

Within Lo Monthang's Loba community, in a region formerly known as the Kingdom of Lo, local musicians, the lowest ranked group in the local social hierarchy, traditionally offer Garlu songs to royalty, monks, and deities in the Loba Buddhist cosmology. For at least four centuries, these musicians have served Lo's royal court where they have both carried and depended on the tradition of singing and playing rhythmic patterns on a pair of copper kettledrums during Buddhist rituals, celebrations and festivals. As the last remaining folk singer of the musician lineage, Tashi Tsering, ages, concerns about his failing health elicited action on the part of the Loba community. In October 2008, members of the Loba ruling caste invited Western documentation experts to record the Garlu musical repertoire for their community's future use. These songs and materials were collected between March 2009 and July 2010, by a team made up of local singers, a Loba teacher -- Karma Wangyal -- and two American researchers -- Katey Blumenthal (anthropologist) and Andrea Clearfield (composer and musician).

The 780 square miles of Nepal's remote Mustang District lies between and to the north of the Annapurna and Dhaulagiri mountains. The kingdom of Mustang, or Lo as it is known in Tibetan, was founded by a Western Tibetan noble in the late 14<sup>th</sup> Century. The principle settlement of this region, Monthang, has served as an epicenter of Tibetan Buddhist culture through the ages. Approximately 18 kilometers south of the Tibetan border, Lo Monthang once lay on an artery of trade between Nepal, India, China and Tibet. The people of *Lo*, called *Loba*, speak dialects of Tibetan language and follow a way of life akin to their neighbors across the border in Tibet. Lo Monthang is home to several ancient Buddhist temples, Jampa (*bymas pa*) and Thubchen (*thub chen*), as well as Tashi Gephel Palace (*bKra shis dge phel*) build for the regional ruling class, which has been headed by a hereditary king (*rgyal po*) since the founding of the Kingdom of Lo.

While the history of Lo Monthang's court musicians is relatively recent, professional folk music performance has been quickly implemented as a cultural staple. After the marriage between royalty from the western Himalayan region of Ladakh and Mustang, the Ladakhi Namgyal court sent occupational musicians to Lo Monthang in a traditional bridal wealth exchange. In the subsequent two generations, the folk music that hails influences from various cultures -- including that of Tibet, Ladakh and even Persia -- has become incorporated into ceremonial practice in Lo Monthang. Festivals call upon folk musicians -- of whom Tashi Tsering is the last living representative. Their repertoire of songs leads processions and sometimes initiates group dance. Musical activities serve to unite the Lo Monthang community, reestablishing relationships between the human and natural landscape and the deities that inhabit and guard the territory at certain points in the year. Rhythm and lyrics mark the sowing of fields in the spring and harvest in autumn. Other songs help to consecrate marriages. In short, musical repertoire is crucial to social reproduction, and social life, in Mustang.