

have seen in this whole area, it is here we would stay most readily.

The next morning our party separated. Pasang and Takki Babu continued northwards on a brief visit to the city of Mustang while Lopsang and Karchung accompanied me down the valley by Marang (SI: Māhārāṅ) to TSARANG (SI: Chārāṅ). This township, dominated by its fort and its monastery, is built on an eminence above the junction of this valley and another which descends from the direction of Mustang half a day's journey to the north. We approached through fields of pink buckwheat; the red and white buildings were silhouetted against yellow-brown cliffs beyond. Karchung led the way to the house of a family-acquaintance, where everyone was busy thrashing peas (pl. XXXVIIa). While we were setting up a tent and establishing ourselves in a corner of the courtyard, the 'incarnate' Lama of Tsarang came to see who we were. He was dressed for work in the fields and so was in no way distinguishable from any other well-to-do villager, but I recognized him from an earlier photograph of Professor Tucci's. He is the second son of the King of Lo (Mustāṅ-rāja) and now about thirty years old. After enquiring where I had come from, he invited me round to his house. It is a new one, which he has had built in the village, for having recently married, he lives in the monastery no longer. We sat and talked a short while and with Lopsang's assistance I explained where we had been and what we had been doing. His wife was meanwhile preparing enormous balls of moistened tsamba for the field-workers. She reheated the earthen tea-pot and served us with buttered tea. I asked to see the monastery, so the Lama summoned an old woman and handed her a key. She led the way up to the massive red building, which surmounts the bare ridge at the southern end of the village. The walled compound was guarded by a fierce half-starved mastiff, to whom she threw a ball of tsamba brought expressly for that purpose, followed by a well-aimed stone or two. The creature snarled and yelped and even though it knew

her, it made to get at Lopsang and myself. It was imprisoned on the roof of an outhouse just above our heads, and one could imagine it leaping upon its victim in a fury of madness. We were glad to have passed through the courtyard and reached safety inside the main doors. We ascended rickety wooden steps to the lama's own apartments on the top floor. They are now unused except when his father comes on a visit. There is a little chapel, recently painted, with a number of fine images. The living-rooms have large latticed windows in Tibetan style and I reflected how pleasant a dwelling-place it would be. This is certainly the largest monastery we have seen and must have been occupied in former times by a sizeable community. But now their kitchens and living quarters are bare and deserted. There are said to be several monks in Tsarang, but here the term 'monk' (*grva-pa*) is used in the vaguest sense and is applied to anyone who can recite religious texts when there are offerings to be distributed. The old woman did not have the key to the main temple, so we had to wait a long time while the sacristan came in from the fields. But this main temple was the most splendid we had seen on all these travels. The central image is a most beautiful gilt bronze Maitreya, flanked by other smaller images of Śākyamuni and the 'Holder of the Vajra' (*Vajradhara*). There is a fine gilt chöten set with semi-precious stones, trumpets bound with chased silver and gold, well-sounding cymbals, most beautiful *thankas*, all unappreciated by those who should value them. Lopsang hastened to assure me that nowhere in Tibet proper could a temple be abandoned like this one. The frescoes are good and still unspoiled. In the alcove behind the main images is a painting of the 'Holder of the Vajra' flanked by Hevajra and 'Supreme Bliss'. On the left wall of the alcove is Śākyamuni; the fresco on the right is spoilt. Śākyamuni appears again to the left of the alcove, balanced by Buddha Master of Medicine on the right. The Five Buddhas appear along the walls to left and right, some appearing twice, some three times. This temple overwhelms one with wonder and sadness. At the far end of the monastery-compound there is another

temple, completely neglected and always unlocked, for there is nothing worth taking away. The frescoes were once good and with few exceptions are the same as those in the main temple.

We walked over to the fort (pl. XXXVIa) which is now one enormous ruin, but one can still make one's way through its collapsing portals and up dangerous wooden steps to a little chapel. This contains a copy of the Tibetan canon and some fine gilt bronze images, all deserving a better home. On the floor above is a 'Defenders' Room' (*srung-khang*) with a standing image of a drap-lha (*dgra-lha*—personal divinity protective against enemies), dressed in the Tibetan mail-armour of olden times. From the walls hang weapons and various other objects, the beak and claws of a pelican and a dried and blackened human hand, fierce reminder of the harsh punishments of former days. I left this place feeling as though I had had a vision of the last days of Tibetan Buddhism, its images and texts no longer understood or cared for, while the more horrific elements continue to exercise a powerful fascination on the mind.

I found the lama in his fields the next morning, watching over his men, who were busy watering (pl. XXXVIb). He is very friendly, sincere of speech and also perhaps rather pathetic, for there are few unhappier beings than a man of religion who has lost faith both in his religion and in himself. 'I really should live in the monastery, but now I am married, and what can I do, when no one believes in me.' The Lama of Tukchä had said much the same, but without this sense of tragedy. There is no doubt that throughout the whole valley of the Kāli Gandaki Buddhism is on the wane.

In the evening Pasang arrived with Takki Babu and a great deal to talk about; it is to him that I owe the following brief description of MUSTANG, known locally and by all Tibetan speakers as Mön-t'hang of Lo (*blo smon-thang*).<sup>a</sup> This petty

<sup>a</sup> The Tibetan name is given by the SI as *Lho Mantang*. The aspiration of *Lho* is quite wrong and especially misleading as it suggests the Tibetan word for 'south'. I did not visit this city myself on this occasion, as there was