

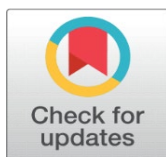
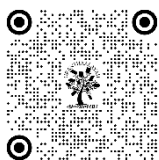
# PASSIVITY TO PERFORMATIVITY OF SACRED MOUNTAINS OF JE TSONGKHAPA AND MAHAKALA (GONBO) IN THE LUNGNAC VALLEY OF LADAKH: CONTEMPLATING THE CONTEMPORANEITY OF EPITOMES OF PAREIDOLIA (IN INDIA)

Kalsang Wangmo <sup>1</sup>✉ , M. Ramakrishnan <sup>2</sup>✉ , Stanzin Tsetan <sup>3</sup>✉ 

<sup>1</sup> Assistant Professor, Department of Far Eastern Languages, Central University of Jharkhand, India

<sup>2</sup> Assistant Professor of Folklore, Department of Anthropology & Tribal Studies, Central University of Jharkhand, India

<sup>3</sup> Research Scholar, Department of Far Eastern Languages, Central University of Jharkhand, India



## ABSTRACT

Pareidolia is an interesting concept that gives a wide scope for understanding the complex relationship between culture, society, and landscapes. It is not merely a perception of human images or objects on natural entities, rather it is an establishment of cultural relation or relatedness with the perceived objects through a “tendency to perceive a connection or meaningful pattern between two unrelated things” Robert (2017), cf. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apophenia> - technically known as apophenia. Pareidolia is defined as “tendency to perceive a specific, often meaningful image in a random or ambiguous visual pattern [and] [...] the human ability to see shapes or make pictures out of randomness” (Pamela Ferdinand, Merriam-Webster, 2023, [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pareidolia](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pareidolia)), or as “imagined perception of a pattern or meaning where it does not actually exist” (Collins Dictionary, 2023, [www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/pareidolia](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/pareidolia)), and or as “our brains are wired to look for faces in objects, calling the phenomenon pareidolia” (Buffins in The Sun (2012), Quoted in Collins, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/sentences/english/pareidolia>). Although these perceptions are founded upon the ‘self-referential over-interpretations of actual sensory perceptions’ Robert (2017), cf. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apophenia>), their significant role for community’s spiritual life is inevitable as they transform natural things into tangible objects to be protected as part of their cultural heritage with esoteric values. Interestingly, a lot of artistic and aesthetic elements of the local communities could be seen reflected in these perceptions which are also best-known examples of elegant craft culture associated with different genres of folklore including myths, stories, beliefs, customary practices, materials culture, etc., that together constitute the folklife in a particular environmental setting. However, by referring to the self-evolved sacred landscapes of Je Tsongkhapa and Mahakala Gonbo of Lungnak valley in Ladakh region, this article delineates the artistic, aesthetic, and spiritual life associated with the splendid and magnificent mountains that emerge to shed their passivity to acquire performativity for giving a new dimension to human life. Based on the data collected through observation method, case study and extensive interviews, this article also explores the nature and significance of the performative status of natural objects for future generations through their constant guidance, support and preaching of moral and ethical values that are indispensable in the globalized context. Finally, this article is an attempt to expand the horizon of literature and its concepts to contemplate things around us in the forms of tangible and intangible heritages which necessitate interdisciplinary tools.

Received 27 January 2023

Accepted 24 March 2023

Published 04 April 2023

### Corresponding Author

M. Ramakrishnan,  
[ilakkiyameen@gmail.com](mailto:ilakkiyameen@gmail.com)

### DOI

[10.29121/shodhkosh.v4.i1.2023.315](https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v4.i1.2023.315)

**Funding:** This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

**Copyright:** © 2023 The Author(s). This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

With the license CC-BY, authors retain the copyright, allowing anyone to download, reuse, re-print, modify, distribute, and/or copy their contribution. The work must be properly attributed to its author.

**Keywords:** Pareidolia, Apophenia, Cultural Heritage, Folklore, Aesthetics, Spirituality



“The possession of knowledge does not kill the sense of wonder and mystery. There is always more mystery” (Anais Nin, [www.brainyquote.com/quotes/anais\\_nin\\_133281](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/anais_nin_133281)).

“It is the function of art to renew our perception. What we are familiar with we cease to see. The writer shakes up the familiar scene, and, as if by magic, we see a new meaning in it” (Anais Nin, [www.notable-quotes.com/n/nin\\_anais.html](http://www.notable-quotes.com/n/nin_anais.html)).

“The landscape you grow up in speaks to you in a way that nowhere else does” (Molly Parker, [www.brainyquote.com/quotes/molly\\_parker\\_381668](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/molly_parker_381668)).

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The interesting aspect of the landscape is that it is an indispensable entity in the socio-cultural life of people, apart from providing them with the substratum for their existence. While it appears as a unified and singular concept, it is never understood alike in by any two communities whose unique perceptions of landscape could be found reflected in their cultural and creative expressions including their folklore materials which consist of oral literature, material culture, performing arts and social customs and beliefs. Further, each society has its own way of looking at the landscape and the unique classificatory system of landscape each community is possessing could be seen as evidence for the culturally specific approach to nature. This complex relationship between human beings and their landscape from the archaeological, ethnological, and mythological perspectives is the objective of the anthropology of landscape which, particularly, associates' landscape with the notions of social customs and beliefs such as shamanism, totemism, and matriarchal structures. [It was advocated by Kurl Derungs since 1990 and his interpretation is based on the matriarchal structure and the cult of the goddess, and he related this idea with the presence of megalithic monuments and the elements of fairy tales.] ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Landscape\\_mythology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Landscape_mythology)) According to the ancient Sangam literature, the landscape is not conceived merely as the lifeless or inanimate physical entity, rather it is understood in terms of *thinai* which is consisting not only of fauna and flora but also of moods, emotions, climatic conditions, inhabitants, and their culture. Keeping in mind the significant role of the landscape, the ancient Tamil society introduced different types of landscapes based on the geographical locations and assigned certain types of moods, emotions, tunes, deities, seasons, cultural life, etc. as characteristic elements of the landscape, and those divisions are *Kurinji* (mountainous regions), *Mullai* (forest regions), *Marutham* (plain regions), *Neithal* (sea and seashore), and *Paalai* (deserted regions, mostly temporary state of first three regions due to prolonged drought and famine). The poems that have emanated from these landscapes excelled in demonstrating the emotions and social conditions of each region, for example, the poem from *Kuruntokai* puts it in the following way: “What could my mother be/ To yours? What kin is my father/ To yours anyway? And how/ Did you and I meet ever? / But in love our hearts are as red/ Earth and pouring rain mingled/ Beyond parting” (*Cembulappeyanirar, Kuruntokai 40, tr. A.K. Ramanujan* <https://www.tamil literature.in/sangam-poetry-translations-k-ramanujan/>) (Set in *Kurinji* landscape, the poem tells how the hero assures his lover they are united forever and they are inseparable by explaining the fact that though they are not

relatives, their parents do not know each other, but their hearts fell in love naturally and their hearts became one like the rainwater mixed with red soil.). From being a classificatory type, *thinai* emerges as a literary concept to look at human life into two genres - *akam* (lit. inside; meaning personal life/subject of love) and *puram* (lit. outside; social life/subject of war - heroism) and the whole corpus of Sangam literature – as well as the ancient Tamil society - can be seen from these two genres. It is an example given here to demonstrate that the landscape has never been understood outside the psychological, social, and cultural space of people and also it has never been inferior to anything, that is, it has always been kept in an elevated state throughout human history. Therefore, the landscape is always seen and being seen as a self-less living being – it is living for itself as well as living for innumerable organisms, and human culture that evolved as a supplementary and complementary element of nature, never fails to represent, and reflect this relationship of interconnectedness. Functions of constituents of society and different elements of culture including oral literature, material culture, arts, customs and belief systems denote the presence of this complex relationship between landscape (synonymously nature) and culture – one could say on the basis of Ferdinand de Saussure’s *la langue* (system/ the abstract invisible layer) and *la parole* (manifestation / the actual speech or expression) [Saussure \(1959\)](#), [Fendler \(2010\)](#), 17, the underlying system of this innate relationship could be understood through their representative manifestations. Moreover, perceiving landscape as part of or belonging to cultural system could be seen almost in all societies, and the personification of land and adding anthropomorphic elements to the landscape could well delineate this intrinsic relationship beyond any doubt. Here emerges the notion of cultural geography or cultural landscape as a subfield of human geography that is used to highlight the fact that the people and their societies are controlled by the landscapes or environment [Peet \(1990\)](#), in a way both can mutually contribute and influence each other for their existence. That is, according to the tradition of cultural geography, initiated by Carl O. Sauer, who is known as the “father of cultural geography”, the culture and societies are developed out of their local landscapes, and they contribute to shaping the landscape as a token of their reciprocity. This article presents two examples that show the interactions between the natural landscapes and people to create the cultural landscape through the notion of pareidolia that is founded on the mechanism of apophenia. Further, the interesting aspect of cultural landscape lies in its interdisciplinary nature drawing insights from cognitive fields of enquiry such as anthropology, sociology, literary studies, folklore, etc. And, of course, these examples are the sacred landscapes of Je Tsongkhapa and Mahakala Gonbo of the Lungnak valley in the Ladakh region, and they help us to comprehend the transformation of natural entities into a tangible heritage through artistic and aesthetic representations apart from their performative nature with a spiritual context. This article gains importance for the simple reason that it attempts to interpret the characterization of the tangible items as human figures as a way to add and reflect the performance of the non-performative and static items in terms of the modern, particularly, linguistic, perspective on the nature of performance which lies on the passive and active mode of communication between animate and inanimate entities on the cultural platform.

## 2. LANDSCAPE

The landscape is not merely perceived by its visible features, and people attribute different qualities based on their experience and artistic and aesthetic orientations. Considering their physical elements both natural and man-made

features seem to play a significant role in giving orientation to people towards the landscape and this orientation is vital for them to integrate the landscape into their sociocultural and spiritual life. Whether it is an aesthetic, or a poetic appeal people have towards their landscape, certain sociocultural elements contribute to shaping or deciding the poetic or aesthetic sense of the people. Moreover, the perspective the people as inhabitants adopt to view their landscape could be seen as culturally specific and influential and the inhabitants draw their identity from the landscapes to which they belong. The belongingness is not perfunctory or illogical, rather it is an eternal bond established at the fiduciary level by the inhabitants over the landscape by the developed assurance as a result of their strenuous and collective efforts in comprehending the properties and qualities of the landscape. The landscape is not a homogenous entity and, as the Sangam thinai concept has already explored the five types of landscapes, there are different types of landscapes each community could identify. Both natural and man-made landscapes are internalized by people in order to be guided and shaped during their everyday activities. On many occasions, people's behaviour is identified with the landscapes, or in other words, the self-image of the people is defined by the character of the landscape. Thus, the landscape is one of the factors that binds together people in the matter of belongingness and differentiates because of the non-belongingness. So, it is an important element that functions as an identifier and classifier which could be seen as the creation of identity based on the landscape – the term regionalism could be seen here as an appropriate example. The heterogeneous landscape [Forman and Godron \(1981\)](#) & [Forman and Godron \(1986\)](#) is always in a position to entice the peoples' attention not only with its aesthetic appeal but also with the characteristic features to influence their cultural and spiritual life of them, and it constructs an interacting ecosystem in which everything is interlinked. A glance at peoples' appreciation of landscape could be seen from three things firstly the list of customs, beliefs, sentiments, and spiritual life of people associated with the landscape; secondly, the poetic and aesthetic appreciation through artworks such paintings, portraits etc., of the images of landscapes; and thirdly, the modification contours of landscape as part of our aesthetic appeal. Thus, the natural landscape is conceptualized and represented by people in view of their socio-cultural settings as well as their individual sentimental orientations. In this study, there are certain issues that deal with the nature of the landscape, its archaeology, science associated with landscape, landscape ecology, etc., are being conveniently ignored here as the focus of this article does not fall on them rather it is directed at exploring either interrelationship or reciprocity between landscape and the human beings to establish the nature of communication between landscape and human beings.

### 3. LANDSCAPE AS VISUAL ART

From a cursory look, one can understand that peoples' life is fully occupied with the portrayal and depiction of landscapes with a poetic and aesthetic appeal as well the descriptions with fine details of what appear in front of them, and these artistic representations of the landscapes of both natural and man-made could be considered as reflection of their appreciation and approval of visual illustrations. The frame of image that appears through the eyes is captured for the purpose of visual experience and this process is an elementary as well as basic process that is required for the creation of mental images of concepts, ideas, etc. However, whatever being registered in mind as the image of external world as a result of conceptual and perceptual experience is now being given a visual representation for

the communication purpose, and one must here refer to the discussion on the need for communication or the need to communicate in the context of the evolution of language, particularly human language. A quick reference to the definition of communication would tell us that it is a means of sending or receiving of information or ideas, and or imparting or exchanging or sharing of information, transmission or conveying of ideas, emotions, experiences, etc. And whether verbal or non-verbal, communication is a complex process as it uses a medium for the transmission of ideas between speaker and listener and further, being a continuous process having dynamic interaction between the participating elements by both affecting and being affected, it is consisting of seven elements such as sender, receiver, channel, encoding, decoding, feedback, and idea/message. Each element in this communication process actively participate to fulfil its purpose, and by which an intended task is met – for example, the sender or communicator or speaker is the one who is with the intention to pass the idea / information; idea or information is something that is consisting of many things including feelings, emotions, orders, suggestions, opinion, views, etc. and unambiguous and clear information will be the facilitator – as much the idea is clear, the communication flow will meet its intended purpose; whether informal or formal, channel has emerged as a medium with its own mode of functioning that helps the sender to a message or an information is sent to the intended receiver; receiver is the component for whom the message / information is intended to be transmitted by the sender; however, the encoding and decoding are two components that deal with message or information that is intangible in form for sending or receiving it respectively; and finally, it is the feedback that ensures whether the sender or speaker has succeeded in the task.

Both encoding and decoding make communication as dynamic as both of them depend on the understanding that both sender and receiver are expected to share elements that make encoding and decoding smooth and meaningful. Encoding is a process in which an idea or message or information is coded for the purpose of sending across to the receiver or the decoder through the available channel with the help medium. In the case of decoding and deciphering messages, in verbal and non-verbal forms, but though it seems to appear as passive and happening internally, it can show a kind of non-verbal communication. That is, during some of the decoding processes, the non-verbal activities could be the indicators that there is a decoding process. Therefore, these both processes get special attention in this article because of their reciprocity in terms of interaction and active involvement in both message production and message reception without any mediation or channel. Interestingly, the encoded messages are not received with their intended values by the decoders though they have common belongingness, and here individual variations or uniqueness could be cited for the diversities. And this point is an important element in this paper since the generational gap among the members along with the access to the external world could be a potential factor that is significant for the discussion, and it becomes relevant here because the encoded primary data (particularly it is non-verbal one and a permanent in time and space) we use here has the large number of community members with generational gaps as it decoders who tend to interpret in many ways and can give different meanings to them due to the change in attitude and lifestyle. Here, encoding denotes the process by which a message is produced with the help of a system of codes, that is, the message is produced within the condition and framework provided by the established system of codes. It means that the meaning production is guided by the system consisting of verbal and non-verbal codes with which the speaker or sender or encoder is familiar. The relationship between the sender with the receiver in connection with the production of the message is based on the belief or expectation that the sender is

having on the receiver, and it is solely related to the purpose of the message for what it is being produced. Further, on the other hand, decoding is the matter of the decoder's ability to get the message out of the encoded one for understanding it or interpreting it, or otherwise to get what is intended by the sender. But in many cases, there is an either 'distortion' or 'misunderstanding' in term of message reception and it is due to the "lack of equivalence" Hall (1980), Hall (1993) between the encoder and the decoder. Stuart Hall is critical of the traditional model of communication for being linear and also of another model for having a "lack of structured conception of various moments as a complex of relations" Hall (1980), Hall (1993), and he comes up with a model with four autonomous as well as interdependent components such as production, circulation, use and reproduction. While all the stages are considered important, they need not occur in a subsequent manner and this is pointed out as "[e]ach can constitute its own break or interruption of the 'passage of forms' on whose continuity the flow of effective production (i.e., reproduction) depends" Hall (1980), Hall (1993). In the production stage, i.e., it marks the beginning construction of the message begins, the encoding appears to be a simple phenomenon framed by meanings and ideas and it could reflect the social and political ideologies, beliefs, sentiments, and values. Stuart Hall exposes the dominant role played by the discursive form in the communicative process where encoding and decoding are determinate moments (1980) in which the former begins from the process of message for wider distribution and the latter determinate moment begins with the decoding or interpretation of messages through 'wider levels of the spectrum' (i.e., social, cultural, and political level). As mentioned, the decoding depends on the various factors associated with the decoders as either individuals or communities within a given social setting. In fact, the individuals' decoding is influenced by exposure to external social and cultural influences, educational level, beliefs, sentiments, etc., and therefore, we can understand that decodings need not begin inevitably from encodings. Stuart Hall proposes three positions such as dominant/hegemonic position (consumers or decoders are in a position to understand and accept the actual meaning of the message loaded with the dominant/hegemonic code by the dominants in society), negotiated position (it refers to the consumers or decoders position of accepting or rejecting elements – a way of acknowledging the dominant message but at the same time showing the unwillingness to complete accept the message), and oppositional position (the consumers or decoders are in a position to contest or oppose the meaning that is derived from denotative and connotative meanings of the message). Before closing this discussion on the encoding and decoding processes and moving on for taking a contemporary example for exploration, it is necessary to mention that even though these positions are significant for the understanding of communication as an act that is highly influential and powerful in our daily life, they have not failed to receive criticisms, and some of them provided suggestions to modify the original model, for example, Ross added two steps – 'first distinguishes the graphical model on the basis of typology and second divides the model into ideology version and text-related version' Ross (2011). Thus, as a brief comment, as Julie Martin points out by quoting Hall (1993), 102 that a possibility is in front of the audience for deciphering a message as a personal message which will reflect individuals' own biases and the viewpoints muddy the decoding process Martin (2007). So, the aberrant decoding or aberrant reading Eco (1976) of a visual sign or an encoded message could be understood to have the possibility of interpreting it differently, i.e., not the way that was intended by the sender. But for Fiske (1990), the aberrant decoding occurs in the case of iconic codes, that is, visual messages, and

in this context, he introduces Semiotic democracy to refer to the 'delegation of the production of meanings and pleasures to viewers.' This paper incorporates the ideological elements at both ends of the communication, i.e., encoding and decoding, in order to understand visual signs in the sociocultural settings. As a matter of convenience, and also to use it as in the larger context to understand the cultural role of landscape, this study draws elements from the communication model to treat the landscape as a visual sign with its denotative and connotative meaning at reference points. In treating the landscapes as visual signs, like paintings, this study draws insights from [Hall \(1980\)](#). According to him, "[t]he level of connotation of the visual sign, of its contextual reference and positioning in different discursive fields of meaning and association, is the point where *already coded* signs intersect with the deep semantic codes of a culture and take on additional more active ideological dimensions" [Hall \(1980\)](#), 134.

Even though this study doesn't exclusively focus on visual arts, it draws some insights into which the sacred landscape is approached for the purpose of understanding its communicative value as encoded message. Painting is always considered both as a process or as an act and also as the product or the result, and their transformational relationship could be seen as a virtualized entity to a realized object respectively. It is also a transformation of a canvas or a surface into an object of creativity through the process of painting, and it has emerged as the visual arts with its own tradition and genre. In history, painting in rudimentary form was the precursor for the writing system that had evolved as a way of fulfilling the deficiency of orality that was the chief medium in the early stage of language development. From cave to rock to canvas, the painting tradition has evolved through and along with the development of humanity, for meeting various purposes, and what we encounter in present days is also undergoing the process of change, that is, there is a constant emphasis on the effective communication by the unsatisfied mankind. As of now, the rock art findings of an unspecified animal in the cave of Borneo Island of Indonesia are considered 40,000 years old [Zimmer \(2018\)](#), [Aubert et al. \(2018\)](#) quoted in [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Painting](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Painting)) as (years of long and continuous history) paintings. Even though it is understood in a singular term, the paintings under the broader category of visual arts accommodate various elements including drawing, composition, gesture, narration, and abstraction, they are understood differently depending on the mode of presentation – naturalistic, representational, abstract, symbolic, photographic, narrative, emotive and political. Nineteenth and twentieth centuries are associated with visual art tradition on the basis of representational value of the contents such as Impressionism, Cubism Dadaism, etc. However, modern, and contemporary painting traditions had challenged the Renaissance movement and also, they focused on concept, i.e., a shift away from their historical value of craft and documentation. Here, the usage of media is significant in categorizing the paintings and different styles that emerged independently are grouped together for understanding them as types, and thus, the landscape paintings emerged as representational type. The landscape is an important segment both in visual arts (including paintings) and photography and both landscape and sky are occupying almost all the painting surfaces. Irrespective of differences, people are fond of landscapes, which is evidenced not only by their visits without different purposes, but also by their love for landscape paintings, landscape photography, eco-art, or environment art.

The transformation from lands to landscape-to-landscape painting or landscape art reflects the trajectory of people's orientation towards nature and their eternal relationship, and the bond between the land and its people has always been reflected not only in their cultural expressions including folklore and creative

cultural expressions but also in their socio-cultural and spiritual life which is full of sentiments, customs, beliefs, and symbolic manifestations. The relationship between the people and their land is not merely in terms of existential conditions rather it is seen at the level of symbolic representation of identity and belongingness. And, it is to say that human societies and their cultural patterns cannot be understood in isolation, that is, their interconnectedness with their geography or physical settings has shaped each other. Geography does not merely offer a substratum for the people to survive, but it provides a platform, or it becomes a base on which the whole cultural system of the people is built. The environment is even perceived as an influential factor and it strongly conditions human behaviour, thus, forcing people to believe through human activity the nature of geography can be understood and vice versa. Richard Hartshorne says that “geography is a science that interprets the realities of areal differentiation of the world as they are found, not only in terms of the differences in certain things from place to place but also in terms of the total combination of phenomena in each place, different from those at every other place” [Hartshorne \(1939/1976\)](#), quoted in [www.britannica.com/science/geography/Physical-geography-and-physical-systems](http://www.britannica.com/science/geography/Physical-geography-and-physical-systems)). Sidney William Wooldridge says that “to gather up the disparate strands of the systematic studies, the geographical aspects of other disciplines, into a coherent and focused unity, to see nature and nurture, physique and personality as closely related and interdependent elements in specific regions” [Wooldridge \(1956/1969\)](#), Quoted by Ron Johnston in Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/science/geography/The-geography-of-contemporary-geography>). Another definition mentions that “Geography, [S]cience of the Earth’s surface, which describes and analyzes the spatial variations in physical, biological, and human phenomena that occur on the surface of the globe and treats their interrelationships and their significant regional patterns. Once associated entirely with mapping and the exploration of the Earth, the field today is wide-ranging, and geographers use a variety of methods and techniques drawn from numerous disciplines. Subfields of geography include physical, human, and regional geography, which may range in scale from worldwide to a continent, a country, or a city” [Britannica \(2021\)](#), 1. But the emergence of cultural geography opens up the ways to “relate to the spaces and places where they originate and then travel as people continually move across various areas” [Briney \(2020\)](#), 1. Cultural geography takes up cultural phenomena that “include language, religion, different economic and governmental structures, art, music, and other cultural aspects that explain how and/or why people function as they do in the areas in which they live” [Briney \(2019\)](#), 1. Thus, the cultural landscape that integrates culture into the physical environment clarifies the interrelationship between landscape, culture, and human behaviour. And this relationship can be seen as and furnished as an impact that happens at a mutual and reciprocal level, i.e., human on nature on the one hand and nature on the human on the other hand, and finally, it affects how human perceives their environment [Briney \(2019\)](#), 1. And it necessitates qualitative studies integrating various disciplines that fall under humanities and social sciences. Finally, it is the landscape that decides the commonality as well as the variations either in terms of language, culture, religion, human behaviour, race, ethnicity, etc. While land becomes a landscape seeing in terms of its physical and environmental characteristics, from ancient to the modern, the environment is conditioned by a human culture that is based on the certain philosophy and religion of each civilization [Jellicoe and Susan \(1995\)](#), and this reciprocal relationship is eternally continued and expressed in the daily life of people in terms of folklore and other



cultural creative expressions as well as in the form of visiting landscapes, producing narratives and other stories on landscapes, displaying landscape arts (also known as eco art or environmental art or eco-art), and finally assigning a supernatural and spiritual value to the landscapes. Here, in all these examples, the landscape whether seen through the framework of narratives or folklore or landscape paintings or landscape photography or through social customs and beliefs including supernatural entities and spiritual beings – is an encoder to participate in an eternal and reciprocal communication with the members of the community to which the landscape belongs. As a matter of convenience, all these manifestations are treated as visual arts to employ semiotics tools to understand their signifying presence as well as signifying performance, and the communication theory becomes a perspective to explore the reciprocal relationship between the landscape and the people, and the spiritual connection people have with the landscape is found to be materialized through an important process which is being given highlight to explore contemporary examples from the proposed area. A brief discussion on the perspective of visual semiotics in handling the landscape as a visual art becomes inevitable here.

Landscape paintings as a category, or as a type, occupies a significant place within the painting tradition which has emerged as an independent language with its own grammar that can be treated on par with or the same as the language of photography. Both cases are the practices of the creation of images that are seen in the case of photography and are experienced in the case of landscape paintings. There are procedures to be followed meticulously in order to produce durable and effective images that can be enjoyed by the viewers. The objectivity of both landscape paintings and photography is to present the world as perceived by the self, that is, the products are becoming the objects of knowledge and eventually get into the power structure. Both of them are not innocent in representing since the photographers and artists include and exclude some of the elements to give an orientation to the viewers to get what they are supposed to get as intended. For example, the frame is introduced in order to restrict and confine the viewers not to try of seeking anything beyond the frame which is an indicator of the separation from the whole as well as to show the continuity that is beyond the frame. They produce static images that are the reflection of the moment or belonging to a particular (socio-cultural) context, and these frozen images – as a subjective form of representations – have elements that make to project these images as ‘simulacra’ in terms of [Baudrillard \(1984\)](#), that is, the copies without originals. Sontag rightly points out the concern that by taking photographs [or making a painting], we transform the objective world including people into objects to be symbolically possessed’, produced multiple copies and distributed. And the ability of the photographer to produce censored images, Sontag mentions that it means that the person is having the ability to construct [his or her own] reality (1977). When photographs and paintings become images, the mode of representation through signs is becoming increasingly empty of meaning, and thus considering that the images are four phases for Baudrillard, ‘a basic reality is reflected; a basic reality is masked and perverted; the basic reality’s absence is masked; and by establishing no relation with any reality, becomes the pure simulacrum of its own’ [Baudrillard \(1988\)](#), 170, quoted in [Chandler \(2002\)](#), 81. When speech and writing were created, as Baudrillard argued, the signs had no problem in pointing to “material” or “social reality”, and thus, the erosion of bond between a signifier and a signified becomes a reality [Baudrillard \(1988\)](#), quoted in [Chandler \(2002\)](#), 81. Here, the sign becomes a significant component in this paper as it helps to understand the various elements that function independently and interconnectedly to make things meaningful in

social life. The signs are having a 'stands for' relationship in everyday speech, that is, people use something to 'stand for' something else. A sign could be in the form of a word, image, sound, gesture or object, and thus, for Umberto Eco "semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign" [Eco \(1976\)](#), 7, for Ferdinand de Saussure, it [semiology not semiotics] is "a science *which studies the role of signs as part of social life*" and "[i]t would investigate the nature of signs and the laws governing them" [Saussure \(1983\)](#), 15-16, for Charles Sanders Peirce, 'a sign is founded on logic, or logic is ... only another name for semiotic, doctrine of signs' and of course, for Roman Jakobson 'language is ... a purely semiotic system' (1968: 703, cf. [Chandler \(2002\)](#), 2-5. The interesting aspect of a linguistic sign which is the combination of a signifier ('sign vehicle'/'*signifiant*') and signified ('its message'/'*signifié*') as per the dyadic model as proposed by Saussure is that it does not reflect a relationship between 'a name' and 'a thing', rather it is between "a sound pattern" (i.e., 'what the sound produces psychological impression on the hearer') and "a concept" [Saussure \(1983\)](#), 66, cf. [Chandler \(2002\)](#), 14.

[Signification, i.e., the outcome of the bond between a signifier and a signified, indicates two types of the relationship of existence from signifier to the signified on the one hand and the signified to the signifier on the other hand. It is to be noted that through the iconic ('qualitative' in nature for Peirce), symbolic ('conventional and law-like' for Peirce) and indexical ('existential or physical' for Peirce) relationship between the signifier and signified, there are instances in social life that show the presence of multiple signifiers with a single signified on the one hand and a single signifier has multiple signifieds. Following Saussure who focused on linguistic signs and treated signifier as a sound pattern and signified as a mental construct (or sound and thought), (it is as "a mental image, a concept and a psychological reality" for [Eco \(1976\)](#)), and also considered writing as 'a sign of a sign', this paper deals with the visual sign which is iconic and simultaneously symbolic. For Saussure, signs that belong to an abstract system establish meaning through their structural and relational relationships than the referential relationship, and this systematic relation between signifier and signified helps to understand that their relationship is not a derivative of 'inherent features from signifiers, or having reference to the material things' [Chandler \(2002\)](#), 18. On the establishment of reality, a sign does not merely function by having a 'stands for' with real world, but by belonging to the sign system, i.e., that is, within the whole system of signs, a sign reflects its interrelations with other signs within the system by which all are mutually interdependent. In other words, a sign gets its value and is materialized by establishing its relationship with different signs from the system, and it means that a sign does not hold the sign value outside the system that guarantees the meaningful existence of the sign. Further, the relationship between each sign within a system is having two-fold manifestations – either by differentiation or by opposition, as Saussure points out "[i]n a language, as in every other semiological system, what distinguishes a sign is what constitutes it" [Saussure \(1983\)](#), 119. For Saussure, "concepts . . . are defined not positively, in terms of their content, but negatively by contrast with other items in the same system. What characterizes each most exactly is being whatever the others are not" [Saussure \(1983\)](#), 115. And another striking feature of the sign is the arbitrariness of a sign, that is, for Saussure, "there is no necessary, intrinsic, direct or inevitable relationship between the signifier and the signified" [Saussure \(1983\)](#), 67, 78. In other words, "there is no inherent, essential, transparent, self-evident or natural connection between the signifier and the signified – between the sound of a word and the concept to which it refers" [Saussure \(1983\)](#), 67, 68–9, 76, 111, 117. Sign's arbitrariness is

advantageous for the fact that the signifier implies the presence of or determines the existence of the signified, and it is considered as a radical concept since language autonomy is established in connection with the reality, and thus to support the claim that reality is not reflected but constructed by language Chandler (2002), 25. However, through discussions it is agreed with the introduction of distinction between *degrees* of arbitrariness that the a sign is not absolutely arbitrary, rather it is relatively arbitrary, because a sign is determined not *extralinguistically* but *intralinguistically* – that is, a (linguistic) sign is a meaningful combination of existing signs and it is not founded on the irrational principle rather on the rationality it' Chandler (2002), 26. However, the historical existence of sign, as pointed out by Lévi-Strauss (1972), 91, an arbitrary a priori that becomes an arbitrary a posteriori, cannot be changed arbitrarily. Since a sign is a part of or exists in social life or a part of social use, it naturally acquires a sense of history and context that the members of the community or the sign users are aware of it. That is the reason that as cautioned by Saussure, Importantly, as Chandler noted that Saussure cautions that “the individual has no power to alter a sign in any respect once it has become established in the linguistic community” Saussure (1983), 68, cf. Chandler (2002), 27. There is no doubt that linguists agree that language is fundamental, and “language is central and most important all human semiotic systems” Jakobson (1971), 455, cf. Chandler (2002), 5. It clarifies that the language is already there for the users on a non-negotiable ‘contract’ so that the members don’t need to create the system for themselves and also to develop the tendency to accept this ontological arbitrariness as natural Saussure (1983), 14, 71, Chandler (2002), 28. However, the discussions on the nature of arbitrariness of sign yielded that semioticians insist that because of the conventional nature of signs, one has to learn the socio-cultural conventions. Culler pointed out that ‘from the naturalness of the existence sign for the user must not create assumption that the intrinsic meaning of the signs requires no explanation’ Culler (1975), 5, cf. Chandler (2002), 28. [The father of pragmatism, and also coined the term Semiotics, along with proposing the triadic model of sign in 1903, Charles Sanders Peirce mentions that “A Sign, or Representamen, is a First which stands in such a genuine triadic relation to a Second, called its Object, as to be capable of determining a Third, called its Interpretant, to assume the same triadic relation to its Object in which it stands itself to the same Object. The triadic relation is genuine, that is its three members are bound together by it in a way that does not consist in any complexus of dyadic relations” Peirce (1931-1958), 2-274, cf. Robert (2012), <https://arisbe.sitehost.iu.edu/rsources/76DEFS/76defs.HTM>). Through the relationship between representamen (signifier), interpretant (signified) and objects (referent), Peirce explained the broader categories of signs in terms of qualitative (iconic), existential or physical (indexical) and conventional or law-like (symbolic), and however, Peircean notion of sign and his logical explanations can be found here subtly guided to reach our objective.]

Double articulation or ‘duality of patterning’ that is associated with language is being discussed by semioticians to know their presence in other semiotic systems. For Susanne Langer, visual media utilizes different units and elements as to make them just as capable of articulation, but they do not have independent meaningful units like language which is having vocabularies Langer (1951), 86-87, Chandler (2002), 6-7. Language becomes an important element for human communication, and it is, for Émile Benveniste, “the interpreting system of all other systems, linguistic and non-linguistic” Benveniste (1971), 239 and for Lévi-Strauss, “language is the semiotic system *par excellence*; it cannot but signify, and exists only through signification” Lévi-Strauss (1972), 48, cf. Chandler (2002), 5-6.

The 'design feature' Hockett (1958) is "an essential and defining feature of language" Hjelmslev (1961) and it becomes "essential for making a language" which is composed of signifiers, which "at the same time, signify nothing" Jakobson (1971), 230, cf. Chandler (2002), 6. However, the visual sign has different stories altogether and its basic elements cannot be compared with that of language. That is, the techniques used for picturing objects are not having the properties of elements that constitute a language, and it does not make the visual signs as simple as possible because they are complex and subtle. Comparing a visual sign with a linguistic sign, as warned by Langer, linguistic model cannot be imposed over model of other media for the simple reason that articulations of both of them are governed by different laws, and for instance, language has things to be misconceived, whereas visual signs resist translation Langer (1951), cf. Chandler (2002), 7. Further, a language sign is situated within the influential model of *langue* (language) and *parole* (speech), in which the former helps us to understand the rules and conventions that are free from the influence of individual users, and thus an instance is the product due to the existence of the former. A visual sign can also be seen with the help of this influential model as an instance of the underlying structure that guides the whole process of its making. The production of the visual sign as an instance is conditioned and constrained by the underlying system. Thus, so far, the visual sign is concerned, as it is referred to in this study, the *langue* is lying parallel to reality itself and it proceeds from Gestalt. However, in this study visual sign has been treated both synchronically and diachronically (the latter is not given prominence by Saussure while handling the sign), and also this study ignores the structuralists' dichotomy of usage and system, or process and product, or subject and structure, to understand the possibility of changes in the structure over a period of time and also to stress the point, as suggested by Voloshinov "[t]he sign is part of organized social intercourse and cannot exist, as such, outside it, reverting to a mere physical artifact" Voloshinov (1973), 21, cf. Chandler (2002), 9. Here the visual sign is seen in the social context in which it is produced and by adopting this study focuses on the historicity that is inherently associated with the synchronic perspective. In the synchronic relationship, one could see the creation of a signifier from the signified of the previous sign and it can be repeated at the third level too. We could see here two process one is signification, and another is the value; while the former is due to the function of a sign and the later is conditioned by a sign's relationship with other sign within a whole system" Saussure (1983), 112-113, cf. Chandler (2002), 20.

This brief discussion on the nature of signs and their role in social life enables us to understand landscape through the lens of visual art, particularly of photography, and it is an advantageous task in making or perceiving landscape as a photograph for treating it as an encoded message that is in front of people for the purpose of decoding as part of social commitment. Although the presence of aesthetic elements makes photography as art and in other words, photography can be turned into fine art. If painting is the imitation of what is perceptually or conceptually experienced, then photography is a way of imitating paintings, and both the process are modes of visualization of what is internalized through experiences. This visualization has its own purpose either to eternally satisfy what is experienced on the one hand and on the other hand, to create the same effect on the viewers by which the painting participates in the communication process. To look beyond the criticism that photography as a process by which an image is produced mechanically, one could see that there are elements that make photography have a common grammar or treat it as a language of photography. That is, there are components that are added to give the readers different orientations

towards meaning productions, and so, photography is not an innocent representation of reality – aesthetics codes are also treated similarly to the basic element of photography. There are elements that make us perceive something as a painting or a photograph and there are also elements that make them either unique and /or differentiate one from the other. [Arthur] Clive [Heward] Bell mentions that “there must be someone quality without which a work of art cannot exist; possessing which, in the least degree, no work is altogether worthless. What is this quality? What quality is shared by all objects that provoke our aesthetic emotions? [...] Only one answer seems possible – significant form. In each, lines and colors combined in a particular way, certain forms, and relations of forms, stir our aesthetic emotions. These relations and combinations of lines and colors, these aesthetically moving forms, I call "Significant Form"; and "Significant form" is the one quality common to all works of visual art” Bell (2015/1914), 2). Both paintings and photography are not any more separate entities, and there is an overlapping aspect of them being practiced in the last five decades. On this background, Wikipedia writes that “Joseph H. Neumann in 1974 concluded the separation of the painterly background and the photographic layer by showing the picture elements in a symbiosis that had never existed before, as an unmistakable unique specimen, in a simultaneous painterly and at the same time real photographic perspective, using lenses, within a photographic layer, united in colors and shapes” ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Photography#cite\\_note-Sontag-67](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Photography#cite_note-Sontag-67)). Therefore, the landscape is considered as the convergence of visual representation combining painting and photography and it becomes the subject of discussion for its significant role in the social life of people through the meaning-making process involving signs. The symbolism involved in the landscape (synonymously used here for landscape photography, landscape paintings or perceptual framing of the landscape) makes it connotatively qualify for the semiotics study of the interplay of signs that are more iconic than conventional or law-like. The landscape that appears as such can denotatively convey its natural properties and or what is “there” – it is clear, particularly for the ‘etic’ view. The landscape is seen in dichotomy – denotative and connotative; signified and referent; signifier and signified; iconic and indexical Scott (1999), 355; coded and encoded; and emic view and etic view. In which the literal meaning associated with the landscape is actually a part of its denotative as well as indexical, and the etic view can directly refer to it. However, by ignoring the literal representation and denotative meanings, this paper focuses on the emic view of the landscape, i.e., what, and how it appears to the community living in the locality through its connotative and iconic functions. Despite the arbitrariness associated with the sign by Saussure, the community members have to traditionally train themselves to understand the meanings based on the rules or conventions people or through familiarizing with the sign systems, and also the connotative draws their familiarity with the constitution of the signifier through the assemblage of multiple elements, here the examples this paper deals with have a different mode of manifestation to establish the signifying aspect of the landscape. The process which is dealt with in detail intertwines the landscape through what actually appears, and the immediate cultural meaning and it helps us to give priority to what is implied by the landscape. Further, the process that brings together the coded iconic message and noncoded iconic message, to borrow insights from Roland Barthes, who is ‘one of the first people to study the semiotics of images’ with the suggestion of Timothy Borchers (2006), 271, will explore not only the what are the identifiable objects through the ‘literal’ denotation but also the story the landscape portrays which is easily understood through its clear relationship that is encoded and understandable by the community members through or guided by the emic perspective.

As an encoded message, the landscape becomes a part of visual communication which has emerged as an integrated system for conveying ideas and information with the help of not only signs but also other elements. Although visual communication is now in an advanced stage with the incorporation of advanced technological development and innovation, it is being with the humans of development by incorporating modern elements and advanced characteristics, since prehistoric times, it is part of human communication Eddy (2020), 397-401. The purpose of visual communication, like oral communication or any other modes available, is to communicate a message, but “effectively” by employing a collection of resources that can be best known as textual and graphics/images/animated. The development in visual communication seems advantageous, it is the fact that it has shaped the way we see the world, as Aldous Huxley puts it “the more you see, the more you know.” It is obvious that the interpretation of images is subjective, and thus, it requires more than one analytical tool to decipher the depth of meaning, and it is essential when images are seen as having multiple meanings. According to Paul Martin Lester, there are six perspectives available for analyzing images and they are personal perspective (depends on personal thoughts and sometimes having conflicts with cultural values), historical perspective (arising out of historical change in the use of media), technical perspective (viewing images influenced by elements that are the result of technical advancement ), ethical perspective (creator, viewer and the image are viewed with moral and ethical lens), cultural perspective and critical perspective (. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Visual\\_communication#cite\\_note-2](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Visual_communication#cite_note-2)).

The transformation of landscape in the medium of painting and photography draws our attention as both of them are seen with different attributes; while paintings are considered more artistic and appealing with high value when displayed in the gallery, the photographs considered a close reflection of the landscape are treated as less significant. However, outside the natural language, the ‘language of photography’ as one of the forms of communication has been explored by semiotic studies which radically transformed the orientation towards the theory of photography Burgin (1982), 143. Semiotics becomes a viable tool that facilitates the analogy between the natural language and visual languages, and it points at the nature of denotative and connotative codes found in the visual image in which while the former denotes the object in the world and the latter points to the secondary system of meanings by making difference but adjacent photographs. ‘Photograph is known for having a heterogeneous complex of codes and thus, plurality of codes present enables the photograph to signify, and they vary from image to image’ Burgin (1982), 143. The photographs are seldom seen without a caption or a title, and it is common to know that a long text is associated with the photographs. Similarly, photographs are having text that is known as “photographic discourse” which, like other discourse, engages itself beyond the “photographic text” to reflect the intertextuality within “a particular cultural and historical conjuncture” Burgin (1982), 144. It is clear that as much we speak, the language speak about us, and Victor Burgin mentions that “[a]ll meaning, across all social institutions [...] is articulated within a network of *differences*, the play of presence and absence of conventional significant features which linguistics has demonstrated to be a founding attribute of language” Burgin (1982), 145. On the nature of signifying system associated with photography, by comparing it with the classical painting, Victor Burgin writes that “at once depicts a scene *and the gaze of the spectator*, an object *and a viewing subject*” Burgin (1982), 146. Photograph is having a structure for representation which is associated with ideology, and through its implication the

photograph can reproduce the ideology. It indicates that unlike textual system, the viewer is compelled to take the offer presented by the photograph without giving opportunity to refuse. He says further that “the characteristics of the photographic apparatus position the subject in such a way that the object photographed serves to conceal the textuality of the photograph itself – substituting passive receptivity for active (critical) *reading*” [Burgin \(1982\)](#), 146. When confronted with an untitled (i.e., puzzled one) image, and the moment we are able to understand what is all about, then as Victor Burgin clarifies that “the photograph is instantly transformed for us – no longer a confusing conglomerate of light and dark tones, of uncertain edges and ambivalent volumes, it now shows a ‘thing’ which we invest with a full identity, a *being*” [Burgin \(1982\)](#), 146-147.

As mentioned, landscape [as a photograph] as a visual image [representation] involves in communication and this communication becomes specific because, unlike photography, communication is possible through the act of seeing by which the subject interacts with the photograph, here the communication is through reciprocity between the viewer and the landscape. In the case of the former, i.e., photograph, there is an involvement of the passive and one-side communication from the photograph in which the viewer is loaded with the responsibility to decode the meaning/message that is encoded in it with the help of an assemblage of signs. And, interestingly, and in general understanding, photograph functions as the window to reality and/or represents social reality. Thus, photograph establishes its permanence since it is produced on a surface with the help of mechanical device [Berger \(1998\)](#), and thus, it is treated as a “perfect representation of authenticity” as well as an effective medium for communication for expressing emotions, sentiments, culture, traditions, beliefs, knowledge, etc. [Barret \(2000\)](#), irrespective of the fact that a photograph can be subjected to multiple interpretation. In fact, due to its function of representing or reflecting the social reality, it is even compared with language, and the popular saying is that “One Picture is Worth a Thousand Words” ([Barret \(2000\)](#), cf. [Adzrool Idzwan et al. \(2010\)](#), *San Antonio Light*. Jan. 10, 1918: 6, cf. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A\\_picture\\_is\\_worth\\_a\\_thousand\\_words#cite\\_note-5](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_picture_is_worth_a_thousand_words#cite_note-5)). The iconic quality of the visual image promises to establish a resemblance by which assures its reliability or at least a realistic aspect to communication. Capturing a photograph implies that we freeze a time to be dislocated along with the dislocation of space present in the picture- for the purpose of giving knowledge and interest about the geography and the history [Barret \(2000\)](#). The photograph is a semiotic structure that leaves chances for interpretations by having multiple signifiers and also itself becoming a signifier. As a signifier consisting of many signifiers within the frame captured in time and space, it does not reflect innocence, and is also not free from prejudices, rather we tend to assume its innocence while seeing the image. As far as the photography is concerned, ‘eye’ plays an inevitable role, and whosoever it may be here eye cannot be seen as innocent, because its ancientness is seen as it is obsessed not only with the past but also with the old. It does not mean that eyes are not from any new influences. Further, seems to be independent, eye is part of a complex system and thus, it cannot be free from any regulation based on need and prejudice [Goodman \(1976\)](#), 7. However, the nature of the photographer’s eye does not merely see through the device and captures what it wanted, as Nelson Goodman mentions that “it selects, rejects, organizes, discriminates, associates, classified, analyzes, and constructs. It does not so much mirror as take and make; and what it takes and makes it sees not bare, as items without attributes, but as things, as food, as people, as enemies, as stars, as weapons” [Goodman \(1976\)](#), cf. [Adzrool Idzwan et al. \(2010\)](#), 1351. Similarly, as Barret points

out, photography has different functions, and when skilful artists take or make or construct photographs, they can be subjected to analysis, interpretation, and deconstruction apart from reading and explain them for the purpose of giving voice to the voice less signs, i.e., photographs Barret (2000). However, the move from photography to landscape gives an advantage in adding socio-cultural and spiritual dimension to the decoding process which is seen as simultaneous with the encoding process with reference to the given example, and also, the move is to explore the performativity of the landscape in the communication activity. Perceiving landscape as the source of performance utterance (or as speech act), following J.L. Austin, it is convenient since it helps us understanding the events and their relations that are produced by the speech acts in the world, and it is also advantageous here for comprehending the complex relationship that exists between the uttered, social situation and the impact on the listener or community members. It also helps to understand how the individual's identity is constituted.

Performativity as a notion is used here to highlight the fact that languages, gestures, and all forms of social signs Butler (1990), 270 cannot be taken for granted since they are constantly involved in the construction of social reality as an illusion. The illocutionary speech act as an example of a speech act needs to be understood at a different level in order to understand the landscape as a disseminating entity which is capable of producing speech acts in symbolic forms that actually do than represent something. A performative within the speech act theory is a discursive practice Butler (1993), 13 and given here as example, the landscape participates to produce within the religious conventions established by the community to shape and mould the behaviour of the present society in daily life. Through constant citation and repetition, and thus as performance, can mention the convention of religious constructions in the enactment or dissemination, or "pronouncement" from the much-quoted example. Here in the example, the landscape becomes the authority to produce constant speech acts in which people participate every day through which reality is constructed and created and it is justified and legitimized through endlessly citing and repeating the ideologies and conventions from the social world. So, what is constructed in the performative act of speaking is being incorporated as reality in the social world, but this convention of the act of performance is taken as natural and necessary for the existence of the community. Here, the landscape differentiates itself from photographs in order to constantly produce performative speech acts by citing or repeating the conventions, the community members develop a kind of subjectivity that is almost constructed through speech acts. Thus, a feeling of subjectivity is created for communities found in the locality, as the two examples show, though it appears as natural, is constructed, and therefore, their 'independent and self-willed' subjectivity as the source of their actions is understood as a "retroactive construction" Butler (1990), 279. With insight from Butler, it is possible to mention that as performance (i.e., performative), to understand broadly, the landscape constructs the social narrative of its own psychological interiority. Though it appears as if it were there, it is constructed on an ideological basis through the citation and repletion of conventions collectively by the community members but mediated through the landscape. It is historical in the sense that the enactment of these conventions through the mediation of the landscape is there for many generations, that is, the enactments were there before the community members of the present generations the present. At this stage, the landscape that produces utterances through the symbolic manifestation and mediation displays its performance which is almost a performance to transmit the encoded message over to the community members as



the audience who need active persuasion in order to decode what is encoded. Moreover, performatives are then, as Butler mentions, “inserted in a citational chain, and that means that the temporal conditions for making the speech act precede and exceed the momentary occasion of its enunciation” [Butler \(2015\)](#), 176. Therefore, people do not internalize laws, rather, incorporate them and to result in the consequences that how bodies function as both as substratum laws to operate on and also medium through the laws can be mediated. [Butler \(1990\)](#), 134-5. For Butler, performativity has three uses: ‘to counter ‘positivism’, to counter ‘metaphysical presumption’ on ‘culturally constructed categories’ and to pay attention to different ‘mechanisms’ of those ‘construction’, and to articulate what produces ontological effects or assumptions of things that constitute reality’ [Butler \(2010\)](#).

It is to conclude the discussion on the theoretical framework of the nature of performativity by mentioning that when the landscape involves communication within a context that supports a range of meanings, it produces text that interacts with other texts to participate within a discourse. The notion of performativity is employed here to highlight the point that it has to do with repetition and very often the repetition with social conventions which is an important factor for binding individuals with their landscape and also with their community members. Here, Derrida’s notion of sign’s ‘iterability’ or ‘citationality’ finds to be significant here. For him, every sign can be cited and also it can break away from its context and can take up new context – all things can happen with the addition of quotation marks. This illimitable use in new context shows, and the mark in the citationality or iterability is not an accident or anomaly, and it is not even to function as “normal” [Derrida \(1988\)](#), 12. It is also be noted that as Butler’s later works highlighted, bodies “speak” without uttering and it is insightful for understanding the symbolic function of nature of the landscape, as discussed in the forthcoming pages. Conceptualizing landscape in terms of speech, as understood by Dell Hymes in bipartite structure with “means of speech” on the one hand and “speech economy” on the other hand, is advantageous and it necessitates the importance of context as a speech cannot happen in a vacuum. For Hymes, speech economy is consisting of following three components: “speech events, constituent factors, and the functions of speech.” And moreover, similarly, for Hymes, a speech event is having seven etic components or factors: ‘sender’ (or ‘addresser’), ‘receiver’ (or ‘addressee’), ‘message form’, ‘channel’, ‘code’, ‘topic’ and ‘setting’ (scene, situation). There are also function associated with the each one such as ‘expressive’ (‘emotive’), ‘directive’ (‘conative’, ‘pragmatic’, ‘rhetorical’, ‘persuasive’), ‘poetic’, ‘contact’, ‘metalinguistic’, ‘referential’, and ‘contextual’ (‘situational’) [Hymes \(1981\)](#), cf. [Claus and Frank \(1991\)](#), 181, cf. [Kumar \(2021\)](#), 125. Indeed, with these elements one can explain the complex relationship that exists between the landscape and the community members. Through the presence and constant interaction with the community members, the landscape elevates itself from the level of photographs; and we are clear with the concept of performativity which enables a language to perform certain social actions and to make the effect of change. The applicability of the concept is not an unknown subject because many fields within humanities and social sciences such as anthropology, gender studies, law, performance studies, linguistics, history, philosophy, etc., have already proved that the concept is having its applicability.

Drawing insights from the above discussion, two specific instances of landscape as tangible heritage are presented in the forthcoming pages, and the focus is on contextualizing landscapes within the broader spectrum of cultural geography to highlight the eternal bond between people and their landscape facilitated and

mediated through the tendency of pareidolia which is considered as different from personification and anthropomorphism. Anthropomorphism is defined as a human psychological tendency for attributing human characters, traits, intensions, emotions, etc., to non-human entities' and whereas, personification is understood as the tendency process in which human form as well as characteristics are attributed to abstract concepts (namely, seasons, weathers, nationals, emotions, etc.). And the existence of these tendencies can be seen having roots in ancient period and that are being evidenced from different stories, and other artistic procedures, and also in other texts, media, and channels, art gallery, mascots, science, computing, psychology, etc. Apart from literature and artwork, anthropomorphism is closely associated with religion and mythology where divine beings are perceived as they are having human form, or in other words, there is a perception of human quality or characteristics on the divine beings. ([wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthropomorphism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthropomorphism)). Interestingly, in most of the mythologies, the divine forms are being represented as local deities with qualities and forms that are human in nature, and here the divine beings or local deities display behaviours that are human. Similarly, specific human concepts or qualities, such as strength and weakness, for example, are also represented by anthropomorphic deities with human forms. However, the examples that are here for discussion are related to the concept of pareidolia, a perception that is quite different from both anthropomorphism and personification in terms of form, qualities and behaviour.

Pareidolia is another interesting human tendency people have as part of their socio-cultural life to have a "nebulous stimulus" or an innate tendency so that people can impose a "meaningful" visual "interpretation" to see a pattern of object – usually images of full objects or parts of the objects like face. The German word *Paredolie* was first used in 1866 in the article "Die Sinnesdelirien" by a German Psychiatrist Karl Ludwig Kahlbaum. While its title of the article was literally read as 'on delusion of the senses', the word was translated into English as Pareidolia, in the following year when the same paper was reviewed for *The Journal of Mental Science* (Vol. 13). The word is used with synonymous terms such as "changing hallucination, partial hallucination, and perception of secondary images" [Sibbald \(1867\), 238](#) cf. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pareidolia>), etc. For Carl Sagan, because of the tendency of pareidolia, random images are interpreted as human faces [Sagan \(1995\)](#). The effect of pareidolia is mentioned in the 2009 magnetoencephalography study shows that the pareidolia impact could be seen from the early activation of fusiform face area than the common objects that do not evoke any activation. For Hadjikhani et al., this face perception is a "relatively early process of cognitive interpretation phenomenon" [Hadjikhani et al. \(2009\), 403–07](#), cf. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pareidolia>) and further, according to Voss et al. quoting the study on the "functional magnetic resonance imaging" conducted in the year 2011, "repeated presentation of novel visual shapes that were interpreted as meaningful led to decreased fMRI responses for real objects, that the interpretation of ambiguous stimuli depends upon processes similar to those elicited by known objects" [Voss et al. \(2012\), 2354–64](#), <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pareidolia>). It is noted that in the cognitive process, the "face-like" object alerts the observers' emotional state as well as their identity well before the information is received by conscious mind. (This robust and subtle capability of quickly identifying the mental state is hypothesized as the result of natural selection that provides an individual opportunity to act, for example, when facing threatening, 'to flee or attack preemptively' [Svoboda \(2007\)](#), cf. Wikipedia on Pareidolia)), and moreover, it "functions to determine the demeanor of wildlife" [Tierney \(2015\)](#), cf.

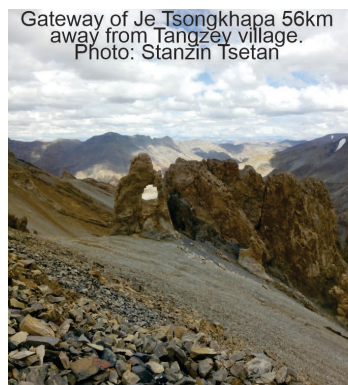
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pareidolia>). The term (pareidolia) is found commonly in artistic tradition, particularly, as [Raber \(2018\), 81-2](#), cf. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pareidolia>) mentions, the renaissance artists often reflected the pareidolia images of human faces on objects or clouds. Here, to quote Leonardo da Vinci who writes that “[i]f you look at any walls spotted with various stains or with a mixture of different kinds of stones, if you are about to invent some scene you will be able to see in it a resemblance to various different landscapes adorned with mountains, rivers, rocks, trees, plains, wide valleys, and various groups of hills. You will also be able to see divers combats and figures in quick movement, and strange expressions of faces, and outlandish costumes, and an infinite number of things which you can then reduce into separate and well-conceived forms” [Da Vinci \(1923\)](#), cf. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pareidolia>). Salvado Dali, the Surrealist artist is known for intentionally using the pareidolia to produce hidden faces (cf. Wikipedia on Pareidolia). Pareidolia is not an uncommon phenomenon in religion because there are instances of perception of the faces of religious figures such as Jesus [Zusne and Jones \(1989\), 77-79](#), cf. Wikipedia on Pareidolia), the Virgin Mary [Schweber \(2012\), 16](#), cf. Wikipedia on Pareidolia), the word Allah [Ibrahim \(2011\)](#) cf. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pareidolia>), “Monkey god” (on a tree in Singapore in 2007, cf. Wikipedia on Pareidolia) [Ng \(2007\), 12-13](#), cf. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pareidolia>) imageries and themes. And there are other instances of the pareidolia appearance: the Virgin Mary on a grilled cheese sandwich ([BBC \(2004\)](#), cf. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pareidolia>); Satan face in the smoke clouds emerged during the attack on the World Trade Centre [Emery \(2018\)](#), cf. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pareidolia>); face appearance of Jesus in the flame of fire at Notre Dame Cathedral [Moye \(2019\)](#), cf. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pareidolia>); etc. while these instances are having momentary appearances, the examples in hand are seen as permanent and they conventionally accepted and agreed upon by the community members in the locations.

#### 4. THE SACRED LANDSCAPES AND THE EXAMPLES OF PAREIDOLIA

The sacred landscapes of Je Tsongkhapa and Gonbo Rangjon contribute to the ecosystem and natural harmony around the Lungnak Valley in Zangskar in the Union Territory of Ladakh. Zangskar (also known as Zangskar valley) is situated in the southern part of Ladakh and it is considered the remotest region in the area of Ladakh. Known for having been treated as a mystic, the landscapes in the Zangskar that attract people from across the globe, are considered not only as the point of confluence but also an interface for various elements of culture and nature; intangible and intangible; and cultural and biological diversities; etc – which eventually become part of the identity of the landscape as well as of the people. The sacred landscapes found in this region play a significant role not only in the fulfilment of their spiritual requirements but also help the people to preserve their nature through their constant interaction with the landscape, or environment which shows another dimension of the role of religions in the modern and globalization era. The presence of sacred landscape could be seen being reflected in the socio-cultural life of the people which is highly moulded and patterned for a smooth and harmonious life as they are capacitated and inculcated with a deep sense of ethics guided by the symbolic guidance extended by these landscapes in response to their devotion and reverence. Zangskar is a Tehsil of the Kargil district, and Padum, the former capital of Zangskar, is the administrative centre. (Historically speaking,

together with Ladakh, Zangskar was briefly part of the Guge Kingdom of Western Tibet during the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD.). Tangzey is a small village located 100 kilometres away from Padum which is the main town in Zangskar, and the village is having about twenty families with faith in Buddhism. The villager is having a harmonious life due to the strong sense of community and kinship. An interesting aspect of Zangskar is that it is the land of spirituality (Zangs-dkarChos-yul) due to the presence of monasteries and sacred landscapes attributed to various Buddhas and Buddhisatvas. Some of the monasteries Karsha Monastery, Phugthar Monastery, Stongde Monastery, Bardan Monastery, Zong-Khul Monastery, Rangdum Monastery, Sani Monastery and so on, and similarly, there are sacred landscapes, i.e., there are physical spaces that are dedicated to a specific deity, spiritual Teacher, ancestor, hero, martyr, and figures of respect - wherein these spiritual entities are venerated or worshipped. The landscape of the Tangzey has become a spiritually significant one because of the naturally appeared image of Tsongkha-pa on the mountain located above the village. Je Tsongkhapa (1357-1419) emerged with multiple identities including a celebrated and highly revered as a Tibetan Buddhist monk, and also, he was identified as a tantric yogi, a great philosopher and the founder of Gelug-pa Lineage/School of Tibetan Buddhism. Known as Lozang Drakpa (*blobzanggragspa*), Je Tsongkhapa studied under several teachers who belonged to the Traditions of Tibetan Buddhism that were prospered in the central Tibet area. Moreover, there is an abundance of flowers blooming in and around the village during summer and they are being honoured by the people as the blessings of Je Tsongkhapa. There are seven small lakes surrounded by meadows backside of the mountain and they are believed as seven offering bowls filled with waters and placed at Je Tsongkhapa by gods and goddesses. The significance of offering seven bowls of water can be understood as the reflection of holding seven elements such as water for drinking/for washing, yak butter, flowers, incense, light, perfume, and food/ rice, and placing them every morning symbolizes the way of collecting merits and virtues. Pilgrims from around the world pay their visit to Tangzey in the month of August and September each year to perform ritual offerings to the spiritual mountain and they do circumambulations around the self-evolved mountain perceived as Je Tsongkhapa. The twenty-fifth day of the eleventh month of the Tibetan calendar marks the death anniversary (Mahaparinirvana) of Je Tsongkhapa, which is celebrated with offerings of lamps (ling-me) in and around Buddhist houses, monasteries, and high peaks. The Tangzey villagers also offer ling-me during the Ladakhi Losar (new year) celebrations and as part of the celebrations, the village elders narrate fascinating stories about the self-evolved Je Tsongkhapa Mountain. According to one such story, the devotees had once witnessed the lamps miraculously lighting up continuously for many days and the village offered more lamps as a way of accumulating merits and virtues. There are several objects around the mountain that are believed or perceived as naturally-appeared Buddhist objects and they include six syllables (the speech manifestation and the wisdom energy of all the Buddhas) of Avalokiteshvara [being an embodiment of all Buddhas, this Bodhisattva is symbolized as immense compassion] Mantra, Om Mani Padme Hung, much manuscript, RigsumGonbo [RigsumGonbo the protectors of the three realms which refers to Avalokiteshvara, Manjushri and Vajrapani] (Manjushri [an embodiment of prajna or God of wisdom and being a male Bodhisattva represents destruction of ignorance and duality with the help of flaming sword, and the realization of wisdom and its ultimate attainment is symbolized through lotus held Prajnaparamita sutra]. It means that one of the Buddha's virtues that is the manifestation of all the Buddha's wisdom is symbolized., Avalokiteshvara and

Vajrapani [It is extensively represented in Buddhist iconography as one the earliest deities or bodhisattvas surrounding the Buddha. It symbolizes the manifestation of all the Buddhas' power]), Lama Mchhod-Pa and so on. The natural spring found down below the mountain is perceived as the blessed holy water of Je Tsongkhapa, and similarly, there are image-like appearances of a horse-saddle, and a drum found near the old bridge of the village about one kilometre away from the sacred mountain believed to be antiquities belonging to Je Tsongkhapa. In the village, there is a small temple with few rooms for meditation, and one could find an old statue of Shakyamuni Buddha and some mural paintings in the temple. Interestingly, on the right of the temple a hill of white limestone known as Kar-tsi-ri can be seen and people use the white limestones from this hill to whitewash the walls of monasteries, mani-walls, stupas, and also their homes. There is a white hill called Kar-tsi-ri (the hill of white limestone) to the right of the temple. People Collect white limestone from this hill to whitewash monasteries' walls, mani-walls [Mani stones are stone plates that are carved with the six words mantra (Om Mani Padme Hung) of Avalokiteshvara. But nowadays people not only carve the six words, rather carve other texts too.], Stupas [Known as Chortan is the most ancient form of Buddhist art, the revered religious monument symbolizing the physical presence of the Buddha.], and walls of private homes in the village. He was an extraordinary person and according to available records, it is understood that Buddha has predicted the appearance of Je Tsongkhapa in Tibet. He appeared, as predicted by Buddha, in the snow filled land of Tibet and lived between 1357 and 1419. There is a story around his birth: 'When Je Tsongkhapa born, a drop of blood from his mother fell on the ground where a white sandal tree grew with leaves showing the image of Buddha Sengei Ngaro, who is considered as the mental continuum as Buddha Manjushri – an indication of the child as the manifestation of Manjushri' (<https://kadampa.org/buddhism/je-tsongkhapa>). Even the *Root Tantra of Manjushri* acknowledges this prediction of emanation of Je Tsongkhapa from Manjushri: "After I pass away / And my pure doctrine is absent, / You will appear as an ordinary being, / Performing the deeds of a Buddha / And establishing the Joyful Land, the great Protector, / In the Land of the Snows. /" (<https://kadampa.org/buddhism/je-tsongkhapa>). He trained and guided the Tibetans on their spiritual development, and he facilitated their gradual development from the Kadampas") "May I meet the doctrine of Conqueror Losang Dragpa, / Who has a pure practice of stainless moral discipline, / the courageous practice of the extensive deeds of a Bodhisattva, / And the yogas of the two stages to supreme bliss and emptiness" (<https://kadampa.org/buddhism/je-tsongkhapa>).

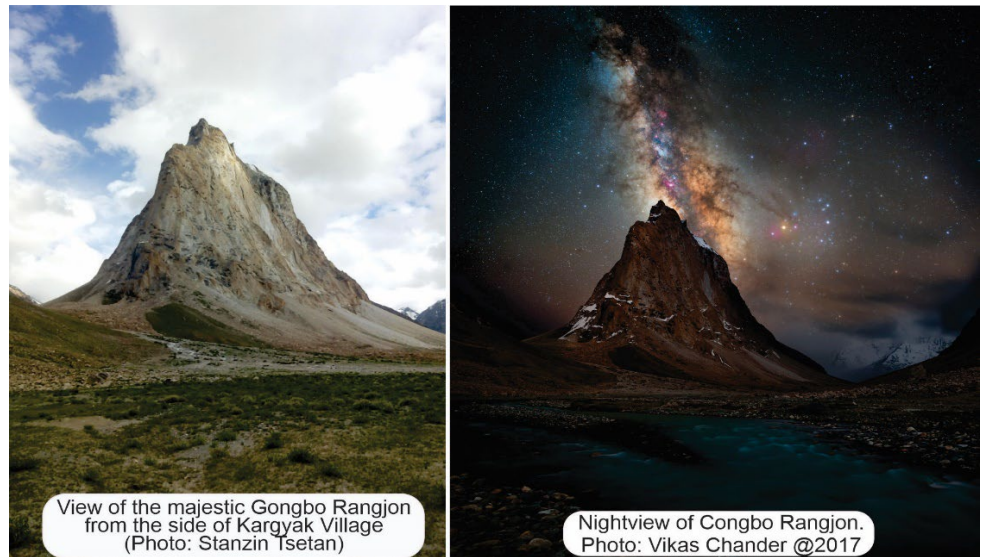


As a son of a Tibetan Longben Tribal leader, he had the opportunity to study various Tibetan Buddhist traditions such as Sakya, Jonang, Kagyu and Kamdam. His emergence from an ordinary being to a great protector is reflected in the way the landscape has been transformed into a spiritual space with the sacred mountain perceived as the image of Je Tsongkhapa, and his emergence is not mediated through any miracles, but by his hard work establishing pure Buddha dharma across Tibet. Further, his constant teachings as well as giving examples assured people of “pure and authentic” realization of ‘Sutra and Tantra.’ Thus, Je Tsongkhapa had been associated closely with the “Ganden” (known as “Joyful Land”) where he established the “Ganden Monastery”, and his pure doctrine is called as “Ganden Monastery.” Je Tsongkhapa’s tradition is presently followed vigorously and as “Gelug” is the name of this tradition, the followers draw “of this tradition are called as this tradition is called as “Gelug”, the followers of this tradition are also getting called as “Gelupas.” (<https://kadampa.org/buddhism/je-tsongkhapa>). Further, the first Dalai Lama, Je Gendundrub offered a song entitled *Song of the Eastern Snow Mountain* (in Tibetan language – *Shargangrima*) mentions in his praise of Je Tsongkhapa: “For the fortunate people of Tibet, the Land of the Snows, your kindness, O Protector, is inconceivable./ Especially for myself, Gendundrub, an indolent one,/ The fact that my mind is directed towards Dharma/ Is due solely to your kindness, O Venerable Father and Sons./ From now until I attain enlightenment/ I shall seek no refuge other than you./ O Venerable Father and Sons/ Please care for me with your compassion./ Although I cannot repay your kindness, O Protector,/ I pray that, with my mind free from the influence of attachment and hatred,/ I may strive to maintain your doctrine and cause it to flourish/ Without ever giving up this endeavor” (<https://kadampa.org/buddhism/je-tsongkhapa>). Similarly, Mahasiddha Menkhangpa’s comment is noteworthy, because it highlights how Je Tsongkhapa stands as an embodiment of Lamrim, Lojong and Mahamudra – they together called as three Dharmas. That is, these Dharmas will be realized by those who receive the blessings of Je Tsongkhapa through the practice of Heart Jewel (<https://kadampa.org/buddhism/je-tsongkhapa>). John Powers, Guy Newland, Jay L. Garfield, etc., have also commented on the comprehensive view of Buddhist philosophy practised by Je Tsongkhapa. John Powers perceives the work of Je Tsongkhapa as an integration of three things - “Sutra and Tantra, Analytical Reasoning, and Yogic Meditation.” However, Guy Newland sees that it is the projection of the radical perspective of emptiness through the combination of “existence and validity of logics and ethics” with it. Whereas, for Jay L. Garfield, his work concerned on understanding of the nature of truth by rigorously engaging oneself on study, reasoned analysis, and contemplation along with meditation, and explored the interdependent, relational, and non-essential, conventional nature of phenomena cf. [www.en.wikipedia](http://www.en.wikipedia)). His views on ultimate truth and emptiness are considered highly philosophical and follow up of Nagarjuna and Candrakirti.

Another self-evolved sacred mountain perceived as a naturally appearing image of or the painting of *mgon bo phyag drug pa* or otherwise known as the six-armed Buddhist protector/deity Gonbo or Mahakala is the Gonbo Rangjon (“Gumbok Rangan” and also “god’s Mountain”) and it is located thirty kilometres away from the naturally appeared Gyalwa Je Tsongkhapa statue, or on the trekking route to Darcha, before reaching Shingku la. Though local people call the landscape around the Gonbo Rangjon the “summer paradise of Zanskar”, it (Gonbo Rangjon) appears as a majestic, gorgeous, and gigantic structure with a human touch and passionately engulfing with a sacred-spiritual blanket even for the ‘non-native’ [used in its broad sense for accommodating non-Buddhists too] visitors. The

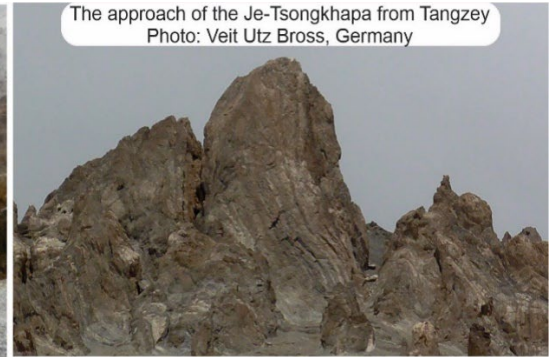
magnificent view of the Gonbo Rangjon, having a peak of 5,520m or 18,110ft with a base of about 4500m or 14,800ft ([www.openstreetmap.org](http://www.openstreetmap.org), cf. [www.en.wikipedia.org](http://www.en.wikipedia.org)), can be witnessed from Kargyak, a small village located about sixteen kilometres north toward Shingkula or Manali.

Due to its spectacular view and mystic landscape with bright blooming flowers in the mountain pastures, it has become the dream destination for travellers and pilgrims, and many of them visit regularly to get blessings from the holy landscape. [Some of the comments and/or feedbacks by “non-native” visitors found at Facebook social media reflections found at



[www.facebook.com/hashtag/gonborangjon/?locale=zh\\_CN](https://www.facebook.com/hashtag/gonborangjon/?locale=zh_CN) are given here (social media usernames are given in italics): “The most sacred mountain of Zanskar. Altitude of 5320 meters and the entry point of Zanskar from the Southern side. It’s splendid and can’t describe its beauty through any lens” (*by Md. Abudulla Mahmud*); “Tranquillity, serenity, and beauty of nature taught me how to find happiness in life and in the silence of eternity” [by Debasish Mridha, <https://www.keepinspiring.me/nature-quotes/> & [www.goodhousekeeping.com](http://www.goodhousekeeping.com) quoted *by Bird\_of\_Paradise\_*]; “One of most beautiful stand-alone mountains I have ever seen” (*by Ravitej Sahu*); “Gonbo Rangjon or God’s Mountain, is an imposing, solitary peak located in the remote Kargyak Valley, and is one of the most sacred sites for Zanskari Buddhists” (quoted from <https://www.insidehimalayas.com/gumbo-ranjan-zanskars-sacred-mountain/> *by Sumithra Narayanan and Amit Sharma*); I follow my heart...and it usually leads me to the mountains (*by Hiren Patel*); “Holy Gonbo Rangjon” (*by Nevil Zaveri*); “Let the beauty of nature remind you of the goodness of God...” (*by Umesh Gogna*); Life in Heaven... (*by CAMARENA Academy*); etc.] All seventy-five manifestations of Gonbo, Shri Deve, can also be found there around as self-formed statues or painting images in white rocks and the villagers believe that they are the self-appeared imprints of Bodhisattvas and protectors on the mountain surface with self-originated Mahakala, being most visible entity. On the fourth day of each Tibetan month, monks from Phugthar monastery worship Mahakala and perform intensive rituals for the peace and prosperity of all sentient/living beings. In fact, the villagers, who do ritual offerings all around the surrounding region and perform circumambulations during

the auspicious occasion, believe that performing rituals bring peace, harmony, and goodness to the region.



There are stories that are being told by the villagers and by other visitors about the self-evolved Gonbo Rangjon and one such story, which is similar to the one associated with the self-originated Je Tsongkhapa of Tangzey village, is that the faithful devotees see lamps miraculously candled around the Gonbo Rangjon on auspicious days, and on seeing that villagers offer more lamps with the belief that offering more lamps will help them to accumulate more merits and virtues for the wellbeing of all sentient beings. The pareidolia, in the case of Gonbo Rangjon, happened at the second level, that is, from the personified concept of protector to the pareidolia. Its majestic look helps to be the pareidolia of the personified protector deity, Mahakala, which disseminates its strength, determination, and perseverance – which are the perquisites for a protector. The strange ambience of the landscape is filled with high altitude semi-desert less populated villages with mud and stone houses with glacial streams and deep gorges – the lofty mountain naturally emerges or appears as the dominant protector. Here there is mediation between the Buddhist text and the society, there is a protector of the Buddhist doctrine as per the Buddhist text, and there is also a holy protector in the landscape with a terrific look. In fact, the valley had been in isolation for many centuries, and it was an unknown and unexplored area to the rest of the world. But the constructed road linking Manali to Padum over the Shinku-La pass but running right below Mt. Gonbo has opened up access to others to witness and enjoy the remarkable and marvellous landscape as well as the Gonbo Rangjon. Although the road is expected to bring economic development and prosperity, there is a transformation in the attitude of the people towards the landscape, i.e., the spiritual land to photograph/painting to landscape – here a shift could be seen in the attitude towards the land. When the spiritual land was in isolation, it had less proximity to outsiders, and it never occupied the walls (Galleries) of non-native people. As a landscape, it has now become a picturesque commodity with retained esoteric value, that is, it is being carried to different parts of the world in the form of visual form to occupy both physical and psychological space, and also to involve in different forms of economic activities (cultural tourism, etc).

## 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

- 1) These two pareidolia instances, i.e., the presence of self-evolved Je Tsongkhapa of Tangzey village and the self-originated Gonbo Rangjon, while the former is a Buddhist monk, the latter is the Buddhist protector



- deity, make the Zangskar region ingrained with holiness and this sacredness makes the people very faithful and devoted to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha - which facilitate the life of people in the region as peaceful, harmonious and prosperous, so that it is meaningful to call the Zangskar region as Chosyul or the land of Dharma.
- 2) It is clear from the given evidence that each society has its own way to establish and re-establish its relationship with its land which provides them substratum to have their inhabitation on the land by moulding themselves with the available resources.
  - 3) There is reciprocity, however, that exists between people and their land, and it can be evidenced from the examples presented here, and with this mutuality, a kind of sustainability of both of them being materialized, or well-being is being assured at both levels.
  - 4) The sacredness and spirituality are the perspectives and orientations people impose on the land to reflect their eternal relationship.
  - 5) Belongingness is another factor that makes the people feel the pride of being born and living in the region, and the sacredness and spirituality ascribed to their land is the result of expressing their gratefulness.
  - 6) A mediation between land and its people is materialized through spirituality, and the land as the token of nature establishes its dominance over its people by being spiritual and superior which ensures its indomitable position over the culturally moulded people.
  - 7) The entwined relationship between land and its people could be seen mediated through not only the folklore materials but also written records.
  - 8) Irrespective of having written records, Je Tsongkhapa and Gonbo Mahakala are filled with oral literature, beliefs and social sentiments that reflect the supremacy of orality in encoding.
  - 9) The faith and devotion on the landscape of Tsongkhapa and Gonbo Mahakala, help them to uphold their oral legacy on their landscape.
  - 10) Both Je Tsongkhapa and Gonbo Rangjon emerge as dominant signifiers with their magnificent outlook to signify compassion, valour, and harmony not only of the philosophical tradition but also of the landscape.
  - 11) Standing as powerful visual signifiers in the Zangskar valley, they signify through iconic existence the philosophical tradition and the protector of the philosophical texts.
  - 12) The iconic signifiers of both Je Tsongkhapa and Gonbo Mahakala appeared not spontaneously, but through the constant mediation between the philosophical tradition, personalities, landscape, and people. However, as a historical person, Je Tsongkhapa has become an icon to be celebrated for his contribution to Buddhism and his contemplation of ultimate truth. In the case of Mahakala, despite the assumption that he was a historical person, the iconic signifier is created through the personification of the concept of protector to be visualized in terms of pareidolia.
  - 13) Unlike anthropomorphism and personification, the pareidolia appearances, in both cases, are constant and permanent, and their permanence is conventional and symbolic which is realized through a mutual agreement among the members of the community who are of the belief system. However, the visitors who happened to be in the landscape are in the

position of agreeing with this convention and the symbolic nature of the pareidolia signifiers.

- 14) In fact, with reference to both the pareidolia instances, the landscape of Zangskar becomes the epitome of iconic representations where the different signifying elements can be verified through comparison and resemblance. The resemblance is achieved by comparison of the physical landscape with one that people are having as a mental image created by reading and believing in the philosophical text and also with their conventional belief on the mediation between the philosopher and his philosophy within a system.
- 15) The Zangskar valley emerged as a cultural landscape through the presence of various signifying elements which are not restricted to the presence of Je Tsongkhapa and Gonbo Mahakala, but they encompass the socio-cultural activities of the people.
- 16) The treatment of landscape as photography, particularly in the case of Zangskar valley, could be seen at two levels – the first deals with the native people and with their aesthetic orientation towards their landscape and the second deals with the non-native people who pay their visit to the valley and go with the memory, experience, and reflections of the landscape. The social media writings and other expressions by the visitors stand witness to both the sacred and spiritual values but also the aesthetics. Therefore, the photographs and images produced by the non-native visitors can display not only the objects available for perceptual experience but also other signifying contents that may go on with signifying independently or in coordination with other elements within the system. However, many of their photographic representations are the reproduction of the splendid and spectacular outlook of the landscape that appears in different shades of time, and through which the spiritual and sacredness of the landscapes are reiterated.
- 17) It is not too narrow to claim that the Zangskar valley emerges as the object of pursuit for being associated with and contributing to the sustainability of the ecosystem through upholding the values both as tangible and intangible heritages that are realized through a vast amount of written records as well as folklore – the broader term that accommodates oral literature, material culture, performing arts and social customs and beliefs. Further, the significance of the land as a physical entity is realized through the transformation of land into the landscape by imbibing both cultural and spiritual values to reflect in the everyday life of the locals. The cultural significance of spirituality lies in the process that equalizes the status of both historical figures and the spiritual entity through establishing or philosophising their position as the protector of the ecosystem by sustaining not only peace and harmony among the people but also by ensuring the preservation of nature.
- 18) Communication at the interactive level is happening between the people and the self-evolved structures and the encoding of messages is executed passively but passionately by the landscapes that have the ambience that ensures peace, harmony and prosperity for the people, in return, people reciprocate with the impact and also through spiritual activities that maintain and preserve the serenity, peace and quietude of the landscape on the one hand and displaying prosperous life on the other hand. The

Zangskar landscape becomes a portrait or a painting not just because of its visual treat by having gigantic mountains and pastoral lands, but by incorporating the internal and external landscapes both reciprocally qualitative and supplementary to each other. While the internal landscape of the people is symbolised through the presence of peace, harmony and prosperity, the external landscape is contemplated in the portrait by having physical objects that are perceptually available for experience.

- 19) Further, as a splendid and beautiful picture, the landscape presents the different signifiers and independently participates in the signifying process as well as collectively engages itself to produce a connotative meaning by being dependent as wellbeing independent in a discrete way.
- 20) The image of the Zangskar landscape, with the dominant presence of the encoder with his encoding of intended meaning, never fails to be decoded in the intended way by the local people as well as the non-native visitors, that is, there is no ambiguity in communication between the self-evolved figures or the sacred landscapes of the Zangskar region with the people who are either happened to be their inhabitants or non-native visitors.
- 21) Further, the landscape as a photograph takes its validation through the presence of caption(s) (see the images given in this article are carrying captions and the actual meaning of the images are undecipherable without the captions). Here, the landscape as a photograph function as a text and intertextuality could be seen when the text is connected to other texts under the common discourse of Buddhism.
- 22) The photographic images are meaningful not by representing the visual aspect of the landscape sans spiritual values, but it is the spiritual aspect of the landscape that gives a perspective to look at the picture with an orientation. The performative aspect of the sacred mountains of the Zangskar landscape is significant and it can be understood from the discursive utterances that are being produced constantly by the magnificent spiritual entities. The spiritual entities mediated and manifested through the sacred mountains are not mere spectators or mute in the discursive framework, rather they are constantly in a dialogue with the people as devotees and non-native visitors who visit to see the display of their performances of these entities.
- 23) The blessings of the landscapes, also promises of providing virtues and prosperity are not the utterances produced by these entities in the past, but they are happening in the present time and are also being produced for the welfare of the sentient beings. And, due to the performative nature of natural objects, the tangible items transform into the tangible heritage to be protected and preserved as per the standard set by the international agency, like United Nations (UN). The tangible heritage, as the examples highlight that, must not be seen merely as materialistic entities, rather, they are constructed and supported by intangible materials that are produced around the tangible items for legitimizing them and also bring them into the performing arts, oral literature, and social customs and beliefs. The shift from land to landscape to the cultural landscape, or the emergence of the cultural landscape, can be witnessed from these two examples that vividly describe the making cultural landscape through the existing reciprocal relationship between nature and culture. The cultural landscape does not emerge in isolation rather it is an amalgamation of various elements that are put together for purposes and goals set by culture and nature in a

reciprocal and supplementary way – to protect and preserve not only the spiritual aspect of culture but also the sustainability of the nature and its landscape.

And, this paper is merely an attempt to understand the complexity in treating cultural landscape or tangible heritage through the lens of performativity and signification.

### **CONFLICT OF INTERESTS**

None.

### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

None.

### **REFERENCES**

- Aubert, M., Setiawan, P., Oktaviana, A. A., Brumm, A., Sulistyarto, P. H., Saptomo, E. W., Istiawan, B., Ma'rifat, T. A., Wahyuono, V. N., Atmoko, F. T., Zhao, J.-X., Huntley, J., Taçon, P. S. C., Howard, D. L., & Brand, H. E. A. (2018). Palaeolithic Cave Art in Borneo. *Nature*, 564, 254–257. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-018-0679-9>.
- Austin, J. L. (1955, 1962). *How to Do Things with Words : The William James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1955*, (eds. J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa) Oxford : Clarendon Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198245537.001.0001>.
- Barret, T. (2000). *Criticizing Photographs : An Introduction to Understanding Images*. McGraw Hill.
- Baudrillard, J. (1984). 'The Precession of Simulacra'. In Brian Wallis (Ed.) : *Art After Modernism : Rethinking Representations*, Vol. 1. New York : Museum of Contemporary Art (reprinted from *Art and Text* 11 (September 1983), 3-47).
- Baudrillard, J. (1988). *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster. Stanford : Stanford University Press.
- BBC (2004). "'Virgin Mary' toast fetches \$28,000". BBC News. BBC. Tuesday, 23 November, 11 :54 GMT.
- Bell, C. (2015/1914). *Art*. Create Space Independent Publishing Platform.
- Benveniste, E. (1971). *Problems in General Linguistics* (trans. Mary E Meek). Coral Gables : University of Miami Press.
- Berger, A. (1998). *Seeing is Believing : an Introduction to Visual Communication : An Introduction to Visual Communication*. Mayfield Publishing Company.
- Borchers, T. (2006). *Rhetorical Theory*. Belmont, California : Thomson Wadsworth.
- Briney, A. (2019). *Human Geography – An Overview of Human Geography*. Thoughtco.
- Briney, A. (2020). *An Overview of Cultural Geography - The Basics of Cultural Geography*.
- Britannica, T. (2021, April 29). *Geography Summary*. Encyclopedia Britannica. Editors of Encyclopaedia.
- Burgin, V. (1982). *Thinking Photography*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Butler, J. (1990). "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution : An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." *Performing Feminisms : Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre*. Ed. Sue-Ellen Case. Baltimore : Johns Hopkins UP.

- Butler, J. (1993). *Bodies that Matter : On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*. New York, London. Routledge.
- Butler, J. (1997). *Excitable Speech : The Politics of the Performative*. New York, London. Routledge.
- Butler, J. (2010). Performative Agency. *Journal of Cultural Economy*, 3(2) 147. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17530350.2010.494117>.
- Chandler, D. (2002). *Semiotics for Beginners*. London. Routledge.
- Claus, P. J., and Frank, J. K. (1991). *Folkloristics and Indian Folklore*. Udupi : Regional Resources Centre for Folk Performing Arts.
- Culler, J. (1975). *Structuralist Poetics : Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature*. London : Routledge & Kegan Paul. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203449769>.
- Da Vinci, L. (1923). "Note-Books Arranged and Rendered Into English". Empire State Book Co.
- Derrida, J. (1988). limited, Inc. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Eco, U. (1976). *A Theory of Semiotics*. Bloomington, IN : Indiana University Press/London : Macmillan.
- Eddy, M. D. (2020). "Diagrams". In Anthony Grafton, Ann Blair and Anja Sylvia Goeing (Eds.), *A Companion to the History of Information*. Princeton : Princeton University Press.
- Emery, D. (2018). "Does the Devil's Face Appear in the Smoke on 9/11 ?". ThoughtCo. Retrieved 21 April 2019.
- Fendler, L. (2010). *Michel Foucault*. London : Bloomsbury.
- Fiske, J. (1987). *Television Culture*. Routledge.
- Fiske, J. (1990). *Introduction to Communication Studies (2nd ed.)*. London : Routledge.
- Forman, R.T.T. and M. Godron, M. (1981). Patches and Structural Components for Landscape Ecology. *BioScience*, 31(10), 733–740. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1308780>.
- Forman, R.T.T., and M. Godron (1986). *Landscape Ecology*. Wiley, New York.
- Goodman, N. (1976). *Language of Art*. Indianapolis : Hackett.
- Hadjikhani, N., Kveraga, K., Naik, P., & Ahlfors, S. P. (2009). Early (M170) Activation of Face-Specific Cortex by Face-Like Objects. *Neuroreport*, 20(4), 403–407. <https://doi.org/10.1097/WNR.0b013e328325a8e1>.
- Hall, S. (1980). "Encoding/decoding." In Stuart Hall, Dorothy Hobson, Andrew Love, and Paul Willis (eds.), *Culture, Media, Language*. London : Hutchinson, 128–38.
- Hall, S. (1993). "Encoding/Decoding." S. During (ed.). *The Cultural Studies Reader*. London and New York : Routledge.
- Hall, S. (1993). *Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse*. University of Birmingham.
- Hartshore, R. (1939/1976). *The Nature of Geography*.
- Hjelmslev, L. (1961). *Prolegomena to a Theory of Language* (trans. Francis J Whitfield). Madison : University of Wisconsin Press.
- Hockett, C. F. (1958). *A Course in Modern Linguistics*. New York : Macmillan.
- Hymes, D. (1962). *The Ethnography of Speaking* In T. Gladwin & W.C. Sturtevant eds. *Anthropology and Human Behaviour*. Washington, D.C. : Anthropological Society of Washington, 15-53.
- Hymes, D. (1973). *Toward Linguistic Competence*. Working Papers in Sociolinguistics, 16.
- Hymes, D. (1974). *Foundations in Sociolinguistics : An Ethnographic Approach*. Philadelphia : University of Pennsylvania Press.

- Hymes, D. (1981). In *Vain I Tried to Tell You : Essays in Native American Ethnopoetics*. Philadelphia : University of Pennsylvania Press. <https://doi.org/10.9783/9781512802917>.
- Hymes, D. H. (1967). Models of the Interaction of Language and Social Setting. *Journal of Social Issues*, 23(2), 8-38. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.1967.tb00572.x>.
- Hymes, D. H. (1967). The Anthropology of Communication In F.E. Dance (Ed.), *Human Communication Theory : Original Essays*. New York : Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Ibrahim, Y. (2011). "In Maiduguri, a Tree with Engraved Name of God Turns Spot to a Mecca of Sorts". Sunday Trust. Abuja.
- Ismail, A. I. H., Isa, K. M., and Azahari, M. H. H (2010). An Interpretation of Photography as an Art and Communication. 2010 International Conference of Science and Social Research (CSSR 2010), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 1350-1352. <https://doi.org/10.1109/CSSR.2010.5773750>.
- Jakobson, R. & Halle, M. (1956). *Fundamentals of Language*. The Hague : Mouton. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110894264>.
- Jakobson, R. (1960). 'Closing Statement : Linguistics and Poetics'. In Sebeok, Thomas A (Ed.) *Style in Language*. Cambridge, MA : MIT Press.
- Jakobson, R. (1968). *Child Language, Aphasia and Phonological Universals*. The Hague : Mouton. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111353562>.
- Jakobson, R. (1971). 'Language in Relation to Other Communication Systems'. In Roman Jakobson (Ed.) : *Selected Writings, Vol. 2*. Mouton : The Hague. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110873269.697>.
- Jellicoe, G. and Susan, J. (1995). *The Landscape of Man : Shaping the Environment from Prehistory to the Present Day*. Thames & Hudson Ltd.
- Kumar, N., Sahoo, S., & Ramkrishnan, M. (2021). A Glance at Folk Performance and Non-Native Audience. *ShodhKosh : Journal of Visual and Performing Arts*, 2(2), 112–132. <https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v2.i2.2021.42>.
- Langer, S. K. (1951). *Philosophy in à New Key : A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite and Art*. New York : Mentor.
- Lester (2006). *Visual Communication : Images with Messages*. Belmont, CA : Thomson Wadsworth.
- Lévi-Strauss, C. (1972). *Structural Anthropology* (trans. Claire Jacobson & Brooke Grundfest Schoepf). Harmondsworth : Penguin.
- Martin, J. (2007). "Audiences and Reception Theory." Julie Martin : Community Manager / Animatrice De Communauté.
- McLaughlin, T. M. (1977). Clive Bell's Aesthetic : Tradition and Significant Form. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 35(4), 433–443. <https://doi.org/10.2307/430609>.
- Moye, D. (17 April 2019). "People Claim to See Jesus in Flames Engulfing Notre Dame Cathedral". *Huffington Post*. Retrieved 21 April 2019 – via Yahoo! Lifestyle.
- Ng, Hui (13 September 2007). "Monkey See, Monkey Do ?". *The New Paper*. Singapore Press Holdings Ltd. Co. Archived from the Original on 14 October 2007. Retrieved 21 April 2019. 12–13.
- Peet, R. (1990). *Modern Geographical Thought*. Blackwell.
- Peirce, C. S. (1931-1958). *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, 8 Volumes vols. 1-6 edited by Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss, vols. 7-8 edited by Arthur W. Burks. Cambridge (Mass.) : Harvard University Press.
- Raber, K. (2018). *Shakespeare and Posthumanist Theory*. Arden Shakespeare.
- Robert, M. (2012). *76 Definitions of the Sign by C. S. Peirce*.

- Ross, S. (2011). *The Encoding/Decoding Model Revisited : Annual Meeting of the International Communication Association*. Boston, MA.
- Ryan, L. (2016). *The Visual Imperative : Creating a Visual Culture of Data Discovery*. Morgan Kaufmann, 116.
- Sagan, C. (1995). *The Demon-Haunted World – Science as a Candle in the Dark*. New York : Random House.
- San Antonio Light (1918). *Pictorial Magazine of the War (Advertisement)*. San Antonio Light. Jan.10. 6.
- Saussure, F. de (1916/ 1974). *Course in General Linguistics* (trans. Wade Baskin). London : Fontana/Collins.
- Saussure, F. de (1916/ 1983). *Course in General Linguistics* (trans. Roy Harris). London : Duckworth.
- Saussure, F. de (1959). *Course in General Linguistics*. ed. By Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye, tr. by Wade Baskin. New York : Philosophical Library.
- Schweber, N. (23 July 2012). "In New Jersey, a Knot in a Tree Trunk Draws the Faithful and the Skeptical". *The New York Times*.
- Scott, C. (1999). *The Spoken Image : Photography and Language*. Reaktion Books.
- Sibbald, M. D. (1867). "Report on the Progress of Psychological Medicine ; German Psychological Literature". *Journal of Mental Science*, 13, 238.
- Sontag, S. (1977). *On Photography*. Penguin, London, 3–24.
- Svoboda, E. (13 February 2007). "Facial Recognition – Brain – Faces, Faces Everywhere". *The New York Times*.
- Tierney, R. (17 November 2015). "Emotions in Canines and Humans" Partnership for Animal Welfare.
- Voloshinov, Valentin N (1973). *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (trans. Ladislav Matejka & I R Titunik). New York : Seminar Press.
- Voss, J. L., Federmeier, K. D., Paller, K. A. (2012). "The Potato Chip Really Does Look Like Elvis ! Neural Hallmarks of Conceptual Processing Associated with Finding Novel Shapes Subjectively Meaningful". *Cerebral Cortex*. 22(10), 2354–64. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cercor/bhr315>.
- Wooldridge, S. W. (1956/1969). *The Geographer as Scientist : Essays on the Scope and Nature of Geography*. England : Thomas Nelson & Sons.
- Zimmer, C. (2018). "In Cave in Borneo Jungle, Scientists Find Oldest Figurative Painting in the World - A Cave Drawing in Borneo is at Least 40,000 Years Old, Raising Intriguing Questions About Creativity in Ancient Societies". *The New York Times* (7 November).
- Zusne, L., and Jones, W. H. (1989). *Anomalistic Psychology : A Study of Magical Thinking*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.