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LADAKHI LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

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Ladakh, because of its geographical situation and its cultural variety, is known by various names which in many ways give a good description of regional conditions. The most prominent among the names given to it by local scholars are: Ladaks (*La-dwags*, the land of passes), Ladaks (*bLa-dwags*, the land of lamas, *bla-ma*), Maryul (*dMar-yul* or *Mar-yul*, the red land), Mangyul (*Mang-yul*, the people land), and Ngaris (*mNga'-ris*). Among the popular names given to it by Western scholars are: "the land of lamas (*bla-ma*) and gonpas (*dgon-pa*)", "Little Tibet" and "Western Tibet". Similarly, Ladakh has a rich tradition of language and literature, which historically dates back to the 7th century A.D. As in the case of the land, the people also have known the language by various names, the main ones being Tibetan or *potyik* (*bod-yig*), bothi, bodhi or Ladakhi.

Politically, Ladakh was an independent state dating from the 10th century A.D. The kings of Ladakh succeeded in keeping this independence until the invasion of the forces of Maharaja Gulab Singh of Jammu under the leadership of General Zorawar Singh. This occurred in 1834. After this Dogra conquest, Ladakh became a part of the Jammu princely state and, as part of the Maharaja's state of Jammu and Kashmir, acceded to independent India in 1947.

While Ladakh was under the reign of various kings, it had no problem with the present vital subject of Ladakhi language and literature as opposed to Tibetan, mainly because the first King of Ladakh, Palgigon (*dPal-gyi-mgon*) was a descendant of the King Skilde Nimagon (*Skyid-lde Nyi-ma-mgon*) (957-1000). Similarly, his subjects were Buddhist even at that time. The *chogyal* (*chos-rgyal*) or Dharmarajas, gave full patronage to the practice of religion and the development of language and literature. In this way the whole region became a centre of Mahayana Buddhism and Ladakh played a very important role in the development of all aspects of Mahayana Buddhist literature and culture.

Although Ladakh is situated far from central Tibet, Ladakhis were very active in Tibetan affairs. According to a popular Ladakhi oral tradition, Rigpachan (*Rig-pa-can*)¹ the able minister of King Srongtsan Gampo (*Srong-btsan sGam-po*) of the 7th century, was a Shergol-born Ladakhi. It is recorded that during this period this minister was very active and played a big role in sending Thonmi Sambhota (*Thon-mi Sam-bhota*), the inventor of the Tibetan script, to Kashmir for his studies. Similarly, in the field of literature, Ladakhis were very active even in the 10th century A.D. Among the prominent Ladakhis were Zanskar Lotsawa Phakspa Sherab (*Zangs-dkar Lo-tsa-ba 'Phags-pa Shes-rab*) and his pupil Balti Lotsawa (*sBal-ti Lo-tsa-ba*).² It is a fact that their translation works and original writings were preserved in the Tangyur canon (*bstan-gyur*). About Balti Lotsawa it is said that he was one of the four main disciples of Zanskar Lotsawa. He was born in a poor

family in a village called Bulmik, in Skardu; and presumably he was the first incarnation of Ngari Rinpoche (*mNga'-ris Rin-po-che*).³

For a very long period, the present Baltistan region of Pakistan was a district of undivided Ladakh and remained a part of Ladakh till the partition of India in the year 1947.⁴ As in the case of Tibet, we do not find many differences between the spoken languages of Ladakh and Baltistan. On linguistic grounds from the very beginning there was a close relationship with Baltistan. However, on political grounds Ladakh and Baltistan had many conflicts until Baltistan became a district of Ladakh during the Dogra reign. Once, the king of Ladakh, Jamyang Namgyal (*'Jam-dbyangs rNam-rgyal*) reached Skardu in the course of a war. In Skardu he was arrested by the forces of the Chief of Baltistan and imprisoned. During the imprisonment the Ladakhi king met the Chief's daughter and they fell in love. The Chief of Skardu released Jamyang Namgyal, and allowed his daughter, Khatoon, to marry him. While sending the couple to Ladakh, it is said that the Chief of Skardu also sent a team of musicians who later settled in the Leh area.⁵ It is believed that many of the present Ladakhi musical instruments derive their origin from Baltistan. Later Queen Khatoon gave birth to the greatest King of Ladakh, Singge Namgyal (*Seng-ge rNam-rgyal*) (1590-1620).

It is interesting to note that, even in these early days, the Baltis of Skardu and its surrounding area spoke the Tibetan language, locally called Balti. Their pronunciation of the language is both the purest and closest to written Tibetan of all the widespread Tibetan dialects, Ladakhi and central Tibetan included. Because of the linguistic evidence we can believe that even before the 7th century A.D. the population of Baltistan, Ladakh and the surrounding area were Tibetan-speaking people. In Ladakh and Tibet many developments took place in the dissemination of the classical Tibetan script invented by Thonmi Sambhota. In Baltistan however, Tibetan script was not generally developed or adopted for the Balti dialect. Despite their religious conversion to Islam, the Persian spoken language was never adopted and the Balti dialect is still purely Tibetan.

In contrast to the Balti example we find several scholars born in Tibet and neighbouring areas spreading Tibetan literature in Ladakh. Foremost among them was Lotsawa Rinchen Zangpo (*Lo-tsa-ba Rin-chen bZang-po*)⁶ of the 11th century A.D. About the Guge (*Gu-ge*) born Lotsawa, the great translator, it is recorded that he built 108 monasteries in Ngaris (*mnga'-ris*) and was active when Dipankara Shrijana happened to pass by Ladakh's border. Similarly Tibet-born Staktsang Raspa (*Stag-tshang Ras-pa*) who founded Hemis Gonpa (*Hi-mi* or *He-mis dgon-pa*) and Chimre gonpa (*ICe-bde* or *ICe-bre dgon-pa*) in the 16th century A.D. and travelled as far as Mecca, wrote

several books including his tour diary of which the master copy is preserved in Hemis gonpa.⁷ In these, and other cases we do not find any significant cultural or geographical boundaries between old Ladakh, Guge or central Tibet.

For an early Western confirmation of the nearly identical nature of Ladakhi and Tibetan, we can look to the example of Csoma de Körös the Western pioneer of Tibetan studies.⁸ Csoma never went to Tibet during his research; what he learnt was taught to him by his Ladakhi teachers. Despite this, he did not describe the language as Ladakhi. It is clear that he did not do so because he did not observe any significant cultural or literary rift between Ladakh and Tibet as far as the written language and the scholarly culture are concerned. Csoma was not interested with popular culture and spoken dialects. Otherwise, Csoma might have described his dictionary as, “Ladakhi-English”. Csoma’s teachers were Buddhist lamas and until the Chinese subjugation of Tibet, Ladakhi Buddhists looked for religious and spiritual guidance there, and did not emphasize the linguistic or cultural differences that did exist.

Ladakhi language

Despite these close religious and cultural ties, there are also inevitable divergences between Ladakh and Tibet. Along with the widespread use of classical Tibetan in religious and lay literature, there are definite differences in the spoken dialects of Ladakh and Tibet, as well as within Ladakh itself. This seems to be a universal characteristic of traditional societies. For example, the present population of the Kargil district of Ladakh speaks the Purik (Bod-rigs) dialect which is essentially identical to Balti. The majority of these people cannot write Tibetan script, but they speak the language classically and with such clear pronunciation that in my view none of the other Tibetan-speaking peoples of the world are their equals (by clear pronunciation, I mean very near to the written language). In contrast, the present population of eastern Ladakh or Changthang (Byang-thang), also has its own dialect, popularly called *cangskat* (*byang-skad*). Geographically, Changthang is the closest to Tibet of all the districts of Ladakh, but its dialect is considered the most difficult in Ladakh. Similarly, the northern part of Ladakh, Nubra, and the southern part of Ladakh, Zanskar, have their own dialects within the Ladakhi language. The rest of Ladakh is divided linguistically into lower, (Sham; gSham), upper (Stot; Stod) and central Ladakh. The dialect of the lower Indus valley is called *shamskat* (*gsham-skad*), or the dialect of lower Ladakh. In upper Ladakh, or Stot (Stod), we have several dialects, namely those of Shey, Thikse, Gser-khri, Igu and Chimre (lCe-bde or lCe-bre). Although the villages are very close to each other, the inhabitants speak the language with a very different pronunciation from those of neighbouring villages. In Ladakh we also have a small population called *argon* (*ar-gon*). The *argon* originally came from the Skardu area during the reign of Jamyang Namgyal (‘Jam-dbyangs rNam-rgyal). They also have their own typical dialect. Finally we have the dialect of Leh, the capital city, which the whole of Ladakh has now acknowledged as standard spoken Ladakhi and which can generally be understood by people from all of Ladakh’s regions. This dialect has now become the medium of Leh Radio broadcasts and the standard medium of communication with those of different dialect areas.

Development in Ladakhi literature and culture during the Dogra period

In the year 1834, Ladakh became a part of the kingdom of the raja of Jammu. Although the Dogras destroyed many important Ladakhi cultural, historical and religious objects during the war and immediately after, they never adopted a policy of discouraging Ladakhi scholars. During the early part of the Dogra era, Lama Tshultim Nima (bla-ma Tshul-khrims Nyi-ma 1790-1865),⁹ founder of Rizong (Ri-dzongs) monastery and Samtanling gonpa (Bsam-gtan-gling dgon-pa) in Nubra and the greatest scholar of the age, and Lama Tashi Tamphel (bla-ma bKra-shis bsTan-’phel) were active strengthening Buddha’s religion and in the revival of literary activities in the country. Lama Chultim Nima encouraged the youth of the period to keep up the tempo of literary creativity. Later Nastan Dorje (gNas-brtan rDo-rdje), another scholar lama, wrote the biography of Lama Tshultim Nima. This contains much information about conditions in Ladakh during his life. Meanwhile in Zanskar, the head of Dzongkhul gonpa (rDzong-khul dgon-pa) lama Kunga Chosleg (bla-ma Kun-dgal Chos-legs) was a very active scholar.¹⁰ Lama Kunga Chosleg, besides being a scholar, was a good painter and writer. When the great Hungarian scholar, Csoma de Körös, came to Zanskar to learn Tibetan, Lama Kunga Chosleg wrote a book in reply to three questions of Csoma, entitled, *The Questions of European Skander*. During the Dogra conquest of Ladakh and Zanskar this lama, realizing the futility of confrontation, extended the hand of friendship and organised feasts in honour of the invaders. This he did in the interest of preserving the religion and literature of the people.

During the Dogra regime, the Moravian missionaries played a big role in the development of the teaching of Ladakhi in the schools. In this connection the role of H.A. Jäschke, the compiler of the second *Tibetan-English Dictionary*, is appreciable.¹¹ Jäschke, came to Ladakh in the summer of 1857 and learned Tibetan while staying in Stok village near Leh. After learning the language, he returned to his missionary headquarters at Kyelang in Lahoul. There he prepared text books and dictionaries for the students of mission schools. Later the books prepared by Jäschke were used in the mission school at Leh and the dictionaries were widely used by the scholars of the time. Even today his *Tibetan-English Dictionary* has proved the best for learning Ladakhi because he used colloquial Ladakhi words in the dictionary more than any others. In the year 1896, A.H. Francke, came to Ladakh and learnt the language well.¹² He lived for a long time both in Leh and Khalsi (or Khalatse) collecting materials for his history book as well as collecting Ladakhi folk songs and folk tales. From 1904, Francke started publishing a daily newspaper in Ladakhi called *Ladvags kyi Agbar*. This made him very popular among the people of Ladakh and because of his efforts Ladakh had the first newspaper published in the whole of Jammu and Kashmir State.

Around the same time Sras Rinpoche Lobzang Chultim Chospel (Sras Rin-po-che bLo-bzang Tshul-khrims Chos-dpel) was active in the field of literature.¹³ This lama scholar had mastery over many branches of knowledge. Among his works were poems, songs and prose. It is recorded that Chultim Chospel, besides being a writer, was a great artist, a craftsman and a singer. Many of his songs are popular among the people

even now. Most of his writings appeared in 1934.

In the year 1933, the great Hindi writer Rahul Sandriyayan visited Ladakh. While Rahulji was in Ladakh he came in contact with two Ladakhi scholars.¹⁴ They were Joseph Gergan (dGe-rgan) the compiler of *bla-dwags rgyal-rabs 'chi-med gter* and Munshi Tsetan Phuntsok (Mun-shi Tshe-brtan Phun-tshogs). At that time Joseph Gergan was around 60 years of age, but Munshi Tsetan Phuntsok was young and energetic. Around 1935-40, the youth of Ladakh founded the Young Men's Buddhist Association for the development of the Ladakhi language.¹⁵ In the year 1933, under the auspices of the Young Men's Buddhist Association, Munshi Tsetan Phuntsok brought out Bodhi text books for Ladakhi schools from its 5th primary. The textbooks became very popular and remained as school textbooks even after independence in the year 1947. So despite the conquest of Ladakh in 1834, the Ladakhis were able to retain and even develop their religion, culture and linguistic traditions throughout the colonial period.

Modern Developments in Ladakhi Literature and Language Use

In the year 1947, India became free from British rule and Pakistan was created by the partition. Ladakh, as a part of Jammu and Kashmir, acceded to the Indian Union. But the Baltistan district of Ladakh was occupied by Pakistan. In 1951, a convention was called to write a constitution for Jammu and Kashmir State. Kushok Bakula Rinpoche (sKushog Ba-ku-la Rin-po-che) the noted lama scholar, was nominated as the Ladakhi member of the Constituent Assembly. In the new constitution of the State, Ladakhi was enlisted as one of the State languages. In the year 1953,¹⁶ Kushok Bakula Rinpoche was made a minister and since then the Kushok has worked to give Ladakhi its due position and status as an important regional language.

In the year 1963-64, for the first time since the country's independence, Ladakhi text books from class 1 primary to the 8th standard were brought out. As pledged in the constitution, the government established the Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages. In the year 1969 a branch of the State Academy was established in Leh for the promotion of Ladakhi language and culture. In 1970 the Academy brought out a volume of *Ladakhi Folk Songs*, compiled by Tashi Rabgias (bKra-shis Rab-rgyas) as its first independent literary work in Ladakhi. From the year 1954, All India Radio, Srinagar, started broadcasting news in Ladakhi and later a unit of the Ladakhi section opened in Delhi.

Initially, Ladakhis did not feel the importance of creating their own independent literature, due to the fact that so many literary works left behind by the scholars of the past were available. Later when the Academy started publishing books and the Radio introduced programmes in Ladakhi, scholars of Ladakh were encouraged to write. In the 1950's there were not many scholars exclusively engaged in the development of literature. However, some of the scholars who did devote themselves to this area were Geshes Eshey Tondup (dge-bshes Yeshe-shes Don-grub), Lonpo Morup Stanzin (blon-po dNos-grub bStan-'dzin) of Alchi and Tashi Rabgias.

Stok-born Geshes Eshey Tondup (1897-1980) went to Tibet at an early age for education. After obtaining the *geshe* (dgeshes) degree at Tashi Lhunpo monastery in Tibet, he returned

to his homeland. His fame as a scholar spread and soon he was invited to work at the Asiatic Society, where he spent a couple of months working with some prominent European scholars of the time. Geshes Eshey Tondup arrived from Calcutta around 1934 and soon after his arrival he was appointed Buddhist missionary by the Maharaja's government for propagating the teaching of Buddha and promoting Buddhist studies. When Ladakh became part of India he worked as a Bodhi teacher in Leh. While Geshes was working as a teacher, he started taking an active part in the promotion of Ladakhi language and literature. He was made a compiler of school text books and the Jammu and Kashmir Academy nominated him as the Advisory Member for Ladakhi. Later, the Academy conferred the "Robe of Honour" upon him for his outstanding contribution in the field of Ladakhi language. Geshes Eshey Tondup wrote several scholarly articles for the Academy's publications and till his death took an active part in the field,

Lonpo Morup Stanzin (blon-po dNos-grub bStan-'dzin) worked for many years as Ladakhi programme producer in the 1960s with Radio Kashmir, Srinagar. He has also written a book and compiled a dictionary of Ladakhi language. Tashi Phuntsog (bKra-shis Phun-tshogs) was born in Skara village in the year 1912. After studying up to middle standard, Tashi Phuntsog joined the State Education Department as a teacher. In the year 1963, he, along with Geshes Eshey Tondup, was nominated as member of the Ladakhi textbook preparation committee. Tashi has written several songs for the youth of the time and some of these have become very popular. He also published a newspaper entitled *Melong* or "Mirror" (*melong; me-long*) in Ladakhi, and produced several plays.

Among the foremost disciples of Geshes Eshey Tondup was Tashi Rabgias (bKra-shis Rab-rgyas). Tashi Rabgias started writing poems at a very early age and published several books of modern songs. While he was working with the State Information Department, he successfully brought out a monthly news letter entitled *Yargias Gongfel* (*dbyar-rgyas 'gong-phel*), "Progress and Development". For many years, Tashi was a member of the Central Committee of the Academy. Like Geshes Eshey Tondup, he too was decorated with the "Robe of Honour" by the Cultural Academy for his outstanding contribution in the field of literature. Several of his articles were published in the Academy books and journals. His greatest contribution in the field of Ladakhi literature is his book *History of Ladakh called the Mirror which illuminates all* (1984). Because of the efforts of the above mentioned scholars, many young writers came forward and made significant contributions to all areas of Ladakhi language and literature.

From the very beginning, drama was the main medium of entertainment in Ladakh. Staging of the modern type of drama began in the 1950s. Around 1953-54, under the guidance of Geshes Eshey Tondup, the young and old of Ladakh presented many dramas taking themes from the Jataka stories, the previous lives of the Buddha. Later a couple of Ladakhi playwrights wrote plays taking historical themes. Among them were Jamyang Gyaltsen's ('Jam-dbyang rGyal-mtshan) historical play *King Singge Namgyal* (Seng-ge rNam-rgyal), Gelong Thupstan Paldan's (dge-slong Thub-bstan dPal-ldan), *King Trakspe Bumde* (Grag-pa 'Bum-lde) and Tsewang Rigzing's (Tshe-dbang Rig-'dzing) *Gyalbu Kunzang*. In 1980, Gelong Tsewang Rigzing (dge-slong Tshe-dbang Rig-'dzing)

wrote a play discussing social issues entitled *Dus-kyi bka'-chad* or *Timely testament*. Besides that many Ladakhi playwrights wrote dramas for the stage as well as for radio.

Similarly, writing of prose in Ladakhi started only recently. In the year 1976, the first *Lo 'khor gyi deb* or *Annual Book* was published. In that book the writing of Geshes Eshey Tondup (dge-bshes Ye-shes Don-grub), Kachen Lobzang Zodpa (bKa'-chen bLo-bzang bZod-pa), Gelong Lobzang Jamspal (dge-slong bLo-bzang 'Jam-dpal), Tashi Rabgias (bKra-shis Rab-rgyas), Tashi Phuntsog (bKra-shis Phun-tshogs), Tsering Norbu (Tshe-ring Nor-bu), Rinchen Tondup (Rin-chen Don-grub), the late Thinlas Dorje (Phrin-las rDo-rdje), Tsering Wangdus (Tshe-ring Dbang-dus), Gelong Thubstan Paldan (dge-slong Thub-stan dPal-ldan), Tashi Tsomo (bKra-shis mTsho-mo) and Thubstan Janfen (Thub-stan gJan-phan) were published. These attempts of the Academy proved so successful that later many of its writers have succeeded in developing their own individual writing style. Since then the local radio has also encouraged writers to write radio scripts and stories. Now, in the field of prose writing, Ladakhi writers are very advanced and every year individual writers and the Academy publish numerous writings in Ladakhi.

Writing of poetry started much earlier than that of prose. Even in old Ladakh we had several poets who produced high literary poems. Among the prominent early poets of Ladakh was Rinpoche (rin-po-che) Lobzang Tshultim Chosphele (Lob-zang Tshul-khrims Chos-'phel). In 1951, Munshi Tsetan Phuntsog (mun-shi Tshe-brtan Phun-tshogs) published a book of modern Ladakhi songs. Geshes Eshey Tondup, Tashi Phuntsog and Tashi Rabgias also wrote poems and became very popular among the people. In modern Ladakh there is no scarcity of poets. The Cultural Academy and Radio provide opportunities for poetry recitals which encourages more and more modern Ladakhi writers and poets to come forward.

The novel, in the modern sense, is a recent development in Ladakhi literature. We can find some literature of this type from earlier times, but further research must be done to clarify the nature of these older texts. Many, which use a quasi-novelistic form, may have been considered purely historical texts at their inception and afterwards. In recent years Tsewang Tondan (Tshe-dbang Don-ldan) wrote two novels taking modern problems as their theme. On the whole, this field of literature still needs much development.

Ladakh is also very rich in the field of folk literature. The Kesar Saga is popular throughout Ladakh. In recent years the Cultural Academy encouraged local writers to write modern short stories. In this regard the first attempt was made by Gelong Thubstan Paldan, which was published in *Sheeraza* journal. After that Rinchen Tondup (Rin-chen Don-grub) and Gelong Konchok Namgyal (dge-slong dKon-mchog rNam-rgyal) also wrote short stories which are well received by readers.

Conclusion

Ladakhi language and literature is entering the modern age. We still have much development necessary before solving the problem of safeguarding our traditional tongue. In this connection the role of the Ladakh Cultural Forum, the only literary society of Ladakhi writers, is significant. The Forum, beside publishing its own books, is struggling at every level

for the enrichment and development of the language. Among its major achievements in the field of language and literature is its success in producing Ladakhi school books from classes 1 to the 8th standard. Later, on the repeated requests of the Forum, the J & K State Board of School Education has undertaken to publish school texts books from classes 9 to the 12th standard. On the request of the Forum, teaching of Ladakhi up to University level is under active consideration by the State government.

The State Cultural Academy first started publishing books in Ladakhi with the publication of an annual digest in the year 1976. This annual book became very popular among readers and writers of the region and abroad. With the success of this publication, the Academy introduced publication of a bi-annual journal named *Sheeraza Ladakhi (Shi-ra-za La-dwags-kyi)* from the year 1979 and from 1984 it began appearing as a quarterly journal under my editorship. The Academy has also been publishing Ladakhi folk songs and folk tales. Up to 1985, the Academy brought out eight volumes of Ladakhi folk songs and four volumes of Ladakhi folk tales.

Other media which have crucial roles in furthering linguistic development and integrity are the spoken mass media of radio and television. In Leh, the local radio broadcasts in Ladakhi. It produces radio talks, features, dramas and local and international news on a regular basis. So far local television does not have the facilities to allow Ladakhi-produced programmes. Ladakhi language and literature is now developing its modern form, but its position as an Indian language is not clearly recognised. Among the urgent work which needs attention is the opening of departments of Ladakhi in the universities of Jammu and Kashmir, as has already been done in the major national universities. We are also seeking recognition of Ladakhi by the National Academy of Letters. The "Sahitya Akademi", as an Indian language. This will bring both immediate benefits for Ladakhi scholars and will be a clear announcement of Ladakh's importance as a part of India's cultural heritage.

NOTES

1 Tashi Rabgias; 1984 *Mar-yul la-dwags-kyi ngon-rabs-kun gsal me-long jis-bya-ba bjug-so* Leh (*History of Ladakh Called the Mirror which Illuminates All*, in Ladakhi). C. Namgyal and Tsewang Taru, publishers, p. 44.

2 K. Zodpa and Nawang T. Shakspo (dKa'-chen bLo-bzang bZod-pa and Ngag-dbang Tshe-ring), 1979, *zang-dkar-gyi rgyal-rabs dang chos-'byung (An Introduction to the History and Monasteries of Zanskar)*. Varanasi, 1979 p. 21.

3 Tashi Rabgias; 1984, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

4 J. N. and P.N. Ganhar, 1956, *Buddhism in Kashmir and Ladakh*, p. 168 and K.M. Panikkar, 1953, *The Founding of Kashmir State*, p. 74.

5 Nawang Tsering Shakspo, 1985, "Song from Himalaya, Ladakhi Folk Songs". Published in the proceeding of the 1982 I. A. T. S.: *Sounding in Tibetan Civilisation*, Matthew Kapstein and Barbara N. Aziz (eds) New Delhi, 1985.

6 *Lo-'khor-gyi deb* (annual publication, Ladakhi) 1977, p. 34. (Publication of the Cultural Academy, Leh in Ladakhi).

7 *Lo-'khor-gyi deb* (annual publication, Ladakhi) 1981, p. 24.

8 *Lo-'khor-gyi deb* (annual publication Ladakhi) 1984, p. 74.

Photo Bruno Morandi



RESUME : Issue de racines tibétaines, la langue ladakhi a pris son propre essor et est devenue un instrument d'unification culturelle très efficace pour les habitants de cette région de hautes montagnes. Cette langue est tiraillée entre deux directions : les nombreux parlars locaux d'une part, la langue classique écrite de l'autre. Cette dernière jouit d'un grand prestige auprès de la population instruite aussi bien qu'illettrée. Le ladakhi moderne a développé sa propre synthèse entre ces deux tendances et est devenu à son tour une langue écrite issue de dialectes parlés. Cette langue moderne, utilisée aussi bien par les Ladakhi bouddhistes que musulmans, joue un rôle crucial dans le maintien de notre identité culturelle.

SUMMARY: The Ladakhi language has developed as a unifying cultural force from its Tibetan roots and remains so among the small population that inhabits the high mountain land of Ladakh. It has been affected by the creative tension between local speech and the classical written language, which was considered of great importance by the entire population, literate or illiterate alike. Modern Ladakhi is developing its own synthesis of these two tendencies and has brought oral dialects to the written page. This modern language is spoken by both Buddhist and Muslim Ladakhis and is crucial to the maintenance of our cultural identity.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG: Die Sprache Ladakhs ist zu einem identitätsstiftenden Medium für die kleine Bevölkerung des Berglandes geworden. Sie oszilliert zwischen den Polen lokaler gesprochener

Dialekt und klassisches Schrifttibetisch, die beide von der Bevölkerung, Alphabeten wie Analphabeten, für wichtig gehalten werden. Das Ladakhi wird sowohl von Buddhisten als auch von Moslems gesprochen und nimmt einen wichtigen Platz in der Aufrechterhaltung der kulturellen Identität ein.

9 Nawang Tsering, *Buddhism in Ladakh*, p. 12 and 44 and *Lo-'khor-gyi deb*, 1977, p. 44.

10 *Sheeraza Ladakhi (shi-ra-za la-dwags-kyi)* Vol. VI, n° 3, p. 56, Leh. Publication of the Cultural Academy.

11 For this information I am grateful to John Bray.

12 Francke A.H., *Antiquities of Indian Tibet*, (2 vol.) Calcutta 1914 and 1926, republished New Delhi 1976 and Francke A.H., *History of Western Tibet*, London, 1907, republished New Delhi 1977.

13 *Sheeraza Ladakhi (Shi-ra-za La-dwags-kyi)*, vol. 1, n° 1, p. 14.

14 *Lo-'khor gyi deb (Annual Publication, Ladakhi)* 1983, p. 97.

15 Tashi Rabgias, 1984, *op. cit.*, p. 472 and Rahul Sankrityayan and Munshi Tsetan Phuntsok, *Bodhi Reader*, published by Young Men's Buddhist Association, Leh, 1942.

16 J.N. Ganhar and P.N. Ganhar, *op. cit.*, p. 233.