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Dating Tibetan architecture:
The case of Alchi Monastery, Ladakh

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The monastery of Alchi in Ladakh comprises six temples and several stupas set inside a rectangular enclosure. Though traditionally ascribed to Rinchen Zangpo (10th-11th century) there is no documentary evidence for this. Debates over the dating of the different temples have used as evidence artistic styles of the internal murals and sculptures, inscriptions contained within, and more recently architectural design principles.

Controversy has particularly centred on the so-called Sumtsek or three-storeyed temple, in which an inscription names historical figures dating to the early 13th century, as first shown by Roger Goepper. This dating will be discussed in the light of the above-mentioned evidence.