

Headquarters,
South East Asia Air Command,
India.

24 November 1943.

Dear Sir,

I may introduce myself as a British archaeologist at present in the Army and a friend of Capt J. F. T. Horne, who visited you at Naggar last month.

I am very interested in the type of building represented by the wooden temples in the West Himalayan foothills, as for instance at Manali and that near your Institute of which Captain Horne brought me back a photograph. This type appears to represent a well-known primitive house type widely distributed among modern primitives and in northern Europe going back at least to the third century B.C. and possibly considerably earlier. (You may know Oelmann's 'Haus u. Hof im Altertum' which discusses the type). Essentially it consists of a central structure giving provision for light and escape of smoke from a central hearth by a 'lantern' raised above the remainder and may be square or circular in plan.

This seems to be precisely the structure of your local wooden temples, and the same structure is implied to my mind in the Asokan temple at Bairat in Jaipur State, on which I enclose a reprint of a paper of mine. A variation of this central hearth and smoke-hole is of course seen in the stone temple roofing (seen e.g. at Baijnath) where the stone is a skeuomorph of wooden construction such as was seen in the Upper Oxus by Stein in comparatively modern dwelling houses, where as the central hole is functional it is open though of course closed over in the stone temples.

My reason for writing to you is to ask whether it would be possible for you to let me have a rough plan and section of the Naggar temple, for comparison with analogous structures as indicated above. So little has been done or published in India on material culture that details of house and temple types (except elaborate stone structures) are almost impossible to come by, and in attempting to get information one meets with nothing but apathy!

I apologise for troubling you in this matter but the presence of scientific workers in such a remote area constitutes in itself an incentive to correspondence on the local problems of material culture and I hope you will be interested in this point. Quite a rough sketch-plan and section with approximate measurements would be of the greatest value to me.

Yours very truly
Stuart Piggott
Major.

Dr. George Roerich,
Sarasvati Institute of Himalayan Research,
Naggar,
Katra,
Kulu Valley.

