

Save the Tibetan Monasteries of Ladakh!

Dear friends and supporters of the World Heritage,

you are certainly aware of the mounting pressure the Chinese government exerts on the spiritual culture of the Tibetans, including the destruction of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries. As a result, the trans-Himalayan region of Ladakh in India, often called “Little Tibet”, is considered the last stronghold on Tibetan monastic culture, where the Dalai Lama usually spends the month of August. Much to our surprise, on a trip to Ladakh we found out that the monasteries there are in serious danger, too – but for very different reasons.

Due to climate change, heavy rains and cloudbursts are now occurring in the summer. Since the monasteries are built of mud bricks, they are extremely vulnerable to moisture — the masonry becomes unstable and will eventually crumble.



But it's not just about the walls. Rainwater collects on the flat roofs, seeps through the porous clay bricks, and runs down the interior walls of the buildings, where it destroys centuries-old Buddhist frescoes and murals in the prayer halls and sacred chambers.



Ladakh lies beyond the main Himalayan range at elevations ranging from approximately 3,000 m to over 7,700 m. It is a high-mountain desert; until recently, precipitation fell only in winter as snow, which does not begin to melt until May, allowing some vegetation to thrive in the valleys during the short summer.

However, due to global warming, monsoon clouds from India are now rising high enough to reach Ladakh and bring rain. Mud-brick architecture is ideal for a dry climate, keeping buildings cool in summer and warm in winter, but it offers no protection against heavy rain.

Ladakh is one of the last vast regions where Tibetan monastic culture is still alive. The monasteries are at the center of the cultural landscape, perched on high hills above the villages and fields. For this reason, Ladakh is set to be included on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

The monasteries are already affected and urgently need help to waterproof their roofs and prevent further damage!

The monasteries have neither the resources nor the expertise to address this new threat. That is why the *All-Ladakh Gonpa Association* (Association of all Monasteries of Ladakh) has asked us for help. Together with a Tibetan architectural studio, we now aim to develop a method that respects Tibetan culture, preserves the monasteries' exterior appearance, and can be implemented using local materials. We then plan to train local workers in four districts of Ladakh to apply this method, so that Ladakh's more than 100 monasteries can insulate their roofs on their own as quickly as possible.

We need your support to do this. Please help us save the monasteries of Ladakh with your donation!

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