

'Lo Manthang has an exceptional value' says Maie Kitamura in UNESCO interview

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Maie Kitamura, a heritage architect from France, visited Lo Manthang earlier this year as part of a research project that aims at comparing the ancient earthen walled city in Upper Mustang with similar sites in South Asia. She undertakes her research work as part of the UNESCO project “Strengthening the protection of Lo Manthang”, which supports the

Government of Nepal to prepare a nomination of Lo Manthang as the fifth World Heritage property in Nepal. Lo Manthang is an outstanding sanctuary of a disappearing urban, religious, artistic and living culture, Kitamura says in an interview with the UNESCO Office in Kathmandu.

UNESCO: You had first visited Lo Manthang in 2005. How has it changed since then?

Maie Kitamura: Since 2005, Lo Manthang has gone through a number of changes, among which is the construction of the road linking Koralla pass on the Chinese border and Jomsom. The road with its trucks, jeeps and tourists is already coming to Lo Manthang. The travel has become relatively short compared to the situation before (1 day instead of 3 or 4) but the road itself is unpaved and still quite difficult and uncomfortable. The city itself kept the same character and one can still feel the same sense of awe meandering through the city. Inside the walls, the changes are still marginal in terms of urban morphology and architectural traditions. But, the urban development that was already visible eight years ago outside the walled city has intensified. More and more houses have been built and are still being built outside the walls of the city. The new factor is the use of concrete for the constructions of both houses and religious structures such as chortens and mani walls. Other changes are related to the impact of climate change, with extreme weather conditions in winter (animals dying by hundreds due to heavy snow) and water shortage issues (some villages are being relocated for the lack of water). The recent political changes in Nepal also seem to have brought changes in Lo, especially in the Chorog village down the river, where traditional activities such as mills and blacksmiths have been abandoned in the last two to three years. Such activities are associated with “lower social classes”, and as a result, are progressively being rejected.

UNESCO: What did you observe as the main challenges of preserving the city, for example from risks related to the increased accessibility of the place by road and the impact of climate change?

Maie Kitamura: One of the main challenges in preserving the city is linked to the easier accessibility through the road connecting Jomsom to Lo Manthang and further to the Kora-la pass. Loaded trucks come from as far as India to deliver their goods including cement bags and other construction materials. Due to fast execution made possible by cement concrete, its use is preferred in new constructions, thus contributing to rigid and inappropriate features to the architecture and threatening the integrity of Lo Manthang's built heritage. Climate change is also a factor affecting the city. For instance, Lo Manthang is normally an arid and dry land, but is now subjected to more and more rainfalls during the summer. As a result, the traditional mud flat roofs face water leakage problem, which further encourages the use of concrete for better waterproofing by the inhabitants.

As the use of concrete is new, people are not yet aware that it is not suitable for the harsh and extreme climates of Mustang. Concrete keeps the houses cold in winter and is not sustainable in the long run, especially in a region with high temperature differences between summer and winter (more than 40°C). And, consequently severe cycles of frost / thaw burst through the concrete.

Another challenge is the reluctance of some of the local people in preserving their heritage. They see tradition as an obstacle to the modern life they are seeking, without realizing that sustainable development does not mean getting rid of 600 years of history and stopping continuous transmission of their culture through generations. On the contrary, the real path to a modern and developed society is a harmonious link from the past to the future, respecting our ancestors' heritage and building a future based on our traditional and unique culture and society. "Development"/"modernization" without the basis of or without real links to our own particular culture will be a superficial one: it will be modernization without a soul.

UNESCO: You went this time to Lo Manthang within the framework of the nomination process of the site as the fifth World Heritage property in Nepal, in particular to help prepare a study comparing the city to others in the region. What makes Lo Manthang so unique?

Maie Kitamura: Lo Manthang can be considered unique firstly because it is the only fortified city in Nepal. As such, it bears a unique testimony to a particular physical and symbolic element of Nepalese medieval history and culture. Furthermore, it seems to be the only fortified city in the Tibetan culture to contain within its walls royal power (palace), religious authority (four temples and a monastery) as well as secular houses, which has been so well preserved and conserved.

Lo Manthang is concentrated with artistic monuments of extraordinary value, such as Thubchen and Champa temples housing some of the most precious 15th century wall paintings in the Himalayas. The palace, also from the 15th century, is one of the last palaces of the Tibetan world to be still used and inhabited by the local sovereign, the pömbö of Lo.

Finally, there is no place like Lo Manthang which retained the Tibetan traditions in such an integral and authentic way. Indeed, other ancient cities of the Tibetan culture seem to have gone through irreversible changes, while fortunately, Lo Manthang has so far been barely untouched by “modernization” or outside influences. It can be considered to be a precious sanctuary of an otherwise disappearing urban, religious, artistic and living culture.

UNESCO: At present, Lo Manthang is being seen as a cultural site. Do you think that this view adequately reflects its overall significance or should we take a broader approach also taking into account the landscape and the cultural elements that surround the city?

Maie Kitamura: Lo Manthang is a cultural jewel set in an extraordinary landscape, showing that the site was carefully chosen on a geomantic level in accordance to Tibetan tradition. The value of Lo Manthang strongly relies on this ordered landscape: the mountains as the pure domain of gods, the land and hills for the human beings, and the rivers housing water deities of the infra-world. The site of Lo Manthang is marked by religious landmarks such as chortens and mani walls, which sanctify the protected area and define its boundaries. Lo Manthang cannot be fully apprehended without the surrounding fields outside the city that define the habitable space and the Chorog village down the river which had been a home to blacksmiths, butchers and other traditional professions subordinate to the city. And as such, Lo Manthang owes its existential significance to this balance between cultural and natural dimensions, and should be considered in a broader perspective than merely a cultural site.

At an even larger scale, the whole of Upper Mustang contains outstanding sites and places, such as Lo Gekar, considered by many to be the oldest Buddhist temple in the Tibetan culture, or Tanggye with its stunning series of chortens and vivid cultural traditions, or the priceless network of caves adorned with paintings. In the future, the protection of Lo Manthang should include all Upper Mustang area, which bears treasures that are unique in the world and is dramatically threatened today by the lack of protection (resulting in destruction and illicit trafficking).

UNESCO: How do you think the linkage between tangible and intangible cultural heritage of Lo Manthang should be considered in the future management of the site?

Maie Kitamura: The exceptional value of Lo Manthang is justified not only by its tangible heritage (monuments, urban fabric, landscape), but also by its living traditions and beliefs. The city itself has been shaped by religion, every monument and cultural elements are sacred in nature. As a protected site, Lo Manthang has to be managed through an integrated approach between tangible and intangible elements. At a religious level, the festivals and ceremonies performed throughout the year should be maintained, documented and protected. But, efforts should also be focused on traditional craftsmanship, such as weaving, traditional carpentry and building techniques. These skills should be valued and preserved through sustainable maintenance system. The city constantly “over-writes” its heritage by

replacing some houses, but maintaining the spirit of the place through its building traditions.

It is also by conserving and restoring the tangible heritage that the tradition may continue to exist. For example, the restoration of Thubchen temple and its paintings has brought back life to the temple, where Lopas come to worship and where religious ceremonies are now performed anew, after decades of abandonment. Therefore, the link between tangible and intangible cultural heritage has to work in both ways, in a symbiotic relation.

UNESCO: In your opinion, what is the best way to involve the people living in Upper Mustang and Lo Manthang in the nomination process?

Maie Kitamura: The local community should of course be fully involved in the nomination process. To do so, the local traditional authorities, who have maintained their influence over the community for centuries should be consulted and involved in one way or another in the process, including the Pömbo (sovereign of the former kingdom of Lo) and the Khenpo (head of the monastery).

But the main challenge resides in the reluctance of a small part of the community, who succeed in convincing the population of the "burden" created by World Heritage protection, especially in regards to the limitation of their building "liberties". Therefore, a careful and long-term awareness raising campaign has to be undertaken within the community, among whom the majority is already convinced about the unique value of their heritage. The main objective would then be to dissipate their fears about World Heritage protection, showing its benefits for the community on a mid- and long-term scale, and putting in this perspective, their short-term, individual or categorial advantages and profits. Consultations, at intervals, could also be carried out to address the inhabitants' problems and concerns, in order to integrate their needs within the future management plan. The plan may gain from being evolutionary, flexible, dynamic and adaptive.

And for a real democratic and indubitable choice, why not organize a local referendum on the listing of Lo Manthang as a World Heritage Site, as suggested by the religious authorities. A suggestion box could also be set up to allow everyone to express his/her ideas freely.

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联合国教科文组织（UNESCO）采访 Maie Kitamura——罗马丹（Lo Manthang）的独特价值



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Maie Kitamura，来自法国，从事文化遗产的保护工作。为了比较、研究上木斯塘（Upper Mustang）和南亚在古老的有城墙的城市方面的差别，Maie Kitamura 在今年早些时候参观了罗马丹（Lo Manthang）。她参与了联合国教科文组织（UNESCO）“加强罗马丹（Lo Manthang）的保护”项目，该项目的目的就是在将于尼泊尔召开的第五次世界遗产大会上，支持尼泊尔政府提名罗马丹（Lo Manthang）申报世界遗产名录。Maie Kitamura 在联合国教科文组织加德满都办公室（UNESCO Kathmandu）接受采访时说：“罗马丹（Lo Manthang）是一个杰出的地方，拥有其他地方已消失不见的城市、宗教、艺术和生活习惯”。

联合国教科文组织（UNESCO）：你在2005年第一次参观了罗马丹（Lo Manthang），现在和那时相比，有什么变化吗？

Maie Kitamura：自2005年以来，罗马丹（Lo Manthang）发生了许多变化，变化之一就是建成了一条连接 Koralla 的公路（两端分别为中国边界和江森（Jomson——尼泊尔小镇，靠近木斯塘（Mustang）））。货车、吉普车和游客已经可以通过这条公路到达了罗马丹（Lo Manthang）。虽然花在路上的时间已经缩短由原来的3到4天缩减至1天，但是由于公路没有铺柏油，开车比较困难、旅途也不太舒适。城市本身仍旧保持着原有的特征，一条蜿蜒的河流穿过城市。在城墙内，仍保持着传统的城市形态和建筑。但是8年来城市外的发展已经

显而易见，城墙外出现了越来越多已经建成或正在新建的房屋。新建成的房屋和宗教场所的特点是使用了混凝土，例如神龛（chorten）和嘛呢墙

（maniwall）。另一个有影响的变化是气候变化，导致冬天出现了极端的天气状况（数百头动物因为大雪而死亡），并导致出现缺水的情况（一些村庄因为缺水而被迫迁移）。尼泊尔最新的政治变化似乎也给罗国（Lo）带来了变化，特别是在河下游的 Chorog 村，在过去的 2 到 3 年中，村民放弃了传统的磨坊和铁匠的技艺。这些传统技艺与“较低的社会阶层”相联系，导致了被抛弃的结果。

联合国教科文组织（UNESCO）：你认为城市保护的主要挑战是什么，是不是公路通车以及气候变化给城市带来的影响？

Maie Kitamura：在保护城市方面面临的主要挑战之一是从江森（Jomson）通过公路较容易到达罗马丹（Lo Manthang），更远能到达科拉拉山口（Kora-la pass）。从印度来的卡车满载水泥和其他建筑材料抵达罗马丹（Lo Manthang）。由于水泥混凝土能够加快建房的速度，很多新的建筑物选择使用它。因此，建筑的风格变得僵硬、并不适合当地的情况，威胁着罗马丹（Lo Manthang）现存的建筑传统。气候变化也是影响城市的一个因素。例如，罗马丹（Lo Manthang）的土地通常是干旱的，但是现在夏季的降雨越来越多，导致传统用泥砌成的屋顶面临着漏水的问题，这进一步鼓励当地居民使用防水性更好的混凝土建房屋。

由于当地居民是刚开始使用混凝土，所以没有意识到混凝土并不适合木斯塘（Mustang）极端恶劣的天气。使用混凝土建成的房屋冬天非常寒冷，在夏、冬季温差超过 40°C 的地区使用寿命也不会很长，因为混凝土在经过剧烈的热胀冷缩的循环后会出现爆裂。

另一个挑战是当地的一些居民不愿意保存他们的传统。他们认为传统妨碍了他们寻找现代化的生活，并没有意识到可持续发展并不意味着放弃 600 年的历史，停止将文化一代代传承下去。相反，一个现代发达社会的过去和未来是可以和谐的联系在一起的，应该尊重我们祖先的遗产并在我们传统和独特的文化、社会基础上建设未来。“发展”和“现代化”如果不以我们自身独特的文化作为基础和联系，只是表面的，这样的现代化是没有内涵的。

联合国教科文组织（UNESCO）：你这次是去罗马丹（Lo Manthang）是为了支持其在尼泊尔召开的第五次世界遗产大会上申报世界遗产名录，特别是比较、研究罗马丹（Lo Manthang）和同一地域的其他城市的区别。什么使罗马丹（Lo Manthang）变得如此独特？

Maie Kitamura: 罗马丹 (Lo Manthang) 独特, 首先是因为它是尼泊尔唯一仍生活在城墙里的城市。因此, 它体现了尼泊尔中世纪独特的历史和文化特征。其次, 罗马丹 (Lo Manthang) 深受西藏文化的影响, 拥有和西藏一样的王室权利 (王宫)、宗教权威 (有四座寺庙和一座修道院) 以及民房。这些都被很好的保存和保护着。

罗马丹 (LoManthang) 拥有大量价值非凡的艺术古迹, 例如 Thubchen 和挂着喜马拉雅 (Himalayas) 15 世纪珍贵的壁画的 Champa 寺庙。15 世纪建造的、保留至今的西藏文化区域最后一座宫殿仍然被罗国 (Lo) 的首领使用和居住。

最后, 没有一个地方像罗马丹 (Lo Manthang) 一样如此完整、真实地保持着藏族传统。事实上, 其他拥有藏族文化的古老城市都不可避免的发生改变。然而幸运的是, 罗马丹 (Lo Manthang) 到目前为止几乎没有受到“现代化”或外界的影响。罗马丹 (Lo Manthang) 是一个杰出的地方, 拥有其他地方已消失不见的城市、宗教、艺术和生活习惯。

联合国教科文组织 (UNESCO): 目前, 罗马丹 (Lo Manthang) 被认为是一处文化遗址。你认为这个观点是否恰当的表达了它的整体价值? 或者我们应该采用更广泛的方法, 同时考虑到景观和城市周围的文化元素?

Maie Kitamura: 罗马丹 (Lo Manthang) 是一块存在于奇异景观下的文化瑰宝, 它巧妙地符合了传统藏族文化中最好的风水布局。符合风水布局的有序景观体现了罗马丹 (Lo Manthang) 的价值: 群山是神的领地, 陆地和丘陵属于人类, 河流则属于水下世界的神明。罗马丹 (LoManthang) 文化遗址因为有神龛 (chorten) 和嘛呢墙 (mani wall) 而被认为是宗教遗址, 并以此来确定保护区域和范围。罗马丹 (Lo Manthang) 很难被理解, 适宜居住的土地出现在了城市的外面, 河流下游的 Chorog 村只有本地的铁匠、屠夫和其他传统手工业者。因此, 罗马丹 (Lo Manthang) 在文化与自然之间缺少一种平衡, 它不应仅仅被视为一处文化遗产, 而应该在更广阔的视野中被考虑。

从更大的范围上来看, 上木斯塘 (Upper Mustang) 拥有很多杰出的遗址和地方, 例如嘎寺庙 (LoGekar) 被认为是藏族文化中最古老的佛教寺庙, 唐歌 (Tanggye) 拥有令人惊叹的一系列的神龛 (chorten) 和丰富的传统文化, 已经画有壁画的珍贵的洞穴群。未来, 罗马丹 (Lo Manthang) 的保护应该包括具有世界上独一无二珍宝的上木斯塘 (UpperMustang) 地区, 该地区现在因为缺少保护而正明显受到威胁 (遭受到破坏和非法交易)。

联合国教科文组织（UNESCO）：你认为未来罗马丹（Lo Manthang）遗址的管理需要考虑它的有形文化遗产和无形文化遗产之间的联系吗？

Maie Kitamura: 罗马丹（Lo Manthang）的特殊价值在于它不仅拥有有形的文化遗产（古迹，城市结构，景观），还拥有传统的生活习惯和信仰。城市形成了自身的宗教，自然界的遗迹和文化都是神圣的。作为遗迹保护，罗马丹（Lo Manthang）需要建立一套保护有形资产和无形资产的方法。要记录和保护每年定期举行的宗教节日和宗教仪式上的表演。但是，也要关注传统工艺，例如编织，传统木工和建筑技术。应该重视这些技能，并通过可持续维护系统加以保护。一些建筑经过时间的沉淀形成了城市的遗址，通过传统的建筑保持了地方的精神。

通过保护和修复有形遗产，传统可以继续存在下去。例如，修复 Thubchen Temple 及其壁画为寺庙带来了生机——已经遭到遗弃几十年的 Lopas 进行朝拜的地方及其宗教仪式正在进行修复。因此，有形遗产和无形遗产的关系就是它们是一项修复工程的两个方面。

联合国教科文组织（UNESCO）：在你看来，在提名上木斯塘（Upper Mustang）和罗马丹（Lo Manthang）申报世界遗产名录的过程中，当地居民最好的参与方式是什么？

Maie Kitamura: 当地的部族当然应该充分的参与提名过程。当地的传统贵族在几个世纪都对部族保持着影响力，应该一起讨论并参与进申报流程的一个或几个方面，包括 Pömbö（罗国（Lo）的前君主）和 Khenpo（寺庙的主持）。

不过主要的挑战是一小部分部落不愿意参与其中，他们认为保护世界遗产会造成当地人的负担，特别是会限制他们的建筑“自由”。所以，现在正在当地居民中开展一项长期细致的宣传活动，使得其中大多数人已经确信他们的文化遗产具有独特的价值。宣传活动的主要目标是消除当地人对保护世界遗产的顾虑展现出中长期保护将给部落带来的好处，并从这个角度说明短期保护将给个人和团体带来的益处。定期举行的协商会议也可以解决居民关心的问题，以使将来的管理计划能兼顾到居民的需要。计划也将根据情况的变化，不断灵活地改进。

宗教权威建议，作为一个真正民主的选择，为什么不在罗马丹（Lo Manthang）就是否支持申报世界遗产举办一次公民投票？也可以设立一个意见箱，让每个人表达自己自由的想法。

比较分析的第一阶段资金来自法国巴黎的东方文化遗址保护联盟。