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Edoardo Paolo Ferrari

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*Khangpa: A Ladakhi Vernacular
Architecture's Glossary*



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PREFACE

The art and architecture of Ladakh is unique and fascinating. Located at the confluence of ancient routes linking India with Tibet and Central Asia, the indigenous traditions and influence of neighboring regions are manifest in its art, architecture and in the Ladakhi people's way of life. Despite extreme climatic conditions and a lack of conveniences and amenities, humans have both strived and prospered for centuries in the region. Traditional Ladakhi houses are built of stones, sundried brick, mud-plaster and wood. Until recent times, houses were built according to ancient local knowledge, making them climate friendly and energy efficient. Some of the most interesting features of Ladakhi architecture are their symbolism and decorations, for example Buddhist depictions which are present in different parts of the building. However, in the last two to three decades, locals have become attracted to new construction materials that are easily available in the market, causing the decline of traditional materials, skills and knowledge. Moreover, recent development and modernization have led to a trend of demolishing traditional houses and replacing them with concrete buildings, which has also caused the destruction of much of the traditional rural landscape. In general, there is a lack of systematic research on local Ladakhi architecture, architectural history and its symbolism.

I am pleased to present Edoardo Paolo Ferrari's in-depth seminal study of vernacular architecture terminology in Ladakh, including an exploration of the styles, materials, different use of rooms, and decorations present in the region. The study promises to become not only an important resource for researchers, but has the potential to facilitate the rehabilitation of local knowledge and skills. With the efforts of several NGOs working in the field of cultural heritage in Ladakh, the people are realizing the architectural negligence of the last decades and are slowly coming back to traditional art, craft and architecture. This research work offers an excellent starting point for facilitating this dialogue.

DR SONAM WANGCHOK
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