From Stupa to Stupa Shrine: The changing morphology of Buddhist religious edifice per excellence

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Abstract

The archaeological excavations in the last century have revealed the ruins of a new genre of Buddhist monuments in Bengal and surrounding region that belong to 7th –12th century AD- the most flourishing period of *Tantric* Buddhism in eastern India. Its architecture seems unprecedented because of the unique cruciform layout, spatial organization and articulation and disposition of different architectural elements. Its strategic positioning within the monastery complex, scale and architectural manifestation indicate that this structure was certainly of significant importance to the contemporaneous Buddhist creed. These later monuments are generally termed as "Stupa- Shrine'- a hybrid of stupa and shrine because of the solid central core resembling a stupa base and shrine like antechambers at four cardinal directions. However, as architecture whether it really represents a newer type or a simply a variation of stupa archetype is yet to be defined. This paper is an attempt to understand the process through which this new genre of monuments were conceived and materialized. It will delve into the morphological transformation of the central religious edifice of the Buddhist belief, in terms of form, function and meaning with reference to the changes in religious creeds, practice and symbolism.

Key words

Buddhist Monuments, Stupa, Stupa-Shrine, Bengal.

Introduction:

The early monumental architecture in Bengal mainly belongs to the Buddhist tradition. Despite the scarcity of the complete physical structure, the archaeological surveys in the last century has discovered a group of Buddhist monuments in Bengal and surrounding region that seem unprecedented in terms of lay out, geometry and formal expression. The monuments that are included in this group are Sompur Mahavihara at Paharpur, Salban Vihara, Rupban Mura, Ananda Vihara and Bhoja Vihara at Mainamati and Vikramashila Vihara at Antichak (Figure 1). They were generally square in plan with a central courtyard and accommodating the cells for the monks at the peripheral wings. The most striking feature that distinguishes them from any of the earlier architectural monument of Buddhist tradition is the huge cruciform structure that works as the focus of the composition. From the configuration and the size, it is clear that this cruciform structure played an important role in the religious practice of the monastery. The absence of any precedence of similar architecture anywhere in the Buddhist world or earlier in Indian subcontinent indicates that this genre of architecture was developed to cater to particular purpose and the existing socio-religious condition was greatly liable for that. Unfortunately, none of them, except Sompur Mahavihara is included in the mainstream discourse on the architectural history of Bengal.

Stupa or Temple?

The main impediment of studying these monuments is the lack of substantial resources at the disposal of the architectural historian, both physical and literary. Among the five major monuments, only Sompur Mahavihara offers some physical remains of the ruin that is worth to investigate. Hence most of the earlier works on Buddhist architecture of Bengal were centered on this monument. There are two hypotheses that try to define the structure in terms of its function. The first one demonstrate the building as a temple, mainly the *Pancha Ratha* type, that uses Javanese temples like, Candi Loro Jongrang and
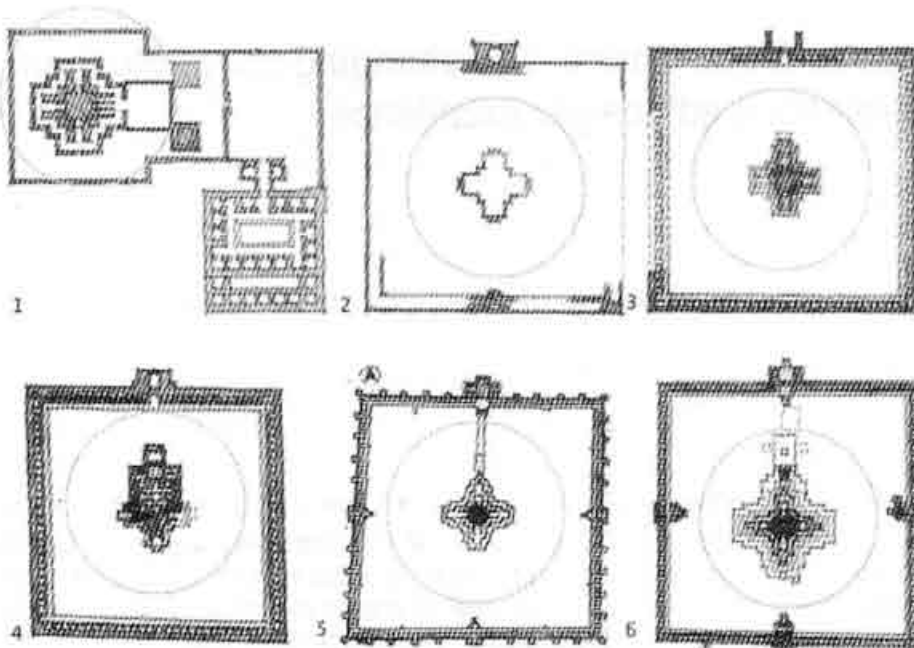
1. Rupban Mura,   2.Bhoja Vihara,   3. Ananda Vihara,   4. Salban Vihara,   5. Vikramahsila Vihara,   6. Sompur Mahavihara

Figure 1: 7th-12th Century Buddhist Monasteries in Bengal with cruciform structure.

Candi Sewu as visual parallels. Dikhshit[i] was the first to make such an assumption that was subsequently supported by some other scholars[ii]. Certainly there exists some visual similarity between them with the angular projections, location of antechambers and truncated pyramidal shape. However the manner spaces are organized in a Javanese temple with a central chamber and four surrounding ante chamber and demonstrates a over all scheme of convergence from the outside to the centre, is radically opposite to the scheme that have been adopted in Sompur Mahavihara. An underlying theme of divergence from the centre to the periphery can be discerned once we observed the plan of the cruciform central structure of Sompur Mahavihara carefully. In contrast to the central chamber of the Javanese temple the centre of the composition is occupied here with a solid core with shaft that was inaccessible from any side. Four antechambers were placed in four cardinal direction and multiple terraces were added as the scheme diverges out to the periphery (Figure 2). Hence it is clear that the architecture of Sompur Mahavihara was morphologically different from the architecture of the Javanese temple, although have similar cross-axial organization. The other hypothesis demonstrates this structure as a stupas claimed by schol-

ars like, Myer [iii] and Samuel [iv] who, observed this central core of the structure as the solid core of the stupa and the chambers as further addition to accommodate some ritualistic cults. Although they did not delve deeper into this possibilities but considering the formal expression of other contemporaneous and later stupas and stupa motifs this hypothesis has potentials for further study. Whatever the uses are or the type they belong to, it is sure that these cruciform structures had significant impact on existing Buddhist religious practice and reflective of the symbolism, iconography and cultural practice of that time as well as the aspirations of their patrons. The way they were conceived and constructed, was solely liable to the geo-cultural context of Bengal. As argued by Norberg-Schultz[v], the way in which the ordering systems are used in a culture's architecture and the broad concept behind the use of various architectural elements in a particular way are closely related to the fundamental paradigms in the culture itself. Hence, in this study we would put more emphasis on the process than the product. We would try to understand how these buildings were conceived and realized under certain condition, which eventually defined these structures in terms of use and their relative role in the contemporaneous religious practice.
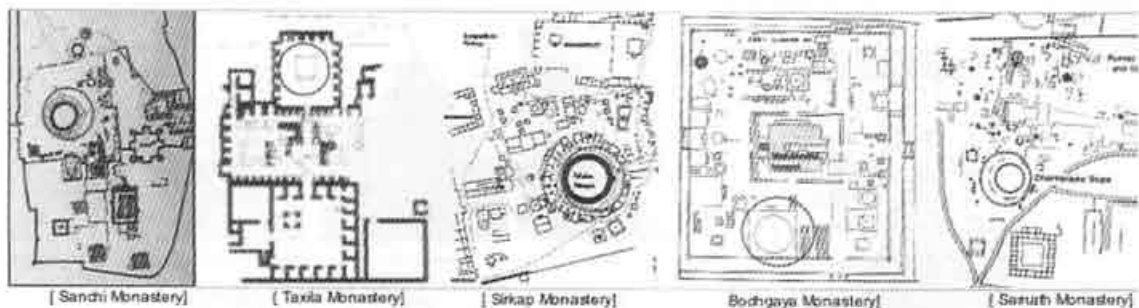
[Sanchi Monastery]   [Taxila Monastery]   [Sirkap Monastery]   Bodhgaya Monastery]   [Sarnath Monastery]

Figure 3: Major monastic complexes with a great Stupa

Stupa and Its form:

The term 'Stupa' is quite vague in describing a particular form. The amorphous nature of Buddhist philosophy made its architecture most susceptible to the socio-cultural paradigm i.e. the custom of reverence, symbol and rituals of expressing status and customs related to death. Since its early days till date Buddhist religious edifices were transformed not only morphologically but also in their use and meaning. Consequently, stupa took different forms ranging from the simple hemispherical dome to multi-tiered tower while traversing through time and space. Despite all this formal expression there is certain theme that is common and tie them together under the common nomenclature. In general they are treated as single monolithic volume with three distinct parts as an anthropomorphic representation of Buddha. These three major parts are known as *Vedika* or the lower part that includes platform and drum, *Anda* or the hemispherical dome and the *Harmika* or the finials with parasols (Figure 4). Numerous seminal works have been done by different scholars on classifying and describing different forms of stupa from India to East Asia, the reason behind their formal expression and their symbolic and iconological associations. We do not want to go into the details of these studies. Rather we want to summarize the findings of these studies to get a broader picture of how the different stupa forms were manifested in different ways and the reason behind them mainly in South Asia, as this study is focusing on this particular geographic region. This summary is presented in tabular form in Table 01. The table demonstrates that it is not always the religion that dominated or determined the form or morphology of the structure. Rather religion played as one of the factors that may shape a particular architecture. Sometimes, it is the politics, economics, or simple technological reason a particular stupa was manifested with certain formal expression. Another thing is that each of this particular form was cre-

ated to serve particular purpose and they never emerged as replacement or descendant of the earlier type. Rather each of them was individual with their own formal expression and carries different meaning. So it is almost impossible to classify them either chronologically or geographically. The chronological frame that is presented here is more as a guide to indicate when a particular form was flourishing rather then to demonstrate a chronological sequence of development of stupa type from one to the other. That is the reason we frequently observed different types of stupa base in a same archaeological site that were constructed in the same period. Actually each of them was erected to commemorate a particular incident to associate and imply certain meaning to the site. The table also shows that the period when most of the monuments of Bengal (particularly the cases we are dealing with) were constructed was highly influenced with the *Tantric*[vii] philosophy and the principles of *Mandala*[viii] worked as the guiding principle for stupa architecture. Consequently the Stupa base took a cross-axial alignment, with multiple tiers. The drum was elaborated and this cross-axiality was further enhanced by placing four Buddha images in the four cardinal directions. Actually this four Buddhas in the niches were placed to conform with *mandala* of the Five-Buddha scheme (Figure 5), where four *Jinas* or Buddhas dominate the four cardinal directions and the central one, the *Vairocona*[ix] represents the core of the stupa. The *anda* or the dome became slightly squatted and bulbous. The Upper part with *harmika* and *chatrabali* holding the *Yasti* or the vertical axis became important for two reasons. Firstly to attain height and this is a common phenomenon for any religious architecture. And secondly to accentuate the vertical axis of the stupa that eventually connect the human realm of the mundane world to the heavenly realm of the celestial world.[x] Architecturally the cruciform plan or the base, presence of multiple tiers and four niches on four sides has closer affinity with the ruins of the central structure of the Sompur Mahavihara or other similar cases that we are
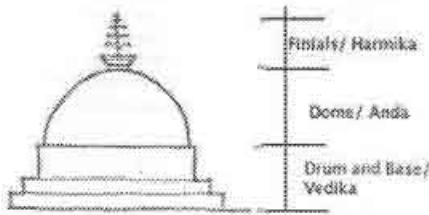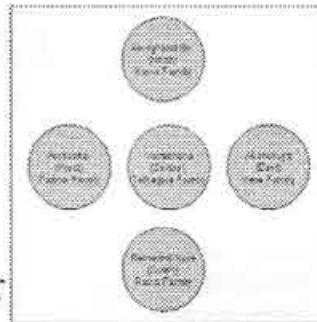
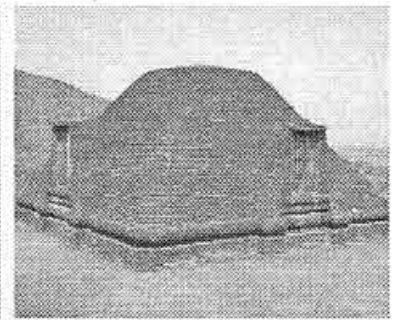**Fig 4:** Major Parts of a Stupa   **Fig 5:** Mandala of the Five-Buddha   **Fig 6:** Ruins of Stupa at Udaigiri

discussing in this paper. However, whether this central building was really a manifestation of stupa and if so, then how the designer has come up with such a complicated scheme is something that we need to study deeper. Another question that remains valid is that, whether these central structures were simple manifestation of stupa or there was certain attempt convert a stupa to another building type for certain purpose.

There are certainly some principles that were followed here to organize the plan. From its geometry and consistency of lay out it seems that the whole complex was carefully designed and constructed from the very beginning. The grand stupa found in the Udaigiri (Figure 6) has almost similar formation. It has four elaborated niches that accommodate four *Dhyani* Buddhas[xi] of Five-Buddha scheme and the solid central core symbolically represents the central Buddha *Vairocona*. Udaigiri was one of the famous centres for *Tantric* Buddhism and this stupa is a manifestation of early *Tantrism* in Buddhist practice. However, Buddhist or *Tantrism* became highly ritualistic in the later period and influenced by the local conditions. Therefore, we need to know the preconditions under which these structures were designed and constructed.

Politics and Religion under the Palas:

Although, *Tantric* Buddhism had penetrated in Bengal in a much earlier period but it was flourished under the ruler ship of the Pala kings in Bengal. The first Pala king Gopala came into power after a great turmoil, popularly known as *Matsanya*[xii]. In such a situation his first task was to establish control over the region and stabilize the country's social and political condition. He started patronizing *Tantric* Buddhism as a tool to establish political hegemony and stabilize the socio-political and economic situations of the empire. The reason was two-fold. Firstly, *Tantric* Buddhism had the capacity to fulfill the religious desire of the common people by making the religion more open and accessible. To popularize the religion and

establish it as a rival of Hinduism, *Tantric* Buddhism has adopted different godheads, tantras, newer rituals and rites to expedite the process of salvation.[xiii]

Secondly it could establish political hegemony over the empire as *Tantric* rituals are closely connected with kingship and power.[xiv] The grand scheme of erecting huge monastery complexes like Sompur Mahavihara through out the Pala territory was undertaken not only for religious purpose but also as a part of the political pageantry of the Pala kings to demonstrate power, hegemony and authority over the religion.

Mudra[xv], *Mantra*[xvi] and Mandala these three things became the key role player of the every aspect of *Tantric* Buddhism. First two are directly connected with worshippers personal state while the Mandala represents his connection with surrounding- the ritual space. Nevertheless, the central theme of *Tantric* Buddhism revolves around the concept of Mandala[xvii] - a 'psychocosmogram' that connects the microcosm of man to the macrocosm of universe.[xviii] In Tantric Buddhism the ritual space i.e. the architecture is considered as a representation of the cosmos and its design and construction are precisely guided by the principle of Mandala.

The interrelationship and relative hierarchy between different spaces and architectural element are very important in a Mandalic structure. Hence the central cruciform structure must have certain connection with the principles of Mandala. In any Buddhist Mandala the centre is considered as the most vital point through which the transcendence from human realm to celestial occurs.

Architecturally 'Stupa' is the most sacred and venerated Buddhist edifice. It is a symbolic representation of the mount Meru[xix] that connects the two planes- one with human consciousness and another with absolute consciousness. Therefore it is very possible that the central structure of this monastic complex is a manifestation of stupa. How the contemporaneous vernacular designer had come up with such and complicated scheme of architecture with the core concept of stupa is an issue to be

examined.

Conception of Stupa Shrine:

It is clear now that this 'unique' architectural layout is conceived to cater the religious, social and political aspiration of that time. Yet, in a vernacular nature of building industry where the use of model or variations of models was the main practice for the construction of building, it is difficult to imagine that some artisan(s) had come up with a unique design like the cruciform central structure form solely out of his/ their creativity. Rather it is more rational to think that they have certain model in front of them and they did some additions and alterations of that model to meet the newer demand that created either to substantiate some newer rituals practice or to cater to some political aspiration. However, throughout the process the stupa- the paradigmatic Buddhist religious edifice was kept at the core.

With the available resources in hand we could assume at least two possible schemes of this design cognition. The first one is based on the assumption that this structure is a direct manifestation of stupa. In earlier discussion we have done a scrutiny of the stupa that was flourished under the *Tantric* influence. This particular stupa form was the predecessor for the stupa shrine of the Sompur Mahavihara or in general for all the cruciform central shrine of that period in Bengal.[XX] So we can conclude that this particular stupa form was known to the builders of this mega-structure and thus there is very good possibilities of using at as a basic model to develop the stupa shrine. This basic model is featured with a cruciform base, four niches at four cardinal points with Buddha images, elongated drum, squatted dome and elaborated finials as described in the table. Devotion becomes one of the important parts of the Buddhist religious practice of that period and offering different sacred objects like, flower, incense, and jewelry was an integrated part of expressing devotion.[xxi] The ritual practice became much similar with the Vedic or Hindu religious practice as there existed a clear intention to establish Buddhism as rival of Hinduism. Eventually it led to establish a series of godheads parallel to Hindu beliefs and adopting similar hierarchy in overall religious system.[xxii] That resulted into the need of similar architectural space to house the god as well as to place the offerings from the devotees. Further, similar hierarchy was also established in terms of offering and performing rituals. Generally a Hindu temple has strong hierarchical sequence in its different parts. It represents a journey from light to darkness i.e. from an open and large space to the confined and small space.[xxiii] This small and dark space is basically a metaphor of a cave that houses the god and the temple itself represents the sym-
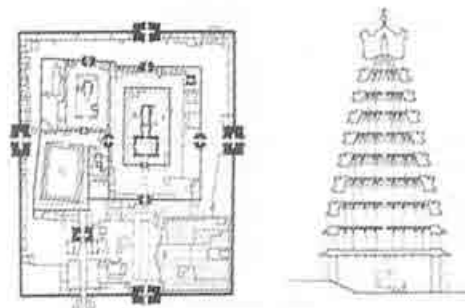
Temple of Maduari- A typical South Indian Temple
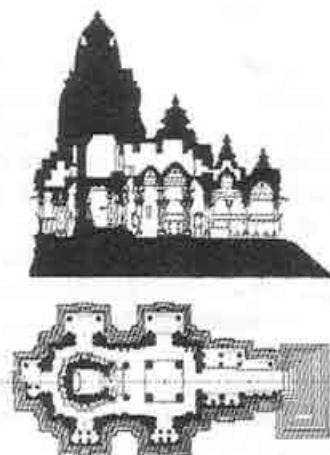
Lakhsman Temple of Khajuraho- A typical North Indian Temple

Fig 7 : Hierarchical distribution of spaces in South and north Indian Hindu Temples

bolic mount Meru in which the cave is dug out. In the simplest manner a Hindu temple thus can be divided into two major parts. The first one, where the god is housed is the most sacred and most protected part and known as the 'womb-chamber' *Garbha Griyha*. The second part that works, as a transition between the open and the close space, is the place designated to perform ritual by the laities and place offering. It is known as *Mandapa*. In larger temple this part is divided into some other parts depending on the sequences of the 'journey'. There is also a distinction between the spatial layout between the North Indian and South Indian temple type (Figure 7). However, the basic hierarchy that can be observed between these two is same i.e. a space for god and a space for devotees to place offering and perform rituals.

Thus, between 7th-11th century, when the Buddhist rituals became parallel to Hindu rituals and the basic space requirement became same, it definitely demanded a similar pattern of hierarchy between the space for god and the devotees. The niches of the stupa that were already
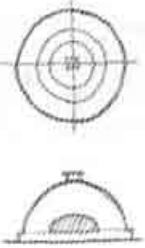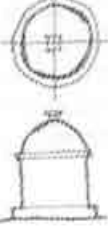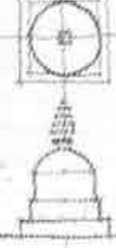
-Early Stupa. -Mortuary relics of Buddha. -Commemorative purpose. -Emperor Asoka used it as political instrument for hegemony and control over India. -Humble in scale. -Brick built hemispherical mound with a circular platform.	-After Asoka. -Authority goes to local monasteries. -Ambitious attempts enlarge the scale of the stupa to establish as symbol identity. -Financial limitation. -No new stupa was built but older one was magnified by using several encasing. -Encasing of stupa was considered as noble did..	-Stupa as an embodiment of Buddha. -Three distinct parts. -Worshipping of stupa became the integral part of religious practice. -Attempts to make it higher and dominant. -Elongated drum and base to resolve the problem of occupying much land.	-Early Mahayana. -Buddha as the Universal King. -Elaborated finials or chattravali. -Anthropomorphic representation of Buddha in smaller scale. [Relief work]. - Emergence of different terrace level, each representing certain phase of Buddha's life.	-Late Mahayana. -Concept of Multiple Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. -Enshrinement of main Buddha for distinction. -Stupa as a symbolic representation of Buddhist world view.	-Vajrayana [More empirical nature of Buddhism] -Cult of five Buddhas. -Stupa as the centre of the Mandala. -Four Buddhas on four side representing his authority on that direction - Stupa is symbolically connected with world system as centre. [No more a single entity , but the central part of the world system]

Table 01 : Table Showing the Transformation of Stupa

holding the four godheads of *Vajrayana* Buddhism[xxiv] became the chamber for the gods and demanded a similar hierarchical sequence of a Hindu temple. The first attempt could be the addition of the front chamber or hall to house the devotees i.e. a parallel of the *Mandapa* of the Hindu temple. This addition of the *Mandapa* accentuates the cross-axial character of the structure. A clear distinction can be observed between inner and the outer chamber in all four sides. This distinction is done by changing the thickness of the wall, which eventually determined the height of the chamber as well as placing door as a threshold between these two spaces. This is actually common for all the cruciform central structures that have been discovered so far including. In case of Sompur Mahavihara the difference between these two spaces is clearly discernible. Where the outer chamber takes the shape of hypostyle hall or colonnaded chamber, the sanctum remain unadorned and give cave like feeling resembling the character of the character of *Garbha Griyha*. Although, whether the presence of four column bases in the outer chamber are actually representative of a hypostyle hall with roof supported by columns or they are actually creating a inner pavilion to accommodate a Buddha statue for circumambulation, remains unresolved, but there is no doubt about the different character as well as purpose of this two spaces.

Circumambulation or '*Pradakhshina*' is one of the most important parts of the Buddhist religious rituals since its early days. Any sacred structure, stupa or images must have a *Pradakhshina* path around it. With the addition of the *Mandapa* in the front, the original stupa was now transformed into newer entity- the 'stupa-shrine'. This transformation implied a newer meaning to it and the cruciform stupa-shrine now transcended to another level as a sacred entity. The structure itself became an element to be worshipped and eventually needed a circumambulatory path around it for this purpose. The addition of different terrace levels was actually the addition of paths for circumambulation as well as to provide a connection between all the four chambers. As Buddhist considers higher ground as more venerated than the lower one, the whole structure was then elevated to another level with an additional ambulatory path. The first terrace level of the central structure of Sompur Mahavihara that held the stupa or stupa shrine is basically the platform to add veneration to the stupa shrine. That eventually resulted into an 11' wide circumambulatory path with 16 projecting angle as it runs parallel with the second terrace level. Interestingly another level of transcendence took place with this. The whole structure is now became the centre of the Mandala as symbolic representation of mount Meru. It is now connected with the much larger context- the universe, which is resulted into the addition of a grand approach from the north through a huge staircase and a processional path. This theoretical scheme (Figure 8) proposes that the design was actually originated from a
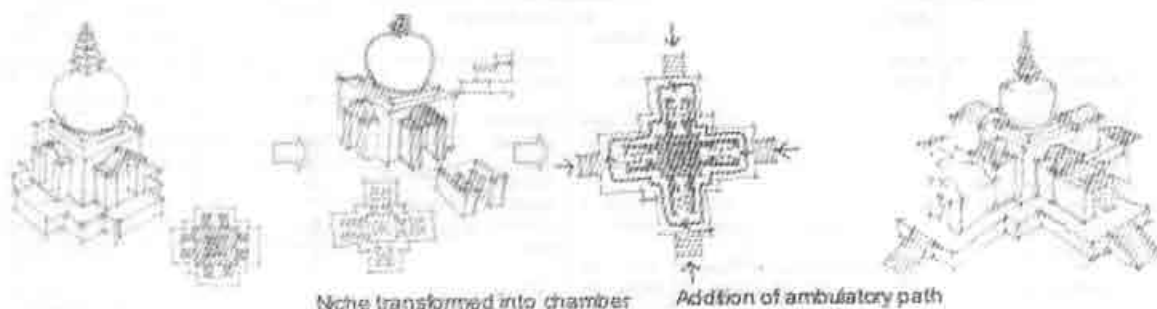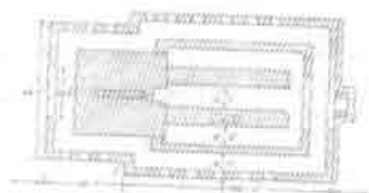
Niche transformed into chamber   Addition of ambulatory path

Fig 08 : The First scheme of design cognition of the cruciform structure

Stupa Shrine, Nalanda   Itakhola Mura(7ᵗʰ century)   Halud Vihara (7ᵗʰ century)

Fig 09 : Some of the earlier 'stupa-shrine' in Bengal and surrounding region

stupa and gradually through the process of addition and transformation that makes the structure to transcend from one level to another, as a response to existing religious need it took the shape of a complicated cruciform structure. The main shortcoming of this assumption is the lack of archaeological evidences. If this is the possible process of the design cognition then it must underwent different trials and errors and their supposed to be some evidences of the buildings or structures of these experiments. Unfortunately archaeological excavations hitherto could not reveal any of the structures that could substantiate this hypothesis.

The second scheme is based more on the archaeological findings. From the records of I-Tsing[xxv] and Xuanzang[xxvi] we knew that temples were also became important architectural types for the Buddhist's in the late *Mahayana* period (4ᵗʰ-7ᵗʰ centuries). Although the temples were constructed for different purpose, they were equally important with the stupa in everyday ritual practice.[xxvii] From the archaeological ruins of Nalanda, Bodhgaya and Sarnath we can see that temples and the grand stupas were placed together in the same monastic complex. However, the surviving example of one small stupa with a shrine chamber at Nalanda site III and foundation remains of some similar structure in Bengal actually interest us. In the example of Nalanda site III (Figure 9) a conscious attempt of combining the stupa and a shrine

chamber is easily discernible. The archaeological ruins of some Buddhist temple foundations in Itakhola Mura and Halud Vihara (Figure 9) in Bengal demonstrate a solid square mass was attached in the front of the shrine chamber. The solid mass is identified as stupa base and hence they are similar in terms of morphology with the structure in Nalanda site III. These structures were commonly termed as 'stupa-shrine' by most of the scholars. Why and how these structures were emerged was never answered. However, we could guess that this attachment of stupa and a shrine could be solution of two very practical problems, one functional another architectural. Firstly, as the temple and the stupa both became a part of the ritual practice, the monks had to commute between these two every day, while they came out from their hostel for worship. Secondly, it is an architectural problem to accommodate two structures of almost equal hierarchic importance within the same complex.

The most simple and rational way to resolve these problems is to put them together and treat them as one structure, which eventually gave birth to a newer building type-the 'stupa-shrine'. The plans of the early phases of Itakhola Mura structure demonstrate the attempts of attaching a shrine chamber with the stupa in a quite rudimentary manner. Whereas in the Nalanda example we could see a quite matured architectural piece. However, when the faith was gradually transforming towards *Tantric* Buddhism the adaptation of the principles of Mandala for
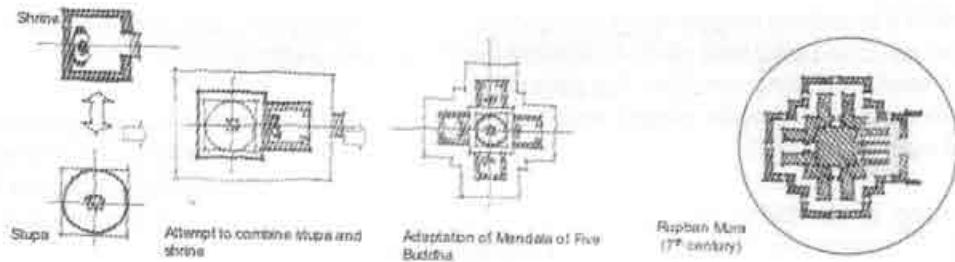
Fig10 : The second scheme of design cognition of the cruciform structure

religious structure became the priority. Converting the single chambered stupa-shrine to four-chambered shrine came as solution. To comply with the five Buddha Mandala of *Tantric* cult, the four chambers were placed at four cardinal directions to accommodate the four *Dhyani* Buddhas and the stupa at the centre as a seat for the central Buddha (Figure 10). The plan of the Rupban Mura is the best example of the earlier attempt of incorporating mandala scheme. The morphology of the earlier stupa-shrine with solid stupa and single chamber can easily be discernible by observing treatments of the four radiating chambers. If we observe the other cruciform structures that have been discovered so far chronologically, a gradual progression of refinement and complexity can be observed. The cruciform central structure of Sompur Mahavihara seems as the culmination of the process.

We do not propose these two schemes as the definite origination process for cruciform central structure. Here we tried to use the evidences in hand, study the socio-cultural religious tendencies and use architectonic intuition to propose these schemes of design cognition. They are much theoretical and certainly subject to change while further resources would be available.

Conclusion:

Despite some grey areas in the study that was mainly due to the limitation of resources, we could crystallize some assumption regarding these monuments at the conclusion. The major finding is that the central religious edifices of the *Tantric* believer was morphologically different from the earlier Buddhist religious monument e,g, Stupa. However, it certainly did neither mark the culmination of stupa cult nor end of veneration of stupa as a sacred monument. From the archaeological remains (i.e. votive stupas and stupa motifs) of the sites that we have included in these studies, we have observed evidences of several stupas of different shapes sizes. It implies that the stupa cult was still alive during the construction of these monuments and each of the stupa form was individual

with its own associated meaning, as we have argued earlier. This particular genre of monuments was emerged as an addition to fulfill certain requirements, functionally to accommodate the five Buddhas together and provide a space for worship, symbolically to create a Mandala of its own to conform the metaphysical link with the eternity. Nevertheless, through out process of developing this new genre, it kept the stupa, the Buddhist religious edifice par excellence at the core.

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[vi] *Vinya Pitaka* is the first part of the Buddhist religious scriptures 'Tripitaka'. It demonstrates the was the code of ethics to be obeyed by the early *sangha*, monks and nuns

[vii] *Tantric* Buddhism, was an extension of *Mahayana* Buddhism consisting of differences in the adoption of additional techniques (upaya, or 'skillful means') rather than in philosophy to expedite the journey towards enlightenment.

viii *Mandala* is an ordering principle mainly based on religious symbolism and associated geometry. According to Buddhist belief it is 'Psychocosmogram' that plays a vital role in connecting human realm material world and the celestial realm spiritual world.

ix According to Mandala of the five Buddhas, four Buddhas, namely *Akhshobhya*, *Ratnasambhba*, *Amitabha*, and *Amogashiddhi* are placed at four cardinal directions and the centre is occupied by *Vairocona* Buddha

x John Irwin (1980), The Axial Symbolism of Early Stupa' in *Stupa , Its Religious , Historical and Architectural Significance*, ed. Anna libera Dallapicola, Wiessbaden; Franz Steiner Verlag

xi The five Buddhas in five different gesture in the five fold scheme of *Tantric* Buddhism are also known as five *Dhyani* Buddhas.

xii Literally the term '*Matsyanya*' means anarchy of the fishes where the big fish eats the smaller one. This is a metaphoric term to be used as the overall lawlessness of state system.

xiii Rama Chatterjee (1985) *Religion in Bengal During Pala and Sena Times*, Kolkata; Punthi –Pustak.

xiv " The concept of power in its political and social application has been intimately connected with Tantric theology- so intimately, one might suggest, that one cannot be adequately understand apart from the other"- S.Gupta and R. Gombrich (1986) , 'Kings , Power and Goddess', in *South Asia Research* 6(2), Nov. 1986, London; School of Oriental and African Studies, p.125

xv *Mudra* means a particular gesture. This concept of gesture originated form the *yogic* practice where the *yogi* has to seat in a particular gesture to concentrate his mind. In tantrism each of the gesture has its symbolic meaning and practiced to serve a particular purpose.

xvi After seating in particular gesture the devotee needs to recite some syllables, which helps him to concentrate more. These syllables are known as *mantra*.

xvii F.W. Bunce (2002), *The Iconography of Architectural Plans: A study of the Influence of Hinduism and Buddhism*, New Delhi; D.K. Print world.

xviii Giuseppe Tucci (1961), *The Theory and Practice of Mandala*, London; Rider

xix A. Snodgrass (1985), *The Symbolism of Stupa*, Ithaca; Colonel University.

xx As all these art works as well as architecture had been created under certain religious environment and it is certain that there should be some underlying theme that ties them together. Hence it is very natural to have a visual similarity between them.

xxi Rama Chatterjee op cit..

xxii Rama Chatterjee op cit..

xxiii George Mitchell (1977), *The Hindu Temple, An introduction to its meaning and form*, New York; Harper & Row. Also see, Stella Kramrisch (1946), *The Hindu Temple*, Calcutta; University of Calcutta.

xxiv Actually, *Vajryana* Buddhism is form of *Tantric* Buddhism, which is based on the five fold scheme Buddha, known as five Jinas. However the central Buddha is considered as a symbolic entity and represented by the central stupa, whereas the other four are placed in there anthropomorphic form in four cardinal direction.

xxv J. Takakusu (1966) (tr), *A Record of The Buddhist Religion in India and Malayan Archipelago, by I-Tching*, Delhi; Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers (reprint).

xxvi Samuel Beal (1957-58) (tr), *Si-Yu-Ki; Buddhist Records of the Western World. Chinese Accounts of India by Xuanzang*, Calcutta; Sushil Gupta,

xxvii It can be understood from I-Tsing's description of different Buddhist rituals in Nalanda, mainly from the chapter describing the Ceremony of Chanting, See J. Takakusu, op cit.
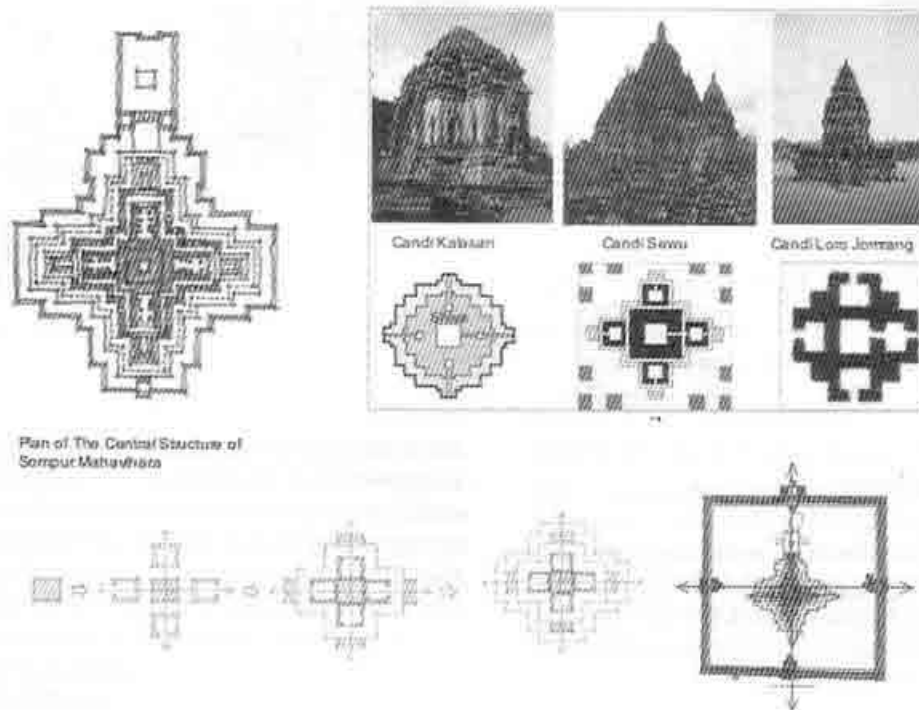
Plan of The Central Structure of
Sompur Mahavihara

Candi Kalasan   Candi Sewu   Candi Loro Jonrang

Figure 2: Comparisons of the schemes of space arrangement of Javanese Temple and Sompur Mahavihara

Buddhist Religious edifice:

Unlike other religion, Buddhism did not require any dedicated structure/ architecture in its early days as the religion put more emphasis on the philosophical aspects of living than rituals. However in the *Vinya Pitaka*[vi] we found mentioning of two types architecture that were somehow related with Buddhas teaching. These are *Vihara* and *Bodhi Ghara*. Actually the *Vihara* or the monastery was the temporary retreat of the monks during the monsoon and the Bodhi *Gharas* were generally tree shrines that were very common in India since the pre Buddhist era. Usually it was a two or three storied structure around a sacred tree. As a sacred entity, Buddha had instructed his disciples to pay due respect to the *Bodhi Ghara*, while they confront any during preaching. Nevertheless neither in his teaching nor in his acts Buddha demonstrated a particular religious structure to be venerated. Buddhism had changed a lot after the death of Buddha and the subsequent centuries. Two architectural types became gradually important in the religious practice. One was the 'Stupa' that initially was erected as commemorative purpose and gradually became the most venerated religious monument as an embodiment of Buddha. The second one was the monastery or the 'Vihara' that was initially conceived as a more secular form of dwelling for the monks and later became the central institution of the religion two disseminate the teachings of Buddha.

With the passage of time these two types went through different changes in terms of architectural form and its associated meaning due to the change of religious canon as well as the prevailing conditions under which certain architecture is conceived and realized, albeit remain distinct and clearly discernible as architectural types. However, in terms of symbolic, ritualistic and metaphoric aspects the stupa became the centre of the religious practice. They were erected through out the Buddhist world for different purposes, sometimes as an individual structure, sometimes as a part of the monastic complex. Usually, in a monastery complex there were numerous stupas of different sizes, constructed for different purposes. However in most of the cases there was a stupa that was considered as the most sacred structure within the territory of the monastery. If we do a simple scrutiny of the lay out and planning of the major religious centre for the Buddhist we could see that among the numerous minor stupas, there was always a large stupa known as Maha-stupa that was considered as the focus of all the ritual activities (Figure 3). Considering this there was a very good possibility of the central structure of Sompur Mahavihara to be a manifestation of Stupa.