Himalayan Hybridity and the Evolution of Ladakhi Popular Music

Noé Dinnerstein, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY

Author Biography

Noé Dinnerstein is Adjunct Assistant Professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, City University of New York. As an ethnomusicologist, his areas of interest are in music of Ladakh, North India, and Latin America. His research in Ladakh focuses primarily on tradition and popular songs, and their evolution through process of crossroads hybridity, past and present. In addition to his scholarly pursuits, he is an active performer and teacher of Hindustani sitar and khayal singing, as well as a composer. He is currently finishing up a book, Traditional Songs in Buddhist Ladakh, which will include translations, transcriptions, and recordings.

Abstract

Historically, Ladakh in the Western Himalayas was a significant nexus of Trans-Himalayan caravan trade, and thus exhibited a significant hybridity in its material, linguistic, religious, and musical culture. In this paper, I examine the rise of Ladakhi popular music in and through these crossroads, paying attention to themes of hybridity. I look at the development of Ladakhi ethnic, political, and musical identity, and the role of government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and individuals with regard to the rise of new musical genres. Accompanying the historical survey of the music is a discussion of the evolutions of textual content. Changes in mass media technology and economics have had a profound effect on this remote region, and have shaped how cultural identity is negotiated by both song writers and consumers of popular music.

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