

From Plateau Pastures to Urban Fringe:  
Sedentarisation of Nomadic Pastoralists in  
Ladakh, North-West India

by

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## Declaration

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available in all forms of media, now or hereafter known.

..... 30 /05 /2007

Sarah Goodall

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## **Abstract**

The sedentarisation of nomadic pastoralists in Ladakh, north-west India, is taking place amidst a global trend toward settlement. Despite a few exceptions, where pastoralism either continues to thrive or is being revitalised by market reform, many nomadic pastoral communities are facing a period of unprecedented change, as they are increasingly drawn into national and international economies.

This study focuses on the migration of Ladakh's nomadic pastoralists from their traditional grazing lands to the rapidly urbanising capital Leh. Three separate communities were studied to determine their levels of out-migration and settlement and to explore the causes and consequences of the decision to settle. The research design encompassed both sending and receiving communities and uses a multi-level approach to assess the combined influence of macro-level (structural) and micro (individual and household-level) factors on the decision to migrate.

Data from a survey of 103 migrant households and in-depth interviews conducted in each of the three nomadic pastoral communities shed light on the complex nature of population mobility. The data reveal the communities to be characterised by distinct forms of mobility (large scale, permanent out-migration from one community, seasonal circulation from the second, and low-level traditional forms of out-migration from the third). It is argued that the community-level differences in out-migration are not indicative of a progressive decline of nomadic pastoralism in the region. The nomadic communities are facing substantial pressure from external socio-economic change and migration to the urban area is seen as a strategy for survival and security optimisation. However, the extent to which the communities utilise this strategy is influenced by locally specific normative and regulatory factors.

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## List of Abbreviations

CMO	Chief Medical Officer
CHW	Community health worker
IALS	International Association of Ladakh Studies
J&K	Jammu and Kashmir State
LAHDC	Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council
LBA	Ladakh Buddhist Association
LEDeG	Ladakh Ecological Development Group
LNP	Leh Nutrition Project
MAC	Medical Aid Centre
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PHC	Primary health centre
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity (used in tables in chapter 2) UNDP reports. An attempt to adjust for price differences between countries. So \$US PPP1 in the domestic economy has the same purchasing power as 1US\$ in the US. Preferable measure to GDP per capita.
SECMOL	Students' Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh
SC	Scheduled Caste
ST	Scheduled Tribe

## Indian Currency

During the period of fieldwork, one Australian dollar was equivalent to 23 Indian Rupees (Rp).

## Glossary Of Terms

**Note about spelling:** place names, Ladakhi words and people's names are based on the local pronunciation of the words rather than the written forms in the Ladakhi script.

Abi	grandmother
Amchi	traditional doctor using techniques based on traditional Tibetan system of medicine
Brog-pa/ brok-pa	literally high pasturage ones. Term used in reference to Tibetan nomadic pastoralists
Changpa	literally meaning northerner. Reference to semi and full nomadic pastoralists who live in the Ladakhi Changthang.
Cho-lo	dice
Chomo	nun
Chu	river (literally water)
Drimo	female yak
Gompa	monastery
Goncha	traditional woollen overcoat worn throughout Ladakh
Go-ba	village head-man, chief
-pa	suffix added to a place name to signify a person's origin (-ma for females)
rigs.nan	'low caste' or scheduled caste
khaun	term used by Changpa of Rupshu-Kharnak to describe khang-chung
khang-chen	big house (main house)
khang-chung	small house (subsidiary house)
khag-gnyis	break in two – reference to splitting of household into kaun and kangchen.
Khrel	tax
- la	pass eg. Taglang la
Lama	monk
lha	god
mani	prayer ceremony
magpa	husband – especially one brought into uxori-local household
Meme	grandfather
Pashm	raw fibre combed from the undercoat of the pashmina goat
Pha-spun	a specific form of social organisation
Pha Lha	deity of the pha-spun
Phia	marmot
phog-srod	literally to take control
Phu	upper part of valley
Ralug	combined term for sheep (lug) and goats (rama)
Rebo	tent woven from goat and/or yak hair (as opposed to gur – white tent)
Sku rim	religious ceremonies
Tshawo	grandson
Tso	lake

Yul lha	territorial god / deity
Yul	village
Yulpa	'villager'
Lha tho	shrine to the yul lha. Cairn-like small heap of stones topped with twigs and prayer flags.