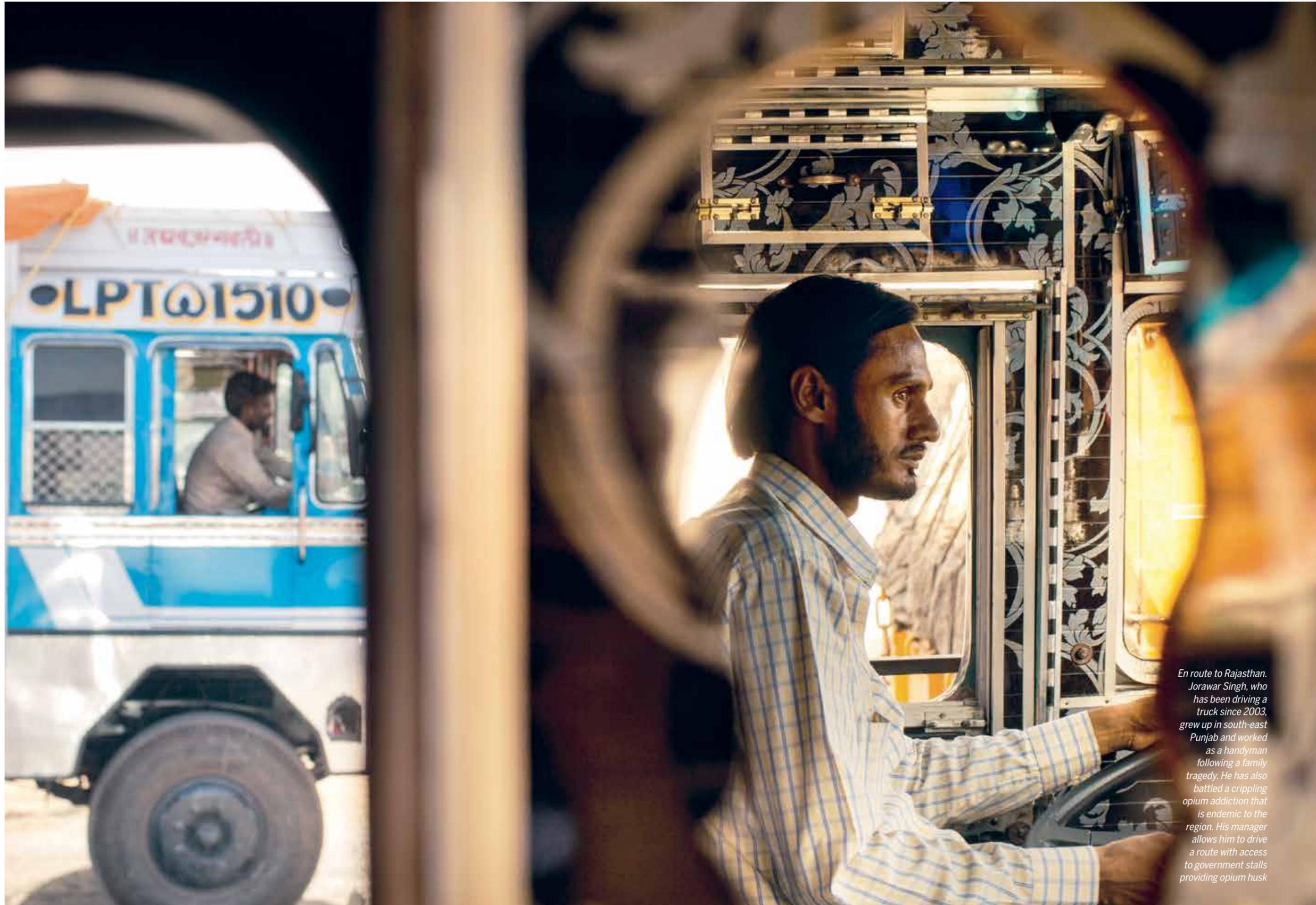


Ships of the tarmac

Indian highways are dominated by ornately decorated trucks overburdened by double-capacity loads, and often running on their last legs. They ride to a melody of squeaking brakes, chugging engines and song-like horns that overlap to form a convoy of mass and sound moving under the constant pressure of delivery deadlines. Photographer **Ozzie Hoppe** spent three months hitch-hiking with truckers across the country, documenting the daily lives of a unique community that often suffers discrimination, health issues, impossible work demands and little to no formal social or occupational representation.



En route to Rajasthan. Jorawar Singh, who has been driving a truck since 2003, grew up in south-east Punjab and worked as a handyman following a family tragedy. He has also battled a crippling opium addiction that is endemic to the region. His manager allows him to drive a route with access to government stalls providing opium husk



With the demanding schedules and expectations of their truck and cargo owners, many drivers spend the majority of their existence within this space — sleeping, eating and socialising inside these decorated mobile homes



Drivers bathe in a waterfall midway up the Himalayan range in Kashmir. The NH44 highway is the main artery of transportation from the dry city of Jammu in the northern plains of India and the Kashmir Valley



Two unloaders empty cargo off a truck from Delhi at Bhiwandi depot in Mumbai. With quick turnaround times, all levels of the workforce labour around the clock under high pressure to fulfil strict shipment demands

A manager reviews an order as he waits for one of his three trucks that run between Mumbai and Delhi. The office doubles as a cargo shelter and sleeping den for mid-shift drivers

A nomadic family from the Gujjar community load their cargo on a truck going from Punjab to Kashmir. Gujjar payments augment driver incomes, which are often meagre after repairs and payments to highway officials

A love letter, transceiver and Hindi music-filled USB drive in a cab. The crew comprises six young and somewhat rowdy friends so there's always someone to take the wheel





A driver passes time at a fuel station in Nagaland. The state is known for the tribes that lay claim to the roads. Refusal to pay money usually results in retaliation starting with a broken window. Further infractions often lead to much graver forms of retaliation

Along the ► NH39, which is one of the most heavily disputed roadways in the north-east of India, a young group of drivers inspect their fourth tyre puncture on a three-day voyage from Dimapur, Nagaland to Imphal, Manipur



◀ A crew cooks dal and chapattis before settling in for the night in their trucks at the last petrol station before the city of Kohima in the cool misty mountains of Nagaland. The route from here is considered dangerous at night due to a local tribe that levies a fee on commercial vehicles. Drivers who arrive late usually set up camp here