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ABSTRACT

This dissertation discusses the construction of socio-spatial landscapes in Leh, Ladakh and elucidates the relationships between stakeholders in the tourism arena, conservation profession, regional and state government, and local civil society. It explains processes of urban regulation, juxtaposing the (re)production and representation of Ladakhi architectural heritage both during the conservation of historical buildings and during the construction of new tourist accommodations. Qualitative ethnographic research and spatial studies were conducted to investigate how competing discourses on Ladakhi heritage generated by state-based tourism industries and by non-governmental organizations are shaping building traditions, residence patterns, and livelihoods for resident Ladakhis. Leh's built environment is a product of numerous contestations and negotiations between residents, NGOs and the state in places I call *heritage construction sites*: architectural conservation projects and new guest-house construction projects, respectively. In this study, I pinpoint how Ladakhis identify with or contest the transformation of their urban landscape, answering the question "whose heritage is it?"

**ACCOMMODATING CONSERVATION:
REGULATING ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE IN A HIMALAYAN TOURIST TOWN**

by

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology
in the Graduate School of Syracuse University.

December 2014

Approved: _____
Professor Deborah Pellow

Date: _____

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This dissertation is dedicated to my parents (all four of them) whose tireless love and encouragement motivated me to achieve my goals and whose support I could not have done without, to my doctoral advisor Dr. Deborah Pellow, who pushed hard enough to frighten me but not hard enough to frighten me away, to my closest companions, whose fun-loving distractions were always perfectly timed, and especially to my Ladakhi families and friends who so graciously shared their homes and their lives. Last but not least, this dissertation is dedicated to the late Andre Alexander, president of the Tibet Heritage Fund, who dedicated his life to conserving old buildings. I will miss our conversations.

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INTRODUCTION

Project Overview

This dissertation explores how cultural tourism and the heritage industry impact the construction of socio-spatial landscapes in the autonomous territory of Ladakh, India.¹ Ethnographic research was conducted in the political and economic capital of Leh to determine how competing discourses on Ladakhi heritage generated by the tourism industry and by non-governmental organizations are shaping building traditions, residence patterns, and notions of place held by various local and global actors. This investigation is couched within a larger attempt to understand identity formation and culture change as expressed in the transformation of an urban landscape. When I designed this project, I did not anticipate the complexity and variety between each individual case I would encounter. I now understand Leh's built environment as a product of numerous contestations and negotiations between residents, the state, and civil society in places I call *heritage construction sites*: architectural conservation projects and new guest-house construction projects.

It is my thesis that cultural conservation experts' and tourism industry specialists' continuous emphasis on Ladakh's Tibetan heritage shapes notions of place, cultural tradition and identity for Buddhist *and* Muslim (and Christian) resident Ladakhis. Feeding into this thesis are questions of what structural, aesthetic and cultural components constitute traditional architecture in Ladakh, who decides which features are essential for conserving that built heritage, and how those parameters are enforced. Do Ladakhi travel agents and hoteliers reproduce or reject NGO-driven discourses on place? Do they welcome, deny or remain indifferent to constructions and perceptions of Ladakh as "Little Tibet"?

¹ With all due respect to the International National Trusts Organization (INTO), I have chosen the phrase "heritage industry" over "heritage sector" to acknowledge the role of heritage conservation in cultural production, as opposed to merely a sociological or economic subdivision of cultural conservation. Recognizing that industries and sectors are both products of a bureaucratic, post-industrial world, labeling heritage conservation as an industry, or a group that provides a particular product or service – in this case conserving buildings, allows me to point out its relationship to tourism. Henceforth, and with all due respect to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), I also understand tourism as an industry, collectively a category of groups – namely businesses – that provide valuable services to tourists with the added incentive of economic competition in a global marketplace.

Further, how do Leh residents experience the transformation of their built environment? Faced with the increasing availability and popularity of industrial materials, to what extent are they adapting their personal living quarters and how does that change notions of place? These questions may be addressed amidst several tensions: the essentialism of cultural identity in a historically diverse population and the assumption that such a monolithic culture remains timeless and unchanging despite recent and enduring metamorphoses.

Focusing on the scholarly reification of Ladakh's historical relationships to Tibetan Buddhist culture and of modern stereotypes about "Little Tibet" limits one's gaze to a certain type of architectural tradition which presumably originated from Lhasa and traveled west into Jammu and Kashmir. However convenient or useful a static and essentialized model of cultural authenticity may be for conservationists and tourism industry officials, for seasoned travelers, skeptical social scientists and indeed for locals who are questioning the practicality of their own customs, that gaze is too narrow.² Additional travel and research reveals that Ladakhi structures represent a pan-Himalayan vernacular, or prototype, that transcends the present territorial boundaries of India, Pakistan, China, Nepal, and Bhutan (Oliver 1998). Although the building traditions and forms and to some extent dwelling patterns are consistent throughout this mountainous region, ornamentation is culture-specific and exhibits Mediterranean, Islamic, Indian, and indeed Tibetan aesthetics which diffused via centuries of overland trade.

Context

² It should also be emphasized that, in Jammu and Kashmir, where the Line of Control is a constant reminder of Indian territorial tensions with Pakistan and Tibetans-in-exile are an enduring symbolism of neighboring Chinese aggressions, essentializing Buddhism against stereotypical monolithic representations of Islam and Communist China are perhaps instrumental for containing Ladakh within Indian nationalist narratives (Aggarval 2004; Bishop 1989; Brasted 1997; Handler 1985; Herzfeld 2005; Van Beek 2000; for inventing traditions and imagining communities to define nationalist narratives see Hobsbawn and Ranger 1983 and Anderson 1983, 2006; for a discussion of territoriality and the built environment, see Ingold 1998; for problematizing notions of authenticity broadly construed see Theodossopoulos 2013).

In the first two chapters I help readers visualize this ethnographic fieldsite by describing its environmental landscape and cultural setting. The examination of human geography buttresses an ensuing discussion of traditional settlements and dwelling places which are designed first and foremost as adaptations to the Himalayan Mountains' specific environmental challenges, and second, in accordance with cultural norms and values.³ An abbreviated account of Ladakh's geopolitical relationships with Tibet and later to Mughal India and its subsequent appropriation by Britain via Indian colonialism provides historical and political context for this study. Made evident by these descriptions, the overlap of Islamic and Buddhist cultural traditions manifests itself socially and spatially in the political and economic center of activity, and the focal point of this study: Ladakh's capital, Leh. That Ladakh derives its present day material and social culture from a variety of influences gives me cause to problematize Ladakh's nickname "Little Tibet".

Through ethnographic research, I learned - and contend throughout this study - that there is a long-standing social and material distinction between Ladakhis and Tibetans. In Chapter One: A Millenium in the Making, this contention is first supported by contextualizing historical relationships between research participants whose interviews are featured in subsequent chapters. I mention the associations of ethnic Tibetan Buddhists and Kashmiri Muslims with their Ladakhi counterparts neither to advocate for or against either group nor to engage in a political conversation, but again, to complicate the notion that Ladakhi material culture, its materials, construction and use, relates exclusively to Tibetan material culture.⁴ Historical accounts, social, political, and linguistic scholarship, news, literature, and travel writing have all focused overwhelmingly upon Ladakhis' Tibetan Buddhist ancestry. Thus, one could simply hypothesize a distinction between past and present dwelling patterns which would be evident in the built environment and seek to investigate the dimensions of that claim. But the

³ If resources permit, buildings would be embellished according to personal preference. Elaborate ornamentation was, and is today, a luxury afforded by group leaders, wealthy merchants, or religious complexes.

⁴ Others have problematized this relationship in the recent past (see Aggarval 2004).

gray area between customary and modern-day practices is not only broader than a temporal dichotomy, it is further complicated by economic, political, religious and ethnic social arrangements *in addition to* environmental and aesthetic considerations. Leh Town's current built environment perpetuates consistency and change in various social structures for well over 500 years.

In Chapter Two, *Leh Town*, readers come to understand how Ladakh's political and economic capital was transformed from a remote Indian Hill Station into a thriving cultural tourist destination and focus of NGO conservation efforts. Descriptions of prototypical vernacular building designs which are indigenous to both Kashmir and the West Himalayas and to Nepal and the East Himalayas focus exclusively on dwelling spaces and non-monumental architecture. Implicit in these descriptions is the blending of Indian, Kashmiri, Persian, Tibetan, and tribal dwelling and settlement patterns which are suited to their respective Himalayan environments. In Ladakh, the vernacular prototype exemplifies indigenous forms found throughout montane environments of the Himalayas.⁵ Yet beyond their basic square, two-story white-washed form, their designs and ornamentation appeal to specific cultural practices. The naked eye can be trained to recognize these divergences; some are rich with Kashmiri or Persian character while others display Tibetan-inspired ornamentation. The more recent adoption of Western designs and industrial building materials has shifted the cultural and material base of Ladakhi dwelling and settlement patterns in Leh Town and continues to problematize the reification of Ladakh's ties to Tibetan culture.

Introducing Western designs and industrial materials to the Himalayan vernacular is a prevalent practice among Ladakhis who choose to vacate deteriorating ancestral estates and "shift" to their new guest houses in fertile surrounding villages. Inspired by foreign designs, and perhaps by foreign profits, residents often incorporate imported construction materials and accoutrements while

⁵ Although altitude, and not latitude, distinguishes montane, or mountainous, regions from other environments and climates, topographic variations can vary widely, affecting subsistence options and building materials and resulting in diverse settlement patterns (Cook 1998).

accommodating, or making room for, state-prescribed exterior guidelines meant to preserve, or retain, the town's built fabric. Little attention is paid to building traditions, the technologies and skills transmitted from previous generations (Oliver 1988; Rudofsky 1977). In fact, many construction projects are executed by itinerant workers who may rent or squat the town's older residences.⁶ New commercial properties will generally pass inspection as long as the finished product generally conforms to Leh's architectural heritage, which consists of palaces, building complexes, marketplaces, temples, shrines, and ruins, as well as natural landscapes and terraced irrigation fields (Orbasli 2008).

Change in residential building and settlement patterns coupled with commercial growth in the urban sphere has a number of consequences beyond a move away from the city center and into the periphery. Shifting has prompted NGO-based conservationists to decry commercial encroachment by developers upon the Old Leh Heritage Zone adjacent to the Main Bazaar and to exercise influence upon Ladakh's Hill Council to conserve, or adapt and make inhabitable, and in some cases restore from ruins Old Leh's neglected 16th and 17th c. temples and royal residences (Harvey 1972). Their advocacy is couched within a broader movement for sustainability and cultural conservation that lies beyond the scope of this project but is no less important.



The Old Leh Heritage Zone, left, palisades down the mountain beginning with the 15th century Fort Tsemo at the highest elevation, down to the abandoned Namgyal Palace and its associated temples and administrative complexes, and onto the residential labyrinth below. The Old Leh Heritage Zone is home base to a number of conservation-oriented NGOs. It also provides a visual index for state officials regulating construction of new homes and tourist accommodations. Photo by author.

⁶ In keeping with Favro 1989, this project distinguishes between architects, builders, and workers.

It is the complicated tension between the conservation and construction of a living cultural heritage which necessitates a discussion of concurrent civil and political activity in the Ladakhi capital. The Old Leh Heritage Zone (pictured above: photo by author) palisades down Tsemo Mountain in to the Leh Valley. On the other side of the mountain lies a bucolic agricultural village dotted with barley fields and family homes and crisscrossed by irrigation channels. Atop the mountain (top right), the 15th century Fort Tsemo and its associated Buddhist monastery or *gonpa* (L), provide a lookout for the colossal 16th century Namgyal Palace and administrative buildings associated with the royal complex. Just beyond the ascending labyrinth of footpaths flanked by crumbling mudbrick and mortar structures, the thriving *Main Bazaar* bustles with travel and trekking companies. Countless curio shops advertising pashmina shawls and “authentic Tibetan” relics entice visitors as they tack back-and-forth between bookstores, e-cafes and restaurants. From one restaurant’s rooftop patio - situated next door to the Johkang Lakhang (a meditation center and home of the Ladakhi Buddhist Association), caddy-corner from the Sunni Jamia Masjid, and adjacent to the new Shia Imambadda mosque - one can dine on continental cuisine, gaze upon Leh Palace’s imposing façade and plan one’s next excursion.

The Old Leh Palace, or Namgyal Palace, is often likened to Lhasa, Tibet’s Potala or Red Fort although the former was built prior to the Red Fort and may plausibly have inspired the latter’s design, as opposed to the reverse (Alexander 2006). Just as the Red Fort continues to symbolize Tibet’s legacy, the Namgyal Palace continues to symbolize Ladakh’s imagined connection to the Tibetan past. Popular works that serve to reinforce this association include travel guides such as The Lonely Planet, state publications from the Indian Tourism Department and the Jammu and Kashmir Tourism Department, scholarly pieces such as J. Sharma’s (2003) seminal Indian National Trust for Architectural and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) publication *Architectural Heritage Ladakh*, and activist works such as Helena Norberg Hodge’s (1991, 2009) *Ancient Futures*. Despite political incongruity with Tibet and perhaps in lieu of Leh District’s Tibetan-in-exile colony, the homogeneity of the Eastern Himalayan landscape is likely the

primary inspiration for designating Ladakh as “Little Tibet”. The cultural landscapes and built fabrics across the Eastern and Western montane regions are indeed similar, but with an eye opened to detail, one might discover that Ladakh’s material and cultural heritage is more heterogeneous than meets the naked eye. This distinction is now more complicated than ever.

A brief overview of the politics of place in this growing tourist destination evidences the complex network of Ladakhi village or community-based organizations at the local and regional level, and their continued intersection with organizations at broader regional, state, and now, international levels. Since cultural changes are perhaps best understood in chronological order, we begin with an overview of traditional neighborhood organizations, tracing customary social, economic and religious responsibilities and their integration at the village level. At the secondary and tertiary levels of village-based organizations, members often maintain overlapping affiliations at regional and state levels. Interweaving case studies and residential accounts of the transforming built environment allows readers to become familiar with recent changes in the political climate and the configuration of urban planning bureaucracies which have developed from local, state and regional development initiatives. The section concludes with an abbreviated history of non-governmental organization intervention and its effects on the social, political, and material fabric of the town, focusing on both cultural and material conservation. The roughly ordered historical chronology of these first two chapters provides past and present details relevant to a study of the built environment, including trade, exploration and representation, geopolitical and socioeconomic change, and local, state, and global conservation initiatives.

Theoretical Orientation

In the third chapter, *Dwelling on Heritage Construction Sites*, I orient the research under the theoretical umbrella of space and place and heritage conservation. A study of this nature begs inter- and intradisciplinary questioning that my data could only be manipulated to address. It may seem

duplicitous to utilize anthropological and practical concepts of heritage and tradition in the fashion of ethnographers (Al-Harithy 2005; Hancock 2002, 2012; Herzfeld 2005; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998; Menon 1998; Poria, Arie and Biran 2006; Totah 2009) and architectural conservationists (Alexander 2006; Harvey 1972; Croci 1998; Oliver 1998; Orbasli 2008; Sharma 2003; Rudofsky 1972) and not equally engage other geographical, sociological, environmental-psychological or philosophical lenses. But contextualizing Leh Town's built environment within historical, ethnographic and architectural frameworks permits ethnological comparison with similar projects and philosophies. As spatial studies are inherently interdisciplinary, earnest attempt has been paid to acknowledge the relevance and applicability of other academic narratives (Hobsbawn and Ranger 1983; MacCannell 1976; Sorkin 2011; Zukin 1991, 2009). But as I am my own research instrument, trained in anthropological theory and field methods, and as my interlocutors are either homeowners or conservationists, the product remains roughly discipline-specific.

With the data in mind, I employed the concept of *heritage construction sites* to make sense of various processes contributing to the cultural construction of Ladakhi building traditions and settlement patterns. Unpacking heritage construction sites means defining the philosophical boundaries of "heritage" – which are invariably anchored in the past - against the actions and activities of construction sites in the most practical sense. Heritage is defined by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as "our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations" (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/about>, accessed 7/8/2014). In continuously occupied places, humans construct their cultural heritage over the course of a settlement's history. Much communication and activity carries on a building tradition. If certain adaptations to the environment work both practically and symbolically for a group, those techniques and their meanings will spread. This is true both for sites we now label historical and for sites under construction. For now, we will concern ourselves with building traditions which are associated with historical sites and those

not associated with the tourism complex. In the conclusion of this paper, we can address the ways in which heritage construction sites can apply to both.

There are known structural and cultural intersections between montane dwellings and settlements in Northern India, the Western Himalayas and the Eastern Himalayas. Together, material, form, design, and inhabitation create a sense of place that is in-synch with natural materials and ripe with symbolism. Scholars have discussed spaces and places as separate entities which are somehow combined through social processes (Fine 2008; Casey 2003; Basso 1998). Spaces themselves do not have meaning without human inhabitation and/or intention. When a landscape - or a building - is infused with human life, it takes on meaning. Understanding the meanings associated with inhabiting places, and in particular, homes, is paramount to understanding heritage. However, given the diversity of the Himalayan regions, the differential positioning of actors necessarily affords those places different meanings for different people. The multivalence of place is of certain importance when asking “whose heritage?”

And what is the product of a heritage construction site? Beyond a capitalistic understanding of production where commodity fetishism exploits material, form, and use (not to mention labor), the heritage site is a cultural product. It is a building process where human groups incorporate sacred and mundane landscapes into their worldviews, adapting to their environments by socially, materially and symbolically adapting their surroundings. Interacting with the physical environment provides people emotional security and increases inhabitants’ connections to their surroundings, intensifying the depth of the human experience (Lynch 1960: 5; Basso 1998). It is this routinization of custom alongside “ontological security ... sustained in the daily activities of social life” which visitors might observe with awe, this ability to carry on “in practical consciousness.... the contexts of social life without being able to give them direct discursive expression” (Giddens 1984: 15) which constitutes authentic cultural practice (see also Bourdieu 1972). Culture change is no doubt an inevitable byproduct of continuous dwelling in

certain places, but when groups consciously, collectively and lastingly change their building, dwelling and settlement patterns, one expects a considerable degree of discontent.

Now, contrasting this idea of heritage against the practicalities of the construction site, we expect some residents to become attached to their ways of life and to struggle with this flux, and still others to lead the charge to modernity, intrigued by the possibilities and promise of industrial materials and their implications. In towns like Leh where economic prosperity leads to rapid physical transformation, the damage or loss of historical monuments, temples, and homes is an inevitable outcome. Concurrently, the availability of new construction materials and diffusion of alternative vernacular styles seems to paint a murky picture of the town's built fabric. Even as they are made, urban alterations impact residential perception, emotion, and experience (as well as visitor understandings of place). Yet common characteristics that all heritage sites share are organizations and individuals ready and willing to offer their designations, expertise, and probably resistance to change in one way or another.

In several ways, heritage sites and their inhabitants must accommodate both conservation and conservationists. First, some projects take years to complete and may yield subsequent conservation opportunities in a related place. As a matter of convenience, conservation architects and their staff may occupy residences in or near their sites for extended periods of time. Second, conservation causes a racket. If a building must be maintained "as to keep it fit for living use within its potentiality" which often entails "repair of decayed buildings to bring them back to a state of technical good health and utility" (Harvey 1972: 11), this is sure to cause audible and visual interruptions/disruptions.⁷ Residents may ask who invited these conservationists to begin with. Their physical presence is at once an anomaly

⁷ I consider the practice of conservation according to the 2013 Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter (2013: 2) to include "all the processes of looking after a place so as to retain its cultural significance". I use the term conservation in keeping with my European interlocutors, but recognize that the term preservation in the US bears some similarity to conservation in the UK, wherein a building is maintained "in its existing form and condition" (Orbasli 2008: 212). I also recognize the similarities of European conservationists and US preservationists in their zeal for "cherishing existing structures" (Harvey 1972: 16) and in their commitment to "[champion] and [protect] places that tell the stories of our past" (<http://www.preservationnation.org/what-is-preservation/> accessed 8/22/14).

and a distraction and can potentially interrupt the reflexive capacities of otherwise self-conscious actors who “are characteristically involved in a continuous manner with the flow of day-to-day conduct in the contexts of social activity” (Giddens 1984: 13; also see MacCannell 1976). As some case studies point out, invasive conservation can have the same effect as unchecked urbanization as conservationists assert themselves, their methods and philosophies like developers on freshly-surveyed soil (Menon 1998; Al Harithy 2005; Totah 2009). In cases where conservation is politically and/or ideologically legitimated, social institutions and bureaucracies themselves make concessions for these foreign professions and professionals.

Architectural conservationists are increasingly called upon to accommodate the needs of the local community over their professional and personal agendas. Some studies of heritage management stress the imperative of consulting and/or including locals or indigenous understandings of historical structures in order to construct sustainable conservation practices (Alexander 2006; Al Harithy 2009; Orbasli 2008; Poria, Arie and Biran 2006). This recent critique from social science reflects the reality that, despite world-class training in the “structural restoration of architectural heritage” (Crocì 1998), conservation has paid little mind to the disparity between the architect, armed with Western education in design and engineering, and the native builder, a “skilled practitioner” and “accomplished storyteller whose tales are told in the practice of his craft rather than in words” (Ingold 2011: 57). Recognizing this, conservation should accommodate local practices if it wishes for projects to remain true to form and for people to live in them.

Moreover, conservationists (and tourists for that matter) tend to focus their efforts on monumental architecture without acknowledging the resemblances those structures bear to the settlements and dwellings where real people live out meaningful lives (Oliver 1969; Rapoport 1982; MacCannell 1976). Monuments and monumental architecture have historically been singled out for their grandeur and prominence rather than being considered in a living context. In this way,

conservation mimics early European notions of preservation where a building was monumentalized, saved from the wear and tear of continued use and reuse, and maintained as an unchanging vestige of tradition. Buildings in continued use are in fact seated in the heart of living, growing landscapes, not situated behind a rope and pegs (Harvey 1972; Orbasli 2008). Conservation should thus take account of the cultural setting if it is to “retain the cultural significance of a place” (Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter 2013: 3). In practice, this means practitioners should accommodate residents by identifying the meanings of places and look beyond the bones of a structure into the backbone and backdrop of social production. Ladakhis recognize this, although they do not necessarily articulate it as such. As one conservation architect casually told me: “Ladakhis have no need for this heady theoretical stuff” (Personal Communication, Alexander 2008).

A Note about Authenticity

This project was not originally concerned with the academic notion of authenticity and the philosophical conundrums entailed, although claims of authenticity stated or implied by interlocutors certainly warrant discussion. Neither was the study designed to scrutinize the authenticity or inauthenticity of actors and their products, but rather to present discussions and observations pertaining to culture change in this unique built environment. Nevertheless, and especially in the context of tourism, questions of what is an authentic ceremony or festival, object or building, or even dress or mannerism, *do* arise, typically in relationship to the question of tradition. This is another term fraught with academic uncertainty.

For tourism and tourists, the search for an authentic or traditional culture is an enterprise borne out of Western individualism and grounded in modernity (MacCannell 1976; Handler 1986). Certainly that quest has been renewed in the academy as scholars consider “parallel manifestations” of the term (Theodossopoulos 2013). Whether site, town or nation-state, tradition is characterized not by the

ontological security of habitus, but by “a process of formalization and ritualization, characterized by reference to the past, if only by imposing repetition” (Hobsbawn 1983: 4). If actors are self-consciously producing their cultural norms, behaviors, or products, they are not creating “authentic” traditions but transformations (Lawrence-Zuniga 1996; Gow 2001 in Theodossopolous 2013: 350). (Re)production of a presumed cultural collective, especially for tourist consumption, aims to bind a people, their beliefs, practices and products into a coherent entity, whether or not that group defines itself as such (Hancock 2002; Lindholm 2008). Where conservation efforts focus on the visual representation of a group, “[a]uthenticity is seen as an objective and measurable attribute inherent in the material fabric, form and function of artifacts and monuments” (Jones 2010:182), which can be reclaimed and maintained through diligent practice.

I contend throughout this thesis that conservation and attempts by the Ladakh-focused tourism industry to capture or reconstruct a singular cultural context or historical narrative may contribute to readings of Ladakhi culture as static, and may further subvert the built environment’s historically diverse nature. As Appadurai and Breckenridge (1995), Al Harithy (2005), and Totah (2009) allude to, the transformation and layering of any urban fabric is not achieved through some organic amalgamation of peoples and cultures, but takes place through a series of conscious, deliberate, time-consuming processes. Each layer, so-to-speak, is “stamped with the unique...” in the sense that they “never happened before, and will never happen again” (Harvey 1972: 10). In order to capture and reproduce a sense of that cultural authenticity as a sense of place, a conservation group may present a structure as “a ‘possession’ of an authentic culture... one original to its possessors, one which exists only with them” (Handler 1986: 4). However contrived dichotomies between old and new may be, they are useful to bear in mind when problematizing and discussing the transformation of any urban landscape.

Methods and Analysis

Chapter Four, *Seasonal Methodologies*, presents an account of four field seasons spent during various times of the year in Leh. During my fieldwork, I observed and photo-documented the transformation of the built environment – from replicas and new adaptations of prototypical forms found throughout the region, to complete departures and creations in Western design - essentially creating a directory of culture change which I could refer to throughout the course of my interviews. And although I perceived the changing façade of Leh Town as a metaphor for agents and their actions, I became keenly aware that culture change is rarely experienced evenly by all members of society. The creation, use, and understanding of public space represents and reflects broader socio-economic processes surrounding and permeating cultural practice.

In Chapter Five, *Regulating Heritage*, I present a discourse analysis of conservation efforts and their supporting rhetoric at the local, regional, state, and international level. I begin by presenting a history of NGO efforts in Ladakh, focusing exclusively on the International Society for Ecology and Culture and discussing how the formation of that organization opened the door for additional intervention against Western influence. I then pivot that story by showing how the organization and its ensuing movements may have had unintended consequences, providing ethnographic evidence of Ladakhi backlash against foreign intervention and suggesting that NGO presence increased (and not decreased) Western influence in Ladakh. To this end, however, I understand both cultural and architectural conservation *and* new construction as ongoing expressions of heritage production. I also understand the social construction and semiotics of these spaces as congruent with public input into their physical construction, an input which is constantly infused with economic, political, and religious interests. I reiterate that places I call *heritage construction sites* are seemingly divergent: for example, architectural conservation projects in Old Leh might appear incongruous when compared to new guest house construction in town, or with new hotel construction up the valley. Yet, each shares surprisingly convergent characteristics.

In Chapter 6, *Converging and Diverging Constructs*, I refer back to the diverse nature of Leh's outwardly homogenous landscape, reintroducing where applicable environmental and cultural factors which have influenced pan-Himalayan design. Here I focus exclusively on the built environment, triangulating my discourse analysis with spatial surveys and ethnographic interviews. Using spatial surveys, I present an architectural comparison of buildings sacred and mundane, old and new, humble and grand. I then interview the owners of new hotels and guest houses about the changing built environment in Leh, about their feelings about the Old Leh Heritage Zone and its architectural heritage, and their reasons for designing their hotels the way they do. I also ask them to comment on fixed and semi-fixed feature structural and decorative elements that appear multiple times in the built environment (Hall 1966). Do they choose to live like the tourists they accommodate? Responses delineate how actors designate certain design elements as authentic, inauthentic, or otherwise, and whether they choose to omit or incorporate them into both conservation and new construction.

My research in this region broadly interrogates the meaningful elements of vernacular pan-Himalayan architecture and decorative personalization significant to the cultural construction of Ladakhi heritage. But for this thesis, I focus primarily, although not exclusively, on vernacular residential structures. In an effort to represent the dynamics of heritage construction, I include interview details from a number of differently-positioned actors: landed Buddhist and Muslim Leh residents, NGO-affiliated conservationists, and members of two tourism-regulation unions. Conversations with research participants were informed by my interest in so-called "traditional Ladakhi-style" building forms, and I relied upon my observations (and photographs) of historic dwellings and new guest houses and hotels in Leh Town to generate conversation. I also include conversation snippets with Jammu and Kashmir State Tourism Department (JKTD) officials who are responsible for regulating new construction aesthetics through legal codification and implementation of building regulations. I conclude by juxtaposing these

differing perspectives against the global dynamics of local knowledge production, vernacular building traditions, and the cultural signification of place.

Like Rodman (1992: 640) and others, I argue that place matters, though in scholarly accounts “the meaning of place too often seems to go without saying.” As I explain, this presumption that a real or authentic culture may be found only in the primitive, traditional, or old, is tied to a modern search for meaning in a disjointed post-industrial world (Appiah 2007; Hobsbawn and Ranger 1983; MacCannell 1976; Oliver 1969). A built heritage is more than location or a fixed anthropological construction. It is powerful, it is dynamic, and it *is* meaningful – a product of multiple understandings and representations. Rather than ignore or gloss over the built environment as simply housing humans or as fixed ethnographic locales, place is presented herein as an ongoing expression of human behavior. Attending to conventional theoretical binaries of heritage/tradition and innovation/modernity served to orient my ethnographic inquiries, providing a framework for understanding and interpreting stakeholders’ interests and lending a fresh perspective for the analysis of the gray areas, so-to-speak. The voices heard within this study truly speak to Rodman’s (1992) multivocality of place, as heritage construction sites become constituted through negotiations of competing local, state, regional and global interests.

CHAPTER 1: A MILLENIUM IN THE MAKING: THE SOCIAL AND MATERIAL CULTURAL SETTING

EXPLORATION AND REPRESENTATION

For well over a millennia, the Indian Himalayan territories hosted many crossroads of trade. Along famous routes like the Silk Road, continuous migration diversified settlement patterns from East Asia to the Tibetan Plateau, across the Himalayas towards the Middle East, and on to the Mediterranean and Europe. Later, European exploration and research in the region's rugged Himalayan outposts revealed an abundant repository of social and material culture to four centuries of mountaineers, missionaries and scholars, many of whom returned to their home countries with tales and goods from this exotic place. Couched between present day Pakistan and Tibet, China and strategically located within the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir, the region known as Ladakh has been politically subjugated for the dynastic gain and imperial glory of distant homelands, and also reinvented towards the creation of nationalist identity.



Ladakh is an autonomous territory located in the northwestern reaches of the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir, a “complex entity where political, geographic, and administrative boundaries do

not match each other and are frequently confused” (Samizay *in* Oliver 1998: 1008). Now predominantly Muslim, the region has historically fallen under the political and religious influences of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam, which accounts for the diversity and complexity of its populations. After the Partition of India in 1947, Kashmir was politically separated from Pakistan and governed by India, prompting three wars over control of the territory. The current arrangement is tenuous for a number of reasons, not the least of which is an ongoing insurgency and counterinsurgency between Muslim separatists and the state.⁸ Beijing also has a stake in the claim as India protests Chinese control over 35,000 square kilometers in the Aksai-Chin region of Ladakh. While a political truce between India and Pakistan would provide a salve for China’s relationship with India, it could also open up questions of political sovereignty in the contested territories (Yuan 2014).

Like its ecosystems which range from flat, fertile grasslands to towering alpine tundra, Kashmir’s population is hardly homogenous. With persisting trade, indigenous populations have long since adapted to Kashmir’s divergent physical environments by developing a “psychosocial consciousness” which was reflected in their material cultures and building traditions (Samizay *in* Oliver 1998: 1005). Indigenous, or preexisting, groups incorporated traders’ cultural traditions over time, resulting in the hybridization of language, religion, and settlement patterns. Herzfeld points out that hybridization, like multiculturalism, “[is] the fact of a constant and accelerating process of juxtaposition of genes and memes, of people and understandings. The resulting hybridities – however evanescent – are tossed off by the global system at a rate of zillions an hour, a constant production of new forms of otherness, a system of difference that increasingly resists ready taxonomy...” (Herzfeld 2005: 4674 of 7450). These cultural differences, in addition to close cultural ties Kashmiris have with Persian and Central Asian groups, have spurred recurring struggles for autonomy over the past forty years.

⁸ For further reading on Partition see Das 1995; Dirks 2001; Menon and Bhasin 1998.

As a majority Buddhist population occupying a unique cultural and geographic region, Ladakhis also struggled for autonomy in the 1980s and, with encouragement from a non-governmental organization led by Swedish activist Helena Norberg-Hodge, were able to successfully establish the Ladakh Autonomous Development Hill Council in 1982. In doing so, Ladakhis effectively established a local governing body independent of Kashmiri control. Buddhist Ladakhi predominance in the LADHC led to the 1990 boycotts by Muslim Ladakhis and to further definition of local civil society organizations, the Ladakhi Muslim Association and the Ladakhi Buddhist Association (Aggarwal 2004). Today, both groups are more equally represented in the LADHC and tensions have calmed. However, as Ladakh grows in popularity, one notices that it is the Buddhist, and not the Muslim, population of Ladakh which is represented in popular representations.

Map 1 (shown above) is a prime example of representations of place that not only reflect national boundaries and reproduce imagined communities, but that also have the potential to incite or inflame ethnic and political divisions. The cartographer/artist is not named, however, the image itself is published by the Ladakhi Development Foundation, an American-founded non-profit organization. It clearly delineates Ladakh from Jammu and Kashmir, Jammu and Kashmir from India, India from Pakistan and China. It also separates Tibet from China, and draws Ladakh's borders in direct contact with Tibet's (in contrast to Pakistan and China, which are separated from Ladakh by "Disputed Territories"). Perhaps this map was drawn to acknowledge the homeland of Ladakh's substantial Tibetan refugee population, perhaps it was simply to create a direct association with Tibet. Although China looms large to the northeast, the scale of Tibet is roughly equal to that of Pakistan. In either case, the map is in keeping with historical representations, which serve to highlight the uniqueness of the region.

Tibet and Ladakh both attract the attention of scholars and travelers whose fascinations derive from the awe-inspiring Himalayan landscape, as well as from the power and fantasy associated with sacred space. Indeed, "places are produced by a dialogue between cultural fantasy-making and

geographical landscape” (Bishop 1989: 9). Since the closing of Tibet for travel by the Chinese, Tibetan life has received considerable attention from a variety of scholars working in the Himalayas. As many of these places were open when Tibet and Ladakh were not (India, Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim), the exiled communities spread throughout the known, accessible world became the central focus of scholarly interest. This project calls attention to both scholarly *and* tourist industry writings of Ladakh, as both play an important role in the social-cultural and the physical construction of place.

The Himalayas are experiencing an influx of tourism as never before, carrying profound cultural and ecological consequences. The significance is more than just a matter of increased travel, but of conceptualization of place. In the mid-1960s, Himalayan cultural tourism and low budget “mass adventure tourism” began to shape contemporary images of Tibetan Buddhist destinations (Bishop 1989: 245). Today, Tibetan Buddhism is the main tourist attraction of the Himalayas as “[i]ts monks, rituals, monasteries and artifacts throughout the Himalayan region - from Tibet to Ladakh, Nepal to Darjeeling - have become the delight of photographers, trekkers, and bargain hunters” (Bishop 1989: 245). Referring to hundreds of years of previous travel writing on Tibet, Bishop (1989:245-246) contrasts modern tourism from previous eras, where most tourists “viewed their sights against the background of a coherent ‘other’ world.” Herzfeld (2005: 4666 of 7450) comments that “[t]his predicate of otherness is central to any workable definition of tradition” and suggests looking at the processes, values and justifications which create otherness and alterity. Searching for what Dean MacCannell (1976: 23-24) might term a “cultural experience” of Tibetanism, Bishop explains that “in the contemporary era, tourist culture (literature, images, etc.) has to an extraordinary extent created these ‘places’: the expectation them, their representations.” That each cultural experience consists of a *model* or “embodied ideal” and its *influence* the “changed, created, intensified belief or feeling that is based on the model” (MacCannell 1976), the culture of Tibetan Buddhism is “instantaneously appealing, visually dramatic, and suitably archaic for packaged travel” (Bishop 1989: 246).

As Edward Said famously pointed out, the fascination with and creation of otherness is at once a reflection of a self-conscious search for identity. In lieu of this, Herzfeld (2005: 4666 of 7450) argues that this “system of difference,” which drives the search for uniqueness, is context-specific and warns that “in the age of globalization, nothing on the planet is immune from its spreading implications” (2005: 4674 of 7450). Inspired by historical and fictional accounts, then, the Eastern Himalayas can be considered as “located within a global smorgasbord of possible destinations, all of which are suitably exotic” (Bishop 1989: 246) and thus, compelling places to search for traditional, timeless culture.

The empirical reality of place and its ability to be mapped and known also contributes to the discursive construction of locals and locales. Mapping the Himalayas, its mountains and its monasteries, imprints in the explorer’s mind a connection between people and place. Drawing visitors’ attention to the built environment – namely to monasteries - is an important component of imagining Ladakh as a Tibetan Buddhist space, or “Little Tibet” as it has been consciously branded. Like maps, architecture and art are materially quantifiable. The ability for architectural conservationists and art historians to identify forms across time and space and to attribute them to a single cultural genesis lends credence to the authenticity of those sites. Tibetan Buddhism, whose physical form is solidified in and signified by monasteries and certain monumental architecture and is further reinforced by destination branding and conservation architecture, has thus become the hallmark of Ladakh, and may result in marginalizing or silencing other alternative narratives. Drawing from Foucault and Said, Bishop (1989) warns that objectification of place can also shroud the relationship between power and the production of knowledge. In a nutshell, in this map, the Ladakh Development Foundation makes a clear statement (if not a self-conscious or even oversimplified one) about identity and belonging.

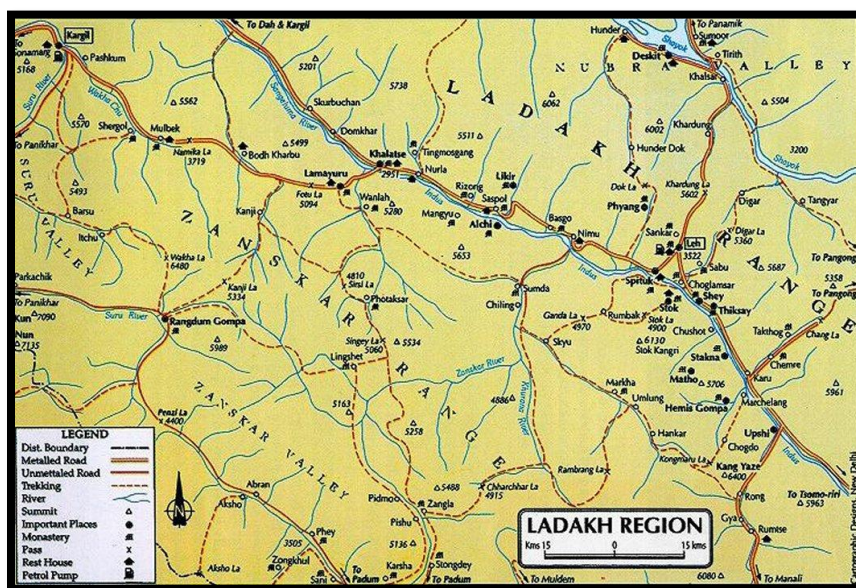
Recently, the appropriation of Ladakh’s geographic and cultural landscape has taken a unique turn, time-stamped by the global hallmarks of tourism and civil society. Tens of thousands of international and domestic visitors leave their impressions on the Ladakhi people each summer while

innumerable NGOs invest energy and money into raising awareness of development's damaging effects on Ladakhi environment and culture. Ladakhis themselves are invested in their cultural heritage; however, they appear to be equally invested in socio-economic change. Each of these industries - heritage and tourism - relies on certain sets of knowledge. They also rely on the physicality of space. These tensions play out in the ongoing task of accommodating visitors as government agencies regulate construction to insure that built forms conform to predetermined standards while allowing the builder some degree of flexibility and creativity.

Home building, and construction in general, is an excellent example of traditional knowledge and traditional ecological knowledge. Paying specific attention to the builder's treatment of pan-Himalayan vernacular designs and to his adaptation to political and environmental limitations, one may discern where these sources and forms of traditional knowledge converge with and diverge from the practicalities of building. From that vantage point, indigenous and scholarly branding of traditional Ladakhi architecture can be understood as a metaphor for the fluidity of heritage site interpretation.

Geography

The Himalayan Mountains have long attracted traders, travelers and trekkers. Their remoteness and grandeur present an obvious but welcome challenge to anyone who seeks to visit. Ladakh's location high on the Eastern edge of Tibetan Plateau in the Western Himalayan Mountain range (32° to 36° N and 75° to 80° E), politically situates the territory in the most Northwestern part of India between Pakistan and China, constituting a sizable portion of the Jammu and Kashmir State. Leh, Karghil, and Zanskar are the territory's three districts, named for their respective administrative centers and cartographically delineated by mountain ranges and river systems.



Map 2. Road and trekking map of Ladakh highlighting “Important Places” and “Monastery”. One can reference the Legend and observe that those two icons almost always appear side-by-side. One may also observe that “Mosque” does not appear in the Legend. Map courtesy of www.ladakhtravelguide.com.

The approximate area of the Leh district is 28,013 sq mi, making it the largest district in the country, although, in contrast to its large land holding, the total population of the Leh District is 133,847 persons, with 78,971 males and 54,516 females. The average literacy rate for males is just over eighty-six percent, and females, over sixty-three percent (<http://www.census2011.co.in/census/district/621-leh.html>, accessed 8/22/14). Leh district consists of Leh town proper, and just over one hundred inhabited villages. It is useful to note that much of the religious practices throughout the entire region coincide with geopolitical boundaries. Fifty-two percent of all Ladakhis practice Buddhism, and they are concentrated primarily, although not singularly, in the Leh District. Approximately thirty-two percent of all Ladakhis follow Islam, and the majority of that population is located in the Karghil District. Of the remaining population, eight percent of the inhabitants practice Hinduism while the rest are divided between Christianity and others.

The Leh district lies beside China-occupied Tibet in the North and East, accounting for the concentration of Tibetan Buddhism in that area. In the central and southern region of Ladakh, respectively, the Leh and Zaskar districts are visually similar to one another, but are geographically and geopolitically distinct from their western counterpart of Karghil in that the latter is a temperate-climate zone which closely borders Jammu and Kashmir to the West and Pakistani-occupied Baltistan to the North. Yet despite divergent religiosities, the lifeways of many Ladakhis are quite similar, and until recently were primarily shaped by the environmental constraints of living in an alpine desert. Ladakh's principal valley follows the undulating course of the cerulean Indus River. The sacred Indus itself is fed by glacial tributaries of the Karakoram mountain range that break off into various streams and allow for the cultivation of smaller valleys. These valley villages have supported Ladakh's myriad populations for millennia (Mann 1986) and can be easily spotted on road trips across the Karakoram Trans-Himalayan Highway.⁹

Little Ladakh

The treacherous, 17-20 hour jeep journey from Manali, Himachal Pradesh to Leh reveals a homogenous built environment, even as far south and east as the northern region of Himachal Pradesh known as Spiti. The prototypical single or double-story square forms with their white-washed mudbrick construction, small windows, and surrounding terraced agricultural fields are representative of a pan-Himalayan building type well-suited to the mountainous region. Early snowfall at the 18,000ft Zoji La pass stranded many overland travelers in bordering Himachal Pradesh, making road travel into Ladakh impossible. The region of Spiti, Himachal Pradesh, carries the brand "Little Ladakh" because of its environmental, structural, and historical and cultural commonalities with Ladakh. Spiti's villages, many of which are terribly remote, are "ripe for conservation" according to friends at the Tibet Heritage Fund

⁹ Etched into solid rock by the Indian Border Roads Organization (BRO) to allow military transport from Leh to Karghil, the highway boasts the highest motorable pass in the world.

with whom I shared numerous photographs of dilapidated forts, Buddhist monasteries or *gonpas* (L), and personal dwellings.¹⁰ Although residents of the region have largely converted to Hinduism, parallels to other Ladakhi cultural institutions (language, subsistence systems, kinship, music and dance) remain intact. Spiti's resemblance to Ladakh is most likely due to its former territorial inclusion as the kingdom of Guge during the early Namgyal Monarchy of the late 16th century. Observation of the region was instrumental to developing a broader, more holistic approach to identifying, rather than reifying, Ladakhi heritage.

Like those in Spiti, the long-established village complexes in Ladakh's central Leh District cascade down from once heavily-fortified forts and *gonpas*. This common sight no doubt contributes to perceptions of the region as being a part of one large complex. Indeed, the comparable construction and physical appearance of these mountain villages could lead one to believe that their inhabitants are equally similar. The *gonpa*, like its surrounding structures, is constructed primarily of stacked mudbricks. These bricks are composed of dirt containing a high clay content, or *markalak* (L), which is mined from shallow pits, scored into roughly 6"x 12" blocks, hand-formed using wooden blocks, and then stacked vertically and sunbaked until dry (see fig. 1).

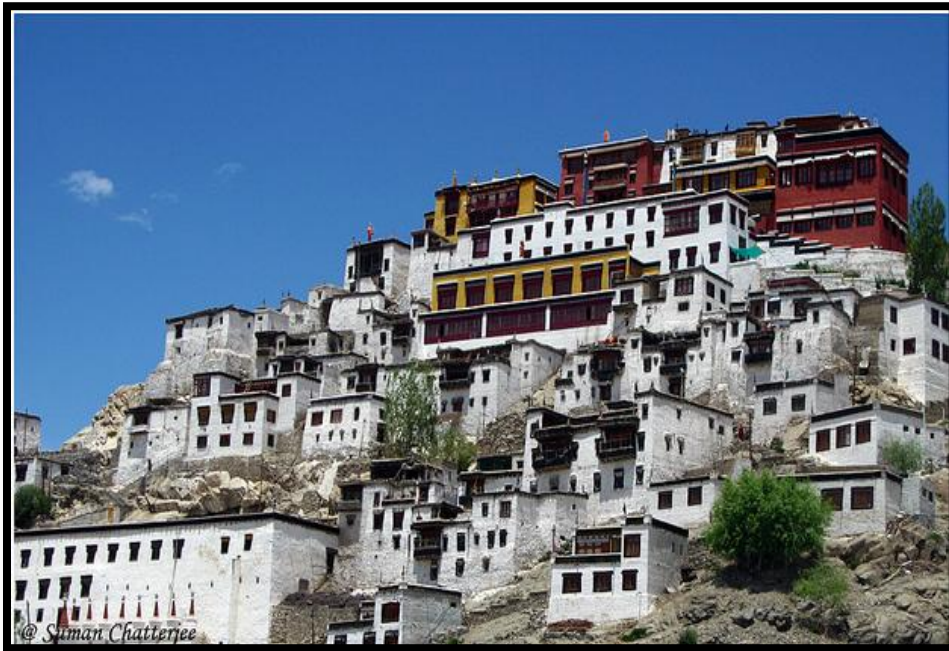
¹⁰ (L) denotes transliterated Ladakhi, (H), Hindi, and (U) Urdu. See glossary.



1. Mudbricks dug from pits and baked in the sun are the basic building blocks for most forms in the area. Photo by author.

When stacked lengthwise and adhered with a similarly hand-formed mortar, these bricks provide excellent insulation in both the winter and summer. I am told that their porosity also allows flexibility during earthquakes, such as the kind which devastated neighboring Pakistan in 2009 (personal communication Harrison, 2005). But research on mudbrick buildings in similar geographies and climates indicate that wooden columns and beams, and not mudbrick alone, provide the flexibility and support in buildings which exceed two stories. In his survey of “Oriental Houses in Iraq”, Subhi Hussein Al-Azzawi (1967: 65) notes that the first floor of a multi-story mudbrick house is supported by timber studs while the lower floor walls incorporate a cladding system for support and ventilation. The low ceilings and small glassless windows in Ladakhi structures offer inhabitants ventilation and insulation, but very little light. Throughout the Eastern and Western Himalayas, as with other montane regions in the world, villages are often built into hillsides allowing for maximum sunlight. Palisading down from the steepest

point, the Buddhist monastery not only assumes its ritual place as the highest structure in the village, but most likely served as a strategic lookout for invaders.



2. Thiksey monastery or *Tikse gonpa* (L) palisading down the mountainside. Its forms are representative of those across the Himalayas. Photo courtesy Suman Chatterjee, www.flickr.com.

Traditionally, officials and laypeople live in descending rank down the hills from the *gonpas* (Mills 2003). In similar fashion to other Buddhist cultures in South and Southeast Asia, common practice prohibits other structures from exceeding the temple in scale.¹¹ From there, family landholdings spread out and up into the valleys.

Many visitors fail to realize (and still others choose not to acknowledge) that Muslims make up sizable portions of Ladakh's village populations. Historically, these groups occupied the same villages, each contributing to the preservation and continuation of the community, and villagers would often intermarry with little fanfare (Koshal 2001; Rizvi 1996). Still, even in villages where no *gonpa* exists, the

¹¹ In Lamayuru, site of a famous *gonpa* containing ancient and beautiful wall paintings, a new hotel surpasses the *gonpa* in size and scale. The associated village there is all but dead except for tourism.

single or double-story residences follow similar building patterns: the exterior walls are ritually whitewashed (typically as needed), and windows are often trimmed in broad, black trapezoidal outlines¹² which gives off a uniformly homogenous appearance anywhere one looks. The window trimmings, however, vary from village to village, and in some cases are not uniform throughout an entire village. For example in Spiti, the entire village of Manu, which was located up 6km of hairpin switchbacks on a 45° gradient, had outlined their windows in titanium blue. The buildings echoed the sky. The residents are Hindu.

Every 50 or 60km along the Leh District's Indus valley road, towering mountain valleys give way to different villages. Trickling down from the heights, sparkling channels fed by snowmelt irrigate poplar trees and barley fields. Signifying broader geographical boundaries, these water features intersect family landholdings and provide a relief of greenery amongst the barren scrub of the alpine desert. This similitude materializes in striking contrast to the vast array of Himalayan geological formations. Like past explorers and anthropologists (Stein 1898; Risley 1912; Berreman 1956), I wondered how a people spaced this far apart and separated by such great geographic barriers could 1) traverse, populate and survive such an area, and 2) create, maintain and manage such a seemingly homogenous material culture. Moreover, why in the 21st century would this region acquire brand-names like "Little Ladakh" and "Little Tibet"? What characteristics contribute to this branding? Were they ever accurate, and how fitting are those labels today?

Tibetans in Little Tibet

Popularly known as "Little Tibet", Ladakh hosts a flourishing Tibetan-in-exile refugee population just 7km outside of Leh in the village of Choglamsar. During the Chinese invasion of their traditional

¹² I have heard from conservation architects working in Leh for the Tibet Heritage Fund, but have neither read nor inquired for myself amongst residents, that sometimes another color such as green or purple is used for the outline of the window; this serves as an indication of a Muslim, as opposed to Buddhist, family residence.

homeland, the Tibetan people made their exodus across ancient trade routes into India at a number of different points along the Chinese border. Choglamsar was among a number of Tibetan refugee camps which, over time, developed into permanent settlements as return to Tibet became an unattainable goal. Today, Choglamsar is a small village on a flat piece of land with little or no vegetation and no water save for a canal which runs adjacent to the road. The flat-roofed mudbrick and concrete houses are lackluster; few families even whitewash their exteriors. Yet each home has the tell-tale sign of colorful Buddhist prayer flags flying in the ever present winds which sweep down from distant mountains. Some houses fly the Tibetan political flag.

Choglamsar is also the official summer residence of His Holiness The Dalai Lama, the spiritual and political leader for Mahayana Buddhists.¹³ H. H. The Dalai Lama's birthday is a huge celebration for local Tibetan Refugees and Ladakhi Buddhists alike. Yet, counterintuitive to Leh's prominent place on the Indian Tibetan Buddhist tour circuit, tours through the Tibetan-in-Exile town area are difficult to come by and are not endorsed by local travel operator unions. I rarely observed or heard of Leh-Ladakhi residents socializing with members of the Tibetan-in-Exile population.

This is not to say that Tibetans are entirely absent from Leh Town. Quite the contrary: the Tibetan Handicraft Emporium, for instance, is a government-allocated space in Leh's Main Bazaar where Tibetans alone sell mostly imported goods from China. Women are frequently the proprietors of the shops. Common wares sold throughout the labyrinth of stalls include trekking gear, The North Face jackets and sweaters, backpacks, and other commodities popular with adventure tourists. Bargaining is not an option as most prices are fixed. Down the street, many older ethnic Tibetans rent stalls in the open-air market called Moti Bazaar, a long line of shops cascading downhill and terminating into a newer, larger shopping complex frequented by Indian Army patrons and some locals. In Moti Bazaar, elderly Tibetan women dressed in colorful striped aprons rely on their daughters and nieces to negotiate

¹³ I will problematize and discuss the nickname "Little Tibet" at length in this chapter and in Chapter V.

prices on their handicrafts, which include prayer beads, coarsely-woven wool hats and socks, and braided protection amulets. The older generation of Ladakhi shopkeepers can be distinguished from the Tibetan women by their garments, as Ladakhi women wear the red woolen *goncha* (L), a full-length robe cinched at the waist by a sash.

Tibetans do not possess their own commercial or residential properties outside of Choglamsar. According to several senior contacts in the travel operators union and the Jammu and Kashmir Tourism Department (JKTD), only native-born Ladakhis are allowed to own property in Ladakh. Elsewhere, such as in Dharamshala, a thriving Tibetan-in-Exile community (and home of “Little Lhasa”, the Tibetan government-in-exile) in the neighboring state of Himachal Pradesh, second and third-generation Tibetans are gradually being allowed by the Indian government to own private property, essentially changing their status as Tibetans-in-exile to Indian citizens. In Ladakh, however, there is considerable opposition to changing the contract. The prohibition in Ladakh against outsiders owning land essentially prohibits Ladakhi-born Tibetans-in-Exile and others from owning and operating any business (restaurants, travel agencies, curio and antiquity shops, guest houses and hotels, etc.) that would harness tourist revenue. This arrangement breeds animosity between Ladakhis and some Tibetans, the latter of whom are well aware that the former (including Buddhist *and* Muslim Ladakhis) knowingly capitalize on the branding of Ladakh as Little Tibet.

Ladakh’s Political Affiliations with Tibet, China and Kashmir, India

Ladakh’s associations with Tibet are long-established. Its ties to neighboring Kashmir, however, are equally continuous, if not chronically interrupted by Muslim invasions from Central and West Asia in the middle to latter half of the second millennium. The reader should note that the place names and political boundaries of today’s nation-states were varied and fluid throughout all but the last fifty or so years of the region’s history. The earliest written accounts of Himalayan inhabitants came from classical

Greek scholars who mentioned an indigenous race known as the Dards who were thought to have migrated from lower parts of the Indus into the region. The First (7th- 9th century AD) and Second (10th- 12th century AD) Spreading of Buddhism between India and Tibet appears to have subsumed much of their original ways of life as little material culture exists to verify Dard occupation (Alexander 2005; Rizvi 1996). Prior to the 2nd millennium AD, most of the eastern and central Ladakhi regions that lie on the Tibetan plateau and parts of Central Asia once known as Baltistan were united under Tibetan rule. Contrary to popular belief, however, Buddhism first came to Ladakh from Kashmir, not from Tibet. Examples of this pre-Tibetan Buddhism can be found in the magnificent rock carvings and petroglyphic inscriptions in Zanskar, Dras and Mulbekh. Tibetan influence actually entered into Ladakh around 950 AD in the wake of chaos following the collapse of the Tibetan dynasty.

Henceforth, the first Ladakhi dynasty was established by Nyima-Gon, whose lineage fell under one of Tibetan Buddhism's strongest supporters: the great Stron-tsan-gan-po (Rizvi 1999: 56). By the 13th century, Hinduism began replacing Buddhist influence in Northern India as Islamic influence simultaneously and independently began to spread east. The consequences of these conversions were myriad. A wave of immigration into Western Ladakh seemed to have a domino effect as Ladakhi leaders began sending young Buddhist initiates to Lhasa for training as opposed to south into India. This eastward immigration of Indian Buddhists into Ladakh also brought with it new forms of art and architectural influence, the remaining evidence of which can be observed in Spiti (then Guge), in Western parts of Ladakh, and perhaps even in Lhasa, Tibet.

During my brief excursion to Spiti, I visited several ancient *gonpas*; even my novice's eye could detect the distinct difference between the imagery and iconography of Tibetan paintings I had seen in the Ladakhi *gonpas* from the more Indian forms of the *gonpas* of Spiti (which to me, were reminiscent of Hindu art work I had seen in the temples of Uttar Pradesh and, much more recently, in Himachal Pradesh). The famous Ladakhi *gonpa* of Alchi is well known for its characteristic Kashmiri-style building

design and fresco paintings. In his magnum opus *The Temples of Lhasa*, the late Andre Alexander (2006) notes that although the abundance of fine quality stone throughout Lhasa made it, and not mudbrick, the preferred building material, his restoration efforts nonetheless revealed that “the walls of some (perhaps all) of the interior chapels at least are built from baked bricks, hidden beneath mud-plaster. This conforms to the standard building practice in India during the Buddhist period (i.e. 2nd century BC-ca. 1200 AD), and suggests that foreign craftsmen were at work” (Alexander 2005: 45).

Rizvi (1999:61) makes an important point that Ladakh’s reliance upon Tibet rather than India for religious guidance “[set] in train the process by which it was to become part of the Tibetan religious and cultural empire, rather than developing its own distinctively Ladakhi form of Buddhism.” However true this may be, she adds, it does not erase the continuous and lasting effects of migration and trade on the region. The diverse continuum of cultural and religious characteristics that Ladakhi peoples exhibit likely resulted from diffusion from other peoples whose caravans traversed mountain passes for centuries upon centuries (Rizvi 1999: 55). Cultural diffusion is not the only evidence of culture contact; transculturation is also evident in the new forms of architecture, most of which adapted previous forms of knowledge and aesthetic preference to this new, environmentally challenging environment. Surely if the Himalayan winters and generally slow rate of travel through treacherous passes trapped traders along the Indus, it is reasonable to suggest that their influence was both human and material.

Although a significant lapse in historical record between the 13th and 15th centuries leaves much to the reader’s imagination, there is some evidence that a Ladakhi prince became one of the first Muslim kings of Kashmir. This effectively created a political connection which would not be terminated for the remainder of the Muslim invasions into Kashmir, Central Asia and Baltistan, all the way to Western Tibet. To the west, Ladakh itself became the subject of and responded in kind to innumerable invasions and crusades for political and religious superiority; although, claims Rizvi, central Ladakh remained relatively unscathed. There, the Namgyal family established itself as the ruling dynasty, whose

reign would last from the end of the 16th century until the Partition of India in 1947. It was no coincidence that the first lasting invasion by a Muslim power occurred around the end of 16th century as well. The Central Asian leader of this invasion, Mizra Haidar Daughlat, originally more interested in using Ladakh as a station for invading Tibet than in invading Ladakh itself, was successful enough in his negotiations with the Namgyal king to locate his base at the royal complex at the village of Shey. From there, he maintained loose administrative control for some 15 years. As one can imagine, the threat of invasion brought great need for establishing and reinforcing strategic outlooks along the Indus, and it was at this time that King Tashi Namgyal commissioned the construction of Fort Tsemo in Leh (a now prominent marker of Ladakhi heritage and much sought-after conservation site). This was only one of the many building projects for the State during this time.

Tashi Namgyal died without producing an heir; thus the family's reign jumped through various successors in the lineage. Around the beginning of the 17th century, a distant nephew named Jamyang Namgyal thwarted the most aggressive attempt by the Mughals to spread Islam into Ladakh. In retaliation for the attack, Jamyang sent forces to Baltistan but was seriously outmaneuvered and taken hostage. During the early 1600s, Baltis were said to have overrun Ladakh, "plundering its riches and destroying its religious treasures with iconoclastic zeal" (Rizvi 1999: 66). With few exceptions, most of Ladakh's existing *gonpas* date from after this time period. Islam became the primary religious practice in Western Ladakh, and also began to establish itself in central Ladakh as well. Many homesteads were also erected at this time, and we can safely assume that immigrant builders brought with them material possessions, architectural knowledge, and aesthetic influence from Kashmir and Baltistan.

Maintaining his reign, King Namgyal took a Mughal princess as his bride as a peacekeeping measure, and disinherited children from his previous marriage. Popular lore claims the Buddhists symbolically accepted their new Balti queen as White Tara (a symbolic spirit protector in Tibetan iconography), and their first born son Sengge Namgyal was thought to have been born from a dream

wherein he leapt from his grandfather's mouth in the form of a lion. Sengge, which means "lion," is hailed to this day as the greatest of Ladakh's rulers. Despite the Muslim infusion into the land, Sengge continued to practice Buddhism, while also probably accepting the inception of Islam. It was through his authority that the 9-story Palace at Leh was commissioned. This marked a turning point in the settlement patterns of central Ladakh, eventually making Leh the center of commerce and administrative control, the effects of which are still present today. Sengge further endeavored to glorify his empire by disposing of the rulers of Zanskar and Guge and annexing their territories.

Sengge's success may have made him overconfident, however, as his attempt to invade Kashmir in the late 1600s was impeded by the then Governor of Kashmir. Insult was met with injury when the Governor tried to impose Jamyang's earlier tribute debt upon Sengge, whose response was to errantly close off the pass to Kashmir and institute a trade embargo between the two countries (Rizvi 1999: 69). Many accounts rightly dub this action as "economic suicide" (a term derived from Italian scholar Luciano Petrech's 1977 rewriting of the Ladakh Chronicles), because it limited trade to Ladakh's Eastern and Southern borders. The direct proximity of Leh to the Khardung-la pass, the major summer route to Yarkand, (and, incidentally, the world's highest motorable pass) may have contributed to Leh's becoming the official home of the royal family as opposed to Shey, which had provided a strategically superior station. Leh gradually became a major commercial as well as administrative center, and would later become the capital of Ladakh under both British-controlled Kashmir and its own autonomous hill council.

In the mid-17th century, Sengge's son Deldan finally paid the tribute owed to Kashmir. This was fulfilled in part by the 1666-7 establishment of the first mosque in central Ladakh, constructed at what was then, and now, the apex of the main Bazaar in Leh on the same grounds where the current-day Jamia Masjid stands. This tribute was also paid in conjunction with the promise to designate much of Deldan's lands as the vassal of Aurangzeb of Kashmir. Paradoxically, Deldan later marched successfully

to regain control of much of Western Ladakh. During the late 17th century, however, Deldan came to the aid of Bhutan which was being invaded by Tibet, and which likely could have handled the onslaught *sans assistance*. Tibet was unhappy with Mughal influence in Ladakh to begin with, and so, in 1680 answered with a formal invasion of Ladakh, an onslaught which continued for three years before the Kashmiri army supplied reinforcements. However, this assistance carried a hefty fee: Deldan was forced to convert to Islam, to surrender one of his sons, and to turn over the entire stock of Ladakh's pashmina wool trade to Kashmir (Rizvi 1996: 75). From there on, Ladakh maintained a tedious, somewhat ambivalent relationship with its two neighbors, Tibet and Kashmir, which left the region susceptible to Sikh, or Dogra, invasion of much of Kashmir and Baltistan and their subsequent control of Ladakh in the 19th century. We will continue this chronological journey through the takeover by the British in the next section. It is sufficient to say that Ladakh was historically subject to extensive influence from a variety of political regimes. Those regimes – in addition to the continual trade – left their mark on the Ladakhi people's social and material culture.

Material Cultures

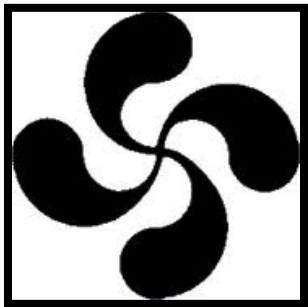
The Indo-Sinkiang trade route goes through a depression in the Karakoram mountain range just north of Ladakh between the border of Baltistan (the Gilgit-Baltistan region of northern Pakistan) and the Xinjiang region of China, and is pinnacled by Godwin Austen peak, or K2, the second highest mountain in the world, elevation 28,265 ft. (see figure 1). It is within these passes and peaks that the legendary Silk Road trade routes lay. The now oldest Buddhist monasteries in the world are also found throughout this segment of the Himalayan range, stationed on the rocky points and projections which overlook the aforementioned valley villages.¹⁴ It is nearly impossible to trace the exact origins of peoples and their products; such knowledge is subject to time and agenda. In order to understand traditional

¹⁴ Prior to the Taliban bombing of 1998, the oldest Buddhist structures were found in Afghanistan.

building complexes, one must historically contextualize their materialities. Even though the Himalayan Mountains ostensibly create a geographic barrier, thereby isolating culturally established building practices, both trade and conquest have brought subtle, lasting changes to the built environment. As previously mentioned, regional travel was made possible by the establishing of a series of trade routes later dubbed the Silk Road. The 400+ mile long Central Asian trade route lead travelers from Baltistan to Tibet through Ladakh, and was reportedly used by Buddhists in Kashmir from at least 125-152 AD until 1949 when the trade routes were closed by the Indian Government. Travelers transported the spoils of their vocation, disseminating their handicrafts and cultures over an enormous span of time and space.

Like symbols and material artifacts, building design and artistic knowledge also travel trade routes. The longer a culture inhabits a particular area, the more that area could be considered a part of a singular cultural complex. Crossing the Himalayas by foot and donkey takes such a prolonged period of time, one can imagine how settlements would form somewhat organically off of these trade routes. For a typical trader-merchant travelling with a reasonable load during seasonable weather, the trek from Srinigar to Leh would take at least one-and-a-half months out and one-and-a-half months back. The same trek from Leh to Lhasa was considerably more difficult and could easily take two-and-a-half months, as much of the journey passed through uninhabited territory (Rizvi 1996: 98-103). Religious significance adds incentive to this treacherous journey. The mouth of the Indus, or Hindu Darshan, has served as a place of pilgrimage for Hindus and Buddhists for over millennia and is now the site of a major annual Hindu festival. Traces of ancient cultural beliefs and practices can be seen not only in the monasteries along the Old Silk Road, but also in the less-famous rock carvings dating between the 1st century BC to the 7th century AD, carved by those whose craftsman received their training in the monasteries of Gandhara, an ancient region of historically Turkish origin which encompasses all parts of NW Pakistan and Afghanistan. Many of these ancient monoliths are visible from the Trans-Karakoram highway in route from Leh to Kargil and onto Srinigar, Kashmir.

Material culture provides evidence of migration and cultural intermingling from the Mediterranean across the Caucuses and Himalayas and on to China. As Hallade (1968:3) noted, “almost every art has been affected at some time by foreign and other influences, but a born style of the marriage of elements as diverse as those prevailing in the immense region of Central Asia is rare.” Prehistorical archaeology attributes the earliest regional settlement to the origins of civilization, namely: early agricultural settlement in the Indus Valley (5000 BC) and Harappan (2500 BC) cultures (Lambert-Karlovsky and Sablov 1995). There is a lasting connection between the symbols in early Indus seals and Hindu iconography today. But not all designs were original to traders of the early city-states. Symbolic forms such as the swastika, here a precursor to Sanskrit text used to connote something auspicious or favorable, can be traced back to the trading seals used by the Indus valley cultures. Its cross-cultural continuity spans eight millennia, and besides being found in Hinduism, is also found in Buddhism and Jainism prior to its incorporation (possibly importation) throughout Greco Roman and Pre-Christian European symbology. Another form of the symbol called the “lauburu” adorns the lintels above doors in the Islamic Basque culture in Spain. The Indus civilizations enjoyed trade with Mesopotamia and beyond, and this one ornamental decoration enjoys widespread circulation, appearing well into South India and across Asia to China.



3. Left, Spanish *lauburu* symbol, which is similar to the swastika form which can be found throughout Asia.



4. From left to right, swastika symbol on seal from Indus Valley Civilization and again on ancient Grecian silver coin. This design is a product of millennia of cultural diffusion.



5. Door frame at Indus Guest House in Leh showing the swastika design. Also present in this frame are the Roman key fret, simple Celtic knot, Christian dove of peace, Tibetan Bodhik script, the multivalent triangle within a circle, among other symbols. Photo by author.

Spatial surveys in Leh reveal the prevalence of the swastika carved in wooden lintels above doors and windows, soldered on wrought iron gates outside family compounds and even tagged on exterior walls throughout the town. These are all examples of continuity in form and design dating back to the earliest human migrations across Eurasia. This ubiquitous design is indicative of transculturation throughout time and space. Although very little is known about the prehistoric settlements in northwestern India prior to the Indus Civilization, scholars note that ethnic and religious integration and

tolerance could explain the cosmopolitanism feeling inherent in trading towns like Leh (Lamberg-Karlovsky and Sabloff 1995; 191-193).

Rizvi (1996: 157) comments on the hybridity of Ladakhi material culture and notes that, in Leh, “whatever people’s requirements beyond the basic necessities of life might be, they could be met by imports; thus there was little call for the development of indigenous industry.” The incorporation of the decorative swastika is minor when compared to the personalization of a vernacular architectural complex (again, pan-Himalayan) which bears witness to the blending of cultural traditions into a single building type. I will take this issue up at length in subsequent chapters, but will mention the village of Mulbekh for an immediate example. Villagers of Mulbekh in Ladakh’s Karghil district have been intermarrying Muslim traders’ sons with Buddhist daughters for centuries. This cultural practice is evidenced in the built environment. Off of the main road, one can observe an inconspicuous mosque stretching out of the hillside in between a *chorten* and a *gonpa* which is perched up on the hillside. The point here is that, although the building forms are essentially the same throughout the Himalayas, their ornamentation and even interior floor plans are often representative of variety of cultural preferences (and change in fashion) over time. Incidentally, Mulbekh is also the site of the 8th century rock monolith carved in the form of the Maitreya (the coming Buddha) who watches over the road. Notwithstanding scant evidence of indigenous cultural complexes prior to historical documentation of trade, the Silk Road doubtlessly served as catalyst of exogenous culture change (Mann 1986).

Territorial Claimstaking and Cultural Representation

Early sources on Ladakhi art history, archaeology, and material culture, include myriad travelers and explorers, missionaries and leaders, researchers and cultural historians. Few written records fail to mention Ladakh’s striking resemblance to Tibet’s landscape and Buddhist culture. Such monolithic representations are perhaps misleading. The first of these accounts came during the late 13th century

when Marco Polo became the first Westerner to venture into the area, albeit to a region slightly farther north than Ladakh. He found that various Asian ethnic groups such as the Chinese, the Huns, the Manchus and the Mongols had previously laid claim to the area, taking and leaving behind remnants of their conquests which were discovered in culture complexes along the Silk Road. The Jesuits and Moravians both established missionary efforts from the 15th century forward. Their writings inspired German and Scandinavian explorers who began to infiltrate and lay claim to these remote, indigenously populated areas in the mid 19th century (Grover 1999).

During the period of time known as “The Great Game” - when Russia and Britain played espionage along China’s most Western borders - Britain funded official exploratory and mapping expeditions throughout the Trans-Himalayan mountain range from Kashmir in Northern India by route of the Silk Road into Central Asia and the Siberian Plateau. Even today, those borders between Ladakh, Pakistan, the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union, and China are permeable (Grover 1999). By the early 1900’s, explorations were primarily motivated by and limited to the search for antiquities along the famous, 2000 year-old, Silk Road where, not coincidentally, Russian forces were moving in. Explorer’s travel accounts express awe at the exchange of precious commodities in the Leh Town’s famous Silk Road Bazaar (Grover 1999: 49).

In the mid- to late- 1800’s, Britain’s obsessive fear that Russia would colonize and expand its influence into Central Asia and China’s unguarded and largely unmarked territories sparked a series of archaeological expeditions. It was through this scholarship that Britain obtained crucial information about the region, securing and appropriating its cultural and material resources for its own purposes. But where Britain shifted focus from its colonies, India picked up the slack, claiming that the inhabitants of the region were perhaps closer in race or creed to Indians than to any other cultural group.

The ties between archaeology and history were made easier by close similarities between the culture-historical approach in archaeology and the newly emerging Indian Historiography. Historians tended to think in terms of different racial groups and viewed the past as a series of migrations of peoples who brought innovations into India but

eventually were absorbed into the Indian way of life. By labeling the Indus civilization as pre-Vedic and attributing its destruction to Aryan invaders, archaeologists made prehistory conform to the established pattern of Indian historical interpretation ((Chakrabarti 1982:339) Trigger 1988: 181).

In other words, by distilling British scholarship, India began to write Ladakh into its official history.¹⁵

Although not of primary importance to the present study, this issue is subject to great contestation in the context of Hindu Nationalism in India.

The Residue of “Culture Area” Studies

Late 19th century researchers focused primarily on the geographical or geo-political orientation of Ladakh and of the Himalayan region as opposed to the cultural aspects of its inhabitants. Culture area studies were not limited to South Asia; New World social scientists studying indigenous North American populations understood culture areas as broadly similar natural environments whose human inhabitants adapted in materially, economically and socially similar ways. Because politics encouraged much of the interest in Himalayan culture, early culture area studies in the region focused more on Central Asian than South Asian culture (Srinivas 2002; Walker 1998; Grover, 1999; Mann, 1986; see also Risley 1915). Much of this work was based on secondhand accounts due to difficulties in accessing these remotely populated, and extremely rugged, areas (Bacon 1946; Barreman 1966). During British occupation, exploratory missions generated a surge of structural anthropology studies, and researchers expanded their efforts to classify and catalog various Himalayan inhabitants into their respective culture areas (Bacon 1946; Berreman 1972; Bose 1963; Risley 1915; Walker 1998; Grover, 1999; Mann, 1986). Typical

¹⁵ Recent research carried out by the Indian Archaeological Survey still focuses primarily on the study of ancient civilizations. Marxist archaeologist Bruce Trigger notes that “Archaeological research in India began in a colonial setting and for a long time remained remote from traditional Indian scholarship.... Many Indian archaeologists are content to attach ethnic or linguistic labels to newly discovered cultures and to interpret them in a general, descriptive fashion. It remains to be seen how, as research of a processual nature becomes more familiar to Indian archaeologists, they will relate it to this orthodox historical framework” (Trigger 1988:181-182).

of social studies in the mid-to-late 19th century, European experts were determined to prove that the European “race” was indeed the progenitor of the Himalayan civilizations (Trigger 1989; McGuire 2002).

Both European and Indian studies appropriated the archaeological material and cultural resources of indigenous cultures as scientific and ethnological proof for the history (and future) of Western Civilization, and to promote nationalist agendas, respectively. Further, they provided excellent justification for collectors and art historians to capitalize upon the bounty. The general consensus for Central Asian research was that “the complex cultural variations observed on every continent resulted from the mingling of cultures at different levels of development” (Hallade 1968: 382-92; see also Andriolo 1979 in Trigger 1989). In the late 1960’s the study of Gandharan art of North India and the Greco-Buddhist tradition in India throughout Central Asia art became an important focus for scholars looking at the relationships between cultural complexes. With the exile of ethnic Tibetans from Tibet, China, that gaze narrowed exclusively toward Tibetan Buddhists.

Ladakh scholar Martijn Van Beek offers some insight into the growing popularity of what he terms the “Orientalism of Buddhism” within Indian archaeology:

Although official classifications invariably reflected the existence of the sizable Muslim population of the region, academic interest and popular imagination - fed by hugely popular travelers’ accounts - focused on the Buddhists. With Tibet largely off-limits to Europeans, Ladakh came to be regarded as a more or less sufficient substitute for the ‘real thing.’ Here, it was believed, a pristine example of Buddhist culture could be studied. The myth of Shangri-la, which suggests a society of spiritually evolved, peaceful beings, shaped research questions as well as popular representations of Ladakh” (Van Beek 2000: 533).

After the Partitioning of India and Pakistan in 1947 and through 1974, Ladakh was closed to both travel and to research, even by Indian citizens, due in part to Britain’s concern with the expanding Soviet Empire. When its borders reopened, research and travel resumed. Much of the archaeology of the northwestern Indian provinces, and particularly of Ladakh, was carried out in the 1980’s by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). However they tried to attribute material culture to Indian heritage,

Hindu scholars could not classify Ladakh as a South Asian culture, nor could Buddhist scholars consider Ladakh as an East Asian culture.¹⁶ Today, there is a very different relationship between the ASI and Ladakh, as the tide of Western-educated art-historians, architectural conservationists, and social scientists once more make room for their own interpretations of Ladakhi heritage.

¹⁶ A prime example of this fusion can be found in the Gandharan art. Its influence extends from its Eastern most parts of Chinese Turkistan and Serindia; the region has close cultural ties to both India and China, to the Steppes of Siberia in the North, and to the Southern boundaries of the Karakoram mountains which separate Serindia from India and Tibet. Gandharan art is concentrated around the 4th century AD, and forms a stylistic bridge between India and Iran via the classical west; incorporating aspects of Greco-Roman origin upon a folkloric interpretation of Buddhism, but with the basic iconography remaining profoundly Indian (imagine a Buddha with Apollonian features) (Hallade 1968; see also Belenitsky 1968). There is some debate over this school as being singularly Gandharan, and some styles have been attributed to the rule of a Kushan ruler in 2AD who was overtly fond of Buddhism.

CHAPTER II: LITTLE TIBET ON THE ROOF OF THE WORLD

This chapter provides a context to help readers understand how Ladakh's capital of Leh was transformed from a remote Indian Hill station into a thriving cultural tourist destination. Thirty years since the Indian Government re-opened Ladakh's borders for domestic and international travel, much attention has been given to the vacillating affects of culture contact on Leh's diverse local culture. At 12,700 feet above sea level, the Ladakhi capital of Leh rides high upon a popular route of India's Tibetan Buddhism tour circuit. The tourist economy is responsible for a burgeoning urban landscape, largely owed to continuous construction of tourist accommodations (see Figure 2 and 3). During the summer months, the Main Bazaar is bustling with activity (see figures 1 and 5). There, curious tourists can be seen peering into Kashmiri Muslim antique shops whose advertisements proclaim "Authentic Tibetan" goods and whose charming proprietors invite them to "Come into my shop...." The density of the compact L-shaped Bazaar and its confluence of trade routes from the Kardung La and Karakoram highway add to that commotion.



Figure 1. Chart of increasing tourist visitation since 1998 (compiled from the J&K census office Leh, Ladakh 2007). The 2011 Indian census estimates that in 2010, Ladakh hosted over 140,000 visitors.

After shopping, weary travelers can attend a meditation class in the Johkang Gonpa or dine in rooftop restaurants enjoying ubiquitous sunshine and a view of the 16th century Royal Namgyal Complex and Jamia Masjid above the Old Main Bazaar.¹⁷



6. The Dzomsa watering station and Ladags Apricot store at the confluence of Kardung La and Trans-Karakoram highway are one of the very few shops that provide local handmade items for tourist consumption. Photo by author.



7. Tourists walking down the Main Bazaar, Leh, Ladakh. Photo by author.

¹⁷ Interestingly enough, however, most tourists with whom I spoke scarcely noticed the Masjid despite its central location.

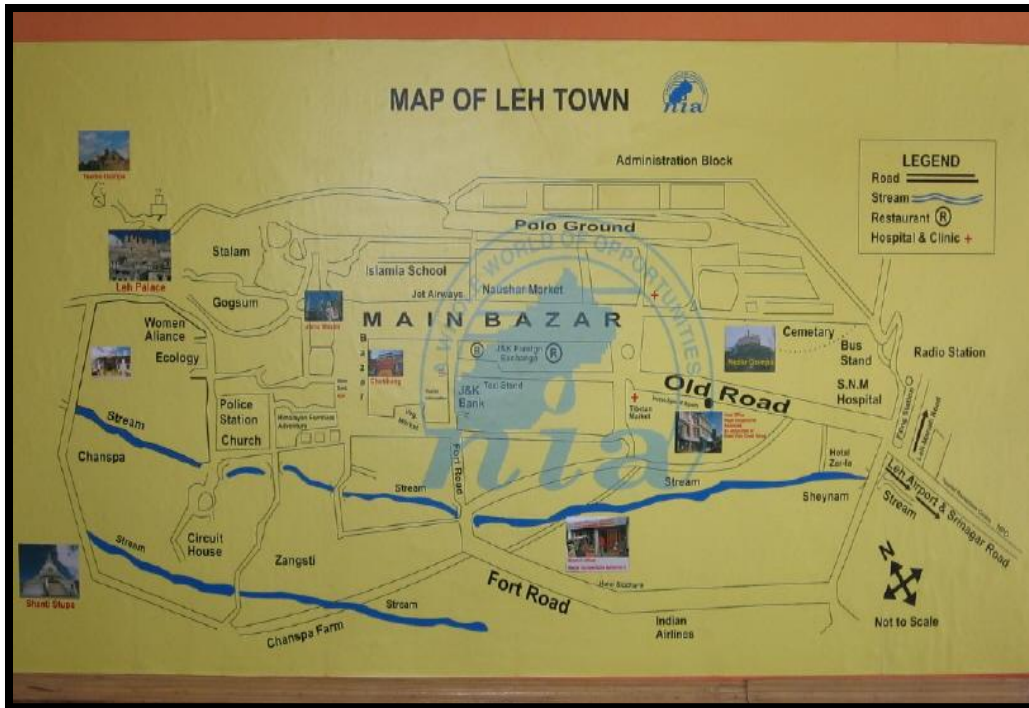
In a New York Times “Surfacing” travel report entitled: “*Ladakh, ‘Little Tibet’, Comes of Age*”, a Swedish journalist provides the following description of Ladakh:

Hundreds of trekking outfits line the streets, offering tours to Ladakh’s snow-capped peaks, rocky desert plateaus and lush oasis villages... Fierce competition keeps prices stable.... A new trail has also emerged: spiritually themed tours that promise full immersion in Tibetan Buddhist culture...combin[ing] hiking with meditation, and ... arrang[ing] stays in monasteries and Buddhist homes....

The road from Leh to the fairy-tale village of Lamayuru winds along the Indus River and goes north to the ancient Muslim city of Kargil. Although many visitors treat Leh as a way station, the city itself, a microcosm of non-Hindu India, should not be overlooked. The central mosque broadcasts evening prayers near the medieval Chokang Buddhist temple, and Tibetan restaurants serve veggie momos (dumplings), next to Punjabi sweet shops.

But as new and ever larger waves of travelers discover Ladakh, old mainstays like Gesmo [restaurant] are being crowded from every direction. “The growth is too much, too fast,” said Vivek Namagyal, a Leh resident, pointing to a cluster of new businesses on the new outskirts of town. But he didn’t have too much time to complain. He’s busy opening an Internet cafe on Changspa Road. –NY Times, August 2006

This description provides a variety of images: a harmonious intersection of hosts and guests set against a backdrop of urban development and growth; sacred landscapes, heritage sites, and religious and cultural intersections; and the tourism industry and its local unions. The images and experiences appeal to a variety of travelers- from outdoor enthusiasts to artists, scholars to activists- as each envisions a unique and authentic destination couched within in a safe, geographically *known* locale.



Map 3. Visitor's Map of Leh, Ladakh. Although this map is not to scale, it is generally accurate. As one travels north and northwest, from the Main Bazaar, the elevation increases from 12,500ft at the base of the valley. Courtesy www.oktatabyebye.com.

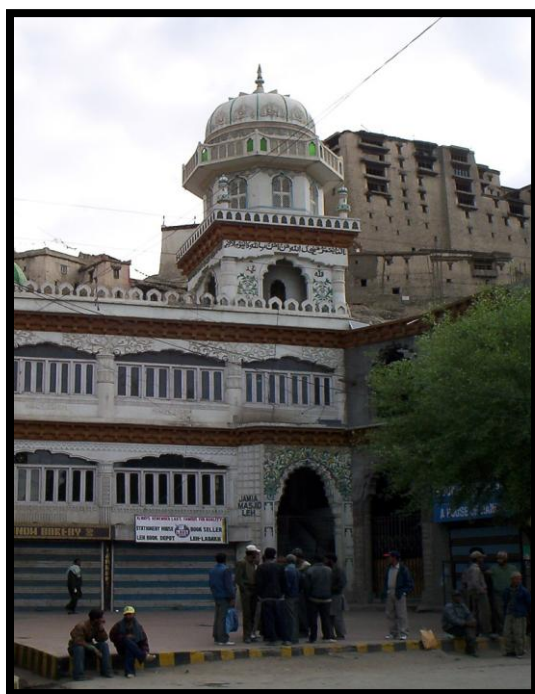
Recently illuminated in the global spotlight, Leh, Ladakh shines against the political unrest of Srinagar, Kashmir. Monumental architecture, traditional peoples, breathtaking treks in “the most remote region of India,” *spiritual* (aka Buddhist) trekking; and authentic [Tibetan] food aside ubiquitous Punjabi sweet shops can all be experienced along the ancient Silk Route, this new Shangri La of the Tibetan Plateau. And yet despite its close proximity to the main Bazaar, scant travel guides mention the Old Leh Heritage Zone save for trekking through its confusing, dusty and dirty footpaths to reach the nine story palace atop Rtse-Mo mountain.¹⁸ This research yields a very different reading of destination “Little Tibet” as it reveals conservation-based NGOs seeking to halt the destruction of Leh's Old

¹⁸ The ill-preserved Palace has been deserted since the early 1950's- not even a museum or a tour guide greets guests. Its lone sign reads “Protected by the Archaeological Survey of India”

Historical District and “traditional” Ladakhi culture. Their global initiatives thrive amidst an equally powerful tourism economy hyper-regulated by local Civil Society Organizations.¹⁹

Shifting Accommodations

Leh Town, population 30,000²⁰, is described by native anthropologist Ravina Aggarwal as “a vibrant, rapidly urbanizing town... with a constant flow of migrants and travelers and a marketplace that is representative of its diverse population” (Aggarwal 2004:15). In the center of the town, Old Leh's dusty labyrinth of streets and historical residences are shadowed by the dilapidated 15th and 16th century Namgyal Royal Palace. That shadow also crosses the minarets of the historic Sunni Jamia Masjid (17th c. site) nestled in the corner of the Main Bazaar.²¹



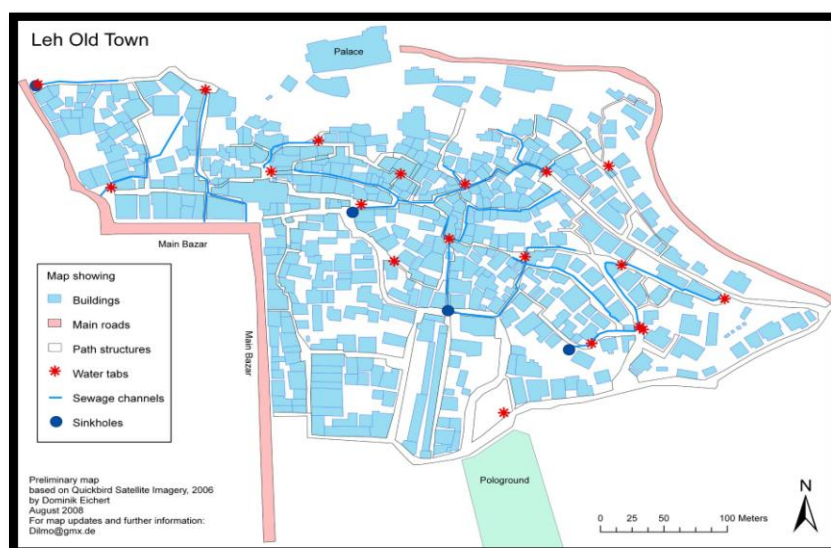
8. Itinerant workers wait for work in the early morning hours in front of the Jamia Masjid in the Main Bazaar. The Old Leh Palace looms in the background. Unseen in this photo are patrons of two very old tandoor bakeries which are located in the Muslim section of town surrounding the Masjid. Photo by author.

¹⁹ One such CSO is the All Ladakh Travel Operators Association (ALTOA) comprising all 170 registered travel agencies in Leh; ALTOA's "Action Committee" volunteers function as registration watchdogs.

²⁰ The President of ALTOA informs me that that figure as much as triples from May to September

²¹ Despite its close physical proximity, this Sunni Muslim site has no affiliation to the Shia Imambara.

After the exile of King Namgyal during the Dogra rule of the 1830's, Ladakh's social, economic and political ties with Kashmir strengthened while their religious ties to Tibet remained somewhat static. Unlike neighboring Zaskar and Karghil districts, the Leh district continued to thrive and prosper as a trade hub along the Silk Road until the Partition of India and Pakistan in 1947. Thus, the architectural heterogeneity of Old Leh homes speaks to both its Buddhist *and* Muslim influences. Although the exterior of the old masjid in the Main Bazaar exhibits minarets and arches characteristic of a mosque, the capitals topping the interior central support pillars are characteristic of Ladakhi rather than Islamic style. A demographic study of Old Leh estates compiled by the Tibet Heritage Fund shows landed Buddhist and Muslim families dwelling side-by-side (see map of Old Leh, below, courtesy of the Tibet Heritage Fund www.thf.org). A tour through the Old Leh Heritage Zone (OLHZ) reveals homes in various states of repair and disrepair, whose composition varies between mud brick and stacked stone, and whose exteriors and interiors – which I will discuss in this chapter and in Chapter VI– resemble homes from the Middle East and Central Asia, Kashmir, and Tibet. If those homes appear display features of vernacular styles both near and far, new construction is inspired by an even greater range of influence.



Map. 4
Old Leh Town,
courtesy of Disket
Dolker. The majority
of historically and
culturally significant
buildings in the Old
Town predominate
near the Namgyal
Palace, the large,
rectangular form at
the north end of the
map. The Main
Bazaar flanks the
eastern portion.

To address the rapid urban growth, the Leh Town Planning Commission has invited participation by Ladakhi members of the Old Leh Heritage Initiative (OLTI), co-founded by the NGO Tibet Heritage Fund (THF). However, the degree to which this initiative can effectively modernize the infrastructure of Old Leh and improve its visibility (and desirability) remains to be seen.²² Members of OLTI identified the lack of economic interest in Old Leh due to outsiders' ignorance of local knowledge and lack of local pride in Ladakhi heritage as the primary obstacle to successful negotiation with the Jammu and Kashmir Development Corporation (JKDC) (Dolker 2004). As the Royal Namgyal Complex is all but deserted, the traditional village structures which were once responsible for its maintenance have been subsumed by various NGOs; and now, local civil society organizations responsible for tourist regulation have been called to task to regulate the growth of the commercial district which threatens to overwhelm the ancient Bazaar.

Meanwhile, Ladakhi travel agents are benefiting from the economic climate, "shifting" their private residences from dilapidated estates in crowded Leh Town to their new guest houses in fertile surrounding villages (see Figure 2). Many local Leh residents incorporate imported construction materials and western designs for new guest houses and hotels. Common elements include flush toilets for bathrooms, gas stoves for kitchens, and concrete, tin roofs, and machine-lathed windows incorporated into construction units. It is rare if impossible to find locals using exclusively mud brick construction materials or incorporating traditional composting toilets in their new hotels and guest houses. I am told that these traditional practices are considered backwards lifestyles and are associated with peoples of lesser means. Much to the dismay of Western conservation architects, local travel operators' lack of interest in their historical homes renders them either unoccupied or rented to itinerant workers.²³ Further encroachment upon the Old Leh Heritage Zone by commercial construction

²² Leh Town planners are vestiges from Ladakh's ties with the Jammu and Kashmir government, led under the guise of the Jammu and Kashmir Development Cooperation (JKDC).

²³ Personal correspondence, Andre Alexander, August 2006

in the adjacent Main Bazaar has NGOs like the Tibet Heritage Fund (THF) scrambling to save its derelict 16th and 17th c. residences and temples.

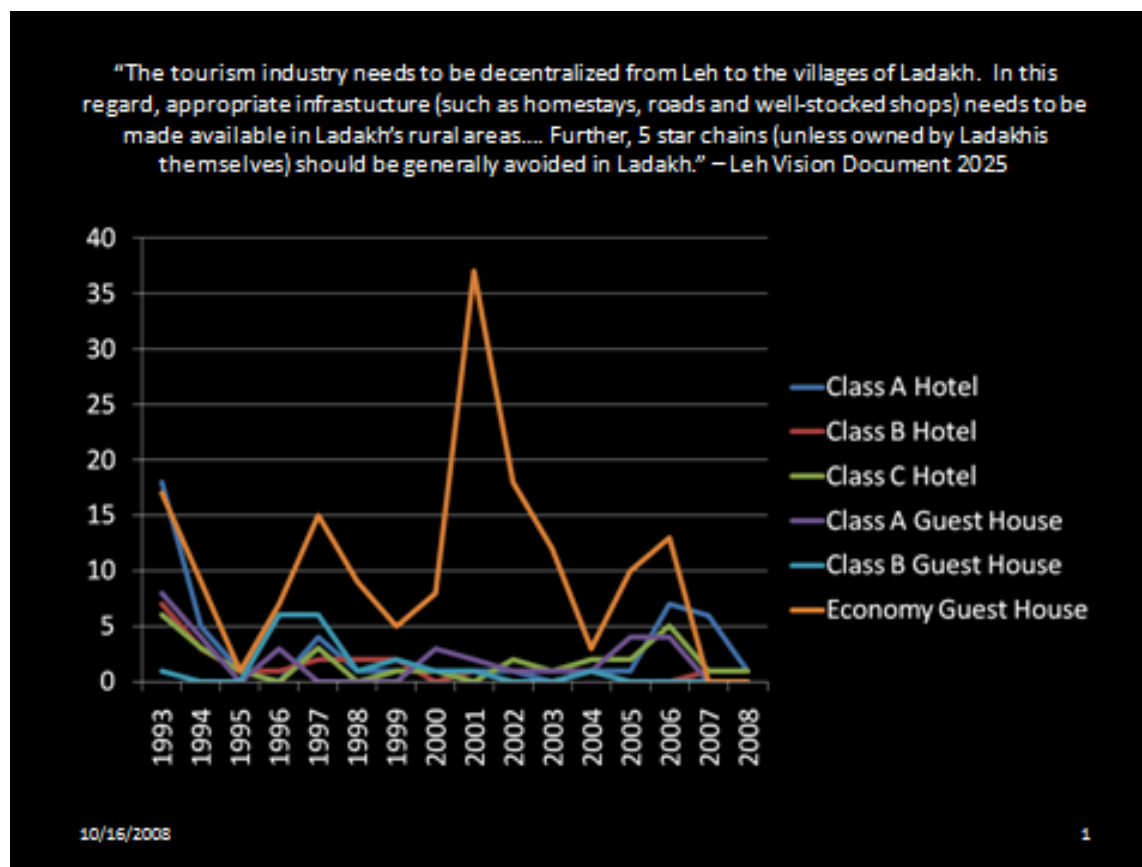


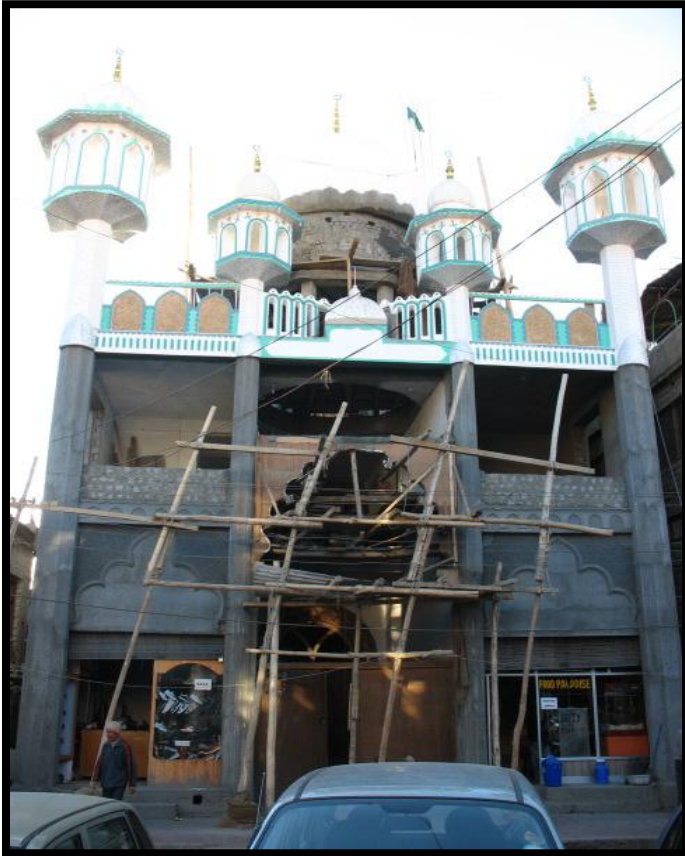
Figure 2. Number and class of tourist accommodations built in Leh from 1993 - 2008. The spike in 2001 may be attributed to Ladakh’s feature appearance in a Bollywood film about the Line of Control. (Chart compiled from the J&K Tourism Department, Leh, Ladakh 2008)

Politics of Place: Civil Society and the New Leh Town

Communal spatial arrangements and social relationships within Leh are mutually constitutive, and are also part and parcel of the ongoing change of Leh’s built environment.²⁴ In the Main Bazaar, the growing minority of Shia Muslims have constructed a three-story *imambara*, a place of religious worship and future site of the Ladakhi Muslim Association. This new construction is indicative of changing

²⁴ Fundamentally, communalism is political organization based upon religious affiliation. For further information on communalism and communal identities in Ladakh, see Van Bijk, 2003.

demographics within the Islamic community as the Shia population gains numbers over the relatively small population of Leh Sunnis.



9. The Shia Imambara the Main Bazaar under construction in 2007. Photo by author.

This site is indicative of changing religious landscapes in the urban sphere in general. Just around the corner couched between a restaurant and curio shop stands the Jokhang Gonpa. An active monastery and home of the Ladakhi Buddhist Association (LBA), monks perform daily meditations and, for a small fee, offer tourists guided meditation classes.²⁵ Adjacent to the *gonpa*, is the previously mentioned Jamia Masjid, where Sunnis (and previously Shias) gather to recite their daily *namaz* and offer classes for young men in the Quran. By the first break of daylight, itinerant workers from rural Ladakh, Kashmir and other Indian states can be seen waiting for employment in front of the Masjid.

²⁵ LBA representatives have held the Autonomous Hill Council seat in the Indian Parliament since communal riots rocked the streets of Leh fifteen years ago.

Despite communal conflicts of the past, both Buddhists and Muslims in Leh Town are joining efforts to keep tourism business revenues in the hands of local Ladakhis. The All Ladakh Travel Operators Association (ALTOA) plays an important role in this mission, going so far as to exclude Tibetan Buddhists from the nearby refugee settlement of Choglamsar from participating in the tourism market. In addition to contributing to new commercial and residential construction, other groups like the Ladakhi Hotel and Guest House Association (LHGHA) are forming secular, autonomous networks that both regulate the tourism industry (including sponsoring local festivals and cultural performances) as well as perform public works.²⁶ Their agendas include “modernizing” Leh Town for the comfort of their guests, as well as for themselves. And like those fading religious divisions between Buddhists and Muslims, the physical distinction between town and village is becoming more difficult to discern.

Leh Town is actually a conglomeration of small *tgonspas*, or neighborhoods (see figure 2 Ch. 4). These neighborhoods are also experiencing changes owing to the urban sprawl of Leh Town. Since the inception of a cash-based economy throughout much of village life in Ladakh, crime has become an increasing, although still relatively moderate, phenomenon. As local guest house owner Mr. R.S. Bodh informed me:

One of the very nice things about living in Leh is the very low crime rate. You see, Ladakh is a very small place... so everyone knows one another. And we never have to worry about the crime. We can go out at night and not have to worry about anything. Sometimes during the summer these people are coming in for work from the outside, and so they have quarrel, but it is amongst themselves. They do not bring it to us. [personal communication 9/9/08]

Although each *tgonspa* traditionally has a “policeman”, these individuals only have authority to deal with in-neighborhood disputes. As a result, the Indian Army, with its Leh-based outpost of 20,000 active duty soldiers, is likely to be called upon for larger disruptions. This activity may have contributed to Ladakhi’s impetus to create new positions within traditional village-based organizations to negotiate between the village, the State, and the *gonpas*.

²⁶ Based on 9/2006 interview with the President of ALTOA

Greater numbers of itinerant workers and curious tourists wandering the footpaths may also influence vernacular construction. In 2006 and in each consecutive year I returned to Leh, I observed that the retaining walls surrounding family homesteads had increased in height since my last field season. The same resident commented on the resident walls:

Yes, you know, we were talking about the crime and how in the summer it is there. A few years ago, I had some workers and some things lying around, and then the next morning I went looking for these things and they were gone. So it's like this: we Ladakhis, we don't even think about these things, but when the workers come from outside, people begin to start missing these things. The workers, you know, they look in and maybe see something and go and take it for themselves. So I used to have a wall, it was only about this high [he held his hand a few feet off the ground], but two years ago, I had the wall built up. (And you think it's the workers who are responsible, I asked?) Yes.

Clearly residents with means take protecting their property into their own hands. On a broader scale, however, the need for forming increasingly complex and integrated forms of governance and regulation is manifest in new forms of social organization.

Leh Town Village-Based Organizations

The fabric of local authority is woven from integrated social, agricultural, and religious village practices (See Figure 7). The weft is neither static nor rigid as village leaders may occupy multiple positions at a time, all working together as a cohesive unit. These decentralized positions of power contain no prescriptions for certain action, as they are not officially sanctioned either by the LAHDC or the J&K State. Local leaders are chosen on the basis of merit and ability. No official ranked society or Hindu caste-based system exists in the area, although stratification is increasing as landed families with visible wealth are often more politically prominent than are families of lesser means. Recent Indian and J & K State development initiatives interrupt this system as "progressive" economic policies and programs crosscut community-based organizations (CBOs) and disrupt coordination between the household, farmland, village, temple and monastery. In some cases, however, state edicts have created an

opportunity for new political structures to manifest and for new positions of leadership to unfurl (see figures 6 and 7).²⁷

The most fundamental level of village social interaction exists around the *khampa*, or individual residence of the *nangmi*, or family. The typical family social structure is patrilineal and uxorilocal, and kinship practices incorporate primogeniture for the inheritance of the *kangchen/khutu* (family homestead) through the male line (Srinivas 1998; Aggarwal 2004; Norberg-Hodge 1991). Negotiating social ties between the family and the village are the intermediate *chutsos/chosphons*. Composed of ritual siblings, this 10 *kangchen* sub-group selects representatives to village councils.²⁸ This important CBO is responsible for agricultural cooperation, festival organization in conjunction with subsidiary temples, management of community property including repair and renewal of historic structures such as local shrines, or *chortens*, and other development activities (Srinivas 1998; Sharma 2003; see figure 7).

At the secondary tier of integration within village, larger kin networks may be observed fulfilling judiciary, and executive authority roles. The *paspun/phasphun* is a group of fictive-kin, or non-related families who traditionally share a common shrine deity by initiation through rites of passage (Srinivas 1998). Within the neighborhood, and particularly in urban settings, both Muslims and Buddhists are traditionally a part of this group which is responsible for organizing and carrying out village-wide or multiple village life cycle festivals such as marriages and funerals. Village politics are generally guided by *gobas*, headmen and adjudicators who serve on a rotating appointment. The entire town of Leh is governed by one central *goba*.²⁹ These interactions take place behind-the-scenes, as it were, during the tourism season, but are nonetheless active.

²⁷ Can material manifestations of Global Heritage, as well as the flows of transnational Buddhism feeding into cultural tourism, aid Ladakh in its incorporation into a Global Civil Society?

²⁸ Religious orientation traverses village territory. For readings on what degree Mosques are a part of the social and political atmosphere of village life, as well as their degree of involvement with the Ladakhi Muslim Association and the Jammu and Kashmir State to a lesser degree, see (Srinivas 1998). She also includes a good deal of information on marriage patterns and domestic interaction, particularly with regards to agriculture.

²⁹ An important note: this man also serves as a representative to the Ladakhi Buddhist Association, discussed later, and also adjudicates affairs between the *trongpas* and regional and state interests.

Regional and State Affiliations

At the tertiary stage of social organization, the local village and Leh Town connects with larger regional (Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, or LAHDC), state (Jammu and Kashmir), and national (Indian) entities whose interests in governance and town planning both inform and are informed by rotating elected leaders. In 1991 under the direction of the Ladakhi Buddhist Association (LBA), the LAHDC lobbied the Indian Government in support for major state-making projects including regional autonomy, economic and developmental benefits, and Scheduled Tribe status.³⁰ In 1995, The LAHDC Act was made official, ensuring a “district-level elected body” would be vested with the power “to set development priorities and approve plans in accordance with them” (Vision Document 2020: 60). In 2001, this governing body adopted a halqa panchayat system based on the Jammu and Kashmir Panchayati Raj Act of 1989.³¹ Unlike other halqa panchayati in Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh’s district planning and development is represented by the District and Planning Board sector of the LAHDC. The primary motivation for institutionalizing this form of government in Leh is to request funding from the central Indian government for community-based development projects (Vision Document 2020: 61).

The presence of the LAHDC assures that micro-level planning (MLP) and governance based on the Panchayati Raj system, rather than top-down state-level non-participatory initiatives, receives the highest priority.³² However, to this day organizational change is still slow and disjointed as many political officials are reluctant to turn over power and many Ladakhis are reluctant to become involved with official politics. Regardless of intentions to vest power in the hands of MLP officials, in Leh Town, proper,

³⁰ Around the same time, the New Delhi-based Indian Tourism Development Cooperation began to more actively promote Ladakh’s Buddhist heritage sites through tourism agencies located in the capital and through their affiliates via the Internet.

³¹ (http://www.thp.org/resources/speeches_reports/research/overview_local_governance_jammu_and_kashmir_accessed_6/3/2014).

³² The Panchayati Raj is a 3-tiered system of local, decentralized self-governance found throughout India. The LAHDC wishes to base their grassroots participation on the 1st tier, or *halqa* village level. The district planning and development is represented by the LADHC. The primary motivation for institutionalizing this form of government in Leh is to request funding from the central Indian government for community-based development projects (Vision Document 2020: 61; http://www.thp.org/resources/speeches_reports/research/overview_local_governance_jammu_and_kashmir accessed 6/3/2014).

planning and construction of projects such as guest houses, hotels, retail establishments, and government offices ceases to be exclusively executed by edict of village leaders. Rather, that power is shared with or replaced by sectoral or commercial interests. Although myriad development offices exist to regulate local construction projects, applying for a building permit is a neither standardized nor straightforward process. My observations and interviews show that different channels seem to exist for different types of buildings and the granting of building permits appears to be rather subjective at this stage (see Ch 5).

Although LAHDC bureaucracies appear to be intermittently integrating village affairs with regional and state politics, their development projects are grandiose and far-reaching. Increasingly powerful committees known as *Tsokspa/Tsogspa* perform myriad tasks on behalf of the villages, largely in connection with the monasteries and subsidiary temples. These organizations traditionally carry out the tasks of putting on plays, performing religious ceremonies, welfare work, performing village restoration, and restoring *chortens*. They also provide intervention for land disputes, marital conflicts, and inter-village disputes (Sharma 2003; Srinivas 1998; Norberg-Hodge 1991). On a local level they act to assist the *goba*, or village headman, in daily village governance; but on a supralocal level, they also cooperate with local authorities such as the LAHDC and with Indian Army officials (Srinivas 1998; Sharma 2004). Also on a supralocal level, the LAHDC and halqa panchayats are encouraged to support development-oriented priorities which are established and implemented “with the active involvement of various other actors including governmental agencies, NGOs and community based organizations” (Vision Document 2020: 62).

My interviews and research make evident that the myriad civic agencies overseeing the town’s physical organization operate more as a meshwork than a network, that is, they overlap in unconventional and somewhat organic ways (see Ingold 2010).

A History of Civil Society in Leh

To contrast fundamental neighborhood, village, and community-based associations with state and civil society organizations is to begin to understand the multilocal sites where Ladakhi heritage intersects local, state, national and global processes of development and regulation (See Figure 4). Thirty years ago, Ladakh first attracted the interest of cultural tours in India and abroad (Eppler 1983; Rizvi 2000). Simultaneously, it also attracted the attention of international non-governmental organizations concerned with the preservation of indigenous culture. Communal tensions in the 1990s between Buddhists and Muslims threatened to disrupt the budding tourism economy. In 1990-91, the Ladakhi Buddhist Association began agitating in response to alleged social, political and economic discrimination by Muslims; these communal clashes occurred in the Leh and Karghil districts of Ladakh and in Jammu and Kashmir State as well (Van Beek: 2000). Yet, kinship ties in Leh and the surrounding villages often crossed over religious boundaries, making boycotts and protests more difficult to organize and adhere to (Van Bijk 2001; Srinivas 1998; Rizvi 1996).³³

However tense communalism may still be in some regions, it appears as though Ladakhi Buddhists, Muslims, and Christians participate in the collective travel unions to standardize and regulate the tourism-based business. The Travel Agent Association of Ladakh (TAAL) and, more recently, the All Ladakh Travel Operators Association (ALTOA) monitor entrance and participation in the travel industry and sometimes enforce membership or withdrawal. Additional unions also exist. The Cyber Café Association and the Taxi Union, for example, are known for boycotting to guarantee the same rates are charged to all tourists, thereby limiting competition. The Ladakhi Guest Hotel and Guest House Association undertake similar measures to ensure a standardized market for similar levels of accommodation. But without authority, members of these organizations often challenge the limits of their power or overlap into other spheres of the industry. It is unclear to me whether these unions have

³³ The LBA eventually formed a Coordination Committee in 1992 due to ineffective communal politicking.

registered with the Indian Government in order to legitimize their presence; also unclear is how much true power they have to control their circumstances. What I do know, however, is that the tourism economy is opening up new spaces for civil expression.

The Concurrence of Tourism and Cultural Conservation

In a 2003 report, Mr. Urgain Lundup, then Director of Tourism in the Department of Tourism Jammu and Kashmir Government offered a vision for community involvement vis-à-vis Ladakh's economy.

Since Ladakh was opened to international tourists, two major developments have taken place. One is economic development, and the other is cultural development. Both economically and culturally Ladakh has developed by leaps and bounds. People are happy. This is the positive aspect of tourism in Ladakh.... "[T]ourism development has helped in improving the economic life of the people, which ultimately helped the people in their education.... Ecologically, Ladakh has become a very sensitive place. Littering is taking place everywhere, which needs to be stopped urgently. This is the negative aspect of tourism development in Ladakh. For waste disposal, NGOs in Ladakh can play a very important role. They should organize campaigns at the grass-roots level in which people from the travel trade and from the hotels and the community should be involved. [Melongs – June, 2003]

Economic and political leaders at the State and National level have long since used development rhetoric as a backdrop for emphasizing the backwardness of Ladakhi culture. Although many complaints voiced by educated administrators in Kashmir focused on modernizing and legitimating Ladakh's status as an autonomous territory, these voices may also have been echoing from the sounding boards of international NGOs. But the process of progress is largely contingent upon local economizing behavior.

Beyond the successful but saturated tourism industry, jobs in Leh are scarce and consist mostly of self-employed merchants or entrepreneurs. As previously mentioned, the Main Bazaar is inundated with travel and trekking agencies and curio and souvenir shops. Restaurants, bookstores, and internet cafes come and go with each tourist season. All of these businesses require somewhat skilled (or at least literate) labor and all are practically abandoned during the off-season. Government employment is

highly sought after because of its consistent pay and benefits, but bureaucratic opportunity tends to be handed down through a series of hierarchies managed mostly by local officials and bankers. Urban migration from rural agricultural outposts is common during the summer months, as men search for cash-based employment in Leh. Those who do manage gainful employment perform manual labor to earn their keep. Many men leave their villages during harvest time when labor contributions are the most necessary. Increasingly, manual laborers on construction projects – and even in agricultural work up the valley - are mostly itinerant summer workers hailing from outside of Ladakh rather than Ladakhis themselves.³⁴

Although Ladakhi women have traditionally enjoyed a great deal of social equality and a largely egalitarian lifestyle, today there are few economic opportunities for women to participate in the political sphere or in the marketplace. Ladakh is not alone in this respect. In keeping with translocal migration patterns observed throughout the developing world, village women are invariably left with men's work (Kredler 2003). As early as the mid 1980's, organizations like the World Tourism Organization (WTO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and many European-based NGO began to promote women's handicraft production. This served to offer women opportunities to participate in the marketplace also while encouraging local pride in their cultural distinctiveness.

Infamous in Leh for its aggressive cultural intervention agendas, Helena Norberg-Hodge's NGO the International Society for Ecology and Culture (ISEC) is one such organization. Swedish linguist turned environmental activist Helena Norberg-Hodge is the sole researcher and author of *Ancient Futures* (1991; 2009), a widely-circulated anti-development piece translated into 32 languages since its original publication which likely put Ladakh *cum* "Little Tibet" on the map. In 1978, Norberg-Hodge founded The Ladakh Project, the predecessor organization to ISEC which promotes sustainable livelihood and claims

³⁴ Construction projects and agricultural work is overseen by local Ladakhis, some with affiliations and/or leadership positions within the CBOs. However, Ladakhis in the urban center of Leh are becoming increasingly removed from agricultural seasons and choose to focus instead on tourism seasons.

to rely upon traditional and sustainable Tibetan Buddhist life-ways in order to correct the negative effects of tourism upon Ladakhi culture. *Ancient Futures* credits the practice of Tibetan Buddhism as the driving force for maintaining Ladakh's unique terraced-irrigation subsistence system and related agrarian social practices. It says little to nothing about Muslim Ladakhis and their contribution to sustainability. Although Norberg-Hodge's research is outdated and her agenda somewhat narrow-minded, the book's (and its related film) endorsement of transnational Buddhism nevertheless inspires thousands of tourists to visit Ladakh each year.³⁵

After Norberg-Hodge registered ISEC in Ladakh as the Ladakh Ecological Development Group (LeDEG) in 1983, it was inaugurated by then Prime Minister of India Indira Gandhi and was consecrated by the Dalai Lama (Norberg-Hodge 1991). This move represented a symbolic intersection of religious, state, and global interests further authenticating the values of the transnational Buddhism movement and distinguishing the organization from regional communal groups such as the Ladakhi Buddhist Association (LBA) or elite social associations like the Namgyal Institute for Research on Ladakhi Art and Culture (NIRLAC). With the assistance of local Leh monastic organizations and concerned officials, and supported by UNDP Special Grants Programme funding, ISEC began an aggressive education campaign to inform Ladakhis about the hazards of adopting Western lifestyles, particularly Western technology.³⁶ Cutting across communal lines, LeDEG routinely promoted candidates for the LAHDC who supported these initiatives. So invasive was this social movement that many Ladakhis became critical of foreign intrusion and branded Norberg-Hodge as "the Queen of Ladakh", or alternatively, "the Gatekeeper of Ladakh". I was told by two retired local leaders that LeDEG eventually voted Norberg-Hodge off its board of directors but was unable to substantiate that claim.

³⁵ Norberg-Hodge came to Ladakh in 1975 to film a documentary on indigenous practices not long before the opening of borders to foreign tourism by the Indian Government in its efforts to secure territory along the highly contentious LOC.

³⁶ For example, Norberg-Hodge also enlisted local architects to incorporate solar panels into indigenous building styles to give them a sense of pride for their culture (which she claimed was lost in the scramble for the Western model) while encouraging "green" development. The fruits of her efforts can be seen in the more affluent households in the upper valleys of Leh.

In the early 1990s Norberg-Hodge formed the Ladakhi Women's Alliance (WAL) in efforts to raise the status of women and revive traditional livelihoods. Since its inception, WAL's membership has expanded to include over 4000 women encompassing nearly 100 villages (Hiller 2001). A popular cultural and eco-tourism destination, the WAL center located in the heart of Leh features stands of Buddhist women donned in village garb selling their traditional wares. WAL's general manager, an educated Ladakhi, informed me that Norberg-Hodge refuses to hire literate or educated Ladakhi women to operate the center, preferring instead to import foreign volunteers as a part of her Farm Project initiative.³⁷ These westerners serve traditional, organic, mint tea before showing the *Ancient Futures* (1991) film and fielding subsequent questions from the dread-locked and sun burnt patrons.³⁸ They also take part in the Farm Project, which charges volunteers a considerable sum to stay with a village family and learn traditional farming practices. WAL Initiative flyers are posted alongside other myriad programs and advertisements in bookstores, teashops, restaurants, and guest house bulletin boards along the Main Bazaar. I analyze the content of these messages and their affects on locals and visitors alike in Chapter 4.

Regional Interests meet Global Agendas

State-based initiatives also play a large role in cultural conservation. Bearing the name of its Royal founders, the Namgyal Institute for Research on Ladakhi Art and Culture (NIRLAC) was established shortly after the 1990 communal riots in Leh. Founded by the Namgyal Royal Family in 1985, the Namgyal Institute for Research on Ladakhi Art and Culture (NIRLAC) was the first registered NGO in

³⁷ Volunteers apply online and, if accepted, are responsible for their own travel expenses as well as for £500. I was told that all but RS 1800 is paid directly to ISEC.

³⁸ A similar phenomenon is occurring at Dakshina Chitra museum in Chennai, adding to a trend to transform heritage sites into spaces of global culture. Hancock writes: "The craft-based economy is easily invoked within the museum's discourse on premodern environmentalism. Craft is represented as a form of labor that, by contrast with industrial wage-labor, is not exploitative and has less deleterious effects on the environment. It is promoted with the same moral urgency as environmentalism and endowed with value that is at once functional, environmentally appropriate, and aesthetic" (Hancock 2001: 700).

Ladakh (Sharma 2003). This local NGO operates under the auspices of the Queen Mother and King of Ladakh (the living heirs of the Namgyal dynasty who have large land holdings and some political influence but no official power), thus substantiating the agendas of landed aristocracy with outside intervention through international non-governmental aid. Like ISEC, NIRLAC is funded by an international umbrella organization called Action Aid International (AAI), whose mission statement invokes working with local “partners” and integrating their knowledge bases in efforts to publicize “human rights issues, about poor and marginalized people, about injustice, about the need for massive change”.³⁹ AAI is only one of the major funding institutions simultaneously supporting cultural preservation and development initiatives.

Many NGOs in Ladakh apply for the funding through the UNDP Small Grants Programmes. The UNDP Small Grants Programmes are designed for local, decentralized implementation and seem to be the most user-friendly for grassroots organizations as funds are made directly available to local NGOs and CBOs. Those funds do not come without a catch. The value statements on the Indian porthole of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Special Grants programs website instruct local initiatives to adhere to so-called universal ethical principles. Objectives of the National Steering Committee in India include the following:

Promote innovative local responses (particularly in response to natural disasters), build capacities of communities and their local institutions to manage local environment in sustainable manner, demonstrate the effectiveness and potential for wider application

³⁹ To further this trend, The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has founded the Cultural and Eco-tourism in the Mountainous Regions of Central Asia and in the Himalayas program to oversee the environmental management of previously isolated regions in the Himalayas that have become popular areas for cultural tourism and eco-trekking (<http://portal.unesco.org/culture>). Sponsored by the Norwegian government as well as by general funds, this program encompasses seven different independent countries including India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Pakistan and Tajikistan. The Mountain Institute and Snow Leopard Conservancy are the Leh-based grassroots manifestations of these initiatives that have instituted a wide variety of educational programs, not the least of which is highlighted in the proceedings from a recent conference.

of small-scale, decentralized, community based initiatives, generate learnings from the community based initiatives and support the spread of successful approaches and methodologies, and to create public awareness on global environmental issues. [http://portal.unesco.org/culture accessed 11/5/08]

Another recipient of State, National and Global funding and guiding objectives is the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH). INTACH has a team of western-trained engineers and conservation architects that serve to preserve the “built fabric” of India’s diverse, and rich cultural heritage (www.intach.org). Yet despite its rhetoric of inclusion, nowhere does its 2003 publication *Architectural Heritage Ladakh* mention Islamic architectural influence on Ladakhi vernacular or monumental structures (nor do cultural tours in the Leh District of Ladakh highlight Islamic religious sites). Among INTACH’s primary sponsors are the Archaeological Survey of India (also a main competitor for sites); the Indian Government; INTACH UK Trust; and other sponsors such as American Express, whose capitalist intervention of such conservation efforts seems to fulfill a corporate social responsibility to the Global Civil Society (Keane 2003). INTACH lists six monasteries in the Nubra and Zaskar regions of Ladakh for which they are crafting conservation strategies *without* the incorporation of community-based organizations (Sharma 2003).

Civil Society and Conservation Architecture

Leh Town has always been cosmopolitan. We recall that as a trade entrepot along the old Silk Road, it was subject to vastly diverse cultural influences. In contrast to other Himalayan tourist destinations such as Kathmandu, Nepal, this crossroads accepted peoples from far and wide while largely maintaining its cultural and physical character. Infrastructural improvement via the Trans-Karakoram Highway and the Leh Airport, strengthening of Internet and cellular satellites plus the inextricable global connection of tourism have all provided Ladakhis with new ideas and opportunities. The most obvious result of globalization and subsequent commercial development in Leh has been

urban growth, much of which neglects the historical built fabric of the town. Because of this, independent non-governmental NGOs led by scholars of art history and architecture have also sought international funding to preserve Ladakhi culture in a different way.

Conservation is the preferred term for such work by scholars in this region of the world, but their philosophies and practices are similar to those of historical preservation in the United States (Orbasli 2008). According to the 2013 Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter (2013: 2) conservation includes “all the processes of looking after a place so as to retain its cultural significance”. I use the term conservation in keeping with my European interlocutors, but recognize that the term preservation in the US bears some similarity to conservation in the UK, wherein a building is maintained “in its existing form and condition” (Orbasli 2008: 212). I also recognize the similarities of European conservationists and US preservationists in their zeal for “cherishing existing structures” (Harvey 1972: 16) and in their commitment to “[champion] and [protect] places that tell the stories of our past” (<http://www.preservationnation.org/what-is-preservation/> accessed 8/22/14). In this sense, practicing conservation entails undertaking some form of work or management of culturally significant places (ICOMOS Burra Charter 2013). Just as the conservation of a historically symbolic place or cultural monument draws international scholars to unique localities, it also propels local constituents into the global conservation movement. In the course of this exchange, each stakeholder is positioned to act on behalf of a particular agenda. The involved persons are interrelated on a wide scale, ranging from the common villager to the household, the village to the monastery, the monastery to the state, and the state to the nation, with civil society organizations representing among others, economic, political, academic, interests at various these levels. Religious interests can be seen to overlap with any of the former categories, depending on the interpretation of purpose or value of the conservation, and of course, the relationship to the site itself if it be a religious monument.

The Tibet Heritage Fund (THF) on the other hand has a different set of ethics guiding its conservation practices:

Tibet Heritage Fund (THF) is an international non-profit organization working in the field of international cooperation for sustainable development of communities and traditional settlements, particularly within the Tibetan cultural realm but also elsewhere in Asia and Europe.

THF works with a team of international and local experts, and cooperates with local communities, governments and institutions.

Projects such as rehabilitation of traditional settlements and restoration of historic monuments are designed to primarily benefit the local residents. THF runs a large vocational training program to keep traditional building skills and crafts alive. THF also researches and documents traditional architecture and building technologies. [<http://www.tibetheritagefund.org/> accessed 3/15/11]

However different are their perspectives of and interactions with local populations, THF and INTACH conservation architects both draw from the same geographical, historical, and anthropological reserves, and both aim to conserve historical Ladakhi structures in their original built form. Their interpretation of "traditional" Ladakhi architecture, however, may depict Ladakhi design as Tibetan progeniture, as their associated publications also portray Ladakhi built heritage as static. Only villagers are considered by Ladakhis to be traditional craftsman (and that consideration, so-to-speak, is likely a recent phenomenon); their skills are in short supply and high demand. This implies that who builds and what materials they use are at issue when considering change in building traditions, and indeed in authenticity.

Most conservation architects are Western-trained, although they do hire and train both Ladakhi and non-Ladakhi skilled laborers to repair and reinforce heritage sites. But today, even villagers make use of imported labor and materials both in conservation and construction. Similarly, foremen at new construction sites such as guest houses and hotels often contract professional architects, hire itinerant skilled laborers, and refer to the finished product as "traditional" just by incorporating certain aesthetic components. *Shinstoks*, or wooden window carvings, are considered to be traditional Ladakhi design

components by many builders and homeowners whether they are hand-carved or machine-lathed. But once more, the issue of materials and process is as pressing a concern for authenticity and cultural significance as is the object or finished product. We will take up this issue more in the following chapter, but it suffices to say that, irrespective of the relationship between building traditions, conservation and new construction, the organizations and institutions that facilitate these processes are themselves part and parcel to culture change.

I have delineated the chronology India's opening of Ladakhi borders for tourism and the subsequent arrival of NGOs into Ladakh in the late 1970's and early 1980's. With respect to history, I should add that one development arose from the economic initiatives of the tourism departments of India and Jammu and Kashmir, and the other from one Western activist committed exposing the "dangers" of such initiatives. At its inception, the tourism market was controlled almost exclusively by the J and K Department of Tourism. This was simultaneous with the control of Ladakh by Jammu and Kashmir State, prior to its largely communal struggle and success for an Autonomous Hill Council and seat in the Indian Parliament. Lacking regulation, the knowledge produced by these Kashmiri tour guides greatly, and sometimes erroneously, influenced future consumption of Ladakhi heritage. According to one interlocutor, these misinterpretations at the very least motivated citizens to organize formal travel associations. However, I currently see the autochthonous formation of *culturally*-oriented grassroots organizations as well as tourism-regulating civil society organizations (CSOs) as influenced by and reacting to this history of recent NGO intervention.

Ashutosh Varshney (2002) defines civil society from several different angles. First, he distinguishes between *associational* forms of civic engagement and quotidian, or every day, forms of engagement. Among the associations he counts as forms of civic engagement are business associations, festival organizations, trade-unions, and politically-based associations (Varshney 2002: 3). The quotidian forms of engagement, as I have mentioned elsewhere, include visitations, taking meals together,

participating in joint holidays and festivals, and exhibiting camaraderie in public spaces. By civic life, he refers to the parts of peoples' lives that exist "between the state on one hand and families on the other", that allows people to connect and collaborate on a variety of activities that are "relatively independent of the state" (Varshney 2002: 4). He clarifies this definition by stating that civic life is not necessarily devoid of politics, but is distinct from the state.

For purposes of this study, I categorize groups I term Community Based Organization (CBO) and Civil Society Organization (CSO) under the heading of associational forms of civic engagement in their ability to make collective socially and politically motivated decisions and to employ a representative or spokesperson to make their needs heard to the state. In some cases, these organizations act independently of the state to regulate social, religious, and economic matters. In this case, they are not necessarily legally authorized to enforce their decisions, but, because those decisions come with community backing, they are effective.

Often taken-for-granted and behind-the-scenes aspects of tourism are the independent, autonomous, local member associations involved in regulating the tourism industry. They are non-profit to my knowledge, much like the taxi or bus drivers unions, and their members may occupy both village-based as well as municipal government positions. Many CSOs have begun to carry out public works campaigns in a vein similar to those performed by well-established NGOs as well as by traditional community-based organizations at the village level. Initial interviews with leaders of such organizations like All Ladakh Travel Operators Association (ALTOA) reveal that the construction of new residential and commercial establishments (such as guest houses and hotels) undertaken by members of these associations and promoted as "traditional Ladakhi" by their constituencies complicates the expression and perception of an authentic built environment. This posturing clashes with conservationist rhetoric of the International Society for Ecology and Culture (ISEC), the Namgyal Institute for Research on

Ladakhi Art and Culture (NIRLAC), the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage, and the Tibet Heritage Fund (THF).

To complicate these processes, ALTOA requires its member affiliates (tour operators) to complete a training class and certification exam on heritage sites. These training classes may be the link between NGO and CSO representations of space, depending on the similarity of their narratives. ALTOA, as a civil society organization, has enforced institutional authenticity through mandatory registration of all travel organizations, and has overseen the historical authenticity in which tour guides are trained.

I demonstrate throughout this thesis that both conservation projects and new construction projects utilizing Ladakhi and non-Ladakhi skilled labor and local and imported materials can be considered as real, traditional, or authentic Ladakhi architectural heritage. The trouble with contested sites is that their meanings are multivalent, caught up in the “arbitrariness of the relationship between the signifier and the signified” (MacCannell 1976: 117). To be more specific, MacCannell explains:

...the “principle” of the arbitrariness of the relationship of signifier to the signified is only a corollary of a more fundamental principle: namely, that of the *interchangability* of the signifier and the signified. For example, the word asterisk signifies one of these: ****. The presence of an asterisk in a text signifies additional information.*⁴⁰ The asterisk is both signified and signifier. The referent of a sign is another sign. [MacCannell 1976: 118]

Locals know how to distinguish between these signs. If tourists, conservationists, and other activists and onlookers could be trained to look for the asterisk of other signifiers, like Urdu carved into a *shinstok*, or a green flag rather than prayer flags flying on the roof of a building, they could come to understand that the *shinstok* and green flag are signifiers whose referents are Muslim. The question then remains: what is real, traditional or authentic and to whom? That civil society-linked heritage construction sites are subsequently represented in “edutainment” tours as authentic Tibetan Buddhist culture underscores these concerns with tradition and authenticity within NGO- and CSO-led heritage

⁴⁰ *located at the bottom of the page

schemes. When buildings, their materials, forms, and practices become quantified and counted as belonging to a certain tradition, that commodification complicates their cultural significance for locals whose task is to produce and reproduce them. MacCannell noted long ago that “one of the most striking aspects of modern capitalist societies, not often remarked, is the degree to which the commodity has become integral with culture” (1976: 21-22). Producers thereby risk alienation from their own cultural forms.

But there is a corollary to commodification and cultural production. While not solely influenced by the economic and material interest in tourism, when coupled with tourism and particularly, global or “world heritage” rhetoric, Leh residents may also have experienced a broadened sense of the *value* of place, of site. Conservation efforts notwithstanding, even the very physical characteristics of Leh, have begun to change as builders and laborers learn how to construct those signifiers of culture using industrial materials and machination. These processes not only implicate changing building traditions, but also signify the permanence of modernity as they become fixed features within the urban landscape. Recall the doorway of the popular Indus Guest House shown at the beginning of this chapter. The myriad symbols contained within its so-called traditional *Ladakhi* carvings represent thousands of years and thousands of miles of distance and difference. The doorway is indicative of how Ladakhis are adapting to – even ushering in – change while retaining unique elements of their own building styles. However innovative and creative those divergences may be, they are attractive and they sell.

“The effects of tourism... are already noticeable in Ladakh in the form of uncontrolled expansion of temporary accommodations... Most large settlements like Leh have become a hub of hotels and guest houses.” –J. Sharma, 2003

- Registered Hotels and Guest Houses:
 - Class A: 43
 - Class B: 21
 - Class C: 14
 - Upper Class Guest Houses: 32
 - Medium Class Guest House: 20
 - Economy Guest House: 169

10/16/2008

4

Figure 3. Registered Hotels and Guest Houses in Leh. Compiled by author.

“In central Leh, tourists outnumber the locals and the latter have converted their big old houses into small hotels and have started living elsewhere on the outskirts...”

- Population of Leh: 33493
- Tourist arrival 2007: 46829
 - Domestic: 23484
 - Foreign: 23345
- Tourist arrival 2008: 60116
 - Domestic: 26458
 - Foreign: 33658



10/16/2008

5

Figure 4. Chart of tourist arrival in Leh. Compiled by author.

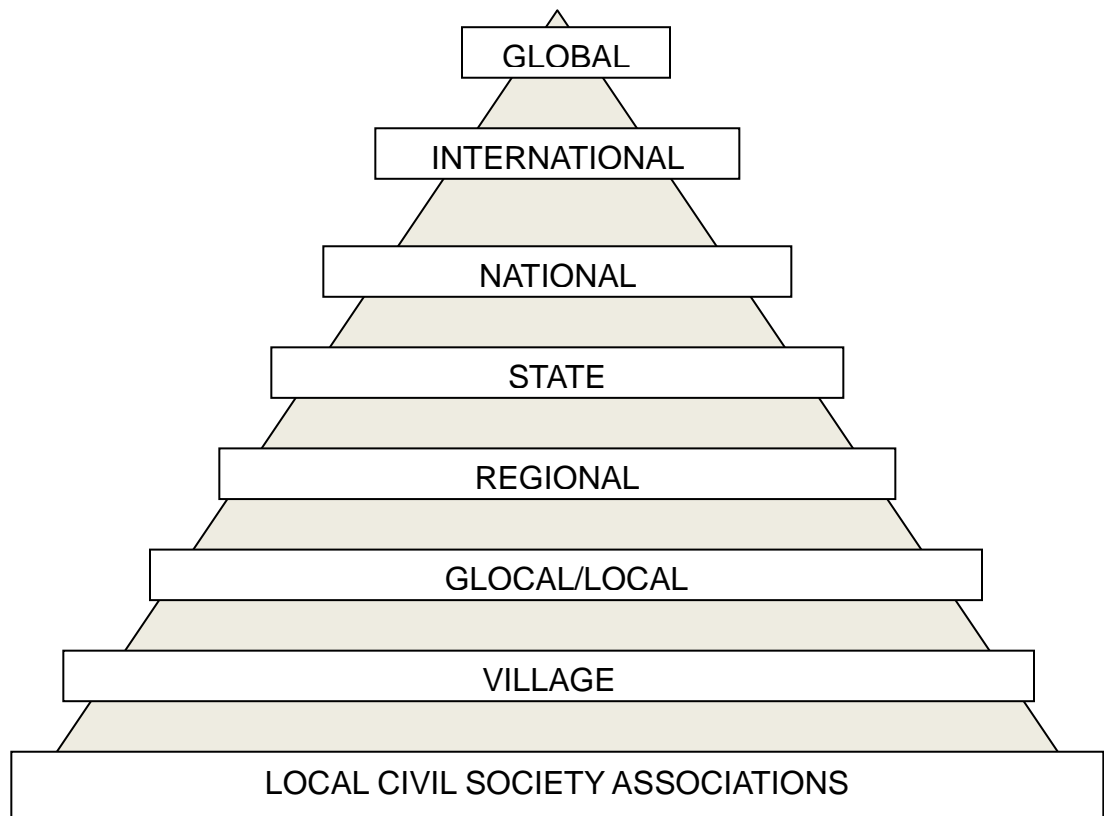


Figure 5. Organizational structure in Leh Town as compiled by author.

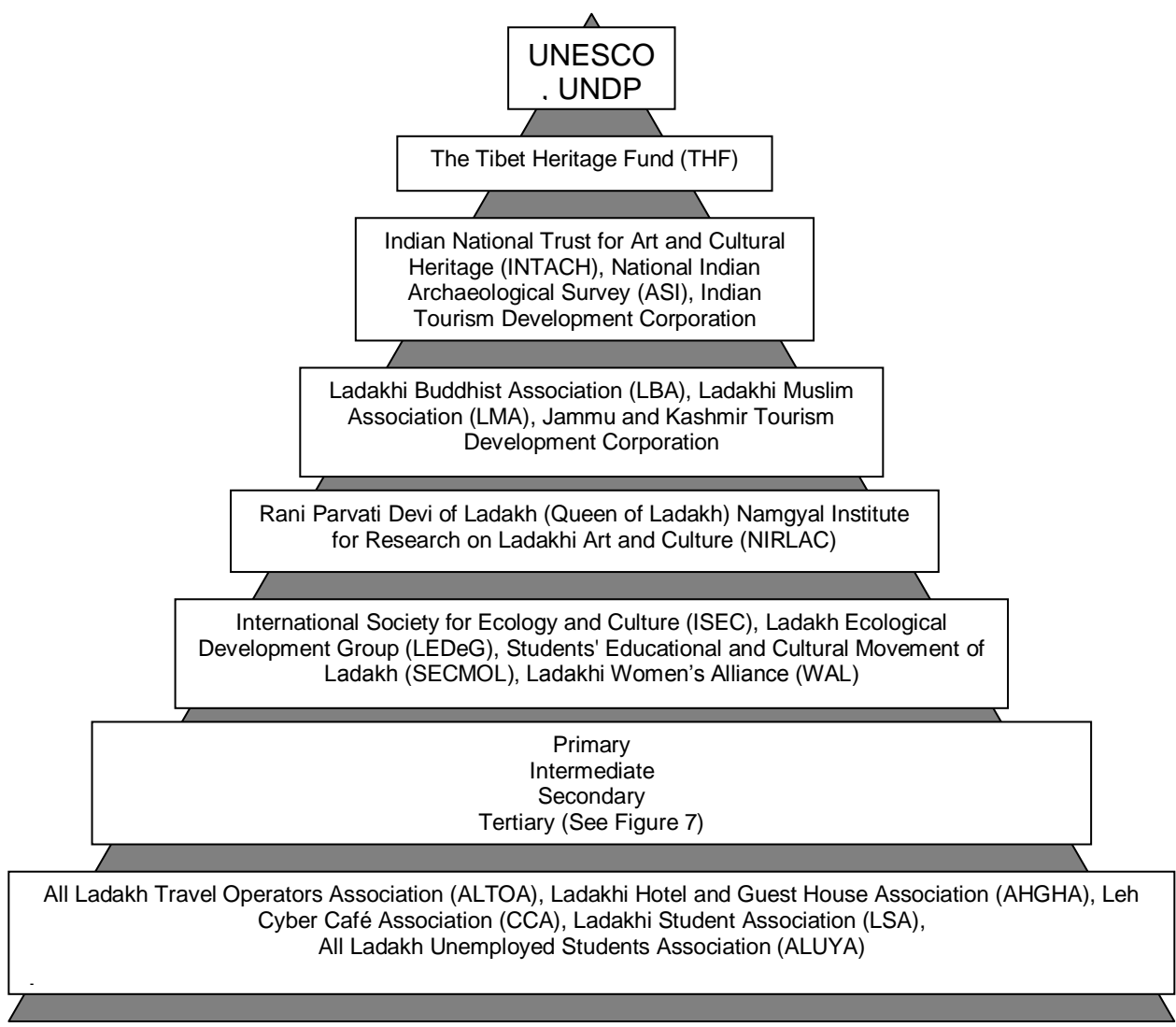


Figure 6. Integrated hierarchical chart of CSO and NGO activity in Leh. Chart compiled by author.

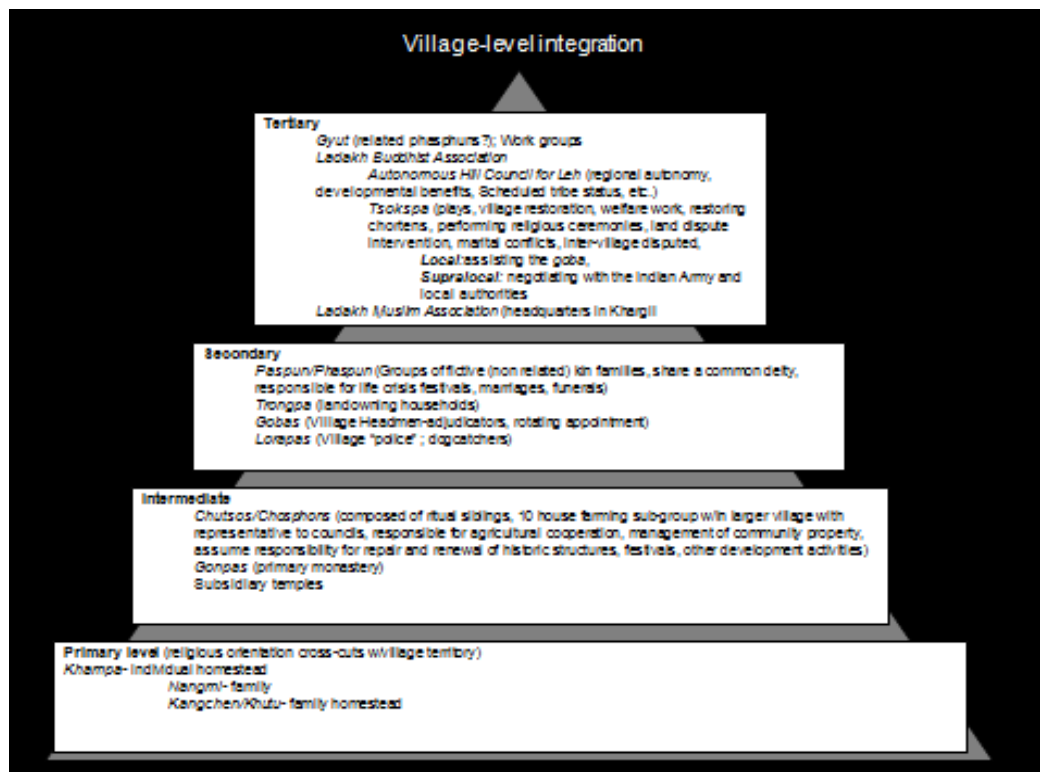


Figure 7. Community Based Organizations (CBOs) in Ladakh. Chart compiled by author.

CHAPTER III: DWELLING ON HERITAGE CONSTRUCTION SITES

HERITAGE CONSTRUCTION SITES

This ethnography takes an anthropological approach to the study of vernacular architecture wherein buildings are considered “cultural artifacts” and their analysis is “revealing of the relationship of dwellings to family, social structure, and mores” (Oliver 1998: 1). Thus, it addresses the cultural construction of place and identifies meaning in the built environment as substantiated through physical and social relationships. The first two chapters of this thesis speak to culture change and to the tangible transformation of a relatively small municipality set against the backdrop of tourism, conservation, and new construction. Behind the scenes, complex ideological discourse has shaped the creation of specific physical and cultural landscapes. The places mentioned here and the people who inhabit them are cemented through social processes. Only when a natural or built environment is infused with human life does that place take on meaning; sites themselves have no meaning without human inhabitation and/or intention. Because Leh Town’s physical constitution and transformation can be observed and understood on a number of levels, I devise and employ the concept of *heritage construction sites* to make sense of various processes contributing to both. The ways in which different actors are positioned vis-à-vis each site necessarily affords that place with different meanings.

Heritage construction sites cannot be relegated to the built environment alone, nor should they be divorced from their residential, municipal or environmental contexts. Hilda Kuper (1972: 420) defined a *site* as a “particular piece of social space, a place socially and ideologically demarcated and separated from other places” through which “social relations are articulated ... [and] associated with different messages and ranges of communication.” The creation, use, and understanding of place represent and reflect broader socio-economic conventions constituting cultural practice. Although I present architectural conservation *and* new construction as ongoing expressions and products of the heritage industry, I also understand the social construction and semiotics of these spaces as congruent with

human input into their physical construction, an input which is constantly infused with various and sometimes conflicting interests. Following Lawrence-Zuniga (1996; 2010) and others, I contend that these sites have a semiotic existence within and outside of the heritage industry – that is to say that these spaces have always been meaningful, but those meanings are subject to change and are contingent upon historical, socio-economic and political contexts (AlSayed's 2001; Al Harithy 2005; Hancock 2002).

Because competing interest groups tailor the built environment to suit specific agendas, heritage construction sites on the whole represent contested spaces. As Low and Lawrence-Zuniga (2003: 20) point out “professional designers and political elites together negotiate competing future images of the city, but these are rarely consistent with the daily spatial experiences of urban residents and workers.” Such places are charged with conflicting meanings which are condensed in symbolic aesthetics and craftsmanship as well as in discourse production. Considering the interconnected nature of physical sites, social practices, and their meanings, anthropology is an ideal discipline for generating broad-spectrum understandings and implications of socio-spatial relationships. As a field of inquiry, heritage construction sites allow me to consider these complicated processes as a cogent whole.

HERITAGE CONSTRUCTION AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Heritage construction sites may be built forms, but they can also be considered physical manifestations of discursive practice - places where images of heritage are negotiated and reproduced. To understand the physical and discursive construction of place, it is first necessary to identify parameters of inquiry. For the purpose of studying the physical construction of place, the *built environment* is broadly construed as:

the products of human building activity... any physical alteration of the natural environment, from hearths to cities, through construction by humans.... [I]t includes: *built forms* which are defined as building types (such as dwellings, temples, or meeting houses) created by humans to shelter, define, and protect activity... [and] spaces that

are defined but not necessarily enclosed, such as the uncovered areas in a compound, a plaza, or a street. Further, they may include landmarks or *sites*.... Built forms may also refer to specific element of buildings (such as doors, windows, roofs, walls, and chimneys) or to spatial subdivisions of buildings (such as rooms- their sizes and function, arrangement and connections), which are often referred to in terms of their *plans*. [Lawrence-Zuniga and Low 1990:5]

An anthropological perspective of the built environment certainly considers places, but avoids reifying them by providing ethnographic descriptions of those who built them, those who occupy them, and the practices which take place within. Places are thought to “encompass the built forms, often monumental, characteristic of civilizations and self-consciously designed and built by specialists” (Lawrence-Zuniga and Low 1990:5). The “size, ornamentation and imposition” of a building are often indexes used to distinguish between different groups of people (Oliver 1969: 8). Builder-specialists can be in-group or out-group, their constructions monumental or mundane or perhaps somewhere in between. Because all buildings have form, all societies designate specialists who utilize formal design, although certainly not all specialists are architects or professional designers.

Architects and Architecture, Builders and Buildings

The scope of this project encompasses a range of buildings which are designed and built by both locals and foreigners. Popular architectural scholarship assumes that “housing for traditional societies tends to be homogenous for any one group, to the extent that settlement forms, dwellings, or a part of them often identify the group or even become symbols of group identity” (Rapoport 1989: xviii). But when monumental architecture and not housing provides the impetus for heritage construction, it is important to unpack this statement. Builders within small-scale societies are thought to have an insider's perspective, an intimate knowledge of the environment which guides their choice of materials and construction practices. This style of building is generally contrasted against large-scale societies where design is executed by architects who are typically outsiders removed from the end user.

Accordingly, meaning in the built environment can be understood as a dichotomy of insider versus outsider perspective, although care must be taken not to oversimplify these categories. With this in mind, much of the literature and participant interviews informing this study may be considered a part of architectural conversation about various styles of buildings, but in particular about dwellings which have been all but overlooked by architectural conservationists who may consider shelter a “minor consideration”.

The rift between builders and architects lies in a/n (mis)understanding and (de)valuation of building as a function of necessity and architecture as an artistic pursuit (Oliver 1969; Rapoport 1982). The term “architecture” derives from the Greek word *arkitekton* (*arkhi* meaning chief, and *tekton* meaning builder) or chief builder. This term implies a hierarchy in the construction of a built form: architects design, builders build, workers construct, etc. This contrast may derive from the application of terms to the practice of building which renders architecture a science and building (with the exception of those structures designed with aesthetic appeal in mind) a “lower-level” operation. The distinction of professional design from practical building systematically applies “indeterminate laws of value” to the end product and assumes that traditional structures are associated with “primitive, archetypal... assumed, understated, undeveloped, unchanging, and ageless” building styles and practices (Oliver 1969: 8-9). Thus, in architectural traditions, the vernacular form is not a meritorious one.

The Vernacular

Borrowed from linguistics and extended to architectural theory, the term vernacular most frequently refers to common speech; it can also describe the incorporation of a cosmopolitan or global *lingua franca*, such as English or Mandarin, into a local lexicon (Pollock 2002). When applied to architectural theory, the linguistic metaphor is multivalent. Generally speaking, the vernacular indicates a style of building common to any given society which could theoretically be designed and built by either

builders or architects. The term vernacular *building* can be an index of the local, a building constructed by native specialists *sans* professional intervention (Rapoport 1969; Oliver 1969; Gell 1998). The term vernacular *architecture*, on the other hand, can refer to “a particular school of architects working under identical circumstances in a shared environment” or to a regional vernacular which is “an appropriate continuation of local traditions or a sensitivity toward local conditions” (Oliver 1969: 11).

The study of “American Vernacular”, for example, “documents and classifies the rural, suburban and urban dwellings of the United States”⁴¹ (see also Upton 1986). The vernacular in an industrial society such as the U.S. is one informed and executed by specialists who have mastered classical architectural training and whose designs are derived from a number of different styles, for example, a simple or domestic vernacular, such as a Queen Anne-style home. The valuation of architecture over building, and perhaps of architects over builders, seems to reflect the Western trope of progressivism where a “mature architecture [implies] civilized cultures” (Oliver 1969: 9). Although both terms signify a style of building which is commonly found in the majority of residential housing for any given society, the term vernacular architecture implies a structure devised by designer or organizer, whereas the vernacular building in small-scale or non-industrial society insinuates a rudimentary structure or perhaps a lack of quality.

As Paul Oliver observed, so-called primitive dwellings and vernacular architecture are often overlooked or dismissed by architectural historians who are “seldom concerned with anything other than monumental building” (Oliver 1969: 7). In a similar vein, Rapoport (1982) commented that the study of the built form often places more importance on the style of the structure rather than the people who occupy it and the social practices which transpire within. Since ordinary, quotidian interaction takes place outside of monumental or grand spaces, it follows that dwelling spaces may be overlooked for imposing or otherwise impressive structures. The word “shelter” has a somewhat

⁴¹ <http://www.vernaculararchitecture.com/> accessed 4/4/2012

pejorative connotation, insinuating a temporary or less-than-grand structure which is of more consequence to those who dwell than for those who study the built form. But even Levi-Strauss contends that “the backwards society may possess a genius for invention or action that leaves the achievements of civilized peoples far behind” (Levi-Strauss 1952 in Oliver 1969: 9).

Heritage literature often focuses on monumental and sacred architecture either because of its visibility or because of Western fascination with the so-called exotic orient (Said 1978; Bishop 1989; also see Mills 1999, 2003). Like history schoolbooks’ focus on royal maneuvers and imperial conflict and conquest, architectural digests highlight structures which are “far removed from the fundamental need to provide shelter [and] more often ... imposing edifices erected to provide lavish, unused spaces for the mightily privileged few, at the expense of the labours and the earning of the many” (Oliver 1969: 7). However, the substance of a place is perhaps more accurately represented in the vernacular, the quotidian, and the everyday. For, as Oliver observed, builders have “an instinctive command of materials” which gives the vernacular form a special “je ne sais qua;” a form like this he contends “may not possess majesty, but it speaks; one feels that here every workman must have contributed his share of intelligence, and has left the imprint of his labor” (1969: 12). Recognizing again that all building specialists utilize formal design, I employ the terms vernacular architecture or vernacular buildings interchangeably to overcome the value-laden designation associated with structures designed and built by people other than professional architects.

In heritage tourism sites, visitors’ attention is invariably drawn towards monumental or sacred structures whose designs are intended to set them apart from the common dwelling. In these sites, new construction may adhere to a design aesthetic representative of local vernaculars whose ornamentation mimics that of the monumental. Although given primacy of importance in tours of literature, the monumental structure and the simple shelter are representative of the vernacular:

But often the religious building is a grander version of the domestic shelter, whose simpler technology may be reflected in its structure.... In this context, it would seem

appropriate to consider both the domestic prototype and the ceremonial edifice: to encompass the provision of shelter in the history of man's building as well as the provision of the focal centres of his symbolic, ritual, and political life. [Oliver 1969: 8]

If imitation is the best form of flattery, then the valuation of the monumental is signified in the heritage industry by a stylistic reproduction of the old in new buildings. However, the monumental had value and meaning (albeit perhaps a different one) for the local long before the search for heritage began. Where tourist accommodations are not just commercial sites but are also private homes, host and guest enter into a contract with one another: the host promises an authentic experience of home and the guest reciprocates by receiving and reifying that experience. Occasionally, that contract can extend into a special emotional connection which transcends any monetary transaction. Thus, for resident and guest, housing "...becomes particularly important because of the emotional, personal and symbolic connotation of the house and the primacy of these aspects in shaping its form as well as the important psycho-social consequences of the house" (Rapoport 1982:22). Paying special attention to the form and function of accommodation permits comparative analysis and further complicates heritage destination branding. There in the heritage construction site, distinctions between traditional and modern may not be so rigidly defined.

A MEANINGFUL HERITAGE EXPERIENCE

Experience changes human interaction with and within any physical site. Culture also predisposes humans to perceive and understand the built environment in different ways, allowing for a variety of experiences within the same site (see Hall 1976). As Browner once reminded us: "[p]erception...is a creative not mechanical act: we see what we look for and we look for things that interest us.... If our information and interests change, we see the same environment somewhat differently. This explains how it is possible for residents and outsiders to look at the same environment and yet see it differently" (1989: 192 italics in original). As previously mentioned, outsiders – whether

tourists or architects or conservationists – may be more apt to understand and experience a site as pertaining to a group’s cultural heritage than to their presently lived experience (although there may be no difference). As I will explain, this presumption that a real or authentic culture may be found only in the primitive or the traditional or the old is part and parcel to a modern search for meaning in a disjointed post-industrial world (Appiah 2007; Hobsbawn and Ranger 1983; MacCannell 1976; Oliver 1969).

Generally speaking, human experience makes places meaningful. Feelings of attachment may differ depending on the experiences one has had and shared within the built environment and the emotional energy one has invested in the myriad structures, sacred and mundane, which comprise the built environment. It goes without saying that residents may understand, experience, and relate to places differently than visitors who, although they may feel something towards the places they visit, generally rely upon cultural interpretation to generate meaningful experience (MacCannell 1976). Still others may feel no attachment to a place, despite the site’s importance to them or their reliance upon it. Unless they experience a memorable event, something which binds that space to memory, placemaking may only be borne out of necessity for navigating the or homes– or, in the instance of Tibetans-in-Exile, from a memory having been forced to leave. Unlike a family member or a conservationist, developers in Leh’s Main Bazaar, for example may look at a derelict estate (and there are many) and see only an empty lot, an opportunity to build something new. In this study, I see that built heritage is subject to multiple understandings: residents’, builders’, cultural and architectural conservationists’, tourism industry affiliates (who may represent local, regional or state interests), and of course, tourists’. For each of these stakeholders, place has a different meaning.

Cultural geographer Yi-Fu Tuan (1977: 104) reported that “few ethnographic surveys report on building activity” as a cultural process where builders create and transmit sense of “greater awareness in built forms and space.” Regardless of its ethnographic or historical inattention, constructing a built

environment indeed speaks volumes about cultural preference and practice. The built environment stands as both a representation of self and as hallmark of group identity (Oliver 1969; Rapoport 1982). The difference between designers', builders', and users' understandings of place is of utmost importance when considering *meaning for whom*, "since meanings, like the environments that communicate them, are culture-specific and hence culturally variable" (Tuan 1977: 21).

Once built, those environments - homes, villages, cities, temples - accumulate meaning with frequent use. When occupied continuously for several generations, a site can take on an entirely new meaning from its intended use. For example, the Tibet Heritage Fund funded, restored and converted the Lakrook House in Old Leh into its official headquarters. Leaders and volunteers reside there over the summer months; during the winter, a caretaker watches over the property. Oliver (1969: 14) asserts that "architects make their own contribution to the conservation of traditional buildings they admire by acquiring and converting them," but the repurposing of historical structures for other than domestic use changes the meaning of the building. Still other residences in the Old Leh Heritage Zone have been acquired by scholars and activists and converted into museums and gallery cafes. Thus, the building remains as a symbol of the traditional culture "obscure and imprecise... of escapism, of a lack of confidence in the present and in the future... of inferior status, of artisan occupation in a technological age, of [the new owner's] custodianship of the architectural heritage" (Oliver 1969: 15). Articulated differently, once relegated to heritage status, architecture may have different meanings for the agent (producer) than for the patient (consumer) and subsequent consumers may also utilize that space for different uses depending on their needs (Gell 1998; Lawrence-Zuniga 1996).

Writing Place

Anthropological studies of heritage sites increasingly show greater attention to human relationships with and within the built environment and also draw attention to the politics of heritage

preservation and production. Hancock's (2009) cultural heritage study of a regional handicraft emporium in Chennai, India highlights and problematizes oversimplified building designs marketed to represent traditional structures unique to each region. These building prototypes are thought to be recognizable to all who visit. The handicrafts produced therein provide visitors an insider view of cottage industry manufacturing which harkens back to a pre-industrial era. The quiet spectacle of production and the consumption of a hand-made object signifies a true, authentic cultural exchange, uncomplicated and unsullied by global industrial homogenization. This is a search for heritage.

Al Harithy's (2005) study of cultural preservation in ancient Tripoli, Lebanon presents a provocative case study where local residents negotiate and contest UNESCO's universal heritage rhetoric in continuously inhabited urban areas. UNESCO World Heritage Sites are places presumed to touch at core traditions and have meaning for all humans throughout time and space. AlSayed's (2001) study of preservation and tourism in ancient Cairo, Egypt and Totah's (2009) study of *suq* merchants in ancient Damascus, Syria both illustrate the politics of cultural heritage restoration where buildings are only assumed to be real – to demonstrate authentic properties - if they are returned to their original structural states, irrespective of their present function. Pellow's (2008) ethnography on socio-spatial arrangements in a Muslim *zongo* demonstrates the dynamic transformation of continuously inhabited residential areas in Accra, Ghana. Lawrence-Zuniga (2010) follows how residents' diverging aesthetic preferences spawn legal battles over the preservation of Southern California bungalows.

What all of these studies have in common with my work in Leh is the presumption that the original design and purpose of a building is its only truly authentic existence, and that the self-conscious reproduction and presentation of that structure in its original form can somehow preserve and maintain that culture. Plenty of museums are made from original structures and are enjoyed as cultural relics of that time. Yet as Oliver (1969: 15) asserts: "Preservation may mean the injection of formaldehyde but it cannot be said to perpetuate life." The imitation of those original designs in new construction is a

simulacrum, but it is also a bonified representative of original with its own new set of meanings – those associated with heritage preservation (Baudrillard 1975, 1981). The fascination with and preservation or reconstruction of archetypal structures is a commoditization and fetishism of the original form.

Commodity fetishism applies value to the form itself irrespective of the value of the labor involved in its production. Commodity fetishism does not preclude an authentic or real experience. The search for and appreciation of any so-called original or traditional form cannot be misconstrued with the actual original structure and the meanings associated with the first experiences of that place (Beck, Giddens, and Lash 1994; Hobsbawn and Ranger 1982; Gane 2004; Oliver 1969; MacCannell 1976).

These studies are often informed by the now classic scholarship of early urban anthropologists, geographers, and sociologists (Hall 1958, 1966, 1976; Kuper 1976; Rapoport 1973; Lynch 1960; Tuan 1977, 1979; Lawrence-Zuniga 1990; Low 1990, 1996; Rodman 1992). Urban anthropologists generally agree that places are socially constructed and contain multiple meanings for individual agents with “physical, emotional and experiential realities” (Rodman 1992: 640-641). Places are also anthropologically constructed through academic writing, where they become “equated with ethnographically fixed locales” (Rodman 1992: 640-641). Subjects of study are often assumed to be local; however, in cosmopolitan cities, inhabitants owe their experiences to places far and wide. Urban ethnography illuminates processes by which residents socially construct their built environments, transforming them and making them meaningful through “social exchanges, memories, images, and daily use of the material setting” (Low 1996: 862). A *spatialized* study, then, is one that “locates, both physically and conceptually, social relations and social practice in social space” (Low 1996: 861). But scholars should exercise caution; places, like culture, are subject to change over time. Ethnographers must recognize that they too produce their own conception of places they traverse and transform. However, as anthropologists, we are perhaps in a better position than some to give attention and credence to the multiple perspectives on place we encounter in our studies.

Much of the initial research for this dissertation project relied on previous writings about the Himalayan region's historical context, settlement patterns and material culture. In the previous chapter, I wrote that under the guise of archaeology and exploration, both the material culture and area studies were used for imperial and national gain. In some ways, that trend continues today, albeit under different pretenses. Historians analyze ancient trade routes to show cultural diffusion and continuity. Art historians author dissertations on centuries-old Buddhas lurking behind layers of soot in ancient temples. Social scientists scrutinize communal quarrels and condemn modernization. Travel writers past and present portray an awe-inspiring Himalayan landscape resplendent with traditional cultures and sacred places. This amplification of place is a common trope for remote or exotic travel destinations, especially those "produced by a dialogue between cultural fantasy-making and geographical landscape" (Bishop 1989: 9).

Both scholarly and tourist industry writings contribute to the making of a heritage construction site as each creates, recreates and represents certain social-cultural and physical landscapes, albeit for different reasons and toward different ends. For example, after the closing of Tibet for travel by the Chinese, Tibetan life has received considerable attention from a variety of scholars working in the Himalayas. As many Himalayan countries were open to domestic and foreign travel when Tibet and Ladakh were not (India, Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim), exiled communities throughout the known, accessible world became the central focus of scholarly interest. Thus, the region has become synonymous with Tibetan Buddhism. The Himalayas are experiencing an influx of tourism as never before, bringing along with it profound cultural and ecological consequences. In the mid 1960s, Himalayan cultural tourism and low budget "mass adventure tourism" began to shape contemporary images of Tibetan Buddhist destinations (Bishop 1989: 245).

For the last twenty years, Tibetan Buddhism has been the main tourist attraction of the Himalayas as "[i]ts monks, rituals, monasteries and artifacts throughout the Himalayan region - from

Tibet to Ladakh, Nepal to Darjeeling - have become the delight of photographers, trekkers, and bargain hunters” (Bishop 1989: 245). Referring to previous travel writing on Tibet, Bishop (1989:245-246) notes:

Most tourists viewed their sights against the background of a coherent ‘other’ world. On the other hand in the contemporary era, tourist culture (literature, images, etc.) has to an extraordinary extent created these ‘places’: the expectation of them, their representations. The culture of Tibetan Buddhism is instantaneously appealing, visually dramatic, and suitably archaic for packaged travel. Travel to these regions is now located within a global smorgasbord of possible destinations, all of which are suitably exotic.

The significance of these writings, therefore, is more than just a matter of increased travel, but of conceptualization of place. International tourism is a billion dollar business (Al Sayyad 2001). Like the Old World pilgrim, cultural tourists strike out across the globe “seeking authenticity and truth in times and places away from his/her everyday life” (Al Sayyad 2001: 1). The tourist gaze or “engagement” differs depending on the context, but nevertheless constitutes and defines how “the gaze transforms the material reality of the built environment into a cultural imaginary” (Al Sayyad 2001: 2; see also Urry 2001).

The empirical reality of place - its physicality to be discovered, mapped, and traveled - contributes to the discursive construction of that place. The built environment is an equally important component of imagining a place as branded and marketed. Like maps, architecture and art history are materially qualified and quantified; the ability for architectural conservationists to identify forms across time and space and to attribute them to a single cultural origin lends value and credence to the authenticity of those sites. The scientific objectification of place can also shroud the relationship between power and the production of knowledge about that place (Bishop 1989; Foucault 2001; Rose 2004; Urry 1995, 2004). Exclusive focus on Tibetan Buddhism, whose physical form is signified by monasteries and monumental architecture, strengthened by conservation architecture, and reinforced by destination branding for the tourism industry, has resulted in the marginalization of other historical narratives.

Dwelling, Imaging and Embodying

Spaces are foreign; places are familiar (Tuan 1977).

Residents possess unique understandings, or *local knowledge*, of places as the natural landscape and built environment can all serve to signify folklore, kinship, religion, and politico-economic rules guiding social interaction (Basso 1998; Gell 1998). In keeping with Gandy (2011), urban researchers should not only seek to understand human relationships within their environmental contexts, but also to pay attention to the experience of an altered natural landscape and the infrastructure which undergirds built environments. Whether considering irrigation canals as bathing streams or as places to dispose of waste, or footpaths as pastoral shortcuts or as peri-urban sidewalks, infrastructure is intimately linked to practice, and therefore to the construction of place. Neither place nor time stands still. Nestled within bucolic landscapes, the *yul*, or agricultural village, is incorporated into a wider framework of changing social-spatial relations as the tourism market expands into the periphery. Thus, in mixed commercial areas, growing seasons may be replaced with tourist seasons, their respective chronemics yielding a very different local knowledge and/or sense of place.

Like managing one's way in the darkness of one's home, the urban image that cosmopolitan residents hold in their minds is crucial to their locomotion throughout the city. That image is at once the product of "immediate sensation and [also] of the memory of the past experience" (Lynch 1960: 4). Beyond its physical, orienting role, the image of one's physical environment also plays a social role by incorporating symbols and collective memories. The cultural construction of a place is a process by which human groups incorporate both sacred landscapes and quotidian fixtures into their lifeworlds. This process provides people emotional security and increases inhabitants' connections to their surroundings, intensifying the depth of the human experience (Lynch 1960:5; Basso 1998). Culture change is synonymous with urban growth. Where some residents grow attached to their built

environments and struggle with this flux, still others lead the charge to modernity – in this case new construction. In cities and towns where economic prosperity leads to rapid physical transformation, the damage or loss of agricultural land, historical monuments, temples, and homes is an inevitable outcome. These alterations impact perception and emotion; resistance against such change is variable.

Provincialism, or local knowledge for rural dwellers, encapsulates family homesteads which are connected to the village through agricultural fields and residential areas.⁴² Like the symbolic and sometimes personal relationships humans construct with their natural environments, the integration of built infrastructure into the landscape is more than just an adaptation to the natural environment. The meshwork of socio-spatial arrangements is analogous to infrastructural components linking dwelling places themselves. Spatial theory implies that social structures are internalized and subsequently reproduced by individual members of the community (MacCannell 1976). At the macro-level, the house is a visual representation of community identity; at the micro-level, the house becomes a symbol of the self, an archetype which is representative of cultural norms and behaviors (Cooper-Marcus 1976; Pratt 1982). Environmental psychologist Claire Cooper-Marcus writes:

The first and most consciously selected form to represent self is the body, for it appears to be both the outward manifestation, and the encloser, of self. On a less-conscious level, I believe, man also frequently selects the house, that basic protector of his internal environment (beyond skin and clothing) to represent or symbolize what is tantalizingly unrepresentable. [Cooper-Marcus 1976: 32]

This subtle relationship between person and place constitutes an inscribed disposition which allows residents to emotionally and physically discriminate historical from new vernacular structures, sacred from profane spaces (Bourdieu 1972). It is important to add that spatial relationships also have a gendered dimension, especially with respect to public and private space. Even though Ladakhi gender

⁴² Landholdings are determined by ancient family plots; access to irrigation channels are marked by a series of religious shrines, and are governed by calendar rotation to ensure equal distribution (personal communication August 2006). Farm animals are also shared between families, and are herded day and night up and down the footpaths connecting households to each other and to the Main Bazaar in Leh.

relations are more egalitarian than elsewhere in India, women and men nevertheless occupy different spaces and understand the spaces they share in different ways.

At the residential level, “the parts of the house are implicated in the life of the household. What exists is this life, in its cycles of birth, growth and death. The house is a process caught up in this life-and-death, not an inert framework that pretends to stand apart” (Mitchell 1991: 52). In other words, the environment itself is intimately connected to building processes; structures people create from local materials serve as lifelines in the harshest physical environments and cannot be divorced from the social processes which transpire within their walls. Beyond their internal structure, homes themselves cannot be divorced from the land on the broader level of ownership.

Order and hierarchy in the built environment and social structure are maintained throughout time and space, extending not at the very least to tangible social relations and daily practice. Bourdieu’s (1977) Kabyle house identifies structural mechanisms that allow for or prevent the movement of peoples of differing spiritual, political, and gendered status, which, he claims, correspond to gendered understandings of purity and pollution. Many Ladakhi domiciles contain multiple rooms with a horizontal spatial orientation, forming a head and a bottom from the entrance (bottom, or end) to the furthest side (head, or beginning) of the room. These are said to correspond to bodily and material effects.⁴³ Soiled shoes, for example, are left on the floor at the door or (bottom) end of the room, religious effigies and books are placed at the head of the room, off the floor. Intermediate categories such as products for body care (toothbrushes, for example) are kept in containers by the door (Mills 2003). Many of these practices are indicative of broader prohibitions in South Asia, removing shoes before entering the house, for example, and may apply concepts of purity and pollution which transcend religious understandings.

⁴³ The display of material wares typically corresponds to laypersons and not to monks, who are forbidden to take on material possessions. More religious Buddhist Ladakhis may follow the same path. However, with the increasing desire for commodities and the social capital their possession represents, Ladakhis may begin to display their effects without regard to custom.

If the spatial organization of the house can be understood as a template, a representation of self within a meaningful, historically-anchored and socially-constructed built environment, it must also be mutually constitutive of place itself, complete with attributes that come to symbolize and structure the “social worlds” or shared perspectives of human interaction (Pratt 1982). These shared understandings can then be used to organize and understand other spaces in the town. When multiple bodies are present in a room, a vertical hierarchy of space is generally observed, creating a three dimensional conceptualization of order within the room.⁴⁴ Bringing to mind Hall’s (1967) discussion of proxemics, the human body’s orientation thus progressively determines the orientation of physical space, and vice-versa (Bourdieu 1972:69 *in* Mills 2003:50). Village building specialists, and even conservationists, know that sleeping rooms (or composting pit toilets for that matter) cannot be built above shrine rooms, central houses are not allowed to be built above the monastery (unless the land was cut by a stream), and new puja (prayer) rooms must always constructed upon existing ones, etc. But what do tourists know? And does it matter?

Heritage Site Authenticity

To recap, the search for an authentic cultural heritage is an enterprise borne out of Western individualism and grounded in modernity (Beck, Giddens, and Lash 1994; Handler 1986; Hobsbawn and Ranger 1982; Gane 2004; Oliver 1969; MacCannell 1976). (Re)production of this presumed cultural collectivity especially for tourist consumption, aims to bind a people, their beliefs, practices and products into a single coherent entity, whether or not that group defines itself as such (Hancock 2002; Lindholm 2008). Where conservation efforts focus on the visual representation of a group, “[a]uthenticity is seen as an objective and measurable attribute inherent in the material fabric, form and function of artifacts and monuments” (Jones 2010:182). Conservation and the tourism industry attempt

⁴⁴ Lamas and monks, older laymen, younger laymen, older and younger laywomen, and non-infant children, respectively, sit upon graduated cushions; the lowest on the hierarchical chain would sit closest to the door.

to capture or reconstruct a singular cultural context or historical narrative may contribute to readings of Ladakhi culture as static, and may further obscure the many cosmopolitan meanings that could be read in its built environment. As Appadurai and Breckenridge (1995), Al Harithy (2005), and recently Totah (2009) all allude to, the transformation and layering of any urban fabric is not achieved through some organic amalgamation of peoples and cultures, but takes place through a series of conscious, deliberate, time-consuming processes. Each layer, so-to-speak, is charged with its own unique cultural inheritance of meaning. In order to capture and reproduce a sense of that cultural authenticity, a sense of place, a conservation group may present a building as “a ‘possession’ of an authentic culture... one original to its possessors, one which exists only with them” (Handler 1986: 4). Thus, here, authentic means unique, singular, and original (Lawrence-Zuniga 1996).

It goes without saying, that “people will encounter heritage spaces in different ways based on their own cultural backgrounds” especially as such encounters transcend the educational realm into the emotional sphere (Poria, et al 2006: 163). Even ethnographers can attest to that sentiment. In the heritage industry, traditional cultures are marketed as “‘authentic’ landscapes [containing] imagined communities full of appealing, heroic, or colorful people” (ibid). In the context of tourism, authenticity can be understood in two distinct senses: “as genuineness or realness of artifacts or events, and also as a human attribute signifying being one’s true self or being true to one’s essential nature” (Steiner and Reisinger 2005: 299). Keeping this in mind, then, the heritage industry becomes responsible for material and cultural transformation by producing sites that appeal to collective understandings of heritage. Unless the construction of heritage sites is guided by a universally recognized formula (such as UNESCO criterion for world heritage sites <http://whc.unesco.org/> accessed 1/9/12) creative interpretations may diverge from more conventional, or local, understandings (Al Harithy 2005).

Heritage sites are physical locales that offer a unique experiential quality to the user, whether tourist or local (Ooi 2003; Burns 1999; Shackel 2004; Baram and Rowan 2004). The industry must

provide a well-defined concept of heritage (which is seldom a scholarly one) in order to “[sustain] local identity and a sense of place, especially by those communities and locales that are threatened by transformations in the global economy” (Shackel 2004:10). In order to appeal to consumers, “heritage marketing insists on, even requires, a focus on the unique” (Baram and Rowan 2004:20. In the global tourism market, it is necessary for places to be differentiated and to maintain their authenticity as viable, traditional places. Cultural authenticity is often presented by a “destination branding” of these locales in order to create a sense of place, to construct a certain image, and to build the tourist economy (Ooi: 2002). Sacred sites are the most obvious, visible places to focus publications, photography and travel writing. Those images become like brands in the minds of cultural producers and consumers. However, producers can also incorporate other built forms into brand imagery, such as historical buildings and homes. The tourism industry and NGO-based conservationists may frown upon residents who evacuate heritage zones because doing so in their minds accelerates the decay of brand



10. A derelict house in the Old Leh Heritage Zone in 2005 was singled out for conservation by the Tibet Heritage Fund. The owners of the house were able to contribute funding towards its conservation, but took no part in the actual repairs. Photo by author.

authenticity. They may therefore establish social, economic, and political relationships to preserve those spaces, creating a “contested cultural topography” between those residents who genuinely wish to improve their living arrangements (Herzfeld 2003: 363).



11. The same house shown in Figure 10, now LaLa's Café (conservation completed in 2008 by the THF), greets visitors entering the Old Leh Heritage Zone. Photo by author.

Herzfeld's ethnography of Turkish residents in historical Cretan Town in Rethemnos, Greece highlights how “[h]ouse-proud women and fiercely independent men resent the intervention of bureaucratic archaeologists[;] this devaluation of antiquity symbolically reinforces the general distress

that residents express at the physical dirt which crumbling, damp-ridden walls impose upon them” (Herzfeld 2003: 363). Although some residents may acknowledge a general need for conservation, they may not necessarily apply that sentiment to their own homes as antiquity is often associated with backwards lifestyles. In tourism industries, particularly, destination branding and conservation may contribute to the antiquating or museumification of living culture (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998; Ooi 2002).

As previously mentioned, the construction and maintenance of Buddhist monasteries and other monumental architecture has long been supported by a network of Ladakhi village based organizations. These activities signify the relative importance of and connection to the political, spiritual, and socio-economic wellbeing of the community. As those institutions break down or change, so also do the buildings. Monasteries and monumental architecture seem to represent the same utopic structures for NGO-sponsored conservation as they do for heritage tourism in their ability to inspire imagination. Critiquing the western obsession with such places, Bishop writes:

Whilst sacred places are for temporary visits, utopias are for future dwelling. Sacred places usually help to stabilize the world, and provide sites for worship and prayer. Utopias on the other hand, while often escapist, may also provide imaginary places where an alternative society can be envisioned; places where visions can be brought to life and experiments tried out; vantage points where criticism can be directed back at established society.... Above all, utopias must offer a vision as well as an escape, a critique of prevailing society as well as an ideal lifestyle. [1989: 216-218]

The symbolic capital associated with the unique UNESCO World Heritage Site designation provides destinations visibility, prestige, and legitimacy. Moreover, site designation may also provide funding opportunities that enable conservationists to harness financial resources and attract skilled labor. However, we should note that these designations do not simply provide heritage sites with historical annotations, but also come with “changes in value systems, cultural codes, and cosmologies [that] will cause changes in [built] form” (Wilk 1990:437). In the absence of local skilled (read: educated) laborers, conservationists will ultimately rely upon recruits or volunteers who they themselves train. It follows,

then, that the decreasing local involvement in the design and construction of new buildings and the conservation of sacred and historical vernacular complexes may manifest in cultural as well as physical transformation. Thus, NGO intervention may be shooting itself in the proverbial foot. NGO intervention may also stimulate the creation of a core of local specialists who can find employment engaged in conservation work.

Tourism and Civil Society

Cultural tourism is essentially a complex gaze upon any given locale, one riddled with discrepancies and inconsistencies as outsiders increasingly find their gazes returned by local actors (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998). In this exchange, local economic, political and religious contexts increasingly shape and define definitions, perspectives, and meanings of the destination itself, often without the tourist's knowledge. The primary components of tourism include that it involves travel, utilizes intermediaries, creates destinations, and impacts local environments (Burns 1999). Like transnationalism, tourism is situated within the global economy and culture, and is characterized by "the movement of people, goods, capital, and ideas ... between home regions and destinations that are linked by means of routes and transit regions and associated with many other societal processes" (Saarinen 2006: 1124; see also Smith 2010; Burns 1999). But tourism is also about the experience of place (Ooi 2006; Hancock 2005). Similar to transnational processes, tourism takes place through a decentering and recentering of home and destination for the tourist, and, I would add, possibly also for the local (Ooi 2006). In contrast to the deterritorialization associated with globalization, these processes are decidedly grounded in place - within the nation state, within the specific social, economic, historical, political and religious context, and especially within the cities, villages, places of worship and homes of every participating actor, local or non-local.

There is a distinction between *object authenticity* (the authenticity of things) and *existential authenticity*, or that which transcends human nature, or perception, and corresponds to the experience and essence of human individuality.⁴⁵ The utility in this approach to understanding authentic, traditional culture lies in treating tourism not as a special case, but “as just another human activity that creates, in its own way, opportunities to explore and experience what it means to be human” (Steiner and Reisinger 2005: 302). “The tourism ‘product’ is not the tourist destination, but it is about the experience of that place and what happens there: a series of internal and external interactions” (Ryan 1991 *In Burns* 1999: 31). This understanding of place is both “humanistic and existential,” allowing for the understanding of both host and guest. Citing Turner (1994:185), Burns (1999: 33) continues:

Tourism tends to make cultures into museums, as cultural phenomena which can be viewed as quaint, peculiar and local. Tourism paradoxically is a quest for authentic local cultures, but the tourist industry, by creating an illusion of authenticity, in fact reinforces the experience of social and cultural simulation. The very existence of tourism rules out the possibility of authentic cultural experience.

I take issue with Burns, for every cultural experience, even those contrived for tourist consumption, is authentic because it is lived. Culture and change are inextricable. Industry specialists (including locals) contribute to the paradox of authenticity even as they aim to maintain and represent a monolithic cultural heritage. These conflicts of interest are particularly evident between those industry specialists – culture brokers and tour guides - and organizations or individuals who aim to thwart tourism’s impact on local culture.

Accordance and Affordance: Heritage Construction in Economic and Political Perspective

Still, heritage tourism presents a paradox, as the ornamental veneer of antiquity is ensconced within an underlying economic and demographic reality. Participation in global tourism engenders

⁴⁵ Present in tourism literature for the past decade, existential authenticity concerns itself with “what it means to be human, what it means to be happy, and what it means to be oneself” (Steiner and Reisinger 2005: 300).

socioeconomic and physical transformation for locals and locales, respectively. Local desires to keep in-step with broader economic and material development may conflict with the interests of non-local conservation-based NGOs who seek to preserve historical dwellings or monuments.⁴⁶ Thus tourist sites, like urban spaces, become contested spaces due to the "intersection of diverse and competing social, economic, and political influences" (Low and Lawrence-Zuniga 2003: 22).

Conservation carried out-of-context can have the same effect as unchecked urbanization (Menon 1998; Al Harithy 2009). Recent studies of heritage management claim that conservation efforts should consult and/or include local or indigenous understandings of historical structures in order to construct sustainable conservation practices (Alexander 2006; Al Harithy 2005). Little to no attention has been paid to the disparity between the architecture complex— complete with education, design, and engineering – and the native builder – a “skilled practitioner” and “accomplished storyteller whose tales are told in the practice of his craft rather than in words” (Ingold 2011: 57). Residential structures in particular exist in a living context, not situated behind a rope and pegs. In Ladakh, as elsewhere, a critical inquiry into the concept of built heritage includes “that which is beyond the physical and visible.... [I]t should be recognized as an open process of production and transformation sustained by roots in the identity of local community” (Al-Harithy 2005: 329). Considering this living landscape as a constant production of built heritage prevents divorcing local culture from the built environment. By identifying meaning within the landscape, our understanding moves beyond the bones of a structure, and into the backbone of social production. Ladakhis recognize this, although they don’t necessarily articulate it as such. As one conservation architect casually told me: “Ladakhis have no need for this heady theoretical stuff.”

Regardless, tourism’s consequences are reflected in both social relationships and urban settings. Residential architecture in continuously inhabited urban centers can be viewed as a physical

⁴⁶ For a debates surrounding the constitution of civil society in India, see: Keane: 2003, pp. 36-39.

representation of different stages of development. Mewari merchant class houses of Calcutta, for example, “can be interpreted as a sign of the confidence the merchants had in the gradual transfer of economic and symbolic power from royal patrons to migrant capitalists who engaged in global capitalism” (Hargrove 2004: 121). As localities change over time, so also does meaning of the built environment. Politics, religion, economics, modernity, and affluence are all represented in residential architecture (Hargrove 2004). Hargrove argues that commodifying houses for tourist consumption “further extends the importance of local/global relationships in the perpetuation of history and social memory” (Hargrove 2004: 121). Thus, the conservation of such heritage homes should draw attention to a complex architectural heritage. Yet often times, those desired narratives are obscured by the very history conservationists seek to protect or reproduce.

Damascus, Syria, presents an example of capturing a specific time period or vernacular tradition for tourist consumption. There, city officials’ plans to renovate the ancient marketplace, the *Suq al-Hamidiyya*, drastically contrasted with how merchants used the space. Moreover, the specific time period which officials chose as their model for restoration represented only one time period out of many centuries of use. This time period did not necessarily correspond with Damascans’ identity, ethnic or modern, but rather suited a representation of ancient Syria which would appeal to tourist interests while supporting Syrian national identities (Totah 2009). Continuously inhabited for two millennia, Tripoli also presents an excellent case study for the politics of preservation. Granted an award by the World Bank to renovate and restore significant parts of the old city, UNESCO conservationists scrutinized this World Heritage Site looking for structures deemed to represent universal appeal (Al Harithy 2005:11). Tragically, many of the efforts to secure a site which will appeal to all visitors results in a freezing of cultural icons, effectively preventing them from evolving with the city.

Some scholars contend that authentic heritage allows room for change (Steiner and Reissinger 2005). Breaks from traditional materiality found in modern construction materials and popular home

décor brings into question notions of symbolic capital and agency with which producers and consumers shape their built environment and, thus, their cultural heritage and identity. To address the conflict of interest over installing traditional versus modern facilities within the home, cultural geographer and spatial theorist Yi Fu Tuan presents the case that tradition is dependent on the absence of choice:

Choice is limited in non-literate and folk societies. People have to make do with whatever is at hand. The form and arrangement of dwellings, for example, are constrained by the availability of local materials, the nature of the local climate, and the socioeconomic facts of life. To the modern observer, the material world thus created can have enormous appeal, because everything in it has a purpose, and because its aesthetic qualities emerge unobtrusively out of the serious business of living. Folk artifacts are often able to project an image of elemental power or stark elegance that modern aestheticians value. By appearing to address life's irreducible essentials, they exude an air of import (Tuan 1989:28).

Given the choice, then, many people may prefer to modernize.

Amrita Shah (2011) discusses the transition of Ahmedabad, India from thriving textile center of the 15th century to a polluted seat of communal violence of the 1990s, and then back to a contemporary thriving modern metropolis. At each step along the way, economics has affected human design choice as much as religion or aesthetic preference. As a center of commerce, the city has long had access to myriad design, from Hindu to Mughal, as well as to both local and imported construction materials and accoutrements. Yet even where ancient commercial centers give way to modern condominiums, the site is still authentically Ahmedabad. This is because at heritage sites, new construction must often adhere to a prescribed traditional aesthetic, even if the materials and engineering drastically diverge from local materials.

Residents in traditional folk societies are not necessarily able to afford the architectural embellishments common on homes of affluent residents. Those who do possess more resources, such as community leaders or merchants, are able to also enjoy more creativity to import modern materials or fixtures. In a tourism destination, these sites capture the mind's eye and the visitor's pocketbook.

Although creative individual divergence from local convention suggests "prideful assertiveness" (Tuan 1989: 29) and a break from tradition, that agency is altogether authentic.

[I]t is always about free choices, not about maintaining traditions or being true to some past concept of individual, social, or cultural identity.... Even traditional cultures that some people might like to protect and preserve as timeless are entitled to change and evolve in response to their changing circumstances; authenticity always is a self-judgment. It can never be made from the outside for or about someone else. It is no one's business to decide what constitutes authenticity for the host community except the local residents.... – claiming and exercising that freedom is the ultimate expression of existential authenticity. [Steiner and Reissinger 2005: 311]

This means locals' understandings of their towns and homes as modern, global places may derive from their involvement in transnational planning processes for conservation, restoration, and the promotion of cultural tourism, from media influences, or even from visitors' suggestions. But for the non-local (and particularly for the Westerner, whose knowledge of the world so often is received through formal education) those who alight upon a destination hoping both to learn and to experience, "rely on ... interpreters to interpret the significance of such places for them...." (Steiner and Reissinger 2005: 309).

Culture Brokers and Intermediaries

If consumers accept the inherent value of UNESCO Heritage Sites, they can then be said to facilitate universally "strengthening" experiences, as heritage products that contain universal values that will bring satisfaction to the consumer (Ooi 2003). Poria, Reichel and Biran (2006: 171) add that "the more participants perceiv[e] the site as part of their own heritage, the higher their expectations of the interpretations to enrich their knowledge and make them feel emotionally involved." The sacred Indian site of Bodh Gaya in present day Bihar, for example, has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site due to its significance for Buddhists, Indians, and persons interested in religious sites writ large. Believers understand Bodh Gaya as the site where Siddhartha Guatama, or the Buddha, attained enlightenment. Consequently, the site has become a place for spiritual seekers to attain that personal

enlightenment, or to at least revel in the site where the Buddha transcended the cycle of birth and death. This revelation is attended to by scores of commercial enterprises which serve to enhance a tourist's spiritual experience (Geary 2010).

The satisfaction that consumers experience at heritage sites is made possible through a mediator. Cultural mediations do more than just build a bridge between place and consumer; they influence the very cultures that are being packaged as products. These changes are manifest in economic development as well as in the built environment. For paying visitors then, "cultural mediators are the narrators in the carnivalesque destination, through which tourists cognize a sense of place and culture amid a polyphony of sights, sounds and experiences" (Ooi 2002: 123). As Hancock (2002: 709) asserts, "the greater value accorded tourism as an avenue for development reflects a perception that the marketing of heritage offers a means of preserving and enhancing the value and visibility of the endangered residues of the past." Simultaneously, signatures of modernity made possible by financial remittances from tourism industries encourage and, from a certain perspective, threaten the very sites they promote.

In Leh Town, for example, the creation of economic boundaries that distinguish the true, living locality from the created, conserved or restructured locality are improving accommodations and benefiting (temporarily at least) local pocketbooks. For some tourists in search of an authentic experience, new construction is less aesthetically appealing than the preexisting historical structures and may lessen the appeal to travel to Leh. However, visitors don't seem to mind as long as new construction a) does not take away from or harm religious sites or monuments, and b) they can maintain a similar lifestyle as they would in any mainstream destination (Alexander 2006). Thus the need for mediation in both conservation and construction becomes central to reproducing the desired past that tourists (and conservationists) rely upon for their continuation. Locals may participate by becoming mediators while also being affected by this mediation.

When describing the identity of the Ladakhi tour package, in this case, "Little Tibet," members of the local CSO the All Ladakh Travel Operators Association (ALTOA) highlight the cultural distinctiveness among native residents and continuity of place that should be visible to tourists. Like builders and designers, mediators are agent-producers. The conservation, interpretation, and consumption of tourist-associated heritage sites in the Leh district of Ladakh, India, such as monasteries, the bazaar, and commercialized residences, is facilitated by various mediators, or culture brokers (Poria, Reichel and Biran 2006; Ooi 2003). The most common culture broker is a tour guide, who is responsible for providing both information and interpretation and is expected to help visitors perceptually and emotionally experiencing the site on a backstage or more intimate level than they would otherwise have access to (MacCannel 1976; Poria, Reichel and Biran 2006). This is the authentic existential experience of an authentic place. In Ladakh, the role of mediator includes tour guides, INGO members involved in heritage conservation, state tourism department officials, and local CBO members maintaining or restricting access to the tourist market. Acting on behalf of their individual or organizational agendas, these culture brokers often produce a one-sided, essentialized, or otherwise misguided view of the site. Furthering their respective agendas may result in silencing the multivocality of place (Rodman 1998).

Just as tourism agencies and heritage preservation specialists in Leh carve out cultural amenities for customers, so also do local political and economic interests shape local society to manage tourist needs. Thus, overessentializing - even stereotyping - becomes both a prerequisite for and an inherent paradox to tourism-based place-making, and has significant consequences on a variety of levels. Erve Chambers (2000: 112) states that "the production of material culture for tourist consumption is often associated with a country's ethnic or rural population... [who are] presumed to have maintained a more 'traditional' way of life." Even scholarship contributes to the making of history and heritage as publications take precedence over local variations. We recall from the previous chapter that British and Indian scholars, and not local folklorists, were considered regional experts. Although their research

agendas are increasingly scrutinized, their authoritative accounts nevertheless rendered static what are now hotly contested heritage sites. This historical precedent may help explain why travel guides make scant mention of Muslim-influenced architecture and it may also offer clues to the exclusion of Muslim heritage sites from the INTACH 2003 publication: “Architectural Heritage of Ladakh”.⁴⁷ Even as culture brokers in this global tourism destination look to the *gonpas* for the vestiges of the past, new guest houses are increasingly built by Buddhists, Muslims and Christians alike, using foreign designers and imported materials and labor, while labeled as traditional homestays.

The mediation of cultural sites by culture brokers in the tourism sphere appears to generate an air of anxiety among conservationists, who fear the loss of tradition and cultural value of place. The promotion of sustainable development for tourism destinations such as Little Tibet has been echoed in the cultural preservation initiatives of international NGOs such as ISEC since the late 1980s.⁴⁸ In much the same way, the threat of impending global homogenization and the takeover by a spiritually bankrupt West prompts today’s tourists to seek out the remote, impossible locations (Bishop 1989: 212). I would argue that conservationists are not immune to this pull of the exotic. Like the house, Bishop (1989) claims that travel writings are reflections not of the places journeyed but of the self. A famous conservationist responded to my question “why conservation?” with the following retort: “because I love old buildings.” Perhaps, in moments of self-consciousness, conservationists aim to immortalize themselves in the preservation of historical places. At the same time, Ladakhis, while recognizing the value of antiquity, also long to see in travelers and educated Westerners a reflection of a modern, civilized, Ladakh.

Ken MacDonald highlights heritage negotiation in the nearby Himalayan region of Northern Pakistan, where international ecological organizations tend to promote agenda-laden conservation projects

⁴⁷ Especially given the geopolitical circumstances of Ladakh’s territorial boundaries vis-a-vis Pakistan and China.

⁴⁸ For more on the movement of sustainable development discourse, carrying capacity, etc., into discussions of cultural tourism and management policies see Saarinen, 2006.

by emphasizing the "rapacious or ecologically ignorant native" (MacDonald 2005: 261). In Ladakh, conservationists have further responded to changing urban landscapes by creating initiatives to educate local town planners on the significance of these sites to both Tibetan and global heritage. In 2003, the Indian NGO INTACH published their survey of Ladakhi Heritage Sites. Among other things, this work decries the ignorance of local villagers and monastic efforts for not knowing how to do proper restoration. The encroachment of commercial construction upon the historical royal residences in Old Leh rouses NGOs like THF⁴⁹ to strengthen conservation efforts and train locals in traditional materials and construction practices, believing that Ladakhis do not recognize the value of their own heritage. One interpretation of this apparent condescension is a matter of difference in ideology and the valuing of scholarly knowledge of architecture over traditional knowledge of building.

Other sites of negotiation where locals are likely to be excluded include planning meetings for future conservation efforts. In August, 2005, the Ladakhi royal heritage association NIRLAC consulted with Indian Government representatives⁵⁰ to direct local religious and political leaders toward the proper restoration of centuries-old structures in the nearby village of Alchi, a fledgling tourist destination (Interview, T. Sharma 6/05 at NIRLAC). To complicate the scenario, travel agencies in Leh also mediate heritage negotiation through their Tibetan-centric interpretations while forming unions that deliberately exclude residents of the nearby Tibetan refugee settlement from participating in the tourist industry.

NGO meetings and their top down programming further serve to justify the "rapacious native" rhetoric. Brutal winters and searing summer sun take a toll on buildings. Construction and repair is a constant social practice in Ladakhi village life that instills an awareness of heritage, or *habitus*, and a strong sense of place through repetition and teaching specialized skills to younger generations (Bourdieu 1972; Basso 1998). That both THF and NIRLAC train and employ local Ladakhis in their

⁴⁹ A Berlin-based non-profit organization of western-trained conservation architects whose work is committed to documenting Tibetan Architectural heritage and preserving old buildings.

⁵⁰ the Namgyal Institute for Research of Ladakhi Art and Culture, and The Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage and Archaeological Survey of India, respectively

UNESCO-funded global heritage conservation projects raises an eyebrow.⁵¹ If heritage sites are subsequently promoted by Ladakhi travel agencies as authentic Tibetan culture, this would underscore ethical concerns within NGO-led heritage initiatives. Irrespective of community involvement in heritage conservation projects, further assimilation of the Tibetan heritage rubric into JKTD building regulations may cause residents to develop strategies of resistance “by creating physical or temporal boundaries to protect a ‘backstage’ area for private use” (Low and Lawrence-Zuniga 2000:23).

As a good example of community resistance to NGO and state heritage conservation initiatives, Herzfeld addresses Turkish residents’ “objectification of tradition” while negotiating “embodiments of nostalgia” in their Cretan town homes:

In the multiply refracted contest over the meaning of the past and its relics, situated actors adopt attitudes that will serve their interests best. As they variously succeed or fail, their position in the nexus of power also shifts, and their engagement with the past alters with it.... People do not adhere to the principles of conservation merely because the state tells them to. Rather, while increasingly using cultural criterion that the state has taught them to represent [the European essence of Greekness], they try to memorialize their old life-style in terms that would give it value in a modern world hungry for nostalgia. Those who no longer own an old fireplace now turn instead to a more collective sense of ‘tradition’, one that is aggressively more bourgeois and ‘European’. [Herzfeld 2003: 364-367]

The essentialization of otherness as a timeless unity is common in travel writings associated with sacred landscapes as well as in tourism literature (Eliade 1959 *in* Bishop 1989:18). The importance of studies such as this one lies in moving beyond binaries and oppositions into a description of culture as a fluid process, as well as recognizing our own hand in the creation and fixation of places.

Like the destinations themselves, NGO ideologies supporting their own sustainable tourism and conservation schemes are “understood as dynamic and contested ideas which are continually being constructed and reconstructed” through a constant negotiation process (Saarinen 2006:1130). As I mentioned in Chapter 2, local leaders experience tension as they exercise power and try to establish

⁵¹ Professional, western-trained conservation architects “CAM” associated with INTACH also promote a set of well defined ideologies that guide their restorations. These may get passed on along with construction knowledge.

authority to designate a site or to regulate and enforce the construction of structural prototypes or decorative aesthetics. This tension plays a critical role in the construction and representation of Ladakhi traditions and cultural authenticity while Tibetan Buddhism destinations continue to appeal to NGOs as well as to tourists. Notwithstanding the consciousness-raising benefits of heritage conservation programs, an unintended consequence of limiting growth is the museumification of culture, exemplified in the feeling that the best development is perhaps no development at all.

“The landscape is a map of the social relations of the people.... The physical environment is built into the whole edifice of native life” (Fortes 1945: 157-158).

CHAPTER IV: SEASONAL METHODOLOGIES

This chapter describes various ethnographic methods I used to gather data at different seasons of the year. I visited Leh five times over the course of four years: my first visit was during spring, my second and third visits were during summer, and my fourth and fifth visits were during fall. To keep the methodology section intact, I have divided this chapter into five sections: spring season, summer season, two fall seasons, and a special section on cognitive mapping. Each section describes the means by which I arrived in Ladakh based on seasonal transportation availability, the lodging available for rent, the social and spatial context of each season, and the subsequent methods I used to make connections and gather data for my project. Throughout this chapter I highlight which techniques worked and which did not. I also describe specific challenges and considerations I made while conducting research.

As my project examines relationships between conservation architecture and new construction in a well-recognized tourist destination, it also exposes the force with which local, state and global heritage discourses differentially and sometimes conflictingly affect the built environment. Ethnologically, the project can be situated within a larger attempt to understand identity formation and culture change as expressed in the transformation of space. I have previously discussed how a theoretical expansion of the terms “heritage” and “tradition” beyond the conventional binary of “old versus new” lends a fresh perspective for analysis of these sites. My ethnographic methods thus are aimed at describing places as locally and globally constructed within a given historical and economic context. Triangulating participant observation, ethnographic interviewing, spatial analysis, and discourse analysis allows Ladakhi heritage to be viewed from a number of different angles.

This a spatialized study. Thus, when brainstorming the project design, sensitivity was paid to the particular spatial aspects of culture that I aimed to investigate.⁵² But while I anticipated my ethnographic needs, nothing could prepare me for the physical and material challenges I would face whether, or for the epistemological challenges - both subjective and existential - when encountering the built environment. The built environment in Ladakh is charged by contested heritage. If my intention had originally been to include a study of *Ladakhi wayfinding*, I was unprepared to discover that ethnography itself is a process of ethnographer wayfinding. This research project, its methods and analysis, is grounded as much in the field as it is in books and classroom training. The lessons I take from formal education allow me to articulate in scholarly fashion my research topic. But to borrow from *The New Yorker* writer Tony Hiss (1990),⁵³ I also aim to impart to the reader my ‘simultaneous perception’ of the environment around me - micro and macro, built and natural, social and physical. In his seminal work *Senses of Place*, the late Keith Basso (1998:xiv;xvi) claims with aplomb that “practicing ethnographers, much like everyone else, take senses of place for granted, and ethnographic studies exploring their cultural and social dimensions are in notably short supply.” He further acknowledges a scarcity of what he terms “intellectual maps” available to those concerned with the experience of place, and recommends other spatial ethnographers look to a variety of sources for inspiration. So, unlike other ethnographies which give only a head nod to place, my research begins with place in mind.

* * *

PART I: THE VERNACULAR SPRING

With any research project, the first step is becoming acquainted with the problem. Between 2003 and 2007, I familiarized myself with the literature about Ladakh, the Himalayas, Western China, Central Asia and South Asian area studies broadly. I completed beginning and intermediate Hindi at

⁵² I define culture as peoples’ beliefs, values, and norms; behaviors; social and spatial arrangements; and social and material products of these that are shared and transmitted in discernable patterns within a given population over an extended period of time.

⁵³ “Simultaneous perception helps us experience our surroundings and our reactions to them, and not just our own thoughts and desires” (Hiss 1990:4).

Syracuse, attended two Urdu summer immersion programs in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, and taught myself elementary Ladakhi in the field. While balancing coursework, a teaching associateship, and student leadership, I wrote numerous proposals to fund my research. From 2005 through 2008, I journeyed to Ladakh at various seasons of the year. Each of those visits led me to understand Leh in ways different from the previous. But in those four years, I also took the time to travel overland from the southernmost tip of India to Ladakh, giving me a broader perspective of the South Asian continent than what could be seen during language training and fieldwork.

In the first leg of the project, undertaken in the late spring of 2005, I sought to understand the dynamics of change in a built environment transformed by the tourism economy. Broadly interested in how locals accommodated tourists and tourism, I hypothesized that any transformation in Leh would be evident in both material and cultural dimensions. Thus, my early observations describe residential and commercial construction and social interactions between Ladakhis and outsiders. I began to take note that the simultaneous conservation and renovation of historical sites in Old Leh was impacting both local and foreign perceptions of the built environment. I disclosed my fascination with historical buildings to my interview participants and made no attempt to conceal my belief that they should be conserved for future generations. This obvious bias challenged me to remain neutral. But since the first step of *doing* anthropology is establishing one's own place, in the beginning, my role in Leh was not much different than that of a tentative activist or well-read tourist.

Making Acquaintances

My host family was a great source of stability for me. Their family-run guest house in Samkar where I stayed in 2005 and 2006 was recommended by a well-known Ladakhi scholar and anthropologist, Martijn Van Beek, with whom I had communicated while preparing to depart for the field. The estate had fantastic, multiple-acre organic gardens, which were tenderly cultivated by *Abale*

(father) Thinles Lakrook. Nearest to the guest house, the flower gardens were routinely tended by *Amale* (mother), whose arthritic fingers remained constantly irritated from picking chamomile. Each morning, I awoke to the braying of donkeys underscored by the murmur of *Amale's mane tonches* (meditations) echoing off the stone garden walls.⁵⁴ The guest house manager and youngest of three adult sons was involved in numerous INGOs and became an insightful consultant, contact, and friend.

That first spring and early summer, my acquaintances- or people with whom I would hang out off-the-clock- were typically European (English-speaking) THF conservation volunteers my age. They were there to conserve structures and preserve ancient paintings and I was there to study them; thus most of our *têtes-à-têtes* took place over dinner (with the occasional after-dinner nip concealed in a teapot to avoid upsetting conservative Ladakhi restaurateurs) and concerned our respective research projects. But the infrequency and brevity of those conversations were punctuated, even dictated, by the chill of mountain air, lack of electricity, and inevitably long torch-lit hikes back up the mountain. Sometimes desperate for conversation, I made the acquaintance of like-minded tourists or passing intellectuals. Yet due to the transitory nature of their stays, none of those friendships were lasting. I spent a great deal of time sitting at the dusty table and chairs outside the Dzomsa watering hole, observing hordes of tourists mulling around in the Main Bazaar, taking notes, recording my thoughts, and waiting for appointments.

I sought potential interviews by meeting tourists and tour guides in popular Main Bazaar shops, in restaurants, and in bookstores, taking every opportunity to broaden my knowledge base. I joined guided tours in and around Leh Town, which eventually led me to the nearby Tibetan refugee settlement of Choglamsar, as well as to the ubiquitous *gonpa* villages of Chambrey, Hemis, Lamayuru Phyang, Shey, Stok, Thiksey, and Wanla. After some time, I made the acquaintance of leaders and workers employed by regional and state-based organizations like the Ladakh Ecological Development

⁵⁴ I provide a detailed socio-spatial account of the Lakrook Garden Guest House in Ch. 7.

Group (LeDEG), the Namgyal Institute for Research on Ladakhi Art and Culture (NIRLAC), and the Jammu and Kashmir Tourism Department (JKTD). I met leaders and members of Indian-based non-governmental organizations including the Indian National Trust for Architectural and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), the Archaeological Survey India (ASI), and I came in close, frequent contact with employees and volunteers in international non-governmental organizations including the Women's Alliance of Ladakh (WAL) and the International Society for Ecology and Culture's (ISEC) Farm Project.

In addition to these registered organizations, I encountered local business people and religious leaders who had formed grassroots non-governmental organizations such as the Students' Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh (SECMOL), The All Ladakh Travel Operators' Association (ALTOA), the Ladakhi Hotel and Guest House Association (LHGHA), the Ladakhi Buddhist Association (LBA), the Ladakhi Muslim Association (LMA), the All Ladakh Gumpa Association (ALGA), the Taxi Union, and the Cyber Café Union. In the urban sphere, I conversed with a number of residential homeowners and workers while poking my head into every conservation and construction site that seemed open enough to the public as to allay fear of trespassing. Although many contacts I made did not pertain to my work, I cataloged businesses cards from all whom I encountered, remaining in contact with tour and travel agents, restaurateurs, internet café owners, hoteliers, and shopkeepers.

The Tibet Heritage Fund

With a general focus on material and social transformation, I spent much of my first spring and early summer in Leh physically orienting myself to the Himalayan topography, altitude, and landscape, meeting and asking a variety of people about local customs, and trying to establish routines to remain productive and counteract culture shock. A central project objective was locating historical political maps of Old Leh and to compare and contrast them to present-day maps. It was in that capacity that I introduced myself to Andre Alexander, the late (and quite frankly great) President of the Tibet Heritage

Fund (THF), an architectural conservation group dedicated to preserving monastic, and later, secular edifices. At that time, THF was renovating the Lakrook House belonging to the Buddhist family who owned the guest house where I stayed. The Lakrook House was located on a steep escarpment in Old Leh just below the Namgyal Palace and was in relatively close proximity to Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh Autonomous Development Hill Council government offices.

Andre Alexander and the THF were formerly based in Lhasa, where he had engineered a number of successful conservation efforts, as beautifully unveiled in his 2006 magnum opus *The Temples of Lhasa: Tibetan Buddhist Architecture from the 7th to the 21st centuries*. Exiled by the Chinese government, he had relocated to Ladakh and began conservation work in Leh and other surrounding villages. Our mutual enthusiasm for old buildings culminated in a quest to locate archives where, I presumed, any maps of Old Leh Town might be stored. In conjunction, he proposed a similar but equally demanding venture. I had heard of tales and had seen an antiquated photo in the LEDeG (Ladakh Ecological Development Group) library of the “Gates of Ladakh”. Andre, too, had heard of these gates, so together we sought them out en route to the mythical Leh archives. Both quests met with surprising success. At the location of the eastern gate, we “discovered” the stump of a wooden support beam jutting from the wall of a decrepit stone tunnel which conjoined the merchant section of the Old Leh Heritage Zone with the Muslim bakeries behind the Jamia Masjid. The other gates had been removed and improved with the expansion of the Main Bazaar, and thus were impossible to locate.

Determined still, our sleuthing led us to the scrap yard. Rummaging through the debris proved fruitless. The discarded materials included only cheap compound wood (particleboard) planks, CGI (corrugated galvanized iron) fragments, and POP (plaster of Paris, or sheetrock) morsels. These we found interspersed with scatterings of the ubiquitous mud brick, several 5-gallon paint buckets, and various paper and plastic waste. The scarcity of wood at this altitude in the Himalayas forced us to posit that, more than likely, the wooden gates had been recycled into a later building project or burned for

fuel. This theory was further encouraged by a later finding: a stone retaining wall where, presumably, an enterprising mason had randomly inserted the ornate dorsal side of a stone oven. I had the chance to see such an oven *in situ* several years later, but at the time was unfamiliar with them other than from literature and pictures. With the advent of propane stoves in Ladakh, the practice of cooking and heating one's home with the messy and cumbersome dung and wood-burning oven had fallen out of vogue. With the general decline in Old Leh home conditions, one could easily imagine a dilapidated kitchen ripe for construction salvaging.⁵⁵

Random excursions like these constitute what Geertz (1983) and subsequent others have termed "deep hanging out." Just as "deep hanging out" is defined as more than forced entry into some unknown cultural scene with the intent of gaining rapport and soliciting participants, fieldwork is also more than simply learning the ropes - it is adapting to place. The Leh archive was no more than a 12x15 room of metal shelves containing countless deteriorating parchment scrolls. I digitally photographed two ancient maps with faded scrawls of Urdu that designated land plots predating the 18th century Dogra invasion and eagerly shared these with THF leaders and volunteers. Subsequent visits to the Lakrook House were welcoming and cheerful. With each subsequent journey to the field, a visit to the THF office would always be my first stop. Scarcely acclimatized to the 12,700 altitude, and against my host family's wishes ("You should rest, take tea, and wait..."), I would look anxiously forward to losing my breath climbing up the dizzying concrete and stone pathway.

The Main Bazaar

Not all the contacts I maintained were directly related to my dissertation. For example: I met and formed a lasting friendship with a well-established shopkeeper in the Main Bazaar, a dealer in fine gems and "authentic" Tibetan antiquities: Mr. Kashani. Kashani *sahib* had opened his shop in the late-

⁵⁵ The location of gates of Ladakh has since been determined and, through photographic evidence, the gates themselves have been reconstructed to resemble their former states.

1980s, and had thus experienced Leh Town's growth first-hand. Our conversations provided the bulk of context I gathered on Leh's economic growth over the past twenty years and were occasionally supplemented by additional accounts from other Kashmiri merchants in the Bazaar. Of course, I traded information for patronage. And we talked a lot. It was nearly impossible to avoid his shop, as it sat at the confluence of three main roads shortly before one reached Dzomsa, a local shop which offered clean boiled water and dried produce for trekking. I eventually found solace in finding hidden footpaths down narrow alleyways and between buildings where I could dodge his inevitable invitation: "Jamie *madam*, come into my shop... come have tea... I have something to show you".

I frequented the same public places at certain times of day and was able to observe a great deal of market culture extending beyond the ebb and flow of tourism. Regular trips to the *subzi mandi* (H/U vegetable market) rather than to restaurants for food made locals notice me. By frequenting the same shops for provisions and speaking in Hindi (or, if I was feeling brave, elementary Ladakhi), some locals became as curious about me as I about them. In this manner, many people were able to relax their guard and strike up conversation. Then, discovering my interest in old houses, new houses, construction, demolition, and the like, a few began to extend invitations to their homes.

"Tina", who at the time lived at Hotel Ibex, one of the oldest hotels in the Main Bazaar (whose adjoining restaurant is the only establishment in Leh with a bar), had me over for tea every afternoon. I met her three sisters, and learned that their late father, a Ladakhi general in the Indian Army, had been given a plot of barren land in the lower Indus valley to settle, as had many other Ladakhis who had served in the Indian army. An impromptu but geographically bounded and named community had resulted. The small, growing suburb had no electricity or running water. Land parcels there were small and subject to dispute, but nevertheless the neighborhood was growing rapidly.

Three years later when I was finishing my dissertation research, Tina's only brother, Lobzang Rinchen, whom I had met only once, contacted me on my mobile. After chiding me for not keeping in

contact, he urged me to “come straight away” for a tour of his new hotel: The Druk, an imposing, 100-room hotel with first-class amenities and spectacular views. A former officer and prominent member of ALTOA and LHGHA, he quickly became an indispensable resource and most gracious host.

In summary, hanging out alone in the Bazaar was a tedious process which eventually resulted in my learning rich accounts of multiple family histories, their home building, rebuilding and sometimes abandoning and relocating in and around Leh. Through this process I slowly began to acquire a network of contacts. By using subsequent snowball sampling techniques, I operationally defined and bounded my study population based on a selective criterion process of persons who fit my general research interests (LeCompte and Schensul 1999: 115-117).

Making Observations

All of my preliminary research consisted of participant observation. Balancing an etic perspective on Leh’s transformative processes with the emic views of those I met, my research project slowly began to take shape. Although my observation and interview field notes included my own interactions, responses, and memos, I kept these separate from my own journaling (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw 1995). My personal journals consist mostly of longings for family, friends, and loved ones written in both prose and poetry - common entries, certainly, for one’s first trip to the field. Journal entries elaborated on my physical, emotional, and spiritual health; much of this took the form of dream journals. By journaling, I remained conscious of how my mental states affected my abilities as an ethnographer.⁵⁶

The bulk of my early fieldnotes contained preliminary data. That spring, I conducted informal, open-ended interviews with four permanent Leh residents of Ladakhi Buddhist and Muslim affiliation,

⁵⁶ I dreamt frequently (sometimes 2 or 3 times a night) and vividly; this dream journal formed the basis for a paper I gave to the Syracuse University graduate student presentation series entitled: “Dreams, Delusions, and Déjà vu: is it Fieldwork or just my imagination?”

and seven transient Leh residents. Those included foreign tour operators, restaurateurs, and tourists. In these interviews, I aimed to develop a general sense of Ladakhis' daily practice by locating frequented places, observing comings and goings, and enquiring about social interactions (amongst themselves and with others). I made informal visits, dropped into workplaces, accompanied acquaintances on their errands, and took a genuine interest in what people did. This process opened my eyes to dynamic, quotidian spaces which constitute and are constituted by Ladakhi dwelling practices (see Ingold 2011).

Daily practices for men and women including bathing and washing clothes in icy mountain run-off rivers. After a task was completed, it was common to chat in the warmth of the sun. Work outside of the home was generally conducted in the Main Bazaar in close proximity to shops and vegetable markets. After meals were prepared and consumed, waste would typically be disposed of by being tossed into the closest stream. Early mornings for many were spent in line to patronize one's preferred *tandoorwala* (a man who cooks either bread or meat in an open air kiln-like oven) and were generally preceded or followed by a walk on the footpaths. It was common place to witness neighbors calling out and responding to the ubiquitous "*Jullay!*" (Hello!), perhaps conversing with other *goncha*-clad residents on footpaths or in the market place. Those behind-the-scene glimpses are merely part of the composite social life which constitute what Giddens (1984) calls ontological security – practices carried out consciously, but not self-consciously of outsiders. Those residents' collective interactions constitute authentic cultural practice and serve to instill meaning into the natural and built environments they inhabit.

Attending Festivals

When I first arrived in Ladakh, I set out to map and learn Leh Town. Areas I mapped included the Main Bazaar, the complex maze of Old Leh, the neighborhoods of Changspa which are now overrun by guest houses, and the neighborhood of Sankar, so named for its old *gonpa*. While suffering the terrific altitude headache I'd developed upon arrival, I traveled to the village of Hemis to attend the famous Hemis Festival. Built by Sengge Namgyal, the Hemis *gonpa* belongs to the powerful Drupga (yellow hat) monastic sect. During the festival, the monks would unveil for the first time in eight years the three-story high Guru Padmasambhava *thangka*, or tapestry. Further, they would be opening up several rooms to the public containing ancient effigies that had scarcely been seen by residents, tourists, nor researchers alike.

I was interested in the experience of festivals as authentic Ladakhi cultural events, where each subject reflects upon their own experience in unique ways just as each self is a cultural construction within a geographic and temporal context (Ortner 1995: 185-186, also see Kondo 1998). In my fieldnotes I wrote about "witnessing in subtle, objective detachment my own unique subjective experience" and speculating "if the masked dancers were truly in deep meditation" (Fieldnotes June 3, 2005). The *gonpa* festivals are designed to interrupt normative behavior, their courtyards the locus of transformation and their performances the presage of Ego Death. I paid careful attention to individual facial expressions and social interactions, trying to glean from countenances and conversations the experience and meanings of these festivals. I took care not to detach individuals' speech and actions from the context. I also kept separate notes on how the festivals affected me on a transpersonal level.

The tale of the Hemis Festival is probably a good place to confess both my ignorance about and aversion to unraveling the historic symbolism of Tibetan Buddhism. As I mentioned, on my second morning in Leh, Ladakh, I hired a taxi bus with several foreign nationals, one of whom (a blond Hungarian girl) was later given the wheel by our smitten driver. We arrived at the monastery in one piece in concert with thousands of other tourists, domestic and international, and with scores of locals

who I assumed at the time were all Ladakhi, but who in retrospect were probably Tibetan refugees from Choglamsar. The courtyard was packed, all eyes on the symbolic enactment of ritual Ego death. In the chaos of the gazing and gawking, drumming and dancing, I noticed little masked figures weaving in and through the crowd. Slowly, they approached where I was standing, and then “kidnapped” me by placing a rope around my waist and dragging me to the entrance of the *gonpa* where hung the giant *thangka*!⁵⁷

Meanwhile, tourists, and especially amateur photographers stormed the courtyard, photographing the dancers’ every move. It seemed as though every tourist I met was enthralled with the spectacle of Buddhism, and every institution catering to tourism followed in-suit. As I will later elucidate, the bulk of tourism in Ladakh revolves around Tibetan Buddhism: meditations, tours, and teachings, publications, trekking, antiquing, and even dining. I was already familiar with the history of Buddhism, both as a regional and transnational religion (although I have since inadvertently learned a great deal about the local Ladakhi flavor of Buddhism). I often read Ken Wilber for intellectual pleasure and spiritual guidance both in and away from Ladakh. Despite identifying as a Christian, I had even practiced Zen off-and-on for 10 years. Yet my personal interest in Buddhism had no bearing upon my decision to study in Ladakh, and I became, as I mentioned, completely skeptical - even silently intolerant - of spiritual tourism.

Attending festivals and touring *gonpas* seemed an efficient and interesting way to both view the intersection between economic and supernatural belief systems and to get a sense for the built environment. If Hemis was awe-inspiring, then later festivals were eye-opening, especially the Phyang Gonpa Festival. There, a young monk I had befriended, Tundup Namgyal Geshe, performed in the lauded Master Dancer position. He became a valuable consultant throughout the duration of my fieldwork. That day in Phyang, the sun blazed a stripe of white lightning across the earthen Phyang monastery courtyard as I sat in a polychromatic crowd. I gazed at the performance. All eyes seemed fixed on the colorful

⁵⁷ This practice reminded me in some ways of the kidnapping of brides in the Himalayas (see Ahearn 2004).

masked dancers forming their dragon train, seemingly entranced by the strange and exotic music buttressing their slow, snake-like movements.

And yet, all but a few foreign gazes were filtered through a camera lens, and within moments, their shots were blocked. Thus, rather than photographing dancers, I snapped several shots of the journalist horde encircling the dancers like vultures searching for the perfect angle. How could this be allowed? Disenchanted, I turned towards the family next to me and watched a very young Ladakhi boy - presumably of Buddhist parentage judging by his mother's dress and their very attendance - play with his plastic toy gun. "Pow pow! Pow pow!" he exclaimed in English. I snapped a picture of him and then watched the festival musicians. During an interlude, I chatted with the musicians in simple Hindi and discovered that the double-reed player was from the tribal group known as Mon (and, like many musicians in India, dwelled among the lowest "caste" in Ladakhi society). I was confused: were we not at a Buddhist festival?

Mistaken Assumptions

Another source of confusion resulted from my rapport building. Ernesto LoBue, an Italian art historian I met at the IALS conference, invited me to dinner one evening with several other Europeans, among them a Tibetan art historian and a documentary director. LoBue knew I was interested in old buildings and had automatically assumed that meant I was interested in sacred Buddhist spaces. The restaurant he chose was located in a hotel just off of the main Bazaar. Pricey for Leh, their *momos* (steamed dumplings) were purportedly the best outside of a Ladakhi kitchen. At one end of our table sat two quiet young monks, Tundup and Jigmet, resplendent in their red robes and red beanies. At the other end sat the Europeans. Conversation revolved around the chatty art historian and documentarian, with occasional reference to the monks who politely answered when questioned. Slight of stature,

Tundup spoke little English. The heavier-set Jigmet, however, had studied in Dehra Dun and could hold a fluent English conversation. He code-switched to allow Tundup to follow conversation.

The monks were invited for a specific purpose. Tundup Gashe Namgyal's family owned a 15th - 16th century Guru Lhakang temple in nearby Phyang village which housed some very old wall murals of exceptional value to Tibetan scholars. In good keeping with every other European I met in Leh, Ernesto wanted to launch a campaign to preserve them. I surmised that I been invited because an anthropologist invested in old buildings would be an excellent addition to the crusade. Through his interpreter, Tundup kindly invited me to visit Phyang *gonpa* and to tour his family's shrine. This sounded like an excellent opportunity to break out of my daily routines in Leh, and I gratefully accepted the offer. We arranged to meet in the *gonpa* itself. Having never been there before, Tundup nevertheless assured me that I would have no trouble locating him.

Two days after our meeting, I hired a two-wheeled manual shift transmission scooter for the trip, with confidence that my previous experience riding dirt bikes and ATVs had prepared me well enough to drive one village over. The 50cc Honda Scooty seemed fine at the time. The brakes worked reasonably well, and there were plenty of men at Leh's only petrol station willing to remove my seat, gain access to the gas tank and charge me undisclosed prices. Traversing the 15km to Phyang village was another story. Roughly-paved or potholed impacted-gravel roads, steep inclines, blind switchback curves, made for an uncomfortable ride, while the potential for *huge* lorries to come barreling around any given corner transformed the short-trip into a white-knuckled adventure. The Himalayas are no place for a little scooter.

In the distance, the village was breathtaking. Its undulating terrain contained blocks of green cultivated fields cut by sparkling irrigation channels. Here and there, the landscape was dotted with swaying poplar trees dispersed between one and two-story houses with their whitewashed walls and black-outlined windows. Beyond the mountains, the late morning sky was an intense cerulean blue. I

turned west off of the Karakoram Highway, which follows the course of the Indus River, and made a gradual decline into the valley before climbing switchbacks up towards the *gonpa*. Tiny stone cairns randomly dotted the landscape, as did short, square 10x10 to 15x15sqft mud-brick retaining walls.⁵⁸ Constructed on a (relatively) small plateau by King Namgyal in 1515, the monastery appeared fortress-like, its central 5-story building dominating the smaller residences palisading down a cliff. The southern third of the building was painted brick red, capped by a large white puja room, and crowned with a *surya chandra* (sun and moon) statue. The northern two-thirds had been white-washed, and appeared as though they may have been added-on at separate times (a thought later confirmed by a resident monk). Silhouetted in black, the small, ubiquitous square windows offered continuity to the entire structure. Climbing still, the road circumambulated around several massive *chortens*, or stupas, in reverence to the late ascetics whose ashes were interred therein.

Fearing the scooter could not ascend the steep escarpment leading to the main entrance, I parked down the hill and walked up. Out of breath, I passed through the massive wooden door frame and up a flight of well-worn stone stairs into the cool darkness of the *gonpa*. For some time, I wandered around the seemingly deserted labyrinth. I stumbled up stairs and down stairs through narrow, pitch-black hallways only to wind up on empty sunlit terraces whose earthen balustrades alone separated human from sky (or a quick tumble down a long cliff). Following echoing voices, I found a Dutch tour group guided by none other than Jigmet, the heavier monk from the restaurant. He recognized me immediately and smiled broadly. Interrupting his tour, he asked a flurry of questions: was I there to meet Tundup *le*? Did I made it okay? Did I take a taxi? Then he invited me into the 16th c. shrine where his tour impatiently waited. Out of respect, I began to unlace my hiking boots, but he guffawed and waved me in, much to the irritation of the barefooted Dutch. He proceeded to an open window and

⁵⁸ I would later learn that these outlines were layed in order to stake ones claim on the land. If a structure were so occupied and successively improved upon over a period of time, then after 10 years, a person could apply for rights to the land. Electricity, water, and sanitation, however, were another story.

loudly announce: “Tundup *le!!!...*” followed by several fast Ladakhi phrases which I assumed translated roughly into “the American girl is here to meet you.” Utterly embarrassed at this point, I thanked him, and perched as deeply inside the windowsill as I could.

Half-listening to the monk, I sat for a time before glancing out the window down onto the lower terrace. There, a young monk stood staring back up at me, smiling. He wore a yellow short-sleeved button-down, his robes wrapped around his waist like a sarong, Doc Martins sandals on his feet, a wrist watch on one hand and Adidas wristband above the other arm, sporty black sunglasses, and a red ballcap. I was stunned and amused, and my face must have shown it. The monk gave me a cool “what’s up?” head nod and motioned for me to come down.

I ascended and after brief introductions, followed Tundup breathlessly to the far northern end of the building, up a narrow wooden ladder, through a makeshift kitchen, and out onto yet another terrace. He unlocked the padlock on a wooden door no more than 4ft high, revealing a small room with a rug-covered mattress on the floor. I assumed that this was his room, and tried not to stare *or* show my surprise when he bade me enter and take a seat. I timidly did as I was asked and waited until Tundup returned with tea and biscuits.

Looking around the meager room, I began to notice things not in keeping with my idea of a monk’s room: a stereo with CD player and a small stack of CDs, land line telephone *and* mobile phone, a TV and VCR, books (which seemed normal), decorations, hiking gear, and quite a few pieces of clothing, many Western in design. Weren’t monks supposed to live possession-free? The room was scarcely 6x10, and the ceiling, again, was no more than 5 feet tall. A tiny window let in just enough light and warmth despite the brisk breeze; I imagined it was very cold at night. Just then the phone rang; it was a woman’s voice on the other line. Tundup smiled as he listened, laughed after she spoke, said a few brief sentences, and hung up the phone. Shortly thereafter, he showed me his CD collection. One burned copy of Michael Jackson read (in English): “To Tundup, with love,”

We conversed as far as our language skills would take us, until he finally suggested we go visit his family's shrine. We made our way down to the parking area. I asked in Hindi if we would be walking there, and he replied that it was too far to walk. Although I hadn't had any experience carrying passengers, I felt like I should at least offer to drive us there - in fact, I sort-of assumed that he would have expected me to arrange transportation - so I asked if he wanted to take the Scooty. He said that it was no problem; he had one and we could just take it. Suddenly, he realized he had forgotten the keys. "*Ek minat!*" (One minute! (H)) he exclaimed, and smiled; then, with the skill and agility of a mountain goat, he literally bounded up the side of the *gonpa* (up-the-cliff!) before disappearing over a wall taller than he. I felt bad for causing him so much trouble, but he returned promptly and cheerfully said, "Okay, I go get the *gari*" (motor vehicle).

Without warning, I heard the roar of an engine starting, not a thunderous roar of the ubiquitous Royal Enfields rented and sold throughout Leh, but the high-pitched "Vrrrummmmanamanamana..." of a sport bike. And sure enough, out from behind a pile of rocks emerged Tundup on a red Honda 750cc sport bike. Sheer and utter astonishment struck me, seconded shortly by fear, and rounded off by confusion. Where was I to ride? On the back? Surely not! I had seen Indian women riding side-saddle out of modesty, and there was no way I was about to dangle my legs off the side of that thing; moreover, there was scarcely enough room for one! I laughed out loud and shook my head just as Tundup shouted and summoned me: "*Jao, Jamie le!*" (H, Come, Jamie!). I did as I was instructed, and off we went.

All of my previous experience had taught me a number of cardinal rules-of-thumb for women interacting with Buddhist monks: do not hold or even so much as make extended eye-contact; don't come within three feet; and always show deference and respect for the challenge of attaining enlightenment. Among the 300+ precepts that a monk vows is that of sexual abstinence. Thus, temptation was to be avoided at all costs. And yet, here I was - an American *wideshi* (foreigner), white

girl - straddling the back of a red sport bike with a sunglasses-clad monk, holding onto the small metal loop on the back of the seat to keep from touching him while he head-nodded at friends and waved to neighbors in the village where his family had resided for 500 years. I was contributing to a total spectacle. Ultimately, Tundup was a safe driver, and the shrine was well worth the embarrassment; but from the events of the day, and from future conversations, I began to see a side of the monastic guild which differed greatly from one I had ever imagined.

Tundup indicated that many of his friends joined the monastery because their families had too many children and could not afford to care for them. In other cases, families chose to earn merit by gifting a son (or a daughter) to the *gonpa* or nunnery. Many young male monks were leaving the monasteries and joining the Indian Army with its promise of wages and free land after service, as well as the opportunity to marry and have a family. Still others were bucking the system, refusing to follow their masters in youthful rebellion, but retaining the status of Buddhist monkhood. They wanted educations, they wanted mobile phones, they wanted girlfriends, and most of all, they wanted freedom. How many tourists with their ideal versions of Tibetan Buddhism were aware of these truths? That the Ladakhi monastic system was considered by many to be an obsolete institution? I pondered that question throughout my four years of fieldwork, and it seemed to hold true in many respects. As a result of these early experiences, I consciously filtered many of my early observations through this lens. My bias set the stage for a critical reflection on experience, authenticity, and representation in both spiritual and cultural tourism.

Participating in Guided Tours

Cultural tours are ideal sites for the participant observer to gain a sense of tourist/local interaction; they also present additional opportunities to understand the cultural construction of place. But the cultural tours in the Leh District were guided exclusively by Ladakhis and tended to focus on

monastic sites. During my 2005 field season in Leh, I participated in a guided tour of Choglamsar, a neighboring village 15 km from Leh, and home of roughly 5,000 Tibetans in exile. There, I received instruction about Tibetan Buddhism, learned about the Tibetan community, visited the Dalai Lama's summer residence and meditated with the others in the inner sanctum of his monastery. I also learned about the other twelve participants of the tour, all internationals, all with various agendas and unique understandings of Tibetan Buddhism. I was further aware that this guided tour was being *mediated* by an actor with his own agenda and cultural perspective - a culture broker.

After discovering the nature of my stay in Ladakh, Tashi, our guide, arranged a rather clandestine, three-hour, open-ended interview where he shared with me his exclusion from the tourism market of Leh Town by the CSO the All Ladakh Travel Operators Association (ALTOA). He attributed this exclusion to his Tibetanness, and believed Ladakhis were using the Tibetan brand in order to sell more tours. He also confided that he had been personally threatened from members of ALTOA not to run any more tours. In an interview with the late Mr. Goba, president of ALTOA in 2007, I related this tale of exclusion in a round-about way. The president confirmed whole-heartedly that it was indeed true- outsiders are not welcome in the tourism market because they take money from local Ladakhi pockets.

Thus, for the purpose of regulating entry to the market, ALTOA had formed a volunteer "action committee." This action committee, made up of young Ladakhis, many of whom are travel agents or the sons of travel agency owners, is sent to reinforce the solidarity of the union. Mr. Goba sincerely resented the intrusion of outsiders from Delhi, Dharamsala, Kathmandu, and Goa coming into Leh and "stealing their business." Ladakhi business owners' commitment to correcting this problem, he then explained, was the sole reason for the formation of the Travel Agents' Association of Ladakh (TAAL, now ALTOA).

This is an explanation of the importance of participating in and observing tours such as the walking tour. Without that sort of introduction to the problem of Tibetan participation in the tourism

industry, I would never have become aware that the Ladakhis maintained a monopoly and enforced that monopoly through coercion, if necessary. This comprehension shifted my focus away from interactions between Ladakhis and tourists and towards Ladakhis and Tibetans or even Ladakhis and Nepalis, many of whom operate (not own) restaurants and guest houses or are employed there.

Other guided tours I have participated in took place in the *gonpas*. On several occasions, these sites were mediated by young Ladakhis with an insufficient grasp of English to field questions pertaining to their scripted tours. In these instances, I couldn't help but wonder about the source of the information. After further inquiry, I learned that the J and K Tourism Department maintained responsibility for training tour guides affiliated with or employed by one of the 170-member travel agencies in Leh.⁵⁹ Further, they were hiring ethnic Tibetan Buddhists from the Central Institute of Buddhist Studies (CIBA), located in Choglamsar, to teach these classes. ALTOA would subsequently certify these guides once they had completed their training. I had originally intended that, should I continue to participate in tours, I should try to attend these classes in order to listen to the ways in which Ladakhi history and built heritage is portrayed, and to ask questions when they arise. However, my research took me in a different direction altogether.

Attending Meetings

During my first field season in Leh, I was able to sit in on several planning meetings for the ISEC Farm Project planning committee, an NGO committed to sustainable farming and cultural awareness. I watched and listened as the American and British planners discussed the nature of the projects and the placement of the incoming foreign volunteers into rural villager's homes, while the go-to man, a Ladakhi, and my primary informant, sat back and basically took orders from the volunteers. I was not asked to give my input but nevertheless was present for the unfolding of the scene.

⁵⁹ This directive appeared in the Leh Vision Document 2010. I confirmed its existence through ALTOA members and JKTD officers.

As Wangjal, the go-to later explained, his family was very close to Helena Norberg-Hodge (see *Context* pp. 18-20; also see Ch. 4) and, as the youngest and most educated son, he had been sought by the Ladakhi Women's Alliance (WAL), the headquarters of the Farm Project (see appendices for organizational integration), to both manage WAL as well as coordinate and oversee the Farm Project. This task was placed upon him in addition to his responsibilities of running the busy guest house - now the site of these planning meetings.⁶⁰ Not only was he uncomfortable mediating between rural villager hosts participating in the Project, but he also began to clash ideologically with Norberg-Hodge. Among other complaints, he claimed she wanted to keep Ladakhis ignorant and sheltered from the rest of the world. Further, as he explained, with his level of education, he could be earning three times as much working in the tourism industry.

Other Meetings: The International Association of Ladakh Scholars (IALS)

Cultural tourism and cultural preservation NGO meetings are only two heritage construction sites I observed. In 2005, I had the opportunity to attend an International Association of Ladakh Scholars (IALS) Colloquium in Karghil, Ladakh, a neighboring district 8-10 hours across the Himalayas. This was a monumental event, as leaders of the colloquium had arranged special visas for several Baltistanis to join the meetings; these individuals were separated from their Karghil Ladakhi relatives and neighbors during the Indian Partition and hadn't seen their brethren since. The meeting was the first ever to be held in Karghil, adding to the significance of the event. But even before our departure from Leh, I experienced my first fieldwork misadventure.

We had almost left the city limits when our caravan came to a grinding halt. Shouts echoed through the early morning streets, and the popping of tires (which sounded like gunshots) resonated against the brick buildings and metal rooftops. Shortly thereafter, members of the Leh Taxi Drivers

⁶⁰ I helped him cook dinner, set the table, and clean up after guests on a number of occasions- it was during these occasions that he shared information such as this with me.

Union accosted participants from our two private chartered buses and redirected us into expensive, private SUV taxis operated by local merchants. Apparently our buses had been chartered through an unidentified outside source, and had not purchased insurance from the Leh Taxi Union. This event opened my eyes to the powerful and pervasive local unions regulating the tourism industry and I began to identify similar events executed within the urban sphere.

The private SUV ride was as impressive as the meeting itself, as it represented the first and only time I made the voyage to Karghil, passing such famous Ladakhi villages as Alchi and Lamayuru. Alchi, I was told, was virtually uninhabited, save for the 14th century *gonpa* and smattering of local guest houses. In Lamayuru, a magnificent *gonpa* perched upon a cliff side next to a newer, impressive building which slightly surpassed the monastery in height and breadth. I enquired about the newer structure; it was a hotel. After reading Martin Mills' (2003) study of Ladakhi sacred spaces, I understood that the most important structure in a Tibetan Buddhist village was the *gonpa*; all administrative and dwelling places would typically palisade down the mountain according to social hierarchy. Economic considerations had eventually outweighed structural symbolism, however, and visitors could now gaze down upon Lamayuru's *gonpa* from their hotel windows. This village, too, was all but deserted with the exception of a few monks and hoteliers.

I learned on that trip that many villages were experiencing similar negative population growth. Leh Town, by contrast, was experiencing relatively rapid growth. My 2008 inquiries at the Jammu and Kashmir census bureau confirmed that rural to urban migration is increasingly commonplace in Ladakh. Further testimony from consultants in the tourism industry enriched these claims. For example, economic development in outlying districts such as the Changthang, the contested borderlands between India and China, encourages the Changpa, native nomadic pastoralists, to participate in the tourism industry. The tribal Dras women with their suntanned faces and flower-adorned braids travel hundreds of kilometers from the Kargil district to sell their paltry produce on the crowded streets of the Main

Bazaar, grossing extra income as the subjects of travel photography. Statistics spoke to demographic change, and inquiry confirmed cultural change. But what of material change? How was the tourism economy affecting Ladakhi dwelling spaces and practices?

Locating scholarly material on Ladakhi vernacular forms continued to be problematic as publications including Ladakhi built heritage, like their tourism counterparts, typically focused on sacred sites such as Buddhist monasteries and monumental architecture. Thus, I spent that summer identifying and photographing specific research sites in Leh Town as well as the groups I initially hoped to work with. Since my interest in the cultural construction of place concentrated on vernacular as opposed to high-style or monastic architecture, I sought out information to contextualize Ladakhi architecture. I began surveying historical homes in the Old Leh Heritage zone, noting residents' and conservationists' perceptions of them, and contrasting them against new construction projects. Ultimately, this led me to define my first unit of analysis: the interpretation of architectural heritage in conservation architecture and its relationship to cultural tourism narratives. I came away that summer with several objectives for the next season: language training and secondary source research.

* * *

PART II: SUMMER CROWDS

I visited Ladakh twice during the summer months, both times in 2006. I made my first excursion by plane while on a week-long break from language training in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. At the height of the summer tourism season, I was able to observe Leh Town: population 60,000+, not the lower springtime population of 25,000. Although temperatures were warm and the barley fields and poplars shone a glorious green, the obvious downside to working in Leh during that time was difficulty interacting with locals who were encumbered by managing guest houses, navigating crowds, and arranging transportation amid such great demand. Another serious issue affecting all who both resided and visited Ladakh that late summer of 2006 was climate change over the past several years and the resulting torrential downpours throughout the Himalayas. This I witnessed on my second trip following

the conclusion of the language program. Regardless of climate, however, the streets were packed, and one could forgo observing any so-called native culture in Leh.

Itinerant Workers

Not only was Leh overwhelmed by international and domestic travelers, but also by itinerant workers hailing from Nepal to Bhopal. Rajasthani beggars and their children also followed the tourist route with outstretched hands, and were present in the marketplace and at festivals exclaiming: “*Bhook lugti hu*” (H, I’m hungry). Many if not most foreign workers resided in Old Leh and the growing residential sprawl descending down the valley. Some rented and still others squatted in the decrepit abandoned homes closer to the Heritage Zone. Those who lived on the periphery constructed makeshift mudbrick buildings with CGI (corrugated galvanized iron) roofs and no windows; I observed that they lived without running water and electricity, as did all who were unable to afford generators. I often saw men, women, and children filling plastic jugs and buckets at the water tap and disappearing back down into the maze of houses. These dwelling clusters also lacked sanitation at the time. One late summer afternoon, lost in the maze of homogenous buildings and nameless pathways, I soon found myself in alleys hopelessly trying to avoid treading on garbage and human feces. Most shocking to me was that I was within one hundred yards of the census office.

I noted workers’ living conditions for a number of reasons. First, it enabled me to describe the rate of construction and to shed some light on how workers lived in contrast to the accommodations they were building and the persons who are hiring them. Second, their mode of inhabiting the Old Town indicated how profoundly their presence had been changing the built environment. Lastly, when I considered their peripheral modes of dwelling alongside more privileged, visible structures, I was able to see for whom and where urban planning standards applied and where they did not. Making consecutive annual journeys to the field meant that I would have to take at least the first week for wayfinding

excursions. Each year, walls grew higher, construction projects reached completion, conservation sites made ready housing, and new businesses ushered in commerce. In short, I watched the town grow. But always I remained aware of who was doing the work and where they were living.

The challenges posed by the population explosion were tempered by new research opportunities. With few exceptions, the long Ladakhi summer days are dry and mild, a prime season for construction and conservation. New construction projects were as ubiquitous as their mudbrick beginnings. Many times, I would drop in on construction sites to find unsupervised workers half-heartedly putting around the site. The moment I would start asking questions about the construction processes (in Hindi), the workers would suddenly come alive, perhaps believing I was affiliated with their project foreman. I tried not to interrupt the men while they were working, but generally found that most were willing to stop and chat a while. My approach was always to ask if they were busy, then to gain informed consent, explaining I was an American student interested in buildings and the building process. Having previously identified several structural features, I typically asked: "What is this building?" "Who will use the building?" "Why will they use the building?" "What is *this* (point to a feature) called?" "Who built it/where did it come from?" "Where did you learn how to do/make this?" I would always try to incorporate and ask in a number of ways "what is traditional?" or "what is Ladakhi?" Then I would casually jot, verbally record, or mentally note their answers. On the other hand, I was not easily able to interview Ladakhi project managers during the summer months, as they were inundated with tourism responsibilities.

Language Considerations

My first trip to Ladakh also marked my first year as a Hindi student. I was incredibly self-conscious using Hindi, but many times it was my only form of communication.⁶¹ During the second summer trips, my language skills were sharpened which naturally enhanced communication. This was instrumental to my investigation of meaning in the built environment and perceptions of urban transformation. Moreover, speaking Hindi/Urdu set me apart from tourists, enabled me to talk to itinerant workers, and aided communication with the primarily Kashmiri and Baltistani-descendent Muslim Ladakhis. But I also discovered that some Ladakhis prefer to speak English rather than Urdu.

Linguistic heritage is a sensitive subject in Ladakh, a fact I first learned at the IALS conference during an intense debate the previous year. The issue of language continued to arise in issues of *Melong*, a locally published journal written in both English and transliterated Ladakhi-Bodhik, a unique dialect of formal Tibetan Bodhik. Most recently, officials in the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council petitioned to replace mandatory Urdu with mandatory Bodhik in primary schools, making children who are of mixed Buddhist and Muslim descent choose between English and Urdu as a secondary language. These arguments run deep.

Since Partition, Ladakh has officially been governed by Jammu and Kashmir State; yet even hundreds of years prior (since the Dogra invasion, discussed in Chapter 1), all official documentation was written in the Urdu script of *Nasta'liq*, not Bodhik, or even the Hindi script *Devanagari*. Since language and culture are inseparable, Ladakhis associate cultural heritage with their language. Even as one travels further towards the Pakistani/Kashmiri border, the Ladakhi dialect spoken (60 percent intelligible by Eastern Ladakhis) is written in transliterated Urdu. I discovered this after purchasing a number of Ladakhi poetry books written in *Nasta'liq* and taking them back to my Lucknowi instructors for help with translation. All the words were phonetic Ladakhi. I could not understand a single thing.

⁶¹ See Appendix L

That was just one occasion where literacy opened up channels previously unavailable to me. Speaking Urdu was also essential when conversing with officials. Working in a fieldsite where conservation and construction intersects with community based organizations and the State, many times I felt acutely aware of my gender. Conservationists were men, with a scattered few female volunteers working under them. Landowners were men. Builders were men. Workers were men. With one exception, community leaders were men. Union leaders and their constituents were men. And invariably, local and state officials were men. While most of these men were willing to converse in English, my conversational Urdu was amusing enough for the rest to allow my foot in the patriarchal door. Urdu also became an intermediary language between English, helping me to slowly pick up words and phrases in Ladakhi with the help of conversation guides and an English-Urdu-Ladakhi dictionary.

Acquiring and Researching Written Materials

I contextualized and reinforced residents' representations of tradition and heritage with archival research. Bearing in mind Ortner's (1995) claim, the ability of an ethnographer to acknowledge his/her limited comprehension of any particular culture affirms several methodological essentialisms: first, to consider in all seriousness that realm of possibility out of which responses to complex structural and conventional domination emerges; second, to acknowledge the importance of gaining multiple perspectives during fieldwork; and third; to triangulate the data. To ensure that I exhausted a range of perspectives, I consulted written and online materials published in English, and occasionally asked for help translating those written in Hindi, Urdu, and Ladakhi.

An indispensable resource on Ladakhi heritage I located that summer is the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council publication "Leh Vision Document 2025". Following its reference trail, I investigated scholarly and amateur publications on Ladakhi built environment and cultural heritage. For my excursions, I browsed popular narratives in travel guides and websites- encompassing International,

National (Indian), State (J & K), and local travel agencies. To contextualize broader civil society movements, I perused NGO publications on sustainable development and cultural preservation as well as local, non-commercial Ladakhi publications such as *Melong* (Eng. and Ladakhi), the *Magpie* (an independent publication on local Ladakhi political and cultural issues), and regional newspapers. I also consulted and analyzed the websites for the LADHC and a number of Non-Governmental Organizations including UNESCO and UNDP, THF, INTACH.

During my first summer in Leh, I worked with the THF locating old maps of the main Bazaar in the Jammu and Kashmir Archives in hopes of understanding how the built environment had grown over the past one hundred years. This was entertaining but fruitless, for although we did find several old maps dating to the 18th century, neither I nor anyone in the office was able to translate them from Urdu at the time. After gaining rapport with THF team members, I was given access to the THF's copy of the LAHDC Leh Vision Document 2010. Every afternoon for a solid week, I sat on the Lakrook House roof reading and taking notes on the document. During this exercise, I was also able to observe the comings and goings of volunteers, community members, and other persons interested in THF's projects. At the end of the summer, serendipitously, I obtained my own digital copy of the Leh Vision Document 2025 which had just been published. I reciprocated by sharing this under-circulated and highly-coveted document with the THF members. I also borrowed and photocopied the INTACH publication *Architectural Heritage Ladakh* which became another one of my primary sources to understand the clash of state-based initiatives in Leh Town. This, too, I shared with Andre Alexander and his Assistant Project Manager, Andreas Catanese.

I found local publications particularly useful for understanding broader relationships and interactions between Ladakhis involved in civil society organizations and individuals from the Jammu and Kashmir State. One such interaction that comes to mind is that of the state and the NGO sector. *Ladags Melong* is a 13 year-old, independent medium dedicated to "provid(ing) an open forum for all

Ladakhis to freely express and exchange ideas, and to spread awareness and information about issues affecting Ladakh,"⁶² The August 2006 edition published a dispute between the Central, State, and NGO sectors. That the article was published in the society section of the magazine as opposed to the section on politics may point to the intended audience of civil society members (which include Ladakhis and Westerners) as opposed to government (which may include Ladakhis and Kashmiris).

The dispute arose earlier that April when the Deputy Commissioner for Jammu and Kashmir circulated a memo to NGOs directly requesting information on membership, funding, and allocation of funds to encourage transparency and accountability. The second half of the circular was more demanding, threatening raids and seizures of all documents and assets if compliance was not achieved. But an un-registered umbrella organization, the Ladakh Voluntary Network (LVN), representing several Leh-based NGOs decided on principle not to comply with the State, submitting the materials instead to the Hill Council Chairman.

The Chief Executive Councilor of the LAHDC responded to this argument with neutrality, refusing to side with either the J and K State or the NGO sector, and rationalizing that both were vital to Ladakhi society. In the meantime, J and K State officials responded by circulating a memo requesting an affidavit of non-NGO affiliation from all government employees as well as detailed reports of any service provided to NGOs in their professional or personal capacity by the state (this would most likely include infrastructural support such as electricity, water, sanitation, or manpower). The LVN again retaliated by preparing a memorandum for submission to the President of India stating that "the NGOs of Leh are

⁶² Beyond the article in concern here, another recent development that is effecting, or perhaps reflecting, the division between traditional and modern Ladakhis is the recent decision by the new editor of the journal to discontinue the inclusion of articles in Phalskat, the colloquial language of Ladakh. After a 12 month hiatus, the former editor chose a path of politics, becoming the Executive Councilor for education. The new editor reasons: "Since certain scholars and elders are not ready to accept that language changes over time, we have decided to publish only in English for the time being." This has caused considerable strife amongst the writers and, as evinced from the editorials, from Ladakhis themselves. The publication had originally prided itself on having both mediums, as it was supposed to promote the importance of teaching the local dialect of Bodhik, further distinguishing it from classical Tibetan script and spoken language. As one letter read: "By making demands to use classical language, we are degrading our only Ladakhi magazine. It is also important to remember that Ladakhi is not a Buddhist language and Ladakh is not a Buddhist region. Ladakh is multicultural! And it is the colloquial language that all Ladakhis understand."

disturbed to see that after 60 years of freedom 'India can still have district commissioners with colonial mindsets'..." and requested that the circular and related affidavits be withdrawn. Ultimately, important decision-makers and state political leaders resolved the matter, but the event spoke to the high visibility of NGOs in the region, as well as to the potential for State intervention in future matters. This is only one example of the importance of my attending to written materials. Although my project is not related directly to Leh's political economy, certainly these events affect participants within my study. They also demonstrate the authority of the written word.

Visiting Bookstores and Libraries

Beyond the political sphere, the general public could access a wealth of cultural information about Ladakh, Tibet, and India. Travel guides and photography books, spiritual guides to Buddhism and Hinduism, Ayurveda and Yoga, sustainable development publications, and dictionaries were available at every bookstore in the Bazaar; at last count: there were four. Not only did tourists come to Leh for trekking and meditation, they also came to read. Many travelers I met spent a great deal of time in Indian bookstores, and I found myself following suit. Amateur publications provide local flavor as well as local knowledge- prevailing opinions, stereotypes, origin narratives, and political commentary, to name a few. Moreover, which books these stores chose to stock said a great deal about the types of clientele they cater to and to the ways in which place is represented in general. For example, every bookstore stocked a wealth of information on Buddhism; however, none except the stationary shop in front of the mosque sold books on Islam.

There were also two libraries in Leh: one, the official City Library down on Airport Road, and the other, in the LeDEG headquarters. My first summer in Leh, I spent a great deal of time in the dusty Airport Road library, chatting with the librarian and sipping weak *chai*. The library was loosely organized by subject, but there was no coding system as such. In the absence of "photostats" (copy machines), or

electricity for that matter, I took notes by hand. Furthermore, the books were not alphabetized, making it difficult to search for a particular author.⁶³ Yet one need only ask the librarian about a particular subject matter, and he would locate the book at once. A well-read man, he also owned a stationery store which sold mostly children's books.

Experiencing Climate Change

At the conclusion of the 2006 Urdu Summer Program, I made my way back to Ladakh by air. When I arrived at the Lakrook Garden Guest House, Wangial prepared me eggs and toast and a pot of chamomile tea. We chatted for some time about various goings-on. The tiny room in the main guest house where I had previously stayed was occupied by another guest. Thus, for RS50 (\$1 USD) more a day, I was given a room in the cottage - a small, two room guest house with a shared bathroom containing a western-style flush toilet, hot water heater and shower. The small guest house had been recently built out in the courtyard between the apple orchard and flower garden. The family had contracted the labor but had overseen construction themselves. The edifice was built from mixed materials. A concrete and rebar slab was overlaid with a conglomerate (faux) marble in the entry hall and bathroom and needle-punch indoor-outdoor carpeting in the adjacent two rooms. Mudbrick walls smoothed with Plaster of Paris were covered by a single coat of light yellow flat latex paint. A *markalak* roof was buttressed by exposed *talu* and *dungma* ceilings. Although it lacked any wooden exterior decorative appliqué, the building traditions were evident in materials and form. My neighbors in the cottage were a German couple who had both recently injured their right feet by trekking in sandals and no socks. An unseasonable amount of rain had inhibited the healing process of their open blister wounds.

⁶³ I was interested to find Norberg-Hodge's *Ancient Futures*, as I had located it in every commercial bookstore and NGO library in town.

Floods also destroyed many homes throughout Ladakh, displacing over two hundred people in the Leh District alone. A prevailing sentiment among locals and foreigners attributed the increasing heat, decreasing snowfall, and increasing summer rains to global warming. These sentiments seemed to influence local beliefs that the change in the environment owing to infrastructural development was responsible for the resulting destruction. In the course of conversation, I was told that the river up the valley had overflowed its banks, destroying the Changspa Bridge and washing out many adjacent barley fields. I decided to go inspect the damage to homes and fields for myself.

Setting out towards Changspa, I walked east towards the river. Noting a construction site opposite one of two tributaries I had to cross, I picked up a stick and measured the depth of the first stream, hiked up my pants, and cautiously treaded into the icy, swift-moving waters. Once on the other side, I spotted a makeshift bridge that workers were using to cross over the second stream whose banks were much steeper and whose currents indicated deeper, more powerful rapids. Watching one of the workers walk across the haphazardly-lashed poplar branches, I settled on inching across the foot-wide structure on hands and knees, rationalizing that were I to lose my balance, I would at least have something to hang on to. I made it safely across, and stopped to talk with the construction workers about their project, a 20-room hotel, before continuing my journey.

On my walk, I took note of many of the homes that had been destroyed by the flood. One of the pictures I documented was of a door surrounded by remnants of a wall, all that was left of one family's estate. Flooding had carved deep fissures in the fertile fields; the devastation became increasingly evident as I walked further towards the mountain. Most homes were covered in vinyl tarps. Many ceilings had caved in, their flat, mud roofs unable to support or drain such large volumes of rainwater. The unprecedented amount of rain was hailed by some climatologists as an increasing concern. Indeed, Ladakh and its Himalayan neighbors as far west as Pakistan and Kashmir and as far south as the Lahaul in Himachal Pradesh had received increasing amounts of rain over the past ten years, but nothing as

severe and lasting as this recent storm. Although the day was warm and the sky shone a brilliant blue against the midmorning sun, the scene was utterly depressing, a profound testament to the force of nature. That afternoon I had a terrible accident, falling into the river and breaking my foot. This stranded me at the guest house for over two weeks and greatly impacted my mobility thereafter.

Rain returned to the Leh Valley a few days later and didn't stop for a week. The construction materials and design of the guest house cottage left it ill-equipped to withstand such a magnitude of rainfall. Water entered the Lakrook cottage through two paths of least resistance: the ceiling, and the front door. And so I found myself spending my afternoons hobbling between drip buckets and futilely sweeping the entry hall. The Germans' room fared worse than my own, forcing them to relocate to the old guest house. The indoor-outdoor carpet became completely saturated before I, too, took one last video of the cottage underwater and headed to the old house. However, that house fared no better. Despite working round-the-clock to clear the rooftop tarps of rain, all but one of the rooms had succumbed to the storm. Thus, the Germans and I huddled into my old room- they on the twin bed, me in a sleeping bag on the floor- and stayed there for two nights and three days.

* * *

PART III: THE FALL OFF-SEASON

In both summer 2006 and 2007, I traveled to Ladakh and stayed beyond the tourism season, which provided a small glimpse into normal life in Leh. I had begun to establish my identity and my role in the community - the second and most crucial step to carrying out more extensive participant observation. The results were more detailed data sets but also more confusion, as data seemed to arise where least expected. The project began to unveil itself. This process of tacking between data and hypotheses is what Glaser and Strauss (1967) and others (Bernard 1998) have termed *grounded theory*. Grounded theory, also called recursive analysis, refers to the "continuous interaction between data and hunches or hypotheses until a stable cultural pattern appears" (LeCompte and Schensul 1999:15). From

the data itself, grounded theory may produce a more subjective, nuanced understanding of place than one that is imposed upon by assumptions or blanketed by grand theory. As I engaged in and absorbed all of the scenes unfolding around me, I also recorded detailed descriptions and began to analyze them in the field and during my write-ups.

During those trips, I identified, interviewed, and affiliated myself with leaders of western-based NGO project managers of state-based architectural conservationists, and presidents of local Ladakhi civil society associations. Other actors I made contact with include guest house owners in the village of Sankar, transient Leh residents, Old-Leh homeowners, non-Ladakhi NGO planners and their employees, such as itinerant construction workers, handicraftsman, proprietors, etc. The last are involved in the regulation of the tourism industry, the education of travel operators and tour guides in the interpretation of heritage sites, and the advertisement and promotion of an authentic Ladakhi Tibetan Buddhist culture. Thus, my sample interview population was derived from a criterion-based selection process (LeCompte and Schensul 1999: 113) and became the basis of my ethnography.

Travel Considerations

For the final leg of my dissertation research, I transitioned from the liminal space of interested traveler to that of engaged researcher, thus completing the formative process of sustained anthropological fieldwork (Peacock 1987). After finishing the intensive Urdu language program in 2007, I traveled across India for several weeks, taking the train from Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh to Madurai, Tamil Nadu, stopping for a week in Pondicherry and then for several days in Chennai. The previous year, I had journeyed by train with several other Urdu students from Lucknow to Cochin, Kerala. But the 2007 trip marked my first solo voyage across the country, after which I became quite accustomed to traveling alone. I was confident in my language skills, even in states where they were irrelevant, and traveled with an awareness of my surroundings at all times. My goal was to travel by land from the southern tip of India in Tamil Nadu to its most northwestern point in Ladakh- a journey of over 3,500 kilometers.

On the two occasions that I made the treacherous, 17-20 hour jeep journey to Leh from New Delhi, I marveled at just how homogenous the built environment appeared to be, even as far south and East as into the region of Himachal Pradesh known as Spiti. In 2007, an early snow had fallen at the 18,000ft Zoji La Pass, stranding me in Manali, Himachal Pradesh, and making road travel into Ladakh impossible. Having heard that the Spiti district is known as “Little Ladakh,” I hired a driver who was familiar with the area. We visited seven villages, three of which were terribly remote and bore no evidence of foreign presence. The landscape and built environment of Spiti were remarkably similar to Ladakh, although many residents of the region had largely converted to Hinduism. The resemblance was most likely due to its inclusion as the former area of Guge during the early Namgyal Monarchy. The trip was instrumental to my developing a broader, certainly more informed, holistic approach to Ladakhi Heritage. And I finally made it over the mountain pass a week later.

For the land trip to Leh, I paid RS850, roughly \$18USD, for the backseat spot in the 4-door Mahindra Scorpio jeep which was no seat at all, but essentially a luggage compartment with two compact side benches located above the interior fender wells. I had to share this space with another person, a man who I presumed was a soldier stationed at the Indian Army base in Leh judging by his camouflage garments and rucksack. The trek began in the middle of the night, and I was instantly nauseated by being tossed around and unable to orient myself to a point along the horizon. I had taken ginger extract and had ginger candy with me (a trick I had learned from a Swiss woman with whom I traveled to Kargil the summer before), but the added anxiety of brief glimpses over towering cliffs exacerbated my motion sickness. I steeled myself against a panic attack as we lumbered onward.

Several hours into the trip, our caravan of three jeeps paused at an army checkpoint. All passengers and drivers relinquished their passports to the stationed officials standing stone cold by the gates with their semi-automatics hanging in plain sight. An abandoned building served as a makeshift outhouse. We stood outside waiting for our passports, the icy cold air smelled of cigarettes and *bidis* (an

inexpensive, hand-rolled Indian cigarette). Our passports were finally returned and everyone loaded back up into their respective vehicles. My nerves were calmed a bit from the rest, as was my stomach, and I vaguely recall enjoying the excitement of the perilous darkness.

As we climbed higher into the Himalayas, the temperature grew colder and colder. There was no heat in the jeep. Other passengers, including my backseat neighbor, unfurled dense woolen blankets and wrapped themselves tightly. Equipped only with my Brookstone Nap Kit travel blanket, I did my best to coil my extremities into my core, only to expand like a spring with each pothole or bump. One such extrusion sent my outstretched fist flying into the lap of my unsuspecting neighbor, who responded by uttering what I presumed to be a curse and positioning his knapsack in his lap until we reached the next checkpoint. The lurching and catapulting continued on through the night. Then, just as I became accustomed to the dizzying darkness, light began to enter the cab. And with each passing moment of our ascension, my eyes adjusted to the snowy panorama of the *Rohtang La* pass, which translates in Tibetan as “pile of corpses”. The morning sun finally beamed over a 20,000ft peak which warmed my chilled and bruised bones. This was the first of two major passes we would encounter.

At the second pass, the 16,000ft *Baralacha La* which demarcates the entrance into Ladakh, we were delayed over an hour while the men helped to dig out one of the caravan jeeps which had careened into a snow-filled culvert. Luckily, the vehicle slid into the mountain as opposed to away from it. Moving on, we stopped at a roadside *dhaba* (food stall), a permanent tent built into the base of a hill alongside a tributary of the Indus, for *chawwal dal* (rice and beans) and *chai*. I paid RS60 (\$1.50 USD) for a huge plate of hot, steaming food cooked and served by a smiling Ladakhi woman, her weathered face a reflection of three tattered aluminum pots. Perhaps because I was one of only two women on the journey, the other who remained shrouded in a heavy woolen blanket beside her husband, the cook’s eyes sought out mine on a number of occasions. Each time, she raised her eyebrows towards the pots and then to me, silently questioning if I wanted more. The men, by contrast, walked directly up to her

and held out their plates. Walking down to the river to relieve myself, I saw a man behind the tent rinsing off a huge stack of plates in a barrel of river water.

Alternative Accommodations and New Opportunities

Words cannot describe the beauty and grandeur of the Himalayan Mountains. Never in my life had I felt so insignificant, so small, as I did making that journey. We arrived in Leh beyond exhaustion, luggage covered in dirt. Rolling my suitcase out-of-breath, out-of-shape, and sleep-deprived, I knew I could not manage the 2-mile uphill walk to the Lakrook Garden Guest House. I devised a plan to stay in Old Leh, as I already wished to understand the lives of those living in the heritage district. Meandering through the dusty footpaths in the approaching dusk, I surveyed the Old Leh Guest House and was disappointed to discover it was a fairly modern structure, perhaps only thirty years old. Reasoning that it would give me great access to the Heritage Zone, I entered anyway. The room rates were reasonable, but after inspecting the less than sanitary accommodations, I chose not to stay.

I walked back through town and made my way to the *Re-Yul* Hotel (from *ri-yul*, or mountain village), whose sign I had seen from Dzomsa. I had never been through that particular neighborhood before, even though it was right off the Main Bazaar. I entered what appeared to be a family compound with several new structures. I knocked on one, and the woman who opened the door appeared Ladakhi to me, but was somehow different from the women I had met on my previous trips. She spoke no English, and so I asked in Urdu if there were any rooms available. Wide-eyed, she shook her head no, and said "*Nahi*". I asked again in Urdu, "*Aap ko malum hain ki dusre kamre kaha hai?*" (Do you know where any other rooms are?). She looked frightened, and quickly chirped "*Nahi*", then closed the door.

Frustrated, I turned to leave, wondering if it was a sign that I should stay in the run-down guest house in Old Leh. A man came running out of the hotel and asked in thickly accented English, "Do you need room?" I replied once again in Urdu, "*Haa, ji. Main gari per manali se ayi aur main bahut bahut*

taki hui." (Yes sir. I have come from Manali by car and I am very, very tired.) "Oh, you speak Urdu!" he exclaimed with delight in English. "*Andar aaie, baithie*" (Please come in and sit down). I was welcomed onto the floor in a small, warm room with a number of family members. I introduced myself, again, speaking in Urdu, and fielded a number of questions to the best of my ability. Finally, introductions came around to the youngest member of the family, a girl just slightly my junior, and she introduced herself saying "Hi, my name is Nazia. I speak English, so you don't have to speak in Urdu if you don't want to." "Was I doing that bad?" I laughed. She laughed with me and said, "No, no it's very good. I can tell you are tired. Have something to eat." I was vegetarian at the time, and all the momos were stuffed with mutton. Not wanting to insult the kindness of my hosts, I gratefully cleaned my plate.

Ramzan

If spring and early summer were prime seasons for Buddhist festivals, fall was surely the season for Muslim contemplation. I did not know at the time, but I had actually arrived during *iftar*, the evening fast-breaking during the holy month of Ramadan. Iqbal Bilal *sahib* had invited me to share in *iftar* with his family which I learned included his wife (who had initially answered the door) and two adult male children, his brother Iqbal *sahib* and his wife, and their three adult children - two boys and a girl. The young lady's name was Nazia, Iqbal Bilal's niece who lived in the same compound but in a separate residence. She and I chatted until Mr. Bilal suggested he show me to my room to I could rest. He apologized that my room was the smallest in the guest house. But I could have been placed in a storage house with field animals and have been perfectly content. The bathroom down the hall was not well kept and smelled of Bilal *sahib's* cigarette smoke which wafted up from the room below. But it had a hot

water heater, and thus, when the electricity was on in Leh - which was not very often - I was able to take a hot shower.⁶⁴

I made a habit of learning the daily power outages, which were programmed around 10:00am and 4:00pm during peak season. On occasion, the power would come on during the middle of the day, and I would race back to my guest house to charge my mobile phone and my laptop and to enjoy a hot shower without competing for hot water. Nazia and I became better acquainted, and I spent time exploring the side of Leh I did not know: the Islamic world. The Jamia Masjid was at the corner of the Main Bazaar in plain sight to all who passed by. There was also a new building under construction on the same street, not even a full block down which I learned would become a Shia *bada imambara* (large mosque). I learned through visits with Nazia's family that there were several pockets or neighborhoods of Muslims. Most were located in the commercial district rather than up the mountain in the agricultural outskirts. The majority of Nazia's family ancestry hailed from Kashmir. Her father worked for Save the Children's Fund, and had an office in both Kargil and Srinagar, and also occupied another home in Kargil. I ate dinner (*iftar*) with Nazia's family at her insistence many nights, and became very fond of them, taking care to contribute to the meals by bringing *khambir* (leavened bread made in tandoor ovens by Muslim bakers behind the masjid) or apples.

On the celebration of Eid, the end of the holy month of fasting, Nazia bade me come across the courtyard from Re-Yul to the new Nazia Guest House which her parents were building. I thought it odd that the two families were essentially competing for business. Both kept their revenues separate. I shared a meal of *momos*, a barbecued chicken dish, savory mutton and many Persian-style dishes I was unfamiliar with. Amale, Nazia's mother, stayed in the kitchen most of the time, whereas we sat in the *shelkang* for a bit until finally moving into the room where Nazia stayed to watch Doordarshan.

⁶⁴ As an aside, Leh's electricity was powered by a large generator, which went out frequently. Most days, it was common to walk down streets filled with the noise and smells of small, gasoline-powered back-up generators that shopkeepers would use to illuminate their shops.

Nazia, I learned, was a traveled, well-educated Radio Television and Film college graduate and now reports for a major news network. Thus, she watches a lot of TV, which I usually didn't mind, but I had hoped to observe my first Eid. Sitting on the king-size bed, I turned my attention instead to the furnishings. A large, wooden mirrored vanity served as the TV stand, flanked by tall storage armoires on either side. From the full-windowed wall hung red, orange, blue, and green full-length curtains with a tiny celestial theme embroidered in silver throughout. They were costly, and Nazia was very fond of them. However, because the room contained an entire wall of windows, the room was always chilly, and we had to cover ourselves in thick blankets to stave off the cold. Some nights, we would roll the enormous portable propane heater into the room, which was a luxury as the nights were especially cold (around five degrees Celsius).

My new second-floor room at Re-Yul was even colder. The room itself was nicely appointed with a vanity, full length mirror and a narrow armoire for clothing. A small desk was occupied by a television which worked upon occasion. Years of tourist neglect and poor maintenance had tarnished the pieces, and so I had given the entire room - especially the bathroom, which had modern fixtures but no running water - a thorough once-over before unpacking my belongings. Being a corner room, it had two walls of windows. At night, I guessed the temperature to hover between 40 and 50 degrees Fahrenheit, depending on the afternoon highs. The compound walls shrouded the courtyard in cold shadow until 10:00am. I generally would not leave the protective warmth of my -20 degree down sleeping bag and 3 layers of heavy woolen blankets until the sunbeams warmed my bedding. My hands were too cold at night to take notes, and too cold in the morning to journal, so I had to rely on recall for any events that happened after dark, or any dreams I wished to journal. Also, as the winter approached, the hotel ultimately emptied until I was the only occupant. At that time, I raided the vacant rooms for extra (clean) bedding, propping accent and sleeping pillows against the wall and stuffing them into the corner and window cracks to conserve heat.

More Language Considerations

Besides its scholarly applications, reading and speaking Urdu was the metaphorical equivalent to break-glass-in-case-of-emergency. A week or so after Eid, another guest came to Re-Yul. A young Australian pro-skateboarder with an endless energy supply, he preferred to be addressed by the pseudonym "G-Money". Within a few days of making our acquaintance, he, Nazia and I planned an excursion to the world's highest motorable pass: the Khardung La, elevation 17,350ft. Nestled within the Siachen Glacier, the Khardung La is as significant to commerce today as ever. Providing a gateway between Yarkand (Chinese Central Asia) and Leh for over 500 years, traders riding pack horses and Bactrian camels would descend from the Karakoram to rest and do business at the budding *caravansera* (traders' marketplace) (Rizvi 1998). Now, the road is essential for the transportation of supplies to the Indian Army stations along the Chinese border. Despite the fact that the pass is located roughly 39km (24mi) from Leh, the trip would take most of the day; only the first two-thirds of the steeply graded road was paved, the rest was dirt, rock and gravel. When our driver attempted to overtake a fishtailed minibus which had blocked the road, we got out and walked. Later, when the jeep began sliding backwards down the mountain in the ice and snow, the driver made us exit the cab and walk.

Later that week, Money and I discussed visiting remote villages without concern over ride-sharing or taxi fees. I mentioned my dangerous scooter trip to Phyang, and lamented my inability to sit on the massive 750cc motorcycles which were commonly hired out. Money offered to drive, and after talking shop with him for some time, I was fairly confident in his ability. So, on an unusually cloudy day, I split the rental fees for a late 1950s model Royal Enfield with bald tires and sketchy breaks. The tour was breathtaking. The further we drove from Leh, the more rural villages and homes appeared untouched by the hand of tourism. We made it all the way to the gonpa village of Chembrey, climbing to the summit of the multi-storied gonpa before the sun slipped behind the mountains. Upon our return, we decelerated

through the Tibetans-in-exile camp at Choglamsar. Dusk wrapped around us as we cruised past the hodgepodge streetfront where vendors were pull-starting generators to illuminate their small shops and tea stalls. Hundreds of people occupied that one hundred-yard stretch, some walking, some running end-of-day errands, and still others loitering around parked cars.

It had been an exhausting ride through the mountains; my original hesitation with an unfamiliar driver and wariness over the motorcycle's condition had lapsed into a dazed comfort zone. Just then, a young boy darted out of the dusty haze chasing a tire with a stick. In an effort to avoid him, Money laid the machine down on its left side and we went skidding across the pavement, sparks flying. With such a thud during impact, I could only presume that we had run over the boy. All I could think was *tamasha* (U, disaster). A crowd immediately gathered; some began screaming at us in Nepalese (not Tibetan or Ladakhi). I couldn't make out their words, only a few verbs here and there. Stunned and shocked, I yelled out from the pavement: "*Becce kaha hain?!*" (Where is the child?) The crowd cleared a moment and I caught a glimpse of the boy being carried into a car. He was crying.

Luckily, the boy was not seriously injured. We phoned a local Ladakhi leader and friend who took us by car to the hospital. After declining x-rays from the machine which looked easily as old as our motorcycle, Money and I followed our friend to the patient's room where he lay on a simple cot surrounded by approximately 20-25 other patients. There, I apologized profusely in Hindi and promptly paid the boy's family - itinerant workers from Nepal - RS 500 for the family's medical expenses. Then we paid a visit to the *tana* (H, jail). There, driver and rider were made to "*lao Amrikan pasports purdna keliye*" (H, hand over our American passports for studying). We waited for over an hour before filling out a report and signing several forms, *all* of which were mimeographed in Nasta'liq. Mostly able to read the forms, I signed my name in Nasta'liq. Money scribbled some incomprehensible squiggles across his form. I wonder whatever became of those reports, as neither of us obtained copies. The following day, we were taken to the compound to retrieve the motorcycle; without paperwork, it took a great deal of

energy to negotiate its release from impounding. Ultimately, I believe it was speaking in authoritative Urdu that produced results.

That experience reaffirmed the necessity for knowing the language, or at least a *lingua franca*, in the countries where one travels. Moreover, it continued to affirm the dangers of both being and associating with foreigners in a research environment. Although my intentions for that trip were to explore remote villages for research purposes, I was traveling with a tourist – in the eyes of the J & K officials that made me a tourist despite my research visa. That experience also demonstrated to me the pervasive social stratification that manifests through age, gender, ethnicity, class and occupation. From that day forward, I removed myself entirely from the tourist scene, choosing only to interact with foreigners with whom I had business.

Milestones

The 2007 season represented an important milestone for the research project. I took a series of digital photographs of new and historical homes which displayed full shots of both the structures as well as zoomed-in pictures of particular features including but not limited to exterior features such as 1) *shinstok* 2) eaves and overhangs 3) side shots of roofs (tops of roofs if permissible) and interior features including, but also not limited to 1) *ka*, main pillars of the great room 2) kitchens 3) bathrooms/pit toilets. My preliminary interviews with residents, conservation architects and guest house owners had revealed these features to be among the most constant forms in historical housing, and the most variable in new construction. I conducted a number of interviews to understand Ladakhis' perception of built forms; in particular, what certain aesthetic components of buildings mean to residents.

I planned to explore the construction of heritage in daily practice by returning to heritage construction sites I had previously identified. These are places where Ladakhis meet and talk, work and play, learn and grow - exemplifying the active construction of Ladakhi heritage. It is within this portion of

the study where I hoped to understand the Ladakhi drive to modernize against the desire to retain traditional ways of life. In the way that Basso (1998: 67) used ethnography to illustrate that Western Apache concepts of land “work in specific ways to influence Apaches’ conceptions of themselves, and vice versa, and that the two together work to influence patterns of social action,” I aimed to show that present day notions of Ladakhi heritage both signify and are signified by the built environment. I wished to use spatial data analysis to enhance other qualitative methods I employed while trying to understand human—human, human—environment relationships within the community (LeCompte and Schensul 1999: 52).⁶⁵ I took care not to overessentialize or reify heritage concepts by conducting spatial surveys and follow up interviews in five different neighborhoods. However, urban expansion made it difficult for me to delineate one village from another.

I learned and observed that the *tgonspas* of *Gonpa* village, *Sankar*, and *Changspa* have become increasingly interconnected as guest house construction continues. *Gonpa* village is a primarily agricultural village, far from the hustle and bustle of the main Bazaar. The *Sankar* accommodation business was growing quickly, but was not nearly as developed as *Changspa*. The majority of new hotel and guest house construction takes place in *Changspa*. Whereas the Main Bazaar remains a center for Ladakhi, Kashmiri, and Indian commerce year round, *Changspa* is nothing but desolate storefronts in the winter. Old Leh is primarily residential; building activities consist of demolition, reconstruction, or conservation. But it is inhabited over the winter, and lower Old Leh receives a lot of traffic in fall owing to matches and other events held at the Polo Grounds. Airport Road has quite a few hotels, and still more coming, but lacks many residences or guest houses, perhaps owing to its lackluster appearance. Moving north (downhill) away from the main Bazaar towards the airport, the Upper Tukcha

⁶⁵ As a unit of analysis in spatial studies, the term “community” has been described in a variety of ways including “[by] the sharing of a localized territorial space... [or by] the territory defined by the set of locations where the interactions of interest take place, including the homes of the participants” (LeCompte and Schensul 1999: 52).

neighborhood has been built out all the way to the river channel which flanks the backside of the Iqbal compound (see "Milestones").

* * *

PART IV: MIXED RESULTS

Civil Society Organizations

Beyond the built environment and interactions therein, I also consider Ladakhi interactions pertaining or influencing the construction of the built environment as heritage construction sites. In order to contextualize Ladakhi civic life, it was necessary to first answer key questions regarding the provenance as well as the temporal and spatial trajectories of civil society.⁶⁶ Guiding this inquiry, I referred to the following question: "Can inter-communal civic links be built over the short-run? Who can build them - the state or civic groups, time-honored village institutions - and why? Are civic networks path-dependent for the creation of other associational or pseudo-political relationships between families, villages, and the region or state⁶⁷ and 2) their usefulness in tracing networks and relationships backwards to the various neighborhoods both in Leh Town and the surrounding villages such as Sankar and Changspa. But what I realized was that the research question became overwhelmingly complicated.

In 2005, I built upon my preliminary research of community-based organizations (CBOs) by incorporating NGOs and CSOs into these levels of village integration (see figures 7, 8, and 9). In 2006, I began to triangulate my data by asking my primary informant to validate the structure of community-based organizations in Leh. Since my knowledge about village-based organizations was derived from

⁶⁶ It could be argued that *should* the dynamic economy of Leh, which is all but exclusively propelled by the tourist market, erupt in another crisis, "civil society, if present and especially if vibrant, can provide self-regulating mechanisms..." (Varshney 2002: 286). Civil society associations may also regulate the culture of tourism, capitalizing upon those cultural and economic pressures (especially communally based ones), and providing through its various associations platforms for its members to stand upon, however precarious the foundations.

⁶⁷ I say pseudo-political because at any level of organization- even in the so-called egalitarian societies which, during the time period that this study concerned with, is not the case for Ladakh- there exists some sort of hierarchy of representation, whether elected, spoken or rotational.

ethnography about rural Muslims and Buddhists in a frontier community, I wanted to be sure that they were also applicable to the *trongspa* in and around Leh Town.⁶⁸ I continued to seek multiple perspectives on these delineations, and eventually was able to interview at least three more individuals: 1) a *goba*, who was also a leader of a civil society association 2) several non-Ladakhi leaders of a conservation-oriented NGOs and 3) several Ladakhi leaders or liasons.

This human organization is also made visible through the charts I created which map relationships between community-based organizations and non-governmental organizations (see Appendices 7 and 8). Some of the difficulty I experienced creating these charts occurred because the State has both the authority and (sometimes) power to regulate the former (see Melongs 2006). Furthermore, both local and outsider extra-state organizations often fail to negotiate amongst themselves, succumbing to influences from broader state and national development initiatives and being either subsumed within or dissolved as a result. I interviewed a number of local residents regarding state intervention in local issues, specifically those concerning the contestation and codification of space. To further elucidate the dynamics of these processes upon my 2008 return, I aimed to pay special attention to heritage construction sites such as planning meetings for community or village-based organizations, civil society associations as well as conservation and construction projects.

Again, my primary focus was the urban sphere; thus, I became particularly interested in civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations as opposed to village-based organizations. How CSOs strengthen intercommunal relations, equalize structural inequality, and strengthen Ladakhi identity is of ultimate concern. By the end of 2007, I understood the routinization of organizing and regulation as a response to/against constant influence and pressures from the outside (thirty years of organized tours, NGO development, state political organization, Indian economic initiatives). I do not

⁶⁸ According to my informant, there were a few minor corrections at the secondary level. I have made those corrections with respect to my original data.

believe those processes are solely responsible for the construction of identity. I hoped that through cognitive mapping, I could elicit spatial perspectives from community members - including how daily social practice and travel patterns influence their views of space. My hunch was that where community meetings took place, whether in Old Leh, in the farming neighborhoods, or in the Main Bazaar might provide insight into what places unify different groups for collective action.

Why Cognitive Mapping Doesn't Work

I planned to triangulate those perspectives against my *own* observations by juxtaposing cognitive mapping with spatial mapping. My aim was to describe the locations of community organization, be they formal or informal, as well as ascertain their importance based upon their 1) size (membership and spatial trajectory), 2) centrality (proximity and accessibility to individuals as well as to other institutions), and 3) level of integration (locations and numbers of facilities and their forward and reverse linkages to NGOs, and to the state as well as to village-based organizations, respectively) (see LeCompte and Schensul 1999: 65). However, I learned through trial and error that, at least in Leh Town, participant observation was a more effective method than cognitive mapping.

Notwithstanding prior concerns about the nature and scale of community-based organizations, two methods I employed to observe activity sites were 1) spot sampling (based on random time intervals and close proximity to other sites); and 2) focal sampling (based on individuals as opposed to sites- focal sampling is more useful for spatial mapping over a sustained period of time rather than at random intervals) (LeCompte and Schensul 1999). One particular site I chose for spot sampling was within community organizations, since, like individuals they function in time and space, presumably at fixed locations. I consider these potential heritage construction sites, as they “represent nodes in the activity spaces of service providers and service users” thereby constituting the size and relative importance of the organization (LeCompte and Schensul 1999: 76-79).

Collecting and mapping spatial data at sites of quotidian interaction is more straightforward than that of formal community organization centers. Like CBOs, I considered sites of quotidian interaction as potential heritage construction sites that were of equal importance to their civil society and community-based counterparts. The distinction between formal and informal sites of social interaction is important to consider “when evaluating access to power or use” (LeCompte and Schensul 1999: 86). Gender was also of particular concern to me, as all but one of my research participants in the formal categories (i.e. public positions of power) is male. In my observations, women were more likely to be found interacting in informal quotidian interaction sites than in public political spheres. But, as Rosaldo and Lamphere (1974) alluded to in their now classic feminist work, although women may not be seen in positions of authority, their power to drive cultural and social change is no less formidable.

Mapping Concerns

Displaying activity spaces on a map can lead to a confusing representation if there are too many variables. In order to correct for inconsistencies within spatial analyses of community-based organizations, I limited the number of CSOs from which I collected data from and increased the number of individual and spatial sources within a well-defined proximity. Another difficulty is that of confidentiality. During my first two years of fieldwork, I gained written, informed consent from the few formal interviews I gave. During the last two years, I relaxed the written portion of consent, making sure to receive quality informed consent (Fleuhr-Lobban 1994; Fine 1992). I asked for consent any time I made personal contact with individuals with the intent of using their personal whereabouts or information in my project, explaining the risks and benefits of participation, offering the choice of pseudonyms, and insisting that an interview could be stopped at any time. Lehigh is not a large town; ethnographic descriptions of time and place of interactions along with the gender and age of the individual observed can potentially reveal one’s identity. To correct for this, I generalize point locations

like homes and hotels “... before they are mapped, [such that] data can be aggregated to a set of areas (census blocks, towns) that are relevant to the research question” (LeCompte and Schensul 1999: 93).

For the second half of my spatial mapping procedure, I conducted a survey of the built environment itself. I identified several types and features, or built forms, of interest whose meanings I wished to uncover. In order to identify those built forms, I use categories established by locals and conservationists themselves that I gathered from structured interviews. Although I could clearly recognize certain built forms, I took care not to superimpose my own categories of importance upon these edifices and objects. Keeping in mind Basso’s (1998: 72) cautioning that “the meanings of objects and acts alike can only be guessed at, and once the guesses have been recognized for the arbitrary constructions they almost always are, one senses acutely that one’s own experience of things and events ‘out there’ cannot be used as a reliable guide to the experience of native people”. Thus, I gained a better understanding of whether and how locals associate built forms with architectural heritage which was meaningful to them, as well as how those notions conflict with or coincide between various groups. One example of these forms is the *shinstok*: these eaves and overhangs surrounding windows have been identified by both conservationists and locals as a “traditional” feature of vernacular Ladakhi architecture. The utility in using spatial mapping for identifying traditional architectural forms is that one can generate quantitative data regarding the frequency of built forms in a given target zone.

I distinguished sampling *of* space from sampling *in* space, as the former deals with continuous or observable features found on the earth’s surface (such as topography or elevation) whereas the latter involves sampling “from a population of discrete objects or things arranged in space” (LeCompte and Schensul 1999: 94-96). On a broader scale, this spatial sampling was useful for understanding how the built environment structures social interactions as well as how, through those interactions, places come to be culturally constructed (Hall 1966, Lynch 1961). Specifically, I paid attention to how individuals 1) observe the built environment, 2) use the built environment, and 3) communicate about the built

environment. Documenting what Basso (1998: 73) calls “communicative acts of topographic representation” may be more important to my understanding interpretations of built form as adhering to or deviating from heritage than solely producing a map or a statistical analysis correlating the presence of certain forms with perception of tradition.⁶⁹

Site mapping occupies an important role in anthropological fieldwork, enhancing ethnographic research by demarcating localities and illustrating patterns of spatial and social movement (Bernard 2006; LeCompte and Schensul 1999; Emerson 1995). But maps can also create a special set of problems. In Ladakh as elsewhere, maps have been configured and appropriated for a number of interests- imperial, national, ethnic, religious, scholarly and commercial to name just a few (see Chapters 1 and 2). The three hundred year-old map Andre Alexander and I unearthed in the archives of Old Leh seemed to exemplify this point: land parcels were numbered in Arabic and written in Urdu, a language only literate Ladakhis of Kashmiri or Mughal decent would have been able to read and understand. Clearly, this map was not meant for common citizens, regardless of their proprietary statuses. Moreover, maps alone do not account for people knowing where they live.

One should consider that maps have power even irrespective of their absence in daily use. Locals maintain other forms of knowledge which disclose land distribution, a short-hand for reading the landscape which is shared amongst members of a population. During the summer of 2005, I experimented with a methodology called cognitive mapping (Downs and Stea 1977) in order to map local knowledge. Pioneered by Kevin Lynch’s (1960) *The Image of the City*, cognitive mapping rests on the idea that city dwellers maintain knowledge in their heads of certain cues which clarify or make the city legible and thus meaningful to them. Such cues are triggered by immediate sensory stimuli - visual, audial, olfactory, thermal, tactile - and are also embedded in memories which not only guide the

⁶⁹ Basso notes that in Apache conversations, “individuals exchange accounts and observations of the landscape that consistently presuppose mutually held ideas of what it actually is, why its constituent places are important, and how it may intrude on the practical affairs of its inhabitants” (Basso 1998: 74). His inspiration was that of Heidegger (1977:323) who claimed that in these sorts of conversations, “cultural conceptions of ‘dwelling together’ are placed on oblique display”.

dweller's wayfinding, but contribute to an emotional awareness of the environment. These cues are embedded on a metaphoric mental map. Environmental behaviorists Downs and Stea claim that cognitive mapping is a "mental process through which people come to grips with and comprehend the world around them"; the cognitive map is thus "a person's organized representation of part of the spatial environment" (Downs and Stea 1977: 61). Cognitive mapping is goal-driven, making it interactive, selective, and spatially organizing. It is also practical, enabling the formation of spatial problem-solving techniques. Finally, it is a process of wayfinding which involves orientation, agency and route-making, *habitus* and route-taking, as well as discovery (see figure 4).

Psychologically, mental maps constitute plans for spatial problem-solving that, once operationalized, act as guides for direct action; patterned behavior often results. Asking interlocutors to produce these so-called mental maps thereby generates subsequent "frames of reference for interpreting and understanding the spatial environment" (Downs and Stea 1977: 38). These mental images of one's city symbolize and index lived, felt experiences. It is plausible that those images are transferable onto paper. Interviewing and participant observation are certainly useful methods for understanding how people navigate around and feel about their physical environment. But visual representations can engender nuanced understandings of a research participants' world which can then be triangulated against data obtained using other more traditional methods. This method may not produce typical cartographic maps, but theoretically it can evidence what elements in the natural and built environment are important to people's lives (Lynch 1960; Downs and Stea 1977).

Over the course of four years, I asked a number of Leh residents to draw spatial representations of Leh Town on paper, and to highlight places that are of interest or of importance to them. If I was asked for clarification on what to include (which I often was), I simply encouraged people to show me where they traveled and what routes they traversed during their everyday routines, including errands and shopping places, work places, meeting places, places of worship, and schools. I followed up on these

exercises by asking my informants what places were most meaningful to them. I also intended to ask how new construction had changed their daily lives. What landmarks were important to them and why? Which new buildings satisfied their intentions, whether to serve locals, tourists or both? My intention in eliciting cognitive maps was to ascertain how local Leh, Ladakhis were accommodating the changing built environment into their daily lives, even as they themselves changed it. I had initially hoped that these illustrations would illuminate important Ladakhi places not easily translated into mainstream cartographic representation. Unfortunately, in a tourist town, once I asked for something resembling a map, locals would invariably redirect me to the nearest bookshop or to the Jammu and Kashmir Tourist Information Centre.

Ultimately, all but four respondents declined completely; one didn't complete the map before my return to the US. Most who declined pleaded incompetence. Perhaps my instructions were lost in translation? More than likely, this has to do with non-mapping backgrounds, common in the non-Western world. Even after four years of language training and subsequent visits, my Ladakhi acquaintances were still tepid towards this highbrow venture.⁷⁰ I inferred from their justifications that the prevalence of maps and trekking routes (in addition to tiring of being asked for directions) precluded participation. Those who did participate may have been hesitant to include places that are of importance to *them*, preferring instead to include places of interest to tourists. I hoped that clearly articulating the purpose of the exercise and patiently listening as people explain their maps to me would hopefully correct for this problem. I was wrong. Only one local readily agreed to draw me a map: the manager of my guest house, and this was with furrowed brow and quiet consternation (see Figures 3 and 4). Another agreed to point out places of importance: a conservation activist with an urban planning degree who insisted on drawing upon using her own maps (see figures 5 and 6). The last was a western-educated bookkeeper who sold journals and notebooks to local school children (and who also acted as

⁷⁰ I revisited the cognitive mapping exercise as I believed I would be better able to communicate my intentions and conduct follow-up interviews.

interim postmaster for a small fee – incidentally the post office was among the scant four buildings he identified in the Main Bazaar) (See Figure 1).

Problems of representation and translation may have contributed to people’s reluctance in drawing me a mental map. As previously noted, representation is the way in which a person organizes the spatial environment according to what makes sense to them. Translation takes place on two levels: the first is that of the producer (the artist); the second is that of the consumer (in this case myself, the researcher). To correct for this, I quickly changed the word “map” to *tasvir*, Hindi for picture. This seemed to cause additional anxiety. Traditionally, pictures, otherwise known as *thangkas*, were painted expressions of Buddhism on monastery walls.⁷¹ Moreover, trying to convince people that their daily comings and goings were of interest to me was a futile effort in and of itself. Ultimately, I reverted to the role of nuisance anthropologist, following around my host mother when she came and went from the *subzi mandi* and to and from relatives’ homes, or following Andre Alexander around as he made his rounds to and from different conservation sites.

I sought other ways to discover what places are important to people and how features of the built environment signify and give meaning to their home town. Just as the particularities of places in the natural and built realm are constituted and made unique by those who experience them, so also can general features of structures contain significance and meaning. Aware of this, I doubled my efforts in observing and interviewing for certain design attributes. The characteristics (and even quality) of design may provide frames of reference for the viewer. As Downs and Stea (1977: 91) attest: “a symbol must immediately be recognized by people as standing for a particular place. The meaning and value of a symbol goes beyond the immediate recognition of the identity of a place. It acts as a trigger to help us recall the characteristics of that place... that gives it a unique identity”. Thus, heritage homes in Old Leh can be considered an “identity category” whereas their particular features may be considered

⁷¹ Conservationists have made a great deal out of preserving these, and subsequently publishing volumes in antiquities journals.

equivalence categories ... built around the similarities between places of objects commonly found in the spatial environment” (Downs and Stea 1977: 117).⁷²

PART V: A FALL FINALE

In 2008, I flew from the United States directly into New Delhi, and stayed with Nazia at her family’s flat in an upscale residential colony. I visited with her for several days before booking my trip to Ladakh. She had arranged for me to stay with her family at their guest house at no charge. I was elated to receive the invitation, but apprehensive about staying there without Nazia’s guidance. My more immediate concern was transportation. In 2007, I had booked my overnight journey to Manali in an economy class “sleeper” bus, where I shared an uncomfortable 3x5 crawlspace with a quiet woman of Scandinavian descent. Ruling out another overnight bunk-sharing adventure, I paid an extra RS300 (\$5.75 USD) to sit directly behind the driver of a plush purple bus, which I fondly named “*bari baingani gari*” (big purple car). I read, slept and chatted off and on with the driver, enjoying the 13 hour bus ride in the comfort of my own reclining chair. Arriving in Manali to unseasonably cold weather, I lodged at the hotel where I’d stayed the year before, happy to return to the same room with a mountain view, hot shower, and television with three stations. It was late August, approaching the off-season. Hotel rates were reasonable and locals could be seen in equal proportion to American ex-patriots and self-proclaimed *sadus* (religious nomads).

While attempting to arrange my jeep to Leh, I was informed by the travel agent that an early snow had fallen, closing the *Baracha La* for an undisclosed period of time. Reports around town were that a blizzard had stranded several army transports; one lorry had driven off the road, killing all the passengers. Even the famous Raid De Himalaya race had been postponed, marooning many competitors

⁷² Hence, cognitive mapping utilizes the following strategies: 1) “focusing on the essential similarity between places... to classify and order experience according to shared characteristics ... result[ing] in the identity and equivalence categories....”; 2) “organiz[ing] information according to spatial relationships... [and] represent[ing] the spatial organization of places in the ‘real world’ by cognitively generating spatial frames of reference”; and 3) incorporat[ing] both similarity and spatial relationship in a regionalization process; a common result of this process is a set of stereotypes” (Downs and Stea 1977: 123).

in Manali until such a time as the snow would cease and the roads would be cleared. Still, I booked my ticket, promising to be available at a moment's notice should the pass clear, and paying an additional RS300 to avoid another back-breaking, bone-jarring luggage compartment ride. The trip proved to be just as rough a ride in the front as it was in the back. I shared the bench seat not only with the driver, but also with his friend, a man of moderate stature, unwashed clothes and person. We shared our travel time with the Raid De Himalaya race; I was able to take several videos of jeeps and motocross cycles winding around mountain bends at dangerously high speeds.

When I arrived in Leh late the following night, my somewhat awkward arrival was tempered by the news and gossip I had brought from Nazia back in Delhi. The weather in early September was lovely and mild; the streets were not over crowded as they were in the summer but still bustled with remaining tourists and ever persistent merchants. I made myself at home in one of the Iqbal family's guest rooms. Located in the same compound just beside Re-Yul, the Nazia Guest House had a unique layout compared to many other buildings I had observed. Passing the stairway upstairs, the entry gave way to a bottom-floor residence which an Indian army family rented. I rarely saw either of them despite treading the stairwell multiple times a day. This year, I smartly chose a southerly-facing room with a lackluster view in the close proximity to the home's interior. One morning, I overheard a few tourists in the courtyard who were staying in the more desirable mountain view rooms with dual corner windows; they had frozen over the night.

The guest house proper was located on the 3rd floor of the house, and was comprised of two sets of residences. The first set of rooms enveloped a small open-air courtyard, two on each side with a small solarium which, in the warmer months, acted as a reading room. A narrow wooden ladder led up to the rooftop where two additional rooms were under construction. Behind it, a dividing wall and door separated these outdoor courtyard rooms from the interior rooms surrounding the main stairwell. The four rooms were rented each year by different employees of the Jammu & Kashmir State bank who

were “selected” to stay in Ladakh through the winter. While I was usually cordial and modest around the boisterous *bankwalas* (men who work for a bank) I was finally forced to confront my noisy neighbors or risk an entire fieldseason of sleepless nights. In a manner quite unbecoming of a single woman, I emerged from my room in my pajamas and barked a booming “SHUT UP!” (in English) across the courtyard. Gaping jaws and silence indicated success. That was the only trouble I ever had sharing such close space with strangers.

The middle floor served as the family home. Set apart from the marble stairwell and the comings and goings of others, the home was a stable oasis amidst caravans of passersby. A 5th generation resident of Leh, Amale did part-time clerical work for the J & K government. Aside from that, she spent most of the time at home caring for her elderly father, Meme le (grandfather). Her elder sister, also Amale - a kinship term used to refer to mother as well as mother’s sister - would occasionally stop by to help prepare food and to join the family for dinner. Meme le’s younger brother, Amale’s uncle, Chacha le, a former imam at the Masjid also frequented the Iqbal home for dinner. This was especially the case during Ramadan, where we would also be joined by Amale’s first and second male cousins. I thought it odd that, despite living in the same compound, Mr. Iqbal’s side of the family rarely, if ever, came to visit. I learned that Amale preferred the company of her maternal kin over her husband’s relatives, especially while he was away in Srinagar.

Nazia’s older brother lived at the house year-round, watching it during the winter when Amale joined Nazia and her younger brother at the family’s Delhi flat. Although I met with Mr. Iqbal on a number of occasions in 2007, he was unable to eschew responsibilities at Save the Children’s Srinagar location to be with the family during Eid. He rang Amale every day to check on the household, and sent several houseboys from Karghil to help out in his absence. The previous year’s help had been loyal and devoted; he followed instructions and always seemed eager to assist. His manners were in stark contrast

to this year's brazen young man who bitterly complained about being housed in a storage room.⁷³ His continued defiance lasted only one week before tempers flared. One morning I came down to greet Amale. She was madder than I've ever seen or heard her, angrily complaining (in Urdu) into the phone that the houseboy had left without notice.

An Anthropologist's Household Responsibilities

As an outsider and the youngest "child" so-to-speak, I tried where I could to pick up the slack. I began helping Amale with dinner, especially as the Ramadan season commenced. She would assign me tedious and time-consuming food preparation tasks, which allowed me to ask questions about meal preparation and ingredients. Iqbal's cooking style was much different than Wangial Lakrook's, as the latter was entirely vegetarian and the former consisted largely of meats and curries. When I had no plans, I would sometimes accompany Amale on errands hoping to be more of an asset than a burden. I was eventually entrusted to buy veggies from the *subzi mandi* unescorted. At dinner time, I sat closest to the kitchen, filling empty cups and clearing empty bowls from the plastic dropcloth upon the floor where we ate. Washing dishes was a difficult task for a number of reasons: 1) the water, bitterly cold air, and harsh cleansers laid waste to my hands 2) all waste, organic or otherwise, was pitched outside into the river. I said something to Nazia about river pollution, as it has been a serious environmental issue for years. Her sad response was, "Yeah, but everyone does it, so what's there to do?"⁷⁴

A confident and shrewd woman, Amale possessed uncanny intuition and was an excellent judge of character; her sense of humor allayed more direct commentary regarding those who held her suspicions. A devout Muslim, she prayed regularly and invariably covered her head in the presence of

⁷³In all fairness and honesty, he was accommodated in a large bedroom that the family did indeed use for storage. Had he had expected a suite? I wondered what the arrangements of his service might be, and if his family (or anyone) was honest with him about the terms of agreement.

⁷⁴ The act of pitching middens in the river is a matter of convenience. If a trash service were put in place, it's highly doubtful anyone in the house would continue to litter as they were aware of the "social and environmental hazards of adopting Western Ways", i.e. straying from indigenous farming practices and supplementing their diets with processed and prepackaged products (Norberg-Hodge 1990).

others. She dressed conservatively, donning a sweater or vest over her *salwar-kameez* (H/U), a cotton two-piece, knee-length, long-sleeved top worn over baggy drawstring pants with thick tights underneath for warmth. Nazia, by stark contrast, was quite cosmopolitan. She spoke in English as frequently as in Hindi and Urdu except when in Ladakh. She wore designer jeans with a short Fab India tunic, or *kurta* (H/U), designer sunglasses and shoes, and carried the latest mobile technology. I don't think I ever recall seeing her in a *salwar*, although I have seen her in a *sari*. This was typical of many Ladakhi youth Nazia's age. Many of the youth I met were overeducated for Ladakh, and were subsequently unemployed or employed in one of the many, many cyber cafes across town. Regardless, style was frequently a marker of education and status among young Leh residents, both permanent and transient.

Ramzan was something that was recognizable to all no matter background, class, religion, or otherwise. The solemn prayer, *azan*(U), echoing from the Jamia Masjid minaret, reverberating across the mountains five times a day and cueing two-thirds of the shops in Leh to close - not only during prayer times, but also all day on Fridays - was an indication of both the perceptual and economic impacts. The inability for neighbors to share meals or even tea (although *khawa* could be consumed in dire emergencies) signaled the social impacts. And since the majority of Jammu and Kashmir State employees (and a significant number of LAHDC officials), including bankers, clerks, and officials were Muslim, the small town's political sphere was also strongly affected. The audial cues, however, did not stop at the *Main Bazaar's* boundary. If the wind was blowing right, and the town was quiet, one could stand on the rooftop and hear another mournful prayer sounding off in the distance from the Shia mosque. But for the most part, life in Leh was little disrupted by *Ramzan*. Many shopkeepers were packing up and heading to Goa for the season. Only the most popular restaurants stayed open, and many guest houses and hotels had closed for the season. The harvest had been reaped, and the poplar leaves sparked gold and orange against the short daytime sky.

Daily Routines

My daily routine by this point consisted of waking up, warming up, padding onto the icy tile of my attached bathroom and washing my face in the chilly tap water. Then I would dress and saunter downstairs to see if there was any unleavened bread, *khambir* (U), left over from the post-prayer 3:45am snack. Early on, Amale would make me a cup of chai and we would chat. Eventually, she gave me license to make it myself. I would then make my way down to Gezmo café and bakery. Gezmo had a continental and Indian menu. They were the only places in town that didn't serve Nescafe when one ordered coffee; in fact, one had to specify Nescafe. Otherwise, one of the Nepalese sons would deliver a deliciously fresh-ground and French-pressed mug of steaming java, served with a side of whole milk and turbinado sugar. Fluffy banana pancakes with a fried egg was a special treat; most of the time, however, I flanked my morning coffee with a "brown roll" or croissant-shaped bread with butter, honey, and jelly.

The only trouble with Gezmo was the flies. They were bad enough during the regular tourist season, but they reached near-infestation levels before the restaurant eventually closed at the end of each October. Perhaps because so many shops had closed, there were few other places for foreigners to dine; regardless, the fly population seemed to consolidate at Gezmo during the off-season. To avoid them, one had to sit in the backside of the café which remained in shadow during the morning hours. It was a cold but clear vantage point from which to watch weary travelers enter and sit in the warm sunny windows where they would spend the next hour or so swatting flies from their tables. Gezmo was a reliable place to make new contacts and to catch up on news from the trekking industry, as both travelers and trekking agents would dine there before or after an excursion. After breakfast, I would venture out either into town or into the surrounding neighborhoods to familiarize myself with the area and gain a sense for daily life.

Walking rather than taxiing to appointments on the periphery of town where the LAHDC or the J&K State or JKTD offices were located was a preferred method to expand my sense of place. My visit to

the LAHDC Census Bureau, Leh Division, took several days - I simply could not find it despite asking host family members, THF volunteers, and every *chaiwala* and *dukandar* I came across. Beyond the Old Leh Heritage Zone, immigrants have created an urban sprawl on the adjacent plane and up the side of a mountain opposite the Palace. Walking through these neighborhoods was even more disorienting than walking through the winding Old Town labyrinths. Roads were scarce, and were at times no more than dirt trails. Dead-end pathways were littered with garbage and human refuse, forcing one to find a Palace-view for spatial reorientation. I wondered how anyone ever found their way around in this place; but then I remembered that people have different wayfinding techniques that may neither be grounded in nor reliant upon cartographic representations of space.

General Concerns

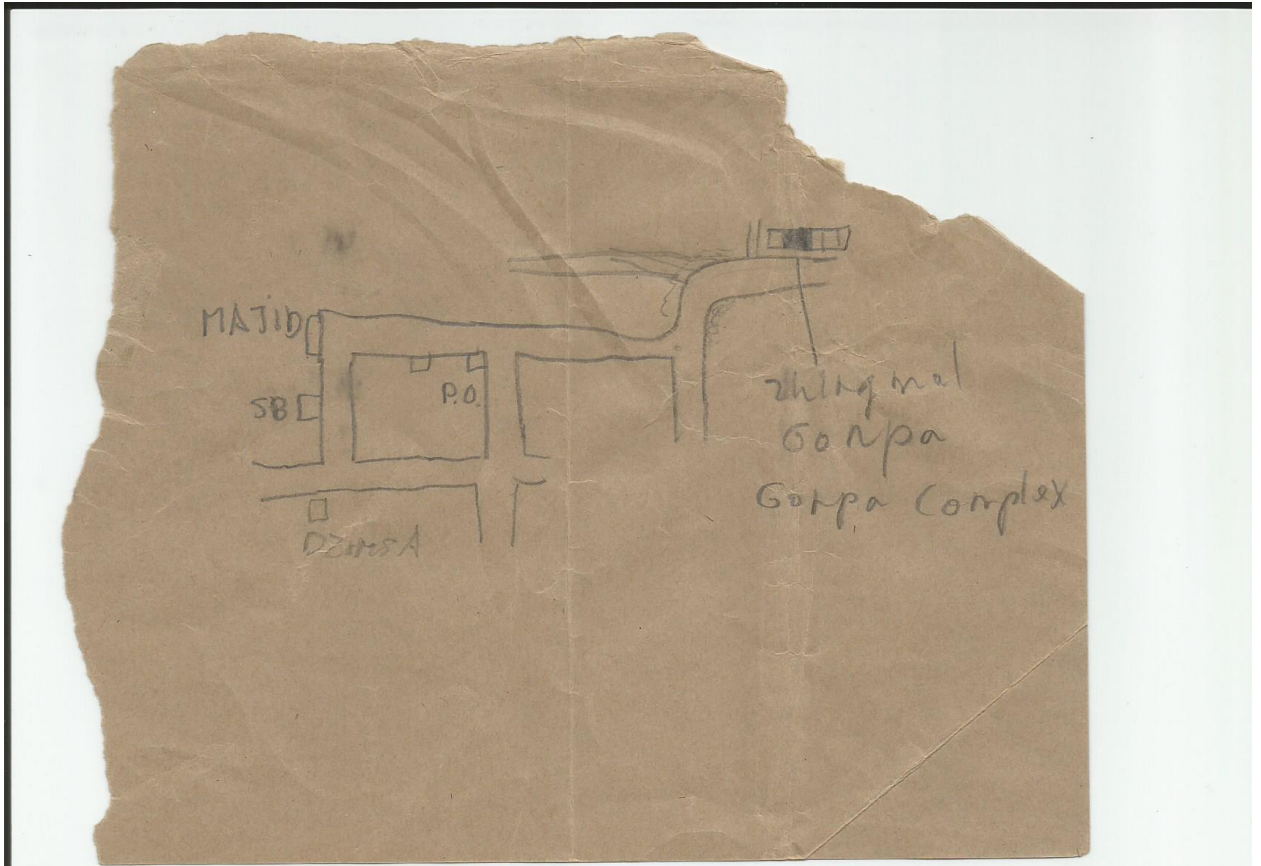
Paying special attention to the “politics of representation” (Marcus and Fischer 1986), the degree to which the ethnographic product is only a means to an end (giving voice to the subaltern), is relative to the intent of the anthropologist. In other words, the anthropologist must take responsibility for choosing to share (or not) the discourse taking place between informants' voices and the researcher's immediate recognition both during fieldwork and when performing data analysis. In this process, it is important to note where in the text the ethnographer engages with their informants, or where the synchronicity lies between questioning the data and resisting or accommodating the subsequent interpretations. “Shadow conversations” take place in the ethnographer's mind ever so much as they do in the informants'. Those conversations must be transparent within the text (Spitulnik 2005).

As an anthropologist engaged with the community for a long period of time, I also have a role in shaping local culture and perspectives. This research also has potential applications. The significance of my work has drawn attention to conflicting heritage discourses between NGOs, CSOs, and local residents. I have also taken care to reciprocate with my participants wherever possible. For example,

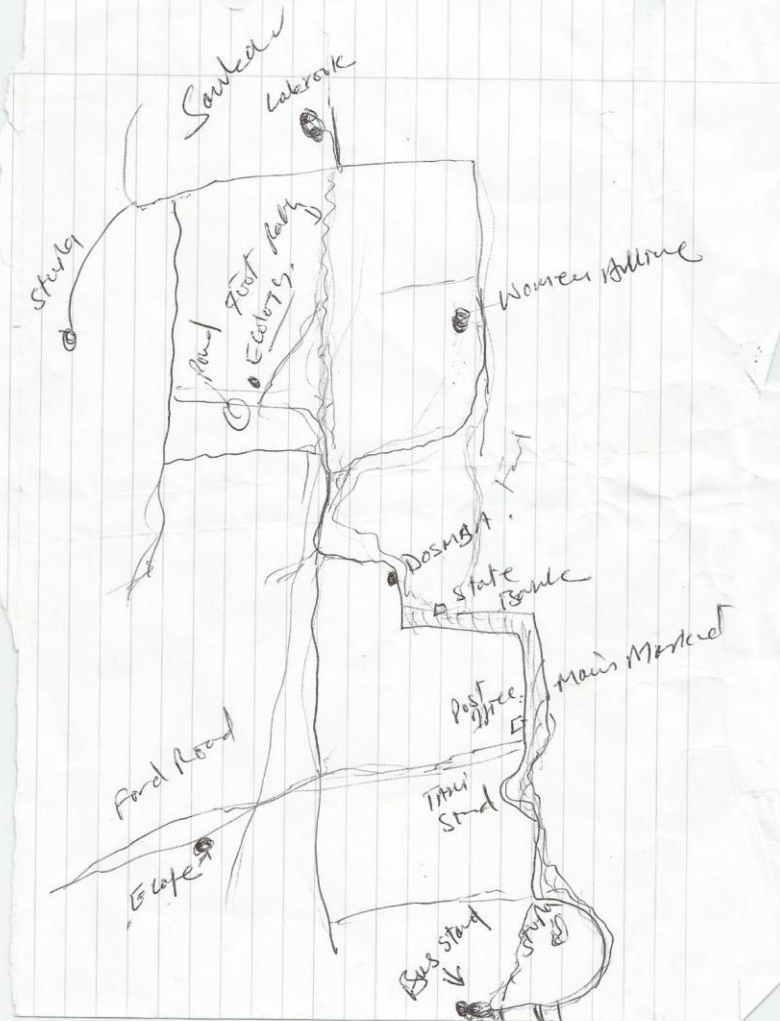
because I had learned to speak Urdu and had been hanging out with Nazia and her family, I was asked by the president of THF to act as a mediator between the organization and a local Muslim community living behind the Jamia Masjid and adjacent to the Old Leh Heritage Zone. The ultimate result of that interaction was the reconstruction of a “women’s mosque” and eventually, the addition of a museum highlighting the Muslim heritage of Ladakh. I find no conflicts of interest with engaged anthropology, as I have already recognized a deficiency in the written record about Muslim heritage in Old Leh, as well as about vernacular architecture in general. I was also asked by THF to seek information from several Muslim families who moved out of Old Leh and relocated to their new guest houses.

The second application of my research was a presentation given to INTACH in late October 2008. Many of my critiques of the State representation of Ladakhi built heritage echoed that of my critiques regarding NGO conservation outfits: they were not only slanted towards Buddhist representations of Ladakh, but also regularly espoused or rather decried Ladakhi efforts to modernize. This flew in the face with broader Indian initiatives to modernize, but those elements of modernity appeared to follow suit with post-colonial development discourses writ large, rather than taking into consideration Ladakh’s unique locality.

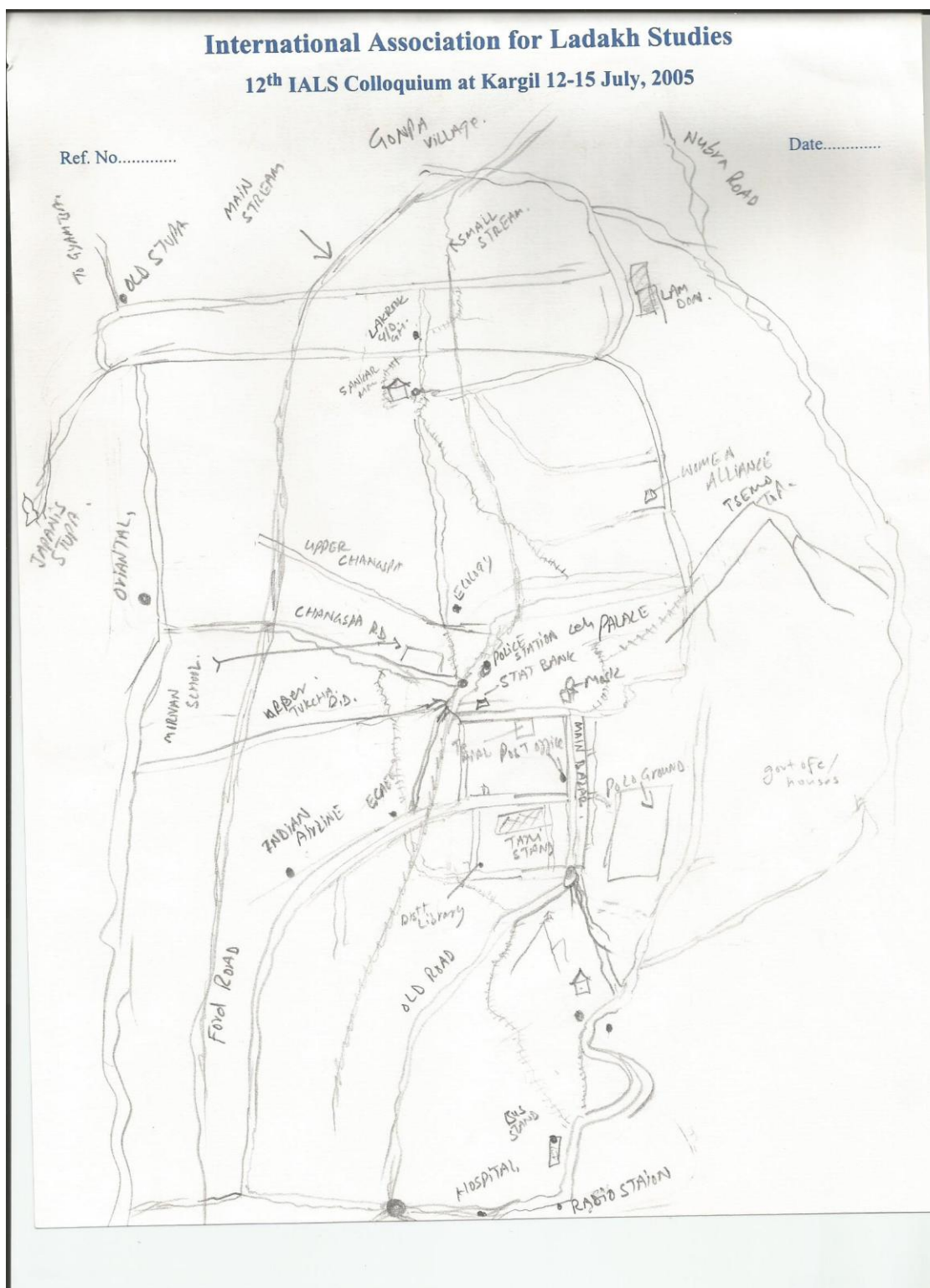
Like many residents I know, I did not stay in Leh through the hard winter months. I understand that daily practice in winter is much different than even in the late fall months, as mobility is limited to a great degree by the cold temperatures and snowfall. Future research would certainly include determining the durability of non-traditional design and utility of new building materials (pipes freeze; rammed-earth toilets do not) and to fully experience the trail and tribulations of life in Old Leh. However, these aspects of life could also be extrapolated from interviews and through spatial surveys.



2. Cognitive map drawn by local Ladakhi Christian showing roads and one footpath.



3. Cognitive map drawn by local Ladakhi Buddhist showing both roads and footpaths.



4. Second cognitive map drawn by same local as Fig. 3 showing both roads and footpaths.

CHAPTER V: REGULATING HERITAGE: A COMPARATIVE DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AT LOCAL, NGO, AND STATE LEVELS

This chapter outlines the differences between state and local agencies that seek to regulate the tourism industry in Leh. Management is approached by both the public and private sectors in several ways, including but not limited to monitoring travel agencies directly (which I will discuss at length in the next chapter), and regulating tourist accommodations. With no clear-cut directives, various stakeholders show haphazard involvement in the built environment; their loosely-defined goal is to create a homogenous picture of the built environment in keeping with the cultural narratives. This chapter will reveal difficulties associated with regulating narratives and homogenizing structures associated the tourism industry. In both instances, implementation and enforcement are identified as the main obstacles to success. One case study shows that, regardless of deference to traditional narratives and structures, even the most concerned Ladakhis will act in such a way as to benefit themselves and their families, as opposed to satisfying recommendations made by either department or organization.

Jammu and Kashmir Tourism Association (JKTD) – on the Outside Looking In

Earlier I relayed the chronology of events leading to India opening Ladakhi borders for tourism, which led to the arrival of NGO's into Ladakh in the late 1970's and early 1980's (see Chapter I and Chapter IV). In general, it seems that Ladakh's popularity increased on account of two major developments: one stemmed from the economic initiatives put forth by the national and state tourism departments, and the other from one Western activists committed to exposing the purported dangers of such initiatives. Regardless of cause and outcome, Ladakh's tourism flourished. From its inception, the tourism market was controlled almost exclusively by the J and K Tourism Department (JKTD). This control paralleled Ladakh's control by the Jammu and Kashmir State prior to Ladakhi's largely communal struggle to create the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council and respective seat in the Indian

Parliament. At the same time, as commercialism in the Main Bazaar continued to grow, a separate movement was established to preserve the ways of life that appeared to be disappearing.

Initially, the JKTD had no measures in place to regulate or even monitor travel operators. Lacking regulation, uneducated or unscrupulous tour guides spread erroneous knowledge which inadvertently influenced public interpretation of Ladakhi Heritage. Once JKTD began endorsing travel operators, it was industry recompense rather than product authenticity or heritage conservation that held their interests. One travel operator bluntly told me “[the early tour guides] would make things up as they went along.”⁷⁵ Although my interlocutors may have held biases against the JKTD, State interference indeed became increasingly heavy-handed. As a result, Ladakhi citizens moved to organize their own travel associations – TAAL, and eventually ALTOA - in order to standardize, regulate and control the tourism market. This move included lobbying the LAHDC to prevent non-Ladakhis from owning and operating tours.

In the mid-2000s, the J & K Tourism Department founded its own travel operator’s certification course requiring travel operators to sit for a test. This multiple-choice test took a scholarly approach to training travel guides and heavily emphasized Ladakh’s Buddhist past. Travel operators who refused to take the test (or who failed) were denied business licenses. I wondered as I read the test whether or not tourists and tour guides saw the construction around them as part and parcel to the transformation of Leh’s built environment. But the State was only one external or non-Ladakhi organization pressuring citizens to conform to certain standards. ISEC and its myriad off-shoots (LEDeG, The Woman’s Alliance of Ladakh) and later, increasing numbers of conservation architects applied pressure in the opposite direction. In retrospect, it appears Ladakhi citizens were merely the catalysts for supra-organizational

⁷⁵ Personal correspondence, ALTOA members; 9/2007

directives. In this regard, I understand the formation of autochthonous grassroots pro-commerce organizations as being influenced by and reacting to this history of State and INGO intervention.⁷⁶

Linking Guest House Regulation and Cultural Tour Narratives

As are many volunteer organizations in India, the independent, autonomous, local member associations that regulate the tourism industry are often taken-for-granted and operate behind-the-scenes; yet these organizations exercise power. Although their goals may be profit-oriented, they exist to enhance Leh's desirability as a destination. To my knowledge the groups themselves are non-profit, much like the taxi or bus drivers unions; moreover, their members may occupy both village-based and municipal government positions without issue. Guest house owners are among the wealthiest and most visible members in Leh society. Since their wellbeing depends largely upon the tourism industry's success, these groups are well-positioned to influence legislation within overlapping institutions (Alexander 2006; also see Ch. 2). Some CSOs now execute public works campaigns that might ordinarily fall under J&K state jurisdiction (and funding) – building and maintaining public toilets in the Main Bazaar, for example. In similar fashion, other public works such as the contentious creation of drains in the Old Leh Heritage Zone are carried out by well-established NGOs who work closely with, albeit independently from, the LAHDC.

Overlapping membership may compound implementation of directives aimed at improving infrastructure or regulating unchecked urban expansion. Public works campaigns are not the only concern for guest house owners and travel operators. These overlapping organizations are also intermittently involved with conserving Old Leh residences, but are more-so connected with efforts to regulate external facades in new construction around the Main Bazaar. To date, neither state nor local

⁷⁶ It is not possible within this particular project to explore the possibility or degree to which they mirror pre-existing community systems (or that these community systems can become like an HOA). Nevertheless, that remains an interesting question, especially to debunk the myth that tourism harms local systems.

organizations have been successful regulating commercial construction. Initial interviews with leaders of ALTOA reveal that the regulation of new residential establishments such as guest houses and hotels or the conservation, conversion and remodeling of previous structures has been largely successful. Interviews with conservationists, however, shed doubt on the parameters by which buildings are authenticated as traditional construction by these associations and how they become advertised as traditional Ladakhi homestays or hotels. My own observations point to practical, structural and aesthetic divergence from original dwelling spaces. Overall, the inconsistency of regulation and implementation combined with the tremendous variety of construction methods and materials complicates the expression and perception of an "authentic" built environment.

To complicate matters further, the CSO ALTOA began to require its member affiliates (tour operators) to complete the JKTD training class and heritage site certification exam. These training classes link State, NGO and CSO representations of space. Yet, just like individual homeowners (*cum* guest house business owners) seem to exercise agency with respect to building design, the similarity or difference of Ladakhi narratives rests on the shoulders of the individual tour guide. Without prompting from JKTD, ALTOA as a civil society organization has enforced institutional authenticity to the best of their ability, for although they may have power, they have no authority to do so. What they have accomplished has been carried out through mandatory registration of all travel organizations – excluding those operated by the Indian Tourism Department (and indeed every effort is made to oust these travel operators from the Leh market). This has forced the latter to affiliate with other villages and to stay on the move. It has also overseen the historical authenticity in which tour guides are trained. But these culture brokers seem determined to exercise free will and choice wherever possible.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ This is not a new development, either. I learned from an interview with the late Goba and former president of ALTOA Spalzin Goba that ALTOA was formed in 1996 as TAAL – the Travel Operators Association Ladakh (personal correspondence 2005) before reincorporating as ALTOA in the early 2000s. Two years later, according to my same informant, a similar Ladakhi organization of hotelier and guest house owners formed a small coalition to regulate and standardize pricing.

But when, exactly, did the JKTD begin regulating exterior facades? Moreover, did they act unilaterally? I sought the answer to this question by visiting the Evaluation and Statistics Department at the District Commissioner's Office, a tiny office located in an obscure and haphazardly-constructed business park relatively near the Polo Grounds. The records were incomplete and did not include information pertaining specifically to construction – even to building permits⁷⁸. Nor did the Department contain information on tourism beyond what percentage of GDP was derived from tourism industry.⁷⁹ Later interviews with JKTD officials proved more useful in this regard. I did, however, acquire demographic data on the Ladakhi population from the most current census (2000), and urban growth statistics. The only statistics I was able to obtain on guest houses and hotels merely track the growth of each class of accommodation from 1993 on (see appendix). I could find no written data on exterior façade regulation.

It was from interviews, then, that I surmised, with cultural conservation already in place, that cultural conservation and architectural conservation NGOs, and not local or state organizations, stood poised to preserve and portray their powerful narratives on Ladakhi Heritage. Recently-exiled from Tibet, the THF began work in Old Leh in 2005 with its President Andre Alexander at the helm. But this was neither Andre's nor his team members' first visit to Ladakh. One must remember that, until their office was created, members of the THF, like visiting scholars, stayed at guest houses or more frequently at the mainstay hotel *The Oriental*. From my spatial surveys, early guest house and hotel construction (1980s – 1990s) appears to be more in keeping with simple, traditional building styles and minimal ornamentation than later ornamental styles. Was it mere coincidence that, at the same time the THF began its first conservation series on the Lakrook House in Old Leh, hotel and guest house construction both peaked and became more ornate? My results were inconclusive; many homeowners I interviewed

⁷⁸ Those could be found in another department, and there was some disagreement between the government workers who were kind enough to try to assist me what and where that office might be.

⁷⁹ I learned that, because of Ladakh's sensitive geopolitical location, tourists have always been required to register their stay. For its own records, the JKTD has been counting the number of tourists entering into Leh since 1998.

seemed indifferent to Old Leh conservation efforts. Interviews with conservationists reveal that upper-level Ladakhi and Kashmiri state officials however seemed to value these efforts, at least in theory if not in praxis (Alexander 2006). Since these upper-level officials collaborate with conservationists and scholars to design travel operator training classes and establish parameters for new construction, it is reasonable to assume that some trickle-down has taken place.

Somewhere in between broad scholarly narratives about Ladakh's past and the specifics of a state certification exam lie a number of perceptions regarding Ladakhi authenticity. Those narratives are timeless, traditional, and constant, and fluid, hybrid and changing. I suggest that both conservation projects and the new construction projects utilizing non-Ladakhi skilled labor and imported materials can be considered traditional or authentic Ladakhi architectural heritage. That these civil society-linked heritage construction sites are subsequently represented in "edutainment" tours as authentic Tibetan Buddhist culture underscores representation concerns within NGO and CSO-led heritage schemes. While not solely influenced by the economic and material interest in tourism, when coupled with tourism and particularly global or world heritage rhetoric, Leh residents themselves may also experience a broadened sense of the value of place, of site. But notwithstanding conservation efforts, even the very physical characteristics of Leh have begun to change, adhering to those of a much broader scale and possibly signifying the permanence of cultural change.

JKTD – on the Inside Looking Out

I found my answer to the question of State and CSO intersection when interviewing the Assistant Director of the Jammu and Kashmir Tourism Department, Mr. Iqbal Muhammad. Mr. Iqbal Muhammad enthusiastically shared his opinions on conservation and guest houses. In fact, most of his answers to my questions involved as many anecdotes as they did official mandate. We code switched back and forth between English and Urdu as he began by describing his "*subse bahut bura makan*" (very

old family estate) in a neighboring village that he and his wife had chosen to “shift out” of in favor of constructing a new family estate. It seemed to me at the time that stories were told in Urdu, while opinions were given in English. His new home is plain, “safed” (white) and two-storied; “nothing fancy.”

We talked about guest houses and hotels and he said that the older ones (even many I saw in the construction process) fell outside the required parameters of traditional. “In 2006, there was a JKTD Initiative to regulate exterior facades to the traditional Ladakhi style.... Many [guest house owners] didn’t know about the Tibetan influence in their architecture, they have just been building this way because it is the way we do it. But now people do not build their own buildings like in the past.... The *Pagna Tutkul* [an ornamental carving on the door] is found in Kashmir and Turkestan [Chinese Central Asia] which is similar to the ‘Tibetan Qala’ that is also on the door.” Mr. Muhammad clarified that “there are no written or codified rules stating that something is or is not Tibetan, so the JKTD wishes to pass checks [issue building permits] within a 25 sqkm radius in Leh Town.”

To get a building permit, “one applies ... to the Building Permit Planning Commission through the Public Works Department. The chief engineer is the head administrator.” Then “there are a number of approvals. They must first go through the Notified Area Committee (NAE) and the [R&B?] in urban areas only like Gungless and Spituk. Then they must go through the PHE which includes 30 villages or so. The JKTD committee must approve [the design]. Then they must go to the Telsidar to get the NAC ‘No Objection’ Certificate.” In short, the Jammu and Kashmir Tourism Department has little to do with the building process and more to do with the standardization of exterior façades. I wondered about the extent of authenticity when the interior could be constructed from whatever materials a builder deemed necessary. Shouldn’t there also be some constraints on size to preserve the traditional or historical fabric of the built environment?



12. The Dragon Hotel under construction in 2006. Photo by author.

In 2006, I interviewed the foreman overseeing construction of the new 50-room Dragon Hotel, to ask if his building design fit the LHGHA requirements for traditional architecture. Mr. Muhammad, a Muslim Ladakhi and father of the president of the LHGHA explained to me that, yes indeed, the Dragon *is* a traditional structure because not only did it feature elaborately carved (and multi-tiered) *shinstok*, but he had employed a full-time craftsman from a rural village to craft the windows by hand (as opposed to machine lathing them as many other guest houses and hotels do). My survey of that space noted multiple building materials used on just one wall. Mud brick lay on top of kiln-fired brick, mixed in with a few concrete cinder blocks and concrete retainers; then all were plastered over with plaster of Paris for a neat finish. Surely this was not a Ladakhi custom (see chapter VIII). How, I wondered, would construction like that be approved?



13. A man carves decorative exterior adornments from a pile of lumber at the Hotel Dragon construction site. Photo by author.

Learning that many upper level leaders in ALTOA also participated in another voluntary organization known as the Ladakh Hotel and Guest House Association (LHGHA), I sought to understand how much sway these organizations had with the JKTD and/or Hill Council. Could one pass inspection by knowing someone in the Department? Mr. Muhammad told me directly, “[Hotel and guest house builders] should go through the government otherwise there will be conflicts. The associations have no legal binding even though they think they do.” I learned from a separate interview that favoritism had caused trouble with the Hill Council until the previous District Commissioner was transferred out of Leh. Evidently the transfer enhanced cooperation in business and tourism. Mr. Muhammad was of the opinion that ALTOA and LHGHA interfered with architectural regulation, and that if the two groups “supported [Jammu and Kashmir] fully, [they] could change the Leh Development Authority (LDA). The Hill Council’s most important document was the 1972 Tourism Act.⁸⁰ [Tour guides and guest house owners] should not listen to ALTOA.”

⁸⁰This Act officially opened Ladakh’s borders for tourism and placed no regulations on growth or construction.

Although there is no overlapping membership between the JKTD and ALTOA/LHGHA, there is overlapping membership between the voluntary associations and the Hill Council (LAHDC). The directors for tourism sit for only two years on the Executive Council for Tourism. The Councilor is elected every four years. According to my interlocutor, the station officer from Jammu and Kashmir is not concerned with the affairs of the Ladakhi Hill Council. That his statement was pejorative was perhaps indicative of broader concerns that the LAHDC should assume maximum autonomy and authority for regulating the public sphere and for conducting public works, rather than relying upon the state for assistance. "For example, the new chairman, the Telsidar, does not see that the public toilet is maintained. We must do this otherwise the tourist they will not want to come. It makes the place dirty. There should be a special councilor for tourism [because of] tensions like this between the JKTD and ALTOA. ALTOA boycott the Ladakh Festival (promoted by JKTD) and agitate and demonstrate with BSNL (the cellular phone company, also promoted by JKTD). But the General Secretary in the in ALTOA is in the Hill Council." This last statement indicated that unless affairs were taken out of the JKTD and redirected to the Hill Council, that ALTOA would continue being ineffective in its efforts to regulate travel.

Caught in Between

This matter of the boycott which I had heard about before is an example both of political entwinement and bureaucratic roadblocks. Those of us who have lived and worked and studied in India know that the bureaucracy can be one of the most frustrating aspects of life. Simple requests can take months, even years to be approved. For example: the THF headquarters in Old Leh had no facilities for officers and student volunteers to bathe. For four years, the THF repeatedly attempted to secure a permit to build a solar shower. If the permit was not granted within one administration, the organization was required to reapply after the Telsidar's reelection. While the THF's solar shower request may be the least of the Telsidar's concerns as president of the Notified Area Committee (NAC) responsible for

overseeing all new building permits in Leh Town, some THF members suggested that the NAC's refusal represented a reluctance to pander to THFs unabated meddling in the Heritage Zone.

At the Jammu and Kashmir Tourism Department, I am told the scene is much the same as in the NAC. Elections are held every other year. Each officer has his own idea of how to best promote tourism, including who to grant building permits for guest houses, hotels, and other commercial tourism-related establishments.⁸¹ In other words, the ability to build has much to do with who one knows. Contrary to the lack of overlap several years past, at the time I conducted my interviews, the Director of Tourism also happened to sit on the NAC. Still other NAC members come from the Public Works Department. With no written scheme, these men are single-handedly able to decide what goes up and what doesn't; what it's going to look like, and not; how tall it's going to be. ALTOA also has yearly elections, although if someone's doing a good job, then they're likely to stay in office *ad infinitum* barring resignation or death. Indeed, for the two years I investigated this matter, with the exception of the Secretary General, the officers remained the same. Even so, I heard complaints by members of ALTOA that their organization is weak and ineffective. Without JKTD and LAHDC (legal and financial) support, members found it next to impossible to bring about social change or to even carry out one of the many public works projects members envision. As well, members found themselves powerless against decisions made by the state to intervene in local affairs. These frustrations ultimately culminated in the boycott of the Ladakh Festival by ALTOA.

For as long as residents could remember, there had been an open-air square at the end of the Main *bazaar* where three major roads converged and made an abrupt turn up the valley. Framed by travel and trekking agencies and the long-standing German Bakery, the space was always one where residents could congregate and greet one another. Many a day I sat across the street at the rickety

⁸¹ There are no women in public office that I knew of.

mismatched table and chairs outside Dzomsza, sipping water or seabuckthornberry juice,⁸² where I would witness local men and women bumping into each other at the corner, exchanging a cheerful “Jullay!” (Hello, goodbye, thank you), and engaging in conversation. It was the appropriation of this public space by government officials which sparked intense conflict.

In 2008, the Ladakhi students of Chandigarh University had formed their own organization "the Ladakhi Students Association." Unfortunately, Ladakhi education operates in inverse relationship to economic opportunity – there are no skilled jobs to employ educated youth. Many young people therefore participate in Leh’s prodigious summer economy. Some operate or oversee Internet Cafes, and even formed a union to regulate prices in an effort to equally distribute the wealth. The more athletic and adventurous young men create indiscriminate trekking outfitters. One student-run coffee shop benefitted a locally-based educational foundation.⁸³ The point is that these enterprising youth often operated doing business as under the title of an organization; remittances from sales often go towards their collective cup.

This particular organization inspired unemployed Leh youth with lesser educational backgrounds to also form their own organization: the All Ladakh Unemployed Youth Association (ALUYA). In 2006, ALUYA had established an outdoor restaurant at the aforementioned corner, serving reasonably-priced, simple Ladakhi and Tibetan meals. A prime vantage point for gazing up at the palace against a bright blue sky, the public space catered to tourists in the summer but also provided a gathering place for Ladakhi youth and other locals. Unlike other businesses, ALUYA erected a giant tent over the space to shade customers from the sun physically altering the space by obscuring the mountain view. This corner location formed the basis of intense debate between ALTOA, the Jammu and Kashmir Tourism Department and their LAHDC affiliates. Flanked by the J&K State Bank, the site is located at the apex of

⁸² Seabuckthorn berry is one of Ladakh’s major exports and a prime source of vitamin C, a scarcity in the arid region.

⁸³ This shop at the lower *bazaar* had an espresso machine. Even though there were frequent power outages, the novelty of offering espresso attracted Europeans and Indians with a preference for coffee over tea, chess and reading over shopping. Thus, overpriced instant coffee was often heated on a single burner gas stove and served in the dark.

the bazaar, making it prime real estate. Once that transient structure was erected, it seemed inevitable that a more permanent one would follow.

Around the middle of August 2008, the NAC decided to appropriate rent funds from several nearby government shops to build a multi-story shopping complex in the open space. ALUYA and the bakery were closed down and demolition commenced. ALTOA complained loudly to the NAC, and the construction halted for a week. Then, without warning it resumed. This caused outrage among nearby business owners. My sense was that in addition to losing the space, they were upset that this government-funded complex could compete with and hurt their own small businesses. Many locals with whom I spoke joined ALTOA in its protest by boycotting the Ladakh Festival, a JKTD-engineered parade, having no religious or calendar significance for native Ladakhis, put on for tourist display only.

Performers are a motley troop, some in *gancha*, others in western dress. The parade commences with an exclusive traditional dance at the Dragon hotel and winds up Airport Rd. to the Main Bazaar- ironically at the corner site itself. For many years, ALTOA had been a major co-sponsor of the festival, and felt certain that their absence would halt both the festival and the construction. The protest, however, was unsuccessful. Within days, construction had commenced, proving that, indeed, volunteer member organizations were weak in the face of the state. With no codification of how these organizations should co-exist, and little membership overlap between it and other local associations, ALTOA does not influence the Jammu and Kashmir state or LAHDC governments. But when considered in the grand scheme of organizational edits and efficient implementation of directives, often the local CBO are the only effective programmers. Indeed it seems as though going small is big in Leh town.

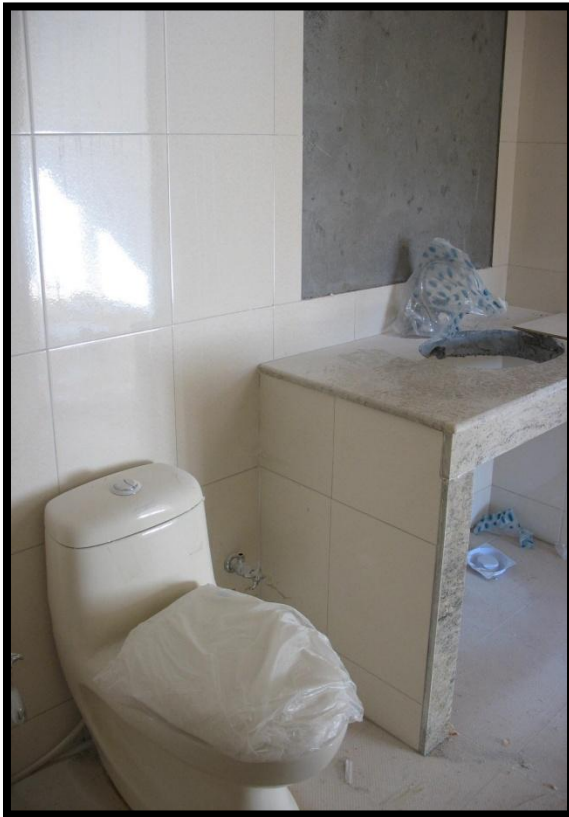
Accommodating Regulation Somewhere in Between

One day in late September, I fruitlessly searched the J & K Evaluation and Statistics Dept. and, later, the LAHDC Rural Development Office for copies of building permits. I had met a number of lower-level officials and talked to them about my project; I made phone calls, but no one could assist me with data on guest house construction. On the way back to Nazia Guest House, I received an unexpected phone call from Mr. Lobzang Rinchen, the same travel operator who three years prior had introduced me to the builder at The Dragon Hotel. A well-connected politician *cum* travel operator, he voluntarily offered to introduce me to a number of people I had hoped to meet. He tried to arrange for me to attend the All Ladakh Travel Operators Association (ALTOA) meeting the following Monday. Unfortunately, the president was not keen on my attendance as an outsider and foreigner. But the meeting proved more beneficial than I had hoped.

Mr. Rinchen was in the middle of building an enormous class-A hotel and took me to see it. We drove several kilometers up the valley, past Shanti Stupa, and up towards the side of the craggy mountain range separating Leh from neighboring Phyang. The hotel's colossal form inched closer and closer to us from the winding road. The hotel is grand; its accommodations were as world-class as its design and construction.



14. Druk Hotel under construction in 2008. Photo by author.



15. En Suite in the Druk.
Photo by author.

The Druk Hotel contains 100 rooms, approximately five of which are executive suites with stunning views of K2 and the Karakoram mountain range. There is a dining hall and restaurant as well as an entertaining space for cultural programs. Each room has an *en suite* bath complete with mirrored granite vanities, water-conserving flush toilets, and glassed-in showers with tiled surrounds. Although the Druk was only 70% complete when I visited, one could easily imagine its clientele. Starting at RS 3000 a night [\$100USD], affluent domestic tourists and large foreign tour groups would be the primary lodgers. Visitors would be greeted by an exterior façade constructed of hand-crafted, un-honed, grey granite stones. All of the windows and doors were to be adorned with elaborately detailed and pain-stakingly carved *shinstok*. Every centimeter of Mr. Rinchen's creation spoke to master craftsmanship.

This was not Rinchen's first experience with world class hotel building. As I mentioned previously, when we first met, he drove me down to the Dragon Hotel, then under construction, which belonged to a friend of his. Impressive in its own right, the Dragon contained 50 rooms, 4 floors traversed by elevator, a game room, underground parking, and a so-called traditional Ladakhi interior and exterior design. Crown mouldings were added to the executive suites. All rooms were joined by western-style attached bathrooms. The construction, like Druk, incorporated imported and local materials. I learned from the foreman that the Dragon would hold nightly traditional Ladakhi performances (and host the Ladakh Festival). I asked Mr. Rinchen if he planned any such performances, and he said "Oh yes, of course. It's what the tourists come to see."



16. Crown molding inside an executive suite at The Dragon Hotel. Pictured are the secretary of ALTOA (left) and Vice President of Ladakh Hotel and Guest House Association (right) also the Dragon construction Project Manager. Photo by author.



17. Druk *shinstok* in Ladakhi and Bhutanese style also contains the key fret similar to that in the Indus Guest House doorframe. Photo by author.

Outside, imported stacks of PVC pipe, heavy-duty lumber, and shiny slabs of polished marble surrounded the premises. The elaborate *shinstok* designs appeared to be several layers of different designs stacked upon one another. According to Mr. Rinchen, the designs on the first and second rows were Ladakhi and the third was Bhutanese.⁸⁴ Bhutan has *shinstok*, as does Tibet, but “not as fancy as Ladakh’s”. Rinchen rationalized this design by clarifying: “you know what the word *shinstok* means – ‘shin’ is ‘wood’ and ‘stok’ is ‘to layer’”. So layering *shinstok* is more traditional Ladakhi than incorporating any specific design. Further, the wood available in Ladakh is thin because of the type of trees. The local poplar trees (*Populus ciliata*) are extremely tall, but at full maturity, their trunks only average about 1 to 1.5ft in diameter.⁸⁵ Mr. Rinchen insinuated this made them an inferior carpentry choice for Druk.

In differentiating Druk’s *shinstok* from that of other buildings’, Rinchen explained that there is a problem with the machine-lathed *shinstok* ; it is “placed upon an exterior wood,” so that when snowfall and freezing winter temperatures arrive, “the wood will just pop off”. Instead, Mr. Rinchen imports his wood from the large conifer forests of Jammu and Shimla in Kashmir and incorporates them at least into the exterior structural supports for the windows, eaves, and overhangs. These are carved after installation rather than applied as a finishing touch. Other materials around the yard included window and shower glass and plastics imported from Mathura, Uttar Pradesh; pipes from Mumbai; granite (for exterior and interior applications) from Rajasthan. The stone, Rinchen prided, was mined locally in Leh.

⁸⁴ Rinchen had travelled a number of times to Bhutan and appreciated the beauty of their monasteries and palaces.

⁸⁵ Poplar plantations are popular in Ladakh and throughout the Himalayas due to their ability to withstand the difficult climate; their yields, however, are significantly lower than species in other climates (<http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/> accessed 6-11-12).



18. Imported PVC and other building materials stacked outside the Druk Hotel. Photo by author

Like conservationists, Rinchen complained that reliable and skilled masonry and carpentry was virtually impossible to come by in Ladakh. His stone masons and carpenters were also non-Ladakhi; high-quality work was expensive. To create a traditional *shinstok* pattern, he simply gave the craftsmen designs to copy. Stone masonry was less complicated, as masons had only to follow the building specifications. To carve one cornerstone is RS 125 [\$2.00USD], a middle stone is RS 70 [\$1.15USD], and a carved and finished end-cap runs RS 90 (\$1.50 US). Just one of the four-story building's four corners probably contained 100 or so cornerstones. The *shinstok* for his project ran between RS 1200 and RS 1400 [\$19.60 – \$22.90USD] per linear ft. for hand-carved pieces; machine-lathed is considerably less expensive. I estimated that for 100 windows, there must have been at least 600 linear feet of *shinstok* surrounding the hotel (roughly \$14,000 USD for carving alone).⁸⁶

The Druk's roof was crowned by a massive domed skylight unlike anything I'd seen in Ladakh. The Japanese architect and Ladakhi engineer had taken extra precaution against snow weight by

⁸⁶ (not taking into account corner rooms with two windows, non-guest rooms, doors, and the main entrance awning)

reinforcing this Plexiglas addition with rebar-reinforced concrete. Despite this anomaly, like so many other new buildings in Leh, the rooftop's concrete frame was filled-in with mudbrick in a number of places. Surveying the panoramic view, the surrounding plot was distinguished from a neighboring field by the ubiquitous stone retaining walls which separated one *kangchen* from another. I reflected on the irony of Rinchen's earlier statement that "building on the fields is bullshit."⁸⁷ In keeping with virilocal residence patterns, the land belonged to his father's family, but his *abale's* increasing age and weariness of agriculture had influenced Rinchen's decision to build there. Besides the hotel, two other houses occupied the plot. Rinchen's house was a modest 30-year old two-story adorned not by *shinstok* but by bundles of alfalfa stored on its flat rooftop.⁸⁸ The neighbor's recently built single-story house had very fancy *shinstok*; I commented that it seemed to emulate the Druk. Rinchen smiled and said: "Perhaps they will ask for customers."

Aside from the one engineer, the hotel's construction and operation would be executed by non-Ladakhis. Rinchen's friend ran a hospitality management school in Dehra Dun, Uttarakhand, and had promised to send good students. Thinking of the ALUYA youth, I wondered why he would choose to import workers rather than employ locals. "Ladakhis are lazy and cannot be properly trained. It is a problem to only employ Ladakhis for five months out of the year. I will bring in Nepalis because they are hard-working and good cooks." Rinchen also chose not to consult or involve family the design or operation. While his brothers and cousins are engineers, he "didn't care for their suggestions," so he had devised the design himself and had chosen an engineer who would execute his exterior designs in accordance with regulation and without complaint.

Each of the guest rooms would have a stunning view of the mountains. Accommodations would include flush toilets, glass-enclosed showers with tile surrounds, ventilation for the bathrooms, and

⁸⁷ I wondered what he meant by that: was the hotel built to alleviate his father's need to farm?

⁸⁸ Used to feed animals in the winter – perhaps a better marker of tradition than any sort of adornment, because aesthetics don't necessary speak to necessities.

giant boilers for hot water. This seemed inconsistent with the pan-Himalayan exterior features. Mr. Rinchen had been inspired by his extensive European travels. “[M]ost of my ideas come from there. I wanted to design a hotel that has completely modern facilities, but feels traditional, you know?” I noted that the desks which would be installed in each of the rooms boasted carved Greek frets or “key” patterns; each desk takes an entire day to carve. This, Rinchen stated, “adds to the traditional feeling of the place.” The headboards of each bed would be expensive silk; his world-travelled Bengali designer had recommended that he “keep the feel of the room as local as possible”. He trusted her cosmopolitan expertise and deferred to her on all matters.

Mr. Rinchen had no plans to move his business from the Main Bazaar into this newer, impressive edifice.⁸⁹ “I am very attached to that place. It is where I started from and I am very fond of it. Plus, it is centrally located and so everyone can come there. The Dalai Lama says that if something is good, we should accept it, and if something is bad, we should reject it. For example, Hemis [*gonpa*] is an important architectural monument and needs to be preserved for Ladakhis and for tourists. Hold onto your culture, because it is the most important thing.”

Legitimizing Efforts: Attaining Membership and Obtaining Certification

A week after my hotel tour, Mr. Rinchen summoned me to his office. I had asked to attend the upcoming ALTOA season-end meeting. He explained to me that “it was not possible because there are so many things talked about. If all the tourists come, then they will know what all we talked about.” He apologized, and then added “but I will explain to you what was said.” When the meeting was held, only 80 out of the 140 or so members were present. Although that still constituted a slight majority, Mr. Rinchen and others interpreted it as a lack of interest in Ladakhi commercial wellbeing. The first issue discussed was the “open space” on the Notified Area Committee (NAC) council. ALTOA members

⁸⁹ His friends tease him that his current Main Bazaar office is a “bathroom of a space.”

exerted significant enough influence on construction and planning that they felt as though someone from the organization should be represented in the council; what better member than a chairman? The next issue on the agenda was to plan in advance for the next travel year. They agreed to have a 15-day certification program prior to the beginning of the tourism season. They also planned to invite important foreigners to the inauguration ceremony.

The next issue was the controversy over tourism fees being used for the new shopping complex in the main *bazaar*. Most agreed that the JKTD was not using that money for the benefit of locals, as the locals would no longer be able to use that space themselves. They discussed the various agents who were responsible for allocating this money. This list included but was not limited to: the Telsidar, the PWD engineers and the J&K account head. It was agreed that the money should be kept under the NAC, since this council was comprised of Ladakhis. They also agreed that money should be collected from government spaces occupying Ladakhi lands, and that money should go to the maintenance of the footpaths in the amount of RS 3,000 to 6,000 annually.⁹⁰

On the issue of travel agencies and tour group registration, most members agreed that ALTOA, not the JKTD, should register travel guides since “everyone can get a certificate” from the JKTD. Haphazard certification of outsiders has resulted in the misinterpretation of Ladakhi sites and the diminishing of Ladakhi returns due to increased competition (much of it from Mumbai and New Delhi). Because there are now over 300 registered travel operators, only a fraction of which are represented by ALTOA, the general consensus that “ALTOA is weak” echoed throughout Mr. Rinchen’s office. Bitter, raised voices asserted opinions and cited cases where the organization had failed to empower its

⁹⁰ At this point we were joined by several other members who had attended the meeting, and who wished to continue the conversation with Mr. Rinchen. Two business men and one elderly Buddhist monk, an amateur scholar and influential LBA member, exchanged words in Ladakhi; I took note that several non-verbal gestures appeared to be aimed at me. Mr. Rinchen, I presumed, was arguing on behalf of my presence. I had earned his trust, and eventually gained rapport with the group; not only did the men consent for me to stay and listen to what became a heated argument, but they also began to directly address me. Just as I had done with the Director of the JKTD, I gave an earnest response when my opinion was asked for, and I made no secret of the fact that I had met with the Director. Some of the contents of the conversation I had with the Director I chose to omit from the conversation with the ALTOA members. As well, some contents of the conversation at hand are specifically omitted from this account by request of either the group or one of its members.

members or advocate for their concerns. Travel agents, Mr. Rinchen explained “should be ambassadors to our country. Instead, they do not trust one another, only compete for business.” He continued that without cooperation they can’t have clients or participate in ALTOA; “with such competition, a union should be strong.” If one limited the numbers of new licenses issued each year to curb the rampant growth, how would this be enforced?

This same individual proposed that trusted members of the Cyber Café Association led by members of the Ladakhi Student Association could write and print “official” letters to the JKTD.⁹¹ He also suggested ALTOA take their lead from the Taxi Union, whose strength was measurable in number and in action. “How to implement these things is the problem,” said one. “Funding is the problem,” said another, and he continued: “The Taxi Union depends on the gonpas. They pay to the Gonpa Association who checks a sheet to see [if they have gotten] payment. The travel agents should assert themselves, [but] instead the ponyman is the boss of the travel agents. [Only] the ponymen and the Taxi Union member[s] have certificates with the Gonpa.” Apparently, when trekkers are guided through historical sites by ponymen, they believe what the ponymen say regardless of the information’s accuracy. He insinuated here that in order to succeed, they would need to cooperate with other organizations in order to “pass the middleman”.

Others disagreed that Ladakhis should link with Indian travel agencies to share in the profits and regulate the industry, as it would preclude efforts to protect local travel agencies or ensure profit sharing. One man had called out: “The local is just a face – locals cheat each other.” Moreover, even if they should learn from district administrators how to lobby for rights that still wouldn’t solve the problem of how to get the Gonpa Association to check and make sure a person has a [ALTOA-trained] certificate. “How does the Gonpa Association check? What is the purpose of checking? The Gonpa Association doesn’t know about ALTOA – only TAAL” (TAAL, Travel Agents Association Ladakh, was

⁹¹ Some of these students were no doubt the educated children of ALTOA and LHGHA members.

renamed ALTOA in the mid-1990s). The opposite speaker nodded in agreement, but went on to imply that, regardless of competition between family and friends, social laws are stronger than the “real country laws”; people should therefore pay the organization respect. It was then brought to light that out of the 17 applications for certification with the JKTD, 26 were issued- a third more than formally applied. Only three were approved by ALTOA.

An old monk who had sat in relative silence the entire discussion asked why I wanted to listen to all of this. I explained that I had been interested in the relationships between conservation architecture and cultural tourism, and was interested in what Ladakhis considered their architectural heritage. Immediately the monk’s eyes lit up, and he volunteered a series of drawings on my yellow tablet illustrating the most important features in Ladakhi buildings. While Rinchen agreed that there were important features, this topic of architecture sent others from the room.



20. Rendering of *shinstok* and alfalfa stored on the rood of 18th century farmhouse.
Drawing by Donald Johnson.

Local businessmen experience many frustrations as they try to organize. Although Mr. Rinchen has considerable wealth and status, even he laments his inability to garner support from State and broader institutions. His efforts to connect visible members of society and facilitate interactions between members of different and sometimes overlapping organizations result in talk but no action. Organizational belonging within the tourism industry is analogous to a meshwork whereby members connect and adapt along different nodes in a constantly changing system. The overarching economic and political institutions which inform these processes buttress, structure and constrain members' agency; and yet those same institutions remain yet un-integrated. On a micro planning level, it appears as though the NGOs, CSOs and state mechanisms operate independently; but when citizens articulate their struggles to negotiate and influence affairs to their own ends, we can see where authority is exercised: at the regional and state level.

Organizational operations are not linear, nor do members of voluntary associations travel in straight, parallel, or uninterrupted lines of movement. Sometimes those paths intersect with a spark of synergy – ideas and capital combine and result in new innovations. As evidenced by myriad civil society organizations formed in 2008, those nodes operate as support networks for Ladakhis working to affect change in their favor. But as we saw in the Main Bazaar protests, these movements are often met with resistance as they collide with broader superstructures. In Leh Town's fledgling municipal infrastructure, officials struggle to balance satisfying the divergent needs of the populace, the tourism industry, and the State.⁹² Since their appointments are rotating and elected, an unpopular decision could result in failure to achieve reelection or subsequent appointments. The local combination and state regulation of different built forms like we saw in the Druk, Dragon, and other hotels, provides a tangible metaphor for the messiness of organizational life and the hybridization of Ladakhi culture.

⁹² Leh became an official municipality in 2005; like other small Indian towns, the government structure is fairly weak and ineffective (Alexander 2006).

CHAPTER VI: CONVERGING AND DIVERGING CONSTRUCTS: SOCIO-SPATIAL ANALYSIS OF ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE AT SACRED, VERNACULAR, AND COMMERCIAL CONSTRUCTION SITES

In this chapter, I explore and compare the construction of Ladakhi heritage at three different sites: sacred, vernacular, and commercial/residential. I wish that I could say that those categories are distinct from one another and are thus, neatly identifiable, but all socio-spatial institutions overlap in such a way that the only compartmentalization occurring is done so out of necessity. To this end, I demarcate each realm of life within a spatialized framework; but buildings don't speak for themselves. Hilda Kuper (1972) claims that sites have language and reading them reveals realms of meaning that occupants and users might not articulate themselves, but nevertheless create, enact, and embody through daily practice. In other words, human activity within these places defines and redefines them as sites for inquiry. The anthropologist's job is to understand the connection of activity to place and to connect those understandings to the big picture. This is what I do through various methods: observation, spatial survey, and interview.

CONVERGENCE AND DIVERGENCE: FROM TIBETAN MONASTERIES TO LADAKHI MOSQUES AND MONKS

Throughout this project, one of my main objectives was to understand what, if any, significant differences in built space could be observed between Ladakhis and their neighbors, the Tibetans in-exile. Having seen flyers around town advertising a Tibetan Walking Tour, I decided to join. So early one morning, I trekked down the mountain toward our designated meeting spot, a restaurant in the lower Bazaar I'd never heard of. I crossed the street at the Jamia Masjid to avoid the mass of day laborers who squatted by the narrow entrance into Old Leh drinking chai and awaiting their charges. I anticipated a bus or a jeep or some other form of transportation (as well as a tour guide) awaiting participants, but that was not the case. The streets were deserted save for myself, the workers, and scores of feral dogs, cows and donkeys nibbling at trash piles in the Main Bazaar. Eventually, I ran across several middle-aged

American women wandering about, and together we ascended a dark and narrow staircase to find the Upel Tibetan Restaurant located on the 3rd floor of an obscure shopping center down Old Fort Rd.

The five of us occupied various tables covered with red-checked vinyl tablecloths. No one spoke. A tall European named Gernot entered the room with the flyer and sat at my table, striking up conversation. After coffee and chai, we offered brief introductions. Gernot was in his late 20s, had just completed his medical degree in Austria, and was travelling the world before returning to complete his residency. He was well-versed in Mahayana Buddhism, which fueled his interest in the Walking Tour. We were joined by Indica, a 20-something Burmese native who hailed from the UK, Michael and Jasmine from France, Padma from Slovenia, and Kyung-so, a Korean national who had been living in Varanasi. Padma, a tall, dreadlocked girl in her mid-20s, was an environmental zealot. Self-named, she was in India studying Hindi and yoga. Michael, a 28 year-old Parisian father, was nearing the tail-end of his 6-week Indian adventure. Jasmine had come with her older sister and was interested in spiritual attainment. All these travelers had come to Ladakh on the Indian Buddhist tour circuit.

Kyung-so, on the other hand, was in her early 40s. She carried raw turnips and a pocket knife with her, and frequently cut them into sweet, crunchy strips to share. She was staying in Choglamsar (our destination) and studying at CIBA (the Central Institute for Buddhist Studies). Prior to that, she'd lived in Varanasi whilst transcribing and comparing the Sanskrit and Bodhik versions of ancient Buddhist texts. As a woman, it had been very difficult for her to gain access to the manuscripts. As a graduate student in the United States, she had found the academy unfulfilling, and had thus renounced all her material possessions and come to India to study. She laughed when I asked her what she thought about spiritual tourism. Indica was a self-proclaimed expert on Buddhism. Mahayana Buddhism is widely practiced on the Tibetan plateau. As a native of Burma (Myanmar) however, Indica's belief system followed closely the teachings of Theravada Buddhism. He frequently pointed out the flaws in Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism.

Tashi Rabgias, our guide, met us at a bus stand just outside of Choglamsar. The educated, first generation Ladakhi-Tibetan introduced himself, explaining that his parents had escaped Tibet in 1962 by traversing ancient overland trade routes in the mass Tibetan exodus to Ladakh. He expressed great dissatisfaction that persons such as himself “have no identity... no official status in either Ladakh or India” and must reapply for certification and registration as a Tibetan-in-Exile every 6 months. He also expressed dissatisfaction at the roadblocks he had encountered trying to start his own business. A young woman had guided us to our minibus and accompanied us on the journey to Choglamsar. Tashi apologized for not meeting us in Leh himself. He was evidently banned from doing so.

The Walking Tour operated on a donation-only basis. Tashi’s attempts to form his own tour had been thwarted by an ALTOA action committee who had on more than one occasion threatened him in person and on his mobile phone. Only Ladakhis, and not Ladakh-born-Tibetans-in-Exile can own a business or land. ALTOA’s union, according to Tashi, consists only of Ladakhi and Kashmiri Muslim travel agencies. He claimed that, in addition to competition between themselves, the Ladakhi faction also competes for tourism with the Tibetan faction because the Ladakhis promote themselves as “Little Tibet.” The Ladakhis alleged he was taking 40 or so people on each of these walking tours and considered this stealing their business. He professed that Tibetans were very poor. Most didn’t own their shops, per se, in Leh’s various Tibetan Handicraft marketplaces, but rather had rented the stalls from government agencies which underwrote them. The same climate affected his business, and thus Tashi operated The Walking Tour of Choglamsar doing business as Himalayan Adventures, in order to stay under the radar.⁹³ These introductions set the stage for our trip to Choglamsar, and to the Dalai Lama’s summer residence and temple.

⁹³ The Himalayan Adventures owner was a young Ladakhi man who was a personal friend of Tashi’s and was sympathetic to the Tibetan cause.

His Holiness The Dalai Lama's Residence

Once in Choglamsar, we crossed a large open field dedicated to the annual birthday celebrations for HH the Dalai Lama, who visited for the first time (and the last time to-date) in 2007. The flatness of the Indus floodplain did indeed make for excellent, albeit muddy, celebration grounds. In the far corner of the field stood a large three-story complex: the HH Dalai Lama's summer residence, Thagchokling Dharma and Retreat Center. At the top of His Holiness' website, a large banner reads "General Travel Advice on Ladakh (Little Tibet)" (<http://www.thagchokling.de/tipps-en.html> accessed 1/23/14). The brand new structure with its circular driveway, concrete fountains and lush landscaping resembled an upscale hotel. The edifice bore features of Chinese pagoda-style construction, and a resplendent amalgamation of decorative features and textures. Its whitewashed walls were barely visible in between large, rectangular wooden-framed windows. Gaudy golden cornices with fringe-like fascia separated each story of the building. Four columns with lacquered crimson bases, golden flutes and capitals, ensconced the crimson double doors of the main entrance. Above another golden overhang, a windowed balcony buttressed wooden moldings simulating carved rafters and ceiling joists. This entablature had been assembled after-the-fact, resembling what Hall (1966) would call an applied decorative attribute rather than a structural attribute. In other words, unlike other Pan Himalayan structures whose decorative moldings serve to support the building, the carvings on the ends of this building are simulacra - made to look as though they are supporting the structure. This was a common element in many of the newer structures I observed throughout Leh.



21. The HH Dalai Lama's summer residence, Thagchokling Dharma and Retreat Center. Choglamsar, Leh District, Ladakh.

The interior space boasted carved wooden paneling on floors and ceilings while glass menageries of bodhisattvas and rinpoches of ancient times adorned the walls. Greeting rooms bore standard floor seating mattresses covered with brightly woven rugs; these rested alongside conventional couches embroidered in colorful brocades. *Thankas* hung on every wall; the eyes of dragons and fierce-looking demons followed us as we exited the building. After a brief tour of the first floor, our group sat in front of the large shrine at the front entrance. Some group members prayed; some took photographs; Indica engaged Tashi in an argument over rinpoche authenticity. After some time, Gernot decreed the men's philosophical debates were wasting others' time and we moved on.

From there, we walked across the main road towards the refugee settlement. Passing a large *mani* wall, we observed the hundreds of stone tablets chiseled in Bodhik the prayer and mantra *Om*

Mane Padme Om. My group found this wall spiritually stimulating, laying hands on the rocks to absorb spiritual energy. Facing south towards the Silk Road – and towards Tibet - there were no high snow-capped peaks or inspiring vistas. Off into the distance, the low, brown, undulating Himalayas inspired our guide to speak about thousands of years of slow, overland travel and to recount the tribulations of the Tibetan exodus. In the foreground, Choglamsar held little aesthetic appeal for someone hoping to observe Tibetan architectural heritage. I saw no pattern, creative detail, or discernible adornment. Although colorful prayer flags flew from the rooftops, few of the small, square earthen shacks were even whitewashed. The streets of Choglamsar were all but empty. Children played in a man-made canal, the only source of fresh water beyond the well taps drilled deep into the earth at great expense.

However modest in appearance it may have been (and, according to our guide, the least-organized of all the Indo-Tibetan refugee settlements), I learned that the refugee camp was not without resources. Choglamsar was intended as a temporary nomadic settlement for those who were unable to reach Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh, thus the lackluster domiciles. In the late 1960s, a small grant from HH The Dalai Lama matched contributions from the Indian Government to hastily construct housing before the winter. Since then, foreign, mostly European NGOs had raised hundreds of thousands of Euros towards Choglamsar's development, which included infrastructure, schools, healthcare clinics, and handicraft workshops. Members annually volunteered countless service hours in education and medical care. In and around the settlement, the funding had contributed to the construction of the gigantic prayer wheel and 50ft. wall displaying a series of 2ft. prayer wheels. These funds were also supporting the construction of a modern residential complex set away from the primary settlement. The original homes, however, had remained the same – a testament to limited resources.⁹⁴

My thinking at the time was that it would have made more sense for Tibetan people to congregate and build around a preexisting Ladakhi Buddhist *gonpa*. But I increasingly began to sense

⁹⁴ They remained the same until the flood of 2010, which I will address in the conclusion of this paper.

both from comments that Tashi made and from observing a general lack of interaction between Tibetans and the Ladakhis who I knew that Tibetans in-exile were not necessarily welcomed into Ladakhi society. Moreover, the Tibetans, under the direction of HH The Dalai Lama, needed solidarity and visibility – a place to call their own. For as they fled their ancestral homes, the physical representation of their community – Lhasa, Tibet – was being systematically destroyed and reconstructed by the Chinese. How better to answer that call then by building new structures signifying the continuation of the Tibetan people? What I came to understand that summer was that a building's age doesn't necessarily endorse its importance. Moreover, Tibetan Buddhists and Ladakhi Buddhists were not one and the same. And so the paradox emerged: why would Ladakhis hold onto the brand "Little Tibet"? Was it a marketing technique alone, and if so, what evidence could the built environment lend to answering this question?

OTHER CONVERGENCES: SACRED SITES AS COMPARATIVE MODELS

Throughout this thesis, I have considered community based organizations, non-governmental organizations, and other socio-political organizations to be heritage construction sites. Whether community-based, non-governmental, or state institutions, multiple layers of human interaction constitute processes of social organization. The construction, continuation and extension of these processes constitute a habitus, both by virtue of social interaction and by way of urban regulation. I also understand the construction of heritage in terms of the built environment. My central concern here is vernacular, not sacred, structures. But just as I salute the tension between structure and agency, I acknowledge that the division between the sacred and mundane is more complicated than the simple binary of temple and home. Homes showcase myriad social interactions and the intersection of multiple social structures; the practice of visiting neighbors on religious holidays provides a prime example of

communal interactions revolving around the home.⁹⁵ That most families, both Buddhist and Muslim either have prayer rooms in their houses or designate a special space for daily prayers further disrupts this dichotomy.

I have asserted throughout this dissertation that too many architectural and art experts focus on monumental architecture in Leh – Buddhist monasteries, *chortens*, shrines, etc, – and too few on ubiquitous dwelling places or other sites of quotidian interaction. Most conservators are published scholars; their fine work cataloging or restoring the muraled walls of sacred structures has influenced local and state interpretations of heritage, raised awareness of the importance of cultural heritage, and inspired construction of new vernacular structures (not to mention saved buildings from certain collapse). But to what degree do Buddhism, and particularly the *gonpa* itself, influence Ladakhi built heritage? What of Islamic mosques and Christian churches? Why would some structures and conventions be thusly credited as traditional Ladakhi while others are scarcely mentioned? Perhaps the answer lies less in the built environment than it does in the interpretations and emphasis paid to them by conservationists and tourism. Both industries are informed and motivated by Western interests, but this does not preclude or prevent transculturation within their respective environments.

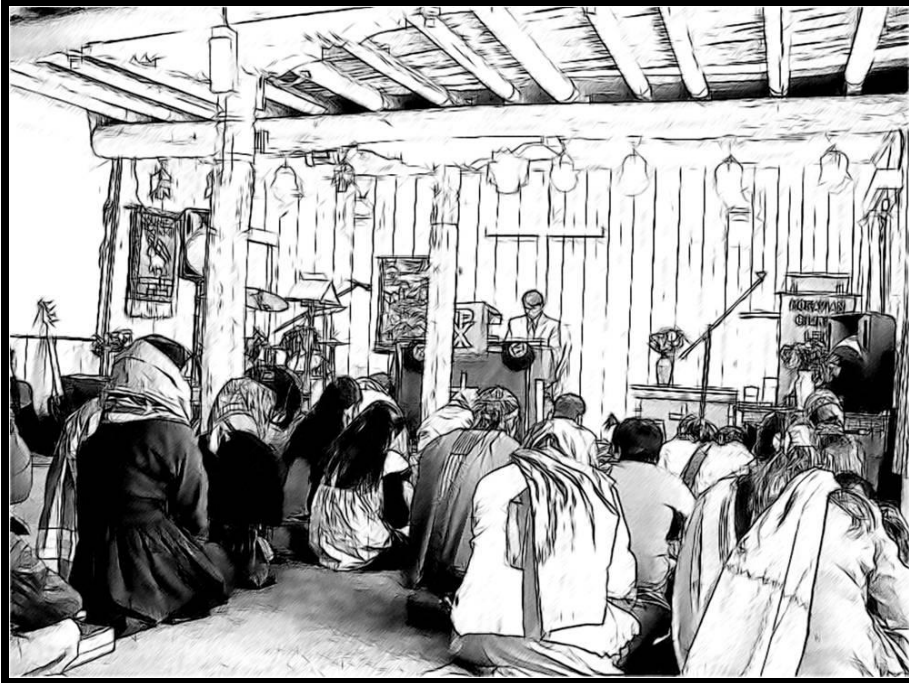
If in fact Ladakhi Muslims and Christians also take part in constructing Ladakhi heritage, their homes and places of worship are also part and parcel to Ladakhi social organization and socio-spatial interaction. In this chapter I present an analysis of three sacred structures I visited in an effort to understand both the convergences and divergences of the built structures themselves and the practices held therein. I then offer a comparison of three homes – both solely residential and mixed residential/commercial use - belonging to Buddhist and Muslim families of very different means. I will

⁹⁵ For women, the home is perhaps the focal point of their lives as their prayers, their childrearing, and their homemaking – much of which involves caring for family and animals- takes place in the domestic sphere. The gendered aspect of this project is one which more careful consideration could be paid.

argue that architectural heritage and personal preference are predicated not only on religious affiliation, community organization, or state regulation, but also on the ability to choose.

The Moravian Church

Just up from the Main Bazaar, a Moravian Christian church lies hidden behind compound walls. The red metal gates bear a white cross on the right and the Moravian lamb, shield, and flag on the left. Passing through the gates, one follows a wide pathway in between two non-descript buildings. In front of the path sits another two-story living space which resembles a western-style inn. It is painted a cheerful yellow and white and bears no exterior ornamentation. Turning to the left, the path leads through a flower garden and up to the church itself. The church's modest one-story exterior is freshly white-washed; the roof bears a row of wooden paneling. A steeple and cross also bore this wooden paneling, as do the heavy wooden shutters covering the small windows characteristic of rammed-earth structures. Although the additions of this wood paneling separate it from other buildings in the region, beneath the exterior façade the building's roots are easily detected.



22. Moravian Church, Leh, Ladakh. Rendering credit: Donald Johnson

Climbing a small staircase, the narrow foyer offers benches to sit and shelves for shoes. The interior of the church is small and simply decorated. I recognized the building's bones at once. Built in the mid to late 1800s, the church epitomizes Pan Himalayan architecture. The low ceiling is made of exposed *talus* and *dungmas*. The interior is supported by several rows of *kas* (see opposite illustration). Three rows of pews line either side of a small walkway in the back of the room, but most people choose to sit on the floor in front of a stage that stretches across the front of the room. Men sit on the left hand side of the room, and women on the right. The men, Ladakhis, Indians of mixed descent, and Westerners are mostly wearing business-casual Western-style clothing. Most Ladakhi women are wearing *shalwar kamiz*, although some older women wear *goncha*. All Ladakhi women are wearing headscarves. I recognize one of these women as the owner of the Paul Guest house who I met during the Iqbal's Eid celebration. The Western women wear mostly hiking gear, although some of the younger women who are on missionary trips also wear *shalwar*.

A drum set and several guitars take up most of the right hand side of the stage, the pulpit is located just off-center stage left. A wooden altar in the background boasts the prepared communion. Bright flower offerings line the stage all around. I attended Sunday service regularly; nothing in particular about the service really stood out to me as unique with the exception of the hymns. There were Ladakhi compositions and Christian hymns translated into both Ladakhi and Urdu. The Ladakhi hymnals were written in Bodhik and in English, but not in Devanagari or Nastaliq. Pages with the hymn selections for that week were also circulated amongst the congregation. The Ladakhi hymns were transliterated in English. Every so often, an Urdu hymn would also be added to the song list. The translation and transliteration of songs into three different languages is likely a common occurrence in places familiar with Christian missionary activity.

Shey Mosque



23. Interior of 17th century Mosque at Shey showing arched, rather than square, doorways, and simple but clearly visible *ka*. Photo credit (www.tasveerghar.net).

In 2007, I was told by a senior official in the J and K Tourism Department about an ancient mosque near the village of Shey (See Chapter V – LAHDC publication). Knowing the history of the region- that the village of Shey was the official home of the Namgyal family until the mid-1600s when the power structure shifted and the Leh Palace was made the official capital of Ladakh- I doubted how ancient this structure could actually be. But the fact that the mosque was very old and yet still in use was interesting. I went to Shey. The mosque was a tiny white structure located down a dirt road and behind a walled, gated enclosure. It had no minarets, but its small dome boasted a lone green flag with the signature white crescent moon and star. The single-story structure resembled every other building of its period, with thick rammed-earth walls and carved ceiling joists terminating on the exterior of the edifice.

The building's four small windows were unadorned except for their respective sets of wooden shutters. However, two *ka* supported the roof-like awning protecting the building's entrance. Inside, there was a giant fabric partition in the middle of the room attached to the massive *ka* supporting the ceiling joists. Unlike the red ones in Buddhist homes and temples, these were painted green. Ceiling tiles had been affixed to the *tal* and *dungma*. I noticed that several of the tiles along with their adjacent walls sported water damage. No one was able to tell me what materials the roof was made of, but from the outside it did not appear as though any modifications had been made to protect the establishment from rain damage. To the left, several men dressed in *pajama kurta* sat silently. None of them appeared to be doing *namaz* or any other sort of ritual practice. On the right side of the divide, three or four women also sat silently. Another entered shortly after me and prostrated herself three times, which is the customary practice for Buddhists entering a shrine.

Later, I discovered that the mosque was indeed an ancient structure. It is credited as the first mosque in the Himalayas, erected in the 14th century by a Muslim leader whose name varies from Shah-

I-Hamdani to Mir Syaed Ali Hamdani to Hazarat Meer Sayeed Ali Hamdani.⁹⁶⁹⁷ In the late 1380s when Shey was still the royal capital of Ladakh, a terrible flood devastated homes in the region. Hamdani was requested by the then king to come to the aid of the people, so he passed through Shey and prayed at the Indus River near Shey. The people at the time credited Hamdani with not only saving them, but also with laying the first ground stone of the mosque's foundation. By all accounts, Hamdani was granted sainthood by the Namgyal family and by residents of the region. Now the mosque is revered as a Sufi shrine. The local belief is that prayers offered to God by persons of any faith will be answered. Much attention has been given to the mosque quite recently by tourism agencies, the LAHDC, the J & K State, and conservationists.

Phyang Gonpa and Village Dwellers

When Yi Fu Tuan (1989) mentions that choice is limited in non-literate and folk societies, he essentially means that people have to make do with whatever is at hand. The form and arrangement of dwellings, for example, "are constrained by the availability of local materials, the nature of the local climate, and the socioeconomic facts of life" (Tuan 1989: 28). This means that people build with whatever is on hand and live according to whatever means are at their disposal within a broader social structure. In this next section, I offer a number of connections between means and choices with respect to building preferences. I contend that the economic ability to choose materials and construction techniques bears weight with locals. Transcending the constraints of the natural environment and

⁹⁶ references include: <http://anjumanmil.com/shey-masjid> The official website of the Leh Islamic Society; Ladakh Past and Present by Prem Singh Jina; and the Greater Kashmir news network, July 10th, 2007 <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2007/Jul/10/cec-lahdc-unveils-memorial-of-historic-mosque-at-shey-15.asp>.

⁹⁷ the final naming of Hamdani as Hazarat is interesting, as there are a tribal people known as the Hazara who occupy much of Central Asia along the Tibetan Plateau. Whether or not the Kashmiri press gave this name intentionally is unknown to me, as the only account I have found of Hamdani comes from the amateur scholar Jina. Most accounts credit Jina with this knowledge. The Greater Kashmir press, however, may also credit the famous oral historian Abdul Ghani Sheikh who spoke at the mosque's consecration as a site of historical significance.

diverging from traditional building practices further affects conservationist sentiment vis-à-vis Ladakhi builders and built heritage.

In 2007, I accepted an invitation to visit Phyang *gonpa* and to stay with my monk friend Tundup's family in Phyang village. Inviting me was a gesture of good will, but one that concerned me as I knew Tundup's family was of low means. Tundup had been one of 8 children; his parents had gifted him to Phyang *gonpa* in order to gain merit, but also because they couldn't afford another mouth to feed⁹⁸. Regardless, I accepted the invitation. I rented a small, sputtering 150cc. Yamaha to make the meandering mountain voyage to Phyang. Tundup had arranged for me to meet with the senior monk in charge of building maintenance and new construction. He also offered to translate from Ladakhi to English, as he needed the practice, but most of the translations were made into Hindi.⁹⁹

According to the senior monk, the western portion of the monastery was deteriorating. Attempts to buttress its crumbling walls with layers of concrete had only added weight to the structure, threatening it further. The construction of new monk housing was underway on the northern end of the building. From foundation to roof, the entire development was executed by monks; an engineer had only assisted in designing each phase. The building was as modern as any I had seen in Leh or in Choglamsar. According to the monk in charge of construction, the new one was better than the old. He thought it would be better to do away with the old part of the *gonpa* altogether, rather than try to preserve the structure. However, none of the tourists or the tourism association would stand for this. As Tundup explained, "Many people are coming to the *gonpa* telling monk how to fix their building."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ I understood that gifting one's child to the monastery came with a reciprocal agreement; the *gonpa* would care for the child, and in exchange, the child would one day see to the spiritual needs of the village. A sister had been likewise sent to a convent. Tundup had rebelled against this arrangement, running away on a number of occasions only to be returned to the *gonpa* to face his master. I listened as he expressed the difficulties he faces being a monk, and the ever-dwindling stock of young men joining the order gives novices leverage against their masters.

⁹⁹ I had prepared for this, bringing along an English/Hindi dictionary and a Ladakhi-English-Urdu dictionary to ensure as little as possible was lost in translation. I wrote down several words and phrases as I understood them in English, and I now regret that I had not written them in Hindi.

¹⁰⁰ I found it ironic that new monk housing was under construction, when I'd just been informed of the dwindling monkhood. Perhaps this building would be used for accommodating more than just monks?

This reminded me of a recent conversation with conservationist architects in Leh a week prior. They had decried the shoddy craftsmanship of the monks' attempt to preserve the structure. One British architect in particular bluntly stated that the monks were ignorant of basic architectural principles, wondering how these uneducated natives could be expected to properly execute a task that should be saved for the experts. After this outburst he recanted; it wasn't all the monks' fault. Concrete was a huge problem. Inexpensive, readily available, and popular, it became a default where they should actually use *markalak* instead. Furthermore, the monks wouldn't have begun using concrete on their own. The Archaeological Survey India (ASI) had also used these same techniques in efforts to preserve the small *gonpa* associated with the Royal Palace at Shey, just across the Indus valley from the Shey Mosque. They had also, according to my THF consultants, "completely ruined" the ancient Alchi *gonpa* with their concrete handy-work. This was a common complaint which I had heard from virtually every NGO conservationist I encountered. Another example pointed to their disapproval with both monk and national.

On a working trek earlier that month, Andre Alexander, student volunteers for the Tibet Heritage Fund and I had hiked the ruins of the Shey royal complex, climbing through crumbling battlements and towers before reaching the palace and *gonpa*. There, the conservationists and volunteers had loudly criticized the state-funded ASI, claiming that their preservation efforts did more harm than good. Andre pointed out a number of sites where concrete had been used to seal cracks caused by water damage, or to shore up collapsing walls. One wall in particular had nearly one-third meter of concrete applied until the ASI finally built an additional concrete wall to support the concrete-reinforced wall which had continued to degrade over time. The weight of the concrete put considerable strain on the building's foundation; as a result, the entire structure seemed suspended in space, clinging to the side of the cliff. Unlike mudbricks, concrete is inflexible; if there was an earthquake, the entire structure would crack and possibly collapse. The problem, explained Andre to the students was that the

ASI are archaeologists and engineers, not architects and conservationists. They had ruined Alchi; they would ruin Shey or anything else they touched. The so-call improvements at Shey had been endorsed by the head monks of the All Ladakh Gonpa Association (ALGA), in effect etching into stone concrete's superiority to mud.

It is not surprising that the monk overseeing construction at Phyang ordered the use of concrete for both the preservation of the west wing and for the new monks' headquarters. What confused me was his sentiment that the old portions of the *gonpa* were unimportant. How could the monks care so little about a landmark so steeped in heritage, so permeated by their prayers and the prayers of previous generations? A later conversation with Diskit Dolker, a young Buddhist Ladakhi and local activist who held a master's degree in urban planning and who worked closely with the THF on the Old Leh Town Initiative (OLTI), cleared some of this confusion. I interviewed the conservatively-dressed Diskit one afternoon in the open space by ALUYA and the German Bakery, seeking to understand the working relationship between the THF and local activists like herself.¹⁰¹

According to Diskit, there was a general lack of interest in Old Leh conservation efforts. Ladakhis were content, it seemed, to allow their grand estates to fall into disrepair, preferring instead to either rent out, remove, or replace the edifice with a new concrete (*pukka*, cooked) building. Was it that they had no money to repair their homes? The THF would match their contribution. It was more likely that many simply desired new homes. "Many people do not want to hold onto the old," she said. "We are taught that His Holiness the Dalai Lama does not mind deterioration- let the *gonpas* and the houses fall into oblivion, he says. It is better to build new structures because clinging to the past represents attachment. Attachment then leads to *samsara* - suffering - and interferes with the ultimate goal in Buddhist practice which is to go beyond the cycle of birth and death." And indeed, people become attached to places. So it makes sense to let them go.

¹⁰¹¹⁰¹ I don't think that Diskit would consider herself an activist; I use that term to describe her active role in mediating between NGOs like the THF, the LADHC, and homeowners in Old Leh.

Back in Phyang, Tundup saw me off to mother's house for my overnight stay. Tundup's mother served *chawal dal* (rice and lentils); the rice was poor quality and had rocks; the bland peas lacked salt or spice. *Tsampa*, a hearty gruel made from mixing barley flour with water, was much cheaper and more readily available, but guests in any home were afforded the best a family had to offer and foreigners were presumed to prefer continental cuisine over Indian and Indian over Ladakhi.¹⁰² Tundup's mother did serve a salty *susma* (Ladakhi butter tea) made from the family's yak's milk rather than from cow's milk, thus accounting for its rich flavor. I had heard stories that in places like the Chang Thang, Ladakh's nomadic peoples the Changpa would bury their butter and leave it to ferment for years, until it turned a repugnant orange color. The more important the guest, the more fermented the *susma* one received.

The family accommodated me in newly-built *shelkang*. Their home was neither old nor new. A simple courtyard divided the living space from the composting toilet from the animal manger. Rooms had been added on as needed. The materials were roughly hewn and the construction did not seem sturdy. I thought of the floods that had demolished most of the Phyang valley homes the summer before. Tundup explained that his family had managed to raise enough money from the barley harvest to add a *puja* room on the roof of the single story home. We climbed the side of the house, and he proudly displayed it to me. The family had lived in Phyang for at least 500 years, and many of the relics they had were quite old. I had already seen the family's *Guru Lakhang* shrine, and some of the treasures dated from that period- the 1400s (see Chapter III). These were covered and stowed away from special occasions. The other relics were stored in new wooden cabinets with candle lanterns and silk flower garlands beside framed pictures of HH The Dalai Lama. But the addition itself was poorly constructed of thin plywood and mudbrick. Although the CGI roof would likely protect its contents from the elements, the rest of the structure was questionable. I thought it interesting that, although their ancestral relics were precious enough to be preserved, the family would prefer to build a new rooftop shrine (emulating

¹⁰² Since I was a foreigner, it was assumed that I would prefer Indian *chawal dal* to Ladakhi *tsampa*.

wealthier Ladakhis) rather than spare the expense maintaining the Lakhang shrine. Their choice was clear: they were determined to build new, despite the cost.

Tundup's older sister lived on the periphery of Spituk village in the middle of the alpine desert. Short of stature and dressed in a worn *shalwar kamiz*, *A-che* timidly smiled and did not return my eye contact when introduced. She chirped a few sentences at Tundup, who promptly rushed out the door and returned with several eggs in his robes.¹⁰³ She served us weak, unsweetened black tea followed by a few fried eggs on top of poor quality rice and chapatti from her morning meal. As we ate, I looked around the two-room home. A hole in the roof surrounded by layers upon layers of soot indicated a wood-burning device occupied the main room during winter months. It appeared as though cloth once covered the ceiling joists and crossbeams, which were comprised of rough-hewn, misshapen pieces of wood; now all that remained were shredded tatters of fabric. The central support beam was no more than a handscraped poplar branch. *Yeh ka hai?* (Is this a *ka*), I asked quietly? Tundup's negative headshake and tightened facial expressions indicated that no, the pillar was not a *ka*. I wondered why. Was it the absence of an ornate capital at the top of the column; had the home not been sited according to Buddhist cosmology; was he just altogether too embarrassed to answer in the affirmative? One thing was certain. From a practical standpoint, the central pillar of this home still fulfilled its function: holding up the roof. I also noted that there was no composting toilet adjacent to the small, homemade mudbrick home, but rather a pile of discarded lumber, CGI, and cardboard which had been fashioned into a makeshift privacy screen.

Tundup's family house in the village and his sister's out in the barren desert show how dwellings are constrained. Certainly the environment influences home design. Firstly, the materials that traditional peoples use to construct their homes are fashioned (cultural) out of the environment (natural). In many ways, this serves to bond people to their environments, arguably negating the

¹⁰³ a-che is Ladakhi for elder sister

dichotomy between inside and outside, indoors versus outdoors. In the absence of synthetics and imported materials, the physical environment – and particularly the climate - also constrains indigenous settlement patterns. Building compact, low-ceilinged dwellings with small windows and doors helps residents retain heat in the cold winters; building with mudbrick creates enough porosity that a summer’s night breeze cools the body for sleep. However, economic constraints complicate these practices.¹⁰⁴ Consider this analogy between buildings and food: when imported materials are available but unaffordable, builders (and cooks) make do with lesser quality components to simulate a desired aesthetic. If the materials cannot withstand the elements, then the home could ultimately be uninhabitable. However, this compromise may also encourage creativity.

DIVERGENCES: GUEST HOUSES, BUDDHISTS, AND MUSLIMS

In this section, I discuss Ladakhi heritage, anchoring my narrative in the two rooms I rented in Leh. The first was located in the scenic Lakrook Garden Guest house in Sankar, where I stayed during my 2005 and 2006 visits, the second in the municipal Nazia Guest House in upper Tucksha, where I stayed during my 2007 and 2008 fieldwork. From that vantage point, I provide a socio-spatial survey of daily family life in these two guest homes, one Buddhist, the other Muslim, respectively. In my descriptions, I differentiate between the physical structures of these traditional-looking and non-traditional-looking households to show that, contrary to popular belief, Ladakhi heritage – traditional or modern - is not synonymous with any religion, be it Buddhist or Muslim (or Christian for that matter). The Lakrook and Iqbal families share a common matrilineal relative, making it possible for me to journey back to the home of my original stay with Nazia Iqbal, the daughter and namesake of the guest house where I completed my fieldwork. This visit convinced me of the confluence of tradition and modernity.

The Lakrook Garden Guest House

¹⁰⁴104 And as I will discuss in the conclusion, changing weather patterns also change these patterns.

Lakrook Garden Guest House rests up in the Leh valley overlooking Sankar, a small gonpa neighborhood with a stunning mountain view. Winding up the footpaths from the Main Bazaar, the most direct approach to Lakrook actually traverses the gonpa grounds. Meandering irrigation canals and parallel pathways lead past an enormous *chorten* and large stuccoed wall to the right, which is flanked on the left by an open-air interior space. Within this enclosure hangs a 9ft-tall prayer wheel where monks and laypeople circumambulate and chant. Buddhists believe that these sacred objects, *chortens* and prayer wheels alike, should never be passed on the left; furthermore, deliberately passing them on the right is thought to be not only respectful but auspicious. Thus, foot traffic flows through the space.

The Sankar monastery is a modest structure from the outside. Three stories in height, it blends seamlessly into the surrounding homes and landscapes. The resident monks keep its exterior freshly whitewashed, even though the red, yellow and black pleated parapets surrounding its black-outlined windows are somewhat faded from exposure to the sun and elements. Departing the courtyard through a narrow passageway just right of the *gonpa*, one reconnects with the cement footpath. It is always important to pay attention to where one treads, for families this far up in the valley share plow animals. Like the ancient blind man who wandered the paths twirling his prayer wheel, the animals just seem to know where to go; rarely did I encounter anyone literally herding them. It is not uncommon on any given day to encounter donkeys or *dzo*, a yak and cow hybrid, on the paths.¹⁰⁵

The walls bordering either side of the footpaths varied in height from 3ft to 6ft. At their lowest level, they were constructed of mudbrick and then plastered to a smooth finish. But more and more often, one could see that the height of these walls had increased through the recent, if not impermanent, stacking of mudbricks or river rocks or a combination of both. Lining the tops of these walls are countless dung patties, no doubt collected from the footpaths and placed to dry and eventually

¹⁰⁵ It is also not uncommon to stumble over rocks only to land in excrement-laden grid-stamped concrete. I found it easy become distracted by the surroundings- to not pay attention to where I was walking- and I was regularly reminded of the pragmatism behind removing ones footwear before entering one's domicile.

be used for fuel. From time to time, one can peer over a lower wall into the courtyard of a family home to see laundry hanging from clotheslines, a family shrine, and a flower garden.¹⁰⁶ Several homeowners confided to me that privacy used to be an unknown thing in Ladakh, but after the advent of tourism and rampant growth, people began to prosper and accumulate wealth. The walls served a double purpose: first, to prevent crime (see Chapter II), and second, keeping out two sets of prying eyes: those of the tourists, and those of their neighbors.



24. Subsequent layers of rock, mudbrick and chain link fencing surround family homes. Photo by author.

The footpath eventually crossed a larger irrigation channel and connected with a road. The road followed a large wall about 12 feet in height which appeared to enclose a terraced landscape. In spring and early summer, fragrant purple lilac blossoms spilled out over the road. A 5'5" tall wooden door is embedded in the stone retaining wall. The door swings open to reveal a dazzling array of vegetables and beneficial flowers, overwhelming the senses with an intoxicating aroma and a cornucopia of color. The Lakrook organic garden cascaded down terraced fields beyond the naked eye, its bucolic setting

¹⁰⁶ Perhaps peering eyes like mine added to the utility of the higher wall height.

interrupted only by a greenhouse and narrow sidewalk skirting past giant marigolds and rare poppy varieties. The family grows mint and chamomile out in the garden, used to brew tea. The ingredients for the vegetarian meals prepared for guests are also sourced directly from the garden. Solar panels sit adjacent to giant water tanks atop the sunken-earth solar shower. Passing to the right of the family prayer pole with its Tibetan prayer flags wrapped and decaying layer upon layer, one enters into the apple orchard which foregrounds the family home and Garden Guest House proper.



25. Lakrook family house located in the Lakrook Garden Guest House, Sankar, Leh. Photo credit: travel.paintedstork.com

The Lakrook Garden guest house contains three structures: a 3-story family home with two guest rooms, a three-story guest house (shown from the front above), also housing two family members, and a small two-room cottage. The first room is the choicest, located in the newly constructed two-room guest house with a shared hot shower, flush toilet and sink basin. The room in the main guest house is approximately thirty years old, built in traditional style, and its small, rectangular windows boast no ornamentation; its exterior is whitewashed. A small, steep staircase passes underneath a yak skull and leads into the guest house's main corridor. The bottom floor contains

a kitchen to make guest meals and a bathroom with a shower and sink only. This is where I could bathe or brush my teeth. There was no hot water. Across from the kitchen was a bedroom which the eldest brother and his wife shared.

Around the corner from the bathroom, a steep, narrow staircase with steps nearly two-feet tall ascended to the second floor. To the left of the banisterless staircase is a large, occupied, windowed room with two double beds (thus, the double occupancy room); the small bedroom across from it is Wangial's room. At the front of the house are two more bedrooms, another double and a single containing one double bed with scarcely enough space to move around it. There is also a small storage closet which doubles as the help quarters in the summertime. I was discouraged from taking the second double room as I was only one person. The single room, a modest space whose small window received no sunlight as it looked out onto the orchard trees and courtyard, I negotiated down from RS250 a day to RS150, or \$3.75USD a night. Breakfast was an extra RS60, or a dollar a day.

In the backside of the house by the stairs, two rooms jettison off of a narrow hallway. One room was marked "Toilet", and houses a porcelain squat-style flush toilet. The other door bore the name "Local Toilet". It opened into dark room approximately two-by-two meters square. The earthen floor contained a small rectangle hole in the middle; mounds of dirt lined the walls opposite the door. A shovel leaned against the corner. "Local toilet" is a euphemism for a composting pit toilet- the standard, preferred method for relieving oneself. In the first floor beneath the local toilet, a compost pile contained human and farm animal waste, garden weeds, and kitchen refuse. Foreigners were strongly discouraged from dropping any paper into the compost pile, as it is not wholly biodegradable. Each spring, the organic fertilizer would be spread across the Lakrook garden by *dzo*-driven plows.

Ladakhis do not drink bottled water, but they are well aware that tap water makes foreigners sick. Since the water from the tap is sourced directly from mountain run-off, it contains any fecal matter from the garden irrigation channels. Tourists use Dzomsa, the local boiled-water station. My second

season staying at the guest house, I decided to challenge the prohibition for drinking tap water by gradually incorporating tap water into my bottled water. By the end of my stay, I could brush my teeth without worry and would drink water from restaurants without becoming ill. All meals were taken in the *shelkang* (shown below), a sizeable room in the main house with large, south-facing windows that warmed the space on cold afternoons. At Lakrook, as in most homes, the *shelkang* was a formal, public space in which to accommodate guests. But Wangial only sat with visitors. The family dined separately in the kitchen, a place where foreigners were rarely allowed.

Sipping morning tea in the courtyard, one could observe family members coming and going in the early morning hours. The grandson Rinchen, Wangial's nephew, was in his early 20s. He dressed in Western-style clothes- a black concert t-shirt and baggy cargo pants layered over hiking boots; he wore his black hair long and over to one side. His dark sunglasses concealed a slightly lazy or deformed right eye. He speaks perfect English, having been educated elsewhere in India. His western style dress is typical of many Ladakhi youth which also includes North Face or other outdoor company fleece but does not include the traditional *goncha*, woolen robes that both men and women wear, unless for a special occasion.



26. The Lakrook family *shelkang*, located in the main family house.
Photo credit: www.oktatabyebye.com

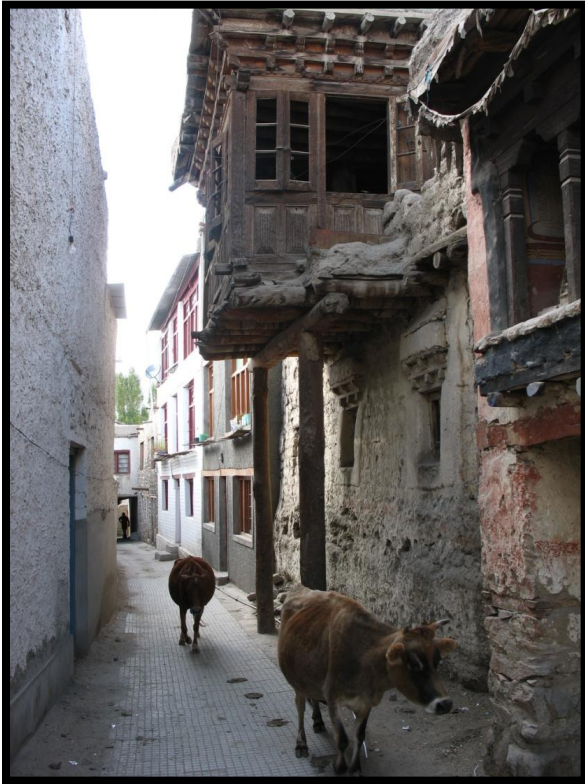
Wangial also had two other brothers. I rarely saw either speaking to Rinchen, and was not exactly sure which his father was. The middle son is still taller than Wangial, but is less lean and more rotund, with a rounded cheerful face. His wife, the only other woman in the compound besides the elderly Amale, was a schoolteacher in Danu, a village several hours bus ride away. Together they had an infant daughter whom *Abileh* cared for during the afternoon hours. It was common to see towering man who, standing well over 6 feet was an anomaly by Ladakhi standards, sitting out in the orchard coddling the little baby in his lap. The eldest son inherited his father's height and friendly countenance but spoke little English. He spent long days in the gardens. Based upon limited life histories (most of which revolved around estimating the age of the original house and the guest house) and the relative births of the children, Abale and Amale were in their mid to late 70s. Wangial, the youngest, was around 40 years old.



27. Thinles Lakrook with his granddaughter sitting out in the apple orchard.
Photo by author.

Foreigners commonly suffered from altitude headaches during their first few days at Lakrook. To offset these, Wangial would make a pot of mint and chamomile tea to keep in ones room; the pot could also be used for boiled water until guests became strong enough to trek down the valley. My thermos was large and colorful; its pink, kelly-green, and turquoise flowers embossed in silver overlay were characteristic of the Chinese-made brands sold in Moti Market, a housewares marketplace further down the valley from the Main Bazaar which was frequented primarily by Ladakhis and Indians. My 3m x 4m room was mostly consumed by the two single beds which had been combined to create one double. Lying on the earthen floor were two well-worn sisal rugs whose faded red and black pattern clashed with the tired ecru and green muslin curtains. The mud walls were unpainted. The ceiling height was no more than 2.5 meters, adding to the Lilliputian nature of the space. A built-in book shelf and several metal clothes hooks were the only storage features. A diminutive bedside table stood no taller than the bed - 30 centimeters tall at best; there I always kept several *safed mombatti* (white candles) handy, as electricity was utterly unreliable.

The Nazia Guest House



28. The pathway to the Nazia Guest house in the Main Bazaar. A crumbling *rapsal* shades cows from the afternoon sun. In the foreground, a guru lakhang shrine is flanked by a dry cleaners (not shown) and is opposite a motorcycle rental shop. Photo by author.

In Chapter III, I described the interior of the 3-story Nazia Guest House, including the patrilocal compound wherein both Iqbal brothers, their wives, and their families reside. Here I elaborate on that description and contrast the interior of my room with the room I occupied at Lakrook. The Iqbal compound is located in a neighborhood known as Upper Tukcha (pronounced *tuuksha*) just off of the Main Bazaar. In order to reach the Nazia Guest House, one takes a slight turn off the busiest intersection in the Bazaar and walks 4 or 5 meters down a one-way street against the flow of traffic (there are no sidewalks here - water channels separate streets from storefronts). There, in between a dry cleaner and motorcycle rental shop, an alleyway jettisons off this hazardous road, its grid-patterned stamped-

concrete footpath curving around a bend and out of sight. Obscured by the dry cleaner's façade is an ancient home with a crumbling wooden *rapsal* (traditional balcony) under which several cows generally slept. This structure contrasted starkly with the flat concrete-plastered exteriors of family homes and businesses. Meandering around a bend toward the river, one would pass the ubiquitous swastika-encrusted wrought iron gate protecting Iqbal Bilal's compound and hotel and enter through a narrow unobtrusive corridor into the Nazia Guest House.

I chose a well-insulated room whose white-curtained windows faced a bleak exterior wall, but was nonetheless sheltered from the elements. My ample quarters boasted tall ceilings, a double bed, and a wooden armoire with full length mirror and storage space. The walls were painted a soft light blue which pleasantly contrasted with the green indoor-outdoor carpeting. The color combination of green and light blue/white is very characteristic of Islamic styles there. The wall adjacent to my door featured a column-like protrusion jutting out from floor to ceiling. One day *Amalie* and I were sitting on my bed chatting about *purana makan* (old buildings), and I asked her what inspired Nazia Guest House's design. She jokingly credited Nazia for all interior designs, then added that even my room was like old rooms, enthusiastically pointing to the column and asking "*jese vese ka, he na?*" (It's just like the *ka*, don't you think?).¹⁰⁷

The attached bathroom had shower taps which were turned off in case the pipes froze. After the spring thaw, these taps would be connected to the large water storage tanks located on the roof of the building. Radiant energy would warm the bright green tanks during the daylight hours, and occupants could indulge in a warm (if not hot) shower until the sun dropped beneath the western mountainscape. The glossy imported ceramic tiles which lined the walls and floor bore a 1980s-remniscent color streak pattern which repeated throughout the bathroom. It was much easier to clean than pit toilets and solar showers. And it was private. All of this was great in theory, but as I learned, bathing in one's private bath

¹⁰⁷ The *ka*, as I've mentioned before, are the central support beams in a home, symbolic of family unity and spiritual stability.

during the off-season was a challenge. Unlike the steamy sunken-earth solar-heated shower at the Lakrook Garden Guest House, only if the electricity was on in town and someone had been home to reset the hot water tank in the family's bathroom would it heat up enough to take a trickling 10 minute shower.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, I shared this brief luxury with 6 other people. Thus, bathing in the privacy of my attached bath once a week became my preferred method; it was not, however, without issue.

Up the valley, women would bathe by leaning over the banks of rivers and irrigation channels, fully-clothed, dunking their heads in the frigid mountain runoff between shampooing and conditioning. "Taking a bucket", on the other hand, consisted of firing up the large propane tank in the outside kitchen and manually boiling between 7 and 15 liters of water in individual saucepan batches. For my own bucket, I would transfer the boiling water into two plastic buckets as quickly as possible, and then haul them up the three flights of banisterless marble stairs to my room. Even during daylight hours, I would guess the temperature in that bathroom rarely exceeded 50 degrees. Bathing was always refreshing, but the process itself was so time consuming - not to mention cold - that I rarely did so more than once a week, and only on a sunny day in the middle of the afternoon. After drying off, I would dress in layers, climb the ladder to the roof, and sit there to air dry my hair. Most off-season guests would agree that guest house rooms are temporary dwellings which have no efficacy nine months out of the year. Nothing about their uninsulated concrete construction or shiny modern plumbing allows for a tradition to develop; they simply are impractical during the winter months. This was a major divergence from what I would call heritage homes up the valley where such luxuries simply did not exist.

Visiting Lakrook with Nazia

¹⁰⁸ This probably would not have been the case in warmer months when the water would come from the rooftop holding tanks already warmed by the sun.

Nazia Iqbal, the daughter of Nazia Guest House and my closest friend in India, went with me one day to visit the Lakrooks up in Sankar. The Lakrook garden had been planted with cabbage, potatoes, carrots, and other fall crops. The apple trees were heavy with fruit. The ubiquitous *kushu* (apples) were in season during the late summer and fall months, and were served at every meal. Small and soft, they were eaten by breaking them in half through the core with ones thumbs. *Chuuli* (Ladakhi for apricots), one of Ladakh's primary exports, were also in season, and unlike the apples, were often served either dried with *yos* (roasted barley) or rehydrated with warm water. No guests were lodging at the time. The elderly Amale's greeting "*a-Jullay! Khamzang- le?*" (Hello, how are you?) preceeded Nazia's respectful explanation that we were here to visit and did not require a room. "*Skyot-le, Skyot-le, Zhuks-le,*" (*come, come, sit*) said Amale as she bade us follow her slowly up the steep stairs of the main house up to the winter kitchen.

Nazia and I sat in the *chansa* (family kitchen) on carpeted floor mats which lined the only windowed wall. An outdated calendar hung low on the entry wall beside various pictures of the Dalai Lama (one presenting the Dalai Lama himself standing with the Lakrook's second son, a monk who lived in another village). There was a landline telephone and well-worn handheld radio perched on an end table; the only other visible technology was a small TV opposite the seating wall. The *choktse*, carved wooden floor-level tables, in front of us sported brightly painted dragon motifs. Upon them Amale offered us *susma*, Ladakhi butter tea, and *yos*, a snack made from roasted barley, *basho* (raisins), *starga* (walnuts), and (*s*)*tsigu ngarmo* (sweet, dried, almond- shaped apricot seeds). After several courteous "*Don-le and Dik-le*" exchanges between she and Nazia (please eat, no I'm fine), she turned to me and said "*Khana lena*" (take food in Hindi/Urdu). We finally accepted.

There are stark differences between the Lakrook family kitchen and the Iqbal family kitchen. The Lakrook family kitchen epitomized the traditional Ladakhi kitchen. After removing ones shoes, you pass through the open door and then through a curtain into a large room supported by a central pillar (*ka*).

Against the far wall were built-in shelves containing the family's precious steel and copper pots and ornate serving bowls- an impressive set of easily 30 or so pieces.¹⁰⁹ In front of them rested the behemoth black iron stove Ladakhis conventionally used for heating their homes and for cooking large ceremonial meals. A lesser wood/dung-burning stove occupied the middle of the room. The stove pipe, I learned later, stretched up into Abale's prayer room, providing radiant heat for prayer during cold winter months. To the left of the entrance was another small, curtained room; this one contained a propane fueled double-burner stove and an industrial-size plastic sink with running water. There, and not in the *chansa*, the majority of cooking took place.

The Iqbals, on the other hand, had built a fully modern kitchen containing customized cabinets, a four-burner cooktop with propane tank hidden neatly under the counter, double-basin stainless steel sink, tiled backsplash and ample counter space. Yet, Mrs. Iqbal prepped most meals seated in front of a plastic table cloth in the middle of the floor, cooked on a single burner stove attached to the propane tank, and used the counters for drying dishes. Food waste and other trash were tossed out into the river once the bucket under the disposal side of the sink became full. Save for a vessel or two, most ornamental pots were stored out of sight. In short, all kitchen activities took place in plain view of family and guests.

¹⁰⁹ Families traditionally display these heirlooms as a show of wealth – they are only used on very special occasions.



29. Amale Iqbal, her sister, and her grand-niece sit on the floor preparing *momos*, a pan-Himalayan dumpling, during Ramadan. Photo by author.

At the Nazia Guest House, several guests who stayed during the off-season were invited to dinner, or at least to have a snack of *yos* and an apple or *chambir* and jam if they visited in the morning. The formal living room where guests were welcomed was longer than it was wide, approximately 30 square meters. An enormous Persian rug adorned the herringbone hardwood floors. Woodburning tools had been used to etch black outlines into the veneer paneling which covered the walls and ceiling. Similar designs were found on the wooden cabinetry next to a built-in bookshelf. The furnishings were tastefully accessorized to match the warm wood paneling and included a hutch on the far wall, four plush chairs and love seat, and a large coffee table in the middle of the room. When Nazia was in town, we generally dined in this room and watched the large flat-screen TV, equipped with satellite reception and DVD player when electricity permitted. However, when I stayed with the Iqbals alone, I ate in the *shelkang*, seated on the ubiquitous carpeted floor mats in hierarchical order by age – me, Amale to my right, Abile to her right; then Tanveer to my left, and usually Chacha-le to his left. The eldest, who were also men, were furthest from the kitchen; I was closest and could fetch anything requested of me. In

contrast to the Lakrook House, I never dined with another foreigner in the Iqbal's *shelkang*. Reminiscent of a parlor (I recall being received by Mrs. Iqbal's sister's family in their *shelkang* before visiting their ancient, crumbling family estate), for the elders, the *shelkang* was the customary family dining area; the younger generation, on the other hand, preferred to sit on the plush couches and chairs in the living room and dine in front of the TV.

Behind-the-scenes at Home

Yi Fu Tuan (1977) once suggested that the domestic sphere is an assemblage of material effects and meanings. Over time, the microcosmic interior of the home may be (re)modeled to reflect macrocosmic changes, a reflection not only of larger social, economic, political milieu, but also of the ever evolving self. Low and Lawrence-Zuniga recall that tourism affects local residents' built environment in multifarious ways, even as they participate in the creation of a specific tourism brand to represent authentic culture. One way this takes place is through the creation of "physical and temporal boundaries to protect a 'backstage' area for private use" (Low and Lawrence-Zuniga 2003: 22).

I observed a number of these spaces in family guest homes where visited with homeowners and conducted interviews – kitchens and other areas curtained off for privacy, usually where women were working. The Lakrook guest house kitchen was designed with a wooden door instead of the flimsy curtain common in other guest houses, and was marked with a large misspelled paper sign that said "No Admittance". I learned more about the purposeful construction of hidden interiors on Eid. I also learned a great deal about intercommunal relationships between Buddhists, Muslims, and Christians that I had never previously considered. These too, are behind-the-scenes constructions of heritage and should be equally considered alongside spatial constructions.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ The question of hidden interiors is also related to the question of hidden exteriors – I mentioned earlier in this paper that homeowners had been building up their exterior retaining walls to both keep outsiders out, as well as to perhaps shield their domiciles from the eyes of prying neighbors.

The second floor of the Nazia Guest House was distinct from the rented domiciles in the same building in that it was shared with visitors. It was also distinct from any other family home I had seen in Ladakh to date in that it was not a free-standing structure. The Iqbal home reminded me in many ways of the nicer high-rise flats in New Delhi (which the Iqbals also owned and resided in during the coldest winter months) due to its location in a multi-storied multi-family unit building. There were other peculiarities as well. After removing their shoes, visitors would generally enter into the living room through a double door which is curtained on the outside, as are many interior doors. Sometimes if the house was open to visitors, the door would be left open with the curtain drawn. Many families (in all parts of the world, no doubt) have quarters that are not revealed to anyone but family members. The Iqbals, I learned, had both a hidden stairwell and hidden room.¹¹¹

I woke up late one morning, having slept poorly the night before. I dressed and went downstairs to enquire about heating up some hot water or using the family shower. A guest house is subject to many visitors, but even during the off-season I didn't see any shoes in front of the door as was customary and wondered where everyone was. After encountering a conservationist at Gesmo, I realized it was Eid and all the Muslims had sojourned up the hill by Lamdon School to the sacred site where they have *namaz* and eat on Eid. After an hour, many had returned to the home. Amale sat in the living room with several other folks. She yelled out to me "*Jimmie!!! Aao! Kaha gayi?? Eid Hai!*" (Jamie, come here! Where have you gone? It's Eid!) In Urdu, I formally apologized in front of everyone (*maf kijiye, Amale, meri bevaqufi hai*- please accept my apology, it is my mistake). There had been some confusion with the new moon, as the Shias in Karghil had proclaimed Eid the day before, but no one (Sunnis) in Leh had participated in their celebration. Amale responded excitedly, "*Nayi chandar nazr hai!*" (The new moon can be seen!) So I said "*Eid Mubarak!*" (Happy Eid!) and everybody laughed. Amale

¹¹¹ Members of Nazia's mother's family would enter in through the side door on the interior of the guest house – the same entrance that the immediate family used regularly.

immediately put me to work filling cups of *chai* and offering guests snacks while she heated up enormous vats of food.

One of the guests I recognized was the owner of Paul Guest House, a Moravian Christian Ladakhi who knew quite a bit about the ACHI conservation group since John Harrison and his crew had been staying there. We had seen one another at church, and easily developed a rapport. I was confused by her presence there at the Iqbals on Eid and enquired. She explained to me that since Leh is such a small town, all of the locals participate in one another's celebrations. On Eid, Christians and Buddhists go to their Muslim friends' houses bringing gifts of food wrapped in *kathak* (ceremonial white fabric respectfully offered by persons of all faiths).¹¹² At Christmas, Muslims and Buddhists go to their Christian friends' houses bringing Christmas gifts of similar sorts. Then on the Chinese New Year, Muslims and Christians go to the Buddhists' homes bringing gifts and celebrating feasts and festivals. It had not occurred to me until then how ethnicity transcends religion to create tight-knit communities such as this one.

Tanveer's friends arrived - approximately 10 Ladakhis young men in Western clothing and two Ladakhi girls in *shalwar kamiz*. Amale fed them all. Only Tanveer was in traditional clothing, and unlike the other Ladakhi men I'd seen that day, Tanveer himself was wearing a Kashmiri style *pajama* instead of a Ladakhi robe. Amale, wore *shalwar kamiz*, but most of her female guests (who were either Buddhist or Christian) wore *goncha*. They all seemed amused that the house came with "Engrez" (English) waitstaff (me), but I mostly enjoyed being a helpful anomaly. The food included chicken and rice and mutton and fried lotus root as well as curries, rice, and samosas.

After Tanveer and his friends departed for another home, Amale and I caught up on dishes and sat for a moment out in the living room. Gradually, I began to hear voices approaching, but couldn't place their origins. Suddenly, a door opened in the living room- one which I always thought belonged to

¹¹² Rizvi 1996: 215-216 claims that the custom of gifting *kathak* was originally a Buddhist one, but was eventually subsumed into the entire region of the Tibetan Plateau.

another storage closet. A large group of women entered.¹¹³ It was her husband's extended family. They had entered in through a stairwell which only family members knew of or had access to. The women in this group wore very nice *shalwar kamiz* and carried themselves in a distinguished manner. They appeared more Kashmiri than Ladakhi, and were comfortable speaking in Urdu. They snacked and sipped *chai* while several young male children ate heartily, and then Amale showed them around the house. Like all of her visitors, they were most impressed with the home. They did not stay long, and departed through the same entrance. I later had an opportunity to investigate. The seldom-used stairwell was beautifully constructed, made of solid white marble with recessed alcoves containing vases of dusty silk flowers. A large window illuminated the entire space. Its door opened up to the family courtyard and Bijal Iqbal's adjacent hotel. I excitedly asked Amale about what I'd found. This was the "darvaza semane" (front door); only strangers used the other door. Yet the immediate family rarely if ever used the front door. But distant family members passed through this door.

After several hours, it appeared as though the majority of guests had died down. Amale estimated having served around 50 guests. I know I was present for at least 30, all of whom were served *chai*, *namkeen*, and a healthy plate of food. We spent a full hour dishwashing. I enquired how the men decided whose house to visit when everyone was practically related. It depended, yes, on family, but also on reputation. Amale was a fantastic cook, and her home was terribly accommodating. It was no wonder why we had entertained so many guests. I excused myself to take a bucket, but unfortunately, dishwashing had expended all the *garam pani* (hot water). So, 5 days unbathed and counting, I washed my face, put on some cargo pants, and took a walk.

¹¹³ Amale's face lit up to see them; however, she did not immediately stand to greet them as she did other guests.

CONVERGENCE AND DIVERGENCE: MORE CHOICES



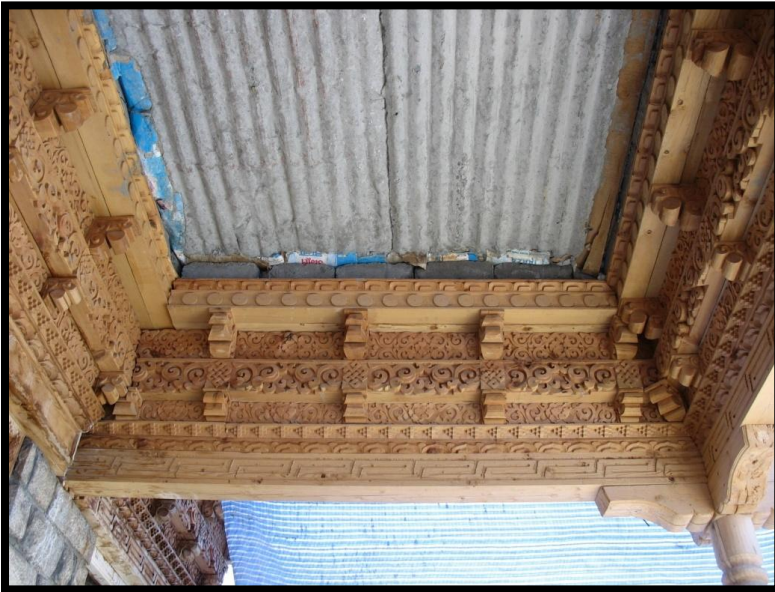
30. Large family estate with harvested alfalfa mounds to be stored on the roof for the winter.

Needing photographs of new construction for an upcoming lecture at INTACH, I walked four or five kilometers down Upper Tukcha road until it dead-ended at the mountain. At each construction site, I observed every facet of construction and compared the differences not only in scale, but also in materials and labor. I photographed several new guest houses and hotels, as well as one enormous old estate which sat on an alfalfa farm (above) couched in between two relatively shabby guest houses. Nearby, someone's house with a workshop off to the side advertised "Woodcarving Center". At the end of the road near Shanti Stupa, a shrine co-jointly built by Japanese and Ladakhi Buddhists in 1991, a faded billboard on the side of the road advertised traditional Ladakhi culture, and featured Ladakhi Buddhist women in their *peraks* (traditional snake-like headdresses made from black lambskin with embroidered turquoise stones) on it. I reflected on this rather one-sided and outdated representation of Ladakhi women, and wondered if the target audience were *deshis* (native Indians) since mainly army transports (and large tour buses) used that road.

Several new cafes were under construction in Changspa, the main tourist hub of Leh. One, which had already closed for the season, would contain a bookstore and second floor café overlooking the river. Workers were busily pouring the cement foundations for a new metal bridge. Nearby, a massive, 3-4 story, guest house was under construction and concrete trucks lumbered by, sputtering thick clouds of exhaust into the already dusty air and prompting me to breathe through my *dupatta*. I was peeking through the wall when the builder spotted me. I struck up conversation in Urdu, and he invited me in. The incomplete project site reminded me very much of the Dragon hotel which I had visited in 2005, because, like much of the new construction throughout Leh, builders used an amalgamation of construction materials. Mud bricks were haphazardly mortared in between conventional brick and stone; concrete and rebar jutted from every nook and cranny; sheets of corrugated tin roofing covered elaborate machined-lathed shinstok. According to the owner, the inside wood carvings were *purana* (old) style and the outside was *naya* (new) style. This tension between new and old seemed true for the entire structure.



31. New Changspa hotel under construction. Exterior showing concrete *ka*. Photo by author.



32. New Changspa hotel under construction - layers of machine-lathed shinstok protected by corrugated tin sheets. Photo by author.



33. Above and below: The Dragon Hotel roof had brick on the outside; mud brick, brick, and stone on the inside. Photos by author.





34. Dragon Hotel bathroom before plastering: mud brick, brick, and stone filled in with concrete. Photo by author.

The builder explained that he had consulted an Indian engineer (not an architect) but he had designed the building himself. Everything was concrete except for the wood carvings around the door and windows, some of which had been machine-lathed and some of which, he claimed, had been carved by hand. The roof was concrete, not *markalak*, and contained no sheet metal - rare for new buildings as everyone feared increasing rainfall. He said the hotel would be up and running the next season. It would contain 30 rooms *en suite*, plenty of parking, and a garden if there was room.¹¹⁴ I asked where he lived

¹¹⁴ Judging by the delayed response to my garden question, I suspected there would be no garden.

and he said in Thiksey. His own house, although new, was Ladakhi style, not Western style; he didn't elaborate.

Back up the valley, a restaurant under construction expressed a philosophy of new construction. Two Namgyal sisters, direct descendants of the royal family and princesses in their own rights, had commissioned Andreas, a conservation architect who worked for the Tibet Heritage Fund, to design and carry out the project.



35. The Namgyal sisters stand in front of their restaurant designed by a conservation architect and built with traditional materials. Photo by author.

Although the roof was as yet unfinished, its weight would be supported by *ka*, the ubiquitous wooden pillars which everyone had identified as synonymous with Ladakhi architectural heritage. The hotel I had just visited also had cement pillars, but ones made of rebar-reinforced concrete. Long wooden planks which would become *talu* and *dungma* were being carved out by smiling, chatting carpenters. To complete any larger project, it would take many years of labor given the leisurely pace.



36. The Namgyal Sister's restaurant under construction. Photo by author.

AND STILL MORE CHOICES: GUEST HOUSE OWNERS DISCUSS TRADITIONAL CONSTRUCTION

The Nazia Guest House was only a few years old. Its design seemed to defy regulations the SJTD or ALTOA had put forth regarding criteria for looking authentic or traditional Ladakhi design and style. I had been invited to lecture at INTACH about new guest house construction in Leh Town, and the similarities and differences of old homes and new homes (9/15/08) and would stay with Nazia in New Delhi. I was nervous about presenting because some of the conservationists that I critique might be present at the lecture. I thought about my own opinion: is new construction good or bad? I would say it is up to Ladakhi's own individual preference. Some of the conservationists may think that new construction is bad because it is not like the old way of building houses. Even Tanveer-le thought that "the climate is changing and so people cannot build their houses the same way because they will come down when it rains. So now we use concrete and make the roofs like this [pitched roofs- he gestured his arm at an angle]." I knew that conservationists could fix the roofs of the houses in the Old Town so that

when it rains, the water doesn't come in. The concrete is disguised by *markalak* and the drains are hidden so that when looking down upon the roof, the exterior surface still retains its original façade.

While thinking about my upcoming lecture, I asked Tanveer what he thought about the difference between Ladakhi architecture and Tibetan architecture and the question of *shinstok* came up. He asked me what I thought about them.¹¹⁵ I said:

I like *shinstok* very much and there are many different styles. I don't care as much for the fancy ones with five or six different patterns on top of one another. To me, that doesn't say Ladakhi architecture or Tibetan, or Chinese, or Western. I have also seen the *shinstok* of a guest house where the family did not have much money. It was made of concrete *shinstok*.

Tanveer shook his head and said "no, this is no good". I explained that the owner, Mr. Bodh, could not afford wooden *shinstok*, but would very much like to add them in the future. In this light, *shinstok* is a marker of social status – a way for families to display their wealth – similar to the way that, in traditional kitchens, there are shelves where the family would display their ceremonial copper pots and pans. And although not all guest house owners *chose* to incorporate *shinstok* into their designs, those who did aspired to a certain aesthetic.

Mr. Bodh

Walking through different neighborhoods looking for new guest houses, I passed by a hotel I had seen advertised down the road and paused for a moment to photograph it. The Hotel Silverline's simple window design and uncomplicated structure had caught my eye, and I wished to know why the owners had chosen not to decorate in the prevailing style of more elaborate wooden *shinstok*. In the reception area, I called out "Julley!?" Angmo Bodh hesitantly greeted me in halting English, "Guest house close". I explained in Urdu that I wished to learn about the guest house, and she promptly turned me over to her husband. Mr. Bodh and I introduced ourselves in the reception area. I explained that I had been coming

¹¹⁵ (a question, I realize now, that people who had not been to Tibet would have a very difficult time answering)

to Leh for four years, and was interested in both the conservation architecture in Old Leh as well as new guest house construction. My project was on traditional settlements and building styles, and I wished to talk with him about the construction of his hotel.

He offered me a seat in the guest hall. It was nicely furnished; the walls were lined with floor mattresses covered in plush Tibetan-style rugs. A few taller couches sat opposite a TV and refrigerator on the far end of the hall. The ceilings were slightly angled and were constructed using poplar beams and slats finished in an earthy brown paint. The wooden ceilings did not incorporate the *talu* and *dungma* style of more traditional buildings, but rather resembled a lodge-style finish. The large southerly facing window reminded me of the *shelkang* – this room appeared to be a hybrid of *shelkang* and great hall.

I inquired what sorts of features in his guest house Mr. Bodh considered Ladakhi-style architecture. In the following excerpt from our conversation, Mr. Bodh describes the differences between the new and old building styles and uses his home as an example of blending materials. He first points out that, although his guest house has shinstok, they are made of stamped concrete and not wood. He also discusses potential benefits and concerns of using *markalak* (mud) as opposed to concrete. He then offers a commentary on why, given those concerns, Ladakhis are building the way they do.

We still use the local mudbrick, but then we finish in concrete where we feel it is appropriate. Then the windows we tried to keep in the local style. Some of the shinstok are wood and some are concrete. Ours are concrete, because, you see, we were short of funds in the beginning - it is very expensive to have the wooden ones and when we built the house we had limited funds and were not able to hire a carpenter. The carpenters are very hard to come by and are mostly employed with the rich people. One day, I would like to change this from the concrete to the wooden one. But only the rich can afford this. It is very much up to your own individual taste, and what you can afford. The ceilings in here are like the traditional Ladakhi style, and this is good for us in the winter. We stay here in the winter, and so this is why it is very good for us to have this kind of ceiling for the heat. The roofs from old, they used to use the mud on the top and then they would just mix some things in with it. But with the climate change we are getting more rain, and so sometimes with these roofs it is a problem. So now we use

[CGI] sheets on the roof to prevent the water from coming inside. So that is another change.

I enquired if any Ladakhis were building their own living quarters like tourist rooms (Are Ladakhis living like tourists?). I asked if there were any other new materials that Ladakhis prefer to use on the inside of the house. In the excerpt below, Mr. Bodh offers an explanation of why the rooms diverge from the customary Ladakhi design. He then specifically outlines how Ladakhis are different from tourists.

The other difference is the tourist specification. You see, the tourist, when they come, they always ask for room with attached bath and hot shower. If we say 'no, there is no hot shower', then they will not stay. So it is for their specification. We have the local toilet outside that we use. No shower. We have no need for these things. You see, Ladakhis are used to the cold. Ladakhis are used to the winter and have no need for things like hot showers and flush toilets. The tourist, they need the hot water otherwise they will not stay here, so this is why we built the hotel according to their specifications. And the Indian tourist - they always ask if there is a television. If there is no television then they will not stay.(chuckles)Yes, they must have the television.

The guest house was completed about six years ago. We were living here in a very small house with only two rooms. So many people would come by and would ask us if we had any rooms available, but we only had two rooms. And then the employees like from the government and from outside would come and we would have no place. So at first we just built a few rooms here and a second floor without architects or engineers. And then we added a third floor and the terrace rooms. You see, it was not planned - it was really unplanned this way. You see we just began to think like this - that it is good that the tourists are coming and so we should welcome them, like this.

Thus both Mr. Bodh and the Iqbals decided to build because so many tourists kept coming by and asking for accommodation. According to earlier Ladakhi travel literature and tourist brochures, tourists were essentially encouraged to knock on anyone's door and expect accommodation. This interview contradicted my presupposition that most Ladakhis building new guest houses wanted to take the tourist-accommodation-lifestyle as their own. Mr. Bodh's insight that Ladakhis are used to the elements and don't need things like hot water in order to survive, helps to show that custom remains in place despite outside influence. As nice as the Iqbal's home is, when it starts getting colder, Mrs. Iqbal and the family in general, migrate into the outside rooms where the windows are either westward-facing

or have very thick walls and small windows to insulate from the cold. Notwithstanding the absence of wooden *shinstok* (or absence of *shinstok* altogether), the main parallel between Bodh and Iqbal guest houses is the issue of concrete. Even THF had begun using concrete in the conservation project. Was this evidence of choice becoming tradition?

When discussing big new concrete hotels coming up in and around the main Bazaar, Tanveer had commented “you see, it is important to have these [for] when a big group comes in, otherwise they would have to be split up.” There were actually plenty of existing hotels that, with advance notice, could accommodate a group of 20 or 30 with little double occupancy. Moreover, much of the new construction I had observed was “built very fast, and the construction is maybe not so good.” Tanveer asked “in what way?” I explained that the mud bricks were not aligned and the window frames were made from different thicknesses and widths of wood. To me that didn’t seem sturdy. Tanveer quickly dismissed the likelihood of an earthquake as being a factor in sturdiness. He explained “no you see, it is because we use the concrete pillar and the iron, that the mud brick does not matter. The concrete is what makes it strong. The mudbrick, it is just to fill in.” “And what if there are holes in between the bricks?” I asked. “It doesn’t matter,” he said “we can just fill it in with the [concrete] mortar”.

His father, Mr. Iqbal, chimed in: “If it is filled in with mud then it is even warmer, but if it is filled in with concrete then the room will become cold.” This point Tanveer did not dispute but rather mentioned that hotels are only used in the summer when it’s warm. I mentioned that Mr. Bodh and Mr. Rinchen and even the J & K Tourism Director have torn down their old houses and are now living in the guest houses year round. Tanveer countered: “yes, but most people can afford to go south in the winter where it’s warm”. I rebutted, “But some people *do* stay in their houses through the winter. Where will they sleep if the house is made of concrete?” He smiled and acquiesced. “You have a point in the case of the family home. Like me, I stay here all year.” “And where do you sleep?” “Just there.” He and Amele,

who had been following our conversation, both motioned towards the small storage room by the front door.

I recalled a very cold week the previous year when the snow came early. Nazia and her mother would beckon me into the tiny room (*"Jamiele, ayiye – bahut bahut tunda hai!"* – Jamie, please come; it's very very cold!). The walls were unpainted and bare; there was no wood flooring or carpeting save a few worn rugs. A tiny cooking stove and sink were obscured by items in storage. Barring power outages, we all would huddle around the large, modern electric heater eat dinner, drink tea, and talk about the cold and until late in the evening before climbing into our beds (mine in the frigid room at Bilal Iqbal's hotel next door). Some nights, Amale and Nazia, covered in blankets, would fall asleep there on the floor as opposed to sleeping in the spacious, well-apportioned bedrooms. Tanveer confided that the storage room had been built "the old way" with mudbrick and a small window, plus *talū and dungma* (the wooden beams and slats) filled with *markalak* on the ceiling. Why wouldn't everyone want their rooms to be so warm, I wondered?

So I asked: "is it possible to construct the new rooms in the old way so that they would be warm? And if so, why does no one do it?" His answer shocked me when he pointed to the space in which we sat and said: "this room (the *shelkang*) and that room (the kitchen) are also made with the *markalak, talū and dungma*". I was shocked! "*Such main?*" (truthfully?) I asked. This seemed incredulous to me because the inside of the Iqbal's house is wooden from floor to ceiling. The hardwood floors are laid in a random pattern. The walls are covered in walnut paneling with darkly-etched cutouts which matches the curvature of glass-front cabinets. The ceilings are also covered in large 2x2 wooden tiles. I clarified: "You mean, you built the *shelkang* and the kitchen (which, socially, are probably the most significant rooms in the Ladakhi house) with the traditional ceiling and then 'finished them' (I chose the word 'finished' instead of 'covered up' which may have implied that I was unhappy that they were in

fact covered up) with the wood?" "Yes," so [the rooms] are a little warmer. But still it is open ("yes, tall ceilings and windows") and so it is too cold in the winter."

"What about the *bankwalas*?" I asked, "Where will they stay in the winter?" Tanveer responded, "That area is also built like this. The rest of the guest house is concrete." Ah, I added, "I have seen guest houses [down the road] where they have kept the ceiling open." Tanveer's furrowed his brow and replied, looking up at the ceiling, "Well, these *talus* are maybe not so nice. Others, they have really nice *talus* and so they can show them." I made sure I understood that during the winter, people are pretty much confined to smaller rooms. Tanveer replied, "Yes, but with the extended family, everyone can sit together and stay warm." I understood. "And then you can enjoy your nice house what - April through November?" Tanveer replied, "Yes, April to November it is better."

Mr. Iqbal

I had observed in both commercial and residential new construction the replacement of the wooden pillars with concrete ones. I evidenced the old religious structures I had surveyed: the Jamia Masjid and Moravian Church in Leh, the Mosque at Shey, several guru lakhang shrines and *gonpas* in surrounding villages – even the Old Leh Palace. Their construction was consistent with the exception of symbolic accoutrements: flat-roofed rectangular building with small rectangular windows; *shinstok* carved from the extensions of ceiling joists and window frames; low wooden ceilings; and carved wooden pillars. These stood in stark contrast structural attributes I had observed and photographed in new construction projects: nice façades of the new hotels covering up shoddy construction and/or mixed materials; a mess of *shinstok* nailed on top of an uneven window frame, concrete *ka*, and etcetera. But I was intrigued that Iqbal's had *chosen* to hide the traditional design construction behind their home's beautiful interior. I announced that these comparisons would form the basis for my talk at INTACH.

Mr. Iqbal continued the conversation by asking me: “So what is your program?” I responded by saying that I needed to gather information from the J and K Tourism Department about guest houses. He asked what I needed to know, and I responded, “Leh mai kaun logone guest house nahi ke pas?” (How many people in Leh have guest houses?) He answered: “Sab log ke pas!” (Everyone has one!) and laughed along with Mrs. Iqbal. He then added that since January, which is when the official tourism season begins, 50k tourists had come to Ladakh, so it was necessary to have places for them to stay. Then I explained that I would like to speak to people who have built new guest houses and to ask them, in particular, how they liked living in them, what happens when the tourism season is finished, and particularly, what features of the house are “traditional” Ladakhi style features. I phrased this as “where can you find the old in the new?” After this, I said my plan was to ask the conservation architects about their projects in the Old Town. Mr. Iqbal considered all of this for a moment and then provided a substantial narrative on the matter.

Well, I think you can see the old in the new though these window carvings on the outside, which are really quite nice if you see them. And we still use the mudbrick for the house. But you know, the structure has changed slightly. Before, we would start with the ground floor and it would be all stone, and then the first and the second floor would be the mudbrick, like this. But now, you see, they still use the mudbrick, but on the ground floor they use the concrete with the pillars coming up - and you know, it is still some stone, but mostly they are using the concrete [b]ecause it is stronger. And then they will use the mudbrick for the walls, so it is the same as before. If people are using the concrete for their walls, much cold will be coming inside. And then on the mudbrick, we can use the concrete plaster, but still some cold is coming inside. If we use the mud plaster, then much warmth will be coming in.... We used the mud brick [for third floor guest house] and then the concrete plaster because it is much stronger. And also you can get the nice finish and it will hold the paint for much longer.

So also the windows have changed a bit. Before, they would be putting the two or three smaller windows; now they have many windows all around the house. And the ceilings are taller. Before, we might have had ceilings no taller than 8 ft and now they are 9ft or so. (I joked with him: “are ladakhis getting taller?”) Yes, (chuckles) it might be that the Ladakhis are getting taller but it is the fashion now. Bigger windows, bigger doors, so the ceilings are taller. And then you know, the Ladakhis, they are getting the nice facilities as well. They have the gas stove, and the gas heater, the light and the television and the phone lines. Before, you know, when I was a child, I remember we used to sit in winter around the big clay [stove] and it had four [slots?] that we would put the wood in and sit around and stay warm. And we were fine all winter - very happy like this. We didn't

have the pipe up into the ceiling; it was just open, and the ceilings were very low, so it was very smoky, you know. But we were warm. We used to have a kerosene lantern here, and it smoked like anything. I used to read by that light, and now I would not read by that.

Things were very different when I was a child. You know, nowadays people are crying about the light is not coming and the water and the phone, and it makes people very upset. They go to the government and say 'what are they trying to do to the people?' 'Why can we not have these things?' Before we were not having this bother, we were having everything that we need.... Maybe next year we will go for the generator. The solar panel is not working. I think the battery is not charging. The battery is something like 5000RS, so we will have to take it and then have it fixed. Maybe next year we will go for the generator. You know in order to run a proper guest house, there needs to be back-up power so the tourists will have light and such. They think because they are paying money, then they should have these things. The foreigners, they don't mind living like this, but the Indian tourists - they are very fussy.

I asked if I could quote him on this and he said sure. I began laughing and shared an abbreviated story about a group of Indian women I once sat next to at the La Terasse restaurant. I had eavesdropped over their conversation about Ladakhi toilets, and in particular about the restaurant's toilet. In order to reach it, one must walk across a suspension bridge made from metal grating and random wooden planks haphazardly lashed together with wire and rope before entering the metal stall which was perched upon four stilts. One woman had exclaimed with disdain: "Why, it's nothing but a whole in the ground - I mean, how can I go in this?"

Between the interviews with Mr. Bodh and Mr. Iqbal, a new pattern had emerged pointing towards Indian, and not Westerner, tourism as being a driving force behind modernization in Leh. I asked Mr. Iqbal when Indian tourists arrived.

Maybe 5-6 years ago. The J and K Tourism Department began promoting Ladakh. Before, nobody knew about Ladakh. But the Sindhu Darshan festival and the Ladakh Festival changed that. And now the films are being shot in Ladakh, and more people are interested in the place. The people in the Changthang became dependent on the army for education and world. People because used to drinking nice *twa* and eating nice *roti and chawal*. Then an agreement with China meant the Indian Army had to stay 200 kilometers away from the border, and now the people there have nothing. Now our children go to school in Jammu and Chandigar and Delhi and they come back wearing the jeans and t-shirts so that you cannot tell if they are Ladakhi.

During this last comment, the power had gone out, but our conversation had not broken. I could hear Mrs. Iqbal doing *namaz* in the *shelkang* and a dog barking off in the distance. Mr. Iqbal began rifling around for a flashlight; Mrs. Iqbal, still praying, wandered into the living room with two candles; a few generators fired up in the background. Mr. Iqbal continued.

You know, when I was a child in Thiksey, we used to work in the fields. I can remember when I would find an apple- I would see this red thing in the field and I would become *so excited!* I would pick it up and it would be this special thing to have this beautiful red apple. But now, you look around - the apples are everywhere. There is nothing special about them.

To me, this statement provided a strong metaphor for the massive growth of guest houses and hotels and of tourism-industry related development in general.

CHAPTER VII CONCLUSION: IF CONSERVATION IS THE NEW TOURISM, WHOSE HERITAGE IS IT?

This dissertation discusses the construction of socio-spatial landscapes in Leh, Ladakh and elucidates the relationships between stakeholders in the tourism arena, conservation profession, regional and state government, and local civil society. It explains processes of urban regulation, juxtaposing the (re)production and representation of Ladakhi architectural heritage both during the conservation of historical buildings and during the construction of new tourist accommodations.¹¹⁶

Qualitative ethnographic research and spatial studies were conducted to investigate how competing discourses on Ladakhi heritage generated by state-based tourism industries and by non-governmental organizations are shaping building traditions, residence patterns, and livelihoods for resident Ladakhis. Leh's built environment is a product of numerous contestations and negotiations between residents, NGOs and the state in places I call *heritage construction sites*: architectural conservation projects and new guest-house construction projects, respectively. In this study, I pinpoint how Ladakhis identify with or contest the transformation of their urban landscape, answering the question "whose heritage is it?"

I discovered that Western-educated conservationists and state tourism specialists place certain emphasis on Ladakh's Tibetan heritage, which in turn shapes notions of place, cultural tradition and identity for Buddhist *and* Muslim (and Christian) resident Ladakhis. These understandings are expressed in certain structural, aesthetic and cultural components of vernacular architecture in Ladakh, which are pinpointed as stakeholders weigh their decisions to conserve historical estates and/or construct new housing – namely tourist accommodations. Through this process. Leh residents manage to maintain a somewhat homogenous veneer of pan-Himalayan vernacular design in their modern buildings.

Innovation, however, ranges from incorporation of new and imported materials such as concrete,

¹¹⁶ The phrase "heritage industry" over "heritage sector" acknowledges the role of heritage conservation in cultural production, as opposed to merely a sociological or economic subdivision of cultural conservation. Recognizing that industries and sectors are both products of a bureaucratic, post-industrial world, labeling heritage conservation as an industry, or a group that provides a particular product or service – in this case conserving buildings, allows me to point out its relationship to tourism. Henceforth, and with all due respect to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), I also understand tourism as an industry, collectively a category of groups – namely businesses – that provide valuable services to tourists with the added incentive of economic competition in a global marketplace.

marble and granite, to embellishment and personalization of decorative exterior features common to buildings throughout the Himalayas, and on to significant infrastructural changes such as indoor plumbing and related floor plan adjustments. The choice to build according to local knowledge, however, is left entirely up to the builder. For the most part, only locals who desire to retain the traditional building practices of their forefathers still utilize only local materials and only local laborers. As I have pointed out, the costs of remaining traditional can far outweigh the costs of imported materials and laborers. Moreover, Ladakhis entrepreneurs want to satisfy their clientele who, for the most part, do not discern Tibetan Buddhist from Ladakhi Buddhist from Ladakhi Muslim or Christian. Their concerns are experiencing a piece of Ladakh's rich culture and remaining comfortable in the harsh climate to which their hosts have long since adapted. Those adaptations continue today, not only to changing economic opportunities, but also to the adoption of Western tastes. In some ways, regulation of the built environment seems to be the only way to remain Ladakhi.

Ladakhi culture exhibits profound plasticity. Scholars and visitors alike have long recognized the Karakoram region of the Himalayas as a place of historical and ecological significance (Berreman 1966; Cunningham 1854 [1970]; Francke 1907 [1995]; Hedin 1902; Moorcroft and Trebeck 1841 [1971]; Walker 1998). Across the modern day countries of Kashmir, Baltistani Pakistan, and Tibet, China, this richly diverse area has endured as a trader's and merchant's crossroads for millennia. Continuous migration along the Silk Road trade routes yielded similar settlement patterns. As different groups adapted to Himalayan montane life, they blended their own building aesthetics with the basic square, two-story, white-washed vernacular form, using materials and building traditions which were suited to the harsh environment. For hundreds of years and through influence from various political regimes and religions, these practices persisted, creating building complexes which loosely resemble one another.

With the influx of tourism –and especially with the sheer number of visitors- the Ladakhi urban infrastructure has yielded to new influences: that of state-development initiatives and non-

governmental organization response. In response, some Buddhist and Muslim residents of Ladakh's capital elected to gradually transform their ancestral hometown from an isolated and rugged hill station into a resort-like locality. All around the Heritage Zone, residents have vacated their ancestral homes and have shifted to their new guest houses; in some instances, those homes have been demolished and replaced by tourist accommodations. Noting that these are private residences, guest house owners cleverly name their homes to attract visitors, names that inspire mountain views or cultural quaintness. Both state and regional tourism departments and local travel agencies branded Ladakh as a destination known as Little Tibet by capitalizing on the long history of scholarly and adventurer fascination. This is easily done, as the Namgyal Palace, which towers over the Old Leh Heritage Zone, stands like a monolith signifying Ladakh's connection to the Tibetan past. The answer to Ladakhi's acceptance of the "Little Tibet" brand may lie within degrees of state and regional government hegemony. I observe that Tibetans-in-Exile rely heavily on their connection to the past, whereas Ladakhis are committed to conserving their heritage as they continue to transform their world. Through their adaptation of design – and especially resistance to remaining within a specific artistic tradition – the practice of local knowledge is now subverting those archetypal forms. The Druk. The Dragon. These hotel facades play on local vernaculars – for example, the mixed-materials and elaborate *shinstok* – albeit on a massive scale. They are quintessentially modern in their representation of the traditional.

Towns like Leh, Ladakh are representations of both their builders and their residents. Traditional settlements and dwelling places are designed first and foremost as adaptations to the Himalayan Mountains' specific environmental challenges, and second, in accordance with cultural norms and values.¹¹⁷ The establishment of extensive trade routes, however, changed the landscape forever. Cultural diffusion and the sharing of ideas accompanied each consecutive human migration. Trade and conquest marked the landscape in unique ways. Mountain travel was slow and treacherous. Those who

¹¹⁷ If resources permit, buildings would be embellished according to personal preference. Elaborate ornamentation was, and is today, a luxury afforded by group leaders, wealthy merchants, or religious complexes.

chose to remain in Ladakh looked to existing structures as a blueprint for their permanent settlements. Square, thick and white, with low ceilings and small windows, the basic Pan-Himalayan building form is relatively homogenous and practical. To embellish and personalize, builders incorporated diverse design characteristics. For example, Muslims wove wooden lattices for domestic privacy while Buddhists carved stylistic eaves and overhangs; parapets donned the white moon and star or a series of colorful prayer flags, respectively. While the elements of home interiors may also have varied, basic components like a center pillar, a summer and winter kitchen, an upper-level composting pit toilet and lower-level animal quarters, remained as always. According to some sources, Ladakhi architectural heritage should be attributed to a single origin, one bearing resemblance to traditional forms in historical Lhasa, Tibet.

Heritage site authenticity is often measured by its origin-narrative, but even if Ladakhi architecture is an amalgamation of different influences, “what it is now facing is radically different” (Lawrence-Zuniga personal communication, June, 2014; also see Hancock 2002; Handler 1986; Trilliot 1995). In order to be a destination, a place needs a strong sense of character. Ladakhis building accommodations are compelled by regional (LAHDC) regulations to mirror Himalayan vernacular form and to include components like *shinstok* which satisfy the market and achieve homogeneity in the built environment. Coupled with good marketing, the place *looks* Buddhist.

Some home builders embrace these guidelines and take full creative license with their designs given respective economic constraints. Others contest these changes by ignoring directives altogether. Those wishing to preserve their ways of life choose to conserve their ancestral homes by collaborating with NGOs. But these latter residents are few and far between, as most choose to “shift out” of the old town and construct new dwellings elsewhere. While concrete and machine-lathed exterior facades may mimic these nearby historical structures, inside, ceramic commodes and hot showers take precedence over composting toilets and mountain streams. This begs questioning what aspects of their built environment Ladakhi residents consider cultural heritage, and thus worth saving. Closer inspection of

new construction reveals a hybrid aesthetic which appears to dignify older traditions while diverging significantly from traditional building technologies. To what extent is this the case? Has architectural conservation overessentialized Ladakh's past and undermined Ladakhi built heritage? How are Ladakhi home lives affected, if at all?

This project shows how the convergence with and divergence from traditional Ladakhi forms like palaces, building complexes, marketplaces, temples, shrines, and ruins represent competing interests and lifestyles. Spatial surveys and ethnographic interviews highlight competing notions of architectural and cultural heritage found in conservation projects and in new commercial construction; they illuminate both the contradictions and continuities of this hybrid locality. The politics of space and place firmly situate in the built environment discursive interactions between international conservationists, state tourism agencies, and associations of landed Muslim and Buddhist Ladakhis. Juxtaposing new guest-house building practices, structures and forms against those of existing dwellings provides a unique insight into the dynamics of local knowledge. The heritage construction sites highlighted in this research remain tenaciously rooted, "shaped by global economic change, transnational migration, and local historical factors" (Vasquez and Marquardt 2003: 146; see also Smith 2003), without being attributed to a single origin or even vision.

For native Ladakhi Buddhist, Muslim, and Christian residents of Leh Town, daily existence is transformed during the summer months as they incorporate rural migrants, foreign entrepreneurs, and tourists into their city. Discerning individual and societal spatial engagement within this mixture of cultural influences and agendas is complicated, even in a town as small as Leh. The meaning and significance of spatial arrangements among and between social groups in any tourist sphere is relative to each party, varying according to the perspectives and agendas each group maintains and pursues. Historical, regional, ethnic, and religious backgrounds may influence residents' conceptual and physical

organization of their neighborhoods, marketplaces, and communities, as well as their use of space (Harvey 1990; Hall 1976).

On a micro level, communal spatial arrangements and social relationships within Leh, as elsewhere, are mutually constitutive, created, recreated and reinforced by daily social practice (Bourdieu 1972). The characteristics of social, political, and economic life both influence and are influenced by specific events that take place in the built environment. Likewise, the specific physical arrangement of households and domestic practices reflect particular aspects of social structure (kinship, for example) (Robben 1989; Pellow 2002; Fortes 1945). The structures of social organization – ethnicity, socio-economics, and religion - are reflected in Ladakhi's spatial organization and building processes. Differences in the organization and representation of space carry the potential for conflicts between indigenous residents, conservationists, or tourists.¹¹⁸

In Ladakh, as well as throughout the Tibetan Plateau and much of the Himalayan range, village-based organizations are traditionally responsible for the construction and maintenance of both monasteries and dwellings; in both cases, local specialists (carpenters, stone masons, brick makers and layers, painters and muralists) work in conjunction with monks and laypeople to execute community construction projects. Local knowledge is basic to the construction of these projects, and ritual is required at each step in the process (Mills (2003) 1999; Rizvi 1999; Alexander 2006). Previous scholars have drawn attention to the enculturation and knowledge transmission which engenders the creation of enduring vernacular forms.

The model itself is the result of the collaboration of many people over many generations as well as the collaboration between makers and users... [hence] *traditional*. Since knowledge of the model is shared by all, there is no need for drawings or designers.... The construction is simple, clear, and easy to grasp, and since everyone knows the rules, the craftsman is called in only because he has a more detailed knowledge of these rules (Rapoport 1982).

¹¹⁸ As much as one can argue for organizations' top-down governance, I maintain that ultimately, agency, or the will to act, belongs to the individual. And although hegemony is not the current focus of this essay, it would be appropriate to identify potential fountainheads.

Today, however, NGOs (many operating under UNESCO or ICOMOS grand rhetoric) designate heritage sites for global consumption, prompting lower-order maintenance of sacred and vernacular places alike. In Leh, the employment of non-Ladakhi architects, designers and builders for both conservation and construction of residential and commercial establishments disrupts conventional practices where villagers would build and maintain their own houses using locally mined, harvested, and fashioned materials. Bureaucratic initiatives appear to follow in concert with those of conservationists and are now mandating that tourism-oriented construction projects adhere to a presumed traditional architectural aesthetic – one which is decidedly ancient and authentic.

Due to craftsmen's increasing reliance on a cash-based tourism economy, traditional craftsmen are few and far between; some are even sought out in neighboring villages.¹¹⁹ Consequently, for large-scale projects like hotels and guest houses, professional architects are typically employed to draw up plans which are then interpreted by building foremen and handed over to specialized tradesmen. Thus, the relationship between resident owner and vernacular architecture no longer constitutes that same *habitus* which once guided preindustrial architecture (Bourdieu 1977; Rapoport 1982). On the surface, new structures may contain built features that allow them to blend with pre-existing types, even though the incorporation of imported building materials, modern facilities, and popular interior design reveals a break from traditional built forms. In essence, Notified Area Committee mandates and Jammu and Kashmir Tourism Department certification only regulates the final product, not the building process. The result is that building is only carried out on a surface level to satisfy presumed market demands. As Rudofsky once observed: "the vernacular is much more than a style; it is a code of good manners ..." (1977: 229). Too look *too* Ladakhi is, for some, a transgression of associational codes –that of the tourism industry.

¹¹⁹ Personal communications Sept/Oct 2006: "Tashi", guest house owner, Andre Alexander, THF, "Stanzin", foreman of "Dragon Hotel

To avoid the “shopworn dichotomy between tradition and modernity” (Sorkin 2005: 4607 of 7450), the built form can be understood not just as a building type but also as a building process. This includes the influences on builder decision-making, such as who decides what building elements will be used in construction and finishing or how one is to design spatial divisions and trimmings. How does one account for variations between intended function and actual use?¹²⁰ In Ladakh, hoteliers and guest house owners are socially pressured by other members to participate in a civil society organization called the Ladakh Hotel and Guest House Association (LHGHA). Members must take care to meet codified standards of traditional building design, or risk alienation from the Association.¹²¹ Unlike the LAHDC and JKTD, CSOs like LHGHA have no authority to enforce codes of building or good business practice, but because membership is often overlapping with membership in the government, it pays to conform to the rules. As Sorkin aptly puts it “planning, architecture, and democracy are difficult bedfellows – no amount of public participation can substitute for either artistic genius or genuine expertise... “ (2005: 1422 of 7450).

Whether guest house construction is regulated by an official construction type or guided by a cultural tradition, variation in design results from individual agency. The builder’s intention – that causative, transformative personalization in design - is just as important to the construction of heritage as it is to the subsequent use of space (Gell 1998). As Yi Fu Tuan famously pointed out, tradition is also governed by constraint, whether environmental or economic. The signification of form depends as much on the intention and ability of the producer-agent as its subsequent reception and function.

During a conversation about the changing construction climate in Leh, one guest house owner, a well-travelled, Delhi-educated Buddhist Ladakhi, explained to me why tourists come to Ladakh.

People come to Ladakh because they see it as sort-of untouched, like a virgin place. Nobody knows about Ladakh. They come to see how we dress (he was wearing a light blue, short-sleeve Ralph Lauren Polo T-shirt with a long-sleeve white T-shirt underneath

¹²⁰ For discussions on relationships between of builders and vernacular design types, see Rapoport 1969.

¹²¹ Personal communication, October 2006: Spaldin Goba, Ladakh Guest House and Hotel Association,

it and dark cargo-style pants, a wrist watch, white cotton socks...), to eat the food (I pictured all the “continental cuisine” restaurants and my experiences at local *dhabas* typically as the sole foreigner), the language (here we are conversing in English), the festivals and dances (locals had recently boycotted the Ladakh Festival). And you know the food - we Ladakhis are very proud of being Indian, and we like the Indian food but we eat our own food. (Do you eat barley or wheat?) It is compulsory to take the barley, the *sampa*, at least one time a day either in the morning, or evening; and the wheat, it is compulsory that we take it- the *chappati*- and then the rice, like this. (What about the Maggi noodles and packaged juices sold in the *bazaar*?). We Ladakhis, we like all things. We welcome the foreigner into our places.

His point: people pick and choose what works for them and leave the rest, despite what social conventions or political interventions dictate. Although stereotypes abound, Ladakhis have free will to make their own choices. Buildings like the Druk and Dragon hotel speak to what can be done if one can afford it. Builders of lesser means may also incorporate structures as they are able, only to a lesser extent. Those without means, like some building homes for themselves, make do with natural materials and do their best to create a structure which can withstand the elements. Families in older guest homes still prefer to use the local toilet, whereas families living in buildings in town who do not compost tend to adapt to western toilet design. Both Muslims and Buddhists alike seem comfortable pretending to tourists that a local traditional homestay is equivalent to a Tibetan Buddhist homestay. Local tour guides and conservation architects have no qualms reifying the “Little Tibet” brand, so long as foreign funds continue to provide for their projects and their businesses.

Recent scholarly interest in Ladakh’s Islamic built environment matches a global interest in Islam. When I first began my project in 2005, there was scant literature on vernacular Himalayan architecture or non-Tibetan/non-monastic sites.¹²² Most architectural conservationists or art historians who had published on the Indian Himalayan cultures were European; their accounts focused by and large on Tibetan sites. Scholars who addressed culture rather than materiality, often painstakingly

¹²² I cannot account for why I could find hardly any information on Ladakh. Perhaps at the time I did not know where to look, and indeed the place was only then gaining popularity. Perhaps reliable Internet connections were only then becoming available in Leh as well, accounting for reduced communication when compared to the present.

attempted to map human terrain over time by dating and, not surprisingly, classifying human groups by way of categorizing material culture (not unlike an archaeologist).

Similarly, most of Leh's tourism publications and cultural conservation focused on structures, sites and social practices related to Tibetan Buddhism or closely associated with its monastic structures, monumental architecture, and traditional lifeways. These discourses reinforce fanciful notions of Ladakh as a sacred, exotic Tibetan place and preclude the possibility that Muslims are part of the heritage. Moreover, focusing solely on the ancient heritage sites blinds visitors and non-residents from seeing Ladakh as a modern place. This may further the Indian perception of Ladakhis as backward. It seems counterintuitive that Muslims would shun their own heritage. But the fact is that tourists – domestic and foreign – *and volunteers* want to “consume” Buddhism. This further justifies the reification of Ladakh as “Little Tibet”. But times are changing for residents, scholars, and conservationists alike.

When I arrived in Ladakh, the Tibet Heritage Fund had just begun its aggressive conservation effort in Old Leh. Its founders worked closely with several Ladakhi families – establishing an office in one renovated estate and a fundraising café in another – all the while bolstering their local government contacts. Their focus was heavily Tibetan, which was understandable; THF President Andre Alexander's had conducted all of his previous work in Lhasa, Tibet (China). Their pervasive focus on preserving traditional culture mirrored other conservation efforts – most of them cultural – like the International Society for Ecology and Culture. I marveled at how the conservation of a particular image (in this case, Ladakhi heritage) could affect a living heritage, and so I sought Andre's affiliation for my dissertation project. Along the way, I shared multiple drafts of my project proposals criticizing 1) the scant attention which had been paid to Ladakh's prominent Muslim history *and* present society, and 2) the prevalence of top-down methods NGOs seemed to prefer when interacting with locals. By the time I presented my preliminary findings to INTACH conservationists in 2008 (Johnson 2008), the THF women's mosque conservation in *Tsas Soma* was nearing completion.

In 2007, the Hamdin Mosque at Shey was named by the Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages and Chief Executive Councilor of the Ladakhi Autonomous Hill Council as a site of great significance. Pledges were made to install a marble plaque containing an English version of the mosque's history (in addition to the one inscribed in Urdu) and to "take all possible steps to make the mosque premises attractive for the visitors."¹²³ That year also marked the date when conservationists, including the members of THF and INTACHs J & K Chapter, joined with the Jammu and Kashmir Tourism Department in conjunction with the Anjuman Moin-ul-Islam (AMIL) to begin the Munschi House conservation project. Eventually completed in 2011 and named the Central Asian Museum (CAM), the project represented a significant marker for the growing awareness of Ladakh's Muslim heritage. Yet how much of this has trickled down into private construction remains to be seen, as the Western World still appears to prefer Buddhism to Islam and *gonpas* to mosques.

While the current of monolithic cultural representation in Ladakh may be changing, the question still remains: why renovate? There is an inherent contradiction, and perhaps conflict of interest, in embracing economic growth and tourism-industry expansion and preserving/conserving and *living* a "traditional" "heritage" or "authentic" way of life. This struggle plays out in two opposite, but similar, spheres: 1) The Old Leh Heritage Zone, and 2) the expanding tourism/ accommodation industry. I have been told that life in the Old Leh Heritage Zone is difficult to endure. Effects of tourism in the adjacent main bazaar include expanding commercialism and increased foot and motor traffic, as well as the perception of security threats from transient summer residents. Combined with a lack of basic infrastructural elements such as water and sanitation, many residents fail to see the utility in conserving their ancestral homes short of complete renovation, which few can afford. Further, as a result of remittances from tourism, Old Leh residents may see other Ladakhis enjoying the relative comfort of

¹²³ <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2007/Jul/10/cec-lahdc-unveils-memorial-of-historic-mosque-at-shey-15.asp>.

new housing and may desire to meet or exceed those standards.¹²⁴ With cultural tourism's emphasis on monumental architecture, residents may not consider domestic quarters as heritage sites, particularly when there is no monetary gain in doing so. As elsewhere (Herzfeld 2003), officials and bureaucrats are preserving most of historical sites themselves. In the Old Leh Heritage Zone, that is precisely the case.

In addition, the climate is changing. As a result of moderate winters, there is decreasing snowfall. Rainfall has substantially increased every year for the past six years (2007 – 2013). Floods have decimated villages and homes and wreaked havoc on patterns of life. *Markalak* roofs melt without proper pitching and drainage; mudbrick retaining walls and mortar dissolve with each passing storm. Traditional building structures are no longer sufficient to protect residents and their belongings, and they know that structural integrity is no longer an assurance in the summer months. To correct for this, residents living in traditional homes resort to tarping their roofs at the first sign of rain. This method meets with mixed results. Those with means have purchased corrugated tin roofing sheets and pitched them at a ten to fifteen degree angle using stacked boulders to direct drainage off the roof. Ground erosion in either case is impossible to avoid without radical infrastructural changes. But my early results indicate that new construction projects that incorporate pitched roofs, drainage holes (and sometimes gutter systems), and *the incorporation of mixed materials such as concrete and mudbrick* stand up to the changing weather patterns. Conservationists have also begun using these mixed materials even while adhering to rigid standards of exterior aesthetic and claim that the use of mixed materials has the added advantage of flexibility in the face of earthquakes – an advantage that using concrete alone does not have.

I assert that it is possible to understand new construction as constituting heritage, but not necessarily constituting authentic building tradition. This is exactly what the JKTD and LHGA in

¹²⁴ As Pratt (1982:158) notes: “[i]f one’s self is articulated through communicative interaction with others, one would expect a different view of the self and the house as an expressive medium for persons involved in these difference social worlds.” This phenomenon could be attributed to what Orser (2003) (drawing from McCracken 1991) has called the “Diderot effect”, commonly known as keeping up with the Jones”.

conjunction with the THF have implemented by regulating the built environment and codifying its signifiers. The most profound evidence of locals accepting these codifications falls not in the realm of guest houses, but rather in the construction of the new restaurant by members of the Namgyal family. As Sorkin observes, “architecture does not create community, but it can provide a setting conducive for the playing out of collective values (2005: 2875 of 7450). When Ladakhis ceased to look to native specialists to execute the construction of a new building, turning instead to outsiders in order to produce an authentic traditional-style structure, the construction itself became a metaphor for culture change. One might suggest that such self-conscious design is inauthentic, but in enough time, it too becomes a fixture within the city’s self-image.

For locals, a heritage construction site can only be authentic if conservation successfully “looks after” the building so as to allow residents to return to business as usual. Once conservation grants a few alterations such as indoor plumbing, raised ceilings, skylights for improved visibility, and other aesthetic modifications are added to update the edifice to satisfy personal needs, it ceases to signify *home* in the same way that it did before. Conservation is not preservation and most conservationists understand that residents’ homes must change as their personal needs change. Year after year the conservationists in Leh have made friends and allies and even enemies, who grant or deny them access to the cultural construction of heritage via conservation. Properly looking after a building involves correcting or improving upon structural flaws or weaknesses of a building, rendering it safe and inhabitable. Many well-meaning intentions are laden with value judgments. The philosophy of progress, a metaphor for culture change, can be likened to modernization. But rather than contrast that with tradition, a metaphor for sameness, it is perhaps more beneficial to look at the “mutual embedding” of tradition and modernity and to the “possibilities and constraints similarly located in contexts that continue to shift” (Sorkin 2005: 4607 of 7450).

The matter of heritage construction sites remains. Outside the bustling Main Bazaar and adjacent Heritage zone, alongside bucolic fields and breathtaking backdrops, cement trucks lumber past backpackers returning to their guest houses and hotels. Influenced by local knowledge, regulated by local government, and institutionalized by NGOs, the built environment takes on a different meaning. Even if those structures are in keeping with local and regional vernaculars, one might judge them inauthentic. They are produced self-consciously, for a particular audience, using industrial materials and possibly non-local labor. But in time, even traditional and modern housing may “find expression through both arbitrary and instrumental signification, themselves situated at various removes from their origins and requiring different styles of authentication” (Sorkin 2005: 4615 of 7450). The Namgyal sisters hired conservationists to build their restaurant because they were architects who employed skilled local laborers, and because they would execute traditional designs and complete the project more exactly and efficiently than they believed others could. The confluence of conservation and construction remains evidence of community structures in Leh, Ladakh which are changing with the times.

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GLOSSARY

TERM	TRANSLATION
<i>Abaleh</i>	Father
<i>Abile</i>	Grandmother
<i>Ameleh</i>	Mother or mother's sister
<i>azan</i>	Muslim call to prayer from the masjid
<i>bidi</i>	a handrolled Indian cigarette
<i>chaiwala</i>	tea seller
<i>chansa</i>	family winter kitchen
<i>chortens</i>	local shrines, usually housing ashes of departed monks
<i>chutsos/chosphons.</i>	Composed of ritual siblings, this 10 <i>kangchen</i> sub-group selects representatives to village councils
<i>dukandar</i>	storekeeper, merchant
<i>dungma</i>	long, relatively thick and round pieces of wood equally spaced across the width of a room above ceiling joists to support talu.
<i>dzo</i>	a domesticated yak and cow hybrid (farm animal)
<i>gari</i>	car, motorcycle, any motorized vehicle
<i>goba</i>	headmen and adjudicators who serve on a rotating appointment
<i>goncha</i>	Traditional red, woolen, full-length robe cinched at the waist and worn by both Ladakhi women and men
<i>gonpa</i>	Buddhist monastery
<i>iftar</i>	breaking of the daily fast for Ramadan-observing Muslims
<i>ka</i>	central supporting beams, symbolic of family life
<i>kangchen/khutu</i>	family homestead
<i>khampa,</i>	individual residence
<i>khawa</i>	A persian-style spiced tea brewed with slivered almonds
<i>le</i>	honorific suffix, i.e. <i>Abi + le</i> = honorable grandmother
<i>Mane Tonches</i>	Prayers or chanted meditations
<i>mani</i>	chant
<i>markalak</i>	<i>lit.</i> dirt. locally mined mud, usually mixed with straw or lime and used as exterior mortar or roof covering
<i>Memeleh</i>	Grandfather
<i>nangmi,</i>	family
<i>Nomoleh</i>	Daughter
<i>Nonoleh</i>	Son
<i>paspun/phasphun</i>	a group of fictive-kin, or non-related families who traditionally share a common deity by initiation through rites of passage
<i>puja</i>	prayer
<i>rapсал</i>	A formal balcony usually found in Ladakhi homes of Muslim descent

<i>shinstok</i>	<i>lit.</i> layers. Structural window frames whose exterior terminations are ornately carved. Alternatively, <i>shinstok</i> can also refer to hand-carved (rare) or machine-lathed (common) planks of wood which are nailed onto exterior window frames
<i>subzi mandi</i>	produce market
<i>susma</i>	Ladakhi butter tea
<i>tal</i>	long, thin and round pieces of wood spaced tightly above ceiling
<i>tandoorwala</i>	joists running along the length of a room
<i>tgonspa</i>	a male cook specializing in preparing meals in <i>tandoor</i> ovens
<i>thangka</i>	neighborhood
<i>Tsokspa/Tsogspa</i>	painted expressions of various Buddhist dieties
<i>wideshi</i>	perform myriad tasks on behalf of the villages, largely in connection with the monasteries and subsidiary temples
<i>yos</i>	foreigner
	a snack made from roasted barley, raisins, walnuts, and apricot seeds

Appendix 1: Tables, Maps and Photos

TABLES

1. Number of Registered Tourists in Leh.
2. Leh Vision Document 2025
3. Registered Hotels and Guest Houses.
4. Overview of organizational hierarchy in Leh.
5. Organizational hierarchy in Leh Town by name.
6. Levels of village integration in community-based organizations

MAPS

1. Political map of Ladakh in Jammu and Kashmir.
2. Road and Hiking Map of Ladakh.
3. Tourism map of Leh Town.
4. Map of Old Leh
5. Cognitive map in pencil on brown paper.
6. White lined cognitive map in pencil on lined paper
7. White lined cognitive map in pencil on 12th AILS Colloquium stationery
8. Cognitive map overlaid on Planning and Development Strategy for Tourism in Leh Town.
9. Cognitive map overlaid on Planning and Development Strategy for Tourism in Leh Town.

PHOTOS

1. Mudbricks dug from pits and baked in the sun
2. *Tikse gonpa* (Thiksey monastery)
3. Spanish lauburu seal from Indus Valley Civilization
4. Greek Silver
5. Door frame at Indus Guest House – Leh
6. The Dzomsa watering station and Ladags Apricot store.
7. Main Bazaar, Leh, Ladakh
8. Itinerent workers stand in from of the Jamia Masjid. Old Leh Palace stands in the background.
9. The Shia Imambara in the Main Bazaar, Leh.
10. 17th century Sankar Monastery Labrang (L), scheduled for demolitions; converted into a café and art gallery for local artisans in 2006 by the Tibet Heritage Fund.
11. The same house, now LaLa's Café (completed in 2008), greets visitors entering the Old Leh Heritage Zone.
12. The Dragon Hotel under construction in 2006
13. A man carves decorative exterior adornments from a pile of lumber at the Hotel Dragon construction site.
14. Druk Hotel

15. En Suite Bath in the Druk Hotel.
16. Crown molding inside an executive suite at The Dragon Hotel.
17. Shinstok in Bhutan.
18. Imported building materials.
19. Greek frets carved into the exterior frame of desks in each guest room.
20. Chap 5 – Hand drawn picture pg 24
21. The HH Dalai Lama's summer residence, Thagchokling Dharma and Retreat Center. Choglamsar, Leh District, Ladakh.
22. Moravian Church, Leh, Ladakh. Rendering credit: Donald Johnson
23. Mosque at Shey. Photo credit (www.tasveergar.net)
24. Layers of mudbrick and even chain link fencing surround family homes.
25. Lakrook family house located in the Lakrook Garden Guest House, Sankar, Leh.
Photo credit: travel.paintedstork.com
26. The Lakrook family shekang, located in the main family house.
Photo credit: www.oktatabyebye.com
27. Thinles Lakrook with his granddaughter sitting out in the apple orchard.
28. The pathway to the Nazia Guest house in the Main bazaar. A crumbling rapsal shades cows from the afternoon sun. In the foreground, a guru lakhang shrine is flanked by a dry cleaners (not shown) and is opposite a motorcycle rental shop.
29. Amale Iqbal, her sister, and her grand-niece sit on the floor preparing momos, a pan-Himalayan dumpling, during Ramadan.
30. Large family estate with harvested alfalfa mounds to be stored on the roof for the winter.
31. New Changspa hotel under construction - showing concrete ka
32. New Changspa hotel under construction - layers of machine-lathed shinstok protected by corrugated tin sheets.
33. The Dragon Hotel roof had brick on the outside; mud brick, brick, and stone on the inside.
34. Dragon Hotel bathroom before plastering: mud brick, brick, and stone filled in with concrete.
35. The Namgyal sisters stand in front of their project.
36. The Namgyal sisters stand in front of their project.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Introduction

Everyone lives somewhere. Even in times of flux, people find innovative ways to adapt to their particular circumstances while creating or retaining markers of their identity. As an anthropologist, I specialize in understanding the socio-cultural aspects of the places people call home, and how those places become loci of cultural transformation. My recent work shows how governmental and non-governmental directives to remain traditional often clash with indigenous aspirations to be modern and upwardly mobile. Using flexible and creative methods and analysis, I was able to mediate competing interests by facilitating an exchange of ideas between stakeholders. The reach of this project extends far beyond peer-reviewed journal submissions. In the classroom, my commitment to transparency and dialog also informs my pedagogy and allows a holistic, multi-faceted presentation and discussion of anthropological studies.

Education

December 2014: Anthropology, PhD | Syracuse University

Dissertation:

Accommodating Conservation: Regulating Architectural Heritage in a Himalayan Tourist Town

My doctoral research investigates socio-spatial aspects of conservation architecture and new vernacular construction in the growing tourist destination of Leh, Ladakh. Understanding indigenous dwellings and settlements beyond convenient binaries of traditional/modern and local/global, I examine conflicting cultural heritage discourses and subsequent regulations imposed by international NGOs and state-based tourism initiatives upon local inhabitants. Ultimately, my research addresses the question: "Whose heritage is it?"

June 2007: Anthropology, M.A. | Syracuse University | GPA: 3.92

Dec 2001: Anthropology, B.A., *magna cum laude* | University of North Texas | GPA: 3.84

Ethnography

Lenses: Urban anthropology, spatial studies, dwellings and settlements, heritage, civil society, NGOs, tourism; Ethnographic areas: Asian studies, Himalayas; North America.

Classroom Courses and Seminars Taught

Anthropological Fieldmethods, Anthropological Theory, Anthropology of Non-governmental Organizations, Cultural Anthropology, General Anthropology, Gender in Cross Cultural Perspective, Indigenous Peoples of North America, Peoples and Cultures of South Asia, Tourism Cultures (prepped), Urban Anthropology

Blackboard Courses Taught

American Culture and Society, Culture and Society, World Cultures Through Film

Blackboard Courses Designed and Taught

Introduction to Cultural Anthropology

Submissions and Publications

Nd. Concretely Ambiguous: Adapting Architectural Heritage in Ladakhi Guest House Construction

Nd. Desiring Hidden Designs: A 100-year Retrospection of the Middle-class American Closet

Submissions and Publications, cont.

- 2007 Playground or Classroom? Gender and Socialization in American Children's Play Songs. *The Maxwell Review* (7)230-257.
- 2006 Learning Community Encounters: Strategies for Effective Teaching Assistantship. *In The Learning Community Book Project*. Peckskamp, Terra and Carrie McLaughlin, eds. Syracuse University Press: Syracuse, NY.
- 2003 Book Review: Confronting Consumption. *Journal for Sustainable Communities* (6)1-2.

Professional Presentations

- 2009 Paper Presentation. AAA Annual Meetings, Philadelphia, PA
- 2009 Panelist: Worlding Cities. AES/CASCA Annual Meetings, Vancouver, British Columbia
- 2009 Poster Presentation: SfAA Annual Meetings, Santa Fe, New Mexico
- 2008 Invited lecture, Indian Trust for Architecture and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), New Delhi, India
- 2007 Bharati Memorial Lecture Series; South Asia Center, Syracuse University
- 2006 Anthropology Graduate Student Association Monthly, Syracuse, NY
- 2006 Rethinking Space and Place in Asia AAS Dissertation Workshop, San Francisco, CA

Professional and Teaching Experience

- 2014 - 2015 Lecturer, Department of Anthropology, University of North Texas
- 2009 - 2014 Adjunct Instructor, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Texas Christian University
- 2009 - 2014 Adjunct Instructor, Department of Anthropology, University of North Texas
- 2012 - present Associate Faculty, Collin County Community College District
- 2009 - 2011 Lecturer and Program Coordinator, National Science Foundation (NSF) Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) Summer Research Program in Anthropology, University of North Texas
- 2009 - 2012 Homeschool Instructor, Job description and references available upon request
- 2006 - 2007 Graduate Assistant, Women in Science and Engineering (WISE), Syracuse University
- 2003 - 2006 Teaching Associate, Department of Anthropology, Syracuse University
- 2001 - 2003 Program Specialist, Coalition for Leadership in Aging Services (CLAS), University of North Texas

Awards

- 2003 - 2006, Teaching Associateship and tuition waiver, Syracuse University Department of Anthropology

Internal Grants:

- 2005 to 2011 Claudia DeLys Scholarship
Maxwell School of Citizenship Dean's Scholarship for Dissertation Writing
Moynihan Institute Bharati Memorial Fellowship
Roscoe Martin Research Grant
Syracuse University Learning Community Travel Grant
Syracuse University Department of Anthropology Travel Grant

External Grants:

- 2006 Association of Asian Studies Dissertation Workshop Travel Grant

Fellowships:

- 2006 - 2007 American Institute of Indian Studies (AIIS) Intensive Language Immersion Programs in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India, Foreign Language Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowships.

Coursework and Training

Anthropology of Physical Design, Anthropological Problems in South Asia, Biological Anthropology, Ethnographic Fieldmethods, Historical Archaeology, Historical and Modern Theories in Cultural Anthropology, Gender and Culture in South Asia, Interdisciplinary Theories of Space and Place, Language and Culture, Urban Anthropology

Professional Training: Future Professoriate Program, Syracuse University, NAPA Market Research/Analysis Workshop (AAA2014), NAPA Design Process Workshop (AAA2014), Peer-reviewed Journal Submission Workshop (AAA2014)

Language training: Hindi, Ladakhi (conversational), Spanish, Urdu

Past and Present Memberships

Syracuse South Asia Center, American Anthropological Association (AAA), Society for Urban, National, Transnational/Global Anthropology (SUNTA), National Association of Practicing Anthropologists (NAPA), American Ethnological Society (AES), Association for Asian Studies (ASA), International Association of Ladakh Scholars (IALS), Frisco Community Band, United States Bowling Congress (USBC), Dallas Off-Road Bike Association (DORBA)

Academic Service

2014-2015 Committee Member, Vision Statement for Department of Anthropology, University of North Texas
 2014 Faculty Liaison, Graduate Fair, American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting
 2010 Supervisor, Special Problems in Cultural Anthropology, Zoey Murzyn (TCU class of 2012)
 2010 Panel Judge, AddRan Festival of Undergraduate Scholarship and Creativity, Texas Christian University
 2005 - 2007 Future Professoriate Program (FPP) Series Coordinator, Syracuse University
 2005 - 2006 President, Anthropology Graduate Student Organization (AGSO) Syracuse University
 2004 - 2005 Representative to the Faculty, AGSO- Syracuse University

Community Service

2011- present Volunteer, Exhibit Manager, Cityscape Dallas at the Galleria Dallas, Dallas Texas
 2012 - 2014 Team Captain, Strikes for Strays, DFW
 2010 - 2012 Volunteer, SAT and ACT college preparatory tutor, DFW Metroplex
 2011 - 2012 Volunteer, Habitat for Humanity, Trinity Branch
 2008 - 2009 Volunteer, Coppell Community Gardens, Coppell, Texas
 2004 - 2006 Volunteer, Syracuse Peace Counsel, Syracuse, NY
 2001 - 2003 Fundraising Events Coordinator, Dallas Peace Center, Dallas, Texas

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