

**A MATERIAL CULTURE STUDY OF THE
TAWANG MONASTERY, EASTERN HIMALAYA**

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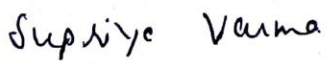
DECLARATION

I, Millo Hakhe, hereby declare that the Dissertation titled "A Material Culture Study of the Tawang Monastery, Eastern Himalaya" submitted by me for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy to Jawaharlal Nehru University is my original work. The Dissertation has not been previously submitted in part or in full for the award of any degree of this or any other university.


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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Since the inception of Buddhism, monasteries have played a crucial role in promoting Buddhist doctrines and its practices. It had its implication on every aspect of life be it in the socio-economic, political and cultural life of the people. It also had an impact on the material as well as non-material elements of the people and its environment. The term “*Monastery*” is derived from the Greek word “*Monasterios*” from “*Monazein*” meaning “to live alone” which is again derived from the root – “*mono*” which generally refer to “alone”. In Europe, this term initially had a narrow meaning that was confined only to the Cathedral church and mainly used for the monastery of England. They were generally referred to the habitation of a bishop and the cathedral clergy who lived apart from the lay community. In literature, we do not find the standard definition for monastery but currently, this term possesses a wider meaning as the term is applicable not only to religious buildings but also equated with other secular buildings (Benn *et.al*: 17). Noteworthy is the evolution of Asian Buddhist monasteries like those of China, Japanese, Korean, Tibet and those located in the South Asian countries. Even though the concept of Buddhist monastery evolved in India, it gradually spread to other parts of Asian countries taking different architectural form. Liqun (2013: 30) opines that the Pagodas of China, Japan, Korea and Tibet were an evolved version of Indian stupas. Excavations in China have revealed that the early monasteries were built up of rammed earth couple with stone and wooden timber and were generally squarish or rectangular in shape. The monastery constituted of residential quarters for Lamas, Pagodas¹, library, kitchen, and prayer hall. But again, the layout and setting of the Buddhist monastery may differ from region to region.

¹ Pagodas are generally the evolved version of Indian stupa in China, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Korea, Tibet, Vietnam and Japan known to be a sacred place of worship. It also acts like an Indian stupa where sacred relics are preserved.

The importance of a Buddhist monastery in the day-to-day life of people is apparent even today in various region of Himalayan belt. The Buddhist monastery of Himachal Pradesh, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, Tibet, Arunachal Pradesh etc., have played a very important place in the socio-economic, political, cultural and traditional life of the region. The Buddhist monastery of Potala Palace in Tibet has a crucial role in various political decisions of the Tibetans. The Potala palace can be seen as the nucleus of the Gelugpa sect from where the Lamas exert their influence on the general populace. Similar is the case with the Buddhist monastery of Arunachal Pradesh, Ladakh, Bhutan, and Sikkim etc. The Buddhist monastery is not a mere residential place to practice Buddhist philosophies and ideas but is also a space, which reflects the making of a place by the people of a specific region as described by Norberg-Schulz. Norberg viewed that the nature of a thing resides in its gathering (Norberg 1980: 170). The making of a place can be observed in architecture where concrete elements with substance, texture, shape and colour are gathered in one space by a man in order to symbolise and to visualise the human life. Heidegger illustrates the example of gathering in a Greek temple which works and first fits together and at the same time gathers around itself the unity of those paths and relations, in which birth and death, disaster and blessing, victory and disgrace, endurance and decline acquire the shape of destiny for human beings (Heldegger 1971: 42). Since the gathering of concrete things depends on the human beings who gather the value and meaning, the things symbols vary according to the personal background, practice, and perspective. This leads to different styles of encountering and dealing with the things involved. The character of a place is created in this way. The diverse culture creates different kinds of place. Similarly, the character of different types of place can also be created by man from the same cultural background but in a different period with a different ideology. The character of a place is the important part of experiencing the place. There are some characteristics of places that can be considered as common experiences regardless of cultural difference. Norberg-Schulz gives examples of these characters: "protective" for dwellings, "practical for offices, and Nsolemnu for religious buildings. He states that "... *all places have character, and that character is the basic mode in which the world is given...*" (Norberg 1980: 14). Hence, it is clear that

irrespective of any culture and tradition, man makes a place which acts as the platform for the gathering of different beliefs and ideas which is manifested in the things of a place. The Buddhist monastery is also the culmination of the same. Its establishment is the result of a gradual process in which man of a particular region has a significant contribution in the enhancement of the Buddhist monastery.

Other than man's attribution towards the outlook of the Buddhist monastery of a particular region, its establishment is also the culmination of the environment and the circumstances. The establishment of the Buddhist monastery generally holds a purpose which is due to the social and cultural development of the region. The Buddhist monasteries are generally suggested to be built on a secluded place far away from the main settlement. But sometimes, it can also be built in the villages or town as seen in northern India, for example, the ancient Nalanda monastery of Bihar. It is understood that Buddhist monastery does not only shelters the Lamas and Nuns, but also shelters a wide variety of material objects which holds a monastic significance such as Prayer wheel, portable Chorten, statues together with a variety of ritual and ceremonial objects. Every single tangible and non-tangible thing seen inside the monastery has value and a purpose. Therefore, the understanding of Buddhist monastery should not be confined only to the building but should also include other material aspect that is found in the monastery.

1.2. MEANINGS AND DEFINITION

The term 'monastery' in Buddhism is a general term indicating a place where Buddhist monks and believers engage in religious activities. The meanings and definition of monasteries in Buddhism can be traced in ancient text like *Vinaya Pitaka* where it mentions *Vihara* as a place of living, stay abode or habitation for a Buddhist mendicant, an abode in the forest (*Aranna*), or a hut; a dwelling, habitation; lodging for *Bhikku* (Vinayapitaka: 207). The Jatakas described *Vihara* as a large building for housing *bhikkhus* or an organised monastery (1877: 126). According to Rhys-David (1925: 101), the present state Bihar bears its name from *Viharas*. Fergusson (1910: 170) viewed *Vihara* as "a group of apartments for a community of monks, a *Sangharama* or monastic establishment" and described *Vihara* as a place for the convention of the *Bhikkhus*; meeting place; a place for rest and recreation in a garden or park. Majumdar (1982: 61)

explained *Viharas* as a place constituting of various buildings along with *Sangrahama* such as living and sleeping quarters for the *bhikkhus*, a service hall (*upatthana-sala*), a fire-hall (*aggi-sala*), frequently rendered as an open pillared pavilion (*mandapa*), a bathroom, hall for tailoring, a store-room etc. Various units of a monastery, for the most part, were detached structures and thus, the *Sangharama* did not constitute of only one single and comprehensive building but many. According to Wijayaratna (1999), a monastery is a complex of buildings comprising of the domestic quarters and workplace of monks and nuns irrespective of any religion. It is clear that the term monastery is understood differently by different scholars. It is evident that the term given to monasteries varies from region to region and is known by different names in different cultures (Ghosh 1998: 19-70). Buddhist monasteries in India are called *Viharas*, whereas they are known as *Gompa* in the regions lying in Himalayan belt and Tibet. Also, the Monasteries hold a different meanings from culture to culture which range from small-town *viharas* to tiny mountain hermitages, to great monastic universities which also vary in terms of its nature and function (Wijayaratna 1990: xv). Further, regarding architectural design too, the monasteries have different outlook varying from region to region. The monasteries in the Himalayan region are often used as a synonym for the temple. The term '*Gompa*' which is often used for the small temple in many parts of the Himalayan region is also used for the monasteries. In light of the above discussion, it is difficult to give a holistic view on the definition of a monastery but the common definition outlines that, monastery stands for a resident which shelters the saints to practice their philosophy and belief system.

1.3. A BRIEF HISTORY OF BUDDHIST MONASTERIES

The archaeological remains and textual sources suggest that the tradition of building Buddhist monasteries for monastic community originated in India and later spread to other parts of the world. This has been supported by the study of inscriptions and texts coupled with the application of archaeological survey and excavation which not only located but also uncovered some of the oldest Buddhist monasteries in India. Many scholars generally accept that Buddhist monasteries existed in India right from the time of Buddha Sakyamuni, the founder of Buddhist community which comprised of four

orders of faithful: *bhikshus*, *bhiksunis*, *upasakas*, and *upasikas*. According to the renowned Buddhist scholar Sukumar Dutt (2005), they were essentially wandering mendicants who took shelter in caves and forest and survived on begging. But during monsoon season, it became difficult for them to wander around. Thus, from the time of Sakyamuni, it is understood that tracts of land, buildings and parks were donated by the laity to accommodate the monastic communities which became a *raison d'être* for the Buddhist community (Mitra 1971: 30-31). From the time of Asoka, Buddhist monasteries received high patronage until the Muslim invasions disturbed the monastic practice in India (*ibid*). The monasteries became the major enterprises for the production and preservation of knowledge system either in the form of written text or oral narratives, owing to which the Buddhist monastic tradition became widely known and its practice got expanded in different Asian countries along the land and sea trade routes. As a result, the monastic tradition became the pan-Asian institution (Jackson *et.al* 2000: 5). The failure of Buddhism to spread in India during the Gupta period is marked as its decline in India. Conversely, the importance of renovation shifted from the Buddhist monasteries to the Brahmanic temple. But Buddhism started to take a gradual rebirth in Tibet from 9th century AD onwards wherefrom this religion began to spread in other parts of the world like China, Korea, Japan, Myanmar and other Asian countries. It migrated from the northwestern part of India via the silk route and entered the land of China from where it spread to countries like Japan and Korea and then again re-entered into the parts of the eastern Himalayas like present-day Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan.

Presently, a large section of the communities inhabiting the Himalaya belt such as Ladakh, Leh, Himachal Pradesh, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh practices different sects of Buddhism. But the Tibetan type of Buddhism which is also known as the Gelugpa sect is the dominant sect in the entire Himalayan belt. In the aforesaid region, the architectural designs and the traditional object used for rituals and ceremonies looks to be homogeneous in nature. The Buddhist monastery acts as a backbone of the society irrespective of any sect whether Mahayana, Vajrayana or Theravada. The Buddhist monastery alone cannot justify the influence it had on the material culture of the region. The tangible material aspects of the Buddhist monastery are equally important which can provide information on the role played by the Buddhist monastery which

influenced and shaped the human behaviour and belief system of the region having a direct impact on the material culture of the region. Traditional objects like Rosary, Prayer wheel, Manuscript, Varjira etc., which are used in the contemporary can provide an in-depth insight into the relationship between the Buddhist monastery and the people in the past. Most of these objects have a ceremonial, ritual and utilitarian significance. Reedy (1999) postulated that to understand the relationship between the people and the monastery, scholars should look from a wider perspective that included the material objects of the region. It is because, in the civilisation of the people, religious building plays an integral part in establishing a strong traditional belief and system which later attributes to the material aspects of the region like structures, objects, paintings etc. This outlook should also be applied in the understanding of the overall functions and significance of Buddhist monastery in the region (1999: 32-36) because the functions and importance of Buddhist monastery constitutes beyond its wall where certain developments such as connection link with the other areas, acquisition of objects, impartation of code of conduct, transmission of ideas and beliefs and many such factors are involved in the whole developmental process of the region. Hence, the study of Buddhist monastery has to be observed from a broader perspective.

1.4. ARCHAEOLOGY IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH

The Arunachal Pradesh which was part of NEFA² prior to 1972 is the northeastern most tract of Indian union covering an area of 83,743 sq km. This region even though explored by the Britishers as early as the twentieth century, the British administrator already explored and commissioned an extensive survey on this region. Finally, after the independence of India in 1947, this region started to receive some attention from the Indian government. It was after the 1960s that Indian Government began to give more attention to this region and that was due to the Chinese claim over entire Arunachal Pradesh which led to 1962 Indo-China war. However, after 1967 Sino-Indian war, the Chinese due to their difficulty in transporting military artilleries and basic supplies had to

² Prior to 1972, present day Arunachal Pradesh was known as the North Eastern Frontier Agency during British India. It was only after 1972 under the Indian republic that this state became the union territory of Arunachal Pradesh.

retreat from this region. Since then, this region came under the administration of Indian government. From the 1970s onwards, Arunachal Pradesh gradually opened its door for the various research from various disciplines which included archaeological research as well. But archaeology in this state has always faced various difficulties which in many cases hindered the research survey of many important sites. One of the reason is due to the tough topographical setting with poor road accessibility which makes it difficult for the scholars to conduct proper fieldwork in this region. The topographical setting of this state is characterized by hilly and steep mountains along with high rainfall (Kumar 2013: 6). The region located at the upper ridges of the mountain receives a high rainfall from the month of November till February. But despite the obscurity, many scholars have conducted various field surveys and located critical archaeological sites. This was possible, as many administrators, officials, and occasional scientists and surveyors made an effort to explore this region together with the support of locals.

From the 1950s onwards, many western anthropological scholars undertook various field surveys in the northeastern part of India. As a result, Arunachal Pradesh also came under the curiosity of the anthropological research (*ibid*: 12). The vacuums that were present in the past narratives of Arunachal Pradesh due to lack of material evidence were filled up with the findings of new archaeological evidence and sources (Malik 2008: 267). The archaeological remains and sources that were recovered from the state was possible with the joint application of the disciplines of archaeology and geology. Due to this effect, a wide variety of archaeological remains in the form of fossils, stone tools, weapons, and utensils have been recovered until now which is still in progress. Besides, architectural vestiges, sculptures, paintings, terracotta, bricks, woodcarvings, inscriptions and coins were also discovered. Material remains from these excavations alongside other objects are preserved in various museums of the state. Archaeological studies in the state began from the 1970s onwards. The initial inquiry of the scholars was to study the prehistory of this region. As a result, tremendous field survey to find the evidence for the prehistoric life of this region commenced. S H Rao (1971) of Dibrugarh University discovered some Paleolithic tools in the Kamlang valley in Lohit district. Subsequently, Y A Raikar of the Research Department of Arunachal Pradesh discovered chips of semi-precious stones like Chalcedony and Jasper from Vijayanagara in Tirap district in 1971

which he considered as relics from the Mesolithic culture. Simultaneously, significant detail from the discoveries of stone age relics from the adjoining regions of Assam, Meghalaya and other parts of North-East India were also reported. Similarly, in 1979, D K Duarah reported the discovery of a possible Neolithic site in the West Kameng district (Riddi 2017: 1). Later, private collections housed in monasteries and individual homes were also reported. They were mostly implements and utensils, well-known specimens of Tibetan and Burmese types made of silver, brass, copper and other metals are encountered in most of the religious centres. Apart from the aforesaid remains, gongs and other items of heirloom preserved in the households of non-Buddhist tribal folk occasionally having definite exchange value are also noteworthy in this context. Currently, there is much architectural evidence which is in the form of monasteries, stupas and shrines along with forts noticed at Bhalukapong, Naksaparvat, Itanagar, Bhismakanagar, Sisupalagada etc. The monasteries are mainly noticed in Tawang and West Kameng District. Apart from that, there are also various ancient Hindu shrines located in the state such as Malinlthana and Taresvari Temples. If properly analysed, the aforesaid evidence can furnish a detailed account of the socio-religious, political and territorial aspects of the particular region. Zeminthang, Tawang, Kalaktang, Rupa, Birangand other places of West Kameng district such as Gelling, Tuting, Mechuka and Mankhota and other parts of the Upper Siang district and Dibang valley are known for the Buddhist monasteries and *Chorten* belonging to various Buddhist sects where some are pertaining to olden days. These monuments are ascribed belonging to eleventh to twelfth century AD. Important objects such as those kept and preserved in the monasteries, chapels, and houses which are generally made up of clay, metal, and stone for worship have been reported from various districts. Beautiful icons of Hindu divinities have been discovered from the temple at Malinithana in the foothills of the Siang region bordering Assam. There are also few fort ruins in the West Kameng districts, Itanagar in the Lower Subansiri district and Bhismaknagara in the Lohit district along with few stones, terracotta and metal figures which are secular in nature (Thakur 2004: 1187-1192). Therefore, the aforesaid mentioned sources and evidence clearly suggests the practicality and possibility of reconstructing the past culture of the region. There is still a lot of potentials to initiate archaeological research in this state provided special

importance given to this region. As mentioned previously, the material remains, however, still needs to be well preserved and understood. The main limitation that is faced by the present-day scholars in the archaeological research is the difficulty compounded by the lack of literary tradition among the inhabitants of the region. Scholars have initiated many comparative studies of ethnological and the linguistic data along with the studies of early literary account in relation to the neighbouring regions of Assam and the neighbouring foreign territories like Tibet, Bhutan, and Burma. The aforesaid is the indicator of scholars trying to trace the interconnection between the various culture in the past.

1.5. STUDY AREA

The Tawang monastery³ located at Tawang circle⁴ in the northwestern part of Arunachal Pradesh plays an important role in the daily life of the Monpas. Just like any other monastery of other religion, it plays an important role in the socio-cultural and political life of the people residing in the region. It was recently the region became the headquarter of the Tawang district. This resulted in the rapid growth of the population. Before this region got demarcated by the colonial regime in the form of MacMohan line, separating Tawang from Tibet, this region had a strong cultural tie with the neighbouring region of Bhutan and Tibet. Scholars like Niranjana Sarkar described that it was only from the thirteenth century that the local inhabitants of this region got converted into Tibetan type of Buddhism replacing the traditional religion Bon⁵ (Tripathy & Dutta 2008: 274-275). The first Buddhist sect that advanced in this region was the Nyingmapa sect. And it was only after the establishment of Tawang monastery in the late seventeenth century that Gelugpa sect became the dominant sect in the region. This monastery is the perfect example of the living monuments which has been renovated multiple numbers of times. Its impact on the material life of Monpas can be observed even today.

³ The Tawang monastery is also known as the Galden Namgye Lhatse.

⁴The headquarter of Tawang district is Tawang itself and the tawang monastery is located in the main headquarter. The Tawang headquarter can be understood as Tawang circle.

⁵ Bon religion is the earliest religion of Monpas practiced prior to the advent of Buddhism.

1.6. PREVIOUS WORKS ON TAWANG MONASTERY

In terms of literary works, only a few works have been done so far as only a few scholars made an effort to initiate studies on this region. Scholars such as Niranjana Sarkar (1981) had done cultural studies on this region, especially on the Tawang monastery. The sources he relied on were mainly the physical evidence of the monastery and to some extent, the traditional lifestyle of the Monpas. He gave a firsthand documented account of the Tawang monastery and its region. In his work, certain objects of interest such as colourful wall paintings, a gold-plated statue about 28-feet in height, prayer wheels; and main doors of the sanctum sanctorum, carved door frame with brass knockers and plates attached with intricate design were observed and explained. His description was basically an ethnological study of the region which explained the current traditions and customs of the region (1981: 6-8).

In 2013, two important scholars namely Lobsang Tempa and Thupten Tempa published an influential book '*A Brief History of the Establishment of Buddhism in Monyul...*' (2013). This book gives an overview history of the establishment of Tibetan Buddhism in Monyul⁶ region concerning the flourishing of monasteries in this region. It is the first comprehensive and informative summary of the important historical sources related to the region. Other than the aforesaid literature, there are only strategic reports of this region. Recently some elementary studies have been done in this region like *Arunachal Pradesh: Past and Present* authored by H G Joshi (2005). His work gives a few cultural and traditional aspects of this region. In a nutshell, he describes the social dynamics of the state as a whole where he describes the tribes of Tawang as well. Hence, it is evident that there are only a few literary works done on Tawang monastery which gives the cultural description of the region. Therefore, it is inevitable to look in the works done by other scholars on the similar type of monastery and the region.

⁶ Monyul refers to a region inhabited by Monpas which includes the surrounding region of Present day Bhutan, West Kameng, Tawang and southern Tibet.

1.7. BUDDHISM IN THE NORTH EAST

Arunachal Pradesh which is located easternmost part of India is home to many important Buddhist monasteries and sites. Geographically, the northwestern and northern region of the state is dominated by the Tibetan-type Buddhism, and the eastern part is inhabited by the Khamtis and Singphos purely practising Thai Buddhism. The northwestern region presently comprises of two important districts namely, West Kameng and Tawang district whereas the Thai Buddhism is found in Changlang district. The former is mostly inhabited by the ethnic groups of Monpas, Sherdukpens, Aka, Miji, and Memba. Other than Sikkim and some parts of Arunachal Pradesh, most of the region of northeast India could not build a strong foundation for Buddhism in the past. The written records and textual sources suggest, throughout the history, the entire Brahmaputra plain (present-day Assam) was mostly ruled by the Hindu kings because of which, Buddhism did not get its stronghold in this region (Barpujari 1990: 306). Currently, the states like Mizoram, Nagaland, Meghalaya and some parts of Manipur are Christian majority, and the states like Assam, Tripura and some parts of Manipur are majority Hindus. Apart from the two religions, the traditional worship of spirits and animism are still practised in the states of Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya.

1.8. LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies on Buddhist monastery of Arunachal Pradesh have been very few and rare. The early works on the Buddhist monastery of Arunachal Pradesh can be traced back to the data collected by the colonial scholars and officials which was in the form of ethnological account. The description given by the British scholars such as Elwin (1872: 14), Dalton (1872: 5-7), Michell (1883: 22), Gurdon (1895: 2), Robinson, Mackenzie mentioned only a few Buddhist tribes in the northeastern region. Their description was on the cultural and traditional aspects of the local people. In the descriptions of Dalton (*ibid*), there is a mention of Khamti tribes practising Buddhism and few ethnic tribal groups in the Mishmi Hills. Elwin interestingly described the characteristic feature of Khamti monasteries. He appreciated the fine skills of the Khamtis in carving images of Lord Buddha some of which were hidden in small temples in out of the way villagers. He observed that the Buddha images of ambers and glassware were kept in Khamti monastery. According to

the descriptions of Dalton (*ibid*), only a few Buddhist temples existed in the Khamti region. And these temples were made up of timber and were made of carved and great neatness and taste were evinced in the arrangement of the internal fittings. Further, he explains how various objects such as statues, ceremonial and ritual objects like prayer drum, bell, candle lamp etc. were the necessary elements of the monastery. He observed and noted down how the interactions between the monastery and people in day-to-day life influenced their livelihood regarding festivals, ceremonies, customs, and belief system. Every small detail of the Buddhist community and the monastery were being highlighted in their account. But apart from these studies, there is hardly any early literary work done on the monasteries of Arunachal Pradesh. But in other part of the Himalaya region like Ladakh, Leh and Himachal Pradesh, from the late nineteenth century onwards, the study Buddhist monastery started receiving high attention from various western scholars and officials. Prior to the proper research was undertaken on the monasteries of the Himalayan region, many geographic expeditions and venture for the traditional sources were initiated by European scholars such as George Bogle (1774), Samuel Turner (1800), Thomas Manning (1811) whose account gave a vivid description on the observed traditions and customs prevalent in the monasteries of Tibet. Besides, scholars like Csoma de Koros (1834), H.A. Jaschke (1881) who was known for their translation of Tibetan written literary sources into a vernacular language paved the ground for the study of the Tibetan-styled Buddhist monastery. After the mid-nineteenth century, for the first time, physical aspects of the monastery were being analysed and studied independently without much reliance on the textual sources. The exploration of Monastery in the untraveled part of the countries lying in the Himalaya became a profound interest among the scholars. Emil Schlagintweit (1863: 205-209) who specialised in Tibetan studies explored many important Buddhist sites in regions like Leh, Ladakh, Sikkim, and Bhutan, collected the detailed account of the Monasteries, ceremonial objects, structures such as Chorten⁷, Mani (large cylindrical prayer wheel) and Flags. His survey was based on building to building survey, informal interview and observation of the structures and objects followed by a proper measurement of the

⁷ A Chorten is a pyramidal shaped religious structure having similar function with that of Indian 'Stupa'. It is generally constructed to symbolize the presence of Buddha.

structural designs, Chortens, and traditional objects⁸. The objective of his survey was to investigate the significance, usage, and function of the aforesaid evidence (Ibid). Subsequently, a similar type of approach was adopted by scholars like A.L.Waddell (1895). In other words, his work was more based on the description of Buddhist monuments and traditional objects rather than the relation that people had with them in the past. Similarly, Wadell followed the same footsteps.

Scholars like Franke during his survey of Buddhist monuments of Ladakh and Leh region tried to investigate the interconnection between the locals and the monastery through the material culture perspective. He was able to trace many traditional objects that still have significance in the present context. His surveyed objects were mostly ceremonial in nature which was later used in his analysis to support his past interpretation of the interdependence between the Tabo monastery with the neighbouring countries like Nepal and Tibet. His emphasis during the fieldwork was more towards the comparative analysis of the developmental changes in the structural design of Tabo monastery with other ancient monasteries of the neighbouring regions. In other words, his study aimed to address the structural changes in the Tabo monastery under different dynastic rule compelling him to emphasize more on developmental changes in the walls and structural design of the monastery. The traditional objects had little space for his analysis. The works of Franke was basically more emphasized on the understanding of the dynastic history of the region.

The period after the 1950s was a remarkable phase within the field of archaeology, as, during this phase, ethnoarchaeology became the sub-discipline of the archaeology. Many western scholars started to employ the similar approach in their field survey especially in the region where the written sources were scarce. This approach generally intended to look into the past human culture through the study of the present material culture of the region. The establishment of the theoretical and methodological basis of ethnoarchaeology by L R Binford (1977) was one of the most successful interpretive frameworks for understanding the archaeological record from the 1970s onwards. His method generally laid special emphasis on processual archaeology to

⁸ Note: The term 'traditional objects' is used here to denote those objects which have been used in the past and still exist today.

discover the universal law governing the human behaviour and the social and ideological and cognitive processes that determined such conduct along the lines of post-processualist archaeology. As a result, many scholars (Bettlinger 1987, Thomas 1983, Torrence 1986) started to pay attention to the ethnological data to study the past culture of the region based on the embraced scientific analysis and objective conclusion. This influence was also seen in the study of Buddhist monasteries and the material objects were most of the research was done through the interdisciplinary approach. A trend that is most visible in the study of Buddhist monastery, especially in the case of Tibetan-type Buddhist monastery is in the field of art and architecture with less regard to its impact on the material culture of the region. This resulted in embracing of 'art historical approach' which to a large extent has always been instrumental in analyzing the material culture of the particular region. This effect was also seen in the works of Indian scholar M N Deshpande (1973) who surveyed art of Ajanta and the art of Tabo Monastery at Ladakh; laid special emphasis on the present day technique involved in its execution, stylistic design and the structural plan of the monastery. The main reason behind his research was to address the cultural link between the monuments of Deccan and the Himalayan region. In 1974 Krishna Deva adopted a similar type of approach during his field survey on the Buddhist monuments of Nepal. His primary objective of the study was to find out the influence of Indian and Tibetan art and architecture with that of the monastery of Nepal. But the research work done by Deshpande and Krishna brought a tremendous zeal among other Indian scholars such as Laxman Thakur, who carried out a more systematic survey on the structural design and objects of the Nako monastery and Tabo monastery located in Ladakh.

From the 1970s onwards, the archaeological survey shifted beyond the wall of the monastery. Scholars like A K Singh (1970) undertook a village to village survey which was never attempted by any previous scholars like Alexander Gerard, A H Francke, G Tucci and Rahul Sankrityayan in the Upper Basin of the river Sutlej in Himachal Pradesh in the district of Kinnaur. He has been working in the region since 1977 to prepare an inventory of archaeological material through conducting village to village and door to door survey in Kinnaur. The fieldwork yielded a considerable amount of cult images in bronze with other artefacts of great historical importance. Sites like Rangrik, Ropa,

Kothi, and Ribba preserve a good deal of rare wooden images of high aesthetic merit. He gives a stylistic definition and provenance of some selected Buddhist wooden sculptures discovered. Also, he attempted to describe the regional development of Kashmiri style, its extension, and various stylistic sources. Indeed, the contribution of Chamba School was examined carefully for scientific evaluation of Kashmiri expression, the paramount style in the western Himalayan region. Chronologically, the material was ascribed to a specific frame of time that is from ninth to twelfth century. His main objective was to address how the Kashmir played an important role during the Ninth century onwards in the exportation of artisans to various regions.

By 1970s, focus in the field of Buddhist monasteries shifted more towards the social and economic perspective. This was due to the rise of Marxist scholars who tried to connect the historical development with the production system of the society. From the 1980s onwards, the study of Buddhist monastery started to cover the wider aspects of the field research. They started to focus on the transition phase of development between the monastery and the objects. And during this research, the Anthropological method was embraced by various scholars. An attempt was made by Scholars like R A Stein (1972), Beatrice Miller (1961), Namkhai Norbu (1989), R.Chapela (1992) who explained the cultural aspects of the monasteries by relating the Tibetan monastic objects with those of Chinese and Mongolian objects. R. Chapela (1992) and Goldstein (1985: 14-31), introduced the role of monasteries in the manufacturing process of objects which had monastic value. One crucial object that they focused was on the prayer wheel Michael Henss (1981) undertook a systematic survey of the then surviving or reconstructed monastic architecture and relics in the central region of Tibet to explain the role of monasteries in the economy and religion. In 1997, Chandra L Reedy in his famous *Himalayan Bronzes: Techniques, Styles and choices* explained the relation between the monastery, and the objects from the art historical perspective together with the various inter-disciplinary approaches. A total of 340 objects was being studied to address the historical questions concerning the Himalayan culture. One interesting area that he focused was the relationship between Tibet with the neighbouring regions like Nepal, Kashmir and China in the manufacturing and the transportation of the objects into the monastery of Tibet. He laid special emphasis on the method of 'analogy' and the

'relational analogy' of ethno-archaeological approach where the former tries to compare the two objects to find the similarity in the appearance and shape and later demonstrate the similarities (Reddy 1997) . This work was, in fact, an extensive one, as it tried to analyse the earliest objects that were manufactured and circulated in the monasteries of the Himalayan region during the medieval period. Only a few scholars attempted to explain the development and transition of the objects from phase to phase in such vast, comprehensive information which makes his work more complementary. His study was mainly focused on the copper objects, and at least more than 340 objects were being studied. It combined the methods of Geology, art history, statistics, chemistry, archaeology, and ethnography. Basically, his work tries to explain the questions of art history and the anthropology which he answered by using multiple types of information (1997: 42-60).

In 2001, O C Handa in his famous *Buddhist western Himalaya* (Vol. 2) gave a vivid description of the monasteries located in four important regions, namely, Lahul valley, Spiti valley, Beas valley and Satluj. His work can be seen as one of the most complimentary descriptions of the Himalayan Buddhist monasteries as it covers all the material aspects. He attempted to explain the influence of Indian Buddhism and the Tibetan Buddhism in the Himachal region through the present material culture of the region. In contrary to the description of the colonial scholars, the objective of Handa was to study the monasticism of the Himachal as a separate identity rather than the extension of the Tibetan culture. In other words, his idea was that, even though the material culture of the region has close affinities with the Tibet, the region has its own identity and may not be seen as the extension of Tibet as described by the colonial scholars. This way of looking into the subject was in fact first initiated by Handa himself (Handa 2001: 7-20).

Considering the trends of studies done on Himalayan region, most of the surveys are primarily focused on architectures, paintings, and *chortens* of the Himalayan monasteries. Most of them were motivated to look into how the monasteries had an impact on the cultural life of the people which was supported on the basis of paintings, rock art, and architectural designs. In fact, there is hardly any scholars who attempted initiate archaeological study to build a connection between the monastery and objects which had an impact on the socio-cultural life of the people. Recently various

archaeological survey has once again been initiated in the regions in Leh and Ladakh region. But the trends still remain the same, the study area is concentrated more on the paintings, rock art and architectural designs of the monastery.

However, in 2017 Alex Wallace, an anthropologist, attempted to look Buddhist monastery from a social point of view where the social structure of the relationship between the Buddhist monasteries and the lay community was emphasised. He surveyed two important monasteries of Ladakh namely; Spituk monastery and Ridzung monastery. Firstly, his aim was to see the dissimilarities between the two and secondly to find out, to what extent, the lay communities of the two monastery followed the similar Buddhist doctrines and philosophy. But the ultimate goal of his research was to address the two fundamental questions a) To show how aspects of the social environments of two monasteries influence patterns of how Lamas narrativise their life histories. b) To show how aspects of the social climate of two monasteries influence the daily life is life and how the monks understand it. Other than Alex, there are also previous works done by Goldstein (1988) and Grimshaw (1983) who tried to look into the monastic affair of Ladakh region through the perspective of social dynamics.

1.9. METHODOLOGY AND APPROACHES ADOPTED BY THE SCHOLARS

Scholars like Schlaginweit during his survey of the Himalayan monasteries basically emphasised on the functions and symbolism of the objects to discourse the overview history of the monastery. He highly relied on the comparative analysis of objects of different regions to establish the overall past interpretation of the culture. This methodology was however already adopted by previous scholars such as Schmidt and Klaproth of Mongolia and Chinese works. Other scholars such as Tucci classified the ritual objects into the precise timeline of the Tibetan dynasty to address the very question of how objects passed through a series of value addition in the monastery from dynasty to dynasty. He highly relied on the archaeological indoor-objects such as brass vessels, bells, statues, and stone inscription belonging to the period of Tibetan kings. Scholars like R A Stein (1972), Miller (1961), Namkhai Norbu (1989), Paljor Tsarong (1989), R.Chapela (1992) generally emphasised more on the stylistic designs of the objects. The designs for them conveyed special meanings and symbols, and if properly analysed could

explain the in-depth inter-connection between the two regions. H E Havell (1911) other than emphasising on the comparative analysis of the styles and designs of the sculpture to trace the evolution of art and architecture of the monasteries also tried to look on the level of efforts put by the local people of that region to execute the art in the structure. A similar approach is witnessed in the works of A K Coomaraswamy (1927). When Laxman undertook a field survey on Nako monastery, situated in Himachal Pradesh, he focused more on the evolution of the building architecture between Nako monastery and Tabo Monastery. To bring into effect, he adopted a comparative and systematic analysis of the architectures, sculptures and the murals of the monasteries. He also relied on the biographic data of the monastery to address the surrounding question “who built the monastery?” and “during which period?” which was again supported by the inscriptional evidence and the records. A similar approach was also adopted by Franke while surveying on Ki monastery. But both did not hinge much on the objects as a source to explain the history of the Tabo and Nako monastery perhaps due to their enthusiasm towards explaining the structural changes of the monastery. Nonetheless, these scholars did not attempt to explore into the impact of monasteries in the developmental phase of the objects or otherwise. They saw objects as mere symbols and meanings being attributed by the monastery. But this trend of research was defeated by the scholars like Reedy (1997: 42) who while studying the relationship between the monastery and the objects highly emphasised on the present day technique, design, and choices of the people. He described that monastery always played a crucial role in the circulation and manufacturing of the objects. His explanation of the transition of monastic objects was mainly based on the classification of the objects into Indian, Nepal, and Tibetan as a basic foundation. His interpretation was established through the art history and interdisciplinary approach. Apart from that, some portion of psycho-analysis can be seen in his methodology which was used to extract the ideas and belief of the communities towards the objects and the monastery. Reedy categorised the objects into stylistic criteria and those of uncertain groups for his analysis. This was done to classify objects into Tibetan-type from the objects belonging to the Himalayan type. He believed that the monastic objects of the Himalaya, similar to Tibetan style, cannot be categorised into Tibetan type as the objects are unique in itself and have to be analysed in a classified

manner. Hence, he classified the objects as well as the monastery of the Himalayan belt separate from the Tibet. At the same time, he acknowledged that there had been a cultural mingling between the culture of the Tibet with the rest of the culture in the Himalayan belt especially present-day Ladakh, Leh, Sikkim, Nepal, and Bhutan. So, his understanding of the Monastic objects and building was based on the relationship between the homogeneity of the culture.

Further, the identification of objects on the basis of regional differences in metal composition was the principle approach in his analysis. For example, his analysis sought to check the differences in alloying elements to reflect different manufacturing choices. Differences in trace elements reflected the exploitation of different copper ore sources. His study also included drilling samples from each object. In some cases, he sampled twice to identify the metal homogeneity. Through the aid of inductivity together with emission spectrometry, 15 elements were identified to be consistently present. This enabled him to find the variability in the alloy composition. To analyse the casting and decorating technology on the surface of the sculpture, he employed a binocular microscope, x-ray radiography coupled with eye observation (Reddy 1987: 47-59). His objective of the paper was not only to relate the monastery with the objects but to describe the scenario of artistic achievement in the monastery during the medieval period.

Recently, scholars like R S Mann attempted to build the past inferences on the basis of the relationship between the monastery and the objects. By profession, he was not an archaeologist but was a renowned anthropological scholar who undertook an intensive field survey in the Leh and Ladakh region to study the Buddhist monuments, structures, and the ritual objects. He conducted an extensive field survey on the Buddhist monasteries in Ladakh region in order to describe the relationship between the Buddhist monuments and the objects in the cultural life of the people. To support his ideas, he relied on certain material evidences such as; Religious structure like *Manes* and *Chortens*; ritual objects such as rosary, prayer wheels both wooden and metallic that is sponsored by the Lamas, small sized flags and various types of amulets In his field survey, one important observation that he made was the role of the monasteries in determining the construction of the houses in a particular site. He found out that the constructions of the houses were to be preceded by the conduct of certain ritual on the

advice of the monastery which required usage of various ceremonial objects in the household. He also emphasized the symbols and belief attached to the objects to understand the behaviour of the existing communities (Mann 1985: 33-49).

1.10. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Hitherto, no scholars have done archaeological studies on Tawang monastery and the traditional objects of Tawang circle. Only a few literary works have been done in spite of the establishment of the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology in 1956. There are only a few journals and survey reports on Tawang monastery and its object that describes the contemporary material culture. So far there are many research works done on the Tibetan-type monastery of the western Himalayan region, hardly scholars have paid heed in the eastern Buddhist monasteries of Himalaya. In the field of research, it appears that designs and symbol of architectural design and symbols, sculpture and religious structure of the monastery received the highest attention in the Himalayan region. Objects have always been studied independently without relating its functionality with the structural design of the Buddhist monastery. If we take the trends of archaeological works done on the Buddhist monasteries and objects, especially in the case of India as a whole, numerous survey has been done by both western scholars and Indian scholars. But the problem lies in the fact that, their archaeological studies were basically analysed with the support of epigraphical, numismatic and written sources. However, this approach cannot be applied in the case of the Tawang region. There is a lack of aforesaid sources. Further, their past experience of cultural development differs from those of mainstream India. Also, no excavated material remains recovered so far. The only material remains available are either passed down from generation to generation or replica of the older versions. Altogether, the above factor makes research in this region more of an anthropological study rather than archaeological study. It is on this ground that interdisciplinary strategy such as the use of approaches from ethnoarchaeology, Archaeological ethnography, Anthropology was decided to be embraced for the fieldwork and analysis of data.

1.11. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As mentioned above, the lack of a written account or inscriptional and numismatic sources creates a severe limitation in the research of Tawang monastery. The only sources that are available and can be utilised to study the past are the contemporary material remains. But in some cases, the material remains are insufficient to build an inference of the past. Therefore, the study of the contemporary culture and tradition becomes a vital step to find out the continuity of the culture and tradition such as the belief system, practice, customs, festivals etc., to describe the past events. Also, it becomes necessary to relate the contemporary culture and tradition to the surviving material remains which may be in the form of antique, artefact or anything which dates back to olden times. In such cases, Archaeological anthropology and Ethno-archaeology has been an instrumental tool in helping to trace the past development in the material culture of a particular region. For instance, the Monpas of Tawang have a strong attachment towards the objects which has a cultural and traditional value. The identity of the Tawang monastery to a large extent is manifested in the objects that locals acquire or possess. Likewise, to understand the nature of Tawang monastery and its impact over the material culture of Tawang, objects act as an agent to discourse the past events of the region. Just like Martin described that man reflects their identity through the objects they use or possess. According to him, the things that surround us can actually be a source of the past information irrespective of any region. In fact, as Martin Heidegger (2002: 13-14) pointed out that, it is precisely when we do not think about things that the thingness of the thing is working best:

The equipmentality of equipment consists in its utility. But what about this utility itself? In understanding it do we already understand the equipmentality of equipment? In order for this to be so, must we not look out for the useful piece of equipment in its use? The peasant woman wears her shoes in the field. Only then do they become what they are. They are all the more genuinely so the less the peasant woman thinks of her shoes while she is working, or even looks at them, or is aware of them in any way at all. This is how the shoes actually serve. It must be in this process of usage that the equip mentality of equipment actually confronts us.

Similar is the case of Tawang monastery as it finds its identity with the kind of objects it acquires, possess or uses. It is on this ground that the Anthropological and ethnoarchaeological approach become very important in tracing the identity of a particular artefact in a specific culture and tradition. From the 1980s onwards, many archaeologists and anthropologists have called attention to the importance of things in determining culture and have criticised the oblivion to which the material has been subjected (see an overview in Olsen 2006). In recent years, some of them have insisted that objects are not just important, they have agency as well. They are not passive containers of culture. Thus, Chris Gosden has noted that it is not necessarily the mind that imposes its form on material objects, but very often just the opposite: things shape thoughts (Gosden 2005: 196). Anthropologist Alfred Gell (1998) also remarked that material objects, and in particular art, have agency. Nevertheless, saying that artefacts have the capacity to affect people does not really imply a transformation of the ontological perspective on the relationship between mind and matter. As Knappett (2002: 98) has pointed out “in acknowledging that objects can be agents and agents can be objects, a dualism between objects and agents remains”. Therefore, the study of the Tawang monastery along with the surviving and the contemporary objects can be of great use for the analysis of the past development in Tawang.

Since the nineteenth century, there has always been a link between anthropology and archaeology at least to some strands. For instance, John Myres (1869-1894) and Richard Dawkins (1871-1955) were not only archaeologists and classicists but also specialises in their contemporary Mediterranean culture and were characterised by the same intellectual space as their contemporary anthropologists. The former became the president of the Royal Anthropology Institute (1928-1931), and later did extensive fieldworks on ethnolinguistics and folk tales through ethnographic works. Also during the twentieth century, the professionalisation of archaeology was achieved at the cost of its severe; as a result, archaeology identified itself separate from the variety of fields that includes social anthropology. Archaeology fenced itself and started carving its own space to grow and develop. By 1960s and 1970s ethnoarchaeology started to take its course which was a bi-product of uniformitarian prevalent than the existing academic tradition. Initially, it attracted a wide variety of scholars and disciplines, but from the 1980s

onwards, criticism arose. The reliability of degenerating contemporary people inclusively and exclusively as a source of information to interpret the past was questioned (Feuster 2001:). As a result, ethnoarchaeology got diversified. But in spite, it's on board criticisms; it attempted to develop a new direction. The underlying principle of the ethnoarchaeology was to create familiarity and lasting engagement with the experiences and lives of the contemporary people. It aimed to valorise the present practices of the existing communities to produce intimate portraits of the past practice. This strategy can be seen in the early works of Forbed (2007) who while studying Greek peninsula of Methana, emphasised more on a perceived 'continuity' of the culture. In other words, by investigating the present ways of livelihood and their remembrance and perceiving of the past, he tried to travel back in the past cultural tradition and practices. According to Hamilakis, the emergence of the archaeological study of the past and the study of contemporary events and social practices paved the ground for archaeological ethnography (Hamilakis 2011: 70). The valorisation and promoting of acquired material presence was another factor that led to the development of archaeological ethnography (ibid).

Archaeological ethnography has gained much popularity over the past decades due to its flexible and dynamic approach towards the study of contemporary physical and material evidence, people, traditions, customs etc., to generate comprehensive insight of the past. The reliability of Archaeological ethnography has so far been highly contested among the scholars. Hamilakis described Archaeological ethnography as fertile cross-disciplinary as well as transcultural, politically loaded space; a space for multiple conversations, engagements, interventions, and critiques, centred on materiality and temporality. This encouraged the space for the downplay of distinction between past and present. The methodology comprises of various techniques such as multi-sited ethnographic and ethnohistorical inquiries such as formal and informal interviews, participant observation, archival research or ethnographic site tour amongst local and trans-local communities, amongst the archaeological team and amongst visitors to the archaeological site (Hamilakis 2011: 399-400). Scholars like Lyn Meskell described archaeological ethnography as the hybrid practice of anthropology and archaeology. To him, it was a project that tries to situate the living individuals and communities who are

in the midst of transition; either celebrated or marginalised depending upon the continuity of their traditions, claims to land, politicisation and international profile (Meskell 2005: 81-82). The fundamental question still surrounds; what is archaeological ethnography? Hamilakis explained that archaeological ethnography is more than a revival of ethnographic projects and practices. It is trans-disciplinary and trans-cultural space for engagements, dialogue, critique revolving upon the material traces of various times that also involves researchers as well as other participants, combining and mixing archaeological and ethnographic anthropological practices. However, the aforesaid is not its ultimate aim but rather to produce epistemological and ontological possibilities for new methods; archaeological, ethnographic, ethnohistorical, artistic, educational or other to emerge (Hamilakis 2011: 73). Scholars like Barthes in short understood archaeological ethnographic as a platform characterised by sharing of ideas, engage in common practices but yet at the same time disagree and clash. In other words, archaeological ethnography is more of inter-disciplinary and meta-disciplinary (Barthes 2009: 72).

As per approach is concerned, Meskell (2005: 72) emphasised two strategies; Culture from “within approach” by which he means “hanging out” or “participant observation”. In this strategy, one immerses oneself in a cultural setting over an extended period of time and participates in diversity and richness of everyday practice. Secondly, one views the values, dynamics, international relationship, conflicts and structure of communities from the criticism side (Meskell 2005: 83-84). Hamilakis was of the view that artefact has the ability to re-enact multiple temporalities that coexist that can be reactivated through human sensuous and sensuous practice. He took an example of an archaic temple, a Hellenistic building, a nineteenth-century graffito on ancient stone, a mid-twentieth century graffito on another stone nearby, and the remnants of late twentieth century farmstead, all at the same heritage space can clarify multiple coexisting time, and often stimulate dissension social practice and political master plan (Hamilakis 2011: 79). Scholars like Quetzi Castaneda during his research on Chichen Itza site observed and recorded the engagements between local and authorities and local Mayan communities with the site. Likewise, Armstrong (2011) explored the aforesaid site and noted down the nomenclatures and conceptualisations that local Mayan communities give to the prehistoric objects (Armstrong 2011: 63-81). Lisa Breglia’s Monumental

Ambivalence (2006) which presents the results of doctoral research on the governmental treatment and public presentation of Mayan archaeological sites in the Yucatan peninsula. A scholar such as Paul Sullivan (1991) relied highly on the testimonies of the locals to understand the knowledge of the site. This was seen recently in 2014 when he visited Tulum site and interviewed more than twenty people to observe Tulum's Mayas in Mayan Riviera socio-economic context. It revealed to him that the Tulum site is perceived as a non-indigenous space. It also explained how Mayas ran away to the forest and continued to use abandoned cities such as Tulum for their rites (Sullivan 1991: 1-18). Archaeological ethnography often encompasses a wide range of improvisational and is context dependent. It includes a mosaic of traditional forms such as archaeological practice and museum or representational analysis, as well as long-term involvement, participant observation, interviewing and archival work. For his field work, digital scanning of its architecture and features and to gather materials for future visualisations of the site, including the recordings of objects was utilised. A similar approach can also be adopted in the case of studying the material culture and Buddhist monastery of Tawang. As already mentioned above, there are no epigraphical and numismatic records in the case of the Tawang region which could reflect the past material life of the Monpas. Therefore, in the recently conducted field survey was highly inspired by the strategy of Archeological ethnography which relied on the testimonies of the locals can also be seen in the survey strategy of Sullivan.

Many of the strategies that Archaeological ethnography and ethnoarchaeologist utilise, are anthropological in nature. In other words, both the archaeologist and the anthropologist adopt the similar technique to gather data information of the region and focus on identical material remains and evidence. Lately, anthropologist such as Grimshaw (1983), Goldstein (1998) and Alex (2017) emphasised on a basic anthropological method such as sample strategy where there is a direct participation in the social life of the monastic communities to observe and understand the traditional and cultural dynamics of the monastery and its region. In the case of Alex, he relied on a survey interview preceded with the arrangement of questionnaire format. With this arrangement, many local monks were interviewed and asked various contextual questions. His final step in the research strategy was to stick with the key informant for

more than three days. The questions were basically based on their social interaction, daily activities and ritual duties. Later, such information becomes the necessary backdrop for analysing the material remains.

1.12. METHODOLOGY

Bearing the theme of material culture in mind, one of the strategies employed is to apply a theoretical framework from European scholars and Indian scholars and then test the analysis on the research data to form an inference of the past development. Throughout this paper, the traditional objects and Tawang monastery will be the primary source of study which is generally in the form of museum objects and those used in the monasteries and household. Therefore, the key approach shall be based on an anthropological strategy which has been adopted by scholars like Reddy, Bernard L. Herman (1992) to study the material culture of the region. The works of Bernard even though does not speak on the Buddhist monasteries and the objects, still have high relevance in this paper. Bernard while describing the past material culture of the North Americans, emphasised on the 'object-centric' approach, and his treatment in the contemporary culture and tradition became the key technique for the analysis of the overall relationship between the monastery and the traditional objects.

In the works of Bernard, the physical attributes of a traditional object and their description with a list of descriptive criteria was the fundamental method. This method to some extent will also be employed in this dissertation, together with the tables and figures to highlight the functions and significance of the material objects and structural evidence. In the recently conducted field survey, the behaviour of the locals attributed by the monastery and the traditional objects was noted down as it allowed to trace the past development in the manufacturing, acquisition, value-laden and usage of the material objects.

The 'analogy' is the principle theoretical apparatus for the ethnoarchaeologists and Archaeological Ethnography. This strategy is usually applied to evaluate the belief system of the non-observable behaviour with the observable behaviour of the people. Such methods have been used by scholars like R S Mann who surveyed the belief system of the locals in identifying the space for the construction of the house. Relying on this

method for analysing the relationship between the Monpas with the objects and Tawang monastery will be an important tool to describe the past developmental process of Tawang. Side-by-side, the direct historical analogy, and the general comparative analogy will be partially employed. The former method will be applied while evaluating the objects to find out the cultural continuity and the latter shall be employed to analyse the similarities between the contemporary cultures and the material cultures from an archaeological context. Also, it will be necessary to identify the similarities of the objects in Tawang with the other region to address its origin as done by Reedy. Taking the similar footsteps with Reedy, classification of the objects into metallic and non-metallic objects shall be done to trace the cultural and traditional aspects of the objects in the past. Hence, in this dissertation, the strategies of anthropological and ethnoarchaeological methods will be adopted to collect data information from the fieldwork. Comparison of material evidence has always been instrumental to the archaeologists in building interpretations. Since the beginning of the archaeological survey, a comparison of the material evidence has always been adopted by the scholars to establish the connection between the data. The proceeding chapters will utilise comparative analysis of antiquities between the surviving material objects and the contemporary objects to investigate the development that was witnessed in the Tawang region in the past.

The current field survey was initiated with the exploration of the monastic sites where four important Buddhist monasteries were visited (see Table 1.1). These three monasteries are Tawang monastery, Urgelling monastery and Sangelling monastery. In spite, special emphasis was given to Tawang monastery for the field survey, the other three monasteries were surveyed bearing in mind its credibility for reference while analysing the data. This does not mean to undermine the importance of the other three monasteries. The limited time for the field survey along with various obstructions, became a barrier while conducting the survey study of the monasteries. Also, other traditional features of Tawang such as Chorten, religious flag and painting are included in the data to support the description. Further, the investigation of the Buddhist monastery and traditional objects was focused only on particular aspects of the physical evidence. The course of action undertaken in this fieldwork was fundamentally simple and less intrusive. Simple in the sense that, not many survey tools were employed. It was less

invasive to maintain the respect the privacy of the local elders and common people as a whole. The fieldwork also adopted where purposive and sample survey was taken. It was adopted in order to conclude the fieldwork, as the goal was to derive some of the age-old traditions and customs associated with the Monastery and the traditional objects. In a nutshell, the strategy adopted was anthropological in nature. Hence, the successful fieldwork comprises of four stages: The key technique adopted by the Anthropologist such as interviewing of the locals, recording of the material evidence and remains, measurement will be adopted in the fieldwork for the collection of data. As part of my fieldwork strategy, to unravel the of the monasteries, first and foremost, the observable location of the monastery in the general landscape was noted down. As I visited the monasteries, the layout of the monastery, structural design and the ceremonial objects kept inside the monastery was recorded. Secondly, the traditional objects, both ceremonial and utilitarian object preserved in the museum was also observed closely and their detailed information was noted down. The second strategy was the interviewing of the locals to produce knowledge about the current beliefs and understanding of locals towards monasteries and objects. It was done through the conversation with the locals which were based on contextual, pragmatic and narratives. The interview was basically semi-structured and unstructured. In a semi-structured interview, a list of question that was contextual-specific was covered. In the semi-structured interview, a total of two Lamas were interviewed along with two teachers of Tawang monastery. This approach was used in the primary stage of the data collection to understand the background and the nature of the monastery and objects. Overall, they became the 'key informants' of the narratives. Also, the unstructured interview was held with relevant individuals especially the local residents and scholars where the interviewee responded freely to the questions. This was followed by the informal conversations.

In the third step, photography was taken to capture the relevant structures, objects of the monastery, household and landscape of the location. The landscape even though shall not be much referred in the chapter but was given attention bearing in mind its relevance for the future reference. Photos taken were mostly focused on traditional objects preserved in the museum and contemporary objects used by the Tawang monastery as well as those found in the household. Also, the photo of the few structural

designs was captured. Even though measurement had a little usage during the fieldwork, the measurement of ceremonial objects kept in the monastery and the household were done. Measurement of museum objects could not be accomplished due to the restriction imposed by the authority of the museum because of which the measurement was limited only to household and monastery objects. Calliper scale and the measuring tape were utilised. Further, the structure of the buildings in the monastery, Chortens were also measured and recorded in the notebook. To collect more information of the region, the following were the main areas that were paid attention:

1. Observing the settlement and the setting of the landscape in the nearby region of the monastery.
2. Classify the type of objects inside the monastery that has been used for the ritual purpose since ages with those objects found in the household
3. Investigate and classify the different type of structures found within the monastery.

And during this process, the coordinates of the site was recorded through the handheld GPS, and the coordinates were being recorded down in the notebook.

1.13. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

What was the role of the Tawang monastery in the material culture of Tawang from the seventeenth century onwards? Secondly, what was the process of development? How did the Tawang monastery influence in the acquisition, manufacturing, usage and value-laden of the object? Also, how these factor influence the behaviour and belief system of the locals shall be discussed. It is these surrounding questions that aroused me to initiate a survey in this area. Certainly, there must have been an important relationship between Tawang monastery and objects that influenced the socio-cultural life of the region. Perhaps the answer lies in the material evidence of Tawang. Hence the main objective is to properly analyse the collected data from field survey and address the aforesaid question.

The objective of this research is to find out the inter-relationship between the Tawang monastery with the socio-cultural life of the Monpas which consciously or unconsciously had an impact on the value-laden, manufacturing, circulation and usage of

the objects which are mainly in the form of ceremonial, sacred and utilitarian objects. Also, the prime motive of the research is to trace the development process by which, objects became the necessary

1.14. OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTERS

The first chapter will begin with the introduction of the study area where it will discuss the meanings and the definition of the Monastery. Secondly, it will look into the trends of study undertaken by various scholars with regard to the monasteries and the objects. The aim is to have a clear understanding of the approach and the methods adopted by different scholars on their research. Considering the theories embraced by various scholars, this chapter will proceed with the review of the academic works done on monasteries of Arunachal Pradesh and the Tawang monastery which will be followed by the theoretical framework. The next section will emphasise towards the statement of the problem followed by the objectives and the significance of my research area. Under literature review, various aspects shall be discussed such as the trends of studies done on the Buddhist monasteries especially the Buddhist monasteries located in the Himalayan region. Subsequently, it will discuss the methodology adopted by various scholars that include both western and the Indian scholars. Lastly, this chapter will give an overview of the structural framework of the chapters.

The second chapter is the documentation of the field area which shall highlight the data recovered from the fieldwork. Firstly, it will give a brief idea on the geographical profile of the survey area and the ethnological data for the region. Then it will proceed with the data information that was recovered from the field survey mostly based on observation, interview and photography. Secondly, it shall discuss the data retrieved from the monastery that will highlight the data information on the architectural aspects of the Tawang monastery and the objects. Thirdly, it will give a glimpse of museum objects along with the tables and the figures. Lastly, it will highlight the data information recovered from the household objects acquired by the locals. The motive of this chapter is not to analyse the data but to simply give readers a general idea of the material remains and evidence that was observed during fieldwork.

The third chapter will discuss the relationship between Tawang monastery and objects in the socio-cultural life of the Monpas. An analysis of Ceremonial, sacred and utilitarian objects, particularly metallic objects, shall be the prime objective of the proceeding chapter with reference to figures and table. The motive of this chapter is to discuss some of the interesting facts that solidified the relationship between the Tawang monastery and Monpas bearing direct impact on the value-laden, manufacturing, acquisition and usage of an object. The analysis will be based on the data recovered from the fieldwork. In addition to that, this chapter will also endeavour to find out the relations that Monpas had with the neighbouring region such as Bhutan, Tibet and the Monpas dwelling in the lower region of Arunachal Pradesh which will be supported through the objects preserved in the museum.

The chapter four will focus on the non-metallic objects that are presently used in Tawang monastery and the households. This section will analyze the non-metallic objects to discourse the inter-relationship between Tawang monastery and the Monpas which had a significant impact on the socio-cultural life of the region in the past. Also, it will look into the developmental process by which certain effect took place in the behaviour of the Monpas and the Tawang monastery influencing the locals in the acquisition of nonmetallic objects.

The conclusion will eventually give an overall summary of the description mainly drawn from the third and fourth chapter. Also, it will describe other possibilities of the interpretation from the recovered data. The discussion will also include the potentiality of the future research in Traditional objects that have been not covered in this research. Lastly, the discussion will conclude with the future course of action required to be initiated to promote the archaeological study on the surviving traditional objects that can further support their correlation with the environment in reference to the Tawang monastery.

CHAPTER II

A DOCUMENTATION OF TAWANG MONASTERY AND THE TRADITIONAL OBJECTS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Arunachal Pradesh which lies in the northeastern part of India is home to a number of ethnic tribes. The entire state lies in the easternmost part of the Himalayan belt. The Tawang district which is located in the westernmost part of Arunachal Pradesh with Tawang as its headquarter has an immense significance strategically, culturally as well as historically. This district covers an area of 2172 sq km located at an altitude of 3,400 to 2,176 meter above sea level. It is predominantly inhabited by Monpa tribe known to have dwelled in this region for a long period of time. In terms of population distribution, it is sparsely distributed. According to 2011 census, the total population of the district was 49,977, out of which 29,151 was male and 20,826 female respectively. And the total population under Tawang circle was 11,202 in 2011 census. The district is roughly located at 27°45' N and 90° 15' east in the western part of Arunachal Pradesh. The temperature of Tawang throughout the year experience cold weather and by the mid-November to February, it receives heavy snowfall. It receives annual rainfall less than 1500 mm to more than 4000 mm per year. As per natural ecosystem, Tawang has five different types of natural ecosystem, and they are sub-tropical forests, tropical forests, Alpine scrub forests, alpine meadows, wetland eco-system. The vegetation of Tawang differs from altitude wise. It means, the density of flora and fauna becomes less in the upper ridges of the mountain which is more than 4000 m above sea level and is high in the lower region. The vegetation that grows in this region is mostly alpine in nature with various types of pine trees.

Presently, in the context of ethnicity, Tawang is predominantly inhabited by the Monpas following the Mahayana sect of Buddhism. Anthropologically, they are classified under neo-mongoloid race. Moreover, the dialect they speak is closer to Sino-Tibetan dialect. The Monpas are also pre-dominant inhabitants of West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh. In addition to that, the Monpas have a different culture and tradition compared to the other tribes of the state. Due to the limited evidence, it has still

not yet been traced their origin of migration, but scholars like Niranjana Sarkar



Figure 1: The Tawang monastery as seen from a higher altitude. Note: (Photo by: Hakhe)

hypothesised that they migrated from Bhutan as they have closer cultural affinities with the Bhutias of Bhutan. Historically, they have a closer cultural-link with the Tibetans and Bhutanese as compared to the other tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. The linkage with the countries of Bhutan and Tibet eventually led to the proselytisation of Monpas into Buddhism that culminated with the advent of the Gelugpa sect.

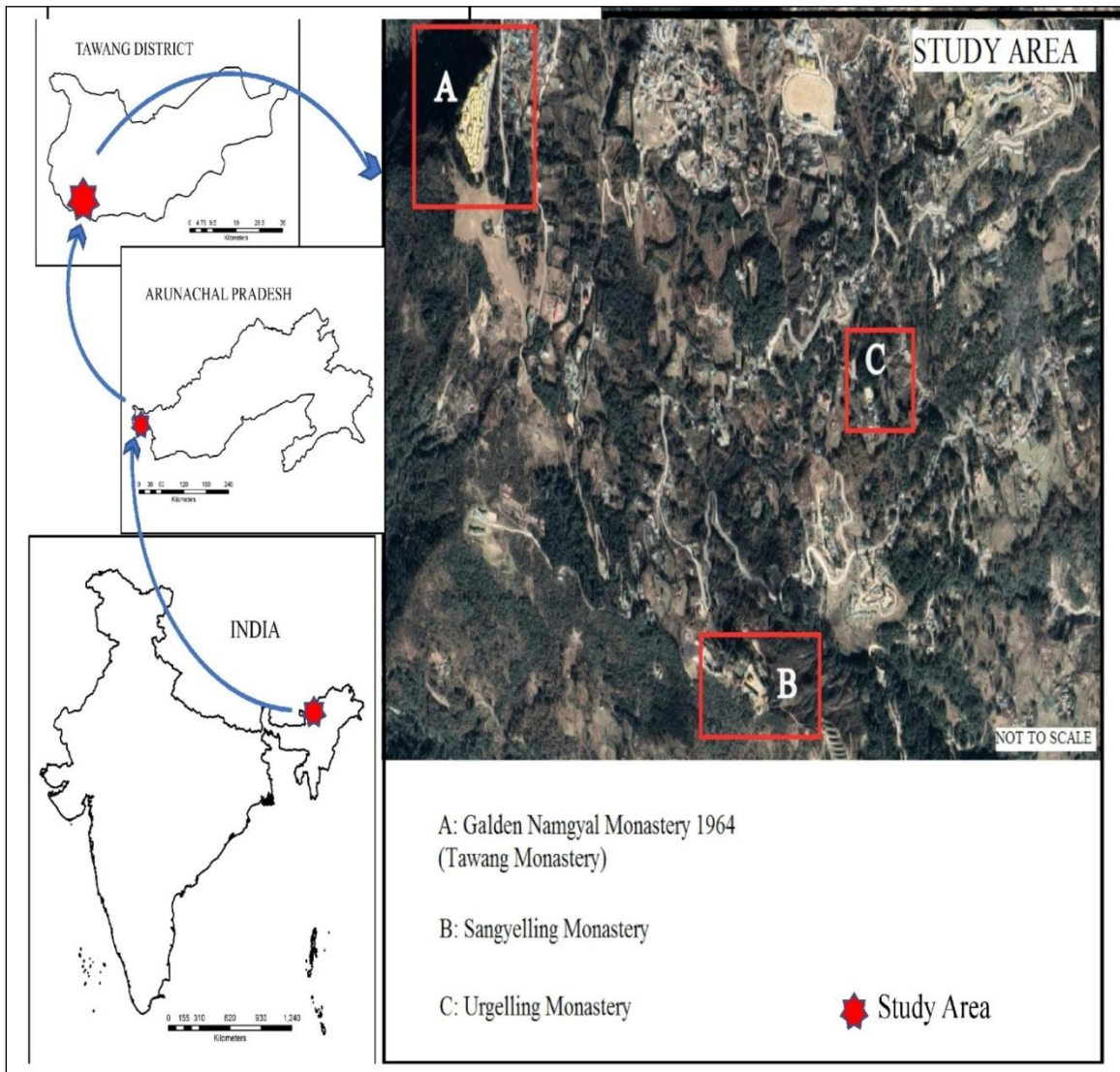
According to the Lamas, initially the region was mostly covered with trees, and only a few

local people were settled in this region. The foremost villages of the locals were primarily located few miles away from this region. But after this region became the headquarter of Tawang district, trees were being cleared, and over a period of time, many people started to move and settle in this region. For instance, the rural population of Tawang circle during 1991 census was 13,060. However, in 2001, the rural population declined drastically up to 9,366 (2001 census). This suggests that more people started to migrate towards the urban region of Tawang circle and got distributed extensively in headquarter. The total urban population of Tawang town during 2001 was 8,376 (2001 census), which rose up to 11,926 by 2011. With the tremendous wave of modernity in this region, many aspects of the monastic culture are being disturbed especially due to the raised concrete government buildings and houses which obstruct the traditional aspects of the region. But so far, the locals have put their full effort to preserve the cultural heritage of the region. The traditional aspects such as festivals, ceremonies, rituals, beliefs and customs are still deep-rooted among the locals and many cultural aspects of the locals that were practised centuries back have been preserved with utmost care by the locals.

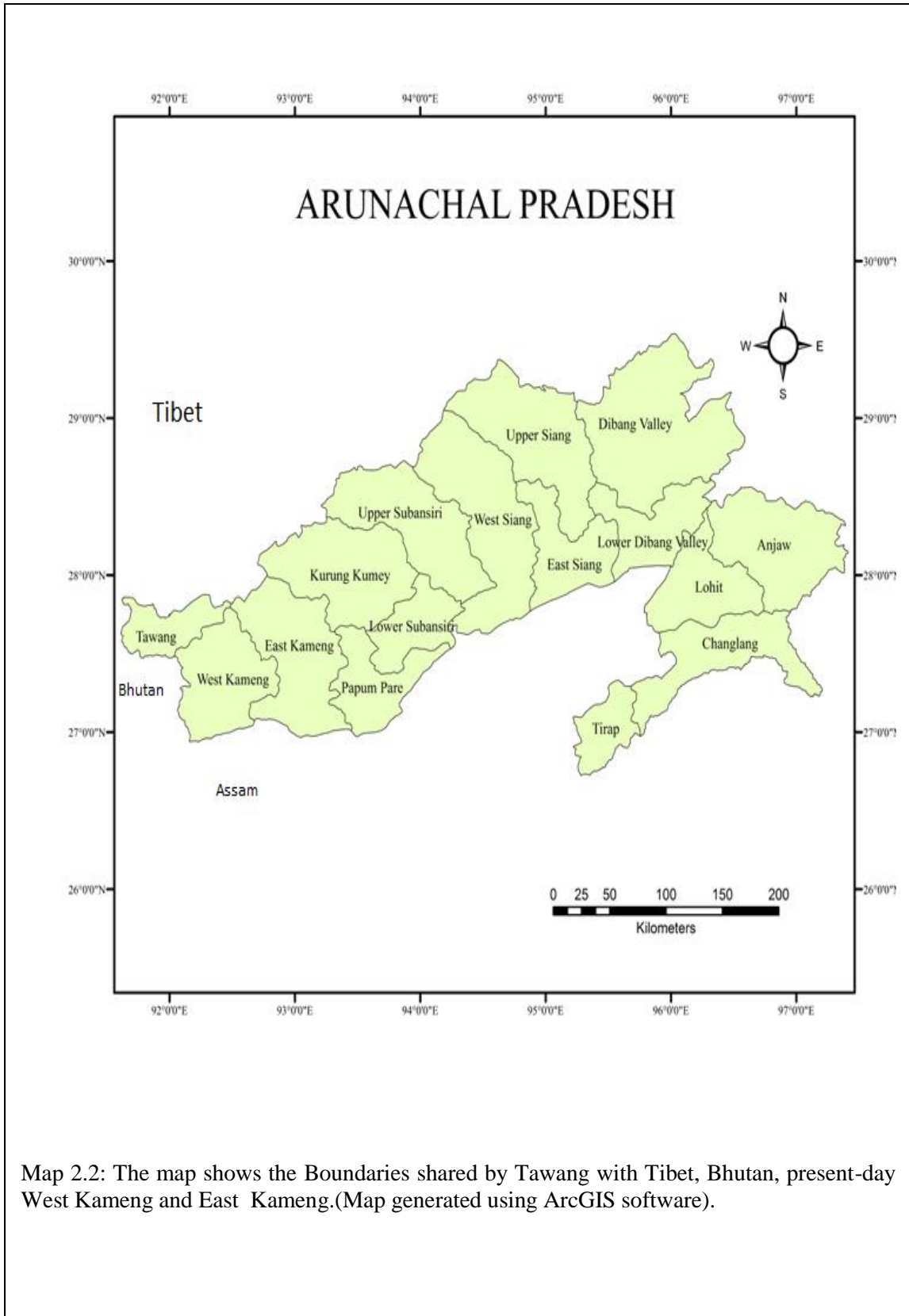
1. Sangyeling gompa	N 27°35.697' and E 091°51.672'	3006 meter	Earlier Nyingmapa sect but later controlled by the Gelugpa sect
2. Galden Namgyal Monastery 1684 (Tawang Monastery)	N 27°35.694' and E 091°51.668'	3016 meter	Administered and controlled by the Gelugpa sect.
3. Ugyelling monastery	N 27°35.779' and E 091°53.440'	2856 meter	Earlier Nyingmapa sect but now administered by the Gelugpa sect.

2.2. OBJECTIVE

This chapter is typically a documentation of important material evidence observed during the field survey. The analysis of the collected data shall be done in the proceeding chapters. Firstly, it will provide information about Tawang monastery along with other two monasteries; and data information of the objects collected during the fieldwork to give a brief understanding of the material evidence. Tables and figures will be represented in this chapter. This will be a necessary backdrop in the next chapter to analyze and interpret the past material life of the Monpas. The recently conducted fieldwork aimed to collect data as many as possible which focused on the features of Tawang monastery and the traditional objects that survives till today. The first initial step of the recently conducted fieldwork was to locate the two important monasteries which had a cultural link with the Tawang monastery.



Map 2.1: The map shows the location of the three important Buddhist monasteries at Tawang headquarter. (Map generated using Arc GIS software).



Map 2.2: The map shows the Boundaries shared by Tawang with Tibet, Bhutan, present-day West Kameng and East Kameng.(Map generated using ArcGIS software).

2.3 SURVEY REPORTS ON TAWANG MONASTERY

2.3.1. Landscape and Dwelling

The Tawang monastery is relatively located at the higher level of the main settlement (see fig 1). From the monastery, panoramic view of attendant villages can be seen that is miles away. All the important settlements are located in the lower altitude of the Tawang monastery. Standing on the north-east and south direction of the monastery, one can see the entire settlement pattern of the town. Towards the west direction of the monastery, the hill on which it stands suddenly becomes extremely stiff hindering the settlement towards in the west direction except for a lone monastery that can be seen standing at a high altitude of the neighbouring hills. From a distance, if one looks at the monastery, the distribution of the settlement pattern appears to be gently sloping downwards with no uniform pattern and apparently more and more compact on the higher altitude of the hill. But the distribution of the settlement gets dispersed and less in number as the terrain slopes downwards. The settlement of the people starts to dwindle, as one goes higher from the location of Tawang monastery due to the inconvenience of the freezing temperature and low vegetation in the upper ridges. Currently, in various areas, the region is raised with a large number of buildings and houses together with the construction of new structures for the monastery, prayer wheels and Chortens. Most of the houses observed were constructed with the modern bricks and cement. The lama of Tawang monastery, in a recent conversation, explained that initially there were only a few settlements in the region. However, after this region became the headquarter of Tawang district, the population increased rapidly leading to the construction of new buildings and structures. Thereby, his explanation goes parallel with the changing face of the settlement adjacent to Tawang monastery.

The traditional houses or the monasteries are generally built of stone brick and timber. The cementing of the concrete wall is done with the use of clay soil. These stones are locally available within their region as large numbers of stone boulder are available on the higher altitude of the region which is approximately 15 km away from the main town. These boulders can be broken into smaller pieces and can be shaped into bricks for the purpose of house construction. The traditional residential houses are typically built of



Figure 2: The figure showing the Yak in Tawang. (Photo by: Hakhe)

Stone to keep the house invincible against the heavy snowfall of the winter season. Therefore the residents have to be concrete and air-tight in order to restrict the extreme cold wind to wave inside the houses on the month of the winter season. In every kind of traditional structure either stones or timber has been used by the locals. The monasteries are generally located far away from the water sources like rivers, streams and lakes, but access to water source has never been a hurdle for the locals. As the mountain region is known for storing water in various ways which may be in the form of snow and ice, water is released as melt-

off during the summer season. Further if one travels higher altitude of the main town, there are numerous glacial lakes. Therefore water can be easily obtained by digging the ground as the glacial water which runs beneath the soil. Probably this might have been the reason the monastery not obliged to be built near the water source.

2.3.2. Means of Transportation

As far as transportation of goods is concern, local people still rely on domestic Yak (*Bos Grunniens*) that is heavily built with a bushy bulky frame, rounded cloven, sturdy legs and a dense fur all around its body which is generally found in the Himalayan region of Indian sub-continent, Mongolia and Tibetan plateau (See fig 2). Similarly, it must have been used in the past for carrying essential items. It is until recently in the late twentieth century with the improving accessibility of road automobiles became the medium of transportation. Some of the locals viewed that walking for miles and miles on foot was also one of the primary means to communicate with the neighbouring region.



Figure 3: The picture shows the cylindrical prayer wheel attached in a horizontal row. (Photo by: Hakhe)

2.4. MATERIAL EVIDENCE IN TAWANG MONASTERY

The monastery comprises of many material structures and objects such as *Chorten*, *Chod drill*, *Dorjee*, prayer drum, Batti, butter lamp and prayer wheel. These are an essential part of the monastery, and without it, the true essence of the monastery is diluted. Each material structure and objects attached to the Tawang monastery have a purpose and cannot be alienated from it. Following are some of the evidence that was observed in the field study:

2.4.1. Prayer wheel (Mani-Khos-Khor)

The first characteristic that I observed before the entry of Tawang monastery was the horizontal rows of cylindrical prayer wheel that was sheltered in a long vertical wall structure (see fig 3). The prayer wheel does not seem precisely old and must have been replaced with a new cylindrical prayer wheel over a period of time. The oldest prayer wheel was those made up of iron metal (see fig 3), but that too would be only a few decades old. Considering the observation, no prayer wheel from seventeenth-century

survives today. These prayer wheels are generally made up of metal, wood and stone which is the replica of the previous version. On the surface of a wheel, a mantra is written in a Bhodic script “*Om Mane Padme*” which means peace to all living being. These prayer wheels are manufactured by the locals specialised in making prayer wheels. They have been practising the art of manufacturing prayer wheel since the establishment of monasticism in this region. When measured, the height of the commonly attached prayer wheel was 54 cm and diameter of 27 cm. The total number of the wheels, when counted in the monastery, exceeds more than 200 wheels which generally reflect its significance in Tawang monastery. Some prayer wheels are as tall as 1 meter and some reaching up to 2 meters. They are well decorated with various curved designs of red, yellow and blue colour on its surface. The mantra is written on its surface with golden or yellow colour script. Just Below the script, intricate designs of flowery shape are painted in various colours such as blue, green, yellow and red (see fig 3). The lamas generally turn the prayer wheel clockwise before they begin their day. The lamas explained to me that thousands of papers with the written mantra “*om mane padme hum*” are put inside the prayer wheels to add divine value in it. Without the paper, the prayer wheel is completely devoid of its value as it is an essence of the prayer wheels and without it, the existence of such becomes ordinary.

2.4.2. Structure

Structural designs and remains of the monastery was the prime focus for my field survey as I believed that it can throw some light on some of the fundamental questions that struck my mind during the field survey “Can the architectural structure of the monastery reflect the significant role played by monastery directly or indirectly in shaping the material culture of the people.” Therefore the objective of the survey was to record as many data as possible especially emphasising on the layout of the monasteries, functions and significance and characteristics of the monasteries. Moreover, in this survey this is what was observed:

2.4.2 (a). Old Library Building



Figure 4: The old library of the Tawang monastery located just next to the main prayer hall on the west. (Photo by: Hakhe)

One important structure that holds attention during field survey was the old library building which is not functioning any longer (see fig 4). This room is located just next to the main prayer hall in the west direction. The wooden pillar together with the wall stands without any renovation and still remains intact. Before entering the interior of the room, the outside wall facing towards the east in verandah displays a painting which is in a deteriorated condition perhaps because of less maintenance and care for a long time. The figure represented in the wall is not easy to perceive since the colour of the

figure has been worn out creating white patches in the painting. There are many scratch marks on the painting



Figure 5: The figure shows the surviving mural painting on the wall of the old library building in a dilapidated condition. (Photo by: Hakhe)



Figure 6: The figure shows the two windows on the west. Photo by: Hakhe)



Figure 7: The figure shows the wooden pillar inside the old library building. (photo by: Hakhe)

along with a dark smoky colour which must have been occurred due to the occasional burning of woods inside the place. The figure in the wall is sitting in a yogic position and are eight in number suggesting it depicts Guru Rinpoche just like depicted in the wall of the main prayer hall. The position of the Guru is the same as those in the main prayer hall. Inside the room, it was completely dark and only two windows could be observed which was small sized. The room is not big either. The wall is made up of a stone brick of variable size. The clay soil has cemented these stone brick but the colour of the soil completely turned grey and black and is abandoned from its original colour (see fig 8). Total of two pillars can be seen standing with a cloudy-type architecture design on top of the pillar and lavishly designed by the painting. I was informed that this structural room is the only surviving structure inside Tawang monastery.

Table 2.2: A table shows the information of Chorten inside the Choksam Temple

Sl. no	Chorten	Detail
1.	Monpa-chaksam mampa	This Chorten contains the relic of a saint named Monpa-chaksam mampa. In Tibetan language, it is known as Thongthong Gyebo.
2.	Namegy Chorten	This Chorten contains the relics of saint namely Namegy Lama.
3.	Imbrum Chorten	This Chorten does not contain relics of any saint but was constructed to commemorate the deceased saint or as a sign of remembrance. Therefore it was constructed for custom and tradition.
4.	Chorten Imbrum	This Chorten did not contain relics of any saint but was constructed as means to commemorate deceased saint.

2.4.2 (b). Choksam Temple

Just entering on the main gate, on the right side, a small-sized temple namely Choksam Gompa is located (N 27°35.258' and E 091°51.461'). The wall of the temple is made up of stone bricks. There are total eleven prayer wheels attached to the front corner side of the temple where the door facing towards west-east is entered. The lamas informed that this temple had stood as it is since the time it was built in the seventeenth century and has been renovated a multiple numbers of times. I was informed by the lamas that the second Chorten namely Namegy Chorten has a supernatural quality especially the Chibi⁹ (see figure 12). Besides, the locals believe that it grows inch by inch every year. So, once the Chibi outreaches the climax of the roof, then the roof of the temple has to be removed and replaced with a new one on a higher level.

⁹ Chibe in English can be understood as the spire that is crowned on top of the hemispherical Chorten.



Figure 8: The figure shows the Choksam temple located just before the old entrance gate. (photo: Hakhe)



Fig 9: The photo shows the three chorten Monpa-Chaksam mampa, Namgey Chorten and Imbrum chorten. (Photo by: Hakhe)



Fig 10: portable Chortens on the right-hand side of the three Chorten as you enter the temple. (Photo by: Hakhe).



Fig 11: The photo shows the entrance gate.
(Photo by: Hakhe)



Fig 12: The photo shows the surface of the wooden stud of the main entrance gate.
(Photo by: Hakhe)

2.4.2. (c) Entrance Gate

The entrance gate which still remains intact is located at an elevation of 3021 m, N 27°35.242' and E 091°51.458' and is 30 meters away from the main prayer hall. The wooden structure of the entrance gate has been painted recently which makes it difficult to find out the actual colour of the wood (see figure 11). But the texture of the wood is covered with various cracks, ruts, holes and stains. The height of the gate reaches up to 310 cm, and its door reaches up to 255 cm. The Second photo shows the surface of the wooden stud of the main entrance gate which is painted recently (see fig 12). Considering the explanation of senior Lama, this entrance gate is also one of the oldest surviving structure of Tawang monastery which stands as it is since generation. However, possibilities are there that the entrance gate also has been renovated many times, without hampering its original style. The reason behind taking its photo was because structural design to a large extent can manifest the continuity of the traditional beliefs and psychology of the contemporary people. For instance, the beam of entrance gate is not

replaced by the concrete cement but rather, is built of a wooden plank. Even the door is made up of wood in a traditional style.



Figure 13 : The main prayer hall of Tawang monastery. (Photo by: Hakhe)

2.5. THE MAIN PRAYER HALL

The main prayer hall is the most important building of Tawang monastery (see figure 14). It is widely accepted that this monastery has been renovated like the previous style. Therefore the current standing prayer hall of the monastery can be seen as a replication of an older version. In other words, it shows the continuity of the traditional styles of structural design. But the interior of the prayer hall, particularly the wooden structures of the monastery have been replaced by the modern concrete structure. Inside the hall, the height of the pillar reaches 290 cm. And the distance of

one pillar from another is around 309 cm. There is a huge space inside the prayer hall with an arranged sitting row measuring 12 meters and 90 cm. There are total 6 windows in the east and two windows in the south direction of the wall. The height of the window is 176 cm and breadth of 98 cm and the thickness of the beam is 10 cm. A big golden statue of Buddha is the central deity of the prayer hall. The statue is said to be 28 feet high according to the measurement taken when it was brought from Nepal. On both the side, there are statue placed in the right and the left side of the Buddha. The statue of Buddha is decorated with sophisticated designs done by the artisans of Nepal and Tibet.



Fig 14: The figure shows the statue of Buddha and the sophisticated decoration on the backside of the statue. (Photo by: Hakhe)

The building wall seems to be sloping up inwards at 10-degree angle. On the wall of the building, fresco paintings representing various types of deities can be observed. The painting represents the deities and Gurus of Gelugpa sect. When interviewed Lama Thupten, he explained that the paintings even though newly painted were done against the earlier represented figures of the deities and was painted in the same fashion. This suggests that the architectural designs, the paintings inside the monastery etc are all represented in the same way it was represented in the past. This compelled me to ask the question the Lama “In the past, who painted these frescoes”? According to Thupten Lama, long back in the past, initially the painters were brought from the neighbouring regions like Nepal, Bhutan and Tibet. However, later, the locals gradually started to specialise in fresco painting and took the profession of painting for the Tawang monastery. These paintings are only restricted to the monasteries and cannot be painted in the house of the local people even if the person is a wealthy man. Besides that, there are three Chorten kept inside the gallery for display. But the oldest one is still preserved in the monastery. The oldest Chorten preserved inside the Buddhist monastery contains the relics of sixth Dalai Lama. The Chorten of sixth Dalai Lama is well decorated with various designs which are mostly golden in colour and is fitted with the beautiful pearl shaped stone of different colour on it (see fig 14). The information from the interview indicates that this votive chorten was imported from Tibet. This indicates the migration of sacred objects from one region to another region.



Fig 15: Figure shows the oldest Chorten of Tawang monastery preserved in the gallery.(Photo by: Hakhe)



Fig 16: Figure shows whose relics kept inside the Chorten. (Photo by: Hakhe)



Fig 17: The wheel temple located just next to the main prayer hall (Photo by: Hakhe)



Fig 18: The photo showing the figure of Guru Rinpoche depicted in the wall of the wheel temple. (Photo: hakhe)

2.6. WHEEL TEMPLE

Just next to the main prayer hall on the right side, a wheel temple is located. This temple is small and has no window. There is huge prayer wheel inside the temple where an old man is in charge of spinning this wheel that hits the bell fitted on the top producing a jingling sound which is considered to be holy and purity. Inside the temple, there are many 'Battis' placed in a row just like any other religion. Many figures of Guru Rinpoche depict the wall of the temple. It seems the figure of Guru Rinpoche, who is also known as the prominent founder of the Gelugpa sect, stands as a central figure in Tawang monastery. When I entered the temple, the first thing that I was told to do was to take a circumnavigation of the two large prayer wheel, standing back to back, and then walk out through the same door. And while walking inside, rotating the prayer wheel in clock-wise was compulsory to mark a sign of peace and purity. His figure is being represented even in the wall of the main prayer hall. According to Lamas, this large prayer wheel is imported from Tibet. In the wall of the inner temple, there are many figures of Guru Rinpoche depicted, and these figures are made up of clay and later painted on it. It seems the figure of Guru Rinpoche is more depicted and represented than that of Buddha.

2.7. URGYELLING MONASTERY

The monastery is located some few kilometres away from Tawang monastery (see fig 20). It is a significant monastery because it is said to be the birthplace of 6th Dalai Lama who belonged to the Monpa community. This temple is said to be affiliated with the Tawang monastery and is run by the Gelugpa sect. However, when it was initially built and established, it belonged to the Nyingmapa sect. But it was only after the Gelugpa sect became dominant in this region that this monastery was affiliated with the Tawang monastery. Most of this temple is renovated except the wall, and the structure of a Chorten erected in the separate room in the left side of the Urgelling temple looks old. Unlike the Tawang monastery, the location of this monastery does not permit a full view of the faraway distance settlement or hills and mountains. There are many trees and shrubs grown on both the side of the monastery.



Fig 19: The figure shows Ugyelling monastery (Photo by: Hakhe).

On the left side as shown in the picture is a room for Chorten (see fig: 25). Inside the room, there are total nine Chorten standing side by side and back to back. The Chorten is said to have been built at the order of Dalai Lama who visited this temple. However, this Chorten was not built for the relics of the Dalai Lama or any saint. This Chorten was built as a commemoration of the Dalai Lama's visit. Inside the prayer room of the monastery which is on the right side (see fig 19), there are many photos displayed and hanged on the wall.

These photos show the lineage of successive Dalai Lama along with the date of succession shown below the picture. More important than that, there are commemorative objects of Dalai Lama such as; the stone having a foot shape of sixth Dalai, small votive Chorten are all well preserved and kept as a display. Also, a stone which was used to tie the horse during the bygone eras is still kept preserved and kept as a display. As per as material object for worship is a concern, all those objects which are found in the prayer room of common people house and those found inside any monasteries of Tawang are also seen here.

As per as structural design of the monastery is a concern, the monastery is designed in a square and rectangular shape identical with modern concrete houses. Except on the front part of the monastery as shown in the fig, there were prayer wheels attached in all the side of the monastery. The front side of the monastery is facing towards the east-south direction. Just on the right side of the monastery, there is a sacred peepal tree considered as one of the holiest trees in the region.



Fig 20: The photo showing the Leg imprint of Sixth Dalai Lama. (Photo by: Hakhe)



Fig 21: The photo showing the Hand fingerprint in the cloth of sixth Dalai Lama. (Photo by: Hakhe)

2.8. SANGYELLING MONASTERY

The monastery considerably looks smaller than Ugyelling monastery just like a temple and presently is affiliated to Gelugpa sect (see fig 23). Except for the roof of the monastery and the cylindrical prayer wheel, most of its part seems to be not renovated. There are total 68 cylindrical prayer wheels on the three sides horizontally except the front part of the monastery. The length of this monastery is 12m and 84cm approximately with breath measuring 7 m, 25 cm respectively. There are only two windows on the left side of the monastery. No metal is used in this monastery except in the roof. Just one meter from the monastery towards the right there stands a structure that looks like a modern post box. And this structure on the top centre has a burning woven which is said to be used for burning a leaf as a sign of peace. The height of the door is 176 cm the wood is 15.4 cm thick on all four side. The wooden pillar is 230 cm in height and the thickness of the wall is 16.4 cm in all four side, not much different from the thickness of the door. I could not go further inside the monastery as the door was locked restricting me to observe the interior space. On top of the wall was written '*Om Mane Padme*' in a Bodhi script. The stone wall which must have been recently painted in white colour restricted me in identifying the age of the stone brick. But inside the monastery, one can

see the unpainted part of the stone brick. The colour of the clay soil used for cementing has become fawn and light marigold. The colour of the stone brick has turned into fawn and a light greyish which looks like a slate colour. From the colour of the stone brick, it can be ascertained that the wall is quite old. When I asked one of the Lama residing in the nearby Monastery the age of the Sangyelling monastery, he described that the monastery was older than the Tawang monastery. However, looking at the monastery, I could see that this monastery has been undergone multiple times of renovations.



Fig 22 : Figure showing Sangyelling monastery. (Photo by: Hakhe)



Fig 23: The figure shows the colour of the stone brick. (Photo by: Hakhe)

Currently, this monastery is probably not functioning as the doors were closed and locked. The entrance door of the monastery seems to have been renovated as the wooden surface looks strong and new. But the two pillars standing in the verandah looks very old as it is visible in the wood having rough horizontal ruts on the surface of the wooden pillar. The architectural design of the pillar is similar to that of the Tawang monastery. Unlike other monasteries, this monastery is relatively located at a lower altitude, and the location does not give a panoramic view of the hills, mountains and far away settlement.

2.9. CASE STUDY OF OBJECTS: MUSEUM, MONASTERY AND HOUSEHOLD

Many of the objects displayed in the gallery dated prior to the nineteenth century and most of them were being used in the monastery itself. Indeed there are no objects displayed belonging prior to the seventeenth century. The objects are kept inside the galleries. The person in charge of the museum did not allow to measure the object. The glass of the gallery became an obstruction for the capturing of photos of an object as the visibility of an object was hindered by the reflection in the glass. Therefore, the photos had to be taken by placing the small scale on the lower level of an object. But no measurement could be taken due to the restriction imposed by the Lamas of this monastery. The objects kept inside the gallery is displayed along with the information about its significance, usage and the time it was used and manufactured. The given information about these objects indicates that most of them belonged to the period of the seventeenth century onwards and partially belonged to the Eighteenth and the nineteenth century. But no scientific analysis and examination have been done on these objects to justify the authenticity of its period. Most of these objects especially the pots, bowl, cup etc are made up of Copper and Brass.

The given information on the objects suggests that most of them were used for the ritualistic purpose. But some objects were used for cooking purpose and to serve the Lamas. There is no mention whether the local people of the region were using these objects. However, the current scenario of the locals possessing various ritual objects suggests that there is no restriction in having any monastic objects in the house. But the question remains whether this trend was also followed in the past from seventeenth century onwards.

There are no traces of past sites where metalworking used to be done in this region. Therefore, it seems these objects were not manufactured in Tawang but indeed, imported from the neighbouring countries like Bhutan, Nepal and Tibet in the past. Some of these objects found inside the monastery are displayed in the museum as well. For example, the large Cooker (*Thro Therp*) used during seventeenth century for preparing barley gruel or porridge which was kept as a display in the museum was also kept inside the Khinme monastery. Both the cooking utensil looks relatively similar in terms of its size, colour, structure and composition. It was placed on the right side of the statue just

near the place where the three important small Chortens were kept. There are also other ritual objects displayed in the museum such as Buttercup, prayer bell, batti, Dorjee or butter lamp which is found commonly in the monastery and the house of the local people. According to the information, the Buttercup which is locally named as Nyul kong has been a part of the ritual object since the seventeenth century. The given information in the museum suggests that the material at that time used for making butter cup was primarily silver. Therefore, it is evident that the three main metal, i.e., copper, brass and silver were the principal metal used to make the objects from the seventeenth century.

TABLE 2.3: LIST OF MUSEUM OBJECTS, FUNCTIONS AND SIGNIFICANCE

Sl.No	Objects	Period	Function and significance
1.	Dancing Mask Local name: <i>Gyalmo Zhebak</i>	Eighteenth Century	Used in the monastic dance to show that human life is impermanent.
2.	Dancing mask-2 Local name: <i>Dur Dag</i>	Nineteenth century	It was also used in the monastic dance to show that the human life is impermanent.
3.	Hanging bell Local name: <i>Chod drill</i>	Seventeenth century	This bell was usually hanged on the top of the entrance of the newly built Tawang monastery by Merag Lama.
4.	Pot Local name: <i>Gug Che</i>	Nineteenth century	Used for preparing <i>Torma</i> (cake) for offering the deities.

5.	Flat Cymbals Local name: <i>Sel Nyen</i>	Eighteenth century	During the congregation of monks, this instrument is held vertically by the users and often used in the rites of peaceful deities.
6.	Bell Local name: <i>Thegchen Drilbu</i>	Seventeenth century	This bell belonged to H.E.Merag Lama Lodre Gyatso. It was used by him in religious services.
7.	Dagger Local name: <i>Dagger</i>	Seventeenth century	A dagger made of red copper as the destroyer of evil spirits in certain rites.
8.	Key Local name: <i>demig</i>	Seventeenth century	Used during the initial period of newly constructed main prayer hall of Tawang monastery by H.E Merag Lama. It was used to lock the main entrance of Dukhan, main prayer hall.
9.	White conch Local name: <i>Dungkar</i>	Seventeenth century	Used as a vessel for offering or blowing as a horn from one end during a religious ceremony
10.	Skull Local name: <i>Thoepa</i>	Twentieth century	It was decorated with attached silver and was

			used in the conduction of certain rituals especially in Tantrayana.
11.	Copper Jar Local name: <i>Zang Kyen</i>	Nineteenth century	This jar was made up of copper and was used for carrying tea during a congregation of monks.
12.	Butter lamp Local name: <i>Nyul Kong</i>	Seventeenth century	It is cup-shaped and is made up of silver. It acts as a candle and is made up of silver. It was used to offer on the altar of deities.
13.	Ladle	Nineteenth century	It is made up of brass and was used to prepare butter tea for the monk community during the congregation in the main assembly hall.
14.	Large bowl-shaped cooker Local name: <i>Thro Therp</i>	Seventeenth century	It was used in the kitchen of Tawang monastery for preparing barley gruel or porridge etc. Measurement : Depth-64 cm Diameter-108 cm
15.	Teapot Local name: <i>Jha Tib</i>	It was used in the nineteenth century.	This teapot is made up of copper and was used for serving tea to the monks.

16.	English name: Bull Horn trumpet Local name: <i>Wong</i>	It was made in the nineteenth century.	It was blown to call the masses for important gathering in the main prayer hall.
17.	Copper vessel Local name: <i>Therpo</i>	It was made in the eighteenth century	This copper vessel was used for preparing <i>Zer Khong</i> , the staple food of local people of Tawang.
18.	Trumpet horn Local name: <i>Dungchen</i>	_____	Blown during the observation of tantric ritual performance.

TABLE 2.4: LIST OF OBJECTS FOUND INSIDE THE TAWANG MONASTERY AND IN THE HOUSEHOLD.

SI No.	Object found inside the monastery	Measurement	Purpose of the object
1.	Varjira Local name: <i>Dorjee</i>	Length : 12 cm	It is a ritual object often used while worshipping the deities. Generally, it is held in the right hand during the worship. This object is also generally found inside the house of common people of Tawang district.
2.	Ritual Bell Local name: <i>Drilbu</i>	Diameter : 3.564 inch and 90.54 mm, height-17cm	It is also a ritual object and is generally found among the houses of the common people.
3.	<i>Minrak</i>	Height-140.43 mm and 5.528 inch	It is a ritual object and looks like a jar where a wine is poured inside and kept. Also found among the house of the

			common people.
4.	Local name: <i>Naize</i>	Diameter-2.326 inch/59.09 mm Height-4.635 inch/117.73mm	It is a ritual object and is used for keeping some wheat inside it.
5.	Jar attached with peacock feather Local name: <i>Bhumpa</i>	Height-20 cm	It is kept in the house of common people and Tawang monastery.
6.	Offering bowl Local name: <i>Lhung Zye</i>	_____	It is found in the house of the common people. Also kept in the Tawang monastery.
7.	A large container looks like a cooker Local name: <i>Thup Therp</i>	Depth 65 cm Diameter 108 cm	Not kept among the common people but the similar object was found in the Khinme monastery. Currently, this object is used for a donation of money for the monastery.
9.	Blowing trumpet Local name: <i>Drungchen</i>	Length-65.4 cm	It is a musical instrument used while praying or during festival or ritual performance. Used by both Tawang monastery and household.
10.	A small cone-shaped object made up of clay Local name: Chaza	Height- 16 cm	It is placed near the prayer wheel or Chorten or around the temple and monasteries. It was more than thousand in number in the complex of Tawang monastery.
11.	Local name: Batti	Diameter-5.705 inch/144.92 mm Height-59.73 mm/2.351 inch	This object is used for the worship. A water is put in it and always changed early in the morning. Also found

			among the house of the common people.
12.	Donation cup	Height- 90cm, diameter-42 cm	Kept to donate money and is kept in the household as well as Tawang monastery.
13.	Candle butter lamp	Height-36 cm Diameter-26 cm	This object is used as a candle where the flame sustains through the butter put on it.

From table 2.4, it is evident that most of the objects that are used in Tawang monastery are also acquired by the locals in their house. Except for the *Chaza* and *Thup Therp*, most of the traditional objects mentioned aforesaid are being kept in the household. This is a clear indication of locals attachment with the monastic objects.



Fig 24: The photo showing the religious statues and images kept inside the shelves in the chapel. (Photo by: Hakhe)

2.10. SURVEY REPORT ON THE LOCAL HOUSEHOLD

The recently conducted survey also revealed some of the outdoor objects which are part of the Monpa tradition. For instance, the majority of the houses were attached with a traditional flag on the top of the roof. In addition to that, just next to the house, generally a rectangular shaped structure, not more than one and a half meter tall, can be seen standing (see Fig 24:). These structures are generally used for burning the leaf of a tree to show the sign of peace. It is generally burnt on a

special occasion for example; when Dalai Lama visited Tawang, people burned the leaves to release a holy smoke as a sign of peace and welcome. When interviewed Lama,

he explained to me that this practice has been followed since the establishment of Buddhism in this region. Some houses have a similar feature with the traditional monastery design especially the window, wall, and the design work on it. This observation in the design of the houses compelled me to interview some of the common people to ask the relation between the monastery and the settlement: When I questioned personally a random household whether the monastery had any role in the construction of their house or was there any obligation from the monastery to observe a ritual in order to chase away the evil spirit before the house could be built in that location? Sadly out of 20 houses that I visited, most of them denied the fact that monastery had any role in the architectural design of the houses as people willingly designed their houses similar to the design of Monastery. But as per ritual before the building of houses was a concern, they supported the fact that since time immemorial, suggestions from monasteries were always considered to observe a ritual conduct before constructing a house in order to chase away the evil spirit from the location where the houses were to be built. However, many of them denounced the fact by describing that it was not mandatory for the people to observe such rituals and had no strict obligation from the monastery. Thus, it was according to the will of the local people to perform such rituals without any external obligation. But in general, lots of people observe such ritual before they build their dwelling house and if not mandatory; the monastery has inspired them with this culture up to a large extent. More importantly, it is only in the present context that some people do not observe such ritual, but if we go back some five or six decades back, the picture would be quite different.

At least more than twenty houses surveyed, it was observed that most people in their house would arrange a separate room or chapel to worship their deity. Inside the room, there were several images of divinities and ritual articles along with the ritual objects kept on the shelves. Many of these objects were also seen kept in the monastery for the purpose of worshipping the deity (see table). But other than these objects, there were many statues of golden and silver colour kept inside the small gallery, and each deity was kept in a different cell. During a conversation with the girl of that house, I was explained that these objects were mostly manufactured and brought from the Nepal, Tibet and some from India itself. In spite these objects were recently created but the idea of



Fig 25: Ritual objects kept in the prayer room of the local people. (Photo by: Hakhe)

surveying these objects in the house of the local people was to trace the age-old tradition followed by the locals that had developed as a result of the establishment of the monastery in this region. The girl further added that this tradition of keeping a separate room for the worship of deity has always been followed for a long time. She supported that earlier local people used to have an altar in their houses but today people do not keep a separate room for the altar and merely prefer a room for worship where various objects of rituals are kept. The girl explained that before the

statue is kept inside the prayer room, the household has to read out the scriptures from the manuscript, and then they place the statue in the cupboard. The deities kept inside the gallery is taken out only on a special occasion during which they clean and polish the statues of the deity. The principle deity kept inside is that of Guru Rinpoche who is known to be the founder of the Tibetan Buddhism.

The tradition of putting flag is also common in the houses as well as in the monastery (see fig). But the difference is that the flag that is erected in the monastery is tall and huge whereas the flag standing on top of the houses are small. These flags are generally changed every year in the month of February or March which is a month of a new year according to the Tibetan calendar. According to the local people, these practices have always been observed for many years.

2.11. CONCLUSION

After assessing the total material and non-material evidence observed during the field survey, it is established that the material evidence is mostly ceremonial and ritual objects. Most of the material evidence are in the form of objects and some in the form of structural remains which is very scanty. Many new religious, traditional structures are also seen built in the town which was not the part of the original tradition as per history of local people. The recently built huge and tall Chorten in the town in the name of the current chief minister of

Arunachal Pradesh for the sake of prestige and status is one fine example of new traditions followed up. Remains such as the skull of the warriors are also preserved in the museum (see Fig 37). The skull according to the given information of the museum belongs to the warrior of the nineteenth century. Maybe or may not be a useful source for my analysis but one thing that fascinated me was that why only top skull of the warrior preserved and what about other bones of the body? If it is the skull of the warrior, can it justify that Tawang certainly had a threat from the enemies? And who were the enemies? As acclaimed by the scholars like Niranjana (Niranjana 1981: 6-7) that the Tawang monastery often played a political role in protecting the people of this region from the enemies of Bhutan who were of a different sect. Whether in terms of material object, painting, or structural evidence, the field survey did not yield any strong material evidence which could strongly support the fact that military was posted in the monastery in the past. But this query still needs to be discussed with further supporting evidence.

Most of the objects displayed in the museum do not seem to be very old. Instead, the objects displayed are probably the replication or of the same genre of previously used objects. But it has become apparent that the objects and the monastery are co-related to



Fig 26: The photo showing the flag on top of the house. (Photo by: Hakhe)

one another as can be seen from those preserved in the museum that was primarily used in the monastery since the seventeenth century. These objects are primarily made up of metals and mostly belonged to the period of seventeenth century. However, it cannot be ascertained that those preserved objects in the museum uncertainly belonged to the seventeenth century as no scientific analysis have been done to generate the genuine epoch of these objects. The head in charge of the museum did not allow me to touch the object due to the strict security reason, the authenticity of the age of these objects still remains unaddressed. In a recent interview with one of the Lama, it was said that the objects displayed in the museum were undoubtedly ancient but he added that it was difficult to affirm the exact date of these objects. Thus this course of survey compelled me to assume that the objects that are displayed in the museum were assuredly used during the seventeenth century, but they may be the generic version that was used in a later period. But if the epoch of these objects is true, then the seventeenth century is a very significant phase for the region of Tawang as we see that it was during this period that Tawang monastery was established and most of the objects displayed in the museum are tagged belonging to the seventeenth century. The objects generally have certain designs and symbols fitted to it. And as I believe that every object has a particular purpose, so, therefore, the analysis of the designs and symbols of the objects shall be covered in the subsequent chapter.

Most part of the monastery is renovated and painted, therefore it became difficult for me to examine the age of the material used in the monastery. But the recent interview with the Lama described me that even though many of the material evidence exists no more but the traditional aspects of peoples association with the material remains the same. Objects and monastery have become a very important part of the daily life of the people. Every house that I visited was kept with objects of worship inside the chapel (see fig 26). And all these objects are also kept in the monastery. The tall wooden flag that is erected in the monastery is also erected in the roof of the house. The only difference was the size of the flag where the former is very tall and later is not more than two meters tall. It seems even though people deny the influencing role of the monastery in their material life, unconsciously they are still influenced by the Tawang monastery but the question still remains to what extent?. And this shall be discussed in the next chapter.

Below is the list of a picture of the traditional objects displayed in Tawang museum which shall be discussed and analysed simultaneously as the chapter proceeds.

TABLE 1.5: THE TABLE SHOWS THE PRESERVED MUSEUM OBJECTS.



Fig 27: Chodrill (Photo by: Hakhe)



Fig 28: Dancing Mask/Dur Dag (Photo by: Hakhe)



Fig 29: Pot/Gug Che (Photo by: Hakhe)



Fig 30: Phurpa/Dagger (Photo by: Hakhe)



Fig 31: Rosery/Gyen Che (Phot by: Hakhe)



Fig 32: Key/Demig (Photo by: Hakhe)

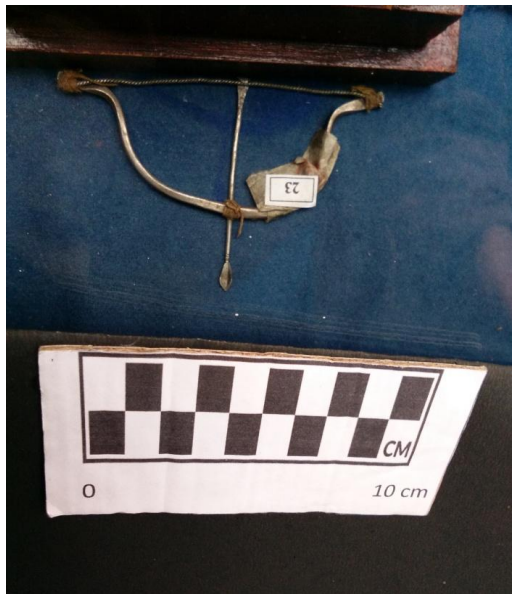


Fig 33: Bow and arrow toy/Dha zhu. (Photo by: Hakhe).



Fig 34: Religious Robe/ Naza (Photo by: Hakhe)

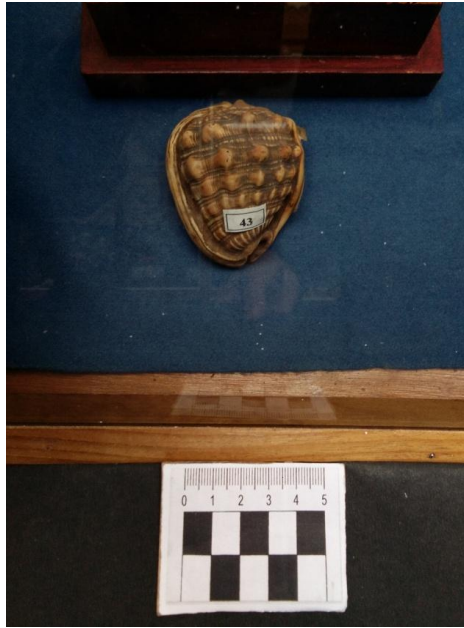


Fig 35: White conch/ Dungkar (Photo by: Hakhe)



Fig 36: Copper Jar/ Zhang Kyen



Fig 37: Skull /Thoepa (Photo by: Hakhe)



Fig 38: Flat Cymbals (Photo by: Hakhe)



Fig 39: Copper basket (Photo by: Hakhe)



Fig 40: Trumpet horn/Dhungchen (Photo by: Hakhe)



Fig 41: Trumpet made up of bullhorn (Photo by: Hakhe)



Fig 42: Gyather/ Scale wooden case (Photo by: Hakhe)



Fig 43: Thup Therp / Copper Pot
(Photo By Hakhe)



Fig 44: Ritual jug. (Photo by Hakhe)



Fig 45: Donation cup (Photo by: Hakhe)



Fig 46: Butter lamp/Nyul Khong (Photo by: Hakhe)



Fig 47: Peacock feathered jug (Photo by: Hakhe)



Fig 48: Batti (Photo by: Hakhe)



Fig 49: Butter lamp of larger size (Photo by: Hakhe)



Fig 50: Flat cymbals (recently made) (Photo by: Hakhe).

CHAPTER III

METALLIC OBJECTS OF TAWANG MONASTERY AND HOUSEHOLD

3.1. INTRODUCTION

The Monpas of Tawang have been traditionally attached with metallic objects for many centuries. Presently, the culture of Monpas continues to revolve around with a wide variety of metallic objects, which are in the form of utilitarian, ceremonial and ritual objects. The unavailability of the metallic ore deposits in their nativity had made them rely on the neighbouring regions like Bhutan and Tibet for the metallic objects. It is still unknown from which period onwards metallic objects got transported to this region. But fair assumption can be made that Monpas have a long history of using metallic objects because of their close link with Bhutan and Tibet, where iron was used roughly 3000-3400 years ago. Generally, the term '*metal*' in a scientific definition means any solid material typically fusible, ductile, hard, malleable and shiny that has an excellent thermal and electric conduction, such as gold, brass, copper, aluminium, iron, silver, alloy, bronze and steel. In the context of the Tawang region, metal has always been an important element of the socio-cultural life for the Monpas. They are generally in the form of ceremonial and sacred objects. In archaeology, context matters a lot in analyzing the functions and significance of an object, because archaeologist wants to know precisely where and when an object of antiquity was found in order to understand its usage. In the case of Tawang, most of the objects that survives today was passed down from generation to generation and were mostly being used in the Tawang monastery. Further, the objects were not recovered from any terrestrial site or burial ground but instead recovered through the voluntary donation made by the locals to the monastery and some of it, were preserved in the monastery from generation to generation. In the past, the locals of Tawang have acquired the metallic object through various means and transport. One way of acquiring was by having direct-link with the neighbouring tribes mainly the

Monpas and Sherdukpens of present-day West kameng¹⁰ region and connection with the communities of Bhutan and Tibet. The Monpas and Sherdukpens also had a close ties with the people of Brahmaputra plain; and exchanged their manufactured traditional items with the metal objects. But the Monpas of Tawang circle had a closer connection with the people of Bhutan and Tibet. This was because, Tawang monastery being the second headquarter of Gelugpa sect, received high attention from the aforesaid region. This resulted in the movement of cultural beliefs and ideas along with the metallic object in this region. Now, the question of how this developmental process took place and how it affected the behaviour of the locals, in general, shall be discussed in this chapter.

3.2. ANALYSIS DESIGN

This chapter will analyze the survey data from a comparative perspective between the current traditional metallic objects found Tawang monastery and households with the past material objects preserved in the museum. A descriptive analysis provided in this chapter and it is informed by the current theoretical expositions in this field of study and regional peculiarities of the social context are also taken into account. To support the description, figures and tables will be referred wherever necessary. The chapter emphasizes four important aspects of metallic objects i.e., its manufacturing, acquisition, value-laden and preservation of the metallic objects and the associated role of Tawang monastery in the course of the development in these four aspects. Another aim is to explain the attachment of the locals with Tawang monastery which in turn directly impacted not only on their belief and behaviour but also in the use of metallic objects. The analysis of the past developments in Tawang is to a large extent is inferred from contemporary beliefs and practices of the Monpas. Also, the structural evidence observed during the survey shall be referred wherever necessary to bridge the connections to zoom in better on the interpretation of the past development. To be specific, objects have been classified into metallic and non-metallic objects as shown below:

¹⁰ The present West Kameng district constitutes of five major tribes: Monpa (which includes, Bhut, Dirang, Lish, Kalaktang and Monpa), Sherdukpen, Miji (Sajolang), Bugun (Khowa) and Aka (Hrusso). Minority tribes include Takpa, Chugpa, Butpa and Lishipa,

Table 3.1: The table shows the classification of objects into metallic and non-metallic.

Metallic	Non-Metallic
1. Prayer Bell (<i>Chod Drill</i>)	Wooden dancing mask
2. Statue of Buddha	Wooden Casket
3. portable Chorten	Donation bowl
4. Iron bowl (<i>Ther Therp</i>)	Paper
5. Prayer wheel (both large and small)	Rosary
6. Copper jar	Trumpet
7. Flat Cymbal	Sacred books
8. Dorjee	Portable Chorten
	Prayer Drum

While the former shall be analysed in this chapter, the latter shall be discussed in the subsequent chapter.

3.3. THE USAGE OF METALLIC OBJECT IN PRESENT-DAY CONTEXT

To a large extent, Tawang Monastery has significantly influenced the material life of locals which is apparent in their use of metallic objects, both ceremonial and sacred. The majority of the material objects that can be associated with Tawang monastery are generally metallic in nature. Metallic objects play an essential role in the traditional life of the Monpas, and their material culture mostly revolves around these objects. These objects are kept both inside the monastery as well as in the household of the locals. The relationship between the Tawang monastery and the locals which shapes the belief system and practices of the Monpas are manifested in their acquisition of the metallic objects. The Tawang monastery maintains a strong inter-relationship with the locals. Two sects of Buddhism Gelugpa and Nyingmapa exist in the region, and as far the Buddhist

culture in the region is concerned, both coexists with no countervailing cleavages. This means despite the sect-specific dogmas, a secular fervour is observed in the interaction between them and the local are privileged to the liberty of various forms. In this context, the role of the lamas from both the sects has considerable influence on the locals. Evidently, there has been no incident of any sect based contestation in the past, and there is a seeming harmony between various Buddhist sects of Tawang. In this regard, the seeming social tranquillity and existence of democratic space within the Buddhist culture in the region is manifested in material culture. Among the Monpas regardless of which sect one belongs to, could acquire ceremonial and religious material objects with no restriction and material objects plays a key role in the life of a Monpa. This means the role of the Lamas who have considerable influence on the Monpas could be seen as crucial in maintaining peace and social cohesion.

Currently, the locals possess a wide variety of ceremonial objects that are kept inside their houses to sanctify the atmosphere inside. Some of the objects are considered as the sacred objects and are kept to be worshipped. The value that is attached to these objects by the Monpas is unique and can be distinguished on many aspects. In fact, all material objects, be it sacred or utilitarian are mostly made up of metal. It is pertinent understand the dynamics of the relations between the monastery and people. To put it otherwise, both influences each other in many aspect of material life. The simple reason behind this is that even though Tawang monastery is the highest seat which manifest the Buddhist way of life, it cannot exist on its own and requires a constant participation of the locals in various function and events the monastery conducts. In delivering the service to the local the monastery relies on the contribution and donations from the people in the up keeping of the monastery and in supporting life in its immediate vicinity.

In the next section, the aim is to see, how the establishment of Tawang monastery determined the behaviour of the Monpas in shaping the relationship with material objects in the past without trying to undermine the role of local people in the development of material culture. Therefore, to have a clear picture of the monastery-object relationship, it is incumbent to analyze the data obtained from the fieldwork that could potentially reflects the past relationship between the Tawang monastery and the Monpas in the

acquisition, manufacturing, value laden and preservation of the metallic objects in the past.



Figure 51: The figure shows the Large sized Tibetan ladle displayed in the Tawang museum. (Photo by: Hakhe)

3.4. ACQUISITION OF METALLIC OBJECT

The objects that are preserved in the museum mostly belong to seventeenth century onwards that goes down the line till the twentieth century and have been preserved with utmost care. Currently, it is strictly restricted to touch these objects. Hence, I was not permitted to take a measurement of the objects. As mentioned above, that no excavation has been undertaken in Arunachal Pradesh and the only material remains are mostly living object found in household and in the monastery premises. This throws a

considerable challenge to fill the vacuum created by lack of evidence. As mentioned in chapter one on approaches to study the past through various contemporary manifestation of material objects though contested is being employed here due to the nature of the study area. This approach is however augmented by material remains preserved in Tawang monastery museum, so the approach employed in this study is eclectic. Given this, the oldest surviving metallic objects preserved in the museum are generally in the form of ceremonial, ritual, sacred as well as utilitarian objects. The entire region of Tawang is constituted by alpine forest and there is no trace of availability of metal in the region.. Hence, the metal objects could only have been imported from the neighbouring region mainly Tibet and Bhutan. It needs to be pointed out that there was no such thing as Tawang district or West kameng district but rather the region was sparsely populated with small village settlement spread across considerable distance to each other. The Europeans who explored this region for the first time during the colonial period

categorized the entire Buddhist tribe of this region into one homogeneous group namely i.e. Monpas. But the fact is Monpas residing in both the districts follows the Tibetan Buddhism but each have a distinctive dialect and practice the religion in a different manner. The establishment of Tawang monastery in the seventeenth century is said to be the watershed moment in the past history of Monpas. Firstly, the emerging influence of the Gelugpa sect converted the entire Monpas to embrace Buddhism in this region as explained by the Lamas. This to a large extent brought all the tribes of Mon region into one common umbrella which opened up space to exchange various metallic objects with the neighbouring region of Bhutan and Tibet. As a result, it led to an constant inflow of objects from the neighbouring region. Also, the present interview with the locals suggests that there was no big centre for the production of the metal objects at Tawang, indicating that many of the metal objects were still being imported from the neighbouring regions like Bhutan, Tibet and India. But on the other hand, the production of the non-metallic objects such as dancing mask, wooden basket, paper, musical objects etc are manufactured locally.

The design that is attached on the surface of the metal objects required a high level of expertise, which was only possible if there was a presence of big production centre which is absent in this region. Prior to the sixteenth century, the Monpas mostly lived a nomadic life and some section of the population still continues to do so till today. They travelled from one place to another on foot and used animals such as Yak to carry the goods. It is implausible to think that nomadic people to have any large manufacturing centre. This argument is supported by the Niranjana Sarkar in 1970s. The absence of a big manufacturing centre for metallic objects compelled them to live on the objects that were produced and imported from Bhutan and Tibet. Therefore, the locals had to travel miles to acquire the metallic objects. Tibet, being the exporting countries of metallic objects thus the Buddhist monasteries in Tibet had a close connection with the Tawang monastery in the past. The relation between the Tawang monastery and Tibet was so deep that not only the beliefs and cultural ideas moved from Tibet to this region, but also the movement of various types of ritual objects along with ideas on how to perform the ritual reached to this region. The objects that were brought into this region were both metallic and non-metallic object but mostly being the former. Whether Metallic or non-metallic,

the monastery had always been a catalyst in opening the gate for the importation and value-laden metallic objects that eventually shaped the behaviour and belief system of the people. For instance, during special festive season, a large number of metallic vessels with large in size with specific purpose were only used. A ladle displayed in the Tawang museum is large in its size and is typically made up of bronze (see fig 51). In festival like Losar, it was used to serve local cuisine to the attendants. During this festival a large number of the local people would participate in the ceremonies to offer gifts to the Lamas and to the principal deity with various items especially rice, wheat and milk products. The purpose of this chapter however, is not to portray Tawang monastery as the sole determinant of the material culture of Tawang but to explain the possible role of the monastery in the importation of large metal objects to serve need of the Lamas as well as the local populace. When observed, it seems, this monastery actively engages and makes various efforts with activities that pertains to the cultural life of the people. In short, the monastery conditioned the object-human relationship over a long period of time through direct measures such as rules and regulation, religious education, arts such as painting that included designs and symbols in the objects and on the walls, along with philanthropic acts in meeting various needs of the local people.

3.5. METALLIC OBJECTS OF HOUSEHOLD AND TAWANG MONASTERY

The locals are unbelievably sensitive towards the ritual objects whether it is kept in the monastery or inside their house. The objects are well cleaned and polished and kept in a special separate room (chapel) inside their houses. It is because of this devoted attachment with the objects that locals were able to preserve the traditional metallic objects from generation to generation. The sensitive nature of locals towards these objects is apparent when one enters the chapel (prayer room) of the house. Every metallic object is well arranged and the statues of the deities kept in the gallery that looks shiny and well placed. They are required to be taken out only during the ritual ceremonies and festivals. They are often washed, cleaned and kept back to the same place after the ceremonies and ritual is over. The household member explained that this tradition had been followed since long time back. But the question arises, why people had so much deep attachment towards the metallic objects. A general belief among the locals is that

any object that has monastic value; used for serving the Lamas; or to worship deities of Gelugpa sect have immense value.

The use of Batti is one of the most essential elements of the Tawang monastery and it kept near the central deities. It is used to store holy water, and it is mandatory to change the water in it, every morning to mark the beginning of a new day. The act of changing the water every morning is a symbolism of purity and holiness. Every morning right after waking up, the Lamas recites the mantra and replaces the previous water with new one. These Batti are not only placed near the deities but also put near to all the religious structure and symbols which is associated with Tawang monastery such as Chorten or photo of Dalai Lama. These Batti are made up of silver, copper or Brass. Likewise, a similar tradition is also common among the locals. There were more than twenty Batti inside the household. This clearly reflects the importance and value of the Batti. When interviewed the household members, explained that such tradition has been followed since time immemorial and has always been the part of their tradition. The reason given by the local behind the usage of the Batti was similar to those explained by the Lamas. It is difficult to assume that people simulate the use of Battis in Tawang monastery, but it gives an idea that somewhere these people unconsciously goes hand in hand with the traditions of the Tawang monastery. Types of Battis are displayed in the Tawang museum which dates back to the eighteenth century.

The oldest metal objects displayed in the museum are those made up of copper, silver, iron and the brass objects (see table 3.1). Perhaps, in the past, these objects were possessed mostly by those who were wealthy as it had high value in terms of its composition and durability. Besides, many people attempted to acquire and possess these objects as they were deemed as an object of monastic significance by the Lamas. But before the establishment of Tawang monastery, possession of such objects was not much prevalent among the locals. Being nomads, the locals had to continually moved from one region to another region searching pastureland for their cattle. One plausible explanation to why the local had only limited acquisition of metallic objects could because metallic objects are heavy and they travel on foot. However, they had a fascination with material objects, and most of them possessed self-manufactured wooden objects. Even after the establishment of Tawang monastery, people did not permanently settle in one region

instantly. The expansion of the village settlement in this region was a gradual process. But once they got settled, the local also started to acquire more metallic objects for it became easier for them to allot the time needed to maintain and preserve the object. In due course, the local began to accumulate as many objects as they could as these object in a way also symbolic value concerning religion, as well as social status.

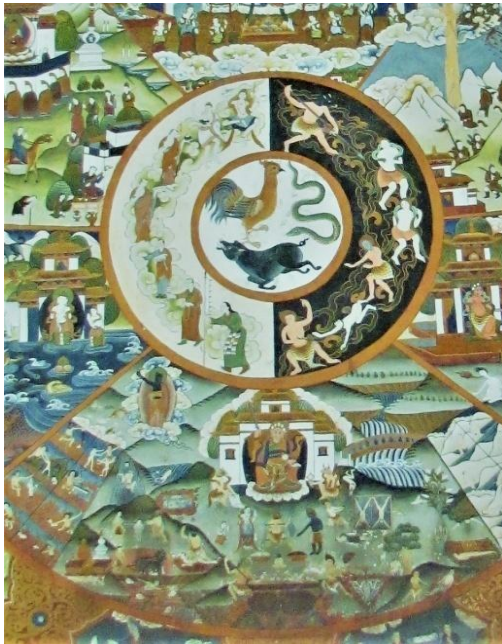


Figure 52: The figure shows the thangka painting in the main prayer hall of Tawang monastery.(Photo by: Hakhe).

3.6. THE THANGKA PAINTING AND METALLIC OBJECT

The Lamas viewed that the monastery hardly imposes any rules and regulation to the locals but rather instils in the soul of a person what is ‘right’ and what is ‘wrong’. Therefore, the people voluntarily give service and offerings to the monastery. The monastery in various ways tries to propagate its philosophical and divine ideas to the locals. For example, just in the exterior wall of the main prayer hall, before entering the interior, on the right side is a depiction of a painting which represents the concept of hell and heaven. The Lamas described that such painting had been part of their culture for a long period of time. Further,

he stated that this painting plays a vital role in transmitting the ideas of reward and punishment to an individual soul after the death (see fig 52). The divine ideas being represented in visualised form by the monastery can be more convincing to the locals than a mere acclamation. These paintings are the replica of the older version which is still followed. The picture on the painting depicts the nature of punishment that will be inflicted upon the souls of the wrongdoer and at the same time the reward that shall be achieved by the righteous people. The painting depicts various types of punishment that a soul has to pass through. However, it seems the painting contradicts the very true concept of Buddhist beliefs and system. The true philosophy of Buddhism does not believe in the

concept of hell and heaven. This concept is actually only prevalent among the Tibetan Buddhism. Probably, this was one of the tactics embraced by the Tawang monastery to fit in the milieu of the traditional belief system of Bon religion followed by Monpas and the Sherdukpens prior to Buddhism also had similar ideas.. Later, the region witnessed an inter-mingling between the two religion i.e. Buddhism and Bon a prominent religion then. The current form of Buddhism practised in the area thus reflects both the philosophy of two different beliefs and custom.

It is fair to infer that the paintings represented in the monastery were influenced the by the local context. The paintings shown in the exterior wall of the main prayer hall is actually the replica of the traditional Thangka paintings which is generally done on cloth and those shown in the interior wall of the main prayer hall is the mural. During olden days, not everyone could read the manuscript. Thus painting which is visual medium to transmit ideas, painting could have been preferred by the monastery as the best method to transmit the philosophical ideas to the local who could not read. Likewise, representation of deity together with symbols and meaning must have been an effective way of transmit the idea of life after death or afterlife of the soul. In India, such type of paintings is generally observed where Tibetan type of culture is practised, e.g., Ladakh and Leh region. The painting shown on the exterior wall of the main prayer hall, on the right side of the entrance, shows the conceptual idea of horrific punishment awaiting afterlife for those who commit a wrong or live sinful life. The punishment awaits after the death of the person if he or she fails to repent from the path of darkness. But the contradiction here is that the Lamas believe that there is no one particular God as a person himself can experience Godly realm in afterlife if a person achieves salvation through the path of Buddha's teaching. But the fact of the matter is, there has to be some conscious divine being which rewards and punishes the soul of the person according to his deeds. The notion of hell and heaven believed among the Gelugpa sect is also seemingly contradictory. Nonetheless, it was a method of imparting specific philosophical ideas. Therefore, the locals believe that discharging service to the monastery, in turn, would lead to welfare and progress, a shortcut way to cleanse their sins. Such perception could only have encouraged participation of locals in various professions such as the traders, artisans, painter and others to contribute their service to

the Tawang monastery. Locals believe, by providing service to the monastery one can abstain from the hellish experience after death. The salvation according to them means true peace and joy after death which they equated with heaven unlike the original believe where it means cease to exist with an absence of rebirth and pain. As a result, this must have had an impact upon the locals who travelled miles and miles to import various metal objects both ritual and utilitarian into Tawang monastery to redeem their wrong deeds.

The import of the statue from far away region itself is one excellent example. As mentioned above, during those days, riding on a yak and walking by foot was the only way a person could travel from one region to another. Besides, the region is located at an altitude of 3500 meters above the sea level. Due to its high altitude, the presence of oxygen in the atmosphere becomes less in this region. Hence, to transport the metallic objects from one region to another region had to overcome various hurdles and it must



Figure 53: The figure shows the votive chorten.
(Photo by: Hakhe).

have been an arduous task, especially if the object was a heavy one. But the locals, to serve the Lamas of Tawang monastery and for the redemption of their unrighteous life, toiled hard to ensure a better realm in their afterlife. Similarly, the ritual objects and utilitarian objects that were used in Tawang monastery during the seventeenth century must have also traveled through a series of transportation under the order of the Lamas. Therefore, two types of objects can be inferred that was imported in this region: a) Objects for the Tawang monastery: These objects were mostly acquired by the Lamas of Tawang

monastery which was in the form of ceremonial, utilitarian and sacred objects. The objects were statue, butter Lamp, Batti, prayer bell, ritual bell, ritual Jug, flat cymbal, iron prayer wheel, and various utensils like large cooking bowl, pot and vessel.

b) Objects for the household: These objects were mostly acquired by the household and were very few in number. The objects were statue, prayer bell, Varjira, batti, ritual jug and hand prayer wheel.



Figure 54: The figure shows the golden statue of Buddha inside the main prayer hall of Tawang monastery. (Photo by: Hakhe).

Apart from these metallic objects, there must have also been other objects but the recent survey conducted could trace only the aforesaid object which is widely considered to have been acquired by the locals for a long period.

3.7. THE GOLDEN STATUE OF BUDDHA

The Tawang monastery has a special place in promoting the worshipping of the Buddha statue and is considered as the nucleus of worship activities. Since its establishment, the statue has been seen by the Monpas as the embodiment of Lord Buddha. The value that it possess is of immense significance

because of which the locals are taking it great care. The Lamas believe that the presence of statue inside the monastery emits a divine power that protects the monastery like an umbrella from external negative elements. According to Schlegintweit (1863: 10-12), before the advent of Buddhism in Tibet, people generally followed Bon religion which was typically a worshipping of the ancestral spirit. Same was the case in Tawang; locals worshipped their ancestral spirit. It can be assumed on this ground that with the establishment of the Tawang monastery, the central figure of Buddha for the first time was brought into the monastery. Probably, this crystallised the practice of idol worshipping or may have enhanced the inspiration for the idol worship amongst the locals. But it is to be understood that, the reverence for the statue is because of the value attributed to it by the Lamas. It is under the guidance of Tawang monastery that the statues were to be composed of certain metal and shaped in a specific posture. It is under

the authority of the monastery that the import of statue from the faraway region was being accomplished. The locals travelled miles to import this statue to Tawang monastery to earn the merits of Lamas. As shown in figure 54, the posture of the statue is cross-legged, the left hand is on the lap, and the right hand pointing to the ground with the palm facing inward towards the Buddha. According to the Lamas, this posture is known as “calling the earth to witness or earth touching Buddha”. The posture generally represents the story of how Buddha was able to surpass the temptation of the evil spirit which eventually led him to attain enlightenment and to share it with the rest of the world. The statue is being clothed with a saffron fabric robes. Saffron in Hinduism and Buddhist indicates the person’s desire to quest light and salvation through sacrifice and religious abstinence. The statue is made up of gold and holds a high value. The Lamas believe that a statue only comes to its true essence after a series of rituals have consecrated it. During the ceremonies, the statue is filled with many relics and offerings and papers of mantras, which are then sealed inside the statue, imbuing it with a special power. The putting of ritual articles inside the object can also be seen in the prayer wheel which shall be discussed later as the chapter proceeds. The power of the statue increases as it ages and therefore also increases its ability to grant blessing to those who pray to it. Such belief among the Monpas often compelled them to pray to it as an aid for visualisation. Even today, the Monpas pay high respect to the statue of a Buddha. Perhaps, the locals got inspired by the idol worship of Tawang monastery and started to acquire a statue of deities to keep in their house and pray to it whenever their spirituality was disturbed. This is manifested in the current scenario among the locals as all the households visited during the survey had acquired a statue of Buddha along with statues of other deities. The statue kept inside the house symbolises an environment of peace and purity which protect the family from the evil spirit. Hence, it became necessary for the locals to quest for such objects. The recent interview with the household members explained that acquisition of such objects and keeping it in the chapel of the house had been followed since olden days. The metallic objects presently are imported from Bhutan, Tibet, Nepal and some from India. Does this mean that the quest for such statues compelled the locals to have a connection with the neighbouring countries? Does it also suggest that the presence of the statue in Tawang monastery could be attributed for the behavioural change among the

locals towards and in understanding the life and belief system of the Monpas? It is difficult to ascertain the above question, which can be left to an open interpretation but evidence suggests that, without Tawang monastery, there would be no statue of Buddha; without statue of Buddha, there would be no inspiration for idol worship among the locals, without inspiration, there would be no active role on the part of locals to quest for



Figure 55: The figure shows the Chorten that contains the relics of the sixth Dalai Lama.(Photo by: Hakhe).

such objects. Hence, the Tawang monastery stands at the top, and the subsequent developments depend largely on the Tawang monastery. Bearing in mind the above discussion, it is evident to assert that the golden statue of Buddha in spite of being the nucleus of idol worship is still is contingent to Tawang monastery.

where the use of metallic objects for the rituals was less and use non-metallic objects. Therefore, the concept of preserving the sacred objects was not much realised by the locals as the objects they used for the ritual were non-metallic, which could be reproduced locally with no substantive cost. The establishment of Tawang monastery in the Mon region led the people to associate their belief more towards metallic objects gradually. But according to the Lamas, it was only after the emergence of Gelugpa sect Tawang monastery was established as the highest religious seat of the brand of Buddhism. Consequently, attachment of the locals with objects in terms of its belief and function became further solidified. The Tawang monastery systematised the code of

such objects. Hence, the Tawang monastery stands at the top, and the subsequent developments depend largely on the Tawang monastery. Bearing in mind the above discussion, it is evident to assert that the golden statue of Buddha in spite of being the nucleus of idol worship is still is contingent to Tawang monastery.

3.8. PRESERVATION OF METALLIC OBJECTS AND THE TAWANG MONASTERY.

Before the inception of Buddhism, the Monpas followed the traditional religion of Bon. The Bon religion of Monpas was more a worship of spirit

conduct in the arena of ritualism. The object was categorised into sacred and ceremonial where the former had a higher value than the latter. The sacred objects could not be acquired by the commoners and were to be kept only in Tawang monastery.

Preservation of objects is one of the important aspects of various cultures. People generally preserve those objects which have ceremonial value and usage; or those which are sacred; and those not manufactured in the region. The preservation of the relics of the sixth Dalai Lama in the form of Chorten is another example of how value is being attached to a certain object which makes it sacred and divine. This Chorten is in fact considered to be one of the most sacred of the objects stored inside the monastery. The shape and structure of the relics can be seen as the model of the Chorten that is built on the ground with mud and stone. This type of sacred object was often transported from monastery to monastery as the Tibetans often had contestations with the Chinese regime over its autonomy and identified themselves as a different nation. This also resulted in the rising consciousness among the Tibetans to build important monasteries in a topography that was tough and far away, to isolate the monasteries from the disturbances of Chinese interference. They transported the sacred objects from one region to another region so that the Chinese state ideology of destroying the Tibetan sacred objects and the monastery could not succeed. To bring it into effect, Tawang was the most favourable region. Hence, the conversion of Monpas started from the fourteenth century onwards, and by the seventeenth century with the establishment of the Tawang monastery, the Gelugpa sect became dominant in the Mon region. After that, the preservation of the Tibetan monasticism was manifested in the preservation of ceremonial and sacred objects. There were also many important non-metallic objects that were preserved by Tawang monastery and the households covered by the survey and this would be discussed in the next chapter.

The Lamas explained that the important object that was used inside the monastery were not to be discarded on being broken but instead preserved as a symbol of respect to the objects of Tawang monastery. Perhaps this was the reason why Tawang monastery successfully preserved its object for centuries. The preservation of Kangyur script inside the museum is another fine example. Even though the manuscript is written on the bark of trees, its scripture is written with a golden colour. The reason behind the use of gold

for the scripture perhaps must be to equate its value with the doctrine of the fifth Dalai Lama. And hence, the manuscript has been preserved with utmost care. This also



Figure 56: The figure shows the scripture written in gold of Kangyur script.(Photo by: Hakhe).

indicates the level of respect towards the doctrine passed down by the Dalai Lama and till date, Buddhist scriptures are to be respected and practised sincerely. This phenomenon of passing down of the norms was confirmed by the teachers of Tawang monastery. For instance, at least one male family member among the locals was obliged to be sent to Tawang monastery to learn Lamaism. And if a person or a student decides to quit from the Tawang monastery, then he has to pay a hefty penalty. However, this system is no longer prevalent, though the band came only very recently.

The culture of preservation of objects among the Monpas further became evident as the Monpas even have a separate room that was used for keeping the holy texts in a finely arranged manner. There were hundreds of text kept in the shelf and people were not entertained unnecessarily in this room for the safety of holy text. Probably, during olden days, the secret text was kept in the old library which presently is no longer in use. (see figure56). The evidence suggests that the monastery was a well set up institution in terms of maintaining and allotting specific space for various objects of high value.

The manuscripts were mostly produced in Tibet, but the mantras and the doctrines were written in Tawang monastery itself. Presently, the local people write the important Buddhist mantra in a traditional local paper or a cloth and keep it in their chapel. In the figure, the dull white coloured rectangular cloth kept on the table with mantra written on it is in the Bodhic script. This suggests that the Monpas were inspired by Tawang monastery write the mantra either on traditional paper or on a piece of cloth and to keep it

inside the house to sanctify the environment. It is said the households would recite the mantras to protect their family from any external negativity or evil spirit. Also sometimes they would invite senior Lamas to conduct prayer service in the chapel of the house to sanctify the place. The Lamas while worshipping their deity would use various types of objects which includes a rosary, drum, batti used as a candle, Dorjee etc. The use of Dorjee is an age-old practice and has always been a part of Tibetan culture which later also became the part of the Monpa culture. Today, we see many metal objects kept inside the house of the locals, and this is because of improved accessibility. The advent of the automobile and simultaneous improvement of the roads in this region has given a boost to the local's linkage with the external world. This has resulted in into rapid flow of different types of objects both metallic as well as non-metallic. But centuries back, it would have been difficult to import metal objects in Tawang. Therefore, the value of the metallic objects then must have been apparently costly. In fact, these ritual and sacred objects must have been acquired mostly under the direction of the Lamas in Tawang monastery and also in order to cater the need of other monasteries in the region. Evidently, in the initial phase these objects were circulated only among the monasteries, and people were solely depended on the Tawang monasteries for the ritual activities and events. Hence, the Monpas did not acquire many metallic objects especially the ritual and the sacred objects in the past.

3.9. TAWANG MONASTERY AS THE CORRIDOR TO FAR REGION

Tawang monastery played an important role in solidifying the connection of this region with the far-off region. The foreign ritual objects were basically manufactured in the distant countries like India, Bhutan, Nepal, and Tibet. The iron prayer wheel of Tawang monastery is one such evidence. Those made up of complete iron may not be seen as more valuable as relative to those made up of wood as the Lamas accorded the wooden prayer wheel with similar respect as it does to the iron prayer wheel. What matters more is the mantra that is written on it. It is also said that that the prayer wheel without mantra paper inside it is devoid of its monastic value. Even if the prayer wheel is made up of precious material, it is devoid of its value unless a paper containing mantra is put inside it. According to one of the Lama, the object may be made of any material, it holds equal

value if it has a religious purpose attached to it. To produce such metallic objects, availability of the raw materials in large quantity is a precondition. India and Nepal already had a long history of producing metal objects. These two countries often used to send artisans to Tibet and other parts of the Himalayan region to work for them as well as to train them. The Tibetans also had a long history of manufacturing metal objects but their encounter with the skilled artisans of India and Nepal resulted in the production of ritual and sacred objects that had features of both Indian and Tibetan style. The Monpas who resides in present day Bhutan and Tibet were the first to get access to skills of manufacturing the ritual and sacred objects which were later acquired by the Monpas of Tawang region. Also, many locals from Tawang often went to Tibet and Bhutan to learn the art of manufacturing objects both ceremonial and ritual. This information was catered from the Lamas of Tawang monastery who explained that the locals often went to the neighbouring regions like Tibet and Bhutan mainly to learn monasticism and when they returned, they bring along with them new professional skills, ideas and philosophy. This must have resulted in the advancement of the skilled artisans and workers among Monpas of Tawang.

The Golden statue of Buddha which is considered one of the most sacred objects of Tawang monastery is well decorated with intricate designs. To execute such sophisticated workmanship, the artisan needs to possess a high level of skill and knowledge about the material and also about specific symbolism and philosophy of Buddhist religion wherein decorations signifies divine value. The Lama described that, even during olden days, artisans were brought from Tibet and Nepal to ensure diligent execution the decorations and designs as only artisans having traditional knowledge of meanings and symbols of the Buddha could do so.. Even today, we see artisans from the Nepal and Tibet being employed in the monastery for the beautification of Buddha statue. Evidently, , this indicates that the participation of the locals in the artistic field which was less in the past has continued till date. Observing the Lamas facing towards the statue and worshipping indicated that the statue is seen as the shadow of Buddha. Their day-to-day activity, to a large extent, is geared towards tending the idol of Buddha.

The Tawang monastery is void if it does not house the ritual objects. As we know, the ritual objects are used in performing various ceremonies or in worshipping the deity,

without it the statue of Buddha itself remains void. The ceremonies cannot proceed without the use of these objects . But it can be inferred that the golden statue of Buddha acts as a catalyst for the locals to possess and acquire varied types of metallic objects. Every ritual objects have different functions and significance. Even today, these objects are being brought from India, Tibet or Nepal and Bhutan.



Figure 57: The figure shows the bullhorn trumpet. (Photo by: Hakhe).



Figure 58: The figure show the large metal trumpet.(Photo by: Hakhe).

Most of the metallic objects preserved in the museum as earlier mentioned are made up of copper, bronze, brass, silver, and iron. Those made of copper, iron, and brass looks the oldest. According to Reedy, Kashmir has a long history of specialising in the manufacturing and production of the metal objects made of metals such as gold, bronze, copper, steel, zinc, brass, etc. Later, the Tibetans started to specialise in producing objects of different types which were then exported to different regions of Himalayan-belt. The ritual objects are not only in the form of fully metal objects, but also come with a combination of both wooden material and metal sheet. The trumpet that is made up of partially steel and bullhorn is one such fascinating object. The trumpet made from the horn of a bull which is not more than 100 cm in its length is attached with the metal, probably to reinforce durability of the object. This object is known to be one of the

essential objects used by the Tibetans in their daily worship of the Buddha. There are various types of such trumpet being used during the festive season especially on the occasion of Losar festival which is celebrated every_--_. But some trumpet is as large as one meter long and are entirely made up of metal also known as '*Lang trumpet*'. Locally it also called as '*Drungchen*'. It is not known which metal was it made of as even the Lamas and teachers of this monastery do not have a sound idea about its composition.

The trumpet is blown to produce a sound to symbolise the event of "offering" to deity. It is often known as *Dungchen* in Tibet or *Rag-Dung* (see fig 57 and 58). The trumpet is also known as *Lava* in most of Tibet and *Kaa* in Nepal. Today, such horn trumpet is mostly made up of silver and copper, but this one as shown in the picture looks quite unique.. Probably, the bullhorns were brought from the countries like Nepal, Tibet, and India where bull are killed either for consumption or for the ritual practice. These objects were attached with the designed metals usually copper (see figure57). From eleventh century onwards, Kashmir and Nepal became highly known for their specialisation in the art of making copper objects. Objects created in these places were on a high demand in the monasteries located in the regions like present-day Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet. Such bullhorn trumpet was highly used in the regions above. But, one interesting question that arises is that today most of the Gelugpa sect followers believe that killing of an animal is an act of violence and usage of such objects are not encouraged by their belief system and customs. In addition to that, the painting depicted on the entrance wall of the main prayer hall, clearly indicates how a person will be tortured in the hell if inflicted any violence on an animal. The concept of hell was already prevalent in the traditional religion of the locals, but the establishment of the monastery and depiction of the paintings further crystallise the idea to a new level. The locals are now aware of the punishment that can be inflicted on them if they live their life otherwise. After all, understanding the visual depiction of the concept of the hell and the heaven does not require a high level of knowledge as it is easy to understand the message that is conveyed in the painting. Hence, Tawang monastery relied on a visual medium to inculcating their religious ideas and reshaping the traditional belief system of the Monpas.

Currently, horn trumpets are not being used in Tawang monastery as it demands the killing of a bull. Hence, such objects are least demanded and are replaced by the trumpet made up of wood and metal. But in another region such as Nepal and Tibet such type of horn trumpet is still in use. Therefore, to access the horn, the bull must have to be killed. Often, in the olden days, a bull was killed as a part of the ritual sacrifice to offer to the Bon deity. According to the Lamas, traditionally the yak was being sacrificed, during special ceremonies in the traditional religion (Bon) of the locals. It is only today, that killing of bulls is restricted. Today, the local people offer items such as grain and wheat. The tradition of slaughtering a cow has also been withdrawn. Despite having considerable influence to sway the people the monastery actually in every possibility, tries to fit with the culture of the locals. Hence, it is evident how Tawang monastery establishes control over the circulation of the object and at the same time is amenable to local sensitivities as per the pulse of the time.

3.10. MEANS OF ACQUIRING OBJECTS

The functions of metallic objects are a very important part of every culture and civilisation. The usage and the circulation of the metallic objects are generally based on its socio-cultural and environmental factor. The manufacturing of the utensils did not require religious knowledge, and hence it could have probably been manufactured in the Mon region itself. As we know, the Mon region mainly comprises of two central districts currently known as Tawang district and West Kameng district. The region is vast, since time immemorial the locals living in different quarters, had a good connection with each other. The West Kameng district bordered the Brahmaputra valley (presently Assam), and till the seventeenth century, it was under the rule of Ahom kings. The people of Brahmaputra valley had good trade relations with the neighbouring regions like Bengal which linked other parts of the mainland India.

The locals residing west kameng district, especially the Sherdukpens often went to the Brahmaputra valley to trade on required metallic objects. They would then exchange these objects with the Monpas. For instance, if we take an example of the Apatani tribe residing in Ziro of Arunachal Pradesh which was secluded from rest of the world until the late nineteenth century when they did start to come down to the foothills of the Himalaya

and in the Brahmaputra valley to work as a tea planter and on the daily wage. The wages earned was then utilised for buying bangles made up of copper and also purchased objects like cooking bowls, necklaces and working tools etc. But the focal point of the trade was to purchase salt why the Apatanese had to come down to the Assam covering many miles. And when they returned back to their village, they used these objects as a symbol of wealth during the festive season. Generally, people of high status could avail such objects along with the salt. In fact, salt was one of the precious commodities during



Figure 59: The figure shows the cooking bowl made up of Iron.(Photo by: Hakhe).

those days for the Apatanese. Only a few privileged sections could get the taste of the salt. Similarly, in the case of Monpas, objects were acquired through building ties with the people of Bhutan and Tibet. As mentioned earlier, they had to travel for a long distance, one of the teachers from Tawang monastery explained that the Monpas had to travel a long distance to trade their home produced commodity with those offered by other neighbouring tribes of Bhutan and Tibet. The main target of this trade for the Monpas was to acquire the metal objects such as Chod drill of different shapes and size, copper and brass plate etc. later to be used during the festive season. This explains that Tawang monastery organised important Buddhist ceremonies and festivals which brought about

the cohesion among the Monpas owing to which transportation of objects to this region became organised and convenient. Perhaps, it was due to this reason that the Monpas started to settle closer to the monastery. More and more villages began to flourish closer to Tawang monastery The Lamas explained that objects made up of metal were expensive as it was not locally available. Perhaps, this must have led the Lamas to take utmost care of the metal objects which enabled the objects to survive for a long duration. This is apparent from observing the objects in Tawang museum where most of the objects

displayed are well preserved for many generations. One such metal that is still well preserved in the museum is the cooking bowl made up of iron, locally known as *Thup Therp* (see fig 59). It was used for preparing porridge for the Lamas during the festive session. The size of the bowl is large and was used to prepare different types of cuisine. This cooking bowl easily must have had the capacity to cook for more than fifty Lamas. In fact, it is one of the largest objects in the museum. It is dated to have been used during the seventeenth century correspondingly to the establishment of Tawang monastery. This evidence suggests that the Tawang monastery was instrumental in introducing various kinds of metal objects in the Mon region. It started with the ritual objects and later encouraged other large metal objects



Figure 60: The figure shows the Dorjee and Cho drill displayed in museum. (Photo by: Hakhe).



Figure 61: The figure shows the chodril attached with dorjee. (Photo by: Hakhe).

-ts to be transported to the region. As previously mentioned, the Tawang monastery had an active link with other important Buddhist region in the entire Himalayan belt as well as in Tibet. In fact, this monastery used to pay tax to the government of Tibet as explained by the Lamas and the locals. As per the locals, majority of the objects that are used in the entire Mon region comprised of two district of Arunachal Pradesh of which

and some areas has become part of current Tibet and Bhutan, uses the same type of utilitarian objects. These utilitarian objects are often used during the special occasions.

3.11. PRAYER ROOM

As mentioned above, the locals arrange a separate prayer room in their houses where they keep various types of ceremonial and ritual objects, mostly metallic. The interview with the household members confirmed that such a tradition has been followed since long time back. They often conduct rituals in this room whenever felt obliged. In fact, the environment inside the chapel gives a similar impression like that of the main prayer hall



Figure 62: The figure shows the ritual worship performed by young Lamas inside the house of the Monpas. (photo by: Hakhe)

in the Tawang monastery. The question arises why they have to create such environment inside their house? Here, the geographical factors play an essential role in determining their tradition. Since the Tawang monastery is located in higher than the villages, it was difficult for the locals to travel so many distances to pay a visit to the prayer hall. Hence, they created their own prayer environment within the house. It seems that they were also inspired by Tawang monastery which maintains peace and tranquillity inside the main prayer hall. Besides, as mentioned above, prayer hall has always been believed to be the

protector of the monastery against the external dark forces. This indirectly affected their emotion to acquire ceremonial and sacred metallic objects and to keep it in the household to realise similar environment.

It appears that, in the past, many of these objects were absent in the household owing to the lesser trade connectivity with the outside world. But objects like Chodril

and Dorjee must have been used since long back. This is evident from the objects displayed in the museum known to have been used during the seventeenth century. This evidence suggests that the locals, perhaps, began to use these objects after the establishment of Tawang monastery. Such objects are used by all the sects of Buddhism in the Himalayan region. Dorjee generally symbolises the thunderstorm of enlightenment. Usually, it is held in the left hand during the ritual ceremonies. Sometimes it comes typically together with the Chodril.

3.12. CONCLUSION

Considering the above discussion, it is evident that acquiring and possessions of the metallic objects among the locals were consciously and unconsciously influenced by the Tawang monastery. It also affected their belief system and behaviour in the process of acquiring the same. The strengthening of the linkages with the outside world was the cornerstone for the Monpas to acquire metallic objects as it is understood that trade and exchange get enhanced with better connection and linkages. The cognitive behaviour of the locals towards the metallic object was the attribution of the Lamas of Tawang monastery who transmitted various beliefs not only among the locals but also towards the use of the objects which led to value-laden and preservation of the metallic objects. People consciously or unconsciously started depending more on the objects to meet their spiritual realm. It is also evident that religious belief played an important role in assigning significance of the metallic objects in the life of a Monpa. But, without Tawang monastery, the foundation of the same would have failed to a certain extent.

CHAPTER IV

NON-METALLIC OBJECT AND THE TAWANG MONASTERY

4.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter dealt basically with the metallic objects which were not commonly manufactured in Tawang due to the absence of raw material in the region. In this chapter, non-metallic objects¹¹ which were traditionally manufactured by the locals in the past shall be discussed. The manufacturing of non-metallic objects generally started along with the cottage industry which became the main source of livelihood for the Monpas. It is in this context that the chapter analyses the influence of non-metallic objects upon the culture and tradition of the Monpas which had impacted the manufacturing, acquisition, and usages. The Tawang museum is known for housing different types of non-metallic objects which are utilitarian, ritual and ceremonial in nature such as wooden baskets, dancing mask, rosary, bullhorn trumpet, human skulls and few utilitarian objects. These objects had immense significance in the cultural life of the Monpas. As per the information obtained from Tawang museum, these objects were mostly used during the seventeenth century. Also, there are other objects apart from those preserved in the museum. The non-metallic objects observed in the Tawang monastery, are prayer wheel, prayer drum, flags, traditional paper, *Chaza*¹² and *Chorten*.

The locals claimed that even before the establishment of Tawang monastery, they were familiar with non-metallic objects, they had trade relations with Bhutan and the Tibet. However due to the lack of historical records, the precise timeline of the Monpa's contacts with the Tibetans and Bhutanese cannot be ascertained., But it is widely accepted among the locals that cultural relationship with Bhutan and Tibet was boosted

¹¹ Non-metallic objects are Wooden Prayer wheel, portable chorten, traditional paper, bullhorn trumpet, prayer drum, rosary and flags.

¹² Chaza is a cone shaped object made up of mud and on the surface its painted white colour. It has a religious significance because of which, it is placed in various corner of Tawang monastery.

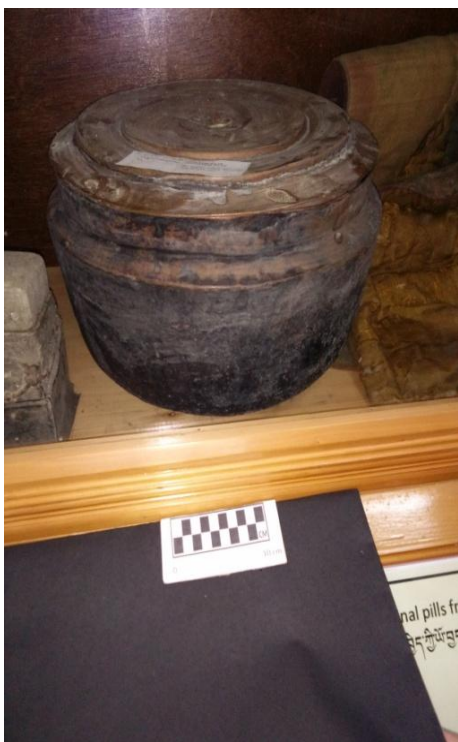


Figure 63: The figure shows the wooden casket Traditionally known as Cham Bur. (photo by: Hakhe).

with the establishment of Tawang monastery. This cultural boost led to more reproduction of non-metallic objects by the locals.

4.2. ANALYSIS DESIGN

This chapter will employ the similar analytical method as adopted in the previous chapter. The sole objective of this chapter is to find out the relationship between Tawang monastery and the Monpas with regard to manufacturing, acquisition, and their usage of non-metallic objects. The rationale behind the need to discuss the non-metallic objects is not based on the fact that previous studies have failed to account for these objects. The focus of this study on non-metallic objects is because previous studies have not specifically explained the relation of Twang

monastery in bringing about certain developmental changes in the traditional belief system and value attributed to non-metallic objects. Henceforth, in this chapter, the analysis will be based on the examination of the contemporary belief system of the locals towards certain non-metallic objects and also study the contemporary role of Tawang monastery over the material life of the Monpas. On top of this, the non-metallic objects of the museum are referred to ascertain the past material culture of the Monpas. Figures and tables will be used wherever necessary.



Figure 64: The photo shows the cylindrical shaped wooden object used formaking butter tea. (Photo by: Hakhe)

4.3. THE MANUFACTURING OF NON-METALLIC OBJECTS

As mentioned above, there are only few old non-metallic objects preserved in the Tawang museum and most of the objects seem to be replicas of the older version. This means, both metallic and non-metallic objects may not be as old as claimed by the Lamas of the monastery. The wooden casket preserved in the museum is one such example. It is still difficult to trace whether such caskets were produced by the Monpas or the Tibetans. It is also uncertain whether such caskets were imported from India, Bhutan, Nepal or Tibet. According to the Lamas of Tawang monastery, most of the objects were imported from Bhutan and Tibet. But these

objects also were imported from the neighbouring tribes and region, —objects such as the ritual bell i.e. chod drill, ritual copper plate and other metallic objects the Monpas could not produce locally. It was only with the advent of the Tawang monastery that a large number of ritual objects was being imported from neighbouring countries. The assumption is that before the establishment of the Tawang monastery, there were already many small temple sized monasteries , but they could not unite the Monpas together in a common platform as the Tawang monastery did which was crucial in organizing concerted effort on importation of metal objects over long distance. The reason was that these small monasteries at that time was very isolated in nature and confined only to a few Lamas. In addition, they did not take much responsibility in the economic, political and cultural affairs of the local populace. It functioned only to meet the spiritual need of the people.. Evidently observation made during the survey indicates that most of these old Buddhist monasteries are small in size, most of them are located far away from settlement area and also not as active as Tawang monastery. But with the establishment of Tawang monastery, the locals started to produce more objects mainly —wooden

objects, traditional paper, woollen clothes and carpets in which the Monpas had traditional expertise. In fact, these objects were in a high demand in the Tawang monastery. Hence, the locals did not only manufacture for themselves but also did to meet the need of the Tawang monastery and still continue to do so. Presently, many locals are involved in the manufacturing of traditional craft objects which are used in Tawang monastery: such as, wooden dancing mask, attire for the Lamas along with other types of traditional garments, carpets, prayer drum, papers, offering bowls, basket, etc. Hence, it is evident that every single non-metallic objects used in the monastery today are the culmination of the relationship the locals with Tawang monastery.

During the interview, some locals described that since time immemorial, various non-metallic objects were being manufactured by the locals themselves such as a woollen clothes, carpets, papers, basket and other wooden and bamboo objects. It must be pointed out that despite of long history of making non-metallic objects among the Monpas, the majority of the Monpas did not make wooden and bamboo objects. For instance, Monpas residing in the western part of Arunachal Pradesh had no such tradition. As already mentioned in the third chapter, the establishment of the proper institution in the form of Tawang monastery strengthened the cultural link of Monpas with Tibet and Bhutan. As per the information acquired in the survey, the locals contended that connection with the neighboring tribes of Tibet and Bhutan through Tawang monastery brought new changes in the life style of the locals in the region, the transition from nomadic life to a settled living was an outcome of the establishment of Tawang monastery as it provided avenues to support life around it.¹³

The relation between the locals with Tawang monastery is symbiotic in nature. The local affirmed that Tawang monastery has quite some influence on various activities related to the socio-cultural and political life of the Monpas. However, the Tawang monastery was still depended on the locals for the importation and manufacturing of objects required in the day to day activities of the Lamas. In other words, despite the Tibetan culture ' had far-reaching influence on the socio-cultural life of the Monpas in material life, it still had to depend on the locals for the proper functioning, especially when it comes to the acquisition of the non-metallic objects. Evidently, this could be

¹³ In the past, the Monpas lived a nomadic life.

easily ascertained from the numerous ceremonial and ritual objects displayed in the museum which had been in used in Tawang monastery, since the seventeenth century. This indicates the gradual participation of Monpas in manufacturing the essential non-metallic objects used by Tawang monastery. The monastery either sale it, or give away the objects made by the locals as a tribute to important sage and deities or due to other reasons.



Figure 65: The figure shows the offering bowl inside the main prayer hall of Tawang monastery. (Photo by: Hakhe)

The lid of the casket is decorated with round circle on the top. The locals confirmed that such caskets are also used by the Tibetans. This means the locals would have initially learned to make such objects from the Tibetans and later started to manufacture it for themselves. Presently, such type of casket is still used in the household.

The manufacturing of utilitarian, ceremonial and ritual objects such as a dancing mask, carpet, offering bowls, jars, basket, casket and traditional papers were expanded by the locals on demand of Tawang monastery. Presumably handmade objects were mostly made during the winter season, because of extreme cold weather condition and snowfall people had to spend most of the time indoors. The tools they used to make such objects were metal and were not locally available; it all likelihood the tools could have been

Let us take an example of the wooden casket locally known as *Cham Bur* (see fig 64) displayed in the museum. In view of the craftsmanship visible on the object, it could be said that the Monpa society had attained a stage of cultural development wherein storing valuable items such as grain, wheat, flour, ornaments in the casket was diligently done. Unfortunately, measurement of this casket could not be taken due to the restriction imposed by the museum authority. Further, the information on about the type of wood used to make it could not be catered as none of the house informants had any idea about it.

The lid of the casket is decorated with round

probably imported from Bhutan or Tibet. The Monpas living in the present day Kameng district were more specialised in making wooden and bamboo objects. This could have been because of the better connection they had with Bhutan, as well as Assam, which was the only the market hubs for exchanging of handmade objects. According to Lama, the Monpas were also specialized in weaving and crafting of bamboo products such as a basket (*Chungchung* and *Lapchu*), bamboo carpet (*Pari*) and Baylow that looked like Japanese coolie headwear¹⁴. The oral information from the locals suggests that there were exchange of handmade goods between the Monpas residing in the Tawang region and the people of Tibet and Bhutan. The locals explained that the objects that was brought from Tibet were relatively better in quality to that of the objects manufactured by the Monpas and this goes for both metallic objects as well as non-metallic objects. Even though the Monpas depended on the objects traded with the Tibetans, they started to locally manufacture few non-metallic objects for Tawang monastery such as a dancing mask, carpet, prayer drum etc. This process gradually made the ties stronger among the various tribes residing in the two districts of Arunachal Pradesh, and also in Tibet and Bhutan. The stronger the ties grew the ability to acquire non-metallic objects increased amongst the Monpas.

Besides, the new found cohesion and its significance on exchange of objects between them, the Monpas also had growing ties with other Buddhist tribes residing far away from each other. In context of the growing connections all the people came under the common influence of Tawang monastery¹⁵. As a result, it became much easier to import non- metallic objects from various manufacturing centers in Bhutan and Tibet. But the major share of the imported non metallic objects were meant to be used in Tawang monastery also to be sold and given away as gifts to Lamas of nearby small monasteries, This is how Buddhism slowly became a popular religion in the region. In time, the demand for ritual and ceremonial non-metallic objects gradually increased and under the direction of the Lamas and assisted by the locals, Tawang monastery started to import a wide variety of non-metallic objects. Some of this are only used by The Lamas in practising monasticism and lots others are use for multiple purposes, both by the

¹⁴ However, these objects could not be traced during the recent fieldwork

¹⁵ The Tawang monastery became the second headquarter of Gelugpa sect after its establishment in 1684 which is considered even today.

Lamas and local people. One of the research questions of this study is –what are the factors behind the increase production of non-metallic objects by the Monpas? How and why it happened so?

With the establishment of the Tawang monastery, population in the settlements around the monastery grew. With the enlargement of the settlement, production of durable goods and food grains also increased, the locals offer the surplus grain such as rice and wheat to Tawang monastery and the monastery, in turn, give it away to important sages and deities during ceremonies and festivals. The wooden casket displayed in Tawang monastery is used for multiple purposes but it is especially used in offering food items to the Lamas or statues of deities. The tradition of offering food grain is critical for sustenance and maintenance of as a result Tawang monastery, Besides, the



Figure 66: The figure shows the compiled traditional Paper at Mukto village. (Photo by: Hakhe)

offering purpose, the main function of this casket is to preserve something valuable which can be anything from food items to Jewellery. Also, the casket must have enabled them to carry important items over a long distance, to settlements located in the lower as Tawang monastery region. However, this argument does not mean to debunk the possibility of the casket to have multiple usage, prior to the advent of the Tawang monastery. At present, this wooden casket has multiple usages thereby adding new meanings to it.

4.4. TRADITIONAL PAPERMAKING

Since a long period of time, the livelihood of the Monpas depended on making traditional paper.

The existing doctrine of Dalai Lama are written on this kind of paper. The Lamas of Tawang monastery also used it to write the teachings and mantras of Gelugpa sect and the eventually the paper was accorded divine value. In a given point in the past Tawang monastery, could shelter more than 200 Lamas. The Lamas required the paper in large quantities, religious philosophy or doctrines written on

it was an important medium through which Buddhism spread in the region. One of the teachers in the Tawang monastery related that the importance of paper in the monastery was such that, it was believed that putting the mantra paper into the prayer wheel made the objects like the prayer wheel and gain divine value. Such mantra paper was stuffed inside, on all sides side of the prayer wheel It was also stuffed, in the statues of deities to add similar kind of value to it. One of the teacher from Tawang monastery explained that earlier the Monpas used to produce traditional paper within their household and all they required was the raw material which was easily available in the surrounding region. Such papers were generally made out of the bark of an indigenous tree namely, '*Shuk Sang*'. The making of the paper involves, peeling off the bark of this tree and the peeled bark is dried under the sun for two to three days after which it is again soaked in the water. After undergoing this process, it is cut into rectangular pieces and boiled without any additives until it takes the form of a paste. Subsequently, a fine screen has to be placed in a water bath over which the bark paste was spread. Then, the bark facing towards the sun gets dried up, and finally, the sheet of the finished paper is removed to be sold (see fig 66). The traditional method of manufacturing papers is still deep-rooted among the Monpas. The monastery used this paper extensively. The reason behind this is that the monastery is not only a religious centre but also deliver educational service to the local and more importantly it serves as political centres.

Presently, Tawang monastery shelters the highest number of prayer wheel in comparison to another monastery. As mentioned before, the mantra written on the paper is stuffed in the prayer wheel. The point is the high number of prayer wheel is related to the demand for paper, and the Tawang monastery encouraged the local to manufacture more of this paper. However, as per the information provided by the locals suggests, the traditional art of making paper from the bark of the tree was known even before the establishment of Tawang monastery. It is must be pointed out that this claim made by the local is not verifiable and there are divergent views on whether the manufacture of this paper was prevalent before the establishment of Tawang monastery, if at all correct then who actually used the paper. The only fact that could be ascertained that papermaking expanded among the locals and most of it was used by Tawang monastery. While observing the present scenario, it can be assumed that papermaking has not only a source

of livelihood but also a path towards a better life in the next birth, as they believe that service to the monastery would open the gate of heaven, in the afterlife.



Figure 67: The figure shows the portable Chorten of Tawang monastery. (Photo by Hakhe)

The paper was used for transmitting philosophical ideas and teaching of Buddha and also in modern educational purposes. The script used for the purpose was the Bodhic script. As per the Lamas, small paper pamphlet with mantra written on it was often kept by the locals within themselves to keep themselves secured from any bad omen. We can imagine this in the context of the Monpa traders who would travel for miles, and keeping this pamphlet with them, naturally, gave them a feeling of safety, spiritual protection from any danger. Also, the paper was used for distributing edible items to the locals during the festive season in Tawang monastery. Henceforth, it is

evident that the significance of traditional paper lies in its multiple usages and not only the monastery but everyone had something or the other to do with it.

4.5. CHORTEN

The erection of Chorten is one of the fundamental elements of any Buddhist monastery whose importance in the socio-cultural life of the locals cannot be ruled out. Total of three monasteries was visited in the course of the survey undertaken for this research; The Tawang monastery had either erected Chorten in its compound or preserved the old portable Chorten¹⁶. Some monastery like Ugyelling monastery preserved the highest number of erected Chorten. It was under the order of the monastery that such Chorten

¹⁶ There is a difference between the Chorten erected and the portable Chorten. The former is constructed in the ground and is tall and huge but the latter is small and can be removed from one place to another.

was being built according to the description of the Lamas¹⁷. The Chorten is referred here because through this symbolism Tawang monastery influenced the locals in the making of religious and sacred non-metallic objects. The field survey, came across structure affiliated to Tawang monastery such as erection of Chorten not only influenced the belief and tradition of the local but the monastery also demanded from the local to make a similar structure in the form of the object. Information from the interviews suggests that locals had a large hand in the making of such objects. This is apparent in the case of portable Chorten that is made up of stone and mud. In shape and structure, it is similar with those of the permanently erected Chorten. Such types of Chorten are seen in the Choksem temple of Tawang monastery (see fig. 67). The size is not more than 1 meter and 25 cm. Two of them were kept together side by side. It is believed to have the relics of a prominent leader of Gelugpa. The men in charge of this temple could relate the name of the Lamas whose relics were buried underneath the erected Chorten, but in case of portable Chorten, he failed to do so. All he knew about the portable Chorten is that it held the relics of important Lamas. The point here is to assert the importance of the relics of Lamas but to note that the erection of Chorten on the ground was gradually manifested in the making of portable Chorten which could be moved from one region to another region, but this time, locals participated in the making of portable Chorten. The first reason behind this is that the material used to make this was locally available. Secondly, the designs and the shape of the portable Chorten is not sophisticated and can be easily replicated. This suggests that some locals started to take up the profession of manufacturing portable Chorten which must have been considered as a noble job during that time. As already mentioned, service to the Tawang monastery has always been a privilege for the locals.

¹⁷As already mentioned in the second chapter, Chorten were built for various purposes, such as, in the commemoration of the late Gurus, to preserve the relics of lamas.



Figure 68: The figure shows the erected Chorten of Choksam Gumpa in Tawang monastery.

4.6. STONE-BRICK MAKING

Brick making has always been practiced by the Monpas since long time back. Monpa houses are skillfully built with stone-bricks are meant to be usually strong and firm so that it could withstand heavy snowfall during the winter season. As per the survey, It is said the locals participated in a massive way in shaping the stone-bricks used to construct the Tawang monastery. The recent observation of the oldest wall of Tawang monastery revealed that even now the stone-bricks looked well-shaped and strong and were large. The stone-bricks had

to be large at Tawang monastery; especially its main prayer hall is massive in its size: using ordinary stone bricks could have made it vulnerable to natural disasters, such as earthquakes because the region comes under earthquake zone and many did happen in the past. The factual narration of earthquakes experienced by the locals is still deep-rooted in this region. According to the seismic intensity report, Tawang monastery which is located in the Eastern Himalaya falls under zone five. In fact, many minor earthquakes are experienced every year. Older adults confirmed that earthquakes in the past have wrecked a considerable toll in this region. Earthquakes have created to cracks in the wall of the monastery and at times also damaged the monastery itself. The monastery and the surrounding walls have been renovated many times because of damages caused by frequent earthquakes. As mentioned earlier, Tawang monastery being built up of large stone-bricks cannot be replaced by ordinary stones and bricks.



Figure 69: The figure shows the *Chaza*, a canonical shaped object kept in the surrounding of Tawang monastery. (Photo by Hakhe)

And a person involved in making stone-bricks need to be aware of the proportionate size of the bricks and only the locals could provide specialized expertise for the renovation of the wall. This must have necessitated the Lamas of Tawang monastery to employ locals to renovate the affected parts of the monastery. As already mentioned, serving the Tawang monastery was always a privilege for the Monpas. Hence, it is evident that Tawang monastery in some circumstances had to rely on locals for its functionality. The inter-relationship between the two impacted the development of the manufacturing of non-metallic objects as well as the behaviour and understanding of locals towards the objects.

4.7. TAWANG MONASTERY AND HOUSEHOLD OBJECTS

Tawang monastery has been more than a mere religious institution. Besides its political significance, it acted as the guardian for the locals to live a righteous life. In the interview with the Lamas, it became clear that Lamas take a keen interest in leading the local youth to the path of Buddhism. Many young boys were being sent to Tawang monastery to learn monasticism so that they would learn Buddhist philosophies and embrace Lamaism in the future. The profession of a lama was highly respected, during those days even till date they are respected in the society. It is said, the monastery used to oblige the locals to send one male member from each family to learn Lamaism. Moreover, some of the parents would send their son because of the difficulties they face in nourishing and bringing up their child. However, it is still a debated fact whether the monastery was aristocratic regarding its jurisdiction. The locals have a varying opinion on this matter. But it can be fairly ascertained that the people of this region did and still send one male member of their household to the monastery to practice Lamaism. This must have

resulted in many male children becoming students in the monastery. This must also have resulted in the requirement of more utensils for the students. As per the locals, the profession of being a Lama was highly respected and honoured by the locals, and they were seen as the shadow of Buddha, having the ability to deliver the locals from the painful world towards the better realm through the teachings and practices of Buddha. Hence, as a service to the monastery, people honoured the Lamas by donating various precious material objects. Hence, the locals started manufacturing certain non-metallic objects¹⁸ that were of great use to in various activities of Tawang monasteries.

Currently, a similar type of utilitarian objects is used in the entire Mon region which covers the two districts of Arunachal Pradesh and some remaining in Tibet and Bhutan. These utilitarian objects are often used during the ritual occasions. The local people generally used a wooden plate or clay bowls to have their meal on it and also used cooking pot made up of clay to prepare meals. But the house to house survey conducted with regard to this study could not locate any of this old material evidence. Presently, modern utensils are used in almost all the households which are imported mainly from India. Utensil made up of metal was generally only acquired by the wealthy locals. In fact, the Lamas of Tawang monastery who were given the highest respect and they also have acquired the highest number of objects be it ritual or utilitarian as the locals would gift them out of respect and reverence. Though the Lamas preach abstinence from materialistic desire but the monastery had to rely on materialism. Every corner of the monastery signifies the strong attachment it has with the objects. For instance, hundreds of *Chaza*, which is an object with conical shaped are kept in various location of the monastery to signify holiness in the surroundings of the monastery. The locals also believe that it defends the monastery from any external evil elements. Such practices are observed almost in all the monasteries of Gelugpa sect and have been observed for centuries. It is generally made up of mud and is seen mostly in the monasteries. A maximum number of these object were seen in Tawang monastery.

¹⁸ See page 3 to know the non-metallic object.



Figure 70: The figure shows the *Churpi* maker known as *Zop* in Monpa.

Some object like those used for producing *Churpi* known as *Zop* displayed in a Tawang museum is a perfect example of the connection of the locals with the Tawang monastery regarding object manufacturing (see fig 70). This object is a typical Tibetan traditional curd maker that can be seen in Tibet even in the present day. No information is given about its usage, but as informed by the locals, this object was used by the Monpas in the process of making *Churpi*¹⁹. *Churpi* is a traditional cheese item that is consumed mostly by the Tibetans. Of course, it was the Tibetans who introduced this object to the people of Tawang region. But, in the absence of Tawang

monastery, this object would have circulated less among the Monpas. Also, it would have taken a longer period for the introduction of such an object in the region. As we know, Monpas have been highly influenced by the Tibetan culture, without the establishment of Tawang monastery, Monpas would have taken a longer period to settle down and could have continued the nomadic lifestyle. Once the locals got settled, their activities on production and manufacturing increased, and many varieties of objects were acquired as well made to meet the need of the others. In short, a secure life prospered after they settled down. However, it can be fairly assumed that the Tawang monastery is a large institution that organised important festivals. One such festival is Losar which usually happens between February and March, and a large number of utilitarian and ceremonial non-metallic objects of various types are used in this festival. For instance, from the late nineteenth century onwards, the Apatani tribe residing in the present-day lower Subansiri district of Arunachal Pradesh, often came down to the foothills of Himalaya, in the plain of Assam to work as a tea labourer in return for wages. They utilised those wages to buy

¹⁹ Churpi is a widely eaten traditional cheese that is made of yak milk. Initially It is hard while chewing but gets soften and chewable.

essential items such as copper bangles, salt, necklace, etc. When they returned to their respective villages, they exchanged these objects with wealthy villagers in return for Mithun²⁰. The commodities that were brought from Assam were seen as luxurious objects in Ziro valley during those days. These commodities were worn and displayed by wealthy men during the festive season. There were also many objects which migrated from Tibet and reached the Apatani plateau through a series of exchange between the tribes, the objects circulated from the Monpas to Nyishi and then to the Apatanese. Similar was the case of the Monpas who monopolised the trade with the tribals of Tibet. The imported objects were also circulated in Tawang monastery.



Figure 71: The figure shows the prayer drum of household. (Photo by: Hakhe)

They always had to depend on imported objects from beyond their locality. However, here the argument is not to trace the genesis of Monpas in the making of household objects as they were already producing non-metallic objects even before the establishment of Tawang monastery. Rather, the point here is, perhaps this was the period, i.e., after the

According to the Niranjana, the economy of the locals was barter economy, but sometimes Tibetan coins were used in exchange for goods. Few of the Monpas have started using Tibetan coins from the thirteenth century onwards as a medium of production of objects for exchange with the neighboring tribes. But it is certain that, during those days, the Monpas were sparsely distributed and little in number as compared to the present ratio, and without an organised trade the production of home-made objects did not earn much revenue for their daily livelihood.

²⁰ Mithun is a wild gaur especially found in the Himalayan region and in the hilly region of northeast India.



Figure 72: The Figure shows the prayer drum of the Tawang monastery. (Photo by Hakhe).

seventeenth century, production of household objects by the Monpas started to gain its momentum, and it gave a boost to their livelihood.

The drum shown in fig. 71 is used during the worshipping of the Buddhist deities. It is generally made up of animal skin and wood. The beating of this drum is done to produce a sound that is believed to release divine positive energy in the house. In Tawang monastery, other than the reason mentioned above, this drum was also used as an alarm call for gatherings in the prayer hall. The drum that is kept and used in Tawang monastery is well

decorated and designed as compared to those kept inside the house. One cannot simply beat this drum other than in a specific time as it is considered disrespect to the monastery and the deity. Similar it applies to the drums in the house of the locals. Therefore, the prayer drum has a special religious value.

There is another type of prayer drum that are generally kept inside the houses of the locals, these ones are simple in looks and design and can be manufactured by the locals (see fig 72). But the one seen in the Tawang monastery looks quite sophisticated and requires a high level of artistic skill (see fig. 72). The Lamas in Tawang monastery affirmed that since time immemorial, the Monpas were highly specialised in the wood carving. However, the Monpas never produced many ritual objects and were more focus on producing utilitarian objects that fulfil the immediate needs of personal nature and not prayer drum or trumpet. These objects were rather manufactured by the Tibetans,



Figure 73: The figure shows the dancing mask made up of wood. (photo by: [Hakhe](#))



Figure 74: The figure shows a Monpa man making a dancing mask. (Photo by Hakhe)

Nepalese, Bhutanese and Indians. The dancing mask which is also one of the important objects used during special occasion is a fine example that supports the aforesaid ideas. Scholars such as Niranjana Sarkar along with other anthropological scholars have viewed that the locals were known for producing dancing mask in the past. Currently, many locals participate in making the dancing mask. But the information from the Tawang museum suggests that the task of mask making, painting, manufacturing prayer wheel were done by the Tibetans who came to this region but later on, such skills were passed down to the Monpas. Therefore, it can be assumed that initially, the Tibetans were the one who introduced the profession of making such ceremonial objects as one needs to have a good knowledge of the symbols and designs that are being attached to the prayer drum. It was only in the later phase that the locals of this region learned this profession along with the knowledge of symbols and design and gradually started producing such objects in their house. The dancing mask (see fig. 73) which represents various demons



Figure 75: The figure shows the tall standing flag in Tawang monastery.(Photo by: Hakhe)



Figure 76: The figure shows the flag on the top of the Monpa house. (Photo by: Hakhe).

are being worn by the locals while performing a dance in Tawang monastery during Torgya festival. It is a living culture which can be seen even today. The mask dance culture is prevalent in the entire Himalayan region. In Tibet, this dance is known as Paldon Lhama Cham dance. The oral narratives suggest that this dance indicates the subduing of the evil spirit to protect the Buddhist belief among the locals from the outsiders. The belief system that is attached among locals is a clear indication of how the Tawang monastery became a strong institution to crystallise the belief system of the Gelugpa sect. According to the locals of Tawang, the Ugyelling monastery is the birthplace of the sixth Dalai Lama, namely, Tsangyong Gyatso. This monastery preserves some of the important relics of Dalai Lama as shown in chapter two. Hence, within non-metallic objects, it can be classified that there were three categories of objects: sacred objects, ritual objects and utilitarian objects. In the survey, two types of flags were observed, one of it was tall and reached up to 20-meter height, and the other one was two meter in height. The former can be only seen in the compound of the

monastery while the latter can be seen attached on top of the houses of the Monpas. These flags generally symbolize the presence of Buddha in the surrounding environment. Also, it guarantees peace and purity in the compound of the household. According to the Lamas, the erecting of flags with a tall wooden pole has always been practiced since the time Tawang monastery was established. The height of the wooden flag was such that, it almost became difficult to adjust the frame while taking a photo. The flag is attached to a string that goes from the base of the pole till the tip of the wooden pole. In all small the monastery in Tawang, such tall standing flag was observed. But there is the difference in its composition. Other flags are generally attached on an iron pole whereas this particular flag was attached on a wooden pole, which also reflects the continuity of tradition. The survey found out that the practice of raising flags on top of the houses of the Monpas was inspired by Tawang monastery. Majority of houses observed had flag standing on top of the house. The locals explained that this flag is detached and replaced with a new flag every year during the Losar festival. When questioned, why they erected the flag? Their view was similar to those of Lamas at Tawang monastery. This is a clear indication that the locals are trying to replicate the environment of Tawang monastery. Further, they at the same time admitted that this practice has been part of their tradition for centuries. Does it suggest the inspiration of locals came from the Tawang monastery? If yes, it also further supports the argument relating to the case of the chapel as discussed above. As even in the case of possession of various non-metallic objects by the household, inspiration was being derived from Tawang monastery. Besides, there are other objects that were observed during the survey, for instance, Rosary a tangible evidence which indicates that the locals were being inspired by the Tawang monastery in their traditional belief and practices. For example, the majority of the locals uses a rosary while chanting mantra. It is generally made up of wood and consists of 18, 27 or 54 beads. Generally, these beads are made up of Bodhi tree or seeds which come from Rudraksha tree. Some are even made up of Rattan tree. The colour can differ from dark brown to black. They called these beads as *Lotus roots*. The colour of these beads initially looks similar to the colour of ivory, but after long usage, it turns into golden brown. In fact, just like Christianity, and some other religions, keeping count of the mantra repeatedly while reciting, chanting or mentally of the deities is also deep-rooted among the elders of

Monpas. In Sanskrit, this practice is known as *Java*. After every successive chanting of the mantra, they change their finger and hold on to the next bead of Rosary. Generally, one repetition is recited for each bead where the thumb goes clockwise. The mantra is repeated sometimes hundred or thousand times. Chanting mantra with the rosary is believed to invite the divine power to keep the evils away. The locals believe that it serves them to increase their lifespan, merit, and knowledge. In addition, chanting mantra also serves them to realise that it is possible to break the cycle of death and rebirth. The locals can use it at any time. Few old men even while walking to the workplace would chant the mantra with the bead in their hand. The usage of rosary reflects the influence of Tawang monastery upon the belief system of the locals. Had it not for the Lamas of Tawang monastery, who believes that reciting mantra holding beads can break the cycle of death and rebirth; rosary will not have had so much value for the locals. But since it gives a hope to break away from cycles of rebirth and death value becomes immense. This eventually inspires every local to keep it at home and recite it whenever they feel the rigor of life

4.8. TAWANG MONASTERY AND RESTRICTION OF THE OBJECT

The establishment of Tawang monastery not only promoted the use of various types of metallic objects but at the same time must have also restrained the use of certain objects that were used by other Buddhist sects. Tawang monastery might not have been directly responsible for the discouragement of certain objects, but its strong influence must have brought a realisation among the locals to relinquish the use of certain practice related to Monpas before they got converted to the specific sect of Buddhism promoted by Tawang monastery. As informed by one of the locals, it seems that earlier the practice of Tantricism in another Buddhist sect namely Sakya sect and Kagyur sect in the region. Sacrificing of the animal was done whenever the ritual demanded. One object that was used during such ritual was that of a human skull. This can be supported by the human skull that is preserved in the Tawang museum. The skull that was used for the tantric ritual was of unknown deceased person. The Lama informed that there are still few practitioners of Tantricism amongst the locals even today, but very few in number. It clearly suggests that the Gelugpa sect in the form of Tawang monastery prevailed upon other sects such as Sakya, Nyingma and Kagyur sect because of which certain practices

got promoted, and some were relinquished. Altogether, this was also manifested in the usage of certain non-metallic objects. Perhaps, this must be the reason why few traditional objects that had importance earlier do not hold significance anymore.

4.9. PRESERVATION OF NON-METALLIC OBJECTS

The Tawang monastery was influential in maintaining a strong tradition of preserving objects of great value. This is supported by the fact that Kangyur script is preserved in the Tawang monastery. The Kangyur script²¹ is said to be one of the oldest surviving scripts. It is a perfect example of Lamas involved in preserving the valuable objects of the region for centuries. As mentioned earlier, monasteries of other sects such as Nyingmapa



Figure 77: The figure shows the top skull used for tantric ritual. (Photo by: Hakhe)

adopted the administration style of Tawang monastery which had a far-reaching influence on their traditional practices too. These are manifested in the practice of preserving relics of saints in the Ugyelling monastery. Some of the relics preserved in Ugyelling monastery includes a stone which has the footprint of the Sixth Dalai Lama, and another has the head print of the Sixth Dalai Lama. A white cloth marked with the fingerprint of the Sixth Dalai Lama has also been preserved in the monastery. Do these relics suggest the influence Tawang monastery had on other monasteries to embrace preservation of non-metallic objects? One cannot ascertain the actuality of such possibility but as informed by the locals. With regard to the

Ugyelling monastery, the aforementioned objects were brought and preserved in the monastery on the advice of the Lamas of Tawang monastery.



Figure78: The figure shows the Chorten that preserves the head print in the stone of sixth Dalai Lama. (Photo by: Hakhe)

A prominent figure of the Gelugpa sect, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama often visited this place to pay homage to these objects. The enthusiasm for preservation among the locals can be seen in the context of monasteries as well. The locals admitted they never abandoned the monastery and it is renovated with willing help from the locals whenever necessary. In this way, the monastery has preserved it for centuries. Hence, it seems, the term ‘ruined monastery’ does not exist in the context of the local of Tawang region. This is because the monastery is the epitome of their culture which has to be renovated again and again to keep it always under function. Noteworthy is the fund it receives annually from Tibet for its maintenance.

Artisans and engineers are being called from Bhutan, Tibet, and Nepal to renovate it in a traditional style to make it look as it was during the seventeenth century. As explained by Thupten Lama: *“It is only the wooden pillar that is replaced by the concrete, or else, every structures and designs executed in it are display and representation of the former version.”* After considering the above discussion, does it suggest the influence of Tawang monastery in the enhancement of preservation tradition of the Monpas?

4.10. CONCLUSION

To sum up, it is evident that the Tawang monastery had a huge impact on the manufacturing and usages of the non-metallic objects. The traditional belief of the locals could be attributed to the Tawang monastery. It had impacted the usage, manufacturing, and acquisition of various ritual and ceremonial objects. Tawang monastery was able to create a space where the traditional ideas and practices were consolidated, and some were discarded. In short, the monastery inspired to nature of the current material life of the

Monpas. However, both the side benefited from the interaction, creating a strong interconnection between the two. The establishment of the Tawang monastery inspired them to adopt a sedentary lifestyle, which enabled them to practice the monastic tradition within their household. This was manifested in the manufacturing of more and more non-metallic objects in the form of ceremonial, ritual and sacred. The attachment of flags mentioned in this chapter is one of the finest examples that indicate that the locals were inspired by the traditional practice of the Tawang monastery. Similar is the case with the use of various ritual and ceremonial objects inside their house. Other than the enhancement of production of a traditional non-metallic object, Tawang monastery also engaged the locals to participate in the renovation of the monastery, and this established a new platform for the already existing tradition of brick making. In nutshell, the Tawang monastery enhanced the already existing material life of the local's new ideas and techniques.

However, in this chapter, description of the past development of the interconnection between the Tawang monastery, locals and the non-metallic objects could not be built on concrete arguments due to the difficulties faced during the field survey. Many of the locals seem to have forgotten many cultural aspects of their past, the information provided by the locals has the potential to distort some facts from its originality. For example, the opinion given by the locals on the usage of rosary varied from person to person. Some believed that it was used for protection from any bad omen. Some opined that it was used to recite a mantra to ensure the long life and free from Karma. But the analysis was done mostly by the explanation given by the Lamas of Tawang monastery which was again tallied with the opinion of the locals. Secondly, the opinion given by the locals in terms of impact on their material life by the Tawang monastery was a negative response. Most of them rejected the role of the monastery in their material life. But one objective of this dissertation was to address the unconscious behaviour of the locals towards the objects and the Tawang monastery. And the discussion of this chapter is mainly based on similar ideas. The locals indirectly or unconsciously get engage in the socio-cultural space created by Tawang monastery, resulting in direct impact towards object usage, manufacturing, and acquisition.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Summarizing the chapters, it is understood that it was the prevailing circumstances among the Monpas that influenced them to embrace the current traditional practice, belief, and ideas of Tawang monastery that tremendously impacted the acquisition, manufacturing, usage, and preservation of the region. The interview with the locals suggests that Monpas were nomadic tribe who moved from one region to another region either in search of pasture land for their cattle or in search of suitable land for temporary settlement. This compelled me to assume that even though they embraced Buddhism before the establishment of Tawang monastery, it did not unify them under one umbrella owing to the unconventional nature of the then existing Buddhist sects. And the establishment of Tawang monastery brought them under one common platform to practice a more vibrant culture in the form of Gelugpa tradition. Noteworthy was their standard of living which was secured with the flourishing villages nearby Tawang monastery, which enabled them to focus on other aspects of life such as acquisition and preservation of more metallic objects which had an impact on the usage of objects as well. The reason behind the nearby settlement around Tawang monastery was due to the close attachment of locals with the Tawang monastery, the most sacred shrine of Buddhist culture in the region. Not only their culture revolved around it, but also they felt secure about their unforeseen future as long as they served the Tawang monastery. Acquisition of metallic objects was one way because these objects generally had religious and cultural values attached to it. As mentioned in the second chapter, metallic objects like *Chodrig*, *Dorjee*, Batti and other ritual objects such as horn trumpet, butter lamp, statues, flat cymbals and ritual jug had a longer life and had better appearance compared to non-metallic objects which were self-made by the locals. Demand increased for the metallic objects increased side by side as most of it were not locally manufactured due to unavailability of the metallic ore. Their demand for the metallic objects could be achieved only if there was a linkage with the neighbouring region namely Bhutan, Nepal, Tibet and other region. The establishment of the Tawang monastery exactly indirectly served this purpose which further strengthened the previously existing bond, if there were

one. Since Tawang monastery was the second headquarter of Gelugpa sect, foreign countries often maintained a close tie with it. This resulted in the import of valuable metallic objects ceremonial, utilitarian and sacred objects. As a result, the enthusiasm to acquire similar objects was realised by the locals. This opened up a new platform for trade activities altogether. The expansion of trade linkage of Tawang with Bhutan and Tibet further boosted the inflow of metallic objects from Nepal and Kashmir. The influx of metallic objects gradually became a part of the Monpa culture. Not only the metallic objects but also some foreign belief system and usage attached to it reached Tawang.

Tawang monastery as compared to other monasteries of this region was more vibrant in its functionality. This idea is based on the present functionality of the Tawang monastery which meets the description above. Its constitution was more established and well evolved as compared to the other monasteries. It took the responsibility of conducting various ceremonies and festivals. This, in turn, resulted in the requirement of various metallic objects of different sizes. Hence, it is obvious that large cooking objects such as *Thup Therp* as displayed in the museum were required to prepare a meal for the guests and lamas. Various types of ladles were also required to serve food with it, as many attendants would visit the monasteries during the festive season. Occasionally, lamas were invited to their house to perform rituals and ceremonies, which required the household to acquire some basic worship accouterments, which were basically metallic. As a result, they toiled to acquire and possess the same. It is assumed that the locals who acquired these objects felt the divine presence of Buddha in their house. They started to pay homage to these objects by cleaning and polishing it to keep it safely in the house, which in turn became a daily chore in their life. The improved trade link with the neighboring countries (Tibet, Bhutan, Nepal etc.) made it possible for the locals to acquire the required metallic goods through import. Yak served as the mode of transportation for such imports.

As mentioned earlier, the lamas believed that service to the monastery was a way of living a righteous life. This argument is supported by the belief system portrayed through Thangka paintings in the main prayer hall of Tawang monastery. The painting depicts the punishment and rewards afterlife depending on the life led by the Monpas. This gave me a picture of the locals going to the extent of importing heavy metallic

objects for the lamas of Tawang monastery. The imported objects such as a giant statue, iron prayer wheel, and chorten were held high in value, and such imported metallic objects were preserved for many generations. This is manifested in the traditions of the locals as they preserve imported objects from far off region like northern India, Bhutan, and Tibet carefully. Hence, the fair assumption can be made that locals not only imported objects from the far-off regions, but some of them went to Bhutan and Tibet to learn the art of making metallic objects. This enabled them to make basic metallic objects that could be used at home. But their participation in this profession was less as was seen in present days in Tawang. Only a few locals are involved in producing metallic objects. Altogether, the metallic materials both common and religious sacredly impacted the relationship between the locals and Tawang Monastery. The locals became slightly possessive in acquiring all the objects that were associated with Tawang Monastery.

In my opinion, the establishment of the Tawang monastery had its effects not only on metallic objects but also on objects that were non-metallic. As a matter of fact, it had the same effects on non-metallic objects. However, the difference lay in its (non-metallic objects) manufacturing aspect. As mentioned in the third chapter, the locals were already known to make various non-metallic objects before the establishment of Tawang Monastery. But its establishment had further empowered the locals to produce these objects (non-metallic) in greater proportion than before. This is apparent in their (locals) ability to supply traditionally manufactured paper to Tawang Monastery. It (Tawang Monastery) being the transmitter of various Buddhist ideology required a large quantity of paper. This was fulfilled by the locals who engaged themselves in papermaking within their own localities. Had there been the absence of Tawang monastery, the manufacturing of traditional paper would not have prospered as it did. In fact, the traditional paper making became one of the sources of livelihood. Other than transmitting Buddhist ideologies, the paper was also used in the religious practice of stuffing into the prayer wheel and statues of deity with it (prayers were written) as the Lamas consider that only after stuffing paper inside the Prayer wheel, it is considered religious value. Traditional papers were also used to write the basic mantras, required to chant during worship. The household may not always call the lamas to conduct worship ceremonies; hence, they wrote down the mantras on the paper and kept it in the chapel in their own house. They

also carried it (mantras are written on paper) with them wherever they traveled, which is believed to keep them focused on their faith and keep aloof of misfortunes. This practice is still prevalent today.

The foreign influence on the trade of metallic objects discussed above can also be observed in the case of non-metallic objects. Many of the traditional wooden objects used by the locals seem similar to the Tibetan counterpart, for example, a cylindrical object (see figure 6) displayed in the museum is also used in Tibet, Nepal, and Sikkim. This object was used for making *churpi*²² Tibet. It suggests that the art of manufacturing some non-metallic objects were also learned from Tibet. There are other objects which have Tibetan features. Another such Tibetan influence on the non-metallic object is the dancing mask. Just like some metallic objects, which were required during festivals and ceremonies, so was the case for non-metallic objects. Mask dance one of the most important dance of Monpas required dancing masks. The making of the mask is also highly practised in the present day, Tibet. This once again highlights the importance of cultural exchange established through Tawang monastery. Hence it is evident that the development process witnessed in the field of socio-cultural aspects of the Tawang region, to a large extent, was due to the phenomenal role played by the Tawang monastery. Every non-metallic object that was used had some purpose. Many of the non-metallic objects valued mostly through religious dogmas which became the directing principle upon the behaviour of the locals.

The above analysis is mostly based on my cognitive observations of the local's behavior towards the object. Observation of the past material objects and comparing them with the present material usage and practices has been fruitful so far. To not hurt the sentiments of the Monpas, but it is clear that their religious and socio-cultural life highly revolved around the material objects that are associated with Tawang Monastery. Most of the traditional practices from the past are still followed today, few cultural aspects, however, may have disappeared. The basic strategy of archaeological ethnography in this field, to some extent, enabled this research to discourse the past developmental process of this region. There are wide varieties of antiques preserved inside the museum which if properly analysed can bring into limelight, the various cultural and traditional aspects of

²² For detail, see chapter four page no 10.

the region. Also, conducting a survey going from house to house concerning the varieties of traditional objects can be helpful in finding an even deeper relationship between the locals and the material objects, which I failed during survey due to time constraint. In addition to that, other than Tawang monastery there are many other old monasteries located within Tawang circle which can also be a matter of interest to be surveyed upon for data collection. This, in turn, can enable the scholars to see the past development from a broader perspective. Presently, there are huge collections of religious text preserved at Tawang monastery. These texts might have further evidence on the way in which the monasteries influenced the locals of the people. Likewise, there were many paintings of various deities of Gelugpa sect which could serve the same purpose. The limited time for collection of data during my field trip to Tawang compelled me to confine my research only to certain aspects of Tawang monastery.

In the entire analysis of the objects, interpretations were primarily based on the limited data source from the field survey. Many different hurdles were faced during the entire journey of my field trip. Some of the hurdles faced during the journey were the poor accessibility to the region. The drive almost took two days to reach the survey location. Rain only made the journey worse, there were signs of landslides along the road, and some were destructive enough to cause road blocks. More than once our vehicle was stuck in slippery mud washed down by rain.

After reaching the location, the next day, as I entered the Tawang museum, the restriction was imposed on me as not to touch anything displayed in the museum. Despite having written an application letter to the concerned authority, it was all in vain. It was a security measure, the keeper of the museum explained that some years back an ancient statue of Buddha had been stolen from the museum. Even photography from close range was not allowed. Hence, photography of objects through the glass became an obstruction, like the flash from the camera reflected, often producing blurred images. And all this did affect my survey tremendously because I was then restricted from taking any measurements of the objects and consequently proper observation of the surface of the object was not possible. Besides that, the locals in this region were very collaborative, providing vast oral information and narratives about the region. The diverse opinions and descriptions of the locals sometimes left me confused during the survey. These factors

became the greatest limitation during my recent field trip to Tawang, owing to which ample data could not be collected.

But, despite such difficulties highlighted above, there is huge scope for research on not only the Tawang Monastery but also the other monasteries about which I vaguely mentioned in the beginning chapters (2 & 3). I also have some suggestions for the concerned authorities to make such field trip to Tawang easy in the future. I firmly believe, a researcher should be authorised to access the objects displayed in the Tawang museum. Such exception of rules and regulations of the museum for the genuine research scholars can come a long way, by allowing him/her to study the objects carefully and in detail. A notification from the Archaeological Survey of India would perhaps resolve this issue. The school of archaeology should also be well funded in India, so that it can, in turn, compensate a researcher well for his/her field trips. Often such trips turn out to be an expensive one, mere relying on the scholarship can, therefore, discourage the scholars from partaking of fieldwork in the isolated or remote regions. Even an enthusiastic scholar would think twice considering the cost of expenditure such trips would entail. Traveling expense together with other expenses on food, guest house/hotels, etc. could be way beyond the budget, ultimately discouraging a scholar from carrying out proper research. Hence, initiating research study in regions like Tawang becomes a real pain in the ass without the financial assistance from the government. Apart from that, I consider my trip to Tawang as a successful one. At least attempts to answer most of my questions, about its traditions, its culture and most importantly the establishment of Tawang Monastery and the influence it had on the lives of the locals is initiated for further study. The monasteries spread across the Tawang region today is a perfect example of living monuments. But sadly, despite its importance, it has not generated enough curiosity among the scholars.

One solution would be a proper survey based on the strategies of Archaeological Ethnography should be carried out. Only objects cannot help scholars to trace back the roots and describe past culture and tradition of a community, therefore, gathering with the locals to exchange past ideas and beliefs may provide scholars deeper understanding of their (Monpas) past relationship with the objects and monasteries, which was not practical in my recently conducted survey. The interview can be done on a larger scale to

add further input to the analysis. Besides this field study can be done as a group, for greater data collection, more valued inputs and lastly for the ease of the fieldwork itself.

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APPENDIX

CONVERSATION WITH THUPTEN TSERING (SENIOR TEACHER AND LAMA OF TAWANG MONASTERY).

Me: Sir, can you tell me in which year Tawang monastery was built?

Thupten Lama: This monastery was built in the year 1682 and completed in 1684.

Me: Can you tell me the reason behind its construction?

Thupten Lama: It was built in this region as the majority of the Monpas by seventeenth-century started embracing Gelugpa sect under the leadership of the then Fifth Dalai Lama whose ideas and Philosophy of life got attention from the locals.

Me: Didn't the locals restrain them to construct in this region?

Thupten Lama: Absolutely no, since they were a nomadic tribe, most of the land remained ownerless. In fact, they wholeheartedly allowed the Tibetan regime to build a monastery in this region.

Me: Does it mean that there were few settlement in this region?

Thupten Lama: yes, there was very less settlement in this region. It was only after this region became headquarter of Tawang in October 1984 that urban settlement started to flourish. During remote days, people inhabited in this region but were very few in number.

Me: This monastery seems to have been built higher than the rest of the settlement and monastery, so, what is the reason behind?

Thupten Lama: Actually it has always been believed that constructing monasteries in such high platform keeps the Lamas secluded from the rest of the settlement area which is the sole essence to experience true peace and wisdom.

Me: Was there monasteries built prior to Tawang monastery in this region?

Thupten Lama: Of course, there are monasteries belonging to Nyngmapa sect which is much older than Tawang monastery. But these monasteries gradually came under Gelugpa sect later. Therefore, presently they are administered by it. In fact, there was some monastery built prior to Tawang monastery which does not exist anymore as they have been completely reconstructed.

Me: Till what extant Tawang monastery has been able to maintain its cultural continuity?

Thupten Lama: There are few changes in the architecture design. For instance, the wooden pillar and beam of the main prayer hall have been renovated with the concrete cement. Few roofs of the resident house have also been replaced by the metallic tin, or else, the buildings and compound of this monastery remain the same in spite of its renovation. The renovations have been followed in the same traditional manner.

Me: What about the Thangka painting in the exterior wall of the monastery?

Thupten Lama: yes, they too have been painted against the previous one as it was in the previous style.

Me: can you tell me who does the paintings? Is it the locals or called from outside?

Thupten Lama: The painters are mostly called from Nepal and Tibet. Locals participation is less in this matter.

Me: And why is that?

Thupten Lama: It is because every painting on the wall represents a symbol, philosophy and stories. Only those painters can paint who have full knowledge on this matter. The locals comparatively less trained in this regard. If these paintings are done by someone who has less knowledge of the same, there is a chance of diluting its originality. Also, such paintings are restricted in the household.

Me: Is it the same case with the architectural and structural design?

Thupten Lama: Yes, in many cases we call experts from Nepal, Bhutan or Tibet to renovate the traditional structures.

Me: which is the oldest structure in this monastery?

Thupten lama: As per I know, the old library building is the oldest structure surviving for many years unrenovated.

Me: The golden statue of Buddha which is the central deity of this monastery looks huge and Tall, can you tell me the height of this statue and where from it was brought?

Thupten Lama: yes, this statue is one of the main essences of Tawang monastery and without it the monastery is void of divine value. It is widely believed that this statute protects the Tawang Monastery like an umbrella from any external negative force. Indeed, it is very huge and tall. Its height reaches up to 28 meters high from its base. It was brought from Nepal.

Me: Can you tell me the year when it was brought?

Thupten lama: I don't remember the year when it was brought here but it may be some decades old. Generally, we replace the older Statue with the new statue after many decades.

Me: What does the posture of Buddha indicate?

Thupten lama: The posture of the statue is cross-legged, the left hand in the lap, and the right hand pointing to the ground with the palm facing inward towards the Buddha. According to the Lama, this posture is known as "calling the earth to witness or earth touching Buddha". The posture generally represents the story of how Buddha was able to surpass the temptation of the evil spirit which eventually led him to achieve enlightenment and to share with the rest of the world. The statue is being clothed with a saffron fabric robes. The saffron in Hinduism and Buddhist suggest the person's desire to quest light and salvation by sacrifice and religious abstinence. The statue is made up of gold and holds a high value. The Lamas believe that a statue only comes to its true essence after it has been consecrated by a series of rituals. During the ceremonies, the statue is filled with many relics and offerings and papers of mantras, which are then sealed inside the statue, imbuing it with a special power.

Me: How do people worship a deity? Can you tell me something about it?

Thupten Lama: Basically, it is simple for the locals to come and worship here. People make sure to come and visit this hall every week. They come inside this hall and kneel down before the statue reciting “Om Mane Padme” which means peace to all living being along with various mantra and meditate and focus oneself with a statue of Buddha as a source of inspiration. But Mantras are generally simple and can be easily remembered. They often bring with them some items like fruits, rice, wheat etc and place it in the offering bowl. Some even keep money in the donation bowl or lamp. Therefore, the statue of Buddha takes a pivotal place in this region.

Me: I see large numbers of prayer wheel fitted in every corner of the monastery and the walls, so what is its significance?

Thupten Lama: Traditionally prayer wheel is one of the most important elements of any monastery. But here at Tawang, in fact, houses the highest number of prayer; both wooden and iron. Its presence symbolizes peace among all living beings. It also symbolizes peace and purity as we turn it.

Me: How old are these prayer wheel?

Thupten Lama: The wooden prayer wall is often replaced with new one as it gets old. But the iron prayer wheel has survived for many centuries.

Me: Wherefrom was iron prayer wheel imported?

Thupten Lama: generally it is imported from Tibet and Bhutan.

Me: So, the iron prayer is the oldest of all these prayer wheels?

Thupten Lama: yes, indeed.

Me: During remote days, how did they imported iron prayer wheel?

Thupten Lama: It was a difficult task, the locals had to carry it all the way from far off distance using animal such as Yak as well as walked on foot.

Me: Does same goes to wooden prayer wheel?

Thupten Lama: As per wooden prayer wheel is concern, it was manufactured at Tawang itself.

Me: So, the locals were involved in it?

Thupten Lama: Yes, but they learned it from the people of Tibet.

Me: That means it was at the later phase the locals participated in manufacturing these objects?

Thupten Lama: yes.

Me: can you tell me how it is made?

Thupten Lama: Yes, sure. The wooden prayer wheel is made up of wood of a tree locally available and it is shaped round with hollow in the centre to stuff paper on it. Then it is rounded with the metal sheet.

Me: Paper?

Thupten Lama: yes, Monpas are known for making traditional paper since time immemorial. After the completion of the wooden prayer wheel, a paper written mantra is stuffed inside to give it a divine value.

Me: What if papers are not stuffed inside?

Thupten Lama: Then the whole essence of prayer wheel becomes meaningless and devoid of its value.

Me: I see paintings represented in the exterior and interior of the main prayer hall, so what does it represent?

Thupten lama: These paintings are of great value as it depicts various deities and philosophy of Gelugpa Buddhism. They are generally known as Thangka painting. The exterior painting depicts an afterlife where hell and heaven is represented. The interior painting depicts important deities and saints of Gelugpa sect.

Me: How old are these paintings?

Thupten Lama: Yes, these paintings are really old. But these paintings are new as the new painting is executed against the old one in a similar fashion.

Me: So, you say these painting has always been a part of tradition?

Thupten Lama: yes, also a similar type of paintings cannot be kept in the household.

Me: Sir, recently I visited Tawang museum and there I saw many old traditional objects kept preserved and displayed.

Thupten lama: yes those objects are really old.

Me: Some seem to have been used during the seventeenth century, is it that old?

Thupten Lama: I am not sure about that, but those types of objects were used during remote days.

Me: Did the Monpas had trade link with the Monpas of present day West Kameng district?

Thupten Lama: Yes, since time immemorial we Monpas always had relations with the other Monpas.

Me: What objects did you all exchange with them?

Thupten Lama: The Monpas living in other regions were specialized in the weaving and crafting of Bamboo products such as a basket which they call *Chungchung* and *Lapchu*, bamboo carpet *Pari*, Baylow, that looked like Japanese coolie headwear. They traded these item with the Monpas of Tawang, locals of West Kameng and with the people of Brahmaputra valley present day Assam.

Me: As per non-metallic object is concern, were they imported from the outside of their domain or manufactured themselves?

Thupten Lama: Initially, it was imported but later some locals started to manufacture themselves in their house for livelihood.

INTERVIEW WITH LAMA KHAO OF TAWANG MONASTERY (ONE OF THE SENIOR MOST LAMA).

Me: Sir, I see many metallic objects displayed in the museum like Prayer bell (Dorjee), Dorjee, Thup Therp (cooking bowl), ritual jug, Batti etc. Where locals involved in manufacturing these objects during olden days?

Lama Khao: Yes, some of our locals were involved in its manufacturing but only few were involved. Most of the metallic objects were imported from the Bhutan and Tibet.

Me: Did locals go to these countries to acquire the objects?

Lama Khao: Perhaps, they went, because the Monpas had a strong cultural link with the Tibet and Bhutan. Many a times they went to this country to work or learn new ideas and philosophy. This must have impacted on the import of metallic objects as well.

Me: What about the non-metallic objects like Dancing mask, prayer drum, paper and other utilitarian objects, where these also imported from Tibet and Bhutan?

Lama Khao: Yes they were. But the locals were already expert in making these objects in their home. Objects like paper, dancing mask, prayer wheel and various types of household objects were being manufactured by the locals.

Me: Did Tawang monastery ordered the locals to manufacture such objects?

Lama Khao: Not exactly, but this monastery compelled the locals to participate in the manufacturing of these objects. For example, the traditional paper which was manufactured by the locals was at a high demand in this monastery. It was used to write the mantras and various philosophical ideas which helped this monastery to transmit its ideas. Also the papers were used to make scripture book which are preserved safely in the library. I think, you must have heard the oldest Gelugpa scripture Kangyur and Tanyur script. Currently, they are kept in a separate room meant only for the preservation of the holy text.

Me: How many Lamas did this monastery accommodated in the past? And how many does it accommodate today?

Lama Khao: In the past, this monastery accommodated more than two hundred Lamas. The total resident was around eighty. But presently, since many of the locals stopped aspiring for Lama, the number has decreased.

Me: One fascinating thing that I observed in the prayer hall was the Thangka painting. In the painting there is a depiction of the hell and heaven concept. Does it have an impact on the locals?

Lama Khao: Yes, the painting makes the locals realize that one must live a righteous life following the path of Buddha. If a person does wrong to a living being, he or she will experience the same in the hell. And if the person lives righteous life, he or she will experience a kind of heavenly realm afterlife. Also, people are supposed to serve the monastery if they want a long life or compensate the wrong living.

INTERVIEW WITH THONDUK (IN CHARGE OF URGYELLING MONASTERY)

Me: Are you in charge of the Urgyelling monastery?

Thonduk: Yes.

Me: How old is this monastery?

Thonduk: It is not known exactly in which year it was built but this monastery was the birthplace of sixth Dalai Lama who was born in 1683. But this monastery was built in the seventeenth century.

Me: There are so many relics kept inside can you explain it to me?

Thonduk: yes, these relics as you can see are commemorative objects of Dalai Lama such as; the stone having a foot shape of sixth Dalai, small votive chortens. Also, a stone which was used to tie the horse during the bygone eras is preserved and kept as a display. We preserve it as a sign of respect for the legends and saints.

Me: And I see these photos of Dalai Lama, why is it displayed?

Thonduk: These photos show the picture of various Dalai Lama showing their lineage along with the date of succession shown below the picture. These help us in remembering important Dalai Lama chronologically.

Me: There are many Chorten built standing back to back. Can you tell why was it built?

Thonduk: Yes sure, there are total nine Chorten standing side by side and back to back. The Chorten is said to have been built at the order of Dalai Lama who visited this temple.

Me: was this chorten built to bury the relics of Saints?

Thonduk: No, this chorten was not built for the relics of the Dalai Lama or any saint but rather built as a commemoration of the Dalai Lama's visit.

Me: Can you tell me whether Tawang monastery has any influence in this monastery especially when it comes to the preservation of relics?

Thonduk: I don't have much idea on that but this monastery initially belonged to Nyngmapa sect but gradually came under the administrative hold of Tawang monastery. And presently, many of its practice and ideas is borrowed from them.

CONVERSATION WITH PEMA (HOUSEHOLD)

Me: Hello, may I know your name?

Pema: My name is Pema Gyatso

Pema: How can I help you?

Me: Actually I wanted to ask you something on your traditions and culture.

Me: Pema, do you keep traditional objects in the house?

Pema: Yes, I will show you where we keep those objects..

Me: Oh I see, there are lots of objects. These objects look to be significant for a religious purpose.

Pema: Yes, these objects are required for rituals and for maintaining a peaceful environment.

Me: Wherefrom do you bring these objects?

Pema: we bring these objects from Bhutan and India.

Me: What about Tibet? Since it is closer as per as distance is a concern?

Pema: Yes, earlier the locals used to bring these objects from Tibet but with the accessibility and better connection with India and Bhutan, we bring from there. But we

also bring these objects from Nepal especially the statues kept over there. In the past, few objects would also come from the West Kameng district as they had closer trade connection with the people of Assam.

Me: Can you name some of these objects?

Pema: yes sure, these objects are chod drill, Dorjee, Batti, statues, prayer drum, rosary, mantra written manuscript, an offering bowl, religious thread and pots.

Me: Out of all these objects, which has the most significance?

Pema: Actually most of them hold a significance in its own rights but the presence of statues, mantra manuscript, chod drill, Dorjee and prayer drum is a most essential item.

Me: Whom does these statues represent?

Pema: These statues are mainly of Lord Buddha and Guru Rinpoche.

Me: What does it symbolize to keep these statues at home?

Pema: These statues in the modern context are generally kept as we like it is at home or else, we believe that keeping it inside provides the house with an environment of peace, purity and freshness. During special ceremonies or festivals, we take it out and clean it, polish it and keep it back after the rituals or ceremonies are over. And only during that time we take it out or else we do not touch it or take it out before that. Currently, we ordered such statues from Delhi. Some are made up of iron and some even of rubber.

Me: What about this small sized prayer wheel? I think it is rotated holding in hand right?

Pema: Yes, we rotate it clockwise and chant “Om Mane Padme”.

Me: Do you keep these objects because you got inspired from Tawang monastery?

Pema: I can't say exactly that's true, but our life very much revolves around Tawang monastery. So it may be or may not be.

Me: What about those non-metallic objects? Do the locals manufacture themselves?

Pema: Yes, today we have a small cottage industry where such items are made.

Me: Can you tell me something about the Rosary?

Pema: The usage of Rosary is very important to us as we believe that it serves to increase our lifespan, merit and knowledge. In addition, this also serves us to realize that it is possible to break the cycle of death and rebirth. Generally, after every successive chanting of Mantra, we change our finger hold on the next bead of the rosary. One repetition is recited for each bead where the thumb goes clockwise motion finger usage. The mantra is repeated sometimes hundred or thousand times. The rosary is believed to be having some divine power that keeps the evils away while chanting of mantra. Therefore, we all keep it for the very same purpose.

Me: Is it compulsory to keep these objects inside your house?

Pema: Not exactly, we keep it because we like it to keep. Even if the person have a single room in his house, they will keep these objects. We feel good when these objects are at home.

Me: How often do you and your family go to Tawang monastery?

Pema: We go often, thrice in the month.

Me: I saw a flag attached to the top of your house, can you tell me something about it?

Pema: Yes, we generally put it as it secures the presence of Buddha in the household also symbolizes purity. We change it according to the date fixed by the Lamas. After Losar festival we generally change it.

INTERVIEW WITH SANGEY CHUNGDEN DEY

Me: Sir, are you the Head lama of Khinme Monastery?

Sangey: NO, I am not. The head lama went to Takshang Gompa over there in the mountain. Over there

Me: Yes, it looks as if it has been built attached to the mountain.

Sangey: Yes, traditionally we believe that monastery should be built in a secluded place far off from the settlement region.

Me: Actually I wanted to interview with him?

Sangey: Sorry to tell you, but he will spend there at least two weeks.

Me: So can I ask you something on Karmapa monastery and Tawang monastery as a whole?

Sangey: Sure.

Me: Tell me when was this monastery built and why?

Sangey: This monastery actually is recently built, the older one which no more exist today was built during the 13th or 14th century. Sorry I am not so sure (Giggles). There has a history behind the construction of the monastery in this region. During remote days, the whole of this region was forested. A saint with immense Buddhist ideas came in this place to meditate. One day he saw hunters running after a wild dog to kill it. But this men stopped them and advised not to hurt any animals. This inspired the hunters to relinquish killing animals. In fact, this saint was the first person to introduce Buddhist ideas in this region. Therefore after he died, people established small residents for Lamas in this region to practice the Buddhist ideas and philosophy.

Me: Has there been any faction between various sects in this region?

Sangey: No, There has never been faction among the sects, there has always been a peaceful coexistence.

INTERVIEW WITH THUPTEN KEDUNG AND LOBSANG DORJEE

Me: Sir, can you tell me the significance of this monastery (Tawang monastery)?

Thupten: Sure. This monastery is one of the most important monastery not only for the Monpas but also for those who follow the Gelugpa sect. Apart from being the second largest Buddhist monastery in Asia, it is also the second headquarter of Gelugpa sect the first being the monastery of Potala palace Tibet. The socio-cultural aspects of the Monpas revolve around this monastery.

Me: Why is it build in this location which seems to me located higher altitude than rest of the settlement?

Thupten: It is because we believe that, monastery should always be built in the secluded region some distance away from the settlement area and built in higher altitude as it enable the Lamas to meditate and experience ture knowledge and wisdom.

Me: Was locals highly involved in its construction?

Thupten: yes, there were many locals involved in its construction. It is said, for the measurement of this complex, prior to its construction, a traditional rope was used. The complex and building of the monastery was to be built on the measurement suggested by the Tibetan Lamas.

Me: I have had informal conversation with few Lamas and they told me that it was only after this region became headquarter that settlement expanded and urbanization flourished.

Thupten: Yes, it is true. Initially there were few settlements in this region and if we go back during remote days, there were only few locals inhabiting in this region. In fact, this region was covered with forest.

Me: Thus, this monastery has any impact on the material life of the locals?

Lobsang: This monastery has influenced the locals in many aspects of life, but to answer your question, we are not sure in what way, but it does have impact.

Me: Can you tell something more of this monastery? Especially its importance to other monasteries of Tawang?

Thupten: There are many villages in entire Tawang district. And each village has its own monastery or a temple. And all these monasteries are basically affiliated to Tawang monastery. The code of conduct practiced by this monastery is binding to the other monasteries.

Me: Do you have any chronological record of this monastery?

Lobsang: We are not sure, there must be some chronological account of this monastery, maybe kept in Tibet. But we have religious text dating back to seventeenth century in the form of Kangyur and Tangyur script. You should visit the museum, there you will see old kangyur script well preserved and displayed.

Me: Yes, I visited the museum and show it. Its script are written in gold.

Lobsang: Yes, the scripts are written in gold.

Me: But why is it so?

Lobsang: It is because, we pay homage to Buddha and his teachings and since the scipt written are basically teaching of, followers have written with precious metal. Even in the case of central statue of Buddha inside prayer hall, you will see the color of statue is Gold. Hence, that is why it was done so.

Me: To maintain this monastery where do the fund come from?

Lobsang: Currently, the government of India to a large extend provides a financial aid for its maintainance which is utilized for its renovation. Side by side, we also receive fund from Tibet.

INTERVIEW WITH SONAM LAMA (SECRETARY OF SANYELLING SCHOOL)

Me: Sir, can you tell me which sect does Sangyelling monastery belong to?

Sonam Lama: Yes, it belonged to Nyngmapa sect initially but now administered by Tawang monastery.

Me: Was Nyngmapa sect the first one to step in this region?

Sonam Lama: Yes, Nyngmapa sect was the first one to advent in this region. After that it was followed by Sajja, Kajju and then Gelugpa sect.

Me: Does Tawang monastery controls every other monastery?

Sonam: Not all, but most of them.

Me: The monastery seems to have been locked and not functioning anymore?

Sonam: yes, most of the time it is kept locked but sometimes we do enter and worship there.

Me: Do you keep any old religious and ceremonial objects inside?

Sonam: No, it is not old, it is recent and only few are kept inside.

Me: Can you tell me how many monasteries are under the affiliation with the Tawang monastery?

Sonam Lama: Currently, there are more than seventeen monasteries which is affiliated to Tawang monastery within Tawang itself.

Me: So, Tawang monastery has very important role in the traditional and cultural life of the Monpas?

Sonam Lama: Yes, it is.