Low Coercive Capacity: Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago, Mexico, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Benin, Gabon, Guinea, Niger, Ivory Coast, Upper Volta, Sierra Leone, Mauritania, Togo, Kenya, Malawi, Botswana, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Philippines, and Fiji \((N = 23)\).

Middle Coercive Capacity: Haiti, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Colombia, Venezuela, Guyana, Ecuador, Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Equatorial Guinea, Mali, Senegal, Liberia, Ghana, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Zaire, Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Madagascar, Gambia, Swaziland, Algeria, Tunisia, Sudan, North Yemen, Afghanistan, India, Thailand, Indonesia, and Bangladesh* \((N = 45)\).

**A Historical Account of Modern Social Change in Ladakh (Indian Kashmir)**

with Special Attention Paid to Tourism¹

JEAN MICHAUD**

**ABSTRACT**

In the interest of illustrating how approaches to the study of tourism in a local society can be respectful of its specific social complexity, I will evoke the history and culture of Ladakh and focus in particular on the effects of tourism in relation to the other main factors of social change in the region. The most important of these are the State as well as market imperatives. For reasons of methodological strategy, I have chosen to integrate the question of tourism into a historical account of Ladakh’s economy and development, rather than trying to fit Ladakh into the general problem of tourist development. This assuming that an approach which takes history into account is more methodologically sound than the other alternative.

**Introduction**

Ladakh is a typical example of an internal periphery in a centralised State, where an ethnic minority isolated from a lowland majority is facing the challenge of being integrated into a national identity different from its own. At the core of this phenomenon is the ongoing process of modernisation and the linkage of a traditional subsistence economy to regional and national markets. Several authors have successfully highlighted the close relationship existing in similar Third World situations between the implementation of activities linked to tourism, the appearance of new economic operations or attitudes, social change in traditional hierarchical structures and identities, and the important role played by the State in the regulation of the actors involved in these activities (see Crick, 1989; Harrison, 1992).

* The data on the independent and the intervening variables for Bangladesh were for 1973-74.
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1. A Tibetan Enclave in Indian Kashmir

Ladakh is a complex of Himalayan valleys on the western edge of the Tibetan plateau. Located between the Great Himalayan range to the south and the Karakoram range to the north, the enclave is a vast rocky desert where only a few islands of vegetation bear witness to a human presence. The inhabited part of the territory is 3000 to 4500 meters above sea-level, with several summits rising to more than 7000 meters. As of the 9th century A.D., way stations appeared in the area to tend to the needs of the caravaneers and their animals plying trans-Himalayan trade routes. Since that time, Ladakh has helped maintain the commercial traffic which uses the valley of the Indus as an access route into Central Asia and Tibet.

Religion in Ladakh developed as a blend of Indian Buddhism and the indigenous Bon-Chos faith, producing an original synthesis which progressively took root in the whole of the Tibetan plateau, and eventually became modern Lamaism. This religion has melded with the Ladakhi way of life in a harsh ecosystem to forge a lasting association between the native peoples of these high plateaux.

Today, Ladakh is the most sparsely populated area in all of India. Indian census figures for 1981 establish the population of the district at 132,000 inhabitants, dispersed between one town and close to one hundred smaller settlements. The language used by the population is Ladakhi, a local Tibetan dialect, written with the same alphabet. The use of classical Tibetan persists among former nobles and the clergy but its use outside religious life is decreasing rapidly. Seasonal merchants and Kashmiri civil servants stationed at Leh (8500 inhabitants in 1990), the capital of Ladakh, have brought Kashmiri with them, while Urdu, a mid-oriental version of Hindi, is used in business and administrative communications with the rest of the country. English, a constitutional language considered transitory at the time of Indian independence, is employed by an educated minority of Ladakhis to communicate with the exterior. Understandably, this latter language is quickly growing in popularity amongst entrepreneurs and guides involved in international tourism, as well as Indian-educated youth eager to connect with the outside world.

The so-called traditional structure of the work force—i.e., that prevailing roughly up to Indian independence in 1947—was overwhelmingly tilted towards agriculture, with 90% of the population, exclusive of the Buddhist clergy, involved in agricultural production in a rural milieu. Agriculture still dominates the Ladakhi economy. Farming-related activities are concentrated in the period from May to October when all able-bodied people pitch in to assure the survival of the family, which is directly dependent on this one summer harvest. During the winter, below-zero temperatures render the use of water for irrigation and as an energy source impossible. It is during this period that people take care of domestic chores in their homes, which are heated by burning dried dung or, often today, coal.

Patrilineal, patrilocal and polyandrous, the family is the village economic unit, and is led by the oldest male in the child-bearing generation. The rule is that each
household looks after its needs. Practically all the villages in Ladakh today still produce the basic foodstuffs of the traditional diet in sufficient quantities to satisfy most of the local demand.

The estimated percentage of the population engaged in religious life varies from to 2% to 8%, sometimes more, the majority being men. Monasteries are the spiritual, political and geographical centres of their respective villages. They act as information broadcasting centres and comment on changes and innovations in all sectors of Ladakhi life. Spiritual power is vertically stratified in three hierarchical levels (Dollfus, 1989: 98-103). At the top, the abbott, whose soul is considered immortal, is responsible for the monastery; monks are second in the hierarchy; and the general population is at the lowest level. The physical layout of the village corresponds to the spiritual hierarchy: monasteries are built on the highest ground, the monks’ cells along the flanks and villagers’ dwellings at the base. As major landowners, the monasteries administer the profits from rents collected on the lands belonging to them.

Aside from agriculture, almost all other economic activities were concentrated in the city of Leh. Situated at the junction of the Indus and a minor tributary, Leh was well established by the beginning of the 16th century, and is favourably situated with respect to irrigation and efficient communication networks. The city grew up around the monastery and the royal palace, built when the city was founded. Until the beginning of its decline in 1948, caravan traffic was an important element of the Leh economy. The caravan market was also a major physical landmark in the city around which were grouped merchants, inn-keepers, horse-dealers, etc. Most of the remaining 10% of the Ladakhi population not active in agriculture or the clergy lived in Leh: the commercial caravaneers, the aristocrats and the lower castes.

2. Ladakh’s Local Economy and Politics Throughout History

In order to facilitate better understanding of the origins and the sense of social developments in contemporary Ladakh, this section presents a more specific picture of the history of economic and political organization in the region. Most authors (Petech, 1977; Kaplanian, 1981; Rizvi, 1983; Dollfus, 1989) have divided this history into three periods: the monarchical age (10th century to 1841); the era of Dogra and, subsequently, British colonization (1841 to 1947); and the Indian district period (since 1947). For the purpose of our exposé, the latter period can be sub-divided into two parts, the first beginnig with the establishment of the Indian State in 1948 and the second with the debut of tourism in 1974. The following presentation draws heavily on the historical accounts of the above named authors.
Feudalism: the Monarchical Age

Ladakh has been intimately linked to the Tibetan world since the installation in the 10th century of the first monarch. Despite numerous Muslim raids and subsequent attempts to convert the local leaders to Islam, the cement of Lamaistic Buddhism has proved to be resilient and has contributed to the maintenance of friendly relations with Tibet for twelve centuries.

The apogee of the kingdom of Ladakh came at the beginning of the 17th century. This period was distinguished by a flourishing caravan trade, several territorial conquests, the erection of numerous monasteries and the active participation of the clergy in political life. It was during this period that the traditional hierarchical structure of Ladakhi society became fixed.

At the summit, the royal aristocracy and nobility, whose members lived mainly in the capital, represented about 3% of the population. The rural base for this group was composed of local village chiefs responsible for collecting land rents, administering local justice and seeing to military obligations. In second position on the social ladder were the tenant farmers who guaranteed the continuity of the social structure. At the very bottom of the social scale, making up about 3% of the population, were the lower castes, subjected to the taboos of pollution and even more isolated from society than were the tenant farmers from the aristocracy (Erdmann, 1983: 151).

Parallel to the secular social ladder was the Buddhist clerical order. The relationship of dominance between the two hierarchical systems could not have been any clearer: “Le religieux l’emporte toujours sur le profane: le monastère sera toujours plus haut que le palais et les lama s’assoient toujours avant les laïcs dans une cuisine, quels que soient leurs rangs respectifs” (Kaplanian, 1981: 189). Gifts of land awarded by sovereigns in exchange for religious favours have, throughout the centuries, helped turn the clergy into major landowners, leaving entire villages in their hands and adding rents and statute labour benefits to the revenues derived from the sale of spiritual brokerage to the population. The monasteries are interrelated in a complex sectarian fashion, and a clergyman recognized as particularly enlightened will sometimes have had a determining influence on the reigning sovereign, a relationship which will lead to advantages for himself and his monastery (Kaplanian, 1981: 50; Rizvi, 1983: 53; Singh, 1977: 363).

Muslims also have a long-standing presence in Ladakh, the origins of which can probably be attributed to a gradual overflow of population from Kashmir. In the nineteenth century, significant numbers of Muslims were drawn to Leh by a flourishing commerce in fine wools. During this period, business gravitated mainly around the caravan trade. Shorter haul transportation of goods between adjacent valleys was in the hands of their respective local populations and corresponded to the agricultural specializations imposed by the feudal regime. However, on the
longer routes, the Muslims controlled caravan activities throughout Kashmir. Once Leh had become a regular stop-over for the long distance caravans, it was logical for a colony of Muslims to settle there.

Only the richest of the local Buddhist families were involved in caravanning, for the trade required a large number of pack animals and significant amounts of capital. The royal power derived most of its revenues from the flow of trade across its territory, both directly from the levying of import and export duties and indirectly from the fact that the caravan trade between Yarkand and Srinagar, the most important of the routes, was partly in the hands of the Ladakhis. According to Cunningham, the most important trader in Ladakh was the king himself (in Rizvi, 1983: 32-83).

Dogra and British Colonization

In the nineteenth century, first Kashmir (1819) and then Ladakh (1841) came under the outside control of the largely Muslim Dogra. In what was to represent a decisive step towards a definitive break in Ladakhi political autonomy, the Dogra rulers set up an administrative and a commercial structure controlled by a few representatives of the raja and several local leaders in the pay of the interests of the Dogra dominion. Although the royal family was forced out and economic administration was placed in the hands of outside managers, the Dogra reforms were nonetheless limited to a simple administrative restructuring of the system of tenant farming, leaving landowners' privileges largely intact. The political power of the Ladakhi elite, however, was weakened (Kaplanian, 1981: 174). In contrast, Singh (1977), who analyzed the immense areas of influence and the property of the great monasteries in Ladakh today, shows that the Buddhist clergy survived the Dogra reform without any major changes in their status, their capacity for survival, or their economic power.

The Dogra occupation also triggered a new wave of Muslim immigration to Leh in the wake of increased trade with the south and the implementation of the Dogra administrative reform. Little interested in agriculture, the new arrivals rapidly associated with their already established coreligionists, reinforcing and increasing the competitiveness of the Ladakhi Muslim community. This group gradually replaced the former feudal money-lenders, and after obtaining land in payment for unpaid debts, accumulated property in and around Leh. Excess parcels of land thus acquired were then let out to poor Buddhists for rents in kind. In this way, Muslims rapidly accumulated merchandise capital which was in turn converted in exchange value on the caravan market. In fact, the process marked an important step towards making a firmer connection between Ladakh and the outside market.

As for the influence of the British colonization of India on Ladakh, there is little to be said, for there was never any formal occupation. Indirect rule maintained or made use of numerous intermediaries between the colonial administration and
this distant district which, like other Himalayan kingdoms, was considered of little interest to the crown except as a buffer zone with China and Central Asia.

The Presence of the Indian State

From the moment that British India was partitioned in 1947, and for several years afterwards, Ladakh found itself embroiled in a border dispute with the then West Pakistan. The dispute led independent India to take notice of Ladakh, and its emerging geostrategic importance. Following the Sino-Indian war in 1962, the Indian army received a mandate to establish a permanent presence in the region and transformed the caravan route linking Leh to Srinagar into a road capable of handling military supply convoys. It also modernized a military airfield two kilometres from Leh, originally constructed during the first Indo-Pakistani war in 1948.

The Indian State then moved to consolidate its position in the upper Indus valley. It initiated local development projects, relieved the monks of their monopoly over education and built public schools as well as introducing such national services as mail delivery and policing. Furthermore, the Indian government authorized the regulation of traffic on the new road that was to be used to supply the residents and the military. At the political level, national legislation first passed by the British in 1941 to abolish the feudal system and landed property, polyandry and inheritance by primogeniture was enacted with mitigated success. Nonetheless, this same legislation did allow farming families with sufficient means to take ownership of the land they in fact cultivated, and also annulled their huge ancestral debts to moneylenders from within the clergy, the aristocracy and the commercial bourgeoisie.

The principal source of political unrest in post-partition Ladakh has undoubtedly been the introduction by the State of a democratic representative regime. Not only does this regime run counter to inherited feudal tradition, but it has transformed sparsely populated Ladakh into a tiny minority enclave with mere district status inside the Muslim state of Jammu and Kashmir, itself in a minority position within a de jure neutral but de facto Hindu Indian Union. Another important consequence of the consolidation of the State was the development of employment opportunities in the civil service. From 1949 on, and even more so after 1962, younger men from the wealthier classes were increasingly drawn to the salaried positions available in Leh, where they were freed to a certain extent from the influence of elder family heirs; for the lower castes, the option of salaried jobs in construction or road-work helped offset their constrictive social position. And, in a similar vein, village farmers saw their younger sons, who had little interest in agriculture, polyandry or the monastic life, leave for the city.

Economically, it was the long-haul caravan trade that suffered the most in the aftermath of Indian independence, one consequence of which was the closing of borders with West Pakistan and Tibet. The abrupt interruption in trade caused by
the closure provoked a considerable reversal of fortune for many merchant families in Leh; a good number of them liquidated their assets and left Ladakh in search of new fields of activity. As a result, many tracts of land in Leh and the outlying areas changed hands during the 1950s, and were bought back at discount prices not only by the few Muslims who chose to stay, but especially by the rich Buddhists who had never thought about leaving. Although the Buddhist aristocracy was also hard hit by the interruption in the long-haul caravan trade, its members had other sources of revenue. Deeply attached to their region, they pinned their hopes on a future economic recovery.

The arrival of the army and of State representatives in the 1960s offered partial rewards for their patience as Ladakh experienced a wave of relative prosperity engendered by the sale or rent of land and reinforced by investment in construction and transportation. In addition, some of the richest merchant families, both Muslim and Buddhist, were able to adapt to the wholesale trade by buying trucks. They hired salaried drivers and succeeded in carving a place for themselves in the lucrative and steady business of transporting foodstuffs, a business generated by the increase in population.

As for the other traditionally dominant group, the clergy, it has maintained a virtually unblemished reputation in the years since independence (Kaplanian, 1981: 94). The involvement of the clergy in politics at all levels is such that abbots were still unrivalled on the national stage in the 1980s. The abbots of Spituk and Shankar, for example, represented the Ladakhis in the Indian parliament; the abbott of Thiksey directed the local Congress party; and the abbot from Phyiang was vice-president of the Ladakh Development Board at Srinagar. Some of these positions are filled by candidates elected by universal suffrage, a further illustration of the prestige that the population still confers on the higher religious offices.

Since 1974: Opening of the Region and International Tourism

In 1974, India decided to open parts of the Ladakh valley to the free movement of people. From Delhi’s point of view, the geographical and political isolation of Ladakh between 1948 and 1974 had had the advantage of keeping military manoeuvres along the Indo-Pakistan cease-fire line and the Chinese frontier secret, a motive still invoked today to justify the maintenance of strict military control over the north of the Srinagar-Kargil-Leh route and the road from Leh to the east. Delhi’s principal incentive for changing this policy was to promote a strategy of increased internal migration aimed at augmenting the civilian population in the area, for it was the lack of inhabitants which had resulted in an important loss of territory to the Chinese in 1962 (see Lamb, 1991). Socially, the national government saw the possibility of keeping young Ladakhis at home, and also hoped to provide the spark for permanent migrations from overpopulated regions in Kashmir and India. For Srinagar,
the incentive was first of all economic: additional subsidies from the national government and the opening of "virgin" lands to international adventure tourism and aggressive Kashmiri merchants seemed very appealing. The Kashmiris, long aware of their competitive edge in the field of tourism, quickly realized that the business opportunities were attractive, and a lobby favourable to free movement to Ladakh was formed among the great entrepreneurial families in Srinagar.

In Kargil and especially in Leh, the local population had no choice but to take the idea under consideration. Ladakhi elders faced a steady stream of much deplored, and sometimes permanent outmigration, as young people left to study or take up salaried posts elsewhere in India. Furthermore, the changes in the mentality of those returning were troubling. Rooted in their land and traditions, the elders were desperately seeking solutions to strengthen the local economy, rendered precarious by the loss of the caravan trade. Although there is no evidence indicating that the local population was consulted in the decision-making process, it is extremely likely that the Buddhist clergy was kept informed by religious representatives in the political apparatus, and it can be assumed they were fairly favourable to plans to open up Ladakh. The fear of seeing new-comers disturb the political, cultural and social order could not outweigh the prospect of new profits to compensate the losses incurred since the end of the caravan trade.

Pulled along by what Rizvi calls "the extension to Ladakh of India's ambitious programme of economic development" (Rizvi, 1983: 72), the inauguration or consolidation of services to the population also had the effect of favouring the development of tourist enterprises. In return, the influx of visitors further stimulated State participation in implanting services that would probably have been delayed without the impetus of tourism demand and wealth. The Jammu & Kashmir Tourism Authority, with its services for entrepreneurs and visitors, was Srinagar-based, as were the Public Works Authority and the Jammu & Kashmir State Road Transportation (public transport). Furthermore, Srinagar was in charge of all regional administrative costs, which have risen considerably since 1974.

The economic consequences of tourism were quickly felt in the years following the arrival of the first tourists in 1974 (Eppler, 1983). In direct response to the rapid increase in visitors, there was an important summer migration of Kashmiri and Indian middlemen coming to do business with the tourists, especially in Leh. Tourist infrastructures developed rapidly and the number of young people holding salaried jobs or going into business for themselves visibly increased (Eppler, 1983; Pitsch, 1985).

Furthermore, the direct introduction of foreign currency via tourism is encouraging Ladakh's integration into the Indian and world markets. The endless rows of trucks which arrive full of consumer goods and leave empty bear witness to this trend. Since 1962, the distribution of consumer goods has become increasingly important and has increasingly tended to displace traditional every-day objects and the
activities inherent to their production. Among imported consumer goods, radio and television sets are major vectors of national integration. Nonetheless, the influence of television will be severely limited as long as the local generator in the city of Leh continues to produce only four hours of electricity daily, as was still the case when I last visited in 1988.

3. Elements for an Analysis of the Current Situation

The hierarchical organizational structure of political and administrative powers in effect in Ladakh reflects the current transition-in-progress from traditional local forms to the national democratic type formalism promoted by the Indian State. Ladakh district is connected to the nation through the vertically hierarchical networks of the State apparatus, with Delhi at the top, and the district at the bottom. However, at the local level, the structure perpetuates the traditional organizational pattern whose points of juncture with the State apparatus are subject to a play of influences where the key positions are coveted.

At the local level, where the weight of tradition can be observed, the official notion of democratic representation remains rather theoretical. Village power is still based on kinship and seniority, and, in order to circumvent the problem of democratic legitimacy, the State has opted to recognize the elective role of the clan in the choice of the traditional chief, who is chosen for a three-year mandate (assistants are mandated for one year). This is equivalent to turning a blind eye to the issue of representativity, for today the title of village chief tends to be connected to the patronymics of some of the most influential families. It is highly unlikely that anyone could make a break with tradition in favour of the elective process by voting against a traditional leader.

Two new social groups that appeared on the Leh political chessboard in the 1980s should also be mentioned. The Ladakh Ecological and Development Group (LEDeG) and the Students’ Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh (SECMOL) are involved locally without, however, being directly involved in the elective process and the open struggle for power. The former group is composed primarily of mature Buddhist intellectuals, but has increasingly begun to seek out members among young intellectuals trained outside the region; the latter group is strictly composed of young Buddhist intellectuals often educated outside Ladakh. Although the membership and aims of the two organizations partially overlap, they function separately, each constituting an independent pressure group with its own network of alliances to lobby the establishment. The LEDeG is supported in part by a network of western ecologists and is close to the traditional and modern power base. The SECMOL, for its part, has the backing of the religious authorities (see Norberg-Hodge, 1991: 167-179). The two groups have also set up their own enterprises and represent the new wave of Ladakhi mobilization allegedly seeking to contain tourism-related
cultural disturbances through a strategy of participation in current social economic development.

Tourism Entrepreneurs and Local Power

The reason why attempts to set up an elective system to choose representatives at the district level have not yielded anticipated results is partly because partisans of the elective system are primarily Kashmiri and Sikh merchants from outside Ladakh. Heavily involved in the tourist industry and already familiar with democratic representation, they seek to increase their influence over local economic development, for they are generally excluded from the local decision-making process. However, the traditional power-brokers, the lay and religious elites, have turned their backs on the electoral process, thus undermining its validity in the eyes of the local population and disenfranchising the outside merchants. The fact is that all the tourism entrepreneurs, including such endogenous merchants as the “nouveau riche” Ladakhis, intend to have an active say in the decision-making process at the local level in order to protect their vested interests. But, motivation and stakes vary greatly with the identity of the actors. In an earlier analysis (Michaud, 1991), I identified that the entrepreneurs’ origins and religious affiliations were of significant importance in understanding their political positions. I would like to refer to certain results from that study.

Tourism-related business activities set up under the direct initiative of endogenous actors are concentrated in the areas of lodging, guiding and transportation, crafts, and to a lesser degree, the trade and the food business. These activities involve landowners, guest house owners, guides and their families, taxi drivers, musicians and women who produce saleable craft-wares. SECMOL and LEDeG must be added to this list as they only recruit among the Ladakhis. Exogenous entrepreneurs are, to all intents and purposes, those with no local permanent residence and whose business activities are concentrated in the tourist season from May to October. These entrepreneurs are involved in the hotel business, in travel agencies, and in the sale of souvenirs. The majority are tenants, for example, hotel managers and shopkeepers. Other exogenous entrepreneurs include self-employed guides from outside the area who accompany small informally organized groups, and Tibetan merchants living in India. The great majority of these entrepreneurs are part of family networks whose members are already involved in the tourist business, mainly in Srinagar.

Whether endogenous or exogenous, entrepreneurs belong to several different religious groups; Lamaist Buddhism and Islam have been the principal faiths in Ladakh over the last several centuries, with the adherents of the former group far outnumbering those of the latter (Dollfus, 1989: 135). Buddhists comprise the majority of the landowners and tourist entrepreneurs involved in the operation of guest houses, restaurants and permanent businesses, as well as those working as taxi
drivers, guides and craftsmen. For historical reasons, the group of landowners and operators of permanent businesses includes a greater number of Muslims than the other categories, but they remain a minority. The SECMOL and the LEDeG are also Buddhist. Muslims are principally involved in tourist activities associated with the managing of hotels, the running of boutiques, guiding done by self-employed exogenous workers, and travel agencies.

Thus, onto a traditional power structure based on a strong clergy and an historically rooted monarchical regime was grafted a commercial bourgeoisie of tourist industry entrepreneurs. In turn, this has led to the emergence of a nascent new petite bourgeoisie composed of intellectuals and young people, mostly from the LEDeG and the SECMOL, who have had access to a western-style education through the Indian school system and foreign alliances. Partly because of tourism, the long-standing complementarity between the clergy and the aristocracy has diversified: the modern commercial bourgeoisie and the new petite bourgeoisie now constitute an enlarged but relatively homogeneous group in terms of economic, political and ideological aims. The caravaneer commercial bourgeoisie, which has always been composed of a certain percentage of Muslims, has grown less religiously homogeneous, a potential source of friction which, so far, seems to have been contained in favour of a more desirable common interest: economic and political stability.

The landowners, as a specific interest group, are defenders of the traditional Ladakhi identity, especially in the case of the clergy and the aristocracy. They are also the privileged partners of exogenous entrepreneurs, to whom they rent their facilities and from whom they derive what has become the greater part of their income. The landowner group includes the majority of political leaders, both traditional and modern; in other words, they control endogenous participation in State activities at the local level, and are at the same time involved in economic activities in the formal sector. Ideally, this group could use its strong political influence to encourage the further development of informal endogenous enterprises trapped in competition amongst themselves. The pretext of protecting traditional cultural heritage could be easily justified, and would correspond to the nationalist ideas group members support. But small-scale businesses in Ladakh are being weakened despite the fact that traditional elites and the new petite bourgeoisie advocate an alliance among natives with the objective of saving their cultural identity and limiting outside power. Exogenous Muslims operating formal enterprises are little affected by protective actions, but small-scale entrepreneurs and endogenous restaurant owners are paying a price that is increasingly high.

Consciously or not, local elites are currently putting the promotion of a native takeover of businesses second to the promotion of economic ties with the formal sector exogenous entrepreneurs, and this despite the potential for cultural preservation that such a takeover might offer. This attitude could undermine the informal sector
enterprises that are too busy competing with each other to realize the long-term danger inherent in this reciprocal non-collaboration.

Can we speak, despite these contradictions, of a movement to protect Ladakh's cultural heritage? Young people and the intellectuals manifestly realize the dangers of acculturation, both the danger of integration into Kashmiri and Indian society and the danger stemming specifically from tourism. Strategies proposing alliances with politically aware visitors and "engaged travellers" (Schwartz, 1991) to support cultural affirmation vis-à-vis the State, and alliances directly with Delhi to escape the influence of Srinagar do exist. Yet socially, the traditional model has been to a large extent maintained. Although young people are rapidly becoming wealthy and acquiring power, a novelty in the local social landscape, the members of the elite are still the owners and leaders; the peasants are holding their own as well as they can; the clergy has not lost much of its former influence. However, globally, I suspect these adjustments would not prove to be all that original if they were compared to those of caravan age. Indeed, it is tempting to draw a parallel between the present situation and that of the caravan era but the demonstration of such a hypothesis would require more documentation.

Conclusion

Current developments in Ladakh are taking place within a living and ancient social organism. Many of their manifestations, which could easily be seen as innovative and original in the eyes of an outside observer, might well be nothing more than modern day representations of historical processes, or the most recent manifestation of intermittent and recurring phenomena. I am defending the hypothesis that a sound diagnosis, which conforms to the social complexity confronting the researcher, requires a preliminary knowledge of the historical and cultural roots of the society under observation.

I have attempted to put the modern Ladakhi political and economic situation into a perspective which takes into account the main characteristics of the region's historical development. I have also tried to identify the elements of the situation that have converged to determine the economic expansion of the last fifteen years. The State, tourism, employment, a certain undermining of the household balance and of the established order, and the intensification of political activities by different interest groups are the most decisive factors. In the wake of the border conflicts of the last decades, tourism offered an economic alternative to the loss of the caravan trade and has triggered the visible emergence of the region at the national and international level. It has stimulated the growth of associations and groups whose interests and divergences have had an important impact on the equilibrium of Ladakhi society. A historical account for modern social change in Ladakh, with special attention paid to tourism reveals some of the social foundations and political consequences of
economic dynamics in the region. It shows that those dynamics cannot be explained uniquely through the study of economic activities, but are also linked to political power struggles between those vying to benefit from tourism, just as, in the days before tourism, comparable struggles took place between those trying to make the most of traditional and historical economic activities.

Ladakh’s situation is not uncommon in today’s literature on social change and tourism in national peripheries. Several Third World situations, particularly in Asia, have been similarly explored in studies of Nepal (Fürer-Haimendorf, 1984), Sulawesi (Noronha, 1979), Bali (Picard, 1992), Thailand (Cohen, 1983; Forsyth, 1992; Michaud, 1994) and China (Oakes, 1992), among others. Although these academic efforts represent genuine progress, more case studies will probably be necessary before a theoretical model encompassing the causes and consequences of tourist development can be successfully developed from this recent empirical research (Nash, 1981; Nunez & Lett, 1989).

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NOTES

1 Most of the data used in the research on which this article is based was collected in 1988, and to a lesser extent on a few visits in the years before. Recent social developments in Ladakh, namely the sometimes violent unrest that has marred relations between Muslims and Bhuddists since 1989, are not specifically accounted for in this analysis.

2 The terms “formal” and “informal” sectors refer here to the notion of a dual economy as proposed by Hart (1973) and the International Labour Office (1972).

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