

Lamayuru

The monastery of Lamayuru is situated on the main road from Srinagar, 124 km in the west of Leh. Its elevated position makes it visible from great distance. Below the monastery the small town of Lamayuru is located, from which long prayer walls and numerous Chörten follow the old paths to the monastery. The well-recorded history of the monastery dates back to the 11th century and it was under the supervision of the Rinchen Zangpo that Lamayuru developed into a greater principal monastery.

The Sengge Lhakhang temple is part of the site but, nonetheless, situated outside the main complex of buildings, approximately 200 meters in the south-west on a narrow precipice.

The temple itself has two rooms, the entrance to the temple is located in the south-east. The first and central room contains the so-called "Lion-altar" after which the temple was named. Annexed to the central room is a smaller room in which stand three statues of tutelary deities.

The temple has no vestibule but various beam seats in the facade indicate that originally there had been a frame of joists, which functioned as the structure for a hall or roofed vestibule, which was removed at a later moment in history.

In terms of design and construction the temple is built in a relatively simple way. Only one main beam and two supporting pillars, which are placed parallel to the wall behind the altar, form - in combination with the external walls and one internal wall - the basis for the static structure of the central room. In the smaller room there are two beams oriented in the same direction, which - because of the short span length - only rest on one pillar placed in their middle.

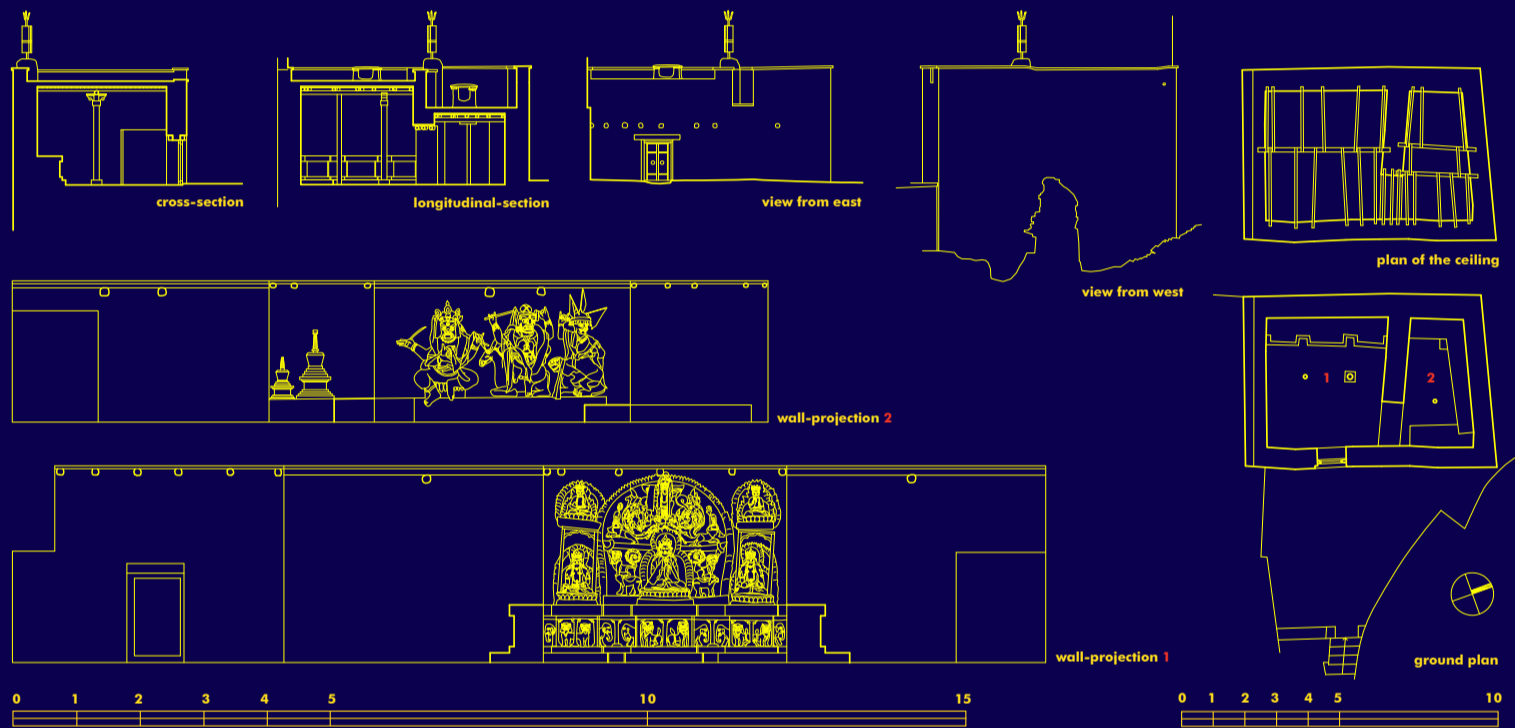
There are two groups of sculptures in the Sengge Lhakhang, one in the main room and one in a small side room. In the main room the five *jina* are assembled around Vairocana.

The lower sculptures are seated on a common throne platform along the whole wall. The upper *jina* are supported by wooden frames which have been added during a subsequent renovation. The sculptures have been repaired and the whole wall has been repainted. In the small side chapel is a group of three extremely lively protective images.

These, too, share a platform on which they are placed. However, originally there certainly was an additional sculpture at the narrow back wall. An additional sculpture, probably added somewhat later, was at the entrance. It is unclear if the painting of the sculptures is original or not. The decoration of the side chapel is definitely later than in the main room. The painting in the side chapel is recent, only the skeletons and skulls painted on the pedestal could be older.

Only the main room contains paintings going back to the foundation. Indeed in the passage to the side room there is still original painting but there is no trace of such murals in the side room itself.

Text: Neuwirth / Luczanits  
Fotos: Neuwirth / Luczanits



# Sengge Lhakhang of Lamayuru

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