Faces and Gazes
Jean-Claude Latombe
For more than 50 years the main goals of my travels have been to take long multi-day walks and climb mountains in remote parts of the world. More recently, as I got older, I added a component of cultural discovery to them. But, ultimately, as time goes by, my most vivid memories are those of people I encountered, perhaps because the slow pace of my travels facilitated contacts marked with mutual respect.

This book is a collection of 240 photos of men, women, and children that I took during some of my journeys. The majority are from Nepal, northern India, Central Asia, and Ethiopia. A smaller number are from Japan, Taiwan, Indonesia, Iran, Morocco, and Latin America. I selected photos that show faces and gazes expressing a wide range of emotions and attitudes, including: kindness, curiosity, joy, sadness, pride, concentration, purpose, self-confidence, and irony. Above all, both individually and collectively, the subjects in these photos convey a tremendous sense of dignity.

I like large portraits. Their greater level of detail makes them more expressive. So, in this book I chose to present a single photo per page, all in the same format, although this choice reduced the pool of photos I could use. The selected photos are grouped by country, but for each country their sequence is somewhat arbitrary and carries no special meaning or intention.

Jean-Claude Latombe
Stanford, March 2021

Several photos in this book were taken in Tigray, Ethiopia’s northernmost region. Sadly, in recent months Tigray was turned into a war zone. Hundreds of Tigrayans, perhaps more, have been killed. Tens of thousands have been displaced, many of whom are now refugees in neighboring Sudan. Gebru and Gebrehiwet, two Tigrayans from Adwa, were my faithful companions on several long walks in various regions of Ethiopia (Tigray, Amhara, and Oromia) in 2012, 2013, 2015 and 2017. Their properties have been looted by the Eritrean army, with the complicity of the Federal Ethiopian army. Younger Gebrehiwet has now joined the Tigrayan forces fighting the Eritrean army, while older Gebru looks after both families. The Tigrayan people is a great and resilient people, with a glorious past (Axum empire, battle of Adwa, defeat of the Derg regime). I am confident and hope they will prevail again.
Women in Narai-juku, Nagano Prefecture, Honshu, Japan (2016). Narai-juku is located on the old Nakasendo road built during the Edo period (1603-1868) to connect Kyoto to Edo (the former name of present-day Tokyo),
Group of drawing artists in the picturesque main street of Narai-juku, Nagano Prefecture, Honshu, Japan (2016).
Two puppeteers with the puppets Oyumi and Otsuru in the Awa Jurobe Yashiki, a traditional Japanese Joruri puppet theater, Takushima, Takushima prefecture, Shikoku, Japan (2018).
Master mask maker Katsuro Kakita, one of the few remaining traditional Kagura mask makers, Hamada, Shimane prefecture, Honshu, Japan (2019). Kagura is a Shinto theatrical dance believed to be older than Noh.
Drawing artist behind the window of his shop, Kurayoshi, Tottori prefecture, Honshu, Japan (2019).
Creator of small bamboo figurines, on Udatsu Street, Wakimachi, Tokushima prefecrature, Shikoku, Japan (2018).
Buddhist ceremony in Sanbutsuji, a syncretic Buddhist-Shinto temple-shrine located at the foot of Mount Mitoku, near Kurayoshi, Tottori prefecture, Honshu, Japan (2019).
Young rider at the Otomouma-no-Hashirikomi, a colorful annual horse racing festival said to be 600-year old, Kikuma, Ehime prefecture, Shikoku, Japan (2018).
Preparation of a soup with sausage in a small traditional restaurant, Tainan, Taiwan (2009).
Preparation of stuffed steamed bun in a street restaurant, Guanshan, Guanshan Township, Taiwan (2015).
Woman cooking delicacies in a night market, Kaohsiung, Taiwan (2016).
Noodle vendor in Jincheng Township, Kinmen, Taiwan (2017).
Tasting tea in a small shop of the Wenshan district, Taipei, Taiwan (2017).
Vendor of traditional Chinese medicine, Dihua Street, Taipei, Taiwan (2017).
Gamelan player in the Kraton (Sultan’s palace), Yogyakarta, Java, Indonesia (2015). Gamelan is a native art that predates Java’s Hindu-Buddhist (4th-15th centuries) and Islamic (16th century and later) cultures.
Wedding in Kota Ternate, island of Ternate, North Maluku province, Indonesia (2018).
Vendor of dried fish in a market of Kota Ternate, island of Ternate, North Maluku province, Indonesia (2018).
Fruit vendor in a market of Kota Ternate, island of Ternate, North Maluku province, Indonesia (2018).
Man on the island of Tidore, North Maluku province, Indonesia (2018)
Man near Rantepao, North Toraja Regency, South Sulawesi province, Sulawesi, Indonesia (2009).
Man wearing a traditional red bandana in the village of Huahulu, Seram island, Maluku province, Indonesia (2010).
Man wearing a traditional red bandana in the village of Huahulu, Seram island, Maluku province, Indonesia (2010).
Fisherman, South Andaman islands, Gulf of Bengal, India (2008).
Seller of religious offerings -- rose petals, attar (perfume), incense, and chadar (holy cloth) -- at the entrance of the Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya Dargah (Muslim shrine), New Delhi, India (2018).
Young street performer,
Varanasi, state of Uttar Pradesh, India (2019).
Woman sitting on her doorstep, Old Varanasi, state of Uttar Pradesh, India (2019).
Man praying at a small Hindu shrine in a narrow alley, Old Varanasi, state of Uttar Pradesh, India (2019).
Woman bringing offerings to a tiny shrine embedded into a street wall, Old Varanasi, state of Uttar Pradesh, India (2019).
Women on the bank of the Gange during the Chhath festival dedicated to the sun God Surya and the Goddess Ushas, Varanasi, state of Uttar Pradesh, India (2019).
Man selling flowers, Old Varanasi, state of Uttar Pradesh, India (2019).
Man selling Kashmiri apples,
Old Varanasi, state of Uttar Pradesh, India (2019).
Street food vendor, Old Varanasi, state of Uttar Pradesh, India (2019).
Vendor of bhang lassi, a type of lassi “flavored” with cannabis, Old Varanasi, state of Uttar Pradesh, India (2019).
Man training at an old-fashioned wrestling club, next to the Gange, Varanasi, state of Uttar Pradesh, India (2019).
Hindu monk, Varanasi, state of Uttar Pradesh, India (2019). Most such monks believe that dying in Varanasi will free their soul from samsara, the cycle of death and rebirth (often called reincarnation).
Hindu monk, Varanasi, state of Uttar Pradesh, India (2019).
Street barber,
Old Varanasi, state of Uttar Pradesh, India (2019).
The Monpas (numbering about 60,000) are one of the main indigenous tribes living in Arunachal Pradesh.
Man in traditional Ladakhi dress, Basgo Dogpo valley, west of Leh, Ladakh, India (2013).
Man in traditional Ladakhi dress, village of Pishu, Zanskar, southern Ladakh, India (2019).
Woman at a nomadic shepherd camp, central Ladakh, India (2016).
Woman at a nomadic shepherd camp, making butter by shaking milk, cream, and yoghurt in a sheep skin, central Ladakh, India (2016).
Man in Dibling, a remote village in central Ladakh, India (2013).
Man in Dibling, a remote village in central Ladakh, India (2019).
Woman in Dibling, a remote village in central Ladakh, India (2013).
Woman from the village of Shade, in a tent at a shepherd camp below Rotong La (pass), Ladakh, India (2013).
Woman in the village of Pigmo, Zanskar, southern Ladakh, India (2019).
Woman in the village of Agsho, Zanskar, southern Ladakh, India (2019).
Man from Zanskar with a Buddhist mala around his neck, Ladakh, India (2018).
Man in the hamlet of Drangha, a Zanskari settlement at the entrance of the Danlong Nala valley, northern Jammu & Kashmir, India (2019).
Woman and child crossing a steep snow bridge over the Bujwas Nala (river), northern Jammu & Kashmir, India (2019).
Bakarwal shepherd in the Danlong Nala valley, northern Jammu & Kashmir, India (2019).
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Man in the village of Bartu, Phulangma valley, east of the town of Sankoo, western Ladakh, India (2019).
Buddhist worshippers and pilgrims circumnavigating the Boudhanath, Kathmandu, Nepal (2011).
Buddhist monks reciting mantras next to the Boudhanath, Kathmandu, Nepal (2011).
Men hand spinning wool in the village of Chetty, western Nepal (2008). Out of this wool they also create their own elegant jackets.
Woman, near the village of Talkot, western Nepal (2008).
Woman from the village of Dhuli, on the Seti Khola (river), western Nepal (2008).
Man from the village of Dhuli, on the Seti Khola (river), western Nepal (2008).
Man smoking a chillum (straight pipe), village of Dolon, western Nepal (2008).
With his hands he creates a smoke chamber that cools the smoke and catch embers.
Children at a window, east of the village of Talkot, western Nepal (2008).
Man and woman along the Khat Khola (river), between Kolti and Rara lake, western Nepal (2008).
Holy man and his followers on a trail along the Khat Khola (river), west of Rara lake, western Nepal (2008).
Man holding a chillum (straight pipe) between Rara lake and the town of Jumla, west central Nepal (2008).
Woman enjoying the warm sun in the village of Pungmo, west of the Phoksundo lake, west central Nepal (2008).
Woman cooking buckwheat pancakes in the village of Pungmo, west of the Phoksundo lake, west central Nepal (2008).
Woman in Kokwa, a village east of Mount Manaslu famous for its mani stone carvers, central Nepal (2008).
Man in his doorstep in a village between Tumlingtar and Chainpur, eastern Nepal (2011).
Limbu woman near Chainpur, eastern Nepal (2011).
Limbu woman near the village of Hellok, eastern Nepal (2011).
Woman in a Tibetan settlement on Milke Danda (mountain range), eastern Nepal (2011).
Smoking woman near the village of Hellok, eastern Nepal (2011).
Woman in the village of Mitlung, eastern Nepal (2012).
Woman in the village of Mitlung, eastern Nepal (2012).
Man near the village of Chirwa collecting cardamom pods, eastern Nepal (2012).
Cardamom, one of the most expensive spices per weight, is a major source of income for this area of Nepal.
Old woman with children in the village of Chyamtang, west of Lumba Samba La (pass), eastern Nepal (2012).
Smiling boy in the village of Chukhung, Khumbu (Everest) region, eastern Nepal (2012).
Man with a wool-spinning spindle in hand, south of Matachaur, central Nepal (2012).
Woman and daughter in a Tibetan refugee camp, near Maduwa, Dolpo region, central Nepal (2012).
Woman and child in the remote village of Chharka Bhot, Dolpo region, central Nepal (2012).
Shepherd in his tent, below Niwas La (pass), Dolpo region, central Nepal (2012).
Woman smoking a chillum (straight pipe), valley of the Chuwa Khola, northeast of Simikot, Humla region, western Nepal (2014).
Woman returning from a high-elevation summer pasture, valley of the Chuwa Khola, northeast of Simikot, Humla region, western Nepal (2014).
Woman returning from a high-elevation summer pasture, valley of the Chuwa Khola, northeast of Simikot, Humla region, western Nepal (2014).
Man returning from a high-elevation summer pasture, valley of the Chuwa Khola, northeast of Simikot, Humla region, western Nepal (2014).
Woman and daughter returning from a high-elevation summer pasture, valley of the Chuwa Khola, northeast of Simikot, Humla region, western Nepal (2014).
Woman in Nim, a hamlet in the Yari Khola valley, Humla region, western Nepal (2014).
Woman in Tibetan clothes on the trail near Yalbang, home of an important Buddhist school, Humla Karnali valley, Humla region, western Nepal (2014).
Man spinning wool along the Karnali Nadi (river), west of Simikot, Humla region, western Nepal (2017).
Man on his way to repair a trail along the Karnali Nadi (river), western Nepal (2017).
Woman preparing Tibetan tea in her home in the village of Chala, north of Mount Saipal, Humla region, western Nepal (2017). Tibetan tea is made by mixing tea with yak butter and salt in a churn.
Women returning to the village of Chala (see previous two pages) after spending the summer season with their yaks in Ranikharka, a pasture at the foot of Mount Saipal, Humla region, western Nepal (2017).
Woman returning to the village of Chala after spending the summer season in Ranikharka, a pasture at the foot of Mount Saipal, Humla region, western Nepal (2017).
Woman returning to the village of Chala after spending the summer season in Ranikharka, a pasture at the foot of Mount Saipal, Humla region, western Nepal (2017).
Men returning to the village of Chala after spending the summer season in Ranikharka, a pasture at the foot of Mount Saipal, Humla region, western Nepal (2017).
Children at a shepherd camp next to the village of Lampato on the Kawadi Khola, south east of Mount Salpal, western Nepal (2017).
Mushroom hunter along the Kawadi Khola, western Nepal (2017). The kind of mushroom he collects is in high demand on Asian markets, where it is often referred to as the mushroom of immortality.
Woman in Baudi, a village on the Kawadi Khola, western Nepal (2017).
Man in Yuna, a village on the Kawadi Khola, south of Baudi, western Nepal (2017).
Children at the window of a house in the village of Yuna on the Kawadi Khola, western Nepal (2017).
The same man as in the previous photo, here carrying a wooden plow to a field, western Nepal (2017).
Man smoking a chillum (straight pipe), south of Yuna, western Nepal (2017).
Vendor of melons and watermelons in the bazaar of Hisor, 15km west of the capital Dushanbe, Tajikistan (2009).
Man in the bazaar of Hisor, Tajikistan (2009).
Man and woman in the bazaar of Hisor, Tajikistan (2009).
Woman selling bread in the Shahmansur market, Dushanbe, Tajikistan (2017).
Man drinking tea in the village of Ghumash, upper Vanch valley, Tajikistan (2009).
Woman in the village of Ghumash, upper Vanch valley, Tajikistan (2009).
Grandmother with two of her grandchildren in the village of Ghumash, upper Vanch valley, Tajikistan (2009).
Women in the village of Jawshangoz on the Shakhdara river, southern Tajikistan (2009).
Woman in the village of Badomdara, Badomdara valley, southern Tajikistan (2017).
Woman in a shepherd settlement, Rivak valley, southern Tajikistan (2017).
Man on a donkey, on a trail along the Karakol river, Fann mountains, western Tajikistan (2006).
Man wearing a traditional Kyrgyz hat, Aksu area, Turkestan range, southwestern Kyrgyzstan (2004).
Man in a kosh (herder camp) in the Kalay Mahmud valley, Turkestan range, southwestern Kyrgyzstan (2005).
Family of semi-nomadic herders in the Kotur valley, southeast of the city of Naryn, Kyrgyzstan (2008).
One-year-old boy in a yurt in the Kotur valley, Kyrgyzstan (2008).
Woman watching over the cooking of sausages in an eatery outside the Chorzu bazaar in Tashkent, Uzbekistan (2018).
Women selling bread in the bazaar of Shakhrisabz, south of Samarkand, Uzbekistan (2012).
Women selling vegetables in the bazaar of Shakhrisabz, south of Samarkand, Uzbekistan (2012).
Woman selling fruits and vegetables in the bazaar of Nukus, the capital of the autonomous Republic of Karakalpakstan, western Uzbekistan (2018).
One of the few remaining fishermen south of the Aral Sea, western Uzbekistan (2018). A few lakes south of the sea still receive fresh water from the Amu Daria. They continue to host fish populations.
Man in the village of Abyaneh, Iran (201a). Men of Abanyeh wear black wide-leg pants, while women wear long white scarves decorated with colorful floral motifs (see previous page).
Danakil woman, Afar region, northern Ethiopia (1973).
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Danakil woman, Afar region, northern Ethiopia (1973).
Priest, Tigray, northern Ethiopia (1973).
Woman, Tigray, northern Ethiopia (1973).
Shepherds from the village of Mari, Amhara region, Ethiopia (2012).
Men in a tej house (house serving honey wine), Sekota, Amhara region, Ethiopia (2012).
Woman in a tea house near the village of Samara, Amhara region, Ethiopia (2012).
Young woman near the town of Sekota, Amhara region, Ethiopia (2012).
Woman in the village of Mari, Amhara region, Ethiopia (2012).
Woman in the village of Adigueba, Tigray, northern Ethiopia (2012).
Woman preparing coffee in the remote village of Debize, west of the Tekeze river, Amhara region, Ethiopia (2012).
Woman on her way to a market, Amhara region, Ethiopia (2012).
Woman carrying wood, Magdala, Amhara region, Ethiopia (2013).
Girls near the small town of Werkamba, Tigray, northern Ethiopia (2015).
Man in a remote village east of Sekota, Amhara region, Ethiopia (2012).
Woman preparing coffee in a country market eatery, south of Gashena, Amhara region, Ethiopia (2013).
Orthodox monk in the village of Chnamba, west of the Tekeze river, Amhara region, Ethiopia (2012).
Priest in the rock-hewn church of Abba Yohanni, Tigray, northern Ethiopia (2015).
Priest proudly demonstrating the original locking system of the door of the rock-hewn church of Medhane Alem Adi Kasho, Tigray, northern Ethiopia (2015).
Priest showing crosses, crowns and old books from the treasure of the Abba Pantaleon monastery, Aksum, Tigray, northern Ethiopia (2015).
Priest in the rock-hewn church of Bet Abba Libanos, Lalibela, Amhara region, Ethiopia (2012).
Man pulling his camels in Bati on a camel market day, Amhara region, Ethiopia (2013). Sitting between the highlands and the Afar depression, Bati is a crossroads for Amhara, Afar and Oromo people.
Woman in the Bati camel market, Bati, Amhara region, Ethiopia (2013).
Danakil (Afar) man in the Bati camel market, Bati, Amhara region, Ethiopia (2013).
Man looking at camels and evaluating them, Bati camel market, Bati, Amhara region, Ethiopia (2013).
Woman in a settlement along the Wadi Shebelle (river), northeast of Sheikh Hussein, Oromia region, Ethiopia (2017).
Man in a settlement along the Wadi Shebelle, northeast of Sheikh Hussein, Oromia region, Ethiopia (2017).
Couple in a settlement along the Wadi Shebelle, northeast of Sheikh Hussein, Oromia region, Ethiopia (2017).
The same man as in the photo in the opposite page, Oromia region, Ethiopia (2017).
Oromo farmer, southwest of the town of Burka, Oromia region, Ethiopia (2017).
Women shopping in the old city of Harar, central eastern Ethiopia (2012).
Women in the old city of Harar, central eastern Ethiopia (2012).
Women in the old city of Harar, central eastern Ethiopia (2012).
Man and women in the old city of Harar, central eastern Ethiopia (2012).
Man in the old city of Harar, central easternEthiopia (2012).
Woman in the town of Babile, east of Harar, on the road toward Somaliland, Oromia region, central eastern Ethiopia (2012).
Woman selling jabena (Ethiopian coffee pots), Mercato, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (2013).
Ait-Atta Berber from the Jebel Sahro at a campfire, southern Morocco (2014).
Man from the village of Tiraf, south of Tagounite, on the edge of the Sahara desert, southern Morocco (2020).
Man on the Sunday market of Cuetzalan, state of Puebla, Mexico (2018). Cuetzalan’s population is mostly of Totonac and Nahuatl Indian descent, and still speak Totonacan and Nahuatl languages.
Maya women in the market of Acanceh, south of Merida, state of Yucatan, Mexico (2018).
Maya woman selling sopes in the market of Acanceh, south of Merida, state of Yucatan, Mexico (2018).
Musician and singer in the street of Cuetzalan, state of Puebla, Mexico (2018).
Maya women selling children clothes in the market of Chichicastenango, Guatemala (2014).
Maya woman selling flowers in the market of Chichicastenango, Guatemala (2014).
Tz’utujil Maya men in their traditional outfits in Santiago Atitlan on the lake Atitlan, Guatemala (2014).
Woman selling food in the Mercado de Bazurto, Cartagena, Colombia (2018).
Fishmonger in the Mercado de Bazurto, Cartagena, Colombia (2018).
Woman selling food in the Mercado de Bazurto, Cartagena, Colombia (2018).