

Around Leh (7/11/2008, 7/14/2008, 7/31/2008)

In between treks and lazy days in Leh, I made a few day trips to some of the monasteries near Leh. Spituk monastery is the closest major monastery to Leh and was mainly interesting for the sand mandala that was being created by the monks at the time I visited, an undertaking which would take the monks three more days to complete, seven days in total of carefully sprinkling the fine grains of colored sand. As a result of its dramatic location, reminiscent of the Potala Palace in Lhasa, the monastery at Tikse is one of the most famous and visited monasteries in Ladakh. I also visited the monastery at Phyang for its yearly monastic festival which included the requisite religious masked dances known as Cham. I had seen similar monastic festivals in Tibet and Hemis in Ladakh but such festivals are always interesting places to wonder around and photograph.



Spituk Monastery.



**Monks creating sand mandala,
Spituk Monastery.**



**Monk creating sand mandala,
Spituk Monastery.**



**Monk creating sand mandala,
Spituk Monastery.**



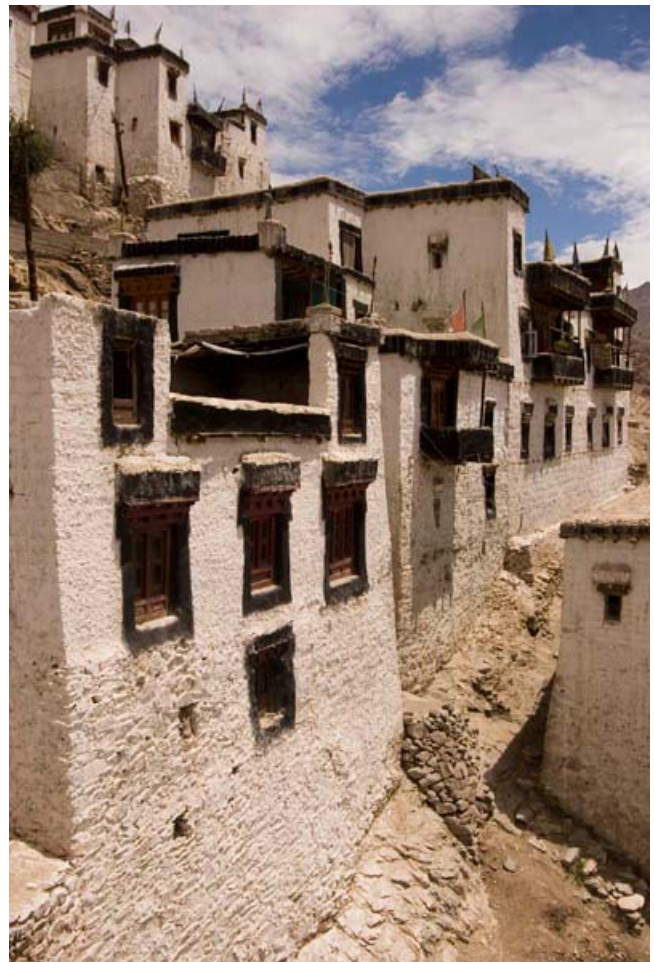
**Monk creating sand mandala,
Spituk Monastery.**



Tikse Monastery.



Sunflower, Tikse Monastery.



Tikse Monastery.



Tikse Monastery.



Tikse Monastery.



Tikse Monastery.



**Monk creating offering items,
Tikse Monastery.**



**Guardian figure with butter lamps,
Tikse Monastery.**



**Monk reading in old library,
Tikse Monastery.**



Image of the future Buddha in the old library, Tikse Monastery.



New large image of the future Buddha, Tikse Monastery.



Traditionally dressed Ladakhi man, festival at Phyang Monastery.



Monk procession during a festival at Phyang Monastery.



Monk from above, festival at Phyang Monastery.



Traditionally dressed Ladakhi man with a prayer wheel, festival at Phyang Monastery.



Cham dance during a festival at Phyang Monastery.



Cham dance during a festival at Phyang Monastery.



Man holds a prayer wheel, festival at Phyang Monastery.



Watching the Cham dance from above, festival at Phyang Monastery.



Cham dance during a festival at Phyang Monastery.



Cham dance during a festival at Phyang Monastery.



Ladakhi man, festival at Phyang Monastery.



Ladakhi watching the festival from the roof, Phyang Monastery.



**Ladakhi girl and monk watching the festival,
Phyang Monastery.**



Young monk, festival at Phyang Monastery.