Tibetan Stupa

[SIMPLIFIED VERSION]

Stupas are tower-like structures which carry great meaning and significance in Buddhist teaching and practice. Since the time the historical Buddha Shakyamuni taught, the basic shape of a bowl on top of a square base has evolved into a variety of different shapes, some of which have taken on more or less of the local style when Buddhist teaching spread to other countries from India.

The word stupa supposedly comes from the syllable „stup", which means heaped up in Sanskrit. This is related to the supposed origin of the stupa as having been developed out of ancient tumuli, artificial hills heaped up on top of graves. According to tradition, the body of Buddha Shakyamuni was burned after he entered Nirvana. The ashes were then kept in eight stupas at important places where the Buddha had taught. From this evolved the practice to build stupas as representations of the Buddha and his teachings and as a treasure trove for Buddhist treasures, such as relics, scriptures and ashes of great masters. In some way they can be described as memorial structures that serve as tombs and a reminder of the teaching and its goal of enlightenment.

A typical Buddhist practice involving the stupa is circumventing it clockwise from 7 to 108 to however many times. Constructing or repairing a stupa is also considered a practice to accrue merit to the practitioner. The Indian Emperor Ashoka who was a devout Buddhist is said to have sponsored the construction of 84.000 stupas.

In the early days of Buddhism, no images of the Buddha himself were made and stupas became an abstract visual representation. The body of the stupa is described as to representing the Buddha: The upper spire represents the crown. Under it is a usually squared section which represents the head, which is why this section sometimes has eyes painted on it. It is also called the harmika. The round section shaped like a bottle or vase is called the bumpa and represents the body of the Buddha. The four steps or stairs under it are the legs of the Buddha and finally the actual base is his throne or seat of enlightenment.
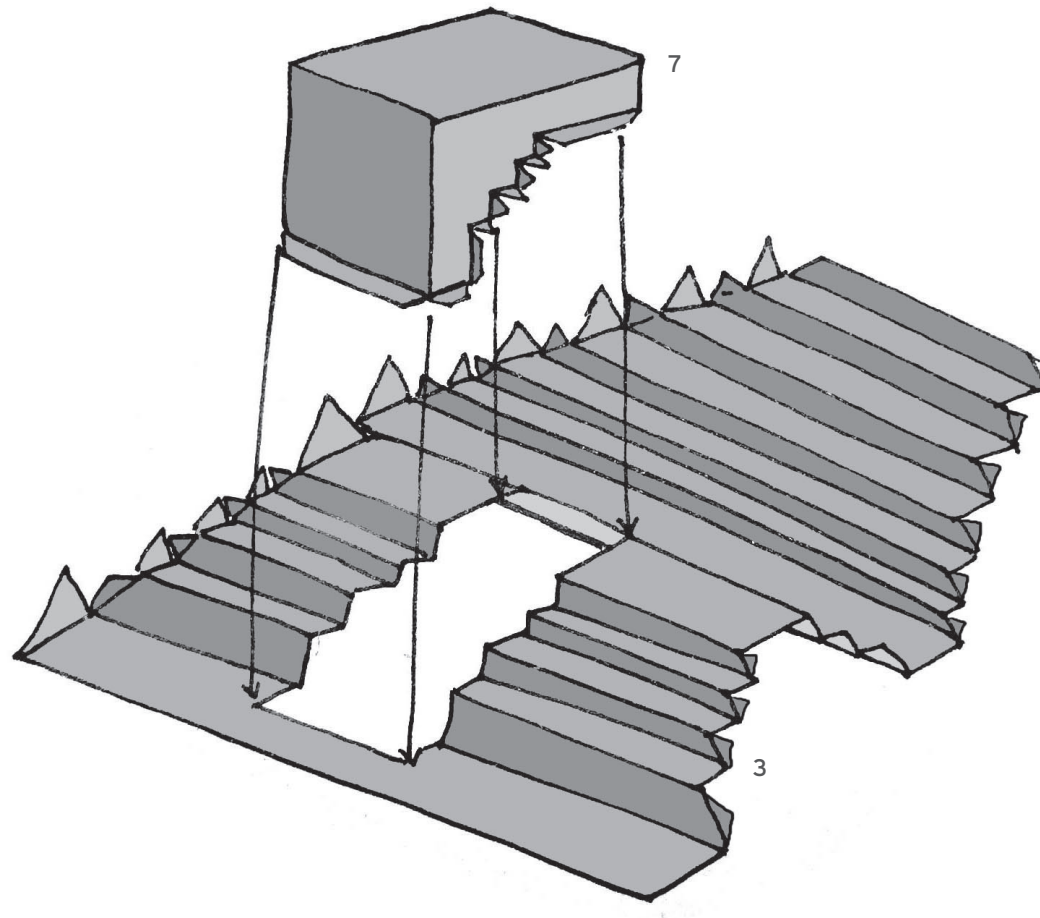
Depending on the region and the branch or school of the Buddhist teaching, additional symbolism is included into the structure of a stupa. The Stahlhart Tibetan stupa depicts a typical Stupa as it can be found in all sizes and at all places wherever Buddhists following the Tibetan branch are present. The version with doors and windows stands in Oslo, Norway. This version of the model has an estimated scale. For all other versions, the scale is irrelevant, as such stupas exist in all kinds of sizes from tabletop to multi-leveled tower. The Tibetans also assign other meanings to aspects of the stupa, such as the five elements plus space to the legs, body, head, crown and tip. The 4 steps – considered the legs – also stand for the 4 immeasurables of loving-kindness, compassion, joy and equanimity. There are also 8 major variants of the Tibetan Stupa, which differ slightly in their structure, representing different stations in the live of a Buddha. The Tibetan Stupa from the Stahlhart model is the most common one, representing enlightenment.
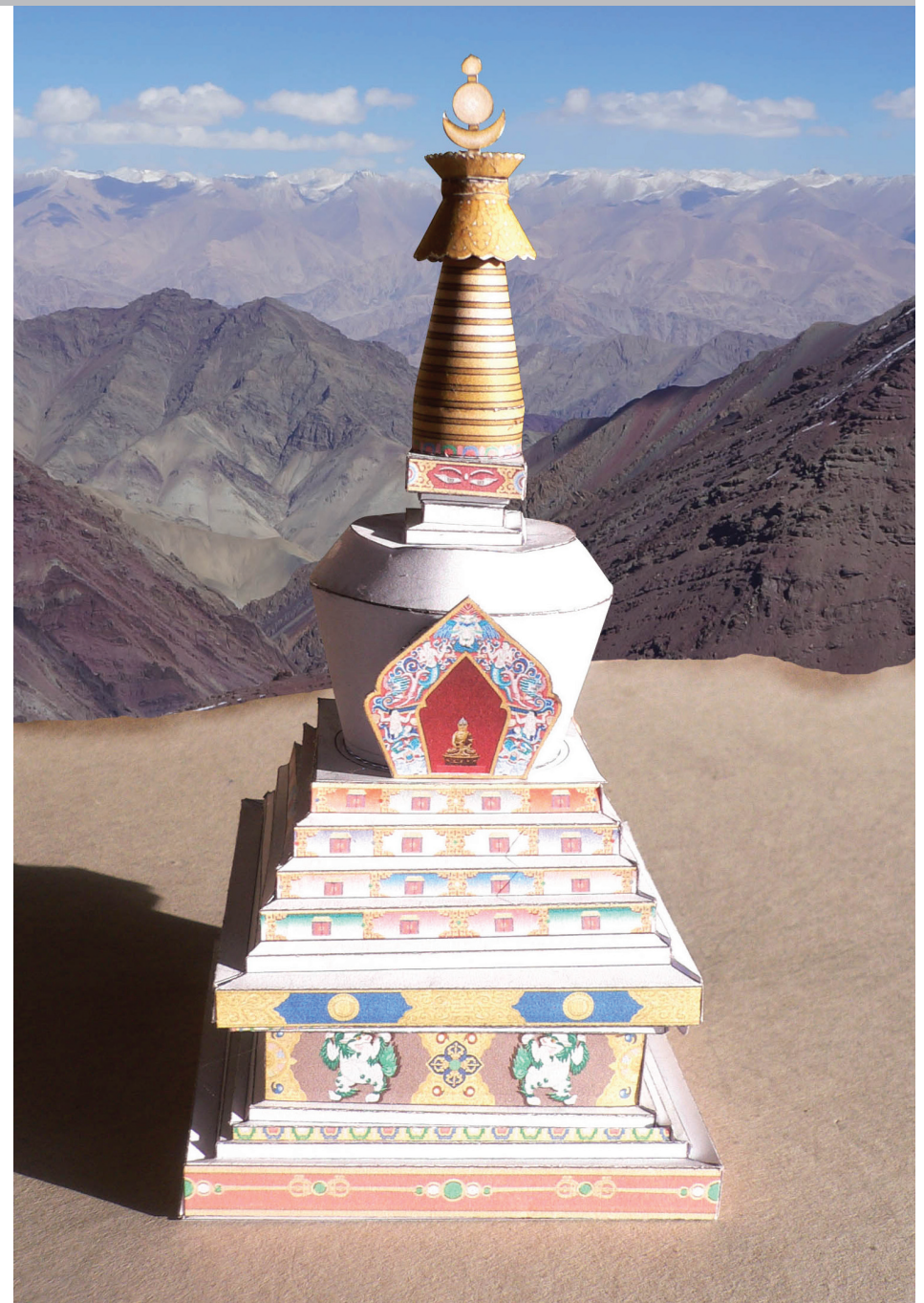
Important Note: Glue tabs drawn with black lines are bent outward (mountain fold) while glue tabs drawn with blue lines are bent inwards (valley fold). The tabs drawn with green lines are not bent (parts 3-6 only).

This is for the Version with doors and windows only.
For all other versions jump to 2

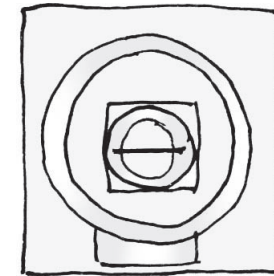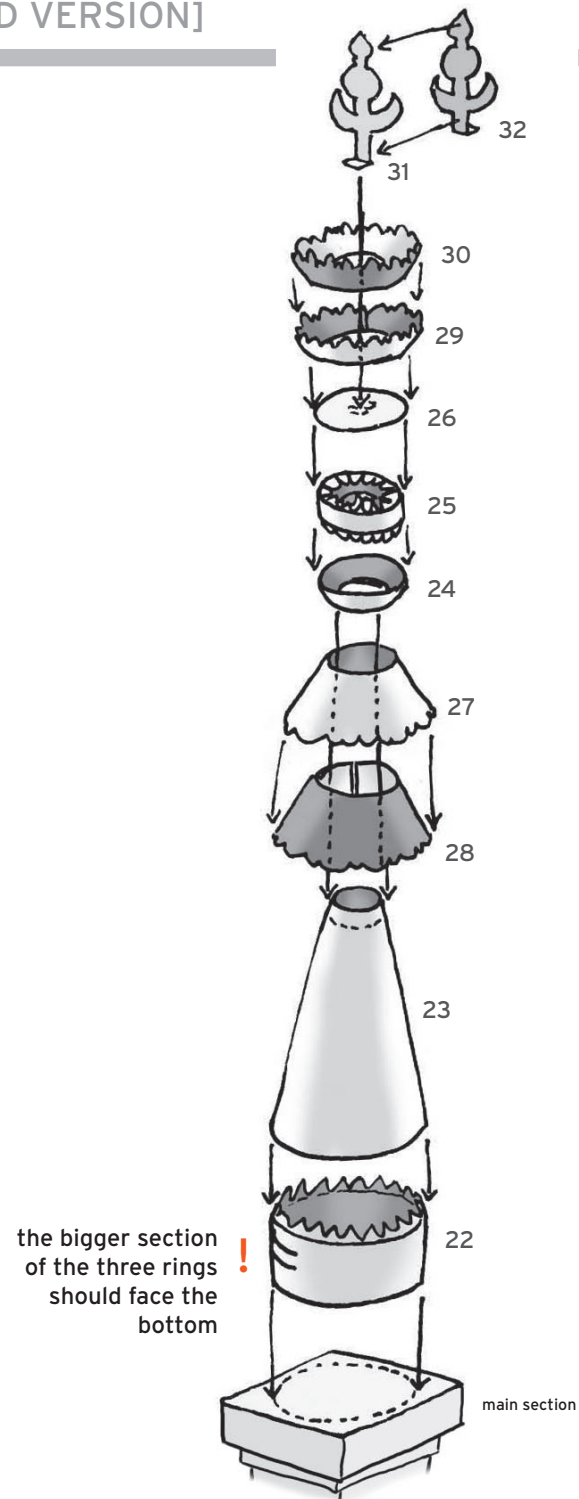1. Glue the door recess onto the side part with the opening.

2. Build the main section

21
19
18
20
16
17
11
10
9

dormer (optional)

15
14
13
12

8

6
5

4

3

2

1
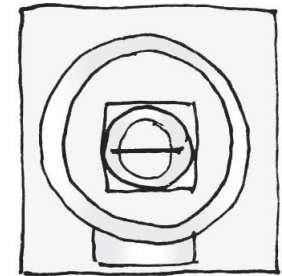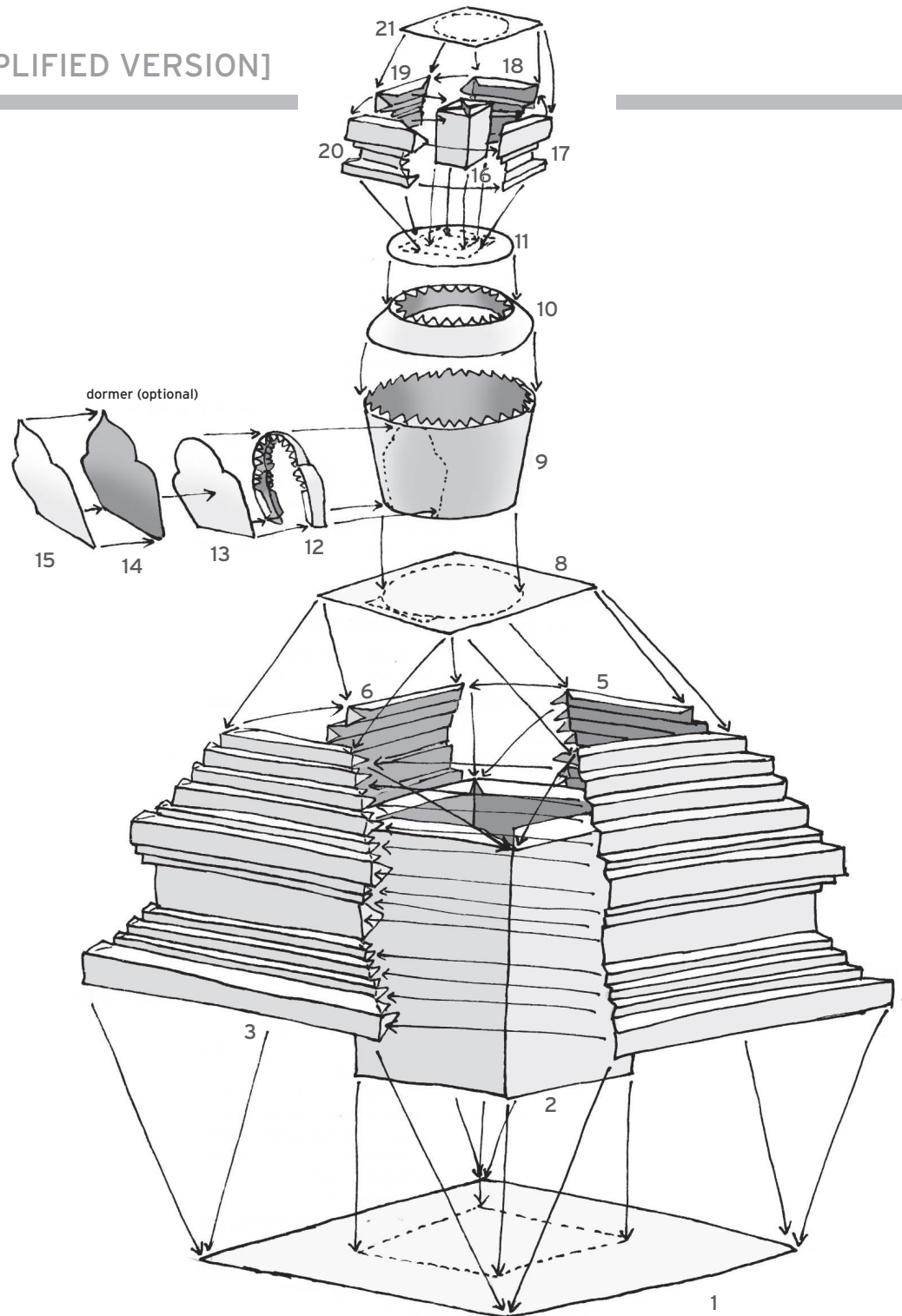
The sides of all squared sections should be parallel to each other and the dormer should be parallel to to the side of the square it faces.

On the Version with doors and windows, the dormer should be facing the same direction as the door.

3. Build the upper part

32

31

30

29

26

25

24

27

28

23

22

the bigger section
of the three rings
should face the
bottom

!

main section

The most upper part with
moon, sun and jewel should
be parallel to dormer and
front side of the square section.