

LADAKH FESTIVAL

HIMALAYA



Ladakh, located in the heart of the Himalayan mountains, in the Indian state of Jammu & Kashmir, hosts every year in September, a large cultural event; the Ladakh Festival. A 4-day festival in Leh, the regional capital established at 3500 m altitude.

The dances of folk groups are the high point of the party. The participants perform on the Polo Ground (polo field), on the tunes of traditional orchestras, sing and dance a ballet of divine grace. These men and women make up a mosaic of colorful costumes reflecting the richness of their respective regional traditions. In the afternoons, it is the polo matches that ensure one of the most anticipated shows and popular Ladakhpas (Ladakh residents).

At Main Bazaar, in the courtyard of the Buddhist temple of Chokhang, masked monks, dressed in colorful costumes, perform ritual dances. Accompanied by the hypnotic rhythm of the drums and cymbals, the lamas hidden under scary masks interpret liturgical dances, and symbolize the fight against the destructive forces.

The Ladakh Festival attracts an ever-increasing number of spectators, and offers Indian and foreign tourists a wonderful opportunity to discover the great cultural richness of the indigenous peoples.

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Women from the Nimoo area, shoulder covered with logpa (goatskin), enter the dance area of the polo field.



Dancers from a cultural troupe in the Zanskar region sitting in front of the Polo Ground wait before their public performances.



Women from the Skurbuchan and Sham region dressed in mo-gos (a wide gathered skirt), perform a slow dance filled with a deep tranquility.



Wearing the perak (a traditional adornment adorned with turquoises), the shoulders covered with a beautiful silk brocade shawl, the women line up and perform a slow step dance. The serenity of this spectacle exerts on the audience a divine enchantment.



The women of the Stok region wear around their necks a necklace of coral and turquoise adorned with ga'u, a small gold box inlaid with turquoises which houses precious talismans.






Wearing a colorful kantop (a high cylinder of felt and silk), women from a cultural troupe in the Nimoo area wait before they happen in front of the audience.



The men of the Gya-Meru region dressed in the goncha, a long traditional coat of thick wool bent with a long silk belt.



A musician from the orchestra plays his gyalings, an oboe circled in copper and silver to accompany the dancers of each cultural troupe.



The Ladakhpas turn prayer wheels (mani-korlo) during the show. This everyday object consists of a copper cylinder in which are rolled rice paper sheets, printed mantras or liturgical images.

According to the belief of Tibetan Buddhism, operating this ritual object, always in the direction of clockwise, allows to spread prayers and wishes, and spread, thus, a positive thought.



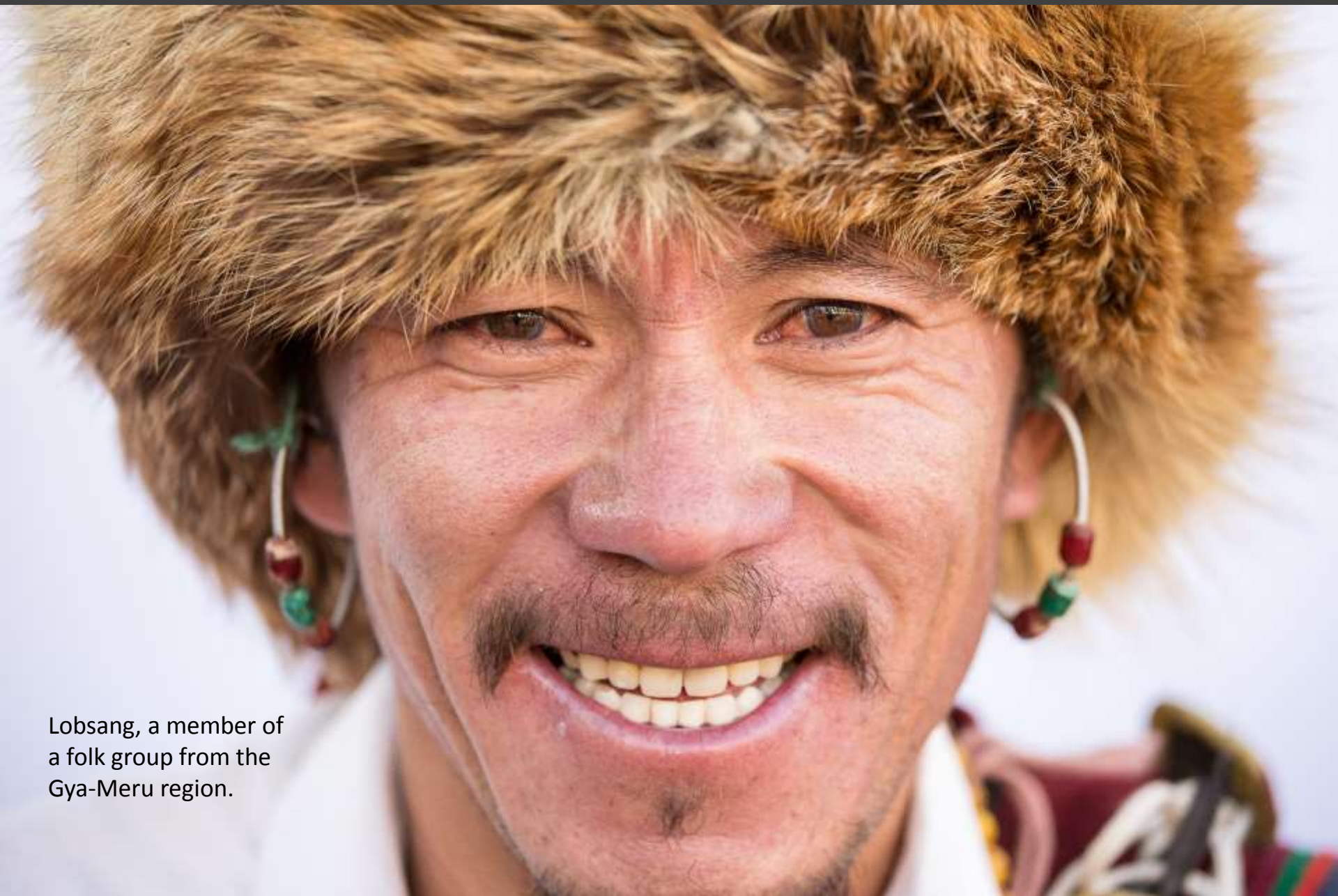






Dolma and Tzering from the Skurbuchan and Sham region wearing a perak, with a necklace of coral and turquoise beads and silver and gold pendants around the neck.





Lobsang, a member of
a folk group from the
Gya-Meru region.



Spectators attend a colorful musical show for several hours. This festival, condensed from local traditions and heritage, attracts a large number of visitors every year, consisting of Ladakpas, Indians and many foreigners.



Gompa Soma Buddhist Temple (Chokhang), masked monks dressed in colorful costumes perform sacred dances in the temple courtyard. These ritual dances symbolize the victory of the Good against the Demons.



Llamas in traditional clothes from the Phyang Gompa (Monastery) perform the music to the sound of chögsa (Tibetan ritual drum) struck with curved rods and bucham (large copper cymbals).



Monks dancers interpret coded gestures from the ritual Tantric.



Dressed in shimmering costumes in silk brocade, monks reproduce codified dance steps in a slow and hypnotic choreography.



Over the course of ceremonial, the public is confronted with a series of masks with a grimacing face: the Dharmapala, supposed to scare the demons. Considered by tantric Buddhism as guardians "protectors of the Buddha's Law". They protect the doctrine and its institutions from enemy forces.

Ritual masks are usually made of papier-mâché, clay and incense.




Polo competitions are held on the Polo Ground, dominated by the Namgyal Buddhist monastery perched on its rocky outcrop. The riders, perched on small fast horses, show a skill and an ease not common.



Very popular in Ladakh, the polo matches are always played in music played by the beddies (musicians) under a roll of drums, the trills of the oboes and the acclaim of a conquered and passionate audience.

Riders use a ball made of knotted wool and relatively short mallets with very thin and extremely flexible handle.





The polo rules in Ladakh are very flexible and usually cause an impressive hand-to-hand combat.

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