A Nepalese Labyrinth

by STAFFAN LUNDÉN

In 1703 the Vatican took the decision to start missionary work in Nepal and Tibet and during a period of about 70 years sent a large number of missionaries to Nepal and Tibet. The considerable number of reports and letters left behind by the missionaries give unique information about these countries during the 18th century (1). One of these reports was written by the missionary father Cassiano da Macerata who was in Tibet and Nepal from 1740 to 1745. In the account of the journey through Nepal Cassiano writes that he saw some ruins in a jungle, which he later was told were the remains of the ancient city *Scimangada*, whose walls were said to have formed a labyrinth around the city. Cassiano relates the story about how Scimangada long ago, despite its labyrinthine defences, was taken by enemies and destroyed. Cassiano adds that the plan of this city can be found, wrought in stone, in the royal palace of Batgao (modern Bhaktapur/Bhadgaon) in Nepal. Cassiano illustrates the text with a sketch of this engraving (Fig. 1). The connection between the ruins of Scimangada, the story of its fall and the labyrinth engraving seen by Cassiano in Batgao will be treated in this article in order to find an explanation for why Scimangada was thought to have had a city-wall built as a labyrinth and how this idea is related to the story of the fall of the city and why the engraving of the labyrinth was found in the palace of Batgao.

The presence of labyrinths in Asia is rare in comparison to Europe, and its occurrence is geographically limited (2). The occurrence on the Indian subcontinent,

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(1) Petech 1952-53. The present article is a reworked and updated version of Lundén 1993.

(2) Causasus, Kern 1983: 95, fig. 99; Afghanistan, Kern 1983: 435, fig. 630. Labyrinths sculpted in wood in mosques, and a rock incision of a labyrinth, have been reported in Northern Pakistan by Scerrato 1983, who also mentions labyrinths in Turkey and Syria (p. 24). Several examples are known from Sumatra and Java (Kern 1983: 435-38). For other Asian examples, see the discussion on labyrinths as symbols of cities, below. Reports of labyrinths in Asia will certainly increase with future research.

although more common than in the rest of Asia, is, with few exceptions, restricted to the western and southern part of India and to Sri Lanka ([3]). Cassiano's account is the only extant source for the occurrence of the labyrinth in Nepal which makes his information particularly interesting.

Few scholars have taken note of this labyrinth and therefore it has seldom been commented upon in the literature on the labyrinth. It is mentioned in an article by Simon Nordström in the Swedish encyclopaedia *Nordisk Familjebok* ([4]) at the beginning of this century, and Hermann Kern treats it briefly in a footnote in his *Labyrinthe* ([5]). But neither author had access to the text of Cassiano, and knew only of an abridged account given by Georgi (see below). The only scholar who (as far as I am aware) have used the text of Cassiano is Rosa Maria Cimino in the article 'The Labyrinth in Simraongarh' ([6]), where this labyrinth is presented. Despite her valuable discussion it seems worthwhile to treat this labyrinth anew ([7]).

The work of Cassiano (1708-1791) ([8]) has the title *Giornale di Fra Cassiano da Macerata nella Marca d'Ancona, Missionario Apostolico Cappuccino nel Tibet e Regni adiacenti, dalla sua partenza da Macerata seguita li 17 agosto 1738 sino al suo ritorno nel 1756; diviso in due libri. Libro Primo*. As the title suggests, the book is an account of his journey to and subsequent stay in Nepal and Tibet. He left Macerata in Italy in 1738 and returned to Europe in 1754. Of the two volumes written by Cassiano the second one is lost and the first, a manuscript of about 200 pages with pencil drawings, water-colours and plans of buildings, is stored in Biblioteca Comunale Mozzi-Borgetti, Macerata. The manuscript was discovered at the beginning of the century by Alberto Magnaghi, who published a large part of the text ([9]). Subsequently the whole text has been published by Luciano Petech ([10]).

In February 1740 Cassiano and seven other Cappuccini missionaries, together with a Nepalese Bavanidat (Bhavani Datt) and porters, leaves Patna on the Ganges in India (in Cassiano's time in the Mogol Empire) on their way to Batgao, capital

([3]) To the examples in Kern 1983: 419-39, add a labyrinth incised on a wall in the rock-cut Ondavalli Temple, Guntar district, Andhra Pradesh in South India. The temple dates to the 6th or 7th century, but when the labyrinth was made is not known (Hyland 1993).

([4]) Vol. 15 (1911), col. 744, s.v. 'Labyrint'.

([5]) P. 424, n. 32. Kern erroneously places Scimangada in India and Batgao is called Batgai, which is the genitive of the latinised name Georgi uses.

([6]) Cimino 1990. See also Cimino 1986.

([7]) This article was largely finished when Cimino's articles became known to me. I thank Prof. Maurizio Taddei and Prof. Giovanni Verardi for bringing them to my attention.

([8]) For a short biography on Cassiano (secular name Giovanni Beligatti), see Petech 1952-53: 1, p. CXII.

([9]) Magnaghi 1901-2, on the manuscript: 8, 1901, pp. 546-47; the account on Scimangada: p. 615. Magnaghi has also published the article separately as a monograph: Magnaghi 1902.

([10]) Petech 1952-53: vol. IV.

of one of the kingdoms in Nepal, and their ultimate goal, Lhasa in Tibet. The missionaries' route is marked on Fig. 2 ([11]). The missionaries pass Lalgang (modern Lalganj), Messi, (modern Mehsi), Barrihua (modern Purnahia?) and, immediately after Barrihua crosses the border to the kingdom of Maquampur (the modern city of Makwanpur). They continue through a jungle in the Rautahat district of the Tarai in Nepal, close to the modern Indian border. Cassiano writes that the journey is not without danger as the jungle is inhabited by tigers, elephants and rhinoceroses. On the 29th of February, after having commented that the large number of animal bones indicates that the tigers are not rare, Cassiano continues ([12]):

> We also saw in several places some old ruins, and some seemed to be remains of substantial buildings. We could not understand how, in such a large forest, which judging from the old trees is of considerable age, there could be buildings of any significance. During the following years when I was staying in Nepal I did not neglect to inform myself about these ruins which I made Bavanidat observe during the journey and whose answer I did not understand, because I did not yet know the language; and although I have received this knowledge 4 years later I am of the opinion that I should treat it here, despite the small digression I have to do from our journey.
>
> I was assured by many Nepalese from Batgao that these ruins were some small vestiges remaining of the very ancient and famous city Scimangada, from which their kings originated, and which was not possible to enter without wheeling it around again and again for about a month, because it was a city situated in the centre of quasi-labyrinth enclosed by high walls, a labyrinth which it was impossible to enter except on a single spot, and after having entered there one had to pass beneath four fortresses, which were evenly distributed from place to place within the enclosures (between the barriers?) of the labyrinth; and these enclosures (barriers?) had a distance from one side to the other (from one to the other?) of about a Kos or two miles, and the walls were extremely high with a width in proportion. Within the enclosures (between the barriers?) there were lovely fields and small creeks with watered them. The food supplies produced by the fields within the enclosures (between the barriers?) were sufficient to feed the large population, which was governed by a great King, who also had a vast domain around outside the enclosures (barriers?), which was governed by one of his prime ministers. One of these which had received the disapproval of the king, swore to take vengeance by betraying his fatherland and surrended it to the Muslims; therefore the plan was agreed with the [Muslim] Emperor, with numerous troops he [i.e. the prime minister] took position of the entrance to

([11]) Petech 1952-53, vol. IV, p. 4. A map on which several of the relevant place names can be found is: J. Rennell, *Hindostan* 1782 (copied at Berlin by Benj. Glasbach 1785), Scale: 60 geographical miles/69,5 British miles to a degree (i.e. 1: 4,500,000). It should be noted that cartographically this map is not very reliable.

([12]) Petech 1952-53: vol. IV, pp. 12-14.

the labyrinth, and then the defensive wall (la muraglia) opposite and on the other side had been forced, they entered the city before anyone had noticed the enemies, who massacred the inhabitants. Some managed to save themselves through the breach in the wall made by the enemies, and one of these was the son of the king, who escaped to Nepal, there he eventually managed to settle and subdue the native king and seize the kingdom. So much has repeatedly been told me in short about the city Scimangada, where in the royal palace in Batgao the plan of the city was preserved wrought in stone, such as I have roughly sketched it here.

An ancient king of Batgao in his time struck coins with some hieroglyphs on one side the plan of Scimangada on the other side. These coins, which are of silver have the value of one lire, about two roman paoli; but today these with the plan of Scimangada are very rare [...].

As was mentioned in the beginning, the text is accompanied by an illustration (Fig. 1). It measures 15.5 by 16 cm and is entitled 'Plan fo the City of Scimangada and its barriers/enclosures'. The illustration shows a type of labyrinth which in modern literature may be referred to as of the 'cross' type or the 'Cretan' type ([13]). A caption explains the illustration:

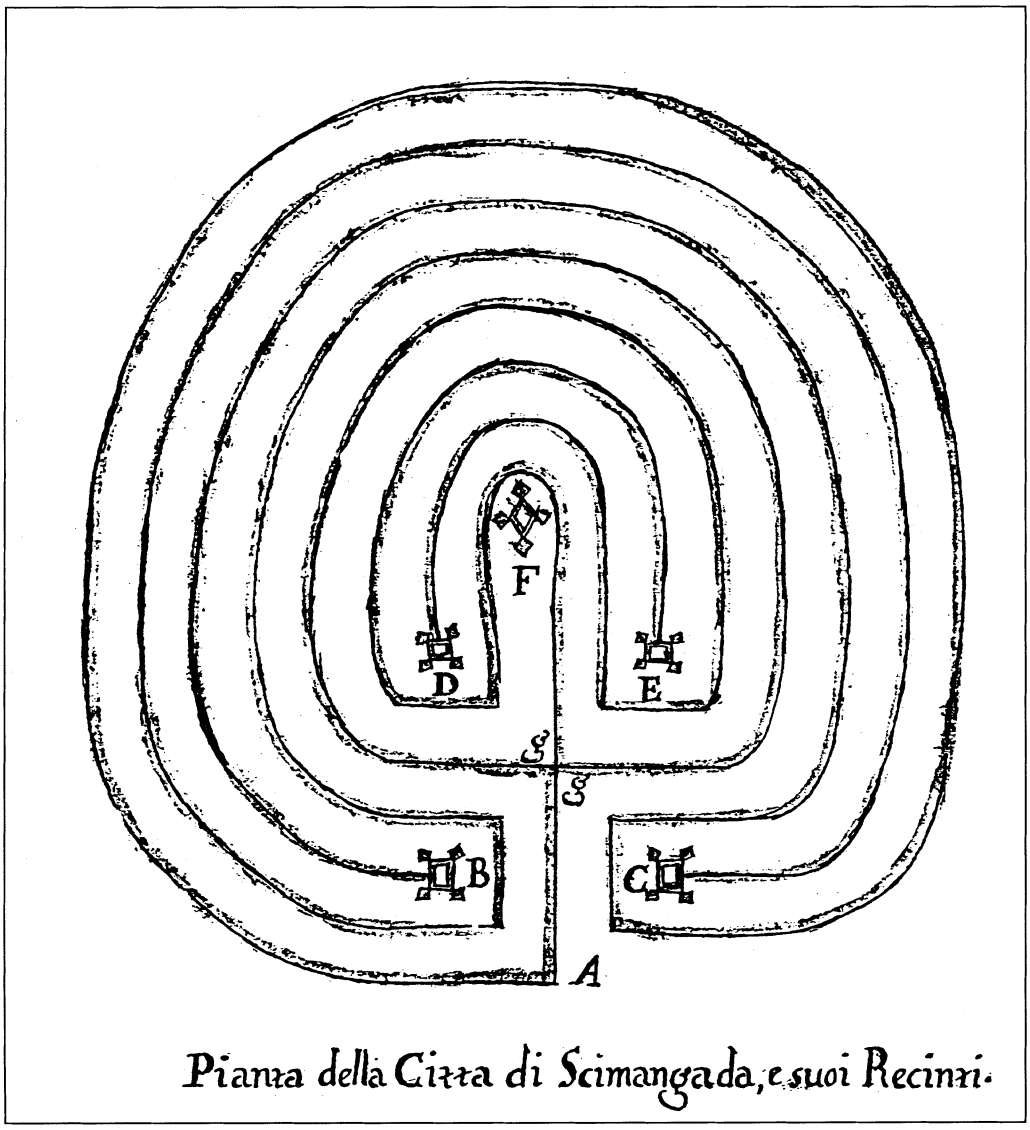
A. Entrance to enter into the fortifications of the City of Scimangada.
B. First Fortress, which one has to overcome to come to the city.
C. Second Fortress.
D. Third Fortress.
E. Fourth Fortress.
F. The City of Scimangada.
g-g. The place where the Vice King led the enemies in and betrayed his Fatherland.

([13]) On p. 60 in Cassiano's manuscript. This type is sometimes called 'Cretan', because it appears on coins from Knossos in Crete from *c.* 300-280/270 B.C. to the Augustan period (Kern 1983: 64-67; on the date: Le Rider 1966: 175-77). A cross labyrinth is easily drawn in the following way: first a central cross is drawn and then angle brackets are inserted in each quadrant and a dot in each corner (Fig. 3). A figure with 16 points is thus created. From here the points are joined with lines, starting with any point of the central cross which is connected with the point of the quadrant next to it. Hereafter the point on one side of this pair is joined with the point on the opposite side. This is continued until all eight pairs of points are joined.

Once this method of drawing is known, a labyrinth can easily be created, which explains the consistency of the labyrinth's design over the centuries in different parts of the world. On the method of drawing: Kern 1983: 36, fig. 6; Saward 1987: 6; Lundén 1997: 29, fig. 1. That this method of drawing has been used can sometimes be easily discerned, as, for instance, in the example from Afghanistan (Fig. 4), where, however, the 'dots' have been forgotten.

It should be noted that the labyrinth is unicursal, unlike, for example, the common European 'garden labyrinth', i.e. there is only one way through the labyrinth with no dead ends and it is thus not possible to get lost within the labyrinth. In order to reach the centre of the labyrinth from its entrance (or vice-versa) the whole length of the labyrinth's path must be traversed.

A= Ingresso p entrare nelle fortificationi della Citta di Scimangada.
B= Prima fortezza, che doveva superarsi p andare alla Citta.
C= Seconda fortezza = D= Terza fortezza = E= Quarta fortezza
F= La Citta di Scimangada.
g=g= Sito ove il Vicere introduce gl'Animi, e vadi la Barca.



Pianta della Citta di Scimangada, e suoi Recinti.

Fig. 1 - The plan of Scimangada and its fortifications according to Cassiano (from Cassiano).

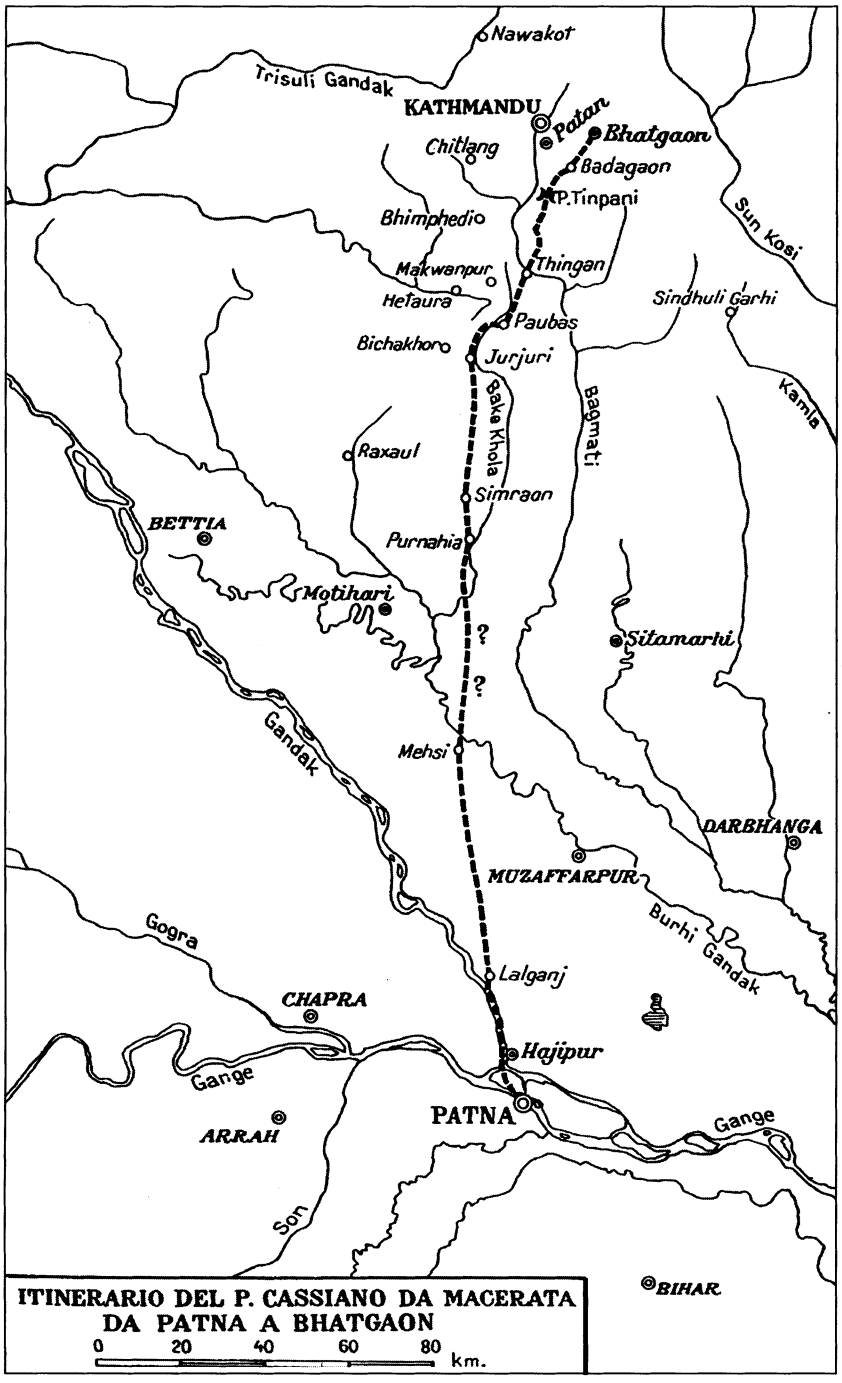


Fig. 2 - The route followed by Cassiano and the missionaries through northen India and Nepal in 1740 (from Petech).

The account of Scimangada had to wait about 200 years before being published by Petech, and the illustration of the labyrinth, which is not reproduced by Petech or Magnaghi, was only recently published by Cimino ([14]). However, a brief mention of Scimangada and an illustration derived from Cassiano's drawing did actually appear in Cassiano's lifetime, in the work *Alphabetum Tibetanum* (Rome 1762), pp. 431-32, written by the Augustinian hermit brother August Anton Georgi. Through this work the occurrence of the labyrinth in Nepal became known to Nordström and Kern and it was the starting point for my own research. *Alphabetum Tibetanum* was written in collaboration with Cassiano, and parts of the book are derived from Cassiano's manuscript. In the book there is a much abridged version of Cassiano's account of the journey:

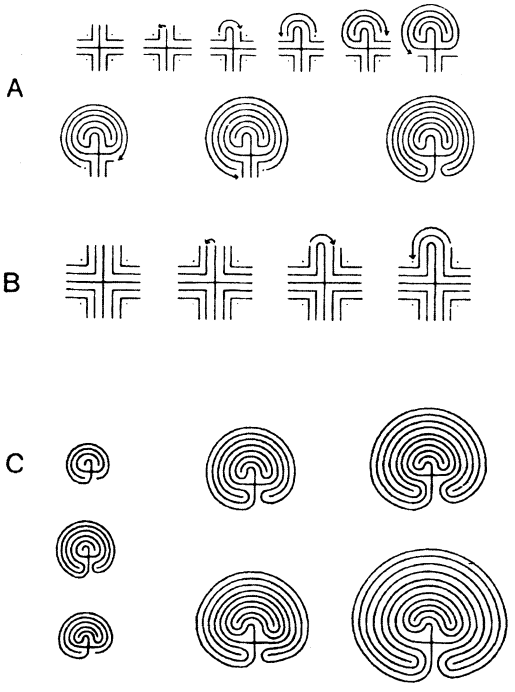


Fig. 3 - The method of drawing a labyrinth (from Saward).

> In the middle of the forest numerous ruins are seen; remains (it is said) of the vast and ancient city *Scimangada*, of which we here give a reproduction. [*Picture of the labyrinth*] Many things are told about this city. Even today they show in the public square of Batgaon a plan incised in stone. Old coins are found, although rarely, which show this plan, constructed in a labyrinthine manner, as in the drawing above. ([15])

The illustration, which measures 8.5 by 8.7 cm, shows a labyrinth (Fig. 4).

Cassiano came to Batgao a few days later on his journey and was later to stay in Batgao for three years, from 1742 to 1745 ([16]), and during this period he learned the story about Scimangada and certainly had the opportunity to see the labyrinth

([14]) Cimino 1986: 279, fig. 1; 1990: 1151, fig. 1.

([15]) Scimangada is also in the index of the book (p. 809) and basically the same information is given: 'Scimangada, a city built in a labyrinthine manner in the most ancient times. Hardly any remains of it are preserved. Many stories are told about it'.

([16]) Petech 1952-53: vol. I, p. CXII.

in the palace. Although Batgao is described by Cassiano the labyrinth is unfortunately not mentioned again, and we are left with no information regarding its size, precise location nor whether the labyrinth was made in relief or incised. Today there is apparently no trace of the labyrinth in the palace ([17]).

We shall now return to the question proposed at the beginning of the article: what is the connection between the labyrinth in Batgao, the ruins in the jungle and the story of the fall of Scimangada?

We start with the story of the fall of Scimangada, which can be summarised as follows: Scimangada was an almost impregnable city, but nevertheless, disaster one day fell upon this city. It fell through treachery, betrayed by a minister whose troops took control of the entrance to the labyrinth. After some walls had been collapsed the enemy entered the city and slaughtered its inhabitants. Among the few survivors, who escaped the same way the enemies entered, was a son of the king who eventually became king of Nepal.

Is this story fictitious or has it a foundation in real events?

Cassiano is sceptical about the whole story. After mentioning the coins engraved with the plan of Scimangada ([18]), Cassiano continues that he has retold the story of Scimangada such as he has heard it but that he finds it chronologically difficult that the city was destroyed by Muslim troops as it was said that Scimangada was destroyed almost 400 years ago, and the first Muslim emperor who, to Cassiano's knowledge, was active in this area was Oranzeb, whose reign started much later, in 1655 according to Cassiano ([19]). Cassiano also finds a difficulty in that the kings of Nepal counts 300 years from their usurpation of the throne. Cassiano concludes: 'But even if it is true that Scimangada once existed, it is not possible to trace the truth among pagans, as one gets entangling in their stories and great tales'.

However, Cassiano did not have a good knowledge of the history of the Muslim powers in India, and the story of the fall of Scimangada is, contrary to Cassiano's opinion, to some degree based on actual events:

Scimangada is also known in Nepali sources as *Simraongarh*, *Simraongarh* or *Simaramapura*, or *Simraon* (Fig. 2, Simraon). It was founded in 1097 by Nanyadeva

([17]) Dr Niels Gutschow, who has worked in the accessible parts of the palace, has in a letter kindly informed me that he has not seen or heard of a labyrinth engraving in the palace. Batgao was mainly a Brahmanist (Hindu) city but did also have Buddhist inhabitants, which makes it difficult to say to which of these traditions the labyrinth should be attributed, and in this region Brahmanism and Buddhism are not always distinctly separated (Slusser 1982: 214).

([18]) Neither Magnaghi 1901: 615, n. 4, nor Petech 1952-53: vol. IV, p. 246, n. 16 knows of the labyrinth as a motif on Nepali coins. Petech suggests that Cassiano refers to a coin with some kind of ornamental design.

([19]) More precisely Aurangzeb, who ascended the throne in 1658 (Petech 1952-53: vol. IV, p. 246, n. 16).

from Karnataka as capital of Mithila (Tirhut). The city remained seat of the dynasty until its destruction by the Muslims in 1325 ([20]). The ruins of the city, seen by Cassiano, are still quite substantial, with much relief sculpture visible ([21]). Subsequently the Karnataka family of Simraongarh gained the throne of Batgao through marriage.

Thus, the story told to Cassiano is to some extent based on historical reality; the city was destroyed by the Muslims and the dynasty of Batgao did originate from Simraongarh.

We may note that the conquest of this city is referred to also in the Muslim sources. The Persian historian Mahomed Kasim Ferishta (*c.* 1570-1611) provides a rather fanciful description of the event ([22]):

Toto fere itinere a Barrihuà Amanuh uſque, per aſperam, denſamque ſilvam, latam M. P. XXVIII., longam ab Or. ad Oc. c., inter cubilia Elephantorum, Rhinocerotum, Tigrium, Bubalorum, aliarumque ferarum non ſine vitæ periculo incedendum eſt. Noctu ad quatuor latera Papilionis geſtatilis magnis accenſibus ignibus, clamoribus, crebris boatibus, tympanis, armiſque ſtrepentibus procul arcentur Tigres. At bajuli, viarumque duces Idololatræ ſuperſtitioſis figuris, & incantamentis uti plerumque ſolent. Ex venatione ferarum uberrimi proventus obveniunt Principi Maquampurgenſi. In ſilva media rudera frequentia viſuntur: reliquiæ, [ut ajunt,] vaſtiſſimæ, & antiquiſſimæ Urbis Scimangada, *cujus Ectypon hìc damus.*

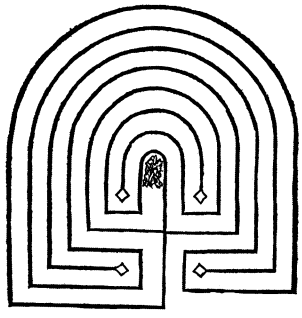


Fig. 4 - Scimangada according to Georgi (from Georgi).

> In the *Futtooh-oos-Sulateen*, it is related, that as the King was passing near the hills of Tirhoot, the Raja appeared in arms, but was pursued into the woods. Finding his army could not penetrate them, the King alighted from his horse, called for a hatchet, and cut down one of the trees with his own hand. The troops, on seeing this, applied themselves to work with such spirit, that the forest seemed to vanish before them. They arrived at length at a fort surrounded by seven ditches full of water, and a high wall. The King invested the place, filled up the ditches and destroyed the wall in three weeks. The Raja and his family were taken and a great booty obtained [...].

([20]) According to late, unreliable, Nepali sources, Nanyadeva — who was regarded as the founder of the Karnataka dynasty — conquered Nepal and established his court in Batgao. Although he did raid the country, he did not take permanent control of it (Petech 1984: 55-56; Slusser 1982: 46-47, 66).

([21]) Ballinger 1973. The work of Hodgson 1835 was not available to me. *Ruins of Simroun* are marked on the map *The Goruckpoor and North Behar Frontier: Comprising the Districts Goruckpoor, Azimgurh, Jounpoor, Ghazeepoor, and part of Allahabad, North West Provinces; with Sarun, Chumparun, Tirhoot and part of Monghyr, Bengal Provinces*, Based on the Great Trigonometrical and Revenue Survey Operations to 1858. (On transfer paper by Bullorum Nath, Mohamed Azeem and lith. by H.M. Smith at the Surveyor General's Office, Calcutta April 1858), Scale 8 miles to 1 inch.

([22]) Briggs 1829: 407 (repr. 1981, p. 234). On Ferishta's source Briggs comments: 'The *Futtooh-*

Ferishta makes clear that he derives his story from the *Futuhu's Salatin*, where the story is related as follows ([23]):

> The troops entered, in high spirits, a plain which was a shelter for the Hindu rebels. At every point in it, a thousand reeds, each one hundred and thirty yards long, were standing. When the emperor saw the boundless jungle, he was astonished at the infidels' place of shelter. There were innumerable wild trees, all as high as the sky. All were so old as to have been watered by Noah's deluge; during the deluge they had been the place of the garden of Noah. Their boughs interwined with one another to such an extent that night and day could not be distinguished in that plain. In that dark area, the army found themselves engulfed; on account of darkness, one could not see one's own hand. The emperor was amazed to see so thick a jungle that even the ants were hardly able to penetrate through it. Afterwards, I am told that the Emperor himself dismounted from his horse. He girded up his loins to cut down the jungle; he took an axe in his own hands to root it out. I am told that he cut down from the root one or two old trees. When his troops saw that the emperor himself had girded up loins, all of them took up axes. In no time, the crocodiles of the sea of battle made that jungle clean like the palm of a hand. A path was made for the troops; it looked as if in that place, there had never been a single straw leaf... In short, when the numerous troops had dug out a path in that boundless jungle, they advanced along the same path for two days. On the third day, they arrived at the fortress of Tirhut. I am told that the fortress had around it seven ditches flooded with water. Each ditch around that lofty fortress was like the Alexandrian wall beyond the reach of danger. For two or three weeks the emperor chargeed the troops to attack the suburban area, left and right, wherever the enemies had crowded and to seize all their belongings and cut off their heads.

In the Muslim versions the city is not surrounded by labyrinthine walls, but instead of seven moats (and a wall). To this defence is added an impregnable forest but the outcome of the story is still the same: the defences are forced and the city is sacked.

Apparently the fall of this city had become a subject in story-telling, where the city was said to be protected by numerous lines of defence.

It is interesting to note that the number of moats is seven. The Tibetan Buddhist monk Dharmasvamin, who came to Nepal in the first half of the 13th century describes Simraongarh and states that the city was surrounded by seven walls, which had a height about equal to that of a Tibetan fort. He further writes that the Raja's palace which was located outside the city-walls had eleven large gates and was surrounded by twenty-one ditches with water and rows of trees. The reliability of Dharmasvamin

oos-Sulateen, or the victories of Kings, is, I understand a compilation of little authority, and may be ranked with the *jama-ool-Hikayat*, or other collections of historical romances'.

([23]) Mahdi Husain 1977: 628-30, vv. 7924-46.

description can be doubted, as he, for instance, gives the number of houses in the city to 600,000, which clearly is an exaggerated figure ([24]).

As very little is known about the walls which surrounded the real Simraongarh/ Scimangada it is difficul to judge what 'truth' may lie behind the different stories of the city's impressive defences, i.e. wether the walls (seen either before the city was destroyed or in a ruinous state) were so impressive that it contributed to the stories of the strong defences of Scimangada ([25]). Still, regardless of how the city-walls looked like in reality it is evident that they were not built to form a labyrinth around the city as shown on the engraving in Batgao. A defensive system, with walls which it took a month to pass is more at home in the world of saga than in reality. But from where then, did this idea of the labyrinthine defences come and why was the plan of this city reproduced in the royal palace in Batgao?

The resembling of a city destroyed long ago with a labyrinth, fits well into the very widespread pattern that the labyrinth is a symbol of a fabulous city from remote times ([26]).

In Europe this symbolism is common and well attested and it is possible that the concept of the labyrinth as a symbol of a city is of considerable antiquity. The inscription TRUIA in the labyrinth on the Tragliatella *oinochoe*, dated to the second half of the 7th century B.C., should perhaps be red as 'Troy' i.e. the labyrinth is the city of Troy/Ilion ([27]). It has been argued that the walls depicted around the Roman mosaic labyrinths indicate that these mosaic labyrinths symbolise cities ([28]).

In Northern Europe, by the 15th century A.D. ([29]) and onwards there is ample evidence for the association of labyrinths and cities (and castles), most evident in the names gives to labyrinths in different countries ([30]). In England we find labyrinths

([24]) Cimino 1990: 1154-55.

([25]) On the remains of the city walls, see now Vidale 1994: 329-32, 336. Outside an imposing inner wall is 'a system of lower concentric earthen walls, alternating with minor ditches', which Vidale suggests inspired the tradition of Simraongarh's labyrinthine defences.

([26]) Exactly what is symbolised by the labyrinth can differ slightly; sometimes the labyrinth is understood as a city/castle and sometimes the labyrinth is the walls around the city (as in the case of Scimangada), but the basic association of labyrinth and city remains the same.

([27]) This means that neither the labyrinth nor the inscription has anything to do with the Roman equestrian game *lusus Troiae* (Weeber 1974: 185-86; Dinzelbacher 1982: 155). The alternative, argued by Small 1986: 68-83, is that the *Iusus Troiae* (and not the City of Troy/Ilion) is depicted on the Tragliatella *oinochoe*. The Tragliatella *oinochoe* is also discussed by Bouke van der Meer 1986.

([28]) Kraft 1985a. Small 1986: 73-74, n. 39, prefers to see these labyrinths as symbols of the Cretan or Egyptian labyrinth. The present author is working on a study (of which the first parts are Lundén 1996 and Lundén 1997) of the ancient Mediterranean labyrinths and hope to return to the subject in this study.

([29]) France: *Le cipté de Troie* 'City of Troy' (Matthews 1922: 156); Sweden: Andersson 1972: 8-9, discusses a toponym *Trøioborgh* 'Castle of Troy', probably derived from a field labyrinth.

([30]) A survey of the labyrinth-names of Northern Europe is given by Kraft 1986. The text is in

named *Troytown* or *City of Troy* ([31]), and the labyrinth-name *Caerdroia* 'City of Troy' is known from Wales. In Poland labyrinths were called *Jerusalem* ([32]). In Sweden labyrinths have been named *Nineve*, *Viborg*, *Trondhjem*, *Konstantinopel* 'Constantinople', Trojaborg 'City of Troy', *Trelleborg* ([33]); the two latter names are found also in Denmark ([34]). In Finland labyrinths are known as *Jerusalem's förstöring/Jerusalem hävitys* 'The Destruction of Jerusalem', *Nineves stad* 'the City of Nineve', *Jerichos ritning* 'The plan of Jericho' ([35]) and in Estonia as *Jeruusalemma linn* 'City of Jerusalem', *Türgi Linn* 'City of Turks', i.e. Constantinople? ([36]), and from the Kolskij peninsula and the Solovetskie Islands in the White Sea, Russia the labyrinth-name *Vaviloni* 'Babylon' is reported ([37]).

Drawings of labyrinths in manuscripts start appearing in the 9th century A.D. In the earliest ([38]) — as well as the latest ([39]) — of these drawings the labyrinth is used to illustrate the city of Jericho. The concept of the city Jericho as a labyrinth apparently became widespread and Jericho illustrated by a labyrinth can be found in manuscripts in Europe and in Asia, both in the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox tradition, as well as in the Jewish and the Christian Syrian and Armenian traditions ([40]).

The concept of the labyrinth as a symbol of a city was also known in the Islamic culture. The Arabic geographer Al Qazwini, gives some curious information about *Quastantiniyya* 'Constantinople', in his *Cosmography*, finished A.D. 1276. The account of Al Qazwini can be summarised as follows ([41]): This city was built by Constantine. Wise men have produced it. Neither before nor after it has anything similar been built. The accounts of the city's size and beauty are numerous. The city looks as follows: [picture of the labyrinth] but nowadays it does not have that appearance. Instead it is a great city, in which is the castle of the king, surrounded by a wall.

Swedish but has an English summary and maps of the distribution of labyrinth names in the different countries.

([31]) Saward 1987: 43-45.

([32]) Kraft 1983: 11-19; Kraft 1986: 22-25.

([33]) Kraft 1986: 38-63.

([34]) Kraft 1986: 26-29; Knudsen 1948: 189-214.

([35]) Kraft 1986: 33-37.

([36]) Kraft 1986: 33; Kraft & Selirand 1990.

([37]) Kraft 1986: 32-33; Baer 1844.

([38]) Italy: Kern 1983: 188, fig. 216.

([39]) Syria, 19th century A.D.: Kern 1983: 198, fig. 230.

([40]) Kern 1983: 182-98.

([41]) I have not consulted the original text, but rely on the translations of Batschelet-Massini 1978: 49, no. 14, and Kern 1983: 166, fig. 196.

Another, earlier, testimony for the labyrinth as a symbol of a city in the Islamic tradition comes from Arabic polyhistor Al-Biruni's work on India, finished A.D. 1045 in Ghanza (Afghanistan) ([42]).

In India the symbolic value of the labyrinth has shifted slightly; labyrinths represent castles instead of cities. In the above-mentioned work by Al-Biruni we have evidence for this concept as early as the 11th century A.D. Al-Biruni writes about the castle of the demon Rāvaṇa on Laṅka (Ceylon), and the castle is illustrated as a labyrinth. In the centre of the labyrinth is the word 'castle'. Although the text of Al-Biruni that follows is somewhat corrupt the meaning seems clear: that in India Rāvaṇa's labyrinth-castle is called *Yavani-Kote* 'Greek castle', but in the Islamic countries it is called *Al-Multawi* 'the confusing, the perplexing', which can translate as *Rumiya* 'Rome' (which probably means Constantinople). It is likely that Al-Biruni got his information about Rāvaṇa's castle as a labyrinth, and the Indian labyrinth's name during his visits to India ([43]).

Nowadays in Southern India, the labyrinth symbol which appears as a threshold design is still called *Kote* 'Castle' ([44]).

Thus, from Northern Europe to India a common pattern appears: the labyrinth is a symbol of a distant, more or less mythological, city, destroyed in the past. Although the identity of the city symbolised by the labyrinth varies, it is never a nearby or contemporary city ([45]). Examples from Northern Europe are, needless to say, not directly relevant, while discussing the symbolic significance of the labyrinth in Nepal, but likewise, in the areas more close to Nepal the labyrinth is a symbol of a well-known city distant both in time and space. Rāvaṇa's labyrinth-castle on the island Laṅka clearly belongs to myth, and — just as in Europe, cities considered as labyrinth are placed in Asia — the labyrinth-city of Islamic tradition was placed in Byzantium, and it was not the present Constantinople which was considered a labyrinth, but the Constantinople of bygone days ([46]).

([42]) Another example of the labyrinth in the Islamic culture is reported by Saint-Hilaire 1992: 192. This labyrinth, forming part of a water game in the central court in the royal palace at Meknès, Marocco, was drawn by captive Europeans, prisoners of the Sultan Moulay Ismail, in the 17th century. A water game in the form of a labyrinth in the Azem palace at Damascus, Syria is also reported by Scerrato 1982: 24, fig. 11. An explanation for the lack of labyrinths in the Islamic culture is discussed by Bausani 1984, who also proposes an unconvincing astronomical interpretation of the labyrinth.

([43]) Kern 1983: 425-26, fig. 608.

([44]) Kern 1983: 425, fig. 607. A labyrinth carved on a house wall in a village of Kota was used for the game *Kote* 'Castle' (Kern 1983: 428. fig. 617).

([45]) From a rationalist point of view a labyrinth cannot be a symbol of a real city, as real cities do not look very much like labyrinths. On labyrinths named after (destroyed) cities, see now also Behrend 1996.

([46]) Accordingly, Constantinople does not seem to be an exception from other cities considered as labyrinths and Kern's suggested explanation (p. 166, fig. 196), that the tradition of Constantinople having been built as a labyrinth originated in a (hypothetical) performance of the *lusus Troiae*, is no longer necessary.

The Nepali labyrinth and the city of Scimangada/Simraongarh fits well into the same pattern of ideas that some great, far away cities of bygone days were built as labyrinths. The physical remains of Scimangada/Simraongarh was long since only ruins and although these ruins were not that remote, their location in a dense jungle inhabited by tigers and other wild animals made them not easily accessible. As the kings of Batgao claimed their origin from Scimangada/Simraongarh, this city and the story of its fall must have had some importance in the cultural milieu of the kingdom of Batgao. If there (already?) was a tradition that Scimangada was protected by numerous moats or walls, this tradition would blend easily with the idea that the defences of Scimangada formed a labyrinth. The function of the labyrinth engraving in the palace may have been to serve as a reminder of the royal house's ancestral past.

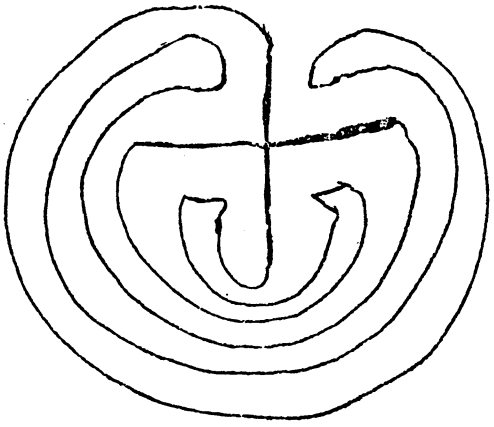


Fig. 5 - The house of Shamaili drawn by Said Agha of Sutan (Dama-i Nur), eastern Afghanistan (from Wutt).

Although rarely explicitly stated in the material, it seems clear that the labyrinth is not only a symbol of a city or of the city-walls, but also symbolises that the city, due to its labyrinthine defences, has a strong protection. A common theme in a number of labyrinth stories is how the defences of the labyrinth, in one way or the other, was finally broken ([47]). (However, despite this common theme these stories are quite different from each other and I do not think that they should be regarded as having evolved from a common source). A story with this theme, in which the labyrinth represents a house/palace, is known from the eastern part of Afghanistan. A contemporary drawing of a labyrinth has the explaining text: 'The house of Shamaili, its entrance was hidden, only Shamaili knew it' (Fig. 5). The accompanying story goes that the man who managed to get a glimpse of Khunkhar's daughter Shamaili would be allowed to marry her. Six sons of Namazlun had been killed in the attempt, but the seventh managed to come near her by hiding in a statue which was brought into her house, and eventually he married her and took revenge for his brothers ([48]). Another story with the same theme can be found in a 19th century magical parchment scroll from Ethiopia, in which the labyrinth is the palace or harem of Solomon. A man called Sirak dug a tunnel into the centre of the labyrinth and abducted one of Solomon's wives ([49]).

([47]) Kraft 1985b.

([48]) Wutt 1981: 5; Kern 1983: 435, fig. 630; Scerrato 1983: 26, fig. 3.

([49]) Kern 1983: 179, fig. 215.

The story told to Cassiano of Scimangada is also a story of how the almost impregnable defences of the labyrinth were forced. (The same theme is also found in the Muslim narratives, although the defence there are overcome in a less sophisticated way: the forest impossible to penetrate is cut down, the seven moats filled up and the wall torn down). Cassiano relates that the products of the fields in the area enclosed by the walls were sufficient to feed the whole population, which I infer meant that the city cold not be starved by a besieging enemy, and the height of the walls supposedly made them invulnerable to direct assault. Hence, the only way in was through the entrance, but the enemy entering here was forced to for a month pass along the whole circuit of the labyrinth and beneath the four fortresses. The treacherous minister nevertheless managed to get the enemy past these formidable defences by taking possession of the entrance to the labyrinth (supposedly to let the enemy in through the gate, if there was one) and by collapsing the two walls situated 'opposite (i.e. of the entrance) and on the other side' ('di rimpetto e l'altre laterale'). In this way a quick passage was created between the entrance of the labyrinth and the city in its centre, through which the enemies — and the king's son — could get, without having to pass along the whole length of the tortuous passages of the labyrinth. In this clever way the minister cheated the labyrinthine defences of Scimangada and the city was doomed.

Thus, to sum up we find that the tradition that Scimangada was surrounded by a city-wall built as a labyrinth is part of a widespread concept that the labyrinth is a symbol of a city. The blending of this concept and historical events formed the story of how the labyrinthine defences of Scimangada was overcome and how the dynasty of Batgao originated. The labyrinth in the royal palace showed this once great city from which the dynasty was descendant.

Before it is time to draw this paper to a close, a structure with a labyrinthine lay-out in the precinct of the temple of Paśupatinātha deserves mention (Fig. 6) ([50]). According to oral information gathered by Cimino the winding path of this structure is formed by 522 votive *liṅgas* ([51]). Although the lay-out is not related to that of the labyrinth, it shared one of the labyrinth's characteristics, the unicursal path ([52]).

As I am not an expert on Nepal I refrain from trying to put the labyrinth into the larger context of Nepali culture, but it can perhaps be noted of that the idea of a labyrinth as a symbol of a city could have been felt to resemble th deep-rooted Nepali conception of a city as a *maṇḍala*, and that the protective qualities of the labyrinth corresponded to the belief that a city was protected by the *maṇḍala*'s concentric

([50]) The plan was drawn in 1986 by Surendra Joshi within the frame of a grant provided by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Council). I courteously thank Dr Niels Gutschow for the permission to publish the plan.

([51]) Cimino 1990: 1161. Foreigners are not allowed within the enclosures of the temple.

([52]) Cf. *supra*, n. 13.

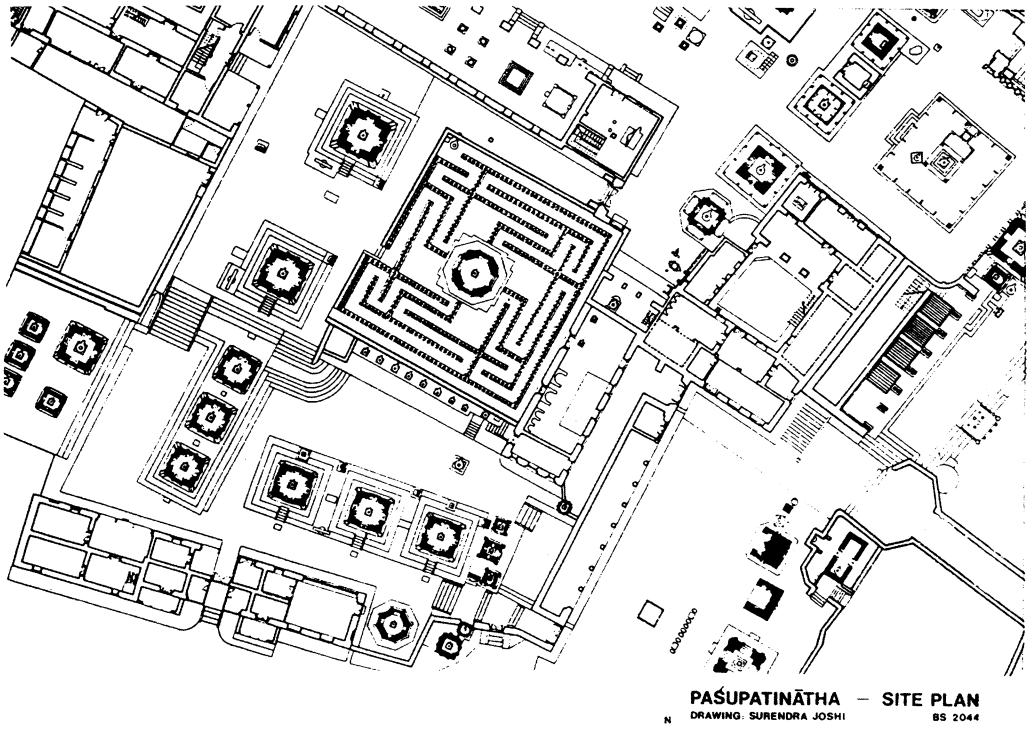


Fig. 6 - The labyrinthine structure within the enclosure of the temple of Paśupatinātha (plan by Surendra Joshi).

rings of divine power, existed both inside and around the city ([53]). But this is a question better left for those who can better judge the evidence. It is hoped, however, that this article will contribute to further research about the labyrinth in this area of the world and that Cassiano's report in the future will not remain the sole testimony for the occurrence of the labyrinth in Nepal.

([53]) Slusser 1982: 94, 102, 345. See Auer & Gutschow 1974: 38, for a 18th or 19th century painting of Batgao as a *maṇḍala*.

On a recently discovered labyrinthine design (similar in lay-out to the one in the temple of Pásupatinātha) painted on a ceiling in the temple of Dattatreya at Batgao, see Cimino 1995. (I am indepted to Dr Rosa Maria Cimino for the reference to her work). The turrets, footsoldier, horsemen, war chariots and war elephants depicted along the path of this labyrinthoid suggests concepts of protection and defence.

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