols which stem from the very roots of village culture. As demonstrated by the social organization of its musicians, it is the component of ritual symbolism that renders their reciprocal socio-economic relationship with the villagers unequal. This principle, then, is extended upwards through all levels of the social system by a network of exchange of hierarchically-valued goods and services. Ultimately, therefore, the symbolism of court ceremonial depends upon that of ritual service at the village level, and the village is incorporated into the polity of the state. At the same time, the state is incorporated and represented within the village, for it is itself required to serve the requirements demanded by the state: whilst the music of court ceremonial and public ritual depended upon that of village ritual, it was also the case that the music of the village also served to support the needs of local officials representing the state.

An important feature of the dynamic interaction between state formation and musical development is that the music patronized by the rulers of Ladakh accommodated external cultural influences in resonance with Ladakh's own musical traditions: as shown by the form of **lha-rnga**, state music incorporated aspects of South and West Asian traditions, yet always in the service of those of its own. The following cultural analysis adopts Emerson's (1984) model of the process of state-formation into three quasi-historical phases or factors (colonization, de-alienation and militarism), anchoring each in historical time by organological considerations and the associated conditions of cultural contact.

5.2: Organological Sources for Predynastic Music

Given that the Brokpa were probably the earliest settlers in Ladakh, and that historical, linguistic and ethnographic evidence suggests that their migration may have been linked to the Indo-Aryan invaders who entered the Indian subcontinent from the northwest, the Brokpa may have been in contact with the earliest 'Indian' music. One is reminded of Danielou's (1968:5) remark that "in a few valleys of the Himalayas, there remain archaic forms of music...the study of which would be of great interest towards the understanding of some of the ancient [Indian musical] texts". Such a study, however, is beyond the scope of the present one, and will remain elusive until the musical culture of the Brokpa is open to scientific investigation. The following attempt to reconstruct the ethnohistory of Ladakh's instrumental music of the predynastic period is therefore a sketchy one, and is restricted to organological data which are not always reliable. [53]

The Shina name for flute in the Gilgit region, **torooyi** (S **tūrya?**), is consistent with the view that Dardic-speaking peoples have long been in possession of fipple flutes: the name **tūrya** (H **turaī**) now means 'trumpet', but in ancient Indian texts it is a more general term for aerophones. It is well known that flutes occupied an important place in ancient Indian culture: holed flutes have been found among the archaeological remains of the (lower) Indus Valley (Harappan) Civilisation (ca.3000-2500 BCE) at Chanhu-Daro (in modern Sind province), and are said to have played a significant role in the definition of the secular (ascending) scale, as distinct from the Vedic (descending) one; another flute mentioned in Vedic literature, the **tūnava**, was used in rituals, its players supposedly being among those sacrificed in the **mahāvratā** festival (Deva 1987:89-93).

According to Tibetan historical sources the fipple flute (**gling-bu**) was introduced to Tibet from areas to the west by the third or fourth century, so the inhabitants of Ladakh were presumably in possession of this kind of flute before then. [54] The instrument's current (entirely vocal) repertoire, characterized by differential melodic patterns in ascent and descent over a wide range - in contrast to Tibetan folk music - and its

extensive use of heptatonic scales over a pentatonic core may also be indicative of early Indian musical influence. [55] Additionally, the dance traditions of the Brokpa, and of those among the Ladakhis which they attribute to them, include hand gestures said to be of ritual significance, and which are reminiscent of the **mūdras** of Vedic ritual gesticulation or Indian classical dance.

Although flutes are not used for ritual purposes in Ladakh, or in Tibet, this may have been the case, as Ellingson (1979a:280) suggests for Tibet, prior to their functional replacement by reed aerophones; the non-ritual repertoire may still be freely rendered on either the **gling-bu** or **sur-na**, and their fingering is identical. Drums, meanwhile, have probably had a continuous ritual usage in combination with aerophones of either kind, although a similar phenomenon of the transfer of repertoire between different types of membranophones has evidently occurred: even today, drum patterns are interchangeable between **da-man**, **ḍaph** and **gring-jang** (Plate 21), while in Tibet the Bonpo single-headed frame drum (**rnga**) may have served as a prototype for later "Buddhist drums" (**chos-rnga**) (Ellingson 1979a:106). Of the Ladakhi drums presently in use, the **gring-jang** is the oldest: its simpler (original?) manner of construction, made by hollowing out a section of tree trunk, places it among the most ancient categories of cylindrical drums (cf. the Newari **dhimay** of Nepal (Helffer 1984a)); its regional distribution - widespread among the Brokpa but unique to the New Year rites in the rest of Ladakh - supports this assessment. [56]

Despite the fact that kettledrums, as a class, are probably a later phenomenon - as the present **da-man** are - those with earthen bodies may represent a line of development from the hide-covered pit, which, if derived from the stamped pit, may be the oldest kind of drum. Deva (1987:58,65), for example, traces a genealogy from the **bhūmiduṅḍhubi** of the **mahāvratā** through the **duṅḍhubi** of later Vedic texts, and the **bherī** of early Buddhist literature; and he notes that earthen pot drums (e.g. the **bhandavādya** of Vedic literature, and the **kumbhathūṇam** in Buddhist sources) precede the appearance of metal kettledrums, notably the **nagārā** (H) of West Asian origin (and its agnate, the **da-man**). If his hypothesis



Plate 21: Brokpa **brongopa** musicians playing **da-man** and **gring-jang**

is correct, then the existence of some kind of earthen kettledrum in Ladakh prior to the introduction of the **da-man** would be expected. [57] If so, then such a drum could theoretically be of considerable antiquity, since metal crafts were probably already known in Tibet by the fifth century CE (Snellgrove and Richardson 1986:50), and even earlier in the Dardic-speaking regions (Dani 1989:89).

That a related pattern extends to Ladakh cannot be discounted, though evidence is scarce: there is possible reference in the Ladakh Chronicles to the introduction of "stone drums" from India to Tibet in c.700 CE, [58] while Tibetan sources refer to a kettle drum made of burnt clay (**rdza-rnga**), an instrument which is still used in some Tibetan monasteries, but not (to the author's knowledge) in Ladakh. [59] This, however, may not be surprising given that the **da-man** never became as widespread in Tibet as in Ladakh, and may not have so thoroughly replaced its antecedents.

The diffusion of the instrument types represented by the **da-man** and **sur-na** into the Indian subcontinent is usually associated with the Muslim invasions of northern India, commencing with the Arab expansions of the eighth century when the eastern border of the Arab Empire extended to the Indus, from Badakhshan in the north (Afghan-Tajik border) to the delta region of Sind. Dick (1984:89) argues that the earliest group of West Asian instruments derive from these invasions, rather than by migration from pre-Islamic Persia, because of their Arabic nomenclature. However, it is not altogether improbable that musical instruments of West Asian origin reached Ladakh earlier than this since its Indo-Iranian population represents a wider (Central Asian) pattern of pre-Islamic Iranian settlement: to the north, for example, the earliest Turkic migrants (Tajiks) from the east were in contact with the culture of Iranian settlers before about 500. In the areas around Ladakh, the existence of Zoroastrian ideas among Dardic-speaking groups suggests that they too were in contact with pre-Islamic Iranian culture (Dani 1989). They in turn may have contributed to the diffusion of West Asian culture to the Tibetans, with whom they were in contact by the seventh century; the Tibetans also experienced direct contact with their "Persian" (**ta-zig**, i.e. Tajik)

neighbours, members of whom performed at Samye in Tibet in 779 (Ellingson 1979a:76).

Organological data from Ladakh cannot disprove Dick's thesis, but they do add credence to the real possibility, proposed by Baloch (1973:16), that certain drum and oboe types existed in parts of South Asia prior to the Arab expansions. Jairazbhoy (1980:155) further speculates that such instruments may have their origin in the subcontinent, and were disseminated through the northwest by bands of gypsies, only later being re-introduced to South Asia in their modified form and with new (e.g. Arabo-Persian) names. For example, as Deva (1975:78) implies, the south Indian **tavil** may be derive from an indigenous cylindrical drum, later influenced by the Arab **ṭabl** (P **dohol**, Tk **davul**).

The Ladakhi-Brokpa **gring-jang**, and apparently related drum-types such as the Newari **dhimay**, could also be a candidate for this same phenomenon: informants reported that the drum is still sometimes hollowed out of a tree-trunk, as this is easier than the more sophisticated method of construction using thin planks of wood. The latter was the method used in the only two specimens of the instrument (one Ladakhi, one Brokpa) examined for this study, a method which, together with the instrument's dimensions and mode of playing, corresponds to the **dohol** type. Its accompanying oboe among the Brokpa, the **ha-rib**, is identical to the Ladakhi **sur-na** and, again, corresponds to its West Asian counterpart (P.**surnā(y)**); but its unusual name, apparently unique to this region as a name for a musical instrument, may point to an earlier type of aerophone, such as a single-reed type still played in the Dardic-speaking north.

It is the alternative musical use of the word **harip** (P.**gharib**, "foreigner" or "gypsy", as in the Afghan musician group Gharibzade), however, which is more significant: among the Shina and Boorishki Dards north of Ladakh, as well as among the Brokpa and Ladakhi-speakers in western and northern parts of the region, it is used as a general term for drum-and-reed music. It has a similar meaning among the Pamir mountain Tajiks, who speak an ancient Iranian dialect, where **gharibi** is a general term to describe an instrumental style. [60]

	Boorishki (Hunza, Nager, Yassin)	Shina (Gilgit)	Torwalak (Swat Valley)	Khowar (Chitral Valley)	Yidghah (Ludkho Valley and Munjam)
"drum" (cylindrical?)	dudung	durrung	dunduk	dól	doomòmoh
"kettle drum"	dámul	dámul		dummuná	tabflaghah
"flute"	gubbi	torooyi	bísh	bóloo surnai	
"clarionet"	surnai tootak	surnai		surnai	
"music"	haríp	hárip	dunduk-o-bíshi	dól bóloo	doomámaghah

Table 3: Comparison of Musical Terms in Dardic Languages [compiled from Biddulph (1880)]

A comparison of musical terms in Dardic languages, contained in the vocabularies given by Biddulph (1880) (Table 3) reveals that several of the terms for 'music' are in fact compounds derived from the names of a drum and 'flute'. This points to a well-established tradition of an identified category of combined drum-and-flute/oboe music throughout the areas inhabited by Dardic-speaking peoples, comparable to the **saz-o-dohol** (music for **sorna** and **dohol**) of the Afghan Gharibzade (Baily 1988) or the 'duhl and **sharnai**' music of Sind (Baloch 1966). If in fact, as Baloch suggests, these latter traditions date from the pre-Islamic era, and were associated with the migrations of gypsy groups, then it is quite possible that the Dardic traditions are part of the same general pattern.

The argument is not conclusive, however, because the current nomenclature and morphology of these instruments clearly lie within the Islamic cultural orbit. With the exception of the name **gring-jang** (?or **ding-jang**, spelling unknown), which may be onomatopoeic (it is pronounced [d̪imd̪ʒang] cf. **dhimay**, **durrung**, **dudung?**), most of the instrument names are clearly of Persio-Arabic origin, as evident in literary sources from the ninth century referring to the Arab military band (**ṭabl-khānā**) (Farmer 1929). The drum-names **dāmūl**, **dōl**, and the stem **tabīl**, derive from the Arabic for "drum" after which the band is named (A **ṭabl**, P **dohol**, Tk **davul**). As elsewhere in Asia, the root **ṭabl** is found in the names of various drums, including kettledrums (Yidghah **tabīlaghah**, cf. A **ṭabl-al-baz**, Tajik-Uzbek **daulbas**, Kashmiri **dulas'**) and drums of the cylindrical type (e.g. Khowar **dol**). The Persian **damāma**, meanwhile, gives **dummunā**, **doomōmoh** and the Ladakhi **da-man**. Some of the names of aerophones are of similar provenance, notably the **surnai** or **surnai** (P **surnā(y)**, Ladakhi **sur-na**), **tooták** (P **tūtak**, cf. Tajik **tulak**) and **bīsh(i)** (P **bīsha**).

The morphology of the relevant Ladakhi instruments also conforms to characteristic types, and tends to confirm the provenance suggested by their terminology in spite of some inevitable transfer of nomenclature. Hence the **da-man**, although not equivalent in size to the enormous Persian **damāma**, is nevertheless identical to the smaller paired version of medieval Arabic origin (**naqqara**, H **nagārā**), while the **sur-na** is of the same type thought to have been developed in Iraq in ca.800 (Dick 1984).

Leaving aside the possibility of the pre-Islamic diffusion of some kind of drum and reed types, it is safer to propose that elements of West Asian musical culture found their way to the uppermost reaches of the Indus Valley some time after the Arab expansions of the eighth century: this would be far from surprising given that the Himalayan passes of the northwest frontier proved to be important channels of infiltration and foreign intrusion into the Indian subcontinent. But even this thesis must be treated with caution because, as Fussman (1989) points out, only a few words in Dardic languages of Arabic origin may have been borrowed directly, and most may derive from literary Persian adopted during the later Islamization of the region. This casts doubt not only upon the appearance of the instrument names, but of the instruments themselves: as in the case of Afghanistan and Sind, where the musical traditions have been heavily influenced by a subsequent, Mughal, wave of Islamic culture, it is difficult to identify a distinct sub-layer of instrumental usage.

Although a clear chronology is impossible to establish on the basis of currently available data, there is little doubt that some kind of drum and reed tradition - represented by the names (at least) **gring-jang** and **ha-rip** - was introduced to Ladakh by the Brokpa prior to the Tibetanization of the region, i.e. when these Dardic-speaking inhabitants were more widely distributed across the country. This is indicated by the persistence of musical practices (notably the use of the **gring-jang** in the Ladakhi New Year ceremonies) and terminology (especially the use of the term **ha-rip**) among the Ladakhis which clearly originate in the Dardic-speaking peoples of the greater region. This supports the Ladakhi belief that much of its own folk heritage of dance and music was introduced by the Dards migrating from Gilgit in predynastic times (Rabgias n.d.). It also explains why the Brokpa, now living in relative isolation from the Ladakhis and away from the cultural heartland of Upper Ladakh, have similar instrumental and dance styles to those current in the Leh area. Further investigation in the areas north of Ladakh is required in order to determine, with certainty, the provenance of specialised musical forms adopted by the early Dardic rulers, but it remains most likely that this music belonged to a distinct cultural sub-layer connected with Indo-Persian traditions in predynastic times.

5.3: Colonization: Harnessing the Power of Sound

As a musical genre connected with ritual service, Ladakhi **lha-rnga** has its roots in the cultural sub-layer that predates the Tibetanization of the region. Evidence overwhelmingly points to origins in the culture of the Dardic colonists that has since been absorbed into the living tradition of Ladakhi Buddhism. Although the structure and function of this musical tradition has evidently changed substantially under subsequent Tibetan rule, the survival of aspects of this pre-Buddhist layer in the remoter valleys where the Brokpa still live, and in some apparently related archaic non-Buddhist practices in Ladakhi religion, furnish an impression of what this music sounded like, and of what roles it might have had in supporting the emergence of hierarchic relations of power.

The possibility of these roles stems from the power of sound, i.e. the transcendental symbolism linked to the capacity of musical sound to change consciousness. This presupposes the belief in a supernatural spirit world with which direct contact is sought, a belief also associated with that in an afterlife. In Brokpa religion, the animal- and bird-spirits of the sacred mountain-tops, perhaps originally regarded as totemic forces, are invoked as protective beings capable of assuring the fertility of the land and of the regeneration of its human settlers. The symbolism of the earliest ritual music is associated with the control of these spirits, using them to communicate with other worlds.

That this type of music is almost certainly of great antiquity in Ladakh is suggested by petroglyphs in the wider region once occupied by the Dards, perhaps dating to as early as the second or third millenium BCE (Vohra 1993). These show hunting scenes with the use of bow and arrow, and with animal and human dancing figures, indicating the existence of a consciousness capable of using symbols and attributing meaning in order to adapt to the biosocial world. Hunting was, for the Brokpa - originally a hunting people - more than a mundane matter of capturing wild animals, for it enabled the hunting group to commune with the sacred realm of the uncolonized mountain wilderness. Mystical experiences, typically induced and influenced by music and dance, accordingly became interpreted through

the symbolism of hunting, as in other parts of Asia (Ellingson 1974): spirits are 'called' to oneself (possession) by music and dance, just as animals are attracted to the hunt by imitating their sound and movement. Spirits, once embodied, may also be used to induce a 'flight' into the higher spirit realm (shamanism), just as animals, once captured and domesticated, are used to support a higher form of civilisation.

An important feature of the music associated with these phenomena is that, as with the spiritual realm itself, it is supposed to have a prior existence; humans have gained knowledge of it by divine favour, not by ingenuity alone. By using the sounds deriving from nature, humans have the potential to control the forces of nature that threaten them. The symbolic association between **lha-rnga** and the natural order is still current among Ladakhis: the notion of the genre as the drumming of the gods identifies its supposed origins in the song-revelations of the animal- and bird-spirits, or in the thunder, wind or earthquake sounds made by the gods (**lha**) of the mountains to reveal their descent into the human realm; the complementary idea - drumming for the gods - represents its subsequent use to call these beings back into the human world at will, and thus gain a degree of control over them.

In pre-Buddhist times, the fear of supernatural forces was perhaps more acute than it is today. In Kinnaur, a Himalayan region to the south of Ladakh (in modern Himachal Pradesh), there are still villagers who believe that a chilly north wind indicates the immanent arrival of their local deity, supposedly from Changthang, and who beat drums in order to receive them (Sharma 1990). In modern Ladakh however, no evidence of this type was obtained which suggested that village deities might require extempore musical propitiation in this way. All the village rituals in which **lha-rnga** are played are linked to the agricultural calendar: the seasonal forces of nature are, ideally, subject to human understanding and control through their cultural mechanisms and, at worst, it would merely be inauspicious to beat drums 'at the wrong time'.

There are nevertheless vestiges of *musical practices* associated with agricultural rituals which support the theory that **lha-rnga** has its roots in pre-Buddhist culture. The Ladakhis widely believe that individual **lha-rnga** were revealed to some notional, 'archetypal' shaman - and hence transmitted to his successors - by the spirits playing the music through him whilst possessed. One of the most auspicious, and musically most elaborate, examples of the genre, the **dpoid-tses lha-rnga** played at the onset of spring (**dpoid**), is said to be derived from the song of the sky-lark (**lco-ga-mo**), which makes its first appearance at this time of year. [61] It is played in the context of a royal fertility ritual which exhibits a striking parallel with those performed among Dardic-speaking groups. Coinciding with the vernal equinox, these rituals in turn may be related to the Iranian New Year (Nauroz) festival, still marked by rituals among Turco-Iranian peoples (e.g. Tajiks) of Central Asia (Blum 1980:70). Through repeated annual performance, the music recalls and thus restores the conditions in which the music was first received, bringing about the desired communion with the sacred realm.

The survival of musically distinct forms of **lha-rnga** which accompany trance-dance (**lha-rtses**) suggests an origin in a cultural practice which, to judge from the identity of the 'gods' portrayed in a remarkable dance tradition preserved at the Shey harvest festival (**srub-lha**), clearly belongs to a pre-Buddhist cultural layer. Dressed in animal skins and masks - again inviting certain parallels with other Central Asian cultures - the dancers take on the appearance of warrior-hunters, invoking the animal-spirits of the high mountains (wild ass, goat, snow-leopard) ridden by the mountain goddesses; their movements, like the music that accompanies them, are supposed to imitate these spirits that first revealed them, now closely guarded by the hereditary line of dancers who maintain the tradition. Actual animal-dances, such as the horse-dance (**rta-shon**) performed after the New Year horse-racing, may have a related origin, since the horse is widely found as a symbol of shamanic flight among Central Asian peoples, being the vehicle upon which the practitioner 'rides' to reach the spiritual world. [62]

Animal symbolism is also evident in the use of drums upon which **lha-rnga** is performed, notably in the case of the oldest type, prevalent among the Brokpa, the **gring-jang**: the higher and lower pitched drum-heads are respectively made from the hides of the ibex and the goat, animals important in Brokpa religion; while its shell is made from the sacred juniper tree (whose berries are burnt as incense to assist trance). Among the Ladakhis, the **da-man** still retains aspects of a symbolic identification with hunting: as shown by the alternative spelling **mda'-man** (e.g. MC.16-229.13/230.7-8), the instrument is identified with the arrow (**mda'**) that flies towards the higher realms, while the act of beating (**rdung-byes**) is likened to the bending (also **rdung-byes**) of the hunter's bow (**gzhu**, which makes a sound when the arrow is released). A similar symbolism may extend to the **sgra-snyan** which, like many Central Asian lutes, is frequently crafted with the head of a horse and which, in some parts of Ladakh at least, can traditionally be played with a horse-hair bow (**dbyangs-gzhu**, "melody bow").

Another theme associated with this symbolism is the belief that certain musical instruments may act as the abodes of animal spirits or deities. They may accordingly be given the status of animate objects with magical powers, including the destruction of evil forces and the curing of illness: i.e. their 'power' is identified directly with their inherent acoustic or mechanical properties rather than with the ritual symbolism of their musically-structured sound, a belief common in many ancient cultures. [63] Tibetan sources say that when the **dung-chen** was first played, its sound was so terrifying that it frightened both people and animals away (Tethong 1979:16), while the unusual "female" conch-trumpet (**dung-dkar g.yas-'khyil**) is supposed to be capable of curing disease or removing domestic strife if kept in the home (Das 1902:628). Presencer (1981:5) refers to one type of singing bowl whose sound, intended to split a demon's brain, is so intense that the player's ears have to be protected from its damaging psychoacoustic effects; another rare type of bowl acquired (apparently without showing any ethical concern) by Presencer in a Bonpo monastery in Ladakh, was said to be occupied by a mountain spirit: the "distressed Abbot...was adamant that the bowl should be returned to its origin as it

was possessed by the spirit of a mountain god whose cry was a constant pleading to be released and returned to his true home" (ibid.).

Although drums are still used in Ladakh to call spirits in order to become embodied in the human world, the idea that the drums, like other vessels, may themselves act as temporary 'homes' of deities, or the related notion that they constitute objects of worship, is little more than anecdotal in present-day Ladakh. The suggestion that the application of beer or butter-tea (both life-giving symbols) to the drum-heads as a means of tuning them might have had a ritual connotation was rejected by informants, although it was accepted that the donation of new drum-skins, notably at the commencement of the Shey **srub-lha** festival, probably was of ritual significance, albeit one only tentatively connected with the idea of the renewal of the instruments' acoustical life being inherent to the re-appearance of the deity (Dorje Chenmo) for whom they are played. However, during the Matho **na-grangs** festival, the two gods which dance to a **lha-rtses** are popularly believed to temporarily reside in the **da-man** between their successive appearances on consecutive days, since they leave their human vessels at the end of the first day by jumping on the drums, silencing them as if to deposit their spirit in them; subsequently, the drummers escort them back to the mountains, where they are returned to the **lha-tho** shrine which serves as their 'home' for most of the year.

The strongest evidence that **lha-rnga** has its roots in the pre-Buddhist religious practices of the Brokpa rests with a unique drumming tradition which survives as part of the **lo-gsar** celebrations in Leh. Coinciding with the winter solstice, it will be recalled that the New Year celebrations in themselves largely consist of non-Buddhist elements which are probably of Dardic origin, including animal sacrifice, ancestor worship, and the fire-ritual which re-enacts the killing of the supernatural king Bagatham. Significantly, the drumming tradition, which like the **lha-rtses** has a musical form distinct from other types of **lha-rnga** and is considered by the Ladakhis to date to predynastic times, constitutes the only instance in Buddhist Ladakh where the **gring-jang** - identical to that of the Brokpa - is used: over the New Year period at Leh, the head **mkhar-mon** plays a special **lha-rnga** unique to this instrument in connection with the renewal

of the king's **rtse-lha-tho** by his **lha-bdag** priest, and, by symbolic association, the renewal of the office of kingship itself. It is furthermore quite clear that the king's protective deity is specifically connected with the particular instrument used only on this occasion: no-one else is allowed to play the drum at any time, neither are they allowed to see it during the rest of the year, for it is kept hidden from view in the **lha-tho** of the musician's home, formerly (according to him) in the crown deity's own shrine-room (**rste-lha-khang**) within the palace. The ritual significance of the tradition is such that the drummer is required to remain verbally mute throughout, and no-one may speak to him.

This tradition is probably related to ritual practices at New Year which were (until quite recently) widely conducted in rural areas. At the renewal of the **yul-lha-tho**, the **lha-bdag**, purifying himself with juniper smoke, would actually become possessed by the village deity, sacrifice a goat and make predictions by reading its entrails, the implication being that the **lha-rnga** still played (in this case on the **da-man**) on this occasion was originally associated with assisting trance by summoning the village god, and that the ritual prescriptions required of the village musicians (e.g. remaining mute, purification with juniper) were connected with the act of renewal.

Similar elements feature in the Brokpa triennial Bonona festival, which celebrates their migration from Gilgit and their colonization of Ladakh, and renews the contract between gods and men (Vohra 1989b). For a period of several days, the **lha-bdag-pa** goes into mountain retreat, staying at the **lha-tho** of the deity Yandring, who is said to descend upon a wild goat; no-one may see him or speak to him. Having purified himself with juniper smoke, and chanting prayers, he returns to the village in trance, sacrifices a goat and makes forecasts. Here, it is the **gring-jang** which is played (by the **brongopa**) to invite and receive the deity in the village so that it may participate in the celebrations.

These festivities bear a striking resemblance to winter festivals formerly held in Gilgit, which are associated with the Bagatham lore believed to have been introduced to Ladakh from there by the Brokpa.

Here the supernatural king Bagatham was identified with the juniper tree, branches and twigs of which were used to build bonfires and make torches that were scattered when the 'old' king's spirit was summoned by the drummers, then destroyed and reborn in the 'new' king. According to Biddulph (1880:95, 104-105), a British official posted to Gilgit in the 1870s, a goat was sacrificed and its blood sprinkled on the head of the **durrung** drum (similar to the **gring-jang**); used to summon the protective deity Yoodeni, "all faces are averted to prevent the evil that would surely happen to him who should catch sight of the performer" (ibid. 104-105) and if anyone dared to look in that direction, "the least he could expect would be that his head would be twisted round to his back, and remain so for the rest of his life" (ibid. 95). The goat carcass was given to the drummer, and its head was used as a target for the archery which then took place along with other contests and festivities. For most of the time, the **durrung** was kept on top of the castle of the ruler of Gilgit (and likewise in Hunza and Nagar): "when it is heard to sound at certain festivals and at critical times it presages good fortune...a warlike expedition undertaken without the sounding of the Yoodeni drum would certainly end in disaster." (ibid. 94-5).

Whatever the historical validity of these connections, the salient point is that the Dardic colonists of Ladakh developed a form of music that supported a ritual system which clearly related to their moral and social world. Like the Brahmin priests whose privileged position derived from their elite knowledge of the Vedas revealed through sound by the gods, the authority of the Brokpa **lha-bdag-pa** priests was linked to their special access to the transcendental realm through music. Being in direct contact with the spirit world, and acting as the spokesmen of deities, the **lha-bdag-pa** had considerable influence on the values and conduct of their believers, and through the display of charismatic qualities - divination, exorcism, healing - they enjoyed a high social status. Furthermore, in being in possession of the knowledge and skill to exercise control over the natural order, they realised positions of real political authority within the social order. Accordingly, the music of ritual service also served the emergent institutions of temporal power, while the **lha-bdag-pa**'s musical

instruments, as accessories of the ritual practices that were his prerogative, became emblems of his political authority.

Even today among the Brokpa, it is the **lha-bdag-pa** who, at the village level, are the holders of political office, but the exercise of authority over wider groups of people would in reality have been limited by worldly conflict. For all their power to create order and meaning in the world, they could not actually prevent natural calamities, wars or contradictory interpretations of their oracular statements. Indeed, to judge from the prevalence of fortified villages, and the use of drums to provide alarm calls in times of war, military protection was clearly uppermost among the worldly concerns of these settlers. Moreover, the wide use of riddle-songs and song-contests in Brokpa festivities (and in the Ladakhi marriage ceremony, believed to have pre-Buddhist origins) suggests the competitive political culture of provocation and alliance between neighbouring groups. In the eyes of subjects, the charisma of the shaman supported the formation of units of authority at higher levels of organization, yet they were not themselves any substitute for the charismatic authority of the warrior-hero who proved himself in real battle. Thus the archetypal shaman, for the Ladakhis, may be identified with their epic hero, Gesar, the god-born king who conquered the world at the dawn of civilization with his magic arrow (the means of colonization to which the Dard village name of Dha (**mda'**, "arrow") is popularly believed to refer); but real shamans cannot exercise such power because, in the Ladakhi interpretation, "today they are lesser beings, as are all of us who belong to this degenerating cosmos" (Day 1990:214). In practice, the process of state formation depended upon the exercise of 'strong-man' politics legitimated by the religious authority of the shaman.

Ritual music had a particular role to play in the legitimation of the ruler's emergent authority because its symbolic power is transferable by negotiating its means of production. In gaining access to the accessories of shamanic power through the possession or patronage of music-makers (instruments and their players), rulers acquired the legitimacy they sought. The possession of drums appears to have had special significance because of their association - symbolic and real - with hunting: they summon

animal spirits (protective powers) to bring about the conquest of evil forces; the use of drums, like arrows, in both military and religious contexts is therefore not surprising even at this stage of state formation among the Dard chiefs. Besides the sounds they produced, musical instruments were themselves symbols of legitimate rule, for they represented the ruler's rightful access to the cultural symbols of the shaman's ecstasy, endorsing the perception of the ruler as one whose authority derived from the supernatural realm. The use of special drums thus supported the idea of the king as himself a kind of shaman simultaneously in contact both terrestrial and celestial realms, in the sense that he was 'possessed' by the ancestral spirit of the primordial king summoned by drumming. The public appearance and sounding of drums exclusive to royal ritual was offered as the living proof of the ruler as the local embodiment of a transcendental principle.

Thus, in the case of the Gilgit winter festival and the Ladakhi **lo-gsar**, the drums beaten to summon the ruler's protective deity were no ordinary drums, as shown by the fact that their use and appearance was highly restricted and associated with certain taboos. Both traditions also seem to share a related symbolism: by invoking the ruler's divinity, which conquers infertility and pacifies the enemies of the state, the music personifies him as the supernatural guarantor of fertility and prosperity, and the protector of territory. The drums themselves embody the musical tradition associated with the archetypal ruler's original divine mandate: as an asset of his kingship, it served as an aural and visual emblem without which, in the ears and eyes of his subjects, his position would be insecure.

The idea that shamanic music, as appropriated by political rulers, personified them as 'incarnations' of a supernatural principle of paternal authority is also evoked by a popular belief, in Punyal (Upper Gilgit), that music was heard from the sanctuary in the ruler's fortress when he was nearing death and his ancestors began to call him to their reception feast (Dani 1989). In nearby Hunza, the ruler was identified as the personification of the solar deity, which suggests the influence of Zoroastrian thinking (an Iranian goddess, Khodomo, was also worshipped here) (ibid.). It is not beyond the bounds of possibility, therefore, that

certain musical traditions of royal ritual in Ladakh, especially those which mark the winter solstice or different hours of the day, are connected with pre-Islamic West Asian culture. [64]

Alternatively, the broad correlations between these winter festivals point to certain Vedic practices - notably fire-rituals and sacrificial contests. The **mahāvratā** festival, mentioned in several Vedic texts, is of particular interest. Apparently a survival of an ancient winter solstice feast as part of a cult in which animal spirits were invoked and human sacrifices performed, music, dancing and revelry were important features: a musician (S **māgadha**) discusses his favourite bawdy topic with a prostitute and beats a huge hide-covered pit (S **bhūmiduṅhubi**) with an animal's tail (Saletore 1985:13). The same elements of inversion are still observable in the Ladakhi **lo-gsar** festival, while the theme of sacrifice using this ancient type of hunting drum may have a symbolic connection with the Bagatham lore, for earthen pits (S **riṣyadā**) were used in Vedic times to capture animals (ibid.:2) in the same way as the evil king, according to one version, met his death. [65] The fact that, in Gilgit, the carcass of the sacrificed goat was given to the drummer while the head was used for the ensuing archery contest also implies a ritual component to the royal patronage of musicians, as there is in Ladakh at the New Year gift-giving ceremonies: this again supports the hypothesis that caste and musicianship became linked through the ritual symbolism of the Indic **jajmāni** system, but it also suggests that this ritualistic linkage arose from the central requirement of ritual service brought about by the separation of priest-donor and ruler-patron.

As far as Ladakh is concerned, such developments cannot easily be traced historically, but in terms of the colonization model, contact between Ladakh and a literate civilisation would be expected: its early musical culture, insofar as it can be identified, reflected the development of a supernatural hierarchy of spirits and gods which sanctioned the emergent socio-political order, an order that was demanded from within by the requirements of the hydraulic state, and that was filled by patterns of specialization (musical and other) which already existed elsewhere.

5.4: Musical Iconography of the Buddhist Instrumentarium

Much of the evidence that Ladakh established early contact with Indian civilization rests with iconographic sources dating from the Buddhist period. Although the earliest, predynastic, sources from Ladakh itself do not yield any information specifically relating to music, they do show that Ladakh was associated with the major regions of Indian culture to the north and west which flourished during the early centuries CE, and whose music is documented in contemporary visual sources. Together with evidence from inscriptions and other textual sources, and organological data, this pictorial documentation enables a broad chronology of the Buddhist musical culture of this wider area to be substantiated. Moreover, depictions of instruments and their performers, and of musical ideas, supplemented by the decoration of actual instruments and the architectural form of sites where music occurred - all of which are represented in Ladakh in subsequent periods - shed light on the nature of musical symbolism in the Buddhist period, and on the significance of instrumental music to religious and secular authorities.

The oldest surviving Buddhist artefacts in Ladakh consist of wooden and stone sculptures dating from the eighth and ninth centuries, whose dimension and style indicates the existence of a central authority capable of patronising artisans, probably from Kashmir. [66] In style, they are Gandhāran, a cultural phase which properly belongs to the period of Kuṣāṇa rule (c. 50-200 CE) around the centres of Gandhāra (Peshawar), Kāpiśa (near Kabul) and Takṣaśilā (Sirkap in the Punjab), but which lingered in Kashmir and other Buddhist centres of Central Asia until the tenth century. Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions in Lower Ladakh suggest that Ladakh was in fact directly subject to Kuṣāṇa rule, and was probably already at that time lying on one of the lines of communication between Gandhara, Kashmir, and the oases of the Tarim Basin (Kashgar, Kucha, Yarkand, Khotan), well before Tibetan expansions into the region. [67]

Notably during the reign of Kaniṣka (c.78-101 CE), the great Kuṣāṇa ruler who is said to have convened the fourth Buddhist Council in Kashmir, it was along these trade routes that Buddhism (and other Indian religions)

and its associated arts were carried by pilgrims and scholars from northern India to Central Asia and the Far East. The settlements which emerged along these routes during the early centuries CE were not merely trading posts, but flourishing centres of Indian learning and culture with sizeable monastic communities. Local rulers, regarding Indian culture as being that of a superior civilisation, increased their prestige and authority by patronising Buddhism, its festivals and its arts. Although the Dardic rulers of Ladakh and Baltistan cannot have enjoyed the splendour of their counterparts in Kashmir or beyond the Karakoram in the renowned centres of Khotan or Kucha, their Indian titles - meaning, for example, "Lion of War", "Bearing the Symbol of a Hero" (Dani 1989:142-43; Petech 1977:9-10) - give the impression of having gained significant authority through the patronage of Buddhism. Indeed, to judge from the account of the Chinese pilgrim Hui-Cha'o who passed through the region in 727, the population was, unlike Tibet to the east, Buddhist and supported a number of monastic communities (Petech 1977:10). In spite - or perhaps because - of becoming subject to some sort of alien Tibetan rule by this time, the Ladakh-Baltistan region appears to have played a significant role in the 'first spreading' of Buddhism and Buddhist culture from Kashmir to Tibet between the seventh and ninth centuries.

The earliest examples of Gandhāran art from the Kuṣāṇa period which are of musical interest occur at Termez and Pendzhikent (both in modern Uzbekistan), Kāpiśa and at Gandhāra (Puri 1987:294-97; Gray 1981:16), and are roughly contemporary with similar musical scenes at the Central Indian Kuṣāṇa sites of Sanchi and Mathura (Dick 1984). These stone friezes show court scenes of musicians and dancers, and depict cylindrical or barrel-shaped drums (held vertically or horizontally, and played singly or in pairs) and trumpets and/or oboes of an ancient kind (conical bore, with or without flaring bell, and without staple or lip-disc).

Later representations of musical motifs in the wall-paintings of the cave-temples of the Tarim Basin show the extent to which Indian musical culture found its way to Central Asia along the caravan routes from the Kashmir-Gandhāran region. One notable example, demonstrating the influence of Brahmānic iconography from Kashmir, is a sixth century

painting from the Khotan region (Puri 1987:268): this depicts a number of dancing figures, one of whom is probably the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara in the form of Śīva (as Nāṭarāja, Lord of the Dance), the first Hindu deity supposed to have been "converted" to Buddhism (Genoud 1982:47); he is shown accompanying his cosmic dance with the pulsating rhythms of his **ḍamaru** drum, evoking music and dance in their "highest, most emblematic form" (Fox-Strangways 1914:76-77). Another example, an eighth century wall-painting from Bezaklik near the northern centre of Turfan, represents the Parinirvāṇa of Śākyamuni, and depicts a number of musicians accompanying a group of sovereigns and dignitaries mourning the death of the Buddha, with a cylindrical drum, cymbals, flute and lute (Puri 1987:242,287).

A prominent musical theme among Central Asian paintings of the seventh to ninth centuries, anticipating those at Alchi (Lower Ladakh) and Tabo (Spiti) from the tenth century onward, is the representation of cosmological ideas relating to music. The most well-known examples come from the cave complex at Dunhuang, at the eastern gateway of the Tarim Basin, but others are also represented along the westward routes, for example in the Cave of the Frieze of Musicians at Kizil, and in the Cave of the Apsarās and of the Kinnaras at Kumtura, both in the Kucha region (Puri 1987:278-81). Among the Dunhuang paintings may be mentioned the "Paradise of Śākyamuni" (cave 17, early ninth century), a scroll-painting which shows the historical Buddha and his retinue of Bodhisattvas and mythical beings being entertained by two groups of five Gāndharva musicians (a lute, harp and mouth organ are most clearly portrayed) and a dancer, performing on a platform above a lotus pond (Whitfield and Farrer 1990, pl.2). A similar ensemble arranged in the same manner, but in more splendid surroundings, is depicted in the "Western Paradise of Amitābha" (cave 139a, late eighth century): again, ten celestial musicians are seated on a platform rising from a lotus pond, set in two groups on either side of a dancer; behind them, a bridge leads to a much larger platform upon which the Buddha Amitābha is enthroned within a lavish citadel of towers and galleries where the gods dwell (Sickman and Soper 1968, pl.113). The imagery here associated with the Buddha of Endless Light, evoking a rich sense-realm of a radiant landscape re-echoing with sublimely beautiful

sounds, suggests that Central Asian Mahāyāna Buddhism enriched Indian Buddhism with pre-Islamic Iranian ideas (Puri 1987:143-44).

In a later phase, similar themes re-emerge in the wall-paintings of celestial music at Alchi. Although the earliest paintings, considered to be Kashmiri in style, date from the time of the supposed founder of Alchi (and of Tabo), the saint-scholar Rinchen Zangpo (954-1055), many of them appear to date from a restoration conducted in the sixteenth century (Snellgrove and Skorupski 1977:31,56; Genoud 1982:36-37). The surviving original paintings include depictions of court scenes in a strongly Central Asian style (e.g. Genoud 1982, pl.40,41) and, like those at Tabo (Francke 1914:38,40), include representations of the nymph-like Apsarā dancers (T **lha'i btsun-mo**, i.e. consorts of the gods) and the half-human, half-bird Kinnara attendants (T **mi-'ma-ci**). Perhaps inspired by the motifs of these original paintings, the later ones are executed in the Persian style of Mughal miniatures, probably from Muslim Kashmir. Two striking paintings, both again of Amitābha, are of special musical interest. The first (ibid., pl.33) shows the buddha seated on an unusual form of peacock throne, and escorted from above by two Kinnaras playing long trumpets (of the **karna** or **dung-chen** type) at either side; beyond them are two tiers of bodhisattvas, including Avalokiteśvara, and Hindu deities such as Śiva. The second painting (ibid., pl.37) portrays Amitābha in a very similar manner, but the pedestals upon which the Kinnaras are standing support an archway that is decorated with elaborate arabesques; in addition, the deity is entertained by an ensemble of Gāndharvas playing lutes, flutes and a harp. Though much later in date, these Ladakhi paintings preserve many of the Indian themes represented in earlier Central Asian Buddhist art. And although they exhibit elements of the later imagery of celestial music represented in the pleasure palaces in Islamic art (Denny 1985), this constitutes a later phase of a long tradition of Iranian influence - pre-Islamic and Islamic - upon Indian Buddhist culture in Central Asia which, in Ladakh, extended well into its dynastic period.

The preservation of particular Indian lutes and harps in Ladakhi paintings quite clearly shows that some musical motifs are invoked only for their visual symbolism irrespective of local performance practice.

Pictorial sources for the historical documentation of Buddhist instrumental music must, therefore, be treated with caution since their technical accuracy is clearly subordinate to their artistic inspiration. However, visual representations are not without foundation in real musical practice: for example, in Indian iconography, Sarasvatī is shown with a **vīṇā**, but in Tibetan art the goddess (Yangchenma) is depicted playing what is regarded as the Tibetan equivalent, the **sgra-snyan**. Indeed, it is not unlikely that the **sgra-snyan**, together with other Central Asian lutes of the waisted/barbed type, represent a pattern of marginal, 'high mountain', survival of ancient Asian lutes, since it was probably introduced to Tibet from Central Asia via Western Tibet by the seventh or eighth century (Collinge 1991:26-30). Moreover, the widespread occurrence of the visual representation of Indian ensembles across Central Asia as a whole does have a basis in fact: the transmission of such ensembles from the western Tarim Basin to China is well documented in Chinese sources, and the present-day Buddhist orchestral musics of the Far East, including Tibet, bear witness to their common Indian antecedents. [68]

The value of iconographic sources is thus augmented where they can be supported by literary and organological evidence. The Gandhāran reliefs of the Kuṣāṇa period, showing Indo-Hellenic influence, appear to confirm accounts (such as those of Kalidasa, a fourth-century writer) that Central Asian ensembles of Greek and Persian origin performed at the Indian courts (Dick *ibid.*; Gray 1981:17-18). Contemporary Greek sources, meanwhile, attest to the use of cymbals and drums in the worship of deities (Danielou 1968:2). These data are also congruent with the view, argued earlier, that the Indo-Iranian population of the Ladakh region may already have been using drum and reed instruments of some kind during this period.

The use of musical instruments in the service of Buddhist ritual, indicated in Central Asian paintings of the sixth to ninth centuries, accords with the accepted understanding of monastic ritual music during the early Buddhist period. Musical principles relating to ritual practice began to be formulated along with other ritual procedures from the time that monastic discipline was institutionalized, as early as the third century BCE (Lester 1987:30); textual sources also speak of music (S **gāndharva**, Pali **gandhabba**)

as one of the disciplines taught at Central Asian monasteries in the early centuries CE. [69] In its more specific sense as a form of ritual music drawn from Vedic **sāma**, the Indian **gāndharva** tradition, intimately connected with the Śiva cult, would be a prime candidate for the musical inspiration behind Indian Buddhism (especially its Śhaivite-influenced Tantric forms), as it was for subsequent types of devotional music (Lath 1978:66,109,145-151).

As in Vedic ritual music, patterns of beat-formations and gesticulations associated with the articulation of sacred texts were fully prescribed by strict, sutra-like rules which were handed down in a guru-disciple setting with the aid of manuals. Greater prominence, however, was given to rhythmic organisation: a complex system of rhythmic patterns (**gītaka**) of varying length and complexity was devised in accordance with the structure of the rituals they accompanied. The following description, based upon a study of the Dattilam treatise (arguably dating from the period third century BCE to third century CE), could almost as aptly characterise Tibetan practice:

They [the **gītakas**] were not simple patterns, cyclically repeated. A single **gītaka** was composed of a group of distinct patterns with a set organisation of sounded and unsounded beats as well as tempic and rhythmic formations. It contained numbered repetitions of smaller or larger patterns within greater patterns; introductions of fixed rhythmic irregularities, and other such features: all pre-decreed and formed according to gandharva manuals (Lath 1978:104-105)

As in Tibetan monastic ritual music, these kinds of formulae are led by a pair of large bossed cymbals played in a similar manner to the Tibetan cymbals of this type (**sbug-chal**) (Ellingson 1979q:226-27; Lath 1978:111). It is also worth noting that the connection between the gestural dimension of this beat system and the actual production of sound, which intrigues - even confounds - Lath (ibid:24-5,111) is still manifest in Tibetan instrumental practice. Here, visual, kinesic and choreographic factors can have a prescriptive influence on the acoustic result of instrumental performance; even where they do not, these "unsounded" features are perceived visually or through movements of the body and are acknowledged to be audible only to enlightened beings. Indeed, the use of the mandala

as an abstract visual model for musical performance constitutes a special kind of pictorial representation of musical ideas (Ellingson 1979a,1979b).

The dynamic poses and elegant gestures of the dancers depicted in the paintings from Bezaklik, Dunhuang and other Central Asian sites, and especially the use of drums and cymbals, also suggests a system of time-beating that evoked Indian aesthetic qualities in the pursuit of religious merit. It has also been established that, in **gāndharva**, drum-playing was most prominent in ritual drama (in which dance had an integral part) and it appears that the association between rhythmic modes and aesthetic qualities (**rasa**) was formulated in conjunction with dramaturgical principles (Lath 1978:102-106,452). [70] Again, current Tibetan practice attests to a pattern of marginal Indian survival: besides the borrowing of a system of drumming modes developed by Indian Buddhists, already described, the Tibetan ritual dance-drama (**gar-'chams**) heritage indicates Indian roots (Ellingson 1979a:226-229).

As for the instruments themselves, they also suggest an Indian origin, and evoke the ideal, at least, of the **pañchatūryanāda** ensemble (cymbals, drums, gongs, trumpets, and conches) of the Indian theorists. Among those certainly of Indian provenance are the semanterion (**gaṇḍi**), hourglass drum (**damaru**), hand-bell (**dril-bu**), thighbone trumpets (**rkang-gling**), cymbals (**sil-snyan**), and conch (**dung-dkar**); the large-bossed cymbals (**sbug-chal**) and frame drum (**rnga**) may not be of Indian origin, yet they probably assumed the role of their Indian counterparts (Ellingson 1979a:223). Although all but absent from the subcontinent today, elements of this ancient layer of Indian orchestral music appear to have persisted in areas where Buddhism has lingered or survived: for example, in the Tamil **periyamelam** (Day 1891:95) and the Sri Lankan **pañchatūryanāda** (Seneviratna 1975:29,39), besides the monastic ensembles of Tibet and Ladakh. Taken together, these suggest instrumental practices of some antiquity, and it is certain that such instrumental ensembles were being used in the Theravada tradition by the fourth century CE and, in all probability, in Mahayana also (Ellingson 1979a:177,186-187).

It is not entirely clear when the Buddhist instrumentarium was assembled in Tibet, but according to Ellingson (1979a:277), the monastic orchestra was all but complete, except for the **rgya-gling**, by the twelfth century, that is, at the culmination of the 'second spreading' of Buddhism from India to Tibet. However, many of the instruments were certainly in use during Tibet's royal period at the time of the 'first spreading', as described in later Tibetan accounts based upon contemporary sources. At the dedication ceremony (**rab-gnas**) of the '**phrul-snang** temple in Lhasa, the principal Buddhist site (i.e. the **jo-khang**, the so-called "Cathedral of Lhasa") founded by King Songtsen Gampo (c.609-649), it is recorded that the "great drum of the gods" (**lha-rnga-chen**) was beaten, and that flutes, gongs, drums and cymbals were "sounded together in many ensembles" (Ellingson 1979a:74). Tibetan wall-paintings also back up textual accounts of the **rab-gnas** of Tibet's first monastery at Samye in 779, where, in the presence of King Thrisong Detsen (742-797), an ensemble of trumpets, cymbals, gongs, flutes, clay drums, lutes and **pheg-rdob** (probably **ting-shags**, cymbals) accompanied various types of songs and dances (Ellingson 1979a:74-76). Supporting evidence for these (and other) foundations is to be found in inscriptions contained upon the large bells mounted upon their verandahs, among the few obvious surviving features of these ancient structures (Snellgrove and Richardson 1986:78,90). Contemporary Chinese records from the Tang dynasty (618-907) also mention instruments used among the Tibetans, particularly drums and conches (Snellgrove and Richardson 1986:29).

The time-depth for the introduction of such instruments suggested by these data is consistent with the pattern of cultural contact between Tibet and areas to the west and north during the 'first spreading' of Buddhism between the seventh and ninth centuries, a period when Tibet established control of a number of key Buddhist sites in these areas, including Swat (Gandharan region), Khotan, Dunhuang, Baltistan and Ladakh. [71] Besides the appearance of "Persian" (Tajik) performers at the Samye **rab-gnas** (Ellingson 1979a:76), and the possible adoption of the **sgra-snyan** from these regions at around this time, Ladakhi records mention that what appears to be an ensemble of Buddhist ritual instruments was introduced from Gya - i.e. India or China (Chinese Central Asia?) - to Tibet during

the reign of king Dusrong (676-704): "from Gya came tea, as well as stone drums [or cymbals?], oboes (**sur-na**, **rgya-gling**), horns [?] etc". [72]

Although neither the **sur-na** nor the **rgya-gling** could have existed in their present form at this time - since they both represent distinct developments of the Middle Eastern oboe-type introduced to India during later medieval times - the presence of some kind of pre-Islamic reed instrument, again, cannot be dismissed. [73] First of all, it is known that an older form of oboe (without bell, staple or lip-disc) was used in Indian Buddhist Ensembles in fourth-century Kucha, i.e. the '**bili**' (whence possibly the Chinese **guanxi**, Korean **p'iri**, Japanese **hichiriki**). Also, a figurine excavated from the Pala dynasty (eighth-twelfth centuries) monastery at Vikramaśīla in Magadha (modern Bihar), showing what appears to be a double pipe (without bell), is evidence that ancient reeds, perhaps of Central Asian origin, were probably being used in Indian Buddhist communities at this time (Dick 1984:84). This would appear to be confirmed by a Tibetan historical account, apparently also depicted in contemporary wall-paintings, of the instruments (including reed-instruments) assembled to receive the renowned abbot of Vikramaśīla, and key figure of the 'second spreading', Atiśa (982-1054), in Guge (Ladakh-Tibet border) in 1042. [74]

Another instrument said to have been 'invented' for this event was the **dung-chen** or, as it is sometimes known in this connection, **jo-bo spyan-'dren-gyi dung** ("trumpet for inviting the master") (Tethong 1979:17), a western connection which suggests the same possible organological link between the **dung-chen** and the Persian **karna** that is alluded to in the Persian-style paradise paintings at Alchi. Another tradition, purely Ladakhi, associates a particular pair of conches (**dung-dkar**), currently in Stok Palace, with the Kashmiri yogin Naropa (956-1040), the spiritual figurehead of the Kargyupa school who was active in Ladakh. Although these individual traditions cannot be substantiated in historical fact, taken together they nevertheless strongly suggest that Ladakh played a significant part in the evolution of Tibetan instrumental traditions at least during the period of the 'second spreading', if not during the first. It was only after the decline of Buddhism in India,

notably in Kashmir, that this direction of influence was reversed, at least as far as Tibetan monastic musical traditions are concerned.

The historical value of these data, like visual representations of instruments, may be limited, but they do yield significant information relating to the symbolic and functional aspects of instruments and their sounds. Thus the conches attributed to Nāropa, known as "Nāropa's gathering trumpets" (**na-ro tshogs-dung**), evoke a common visual motif of spreading the dharma through sound. As one of the eight auspicious signs (**bkra-shis rtags-brgyad**) frequently depicted in monastery wall-paintings, the conch is the predominant musical emblem, but by no means the only one: an unusual painting in Basgo monastery (Genoud 1982, pl.3; also Helffer 1994, pl.3) shows Nāropa blowing an animal horn (**rwa-dung**, in this case what appears to be the spiralled horn of the markhor wild goat). In other cases, it will be recalled that individual instruments are associated with particular deities or qualities by virtue of their sound and musical function. The dharmapala Mahakala, for example, is often portrayed with a **ganḍi** in right hand and a skull-cup in his left, evoking the destruction of the enemies of religion (the Maras) through which is provided the refuge that the religion offers to true believers (see, for example Rhie and Thurman 1991, pl.71).

Real instruments can embody and project these symbolic models not only acoustically, but also in visual, kinesic and choreographic codes. It will be recalled that, in Buddhist symbolic theory, all the sense media have a 'body' and an 'image', and that sense-bodies, or "supports" (**rten**) are the material basis for complex processes of signification in a variety of modes. Hence, as a multiple type of 'sense body', musical instruments do not have to be actually sounded. Their significance lies in the perceiver's association of their physical presence with the sound they produce, regardless of whether the association is realised in sound: their potential to generate meaning in sound is acknowledged visually. Musical instruments are not just sound-producing devices but also, like their pictorial representations, icons of aural concepts. In a ritual context, for example, the **sgra-snyan** is never actually sounded, but only used as a visual symbol of the beauty of the Speech of all Buddhas through which the dharma is

propagated: visual images of the instrument may in fact take fantastical forms (e.g. one thousand strings of lapis lazuli) that cannot be physically realised, or actual instruments may be silently borne in procession or placed before deities as surrogate sound-offerings (Collinge 1991:34-36). [75]

Instruments-as-images, more so than images of instruments, thus have a special status as ritual objects. As with all types of image - whether in two or three dimensions - certain instruments are consecrated by a senior lama before their life-giving properties become permanently embodied in the object. As ritual vessels, musical instruments or objects which can function as instruments, can acquire additional symbolic-functional properties. Conch-shells, for example, may be filled with curd (a symbol of prosperity) or perfume (an olfactory sense-offering). Similarly, horns and skulls, as **gtor-ma**, may be filled with blood to collect evil spirits prior to their destruction. Thus instruments are considered to be sources of power (on the human consciousness) in much the same way as certain sutras which may be chanted are considered to be **dhāraṇīs**, i.e. "those (words) which hold (power)" (Lester 1987:89). Like the written texts in which these words are contained, musical instruments are charged with a potential 'power' that is regarded as auspicious even before - or without - they are sounded.

Although, at the popular level, this concept is underpinned by beliefs in the magical power of certain instruments, this would not be an orthodox Buddhist interpretation. In such cases, their power is regarded as being due to the transcendental power (merit) that accrues to the performer or patron by virtue of his 'received' musical knowledge or rightful access to it, much in the same way that the 'power' of chanted **dhāraṇīs**, though they may contain 'magic' words (mantras) lies in the wisdom of the exhorter under divine guidance, not in the exhortation itself (Lester 1987:89). Real instruments, being more than objects of visualisation or meditation, generate merit by virtue of the sounds they produce each time they are played, not just each time the object is created. [76] In one of the Buddhist Jataka tales, for example, Brahmadata gives a double-headed drum to a mountain hermit, saying "if you beat upon this side your

enemies will run away, if upon that they will become your firm friends" (Fox-Strangways 1914:77). Here the dual symbolism of ritual action is supported by the physical existence of a two-headed drum which, besides its visual symbolism, is capable of producing rhythmic patterns associated with these contrasting modes of ritual activity.

Other instruments also evoke dual symbolism through left-right / male-female oppositions. In the bone version of the **damaru**, the **thod-rnga**, the two half-crania are ideally, according to at least one tradition, made from the skulls of a boy and a girl (Dorje and Ellingson 1979). A particularly fine Ladakhi example of this phenomenon is the pair of conches associated with Nāropa: the component shells, each with large, jewel-encrusted silver wings (**dngul-gshog-ma**) are identified as male or female by the directional sense of their spirals, one (being the more unusual) with the spiral reverting to the right (**dung-dkar g.yas-'khyil**) rather than to the left (**g.yon-'khyil**). The two drums of the **da-man** are identified as male (**pho-skad**) and female (**mo-skad**) not just by their pitch and size, but also by the fact that the heads are made - ideally, if not always in practice - from the hide of either the male or female species of red cattle (Ayu 1986); the Tibetan varieties may also be distinguished by their material (copper and silver) and their painted colour (red and blue) (Norbu 1986). The same idea lies behind the pairing (or multiple pairing) of wind instruments, including **rgya-gling** and **sur-na**.

The visual symbolism of instruments thus extends to those whose main function is, in fact, to produce sound. Their appearance, like their sound, must be sensually pleasing and 'auspicious'; the notion of "liberation through sight" (**mthong-grol**) matches its aural equivalent. Thus the degree of decoration, and the quality of materials, relates to the ornamentation and timbre of the sound appropriate to the ritual context in which it may be used: bells may be made of gold, silver or one of a range of qualities of bronze (Helffer 1989); Tibetan texts of the royal period mention sets of silver drums, and trumpets made of turquoise and gold (Ellingson 1979a:78,98); and **rgya-gling** may be evaluated and identified by the relative worth of the metal used, namely gold (**gser-gling**), silver (**dngul-gling**) or copper (**zangs-gling**) (Scheidegger 1988). This phenomenon

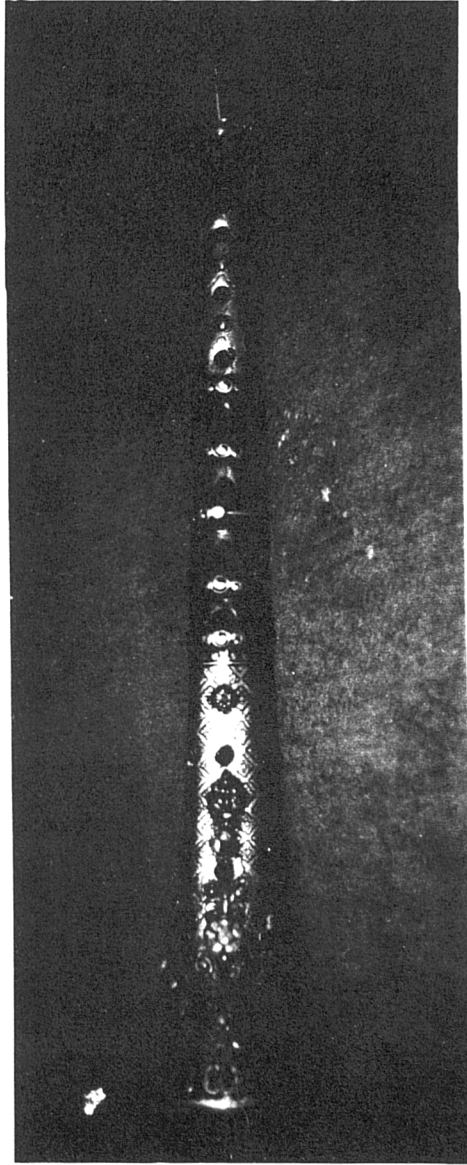


Plate 22: The royal **sur-na** at Stok Palace

is not restricted to monastic instruments: some Ladakhi **sur-na** may, depending upon the value given to their sound and musical function, be decorated after the fashion of **rgya-gling**. The implication is that its sound, though regarded as inferior to that of the **rgya-gling**, is yet considered to have auspicious qualities and is worthy of producing sound-offerings. A particularly impressive example is a royal **sur-na** (**mkhar sur-na**), again from Stok Palace (Plate 22), whose wooden shaft is covered with silver inlaid with gold, and encrusted with ruby, lapis lazuli, coral and turquoise in lotus-flower and peacock motifs. [77] Here, as in the other cases, the materiality of instruments enhances the musical symbolism of their sounds.

Instruments operate as visual symbols in kinesic and choreographic modes of performance, whether or not they are sounded in musical performance. Since meditational practice is regulated by rules relating to posture, gesticulation and movement, the use of instruments in these contexts is subject to the same principles of corporeal discipline. In the case of an individual's practice, the **ḍamaru** is held in the left hand with the **dril-bu** in the right, played in combination with certain hand **mudrā** gestures. In the case of drums and cymbals, their faces may be treated as mandala-discs around which the corresponding sounds are executed (e.g. Ellingson 1979b). Even with regards to the monastic ensemble as a whole, the visual impression created by the arrangement of performers and the alignment of their instruments, likened to 'a string of jewels', has an extramusical significance (Canzio 1980).

Again, although its goal is to effect a ritual transformation through the use of symbols, the performance of '**cham** involves the presentation or display of the various symbols which comprise the ideal model to be invoked. The dancers, like the iconographic images of the deities they portray, therefore bear the appropriate instruments as part of their apparel, manipulating them whilst silently chanting the mantras through which their characteristic postures and bodily movements are memorised in co-ordination with the accompanying instruments. Mahakala, for example, may be depicted holding his **gaṇḍi** and skull-cap in the prescribed manner during his dance: among the spectators, the foot movements through which

he acts out the geometric design of the mandala on the courtyard are understood to represent his trampling of the four Māras, while the **gaṇḍi**, though unsounded, is recognised as an emblem of his protection of the Sangha.

Despite the prescriptive nature of such visual models, the symbolic properties of instruments are nevertheless anchored in their actual musical functions. Ancient signalling instruments such as the **gaṇḍi**, animal horns (e.g. **dzo-dung**) and lithophones (**rdo-ting**) are still used in Ladakh to announce and regulate the activities of the monastery, a function which appears to date back to the first permanently settled institutions; such instruments may even have been used by teachers and missionaries to announce their arrival in a temporary settlement, and to assemble followers to a suitable gathering-place for preaching the dharma. According to the fourth century Ekottaragamasutra, the **gaṇḍi** was used by Ananda, one of Sakyamuni's disciples:

Ananda ascended at the preaching hall, carrying a **gaṇḍi** and...he uttered these stanzas:

In order to conquer Mara, the powerful fiend and to overcome obstruction without residue (I) beat the **gaṇḍi** in the open (as the Buddha had ordered him before);

(You) mendicants assemble;

(You) who want to hear the law which saves those drifting in the Ocean of Life and Death, on hearing those sweet notes gather like clouds. [78]

Today, the **gha-ṇḍi**, and other signalling instruments are used in Tibetan monasteries in Ladakh and elsewhere for a range of signals (**brda**), including alarm calls, assembly signals (**tshogs-brda**) for liturgical services and meal-times, and for retirement signals at bedtime (**gzims-brda**), as well as for more specialist activities: for example, the **gaṇḍi** is struck three times when a debating point is put before a doctrinal debating assembly (**tshed-nyid**) (Canzio 1986); conches are blown at death-rites, when the monks at the cremation site are ready for body of the deceased to be brought from the house; and at **'cham** performances, for calling the dancers out into the public courtyard. In short, these signals convey specific messages not only to the monks, but to the wider community beyond its walls, and are regularly played from the monastery's roof in

order to maximise their acoustic and visual impact. In the case of the enormous drums and bells used as signalling instruments at the larger monasteries of Central Tibet, they were suspended from wooden frames built on their roofs or verandahs (Ellingson 1979a:576), their architectural dimension being reminiscent of the drum- and bell-towers of Buddhist India (Fisher 1993:28). Indeed, their immense size (e.g. drums up to two metres in diameter) was necessary not only for their sound to be of sufficient intensity for it to carry to the boundaries of its target territory, but also for their visual connotations of power. [79]

There are reasons to believe that the use of instruments for such signalling purposes may be connected with the use of instruments in the services themselves. Canzio (1986) has demonstrated how, in the Bonpo tradition, the musical regulation of monastic protocol and behaviour, or "the way of going about things in the monastery" (**dgon-pa'i 'gro-lugs**) is intricately interwoven with the liturgy itself. Hence particular instruments (**ganḍi, rdo-ting, dung-dkar, 'gar-rnga, dung-chen, rgya-gling**) are assigned special signalling roles according to the nature - often liturgical - of the signalled action. Furthermore, the sounds they make are not structured in a simple functional way as true sound-signals might be, but are organised according to the same types of musical principles found in the liturgy. Prior to doctrinal debates, for example, the **ganḍi** plays from the monastery's roof a complex pattern of 108 beats during which the player recites a verse of the Prayer of the Jewel (**nor-bu smon-lam**) with each stroke whilst walking in the "continuous stride of the swastika" (**g.yung-drung lu ku rgyud**) to mark out the cosmic pattern.

A similar tradition which adds credence to the supposed antiquity of such practices survives at the Dalada Maligawa Buddhist temple in Kandy, Sri Lanka (Seneviratna 1975). In the morning, upon hearing a conch-signal sounded from inside the temple complex, a drummer sounds the "auspicious kettledrum" (**maṅgal bere**) in the public courtyard to wake the people and signal that it is time for offerings to be made; then, together with other drums, the musicians beat different patterns throughout the service to convey to those outside the precise moment at which the offering is made.

This phenomenon appears to have a direct parallel in Ladakh where the **lha-rnga** played at three times of the day during special, extended monastic rituals, have a signalling function, and yet are themselves a form of religious offering. Again this suggests that the practice of providing periodic musical offerings regulates ritual activity by indicating the times at which other types of religious offerings should be made.

Musical signalling and musical offering are not, then, contradistinct since the nature of actual signals are not predetermined, according to some neutral arbitrary code, by the action which they expect or demand, but might indeed be subject to musical evaluation, as the epithet of the **gandī's** "sweet notes" (above, p.234) suggest. Unlike true sound-signals whose function is utterly mundane, the perceiver's response is neither physiological (e.g. waking from an alarm call) nor an emotional response to the conscious expectation of the action (e.g. assembling for some purpose) to which the sounds refer, but to the sounds themselves. Conversely, it will be remembered that there are also elements linguistically-coded sound structures embodied in ritual music which make it possible to speak of various types of musical encoding at different structural levels.

In the domain of public music-making where musical instruments operate as visual cues which invoke cultural models influencing musical cognition, the modality of the signalling act - the use of particular instruments which are also used in other modes of musical action - is a highly significant aspect of musical symbolism that extends beyond instances where sounds are encoded in some specific way, such as in signalling. Hence the notion of the power of the dharma as sound - and drumming in particular - is evoked by the popular etymological identification of the **da-man** itself (or **dha-man**) with the dharma (**dhamma** in Pali) (Norpel 1988); the alternative spelling **mda'-man**, where the drum is identified with the arrow (**mda'**), reinforces the association with the transmission of the dharma. Furthermore, the connection with secular language is suggested in the naming of its drum-heads as **skad** ("speech", and also the name of a drum-signal used for announcements and edicts). The association of the instrument with signalling is maintained in

Tibet, where it is called **brda-man** (Tethong 1979), apparently from the word meaning sign, symbol or word (**brda**).

The significance of the image of the "drum of dharma" invoked by the aural and visual perception of actual drumming is that it shares with military signalling the principle that authority is ineffective unless "diffused by sound" (**bsgrags**). The idea of encoding instructions in sound, thereby partially disguising the content of the message, is to protect the 'speech community' of disciples or subjects: military drum-signals can give orders to the allied side without revealing one's intentions to the enemy, or can even conspire to frighten or confuse the opposing side through misinformation or noise; in a religious context, instrumental signalling (e.g. of mantra syllables) reveals wisdom only to those who are not hostile to its message, and helps "insiders" (Buddhists) along the right path. But even where this idea is not given literal expression through specific sound structures, it is an idea nevertheless evoked by the act of drumming in a range of genres: to be seen and heard to be "grasping the drum" is indeed the key to gaining access to the legitimate voice of authority.

5.5: De-alienization: Inventing Buddhist Musical Traditions

Following the foundation of dynastic rule in Ladakh by a branch of the Central Tibetan ruling family in around 930, Buddhist musical traditions were partly modelled on those of the early Tibetan kingdom. But they were also adapted to local conditions: the early musical traditions of the Dardic-speaking inhabitants of Ladakh were, like other local cultural forms, customs and beliefs, assimilated by the new Tibetan arrivals. With the exception of those in the remote valleys of the northwest, the Brokpa were themselves absorbed into the population and probably formed political alliances with the foreign rulers, adopting local musical traditions as instruments of legitimation in order to generate popular support. This process of "de-alienization" had probably already started with some kind of Tibetan rule in the early eighth century when the first Tibetans began to settle in the region in increasing numbers and continued throughout the ninth century, when Ladakh apparently temporarily fragmented into a number of Tibeto-Dard chiefdoms.

In one sense, this was a process of Tibetanization: the indigenous population were incorporated into the wider Tibetan world by extending the boundaries of Tibetan civilization - as identified by cultural and ethnic affiliation - across Ladakhi territory; the Tibetan 'conquest' was legitimated by conversion not only of religion, but also of language and music. However, the political or cultural hegemony implied by this description is not entirely valid, for Ladakh was no doubt the first to thoroughly embrace Buddhism and aid its propagation in Tibet, and Tibet's musical traditions were initially shaped by the same pattern of Indian musical culture that filtered through Ladakh during the predynastic period and into the period of Lhachen rule. Moreover, Ladakh gained sovereignty at a relatively early stage in Tibetan history and retained a form of government that was soon supplanted by independent developments in Tibet itself: unlike Tibet, Ladakh remained an effective Buddhist state which had more in common with the Indian Hindu-Buddhist centralized state than the theocracy that replaced it in Tibet.

It is preferable, then, to describe the process of de-alienization as a particular form of Buddhization [80]: political, and initially alien, rule was legitimated by invoking the ideal Buddhist order. Thus, even after Ladakhi Buddhism took its lead from Tibet rather than India (from around the fourteenth century) the monastic institutions of Buddhism still fulfilled a legitimating role towards monarchic rule: the mutual adaptation between the musics of the court, temple and populace was the direct outcome of the sanction of temporal rule by Buddhist spiritual authority. As shown by the patronage of **lha-rnga**, Ladakhi rulers developed a uniquely Ladakhi form of culture in which the institutions of Buddhist civilization were adapted to the living traditions of the Ladakhi people, while these traditions were in turn adapted to the ideal Buddhist order, each being compromised in its service of the other.

The immutable ideals invoked by such musical traditions thus belie the complex dynamic of historical change and cultural adaptation that has, in reality, moulded their evolution. As such, traditions are 'inventions' in the sense that they disguise their formulation and manipulation in order to gain political significance: that is, new or altered traditions must pose as

old, unchanging ones if they are to generate a belief in their sanctity that is potentially legitimating towards recently institutionalised relations of power. [81]

One institution of power - sanctioned by **lha-rnga** manipulated in such a way - which demonstrates this phenomenon is the office of divine kingship, or at least the creation of an impression of ideal, divine rule. Popular beliefs regarding the divinity of the Ladakhi monarch appear to represent the incorporation of pre-Buddhist beliefs into the sacred aura created by the Buddhist rulers of the Lhachen dynasty. Like the Dard chiefs before them they were 'super-shamans' whose worldly authority, with the responsibilities of communal leadership, was validated by their special access to transcendental powers. But their appropriation of the transcendental symbols of the shaman's charisma occurred within the context of the social institutions of state and church where positions of power - both monarchic and monastic - were validated by regulated ritual procedures (the claim to divine authority) rather than by the direct election by higher beings (divine mandate).

The key 'invented tradition' of Tibetan Buddhist rule in both institutions was the development of a reincarnation lineage where the divine mandate of incarnate leaders (kings and lamas) was perceived to be inherited by birth-right rather than having to be won by personal qualities. In Ladakh, the king and prince were popularly believed to have been reincarnations of Gesar, while the queen and queen mother were considered to be reincarnations of White Tara, just as successive head lamas of monastic traditions are regarded as reincarnations of their founders. In moving between the terrestrial and the divine across several generations rather than during a single lifetime, these leaders are not so much shamans with real charisma, but rather incumbents of an unchanging transcendental principle which represents charisma in its ideal, transmittable form.

In terms of Weberian legitimation theory, this invention constitutes an example of the "routinization" of charismatic authority into traditional authority, a transition matched by the development of Buddhism, especially

in its original Indian context, from a marginal, charismatic cult into a systematic religion. In the case of both monarchic and monastic rule, the belief in a reincarnation principle is a socially stabilizing force which establishes continuity across time by re-presenting the past in the present, and which creates an unchanging symbolic focus, or exemplary centre, around which social solidarity can coalesce.

Music lies at the heart of invented traditions because its repeatable, orally transmitted performance procedures bestow a sense of historical continuity upon the symbolic contexts in which it is embedded. This is especially so in the case of instrumental music because the instruments themselves give this continuity a material basis: as acoustic devices they contain musical traits in sensory-motor habits and become the means of their reproduction through control, manipulation and patronage; and as physical assets, they offer themselves as the signifiers in other symbolic codes (linguistic, ritual, visual) which refer to the meaning of their own origin, history and ownership. But it is in the context of the performance process itself that music inculcates a belief in the sanctity - and hence legitimacy - of invented traditions because the symbolic discourses of cultural schemata, and particularly those concerned with monastic foundation, are grounded in real experience. Through the repeated performance of these schemata, the conflict between inequality (traditional authority, i.e. status acquisition by inheritance) and equality (charismatic authority, i.e. status acquisition through equal competition) is temporarily resolved. It renders the relationship between present realities and their semi-fictitious past as non-arbitrary, reconstructing the past so as to confer legitimacy on the present status quo.

Both state and church established their authority, and indeed competed for it between themselves, through the patronage and manipulation of performance. In the case of the public monastic performances of 'cham, the Ladakhis tend to believe that the festivals have been performed annually ever since their inception by the monastery founders, and that the performances themselves - including their musical components - represent a tradition of knowledge 'received' by these charismatic figures from the transcendental realm. Several of the more

well-known Ladakhi dance-dramas are more or less directly connected with the most celebrated of these founders, Padmasambhava, who is believed to be largely responsible for the 'conquest' of Ladakh's pre-Buddhist divinities and their appointment as protective deities (**mgon-lha**) of the newly founded monasteries. Probably the most famous of all the Ladakhi monastic festivals, at Hemis, re-enacts this event on the occasion of his birth anniversary and, every twelve years, displays the large **thang-ka** painting of him (Helffer 1980), but his role is also widely acknowledged elsewhere because they all, to some degree, re-enact the same ritual battle.

In Ladakh, as in Tibet, these performances have their basis in pre-Buddhist myths and rituals, especially those concerned with the expulsion of the evil associated with the Old Year by means of a human scapegoat. In the context of Buddhism, the plot has clearly become transformed in the service of public monastic ritual, and incorporated into the calendrical cycle of the established Buddhist liturgy (though this, too, was to some degree moulded to the old agricultural festival calendar). The following examples are given because they all involve the performance of **lha-rnga** in connection with the appearance and embodiment of the conquered deities as oracles.

The gods called by **lha-rnga** to appear as oracles at the Stok and Matho festivals are considered to have been ravine spirits first disciplined by Padmasambhava in the Khawakarpo region of Kham (Eastern Tibet); they were subsequently brought to Ladakh by the Tibetan Sakya yogin Lama Drungpa Dorje (**drung-pa rdo-rje**) during the fifteenth century and appointed as protectors of the Sakya sect at Matho, whose monastery (the first belonging to this school in Ladakh) he founded (Shakspo 1988:8). The retinue of characters, portrayed by masked dancers dressed in animal skins, who accompany the Shey oracle, Dorje Chenmo, are considered to be attendants of the mountain goddesses appointed by Padmasambhava as protective deities; the 'conquest' of the Shey oracle-goddess herself is actually attributed to Rinchen Zangpo (954-1055), who first gained her protection at Nyarma (where he built a temple in her honour) in order to help him consolidate the position of Buddhism (nominally Kadampa, by

virtue of his association with Atiśa) in Ladakh (Shakspo 1988:4). The goddess and her retinue were subsequently brought to Shey via Thikse by the Tibetan Nyingmapa lama, Kathok Rigzin Tshewang Norbu (**ka-thog rig-'dzin tshe-dbang nor-bu**, 1698-1755) (ibid.20), who installed the deity as protective deity on the occasion of the village's harvest festival (Shakspo 1988:21-22).

In these cases, the **lha-rnga** pieces specifically associated with the dances (**lha-rtses**) of these deities are believed to have been revealed to these founders. That is, they share with all **lha-rnga** the principle of belonging to the timeless and immutable transcendent order and being originally (in human historic terms) revealed by the spirits or deities they are used to invoke, but in these cases they are believed to have been revealed to individual charismatic Buddhist figures (adepts, saints, gurus, pandits or lamas) rather than some archetypal shaman. Thus the Stok and Matho **lha-rtses** are supposed to have been revealed to Lama Drungpa Dorje. In the case of Shey, some believe that the music and dance was revealed by the goddess as she was brought to the village by Lama Khathok Rigzin Tshewang Norbu, while others say that it was first revealed to Rinchen Zangpo himself at Nyarma and subsequently used to entice her to her new home. The latter tradition would be in line with Rinchen Zangpo's established reputation as a visionary of ritual musical traditions, for it is maintained, for example, that the music used in monastic rituals connected with Mahākāla was revealed by the deity to him in a dream before accompanying the saint on his journey back to Western Tibet from Kashmir: the drum strokes are said to have been given by the swaying of the tails of two tigers which appeared in his vision, while the chant they accompany, "the tune of the tigress", was supposedly inspired by the sound of the tigers devouring a human corpse (Ellingson 1979:239-41). [82]

Just as the pre-Buddhist deities were incorporated into the Buddhist pantheon through their conversion, so too has their music been admitted to the sphere of 'high' religion. Empirically, of course, these musical forms are the products of human consciousness, attributed to the like of Rinchen Zangpo by association; they were composed no less than the instruments upon which they were played were invented, even though the latter too

could be candidates for divine revelation. The 'invention' of the **dung-chen** at the time of Atiśa's appearance in Ladakh, for example, marks a change of ritual status: at first, the instrument of war is said to have caused panic among villagers, but in the new service of Buddhism it has apparently come to symbolize the destruction of fear and ignorance. [83]

The reality, then, is that Ladakhi lamaism drew upon the local musical traditions, exploiting the common ground between Buddhist Vajrayana practice and pre-Buddhist belief systems in order to establish the basis for monastic foundation. It is suggested that as a result, village ritual and the music associated with it is to some degree incorporated by the monastic establishment and brought within its control: if it could not, because of its popular appeal, be suppressed or marginalized then it was more or less integrated. Thus **lha-rnga** came to be performed as village-based offerings in honour of the abbot of monasteries. But as the most 'powerful' (transcendent) village ritual phenomenon, possession ritual has most clearly been subject to central manipulation. The role of the traditional village ritual specialists, the **lha-bdag-pa**, became limited in all but the remotest areas to that of incumbents of the cult of the village deity, now converted to Buddhism and appointed by monks to one of the monastic traditions; the role of **lha-rnga** associated with these rituals is generally reduced to one of (passive) offering rather than (active) possession. Other lay practitioners, village oracles (**lha-pa** or **lha-mo**), are usually directed to act as private household oracle-healers under clerical guidance (Day 1989); their music, **lha-rnga** only in an ideal, literal sense is wholly monastic in orientation. Where their power is not limited, but harnessed in support of monastic authority, the role of lay oracles has been institutionalized within public monastic festivals: in these few cases at the aforementioned monasteries, the village deities are appointed as high-ranking protective deities, and the office of medlumsip is often limited to the monks themselves.

A similar ambivalence is evident in attitudes to, and the organization of, the performance of **lha-rnga** used in connection with the embodiment of the converted local spirits at monastic festivals. Generally speaking, monks are not usually (except in the Drigungpa tradition) allowed to

perform this music - or any form of village music - and the monastic establishment, ideally, prefers to distance itself from the music associated with village ritual. However, it recognizes that to forbid its performance at monastic festivals would be to alienate popular opinion, and it accepts that, in this regard, it needs this music, so long as it is provided by the village and not the monastery. The musicians themselves, the **mon-pa**, are not formally invited by the monastery to perform, and it is social pressure from the village community which motivates their sense of duty to appear at these occasions. Hence, in practice, the musical roles of monastic and village musicians are negotiated: at festivals which include oracular possession, the music played by the monks is regarded as inducing trance and hence ultimately responsible for it, whereas that played by the **mon-pa** is considered to merely maintain it. Where, exceptionally, monks of the two Drigungpa monasteries, Phyang and Lamayuru, do engage in the performance of **lha-rnga** or even folk music, this is seen to be not encouraged by the monastic community as a whole, and is recognized as a marginal practice by village Ladakhis themselves.

As events in which power, through the generation of public support, was created and allocated, it is not surprising that public festivals were occasionally subjects of sectarian conflict. Since it was well-recognized that musical performance was a primary means of generating merit, and listening the means by which it was shared, disputes typically concerned the use and control of musical performance and the roles of practitioners, how public certain types of music should be, and who may participate in them. For example the Cullavagga, one of the Indian canonical **vinaya** (S monastic discipline) texts, criticizes monks for taking part in certain types of music and dancing, notably folk music, in addition to other art forms (Saletore 1985:15). On the other hand, monastic institutions have been taken to task for not providing sufficient public entertainment, thereby risking popular support. [84]

On the whole, though, the promotion of public performance was a key factor in the widespread success of Mahāyāna Buddhism, and the mediating position of **lha-rnga** at Ladakhi festivals reinforces the perception of monastic ritual as being superior to village ritual, and ranks practice

within the continuum so-created. Performances present a stable identity of the religious community as a source of transcendental power superior to those of village shamans or other religious specialists, yet this is not alienating because the populace are allowed access to this power through the 'field of merit' that public performance creates: it encourages the belief that the monks are working in the interests of the lay community, by providing an opportunity for gaining liberation through sight and sound, sharing in the merit by watching and listening. To the monks, the performance of **lha-rnga** represents the desire of the villagers to share in the merit generated by the monastery, and their acceptance of the inadequacy of village ritual; to the villagers, it represents the means by which they can gain access to the monks' higher powers, and the sanction of ritual practice which, albeit inferior, provides security in dealing with their immanent needs.

It is the co-existence of these interpretations which allows the performance of **lha-rnga** to consolidate the negotiation of power between monastery and village. But above all, this generates support and benefits the monasteries because it spreads the message of Buddhism through the instructional aspects of performance, and enhances their position of respect and prestige in the eyes of the people. This position in turn becomes one of real economic power because of the additional donations that people give at public performances in the belief that they gain further merit from this.

The success of Buddhism also depended upon royal patronage for its dissemination and material prosperity; Ladakh's monasteries could not have been built without royal support. Matho, for example, was founded with a grant of land by King Trakpa Bumde (**grags-pa 'bum-lde**, ruled c. 1400-1440), who probably invited its founder, Lama Drunga Dorje, from Tibet. The estates of Lamayuru and Phyang monasteries were granted by King Tashi Namgyal (ruled c. 1555-1575), who invited their founder, Danma Kunga Trakpa (**ldan-ma kun-dga' grags-pa**), as his "fundamental teacher" (**rtsa-ba'i bla-ma, S · mūlaguru**) (Petech 1977:29). Hemis became established as the royal monastery of Ladakh by Lama Tagsang Repa (**stag-tshang ras-pa**, 1574-1651), the Preceptor (**dbu-bla**) of King Sengge Namgyal

(ruled 1616-1642) who brought about the conversion of the royal house to the Drukpa sect; also, the Matho estate was given over to this sect, and the lama founded the palace temple at Shey in 1647 besides playing a key role in political disputes (Petech 1977:52-58).

Significantly, the principal festivals in crown villages did not come into being in their modern royally-sponsored form until the eighteenth century, and it appears that this more conspicuous patronage of Buddhism was motivated by the need to subdue political instability. It was the abbot of Hemis, the Precious Prince (**rgyal-sras rin-po-che**) Mipham Jampal (**mi-pham 'jam-dpal**, d. 1755) who had been denied the throne by his younger brother Phuntsok Namgyal (**phun-tshogs rnam-rgyal**, ruled 1739-53) [85], who introduced the festival there and commissioned the great **thangka** of Padmasambhava (Petech 1977:115-20; Shakspo 1988:22). The inaugurator of the Shey oracle, Khatok Rigzin Tshewang Norbu, was sent by the Seventh Dalai Lama to settle the dispute of royal succession, and it was he who helped negotiate the Wanla agreement (1753) and install King Tshewang Namgyal (ruled 1753-1802), the Hemis abbot's nephew, in that year at Shey (Shakspo 1988:20-21). According to tradition, the king played a personal role in bringing the deity from Nyarma and adopting it as a crown deity (**rtse-lha**) by offering her a horse and a lion on which to ride, the royal attendants laying a path of grass to lead her to her new home (Brauen 1980:143-44).

These semi-historical narratives suggest that the assimilation of legitimating ritual and its music was brought under central control jointly by the state and the religious establishment. In other words, the royal patronage of the monasteries was more than an economic relationship, but also a symbolic one: the dynasty clearly expected to take popular credit for materially supporting the religious establishment, and their conspicuous patronage of the associated festivals demonstrates the importance of religious sanction for the popular legitimation of their authority. By patronizing Buddhism and openly participating in its cultural forms, rulers took a share of the power and magnificence of this charismatic religion, and could pacify and consolidate their kingdom on account of its popular appeal.

The Ladakhi rulers thus took a share of the public support generated by monastic festivals by gaining control of the most powerfully legitimating ritual phenomenon. By winning over oracular possession in support of their authority, they had at their disposal one of the most successful means of manipulating popular opinion and behaviour, a pattern occurring also in Tibet and other neighbouring regions. [86] In most cases it appears that the Ladakhi kings aided the monastic establishment in limiting the power of the village **lha-bdag-pa** by secularizing their position, granting them official titles (**mkhar-dod-pa**, **bka'-rdar** etc), land rights and tax concessions, but the ritual services of particular specialists in royal villages were secured in exclusive support of the state: in Leh, a royal **lha-rtag** (=lha-bdag?) had special public duties, whilst the monastery oracles of Stok, Shey and above all Matho had the status of 'state oracles', conferring legitimacy on the state by foretelling the future of the kingdom and promoting the fertility of the royal estates through public statements made in the context of annual monastic festivals. The royal family also had the exclusive right to privately consult oracles at any time of year, for their authority was evidently such that they were not restricted to the temporal order of the calendar. [87]

The legitimating force of these phenomena partly derives from the ambiguity of the oracles' statements: usually they are not proved wrong because any prognostication is declared to be subject to the continued, correct religious observance among believers, upon whom the blame for any unfulfilled prophecy would therefore fall. [88] In much the same way, the musicians can take the blame - which they would not dare counter-challenge - for angering the deity if they perform the music badly. But above all, the social impact of oracular statement is heightened by their public performance context, where disbelief is suspended by the dramatic appeal of theatrical, choreographic and musical performance.

Rulers therefore gained control of oracles by gaining control of its principal cultural mechanisms: to control the actors of performance is to control its popular impact. That the music associated with the oracular possession is subject to royal direction is clearly shown by the fact the **mon-pa** who provide this music belong only to crown villages with special

responsibilities towards the state. (In other villages, such as Phyang and Lamayuru which have monastic festivals where the **mon-pa** perform **lha-rnga**, their music does not directly assist possession ritual.) At the end of the Shey festival, for example, the King held a ceremony at his summer palace there, at which he made offerings to the representatives of lay offices serving the oracle, and to the local families responsible for providing the dancers who make up the goddess's retinue; the **mon-pa**, meanwhile, were given new skins for their drums as gifts. As with the king's court musicians and dancers in Leh, the king theoretically had the exclusive right to call upon the services of these specialists at any time, not just because of his economic power, but because of his divine authority.

The Shey, Stok and Matho festivals thus have a special status because they are villages close to the capital (or, in the case of Shey, a former capital itself) with palaces or royal estates, which meant that the royal family were personally involved in these festivals as patrons and as individual consulters of the oracles: the very real appearance of their protective deities and their retinues, brought about musically by the musicians of the monastery and the state, goes hand in hand with the actual presence of the king and his ministers. Ceremonial **lha-rnga** and monastic reception music are accordingly played, by the respective musicians (**mon-pa** and monks), not only for the deities and abbots, but also for the royal family and nobility when they make their entrance in procession and take up their allotted seats in the balcony overlooking the monastery courtyard (or formerly, in the case of Stok, the courtyard of the palace where the festival was held).

This situation is confirmed by the conspicuous sharing and contesting of the cultural symbols of power, besides **lha-rnga**, at these events. At Shey, the different crowns worn by the oracle on each day are alternately donated by the King and the Abbot of Hemis. At Matho, the oracle appears in two manifestations, one belonging to the monastery, the other to the palace; each rides a horse donated respectively by Hemis monastery and Stok palace, upon which they race to their **lha-tho** in the mountains above the village. The same theme of contest between church and state

lies behind the mask worn by the Matho oracle: according to tradition, a Ladakhi queen doubted the god's supernatural powers, and demanded that the god's eyes be covered; that the oracle was unhindered in his ability to leap around the monastery's parapets 'blind' was taken as a sure sign of his genuine power. To this day, it is explained, the mask donated by the queen is still worn so that no-one can deny the oracle's authority, underscoring and reinforcing the status of the Matho oracle above other oracles as the principal 'royal' oracle.

These contests, in the context of public performance, recall and re-enact the archetypal contest between king and priest, as represented by the aforementioned 'conquest' of King Thrisong Detsen by Padmasambhava. Tibetan sources relating to the same period show how this inner conflict was negotiated by the participation of the king in public monastic festivals. At the **rab-gnas** ceremony at Samye monastery in 779 (supposed to have been inspired by Padmasambhava), King Thrisong Detsen took a leading part in some of the festivities, comprising various types of dances - including masked dances (**'cham**), drum dances (**rnga-shon**), and animal dances (**seng**) - songs (**glu**), games, contests and acrobatics; at the dedication of the **'phrul-snang** temple in Lhasa, the people sang a "song of happiness" before the "son of the gods" (**lha-sras**, i.e. the king). The Tibetan kings also participated in public religious festivals even before the arrival of Buddhism: early sources record that Bon priests chanted at public events before the king could speak, sing or dance (Ellingson 1979^r:73-76).

Indeed, the survival of non-Buddhist elements in Ladakhi royal rituals suggests that religious sanction played a role in the legitimation of temporal authority before the adoption of Buddhism as the state religion, comparable to the pattern of ritual kingship that existed in the early Tibetan kingdom. Bon sources reveal that there was a chief priest or head shaman (**gshen-gnyan**) who provided ritual services for the ruler, mentioning, for example, a consecration ritual involving a "lustral bath" (**tshang-khrus**) which renews his magical power (**dbang**), and a dance in which the king wore a shaman's white robes and silk-ribbon headress, extolling irradiation of his majesty (**mnga'-thang**) (Tucci 1956/7:200-201).

Bon texts also indicate the importance of royal death rites, ensuring a proper rebirth in the king's successor: one source describes a funeral cortege led by musicians with (conch?-)trumpets (**dung**) and cymbals (**sbug-chal**) (Ellingson 1979a:98).

In Ladakh, similar ritual roles were the responsibility of the king's **lha-rtag**, notably during public rituals with an essentially non-Buddhist core, and especially those connected with the agricultural (solar) calendar rather than the Buddhist (lunar) calendar, i.e. the spring-time ploughing ritual and the unreformed New Year (**lo-gsar**) ceremonies. At **lo-gsar**, or the "old king new year" (Brauen 1980:), the **lha-rtag** was responsible for renewing the king's **lha-tho**, and he led the horse-racing in which the king himself participated; as on other public appearances, the king wore the silk headress supposedly "in imitation of King Langdarma's [crown]" (Heber 1903:173). It is in connection with the former ritual that a special **lha-rnga** is performed by the king's head musician (**ti-chong**) on the **gring-jang** drum, firstly in honour of the crown protective deity (**rtse-lha**, i.e. a special kind of ancestral deity representing a sublimation of paternal authority in the sacred realm), and then in honour of the **pha-lhas** of ministers and nobles in order of rank. They also were in possession of religious emblems of office: the present **bka'-blon** home (of the former Prime Minister), for example, has a special **lha-khang** in which the deity (called **rgyal-po**, "king", identified as one of the Lokapala transcendental kings of the cardinal directions) of this hereditary office takes the form of a mask, and which is only unlocked at New Year (Kaplanian 1980:194). Francke (1914:82-83) also mentions a special mask (now lost), supposed to represent one of the heroes of the Gesar Epic (named **dgra-lha**), then kept in the **mchod-khang** of a deputy minister's (**tho-mgo-che**) home, together with an ibex head which was identified by a renowned lama as one of Śākyamuni's bone relics in his deer incarnation. In its own way, of course, the **gring-jang** was itself an (essentially pre-Buddhist) asset of divine rule, its use and possession being accordingly restricted in the manner already described; it was an emblem of the king's supernatural position as guarantor of prosperity and fertility.

Whether the drum was itself the subject of any special ritual - as it was in Gilgit, or as royal drums were in ancient India [89] - is not known, but it is nevertheless clear from this particular drumming tradition that **lha-rnga** as a whole has its roots in pre-Buddhist belief systems, which, like the beliefs and customs themselves, were subsequently "Buddhicized"; royal Buddhist traditions did not materialize miraculously, as is often claimed. [90] With the arrival of Buddhism, however, the sacred aura surrounding the king, and the ritual and musical procedures which supported it, were largely institutionalized (routinized) within the monastic establishment. Hence in the Ladakhi kingdom, as in the Tibetan Buddhist state before it, the two archetypal forms of authority, the transcendental (**chos**, holy law) and the worldly (**srid**, polity), were instituted in two offices associated with the ruler, represented the Prime Minister, exemplified by the Precious Minister (one of the Seven Jewels of Royalty), and a senior lama from the Buddhist clergy. As in ancient Tibet, it was the Prime Minister (whose full title, **chos-blon chen-po**, Great Holy Minister, invites comparison with the Great Minister of the Tibetan monarchy) who exercised real political power, while the largely symbolic role of the king was upheld by a Preceptor (**dbu-bla**) drawn from a hereditary line of lamas from the Drukpa monastery of Dechen Chokhor in Central Tibet, and who served as the abbot of the royal monastery at Hemis. The relationship between King and Preceptor, closest to its ideal form during the time of Sengge Namgyal and Tagsang Repa, was described as "lion and tiger, priest and donor, sun and moon". [91]

Unlike the **lo-gsar** rituals, those associated with the "new" (Tibetan Buddhist) royal new year, held two months later, are entirely managed by monks from Hemis. They were also responsible for the personal religious welfare of the King, performing rituals (e.g. consecration and death rites) that were generally private in nature. [92] Even the **lo-gsar** celebrations (which commence on the death anniversary of the Gelukpa founder Tsongkhapa), in due course became substantially Buddhicized, the **lha-rnga** in honour of the protective deity of the converted king being incorporated within the Buddhist pantheon. Under the new Buddhist order, the ruler-as-shaman's drifting between the secular and sacred realms, through which he demonstrated his actual control of the cosmic order, was at best little

more than a political manoeuvre between two institutions: rulers sometimes abdicated in order to take up holy orders and at one time both roles were condensed in the institution of the Precious Prince, where a junior member of the royal family simultaneously served as regent and as abbot of Hemis. In brief, the ruler's ability to move between the worldly and the transcendental realms became symbolised through ritual activities (participation in festivals, consultation of oracles and so on) which were brought under monastic control.

Accordingly, the association between **lha-rnga** and shamanic power became loosened under Buddhist dynastic rule: in being harnessed in support of institutionalized power, the genre became more of a symbolic declaration of status or authority rather than a means of ritual transformation (especially through "real" possession), much like the king's monopoly in red robes, or the use of the red colouring in palaces (Kaplanian 1980:160). For example, the **lha-rnga** played at the king's **lha-tho** at **lo-gsar** appears to be a relic of a tradition (documented in Gilgit) where the **lha-bdag**, assisted by this music, actually became possessed by the ruler's protective deity. Again, the three-fold set of periodic **lha-rnga**, which is today only played at monastic festivals, may formerly have been played daily at the royal palace, suggesting a pattern of service in support of ritual kingship similar to that which is maintained at the Tooth Temple in Kandy, Sri Lanka. Here, the thrice-daily offerings to the tooth relic of the Buddha (which had been adopted as the principal sacred asset of Sri Lankan kingship) are said to have been made at the same time as the king took his meals; the musicians who presently continue the tradition claim that the eight-hourly offerings correlated with the daily schedule of the royal court, citing the legend of the Magadhan King, Bimbisara, one of the Buddha's earliest disciples who paid homage to him three times a day (Seneviratna 1975). Alternatively, this tradition may be a musical representation of the shamanic idea of the divine king flying around the world three times a day on his 'precious horse' (another of the Seven Jewels of Royalty).

In Ladakh, ceremonial **lha-rnga**, together with reception music provided by monks, were essentially ritualized procedures for regulating and declaring (signalling) the routines of the royal court, designed to present them as those of the living celestial palace on earth. As the "drum(ming) of dharma" (**chos-rnga**, in its poetic sense), the performance of **lha-rnga** calls the faithful to listen to the holy law (**chos-khrims**) while the "royal drum(ming)" (**rgyal-rnga**) or "judgement drum(ming)" (**khrims-rnga**) proclaims the law of the state (**rgyal-khrims**) by announcing royal edicts and calling ministers to council (its full title was **khrims-kyi rnga-bo-che**, "great drum for the Government edicts" (Das 1902:367)).

In summary, the negotiation of these musical roles represents the sharing of power between the palace and the monastery. To religious leaders, it represents the dependence of the state upon the monasteries' higher powers, a dependence which assures continued royal patronage and material support in the form of government land and money. To the king, it represents the means by which he can gain access to the transcendental realm in order to attain the legitimacy of his rule in the eyes of the people; placed centre-stage by his conspicuous patronage of musico-ritual performance, he benefits from the power (merit) generated by them, and his position as holy ruler is popularly endorsed. The mediating role of **lha-rnga** therefore operates simultaneously across two transcendental-worldly axes: it negotiates the relationship between laity and clergy, and between priesthood and kingship. As the carriers of cultural symbols which, in the public domain, represent different things to different social groups, it renders their interrelationships of power unequal, but reciprocal. Above all, **lha-rnga** socially integrates the various interest groups: it consolidates their perceptions of one another and stabilizes the social interactions between them.

5.6: Militarism: Sounding a Response to Islam

5.6.1: Conditions and Strategies of Cultural Contact

While **lha-rnga** was used by the Lhachen kings as a way of assimilating Buddhist culture to indigenous Ladakhi traditions, it was in turn used as a means of negotiating the perceived military threat posed by Ladakh's Islamized neighbours. In fact there are good reasons for believing that, in being forced to extend the cultural boundaries of the symbols of legitimation, it was the later Namgyal kings who essentially brought about the development of **lha-rnga** into its more or less present, 'modern' form. That is, like most of the contexts in which it came to be performed and the newly-structured relations of power it supported, the genre only became fully developed after the kingdom's direct, turbulent contact with Islam which probably brought about the collapse of the Lhachen Dynasty in c. 1460: historical evidence relating to the adoption of state ceremonial instrumental ensembles, together with their related musical principles and techniques, will show that **lha-rnga** could hardly have existed in its modern form before the foundation of the Namgyal Dynasty, and probably not before (at the earliest) the seventeenth century.

Lha-rnga is thus a foremost example of an 'invented tradition' because despite being vigorously upheld as an expression of the timeless Buddhist order and as a means (cultural schema) of empowering it, it can only have evolved in the comparatively recent historical past as a result of sustained contact with Islamic culture. In spite of claims that the genre originated in the revelations of the visionary founders of monastic traditions, its developed musical forms were nourished by the new cultural and political realities which the Namgyal kings faced in rebuilding their kingdom. As with other cultural schemata (Ortner 1989:73), the development of the genre's procedures arose from the same contexts of real conflict (although mythically or semi-fictitiously represented) which they were designed to symbolically transform.

This circularity reflects the now familiar contradiction between self-empowerment and other-empowerment at the heart of Buddhist society, but here extended to represent and transform military conflict arising from external political forces. Like other small Himalayan kingdoms at the periphery of the Mughal Empire, these small-scale conflicts were characterized by a dual military strategy of provocation and alliance, where augmented state authority (within and beyond the territories of control) was legitimated by the protection (from rival powers) this increased authority claimed to provide: contained, factional conflict was actually necessary in order to demonstrate and justify political ascendancy (Emerson 1984). But unlike Ladakh's major rival, Baltistan, which embraced Islam and where its traditions became de-alienated under Turkish rule, the Ladakhis resisted conversion by themselves implementing this strategy in the form of cultural schemas, dealing with real conflict in terms of the symbols of the ideal Buddhist order: thus military provocation (claiming power) was regarded as the 'fierce action necessary to destroy the enemies of Buddhism, whilst political alliance (renouncing power) was seen as a means of gaining favour (merit) by pacifying rivals. Political violence (and the policies of military conscription and tax-raising that this necessitated) was thus rendered as benevolent, even beneficial, whilst submission or defeat was presented as honourable, even triumphant. The Ladakhis' attitude to Islamic rule and its culture was thus ambivalent: in one sense, they engaged in factional conflict by meeting the threat of the *jihād* with their own holy war and all its symbolic trappings, generating support and solidarity amongst themselves; yet, as a strategy for the survival of what ultimately was a militarily weak kingdom, the rulers adopted the symbols of Islamic rule and participated in its diplomatic protocol in order to avert a full-scale military conquest which it could never hope to fend off.

Fortunately, Ladakh's increased external relations during the Islamic period does mean that the data relating to the development of its instrumental music traditions are far more reliable than those hitherto discussed, and can be more easily placed within the context of Indo-Persian music histories which are relatively well-established. However, Ladakhi accounts of the circumstances which brought them about, being related as

they are to the Islamic sphere, does mean that these developments tend to be mythically represented; but rather than being a hindrance to the objectivity of the present task, these 'invented' narratives actually give a valuable insight into the way in which musical instruments from the Muslim world, and their musical traditions, were incorporated into the Buddhist world of the Ladakhis.

The instruments of the modern Ladakhi ceremonial ensemble clearly have their origin in the outdoor ensemble traditions of medieval West Asia, where instruments of this type (**ṣurnāy** and **ṭabl**) are first mentioned in literary descriptions of Arab military bands (**ṭabl-khānā**) in the ninth century (Farmer 1929; Dick 1984). Such instruments were in the first instance valued for their penetrating sound, capable of producing a terrific noise which frightened the enemy and excited aggression in the troops as they marched into battle; but they also had practical signalling functions on the battlefield for giving orders. This military usage apparently had the blessing of the Prophet himself, who (according to a later Turkish source) had an enormous kettledrum (A **kūs**) beaten during his military campaigns, while instruments normally associated with entertainment, such as the **duff** (frame drum), were banned from camps lest they weakened the resolve of the troops (Farmer 1929).

Under the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate (750-1258) based at Baghdad, the early Arab distaste for secular music gave way to a number of musical developments under Persian influence, foremost among which was the outlining of a system of rhythmic modes (**ṭqa'āt**) and melodic types (**maqāmāt**), each of which was ideally associated with different times of the day, aesthetic qualities and cosmological categories. By the end of this period, these musical elements became the basis of an art genre (**naubat**) consisting of a suite of fixed items, but **naubat** in its original sense ('watches') was a type of outdoor ceremonial performance, perhaps originating in the periodic playing of the caliph's military band at the five hours of prayer (**namāz**). The very name of the band (**ṭabl-khānā**) reflects the symbolic importance attached to certain instruments intended for ceremonial use, drums (**ṭabl**) being housed in a purpose-built pavillion (**khānā**) at the gateway of the palace or camp (Farmer 1929).

Related traditions are still to be found in the northwestern areas of the Indian subcontinent ruled by the Abbasid Arabs during the eighth and ninth centuries, although they cannot be traced back to this era with any certainty. In Afghanistan, an outdoor band (**naqqārakhānā**, named after its principal instrument, the **naqqāra**), which also included **sorna**, **kuwargah** (i.e. **damāma**, the large version of the **naqqāra**), **dohol** and **karna**, used to perform in Herat at the citadel of the old city, principally around sunrise and sunset, and a drum is said to have been beaten three times after the final "watch" to indicate that no-one could move about the city without a pass. It was apparently for purpose of providing these "watches" that there existed an elaborate system of **maqāmāt** associated with different times of the day. In Kabul, the **naqqārakhānā** used to accompany the Amir when on the march and signal his return to the city, where the band used to play for the changing of the guard throughout the year (Baily 1980). Meanwhile in Sind, the **naqqārakhānā** was once used in the royal palaces to play at sunrise and sunset, or for welcoming dignitaries, announcing royal edicts, and providing alarm calls and battle signals. Nowadays the full ensembles, consisting of **sharnai**, **duhl**, **naghara** and **bher**, only played at mausoleums and shrines at special ceremonies, where the performance of **naubat** is considered as a celebration of the Prophet's Victory (**fath-jo-tar**) or, at Muharram, a commemoration of Husain's martyrdom (Baloch 1966).

In both these regions, as in Ladakh, elements of the respective ceremonial traditions still survive in rural folk musics. Hence the traditional Gharibzade musicians may once have had more important urban roles in Afghanistan, now playing mostly dance and processional music for weddings, festivals, wrestling matches, theatre and circus performances, in other words, all the genres comprising the general category of "drum and reed" (**saz-o-dohol**) music (Baily 1988:). In Sind, the local Managanhar and Mirathi musicians are also traditionally responsible for various types of "duhl and **sharnai**" music - distinguished by the use of recognizable rhythmic modes - for accompanying activities such as communal labour, wrestling matches, acrobatics, and dancing (Baloch 1966:28-38). Ladakh's rural musical traditions also preserve musical traditions which have related ceremonial functions (watches, signals, contests and processions), and the

possibility of early (even pre-Islamic) contact with neighbouring West Asian musical cultures has already been noted.

In isolation, the comparative analysis of Ladakhi village traditions with those of neighbouring Islamic areas leaves the historical dimension wide open to speculation. At the level of state interest, however, historical records do yield reliable information in this regard because ceremonial ensembles were conferred upon local rulers as patents of royalty (A **marātib**). As the 'Abbāsīd Empire broke up after Baghdad fell to the Buyids in 936, and again to the Seljuk Turks in 1055, "petty rulers were springing up and all and sundry among them were clamouring for the privilege of the **ṭabl-khānāh** and the **nauba** (periodic musical performance) as part of their patent of royalty. Hitherto such honours had been reserved for the khalif alone." (Farmer 1929:207) As most of the dynastic rulers of these emerging principalities recognised 'Abbāsīd suzerainty, status and prestige was distributed in this way according to the number (three or five) or class of **naubat** allowed, the size and composition of the band, and often the regions in which they were permitted to play. [93] With the further weakening of the Empire by the invasions of Central Asian Turks, culminating with the Mongol conquest of Baghdad in 1258, the centres of Islamic culture and its musical traditions were taken eastward, notably under the Ghaznavids (977-1186), who established a flourishing centre at Ghazni (Afghanistan) which rivalled that of Baghdad.

These traditions were introduced to the Indian subcontinent after the Ghaznavid successors, the Ghurids, extended their empire into northern India, helping to establish the Turko-Afghan Sultanate at Delhi (1206-1526). During this period the instruments, including **surṇāy** and **damāma** or **naqqāra**, and music of the **ṭabl-khānā** (now usually referred to as **naubat** or **naubatkhānā**) were adopted by Indian rulers as assets of their authority, especially as warfare broke out during the crumbling of empire, each faction aspiring to gain ascendancy over their rivals. [94] In doing so, a common musical ground between the Muslim and Hindu-Buddhist sphere was established, the new ensembles taking on many of the functions and characteristics of Indian bands of the **pañchavādya** type, which had traditionally been used both in battle, as ensigns and for providing signals,

and for ceremonial purposes as a mark of honour. [95] The resulting patterns were complex varied, but the situation represented in Ladakh - where the older ensemble traditions were retained for indoor, ritual use, while the newer ones were restricted to outdoor, ceremonial use - is broadly typical.

Ladakh's direct contact with these Islamic traditions was established after a series of Turco-Mongol raids from Central Asia led to the founding of an independent Sultanate in Kashmir (1326-1589), which had until then managed to avoid direct confrontation with the armies of the Arabs or Islamized Turks. The Islamization of Kashmir, however, was mostly gradual and peaceful, its last Buddhist ruler, Rinchen Shāh (ruled 1320-1323) embracing the new religion through the mission from Turkestan of a Musavī Sa'īd, Bulbul Shāh, of the Suhравardī order of Sūfīs. Already an established centre of musical learning during the late Buddhist period, Kashmir built upon these earlier contacts with the Muslim world and the region soon became a renowned cultural centre which achieved a unique blend of Indian and Islamic traditions. [96]

Sultān Zain ul-Ābidīn (1420-70) invited Indian, Persian and Turkish musicians, dancers and poets to his court, two of whom, according to Srīvara (quoted by Sufi 1949:549) sung "the difficult Turushka [Turkish] metres [i.e. **īqa'āt**] before the king". The same chronicler, using unmistakably Hindu-Buddhist imagery, also (ibid.) says that "the king...whose fame was spread over the three worlds...spent the three watches of the night in witnessing the three kinds of dance", and that he ordered the instruments of the best musicians to be "set with gold, silver and jewels". Srīvara also described the ecstasy of his musical gatherings - inspired by the Sūfī concepts of **mahfil-e-sama'** (P), "gathering for listening" and **darbār-e-auliya**, "royal court of saints" (Qureshi 1986:106-108) - in terms of the Hindu-Buddhist celestial paradise, which had direct parallels with the popular image of heavenly 'pleasure palaces' depicted in Islamic art from about this time (see Denny 1985). [97] It is probable, moreover, that the musical principles of **maqām** and **īqa'ā** (called **tāl** in Kashmiri) were adopted in the development of Kashmiri **sufyāna kalam** court and Sufi devotional music at this time; like the Uzbek-Tajik

shashmaqom, this tradition no doubt represents an extension - historically and musically - of the Arabic **naubat** (in its sense of an ordered suite of fixed items) into Central Asia; in the case of **sufyāna kalam**, a mixed system of Persian and Hindustani modes were developed (Pacholczyk 1978; Powers 1989:47).

The earliest contacts with Islam in the remoter areas of Kashmir, including Ladakh, were also largely peaceful, the Islamization of Baltistan and Lower Ladakh (Purig) being attributed to the efforts of Amīr Qābir Saʿīd ʿAlī Hamadanī in 1379 and Mīr Shams ud-Dīn ʿIraqlī in 1438 or 1448. But the Ladakhi rulers upheld a fearless front in the face of the encroaching faith, claiming that the Kashmiri king Rinchen Shāh was none other than the Ladakhi king Lhachen Gyalbu Rinchen. However, despite the ruler's Tibetan name, the claim that Ladakhi Buddhists once ruled Kashmir is probably a fanciful one which, in the words of Petech (1977:21) was little more than boasting "in order to enhance the importance of the Ladakhi kings in the eyes of the Kashmiris". The same kind of bravado surrounds the Ladakhi tradition that Gyalbu Rinchen "saved" Nāropa's conch-trumpets from the Kashmiri iconoclasm which is supposed to have brought about the destruction of the assembly hall (**tshogs-khang**) in Srinagar where the yogin is said to have used them to call his disciples, bringing the instruments back to Ladakh. In reality, the **naro tshogs-dung** in Stok Palace which are identified as the originals cannot (to judge from their decoration) be this old, and Francke's (1926:108-109) search for the so-called "Tibetan Mosque" (P **bodro masjid**) believed to have been Nāropa's assembly hall proved inconclusive. [98]

If, however, it is true that the Ladakhi **daph** (cf. A/P **daff**) was introduced to Ladakh during the reign of Zain-ul-ʿĀbidīn (Ayu 1986) then it may be assumed that certain features of the **maqām-Ṭqaʿā** system came with it, given its traditional role of providing rhythmic accompaniment for singing, dancing and reed music. But it must have been the military music of Ladakh's Muslim neighbours, rather than their entertainment music, which constituted its principal, initial musical contact with the Islamic world, for the lavishness of the court gatherings of the kings of Kashmir contrast sharply their military efforts to seize control of Baltistan and

Ladakh. Zain ul-‘Ābidīn himself raided the region on a number of occasions, c. 1420-30, precipitating the downfall of the Lhachen Dynasty, while Sultān Hasan Shāh (1472-84), famous for his excessive patronage of more than one thousand Hindustani musicians (Sufi 1949:551), conquered Baltistan and launched an unsuccessful invasion of re-unified Ladakh in 1483 (Petech 1977:23,26). The Central Asian Mughal leader Mīrzā Haidar Dughlāt (who controlled Kashmir 1540-51), later criticized by the Indian Mughal chronicler Abu'l Fazl for over-indulging in musical pleasures (Sufi 1949:553), eventually secured nominal governorship of Ladakh in 1548 after a series of unsuccessful campaigns.

The first of these Mughal raids, led by Sultān Abu Saīd Khān in 1532, is one of three semi-historical episodes mentioning music or musical instruments to be discussed here in some detail.

5.6.2: Instruments of Provocation

According to Balti history, this raid led to the capture of the Khapalu ruler, Yabgo Behram (ruled 1494-1550). Having escaped to Ladakh, he returned with Ladakhi reinforcements and lured the enemy out of Khapalu fort by inviting them to engage in a polo match, whereupon Behram "enter[ed] the fort and proclaimed his taking of it by the beating of drums" (Hashmatullah Khan 1987:120).

From a historical perspective, this account is consistent with the established view that the region as a whole was in contact with Islamic culture, probably including music, with the rise of the Turkish (Uzbek and Uighur) khanates in the Central Asian centres of Kokand-Fergana and Kashgar, before the Mughal conquest of Kashmir (1586). Besides the foundation of small Muslim principalities in Gilgit, Hunza and Baltistan (Skardu and Khapulu), these developments also led to the strengthening of economic ties between Kashmir and Turkestan, and of their new common cultural base in the Islamic, rather than Buddhist, sphere. In fact a number of traditions attest that the craftsmen and artisans used to build forts, palaces, mosques, gardens and polo-grounds were invited, principally

from Kashmir, by local Muslim rulers at around the time, or shortly after, their conversion and political installation. [99] This cultural influence even extended to Buddhist Ladakh, where the restoration of some of the older paintings at Alchi and probably the addition of court and battle scenes in a distinctly (Muslim) Central Asian style here and in Leh and Basgo, were probably executed by artists from Kashmir or Turkestan during the reign of Tashi Namgyal (c.1555-75) (Snellgrove and Skorupski 1977:95-7).

The introduction of polo to Ladakh (Plate 23), and perhaps the music associated with it, probably belongs to the same pattern of influence: despite its obscure origins [100], it was associated with the Turks at the time it became popular in Kashmir and the Indian subcontinent in the early eleventh century (Saletore 1985:60-62). The Baltis may have adopted the game directly from Central Asian Turks, the Ladakhis subsequently bringing it from Baltistan (local tradition asserts during the reign of Sengge Namgyal, 1616-42). A similar game once played in Ladakh, using a sheep instead of a ball, is also said to be of Turkish origin (Heber 1903:157), and the name of the **lha-rnga** played during the king's horse-procession, **ti-pi-cag**, is also Turkish (from **tobcaq**, "horse", see Petech 1977:115). The Ladakhis evidently came to share the Turks' enthusiasm for accompanying equestrian sports and pastimes with drum and reed music: as in modern Turkey during wrestling matches (Poche 1983), the Ladakhi ensemble plays continuously during polo-matches, horse-races and archery contests, providing a musical commentary using a similar rhythmic code.

One reason that the Ladakhis extended their cultural boundaries to include some of the Islamic military arts is that, besides their obvious playful appeal, they could be incorporated into the Buddhist symbolic world: such games easily attract the symbols of sacrificial contest. But at the same time, these sports arose out of real situations of conflict with the Islamic world, and equipped the Ladakhis with new cultural and military skills necessary to deal with such situations. Thus the complex relationship between the realities of military action and its cultural manifestations - be they 'mock battles' (games and contests) or semi-mythic accounts of real battles - reflects the familiar circularity characteristic of cultural schemata: through performance, cultural battles



Plate 23: Polo in Leh

symbolically transform real conflict, yet the form and content of these performances are abstractions of real conflict. Thus certain musical forms impose a degree of order upon enacted contests, but owe their formulation to real battles.

At the symbolic level, then, the account of the 1532 raid may be regarded as a cultural schema representing a real conflict in terms of the archetypal contest between good and evil: the eventual winner, and rightful ruler of the Balti state, initially appears vulnerable (is ousted and captured) and is forced to withdraw (escape to Ladakh); having gained outside protection (refuge in Ladakh) and superior forces (Ladakhi military reinforcement and cunning), the hero-to-be engages the antagonist in a magical battle (polo-match) through which he is seen to emerge victorious; his legitimate authority is thus restored (by recapturing the centre of power) in return for the dedication of merit (by sounding the victory signal). The narrative exhibits a number of parallels with similar stories, all apparently influenced by the Bagatham lore in which the evil king is killed after being lured into a dangerous position under the pretext of a dance: in Gilgit, a succession dispute between the two rival sons of Tartorra Khan (ruled 1205-36) was settled by a polo-match in which the loser's supporters were killed (Dani 1989:169); the last Buddhist ruler of Baltistan, Bokha (ruled 1490-1515), conspired to defeat his rivals through a sword-dance that followed the communal hunting expedition (Hashmatullah Khan 1987:7-8). A similar tale in which the captive musicians made their escape from their Gilgit patron-ruler during a dance has already been recounted.

In each case, the conflict is semi-fictitiously re-presented in ideal terms, the battle being shown to unfold along the lines of the same cultural schema: the victor (legitimate ruler) is always portrayed as the hero with superior cunning, cultural refinement and military skill. Through repeatable performance with dance and music, 'mock contests' re-enact these battles in their transformed state, recalling and commemorating real conflicts in ideal, transmittable, form. Thus a sword dance (**ral-gri-rtses**, "swordplay") still widely performed in Baltistan and parts of Ladakh dramatises an episode in which a Khapalu ruler and his supporters, having

been captured by the Ladakhis, made good their escape after massacring their captors at the climax of a sword-dance. [101]

Popular games and contests, notably polo, archery and horse-racing, do not refer to particular historic conflicts in such a specific way but nevertheless invoke the symbols of sacrificial contest, identifying the superior, even supernatural, qualities of the victorious hero with historical or legendary charismatic figures (e.g. Gesar or Prince Siddhārta). It is said of Ladakh's most celebrated ruler, Sengge Namgyal, for example, that "in wrestling, running, jumping, shooting with [bow and] arrow, as well as matchlock, and riding - in every kind of sport - he was to be compared with Don-grub (Siddārtha)" (LDGR-39.21, Francke 1926:108). A song in honour of a Chigtan minister praises his polo-playing, in which the "Master brings [the ball] to please his friends...[and] to grieve the enemies" (Francke 1902:91). A Ladakhi document (MC1; Francke 1926:157) relates a tale in which a Zanskari prince only proved his true identity after he had "mounted grandly on an elephant and taught it manners and made it bow its knees [before him]", a description which is reminiscent of one of the more bizarre feats performed at the Hindu courts of India, where elephants were trained to beat in time to music with their trunks (Saletore 1985:74-75).

Military arts - and even the circus-type tricks they spawned - were not, however, merely forms of entertainment. Their performance constituted an important opportunity for acquiring and practicing the skills (e.g. horsemanship, swordsmanship) necessary for battle, and for identifying potential rivals or allies. Also, as these narratives suggest, 'dangerous' performance could also be a pretext for initiating real military action. [102] Indeed, the boundary between real and re-enacted conflict is an ambiguous one: just as performances can be, or appear to be, precarious, spilling over into conflict, elements of 'play' had an important role in the formulation of military strategy. The small-scale conflicts characteristic of Himalayan warfare were never full-scale wars, but displays of moral courage rather than military strength. Thus the Ladakhi rulers treated military action as an instrument of legitimation rather than conquest, and virtually regarded it as a means of ritual performance.

The actions of King Tseten Namgyal (**tshe-brtan rnam-rgyal**, ruled 1782-1802) were thus described as a means of affording protection by the expulsion of evil: "Before the enemy he was fearless. His solicitude for the welfare of his people was great...and he gathered merit through overpowering foreign foes by his splendour" (LDGR; Francke 1926:124). The cultural schema of the ritual contest was, in fact, used as a prototype for the 'performance' of military action: as in ritual dramas, concerted procedures ensure as far as is possible that the desired victory occurs, but the vulnerability of the principal actors, and their ensuing need for divine protection, is at the same time a precondition for the generation of popular support. In order to be legitimating, military conflict must strike a balance between uncontrolled skirmish and total war, just as the king must himself appear neither too weak nor too strong: in terms of minimum resource theory (Emerson 1984), a zone of uncertainty in warfare is necessary for the 'minimum winning coalition'; that is, the scale of mobilization must be sufficient to ensure a reasonable probability of success, but not so excessive as to be politically costly.

Music easily lends itself to military performance because, on the one hand, the sheer psychoacoustic power of unstructured sound can arouse, or at least heighten, aggression, while structured drum-signals can convey important information. In practice, the degree of coding in military music is sufficient to be a practicable medium of communication among the 'speech community' of allies, but not so explicit to reveal its messages to enemies: it can be a source of refuge and certainty among "insiders" (**nang-pa**, Buddhists), and one of fear and confusion among "outsiders" (**phyl-pa**, Muslims).

Music can then, bring a degree of self-discipline in battle, and perhaps even enhance the probability of victory through the regulation of appropriate procedures. Unfortunately, it is not known what battle signals were used by the Ladakhis because a local militia has not been raised since the Dogra wars of 1834-42, but assembly signals (**bam**) and signals announcing royal decrees (**skad**), at least, are still known and were perhaps once used in military contexts. Historical sources, including the above account, also mention battle signals: one Ladakhi document (MC.16-228.6-7;

Francke 1926:231), for example, speaks of a "night-time alarm signal" (**spyir-mtshan-gyi byag-brda**). Perhaps the use of music in battle was not so far removed from its present use in polo, horseracing and archery where, following the assembly signal (**bam**), the continuous "running drumming" (**tshang-rag**) is played while the action on the field takes place until, when the winning action is considered to have occurred, the "victory drumming" (**rgyal-rnga**) is sounded.

It would also be hard to imagine that **lha-rnga** would not have been performed just prior to battle as an offering to invoke the blessing of the gods, as in Gilgit where victory in battle was considered to be impossible without first beating the **durrung** drum (Biddulph 1880:94-95), or in ancient India where the **duṇḍubhi** was beaten three times and brandished over the soldiers before battle (Krishnaswami 1967:77), and the **bherī** sounded as a hero mounted his chariot at the start of a campaign (Shakuntala 1968:8). The ritual use of music in military contexts, as distinct from its more practical, signalling function, again suggests that the symbolism of ritual music was partly inspired by military usage: the music accompanying the summoning of special forces, and the subsequent expulsion of evil and dedication of merit through 'fierce work' has obvious parallels. Like the ritual scheme itself, its music is both a model for action and a mirror of practice: at different levels of signification, musical forms can refer to (signal) real actions it accompanies or demands, or, by virtue of this symbolic linkage, they can be considered to bring about those actions without them necessarily taking place through practical means. Thus the use of ritualistic music in battle helps to idealize real action in the familiar terms of ritual contest, even shifting the point of view to such an extent that a victory can be considered to have been brought about where none was, in fact, achieved.

5.6.3: Instruments of Alliance

The second narrative represents an extension of this same theme, where the exchange of musical instruments, and the right to perform them, symbolically consolidates a pact following a conflict, or a diplomatic alliance in order to avert one. The account, from oral history, concerns a Balti invasion of Ladakh in about 1600, in which the country's wealth was plundered and many of its Buddhist temples and cultural treasures destroyed. The Ladakhi king, Jamyang Namgyal (ruled c. 1595-1616) was taken captive by the Balti ruler 'Alī Sher Khān (ruled 1595-1623) in Skardo. As part of the ensuing treaty involving the exchange of daughters in marriage, the Ladakhi king's Balti queen, Gul Khātūn, is said to have brought a group of Balti musicians - the original **mkhar-mon** - and their instruments to Leh as part of her dowry upon the king's restoration (Ayu 1986:18; Rizvi 1983:140).

The historical context of this alliance is significant because it points to early musical contact with the Indian Mughal Empire (1526-1803). Following their conquest of Kashmir in 1586, the Mughal rulers were keen to stabilize their northern frontier, and in particular to contain, by whatever means, the *conflicts between Baltistan and Ladakh which* frequently erupted from religious and territorial disputes. Marital alliance between feuding royal houses was one form of diplomacy favoured by the Mughals, and it seems that brides had already been exchanged between the Balti and Mughal courts following a diplomatic mission of Emperor Akbar (1556-1605) to 'Alī Sher Khān in 1591; Mughal records confirm, at least, that a Balti princess was married to Prince Salim, later the Emperor Jahangir. It also appears that Akbar intervened in the subsequent Balti-Ladakhi conflict, sending an army to Baltistan to restore the Ladakhi king to his throne and to ensure that the rule of succession was agreed to. In the hope of reducing the risk of future conflict in the region, it was agreed that the two local rulers should offer one another brides (Afridi 1988; Dani 1989:).

Local histories do not clarify these exchanges, but actually complicate them: Balti and Ladakhi accounts both re-invent them in their own way, each competing for prestige through claim and counterclaim. In particular, both make conflicting claims concerning the origin and nature of musical developments brought about by the semi-legendary Queen Gul Khātūn (or Gyal Khatun, **rgyal kha-thun**) and indeed her very identity. Balti tradition maintains that Gul Khātūn was the personal name of the Mughal bride of 'Alī Sher Khān from the first alliance, and none other than the daughter of Akbar himself (while Prince Salim's bride is assumed to have been one of Ali Sher Khan's daughters), given to the Balti ruler after impressing the Emperor by killing a lion when staying in Delhi. Popularly known as "The Flower Queen" (Mentok Gyalmo, **men-toḡ rgyal-mo**), she is credited with having brought musicians, in addition to engineers, sculptors, carpenters and metalworkers from Agra, the Mughal capital, and for introducing Mughal culture to the region. Under her patronage, these artisans are considered to be responsible for the construction at Skardo of the Mentok Khar (**men-tok khar**, "Flower Palace") and a "flower-garden" [103] with Mughal-style terraces, water channels and marble fountains, and a **khānā** pavillion, "in imitation of the Mughal court...where the **naubat** performed five times a day" (Afridi 1988:41-6,160-2). Mentok Gyalmo is locally celebrated for promoting the patronage of Mughal arts and crafts, which flourished so long as Baltistan prospered under the umbrella of Mughal culture. During the 1630s, another Balti ruler, Hasan Khān, chief of Shigar, who had sought refuge in the court of Shahjahān (ruled 1627-56) (the Baltis say he impressed the Mughal Emperor by saving his life during a tiger hunt) is said to have "called over...cobblers, goldsmiths, blacksmiths, stone-hewers and many other artisans from Hindustan and encouraged them to settle in Shigar...accelerat[ing] development in the country, influences of which are present today" (Hashmatullah Khan 1987:104).

By contrast, 'Alī Sher Khān's Ladakhi bride, from the second alliance, is said to have been rejected by the Balti ruler and sent back to Leh in disgrace. His daughter, Gyal Khatun, remaining in Leh was meanwhile regarded by the Baltis as a means of gaining political influence through her production of a half-Balti heir to the Ladakhi throne. According to

one still popular (among Ladakhi Muslims, at least) folksong, the birth of Sengge Namgyal was a victory for his grandfather:

Today the old king's [‘Alī Mir Sher Khān] name shall resound
through the universe,
For see the lovely babe, his grandson, born today.
See him in the arms of his mother,
This child whose name shall be famous in all the world.
See him in the arms of Zī-Zī the queen [Gyal Khatun],
This child whose name shall be famous in all the world.

In the four-pillared audience chamber of the king,
Hundreds of kings are gathered together to celebrate the day.
In the audience chamber of the Khān,
Thousands of wazīrs are gathered to celebrate the day.

O grandfather! Yours is the victory!
Your golden sword is like lightning;
Your double-barrelled gun like the thunder-giving clouds.
O my grandfather! Yours is the victory!

(Rizvi 1983:148, after Akbar Ladakhi)

Her musical dowry was also taken as a sign of the Ladakhi's submission, certainly culturally if not politically, and the Baltis no doubt hoped that she might bring about the Islamization of Ladakh by peaceful means. In point of fact, it is not clear that she even remained a Muslim: some contemporary Ladakhi records bear the Muslim title Jo Mīr (as is the epithet Zī-Zī in the song), while others simply give the Buddhist title Gyal (Petech 1977:36); it is also probable that she was the daughter of ‘Alī Sher Khān's ally, Sher Ghazī Khān, ruler of Khapulu (ruled c. 1605-20) rather than the great Balti ruler himself, her name being given in Balti genealogies as Argyal Khatun (Afridi 1988).

Naturally, the Ladakhis created invented traditions of their own. To the Ladakhis, Gyal Khatun and her musical dowry were regarded as a valuable prize, not an admission of defeat. Nowhere is this more clearly stated than in the Ladakhi Chronicles, where the great Balti ruler is the subject of supernatural forces which led him to make concessions to the Ladakhis. In popular tales, the narrative has a romantic focus, for the Ladakhi king is said to have fallen in love, and had an affair, with his captor's daughter, thereby winning the sympathy of her father; but the official narrative strikingly borrows from the imagery of

Prince Siddhārta's own miraculous birth (where, in the form of an elephant, the Buddha descended from heaven and entered the body of Queen Māyā whilst she was asleep):

'A-li-Mir had a dream: he saw, emerging from the river below his castle, a lion, which sprang and disappeared in [the body of] Rgyal-Kha-thun. It was at the identical time that Rgyal-Kha-thun conceived. Now, after 'A-li-Mir had prepared a feast for all the soldiers, and Rgyal-Kha-thun had put on all her jewels, he invited Hjam-dbyangs-rnam-rgyal [Jamyang Namgyal] to mount the throne, and then said:

Yesterday in a dream
I saw a lion [emerging] from the river in front [of the castle];
And, jumping at Rgyal-Kha-thun, he disappeared into her body.
At the same time also
That girl conceived.
Now it is certain that she will give birth to a male child,
Whose name ye shall call Seng-ge-[Lion]-rnam-rgyal!

Having said this, he [gave the king] leave with the army of Ladakh to return home and to resume his royal functions.

(Francke 1926:106)

The Ladakhi authorities also successfully managed to assimilate the position of a Muslim queen in Ladakh by 'discovering' that she was a reincarnation of White Tāra (Heber 1903:28), in other words that she was a new manifestation of an unbroken Buddhist tradition. Symbolically, the same idea was expressed by a Buddhist temple built in the style of a mosque which Sengge Namgyal is supposed to have built for her at Basgo: despite an outward appearance of allegiance to Islam, the Buddhist interior remained unchanged. It is conjectured that the assimilation of Islamic musical traditions was treated in much the same way: these musical forms and instrumental technologies were regarded as little more than apparently new, external features of a pre-existing musical culture.

A number of other cultural developments in Ladakh popularly attributed to the Balti queen or her son Sengge Namgyal point to a pattern of substantial Mughal influence similar to that in Baltistan itself, exploiting these new cultural resources in supporting the renewal of the Namgyal Buddhist Kingdom. [104] The conditions of contact suggest that

Ladakhi and Balti drum and reed traditions are connected with the ceremonial music of the Imperial **naqqārakhānā** ensemble, whose ascendancy at the court of Akbar is contemporary with these developments.

Remarking that "kings are fond of external splendour because they consider it an image of the Divine glory" - a reference to the "Divine Religion" established by the Emperor in 1582 as a meeting point of Hindu and Muslim culture - Akbar's chronicler details the instruments of his ceremonial band, as one of the "ensigns of royalty", listing no less than sixty instruments, including eighteen pairs of large **damāma**, twenty pairs of **naqqāra** and nine **surnā** "of the Persian and Indian kinds"; there then follows a description of the daily performance timetable, reminiscent of the periodic musical honours played by the earlier Arab military band upon which the **naqqārakhānā** was based (Allami 1927:53-54). The ensemble also served other ceremonial functions in connection with the processions, displays and contests famously depicted in Mughal miniature paintings (Denny 1985). Akbar's chronicler also mentions the use of kettledrums at polo matches, where the **naqqāra** was beaten loudly whenever the ball was driven through the goal (Allami 1927:207,433-434).

From the rather obscure position that the **naqqārakhānā** has in the subcontinent today, it is hard to get an impression of the symbolic and musical importance it once had, but at the height of Mughal rule its music was regarded as a classical tradition: Willard, writing before 1834, described it as "the grandest instrumental music of Hindustan" (Stewart 1974:18-19). Some Indian **naqqāra_khānā** players were apparently so highly regarded that some were called to Iran in the seventeenth century (Zonis 1973:12), and even the Akbar himself was "an excellent hand in performing, especially on the **naqara**" (Allami 1927:54). There is a strong case for believing that **naqqāra** and **surnāy/shehnāī** music played a key role in the development of Hindustani music "in a period of political and social turmoil which made possible the mass encroachment of the Arabo-Persian rhythmic system, with most of its attendant phenomena, on the Indian" (Stewart 1974:3).

Kashmir was clearly well-placed to host these developments, but as in Afghanistan and Sind, little of their former urban ceremonial importance is evinced by their predominantly rural roles in modern times. The Kashmir **surnāī** ensembles, typically consisting of three **surnāī**, a single small clay **naqqāra** (or **dulas**) and a **ḍholak** (or **wusul**) are usually associated with itinerant entertainers (**bhand**) who provide music for folk theatre (**pathar**) and dance-drama (**jeshna**) (Rasika 1959; Pacholczyk 1979), but in former times these ensembles were much larger (Sufi 1949:554). Perhaps the drums were also previously much larger in scale as well as number, a transition which would match the general north Indian pattern, where the **naqqāra** was, from around the middle of the eighteenth century, gradually replaced by the more refined, hand-played, **tabla** with the corresponding transfer and development of drumming techniques (Stewart 1974). The use of the **tabla** (or **dokra**) in Kashmiri **sufyāna kalam** is in fact a twentieth-century development, having replaced the **wusul** (Pacholczyk 1979), so it is not improbable that the court ensemble once employed the full-sized **naqqāra**. This would help to explain how the **surnāy** ensembles came to make use of the same **maqamat** and **iqā'at** modes employed in **sufyāna kalam**, in conjunction with a time theory recalling earlier descriptions of the **naqqārakhānā**. It would appear, then, that the drum and reed ensemble tradition had far greater prominence in the early Mughal period, before the evolution of drumming techniques for smaller, more portable, drums which were more suitable for domestic use.

It remains to be seen how, on the technical level, the Ladakhi Buddhist instrumental tradition assimilated features of the Arabo-Persian **maqām-īqā'āt** system, but it should be noted that the Ladakhi and Balti **sur-na / da-man** traditions belong to a wider pattern of hybrid drum and reed musics extending across the northwest frontier region which may be connected with the Mughal **naqqārakhānā**. Remarking upon the nominal equivalents of **maqāmāt** employed in the respective traditions of Herat and Kashmir, Baily (1980:8) has already suggested that a mixed system of Indo-Persian modes might have been developed for the **naqqārakhānā**, and that such ensembles, at least at the northwestern periphery of the Mughal Empire, may have had an important role in the exchange of Indian and Persian musical ideas (see also Powers 1989). That the Balti **sur-na** and

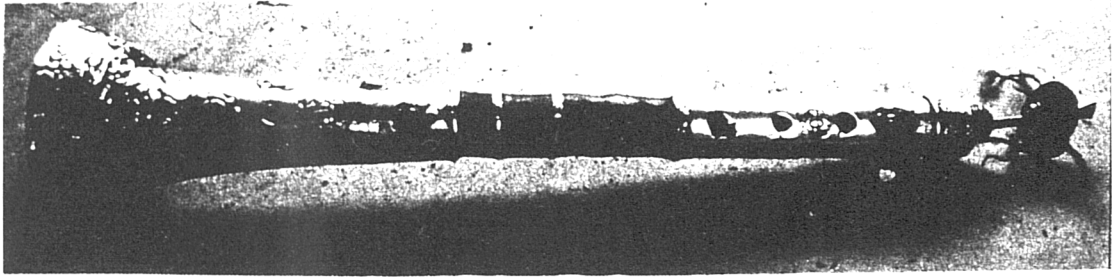


Plate 24: The **sur-na** at Phyang monastery

da-man tradition is also part of this phenomenon is indicated by a high degree of correlation between the names of **maqāmāt** used in Kashmir (Pacholczyk 1978:8-9) and Baltistan (Afridi 1988:160-161), where again there are mixed Indian and Persian names of melody-types associated with specific times of the day.

Organological evidence also suggests that the instruments of the Ladakhi ensembles are peripheral survivals of the Mughal period. The later instrumental developments apparent in the music of other courts are absent in Ladakh, and even a comparison with 'folk derivatives' of the **naqqārakhānā** in other regions of north India shows that the size and composition of the Ladakhi ensemble is closer to the Mughal original. In the Garwhal Himalaya for example, the **naqqāra** (or **nagārā**) is often replaced by the more portable **dohl**, and even where the **nagārā** is used, it frequently occurs as a small, single and/or hand-played drum (Chandola 1977); this makes the Ladakhi use of large stick-played **da-man** in multiple pairs all the more remarkable given the difficulty of the terrain.

Ladakhi oral traditions connected with individual royal instruments also point to a date from the early Mughal period. A **sur-na** among a collection of Mongol armour (which probably dates from the 1679-83 Tibet-Ladakh war) and other military items (including rifles from the Dogra period) in the monastery at Phyang, the village where the Balti musicians settled, is popularly believed to have been part of dowry received by Jamyang Namgyal (Plate 24). Some also maintain that the royal **sur-na** presently in the Stok Palace collection (Plate 22) is also one of the original instruments brought by Gyal Khatun from Baltistan in about 1600. The repetitive geometric patterning of this instrument's silver covering would certainly be compatible with an origin in Mughal Kashmir or Baltistan, but its high degree of decoration using encrusted stones suggests a later date. The less refined Phyang instrument, with its signs of heavier wear around the finger-holes, would be a surer candidate for the alleged dating. [105]

5.6.4: The Politics of Capture and Exchange

The third and final narrative documents further Ladakhi-Mughal contact and gives an insight into the protocol concerning the exchange of the instruments of the **naqqārakhānā**. According to the Ladakh Chronicle, the Ladakhi-Mughal war of 1639 ended in Ladakh's favour when its soldiers "captured ensigns and kettle-drums ('**phyar-dar dang ha-rib rnams**), winning a complete victory over the enemy". [106]

This account shows, first of all, that musical instruments can be the subjects of cultural schemata as well as the means of reproducing them. Whilst their sounds contribute to the legitimation of authority through the *performance of cultural schemas* which symbolically act out conflict, culminating in the sounding of the victory signal, the ownership of the instruments themselves can also be legitimating when the means of acquisition is perceived to arise from the victorious resolution of conflict. Indeed, the rightful acquisition of instruments by capture or cunning is historically a recurrent theme in Indian literature: the capture of a **duṅdubhi**, for example, was recognised as a symbol of the losing side's defeat (Shakuntala 1968:6). A similar idea is evoked by the Tibetan **rgyal-rnga** (Das 1902:367), which can equally mean "royal drum" or the "drum[ming] of victory" (Das 1902:367), for to capture the drum from the enemy is to gain the right to sound the victory signal. On the other hand, ownership can be contested where its acquisition can be shown to be illegitimate, a theme allegorised by an episode in an ancient Indian text (Nalayagiri Suri) in which it is claimed that anyone who misuses or mishandles instruments will not benefit from their power: the narrative relates how the power of the **bherī** drum was lost after its corrupt custodian sold some of its parts, replacing them with ordinary ones (Shakuntala 1968:9). Thus the ownership of certain instruments, where contested, can actually be the cause of, or a pretext for, renewed conflict: according to the Akbar Nāma, for instance, Akbar himself is said to have settled a dispute with his cousin over possession of a drum by engaging in a wrestling match, which he won (Saledore 1985:73).

The above Ladakhi account does, in fact, conflict with Mughal historical sources: the Ladakhis' claim of an overwhelming victory in 1639 was "mere boasting" (Petech 1977:51), and all the evidence suggests that it was more likely that the Ladakhi rulers acquired the right to use ceremonial music of the **naqqārakhānā** on account of their nominal submission to Mughal authority, rather than by successfully contesting it. In reality, the Ladakhi account reflects their latent resistance to Mughal authority and the ongoing situation of conflict which they maintained with the neighbouring Mughal allies in Kashmir, the Baltis. The same theme of instrumental capture hence recurs in subsequent battles with the Baltis in the early part of the eighteenth century, the more detailed accounts of which clearly show not only the symbolic value attached to possession of the instruments, but also the musical significance of their sound:

A quick attack was directed against Bsod [Sod]. In front of the castle it came to a battle...Then Sbag-ram-bhig [the Sod chief] came down therefrom, and his face having been raised (i.e. he had received grace), was brought here (to Leh?) to make his salutations...and the big drums [**mda'-man chen-po**] of Bsod, because of their (beautiful) sound [**gtam don**], were brought here;

and then at Shigar:

[The Ladakhi general] was victorious over the adversary, and he was a man who worked solely for the advantage and fame of [the Ladakhi] government...(For the sake of our fame)...the relics of Buddha's bones in his elephant reincarnation..., the horn of Buddha in his rhinoceros incarnation,...the famous iron drums [**lcags-kyi mda'-man ming grags-can**], etc., were handed over to us (lit. to our side): furthermore,...clarionets [sic. **ha-rib**, i.e. **sur-na**], which could be repaired later, were afterwards recovered (?). In short, he was a discouraging adversary to all the Sbal-ti [Balti] nobles. [107]

These later accounts may, however, contain a grain of truth: two "famous" (i.e. named) royal drums (now in private hands) are still known and used in Ladakh, and some Ladakhis say that they were captured from the Baltis, or from the Muslim chiefdoms in Purig. The name of one, formerly kept in the Lhechen Pelkhar palace in Leh, **kal-ya-ma**, is perhaps derived from Persian, and according to informants refers to the polish applied to the inside of the metal shell of the drum to give it its superior sound; the

other, now at Stok, is called **pho-dkar**, perhaps in reference to a substance similarly applied to the drum's interior [108]

The importance attached to the possession of such instruments was therefore enhanced by the musical symbolism of their sound: the value of their ownership does not merely reflect their status as objects of wealth (in terms of size, number and material quality), but also the prestige arising from the right to have these quasi-sacred objects played before them. Accordingly they were objects sought through ceremonial exchange as well as by capture and, in the Ladakhi case at least, traditions that certain instruments are the spoils of former military victories are probably semi-fictitious claims which aim to enhance the prestige value relating to less heroic means of acquisition.

The exchange of musical instruments (and other ceremonial gifts) in return for submission and loyalty was widely practiced in India, even before the Muslim invasions: Indian literature of the Buddhist period, and of the previous Vedic and Epic periods, abounds with references to the possession of certain instruments - particularly those of the **pañchavādya** - as an indication of (ritual) status, and to their exchange, conferred by rulers on their high-ranking subjects, as a mark of honour. A similar kind of musical protocol, with regards to the Arab **ṭabl-khānā**, was administered in the Islamic world from the time of the 'Abbāsīd rulers, so it is not surprising that it also became a feature of the Mughal **naqqārakhānā**: the use of these ensembles was, like other insignia, a means of establishing and maintaining status, and was granted by the Emperor to regional rulers by means of an 'act of incorporation' (**khil'at**) by means of benefice in return for a 'tribute' (**nazar**) pledging loyalty (see Spear 1970). This courtier pattern became an important feature of the Mughal bureaucratic hierarchy, where the status of nobles and officials of military rank was defined through conspicuous patronage in relation to their proximity to the Emperor. These ceremonial exchanges were renewed at the New Year festival (Nauroz) when the Emperor held a court gathering (**darbār**) of ministers and vassals, who offered gifts and tributes and heard songs and music performed in his honour (Saletore 1985:278). Like the **jajmāni** system between patrons and artisans, in evidence at Ladakh's own New

Year rituals, this system also entailed the reciprocal affirmation of unequal status, but it was regulated by a code of interpersonal etiquette (apparently to reduce religious factionalism within the administration) rather than religious ideology.

The practice of this authority system has a particular relevance for the small Himalayan kingdoms and their musical traditions. According to Joshi's (1992:81) theory of 'incorporative' kingship, the Mughals encouraged local conflict between rival rulers, for example by alternately granting **khil'at** to either side, so that regional rulers would seek Mughal protection. The Mughals could thereby incorporate peripheral mountainous territories into their political framework without having to exercise excessive military action: again, according to the principle of 'minimum winning coalition', they only fought on a level where the balance of power was roughly equal. Local rulers meanwhile stood to benefit from ongoing, contained conflict through alternating provocation and alliance among themselves, because they could achieve legitimate rule of disputed territories (as Purig was between Baltistan and Ladakh) by incorporating Mughal authority within local power structures. As assets of legitimate rule exchanged within the system, the **naqqārakhānā** symbolized the incorporation of local authority from the external (Mughal) perspective, whilst simultaneously representing the incorporation of imperial authority from the internal (e.g. Ladakhi) perspective.

Hence the Ladakhis were in a position to have incorporated Mughal authority, by claiming to have 'won' their instruments during the 1639 battle, even though they were defeated by Emperor Shahjahān's forces and were expected to offer their submission. In fact it was the Balti ruler at that time who pledged his loyalty in order to gain Mughal protection and a victory over the Ladakhis, and it was he who was awarded **khil'at**; a collection of drums and other instruments of war in Skardu, said to have been left by Mughal soldiers sent there by Emperor Aurangzeb (ruled 1656-1707), might just as well date from this earlier Mughal intervention in Baltistan. [109]

While the Balti rulers apparently remained loyal subjects of the Mughals after the 1639 war, Ladakh managed to evade paying tribute until the Aurangzeb arrived on Ladakh's borders in 1665. The French traveller Francois Bernier travelled with the Emperor to Kashmir (a favourite summer retreat of the Mughal rulers), briefly describing the imperial **naqqārakhānā** accompanying his travelling camp on its journey there:

a free space, as extensive as may be convenient or practicable, is always kept in front of the royal entrance, and at its extremity is a large tent called Nager-kane [**naqqārakhānā**], because it contains the trumpets and the tymbals (Bernier 1988:47).

Bernier also witnessed the Emperor's meeting with a delegation sent to Kashmir by the Ladakhi king Deldan Namgyal (**bde-ldan rnam-gyal**, ruled 1642-1694) with gifts and offers of annual tribute; but Bernier notes that it was widely suspected that Ladakh's submission would soon lapse following the Emperor's return to Agra, which it duly did. To have openly confronted the Mughal authorities might have brought about the destruction of Ladakh's religion and culture, so the Ladakhi ruler only managed to retain some measure of political and cultural independence by upholding "the fiction of Islam...in front of the Kashmir [Mughal] authorities" (Petech 1977:76), and nominally accepting the conditions of tribute in return for the award of **khil'at** granted in 1666/7. Thus Deldan Namgyal, and his successors Nima Namgyal (**nyi-ma rnam-rgyal**, ruled 1694-1729) and Deskyong Namgyal (**bde-skyong rnam-rgyal**, ruled 1729-39) (who were awarded **khil'at** in 1696 and 1736/7 respectively), accepted the Muslim title 'Aq̣ibat Maḥmūd Khān and sent annual tributes, including yak-tails destined for the imperial standard, to the Emperor, and appointed scribes in order to administer the Persian correspondence with the Mughal rulers. Deldan Namgyal was also required to construct a mosque in Leh (the present Sunni mosque), read an official declaration of loyalty (**khutba**) and strike coins in the name of the Emperor (Petech 1977)

It is unclear whether the right to use the **naqqārakhānā** was ever officially conferred upon the Ladakhi rulers by the Mughals as part of these exchanges, but historical sources indicate that these ensembles began to be adopted in other Himalayan kingdoms during the same period.

Tibetan sources also suggest that their own ceremonial music (**gar**) was adopted from Ladakh and Baltistan, where related traditions were said to be flourishing, shortly after the Ladakh-Mughal-Tibet war of 1679-1683, if not earlier. [110]

Whatever the precise historical circumstances which led to these developments, the salient point, once again, is that **lha-rnga** played an important symbolic role in the negotiation of power, but in this case between the Ladakhi rulers and the Mughal authorities. One can speculate that the latter would have regarded **lha-rnga** as a related, but inferior, form of their own ceremonial music of the **naqqārakhānā**, perhaps regarding the hierarchic subdivision of the repertoire in a similar manner to the Baltis and Ladakhi Muslims, i.e. as a convention of patronage in support of a network of co-operative bonds rather than as a form of ritual behaviour. To the external Muslim authorities, **lha-rnga** must have seemed a familiar cultural mechanism of status differentiation, where political and economic power was allocated through the exchange of goods and services in the context of an agrarian in which local functionaries were hypothetically answerable ultimately to the Emperor.

To the Ladakhi Buddhists, however, the same music, like the social hierarchy it maintained, was perceived in traditional terms. Its forms must have seemed new, just as local officials assumed new titles with new responsibilities (as tax-collectors, magistrates and, in times of war, as military commanders), but its ethos was unchanged. Still essentially a means of ritual action, the performance of **lha-rnga** validated local relations of power by invoking the symbols of the transcendent Buddhist order: in mediating between the outside, mainly Islamic, world and their own, **lha-rnga** was a significant adaptive mechanism for re-interpreting and incorporating the cultural and political conventions of the Muslim world, and reducing the threat it posed. In the final analysis, however, Ladakh's position of real strategic weakness, and the inevitability of its eventual loss of independence, meant that it retained symbolic vestiges of authority against the disintegration of real power. Nevertheless, such realities were (and continue to be) an inspiration for drawing upon a wide range of human resources in support of its fragile culture.

PART THREE

RHYTHMS OF THE GODS

Rhythm is motion capable as being perceived as a succession of occurrences. It implies, in whichever context it is used, a series of regular or haphazard pulses, seen or heard to be at variance with the surrounding medium. Within the framework of the cosmos it is continuous and eternal. Within a more specialized sphere, such as music...it implies a series of patterned impulses.

Rebecca Stewart, "The modes of rhythmic expression in contemporary Indian and Western music" (**Journal of the Madras Music Academy** 1964, 35, 68)

CHAPTER SIX

RITUAL CYCLES: MUSIC IN PUBLIC RITUAL AND STATE CEREMONIAL

6.1: Introduction

The descriptions which follow are intended to demonstrate the application of the principles of **lha-rnga** performance in the context of specific rituals, and partly by way of summary they provide a focus for bringing together the themes explored thus far. For the most part, these descriptions are based upon events personally witnessed by the author, supplemented where indicated by information provided in the ethnographic literature (notably Brauen 1980; Dollfus 1989) and, in the case of royal ceremonial, historical accounts (Heber 1903; Ribbach 1986). Since none of these authors mention music in any detail, some repetition will inevitably occur in order to give a more comprehensive account of the role of **lha-rnga** in public ritual and state ceremonial.

Public rituals essentially fall into two broad categories: monastic festivals (**dus-mchod**) and village festivals (**ltad-mo**). The distinction, however, is somewhat arbitrary, reflecting the nominal differentiation between 'high' religion (**lha-chos**) and 'folk' religion (**mi-chos**). Both types of occasion are communal events which involve both laity and clergy, the difference being mainly one of emphasis of participation and/or patronage. Both are annually celebrated on specific days of the calendar, the difference again being that monastic festivals are organised by the Buddhist lunar calendar (though sometimes linked to the agricultural calendar) whilst village rituals are more dependent upon the solar cycle, and are generally held each year at times prescribed locally by the village astrologer.

State ceremonial comprises the public events in which royalty and nobility are the principal subjects, or whose participation is conspicuous. Foremost are the 'royal festivals' proper, by which is meant those ceremonies in which the king plays a substantial public role. The final category, in which **lha-rnga** are played for displays and contests includes events which are not (now, at least) necessarily restricted to elite participation, but which once played an important role as declarations of their authority.

6.2: Public Monastic Ritual-Dramas (dus-mchod)

Most monasteries in Ladakh perform an annual ritual, usually lasting for one week during the winter, and the more important ones culminate in an outdoor performance held for two days in the monastery courtyard, attracting large crowds from a number of villagers in the area. The name **dus-mchod**, "time-offering", or **dus-chen**, "great time" reflects their status as special rituals performed at the climax of the annual ritual cycle. They all essentially take the same form of a spectacular exorcism, but individual performing traditions have their own characteristic features and participants [111]: they are celebrated on specific days of the lunar year unique to that monastery, in some cases coinciding with the set appearance of associated gods as oracles, and they bear individual names which often include an abbreviated numerical reference to the date on which they occur. (The dates given below refer to the Tibetan Buddhist, not the Gregorian, calendar). Being collectively grouped over the winter period when there is very little agricultural or domestic work to be done, many Ladakhis make a point of visiting several festivals, not only the one in their own village, in the belief that the more they visit, and the longer their pilgrimage, the more merit they will gain. They are also great social occasions, for they relieve the boredom which many feel during the long cold winter months, and provide an opportunity for meeting friends and relatives, even lovers. Most of the larger festivals attract traders and entertainers, and much of the area surrounding the monastery complex is given over to tents and stalls, offering food, drink and gambling, all of which contributes to the outsider's impression of a melee of the sacred and the secular.

The **lha-rnga** played, usually by the local **mon-pa**, at certain festivals, and particularly the ones associated with the appearance of oracles, are also special in the sense that they are unique to the ritual, and to the gods invoked, and are not performed at any other time or place. They are not numerous, and perhaps no more than one or two have been omitted from this study. They are regarded as particular types of **lha-rnga chen-mo**, "great **lha-rnga**", but they form a sub-group here referred to as **dus-su lha-rnga**, i.e. "festival (time-specific) **lha-rnga**". Playing an important

role in defining the relationship between the clerical and lay communities which come together on these occasions, the **lha-rnga** form an integral part of the performance as a whole, in juxtaposition with monastic music, tantric dance-drama (**'cham**), trance dance (**lha-rtses**), oracular statement and display, processional and folk music. In the case of **lha-rnga** used in support of oracular possession, the ritual procedures which bring about the possession are contained within monastic practice, but the **lha-rtses** serves to heighten the atmosphere of excitement which sustains the oracles' ecstatic trance when they appear in public, and triggers the final crisis which terminates the trance. As part of the spectacle and the performance experience, these special **lha-rnga** are considered to be an important means by which the villagers can gain access to, and identify with, a field of merit with a far deeper significance than their own ritual. Moreover, their inclusion in the domain of 'high' religion sanctions the value of village rituals in which the more usual forms of **lha-rnga** play a more central role.

6.2.1: The Stok **gu-ru tshes-bcu**

The festival of **gu-ru tshes-bcu** is held annually at Stok monastery on the ninth and tenth days of the first Tibetan month (9-10/1), when the Stok **lha-rtses (stog lha-rtses)** is performed in connection with the appearance of the god Serang (**ser-rang**), one of the ravine spirits who was first conquered in Tibet by Padmasambhava and who then accompanied Lama Drungpa Dorje to Ladakh as a protective deity. Indeed, it is presumed that the **lha-rtses** was received by the yogin from the deity at that time.

On each day of the festival, following the performance of **'cham** by monks from nearby Spituk (the main Gelugpa monastery in Ladakh of which Stok is now a sub-branch), Serang appears simultaneously in his two manifestations, the **bla-ma'i-lha**, monastery god, and **rgyal-po'i-lha**, palace god. Three **mon-pa** from Stok village (two players of **sur-na** and one of **da-man**, on this occasion [112]), seated at the front of the crowd on the floor of the courtyard, perform the **stog lha-rtses** for the two oracles as they 'dance' wildly around the parapets above the excited crowd. As they

run and jump back and forth, prevented from falling off only by the unwelcome (to the gods) interventions of the oracles' attendants, they draw their newly-sharpened swords across their tongues, apparently drawing no blood (unless the deity is angry with the people). After some time, still accompanied by the continuous trance-music of the **mon-pa**, they run among the crowd in the courtyard, and around the people gathered on the hill outside, blessing some of them by touching them with their swords and by slinging pots of **chang** and other offerings among the crowd. Finally, having made their prophecies, the oracles run inside the monastery, the music stops and the god leaves its human vessels.

The festival was formerly held in the courtyard of Stok palace, but the present festival is still attended by the royal family, and the **mon-pa**, playing the **rgyal-po'i 'phebs-rnga**, lead the royal procession into the monastery courtyard and towards the stairway which leads to the balcony, where the royal audience takes up its privileged position overlooking the courtyard.

The two men who serve as oracles are laymen elected annually by the village **'go-pa** in consultation with the Matho oracle and the Rinpoche of Spituk (Brauen 1980:134-6). For several weeks prior to the festival, they prepare themselves at home with prayers and other procedures under the direction of the **rdo-rje slob-dpon** ('master of the tantra') from the monastery. On the 7/1, two days before appearing in public, they go into trance for the first time; on the same day, monks perform special offerings and prayers at the village **lha-tho**, for Serang is also considered to be a **yul-lha** of Stok, and this is where the deity resides for most of the year.

Performance roles are also musically shared between laity and clergy. The music supporting the ritual practices which prepare the oracles before their public appearance, and which actually brings about the trance, is performed solely by monks. Unlike most villages, Stok's **yul-lha** is musically (and ritually) served by monks rather than **mon-pa** because the deity has the elevated status of a **mgon-lha**. However, this means that the **lha-rtses** connected with the village's protective deity is still played

by the **mon-pa** in this case because the local possession ritual has been incorporated into monastic practice with royal support (as evoked by the deity's dual manifestation), rather than rooted out: it is suggested that the **lha-rtses** is a musical relic of pre-Buddhist practices which have here been transformed, but which in most parts have all but disappeared. Nevertheless, in being transformed at Stok, the village possession music has been limited by the monastic establishment: the **mon-pa** have no musical control over the onset of trance behaviour, and can only influence its progress and cessation, and even then mainly under supervision. The **lha-rtses** is considered only to maintain the trance for the benefit of the villagers, and it is only played while the oracles appear in public, serving to heighten the emotional impact of the spectacle: it is played continuously for as long as the possession is desirable or possible, ceasing only as the oracles end of their trance.

6.2.2: The Matho **nag-rangs**

The **nag-rangs** festival is held at Matho monastery on 14-15/1, when the Matho **lha-rtses** (**ma-spro lha-rtses**) is played to accompany the appearance of Rongtsen (**rong-btsan**). [113] It is closely connected to the Stok festival because the gods which appear at the two festivals are believed to be 'brothers' brought as protective deities from Tibet by Matho monastery's founder, the Sakya Lama Dungpa Dorje. In fact the reason given for the musical similarity between the **lha-rtses** of Stok and Matho is tied to the belief that the music originates from the gods' first appearance in Ladakh at that time (fifteenth century), and that it has been performed as part of the festival in an unbroken tradition since the festival's inauguration by the monastery's founder (Gyaltsan 1991)

The Matho **lha-rtses** accompanies the 'dance' of Rongtsen who, like his fellow-deity in Stok, simultaneously appears in two manifestations: **lha-btsan** (also **rgyal-po'i lha**), who bears a white spear and a ritual arrow, and **zag-btsan** (**bla-ma'i lha**), who holds a red spear and a lasso. Again, their appearance occurs against the background of a '**cham** dance-drama, only in the Sakya tradition, in which sacrifices are performed for a good

harvest, ridding disease and so on. The oracles make their first appearance towards the end of the tantric dances and, unusually, actually participate in the final **'cham** of Mahakala, which culminates with Mahākāla's ritual stabbing of an effigy-**gtor-ma**. After the monks have finished, the continuous drumming of the **mon-pa** is heard alone as the oracles leap, apparently with complete abandon, around the high parapets and rooves of the monastery: in fact their **lha-rtses** dance contains prescribed movements and gestures characteristic of the deity. They then begin to dance among the crowds, threatening to strike unbelievers with their spears. Even the monk-dancers are in awe of the oracles and are particularly careful not to make any errors in their performance. The sense of fear is particularly strong among the **mon-pa**, who dare not do anything in their performance which might anger the oracles: when the gods first emerge into the courtyard, they shake their spears violently at the musicians, impatiently demanding them to start playing; they stop only when the oracles jump on their drums, at which point the oracles collapse in pain as the god leaves their bodies.

On the second day, the god appears in more peaceful manifestations, and the oracles are dressed in different costumes: they are blindfolded, yet seem to be able to see perfectly through the eyes painted on their chests. Also, one of the oracles holds a small **ganḍi** in his left hand and a **damaru** which he plays in his right, using them to bless people by touching them while answering their questions. The oracles then go into the main assembly hall of the monastery, holding the robes of Lama Dzungpa Dorje above their heads, renewing their pledge to remain in the world to serve the people. Returning to the roof, the oracles toss flour in the four cardinal directions, the one which receives the most being said to indicate where the best harvest will occur in the forthcoming summer. Finally, they chant a few verses attributed to Padmasambhava before coming out of trance.

The ritual procedures performed before and after the festival are particularly elaborate, and reflect the high status of the oracle (Brauen 1980:136-42; Gyaltzan 1991). In this case, the two men recruited annually to serve as oracles are monks, not laymen, and are selected by drawing

lots on 15/X, the day on which a ritual is performed in honour of Pañjara Mahākāla (**mgon-chen**), the **mgon-lha** of the Sakya school (cf. Helffer 1976). Providing that it is the first time they have served this office, they are then expected to go into a strict retreat within the monastery for more than a year, beginning on 14/XI (the **parinirvāṇa** anniversary of Sakya Pandita). Four days before the first day of the festival (10/I), following the completion of the Hevajra Tantra at the New Year, Rongtsen is invited to the monastery by offerings of weapons (dagger, arrow, rope-sling, sword and shield) and musical instruments, notably a **gaṇḍi** and **ḍamaru**: all these are accessories to be used at the forthcoming festival, and have symbolic properties associated with Mahākāla, who is believed to be projected through the Matho oracles. At the sounding of the **ḍamaru**, which triggers the onset of trance, the deity has arrived and entered its human vessels, and the mediums may now break their isolation and make their way to the Mahākāla shrine. This initial appearance is accompanied by the **mon-pa**, who perform the **lha-rtses** for the first time. For the next three days, immediately prior to the festival, the oracles go into trance in a similar manner on each day and receive monks, officials and villagers to answer their individual questions in return for gifts inviting the god to take part in the festival. In former times, the king would be the first to be allowed to consult the oracle to answer questions concerning political stability, the economy and public welfare.

After the festival, a number of rituals are performed, culminating on 8/II when the god makes its final appearance for that year: as in Stok, this coincides with the renewal of the **lha-tho** where the deity resides as **yul-lha**. The two mediums, one riding a horse from Stok palace, the other riding a second horse from Hemis monastery, gallop to the **lha-tho** in a ravine high above the village, where the god re-enters them. After examining the contents of their shrine, the oracles make further prophecies and direct four lay attendants, previously selected by them at the festival, to renew the **lha-tho** by placing seven fresh bunches of juniper inside it. The **mon-pa** are once again in attendance, playing the **lha-rtses** for the final time as the oracles dance vigorously around the shrine, until the oracles thrust their heads into the **lha-tho** and Rongtsen leaves their bodies.

Many of the remarks concerning the role of the **mon-pa** at Stok also apply at Matho, but of added interest is the clear status of musical instruments as vessels (of the deity between the first and second days), and as ritual objects of offering and expulsion, and the theme of contest between monastery and state evoked by the horse-racing and the 'blindfold' test. Also, in spite of the deity's position in the Buddhist pantheon, the trance music is more integral to the possession ritual: the connection with pre-Buddhist religion is more clearly shown by the use of the **lha-rtses** both during (as well as before) the public festival and at the renewal of the **lha-tho**, where in this particular context, albeit under monastic supervision, the village deity unusually makes a full appearance, manifesting itself through possession ritual, dance and divination.

6.2.3: The Shey **sru-b-lha**

In Shey, the appearance of the village deity, Dorje Chenmo, coincides with the village's summer **sru-b-lha** (or **shrub-lha**) festival (9-10/VII), rather than around New Year, because this is when the deity is supposed to have made its first appearance, at the time of King Tshewang Namgyal's installation in 1753, having been appointed as crown protective deity by the Nyingmapa Lama Kathok Rigzin Tshewang Norbu. [114] A number of special **lha-rnga** are associated with the goddess, reflecting her special status as **yul-lha**, **ngon-lha** and **rtse-lha**.

One month prior to the festival, on the 10/VI, the layman who is to serve as the medium goes into monastic retreat. On this day, one month after Padmasambhava's birth anniversary, the **mon-pa** of the village perform the **lha-rnga drug-chen-brgyad-cu** as an offering to the goddess, and to announce the auspicious day which heralds the forthcoming festival. One day before the festival, the image of the goddess in her **lha-khang** is unveiled, and prayers and offerings made.

The possession, said to be difficult to achieve on account of Dorje Chenmo's temperamental nature, does not take place until the morning of 9/VII, when the medium is brought out of retreat, though still within the



Plate 25: The Shey oracle

Tuba monastery in the village, and the monks begin to administer the onset of trance. Meanwhile, the **mon-pa** (three **da-man** players and two **sur-na** players on this occasion) are assembled outside in the small courtyard and perform the **rdo-rje chen-mo'i lha-rnga** until the goddess arrives. Although essentially a musical offering to the goddess, the music, being unique to Dorje Chenmo, is considered to help the oracle go into trance, because Dorje Chenmo is reluctant to appear: each year, as in her first legendary appearance, copious offerings of the highest quality have to be made before she is willing to enter the phenomenal realm, so the musicians ensure that they continue to offer the best music until she appears.

When she does appear, and the oracle becomes possessed by her and emerges on the balcony, the **mon-pa** begin, without pausing, to play the Shey **lha-rtses (shel lha-rtses)**. The oracle then dances on the roof of the monastery before being led to her white horse, where a number of Ladakhi women present offerings of **chang**, flowers and ceremonial white scarves (**kha-btags**) (Plate 25). The **mon-pa** then lead a procession of the oracle and her attendants across the fields to a **mchod-rten** below the palace; the oracle dismounts and dances for a while, consumes yet more **chang**, and then scrambles up the hill to the Dorje Chenmo temple, where monks perform musical offerings in cacophony with the **lha-rtses** of the **mon-pa**. Having finished dancing on its roof, the oracle then runs wildly around the palace-monastery complex on top of the hill before returning on horseback to the Tuba monastery. The **mon-pa** only fall silent - after three or four hours of continuous playing - when the oracle disappears inside the monastery to deliver her prophecies. This phase of the celebrations concludes with another performance of the **rdo-rje-chen-mo'i lha-rnga**.

In some years Dorje Chenmo performs a special dance quite unique to Shey. [115] The tradition is not maintained regularly for a number of reasons: some villagers say it is because the goddess is displeased with the people and is unwilling to remain in the human world, or else it is because the families who are supposed to provide the dancers to accompany her do not honour their responsibilities (these two reasons, in fact, may not be unconnected). [116] The performance includes four masked dancers who

make up Dorje Chenmo's retinue, who dance with her to the **lha-rtses**, each dancer making three circumambulations of the Dorje Chenmo temple, joining the main dance in turn, in the manner of 'cham dance.

The identities of the dancers, all of whom wield sprigs of willow, are of particular interest, and in the first instance relate to the characters involved in Dorje Chenmo's original relocation from Thikse, where the royal attendants laid a path of grass leading to her new home, offering her a horse and a lion upon which to ride: one is called **ma-lig** (U **malik**, 'chief', i.e. of the goddess' horse, and of the dance), and another is **rgyal-rta** (royal horse, i.e. one dressed as a lion). The identities of the other two, however, are less clear: one is known as **gro-la**, who wears a goat-skin and a black hat, and the other, **dre-gzhon** is dressed as a mule with a turban of barley. A local authority (Chali p.c.) maintains that they represent the attendants of the Five Sisters of Long Life, mountain goddesses appointed by Padmasambhava as protective deities, each of whom rides an animal. Whatever their exact identity, there can be little doubt that they are survivals of pre-Buddhist belief systems. [117]

The goddess also sometimes reappears during the evening **srub-lha** festivities, in which case the **rdo-rje chen-mo'i lha-rnga** is played once more. The villagers perform a special form of the **gshon-grol** or **gshon-rtses** dance, called **lha-gshon**, and sing a special **gshon-glu** in honour of the deity (LFS 1980:36-7). Again, this appears to represent a survival of pre-Buddhist practice, since the participation of deities in village festivities through possession is characteristic of the Dardic peoples, and quite rare among Ladakhi Buddhists. One might speculate that the music associated with this possession also has its origins in pre-Buddhist practice.

The celebrations are repeated on the second day, except that the oracle wears a different crown, one said to have been donated by the king, the second by the Abbot of Hemis. Also, the oracle visits a certain household (Champa) to make offerings to the four lokapālas.

The role of the special **lha-rnga** reflects the high ritual status of Dorje Chenmo (Mahāvajra) as a fully enlightened deity of the Buddhist pantheon, and also of the event as a whole. The **lha-rtses** is said to have been revealed by the goddess through the dance she performed as she was led from Thikse to Shey. Alternatively, the **lha-rtses** and/or the **rdo-rje chen-mo'i lha-rnga** are connected with the initial acquisition of her protection by Rinchen Zangpo at Nyarma. The **lha-rnga drug-chen-brgyad-cu** (literally "the six big eighty") is not unique to Shey, but is the name of the **lha-rnga** played at **lo-gsar** in Leh, elsewhere called the **sum-brgya-drug-cu** ("three hundred and sixty"). The significance of its inclusion points to the status of Dorje Chenmo - who is said to speak of her "359 brothers" - as one of the 360 minor protective deities (**lha sum-brgya-drug-cu**) who are invoked by this **lha-rnga** at New Year, notably in Leh because of the goddess' protective role towards the monarch as **rtse-lha**. Moreover, in doubling as the **yul-lha** of Shey, it is appropriate that the **lha-rnga** be played at this time rather than at New Year, since the opening and renewal of the **lha-tho** coincides with her appearance at the **srub-lha** and not, as is usually the case in Ladakhi villages, at or shortly after **lo-gsar**.

The event also has a high status because of the king's involvement in the festival, which clearly was significant because Shey, Ladakh's former capital, was the summer residence of the Namgyal kings, and even retained a symbolic role during the king's celebration of **lo-gsar**. The king would have been in attendance at the **srub-lha**, and the participants in the festival were directly responsible to him, the king remunerating them at an assembly held in Shey Palace after the festival. Traditionally, the **mon-pa** are given new drum-skins at this time. Unusually, hereditary specialization extends to the office of the oracle, who is served by a single family, and the four dancers, who are similarly provided by six appointed families.

[118]

6.2.4: The Shey **sbrul-lo**

The festival of **sbrul-lo**, held on 30/1 at Shey, is considered to be a counterpart of the **srub-lha**, for it is regarded as forming part of the spring celebrations at the start of the agricultural season (**dpyid-tshes**). [119] The **lha-rnga** performed on this occasion, the **sbrul-lo-rtses**, is unique to the event.

The monastic setting for the festival is concerned with Sakyamuni worship and the renewal of Buddhist vows: at this time, villagers come to the monastery in the palace complex, circumambulating the site, prostrating before the large Buddha statue, and lighting butter-lamps in the main prayer-hall in which the statue stands. On their way to and from the monastery from the village below, pilgrims may stop for a while at the Dorje Chenmo temple half-way up the hill, in order to make offerings there and observe the masked dances performed in the forecourt by six laymen.

The characters represented, mainly animal figures, were not identified by informants with any specific beings, but the dances are understood to be offerings to appease the spirits, one type of which (**sbrul**, serpent-demon) gives the festival its name. Like the special dances at the **srub-lha**, the **sbrul-lo** dances are performed in the style of **'cham**: the dancers emerge one by one from the temple, and acting out the geometric form of the mandala with the **dar-chen** at the centre. The Shey **mon-pa** sit in a line to one side, playing the **sbrul-lo-rtses** continuously throughout the dances; the dancers are elected annually from the village. At the same time, monks perform offerings within the temple, exhorting the **yul-lha** to protect the villagers from the earth-spirits as they begin to reawake after the long winter.

Unlike the **lha-rtses** of Stok, Matho or Shey, this **lha-rnga** is not associated with possession, and does not have the musical characteristics usually associated with the triggering of trance. Nevertheless, although not dissimilar in musical style from the standard **lha-rnga** repertoire, its use to accompany non-trance dance may be unique.

6.2.5: The Phyang **sgang-sngon tshe-grub**

The festival of **tshe-grub** was traditionally celebrated at Phyang's **sgang-sngon** monastery on 18-19/I. [120] The special **lha-rnga** associated with this event, the **sgang-sngon tshe-grub-kyi dus-su lha-rnga**, is played as an offering to the **ngon-lha** of the Dregungpa sect, and Phyang monastery in particular, Apchi Choskyi Dolma (**a-phyi chos-kyi sgrol-ma**). It is popularly believed to have been revealed to Danma Kunga Trakpa, the Tibetan lama invited to Ladakh by king Tashi Namgyal in the late sixteenth century: in a vision, he is supposed to have seen a woman riding on a mule and waving an arrow at the place where the monastery now stands; taking this to be a manifestation of Apchi Choskyi Dolma, he founded the monastery on the site granted by the King (Shakspo 1988:12).

The **lha-rnga** is played in the monastery courtyard at around dawn for seven consecutive days, starting on the fifth day before the start of the public festival: highly unusually, neither of the two musicians used on this occasions were **mon-pa**: the **sur-na** player was a Shī'ite Muslim, a member of one the **mkhar-mon** families in the village, while the **da-man** was played by one of the monks; and the instruments (including the **sur-na** attributed to King Jamyang Namgyal) are owned and housed by the monastery. Although not an integral part of the ensuing '**cham** dance-ritual, the **lha-rnga** is regarded (by the villagers at least) as an offering in preparation for Apchi Choskyi Dolma's forthcoming realization during the dances: in other words, the **lha-rnga** has no association with any fully-embodied appearance of the deity in trance-dance, but anticipates and enhances the efficacy of the subsequent realization-offering in the form of a '**cham** dance. It may be interpreted as a way of keeping vigil while laity and clergy alike make their preparations for the festival, for it coincides with the week-long cycle of monastic rituals of which the public festival is the climax. [121]

The '**cham** begins with a procession of monks, playing **dung-chen** and **rgya-gling**, leading the Abbot of the Monastery, Skyabsje Stobdan Rinpoche (**skyabs-rje stobs-ldan rin-po-che**) and his retinue into the courtyard. Simultaneously, the two **lha-rnga** musicians seated at the end of the row

of religious officials and monks (including their musicians) along one side perform the **bla-ma'i 'phebs-rnga**, continuing until all the dancers are in position. Then the first, long dance, a **rnga-'cham** (drum-dance), is led by the Abbot himself. Between each subsequent dance, the **bla-ma'i 'phebs-rnga** is played each time to introduce the new set of dancers, and even on occasion during the course of the dance, apparently matching the rhythm to that of the monastic cymbals (**rol-mo**).

Towards the end of the performance there is an interlude whilst the **'phebs-rnga** is played again to accompany a procession of about twenty five men bearing a huge rolled-up appliqué **thang-ka**. Then, while ropes and pulleys are attached and it is hoisted to the top of a large building erected for the purpose, four monks wearing simple masks with long white beards (said to represent old Muslim benefactors of the monastery) dance the male dance (**pho-rtses**), accompanied by the **da-man** and **sur-na**. During the dance, two **a-tsa-ra** monk-clowns prance about the courtyard, interfering with the dancers, poking fun at the crowd (especially the tourists) and collecting donations; at one point, one of them takes over the role as **da-man** player (Plate 26). When the **thang-ka** has been fully unrolled, and ready to be revealed, an expectant hush falls over the crowd. Then the **bla-ma'i 'phebs-rnga** is played once again as veil is drawn up to reveal the image (Plate 27).

Further dances are performed on the second day, but its climax is reached with an exorcism ritual rather than the **thang-ka** display, in which evil spirits are summoned and placed in two sacrificial **gtor-ma**, one in the form of a human effigy and one large diamond-shaped figure. At their destruction, the **bskrad-rnga** is beaten on the **da-man**, firstly as the effigy is stabbed with a ritual dagger, and secondly as the large **gtor-ma** is cut to pieces with a sword. A procession, accompanied by the **bla-ma'i lha-rnga**, is then led down the hill away from the monastery, where a pyre has been prepared. The expulsion drumming is played for the third and final time when the **gtor-ma** fragments, and the spirits they contain, are slung into the fire to their final destruction.



Plate 26: **Da-man** and **sur-na** players at the Phyang **tshe-grub** festival



Plate 27: **Thang-ka** of Stobdan Rinpoche, unveiled at
the Phyang **tshe-grub**

6.2.6: The Lamayuru **g.yung-drung bka'-brgyad**:

The festival of **bka'-brgyad**, held at the **g.yung-drung** monastery in Lamayuru on 28-29/II [122] includes a **lha-rnga** (**g.yung-drung ka-brgyad-kyi dus-su lha-rnga**) unique to Lamayuru.

As in Phyang, the **lha-rnga** played at Ladakh's other Drigungpa monastery is not part of the '**cham** performance, although the **bskrad-rnga** is again beaten three times at Lamayuru when the effigy-**gtor-ma** is destroyed at the climax of the ritual. The **dus-su lha-rnga**, however, is performed as a preliminary offering commemorating the foundation of the two monasteries by Danma Kunga Trakpa under the patronage of King Tashi Namgyal: the first performance is in honour of Skyabsje Stobdan Rinpoche, the Abbot of the two monasteries, and the second to the Ladakhi King. The **bla-ma'i phebs-rnga** is also performed as the Abbot takes up his seat in the covered balcony above the courtyard and, formerly, the **rgyal-po'i 'phebs-rnga** would have been played when the King attended the festival in person.

The Lamayuru **lha-rnga** tradition largely owes its uniqueness to the fact that the music is played by entirely by monks, although they are seated on a parapet overlooking the courtyard, rather than with the monastic ensemble which accompanies the '**cham** (Plate 28). The young musicians are recruited and trained within the monastery in much the same way as ordinary clerical musicians, and their teacher (as of 1988) was also responsible for teaching **rgya-gling** and **rnga**. Ordinary Ladakhis naturally regard this practice, where monks play instruments and music normally exclusive to the **mon-pa**, as very strange, but not, it seems, morally suspect.

The reason that the **lha-rnga** used in the Drigungpa tradition are more fully integrated within monastic practice, compared to other monastic sects, appears to lie behind the strong musical association that Lamayuru and Phyang traditionally maintained with Tibet. Prior to the closure of the Ladakh-Tibet border, it was common practice for monks of the two monasteries to undergo training, including musical training, at the Tibetan

monastic centres of **'bri-gung-yang-'bri-sgar** and **thel** in Central Tibet (Shakspo 1988:12). The present (1988) teacher of **lha-rnga** at Lamayuru was one of the last to do so, spending seventeen years in Tibet before returning to Ladakh in 1961 following the Chinese intervention; as part of his musical education, he learnt "**lha-rnga**". [123] This suggests that the Ladakhi **lha-rnga** tradition, in the Tibetanized form of the **gar** music adopted at the court of the Dalai Lamas and certain monasteries of Central Tibet, has returned full circle to Ladakh; and that this circuitous route led to the music being incorporated into the monastic establishment as a legitimate form of musical offering to an extent not possible in other monastic traditions in Ladakh.

6.2.7: The Leh **gtor-bzlog**

The public exorcism ritual held in Leh on 9/II [124] is usually counted as part of the New Year celebrations (Brauen 1980:119-121), but it is essentially a popular urban version of the large-scale exorcism (**gtor-bzlog**) which most monasteries perform at the annual culmination of the cycle regular monastic propitiation rituals (**bskang-gsol**) and which, as in the cases described above, typically occur at the climax of public **'cham** festivals.

The public celebrations begin in the morning at the city's Soma (New) Monastery. While the monks from Phyang perform their preliminary rituals inside the assembly hall, the **mon-pa** gather outside the main entrance of the hall and perform the **snga-mo'i lha-rnga** (morning **lha-rnga**) before accompanying social dances in the courtyard below. In the afternoon, the **mon-pa** lead a procession of monks (including their own musicians) with the **bla-ma'i 'phebs-rnga** bearing a life-sized effigy-**gtor-ma**, through the bazaar to a large area of waste-ground on the southern outskirts of the city (Plate 29). A large crowd has already gathered to watch the spectacle, and the atmosphere of excitement is enhanced by two **'a-tsa-ra** who run around the rooves of nearby buildings and among the crowd, shouting and joking as they collect donations.

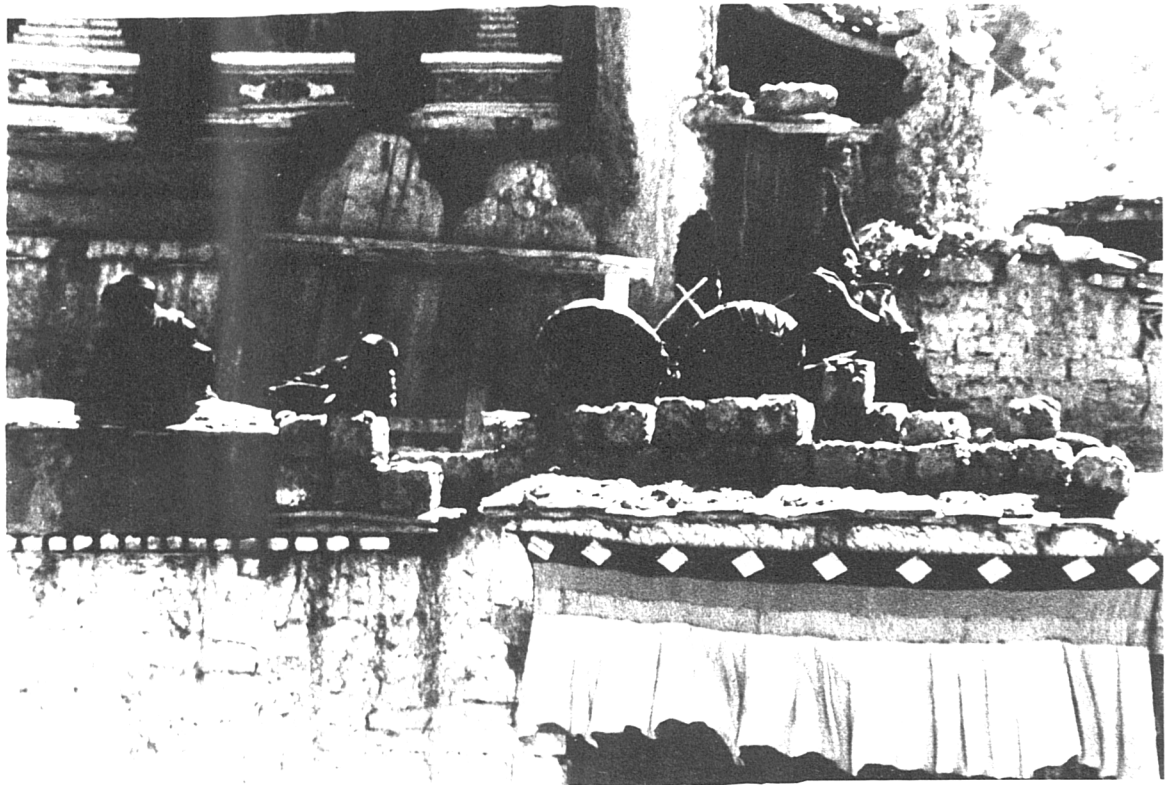


Plate 28: **Lha-rnga** players at the Lamayuru **ka-brgyad** festival



Plate 29: Procession bearing the **gtor-ma** to the site of the Leh **gtor-bzlog**

The monks perform a brief ritual with "summoning music" (**'gugs-pa'i rol-mo**) to call up the evil spirit, which is then 'placed' in the "receptacle-gtor-ma" (**thun-gyi gtor-ma**), a yak-horn filled with a mixture of blood and gunpowder. This is then suspended above the effigy which has by now been positioned at the far end of the ground. A group of soldiers from the Indian Army shoot at the targets with rifles and machine-guns, firstly at the horn until it explodes, and then at the effigy until it falls over, supposedly in a way that indicates the direction from which Ladakh may be threatened in the coming year. In each case, the **mon-pa** beat the **bskrad-rnga** to indicate that the target has been struck, and that the evil spirit has finally been killed after a fierce contest (which is why, it is said, that it takes so long for the soldiers to hit their target). At the conclusion of the ritual, a pyre of thorns is lit and the **mon-pa** play the **bskrad-rnga** again as the monks sling the effigy into the flames; this final destruction removes any remaining traces of pollution, and symbolizes the completeness and ferocity of the exorcism. The **mon-pa** then lead the monks back to the monastery with the **bla-ma' skyod-rnga**, where they dedicate (**bsngo**) the result of the ritual to the benefit of the people. The celebrations conclude with the performance of the **phyi-thog-gyi lha-rnga** (evening **lha-rnga**).

The formal principles, both ritual and musical, of the celebration are not remarkably different to those used in monastic festivals, but their application reflects the relatively low status of the event, for the role of the clergy is hardly any more conspicuous than that of the **mon-pa** or the soldiers. It is quite clear that they participate out of public duty rather than piety: they do not seem to take the ritual very seriously, but cannot afford to withdraw their sanction. In fact, the event in many respects is a modern version of the New Year Bagatham sacrifice, with the added theme of divination, rather than a monastic exorcism ritual, for the effigy, called **a-po ga-ram sing** ("Grandfather Garam Sing"), appears to represent an 'evil' Dogra ruler: Brauen (1980:121) suggests that the name refers to Mahārāja Rāmbīr Singh (ruled 1858-1885), although an identification with an earlier Dogra **ṭhāṇadār** (military police chief) in Leh, Karam Singh (Dani 1989) appears more likely. Perhaps the event did appeal, in disguise, to popular feelings of resistance to the new Dogra regime, but officially

the event was held "for the special benefit of the Maharaja" (Heber 1903:174), commemorating the prayers of the Bakula Rinpoche for Mahārāja Pratāp Singh (ruled 1885-1925) to produce an heir to the Kashmiri throne, for which he was rewarded by gaining tax exemption for Ladakh's monasteries following what had been a bleak period for Ladakhi Buddhism (Shakspo 1988:31-32). If in fact the scapegoat was identified with Ladakh's new rulers, then it was not so different from the traditional theme of royal sacrifice, where the ritual inversion, albeit creating an arena for potential rebellion, actually legitimates the status quo. Interpreted as a familiar cultural schema, the event generated compliance among Ladakhi subjects, yet contained the power of their rulers by celebrating the victory of their religious 'conquest', and accumulating merit at their expense.

6.3: Village Festivals and Rituals (ltad-mo)

Village rituals are not so much concerned with the accumulation of religious merit, but are primarily intended to avert illness and disease, and ensure fertility and prosperity at critical periods of the agricultural cycle. The extremes of seasonal contrast, and the pressures that these exert on socio-economic life, are such that strong emotional values are attached to the changes of the seasons. [125] Whereas most of the public monastic rituals take place during the long winter, the villagers have celebrations of their own throughout the year, most of which appear to have their roots in the pre-Buddhist belief system of the Brokpa. Village rituals accordingly have immanent goals, seeking the protection of the **yul-lha**, and appeasing the spirits of the water and the earth. While many of these rituals take place at the household level, others provide the basis for communal celebrations, generally called **ltad-mo** ("show"), since the prosperity of the whole village depends upon the sharing of tasks, and the exchange of goods and services throughout the year; on such critical occasions, it is vital that the social order is reaffirmed. In many cases the services of monks are frequently called upon, but for the most part the leading roles are assumed by lay specialists, notably the astrologer (**dpon-po**), the incumbent of the village deity (**lha-bdag-pa**) and the village headman (**mgo-pa**).

Similarly, most of the music performed at public celebrations is **lha-rnga**, provided by the **mon-pa** of the village or, if none are available, by those of a neighbouring village. The bulk of the **lha-rnga** repertoire is, in fact, associated with village-based offering rituals, and it is on these occasions that the musicians, in return for the service they provide, receive the greater part of their income. Unlike the special forms of **lha-rnga** associated with monastic ritual, the standard **lha-rnga** are not generally connected with possession ritual, and are invariably performed as offerings for the lesser gods - mainly the **yul-lha** - and for human beings, rather than enlightened deities. Despite inevitable regional variations (which cannot be fully documented in this study), the different types of **lha-rnga** are considered to be employed in similar ways throughout Central Ladakh, and are not specific to any particular deity or place in any systemic way.

6.3.1: Spring celebrations (**dpyid-tshes**)

The beginning of the agricultural season is characterized by a number of collective tasks: animals for ploughing are shared, and rotas are additionally organized for maintaining and operating the irrigation channels. But before any work on the land can commence after the long winter, it is necessary for all members of the village to make appropriate offerings to the earth-spirits (**sa-bdag**) and water-demons (**klu**) which are now emerging from their hibernation. Failure to do so would anger these potentially malevolent powers, resulting in the release of the mountain meltwater and the fertility of the soil to be withheld. Most spring rituals, being village-based, are not as elaborate as the Shey **sbrul-lo** described above, but **lha-rnga** still plays a part in gaining the protection of the village deity in order to pacify the spirits and to ensure, as far as possible, that the harvest will be a good one.

The timing of the ceremonies is set locally by the **dpon-po**, who officiates at the rituals, and it is publicly announced in advance by the **mgo-ba**, who is subsequently responsible for co-ordinating the rotas of the various work-parties (**las-byes**) of the village. Among the Brokpa, both

the rituals and work-schedules are the duty of two **lha-bdag-pa**, one in charge of irrigation, the other of cultivation (Vohra 1982). Most Ladakhi villages celebrate the onset of spring with two closely related rituals: the "opening of the mouth of the earth" (**sa-kha-phye**) and the sowing of the "mother field" (**ma-zhing**) (Brauen 1980 :122-3; Dollfus 1990).

The **sa-kha-phye** usually falls around the beginning of the second month (around March) and is held in an appointed field of the village: it involves a young boy whose face is covered with flour, called **han-ldan** ("dumb, mute"), who symbolically opens the "mouth" (**kha**) of the earth (**sa**) by scratching out the first furrow in the ground (which may still be frozen) with a plough. Meanwhile the **dpon-po** makes offerings to the Earth-Mother (**a-ma khon**) who rules the earth-spirits, thus ensuring that the child's act will lead to the release of the earth's fertility. The boy also answers, in riddle form, the astrologer's question about the size of the forthcoming harvest.

*Around two months later, as the real tasks of ploughing and sowing are about to get underway, ceremonies are held to gain the protection of the **yul-lha** while the earth-spirits are disturbed. In the morning, household rituals are performed to purify the home and prayers are offered to the **khyim-lha** and **pha-lha** to ensure the continuation of the family's fertility and prosperity, and the **mon-pa** assemble at the home of the **dpon-po** (or that of the **lha-bdag** or **mgo-ba**), where they perform the "short **lha-rnga**" (**lha-rnga chung-ngu**) as an offering to the **yul-lha**, in return for which the officiant of the ensuing ritual receives the village deity's blessing.*

Members of the **las-byes**, bearing offerings and two **mdzo** (yak-cow hybrid cattle), then make up a procession led by the **dpon-po** and the **mon-pa** playing the standard form of '**phebs-rnga**. If the party passes a monastery or a **lha-tho** then the **mon-pa** play the short **lha-rnga** again as an offering to the **mgon-lha**, **yul-lha** or **pha-lha**, as the case may be, so as not to ignore the possibility of their protection. Arriving at the appointed **ma-zhing**, the principal field of an estate traditionally reserved for yielding the sacrificial grain and which is always ploughed first, the animals (having

been kept indoors all winter) are set free for the first time. After the astrologer has recited the appropriate prayers for the "liberation of the earth-spirits and demons" (**sa-bdag gdon-bsgrol**), they are recaptured and yoked together, and the **mon-pa** may play, ad lib, a dance-rhythm and/or sing songs about the grain (**zhing-rmo'i glu**, cf. LFS 1970:205-10) while the first seven furrows are ploughed and sown. Sometimes the ploughmen will chant mantras or sing ploughing chants (**thong-skad**), that is, types of work-songs (**las-g.so**, "work-remedies") which Ladakhis regularly use to sustain repetitive tasks, on either an individual or group basis. In the evening, all members of the family gather for a communal feasting and drinking, with social songs and dances.

In many places, the ritual is repeated in the 'mother field' of all the **khang-chen** households who make up the various **las-byes**. The **mon-pa**, together with the **dpon-po** will in this case go from house to house, starting with the highest-ranking first, and the **mon-pa** would typically receive a token amount of grain from each household, according the wealth and generosity of their patrons. This routine may in fact have been the norm in former times, since, as at New Year, the whole village's participation in a continual round of ritual exchange ensures that not only is the cosmic order restored, but also that everyone is re-committed to their communal responsibility.

6.3.2: Harvest celebrations (**srub-lha**)

Household rituals continue throughout the summer while the crops are ripening and individual farming families are tending to their fields, but when the crops are almost ready, the village starts preparing to work together again to gather their harvest before the winter sets in. As with ploughing and sowing, this work cannot beginning until the astrologer has decided upon the most auspicious date for the dedication of the "first ears" (**srub** or **shrub**, T **srus**).

With the exception of Shey, where the **srub-lha** takes a special form on account of the actual appearance of their **yul-lha** (above, p.292), most village harvest festivities follow the same general pattern. On the day appointed by the **dpon-po**, each family cuts the first sheaf of wheat or barley with its almost-ripened ears and hangs it on the central pillar of the kitchen as an offering to the gods of the earth and household. In some places, the ears are mixed with dough and offered to the ancestors. On the next two or three evenings at the village festival place, the people gather for communal dancing and singing accompanied by the **mon-pa**. Fresh **chang** from the new grain is drunk once a portion of it has been offered to the gods as **gsol-mchod**, again accompanied by the **mon-pa**'s **lha-rnga** of the same name, as previously described. The principal dance, as at the Shey **srub-lha**, is the **gshon-grol** or **gshon-rtses**, but unlike the Shey version it is danced by young women only. The songs accompanying the dance, **gshon-glu** (e.g. Francke 1902:101-3; LFS 1970:190-203) are light-hearted celebrations of the cosmic order which has made the harvest possible.

In Nubra, there is a special dance, considered to be a form of the **gshon-rtses**, called the **me-tog ltad-mo** ("show of flowers"). Here, young people go up into the mountains before dawn to collect wild flowers and, upon returning to their village, use them to make garlands or to decorate long poles; these are then paraded before the villagers in the dance, again accompanied by the **mon-pa**, and then taken to the monastery as an offering. According to Brauen (1980:125), the longest pole is taken to the monastery, the second longest to the fort or palace, and the third longest to the house of the **'go-pa**. Local tradition attributes the practice of offering flowers at harvest-time, and the new dance, to the Head Lama of Samstanling Monastery, Gyalre Rinpoche (**rgyal-sras rin-po-che**) (Rabgyas n.d.), but the wider distribution of the tradition across Purig, Dha Hanu and Baltistan, suggests that it is probably of pre-Buddhist origin. [126]

Subsequently, when the real harvest is complete, the monks receive their annual share of the harvest from each household, and a similar pattern of offering occurs musically throughout the villages of Central Ladakh: the **mon-pa** go from door to door around the village, playing a

lha-rnga before each house as an offering to the **yul-lha** on the householders' behalf, in return for which the Ladakhi villagers gain the blessing of the gods and the **mon-pa** receive their principal annual share of the new grain. Just as quality and quantity of the gift varies according to the status of the household, so does the **lha-rnga**: thus the **mon-pa** start their round at the 'top' of the village, playing the more extended **lha-rnga chen-mo**, with its sub-divisions according to rank, for the nobility and then the **lha-rnga chung-ngu** for the **dmangs-rigs**, both **khang-chen** and **khang-chung** households. As a result of this exchange, the ritual status of every villager is restored by their offering, and the social order, as declared musically and economically, is re-established.

6.3.3: New Year celebrations (**lo-gsar**)

When all agricultural work has finished after the harvest, and the household stocks are depleted, it is time to make amends for the damage done to the earth and to the disruption caused to the **lha**. The exchanges at the end of the harvest celebration in fact herald the period leading up to the New Year during which wealth and prestige is distributed through a round of ceremonial feasts (**don-thang**), whereby, as previously described, the ceremonial **lha-rnga** repertory restores individuals' status in the symbolic order. The New Year (**lo-gsar**) itself, celebrated on 1/XI, falls around the winter solstice and marks the culmination of the annual ritual cycle, and the rituals and ceremonies conducted around this time ensure that all evil and pollution from the old year is excluded, and that the cosmic order is restored before the new cycle can begin again. As the long winter sets in, this period is one of maximum sociability and is the preferred period for a range of cultural activities (marriage, epic-singing, festival-going, etc.) which relieve the psychological burden of the harsh winter conditions. In terms of their ritual and musical obligations, it is also the most critical occasion for the **mon-pa**.

The beginning of the **lo-gsar** celebrations is fixed by the Buddhist calendar at the 25/X, the death anniversary of Tsongkapa (**tsong-kha-pa**, 1357-1419), the founder of the Gelukpa order. Known as **dga'-ldan-lnga-**

mchod, this day is celebrated by Gelukpa monasteries throughout the Tibetan region by the offering of butter-lamps and peaceful music (e.g. Ellingson 1979:685). In Ladakh, it is observed by all Buddhists, and on each evening until the 30/X, butter-lamps are placed in the windows of houses and monasteries across the region. For these five days, the people clean their homes, and prepare **chang** and food for the forthcoming celebrations.

On the 29/X, each family performs the ceremony of the "nine-soup" (**dgu-thug**), in which nine flour-balls containing various substances (juniper, paper, and other items either good or bad) are supposed to reveal the prospects of those to whom they are served. On either the morning or evening of the 30/X, or **gnam-gang** (i.e. the new moon), after a member of the family has visited their cremation site (**spur-khang**) to make food-offerings to the ancestors, dough-animals (**skyin**) in the shape of ibex, sheep etc are prepared and placed above the stove, juniper-sprigs are burnt to purify the home and the spells and decorations on the doors, pillars and walls are renewed with fresh flour. In the evening, the entire family gathers for a ceremonial "stove-meal" (**thab-zan**) held in honour of the gods of the pantheon, especially the **pha-lha** and the various **khyim-lha** who live throughout the house. Smoke-offerings of burning juniper, followed by food-offerings of five, seven or nine items are made to a long named list of deities, lesser gods and spirits. Formerly an animal was sacrificed and divided among the family according to status, but these days the **skyin** animals are merely distributed among the children as snacks or toys (Brauen 1980:92,98-104).

Whilst these are essentially private rituals organised at the level of kinship which do not, therefore, directly involve **lha-rnga**, there is one particular household ritual for which a special **lha-rnga** is played. Although not necessarily conducted at new year, the dedication of the home's new prayer-flags (**dar-lcog**) is thematically related. The flags, consisting of thin cloths (ideally the colour corresponding to the patron's birth-year) block-printed with mantras and the "wind-horse" (**rlung-rta**) motif, are intended to deteriorate as the wind carries the prayers to the four cardinal directions to protect the house and its occupants; the wind-

horse motif is also symbolically connected with the juniper-smoke carried as offerings to the mountain gods, and to the royal symbol of the heavenly cord (**dmu-thog**), apparently pointing to pre-Buddhist mountain cults generating prestige and political power (Karmay 1993). In the context of Buddhist practice, however, they are little more than auspicious symbols supposed to bring fortune upon the household, and which publicly declare the family's commitment to the Buddhist faith. Requiring frequent replacement, the flags are supplied and consecrated by monks, and are affixed to the flag-poles (**dar-shing**) at the corner-turrets of the roof, and often made up into a stream of pendant flags (**dar-ling**) suspended between the poles. Throughout the simple ceremony, whilst the new flags are put in place, the **mon-pa** perform the **lha-rnga** known as **lcog-logs-skor** (literally "the encircling of the turrets"). This may be regarded as a form of village-based consecration equivalent to the monks' own dedication ceremony (**rab-gnas**), in which the objects are considered to be invested with their new power.

Although the household rituals of individual homes held just before **lo-gsar** do not otherwise directly involve **lha-rnga**, there is nevertheless a special **lha-rnga** performed by the village **mon-pa** on each of the last five days of the Old Year (i.e. 26-30/X), coinciding with this preliminary period. It is usually played at dawn (**zhag-snyan**), but sometimes in the early evening, from the monastery or fort above the village so that all can hear it. In one sense, the **mon-pa** are keeping a vigil, as they do immediately prior to some other major (especially monastic) festivals, but the last performance at **gnam-gang** coincides exactly with the placing of the **skyin**-offerings above the stove prior to the stove-meal: as soon as the **lha-rnga** is heard re-echoing around the valley, all the families know that it is time to present their offerings, thus ensuring that sacrifices to the gods of the pantheon, albeit executed at the household level, are in fact concerted across the village for maximum effect.

Accordingly, as in monastic ritual, the culmination of the ritual cycle calls for this **lha-rnga** to be the most complete and elaborate musical offering invoking an entire set of deities. This principle is embodied in the **lha-rnga chen-mo** played at this time, which nominally includes "all

360" **lha-rnga**, as indicated by its name, either (in the Leh area) **lha-rnga drug-chen-brgyad-cu** (the "big six eighty") or (elsewhere), **lha-rnga sum-brgya-drug-cu** (the "three hundred and sixty"). Notionally, this New Year **lha-rnga** is considered to invoke, in summational fashion by virtue of their connection with the 360 days of the lunar year, the 360 protective deities (**lha sum-brgya-drug-cu**) ideally associated with the constituent **lha-rnga** played throughout the year. In practice, as the corruption of the name may suggest, there is no such numbered set of **lha-rnga** and only those in the musicians' current repertoire are included, the composition and order of these elements consequently being subject to considerable variation. The idea of invoking the gods of the whole pantheon and restoring the entire cosmic order is nevertheless clearly expressed through the musical structure compiled in this way.

Formerly, the non-musical behaviour of the **mon-pa** was subject to especially strict rules of conduct during this time, since they are traditionally regarded as a potential source of pollution during this period of purification and renewal. The enforcement of these rules also served to remind the **mon-pa** of their low ritual status, and of their obligations to the village community. In many villages, the musicians are still expected to wash and purify themselves, wear new clothes, and abstain from sexual intercourse, but in the past there were added requirements: according to Brauen (1980:18), the **mon-pa** performed only from the doorway of one of their own homes (rather than from above the village), in which they are required to stay for the New Year period, in some villages together with the **mgar-ba**; in addition, they were forbidden to speak from the time they started playing the **lha-rnga** in the early evening until daybreak.

In several villages during this same five-day period, male youths take part in torch processions on each evening, culminating with a fire-exorcism ritual to expell the Old Year at **gnam-gang** on the 30/X (Brauen 1980:93-6). Each day, the boys go from door to door, calling (in song) 'Please give Bagatham some wood!', whereupon they receive firewood, as well as bread, hay and berries; in the evening, when they have made their torches from the sticks of wood, they regroup, light their torches, and process to a site outside the village. There they circumambulate a small

stone structure, raising their torches three times whilst shouting. After holding a contest between pairs of boys from different village 'quarters' (**bcu-cho**), which often spills over into real brawling, they disperse singing bawdy songs that are normally taboo for young people.

On the final day, special torches (**me-tho**) in the form of dough **gtor-ma** prepared by household members are collected from each house by the boys, shouting the victory formula "**rgya-ho-ho**", and are carried to in a procession led by the **mon-pa** playing the '**phebs-rnga** to the festival ground, where a large fire has been lit, often by the **lha-bdag-pa** or other senior village official. In some villages of Lower Ladakh (e.g. Khalatse, Wanla), one or more of the boys dress up as an old man (called **ba-ba**, =the evil king Bagatham?) in a black suit and hat, and bread-**gtor-ma** (itself called **ba-ga-tham** in some places) are offered three times to the gods, whilst the **mon-pa** play the three-fold **gsol-mchod** in synchrony with the presentation-gestures; in some places, this **lha-rnga** is referred to as **lha-gsol** ("god-request"), while in Spituk there is a special **lha-rnga** called **ba-ga-tam**, in each case played as an petition to the **lha** to expel the evil contained in the sacrificial offering. Then, as the **gtor-ma** and torches are tossed into the pyre, the **bskrad-rnga** is beaten three or five times as the spirit is expelled, and guns and fire-crackers may be fired to the boys' heroic cries of "**ha-sha-la-ha-sha!**", "**hep-pa-la-heb!**", or "**te-ya-ho!**". Traditionally, sword dances were also performed around the fire while the **ba-ba** go on forays to steal more wood for the fire, reinforcing the theme of the victory by those, particularly young males, considered to be in possession of the qualities to win the ritual contest over the old evil.

On New Year's Day itself, it is customary for all villagers, Muslims and Christians included, to greet each other and exchange food gifts. At the same time, the **mon-pa** and **mgar-ba** present their New Year's gift, traditionally an arrow-shaft and arrow-tip respectively, to each household, starting with those of highest status. In addition, the **mon-pa** perform the appropriate form of **lha-rnga** according to status in a similar fashion to their round at harvest-time. On this occasion, however, the exchange is almost entirely ritualistic rather than economic, for only a token counter-gift of butter, oil or flour, according to the status of the patron, is

given to the **mon-pa** in return. This is essentially a symbolic act which renews the contract of rights and obligations between the **mon-pa** and the villagers. This is all the more so because the arrows given by the **mon-pa** and **mgar-ba** have important functions in the **lo-gsar** rituals, notably the "renewal of the **lha-tho**" (**lha-tho spo-shes**), reminding the Ladakhis of their dependence upon the **mon-pa** for the provision of musical services which renew the contract between humans and gods.

The **lha-thos** in the village, both those of the **pha-lha** and the **yul-lha**, usually contain pots of barley 'planted' with arrows and juniper-sprigs, which are replaced annually at the **spo-shes** rituals (Brauen 1980:106-8; Dollfus 1989:122-5,176-7). In the case of the **pha-lha-tho**, the head of each **pha-spun** group goes to the corresponding **lha-tho**, places the arrow in it and makes a number of offerings to the **pha-lha** and the '100 fathers and 1000 sons'.

The renewal of the village **yul-lha-tho** is more elaborate, and requires the services of the **mon-pa**. First of all, the **lha-bdag-pa** purifies himself by taking a bath infused with juniper. The **mon-pa** then lead him in procession with the '**phebs-rnga** to the **lha-tho**, usually on a hilltop above the village, where the **yul-lha** is invoked with prayers and offerings, and the shrine adorned with fresh juniper and the new arrows. Until relatively recently, a goat previously selected and marked with red pigment was brought forward and sacrificed, its heart, blood and horns being offered to the village deity; and predictions were made from its organs before the animal was roasted and distributed according to status among the gathering. It would seem highly likely that formerly, as among the Brokpa in Dha Hanu, the deity would possess the **lha-bdag-pa** shaman who would then dance in trance before making direct oracular statements, and that **lha-rnga** would have been played during the trance-dance in support of this possession. [127]

Today, however, there are merely relics of these practices. Where the **yul-lha** has the added status of a **mgon-lha** or **rtse-lha** this fiercer form of possession ritual has been incorporated into monastic practice, as previously described: thus at Stok, Matho and Shey the **yul-lha-tho** is not

renewed at New Year, but at fixed times of the monastic ritual cycle when the deity appears as an oracle and dances to **lha-rtses**; aspects of what may originally have been a village possession ritual have survived, notably these special forms of **lha-rtses** to accompany trance-dance, but most of the ritual and musical roles are assumed by the monks, rather than by the **lha-bdag-pa** or **mon-pa**. In the case of most villages, where the **yul-lha**, although nominally appointed to a particular monastic sect, have no special status, the renewal of the **lha-tho** now takes a simple form: only the **gsol-mchod** (again, usually called **lha-gsol** on this occasion) is played whilst smoke-offerings are made, and the **lha-bdag-pa** merely makes predictions from the condition of the shrine's old decorations. However, the **lha-bdag-pa**'s cry of "**kyi-kyi so-so lha rgyal-lo!**" ("the demons are vanquished, the gods are victorious") resounding with the **lha-rnga** seems to be a direct reference to the powerful type of rituals now only fully conducted within the monastic domain.

Traditionally, the arrows presented to the remaining households are kept for the ritual of "welcoming the new moon" (**zla-ba bsu-shes**) on 3/XI (Brauen 1980:108-9; Dollfus 1989:46). In the evening, the **mon-pa** usually gather on the roof of the **lha-bdag-pa**'s home, or that of the **dpon-po** or **'go-pa**. Ideally the **mon-pa** beat the **gsol-mchod** three times under the direction of the official so that the musical offering to the new moon, as with the **lha-rnga chen-mo** played a few days earlier at the end of the old lunar cycle, also operates as a signal to the villagers to co-ordinate the presentation of the villagers' offerings: each household offers an ibex-shaped **skyin** to the moon three times, and fires their arrow in its direction. Nowadays, the ritual tends to be less complete: often the **mon-pa** play whenever a family calls out that is ready to perform the ritual, and since the **mon-pa** tend only to present arrows to the heads of the **pha-spun** and villagers, and not to every household, guns and firecrackers are sometimes fired instead.

The **lo-gsar** celebrations traditionally continue in their more complete form for the entire fifteen-day period, up to the 9/XI, where the themes of the expulsion of evil by contest, and ritual inversion, were celebrated in the context of playful contests, lampooning and feasting. This period is

now generally reduced to three days, but several villages still hold ceremonies for the full nine days of the new year. In Chusht, for example, pairs of masked characters dressed as a "grandfather" (**a-po**) and a "grandmother" (**a-pi** or **me-me**), one from each **bcu-cho**, tour their sector of the village with the **mon-pa** during the 4-9/XI (Brauen 1980:109-13).

They become the scapegoats of the **gtor-ma phang-shes** exorcism ritual, where they are expelled from the village whilst the villagers smear butter and **chang** around a beer-jar in each home and, in the case of newly-weds or those newly arrived in the village, on householders' foreheads. Then a lama prepares an effigy-**gtor-ma** which is taken out of the village in procession led by the **mon-pa**, and discarded as the **bskrad-rnga** is played. The elderly couple then remove their masks, put on new clothes and return to the village, whereupon they dance the **a-po a-pi rtses**, offering their wishes of good fortune for the coming year. Horseriders from the village then gallop to and from the exorcism site seven times, returning to the village festival place three times around a beer-jar to the **rta-gshon** dance. With the celebrations continuing late into each night, where the newly-weds lead the dancing and pay the **mon-pa** in cash, the festivities bring the annual ritual cycle to a close.

6.4: State Ceremonial

The role of **lha-rnga** performance in supporting the instituted relations of power is naturally most apparent in ceremonies in which royalty and nobility were directly involved. State ceremonial events are necessarily of a public nature since their main function is to acquire and sustain popular support of the monarch and his government by seeking legitimacy from the religious establishment. Central to this category of performance events are the royal festivals in which the king, often together with other members of the royal household and the ministerial nobility, participated in person; but other public events conspicuously patronised by the monarch, and typically attended by him, may also be considered to belong to this category, for although the king is not an active participant, these events

at least in part fulfil the same legitimating function. Accordingly some of the latter, which have already been described, will at least be referred to again. Similarly, private royal rituals - those administered by religious functionaries for the personal religious welfare of the king and his family - cannot be excluded from the more complete picture.

The boundaries of this category are necessarily ventilated because such is the symbolic importance of the monarch in Ladakhi culture, that royal themes occur in a number of ritual contexts even where there is no physical royal involvement. In any case the presence of the king on certain occasions constituted little more than a living icon of his culturally-constructed persona in a broader sense, so royal festivals cannot be interpreted in isolation from the wider range of rituals in which these themes and symbols are embedded. Royal festivals by their very nature are interlinked with both monastic and village events because it is their purpose to create arenas for negotiating the symbols of power, and if they present a living microcosm of the ideal order in its most perfect form possible, then it is only because they are sublimations of culture-wide practices and traditions. Accordingly the **lha-rnga** associated with these festivals may be among the most beautiful and elaborate, but they only form a small portion of the repertoire and only achieve their full significance when considered against the background music-making of this type throughout Ladakhi society.

Thus, while the following descriptions focus on only a small number of events, they refer to a number of important themes already discussed, and not all data is being presented for the first time in this study. But the aim, as in previous sections of this chapter, is to draw these materials together around those parts of the repertory which fall into the category of royal festivals, in an attempt to give a comprehensive account of the role of **lha-rnga** performance.

Royal festivals do at least form a distinct category as far as the nature of sources are concerned, though this too is problematic. Inevitably these events have changed the most dramatically since the collapse of monarchic rule, or have even completely ceased to exist as living

traditions. There is therefore a greater dependence upon historical sources, especially those of Heber (1903) and Ribbach (1986) from the early part of this century, when fortunately, as Heber (ibid.:29-30) observed, members of the Ladakhi royal and noble families were still "prominent in public life in Leh, taking their due precedence at public entertainments" more than half a century after the abolition of the monarchy.

In fact oral accounts from Ladakhis living during the ethnographic present of this study did not prove entirely elusive, so aiding the process of piecing these data together. More important though, as far as this study is concerned, was the discovery of musical survivals from the royal era, which adds a dimension hitherto unknown or ignored. Besides their inherent musical value, information relating to these performances not only yield a better impression of the splendour associated with public ceremonies in the time of the Ladakhi kingdom, but also offer their interpretation to be enriched from a new perspective.

6.4.1: The Royal celebration of Spring (**dpyid-tshes**)

In the royal capital, the spring celebrations take a special form in which the king himself used to take a leading role. The events unfold along the lines of the village **sa-kha-phye** and **ma-zhing** rituals described above, but the king's active participation and the higher status consequently accorded to the Leh celebrations - both marked musically - reflect his legitimating role as divine protector of the earth and guarantor of fertility and prosperity throughout the land.

The royal ritual in part takes the form of the "opening of the mouth of the earth" (**sa-kha-phye**) which marks the start of the agricultural season in rural Ladakh, and Ribbach (1986:134-135) in his account of the Leh celebrations reports that this is indeed the name by which the Ladakhis refer to them. In fact, the village counterpart already seems to have a royal theme, since the mute boy who enacts the piercing of the soil would appear to represent a similar character in a Balti tale, where a

boy-king wards off illegitimate rivals to the throne by remaining mute (Hashmatullah Khan 1989:7-8). In the case of the Ladakhi royal ceremony, it is of course appropriate that the king should himself assume the role of conquering the earth's hibernal infertility.

As in the villages, the timing of the ritual is announced by the local **dpon-po**, but theoretically at least, the ceremony should be conducted in Leh before anywhere else, confirming the king's authority at the centre of the divine kingdom. According to Ribbach's description, a delegation of farmers led a pair of **mdzo** into the bazaar (the site of the king's **ma-zhing** before 1842), where they were released and left to roam freely. The procession, led by the **'go-ba** of Leh and the surrounding villages, was taken to the palace where the king was waiting to receive them and their offerings, which took the form of a **'bran-rgyas** (a dough 'mountain' in the shape of a **rchod-rten**). This was placed in the palace kitchen and, as a symbol of the cosmic centre, formed the focal point of the men's dance, encircling it clockwise. After offering a portion of it to the gods (**gsol-mchod**), the remainder was then consumed by the dancers. Meanwhile a palace official declared from the palace hill that the "mouth of the earth was now open" (**sa-kha-phye**), and reminded the subjects below of their ritual obligations during the agricultural season, e.g. to avoid coming into contact with, or crossing, irrigation channels. Then the king headed the delegation in procession down the hill to one of his own fields, where he led the ploughing with the recaptured **mdzo**, whilst a group of monks recited prayers from the **snang-brgyad bkra-shis rcegs-pa** ("The attained bliss of the eightfold enlightenment").

Ribbach does not mention what music was played at the ritual, but the musical centrepiece of the present-day ceremony, a diluted version of the above, is the **lha-rnga dpyid-tshes**, a type of **lha-rnga chen-mo** which appears to be unique to Leh and is undoubtedly a survival of the royal ritual. This is still played by the city's mainly **bhe-da** musicians from below the palace, usually on the morning of the day upon which the **dpon-po** announces the date of the ceremony, which now takes virtually the same form as it does in the villages, with the musicians leading the procession through the bazaar with the **'phebs-rnga**. According to

informants, however, the **mkhar-mon** would have provided the expected forms of instrumental music at the appropriate stages, besides the **lha-rnga dpyid-tshes** itself (only in their case played on royal instruments from the palace roof): accompanying the threefold **gsol-mchod** with the **lha-rnga** of that name, and the subsequent dance (probably the **mon-sgrol / mon-mgron**, in which food- or drink-offerings are symbolically presented to the **lha** before human consumption can take place); and leading the king's procession with the **rgyal-po'i 'phebs-rnga**.

These additional musical elements mark out the essential differences between the royal ceremony and its village version. Whereas the **mon-pa** perform the small **lha-rnga chung-ngu** as an offering to the **yul-lha** from the home of the village official who leads the ritual (**dpon-po**, **lha-bdag** or **mgon-po**), it is now the king who takes this role and the **lha-rnga** is accordingly of a higher status, as indeed are the religious officiants (i.e. monks rather than the **dpon-po**) and their prayer-offerings. But although the **lha-rnga dpyid-tshes** in this sense declares the king's superior status, and even operates as a symbol of his authority in being played in Leh before its lesser version can be performed elsewhere in the same ritual context, it is not in itself an offering to the king (in which case it would be the **rgyal-po'i lha-rnga** that would be performed).

Its musical similarity with the New Year **lha-rnga drug-chen-brgyad-cu** (which is such that many Ladakhis regard them as being identical) suggests that it was played in honour of the king's protective deity (**rtse-lha**), as does the popular claim that this **lha-rnga** was first received from the sacred sky-lark (**lco-ga-mo**, apparently a totemistic as well as a musical symbol), which is also manifest at this time of the year. This identification would make sense in this context because the king's **rtse-lha** is also his **pha-lha**, which in representing the sublimation of paternal authority in the supernatural realm, might be expected to be invoked with more ceremony than those of ordinary Ladakhis, these being subsequently invoked in their own private springtime rituals. That this was enacted musically in public, and moreover endorsed by the contribution of the religious establishment, is also not unexpected because it demonstrates his legitimate access to supernatural powers which not merely ensure the

prosperity of his own family, but also that of his kingdom as a whole. The event is more than an opportunity for showing respect to the king, it is one which personifies him as the rightful holy ruler.

Supporting evidence for this interpretation of the royal ceremony is provided by similar rituals performed in Dardic-speaking areas, confirming its pre-Buddhist roots. Among the Brokpa, the first symbolic ploughing is conducted by one of the **lha-bdag**, accompanied by children with their faces covered in flour, in his combined role as both shaman in communion with the supernatural realm and as a political leader of the village community (Vohra 1982:89). In Gilgit and other areas to the north, a strikingly similar "seed-throwing" ritual involving the local chiefs was observed by Biddulph (1880:104). The chief and his retinue rode out from his castle to one of his fields, where his subjects had gathered, the procession being led by a man with his face smeared with flour, bearing an offering-cake. The chief then mixed some smoked wheat with some gold dust and scattered it in the four cardinal directions amongst the crowd as a symbol of his auspicious powers. After taking a pair of yoked oxen a ploughing two furrows, scattering seed whilst doing so, he returned to his castle, where the offering-cake was presented to the farmers and a goat sacrificed before the assembly to the accompaniment of drums.

The Ladakhi ceremony thus seems to be rooted in an archaic ritual in which the king's rule over his territory is legitimated by his access to divine protection, and by the aura of benevolence that this affords. In the case of the Ladakhi ritual, the conspicuous involvement of monks in an otherwise non-Buddhist ritual publicly confers the full legitimacy of the Buddhist establishment upon his authority, a heightened status reflected in the use of **lha-rnga**.

The performance of the **lha-rnga dpyid-tshes**, with regard to its connection with the New Year **lha-rnga drug-chen-brgyad-cu**, suggests the added theme of ritual inversion not otherwise explicit in the Ladakhi ritual, and this musical symbolism may throw some light on some of its more enigmatic ritual elements.

It will be recalled that this **lha-rnga** is played at **lo-gsar** to gain the protection of the **lha** whilst the **mon-pa** are expected, among other things, to remain mute, and while the Ladakhis are conducting the **me-tho** fire-rituals in which the evil king Bagatham is symbolically killed for the ritual benefice of young males. As previously explained, the idea of remaining mute is connected with the aversion of evil at critical times (as **lo-gsar** and the **sa-kha-phye** indeed both are), but the identification of the mute child with the legitimate king in the Balti tale cited above makes a direct connection with ritual inversion of the divine king: for the legend relates how the boy disguised his identity from evil contenders to the throne by remaining mute until, following a dream in which he saw himself as a king in the image of the Buddha child, his supporters killed his rivals during the sword-dance that followed the communal partridge-hunting (cf. the related schemes for destroying Bagatham), proclaiming the now-vocal child as king. [128] This connection is given substance by the context of the Gilgit ceremony, which is prefixed by a fire-ritual in which the offering-cake (cf. the Bagatham bread-**gtor-ma** of the Ladakhi **me-tho**) is baked and the grain used in the ensuing ploughing-ceremony is smoked; and which is followed by the goat-sacrifice where the animal's blood is sprinkled on the **durrung** drum before being used to summon the king's protective deity.

Thus it appears that the mute child of the Ladakhi **sa-kha-phye** ritual, whose identity is further disguised by his mask of flour (a symbol of prosperity and renewal), symbolically assumes the role of the king whilst the 'old' king is sacrificed, as do the **mon-pa** (at **lo-gsar**) by remaining mute and communicating through their music with the supernatural realms while (at the **sa-kha-phye**) the king is in polluted contact with the earth. The inversion, of course, is only temporary whilst the king submits to these higher powers, but the protection he so gains in order to extend his favour to his subjects legitimates his position and the social order is restored, with children and musicians alike in the lower ranks.

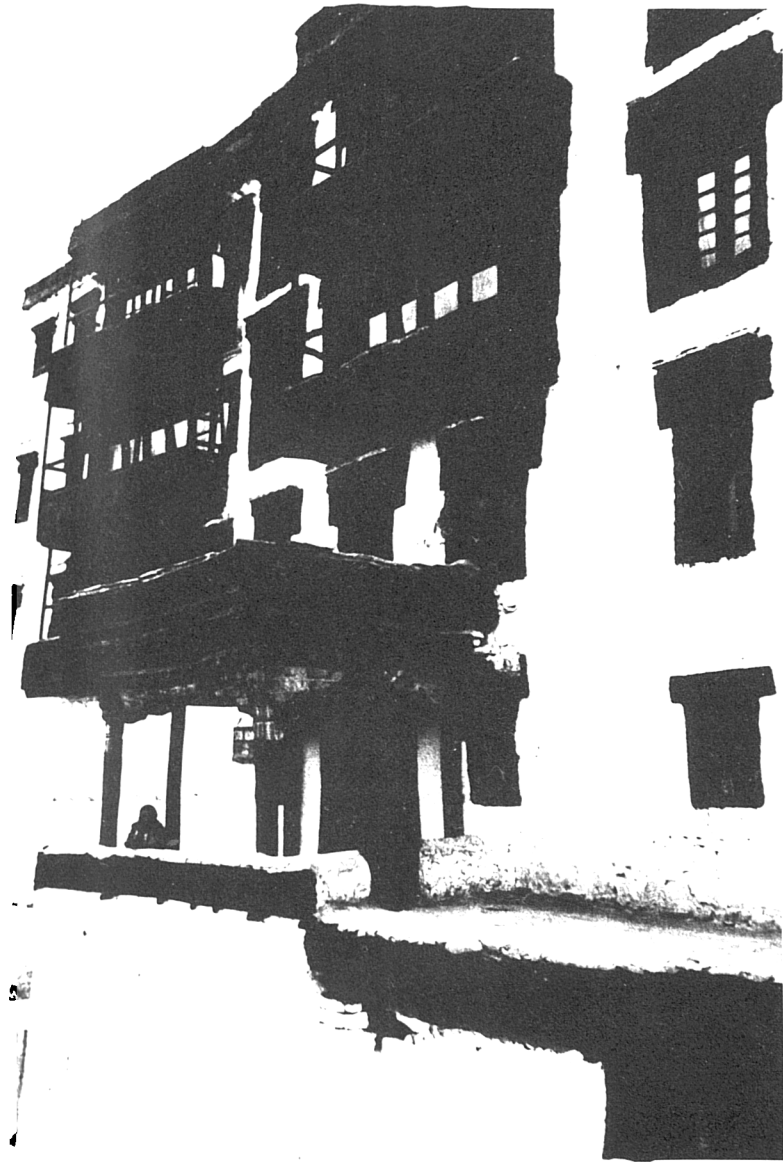


Plate 30: The Royal Palace at Stok

6.4.2: The royal celebration of the Ladakhi New Year (**lo-gsar**)

As the annual cycle of rituals reach their climax at **lo-gsar**, the royal ceremonies held at this time were the most splendid: essentially concerned with the expulsion of the old evil and the restoration of the cosmic and social order, the theme of royal sacrifice underpinning the sequence of Ladakhi rituals at **lo-gsar** almost demands that the king himself took a prominent role. As with the springtime celebrations then, the royal celebration of the Ladakhi New Year is a sublimated version of the village rituals, whose special form - again marked and enacted musically - can only be interpreted against the background of these events. However, also like the royal **dpyid-tshes** ceremonial, the present-day event has little of its former royal grandeur, but we are fortunate in having accounts of the full ceremonies from Heber (1903:210-12) and Ribbach (1986:122-5) [129], enhanced by musical survivals documented here with oral descriptions of their performance contexts.

As in the rest of Ladakh, the royal celebration of **lo-gsar** began on the death-anniversary of Tsongkapa (**dga'-ldan-lnga-mchod**) on the 25/X, locally known as the 'Great Day of Leh' (**gle-zhag-chen**). The ensuing five-day preparation period is observed by the citizens of Leh in same manner as the rest of the Ladakhis by the offering of butter-lamps in the windows of their homes and in the monasteries, the palace itself being no exception in former times. The monastic establishment meanwhile conferred its legitimacy upon the king's forthcoming celebrations, which are essentially non-Buddhist in character, by providing eight monks from the royal Drukpa monastery of Hemis.

Their abbot, by all accounts, was received in Leh with **rgya-gling** and **dung-chen** as well as the **bla-ma'i 'phebs-rnga** and **bla-ma'i lha-rnga** of the **mkhar-mon**, and in his role in Leh as the king's Preceptor (**dbu-bla**) oversaw the daily reading of texts at the palace during this preparation period for the "stabilization of the throne" (Heber 1903:202-203). At the same time the king's **dpon-po** advised the monarch on the dangers facing him in the forthcoming year, and recommended the religious texts which should be read to avert them.

At the end of the initial five-day period, as Ladakhi families gather on the 29/X for the ceremony of the "nine-soup" (**dgu-thug**) to discover their prospects for the coming year, nobles and officials from all parts of Ladakh assembled in Leh and rode out to the king's palace in Stok (his residence in Ribbach's time, as it is now, Plate 30), where they dismounted and prostrated before the monarch, proclaiming in honorific language:

'Hail! We your lowly servants do humbly greet you, the exalted king of Ladakh! Hail! May good fortune, power and long life be granted you!' (Ribbach 1986:123)

The party then returned to Leh where they were greeted by large crowds of Ladakhis in the bazaar. In Heber's (1903:201) time this was one of the few occasions when the deposed monarch was allowed to take up temporary residence in his palace at Leh, but, as on other occasions whenever the king came to the capital (ibid:198-9), he was nevertheless saluted by monks playing **rgya-gling** and **dung-chen** from the roof of the palace, while the people bore their heads and bent low as the king walked past them, hoping that he might touch them "in blessing, for not only is he king, but priest also" (ibid:195).

According to informants, the **mkhar-mon** would have simultaneously performed the **rgyal-po'i 'phebs-rnga** whilst leading the procession along the bazaar, through the King's Gate into the old city, and up the steep hill towards the palace on horseback. Upon reaching the Lion Gate (Plate 31) of the palace, the procession and its accompanying music came to a halt; the first of the three **ti-bi-cag** signals indicating the king's movements would then be played as the king dismounted, the second as he passed through the gate, and the third as he arrived in the inner hall where the festivities were to be held. The splendour of the occasion was enhanced by a further spectacle: as the king approached the Lion Gate, a large Tibetan mastiff inside the gateway pulled on a string tied to the wooden lion carved above it, making it joggle to the amazement of the people (Ribbach 1986:124).



Plate 31: The Lion Gate of Leh Palace

In Leh, as in the villages of Ladakh, the **lha-rnga** locally called **lha-rnga drug-chen-brgyad-cu** (**lha-rnga sum-brgya-drug-cu** elsewhere), was traditionally performed on each of the preliminary five days, from the 26-30/X, with the final performance at **gnam-gang** coinciding with the families' ancestor-worship and "stove-meal" offerings to the household deities. In the royal era this offering to the notional 360 protective deities, having a protective role towards the state, was said to have been performed at dawn by the **mkhar-mon** from the palace roof. But in more recent times, according to Brauen (1980:18), it was played as in the villages by the local **mon-pa**, observing similar ritual restrictions such as remaining mute each night until they had completed their early-morning prayers at the large Maitrēya (Future Buddha) statue in the Chamba Temple below the palace. With the decline of traditional patterns of musical patronage in the city however, presently only the **lha-rnga chung-ngun** is simply played by one of the city's **bhe-da** drummers at the end of the bazaar below the palace.

The significance of these musical offerings, and of the restrictions on the musicians' behaviour, is borne out by the background of the torch-processions held in the evenings of the same five-day period, culminating in the **me-tho** fire-ritual in which the 'old' king, represented by the evil Bagatham, is symbolically killed: the interpretation of these themes of royal sacrifice and ritual inversion has already been described, but it is worth adding that the king's own retreat to his palace in order to submit to the prayers and offerings of the monks, and of the **mkhar-mon**, may be taken to represent his sacrifice. [130]

The final 'sacrifice' of the old king in fact coincides with the Ladakhis' **me-tho** ritual when, on the evening of the 30/X, the king invited officials and nobles to a large banquet in the palace, which may be regarded as the final culmination of the culture-wide round of ceremonial feasts (**don-thang**) held during the period leading up to **lo-gsar**, in which ritual status is restored at each social level through the sacrifice of wealth. At such an lavish gathering in which all the highest social classes were represented, one would have encountered the whole range of ceremonial **lha-rnga** played by the **mkhar-mon** as each was received in turn

by rank. Besides that played for the king and queen, the **rgyal-po'i lha-rnga**, there would have been the **bla-ma'i lha-rnga** for his Preceptor, the **pho-khams** for his Prime Minister (**bka'-blon**), the **mo-khams** for the latter's wife, and then the lesser **lha-rnga chung-ngun** for remaining ministers and nobles. After the performance of **gsol-mchod**, the first food and drink is served to the royal couple seated upon the "centre-carpet" (**gzhung-gral**), whereupon the **gzhung-gral lha-rnga** is sounded in honour of them as the seniormost dignitaries occupying the (cosmic) centre.

The ensuing entertainment was provided by the **mkhar-mon** and the **drag-shos-ma** court dancers, performing a number of songs and dances which during the royal period were exclusive to elite participation. Foremost among them was the **drag-shos-rtses**, which like other dances of the nobility began in the manner of a **lha-rnga** to announce the start of their performance, with appropriate gestures of salutation to the king being made at different stages of the dance. These dances were often performed together with heroic songs (**'gying-glu**) likening the king to the warrior-hero of the Gesar Epic and other praise songs (**gzhung-glu**) sung in honour of the king and his ancestors. The latter included not only traditional songs - often with only the name of the current monarch inserted - but also contemporary ones composed by ministers or other nobles, perhaps in the hope of gaining favour through their display of loyalty (Trewin i.p.). A third type of song sung by the noble revellers, 'drinking songs' (**chang-glu**), were not, as their name might suggest, of a bawdy type, but were literary songs extolling the life-giving virtues of drink, referring to it as **bdud-rtsi** ('ambrosia', with which sacrificial offerings are blessed) (Shakspo 1985a:18); these took the form of a game between the drinker and the court official (**chang-ma**) responsible for the brewing and serving of of the beer, and like other semi-improvised songs of contest had a political function, as well as one of entertainment. Upholding the model of the celestial palace, these celebrations provided an opportunity for the restoration of status amongst the nobility by resolving the contradictions between traditional authority (birthright) and charismatic authority (competition).

Returning to the public domain the following morning on New Year's day, the king and his retinue rode out to Shey, and from there to Thikse. At the temple in Shey palace, offerings were made at the large Buddha statue and the huge "year lamp" (**lo-kong**) was replenished with sufficient butter to remain alight for the whole year, the prayers being considered to bring the protective deities' blessing upon the king and his subjects for the same period. This simple ceremony gave monastic endorsement to the theme of renewal which amongst Ladakhi villagers centres around the **lha-tho** renewal rituals (**lha-tho spo-shes**) held during the first few days of the New Year.

The musical tradition that is uniquely associated with the renewal of the king's own **lha-tho** at Leh palace is so remarkable that it has already been referred to on a number of occasions. As in the villages, the ritual is conducted by the local **lha-bdag**, but in this context the hereditary office of the religious functionary, rather like the head priest or shaman of the ancient Tibetan kings (**gshen-gnyan**), was in the direct service of the king and was provided by one of three noble families including the head of the the **drag-shos-ma**, the **no-chung**. [131]

Traditionally, the musician provided for the ritual was the head of the royal **mkhar-mon**, the **ti-chong**, who was the sole performer allowed to play the royal **gring-jang** drum, which was said to have been kept hidden from view for the rest of the year in the shrine-room of the king's protective deity (**rtse-lha-khang**) in the palace. He, like the **lha-bdag**, was required to purify himself prior to the ceremony with prayers and a bath infused with juniper, but he was additionally required to remain completely mute throughout the New Year period. The **lha-bdag** and **ti-chong** then proceeded from the former's home in the old city at the base of the palace hill to the **rtse-lha-khang** on the roof of the palace, from where the priest invoked the monarch's **rtse-lha** with prayers and offerings, and the drummer beat a **lha-rnga** which is unique to this instrument and this ritual, and which is musically quite distinct from any other **lha-rnga** in Ladakh.

As in the Ladakhi **lha-tho-spo-shes** ritual, the shrine was replenished with fresh juniper sprigs and arrows, and predictions made from the condition of the old decorations, and smoke-offerings are performed to the accompaniment of a special **lha-gsol** which once more is peculiar to the **gring-jang**. During the following four days of the New Year, the ritual was repeated at the **lha-khang** of senior government officials of noble rank in strict order of status (**blon-po**, Prime Minister, **tho-mgo-che**, Deputy Minister and so on), whereupon their individual ritual assets (already described) made their annual appearance . Today however, the present **ti-chong** conducts a complete round of all the **lha-thos** in Leh, both **yul-lha-tho** and **pha-lha-tho** (during the day) and all households (in the evening), apparently in no particular order, commencing on the 25/X. For these eleven days and nights, he is still expected to remain mute, so he brings a junior member of his family with him to collect the householders' token gifts of flour, butter or oil. This teamwork is apparently necessary because Ladakhi children love to tease him by encouraging him to speak, and he personally expressed his fear of divine retribution should he break this taboo as being quite real.

Whilst still being regarded as special as far as its musical content and performance context is concerned, this **lha-rnga** has now become more generally used in its ritual application as an offering to a wide range of lesser deities (**yul-lha**, **pha-lha** and **khyim-lha**). But there can be little doubt from our knowledge of its past royal usage, particularly bearing in mind the similarity of the royal ritual (not to mention the drum itself) to apparently related winter rituals conducted among Dardic-speaking groups, that this was once specifically played to invoke the king's **rtse-lha**. In this connection it is worth reiterating that the **rtse-lha** Dorje Chenmo is indeed invoked at the Shey **srub-lha** festival, where the practice of full possession (accompanied by **lha-rtses**) at the time of the renewal of the deity's **lha-khang** in the summer capital has apparently survived on account of continual monastic patronage since the deity's royal installation there in 1753. It is not implausible, as already suggested in the similar case of the village **lha-tho spo-shes** rituals, that the royal ritual during **lo-gsar** at the winter capital would have included animal sacrifice and the full possession of the king's **lha-bdag** by his protective deity. Given the remarkable

survival of a form of **lha-rnga** whose musical characteristics are not incompatible with trance behaviour, one wonders if this unique piece of music may in fact be a type of **lha-rtses** once employed in the service of a pre-Buddhist possession ritual in direct support of the renewal of the king's divine mandate.

The special role of the king's **lha-bdag** in the expulsion of the evil associated with the old king is reinforced by events of the second and third days of the New Year, which coincide with the Ladakhis' celebration of "welcoming the new moon" (**zla-ba bsu-shes**) with the ritual arrows presented to them by the local **mon-pa** on New Year's day.

Upon hearing the threefold assembly signal (**bam**) of the **mkhar-mon** from the palace roof, horseriders from the Leh area gathered by the Eastern Gate where they were received by the king and his family. Led by the **lha-bdag** dressed in a tigerskin tunic and a large round headress (symbolizing, it seems, his shamanic access to the supernatural realms), pairs of riders galloped back and forth three times from the **mani-wall** east of the city to the bazaar. Completing the leading pair was the king dressed in his full regalia with his silk-ribbon 'crown', said to be imitation of Langdarma's (Heber 1903:173) and apparently symbolizing (if this identification with the ancient kings of Tibet is correct) the irradiation of the king's majesty (**mnga'-thang**); he rode his "royal horse" (**rgyal-rta**), i.e. one richly decorated with a lion-skin, a symbol (also pre-Buddhist) of the king's magical power (**dbang**). At the end of the races, the riders gathered in the bazaar for the **rta-gshon** dance, in which the king himself participated.

Following this, but only on the final day (3/X), the **drag-shos-ma** performed a special dance at the end of the bazaar below the palace in which, according to Heber (1903:211), "the women stand in a circle, and the men dance round them in pursuance of an old custom connected with royalty". The horse-racing between king and priest clearly represents a sacrificial contest for the expulsion of evil, followed by a dedication in the form of a dance, but the identity and meaning of the last women's dance is unclear. [132]

Formerly, royal festivities continued from the 4-9/XI, corresponding to the celebration period in the villages in which the themes of ritual inversion through play and the expulsion of evil through contest are extended. On 4/XI, the **mkhar-mon** beat the **bam** assembly signal from the roof of the palace, whereupon the royal family and their guests took up their positions on the roof to observe more festivities. The king and his more important guests were seated in a special balcony of his chambers overlooking the semi-enclosed portion of the "great roof" (**khang-thog chen-mo**, Plate 32) which formed the ceremonial dancing-ground, while the rest were seated around it according to their status. Ordinary Ladakhis, meanwhile, could only observe the festivities at a distance by climbing the hill above the palace.

The programme of dances also reflected the status of those present. The first dance, named after the roof (**khang-thog chen-mo rtse**), would first be danced by the king himself; even elsewhere in Ladakh, the dance would not be performed unless it was going to be led by a the person with the locally highest status (regional governor or other high-ranking noble), although it is now performed without restriction. The dance would follow, as part of a single performance, a suite of **gzhung-glu** or '**gying-glu** sung by the musicians as they played, in honour of the dancer. The king would then take his seat while the **drag-shos-ma** performed dances such as the **gshon-grol**, saluting the monarch in the traditional manner. Again, these dances are performed at the end of a suite of songs, sung by the dancers in honour of the king and other dignitaries. After the performances on the final day, the king greeted the **drag-shos-ma** and presented them with gifts of tea, beer, bread and biscuits. On the following days, the **mkhar-mon** and **drag-shos-ma** visited the homes of officials and nobles in the old city, receiving gifts of money, food and drink for their endeavours.

These royal festivities have parallels with, and were perhaps even partly modelled upon, the Mughal celebrations of the Islamic New Year (Nauroz) held in neighbouring Muslim principalities such as Baltistan (e.g. Dani 1989:187; Hasmatullah Khan 1989:138). These included a variety of public spectacles and entertainments (polo, archery, swordsmanship displays, wrestling, tug-of-war etc) as well as a court gathering (U/P **darbār**) of



Plate 32: The king's chamber overlooking the **khang-thog chen-mo**
(as it appeared in 1992)

nobles where praise-songs were sung in honour of the ruler and the exchange of tributes (**nazrānā**) and counter-gifts (**khil'at**) took place. During colonial times, Ladakhi royal festivities appear to have become increasingly secularized as they came into more direct contact with other Indian traditions under British administration. The description in the Ladakh Chronicles of celebrations marking the coronation in 1886 of Mahārāja Pratāp Singh at Jammu in the presence of "the Indian representative of the great English queen, the 'secretary-**ṣāhib**'" [133], i.e. the Viceroy of India, presents a mixed picture of British, Indian and Ladakhi spectacles: after a "salutation" (**sa-lam**, U **salām**) of guns and "**bi-gul**" (bugles), there were "conjurers, Persian mimics, somersault-jumpers, and wrestlers", followed by animal-fights and rope-tricks, while the Ladakhi delegation of king Sonam Namgyal later presented "mask dances (**bro**) and Ladakhi games (**rtsen-mo**)".

In the early years of this century, an annual garden party was held by the Wazīr (representing the Kashmiri government in Leh) at his residence in honour of the British Joint Commissioner (representing the British government). According to Heber (1903:211-215), the programme commenced with "some sort of prayer" for the Mahārāja of Kashmir and a rendition (in English) of "God Save the King" for the British monarch (King Edward VII), followed by a morality play by local schoolboys and a "lama dance in devil-masks [sic. '**cham**]. Then the assembly of Europeans, Ladakhi nobles (including the King and his Preceptor) and Indian officials retired to separate tents for tea, after which the party adjourned to the polo-ground to watch a match. In the evening, dinner was provided at the Wazīr's home, and entertainment took the form of a programme of 'exotic' dances then popular among the Leh aristocracy, including a "tall-man dance" (**mi-ring-mo-rtses**), a peacock dance (**rma-bya-rtses**, in which a swan is also represented, although Heber describes them as chickens), a lion dance (**sengge-rtses**), a dragon dance (**'sa-'da'-ha**), a torch-dance (**me-rtses**), two or three kinds of sword dance (**ral-gri-rtses**), a sketch mimicking the corruption of a corrupt Kashmiri tax-collector, and another called "The Amban and the Boat" about a Chinese official. The latter, along with the lion and dragon dances, were introduced from Xinjiang at the turn of the century by Argon traders accompanying British expeditions

into China, notably in 1896 to Beijing (Jordan 1985:43,54-55). The peacock dance is said to have been introduced by Changpa nomads from the shores of the Pangong Lake straddling the Ladakh-Tibet border, while the torch-dance is probably of Indian origin.

Even in the early years of this century, it appears that the splendour of the traditional **lo-gsar** celebrations were being overshadowed by new forms of secular entertainment which represented not only Ladakh's increasing cultural contact with the modern world, but also the decline of its traditional social structure as it became subject to external political forces.

6.4.3: The King's Great Prayer Ceremony (**mdos-mo-che**)

Whereas the king's celebration of **dpyid-tshes** and **lo-gsar** were both closely associated with these village-based, essentially non-Buddhist, rituals, his annual Prayer Ceremony (**mdos-mo-che**) is a public monastic ritual which coincides with the Tibetan Buddhist New Year. While the former sought public support for the king's rule by placing him at the centre of the cosmic order as guarantor of fertility and prosperity at critical times of the agricultural cycle, this ceremony was an opportunity for the monarch to seek the full legitimacy of the established Buddhist church in the eyes of his subjects.

The timing of what is also known as the "King's New Year" (**rgyal-po lo-gsar**) on 1/1, two months after **lo-gsar** is significant, arising from the dissonance of the lunar and solar calendars symbolising the conflict between the agrarian rituals of the realm of **mi-chos** and the high religion of **lha-chos**. According to Ladakhi popular tradition, King Jamyang Namgyal brought the celebration of **lo-gsar** two months forward in order to launch a surprise attack on the Baltis in about 1600, it being inauspicious not to be in the capital for the celebrations. In reality, however, it appears that the Tibetan New Year is a more recent phenomenon, probably imported from China during the Mongol period, which aimed to bring local traditions under the central control of the Buddhist clergy, rejecting their

non-Buddhist elements (such as animal sacrifice and ancestor-worship) in favour of orthodox practice (Brauen 1980:117-118). Indeed, the deep-rooted association of Ladakhi **lo-gsar** (and its virtually defunct Tibetan equivalent the **so-nam lo-gsar**, the "Farmers' New Year" (Stein 1972:213) with pre-Buddhist agricultural rituals, apparently coinciding with the winter solstice, suggests that this is the older of the two, and that the Ladakhi tale is little more than an attempt to justify its continued celebration. It conveniently allowed the king to assert his authority in resonance with local traditions and practices, whilst simultaneously taking advantage of the legitimacy gained by the monastic establishment in slipping ceremonies of their own into the public arena. As a result - and indeed this is also borne out by the Ladakhi narrative - the king's manipulation of the calendar, particularly upon the change of dynasty, is seen as being part of his divine mandate because not only is he portrayed as the steward of agriculture, he is also identified with the Buddhist cosmos through the regeneration of time. [134]

The **mdos-mo-che** was not, of course, the only monastic festival in which the king participated or attended, but the timing of this event held, on 28-29/XII has greater significance for these reasons. Otherwise the ritual, still observed today, is not dissimilar from the winter festivals performed at, say, Phyang or Lamayuru, or the **gtor-bzlog** held in Leh a few weeks later, for it takes the form of a full-scale exorcism. The performance centres around the original Soma ("New") Monastery adjacent to the palace, where the king and queen during Heber's (1903:200) time took up residence for about seven to ten days to participate in the "great festival of the Scapegoat", their arrival from Stok being marked with the musical salutations of the **mkhar-mon**, as at **lo-gsar**. Monks performed **'cham** dances on both days, observed by the royal couple and crowds of spectators. As at other monastic festivals attended by royalty and senior clergy, these dignitaries would have been led (by the **mkhar-mon**) in procession with the respective forms of **'phebs-rnga**, honouring them with the appropriate **lha-rnga** as they took their seats. Additionally, as now, the **bla-ma'i 'phebs-rnga** was performed on the first day when the large **thang-ka** of Sakyamuni was unveiled.

The great spectacle of the second day is the **gtor-bzlog** exorcism itself, which takes place on desert ground to the south of the city. To reach the site, a procession of monks and laymen carrying the **gtor-ma** is today led by **bhe-da** playing the **bla-ma'i 'phebs-rnga**. According to Heber's (ibid.:172-174) account, the procession left the palace hill in the afternoon upon the firing of a gun. At the front were four senior lamas in full ceremonial dress, playing **rgya-gling**, followed by two or three laymen bearing various sizes of effigy-**gtor-ma**. Then came further groups of **'cham** dancers, monks playing **dung-chen** and laymen carrying religious flags. Finally there was a group of horsemen led by the king in full regalia, no doubt accompanied with the **mkhar-mon** playing the **rgyal-po'i 'phebs-rnga**.

At the destruction site, the huge **mdos-mo-che** had been previously erected. This is a **gtor-ma** consisting of a vertically-mounted cross formed of two sticks, connected with coloured threads; Heber's description of "a vastly over-rigged mast" (ibid.:172) is in fact not far from the truth, since the **btsan** demons intended to be trapped therein "are reputed to have a great passion for the rigging of a vessel" (Das 1902:677). After a large bonfire has been lit, around which the masked monks dance, the structure is broken up and thrown into the flames along with the other **gtor-ma**, whilst the **bskrad-rnga** is sounded. After returning to Leh, where the monks held a dedication ceremony (**bsngo**), the king came to the bazaar on the following three days to watch the horse-racing and other spectacles, including on the third day a remarkable display of gunmanship on horseback (Joldan 1985:44).

Like the other monastic rituals of this type, this ritual is intended to bring about the expulsion of the evil associated with the old year. But given the fact that this particular event occurs in the kingdom's capital, formerly in the presence in the monarch, reinforces the theme of the royal scapegoat which is the root of the monastic dance-drama. The symbolism of the fire-expulsion strengthens the idea that the **mdos-mo-che** is but an ecclesiastical expression of the royal sacrifice which lies behind the Ladakhi **lo-gsar** fire-rituals.

6.5: Contests and Displays

The final category of performance events in which **lha-rnga** are performed feature contests, notably polo and archery, which are widely popular in Ladakh as sports, but which nevertheless retain some kind of connection with contests performed, or formerly performed, in ritual contexts. This is evident not only in the usage of **lha-rnga**, but also in many cases by the timing of the competitions and also their governing rules of etiquette. Indeed, these events draw upon such a rich heritage of myth, ritual and symbol in Ladakhi culture, of which music is one part, that the Ladakhis might well be justified in claiming these games as 'national' sports.

The theme of contest is one which runs through many aspects of Ladakhi culture. Under the pretext of "play" (**rtses**), competition is an ethic which, according to the performance situation, can be the basis for the equal struggle status (charismatic authority) or for status validation (traditional authority). Thus actual games, whilst they may appear to stand alone as events-in-themselves for sheer entertainment, are actually, in terms of the levels of controlled performance and the symbolic relations between them, located somewhere between sacrificial contests in which the victory of the winner is 'pre-ordained' and actual open conflict where at least some attempt may be made to model or represent the precarious outcome in terms of the cultural schema of ritual battle. The connections between contests and these battle scenarios - real or ritual - may not be explicit from the performances themselves, but they are no less a real part of the inherited cultural world with which the Ladakhi at play engages. Similarly, the forms of **lha-rnga** associated with these events are not musically elaborate or overtly ritualistic, but they are never far from most of what the genre as a whole represents and embodies.

Some of the functions of such contests have already been identified, including the acquisition and exercise of certain skills, the identification of those in possession of them, a means of gaining favour or public prestige, the legitimation of actual conflict, and - particularly in the case of sacrificial contests - validating socio-ritual status by the expulsion of evil. Many of these still pertain to modern competitions even though

participation is not as restricted to the higher classes as they once appear to have been.

Some of these functions are also a feature of 'displays' (such as horsemanship) accompanied by instrumental music, but these more tightly-structured performances emphasize the declaration of status.

6.5.1: Archery (**mda'-rtses**)

Archery (**mda'-rtses**, "arrow-play") is undoubtedly among the oldest sports played by the Ladakhis, and it has a prominent place in the cultural history of Indian Buddhism. Today, archery competitions are widely held in Ladakhi villages, Buddhist and Muslim, during Spring and early Summer. Among Ladakhi Buddhists, these events may more aptly be described as 'festivals' for they include music, dancing, feasting and drinking. The competition itself, which does not seem to be taken seriously, occurs between two teams of adult non-caste males, preferably captained by members of the nobility, or at least the most senior present. They shoot from a specially constructed decorative archway (Plate 33) at a target consisting of a clay disc attached to a wooden board which rests against a mound of earth (see also Plate 19). To one side there is pavillion where food, beer and tea is available for the competitors and guest spectators, which they consume whilst watching the dance interludes (performed mainly by women) between bouts of shooting whilst the arrows are collected. Crowds spilling around the ground consist mainly of spectating women and children. To one side, near the target, are seated the village **mon-pa**, who are served food and drink separately. They are paid in cash from the competitors' subscriptions, for their presence is solely for the purpose of providing the music for the shooting and the dances.

The music consists of the "running drumming" (**tshang-rag**), played continuously throughout the shooting until the target is struck, when the music changes abruptly to the "victory drumming" (**rgyal-rnga**) to the cheers of the crowd and the delight of the archer, who makes his way to the pavillion to receive a ceremonial white scarf (**kha-btags**) and the



Plate 33: Archers at a village competition in Sabu

congratulations of the spectators. Together with any other target-shooters, he is invited to lead one of the dances, usually the male dance (**pho-rtses**), at the end of the current shooting session. Meanwhile the music returns without a break to its running form, which surges in volume, register and tempo in response to, or with a view to heightening, the atmosphere of the moment, most noticeably when an archer of high social status comes to the line to take up aim. This assumes, naturally, that the archer has paid his subscription, for the musicians might then hope for a **bak-shish** should the target be struck. The crowd, meanwhile, might be repeatedly shouting "**lcag lcag**" ("hit! hit!"), as opposed to "**kyog kyog**" (miss! miss!) out of respect.

While predominantly a form of diversion which is enjoyed with a good deal of characteristic revelry and good humour, symbols of ritual conquest are nevertheless still invoked here. The sounding of the *victory music*, together with the presentation of the ceremonial scarf to the victor suggests that his achievement is not merely sporting, but is also merit-generating. The arrow itself, of course, is a powerful symbol of (male) conquest in a number of Ladakhi myths and rituals where the victory assumes the role of supernatural protector; hence archery is an exclusively male activity, with the exception of the dance interludes which are nevertheless, and significantly, led by triumphant males. Ritually polluted males such as the **mon-pa**, however, are themselves excluded from the competition even though their music is not: one is reminded of the myth where their mediating role is represented by the shaft, rather than the tip, of the arrow.

Historical accounts from the turn of the century support the view that archery festivals once had more substantial ritual elements. According to Francke (1901), these contests formed part of a springtime 'Gesar festival' in honour of the epic hero whose magic arrow was a symbol of his fertility-releasing powers. This suggests a symbolic connection between archery contests and the Spring **sa-kha-phye** ritual, where the beam of the plough (the **gshol-mdā'** or "plough-arrow") is drawn by a young male, a connection further borne by the taboo placed upon women ploughing, and upon singing the Gesar Epic during the summer

months. Songs relating episodes from the epic, **gling-glu**, were said to have been sung at this festival (Francke 1902:304-9 and Francke 1901/2); of particular interest are the songs concerning Gesar's marriage to the 'milk-white fairy' Druguma (the symbolism of which, together with the ritual arrow, features in the Ladakhi marriage ceremony, a symbolic 'conquest'), and his carrying of Spring to the high passes. Two of the songs also direct relate to archery festivals, one referring to a contest held upon Gesar's return to his wife, the other describing the dedication of the arrows. These songs, however, are not known to be sung at archery festivals today.

Ribbach (1986:133) also mentions that similar "songs proclaiming the legendary feats of the legendary Kesar" were sung at the Spring **gtor-bzlog** festival "held in all villages, whether large or small". His description resembles the exorcism ritual of this name performed in Leh, except that bows and arrows were used. To judge from a nineteenth-century painting showing the **a-po a-pi** masked couple, charged with the expulsion of evil at the **lo-gsar** celebrations, with bows and arrows as well as swords (Icke-Schwalbe 1990:47), it appears that such weapons may have been used, if only emblematically, in other popular exorcism rituals. But it is hard to find evidence today for such direct connections between archery competitions and ritual conquests, except perhaps for their common use of **lha-rnga**.

6.5.2: Swordplay (**ral-gri-rtses**)

Displays using weapons other than the bow and arrow are also known, or were once known in Ladakh. Although archery, as in ancient India, has had a special place in Ladakhi Buddhist culture, other weapons - swords, spears, rope-slings, guns, fire-crackers and even cannons (said to have been used in the Leh **gtor-bzlog** ritual for a while, before a fatal accident prohibited its use) - can assume similar symbolic roles as instruments of ritual conquest. The military symbolism of such weapons, not to mention the musical instruments of battle, was adopted by monastic Buddhism at an



Plate 34: A Balti sword-dancer

early stage, and they are still represented in the ritual, musical, and iconographic practices of modern Ladakhi monasteries.

Although more popular cultural expressions of the ritual significance of weapons appear to have an ancient history in India (e.g. Bake 1970), the prevalent form in present-day Ladakh, the sword-dance (**ral-gri-rtses**, lit. "swordplay"), has direct connections with the Islamic world. Heber (1903:214) mentions no less than four kinds: "a slow quiet rhythmical one by a Balti with one sword only; one by a Pathan, lithe and rapid, with a sword in each hand; another slower one, when a Ladaki wields two swords, while in a fourth, two Pathan dancers, each with sword and shield, approach from opposite corners, and engage in mock fight". In the course of fieldwork for this study, however, the only sword-dance that was recorded was performed by Baltis from Turtuk (Plate 34), a Muslim village in the lower Shyok Valley recaptured by the Indian Army in 1974. This is said to re-enact a historic conflict in which some Balti prisoners, in the course of the dance, overpowered their Ladakhi captors, its continued performance legitimating the predatory warfare characteristic of Balti-Ladakhi militarism (Emerson 1984:112-113).

In the Ladakhi Buddhist context, however, the sword-dance acquired the symbolism of ritual conquest, as suggested by the tale of the last Buddhist ruler of Baltistan, Bokha (ruled c. 1490-1515), who assumed the throne as a boy after his supporters had killed his rivals during a sword-dance. Besides the possible connection between this narrative and the Spring **sa-kha-phye** ritual, especially in its royal form, the similarities with the Bagatham myths are striking. This suggests that the sword-dances traditionally performed by Ladakhis at **lo-gsar** immediately following the **me-tho** fire-ritual (e.g. Francke 1923:28, and depicted in Icke-Scwalbe 1990:46) were directly connected with the theme of the ritual expulsion of evil. Again, the portrayal of the **a-po a-pi** dancers with swords (ibid.:47) suggests that sword-dances may also have been performed in the context of the **gtor-ma phang-shes** exorcism at the end of **lo-gsar**.

Other forms of display are also described in historical accounts of Ladakhi festivals, and may also therefore be linked to the theme of ritual

contest, but these are no longer extant. A further picture in the Moravian collection at Völkerkundemuseum Herrnhut (Icke-Schwalbe:49) depicts a rope-sling dance (**yu-gdo-rtses**) said to have been performed at the Spring Kesar festival. Joldan (1985:44-45) also describes a display of gunmanship on horseback, possibly the family duty of the Gangba family, in the bazaar "to the tune [presumably the **tshang-rag**] of the royal musicians who would be seated below the King's balcony" at the king's New Year ceremony.

6.5.3: Equestrian Pursuits (**rta-rtses**)

The popularity of equestrian games and displays in Ladakh, and the music used to accompany them, testifies to the region's strong ties with the Islamic cultural orbit, where horse-rearing and its associated leisure activities have been passionately pursued since receiving the blessing of the Prophet himself (Saletore 1985:58-59). Polo, horseracing and forms of horsemanship, whilst especially popular among Ladakhi Muslims, are by no means restricted to them however, and one should remember the importance of the horse in pre- and non-Islamic Central Asia where, for example, the animal has remained a symbol of shamanic flight among the Mongol and Tibetan peoples, as in Buddhist Ladakh.

Horseracing (**rta-rgyug**) accordingly has a place in a number of Ladakhi rituals and ceremonies where it symbolizes the expulsion of evil through ritual contest. A number of these invoke the image of the god or divine king riding on horseback to other worlds, often in competition with one another. Thus at Matho, the royal and monastic oracles race into the mountains to the **lha-tho** where the two gods, the **rgal-po'i lha** and **bla-ma'i lha** re-enter them for the final **lha-rtses** dance, while at Shey, Dorje Chenmo appears on horseback wearing, on alternate days, crowns donated by the palace and the monastery. Again, at the Leh **lo-gsar**, the King and his **lha-bdag** race three times between the bazaar and a site beyond the city boundary, expelling the old evil from the capital, symbolically represented again by the grand horse-procession to the exorcism site at the **mdos-mo-che** ritual. In these cases, the contest between ruler and priest symbolises the 'inner conflict' between holy law and political

authority, but it is not clear if the actual outcome of the sacrificial contest really matters: perhaps this reflects the inherent contradiction in the king's loss of absolute power in winning the legitimacy of the church.

It is nevertheless clear that these symbolic races are considered to bring about the expulsion of evil, similarly represented by the horse-racing in some villages at **lo-gsar** where pairs of riders gallop - now a symbolic seven times - between the village and the site of the **gtor-ma phang-shes** exorcism ritual. In this instance, as after the royal horse-race at **lo-gsar**, the riders returning to performing the horse-dance (**rta-gshon**) as a means of dedicating the merit generated. This 'dance' - almost a form of dressage - is performed on horseback to the musical accompaniment (also called **rta-gshon**) of the **mon-pa**, and consists of encircling a beer-jar (at the cosmic centre) three times. Informants also referred to a "wooden horse dance" (**shing-rta-rtses**) where an additional musical accompaniment was provided by a bell strung around the animal's neck. This also seems to have been associated with New Year festivities, but is not performed today.

Actual horse-races, such as those performed in Leh bazaar at the King's New Year, are also accompanied by the musicians, who play the same "running" **tshang-rag** as in archery and polo while the races are in progress, followed by the **rgyal-rnga**. Even here, then, the theme of ritual contest suggested by the music is not entirely lost.

The game of polo (**rta-bo-lo**) almost rivals archery in popularity, particularly among Ladakhi Muslims, from whom the Buddhists may have adopted it (Plate 23). In Leh, it was formerly played in the bazaar, but is now a common sight on the pologround on the eastern side of the city during the summer months. Like archery, it traditionally followed festivals and public rituals and there are instances also of mythic polo-matches in the context of real conflict in which the victor is afforded almost supernatural qualities. Biddulph (1880:85-87) provides a glimpse of the game's former ritual significance among the Dardic-speaking groups of northern Kashmir. He refers first of all to a Spring festival where a sheep is sacrificed on the polo-ground, and its blood sprinkled over the

competitor's sticks; before the game began, its head (said to have been subsequently used as the 'ball') was ceremoniously dragged along the field by members of the musician caste, taking the carcass for their own use. A polo-match also followed the Spring "seed-throwing" ritual (referred to above in connection with the Ladakhi royal **sa-kha-phye** ceremony) in Yasin where a representative of the local ruler first galloped up and down the ground twice, to the accompaniment of music, to see if any future misfortune falling upon the community might manifest itself in some riding accident.

None of these associations are explicit in the Ladakhi or Balti game, but certainly it was taken seriously among the aristocracy and was often the subject of betting. In nineteenth century Baltistan, Drew (187 :229-231) described how the local band of musicians first escorted "the Raja of the place, or whoever he may be" in procession to the raised platform along one side of the ground; and how the winning side, "if they are much elated with their victory - if some wager, or some point of credit had been depending on the game - a few of them will dismount and commence a grotesque dance to horrible music, accompanied by wild grimaces and gestures to mark their exultation, the other party meanwhile having slunk off to the far end".

He also mentions that the musicians played virtually throughout the match, "with especial force on the taking off and on each rush at speed", and that upon winning the game, "the band strikes up in a sign of victory", recalling the chronicler of Akbar's description in the late sixteenth century: "when a ball was driven to the **hāl** (goal) the **naqqāra** was beaten so that all, far and near, could hear it" (Allami 1927:433-434). A Balti informant reported that the rhythm played in Balti polo-matches would also signal the status of the scorer, but this could not be confirmed. In Ladakhi polo-matches at least, the music takes the same form as that provided for archery contests: the **tshang-rag** is played more or less continuously, swelling in response to the action on the field or to generate excitement; and the **rgyal-rnga** is played whenever a goal is scored. But for the association with ritual conquest made musically, the game itself is predominantly a means of displaying skill and social status.

CHAPTER SEVEN

RHYTHMIC CYCLES: MUSICAL ANALYSIS OF LHA-RNGA

7.1: Introduction

Having examined the **lha-rnga** repertoire in its performance context, the study now presents a systematic analysis of its musical forms, with a view to elucidating the ways in which its cultural significance is underpinned by the operational principles of rhythmic organization. The emphasis upon the patterning of rhythm, rather than melody, is justified on the grounds that it is through this musical dimension that certain meanings are articulated.

Firstly, an account is given of the musical instruments involved, including their musical possibilities and the techniques used to provide the fundamental musical elements of the genre. The analysis of the **lha-rnga** repertoire is then considered in terms of its more general musical classification, form, and style, before proceeding to analyse the relationship of these constituent elements in performance. The methodology used here is to compare different performances in order to identify the limits of variability which establish the significant distinctions between individual structures. Finally, the musical function of these elements is discussed in relation to their meaning in the performance context.

7.2: The **lha-rnga** ensemble: instrumental techniques

The drum and reed ensembles used in Ladakh for providing **lha-rnga** and other forms of instrumental music essentially consist of just the two types of instrument: the **da-man** and **sur-na**. Compared to other Himalayan ensembles of this kind, the range of instruments used is limited and there is little regional variation in the composition of the ensemble, except in peripheral areas. Among the Brokpa the added **gring-jang** plays a leading role in ensembles. This instrument is also used by Balti musicians in northern Ladakh, together with a smaller cylindrical drum of the **dholak** type, as in Baltistan itself. These additional types of drum are never employed in Ladakhi ensembles, but exceptionally, the **gring-jang** is played singly at **lo-gsar** in Leh. **Lha-rnga** may also be played solo on the **daph**, but again this is not an instrument used in drum and reed ensembles: for

light and popular music, however, it is a common feature of urban ensembles, as are the **ḍholak** and other kinds of drum (**tabla**, bongo).

The size of the traditional ensembles, however, varies considerably on a regional basis, the pattern of distribution reflecting the historical and cultural importance of their music in the support of centralised state rule. In remote areas of Ladakh away from the capital, where there are no **mon-pa**, these ensembles either do not exist (e.g. the Rupshu and Changthang plateaux in the southeast) or typically consist of only one of each instrument (e.g. Zanskar, Dha Hanu, and the Muslim areas of the Shyok and Nubra valleys) played by non-caste members of the village community. In Central Ladakh, the minimum requirement is also a pair of instruments (Plate 3), but greater numbers are more common: two or three of each instrument is typical (Plate 19). The claim that ensembles in the capital once had up to sixty musicians may be exaggerated but it does seem likely that present-day ensembles are generally not as large as they were in dynastic times. It is still the case, however, that the size of the ensemble reflects the status of the event and of the patron, and ten to fifteen of each is not uncommon in the Leh area even today.

Large ensembles are highly impressive, both aurally and visually, but whatever their size, aesthetic and technical concerns demand a certain order and balance in their composition. It is a principal requirement to achieve a balance between the two main strata of the musical texture - rhythm and melody - so there are invariably a roughly equal number of **da-man** and **sur-na**, which match one another in dynamic level. Where there is more than one pair of instruments, a third stratum is added during **lha-rnga** preludes and postludes in the form of a **sur-na** drone. Being less loud in the lower register, more **sur-na** (if available) are used for the drone than for the melody. Meanwhile, in order to retain the rhythmic clarity of these non-metric sections, a single pair of **da-man** - the largest and loudest - is employed, which means that in the case of large ensembles, some **sur-na** will not play until the remaining **da-man** join the ensemble.



Plate 35: Ladakhi ensemble of **da-man** and **sur-na**

Since a single pair of instruments cannot articulate all these textures, a larger ensemble is clearly preferred for musical as well as social reasons, not least because only a large ensemble can provide the characteristic fullness of sound that arises from several instruments playing 'together'. Where such numbers exist, a pattern of musical ranking is most apparent (Plate 35): the leading **sur-na** and **da-man** pair occupy the middle of the seated line, with the remaining players of each instrument extending from the centre on respective sides in approximate order of rank. In the case of the **da-man** the lineout is visually effective because they are laid out in order of size, with the smallest at the end (Plate 19). This departure from normal social etiquette, which demands that persons are seated in order of social rank in a single line with the highest at one end, almost certainly reflects musical concerns; *for the instruments are so loud that this special arrangement enables the more prominent players, and particularly the leading pair at the centre, to hear one another properly.* The seating of individual members of the ensemble is determined amongst themselves according to a combination of age and performing ability. This is an informal arrangement since the larger ensembles (with the exception of the **mkhar-mon** in former times) are not instituted as a fixed membership with an elected head; the bands are, however, formed from a small, stable, population of known players, so patterns of musical ranking are commonly asserted.

The following descriptions of each instrument give the standard spelling of the Ladakhi name (as used throughout the main text), together with any alternative written forms; the Hornbostel-Sachs classification, including a brief description in their terminology (Hornbostel and Sachs 1961); a description of their morphology and fabrication, with measurements and names of parts of the instruments; and a description of their playing technique, including the playing position, musical possibilities with fingerings, tunings, range etc.

7.2.1: The **da-man**

[dha-man, d'a-man, lda-man, brda-ma]

pair of kettle drums

211.12-811-4 membranophone; drum struck directly; sets of kettle drums; with membrane laced to drum; with cord bracing; without special devices for stretching; sounded by beaters (sticks).

The **da-man** (Figure 4) consists of two semi-ovoid bowls (**tsang**, "nest") made of copper (**zangs**) or iron (**lcags**) and covered with hide (yak, cow, sheep, or goat). The larger of the pair (**pho-skad**, "male voice") is typically 40 to 50 cms in diameter and about the same in depth, whilst the smaller (**mo-skad**, "female voice") is approximately 25 to 35 cms in diameter and about 20 to 25 cms deep. The ratio of the dimensions of any given pair is roughly 3:2. The skins (**ko-ba**) are lapped by a leather cord interlaced through the ring of holes around the head, and then braced by thongs (**rgyud-skud**), arranged in a cross-lattice, passing through the holes around the head and secured at the base by a belt. The X-bracing is counter-laced just below the halfway level.

There are no tuning devices, the tension in the heads being simply controlled by wetting or warming. In the case of the **pho-skad**, a small plugged hole in the base enables water to be poured onto the interior surface (Plate 36), or else liquid (often beer or tea) is periodically smeared over the head, applying pressure with the palm of the hand if necessary to further soften the skin. The head of the larger drum is sometimes loaded by pushing a nail into it, or by threading a piece of cloth through a small hole made in this way. The **mo-skad** skin is kept tight by warming it in the sun or before a fire. Ideally the drums are tuned to the **sur-na**, in fifths, but in practice a good timbral separation is as important as achieving the correct pitches. The **pho-skad** gives a deep, semi-pitched, dull sound, while the **mo-skad** produces a clearly pitched, metallic ringing sound.

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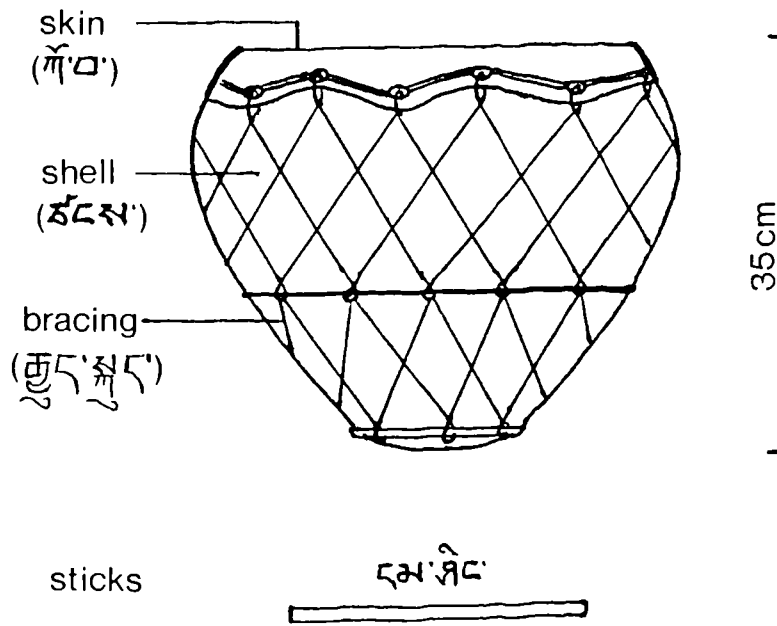


Figure 4: The da-man



Plate 36: **Da-man**, showing the water-hole in the **pho-skad**



Plate 37: The **da-man** in procession

The drums are played with a pair of heavy wooden sticks (**dam-shing**) measuring upto approximately 30cms in length and 3cms in diameter. The drums are usually played resting on the ground, the player seated between them: fabric hoops or "gathering rings" (**tshogs-kyir**, cf. T (**s**)kor=circle, hoop) placed under their bases hold them in position, tilted towards one another, usually with the **mo-skad** on the righthand side and nearer to the horizontal. The two component drums are normally tied together since they are often used in procession, in which case they are either (if small) slung around the player's right shoulder by a long woolen strap (**bar-lung**) tied to hooks (**rna-mchog**, "ears") on each drum, or else carried on the back of a yak or horse. In procession, the drums are usually played with a single stick in the right hand, the other stick being placed in the player's belt to leave his left hand free to support the weight of the drums (Plate 37). An unusual manner of playing is also mentioned by Jaeschke, "one hanging in front, the other behind, the latter being beaten by a second person that follows the bearer" (Jaeschke 1881:289), but this practice was not observed by the author.

For the most part, the drums are played with the two sticks, one in each hand. Although the playing technique, as in the semi-classical **naqqāra** tradition of North India and West Asia, essentially consists of right-left alternations of open **pho-skad** and **mo-skad** strokes, complex stroke-combinations are employed to exploit the musical dimensions of pitch, resonance, timbre and stress. Pitch and stress are the principal parameters in all these traditions, but in the Ladakhi tradition there is little evidence that resonance or timbre operate as independent variables. Unlike the **naqqāra** tradition, there is no conventional system of verbal syllables to memorise and transmit a range of stroke-types: the Ladakhi stroke-patterns are usually communicated by demonstration, or verbally in an informal way using the onomatopoeic syllables **dum** and **ting** to simply indicate the two drum-pitches (but cf. the Arabic **zam** and **ḥīr** for the **naqqāra**). The available strokes may nevertheless be tabulated with their **naqqāra** correlates, indicated by **tabla bols** following Stewart (1974) (Table 4), but the dimensions of resonance and timbre have little musical significance for they are largely dependent upon variations of pitch and stress: the timbre of the high (**mo-skad**) open strokes, varied by the

position of the stroke on the head, is dependent upon the stress of the stroke; the only closed stroke, on the **pho-skad**, always played centrally, is very rarely used.



































































































































The 'closed' playing position from which all movements are made to execute the strokes is shown in Plate 38. In this resting position the sticks are held above their 'home' drums: the left stick is held above the centre of the **pho-skad** and the right is positioned somewhat nearer the rim of the **mo-skad**. The sticks are held firmly in each hands, but with the wrists supple, with the palms turned upwards and the knuckles of the clasped fingers facing the drumheads, the thumbs gripping the sticks in alignment with them from above. From this position, light and moderately stressed strokes are played with the upper arms remaining close to the body and the forearms kept horizontal, most movement coming from the wrists: a stick may be simply raised to strike its 'home' drum (Plate 39), or it may strike the other drum by rolling the wrist and turning the body (Plate 40). Rolls, crushed strokes and composite strokes (striking both drums simultaneously) are invariably executed from this close position.

More vigorous strokes require a larger sweeping action involving the whole arm. To strike the **pho-skad**, for example, the left arm is first drawn up across the body with the stick raised above the right shoulder and the head turned away to the left, leaving the right hand in its closed position to strike either drum (Plates 41,42). After striking the **pho-skad** with the left arm, it may be raised immediately again to repeat the action (Plate 43) or it may be kept low in the closed position in order to allow the right arm to be raised above it and across to the lefthand side of the body in preparation for a similar stroke on the **mo-skad** (Plate 44). The closed stroke on the **pho-skad** (Plate 45) is executed by a lefthand cross-stroke as described, but with the right stick held firmly against the drumhead.

Combinations of two, three or four successive strokes, mostly right-left alternations, make up the basic rhythmic cells of more extended drum-patterns. The possible combinations are highly numerous, but the most common ones are given in Musical Example 1.

bol	drum	pitch	resonance	timbre (location of stroke)	stress
NĀ/RĀ	mo-skad	high	open	near rim	relatively stressed
TĀ	mo-skad	high	open	between rim and centre	heavily stressed
TĪN	mo-skad	high	open	3-5cm from rim	fairly heavily stressed
GHE	pho-skad	low	open	centre	variable
KA	pho-skad	low	closed	centre	relatively light
DHĀ = NĀ or TĀ + GHE					
DHĪN = TĪN + GHE					

Table 4: Available **da-man** strokes, according to their **naqqāra** correlates
[after Stewart 1974]

	two-beat groups			three-beat groups		four-beat groups		
single:	         	         	         	         	         	         	         	         
composite:	  	  	  	  	  	  	  	
crushed:	  	  	  	  	  	  	  	
rolled:			  	  	 			

Musical Example 1: Examples of Rhythmic Beat-Groups on the **da-man**



Plate 38: The 'closed' playing position on the **da-man**



Plate 39: Lefthand 'home' stroke on the **pho-skad**



Plate 40: Left- and righthand strokes on the **mo-skad**



Plate 41: Left arm raised for heavy stroke on **pho-skad** with light righthand stroke on **mo-skad**



Plate 42: Left arm raised for heavy stroke on **pho-skad** with light righthand stroke on **pho-skad**



Plate 43: Left arm being raised over right for heavy stroke on **pho-skad**



Plate 44: Right arm being raised over left for heavy stroke on **mo-skad**



Plate 45: Closed stroke on the **pho-skad**

7.2.2: The *gring-jang*

[ding-jang]

cylindrical drum

211.212.1-92-81 membranophone; drum struck directly; individual double-skin cylindrical drum; with membrane lapped on by a hoop; with cord bracing.

Among the Brokpa, this drum is said to have been traditionally made from a single piece of hollowed-out juniper trunk (**shug-pa**, *juniperus excelsa*), and covered with ibex-skin. Modern specimens (Plates 2,21,46) are made from thin planks of wood (**kham-bu**, apricot; **star-ka**, walnut; **sho**, white willow; or **yar-pa**, black poplar) curved into a near-cylindrical shape by thoroughly soaking them in water and slowly bending them over hot ashes. The resulting shell measures approximately 40cms in length and 50cms in diameter. It has two heads of goat-skin, of two different thicknesses, with hooped rims laced over the shell by W-bracing, which form Y-shaped patterns by partially twisting each pair of straps around one another. The twisted portions are held in torque by short sticks inserted between and at right angles to the straps so as to rest against the drum shell. By winding in further twists with these sticks toward the upper end of the Y (nearest the right membrane), the pitches of the heads may be adjusted.

The drum is usually suspended over the left upper arm by a shoulder-strap, and is supported in a horizontal position by the cushion of the thumb of the left hand, which rests on the hoop of the higher head, and by the left knee. If the player is standing, the left leg is raised slightly; otherwise he may sit cross-legged. The lower-pitched (usually right) head is struck in the centre with a curved beater (**kya**), the higher-pitched one being played with the (usually left) hand near the rim. The **ti-chong** in Leh, however, used sticks for both heads: a slightly thicker one for the lower head held against the rim in the left hand, and a thinner one in the right (Plate 46).

The smaller **ḍholak**-type drum of the Baltis, about 40cms long and 25cms in diameter, is made from a single hollowed out tree trunk selected for size, and may be slightly barrel-shaped (Plate 6). Small metal rings threaded around adjacent (untwisted) cords replace the stick devices employed on the larger type and the drumstick is rather smaller. It is played with a similar technique, but is usually played seated with the knees drawn up; the body of the drum rests on the player's crossed feet, and is supported, with the right drumhead slightly raised, by means of a strap passing around his knees.

The sound dimensions of both drums correspond to those of the **da-man**, and can be more easily tuned accordingly using the devices already described. Apart from the execution of rolls and closed strokes, these drums can otherwise closely imitate the two-voice drum-patterns of the **da-man**. Where played in an ensemble setting among the Baltis and Brokpa, the **gring-jang** is used to articulate the main skeleton of rhythmic patterns, with the **da-man** (usually a small pair, if present) providing subsidiary beats (Plate 21). The smaller type may assume a similar role in the absence of the full-sized instrument, or it may supplement it in a similar way to the **da-man** if present.

7.2.3: The **ḍaph**

frame drum with jingles

211.311-6 membranophone; drum struck directly; single-skin frame drum; with membrane glued to drum.

The circular wooden shell of the **ḍaph**, measuring approximately 50cms in diameter 6cms in depth, is made from a single plank of wood (Plate 47). The skin of sheep- or goat-hide is stuck to the wooden rim with glue. There are no tuning devices, so the head is tightened by warming it. Jingles (**chil-chil**), consisting of small pairs of circular iron plates, are nailed at intervals around the inner rim of the frame, or within slots cut into it.



Plate 46: The **gring-jang** as played by the **ti-chong** in Leh



Plate 47: The daph

The player, who is seated, holds the instrument directly in front of him or her, and may be suspended from one shoulder by means of a strap, or this may be looped around one forearm for support. The drum is held at its lowest arc by the up-turned palm of one hand, with the thumb curled around the inner rim to leave the fingers free to strike the edge of the head. The other hand is used to strike the skin, either at the edge, or at or near the centre.

As with the other drums used in Ladakh, two sounds are distinguished: a low sound corresponding to the centre stroke of one hand, and a high pitch caused by finger strokes of either hand at the rim. The differentiation in sound is enhanced by the presence of the jingles, which are excited mainly by the peripheral strokes, and thereby adds further clarity to the performance of two-voice patterns.

7.2.4: The **sur-na**

[sur-sna, bsu-sna, ha-rip, ha-rib]

oboe

422.112.2 aerophone; wind instrument proper; reedpipe; single oboe; with fingerholes.

The main shaft (**sur-na**) of the instrument (Figure 5) is an externally cylindrical pipe flaring to a bell (**mtsho**, "lake") and is made from a single piece of turned wood, usually apricot. Data relating to the **sur-nā(y)** of neighbouring areas suggests an internal conical bore, but this could not be verified for the **sur-na** (Dick 1984b; Helffer 1984b; Sakata 1980). It has a standard length of one cubit (**khru**), equivalent to approximately 40cms. With the mouthpiece attached, the total length (including the reed) increases to about 45cms. The bell flares to a diameter of approximately 10 cms. There are seven equidistant finger-holes (**bi-yang**) and a single thumb-hole, and sometimes one or more unfingered holes at the bell end for acoustical purposes.

The mouthpiece (**pu-ri**, "tube") consists of two elements: a cylindrical pipe, or staple, about 7 cms long, held within the shaft of the instrument at the proximal end; and a narrow brass tube which is plugged by a wooden stopper into the external opening of the pipe. The latter grips the reed (**pi-pi**, "nipple"), prepared by the player from the stalks of **'dam-bu**, a species of marsh-reed found in the Nubra Valley (also used for thatching and making quill-pens); it is tied at its base by a thread 'to maintain its fanned shape and to facilitate its insertion into the pipe. Very often several reeds are made up on a single thread so that they can be changed quickly during performance if the need arises. There is also a lip-disc (**lo-lo**) for physical support, located roughly halfway between the reed and the body of the instrument. This lends physical support and assists breath control.

The wooden body of the instrument is seasoned with apricot oil (**kham-bu-mar**, from the pressed stones) to prevent cracking. The bell-end, and sometimes the entire shaft, is often covered with white metal or silver, the finest examples being richly decorated with auspicious designs and ornamented with semi-precious stones (Plates 22,24). More simply, metal rings (**shan**) are fixed around the shaft between the finger-holes.

The player grips the mouthpipe with his teeth, and presses his lips against the disc so that the reed freely vibrates within the player's mouth (Plate 48). As the reed is not tongued, articulation depends upon diaphragm control, as does the production of a small, fast vibrato, although in practice notes (especially repeated ones) are more readily articulated by ornamentation. The lip-disc helps breath control, which is especially difficult when circular breathing (**'bud-'khor**) is employed; however this is rare and frequent breaths are taken, preferably but not always at the ends of phrases. The holes are covered by the first three fingers and thumb of the proximal (usually left) hand, and by the four fingers of the distal (usually right) hand. The middle joints of the fingers, rather than the finger tips, are used, a technique which shades the notes somewhat, although not as extensively as on the Hindustani **sáhnāī**. The basic fingering and approximate pitches are given in Table 5, although individual players develop their own systems of cross-fingering and 'lipping' to make

सुर'व'

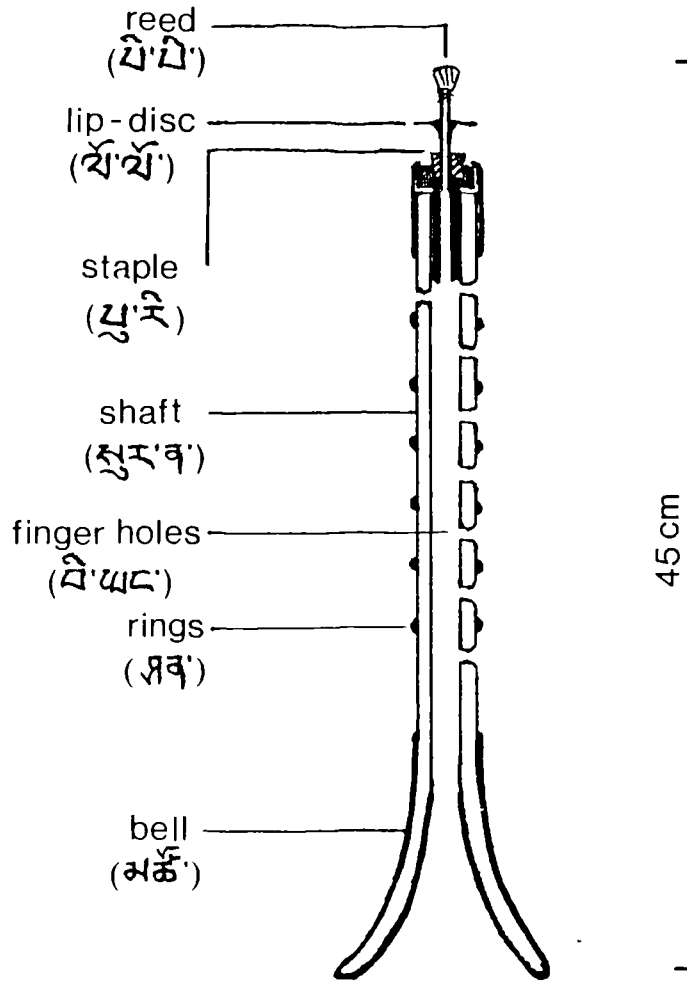


Figure 5: The **sur-na**

●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○
●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○
●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	●

●	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○
●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

●	●	●	●	○	●	●	○	○

Table 5: **Sur-na** fingering chart



Plate 48: The **sur-na**

smaller adjustments of pitch within a diatonic framework.. Both registers are widely used since most Ladakhi melodies extend beyond the octave. The 'tonic' of most melodies is the pitch notated as 'E', corresponding to the fingerholes of the upper hand being closed. Players claimed that this leaves one hand free at the end of phrases to salute any dignitary for whom they are performing. More significantly, though, this means that the melodies, which are based upon a pentatonic core, lie comfortably under the fingers. This also allows the tonic to be approached from below, a characteristic of Ladakhi melody

When several **sur-na** are being played together, tuning is often a problem where there are substantial variations of pitch between different instruments and players; small differences may, however, be considered to 'colour' the melody. There are several means by which a player can adjust the tuning in attempting to match the instruments, although different musicians do not all demonstrate equal degrees of strictness; Leh players, for example, generally appear to be more vigilant in this regard. Small discrepancies of approximately one tone or less can be corrected by adjusting or exchanging the reed. More drastically, the pitch of an instrument can be lowered by plugging the top fingerhole with a mixture of wood and apricot gum and shifting the position of the hands down by one hole, using one of the 'emergency holes' in the bell end.

7.3: Analysis of the lha-rnga repertoire

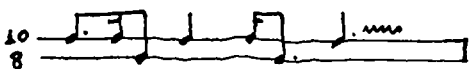
Drum and reed ensembles are used in many types of Ladakhi music, but the term **lha-rnga** draws a clear distinction between this form of 'absolute' instrumental music, and other kinds used to accompany songs and dances. Unlike these, **lha-rnga** can only be played on **da-man** and **sur-na** in specific ritual and ceremonial contexts, and are not regarded as a form of entertainment. Nevertheless, the **lha-rnga** repertoire does include special types of ritual dance, and may even include some song and dance tunes. At a general level, it is indeed possible to identify some common characteristics of the Ladakhi ensemble style, as well as general musical principles which are referred to by Ladakhi terminology.

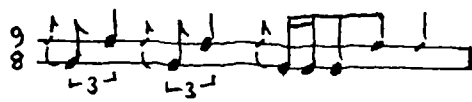
7.3.1: General Musical Features and Terminology

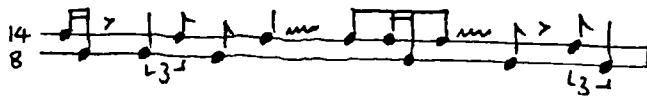
The Ladakhis make a fundamental distinction between rhythm (**rtsas**) and melody (**dbyangs**) in terms of the strata of instrumental texture, rather than the abstract dimensions of time and pitch: thus **dbyangs** refers to the melodic structure of the voice or **sur-na**, while **rtsas** only refers to the rhythmic form of the accompanying **da-man**. This is an important difference since the rhythmic structures of the drum-patterns depend heavily upon the dimension of pitch for their articulation. With this qualification, there are a number of reasons which point to rhythm taking precedence over melody in the Ladakhi instrumental tradition, and which justify the emphasis of rhythm, in the Ladakhi sense, in this study.

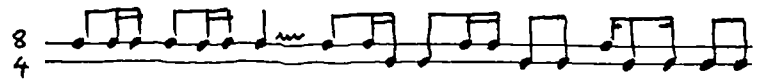
In several respects, the **da-man** plays a dominant role in all Ladakhi instrumental music: for although the ensemble is led by the principal **sur-na**-player, it is the **da-man** which starts and finishes any piece of music and which plays throughout. In **lha-rnga** and dance music, the instrument supplies non-metric preludes and postludes, and sets the tempi of the constituent sections, whilst in accompanied songs, the drum-pattern remains constant whilst the voice or voices alternate with the **sur-na**, and leads the performance into any subsequent dance section. Moreover, where a suite (**tshangs**) of songs is performed, they are grouped according to the prevailing drum-pattern, rather than by a common literary or melodic theme. All melodies are associated with an accompanying drum-pattern, and where there is any doubt it is usually the melody which is adjusted to conform to the rhythmic structure rather than the other way round. Rhythmic patterns are more widely known among musicians (but not necessarily singers) than melodies are, since most **sur-na** players are also able to play the **da-man** to some level, whereas by no means all **da-man** players know how to play the **sur-na**.

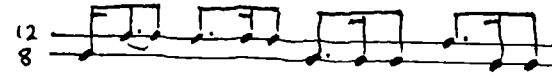
Finally, and most importantly, there is the suggestion that **lha-rnga** constitutes a classificatory system based upon a set of rhythmic, rather than melodic, types. This is evident in the Ladakhis' use of the term **lha-rnga**, for example when they refer to the performance of the "360 **lha-rnga**" (**lha-rnga sum-brgya-drug-cu**), or when drummers claim to know a

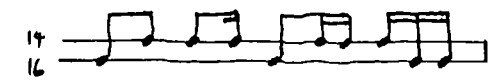
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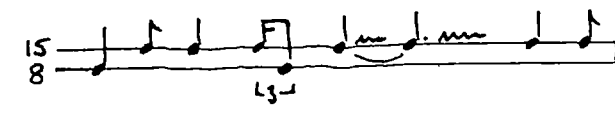
2 

3 

4 

5 

6 

7 

Musical Example 2: Song *rtsas*

similar number of separate pieces. The number clearly has a purely cosmological significance, evoking for example the ancient Tibetan image of the "300 sounds of the drum" (**rnga-skad sum-brgya**) (Ellingson 1979:100), and it invites comparison with similar numerological sets of melodic types such as the 36 **rāgs** of the **damāi** musicians of Nepal (Tingey 1994:115), the 72 **maqāmāt** of the Herati **naqqārakhānā** (Baily 1980) or the 180 **maqāmāt** of the Kashmiri **sufyāna kalam** (Pacholczyk 1979). The Ladakhis, however, do not possess a theoretical system equivalent to some of those of South and West Asia because they do not tend to verbalize or analyse their musical behaviour in such a way: nevertheless, whilst a pitch-modal system is difficult to detect, further musical analysis will show that a system of rhythmic types is indeed in operation. Thus it is certain drum-patterns, rather than melodic ones, which are nominally identified, usually by the context with which they are associated with the affix **lha-rnga** or simply **-nga** ("drumming"). The melodies, on the other hand, are more freely interchangeable, or may even be absent altogether: some **lha-rnga** are played on drums alone, whilst the **sur-na** is never played unaccompanied.

Some general rhythmic principles can be demonstrated by examining a few of the more common ^hrhythmic patterns used to accompany songs (Musical Example 2). Each one represents a single cycle, or "repetition" (**ldab** or **kyor**), of a standard rhythmic pattern (**rtsas**), each consisting of a sequence of beats (**rdung**) of invariant number and length, and which is internally organized by the systematic variation of pitch, stress, resonance and timbre. Each cycle commences on the principal beat, or "heel" (**rkang**), which in practice also closes the sequence: ideally this beat is always in the same position of the drum-stroke pattern for any given **rtsas**, but it may fall on an alternative strong beat within the pattern in some performance settings. Although the beats are not consciously counted by Ladakhi musicians, a regular pulse is established by the internal pattern of equal or proportional beat-lengths, and a metre can be determined at least for the purposes of transcription.

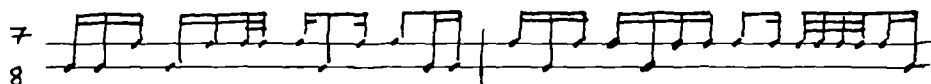
The internal organization of strong and weak beats, however, is not always so clear. In the case of the simpler, divisive metres (e.g. patterns 4 and 5) where each beat-group is of regular duration, the main beats are marked by pitch or stress accents; in these cases, the two halves of the pattern are also characteristically marked by two pitch plateaux, with drum-strokes repeatedly being played on either the **pho-skad** or **mo-skad** rather than alternating rapidly between the two. In the case of the more complex, additive metres however (e.g. pattern 2), where the beat-groups may be two or three beats in duration, stress and pitch accents often conflict with agogic ones, creating a syncopated effect which is difficult to render in transcription; hence in this case a pitch accent occurs on the seventh beat, and an agogic accent on the eighth, rendering a conflict between a grouping of 2+2+2+3 and that, as notated, of 2+2+3+2. Depending upon the context, however, one or other interpretation may be preferred by the pattern of melodic movement or, in the case of dance, by the foot-movements through which the duration and stress patterns are realised.

Another characteristic feature of the Ladakhi drumming style, also difficult to represent in transcription, is the iambic 'lilt' ('**phar**, "rebound", "flutter") of two-beat groups (e.g. patterns 2 and 7) where the first beat, usually marked by a stress and pitch accent, is shortened in duration somewhat to create an agogic accent on the second. This effect is most pronounced at slow tempi (**dal-mo**), lapsing to more even beats at fast (**mgyogs-pa**) tempi:

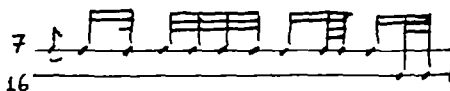


Tempo changes are also an important feature of dance music and **lha-rnga**, these being of two types: firstly, there is a gradual increase in tempo over a series of repetitions of any one pattern where the basic pulse gently quickens; secondly, where there is a series of repeated patterns, long, slow patterns are followed by short, quick ones. In the latter case, it is often claimed that it is only the rhythmic density (i.e.

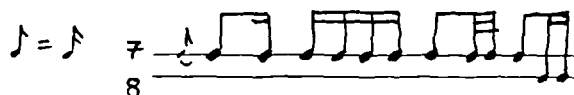
events per beat) which increases whilst the basic pulse remains essentially unchanged, giving the impression of increased speed through greater rhythmic activity, although in practice the pulse does quicken as a result of the overall accelerando. This also creates an ambiguity of interpretation which causes a difficulty for the transcriber. For example, the following **lha-rnga** pattern, extending over two measures of 7/8:



is followed by a faster one-measure pattern which may either be notated in $3\frac{1}{2}/8$ (=7/16), i.e. retaining the basic beat-value but halving the number of beats in a measure, so that the rhythmic density doubles:



or else it may be kept in a 7/8 measure, i.e. retaining the number of beats in a a measure but halving the basic beat-value, with an indication of a change to double-tempo:



The latter interpretation is preferred not only because it is easier to read, but also because in practice, the transition is not a sudden one, but is achieved through a gradual shortening of the beat value over a number of repetitions.

In general, each repetition of the rhythmic cycle is matched by a fixed melodic phrase (**tshig**, "joint"), which starts at the **rkang** of the **rtsas**, as shown in the song transcribed in Musical Example 3. Here, the four phrases (ABCD) each extend over, and are coterminous with, one **ldab** of the **rtsas**, the musicians and singers being continually aware of the desired correlation between **rkang** and **tshig**. It is quite common, however, especially among singers (as compared with **sur-na** players) unused to being

accompanied, for the two to become staggered, creating "wayward rhythm" (**rtsas-log**): sometimes the singers may "busk" (**bcos-ma**) their way back to the **rkang**, but more often the drummers will attempt to salvage the relationship with the **tshig** by skipping the relevant number of beats, or they may leave the error uncorrected by establishing a new **rkang** at a different point in the cycle.

A few typical features of Ladakhi melody may also be noted here. The melody is essentially anhemitonic pentatonic and the movement is stepwise, sweeping through two arched contours extending over an octave or more. A strong tonic-fifth relationship is established by the resting pitches, reflected by the pitch plateaux of the drum-pattern, which coincide at the cadence. The **sur-na** melody is essentially the same upon each repetition between the stanzas, except that the octave-jumping in the first vocal phrase is not necessary to keep the melody within a comfortable range. Also, the **sur-na** melody is heavily embellished, using the intermediary pitches to give the impression of playing hexa- or heptatonically.

The individual embellishment of each **sur-na** introduces a degree of heterophony in the melodic pattern: on occasions, particularly in dance music and **lha-rnga** where the changes in drum-pattern call for changes of melody, one finds instances of polyphony as the new tune is established. Similarly, where there are several **da-man**, individual players, particularly of the smaller drums, will freely provide subsidiary decorative rhythmic patterns which fill out the underlying beat-structure, or introduce polyrhythmic features. However, while there is a degree of creative freedom to produce a fuller, more colourful, instrumental texture, one can hardly speak of any Ladakhi instrumental genre as being improvised. Unlike, say, Indian **rāga** or Turko-Arabic **maqām**, the constituent melodic and rhythmic elements, whilst subject to some repeated variation, nevertheless operate as distinct, regular musical structures in their own right, rather than being the basis for some kind of extemporization.

gling-bu/harmonium
voice
da-man/daph

tshig-gcig

gling-bu 8^{vo}

nub phyogs [k][tə] 'o rgyan gli - [] ng na,

rkang

tshig-gnyis

yi [li] dam pad-ma can bzhus (yod).

rkang

tshig-gsum

(i) no [lo] mo nga lho [de] [a] mi [li] - skyod pa'i,
(ii) nyi zla dbang mo lho [de] [a] mi [li] - skyod pa'i,

rkang

tshig-bzhi

byin rlabs -s dang dngos grub rig sal.

rkang

Text (cf. variant in LFS 1980:27-29):

tshig-gcig	བུ་ཕུགས་ཨ་རྒྱུ་གླིང་པ།
tshig-gnyis	ཡི་དམ་པུ་མཐོ་བུ་ཕུགས་ཡི་ད།
tshig-gsum	འོ་མོ་ང་ལོ་མི་སྤྱོད་པའི། (ཉི་ལྷ་དབང་མོ་ལོ་མི་སྤྱོད་པའི།)
tshig-bzhi	ཕྱི་བུ་ཕུགས་དང་དངས་ལྷུ་བ་རིག་སལ།།

[] = non-lexical syllables (tshig-lhad)

Musical Example 3: A Ladakhi traditional song ("nub-phyogs 'o-rgyan gling") showing tshig-rkang relationship (Tape, No 1)

The definition of the limits of variation are problematic, and are addressed in the analyses which follow, but it may be stated that it is the variety and density of different sounds of individual instruments, whether accidental or intentional, that gives the large Ladakhi ensemble its characteristic sound, which to many outsiders at least, is often 'noisy' as well as loud. Ladakhis, on the other hand, appear to unconsciously discriminate between intentional noisiness, which is acceptable or even desirable in certain ritual contexts, and accidental noise in less formal performance contexts which attract criticisms of musical incompetence or inebriation. The values attached to the limits of musical variability clearly vary from one listener to another, and from one performance context to another, but it would be true to say that a degree of heterophony, even polyphony, is a desirable feature of the Ladakhi ensemble style.

7.3.2: Classification of **lha-rnga** drum-patterns

Before examining the systematic arrangement of rhythmic structures in particular **lha-rnga**, the rhythmic elements are here *analysed by grouping* the constituent drum-patterns by musical type or function. The enumerated list (Musical Examples 4a-d), to which reference will subsequently be made numerically, is not intended to be comprehensive, but it includes most the patterns encountered in this study.

The first group of 'opening patterns' (Musical Example 4a), occur only as the first in a long sequence of **rtsas** (excluding the prelude). Extended **lha-rnga** performances always begin with one of these, and with only one exception (pattern 8), they do not occur in any subsequent position of any sequence. Musically, they share a number of common features: they are all long (12-20 beats) patterns, repeated only a few times in slow tempo (45-60 bpm), with duple beat-groups of equal duration, often subdivided with a heavy iambic lilt. There is a wide range of durational values, but the pulse is clearly articulated by strong pitch and stress accents. They are not, however, strongly metric: patterns 8 and 9 may be considered to fall into 4/4 measures, but the other two actually

vary in length (indicated in parentheses), although they are also roughly symmetrical with a high pitch-plateau in the second section. All but the first pattern also close with a cadential figure consisting of resonant crushed strokes and rolls.

The second group of patterns of "**'phebs-rnga'**" (Musical Example 4b) feature true **'phebs-rnga'** (e.g. patterns 12 and 13) which are normally used on their own for processional music, but which are also employed as middle-order **rtsas** in certain **lha-rnga**. Like the opening patterns, these may be long (up to 20 beats), and have mainly duple beat groups, but they are performed in moderate tempo (about 90 bpm). There are generally only two or three durational values, but the extensive use of crushed strokes and extended rolls makes any sense of metre difficult to determine, and their length tends to be somewhat variable. Primarily intended for processional music, they are highly circular in character, consisting of continual high-low alternations without any pitch plateau to mark off any internal structures. The shorter patterns (4 to 9 beats) in this group have similar characteristics, and are rather like the cadential figures of the first group: they are more regular and metric in character, but they tend to be used as interludes with only a few repetitions.

The third group are here called 'secondary' patterns (Musical Example 4c). These are also middle-order patterns played in moderate-fast tempo (90-120 bpm), but differ in type from the **'phebs-rnga'**; many of them are derived from dance-patterns. They do not contain any crushed strokes or rolls and rarely have more than two durational values, their internal structure being clearly articulated by beats accented mainly by pitch and stress. They are of highly regular medium length, typically 10-14 beats, and are strongly metric, usually extending over two compound or asymmetric measures, for example 5/8, 6/8 or 7/8.

The final group of 'primary' patterns (Musical Example 4d) are short patterns, typically 3 to 6 beats in length, which are sometimes contractions of 'secondary' patterns. They occur at the end of a sequence of **lha-rnga** patterns, in fast tempo, accelerating to very fast (in the order of 120-180 bpm). They do not extend over more than one measure, and

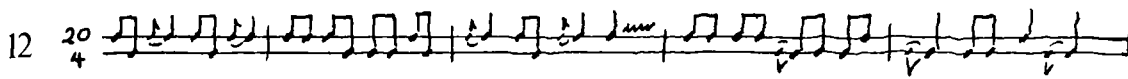
8 Musical notation for measure 8, 4/4 time signature, 12 measures indicated.

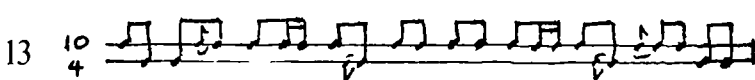
9 Musical notation for measure 9, 4/4 time signature, 20 measures indicated.

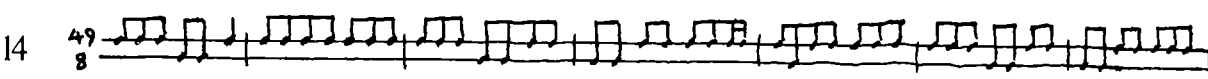
10 Musical notation for measure 10, 4/4 time signature, 17 measures indicated.

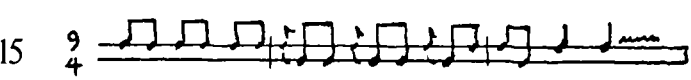
11 Musical notation for measure 11, 4/4 time signature, 19 measures indicated.

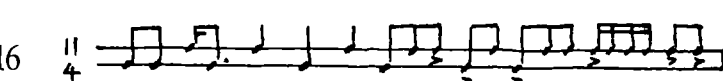
Musical Example 4a: Opening **lha-rnga rtsas**

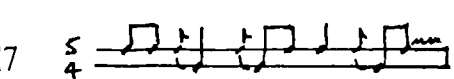
12 $\frac{20}{4}$ 

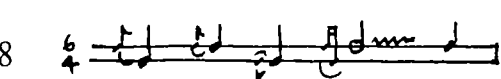
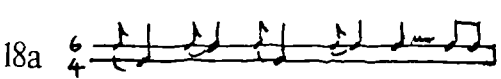
13 $\frac{10}{4}$ 

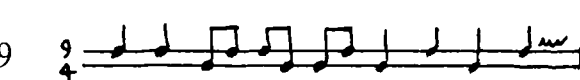
14 $\frac{49}{8}$ 

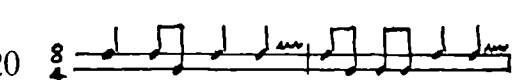
15 $\frac{9}{4}$ 

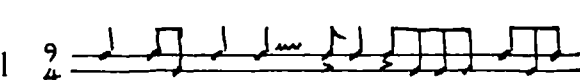
16 $\frac{11}{4}$ 

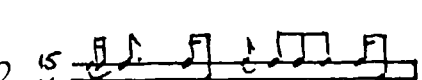
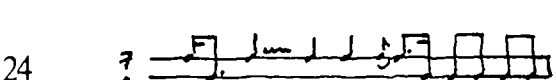
17 $\frac{5}{4}$ 

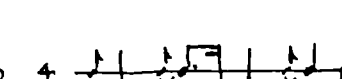
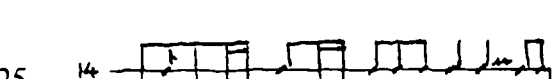
18 $\frac{6}{4}$  18a $\frac{6}{4}$ 

19 $\frac{9}{4}$ 

20 $\frac{8}{4}$ 

21 $\frac{9}{4}$ 

22 $\frac{15}{16}$  24 $\frac{7}{4}$ 

23 $\frac{4}{4}$  25 $\frac{14}{9}$ 

Musical Example 4b: "phebs-rnga" rtsas

26 $\frac{14}{8}$

27 $\frac{15}{8}$

28 $\frac{7}{4}$

29 $\frac{15}{16}$

30 $\frac{6}{8}$

31 $\frac{6}{8}$

32 $\frac{5}{4}$

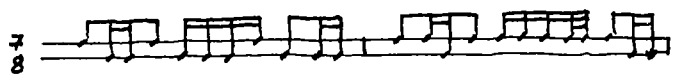
33 $\frac{9}{8}$

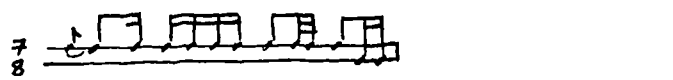
34 $\frac{9}{8}$

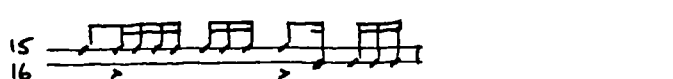
35 $\frac{4}{4}$

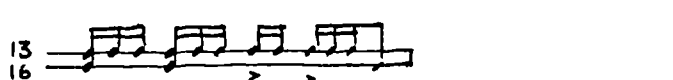
36 $\frac{6}{8}$

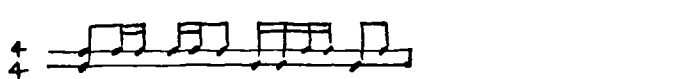
Musical Example 4c: "Secondary" lha-rnga rtsas


37 $\frac{7}{8}$ 


38 $\frac{7}{8}$ 


39 $\frac{15}{16}$ 


40 $\frac{13}{16}$ 

41 $\frac{4}{4}$ 

42 $\frac{5}{8}$ 

43 $\frac{9}{16}$ 

44 $\frac{3}{8}$ 

45 $\frac{6}{16}$ 

Musical Example 4d: "Primary" **lha-rnga rtsas**

characteristically contain 'running' sequences of short vigorous beats on the **mo-skad** with heavy stress-accents, and only one or two pitch or agogic accents to mark the principal beat-groupings.

7.4: Analysis of **lha-rnga** performance

7.4.1: The composition of **lha-rnga** performances

A **lha-rnga** performance may consist of anything up to fifteen or more set drum-patterns, usually in a fixed order. Each **lha-rnga** is distinguished and identified by a pattern or patterns which are unique to it, or by the unique combination of patterns presented by it in order. The following analyses of the composition of these performances will show that it is appropriate to speak of a system of rhythmic types, since a **lha-rnga** may consist of a single item, or a selection of such items arranged in a particular way. Thus the repertoire actually consists of a relatively small number of rhythmic types which re-appear in different musical settings, and they certainly number less than the 360 claimed to be in existence.

The simplest **lha-rnga** are those which contain only one drum-pattern (Mus. Ex 5, p.362a-b). Although they may be used as elements as part of more elaborate **lha-rnga** sequences, they are otherwise unique. Played on their own in particular ritual and ceremonial contexts, they are musically quite distinct from one another and the pattern is identified by the context in which it, and no other pattern, is played. These include the **'phebs-rnga**, and the **lha-rnga** patterns which accompany particular ritual actions (**ba-ga-tham**, **gsol-mchod**, and **bskrad-rnga**), the **du-su sa-kyin** (function unknown), and drum-signals (**bam** and **skad**). This list also includes two **lha-rnga**, one in each of the first two of these functional categories (**ti-bi-cag** and **shog-lo-skor** respectively) which actually contain two or three patterns, but these mini-sequences are again unique and do not occur in any other context. The list also includes single drum-patterns which are not strictly speaking **lha-rnga** when played in their own right, but which nevertheless may be used as combinatory elements in extended **lha-rnga**: these include the music used to accompany contests, and a

variety of dance-patterns, notably those used for ritual dances (e.g. **a-po a-pi rtses, rta-gshon**).

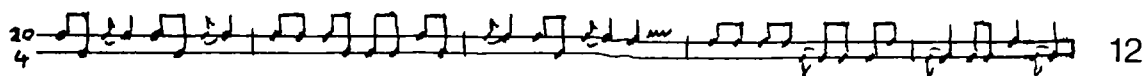
The **lha-rtses** used to accompany trance-dance form a special category (Mus. Ex. 6. p.362c). Although considered to be **lha-rnga**, the structure of these performances, lasting upto an hour or more, is quite different from most **lha-rnga**: the constituent patterns, repeated at length and often recurrent at different stages of the performance, are generally not found in regular **lha-rnga**, and they are freely sequenced to produce loosely-structured, open-ended forms in keeping with their function to maintain trance. Similarly, the two **lha-rnga** played on the **gring-jang** by the **ti-chong** at Leh **lo-gsar** (Mus. Ex. 7, p.362c) do not fall within the regular scheme, since these ordered patterns are again unique to this performance.

The greater part of the **lha-rnga** repertory follows a common overall scheme demonstrated by the **lha-rnga chung-ngu** (Mus. Ex. 8, p.362d). It opens with a non-metrical prelude (**'phab-ba-rag**) and proceeds to the central "order" (**tshir-ka**) of **rtsas** patterns, with brief interludes, accelerating to the short postlude, which frames the performance in a similar way to the prelude. Each of the main **lha-rnga** types, then, is distinguished by the composition and order of the **rtsas** patterns presented in the main **tshir-ka** section.

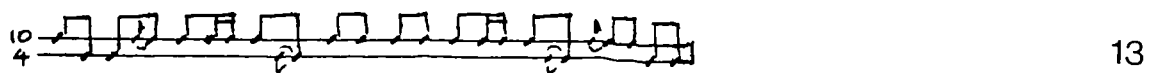
The ceremonial **lha-rnga** contain between five and nine patterns each from a common stock of fourteen (Mus. Ex. 9, p.362e-g). They form a close group because they all close with the same four **rtsas** in the same order, and are preceded by between one and five mostly distinct patterns. For the sake of comparison, these forms are summarized in coded form in Table 6 (p.362l)

The longest **lha-rnga chen-mo** for special ritual occasions, containing between eight and fifteen patterns, also form a musically coherent group (Mus. Ex. 10, p.362h-k): they all start with up to five consecutive patterns of one of the ceremonial **lha-rnga** (usually the **pho-khams**) and finish with the closing pattern of the **lha-rnga chung-ngu**. The **lha-rnga dpyid-tshes**

bla-ma'i 'phebs-rnga (Tape, No 2)



rgyal-po'i 'phebs-rnga



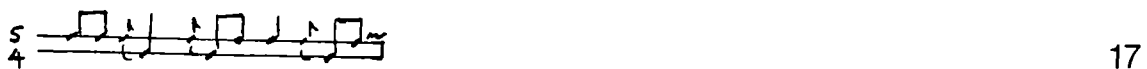
ti-bi-cag ('phebs-rnga)



ba-ga-tham



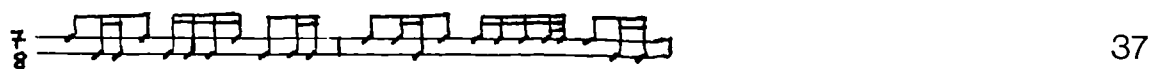
gsol-mchod



bskrad-rnga

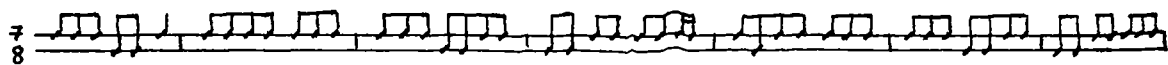


shog-lo-skor



Musical Example 5: Single lha-rnga and short lha-rnga sequences

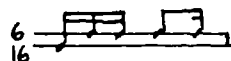
du-su sa-kyin



14

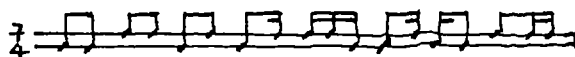
rta-rgyug / rta-bo-lo / mda'-rtses (Tape, No 10)

tshang-rag:



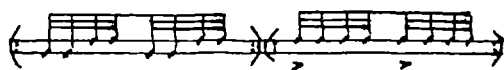
45

rgyal-rnga:



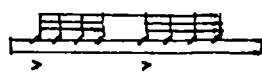
28

bam



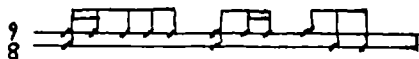
46

skad



47

a-po a-pi rtses



33

rta-gshon



48

interludes

main patterns

Interludes musical notation consisting of several short rhythmic phrases on a staff, some with arrows indicating direction and accents.

Main patterns musical notation consisting of longer rhythmic sequences on a staff, with time signatures (6/8, 12/8, 13/8, 20/8) and arrows indicating direction.

40

etc

Musical Example 6: The **shel lha-rtses** (Tape, No 3)

(a) Prelude

9/8 x 7

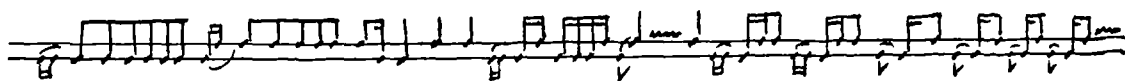
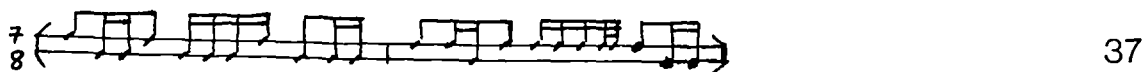
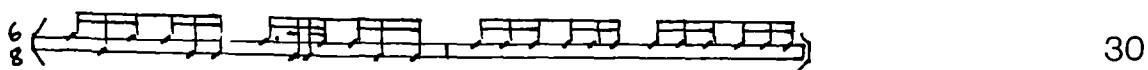
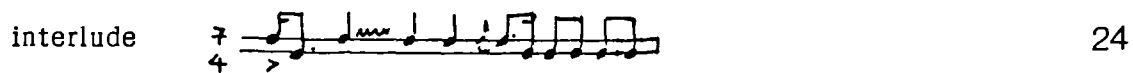
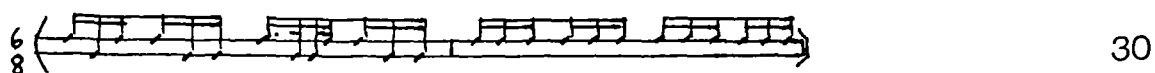
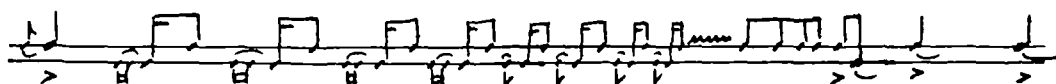
16/8 x 10

10/8 x 11

Postlude

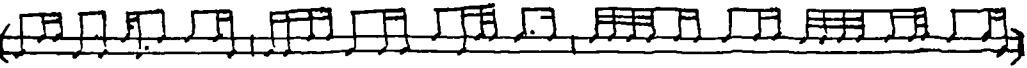
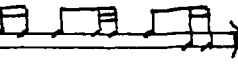
(b)

Musical Example 7: The Leh **lo-gsar lha-rnga** played on **gring-jang**:
lha-rnga (a) and **lha-gsol** (b) (Tape, No 4)

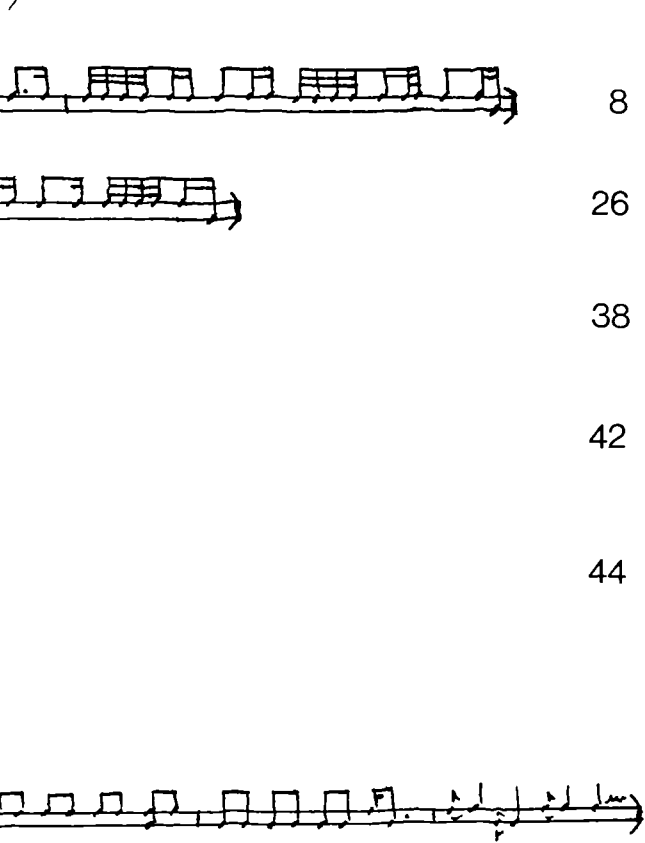

Prelude ('phab-ba-rag)Main Section (tshir-ka)Postlude

Musical Example 8: **lha-rnga chung-ngu**
(Tape, No 5)

snga-mo'i lha-rnga (Tape, No. 6)

12 4		8
14 8		26
7 8		38
5 8		42
3 8		44

phyi-thog-gyi lha-rnga

20 4		9
6 4		18a
14 8		26
7 8		38
5 8		42
3 8		44

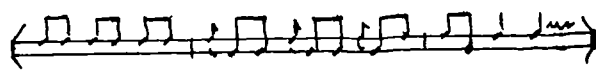
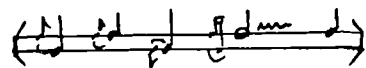
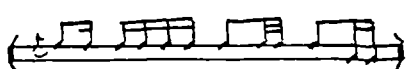
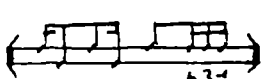
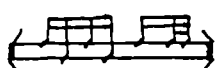
gzhung-gral-li lha-rnga

12 4		8
6 8		31
14 8		26
7 8		38
5 8		42
3 8		44

mo-khams (Tape, No 7)

19 4		11
4 4		23
14 8		26
7 8		38
5 8		42
3 8		44

pho-khams

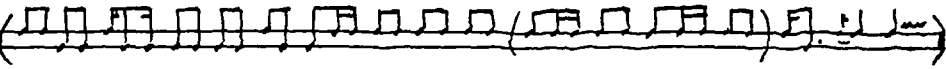
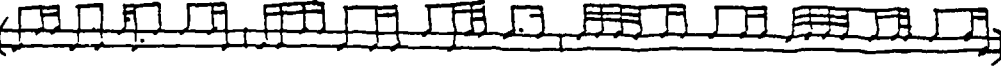
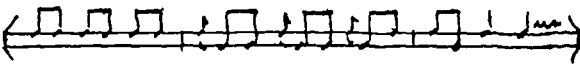
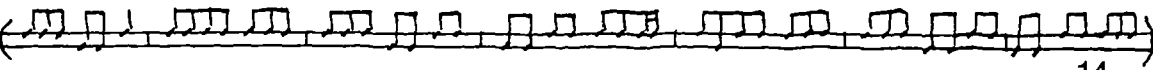
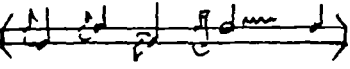
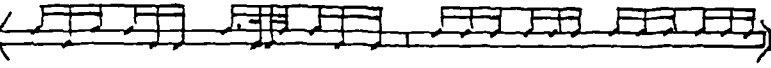
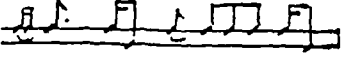
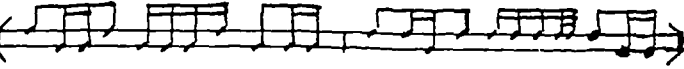
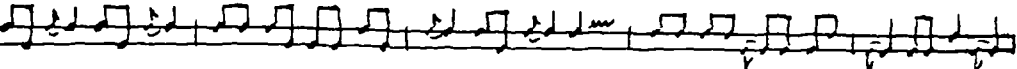

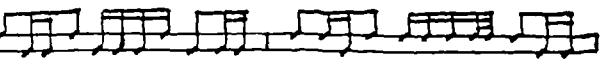
17 4		10
12 4		8
9 4		15
7 8		14
6 4		18
14 8		26
7 8		38
5 8		42
3 8		44

sgang-sngon tshe-grub-kyi dus-su lha-rnga (Tape, No 8)

12 4		8
14 8		26
7 8		38
5 8		42
3 8		44
	 interlude	
20 4		12
10 4		13
7 8		37

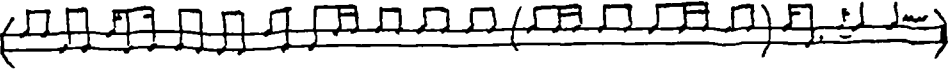
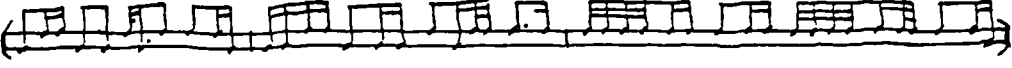
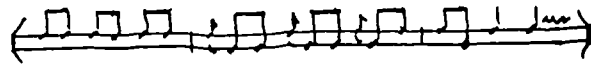
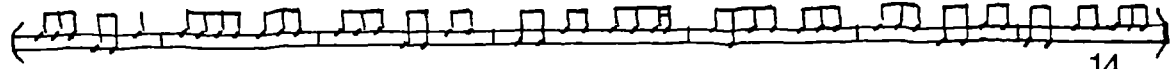
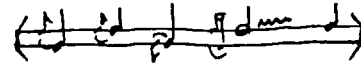
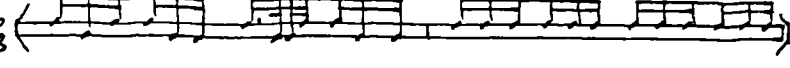
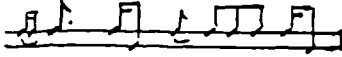
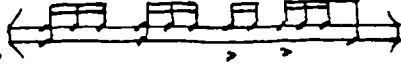
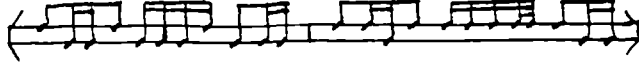
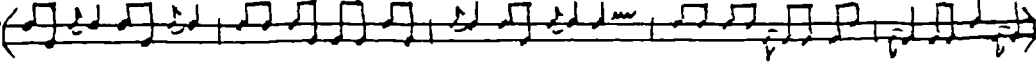
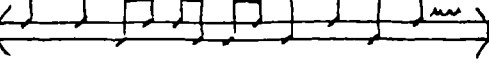
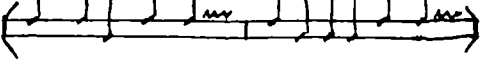
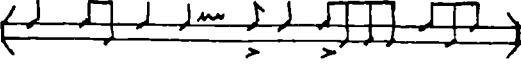
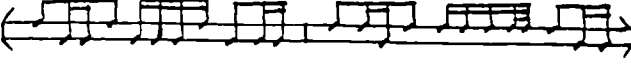
Musical Example 10: The lha-rnga chen-mo

lha-rnga sum-brgya drug-cu (drug-chen brgyad-bcu) (Tape No 9)

17 4		10
12 4		8
9 4		15
7 8		14
6 4		18
6 8		30
interlude	15 16 	22
7 8		37
20 4		12
10 4		13
7 8		37

Musical Example 10 (Continued)

rdo-rje chen-mo'i lha-rnga

17 4		10
12 4		8
9 4		15
7 8		14
6 4		18
6 8		30
interlude	15 16 	22
13 16		40
7 8		37
20 4		12
9 4		19
8 4		20
9 4		21
7 8		37

Musical Example 10 (Continued)

lha-rnga dpyid-tshes

17 4		10
12 4		8
9 8		33
6 8		36
9 8		34
15 16		29
6 16		45
5 4		32
4 4		35
15 8		27
} ad libitum		
6 8		30
interlude	15 16	22
20 4		12
10 4		13
7 8		37

<u>Ceremonial lha-rnga</u>							
snga-mo'i lha-rnga	8	9		26	38	42	44
phyl-thog-gyi lha-rnga	9		18a	26	38	42	44
gzhung-gral-li lha-rnga	8			31	26	38	42
mo-khams		11	23	26	38	42	44
pho-khams	10	8	15	14	18	26	38
				42	44		
<u>lha-rnga chen-mo</u>							
sgang-sngon tshe-grub kyi lha-rnga	8			26	38	42	44
							12
							13
lha-rnga sum-brgya drug-cu	10	8	15	14	18	30	22
						37	12
							13
rdo-rje chen-mo'i lha-rnga	10	8	15	14	18	30	22
						40	37
						12	19
						20	21
lha-rnga dpyid-tshes	10	8				30	22
							12
							13
<u>lha-rnga chung-ngun</u>							
						30	24
						30	22
						(37)	37

Table 6: Comparative table of constituent patterns in extended lha-rnga

sgang-sngon tshe-grub-kyi dus-su lha-rnga =

snga-mo'i lha-rnga
 bla-ma'i 'phebs-rnga
 rgyal-po'i 'phebs-rnga
 lha-rnga chung-ngu

lha-rnga sum-brgya drug-cu =

pho-khams
 lha-rnga chung-ngu
 bla-ma'i 'phebs-rnga
 rgyal-po'i 'phebs-rnga
 lha-rnga chung-ngu

rdo-rje chen-mo'i lha-rnga =

pho-khams
 lha-rnga chung-ngu
 shog-lo-skor
 bla-ma'i 'phebs-rnga
 shel lha-rtses
 lha-rnga chung-ngu

lha-rnga dpyid-tshes =

pho-khams
 rtses
 lha-rnga chung-ngu
 bla-ma'i 'phebs-rnga
 rgyal-po'i 'phebs-rnga
 lha-rnga chung-ngu

Table 7: Constituent **lha-rnga** sequences within **lha-rnga chen-mo**

is unusual in that it contains a sequence of freely-selected patterns, mainly from the dance repertoire. Again, these structures may be compared in coded form by referring to Table 6. These **lha-rnga** are evidently made up of sequences already familiar as smaller **lha-rnga**, and these components are summarized in Table 7 (p.362m).

7.4.2: Variations in **lha-rnga** performance

The system of **lha-rnga** types depends upon the regular nature of the component rhythmic elements, their consistency being the basis of creating distinct, identifiable, structures through the ordering of repeated fixed patterns. In performance, however, variations inevitably occur between the individual repetitions of a given drum-pattern within a performance, as well as between different performances of **lha-rnga** (whether same or different) in which the same pattern occurs, both by the same performers and by different ones. Some of these variations may be accidental, for instance arising from different levels of musical competence, whereas others may reflect significant musical differences between different performance styles and contexts.

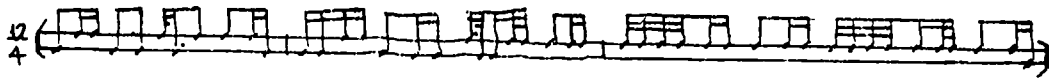
The relatively limited range of variability is demonstrated by the following series of paradigmatic transcriptions. Musical Example 11 (p.364a) shows the variations which occur between repetitions of the first **rtsas** of the **snga-mo'i lha-rnga** (pattern 8), and indicates the degree of inventiveness exercised by a single experienced musician as part of his playing style. Almost every **ldab** is different, but they are freely formed by the player from a small number of substituted figures which mostly produce minor variations by filling out the skeletal pattern with extra drum-strokes. The overall length and structure of the pattern remain virtually unchanged, and the internal arrangement of beat-groups and accents is retained. Where there is more than one drummer, individuals may therefore execute such variations in order to develop the texture without disrupting the basic rhythmic structure. More freedom, however, is permitted in the melody accompanying this pattern (Musical Example 12, p.364b).

Musical Example 13 (p.364c) compares variants of the same pattern in different performances. Pattern 8b is taken from a performance of the same **lha-rnga** by different performers: it is virtually the same as 8a, except one beat-group is omitted. An almost identical version, 8c, by the same performers as 8b, is played in the context of a different **lha-rnga** (**gzhung-gral**). Similarly, pattern 8d, which occurs in a third **lha-rnga** (**sum-brgya-drug-cu**), is very similar to 8a, yet is performed by different drummers. The final pattern, 8e, from yet another **lha-rnga** (**pho-khams**), differs most of all even though it is performed by the same player as 8a. It is somewhat anomalous because the pattern occurs only as an interlude and is interrupted in the middle of the cycle by a new pattern. This small sample suggests that the variation of the same pattern between different players is often at least as wide as that between performances of the same pattern in different **lha-rnga**. In short, any given pattern strongly retains its rhythmic identity in whatever context it occurs.

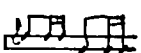
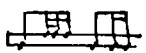
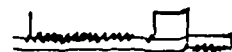
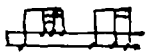
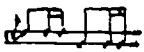
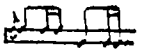
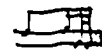
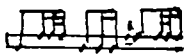
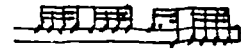
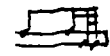
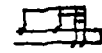
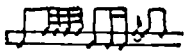
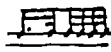
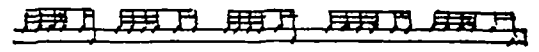
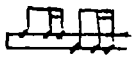
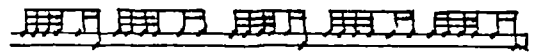
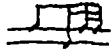
A higher degree of freedom, however, is evident in the prelude patterns ('**phab-ba-rag**). Although these are created from a common stock of accelerating rhythmic formulae (**phab**), the single drummer who performs these non-metric patterns is at liberty to determine their order, length, and tempo (Musical Example 14, p.364d). The **mo-khams**, however, is a special case because the prelude begins with a pattern, uniquely, on the **mo-skad**. In general, though, a short (**thung-se**) prelude - called simply **gtang-nga-rag** or, in the case of the brief dance preludes, **rags-'phab-ste** - is used for the lesser forms of **lha-rnga** (e.g. **lha-rnga chung-ngu**) whilst the long (**ring-mo**) preludes - referred to by the honorific terms '**phab-ba-rag** or '**phul-la-rag** - are reserved for the 'great' **lha-rnga chen-mo**. It is possible, however, to increase the status of any **lha-rnga** by extending the length of the prelude.

In such cases, a longer prelude anticipates a longer performance of any **lha-rnga** achieved by a higher number of repetitions of each **rtsas** in the **tshir-ka**. This is in keeping with the principle of a higher status being afforded by an extended performance (**lha-rnga ring-mo**), as compared to a short one (**lha-rnga thung-se**). Musically, however, the length (**ring-thung**) of a performance is demanded by a longer, slower prelude: the first **rtsas**

Musical Example 11: Variations in the first **rtsas** of **snga-mo'ilha-rnga** (Tape, No.6)



8



a

Musical notation for example 'a' in G major, 4/4 time. It consists of two staves. The upper staff features a complex melodic line with many sixteenth notes and some triplets. The lower staff provides a simple accompaniment of quarter notes.

b

Musical notation for example 'b' in G major, 4/4 time. It consists of two staves. The upper staff has a melodic line with some triplets and eighth notes. The lower staff has a simple accompaniment of quarter notes.

c

Musical notation for example 'c' in G major, 4/4 time. It consists of two staves. The upper staff has a melodic line with eighth notes and some triplets. The lower staff has a simple accompaniment of quarter notes.

a'

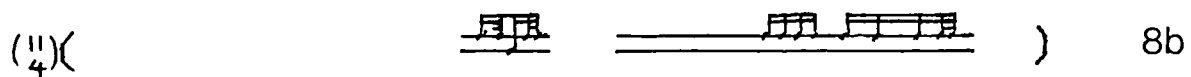
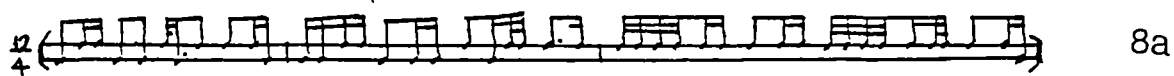
Musical notation for example 'a'' in G major, 4/4 time. It consists of two staves. The upper staff has a melodic line with eighth notes and some triplets. The lower staff has a simple accompaniment of quarter notes.

b'

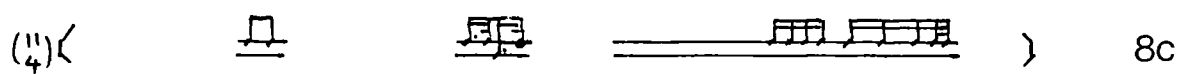
Musical notation for example 'b'' in G major, 4/4 time. It consists of two staves. The upper staff has a melodic line with eighth notes and some triplets. The lower staff has a simple accompaniment of quarter notes. The text "etc" is written to the right of the notation.

Musical Example 12: Melodic and rhythmic variants in snga-mo'i Iha-rnga (first rtsas) (Tape, No. 6)

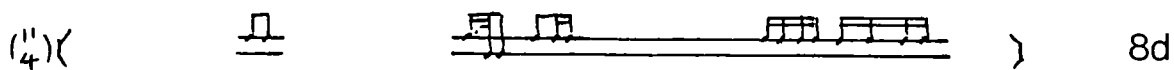
snga-mo'i lha-rnga



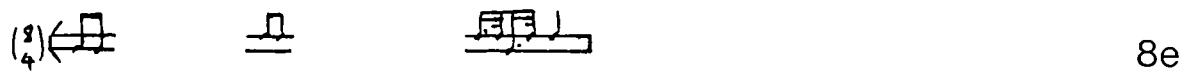
gzhun g-gral-li lha-rnga



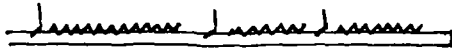
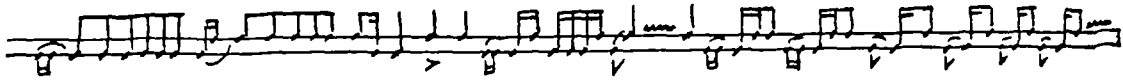
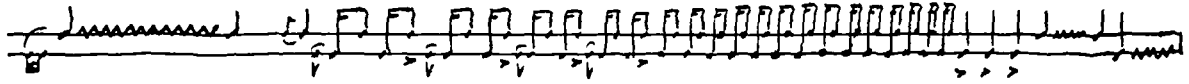
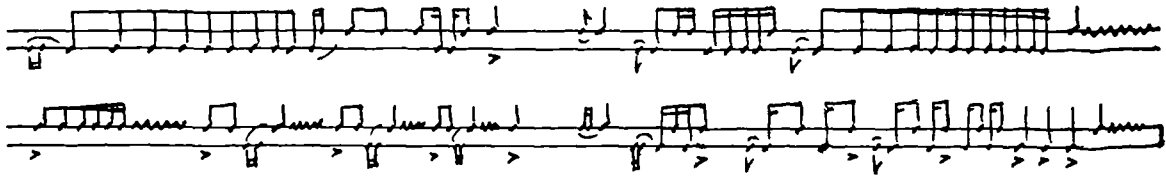
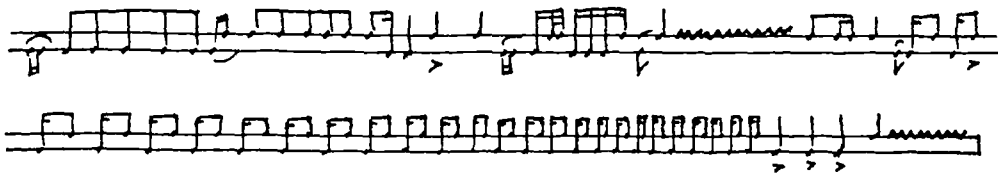
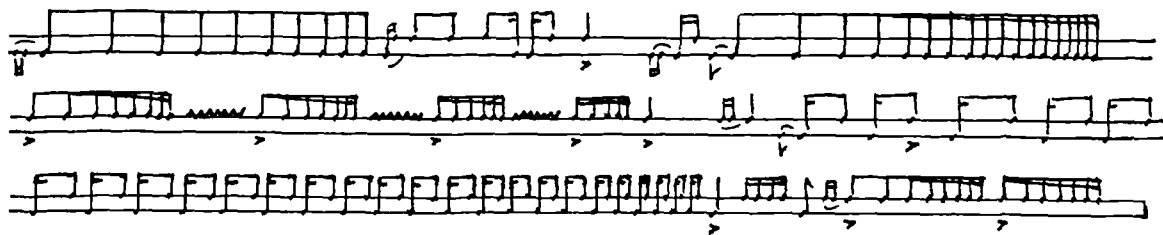
lha-rnga sum-brgya drug-cu (drug-chen brgyad-bcu)



pho-khams



Musical Example 13: Rhythmic variants (pattern 8) in different **lha-rnga**

rags-'phab-ste (rtses)**gtang-nga-rag (lha-rnga chung-ngun)****'phul-la-rag (lha-rnga chen-mo)****mo-khams****pho-khams****lha-rnga sum-brgya drug-cu (drug-chen brgyad-bcu)****(a) thung-se (short)****(b) ring-mo (long)****Musical Example 14: Lha-rnga prelude patterns ('phab-ba-rag)**

— = c. 1sec

Musical Example 15: Comparison of long and short performances of lha-rnga drug-chen brgyad-cu (Tape. No.9)

	long (ring-mo)	short (thung-ste)
10		
8		
15		
14		
18		
30		

x2	2	x3	2	x2	2	x2	2
15	16	7	8	15	4	8	4
22		37		12		13	
x2	2	x3	2	x7	2	x19	19
						2-4, 6, 7, 9, 11-15, 16-18, 5, 8, 10, 14, 15.	
						x13 4, 2, 6, 7, 10	
						5, 11, 12	
						4, 8	
						5, 9	
						13	

Handwritten musical notation on staves, including rhythmic patterns and notes. The notation is arranged in two columns, with the right column being a mirror image of the left column. The notation includes various rhythmic values and notes, with some parts enclosed in boxes or brackets. There are also some numbers and symbols written below the staves, such as '11 4' and '8'.

must begin at a slower, more dignified, tempo and a greater number of repetitions is therefore required for the right pace to be achieved before introducing the next pattern. A comparison of two performances of the same **lha-rnga** (**drug-chen-brgyad-cu**) recorded from the same musicians on the same occasion show how this is achieved (Musical Example 15, p.364e-f). The constituent patterns are, as expected, essentially the same and appear in the same order, the main difference being the number of varied repetitions. Even the transitions between one pattern and the next, which are brief periods of rhythmic instability as the new pattern emerges during the final cycle of the old one, are remarkably similar.

7.5: Meaning and Feeling in lha-rnga Performance

Having examined the operating principles of the **lha-rnga** system, it is now possible to understand more fully how particular musical structures gain significance in the performance contexts with which they interact. The existence of any strong relationship between musical processes of symbolization and other symbolic codes naturally depends upon the presence of a highly structured musical grammar, and this is indeed what **lha-rnga** represents. It may be described as a system of fixed rhythmic patterns which are sequenced in meaningful ways according to rules of combination. As the preceding analyses have demonstrated, each **lha-rnga** follows a basic linear scheme or deep structure, with different arrangements of surface structure being formed by selecting certain closed sequences, or syntagmatic combinations, and choosing available alternatives, or paradigmatic substitutions (Table 8).

This system has a number of structural similarities with the system of rhythmic modes (**Iqa'āt**) used in the West Asian **naqqāra** tradition, from which **lha-rnga**, like many other South Asian drumming systems, derives many of its structuring principles. In all these instrumental genres, the purpose of these qualitative patterns, differentiated by the systematic variation of pitch, stress, resonance and timbre, is to make the presentation of specific metrical structures clear. Their intrinsic musical

meaning arises from the sequential arrangement of distinct patterns with their own inherent rhythmic and tempic qualities.

In the Ladakhi Buddhist context, however, these structures are quite specifically associated with extrinsic symbols, and their musical meaning interacts with other systems of communication. Mention has already been made of the culturally-preserved notion of 'drum-languages', where distinct drum-beats could function as sound-signifiers of lexical signifieds, as they can in systems with syllabic notations, only arranged in such a way as to communicate specific linguistic meanings. In practice, however, the nearest phenomenon found in the Ladakhi tradition are the drum-signals (**skad** and **bam**) and the **rgyal-rnga** of contests, whose highly-structured, easily-recognised forms have quite distinct meanings and refer to specific modes of human action. At best, it might be conjectured that the drum-patterns, as is said to be the case in the Persio-Arabic tradition, originate in the patterns of poetic verse.

Numerological symbolism, however, more easily enables particular musical structures to be related to specific cultural ideas and beliefs. Firstly, the number may relate to the number of rhythmic types. Principally, the notional existence of 360 **lha-rnga** types at least manifests the belief in an association between this number of distinct patterns and the corresponding number of individual protective deities, days of the calendar, and so on. In practice, such a one-to-one relationship only exists in individual cases (e.g. the **rdo-je chen-mo'i lha-rnga**, for Dorje Chenmo), but the belief in the cosmological scheme is evoked by the annual performance of certain **lha-rnga chen-mo** (e.g. the **lha-rnga sum-brgya-drug-cu**) at critical points in the calendar.

Secondly, the number of beats in a pattern may be significant. In Tibetan monastic music, numerical formulae (e.g. of 180 beats) are used to invite major deities into the phenomenal world together with their retinues in strict order of ritual status, each beat or event being regarded as merit-generating. This principle holds true in **lha-rnga**, even if the beats of cycles are not actually counted (although drummers sometimes claim to be able to count 360 'beats'): the larger cycles are of greater

syntagmatic combinations

10 → 8

11 → 23

13 → 37 (→ 12)

15 → 14 → 18

19 → 20 → 21 → 37

23 → 26

24 → 30 → 22

25 → 39 → 43

26 → 38 → 42 → 44 (→ 12)

31 → 26

37 → 12

40 → 37

45 → 28

paradigmatic substitutions

8 → 9

→ 15

→ 26

→ 30

→ 31

9 → 18

→ 26

12 → 13

→ 19

22 → 12

→ 37

→ 40

30 → 22

→ 24

Table 8: **lha-rnga** as a grammatical system

cosmological significance, and come first. Thus, in the **lha-rnga chen-mo**, the **bla-ma'i 'phebs-rnga** always precedes the **rgyal-po'i 'phebs-rnga**, not only because it is the longer, slower pattern, but also because a lama, escorted by this pattern, is of a higher ritual status than a member of royalty.

The number of times a rhythmic pattern is repeated may also have extra-musical meaning. There is no evidence (at least in current practice) that the actual number of **ldab** of a **rtsas** within **lha-rnga** has any significance, and they do not ever seem to be even counted. However, the threefold repetition of single-pattern **lha-rnga** is specifically related to the symbolism of the triple ritual actions they accompany: thus in the case of the **bskrad-rnga**, the three renditions refer to the three stages of exorcism, being "one beat for the virtuous being; one for the enemies of truth; and one for the completion of the fierce work" [135].

In a more general way, many of the **lha-rnga** patterns have ritual meanings or functions, as do the ordered elements in monastic ritual. Thus the basic format of a **lha-rnga** is interpreted as a ritual scheme or drama in which the divine being invoked is invited into the phenomenal world. The **'phebs** patterns of the prelude, whilst they operate as a musical warm-up procedure which alerts the listeners and performers to the start of the performance, directly allude to the deity's "auspicious descent" (**'phebs-pa bkra-shis**), just as similar patterns do in the monastic tradition, where the beat is allowed to "fall like a meteorite" (Ellingson 1979:188-89). This symbolism refers to the way deities may manifest themselves in the human realm through natural phenomena, which also includes the 'earthquake' to which the crisis behaviour of a medium becoming possessed is sometimes likened. Alternatively, the almost effortless rebound (**'phar**) drum-strokes with which these patterns are produced, arising from the mass of the drum-stick and the elasticity of the drum-head, is said to evoke the image of the drum playing itself to teach the dharma to its listeners (ibid.). The similar, but briefer, postlude patterns refer to the return of the deity to the transcendental realm, dedicating the merit of the performance. The characteristic melodic rise which accompanies it, and which often occurs at the end of internal

phrases (as in Musical Example 12), is also said to be a gesture of offering as the fingers of the **sur-na** players are lifted off the instrument.

As in monastic ritual, the constituent patterns of **lha-rnga** have their own meanings, their inclusion or emphasis in a particular **lha-rnga** giving the piece its own significance. The **sgang-sngon tshe-grub-kyi dus-su lha-rnga** for example, played in the early morning on seven days around the Phyang monastic festival, starts with the ordinary morning (**snga-mo'i lha-rnga**) but finishes like other **lha-rnga chen-mo** with the **bla-ma'i 'phebs-rnga** and **rgyal-po'i 'phebs-rnga**. In other words, it is a special form of morning-offering which anticipates the arrival of high-status beings later on during the festival.

The **lha-rnga dpyid-rtses** follows the general pattern of **lha-rnga sum-brgya-drug-cu**, except that the opening **pho-khams** sequence is interrupted by a series of mainly dance-patterns played ad libitum. This is the only instance in **lha-rnga** where the selection, number and order of patterns is not prescribed, but is freely executed by the **mon-pa**. This clearly refers to the specific ritual context of the royal ploughing ceremony: the overall form, resembling a **lha-rnga chen-mo**, marks the higher status of the royal ritual, compared to the village version where only the **lha-rnga chung-ngun** is played. Its moment of freedom, however, refers to elements common to both versions of the ritual, where dance-rhythms are freely played to accompany the first ploughing by the recently-freed oxen - in turn referring to the liberation of the earth-spirits which the entire ritual seeks.

Similarly, the **rdo-rje chen-mo'i lha-rnga** is a special form of the **lha-rnga sum-brgya-drug-cu**, where specific substitutions are made using musical elements from other parts of the ritual in which the **lha-rnga** is played. The general form of the **lha-rnga** again marks off the high ritual status of Dorje Chenmo as crown deity and monastic deity, not only as village deity (in which case it is the **lha-rnga chung-ngun** that is played). At the level of surface structure, however, the **rgyal-po'i 'phebs-rnga** pattern is substituted by patterns from the **lha-rtses** of Dorje Chenmo: the overall scheme remains intact, but it is personalized for the deity

which subsequently appears in actual possession. Its ritual purpose and meaning, then, is made clear: the **lha-rnga** is first played as an offering to invite the deity - it is the drumming for the goddess - emerging again later in the ritual procedure to accompany her **lha-rtses** - the drumming of the goddess.

The musical structures of the ceremonial gain social significance because they operate as markers of status and gender. The division and subdivision of the repertoire by rank is clearly reflected in the number and type of rhythmic patterns selected, in the same way as ritual status is marked by the ritual **lha-rnga**: thus the "small" **lha-rnga (chung-ngun)** has the fewest patterns, while the "great" **lha-rnga (chen-mo)** have the most, including the longer types. Status is also marked by the length of the performance as determined by the number of repetitions of each pattern. Usually the dimensions of 'greatness' and 'length' are commensurate indicators of status, so that **lha-rnga chen-mo** are also performed **ring-mo** (long) and the **lha-rnga chung-ngun** is played **thung-se** (short), but this does not preclude, at the will of the **mon-pa** (given the appropriate pecuniary incentive), upgrading a 'smaller' **lha-rnga** by making it longer.

Gender is musically marked only by the **mo-khams**, which commences on the higher 'female' drum (**mo-skad**), as opposed to the **pho-khams** which, like all the remaining **lha-rnga** starts with the lower 'male' drum (**pho-skad**). This asymmetry arises because, traditionally, the only female dignitaries to be honoured with **lha-rnga** would be of relatively high, non-clerical status (noble or ministerial rank).

Despite the fact that the **lha-rnga** system has a highly structured nature, and necessarily so for it to function meaningfully in the social world, it would be misleading to leave the impression that the genre is only concerned with the presentation of structure. One should remember that these structures unfold in time - indeed they structure temporal experience - so these patterns of movement also operate as a grammar of feeling. Each one clearly has its own distinct aesthetic qualities.

One only has to compare the four types of beat-structures corresponding to the cognitive-affective categories (**nyams**) of Buddhist musical theory (p.113) with some of the **lha-rnga** patterns (**Mus. Exx.4** and 14) to realize, almost instinctively, the reality of these properties. Thus the **phab** patterns of the preludes may be termed "wrathful" (**drag-po**) or, as the familiar description states, "falling like a meteorite"; the 'opening' patterns are generally "peaceful" (**zhi-ba**) or "slow and loose"; the '**phebs-rnga** are "vast" (**rgyas-ba**) or "clear and ringing"; while the 'secondary', and more especially the 'primary' patterns are "powerful" (**dbang-po**) or "pleasant and beautiful".

As dynamic principles, these patterns make the relationship between musical structure and symbolic meaning less arbitrary, or at least so they seem because they feel real. If the Ladakhis have adapted the technical aspects of an Islamic drumming tradition from West Asia, then they have clearly used them to animate the ritual symbols of their own meaningful world.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSIONS: REPRESENTING AUTHORITY OR EMBODYING POWER?

With the exception of the technical analysis of musical sounds, which define their own material limits in space and time, the presentation of the analysis of cultural symbols as a whole has inevitably been discursive: dominant symbols recur in different contexts; themes and arguments at times diverge and re-emerge in a new setting. Repetition and digression are difficult to avoid when this is in the very nature of symbolism, and any descriptive analysis is itself bound to re-present and re-create those symbols which form its subject. But I hope that the point of resolution now reached may have arisen from a play of forms and motifs as coherent as those unfolding structures which have been examined herein.

Besides combining analytical approaches drawn from the disciplines of anthropology and musicology, this thesis has explored a wide range of aspects of music-making in Ladakh (musical repertoire and techniques, and their cultural and historical contexts) and has made use of a variety of sources (ethnographic, literary, iconographic, as well as musical and organological). An attempt has been made to consider as many facets of musical symbolism as possible in order to address the equally broad, if not ambitious, aim of this study: to understand some of the ways in which the activation of musical structures relates to social structures and processes in Ladakhi culture. To make this aim more tangible and achievable, attention has focused upon the performance of **lha-rnga** as a type of symbolic action, linked to the social constructs of power and authority.

The systematic analysis of the repertoire presented in Part Three provides evidence in support of the theory of musical symbolization set out in Part One. Placed in this theoretical framework, this analysis goes some way towards explaining why certain sounds are played in specific contexts, and at what level (or levels) of symbolization these sounds become socially and politically significant.

At an ideological level, which is relatively less difficult to define and analyse, it is evident that **lha-rnga** operates as a musical 'code' whereby individual musical elements represent quite specific ideas relating to principles of social organization. There is a direct structural relationship between standard musical forms played in honour of certain persons and

the routine personification of their social status through the cultural conventions of offering. These meanings are explicitly denoted, and marked musically: they are shared among actors, participants and non-participants, and they are processed cognitively, and probably consciously. Musical sounds are thus ordered, used and interpreted in much the same way as other symbols, and have the status of social facts: they operate as 'presentation' or 'recognition' symbols representing authority. Playing the appropriate form of **lha-rnga** therefore endorses their status, or even declares it musically if not readily identified in other ways (e.g. visually); conversely, playing the 'wrong' form would break the musical and social code, and their authority would be openly challenged.

The musical code is legitimating because it presents aspects of the ideal order in the lived-in world. Musical sounds, like other phenomenal entities, are ordered by cosmological conceptions which attribute higher, extrinsic meanings. Ideally at least, different musical forms have a one-to-one relationship with supernatural qualities or entities which are more-or-less manifest in the human realm. Even in practice, certain musical structures are believed to have been 'revealed' to adepts, saints or lamas by the deities or spirits; in some cases the same forms can be used to invite these beings back into the world. Just as **lha-rnga** may be used to materialize the relationships between gods and mortals, it is used to materialize those between human groups of different status.

Musical performance therefore creates a microcosm of the ideal in the real, and this symbolism is reinforced in visual codes - in the spatial arrangements of the performance space, the ranked seating of participants, the direction of dance, and even in kinesic codes of instrumental technique. The relationship between musical structures and their signifieds may be arbitrarily assigned by cultural convention, but their connection is thereby rendered demonstrable and transparent. To its perceivers, **lha-rnga** also seems to have a status of authority or realism conferred upon it by modality markers in extra-musical codes, particularly where the drum itself is a signifier. The act of drumming constructs a relationship of power difference because of the almost indexical link between certain types of drumming (e.g. signalling) and the actions they accompany or demand, and

because of the dynamics of the political economy of instrument ownership and exchange.

An analysis of the dynamics of the performance process itself, however, points to a different type of symbolization from that represented at the ideological level. In one sense, this^{is} a different directional process: rather than sounds being consciously structured by extrinsic codes which are cognitively processed, musical structures can provoke powerful emotional responses which can influence cognition, and even transform consciousness by structuring experience outside the norms of perception. It is also a process which is based within the individual human organism, rather than in the social domain: there is a formal, intrinsic, congruence between the articulation of tonal-rhythmic patterns and emotional experience which is anchored to psychoacoustic phenomena and behavioural habits of the body. These effects are recognised in Ladakhi culture, both in the aesthetic constructs (such as the sensationist definition of "beauty", and of "auspiciousness") inherited from Tibetan Buddhist musical theory, and in popular mythology where performance can create unexpected results, or even chaos. Such effects are developed and encouraged, but in a controlled way, in certain types of cultural performance involving possession ritual.

The analysis of **lha-rnga** performance shows that most performances are located somewhere between the external, symbolic world and the inner world of feeling and experience. There is an interaction between these two levels of symbolization: the extrinsic and the intrinsic, the ideological and the expressive; and between the structure of performance (as linked to social function) and the performance of structure (as linked to bodily function). Thus the rhythmic patterns of **lha-rnga** may at the same time be symbols of affective meanings or qualities (cognitive evaluations of affective states) which may in turn become signifiers for more general cultural symbols of the divine, as well as being themselves what they represent (by actually evoking such, or similar, affective states).

Turning from the cognitive-affective network to the social domain, it becomes evident that **lha-rnga** is not legitimating simply through the presentation of structure, or by representing authority. The declaration of order, even by symbolic means, is not enough to win support. These musical forms are effectively used and manipulated not only because they are ordered repositories of higher meanings, but because these meanings are underpinned by their expressive power - often unconscious - over their perceivers. Their legitimating potential derives from their ability to appeal to popular sentiments and values, as well as to denote ideological meanings. In representing the ideal order in the human world, it is not declared as some alien, abstract construct: it becomes empowered by being anchored in the actual emotional life of the individual, and 'feeling real'.

In its more specific historical and cultural contexts, as Part Two shows, performance can have, or has had, a socially and politically stabilizing effect because of the role and status of its agents and producers. In the case of the music-makers themselves, stability is achieved because the **mon-pa** musicians are also largely themselves products and symbols of the social world they support: the ritual symbols used to legitimate their subordination to their patrons is intricately linked to those they invoke in performance. In the historical setting, it has been suggested that such patterns of ritual service became the basis of rendering relations of power unequal and irreversible at all levels of the social system, and throughout the phases of state formation. But, as the technical aspects of **lha-rnga** demonstrate, this system was structurally flexible enough to, for a while at least, incorporate and transform the realities of Ladakh's turbulent political contacts with its neighbouring Islamic powers.

Ortner's construct of a cultural schema as a programme of symbolic action has been an effective methodological tool for analysing these and other cultural phenomena, for it shows how cultural performances involving **lha-rnga** can transform conflict and restore relations of inequality by simultaneously bearing different meanings to different status-groups. As far as its legitimating properties are concerned, however, it still runs the risk of shifting the representation of authority to a higher symbolic plane

without demonstrating how dynamic symbols gain their expressive power. If, on the hand, I have drawn upon such theories in symbolic anthropology to demonstrate that musical symbols can exist, and that they can be socially and politicly significant, I also hope, on the other, that this has not been a one-way interdisciplinary approach. **Lha-rnga** may be a uniquely interesting musical genre which has arisen from a particular set of cultural and regional conditions, but it also demonstrates that music offers a perspective on human processes which cannot be ignored by other disciplines concerned with the study of symbolism.

Notes

- [1] The term 'Little Tibet' originates in early Chinese accounts, and its use to distinguish Ladakh from 'Great Tibet' (Baltistan) was inherited by the Mughal rulers of India in the sixteenth century (Dani 1989:30). The name 'Indian Tibet' was apparently first used by Francke (1914:1) - who otherwise referred to Ladakh as Western Tibet - to denote the trans-Himalayan territories, principally Ladakh, that were then included in the Indian Empire.
- [2] Early Western literature on the region includes Cunningham (1854), Desideri (1937), Drew (1875), Duncan (1906), Heber (1903), Moorcroft and Trebeck (1841), Ribbach (1986) and Vigne (1842).
- Modern general accounts of Ladakh include Kaplanian (1981) and Rizvi (1983); for a historical overview of the construction of Ladakhi nationhood, see Bray (1992).
- [3] On early history of settlement in Ladakh, see Dani (1989:89-157) and Petech (1977:5-13); thrlinguistic classification follows Voegelin (1965a, 1965b).
- [4] For a critique of this designation, see Clark (1977).
- [5] The principal source for the cultural and religious history of Ladakh is Snellgrove and Skorupski (1977, 1980), but see also Francke (1914) and, among local literature, Paldan (1976), Rabgias (1984), Shakspo (1988) and Tsering (1979); works on the religions and religious history of Tibet in general include Kvaerne (1984), Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956), Norbu and Turnbull (1972), Snellgrove and Richardson (1986), Stein (1972) and Tucci (1967, 1980). For a still wider perspective, see Puri (1987).
- [6] On the religion and customs of the Dards, see Biddulph (1880), Chohan (1983), Jettmar (1975, 1989), Müller-Stellrecht (1973) and Vohra (1989b).
- [7] The only other Tibetan sects historically represented in Ladakh are the Nyingmapa (**rnying-ma-pa**, at Taktak) and the Sakyapa (**sa-skyapa**, at Matho), but neither of these ever had any real political influence (Petech 1977:164-170). The main monasteries of the Drigungpa are Lamayuru and Phyang, and those of the Drukpa include Hemis, Shey and Stakna. The Gelugpa, now the most popular and powerful sect, has important monasteries at Thikse, Likir, Spituk, Sankar, Alchi and Ridzong. Other sects, such as the Karmapa (**kar-ma-pa**), have only had a presence in Ladakh since the arrival of Tibetan refugees.
- [8] The Ladakh Chronicles (**la-dwags-rgyal-rabs**) were compiled from around the seventeenth century and continued to beyond the end of the kingdom, but the earlier parts appear to have been copied from older histories perhaps dating from as early as the ninth century.

The standard edition was compiled by Francke (1926), which he used as the basis for his pioneer history of Ladakh (Francke 1907).

For modern historical accounts, see Macdonald (1982) and Petech (1977). The Islamic historiographic tradition is represented by Afridi (1988), Dani (1989) and Hashmatullah Khan (1987).

- [9] On social organization, see the recent ethnographies of Ladakh: Brauen (1980), Dollfus (1989), Mann (1986) and Vohra (1989a). On social stratification, see Erdmann (1983).
- [10] On the political administration of Ladakh, see Petech (1977:153-63). On trade and agriculture see Grist (1985) and Joldan (1985).
- [11] Early descriptions of Leh include Desideri (1937:), Francke (1914:68-84) and Moorcroft and Trebeck (1841:315).
- [12] mes po chos kyi rgyal po rnam thar tshul bzhin 'khyong ba zhig byed dgos gsung ba bzhin /
bzung po rnams la yar stod / yon tan can la rtsis 'jag / rgan rab rnams la bkur sti / bla ma rnams la mos pa / ngan pa rnams la gnya' gnon / bka' khirms [rnams la] gtsang ba / sku drag (rnams la) nye ring med pa / 'bangs (rnams) la bu ltar brtse ba / phyogs mi rnams la bdag rkyen / yar dkon mchog la mchod pa / mar ngan songs la sbyin pa // (LDGR-VIII 43.21-22 and 43.29-44.9; translation Francke 1926:118-119).
- [13] bkra shis phun sum tshogs pa / bde ldan kar bzo'i sked tshal / ma zhengs lhun du 'grub yong / tshangs sras nyi ma'i pho brang // (LFS 1970:113; translation Francke 1902:89).
- [14] lha dmag 'dzom pos bzhengs pa'i / 'chi med lha'i pho brang / tog mkhar bkra shis g.yang chags / ngo mtshar lhun du grub byung // (Francke 1902:90).
- [15] lha yul nang mi yul li mtshams na / seng ges bzhangs pa'i mkhar zhig yod / de bo ga ri se ga ri se zer rug na / nga ti lha yul nang bar ma'i shar pa kun yin / de bo ga ri se ga ri se zer rug na / sen mo shag mkhar ri shag kun yin // (Francke 1909:64).
- [16] zhabs 'degs grub pa rnams gsal por khungs ldan du rjod na / mi 'ma [ci?] po'i gro 'gyur dang / tambu-ra'i rgyud mang sdebs la lta bu'i snyan tshig tu chung zad gleng bar bya bas / khyod cag kun rna ba'i sgo legs bar gtod la / dga' bar kyis shig / (MC.16 228.1-2; Francke 1926:231).
- [17] In honorific language, **phyag** means simply "respects" or "compliments" according to Jaeschke (1881:347), who adds that "a Lama even of a higher order concluded his letter to a nobleman with 10,000 compliments as the head of the family, and then to the rest according to rank and age in a descending line with 1000, 100 etc."

- [18] A performance revived during the Ladakh Festival was witnessed by the author in August 1986. For an account of the ritual in Spiti, see Kahlen (1993).
- [19] Gilgit versions of the Siri Bagartham myths are given by Dani (1989:163-64) and Müller-Stellrecht (1973:23-25). For Ladakhi versions, see Brauen (1980:96-97) and Dollfus (1989:54-55).
- [20] Some successful rebellions are recorded as legitimate in Ladakhi legend and history. Grist (1980:249) mentions a folk tale in which a palace (=government) of an over-ambitious king was destroyed because he built it above a monastery (=did not govern according to the holy law). According to the Ladakh Chronicles, a series of rebellions which brought down the government of King Tsewang Namgyal (**tshe-dbang rnam-rgyal**, ruled 1753-82), were in response to the recognition that "the devil entered the king's mind" (Francke 1926:122; see also Petech 1977:116-118). This suggests that the king was not intrinsically evil - which would violate the principle of holy rule in a reincarnate king - but that his transgression was a result of external evil forces; it was accordingly regarded for his own good, as well as in the public interest, to be removed from office.
- [21] The phenomenon of the Tibetan monk-fool and similar characters in the European medieval Festival of Fools have been previously compared by Zijderveld (1982:132-133).
- [22] A striking example of this borrowing is the tradition of Gesar Epic singers among Muslims in Chigtan (Rizvi 1983:146). Historically, Kashmiri Islam was strongly influenced by Indian philosophy and Sufism, and the rulers of this region were internationally renowned for their patronage of the arts and made a strong contribution to the development of Hindustani classical music (Pacholczyk 1978, Sufi 1949:546-554)
- [23] There is, for example, no longer a caste of leather-workers (**ti-shi**) mentioned by one Western missionary in the nineteenth century (Marx 1892), nor is there a caste of butchers, as there is in Tibet, because there have always been enough Muslims to perform this duty, abhorrent to Buddhists. On the other hand, the highly specialised Newari metalworkers (**gser-mgar**) in Chilling, who crafted fine objects in gold, silver and copper, were highly respected and, unlike the village blacksmiths (**mgar-ba**) who produced only everyday utensils in iron, were not counted among the artisan castes.
- [24] This was the situation as it was explained by some former Muslim musicians of Kugsho village, which had roughly equal numbers of Buddhists and Muslims. They were not **mon-pa**, but their families' occupation was hereditary. Although there were **mon-pa** musicians in this region, and in the predominantly Muslim villages of Purig and the lower Shyok valley (Nubra), their identity as a 'caste' is highly doubtful even though they were nominally of low social status; intermarriage, for example, was less strictly avoided. In

Baltistan, the Muslim **mon-pa** evidently were far more socially mobile than in Ladakh, those of Rondu, Shigar and Khapalu rising to ministerial rank during the Maqpon Dynasty (founded ca.1500) (Kazmi 1993:161).

- [25] See Drew (1875:56,182,426-7); Jettmar (1975:236,286); Fussman (1989:54); and Sufi (1949:57). The suggestion that the **Ḍōm**, who are known to have migrated from India by about the fifth century, brought their musical traditions with them, for example to Andalusia, has been explored by Baloch (1968).
- [26] Murty takes as his prototype the Mompā, a Buddhist tribal group located at the eastern end of the Himalayan chain in Kameng District, Arunachal Pradesh (see also Furer-Haimendorf 1982:31,308-11).
- [27] See also Brauen (1980:53) and Heber (1903:132). In Himalayan areas generally, Hinduism and Buddhism are frequently coexistent and, as Staal (1982) argues, the labels 'Hindu' or 'Buddhist' cannot always be meaningfully applied to local deities which have been incorporated into either one, or both, of the related Hindu and Buddhist pantheons.
- [28] No separate census figures for the **mon-pa** are currently available because they were not 'notified' as a Scheduled Caste until 1989, and the 1991 Census was suspended throughout Jammu and Kashmir due to political unrest. The estimates given here are based on a calculated guess of the proportion of **mon-pa**/Ladakhi households in a typical village (about 1 in 50), and the average number of musicians per family (1 in 4 males).
- [29] This obligatory gift is sometimes also called **thob-thang**, "that which falls to one's share, as a reward or pay, for work, services, etc" (Jaeschke 1881:238). 1 **khal** = 10 **bo** = 20 **'bre**; a **'bre** is a variable measure roughly equivalent to one Indian seer (H.**sēr**, approximately one British quart); the absolute weights given here in kilograms follow Dollfus (1989:41,45). Remuneration arrangements vary somewhat from village to village, and authors differ on the amounts given, and the times at which they are paid, but they are fixed for any one village. In many places, the **mon-pa** are given a small amount of grain after the **ma-zhing** ritual which marks the beginning of the agricultural season in spring, in addition to the main share after harvest. Brauen (1980:17-19) says that the latter payment, always in kind, used to be much larger, e.g. 1 **khur** (defined to be as much as a man can carry on his back), and that an additional amount, varying from two handfuls to 1 **khal** according to the wealth of the family, was given at the time of sowing. According to Mann (1986:18), about 2 seers were given in the spring, and 2-5 seers in autumn.
- [30] The standard of musical instrument manufacture is highly variable, and is partly influenced by the ritual status associated with the instrument's intended function. But it also depends upon scarce resources; in modern times, the escalation in the cost of materials

has forced the Ladakhis to resort to unconventional, but ingenious, alternatives: it is not unknown to make a pair of **da-man** from the headlamps of an army truck; nylon parachute cords, again from the Indian Army, are used for **sgra-nyan** strings; jerrycans sometimes serve as makeshift drums if none is available.

- [31] Only once in Ladakh did I ever come across a **bhe-da** in this traditional role: he squatted on the ground outside the door of the house in Leh where I was staying, and sang for some minutes, accompanying himself with hand-claps. After being given some tea and a handful of flour, he went on his way to the next house.
- [32] Buddhists, like Hindus, use the concept of karma to interpret the nature and existence of different life forms, the highest of which (Sublime Gods) are the most pleasureable and the lowest of which (Hell Dwellers) the most painful. Unlike Hinduism however, orthodox Buddhism preaches that in the event of a human rebirth resulting from the acquisition of moderate karma, one is only placed in a more or less favourable position for the achievement of nirvana (freedom from karma) rather than reborn into a particular caste.
- [33] In Hinduism, Sarasvatī is regarded as the consort of Brahmā and the goddess of music and speech, and is widely worshipped by musicians. She is also invoked as the patron of the arts in Buddhism (where she is the consort of Mañjuśrī), for example by Sakya Paṇḍita in his Tibetan treatise on music (Canzio 1978).
- [34] Monastic musicians also believe that deities need to be appeased if they make musical errors; conversely, errors of a non-musical ritual nature (e.g. the construction of a mandala) may be rectified by performing a musical offering (**mchod-rol**).
- [35] The music producer at All India Radio, Leh reported that when local broadcasting started recording local musicians in the early 1970s, certain village musicians would not perform until the appropriate propitiatory prayers had first been offered. Some musicians also refused to play out of context during fieldwork for this study, and offered similar reasons for not doing so.
- [36] The 1911 Census lists a group of "dancing girls and prostitutes" called "malakhwan" (Mann 1986:), which points to a link with a middle-rank Hindu caste (**mōlakkāran**) of male musicians and female temple-dancers who also served as prostitutes for Brahmans and the higher castes (Gough 1969:25). Jaeschke (1881:409), however, gives **ma-la-khan** as the Ladakhi for "snake-charmer, conjurer". Perhaps the census enumerators chose this label in response to local stereotypes concerning low-caste entertainers. It is difficult to show that Leh's prostitutes have any connection with musicians, or with the low castes (cf. Prince Peter 1963:386).
- [37] For versions of those mentioned, see Brauen (1980:17-9), Dollfus (1989:37-8), Erdmann (1983), Kaplanian (1981:176-89) and Rizvi (1983:140).

- [38] In the Bhutanese festival of Nyungne (**snyung-gnas**), a seventeen-day period aimed at preventing sickness in the community, the people remain mute on alternate days in the belief that it will avert a deaf-mute rebirth in the next life. A mute character also features in the Ladakhi springtime **sa-kha-phye** fertility ritual in which a child described as "mute" (**han-ldan**) wards off evil (Dollfus 1990:224-5).
- [39] Traditional types of marriage, both polyandry (illegal since the Polyandrous Marriages Act, 1941) and polygyny, are also more persistent among the **mon-pa** compared to the Ladakhi population.
- [40] According to one version of this myth (Dollfus 1989:54-55), his disgruntled work-mate took the form of an ox (**ba-lang**), punning on the name of the apostate Tibetan king, Langdarma, with whom the latter was identified, and who, according to the Ladakhi Chronicles, sent Buddhist monks "hunting with a hunting drum [**rnga-shang**, sic. **rnga-shong?**, kettledrum], bow, arrows and dogs; and some were made butchers" (LDGR-V 34.15, Francke 1926:91).
- [41] The offspring of adulterous alliances among the Ladakhis, by contrast, are not necessarily stigmatized (Dollfus 1989:)
- [42] The etymological derivation of **bhe-da** from the Sanskrit is probably the correct one if indeed the **bhe-da** are indeed of sub-Himalayan origin. Incidentally, in a musical context, the same word was used by Bharata in his *Nāṭyaśāstra* to describe the "types" of "heroines" by which dramatic characters and moods were identified. The system still has the social dimension alluded to here, however, for these **bhēdā** were classified according to, amongst other things their "social status (queen, aristocrat or harlot), and their relation to the lover (one's own, another's, or a prostitute) (Manuel 1989:9).
- [43] Compare the Hindu Rajput caste, whose name is derived from the Sanskrit **rājaputrā**, "royal-born", whence the Tibetan **rgyal-rigs**.
- [44] See, for example, Kaplanian (1981:187-188).
- [45] The name **drag-shos-ma** literally means "person of superior order". This could be interpreted as superior by birth or by quality or experience, but it may have been a more general title or office conferred by the king upon outstanding nobles (the affix **-ma** does not necessarily imply the feminine in compounds such as this). For example, a renowned family in Khaltse - the subject of Ribbach's (1986) account - was known as Dragshos, whose ancestor, according to a Ladakhi document, had distinguished himself in battle against the Baltis during the reign of King Tsestan Namgyal (ruled 1782-1802), in return for which the king gave him land. (Francke 1906:127; Ribbach 1986:146). An earlier edict of King Nyima Namgyal, ca.1705, relating to the same family is worth quoting because it demonstrates the manner in which the Ladakhi kings exercised their authority to grant privileges or titles towards whoever gained their favour: "I have shown kindness to Gangva Gyatso, the Dragshos, from the days of my forefathers, and

Dragshos has always done his work in a skilful way. Thus it is suitable for Dragshos to receive: the place of honour at festivals; the dish of honour; a share of the game from nine peasants, who must offer it in turns; a share of the harvest and lucerne. As has been the former custom, I swear by the existence of the Namgyal Tsemo hill [upon which the royal palace stands at Leh] and Yutur (unknown), and have made it clear that Dragshos receives authority as he had before. As my mercy also extends to letting him rank with the nobility, it is important that you noblemen neither despise him nor give him any commandments. Whoever, when seeing this letter, does not heed it, will be sternly brought to judgement." (Francke 1906:117).

- [46] Defence requirements, for example, meant that regional fortresses also acted as temporary palaces (cf. the Tibetan court, which took the form of a mobile military camp (Stein 1972:118-119). Symbolically, palace-building at new locations was a gesture of political renewal; in the Tibetan dynastic period, each king is said to have built his own palace as a symbolic renewal of an unending order, "unending but always new in its temporal localization" (Tucci 1956/7:199); relocation could also arise through political fragmentation. Environmental factors could also be a reason for seasonal relocation: the availability of water, for example, meant that the Ladakhi court shifted between Leh in winter and Shey in summer (the Dalai Lama likewise had winter and summer palaces in Tibet). Extremes of climate in Kashmir have perpetuated this tradition in modern times: during the colonial period, the administrative capital of the Ladakh Wazīrat (which included Baltistan) was seasonally shifted between Leh (summer) and Skardo (winter); today, the Kashmir government is still alternately administered from Srinagar (summer) and Jammu (winter).
- [47] See Dollfus (1989:37,58-9), who notes that the villagers refer to dynastic times to explain the rights and duties of certain estates and titles, including land and property reserved for a garrison of eighteen archers formerly deployed at the fortress.
- [48] In Afghanistan for instance, its rulers employed members of the Gharibzade ethnic group (sometimes identified as gypsies), who played reed (*sornā*) and drum (*dohol*) in addition to carrying out other hereditary occupations of low status, including blacksmithing and carpentry; in Herat, and perhaps in other cities, the royal musicians were apparently drawn from individual families, the head of which assumed the title *nayeb-i naqqārakhāna*, or leader of the royal band (Baily 1980:3-4).
- [49] This is according to the accounts of the Jesuit missionary Francisco de Azevedo in 1631 (Rizvi 1983:200) and Moorcroft in 1820 (Francke 1914:70), though they may be exaggerated estimates, as Moorcroft himself suggests. The number of households in 1981, by contrast, was more than two thousand (Census 1981).

- [50] It is a mark of the mobility of the **mon-pa** that the exact number of traditional households in Leh is difficult to ascertain these days, as few citizens are able or willing to identify them. Ironically, their recent 'notification' as a Scheduled Caste means that, in future, such information will (theoretically) have to be made public.
- [51] Rizvi (1983:146-7,155) states that this pressure was at that time being resisted in the villages of Chigtan, a mixed Buddhist-Muslim area of Purig whose former feudal rulers were historically ambivalent towards Islam. The case of Kugsho village, however, suggests that their music and dance heritage has been all but abandoned in this region during the last decade. Three Muslim musicians from the village joined the Indian Army (at about the time of the 1971 war with Pakistan), converted to Buddhism and settled in Spituk, near Leh. This enabled them to continue playing music, whilst other musicians in their native village who had remained Muslim had, by 1990, stopped playing music and had sold their instruments. One notable example of this musical abandonment among the Muslim community in Leh district is the current **'imām** of Phyang mosque, who gave up the musical profession inherited from his **mkhar-mon** forebears.
- [52] Heber (1903:189) mentions that **bhe-da** could typically earn 3½ Annas (1 Rupee = 16 Annas) per head for performing at a wedding.
- [53] The musical traditions of the Brokpa have remained virtually unstudied because they live in the restricted military zone bordering the Line of Control dividing Kashmir between India and Pakistan (essentially the 1948 UN Ceasefire Line). Francke's (1905) early published collection (without musical transcriptions) of Dard songs has been followed up with modern linguistic and cultural analyses, notably by Vohra (1989a and 1989b) and Bielmeyer (1990). The Dutch ethnomusicologist Arnold Bake's valuable collection of recordings and photographs from Ladakh in the 1930s includes some Brokpa material which awaits examination (Jairazbhoy 1970, note 9; 1991). Following the easing of restrictions on travel to the region in late 1993, it is hoped that a re-study involving fieldwork will now at last be possible.
- [54] Tibetan sources say that the **gling-bu** was introduced during this period from "Syria" (Tethong 1979:5), the region of West Asia long known among the Tibetans as Phrom or Khrom, i.e. Rum (Rome, usually for Byzantium), as in Gesar of Phrom (Caesar of Rome) (Stein 1972:39). Farmer (1931:58) observes that the Syrians, under the same name, were long noted for their "woodwind" instruments, or **nāy rūmi**.

A similar dating is indicated by Gyaltzen (1985:4), who states that the **gling-bu** was introduced during the reign of the last Tibetan king of the Tsen dynasty, Lhatho Thori Nyentsen (**lha-tho tho-ri gnyan-btsan**), whose birth according to one dating may be placed at c.367 CE (Stein 1972:52). Stein (ibid.:51) cites a Tibetan source which attributes the invention or introduction of the "panpipes,

music of the gods" during the reign of this king's predecessor, Thogrje Thogtsen (**thog-rje thog-btsan**).

- [55] The thirteenth-century scholar Sakya Pandita characterised the singing of "far Westerners" (i.e. of Tibet) as "neighing, sing[ing] with knots (**mdud-pa**)" (Ellingson 1979:235). Rather than referring to a constrained vocal style, as Ellingson suggests, this description perhaps reflects the tumbling quartal and quintal patterns, frequently in chained or interlocking sequences which are characteristic of Ladakhi melody (Trewin 1992). The differential features of Ladakhi vocal music in ascent and descent has already been noted by Picken (1957:141), which he attributes to border conditions.
- [56] In Tibet, the oldest drum is probably the frame drum (**lag-rnga**, "hand-drum"), since this has a continuous history in Central Asia from an early date, being the principal instrument of indigenous shamanic traditions before it was incorporated into Buddhist rituals. Tibetan texts of the pre-Buddhist Bon religion demonstrate that the instrument was used by religious specialists for a number of purposes: making offerings to the gods in order to appease human disruption to the spirits; accompanying them in mystic trips to the spirit world; attracting animals to the hunt, and accompanying masked dances (Ellingson 1979a:89-90). However, although similar in some respects to the religion of the Brokpa, there is no evidence that such a drum was used in Ladakh in pre-Buddhist times. The only other frame drum in Ladakh, the single-headed **daph**, is of more recent Persian origin.
- [57] This evolutionary perspective should of course be taken as applying only to the technological developments relating to the construction of musical instruments, rather than to the musical cultures as a whole. Even so, as Sachs (1962:92-93) warns, while the appearance of certain drums (such as the **da-man**) may be dated fairly accurately, their absence may for various reasons confound the expected chronology. The possible existence of earthen kettledrums in Ladakh therefore remains highly speculative.
- [58] One version of the text (British Museum MS 6683) gives **rdo-dha-man**, i.e. "stone da-man" (LDGR-IV 32.7; Francke 1926:85). However, Francke's (ibid.) principal source, the version obtained in Leh from King Jigme Namgyal by Schlagintweit in 1856, gives **borddha-mal**, which suggests cymbals of the large bossed type similar to the Tibetan **sbug-chal** (Deva 1987:48; Helffer 1994:161ff). An alternative interpretation that they may be some kind of lithophone, cannot be ruled out either: although rare in India, they were not uncommon in China and Tibet (Deva 1987:54, see also below, note 72). Above (note 40), a possible early reference to an earthen "kettledrum" (**rnga-shong**, from **gshong**="cavity" or "vessel", Das 1902:368) was also suggested, however.
- [59] The **rdza-rnga** is mentioned in the biography of the Kadampa sect founder Bromston (1008-64) (Das 1902: 1057), but this cannot date the instrument with any certainty. Scheidegger (1988:32) provides

a description of its use in the Mindoling tradition, but without any indication of when, or under what circumstances, it may have been adopted by some monasteries. However, its use with the **rgyal-gling** for providing escort music to religious dignitaries invites the speculation that some kind of oboe-kettledrum music may have served similar kinds of functions to West Asian instrument types prior to their introduction to Ladakh (and from there to Tibet).

- [60] Slobin (1980:418) notes that **gharibi**, or "poor man's music", is characterised by "extremely protracted final syllables, free rhythm or frequent use of heptameter quatrain verse form, and parallel fourths on the lute and fiddle". These features are to a large extent shared by traditional Ladakhi music, as are many of the genres, including antiphonal work songs, masked and animal-imitation dances, satirical songs and 'action' songs depicting common occupations. The Pamir lute (**robab**) also bears a striking resemblance to the **sgra-snyan** of Ladakh and other Himalayan areas, prompting Slobin (ibid.) to note the "pattern of cross-mountain relationships between the Pamirs and Himalayas". Similar drum and reed instruments to those used in Ladakh, the **surnal** and **naghara** are only used among the plains Tajiks to the north of the Pamir.
- [61] The informant of this datum gave the impression that his statement was anecdotal, but as with much folklore collected in modern times, such data are often the relics of real belief systems.
- [62] See Ellingson (1974), who notes that the so-called "horse-chants" (**dbyangs-rta**) were inspired by the Bonpo priests' visionary journeys whilst in trance.
- [63] One immediately thinks of the Biblical trumpets sounded at the battle of Jericho, but similar powers are described in ancient Indian literature: according to Puranic and Vedic sources, the sound of the **duṇḍubhi** war drum was capable of causing death, and it was ritually washed and worshipped prior to battle; another drum, the **bherī**, was annointed with ghee and was said to have the power to cure any disease of whoever sounded it (Krishnaswami 1967, Shakuntala 1968).
- [64] A description of daily ceremonial music of the **naqqārakhāna** ensemble in Mashad, Iran, played in honour of "the great luminary" suggests a Zoroastrian connection (Baily 1980:2), as does a description of the imperial ensigns (including the **naqqārakhāna**, which played at sunset and sunrise) of the Mughal Emperor Akbar, which mentions "the arch of royalty", a picture of the sun illuminated at night, evoking the "divine light which God directly transfers to kings" (Allami 1927:52). The possible identification of drums with images of the sun, as with much royal symbolism, in Islamic art probably has pre-Islamic origins (Denny 1985:39,63-64).
- [65] Similar kinds of pits, built of stones, are still used in Zanskar to trap wolves: a live sheep or goat is placed inside it as a bait, and the villagers then stone the wild animal to death.

A more substantial connection with ancient Indian civilization is suggested by Dani's (1989:163-64) identification of the name Bagatham with the Sanskrit Vajraditya.

[66] Notable examples are at Mulbech (of Maitrēya, the future Buddha), Changspa (of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, with a retinue of Gāndharas?), and at Sumda (Francke 1914:80,101-2; Vohra 1993).

[67] The major routes between these two regions passed through the Wakhan corridor, or across the Pamirs to the north, but a more direct (but difficult) route through "Dardistan" also existed (Puri 1987:17-18). These routes, following river valleys and mountain passes, continued to be used as trade routes into modern times: trade between Kashmir through Leh to the "Land of Six Cities" (Alte Shahr, i.e. the oasis kingdoms of Chinese Turkestan, as they were known to Ladakhi Muslim traders in Turki) continued to 1950 (Joldan 1985:58).

The language of the Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions in Ladakh and other parts of Central Asia is mainly Gāndhāri Prākṛit, a northwestern Middle Indo-Aryan dialect which was used by the Kuṣāṇas, and which forms the core of the Burushaski Dard language. Later Sogdian and Kucheana inscriptions in Ladakh of the seventh century show that contact with Central Asia was maintained throughout the period leading up to the Tibetan invasions (Francke 1914:94-95; Petech 1977:6-7; Bielmeier 1990; Fussman 1989; Vohra 1993).

[68] It is recorded that General Lu-Kuang brought musicians, actors, dancers, and instruments (including a five-stringed lute, four-stringed Kucheana lute, twenty-three-stringed harp or zither, oboe, mouth-organ, conch, drums, cymbals and gongs) from the region in 382 CE. Indian/Kucheana names of performers are also given in a record from 568. By the seventh century, Kucheana and Kashgari music were among the seven (later nine) foreign musics used at the Chinese court, with the Kucheana ranked among the highest. In c.788, the emissary Wu-Kung, passing through Kucha on his way to Gandhara (where he became a convert to Buddhism), observed a flourishing musical culture in the Kucha court. See Puri (1987:242-243) and Zheng Ruzhong (1993).

[69] The famous university-monastery of Takṣaśilā was undoubtedly among them (Saletore 1985:16,20). As a subject of study, **gāndharva** is included in a list of disciplines (medicine, astronomy, grammar, poetic, etc.) mentioned in Kharoṣṭhī documents (Nos. 514 and 565 in Aurel Stein's collection) dating from the first to third centuries from the Tarim Basin (Lath 1978:62; Puri 1987:185).

[70] It so happens that the oldest known Indian drama, the Sāriputra-prakarāṇa by the famous Buddhist writer Aśvaghoṣa (c. first century BCE), was discovered in the Turfan region; it consists of Sanskrit fragments with Prākṛit dialogues (Puri 1987:178,204-210).

- [71] Songtsen Gampo, for example, is credited with the fixing of the Tibetan script, probably based upon a northern form of Indian (Gupta) Brāhmī writing used in Khotan which his emissary is supposed to have encountered in Kashmir (Snellgrove and Richardson 1986:74-75; Puri 1987:13,148). It was from Oddiyana (Swat), west of Ladakh, that the Indian yogin Padmasambhava came to Tibet, perhaps at royal invitation, during the reign of Thrisong Detsen. Besides being revered as the inspiration behind the foundation of Samye monastery (and of the first monastic order), local Ladakhi tradition maintains that he spent some time in Baltistan, Ladakh and Zanskar: several folksongs, for example, refer to a tale which purports that the apricot trees of Lower Ladakh and Baltistan originate in the Guru's staff, made of apricot wood, which he planted in a rock (Shakspo 1988:1-2)
- [72] LDGR IV-32.7: rgya nas ja dang / bord dha mal (L MS. rdo dha man) / sur na / 'bur rgod / rgya gling la sogs byung ngo // Francke's (1926:85) inaccurate translation gives: "From Rgya (India or China) came tea, **borddha-mal** (?) (L MS.: stone drums), clarionets, long trumpets, telescopic trumpets, etc." The unusual term '**bur-rgod**, which Francke renders as a "long trumpet", could be interpreted as a horn through the reading '**bud-(dung)-rgod**, "wild trumpet"; for the meaning of **borddha-mal** or **rdo-dha-man**, see above, note [6]. Although these details remain obscure, Dusrong apparently had a strong interest in the arts, for he is credited with being the composer of some of Tibet's oldest surviving songs from Dunhuang, which he is supposed to have sung himself (Snellgrove and Richardson 1986:62-63).
- [73] This oboe-type is not known before the ninth century (Farmer 1931), and the evidence considered in this study shows that the current **sur-na** is unlikely to have reached Ladakh before the fifteenth-sixteenth century. Ellingson (1979:277,280), noting that the **rgya-gling** is not mentioned in Tibetan sources until the sixteenth century, suggests a similar dating for the introduction of this oboe to Central Tibet. Elsewhere (Trewin 1995), I have argued, in the context of the debate on South Asian double-reed instruments (Jairazbhoy 1970,1980; Deva 1975; Dick 1984), that the **sur-na** was introduced to Tibet from Ladakh-Baltistan in the seventeenth century; the **rgya-gling**, meanwhile, is probably derived from a more refined version of the Middle Eastern oboe (of the **shahnāī** type) developed in northern India sometime between the tenth and fourteenth centuries, and perhaps introduced to Tibet either from north-eastern India or from Kashmir, the last major outposts of Buddhism in India.
- [74] The text, dpag-bsam ljon-bzang, has been translated by Das; see Francke (1914:50-51), who mentions the paintings. Atisa was initially, but unsuccessfully, invited by Yeshe-'Od, the King of Guge (one of the three dynastic kingdoms of Western Tibet, Ladakh and Zanskar being the others) who sent Rinchen Zangpo for training in Kashmir. It may have been the latter who eventually persuaded Atisa to come during the reign of the successor, Dbyang-chub-'od. Atisa spent the rest of his life in Central Tibet as the key figure

behind the revitalisation of Buddhism (the 'second spreading') there, and the spiritual founder of the Kadampa school (Snellgrove and Richardson 1986:129-31).

- [75] The image of the thousand-stringed **sgra-snyan** is the subject of the following Ladakhi folksong (translation slightly amended):

O King Dhritarastra,
Lend me thy lute
With one thousand strings
In thy hands.

Today is an auspicious day,
And I would like to sing a sweet-sounding religious song
To the music of the lute.
Please help me.

O Blissful daughter of Brahma,
Please stay in my throat,
Help me to sing
A Song of six melodies

lha rgyal yul 'khor bsrung ba / khyed kyi phyag na mdzes pa'i / pi
wang rgyud stong ldan pa / nga la g.yar rogs gnang dang // de ring
bkra shis nyi ma / dam chos bkra shis dbyangs snyan / pi wang
sgra dang sbyar nas / nyams dga'i glu ru blang ngo // bde chen
tshangs pa'i sras mo / bdag gi mgron par bzhugs la / drug ldan
bkra shis glu dbyangs / len pa'i stong grogs mdzod cig // (Shakspo
1985a:9,31).

- [76] With other types of ritual objects, greater emphasis is placed on the merit generated by their original construction, which often means that they are re-created anew rather than conserved. Hence as objects, old musical instruments are, like other artefacts, quite rare unless they are still of use, or have been preserved by foreign collectors.

- [77] These semi-precious stones are supposed to satisfy the desires of sentient beings: lapis lazuli, one of the seven jewels of royalty, is said to "dispel the gloom of night and fulfil the wishes of the monarch and his subjects". But for all their beauty, the peacock and lotus-flower motifs they compose are at the same time symbols of renunciation: the lotus (one of the eight auspicious signs), which grows out of mud yet is not soiled by it, "shows that the fruit of the path is not affected by desires, even though it is attained by means of practices which utilize desire" (Genoud 1982:45); the peacock, which thrives on poisonous plants, is likened to the bodhisattva who lives in the jungle of worldly concern, transforming the poison of desire (ibid:98-99). By analogy, the same transcendental aesthetic applies to the sound the instrument produces.

- [78] Quoted in Helffer 1983:112 (see also Helffer 1994:87-98). The Ekottarāgamasūtra is part of the lost Sanskrit Buddhist canon which survives only in Chinese translation (Tseng-a-han-ching), conducted by Gautama Sanghadeva (according to Helffer) or by Dharmanandi in 384/5 (according to Puri 1987:190). Both these translators were Kashmiri scholars working in Central Asia (Puri, *ibid.*). Probably the oldest passage in the canonical literature concerning the instrument is the Gandistotragatha, which survives in Tibetan (**gandi'i bstod-pa tshigs-su bcad-pa**) (Helffer 1983:113); this is attributed to the first century poet Aśvaghōṣa, whose works (including the Sāriputraprakaraṇa drama) are among the earliest manuscript finds in Central Asia (Puri 1987:204-5).
- [79] Tethong (1979:14) remarks that, in the absence of loudspeakers, musicians from different monasteries compete with one another on occasions by seeing who can produce the loudest sound. In Leh in the early 1990s, the Soma Gompa monastery in the bazaar actually started using loudspeakers mounted on its roof to broadcast the ritual music from within, apparently in competition with the nearby mosque, where the call to prayer (**ādhān**) is regularly transmitted by this means.
- [80] "Buddhicization" describes the spread of Buddhism from India to Central Asia from the first century CE, but as a process parallel to the idea of Sanskritization (Staal 1982:40), starting with Vedic migrations and continuing to the present, especially as a form of upward social mobility. Both notions postulate processes whereby the "Great Traditions" spread to absorb the "Little Traditions".
- [81] The notion of an "invented tradition" follows Hobsbawm (1983:1?), who defines it as a "set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past".
- [82] For further discussion of the musical contribution of Rinchen Zangpo, see Helffer (1976). Samuel (1991,1993) notes a number of examples of shamanic scenarios besides ordinary spirit-mediums of the **lha-pa** or **lha-mo** type to which the dynamics of musical creation are attributed, including: a lama who enters a "pure realm" visionary state (**dag-snang**) where, as part of the teachings he receives, he learns a melody (**dbyangs**) or ritual dance (**gar**); a lama who founds a monastic tradition, receiving new traditions as part of an individual interpretation of Buddhist philosophy; and **gter-ston** lamas who "discover" ritual objects (which could include musical instruments), sacred sites, etc; and "inspired" Gesar-epic singers (**bab-sgrung**) who sing on the basis of knowledge said to have been received in a visionary state. A number of titles of **rgya-gling** melodies collected from Lamayuru monastery (Norpel p.c.) reflect the dream-like imagery of the visionary states in which such tunes are learnt, for example: **dkon-mchog rmi-lam**, "the dream of Kunchok [Gyalpo]", the recipient of the received traditions which led to his foundation of Sakya monastery in 1073 (see Snellgrove and Richardson 1986:132); **me-tog**

su-lu, "the buzzing [of the bee around the] flower"; and **pho-brang g-yu-mtsho**, "The Palace of the Turquoise Lake", evoking the legendary "lake-beginnings" of Buddhist foundation (Stein 1972:37-8).

- [83] The "invention" of instruments at the time of religious conversion and/or divine revelation is an old Indian theme: the Puranas, for instance, say that Brahmā invented the **mridanga** drum so that Ganeśa could accompany Mahādeva's dance before Indra in celebration of the victory over the demon Tripurasa (Krishnaswami 1967:73). In Tibetan Buddhism, the techniques of a wide range of craftsmanship are also believed to have been revealed or invented by divine artists or craftsmen.
- [84] See Snyder (1979). A similar type of secular-sacred controversy has occurred in recent years in Ladakh, where a number of winter monastic festivals have been moved to the summer in order to profit from the tourist trade.
- [85] It is usual practice in Ladakh, as in Tibet, for younger brother(s) to take monastic vows, while it is the elder or eldest who inherits titles and property. In the case of the royal family, this reflects the principle that the monastic establishment, whilst being superior in the cosmic order (e.g. its institutions are built above any palace), it is subordinate to the state in temporal matters.
- [86] The Tibetan state oracle (**gnas-chung**) at the monastery of that name, near Drepung, was consulted for political decision-making, and for conferring legitimacy upon government policy, notably by forecasting the reincarnation of subsequent Dalai Lamas. In Baltistan, the ruler 'Alī Sher Khān (r.1595-1623) used captured Shina shamans from Gilgit and Chitral as oracles for deciding foreign policy (Jettmar 1989).
- [87] Generally speaking, ordinary Ladakhis can only consult household (low-ranking) oracles upon demand. The special consultation of monastic oracles by those in positions of authority has continued beyond the end of monarchic rule: at the turn of the century, the Hindu Wazīr (governor) of Ladakh is said to have asked the Matho oracles to go into trance upon the advice of his Buddhist officials, in order to seek their help in identifying a criminal (Ribbach 1986:191); in modern times, they are consulted at the monastic festival by representatives of All India Radio, Leh, which broadcasts an annual message; in 1986, the Shey oracle became possessed especially for a private scence with the Hemis Rinpoche upon his return to Ladakh after political exile in Chinese-occupied Tibet.
- [88] Exceptionally, however, the people might have challenged the authority of the king: in 1884, for example, the king was blamed for a bad year as a result of his failure to consult his astrologer properly.

- [89] According to the Purana Nooru, the **murasu** drum (equivalent to the **bherī**) of the ancient Tamil kings was a symbol of their divine kingship and was itself treated as a divinity: it had a seat of its own, was ritually washed, decorated with flowers, peacock feathers, and jewels and offerings made (Shakuntala 1968:9-10).
- [90] For example, the Ladakh Chronicles (Francke 1926:81), following Tibetan traditions (e.g. Stein 1972:52), claim that Tibetan Buddhist texts were gifts from heaven, landing on the roof of the palace of the Tibetan king Lhatho Thori Nyentsen.
- [91] The Ladakh Chronicles (LDGR VII-40.18-19; Francke 1926:109,111) quotes a saying which puns on their personal names: "In the whole world is there a king like Sengge [a lion] or a lama like Stag [a tiger]; the priest and the donor; sun and moon a pair?" ('jig rten gyi khams su yang rgyal po seng ge 'dra ba la / bla ma stag 'dra ba / mchod yon / nyi zla / zung gcig).
- [92] The Hebers (1903:199) report, to their disappointment, that a "coronation" ceremony held in Leh palace to which they were invited consisted of no more the raising of the prince's throne to the same level as that of his Preceptor on his right (with the Prime Minister probably seated on his left) before a select assembly.
- [93] For example, one of the Seljuk rulers of the central lands of the caliphate, Al-Muqtadi (1075-95), allowed a governor to use kettledrums (**kūsāt**) but with the provision that only a three-fold **naubat** (at daybreak, sunset and nightfall) could be used when outside his own province. Again, a treaty of 1101 allowed two warring princes to take different titles, together with different musical honours: one, **sultān**, with the full five-fold **naubat**, and the other, **malik**, with the lesser three-fold honour. Under the Khwarizm Shahs, who ruled western Turkestan and much of Persia, 1077-1231, some of the bands were magnificent: Jalal al-Din Mankubarti (d. 1231), had 27 gold drums covered in pearls at his disposal, and he boasted of their playing the **nauba** of Alexander the Great (Farmer 1929:).
- [94] The earliest literary references include the **naobati** mentioned in the Varṇaratnākara (ca. 1325), which consisted of two types of **naqqāra**, other drums (**ḍhāka**, **ḍhola**, and **bherī**), conches (**sankha**) and oboes (**mahuari**), and the **naubat** described in the fifteenth century Dohāyaḷī, comprising **damāma**, **bherī**, **ḍhol**, trumpets (**sīng**) and oboes (**sahnāī**) (Dick 1984). The large bands of the north African Fatimid Khalifs (908-1171), which included **surnā**, **ṭabl**, **duhul**, **kūs**, trumpets (**būq**) and cymbals (**kasā**) were also said to have been granted as patents to their Shī'ite subjects in Delhi (Farmer 1929:).
- [95] Early Indian sources abound with references to military instruments in the context of epic warfare (Krishnaswami 1967, Shakuntala 1968). As in the early Muslim period, large drums are prominent on account of their noisy properties. These include the **duṇḍhubi**

(S) of the Vedic period, which the Rigveda hymns (VI, 47, 29-31) call "thundering out strength" or "accordant with Gods"; according to the Atharvaveda (V,20-21), the drum was washed and anointed prior to battle, beaten three times, and wielded before the soldiers in blessing. The **bheri** (S), frequently mentioned alongside trumpets, conches and other drums in the battle scenes narrated in the two celebrated Epics (Mahābhārata and Ramayana), and in the later Buddhist Jātaka stories. More detailed descriptions indicate that drums were also used in particular military contexts to convey specific information: for giving battle orders (in the Buddhist Arthaśāstra); for indicating the start and end of the day's fighting (Mahābhārata, Karnaparva 32, 42); for accompanying a warrior-hero as he entered his chariot to embark on a campaign (Ramayana VI, 31, 28); and for receiving the victorious king after his triumph in battle (Sonanadha Jātaka V, 120).

A related pattern of military instrumental usage apparently extended to Tibet during the early kingdom, where Tang records confirm the use of war trumpets (**dmag-dung**) accompanying the king into battle and military drums (**rnga-gyog**) for giving battle orders. (Ellingson 1979:65-73)

- [96] Several Kashmiri scholars have contributed to the Sanskritic canon of music theory, including three commentaries on Bharata's Nāṭyaśāstra by Udbhata (late eighth century), Lollapata (early ninth century) and Abhinavagupta (tenth century) and Śārngadeva's Saṃgītaratnākara (Pacholczyk 1978:2; Sufi 1949:547; Rasika 1959:42).
- [97] His description reads as follows: "[The Sultān] was part of Mahādeva...and his courtiers who attended on him were like Cupid who had multiplied into many persons in order to overcome him...The actresses, who displayed the forty-nine emotions [**rasa**] seemed even like the ascending and descending notes of music personified. As they danced and sang, the eye and ear of the audience seemed to contend for the keenest enjoyment...

"The stage was like a garden where the lamps on it looked like rows of the champaka flower, and around them were men intoxicated with wine, like bees around flowers. Rows of lamps surrounded the king, as if the gods, pleased with his government, had come to witness the dance, and had thrown a garland of lotuses round him. In some places, the rows of lamps were reflected on the water, as if Varuna (the Regent of the Ocean) had, out of favour towards the king, illumined his court with lights from the Naga [water-spirit] world.

"The spectators seemed to view Indra (Lord of the Gods) himself in the king. The poets and panditas beside the king were like demigods. His servants were like the attendant gods. And the **yogis** around him were like holy men who had obtained salvation. The actresses were like **apsaras** (fairies) whose charms were heightened by their emotions. The singers were like the **gandharvas** (Indra's musicians), and the stage was heaven itself." (Srivara, Kings of Kashmir, pp.133-4, quoted by Sufi 1949:550-551).

- [98] Francke (ibid.) also mentions a Ladakhi "Song of the Bodro Masjid of Srinagar" which refers to the friendship between Rinchen Shah and the missionary Bulbul Shah, but it does not appear in his published collections. Francke (1909:59-60) does however, give the text and translation of a song, "Prince Rinchen", which he argues refers to the departure of the Ladakhi king upon the eve of his supposed conquest of Kashmir. This additional example of folklore may reinforce the Ladakhis' claim, but it has little historical value.
- [99] Among the traditions mentioned by Dani (1989) are the following:
- Gilgit: Raja Firdaus (r.1359-97) brought artisans and craftsmen from Kashmir to build a fort, castle (including a treasury, audience hall and throne), garden and mosque.
- Khapulu: a ruler, probably Shah Azam Khan (r.c.1420-50), the first to adopt Islam, brought cratsmen from Kashmir to build a mosque and other buildings, for which they were given land.
- Skardu: Makpon Bahram Choh, probably the founder of the Balti state at Skardu c.1500, brought craftsmen and artisans from Kashmir to build the residential fort of Kharpocha.
- Nagar: Raja Ji Khan, c.1500, brought craftsmen from Baltistan to build a palace and polo ground.
- Hunza: Ayosha II, upon his marriage to a Balti princess, received a dowry which included some artisans responsible for building the forts at Altit and Balti, and the Mosque of Bibi Ghoras, dated 1548.
- [100] A Central Asian origin is most probable, at least one tradition claiming that it first came from Tibet itself (Saletore 1985:60-62), but the name from which the English "polo" derives (**bo-lo**, "ball") is a Balti-Ladakhi dialect word rather than Tibetan (Jaeschke 1881:371). In any case, the game was called by various names (e.g. **chaugān** in north India, **vāji-vāhyālī-vinoda** in the south) (Saletore ibid.); the name "polo" presumably predominates because the game was discovered by the British in the northwestern Himalaya, from where they re-introduced it in India during the 1860s and brought it back to England in its modern, modified form (Rizvi 1983:129).
- [101] According to the version of the narrative given by informants from Turtuk (a village in the lower Shyok Valley upstream from Khapalu, but on the Ladakhi side of the Line of Control), the sword-dance was originally performed as a last request by the prisoners facing execution; Emerson (1984:112) gives a slightly different version in which the Baltis, who cleverly claimed that the sword-dance was the only dance they knew, were asked to entertain their captors.
- [102] This was a strategy much favoured by the Indian Mughal rulers who mobilized their forces for surprise attacks under the cover of large-scale hunting expeditions. In Hindu India, it also appears that archery was used as a means of declaring war against the kingdom lying in the direction of the longest-range arrow (Saletore 1985:212).

- [103] Balti-Persian **ha-lo bagh**, perhaps a corruption of **hilal bagh** (P), "crescent garden" (Khan 1984).
- [104] Besides bring the Balti musicians and instruments to Leh, Gyal Khatun is also said to have brought Newari metalworkers from Nepal (attributed to Sengge Namgyal in the Ladakh Chronicles), and to have built a mosque and palace in Nubra. Around 1620, Sengge Namgyal built the first royal polo ground in the Murtse garden below his new palace, and may have designated a site for a mosque, which may date from this period (Rizvi 1983:131). He is also said to have introduced Mughal-style ceremonial dress worn by the Ladakhi kings and their ministers (Heber 1903:81), as depicted in contemporary paintings.
- [105] I am grateful to Zara Flemming for her comments on my photographs of the Stok instrument.
- [106] LDGR VIII-41.27: 'phyar dar dang / ha rib rnam thob nas / dgra las rnam bar rgyal lo //. Francke's (1926:114) translation of **ha-rib** (i.e. **sur-na**, or simply "musical instrument") is not strictly accurate, although he more correctly interprets the term elsewhere as "die Oboe von Westt Tibet" (Francke 1905:93). Later references in the Chronicles to similar ensigns include simply **rol-mo** for musical instruments and **'al-wan** (P **alwān**) for flag (T **'phyar-dar**) (Francke 1926:141,143,146).
- [107] Both episodes are taken from a royal edict of Deskyong Namgyal (ruled 1729-1739) (Francke 1926:232,233):
- bsod phyogs rgyug dmag lugs su thal mar phyin nas / mkhar gdong du khrug pa song bas /...s bag ram bhig babs / kha slangs nas 'dir phyag la khyongs /...bsod kyi mda' man chen po bcas gtam don du phan rgyur 'dir khyongs shing // (MC.16 229.10-14);
- pha rol g.yul las rnam bar rgyal bas / mtshan don la rgya srid rtser 'degs pa'i byed po kho nar gyur shing /...('di kha'i mtshan don du).../ ...sangs rgyas glang po'i gdung ring srel.../ sangs rgyas (b)se rur sku ltams pa'i ru co /...dang / lcags kyi mda' man ming grags can sogs / 'di khar phyag tu 'byor shing / gzhan yang dang...ha rib sogs rjes sob thub ba 'byungs shing / mdor na sbal ti rigs can thams cad kyi sbobs pa thung ngur byed pa'i (g)nyen po kho nar gyur shing // (MC.16 230.2-10).
- [108] Jaeschke (1881:3) suggests that **kal-ya**, a West Tibetan dialect word for porcelain or china-ware (**kar-yol**), is a corruption of **قلعي**; **pho-dkar** ("male white") is a hard mineral pigment used in painting. Since these instruments are made of copper or iron, and there is no evidence of ceramic drums ever having been used in Ladakh (although ceramic **naqqāra** are not uncommon in the Islamic world), these drum-names presumably refer to some sort (or sorts) of glazing material(s) applied to the inner surface of the metal. This could not be verified because such a thorough examination of the instruments was not possible.

- [109] The (unverified) existence of this collection, and its supposed origins, were testified by the Balti ruler at the time of Vigne's visit in 1835 (Vigne 1842:251). Baltistan's first tribute to the Mughal Emperor was made after Shah Jahan had sent troops there in 1637 in order to restore Adam Khan to the Balti throne amid the internecine feuds following Ali Sher Khan's death. Remaining a refuge in Delhi as a noble of military rank (**mansabdar**), Adam Khan appealed to the Emperor to bring about the submission of Sengge Namgyal, in revenge for his earlier raids on Baltistan. The award of **khil'at** after the 1639 war with Ladakh was made to Mohammad Khan, Adam Khan's **naib** (governor) in Skardu, and it is quite possible that the instruments mentioned by Vigne arose from this imperial 'act of incorporation'.
- [110] Himalayan examples include the Gorkhā kingdom of Chatra Śāha in 1609 (Tingey 1994:28) and the Kumaon kingdom of Bāz Bāhadur Chandra in 1665 (Agrawal 1990:291).
- According to a Tibetan treatise on **gar** dated 1688 and attributed to Sanggye Gyatso (1991), Regent to the Fifth and Sixth Dalai Lamas, 1679-1705, Ladakhi-Balti musicians and instruments were first brought to Shigatse, capital of the Tsangpa kings, following Sengge Namgyal's conquest of Western Tibet (Guge) in 1630; again after the 1642 Ladakh-Tibet treaty, when the Dalai Lama's rule was established at Lhasa; and finally upon the 1684 treaty. The details of these developments, together with a comparison of the **gar** and **lha-rnga** traditions which shows how the repertory had become further Tibetanized in the Central Tibetan context, have already been published (Trewin 1995).
- [111] For an account of a week-long monastic **gtor-bzlog** ceremony which invokes Mahakala, and the music associated with it, see Ellingson 1979:721-58.
- [112] Observed and recorded on 5th and 6th March, 1990.
- [113] Observed on 10-11th March, 1990.
- [114] Observed on 15th August, 1986.
- [115] This was not performed in the year (1986) the festival was observed by the author. The information here, however, was obtained from one of the hereditary dancers (Chali p.c.).
- [116] Chali (p.c.) recalled that one year, when he was not able to take part, he fell ill because, he said, of Dorje Chenmo's displeasure. On other occasions, however, she was a source of protection: he claimed that the life of his grandfather (a Muslim) was saved by her after a mishap at the perilous Khardung-La (mountain pass). He also expressed great concern that the dance tradition was not being taken up by the younger generation.

- [117] The Five Sisters of Long Life (**tshe-ring mched-nga**) are usually considered to make up the retinue of the Goddess Paldan Lhamo (Sri Devi); the animals they ride are **bkra-shis tshe-ring-ma** (white snow lioness), **mthing-gi zhal-bzang-ma** (wild ass), **blo-bzang-ma** (turquoise dragon) and **cod-pan mgrin-bzang-ma** (hind) (Olschak and Wangyal 1973:178). Similar types of mythical creatures are identified with the spirits who guard the sacred mountains, such as the "white snow-lion with the turquoise mane" (**seng-ge dkar-mo gyu-ral-cang**), and the "great striped tigress" (**rgya-stag khra-bo**), both of which also feature in Ladakhi marriage-songs (Ribbach 1986:66,105).
- [118] Although all the dancers (like the **lha-ba** medium) are male, the dance tradition (in Chali's case, at least) was passed down the matrilineal line. This could be a vestige of matrilineal organization sometimes considered to have been characteristic of ancient Tibet (Stein 1972:94); it seems more probable, however, that this principle reflects the gender of the characters being represented or embodied.
- [119] Observed and videoed on 17th March, 1988. The dances were not performed, however, when visited again on 26th March, 1990.
- [120] It has now been moved to the summer months for the benefit, I was informed, of the tourists. The author observed and recorded it on 31st July and 1st August, 1992.
- [121] A photograph of the '**chams** dance of Apchi Choskyi Dolma is given in Brauen (1980, pl.78). A fine recording of part of the **spyan-'dren-gyi rol-mo** for the deity has been published by Helffer (1978).
- [122] Observed and videoed on 13-14th April, 1988.
- [123] The term **lha-rnga** does not appear to have been used or understood in Tibet, **gar** being the usual term for this type of music (see Trewin 1995); it is quite understandable, however, that a Ladakhi musician might prefer to still use the term in a Tibetan context (Norpel p.c.).
- [124] Observed on 26th March, 1988 and 4th April, 1990.
- [125] These often find expression in traditional songs (e.g. Francke 1902:99-100).
- [126] Although these are predominantly Muslim areas, Rabgias (ibid.) states that the Muslim villagers of Chigtan (of mixed Muslim-Buddhist population) nevertheless offered flowers at the old temple of Vairocana.
- [127] Similar practices are also still to be observed in Kinnaur (Sharma 1990), where village gods possess dancers, or dance with them in the form of a palanquin, its movements being interpreted as an indication of its wishes and commands.

- [128] It is also stated by Hashmatullah Khan (1989:7-8) that the boy's dream occurred as he slept on a stone which subsequently became used for coronation ceremonies in Baltistan.
- [129] See also Brauen (1980:113-14), who complements these accounts with oral data.
- [130] Tucci (1956/7:200) suggests that a king's abdication for the religious, contemplative life was a form of symbolic sacrifice. In ancient Tibet however, actual regicide was not unknown, particularly where the king showed signs of disability or deformity, as reinforced in the Bagatham mythology. Tucci cites blindness as an example, and one wonders if deafness or muteness might equally given rise to such action.
- [131] The king's **lha-bdag** was also known as **lha-rtag** (Petech 1977:157), perhaps because of his powers of prognostication (**rtag**), or possibly this is a corruption of the similarly-pronounced **stag** (tiger) in reference to his tigerskin costume, which identifies his symbolic relationship with the monarch as lion (**seng-ge**),
- [132] The dance would appear to be related to the theme of male conquest, and the subsequent release of fertility. Dollfus (1989:54) also mentions an unusual performed by two veiled women at **lo-gsar**, below the castle in Hemis Shukpachen. This is said to commemorate a queen who was too ill to travel to the village festival-place, her disfiguring illness being otherwise disguised by a veil. Her disfigurement, like that of Bagatham, was attributed to moral transgression, so perhaps these dances are concerned with royal sacrifice.
- In the same village, the **lo-gsar** horse-races were also similarly led by a royal functionary called **chibs-dpon** ("equerry"), a hereditary office associated with a noble family whose ancestral home lies near the castle (ibid.:59).
- [133] LDGR-X 56.11: ang re zi rgyal mo chen mo'i sku tshab rgya gar na bzhugs pa'i si ke ther (drung yig) sa hib (Francke 1926:143). The words **ang-re-zī** (**angrezi**, lit. "foreigner", for English) and **sa-hib** ("sir") are from Urdu, while **si-ke-ther** is clearly direct from the English "secretary". Such borrowings are increasingly common in later parts of the chronicles, and in modern colloquial Ladakhi.
- [134] As was also the case in Tang China (Wechsler 1985).
- [135] bsod nams can rgyabs shig / drang pa'i dgra bo rgyabs shig / drag po'i kh rin las sgrub shig // (Norpel p.c.). This resembles to the three modes of ritual drumming described by the fifteenth-century Tibetan scholar Dondam as "the fall of the shower of blessing of compassion", "the exhortation to perform_a their work", and "the annihilation of the arrogant" (Ellingson 1979:385).

Appendix One: TYPOLOGY OF LHA-RNGA

(a) Ritual lha-rnga

Type	Occasion	Time	Deity or Deity Type Invoked
<u>lha-rtses (trance dance)</u>			
shel lha-rtses	Shey srub-lha	9.VII	lha-mo rdo-rje chen-mo
stog lha-rtses	Stok gu-ru tshe-chu	9-10.I	lha ser-rang
ma-spro lha-rtses	Matho na-grang	14-15.I	lha rong-bstan
shel sbrul-lo-rtses	Shey sbrul-lo	30.I	sbrul, sa-bdag
<u>dus-su lha-rnga (great festival lha-rnga, for monastic festivals)</u>			
rdo-rje chen-mo'i lha-rnga	Shey srub-lha	9.VII	lha-mo rdo-rje chen-mo
sgang-sngon tshe-grub- kyi dus-su lha-rnga	Phyang tshe-grub	17-19.I	lha-mo a-phyi chos-kyi sgröl -ma
g.yung-drung ka-brgyad- kyi dus-su lha-rnga	Lamayurubka'-brgyad	28-29.II	skyabs-rje stob-lan rin- po-che
<u>lha-rnga chen-mo ("great" lha-rnga, for special village rituals)</u>			
drug-chen brgyad-bcu sum-brgya drug-cu	Leh lo-gsar Lower Ladakh lo-gsar	1.X 1.X	{ lha sum-brgya { drug-cu
lha-rnga dpyid- tses	dpyid- tses	(Spring)	yul-lha
<u>lha-rnga chung-ngu ("small" lha-rnga)</u>			
	general village rituals		yul-lha, etc
<u>lha-rnga elements (for ritual actions)</u>			
lcog-logs-skor gsol-mchod/lha-gsol bskrad-rnga	dedication of prayer-flags presentation of offerings destruction of sacrificial offering		

(b) Ceremonial lha-rnga

Type	Ceremonial Function
<u>Offerings (lha-rnga)</u>	
bla-ma'i lha-rnga	incarnate lama (clergy)
rgyal-po'i lha-rnga	king (royalty)
pho-khams	minister (male nobility)
mo-khams	minister's wife (female nobility)
gzhung-gral-li lha-rnga	senior official
lha-rnga chung-ngu	junior official
<u>Watch-Offerings (ha-rip)</u>	
snga-mo'i lha-rnga	morning
nyin-dgung-ngi lha-rnga	noon
phyi-thog-gyi lha-rnga	afternoon/evening
<u>Processional Music ('phebs-rnga and skyod-rnga)</u>	
bla-ma'i 'phebs-rnga	arrival of lama
bla-ma'i skyod-rnga	departure of lama
rgyal-po'i 'phebs-rnga	arrival of king
rgyal-po'i skyod-rnga	departure of king
'phebs-rnga	arrival of lesser dignitary
skyod-rnga	departure of lesser dignitary
ti-bi-cag	royal horse procession
<u>Contests and Displays (rtses)</u>	
rta-rgyug-rtses	horse racing
rta-bo-lo-rtses	polo
mda'-rtses	archery
ral-gri-rtses	swordsmanship
rta-gshon	dressage
<u>Signals</u>	
bam	court assembly
skad	royal edict

**Appendix Two: LIST OF RECORDED EXAMPLES
on the accompanying cassette**

SIDE ONE	- Musical Example No.
1. nub-phyogs 'o-rgyan gling (song) [Time count: 0'0"] [90B-3: artists of All India Radio, Leh 13th March 1990]	3 (p.358)
2. bla-ma'i 'phebs-rnga [2'28"] [92A-10: accompanying procession of great thang-ka at Phyang tshe-grub , 30th July 1992]	5 (p.362a)
3. shel-lha-rtses [4'0"] [86L: accompanying possession ritual at Shey srub-lha , 14th August 1986]	6 (p.362c)
4. lo-gsar lha-rnga (a) and lha-gsol (b) [7'55"/10'45"] [92A-4/5: performed on gring-jang by Leh ti-chong ; recorded in Leh, 25th July 1992]	7 (p.362c)
5. lha-rnga chung-ngu [11'24"] [90M-3: Ali Mohammed, Nyima Tsering (sur-na); Dorje Motup and Sonam Dadul (da-man); Leh, 30th June 1990]	8 (p.362d)
6. snga-mo'i lha-rnga [12'50"] [86B-1c: Tsering Sonam (sur-na) and Ishey Tshering (da-man); Leh, 31st July 1986]	9,11,12 (pp.362e,364a-b)
7. mo-khams [19'30"] [90G-7: offering to royal guest at high-status wedding feast; 4 sur-na, 4 da-man; Leh, 20th May 1990]	9 (p.362f)
8. sgang-sngon tshe-grub-kyi lha-rnga [23'25"] [90L-20: Ali Mohammed (sur-na) and Athar Ali (da-man); recorded at Phyang, 21st June 1990]	10 (p.362h)
 SIDE TWO	
9. lha-rnga drug-chen brgyad-bcu (sum-brgya drug-cu) [0'0"/10'25"] (a) long version (b) short version [90F-1/2: 2 sur-na, 2 da-man; Chushot, 2nd April 1990]	10,15 (pp.362i,364e-f)
10. archery music (mda'-rtses) [13'55"] 'running' (tshang-rag) and 'victory' (rgyal-rnga) patterns [90I-2: recorded at Sabu archery festival, 14th April 1990]	5 (p.362b)

**Appendix Three: REGISTER OF FIELD RECORDINGS
of Ladakhi Instrumental Music**

[s = sur-na; d = da-man]

- 86B-1 Tshering Sonam (s) and Ishey Tshering (d) (*Plate 3*) Leh 31.7.86
snga-mo'i lha-rnga, phyi-thog-gyi lha-rnga, bla-ma'i 'phebs-rnga, rgyal-po'i 'phebs-rnga, ti-bi-cag, gsol-mchod, rta-rgyug-rtses, rta-gshon, a-po a-pi rtses, pho-rtses, mo-rtses.
- 86C to L-1 Ladakh Festival (*Plates 2, 4, 6, 14, 21, 34, 35, 37*) Leh 7-13.8.86
 Various regional artists, including **lha-rnga** from Nubra, Turtuk (Lower Shyok Valley) and Dha Hanu (**brongopa** musicians).
- 86L-2 Shey **srub-lha** (3s, 2d) Shey 14.8.86
 Includes **rdo-rje chen-mo'i lha-rnga** and **shel lha-rtses.**
- 86M Arrival of Hemis Rinpoche from Tibet (about 15s/d) Leh 18.8.86
 Includes **bla-ma'i 'phebs-rnga**
- 88A(VID) [video] Shey **sbrul-lo** (2s, 2d) Shey 17.3.88
 Includes **shel sbrul-lo rtses.**
- 88A-2 Leh **gtor-bzlog** (3s, 3d) Leh 26.3.88
 Includes **snga-mo'i lha-rnga, bla-ma'i 'phebs-rnga, bskrad-rnga, bla-ma'i skyod-rnga, phyi-thog-gyi lha-rnga.**
- 88C/D(VID) [video] Lamayuru **bka'-brgyad** (1s, 1d) (*Plate 28*) Lamayuru 12.4.88
 Includes **g.yung-drung bka'-brgyad-kyi du-su lha-rnga.**
- 90A-1/5 New Year prayers at **gso-ma dgon-pa** (3s, 2d) (*Plate 48*) Leh 3-4.3.90
 Includes **bla-ma'i 'phebs-rnga, snga-mo'i lha-rnga, phyi-thog-gyi lha-rnga.**
- 90A-6/11 Leh **bhe-da** musicians (2s, 2d) Leh 4.3.90
lha-rnga drug-chen brgyad-bcu, phyi-thog-gyi lha-rnga, rdo-rje chen-mo'i lha-rnga, pho-rtses, mo-rtses.
- 90E-4/6 Leh **gtor-bzlog** (3s, 3d) Leh 4.4.90
 Includes **snga-mo'i lha-rnga, bla-ma'i 'phebs-rnga, bskrad-rnga, bla-ma'i skyod-rnga, phyi-thog-gyi lha-rnga.**
- 90E-7 Chigtan (Muslim) musicians (1s, 1d) Spituk 6.4.90
lha-rnga (unidentified)
- 90F-1/2 Chushot **bhe-da** musicians (2s, 2d) Chushot 2.4.90
lha-rnga drug-chen brgyad-bcu: thung-se and ring-mo versions.
- 90G-7 Wedding (4s, 4d) Leh 20.5.90
 Includes **mo-khams, pho-rtses.**
- 90I-2/5 Archery festival (2s, 3d) (*Plate 19*) Sabu 14.4.90
mda'-rtses.

- 90L-10/20 Ali Mohammed (s) and Athar Ali (d) Phyang 21.6.90
snga-mo'i lha-rnga, phyi-thog-gyi lha-rnga, 'du-chung sa-kyin, drug-chen brgyad-bcu, gzhung-gral-li lha-rnga, sgang-sngon tshe-grub-kyi du-su lha-rnga, ti-bi-cag, ba-ga-gtam, bskrad-rnga, rta-gshon, a-po rtse.
- 90M-1/3 Ali Mohammed, Nyima Tshering (s) and Leh 30.6.90
 Dorje Motup, Sonam Dadul (d)
gsol-mchod, lha-rnga chung-ngu.
- 92A-1/3 Polo match Leh 23.7.92
rta-bo-lo rtse.
- 92A-4/5 Leh **ti-chong** musician (**gring-jang**) (Plate 46) Leh 25.7.92
lo-gsar lha-rnga/lha-gsol.
- 92A-7/14 Phyang **tshe-grub** Phyang 31.7.92
 Athar Ali (s) and unknown (d) (Plate 26)
 Includes **sgang-sngon tshe-grub-kyi dus-su lha-rnga, bla-ma'i 'phebs-rnga, pho-rtse.**
- 92A-15 Lila Bano (**daph**) (Plate 47) Leh 3.8.92
lha-rnga (unidentified)
- 92A-16/26 Ali Mohammed (s) and Ishey Tshering (d) (Plates 38-45) Leh 3.8.92
lha-rnga dpyid-tshes, mo-khams, pho-khams, lcog-logs-skor, lha-rnga drug-chen brgyad-bcu, lha-rnga chung-ngu, bla-ma'i 'phebs-rnga, rgyal-po'i 'phebs-rnga, bag-rnga, bam, skad.

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MASTER

RHYTHMS OF THE GODS

Recorded Examples

to accompany PhD thesis

by
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