TOO MUCH ROOM AT THE INN?

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Abstract: The rich built heritage of the Himalayas has great but currently under-exploited tourism potential. Nowhere is this seen more clearly than in the Tibetan kingdom of Lô (Upper Mustang) with its intact network of medieval inns. Despite local pressure for a distinctive heritage tourism product based around upgraded inns, conventional tent-based trekking tourism still predominates. Alternatives include the construction of new trekking lodges or alteration of existing vernacular buildings. Either development would lessen the perceived authenticity of the tourist experience and diminish Lô's attractiveness. This article discusses the potential for inn development and a pilot scheme to record both inns and other features of Lô's built heritage within the general context of built heritage conservation in the Himalayas.

Keywords: medieval inns, Tibetan kingdom of Lô, built heritage.

INTRODUCTION

Most overviews of tourism impact in the Himalayas concentrate on environmental issues such as deforestation and pollution, yet the impact of tourism on built heritage is just as significant. Moreover, built heritage represents a major tourism resource that is currently under-utilized but divisible into two main types of buildings.

The first category, including temples, palaces, fortresses and shrines, constitutes buildings that are themselves visitor attractions, such as the Potala Palace in Lhasa (Tibet). Despite the historic significance of such buildings, very few have been systematically recorded and many are threatened by demolition, alteration or disintegration following abandonment. Such built attractions may also suffer from excessive visitor interest. The increase of tourism to both Ladakh and Nepal, for example, has placed considerable pressure on fragile historic monuments. In urban centers such as Leh and...
Kathmandu this is exacerbated by increased pollution from motor traffic. Failure to control such pollution and to direct some of the revenue from tourism towards monument conservation almost resulted in Nepal losing World Heritage designation for some of the Kathmandu valley sites during 1994.

A second category of built heritage includes more humble vernacular buildings, which are not visitor attractions in their own right. Many of these have been altered in response to increased demand for tourism accommodation and catering services. This may result in anything from minor building modifications (often creating hygiene and waste-disposal problems) to the development of completely new buildings employing nontraditional construction materials and techniques. In some areas, such as the popular trekking routes of Nepal, traditional building materials have been abandoned in favor of concrete trekking lodges, not built in local style.

The Tibetan kingdom of Lo (Figure 1), politically a part of Nepal, presents an interesting case study in Himalayan built heritage, since it possesses significant public buildings and a network of traditional inns that are both visitor attractions and accommodation providers. Although these inns are only one aspect of the built heritage of Lo, they are the most susceptible to immediate pressure. Since the development of tourism in Lo is still in its infancy, it was hoped that it might be possible to halt the destruction of such inns, record their

Figure 1. Lō (Mustang) and its Neighboring Regions
characteristics, archive the information and utilize the results to
develop the tourism potential of the inn network while conserving
their traditional features. This paper summarizes the results of field-
work in Lō between 1992–94 and the problems encountered with
attempting to record its built heritage and devise a sustainable
management plan. It reviews patterns of tourism development in the
Himalayas in order to understand the role that built heritage has
played in tourism development.

TOURISM IN THE HIMALAYAS

Before the middle of the 19th century, few travelers visited the
Himalayas except explorers, traders or pilgrims. This situation
changed with the establishment of British rule in India and the
development of summer resorts, such as Simla in the Himalayan
foothills, to escape the heat of the Indian plains. Such resorts
employed Victorian architectural styles but their impact on tradi-
tional Himalayan architecture was minimal. It was not until after
Indian Independence that the numbers of visitors to the Himalayas
increased significantly (Jenner and Smith 1992). The tremendous
growth in mountaineering (and subsequently trekking) tourism
dates from the 1950s, stimulated by the conquest of Everest by Sir
Edmund Hilary and Sherpa Tenzing in 1953.

Within the Himalayan region, the pattern of subsequent tourism
development has been varied, although certain problems are
common to almost all destinations. These include environmental
pressures, often related to deforestation and overgrazing, rapid
population growth and in-migration to urban centers associated with
uncontrolled tourism expansion and population growth. Throughout
the Himalayas, tourism has acted as a catalyst for speeding up
inexorable Westernization with concomitant changes in dress, food,
family structure, language, community values and patterns of daily
life.

The intensity of problems produced by tourism development is
related to three factors; the duration of tourism development,
government and private-sector policies and the type of tourism that
has been encouraged. Environmental issues relating to built heritage
are felt particularly acutely in Nepal, for example, where high-
volume low-cost tourism has been promoted. They are much less
significant in neighboring Bhutan, which has maintained strict
controls over tourism development and encouraged cultural tourism
(UNDEP and WTO 1986). Any architectural impacts in Bhutan have
been minimized by direct government control of tourism with
minimum private sector involvement in accommodation and support
services until the mid 1980s, although it has been argued that this
and associated policies have caused cultural fossilization (Hobson
1993). In contrast, the modification or destruction of the built
heritage of Tibet over the last 30 years has severely affected its
tourism development opportunities, and other Himalayan regions,
such as Kashmir, are prevented from developing large-scale tourism
because of political instability.
Today's Himalayan visitor is likely to be a special interest traveler. Adventure and cultural tourism, major Himalayan motivators, are growing at 10–15% per year, twice the annual growth rate of leisure travel in general (Hall and Weiler 1992). Himalayan visitors are often seeking “life-enhancing” travel experiences where contact with other cultures is used to gain a sense of personal achievement and satisfaction. Many visitors to the Himalayas are independent travelers wanting a cultural experience, but many travel with adventure tour companies that have a constant need for new regions and new tourism products to satisfy the demands of increasingly sophisticated and experienced consumers. However, Himalayan domestic tourism remains significant, and pilgrimage still represents a major motivation. More than a decade ago, Kaur (1985) noted a shortage of accommodation resources in the Garhwal region of the Indian Himalayas, one of India's holiest Hindu pilgrim destinations. The tourism flow and development were causing pressure on traditional accommodation providers such as ashrams and dharamsalas that resulted in new developments not in local style, such as the modernistic Yoga Training Center on the banks of Ganga at Rishikesh.

All Himalayan governments are continuing to open new areas to tourism each year, generally without properly developed management plans or any idea of carrying capacity. During 1994, for example, India opened Arunachal Pradesh and new areas of Himachal Pradesh. Nepal permitted cross-border trekking to Tibet on its northwest frontier and allowed freer access to its peripheral Buddhist kingdoms. Bhutan increased private-sector participation in the tourism industry and opened new trekking routes. By contrast, Kashmir and Ladakh experienced decreased numbers of visitors because of political instability.

The effect of tourism on Himalayan built heritage has been observed for the last 25 years, but the few detailed published studies are the product of the last decade and concentrate on India, Ladakh and Nepal (Hutt, Gellner, Michaels, Rana and Tandan 1995). Not all newly opened Himalayan areas are likely to experience problems with built heritage, nor are all equally attractive to visitors. In Arunachal Pradesh, for example, on India's northeast frontier with Myanmar and Tibet/China, the first Western visitors arrived in October 1993 (Shackley 1994a). Arunachal's thick, precipitous, jungle-covered slopes and 3m/year rainfall, which prevented the development of trans-Himalayan trade routes and preserved 106 distinct tribal cultures, seem also likely to prevent the development of trekking tourism on the Nepalese model. The nature and extent of government control over tourism are also significant factors, as is the existence of relevant nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and the formulation and policing of a heritage management policy.

Since all travelers require accommodation, but not all are interested in culture, it follows that minor vernacular buildings are more at risk from tourism than public monuments. Indeed, the latter can actually benefit from visitation by donations and gate
receipts. Rebuilding of the Thangboche monastery in the Everest area after a fire was financed entirely by visitor donations. The most vulnerable buildings are those that provide some service to visitors. Accommodation options available to the Himalayan traveler include camping, utilizing local traditional accommodation such as private houses, guest houses or monasteries, or staying in purpose-built tourism accommodation such as hotels and lodges. Generally, Western visitors to remote areas such as the Himalayas prefer to stay in accommodation that is perceived as "traditional", as long as hygiene and security have been sufficiently (and preferably unobtrusively) upgraded to acceptable Western levels. Where such standards have not been reached, most visitors will choose to stay in a tent, however drafty, in preference to an inn, however authentic.

Problems emerge when local aspirations and visitor preferences do not coincide, particularly in matters of taste. This is exemplified in the choice of renovation materials that do not match Western expectations. In a Himalayan gompa (temple-monastery) this may involve the use of bright acrylic paints to retouch wall paintings in marked aesthetic contrast to the original medieval pigments. Guest accommodation may be improved by the addition of synthetic table tops, plastic floor coverings, cement steps or garish modern posters and calendars that the owner feels convey the necessary modernity, although these may be perceived as inauthentic by the visitor. The problem becomes more serious when traditional building and decoration styles are abandoned, often accompanied by demolition or alteration of unrecorded but architecturally significant buildings. This process has been observed in various Himalayan regions but nowhere as well as in Ladakh, open to visitors since the 1970s. This has been studied by the Ladakh Project and Ladakh Ecological Development Group set up in the early 1970s by Helena Norberg-Hodge and John Page to promote understanding of pressures of Western consumerism on traditional Tibetan cultures (Norberg-Hodge 1991). The building boom induced by tourism in Ladakh supports higher consumer prices and villagers have begun selling off traditional building materials (Goering 1990). Inequalities between villages are growing and increased Westernization has meant that local people, whose raw materials and labor came free, no longer make their own traditional mud bricks. Today they pay cash for raw materials, labor and transport. Building in traditional mud brick is slow, and the skills required to build are scarce, therefore expensive. The result is that building in concrete is cheaper and more prevalent. There is an extra psychological dimension in that people in a rapidly developing culture may be afraid of seeming backward. They equate traditional with unfashionable and thus replace a mud house (which has a poor image) with a concrete replica giving an impression of modernity. This process is facilitated by a fall in the relative cost of cement despite the fact that such a heavy product has to be transported over the Himalayas. Unfortunately, concrete buildings are not so energy-efficient as mud brick, creating extra demand for power.
Tourism and Built Heritage in Nepal

Since the kingdom of Lô is politically a part of Nepal, it is reasonable to examine the impacts of tourism on the built heritage of that country in order to obtain a perspective on potential management strategies for the inns of Lô. Despite having been established for more than 50 years, the tourism industry of Nepal attracts a relatively small number of visitors, currently 320,000/year (KMTNC 1992), but they cause disproportionate environmental damage. Tourism impacts on the built heritage of Nepal are generally negative, such as concrete extensions to trekking lodges or the construction of purpose-built concrete lodges such as those of Namche Bazaar in the Everest Area (Figure 2), familiarly known to trekkers as "Lodge City". Nepal’s other popular trekking route, near Annapurna, has developed haphazard collections of teashops (Figure 3) with miscellaneous signage and significant problems with food hygiene, sanitation and waste disposal.

The Annapurna area, directly to the south of the culturally Tibetan provinces of Mustang, Dolpo and Manang (Figure 1) has experienced immensely rapid growth in tourism. The Annapurna Conservation Area sees 44,000 trekkers each year whose impacts, taken in conjunction with rapid population growth, include deforestation, poaching and pollution. This resulted in the formation of the prestigious Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP) in 1986 from the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation (KMTNC), which was the first Himalayan attempt to develop a central management plan to strike a balance between the needs of the local inhabitants, tourism development and nature conservation (KMTNC 1989). As a successful

Figure 2. Concrete Trekking Lodges (Namche Bazaar, Everest Region, Nepal)
NGO, it was significant for originality of approach encouraging community participation. However, in 1994 internal political problems caused some concern for its future, and the extension of its activities into Tibetan-speaking Lō (Upper Mustang, Figure 1) from 1993 proved to be less successful (Shackley 1995).

Lodge owners in the Annapurna area benefit from the ACAP facilitating fixed prices for food and lodging to reduce competition and price cutting. The ACAP has also introduced lodge management courses to improve service quality and energy-effective applied technology such as backboiler water heaters. However, on the whole, built heritage management is probably the least successful aspect of its policies (KMTNC 1990). The traveler on the well-trekked routes of the Annapurna circuit may be confident of encountering frequent teashops and lodges, both in isolated locations and clustered within villages. Considerable success has been achieved with introducing energy-efficient heating and cooking sources, forestry management, etc. but an ambitious program to relocate many of these lodges has not yet been successful. The ACAP considers that these garish teashop complexes destroy the travelers’ appreciation of nature as well as having other environmental impacts. They would like to cluster the teashops, making it easier to provide basic services such as drinking water, microhydro schemes or community campgrounds. The proposal has not been received with favor by local people who resent the removal of entrepreneurial possibilities, especially if heavy investment has been made into lodge upgrading. It is difficult to see a solution to the problem, since the teashop/lodge complexes have accreted gradually over 20–30 years.

Figure 3. Teashops in the Annapurna District (Nepal)
In newly opened areas such as Arunachal Pradesh (Shackley 1994a), the problems will be avoided, since trekking routes are to be planned around existing circuit houses, but this is only possible where government control over tourism development precludes the development of a private sector. It seems unlikely that wholesale moves to control unsightly new development, such as the lodge clustering idea, will ever be successful, since the compensation demanded from lodge owners would be beyond the ability of program managers to pay. However, the 30% drop in visitation to Nepal during 1993–94, partly as a result of poor publicity due to perceived overcrowding on trekking routes, may reduce teashop numbers on the principle of natural selection.

Tourism in Lo (Upper Mustang)

Until 1993, ACAP authority stopped at the southern border of Lo, a Tibetan kingdom forming a semi-autonomous political unit of Nepal. Mustang is a bleak, desert region on the northern side of the Himalayas that is geographically and culturally part of Tibet. The Lo-Ba people of Mustang are Tibetan-speaking, and the province has always shared the architectural and cultural legacy of the Buddhist kingdoms of the Himalayas, from Ladakh to Bhutan. Mustang is ruled by a king/rajah called the Lo Gyalpo, who controls a population of around 3,000 people isolated by distance and, more recently, by the sealing of their frontiers as a result of the Chinese invasion of Tibet in the 1950s. Lo was opened quite suddenly in March 1992, ostensibly to provide new trekking opportunities and take pressure off the main trekking routes through Annapurna and Everest. In practice, the hidden agenda was to generate substantial revenues via a permit fee, which currently stands at minimum US$700 per visit (Shackley 1993). Access was limited to 200 people during the first year (a quota rapidly raised to 1,000 as it was seen that there was great demand). Visitors were compelled to ignore local accommodation in favor of fully supported tent trekking groups accompanied by a non Lo-Ba staff of Sherpa, porters, pack ponies and police. The visitor was guaranteed an “authentic” Tibetan experience, a chance to go where virtually no Westerner had gone before.

After the first six months of tourism in Lo had failed to generate any revenue at all for local people (the poorest in Nepal), the government gave in to pressure and turned the management of tourism over to the ACAP in early 1993 (KMTNC/ACAP 1992). However, two years later, less than 27% of the revenues are now being returned, development projects are patchy and minimal investment has been made in tourism development (KMTNC/ACAP 1994). The writer first visited Mustang in October 1993 to report on the existing and potential impact of tourism (Shackley 1992, 1993), conclusions that were upgraded during a further visit in 1994 leading an interdisciplinary team (Figures 4 and 5).

The architecture of Lo is quite different from the rest of Nepal, characterized by box-like walled towns and villages made from
Figure 4. Plan of the Village of Dhi (Lō/Mustang, Nepal)

Figure 5. The Major Inn in Lō Manthang (Lō/Mustang, Nepal)
plaster-coated stone and chan (Tibetan moulded clay cement). Building exteriors are plaster-coated, often striped with the ochre and grey of Sakya-sect Mayanana Buddhism. The town plans are complex, including narrow dark passageways, small interior courtyards, streets and tunnels. The desert landscape is dominated by isolated fortresses, hilltop villages and rundown gompas, relics of Lö’s former medieval splendor. The houses themselves are built around a central courtyard whose ground floor is used as stables and storage space. Family rooms are located on the galleried first floor with much use being made of the brushwood-framed flat roof. Each village has at least one extra-large house belonging to the dominant family that may be three floors high and contain a private chapel of some splendor. Rooms have beaten earth floors and long rug-covered benches around the walls. These houses, beautifully decorated with elaborately carved and painted windows and beams, include guest accommodation and function as a network of inns.

Some buildings are even more splendid. At Tsarang, for example, an extensive 5-floor castle in an advanced state of disrepair was once the King’s summer palace and now hosts an annual reading of a remarkable golden book. Significant buildings in the capital, Lö Manthang, include the King’s palace and three major monasteries. Many of these buildings incorporate structures dating from the foundation of the kingdom of Lö in 1380, although main monastic buildings tend to be mainly 15th and 16th century in date. Part of the task of the 1994 expedition was to take samples for radiocarbon dating, which will establish a sequence for the built heritage of Lö. The architectural splendors of Lö need surprise no one familiar with the built heritage of Tibet where the Potala palace in Lhasa, contemporary with many Lö buildings, is 19 stories high.

Many gompas contain an as yet uncatalogued collection of artwork including statues, thankas (ritual paintings on silk) and wall paintings. Some of the latter are in very poor repair, and one unfortunate by-product of tourism in Lö has been a spate of serious art thefts (Shackley 1994b). Within six months of opening initial defacement of walls by graffiti and signage, had started, together with building modification in Lö Manthang to permit camping and discussions about Westernizing inns and the creation of teashops and lodges to cope with increased tourism (Shackley 1993). Monastic authorities were already expressing concern for security, and it is interesting to note that some of the first ACAP-funded projects involved installation of security screening. The ACAP has instituted a standard visitor fee for gompas (R100), which is paid directly to monastic authorities and goes towards the monastery school and restoration projects. The visitor receives a ticket with a brief history of the building, and the ACAP thus has a means of counting visitors. There is strong community feeling that favors gompa restoration over almost all development projects, but this is currently being ignored in favor of forestry projects.

Because Lö has been opened to visitors so recently, very little of its built heritage has been systematically recorded, with the exception of the observations of Western scholars such as Peissel (1967),
Snellgrove (1981) and Tucci (1977). No central register of buildings, even major monastic centers, has been kept, and there is, as yet, not even an archive of which buildings have been photographed or surveyed for restoration work. Since it seemed possible that the built heritage of Lō would shortly be substantially modified for tourism purposes, part of the function of the 1994 expedition (which included a surveyor, photographer and information technologist) was to establish the groundwork for a culture resource database. This had to be a pilot project. In the limited time available, it was clearly impossible to attempt something on the scale of operations at the royal Hindu capital of Vijayanagara in India. This covered over 300 sq km and was the capital of southern India’s last and greatest Hindu empire, which flourished between the mid 14th century and 1565. Since 1980, an international team has been recording all visible features as part of a long-term mapping project (Fritz 1994).

The project team established the feasibility of constructing a computer-based multimedia, culture resource database for Lō which would record material culture, architecture and spatial data such as town plans and ecological information. This would act both as an archive and a tool to assist in culture resource and tourism management. The team field-tested a computerized Geographic Information System (GIS) cultural resource database in Lō utilizing a solar-powered laptop computer and Global Positioning System (GPS). Team members made an extensive photographic record to contribute to the Upper Mustang archive and undertook measured architectural drawings and town plans. The major inn in each settlement was fully recorded and data entered into the central archive currently being completed, utilizing ARCINFO GIS software, and a series of specialist reports have been produced on subjects ranging from medieval fortress architecture to early prehistoric stone tools. It was intended that the database would perform two functions. After completion it was to be transferred to CD-ROM and a copy installed on the ACAP’s computer in Kathmandu. This would function as an dynamic multimedia archive that could be constantly updated. In the event of a building needing repair, for example, its plan, external and interior photographs and notes could be extracted from the archive, which could then be updated after the restoration. If the inn network were to be developed for tourism, full records of each building would be available, and it would be possible to utilize the archive to develop structured management plans, examine the potential effect of different activities and determine carrying capacities.

CONCLUSIONS

The mere existence of a built heritage archive is insufficient. Although such a database provides a valuable historical resource, its existence does not prevent that heritage from being modified, nor does it generate funds towards its conservation. Moreover, the pilot project showed that the completion of a full archive for the built heritage of Lō would be very resource-intensive and require regular updating (on at least an annual basis) if it were to remain effective.
The academic potential of such an undertaking is of course immense, since it would enable every feature of the changing urban environment of Lō to be examined in the context of well-documented environmental and sociocultural developments. But although a fascinating research exercise, such an undertaking would contribute few positive benefits to local communities.

Ultimately, the success of such an undertaking and its utilization in expanding the sustainable tourism potential of Lō are politically controlled. The ACAP's initial attempts to reclaim Lō's tourism revenues from the Nepalese government have been only partially successful. Such revenues are the only potential source of funding for tourism planning with the exception of aid agencies, and government resources do not assign tourism projects high priority. It seems clear that the best way to preserve the architecture of Lō is by ensuring that its tourism product is closely geared to utilization of traditional buildings.

The Kali Gandaki valley of Lō (Figure 1) has always been significant as a major north–south trade route joining the southern branch of the Silk Road along the Brahmaputra valley with the Terai of Nepal and thence to the Ganges basin. Caravans have been utilizing this route since the Middle Ages, trading ponies, wool, salt and textiles with Tibet. The inn network, based around at least one substantial private house in each village along the route, would present an opportunity for the modern visitor to experience something of the atmosphere of this ancient route.

As soon as Lō was opened, local people joined together to form a Tourism Development Co-operative, largely instigated by a relative of the King, with the objective of recycling part of government tourism revenues into upgrading local inns under community control. Since Lo-Ba people have neither caste, language, nor religion in common with Thakali Hindu people of the Annapurna area, they prepared to resist in-migration of potential developers in favor of developing their own tourism industry. In order for the inn project to be successful, the cooperation of the ACAP was essential and has not been obtained. It was also necessary to persuade the government to ban tent-based tourism (equally unsuccessful) and to divert a small amount of tourism revenues towards upgrading the inns. The Co-operative project lacked political influence and only got itself registered as an NGO in 1994. Their idea was to organize a chain of inns that could be pre-booked (via a Lo-Ba owned office in Kathmandu) to provide simple traditional accommodation. Guests would take a sleeping bag and sleep, in local fashion, in multiple-occupancy guestrooms. They would eat in the traditional way from a low chogtse table, but bring their own cooks and supplies. Modernization would be restricted to improving room and kitchen hygiene and the traditional “long drop” dry privies that service each floor of the inn on the medieval garderobe principle, the outfall terminating in a manure heap in a stable. Eventually it was intended to centralize bulk goods purchase and to train local innkeepers in better lodge management techniques. It was not intended to offer hot showers, and each inn would have been required to utilize kerosene, solar or hydro power.
(yak dung is used as fuel at present). A standard rate of US$20 per night was proposed, with 10% going to the Co-operative. No demolition or rebuilding was to be allowed without prior consultation and any new building was required to be in traditional style.

The idea underpinning this project was to provide visitors to Lô with an authentic Tibetan experience that could not be obtained anywhere else in the world (especially in Tibet). The creation of this unique product might ensure that tourism in Lô was truly sustainable and able to confer positive economic benefits on all segments of the community. Additionally, existing buildings could be used in a traditional way with minimal alteration and a substantial segment of Lô's built heritage saved from potential destruction. Additional revenue could be channelled into other aspects of heritage management, including fresco and textile restoration at Lô's many outstanding gompas. In order for the system to work, various things were necessary. First, a full record of the existing inns was required in order to aid the sensitive planning of any upgrades. Second, funds must be made available from existing entry permit fees for the necessary upgrades. Third, visitors must be obliged to use the upgraded inns, which would necessitate banning camping tourism. Fourth, in order to determine optimum visitor management strategies, data stored within the GIS would need to be utilized.

It is unlikely that the inn development will ever happen. The Co-operative NGO lacks the necessary political power, and such developments are against ACAP management policies. The Nepalese government is disinclined to return a more substantial fraction of its tourism revenues for local development projects and anxious not to antagonize powerful Kathmandu-based business organizations by banning camping tourism. Without a significant change in policy, existing patterns of tourism development are likely to continue, which will inexorably result in major sociocultural changes in Lô. Although the future of the inns is not in doubt (they do brisk trade from aid workers and visiting government officials), the paucity of any enforceable policies concerning built heritage means that alteration and abandonment can continue unchecked. Funds are needed, and the only source of that funding is sustainable numbers of low-impact high-spending visitors. Improving the inn network would have ensured that local people, impoverished for so long, had legitimate opportunities for development based on tourism revenues. However, if, as seems likely, the environmental problems of the Annapurna region are allowed to extend northwards, then the built heritage of Lô will no longer be unique.

The most likely future scenario sees a short-term stabilization of visitor volumes in Lô at a relatively low level, unlikely to expand while the cost of a visit remains so high. In the medium term, assuming a continuation of present management policies, visitor volume will decline in direct relationship to processes of cultural change as Lô becomes perceived as less authentically Tibetan. The development of the inn network would have safeguarded Lô's built heritage and have ensured its economic future. In the present management climate, this looks increasingly unlikely without significant policy
changes. A unique heritage tourism product has been lost, and doubt must now be cast over the viability of utilizing sophisticated recording and management strategies, such as the Lo GIS database, in such a political climate.

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