

Pavol Breier

Tibetan celebrations

Three series of photographs strives to provide a deeper look into the religious world of the local population in Amdo – part of the Chinese provinces Gansu and Qinghai - situated on the northeast fringe of Tibetan Plateau .

Series **Labtse** (2007) (labtse is a kind of cairn made of stones) is focusing on the living religion, such as the cult of local protective mountain deities worshipped annually by locals.

A typical offering for the protective deity are symbolic arrows – five or six meters long tree trunks decorated with attached wooden wings, prayer flags and juniper twigs.

Such an arrow represents might and virility and at the same time it is a symbolic weapon which is needed by the guardian deity in order to protect the community against evil demons or real enemies.

The spontaneous euphoric mood accompanied by the rattle and rumble coming from various sources is a very emotional experience .

Series of photographs **Cham** (2006) and **Shinlang** (2006) provides a unique insight into the present life of monks in the famous Tibetan Buddhist monastery Labrang, which is one of the six large Buddhist monasteries in Tibet.

Cham dance (masked and costumed dance with Buddhist topics) is one of the most important religious festivals in the monastery taking place in the monastery courtyard annually and strong numerically visited by locals.

During **Shinlang holiday** all monks move for one week to the grasslands and spend that time by playing games and participate on sport competitions.

The fourth series **Sonam Losar** (2015) shows celebration of the Tibetan New Year in Sermathang - the village inhabited by Nepal Sherpas. Masked dance is also taking place in the monastery courtyard but is something like parody of cham provided only for fun.

Cham dance / Labrang monastery, 2006







Shinlang holiday, 2006









Sonam Losar / Tibetan New Year, 2015













Labtse / Celebration of a deity, 2007













Pavol Breier (*1952 Bratislava)

graduated from the Prague Film Academy of the Performing Arts (FAMU) is a Slovak documentary photographer. Ever since the end of the 70s he has been regularly producing cycles of photographs featuring mountain regions, concentrating thematically on the life of people in the mountains and on mountain landscapes and wildlife (cycles about Orava, the Pamirs, Himalayas, Tibet and other regions). He has often presented his work at group or solo exhibitions in Slovakia and abroad (solo exhibitions in Slovakia, the Czech Republic, France and Belgium), he is the author or co-author of a number of photographic publications (e.g. The Pamirs, The Little and White Carpathians, On the Roof of the World, The world of Tibetan Buddhism, Labrang: The Universe of a Tibetan Monastery, Shepherds).

He teaches photography at the Pan European University and at Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia.