

Images of Zanskar*

Ana Carolina Fong

anacfong@hotmail.com

The ancient kingdom of Zanskar (now in Ladakh), which lay west of Mount Kailash and south of the Indus River, once belonged to Western Tibet. The valley, closed to foreigners until 1973, is one of the rare places in the world where the inner law of life and the physical laws of nature are still the only authorities.

In August 2009, in the small town of Padum, thousands of pilgrims descended from every corner of the mountains. Sheltered by storms of sand, Tenzin Gyatso, His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama, had come to speak about the power of consciousness and the infinite ways of entering into the path of happiness.

These photographs trace the subtle dance of inner balance and movement between man and his land, in attempts to further define the vast spectrum of human existence, thereby illuminating alternative ways to persevere and to be.

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Figure 1: Near the main temple in Padum. The woman with a baby on her back is wearing a *perak*, the traditional headdress of Ladakh made of turquoises.



Figure 2: Csoma's room. In 1823 Alexander Csoma de Körös, guided by Sangs-rgyas Phun-tshogs, spent 16 months in a cell in Zangla, studying manuscripts to compile the first Tibetan-English dictionary.



Figure 3: Solitude.



Figure 4: Pilgrim.



Figure 5: In August 2005, hundreds of pilgrims descended from every corner of the mountain to hear the Dalai Lama preach.

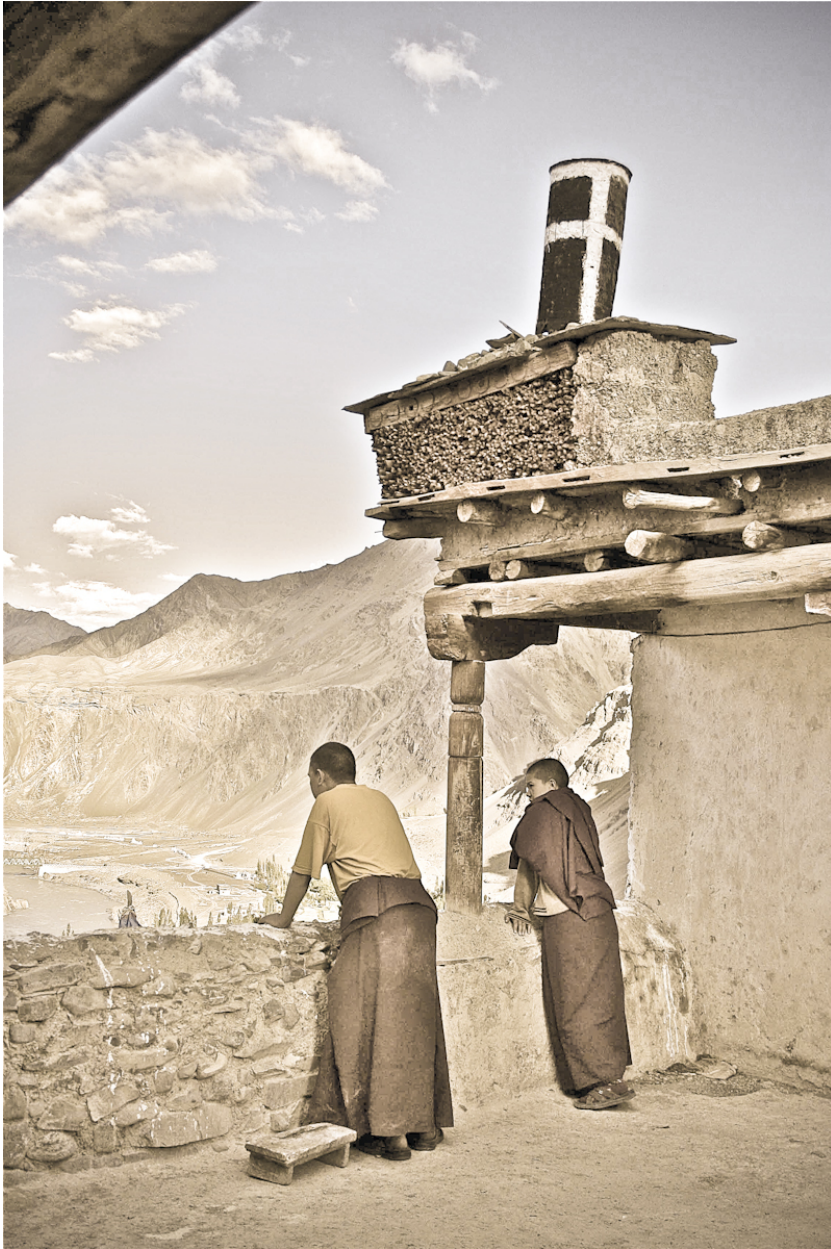


Figure 6: Takmachik, a small village beyond the border of Zaskar, close to Pakistan.



Figure 7: The castle in Zangla, a small principality near Padum. Csoma de Körös stayed here in 1823; it used to house the royal family.



Figure 8: Clouds like prayer flags.



Figure 9: Silence.



Figure 10: Human frailty.



Figure 11: A mountain clad in velvet.



Figure 12



Figure 13



Figure 14: In Zanskar polyandry is still common. This lady is on the roof of a house in which live her two husbands and their children.



Figure 15: Monks carrying branches blessed by the Dalai Lama.



Figure 16: Following the Eightfold Path.



Figure 17: Leaving the temple at Padum, the embrace of a son sees the father off and closes the cycle of teachings imparted by the XIV Dalai Lama.



Figure 18



Figure 19



Figure 20: Near Karcha Monastery.