

Project Report
April - May 1994

RESEARCH EXPEDITION

——Lo·(Upper·Mustang)——

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1 REPORT SUMMARY

During 1994 the writer led an interdisciplinary team to explore Upper Mustang (Lo) in north west Nepal. The Kingdom of Lo is a semi-autonomous province of Nepal whose people (Lo Ba) are Tibetan speaking Buddhists. Upper Mustang is a desert region, geographically part of the Tibetan plateau, whose settlements focus around the Kali Gandaki river, draining southwards through the Annapurna massif. Until March 1992 Upper Mustang was closed to western visitors. The writer first visited the area in October 1992, six months after opening, to report on existing tourism impact and recommend management structures.

The objectives of the 1994 expedition were primarily to update the writer's 1992 survey of the impact and management of tourism in Mustang. As part of this project it was therefore necessary to assess the success of ACAP's (Annapurna Conservation Area Project) tourism strategies in Mustang in the light of tourism issues both in Nepal and elsewhere in the Himalayas. The team also intended to establish the feasibility of constructing a computer-based culture resource database for Mustang which would record material culture, architecture, spatial data such as town plans and ecological data. This would act both as archive and management tool to assist in culture resource and tourism management. An ancillary objective was to obtain the first systematic record of the Tenchi festival in Lo Manthang with a view to producing a visitor guidebook in association with the High Lama of Ngön-Ga Janqhub Ling Monthang Choedhe *gompa** and Himalayan Travel Ltd (UK).

The expedition was fortunate in being able to achieve all these stated objectives including updating the 1992 tourism impact survey by structured interviews and observation. Links were established with local individuals, communities, NGO's and government organisations. The team field-tested a computerised Geographic Information System (GIS) cultural resource database in Mustang utilising 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 resulting database is currently being completed, together with a series of specialist reports on subjects ranging from medieval fortress architecture to early prehistoric stone tools. It is hoped that the resulting database can be made returned to Mustang as a tourism management tool and archival aid.

(* a *gompa* is a Tibetan Buddhist monastery temple)

2 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project was partly funded by a series of external research grants from The British Academy (Stein-Arnold Fund), Royal Geographical Society, Mount Everest Foundation and Nottingham Trent University. Additional funding was provided by personal contributions from expedition members. The expedition was officially recognised and approved by the Royal Geographical Society and Scientific Exploration Society and sponsorship was obtained from Kodak Ltd (photographic advice and provision of film), Youth Hostel Association (discounts on equipment) and Trimble Navigation Ltd (partial funding of Trimble Ensign GPS system). Hiltech Solar Ltd gave advice and assistance towards purchase of their MCB-131 UNI-SOLAR flexible solar charging panel.

The writer is most grateful to all members of the expedition (see below) as well as to the staff of Himalayan Travel Ltd and colleagues at Nottingham Trent University for providing advice, assistance and support. Detailed background information also came from interviews kindly granted by Jayaprata Rana, the new Director of ACAP and Dr Chandra Gurung (ACAP, Kathmandu), Manju Thapa (ACAP, Lo Manthang) and other ACAP staff members.

3 PERSONNEL

The project team included;

- Professor Myra Shackley (Expedition Leader)
- Dave McAdam (Information Technologist)
- Richard Keeler (Photographer)
Rose Beddington (Photographer)
- David Barlow (Architect)
- Tsewang Bista (Interpreter)
- Lhakpa Sherpa (Field Manager)
- Philip Behrend (Doctor)
- Gary Weber (Field Assistant)
James Gladstone (Field Assistant)
Ben Gladstone (Field Assistant)

Elaine Brook was obliged to withdraw from the team at a late stage due to illness.

4 LOGISTICS

Expedition members met in London and travelled by air to Kathmandu. A free day was allowed for acclimatization and preliminary briefings before flying to Pokhara and on to Jomsom in north west Nepal. Staff and supplies were collected in Jomsom and the team then spent four weeks travelling on foot around Lo. Because of the environmental protection regulations all expedition supplies (including kerosene) had to be bought outside Mustang. A team of 25 pack ponies and 8 porters was required, plus staff. Ground handling arrangements were made by Himalayan Travel Ltd and the team was accompanied by an Environmental Liaison Officer provided by the Royal Nepalese Police Force. The team returned via Pokhara to Kathmandu by air, and thence to London.

5 ITINERARY

(See Fig. 1)

- | | | |
|--------------|-----------------|---------------|
| 1) London | 8) Ghemi | 15) Tangbe |
| 2) Kathmandu | 9) Ghilling | 16) Chusang |
| 3) Pokhara | 10) Tsarang | 17) Tetang |
| 4) Jomsom | 11) Lo Manthang | 18) Jomsom |
| 5) Kagbeni | 12) Garphu | 19) Pokhara |
| 6) Chusang | 13) Dhi | 20) Kathmandu |
| 7) Samar | 14) Lori Gompa | |

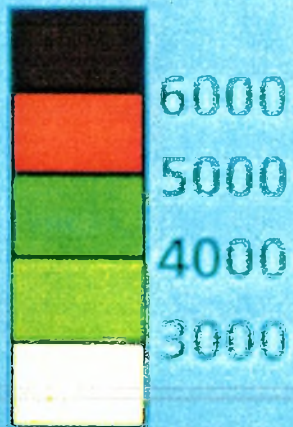
MUSTANG

Nepal

Settlement
location and
trekking route

----- main track

Height in metres



6 OBJECTIVES

The 1994 expedition was intended to build on experience gained by the writer during a 1992 reconnaissance visit (Shackley 1992, 1993) which had described the extant environmental and socio-cultural impact of tourism in the light of existing tourism management strategies. Since this trip took place less than six months after Mustang received its first international visitors it was anticipated that a further visit after eighteen months would provide a clear indication of the success or failure of those strategies. Visitor data and management statistics were obtained from the Ministry of Tourism (Kathmandu) and the Kathmandu offices of ACAP as well as ACAP offices in Jomsom and Lo Manthang.

One of the issues raised in 1992 was the lack of any form of central archive for tourism management or cultural recording in Mustang. Each scientific team, cultural project or government/NGO backed development effectively acted in isolation with the result that it was impossible to cross-reference information or to obtain even the most basic data such as whether a particular building had ever been surveyed. Nor was there any central register of historical, archaeological or cultural information pertaining to Mustang. Such data had been published in the relevant academic sources which, unless directly quoted in electronic or keyworded information banks were inaccessible without personal information. The serendipitous nature of Mustang information is well illustrated by the fact that relevant archaeological studies have been undertaken in southern Mustang unknown to ACAP in Lo Manthang.

It was decided to examine the feasibility of establishing a central archive for Mustang utilising a computer-based Geographical Information System for the area which would consist of a multimedia database for record purposes. The intention is to make this information available on hard disc or CD ROM to development agencies and regional planning authorities in Nepal who can utilise it as a framework for establishing and updating a central recording system. This expedition undertook preliminary work utilised a solar powered satellite Global Positioning System and laptop computer to establish a database capable of recording everything from village plans, details of domestic architecture, temple wall paintings and taped interviews with local people. In addition the team attempted to construct a detailed photographic record of temple paintings, sacred and vernacular architecture both for record

purposes and to see how this material could be entered into a database. Reports are currently being written by leading UK experts (see below).

More detailed work including obtaining permission from local communities to remove very small samples of some early paintings, structures and manuscripts which will be scientifically dated to establish a chronology for the early history and archaeology of the region. This dating programme is currently being undertaken at the Research Laboratory for Archaeology and the History of Art, Oxford.

The expedition was timed to arrive in Lo Manthang to coincide with the annual Tenchi festival which was recorded both in notes and photographically. This will be the first time this event has been systematically recorded by westerners. The obtained information is being used to write, in association with the High Lama (Abbot) of the monastery, a 'visitors guide' for westerners which will constitute the first publication of the significance of this 600-year old festival.

7 ACHIEVEMENTS

7.1 The GIS system

It would, of course, have been impossible to establish a complete culture resource database for Mustang in so short a time. Bearing this in mind the team felt that the 1994 fieldwork should have certain distinct objectives. These included;

- testing the feasibility of technology like the GPS recorder and data capture forms in a fieldwork situation
- establishing a framework which would enable us to prepare accurate estimates of time/resources required to establish a complete database
- obtaining different types of data (which varied from taped interviews to measured plans and building surveys) to see how they can be incorporated into a complete system
- to investigate the possibility of constructing a regional culture resource database utilising a GIS system with updating by means of local training

The development of the GIS system for Mustang was controlled by Dave McAdam, with the assistance of other expedition members in the field. The team had originally wished to use a prototype GIS application in the field to collect the relevant data, store it and have some of the system models manipulate the data to enable some 'real-time' analysis to emerge. However, problems with licensing of the GIS software (GEO/NAVIGATOR Version 3.0) prevented this. Fieldwork therefore utilised a standard database package dBASE IV loaded on an Olivetti notebook powered by solar-recharged batteries. Solar power for equipment was obtained from a MCB-131 UNI-SOLAR flexible solar charger (Plate 1a). Data was initially recorded on data capture sheets (Fig 2) before being transferred to the computer on a daily basis. This facilitated discussion between team members and also provided a backup hard copy. A hand-held GPS system (Trimble Ensign, Plate 1b) was used to generate a base map (work on this is still continuing) since initial observations suggested that available maps were inaccurate by as much as plus or minus 1km. Fixes were obtained at or near main settlements and other

MUSTANG ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH PROJECT 1994

DATA CAPTURE FORM

GUIDE FOR COMPLETION

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

PLEASE COMPLETE RELEVANT SECTIONS AS FULLY AS POSSIBLE

PLEASE SEEK CLARIFICATION IF NECESSARY

PLEASE ENSURE DUPLICATES ARE LEGIBLE

THANK YOU

SECTION 1			
SHEET REF. NO (Please Leave Blank)		DATE :	
RECORDED BY:		GRID REF :	
	LAT	LONG	ALT

LOCATION (Settlement Name / Trek - route - section)	
-----------------------------------------------------	--

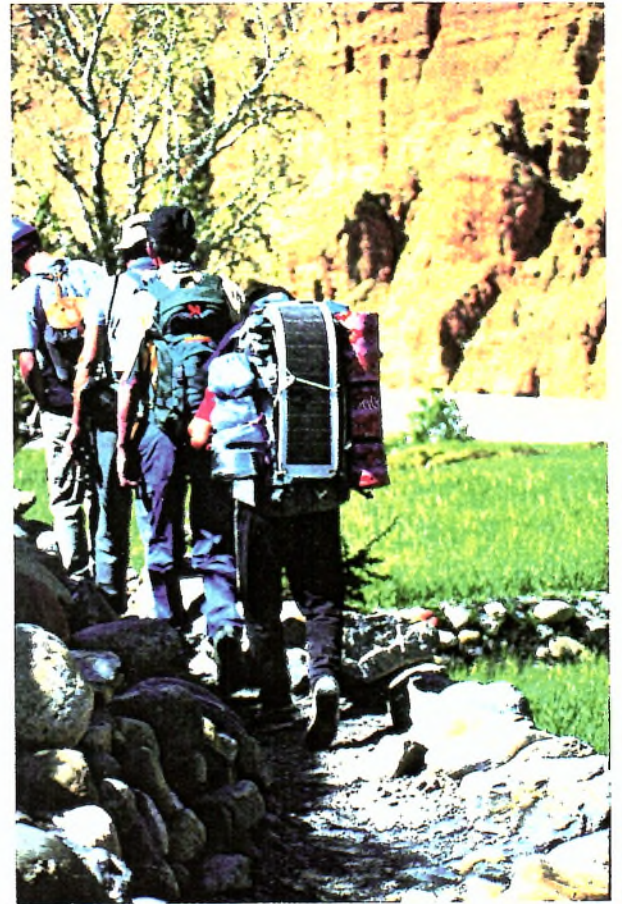
SECTION 2 BUILDINGS OR OTHER STRUCTURES					
TYPE :		NO. OF ROOMS :		BUILDING/STRUCTURE USE : (If known)	
ARCHITECTURE :		NO OF OCCUPANTS : (If known)		ARTIFACTS PRESENT :	
				1.	3.
				2.	4.
					5.
DESCRIPTION OF FEATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ISOLATED <input type="checkbox"/> PART OF COMPLEX <input type="checkbox"/> INTERIOR <input type="checkbox"/> EXTERIOR (Please tick)				
DIMENSIONS IN METRES/ SQ METRES	LENGTH :	WIDTH :	HEIGHT :	PLAN:	ELEVATION:
EXTRA DATA (Please tick where relevant)	<input type="checkbox"/> NOTEBOOK <input type="checkbox"/> PLAN DRAWING <input type="checkbox"/> PHOTO <input type="checkbox"/> VIDEO <input type="checkbox"/> AUDIO <input type="checkbox"/> RELATED MATERIALS <input type="checkbox"/> SAMPLES				

SECTION 3 ECOLOGICAL FEATURES			
GEOLOGY:	SOIL TYPE :	FLORA :	FAUNA :
NOTES :			

SECTION 4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES		
NEAREST SETTLEMENT :	SITE TYPE :	MAIN FEATURES :
		1.
NEAREST TREK - ROUTE - SECTION:	ESTIMATED AGE :	2.
		3.
EXTRA DATA (Please tick where relevant)	<input type="checkbox"/> NOTEBOOK <input type="checkbox"/> PLAN DRAWING <input type="checkbox"/> PHOTO <input type="checkbox"/> VIDEO <input type="checkbox"/> AUDIO <input type="checkbox"/> RELATED MATERIALS <input type="checkbox"/> SAMPLES	
NOTES:		

SECTION 5 CULTURAL AND SOCIAL FEATURES (incl. Festivals)	
BELIEF SYSTEM NOTES :	FOLKLORE NOTES :
CEREMONY / FESTIVAL DETAILS :	
LITERATURE DETAILS :	
DANCE DETAILS :	DRAMA DETAILS :

SECTION 6 AV REFERENCES	
FILM REF. NO :	TIME OF RECORDING :
VIDEO SEQ. START NO :	VIDEO SEQ. END NO :
AUDIO SEQ. START NO :	AUDIO SEQ. END NO :



recording points with the locating grid reference used as a key field in the spatially-orientated files in the database.

Dave McAdam utilised graphical printouts from geodesy software provided by colleagues in the UK to optimise the best days and times for GPS readings which were taken every five minutes through selected half hour periods at these times. This GPS data is currently being imported into Geo/Navigator to develop improved digitised maps of the region.

It is hoped that after completion the GIS system will be made available to ACAP and installed on their hardware in the Jomsom and Kathmandu offices accompanied by the necessary technical training. However, the current political restructuring of ACAP suggests that it may be some time before this happens. Ideally, it is hoped that the provision of a CD-ROM database will enable all relevant organisations, including ACAP, to centralise their cultural and management records. In the UK Nottingham Trent University will be completing the design of the GIS and examining its applications to future research on culture resource databasing. Liaison with other Universities (particularly the School of Oriental and African Studies at University of London) will enable the contents of the database (such as the photographic archive) to be disseminated and studied more widely.

7.2 Radiocarbon and Thermoluminescence (T/L) Sampling

A series of dating samples were taken which have now been submitted to the Research Laboratory for Archaeology and the History of Art (Oxford). These include;

- (1) Tsarang UM TS 94/5 ceramic fragment from occupation debris stratified within Palace wall
- (2) Tsarang UM TS 94/4 parchment fragment, Dhorje Dhen gompa manuscript copy of Kanjur
- (3) Ghemi UM GH 94/1 ceramic fragment stratified within fortress/palace wall
- (4) Gheling UM GL 94/1 ceramic fragments stratified within wall of oldest gompa
- (5) Gheling UM GL 94/3 plaster sample from gompa wall

- (6) Gheling UM GL 94/4 ceramic sample stratified under gompa wall construction
- (7) Tangbe UM Tn 94/1 ceramic sample stratified within archaic walling

It is hoped that analysis of these samples will, to some extent, calibrate the historical records and provide the first chronometric evidence for urban settlement within Upper Mustang. Recent C14 dating of material excavated from artificial cave clusters to the south of Kagbeni in the Muktinath area suggest long occupation periods 800BC-1500AD (Simons et al 1994) and it is hoped that the Upper Mustang dates may correlate.

7.3 Architectural Drawing and Planning

One of the team members, David Barlow, undertook to make a series of measured architectural drawings of vernacular buildings and specific architectural features including several domestic houses also utilised as inns. He also completed plans of several villages together with a plan of Lo Manthang to complement the photographic record. These drawings are currently being completed for addition to the database.

7.4 New Archaeological Sites

During the course of the expedition the writer (who was trained as an archaeologist) identified several offsite scatters of prehistoric flaked quartz tools stratified within alluvial sediments capping a 500' terrace to the south east of Ghemi (Fig.1). The material was clearly in primary context and included globular flake cores and scrapers of indeterminate date. Similar material was noted on a high fluvioglacial terrace at an altitude of 11 800' south of Tsarang, some of which had rolled downslope to become incorporated into alluvial/colluvial deposit. It is extremely difficult to date such artefact assemblages but the absence of associated pottery would indicate that these are relatively early and probably represent the debris of early hunter-gatherer visits to the Kali Gandaki valley. The assemblages are currently being drawn and described before typological comparisons can be made with previously identified material from Tibet and an approximate date inferred. Much further work could be done on these terrace sequences which include colluvial deposits containing pottery and occupation debris at their base and fluvioglacial terraces with moraine and erratics at heights of up to 600' from the valley floor.

7.5 Fossil Ammonite

Lhakpa Sherpa drew the attention of the writer to a very large fossil which he had observed between Dhi and Lori gompa at 29 05' 28" N 83 59' 28'E in the course of a previous visit. The fossil lay in a debris slope below cliffs of Cretaceous mudstones in contact with calcareous Mesozoic nodules. The team examined and photographed this fossil which appeared to be a giant ammonite nearly 2m in diameter (Plate 2). Details and photographs were submitted to several palaeontologists in the UK and a preliminary identification was made classifying the fossil as an ammonite *Parapuzosia*, a genus known from the Cenomanian to the Campanian. However, this is not a genus previously reported from Asia and the huge size of the fossil has made this interpretation open to question. Further work is currently in progress at the University Museum, Oxford, and a short report will be published in due course.

7.6 Tenchi festival and booklet

The Tenchi (sometimes called Deje) festival was started in Lo Manthang during the reign of King Angun Tsewang Samdruk, the 9th King of Lo, according to Teshi Tenzing Rinpoche, the current *khenpo* (abbot) of the *gompa* upon whose information the interpretation of the festival is based (Shackley 1994). The Festival lasts five days, the last three of which include ritual dances and ceremonies performed by monks in the presence of the king (Plate 3). It celebrates the slaying, by a great Buddhist lama, of a demon who was thought to have caused terrible epidemics. Not only is it Mustang's major festival (performed annually on a date determined by the Tibetan lunar calendar) but it is attended by a substantial proportion of Mustang's population, dressed in ceremonial finery. The popularity of such festivals elsewhere in the Himalayas (such as the Mani Rimdu festival of the Everest area) suggests that it could become a major attraction for western visitors.

During 1994 the writer and Elaine Brook had completed a series of interviews with the abbot enabling them to prepare a rough outline for an account of the festival. However, this needed to be checked during an actual performance. The writer therefore sat through the entire Tenchi festival correcting these notes where possible, while another team member (Richard Keeler) made a photographic record. A further interview with the abbot clarified certain questions which had been raised and a final account of the festival has now been prepared. This will be processed into a small booklet, printed in English. Funding for this is to be provided by Himalayan Travel Ltd who will donate the copies to the monastery so that they can be sold to westerners at future festivals. The objectives here are threefold;

- to produce and publish the first permanent record of the festival
- to provide festival information for western visitors which will enable them to obtain both greater insights into the religious significance and guidelines about what is happening and how to behave
- to enable the monastery to gain some funding from selling the booklet (which they will have received free) in order to generate revenue for monastic education and also for the costs incurred in mounting the festival

7.7 The Golden Book

The expedition was also lucky enough to visit the palace/fortress at Tsarang at a time when the annual reading of the 'Golden Book' was taking place. This book is actually a copy of the 191 volumes of the Kanjur (Buddhist scriptures) written in gold on thick black vellum. It is read by relays on monks during April-May, financially supported by villagers since it is thought that the reading guards against evil and ensures a good crop. This wrapped Tibetan style book is one of only two copies of a golden book called Gyandongba (8000 verses of wisdom) - the other is in the King's library in Lo Manthang. They were made 7-800 years ago at the height of Mustang's powers in a valley near Lo Manthang famous for book making. As far as the writer is aware they have never been examined by western art experts.

8 TOURISM MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- THE ROLE OF ACAP

"In July 1992 the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation made a decision to direct 60% of the revenues raised through entry fees to Upper Mustang for tourism development through grass-roots conservation and community development works by the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation Annapurna Conservation Area Project. In doing so the MOT reversed the nationwide phenomenon of tourism benefitting the travel industry of Kathmandu and the tourists' home countries more than the people of the area travelled to, and launched a new programme in eco-tourism" (ACAP 1994).

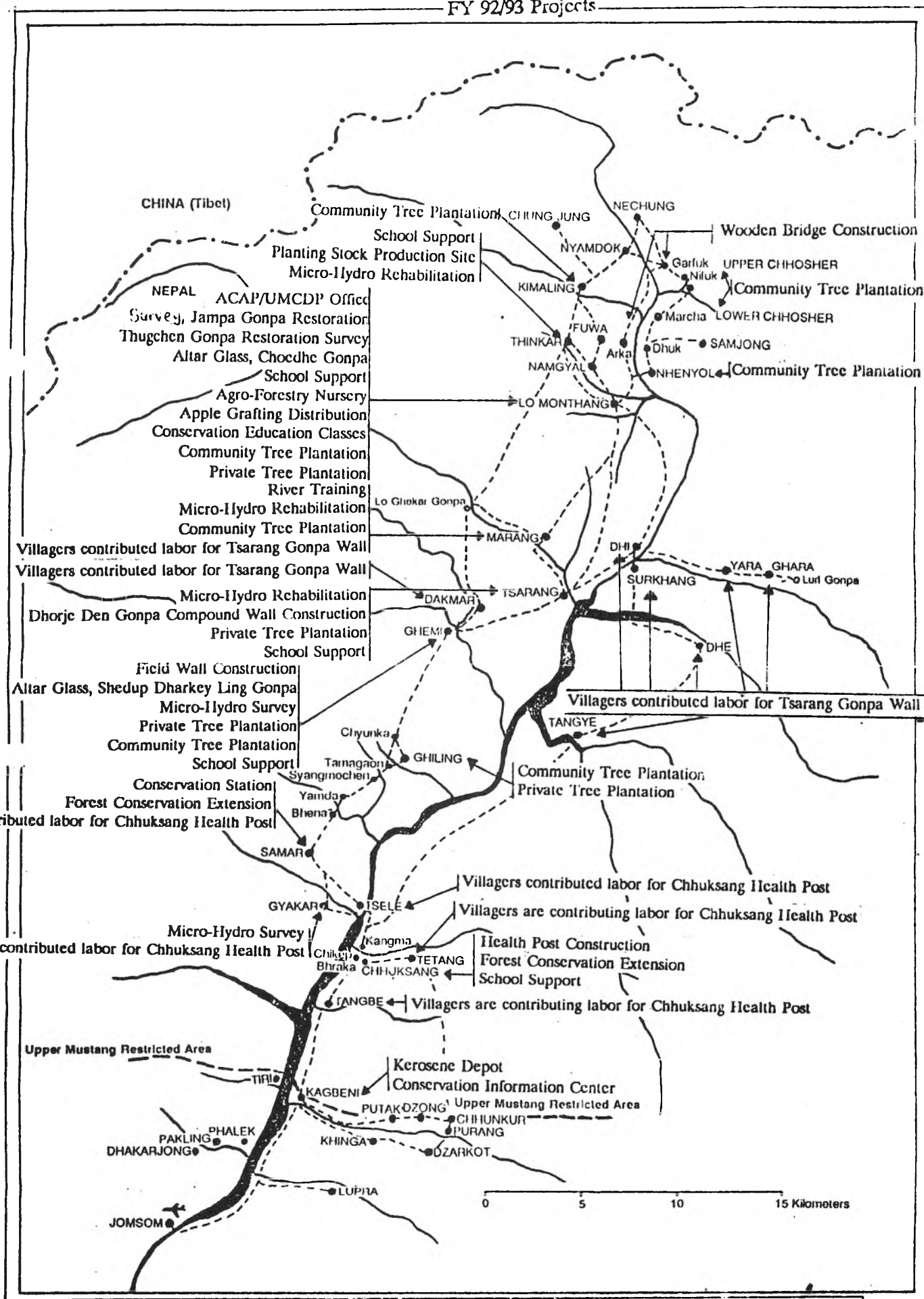
This statement has proved to be only partly true. Less than 27% of the revenues have actually been returned, development projects are patchy, minimal investment has been made in eco-tourism with the exception of trail signposting, provision of information leaflets and keeping the existing regulations. During the course of the 1994 expedition the team made notes on the efficiency of existing tourism management strategies to enable the writer's 1992 conclusions to be updated.

During the course of this expedition the writer visited the King Mahendra Trust (KMT) offices in Kathmandu to meet Jayaprata Rana, the new Director and Dr Chandra Gurung. The new ACAP offices (which have absorbed the former police post) in Jomsom were also visited. Interviews were held with staff members and later with Manju Thapa (ACAP Upper Mustang Project Director) in Lo Manthang and the writer was given the opportunity to read and make comprehensive notes on their progress report for the Fiscal Year 1992/3. The writer noted with some interest that this included the implementation of most of her own suggestions expressed in her 1992 report, without benefit of acknowledgement. Other interviews were held with Lo Ba people throughout Mustang, including inn owners and relatives of the royal family.

The maximum number of ACAP staff in Mustang has now reached 15, mostly Gurungs from the Annapurna area. Fig. (3) shows the official scope of ACAP's activities in Mustang. It is misleading - the Chusang Health Post, for example, is merely a shell whereas other projects

YOUR ENTRY FEE SUPPORTS...

ANNAPURNA CONSERVATION AREA PROJECT UPPER MUSTANG
FY 92/93 Projects



TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT ACAP'S WORK, PLEASE CONTACT THE REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS IN JOMSOM, LO MONTHANG, MANANG, GHANDRUK, SIKLES, LWANG, AND BHUJUNG, OR THE LIAISON OFFICE IN POKHARA.

(such as the Tsarang gompa wall restoration) have been completed. Many Lo Ba are resentful of ACAP for the following reasons;

- they dislike and distrust the Gurung 'foreigners' who comprise the ACAP presence
- they feel that ACAP have not fulfilled their promise to recycle 60% of tourism revenues into development projects (the best estimate is 27%)
- they resent the requirements to contribute labour and cash to ACAP projects (see below), seen as excessive
- they see the rich getting richer (especially those who own lodges) and the poor getting poorer
- they feel that ACAP is not sensitive to the particular needs of Mustang and is imposing ideas derived from different environmental and social circumstances
- they resent the occasional import of labour from India for ACAP projects
- there is some feeling that ACAP might be diverting tourism revenue from Mustang elsewhere

The writer agrees with all these points (except the last, for which there is no evidence). ACAP has made a lot of enemies and has encountered tremendous political difficulties and there is cause for concern about their tourism policies which will end in the promotion of backpacking. This has only been prevented as tourism to Nepal is down by c.30% this year and visitor numbers to Mustang have not risen as fast as expected (see below). No one in ACAP seems to know anything about tourism or be interested in finding out. Several examples of ACAP-related problems can be quoted;

- when discussing our database project with ACAP it became very clear that their record keeping is erratic. There is no central record of even basic information such as whether a particular *gompa* has been surveyed for restoration. Our offer of access to our culture resource database accompanied by training so that this could form the basis of computerised records for the province was met with vague interest but clear inability to administer such a process

- Lo Manthang will not have electric light because ACAP has fixed a very high contribution rate for householders who are unable to pay. They have voted against the scheme increasing the wealth gap as two householders have now acquired generators and everybody else
- at Ghemi raw materials (and labourers) had been imported for irrigation schemes. Both were greatly resented as the villagers had voted to utilise tourism revenues for gompa restoration but were overruled. Villagers quote many other examples of projects that they had supported which were vetoed by ACAP
- none of the tourism revenues are being returned to tourism projects and the only tourism infrastructure developments are some pathway signage and rubbish pits (now overflowing and not being maintained). No investment is being encouraged to improve local inns, no discussions being held with trekking agents and there is no clear idea of the potential tourism market
- ACAP has come into direct conflict with the Lo Manthang monastery over the Tenchi festival. The High Lama was angry that no money was being used to support the festival (although ACAP wished to profit from it by promotion) and has set up an independent organisation to try to collect money from visitors for monastery funds
- the King of Mustang has just abdicated in favour of his eldest son (although there will be a two-year regency period). Local opinions hope that this will mean that the new king (who has a degree in political science) will pressure ACAP and the Ministry for release of more of 'their' tourism revenues
- there are a lot of minor grievances which, taken together, promote a feeling of general dissatisfaction. An example might be the fact that ACAP are felt to be paying an unreasonably low rental for their Lo Manthang offices while 'profiteering' (so some locals say) from tourism revenues

Whether or not there is truth in these assertions ACAP is clearly having a politically rough ride in Mustang and trying to apply policies developed elsewhere in an entirely different context. There seems to be continuous conflict between ACAP, the Ministry, the King and the powerful Bista family, the religious establishment and local people. Inter-village conflicts are also evident. Manju Thapa is highly able and intelligent but hampered by her development politics which may be inappropriate for the context. The writer was concerned that there is no

independent outside evaluation and even more concerned about the complete ignorance of tourism displayed. This is not a good omen for the future development of the area - in order to make Mustang tourism sustainable and contributing increased revenues to a steadily depopulating province it is essential to capitalise on Mustang's uniqueness. This is not being done. The writer did not form the opinion that the management change in KMT Kathmandu would benefit Mustang (or any other KMT projects) at all unless stringent administrative changes were put in place.

9 CURRENT TOURISM IMPACTS

According to the Department of Immigration the number of trekkers to Mustang in 1992 was 557. A detailed breakdown of country of origin was available for 1993 until May 1994 and is shown below in Table (1).

Table (1) Visitor numbers and origins, 1993-4

Country of Origin	1993	1994	Total
Australia	27	2	29
Austria	56	26	82
Belgium	30	5	35
Canada	18	3	21
France	115	15	130
Germany	166	39	205
Italy	37	22	59
Japan	19	4	23
Holland	16	6	22
New Zealand	3	0	3
Norway	9	8	17
Spain	16	0	16
Sweden	7	0	7
Switzerland	57	6	63
Denmark	0	5	5
Thailand	0	4	4
USA	146	4	150
UK	40	9	49
Misc	6	0	6
TOTALS	768	158	926

This indicates that Mustang has received less than 1500 visitors since it opened in March 1992 with a dramatic drop in 1993/4. This drop probably reflects an overall reduction in visitation to Nepal but might also suggest that the initial novelty value of Mustang as a destination is

over and that few visitors are prepared to pay the very high cost (\$700 permit fee). There seems no danger of exceeding the annual visitor limit of 1000. Visitors are primarily western European (principally German, French, Dutch, Swiss) with American visitation diminishing from 146 in 1993 to 4 in 1994. There is, however, reason to suggest that these figures are not entirely accurate.

Since the writer's previous visit in October 1992 the regulation banning trade between hosts and guests has been lifted although strict environmental regulations remain in place. Visitors must still travel in an organised group, accompanied by an Environmental Liaison Officer (appointed in Kathmandu, not Mustang). They must take tents, kerosene and all necessary supplies. Kerosene depots are now available at Jomsom and Kagbeni. Donations may be given to gompas, schools etc. and souvenirs purchased.

Observation supports the Lo Ba complaint that one economic effect of tourism is accentuation of a wealth gap. This is inevitable since the removal of the trading ban has resulted in more use being made of inns, with potential profit for innkeepers from the supply of camp sites, cooking facilities, drinks etc. There are complaints of a rise in the price of basic foodstuffs due to tourism. Trekking parties contribute steady revenue for landowners. Renting a field at lunchtime cost 150 rupees, an overnight campsite 1000 rupees. It was therefore clear why these sites were now so well signposted and some, such as the Bhikruti camping site at Chusang, had made great efforts at improvement by tidying the site, installing higher walls and advertising horses for hire. There is a noticeable increase in signage (almost every inn now has an English sign) but no perceptible upgrading of internal facilities or cleanliness. Regulations have been altered so that, in theory, visitors could now stay in a local inn but since they are still compelled to take full camping equipment and staff few take advantage of the opportunity. Most, in any case, would prefer the relative cleanliness of a tent to the dirt of a local inn. Although the regulations still prevent independent backpackers it is clear that ACAP is moving in this direction although this is unlikely to happen while visitors are still compelled to be accompanied by an environmental liaison officer.

The facilities being offered in villages have been greatly expanded. At many locations well-organised inn owners have started to stock a wide variety of bottled drinks and foodstuffs (beer, sodas, confectionary etc). imported for resale. Expedition leaders complain that they are still unable to buy food such as flour, rice, sugar and kerosene from depots in Mustang. The establishment of such depots would enable a small profit to be made by local people since at present these heavy bulk supplies must be bought south of the Kingdom and carried in (at considerable expense).

Little architectural impact is evident despite predictions that rapid upgrading of local inns would occur. Some extensions of teahouses are recent, as at Syangmoden, but these seem to relate more to increased local movement (teachers, aid and health workers) than visitors. One local entrepreneur in Lo Manthang who had planned a purpose-built extension to his premises had been obliged to lease the house to ACAP at a low rent. Our party only observed one major construction - a new room in the Bista house in Tsarang which had been carefully built in the local style, though with over-large windows. The room was intended to be a communal eating/meeting room for trekkers staying in the nearby camp site but was not suitable for overnight stays. A room underneath functioned as staff accommodation and kitchen, the two being linked by a precipitous log stair. The principal advantage was that a trekking party renting the room no longer had to traverse the family's private quarters. Furnishings included a huge Chinese cupboard brought over the border from Tibet which illustrates the wealth of the innkeeper, as does his recent purchase of a horse for a reputed \$US 4000.

Lo Manthang now has two kerosene generators, one left by a British film crew (Intrepid Films) whose work has recently been premiered in London. The film project aroused strong local objections since the generators were positioned on a *gompa* roof without permission causing serious damage. One generator is currently being used in the inn on Lo Manthang's main square to power a video player enabling the innkeeper to charge local people R25 to watch videos.

Despite official claims to the contrary members of the expedition who had been to Mustang before noted further signs of depopulation, *gompas* being increasingly neglected with insufficient local people available to pay for their upkeep. The actual cost of repairs is quite small by western standards and there is some evidence that western visitors who have expressed a willingness to contribute or pay for repairs have been rejected by ACAP who only allow donations into a central pool from which payments are made to official projects. This is a pity - a more flexible approach might generate substantial sums from visitors interested in a particular site. However, more positive signs of change since 1992 included new wall/house construction, tree plantation and irrigation works although these probable only affected a minority of families. New taps and waterpipes had been installed in many villages, financed by CARE Nepal. One member of our team, a farmer, observed that the fields were manure depleted with perhaps only 30% of available arable land being cultivated (less when away from the water of the Kali Gandaki valley). Available manure was being burnt for fuel, rather than returned to the fields, and crop quality was variable. Lo Ba expressed pleasure in the progress which had been made over the past two years but wanted a great deal more very fast. Most thought that this could best be achieved by attracting far larger numbers of visitors and no-one expressed any environmental concerns.

The social impact of tourism did not seem greatly changed. Children still begged for sweets and adolescent girls have started to ask for lipsalve or facecream. Formal charges had not yet been instituted for photographs and many older people did not wish their photograph to be taken. Local people appeared to be far more used to visitors, except in very remote areas. Far more souvenir sellers were available, clustering around every campsite, but many of these were not Lo-Ba but traders from outside the Kingdom (mostly from Tibet). In Lo Manthang visitor resentment was still high. The city has seen no rain for more than two years causing severe drought which was being attributed to the evil influence of tourists.

ACAP has at least started to develop a healthcare system but education is still seasonal. Children are still taught in Nepali though premises have been allocated and part converted for a Tibetan school in Lo Manthang though development has stopped due to lack of funds. ACAP has tried to develop and promote cultural activities and encourage communities to market these to visitors. At Samar, for example, 'cultural dances' regularly entertain trekkers at the suggestion of ACAP who have also indicated a minimum contribution of R100 per head.

A more sinister cultural impact is the recent theft of three black *thankas* (ritual paintings on silk) from the remote *Lorigompa*. Local complicity is indicated and it is thought that the objects were shipped out of the country to the international art market. A valuable statue made of copper covered with gold paint has been stolen from the nunnery at Gelling and is currently the subject of an official enquiry, with the site permanently closed to visitors. Local rumours also suggest that many minor thefts and illegal transactions go unreported with *thankas* and other religious objects being sold to tourists for cash payments. Despite this the writer was able to compare the artifacts at certain locations (eg the Defenders Room in the fort at Tsarang) observed in 1992 and then again in 1994 and observed no omissions though much rearranging.

The topography of Mustang has resulted in the developed of a well-established tourist circuit taking the visitor from Chusang-Ghemi-Tsarang-Lo Manthang and back. Villages such as Dhi or Gelling which are off this main route see less than 10% of the visitors received by the above villages and are far more friendly and interested in westerners.

10 REPORTS IN PROGRESS

Various sets of data including photographs have now been submitted for specialist analyses and the following work is still in the process of completion;

- drawing up of some plans and survey results
- completion of GIS database
- specialist report on quartz artifacts
- dating of archaeological material
- final identification of fossil
- specialist report on fortress architecture
- specialist report on *gompa* paintings

It is anticipated that academic published outcomes will eventually include two international conference papers, public lectures, specialist and more general articles including work on GIS system, completion of update on tourism impact, medieval fortress architecture, local textiles and vernacular architecture.

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