

## **12<sup>th</sup> IALS COLLOQUIUM REPORT, KARGIL 2005**

The 12<sup>th</sup> IALS colloquium took place on 12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> July. This was the first time that we had held a conference in Kargil, and that in itself made the event especially memorable. There were more than 70 participants from ten different countries, including three (Croatia, Slovakia and Canada) that had not previously been represented at IALS events. We all benefited immensely from the hard work, friendship and hospitality of our friends in Kargil.

The conference programme fully demonstrated the cultural and historical riches of Kargil and the wider Purig region, and we hope that it will serve as a stimulus to further research to be presented at future IALS conferences in years to come.

### **Inauguration ceremony**

The conference was launched with great style at the town auditorium, close to the main bazaar, which had been specially decorated for the occasion. We were honoured by the presence of Haji Asgar Ali Karbalaiee, the Chief Executive Councillor of the Kargil Hill Council, who was Chief Guest. The Guest of Honour was Kacho Asfandyar Khan, who is himself a scholar and later presented a paper on the Kesar Saga.

As the guests arrived they were welcomed by teams of musicians organised by Mipham Otsal of the J&K Cultural Academy, and they later presented a cultural programme inside the auditorium. The performers included Muslim and Buddhist representatives from Dras, the Da-Hanu region and Wakha-Mulbekh as well as Kargil town.

### **The Munshi Aziz Bhatt museum**

After the main inauguration, we moved to the Munshi Aziz Bhatt museum so that it could be inaugurated in its turn. The museum contains an important collection of Central Asian trade and Kargili artefacts: its core comes from the Munshi family, and has been supplemented by other donations. This is the first museum of its kind in Ladakh, and the organisers hope that it will serve as a centre for future study and research by both local scholars and visitors.

### **Conference programme**

The conference took place in a hall at the government compound in Baru, some distance away from the Kargil bazaar on the road towards Leh. The breadth and variety of the presentations makes the conference difficult to summarise: the following is a selection of some of the papers and themes that made a particular impression on this participant.

Tashi Rabgias opened the first session in his capacity as the senior scholar present. The title of the first session was 'Images of Kargil'. The papers by Ghulam Hassan Khan, Sadiq Ali Sadiq, Ali Rather, and Abdul Hamid Tanweer took a broad historical view of the region. Abdul Ghani Sheikh discussed the impressions of historic – mainly Western –

travellers in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Turning to more recent events, Ravina Aggarawal discussed representations of Kargil since the 1999 war in film as well as the printed media, arguing that local voices and images had all too often been neglected in the patriotic fervour that followed the war. Sophie Day closed the first session with a review of the work of Nicky Grist (1957-2004), emphasising the continuities between her early researches in the Indus valley and her more recent work in Suru. Nicky would have loved to take part in the Kargil conference, and it was good to commemorate her in this way.

We returned to historical themes on the second and third days of the conference. Kacho Asfandyar Khan discussed the origins of the sKaysar (Kesar) legend in Tibet and Ladakh: he recalled listening to the legend as a child, and – having returned to the study of the epic as an adult - pointed to possible affinities with the pre-Islamic religion of Persia as well as Tibetan Bon. Other historical papers included Jigar Mohammed's review of Mughal relations with Ladakh in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and a variety of studies on the history of Zanskar, Dras, and different parts of Purig. Maulvi Omar Gutu Nadvi discussed the philosophy of Khache Phalu, an 18<sup>th</sup> century Muslim who wrote in Tibetan and may well have had links with Ladakh. Many of the other presenters in the sessions on Culture and Society and Links and Comparisons with Baltistan also drew on historical themes.

The art history and architecture session included papers paintings by Christian Luczanits and Erberto Lo Bue; on rock sculptures by Lalit Gupta and Sonam Phuntsog; and on the monuments of Dras by Ghulam Nabi Zia. Two the speakers pointed to the urgent need for conservation of Ladakh's historic buildings. Wolfgang Heusgen gave a first-hand account of the challenges of preserving the temple at Wanla: the roof is overloaded, and weight needs to be removed from it to prevent it collapsing. Sundar Paul and Tashi Ldawa Tshangspa reported on the current restoration of the palace in Leh.

The Environment and Ecology session naturally touched on more contemporary issues. Blaise Humbert-Droz, emphasised the special features of Ladakh's environment, but also the threats arising from military activities and off-road driving by tourists: a well-designed Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (BSAP) is essential. Ken Macdonald, a Canadian geographer who has made a special study of Baltistan, discussed the social and political history of wildlife management in the Karakoram region. Richard Lee combined medicine and geology with an analysis of health problems in the Hanle region arising from unclean water supplies. Zohra Bano drew on her own experiences as a doctor to discuss the most common diseases among women and children in Ladakh. Radhika Gupta gave the final presentation in this session, explaining the workings of Ladakhi village irrigation systems.

The panel on Social Change and Development complemented Ecology. Monisha Ahmed discussed recent social developments in Rupshu, and the current trend for people to leave nomadic life and settle in Choglamsar and Leh. Jigmet Namgyal, who has recently retired from J&K government service, outlined plans to join Ladakh to a transmission line from Srinagar to Leh via Kargil. Sonam Angchuk gave a different perspective on energy use with a vivid presentation on new designs for low-cost solar heated buildings.

The final session on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> July—but not, as it turned out, the last session of the conference—was on language. Recently, there has been much discussion in and around Leh on the history, grammar and style of written Ladakhi. The four papers in session discussed these issues from contrasting perspectives, provoking heated but largely good-humoured debate on a topic that is likely to remain controversial for some time to come.

### **IALS general meeting**

This was the first IALS conference since our patron, Kushok Bakula Rinpoche, passed away. As a mark of respect, we commemorated his passing with a two-minute silence.

As worthy successors to Kusho Bakula, we elected Tashi Rabgias and Kacho Sikandar Khan as joint patrons of the IALS. Both are distinguished scholars of Ladakh: we were delighted that Tashi Rabgias was able to be present throughout the conference, and that Kacho Sikandar Khan was able to attend the reception.

We also elected four new members to the Advisory Committee Gulzar Hussein Munshi, Dr Mohammed Salim Mir, Dr Mohammed Raza Abbasi and Tashi Ldawa Tshangspa.

### **Evening reception**

On the evening of 14<sup>th</sup> July, Hill Council Chief Executive Haji Asgar Ali Karbalaiee organised an outdoor reception for the IALS at BulBul Bagh in central Kargil. A number of leading local figures, including the army commander, also attended. The whole event was a wonderful further demonstration of Kargil hospitality.

### **Balti participants**

Two scholars from Baltistan—Syed Bahadur Ali Salik and Ghulam Hassan Hassni—arrived at 2 a.m. on Friday 15<sup>th</sup>, the very last day of the conference, having been held up by a series of bureaucratic delays. We were particularly glad that they were able to come, because of the close historical and cultural links between Baltistan and Ladakh.

The two Baltis received a warm welcome from conference participants and from many other friends in Kargil, and later in Leh. They took part in the conference excursion to Sankoo and Kartse (see below), and presented their papers on the terrace of the Caravanserai Hotel in the evening. Syed Bahadur Ali Salik discussed ‘Balti Folksongs with Reference to Ladakh’, pointing to the shared cultural heritage of the two regions. Ghulam Hassan Hassni spoke of ‘Balti Proverbs and Idioms’, the subject of his recently published book. Many of the proverbs were readily recognisable by our Kargil friends: he would begin reciting the first half of the proverb, and a chorus of Kargilis would complete it.

Both scholars now live in Skardu, approximately 100 miles from Kargil. Ghulam Hassan Hassni’s home village in Kharmang is even closer—about 35 miles. That makes their

long roundabout journey to Kargil all the more poignant. However, it is also a sign of hope. This was the first time that Balti scholars had been able to take part in a conference in Ladakh since 1947, and we trust that there will be many more such occasions in the future.

### **Conference field trip**

The final day of the conference on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> July was devoted to an excursion by bus up the Suru valley to Sankoo and Kartse. The excursion highlighted the long and varied history of the region, as well as the natural beauties of the landscape. It provided an opportunity for participants to relax and to exchange ideas informally after a very crowded programme.

Our first stop was at the Trespone mosque, which combines features of both Islamic and Central Asian art. Near Kartse, we saw the Maitreya relief sculpture, which resembles the better-known image cut in the rock face at Mulbekh. We were unable to cross the river to Kartse village, because the footbridge had been washed away. However one of our Kargil colleagues pointed out that one of the battles in General Zorawar Singh's invasion of Ladakh in 1834 had taken place on the opposite side of the valley. On the return journey to Kargil, we stopped to inspect an ancient Buddhist relief carving on a large rock close to the road.

### **Grateful acknowledgements**

We received a particularly warm welcome from our friends and colleagues in Kargil, and that is perhaps the most memorable aspect of the conference. We also received financial support from the Kargil Hill Council and the J&K Tourist Department which sponsored the accommodation at the Caravanserai Hotel, overlooking the main bazaar. We are especially grateful to Saleem Beg for helping arrange the Tourist Department sponsorship.

Gulzar Hussein Munshi led the local committee: he was well supported by Dr Mohammed Saleem Mir; Dr Mohammed Raza Abbasi; and their team of volunteers, especially Kacho Mumtaz Ali Khan, Aijaz Hussain Munshi, Said Hardass, Bashir Wafa, Vilayat Keep, Mohammed Hussain, Nabi Ziya, Dr Niyaz and Parvez Bagh. We owe further thanks to the members of the Young Baltistan and KASCO organisations in Kargil. Among the IALS 'visitors', we are grateful to Abdul Ghani Sheikh for his co-ordination work in Leh, and to Francesca Merritt for her good-humoured efficiency in financial and organisational matters. All these individuals and organisations worked immensely hard on our behalf both before and during the conference, and its success is due to their efforts.

John Bray

## **CONFERENCE PROGRAMME**

### **TUESDAY 12TH JULY**

## **Introductory Remarks**

Tashi Rabgias

## **Images of Kargil**

Ghulam Hassan Khan - Ladakh in the Mirror of Trade, Travel and Transit

Sadiq Ali Sadiq - Ngati Adab ('Our Culture' )

Abdul Ghani Sheikh - Historic Travellers' Perspectives on Kargil Town

Dr Ali Rather - Kargil, Past, Present and Future

Abdul Hamid Tanweer - History of Suru Kartse, Wakha Mulbekh and Fokar

Ravina Aggarwal - Representations of Kargil following the Kargil war

Sophie Day - Visions of Ladakh. Nicky Grist, 19th April 1957-26th August 2004

## **WEDNESDAY 13TH JULY**

### **Environment and Ecology**

Blaise Humbert-Droz - Threats to Ladakh's Biodiversity: Priorities for Action

Ken Macdonald -Not so Free on the Range: Power and the History of Wildlife as Property in the Karakoram Himalaya.

Richard Lee - Hazards of Modernity at the Hanle Basin, Ladakh

Dr Zohra Bano - Most Common Diseases Among Women & Children in Ladakh

Radhika Gupta - Irrigation Systems in Ladakhi Villages.

### **History**

Kacho Asfandyar Khan - The Origin of the Legend of sKaysar. The Epic Hero of Tibet and Ladakh

Jigar Mohammed - Mughals and Ladakh in the 17th Century

Sanulah Munshi -The Fall of Western Tibet

John Bray - Begar and the British

Asghar Ali Basharat - The Trade Between Kargil, Leh and Skardu

Ahmed Jawan -History of Dras

Habibullah Kakpuri - History of Zanskar

Mohammed Ali Khan Hazin –The Mirror of Baltistan

### **Social Change and Development**

Monisha Ahmed -Where Have All The Rupshu-pa gone?

Dr Mohammed Saleem Mir - Social Support System of Ladakh

Dr Nawang Tsering - Tradition and Transformation of Buddhist Culture in Ladakh

Danesh Rana - Tourism in Kargil

Tashi Morup - Pashmina project in Leh

Jigmet Namgyal - Power Scenario in Ladakh and J&K.

Sonam Angchuk - Low-cost Solar Heating Buildings for the Trans-Himalayan Region

### **Art History/Architecture**

Christian Luczanits - Variations on a Theme. The Iconography of the Kanji Main Temple

Lalit Gupta - Brahad Buddha: Buddhist Art of Colossi and the Continuing Tradition in Ladakh

Sonam Phuntsog - Kargil's Rock Sculpture  
Ghulam Nabi Zia - Historical Monuments of Dras  
Wolfgang Heusgen - With Maintenance to Destruction? The Wanla Temple  
Erberto Lo Bue - Wall paintings and inscriptions at Phyang and Basgo  
Sundar Paul and Tashi Ldawa Tshangpa - The Restoration of the Palace in Leh  
Janet Rizvi - Presentation on the Kashmir shawl (Evening slide show at the Caravanserai Hotel)

## **THURSDAY 14TH JULY**

### **Links and Comparisons with Baltistan**

Nasir Hussein Munshi - *The Lost Legacy: Forms of Music and Dance in Baltistan*  
Mohammed Sadiq - *Balti Folksongs*  
Tsering Norbu - *Traditional Dresses of Kargil*  
Raja Iftikhar Hussein - *The Untold Story of the Makpon Rajas of Skardu in Jammu & Kashmir*  
Maulvi Omar Gutu Nadvi - *The Philosophy of Khache Phalu*  
Mohammed Ali Khan Hazin - *Balti and Balti Yul*  
Sheikh Javed - *History of Balti Settlement in the Indus Valley around Leh*  
Mohammed Assi - *Dras Past and Present*

### **Culture and Society**

Fernanda Pirie - *Hierarchy or Equality? Reconsidering the Dral-go.*  
Mona Bhan - *Hidden Legacies: Aryanism and Perceptions of Brogpa selfhood.*  
Tsewang Namgyal Yarkem Wakha - *Some Old Customs of Purig*  
Kacho Mumtaz Ali Khan - *Kesar Saga and its Impact on Ladakh*  
Geshe Lobzang Khadup - *Influence of Religion in the Socio-Cultural Heritage of Zaskar*  
G.H. Murtaza - *Ancient and Modern Legal System of Ladakh*  
Tsering Samphel - *Knowledge Management in Ladakh*  
Mohammed Baqir Naqdo - *Ancient Birth Customs and Rituals of Purig*  
Skarma Junglay - *Meditation Caves in Fokar*

### **Language**

Bettina Zeisler - *Glimpses into the Past: Language Change and the Fossilization of Written Tibetan b- Prefix in Western Sham and Purik dialects.*  
Nawang Tsering Shakspo - *Ladakhi Language and Script*  
Lobsang Tsering - *Script and Grammar of the Ladakhi Language.*  
Tsewang Rigzin - *The Tibetan Script*

## **FRIDAY 15TH JULY**

### **Evening presentation by Balti participants at the Caravanserai Hotel**

Syed Bahadur Ali Salik - *Balti Folksongs with Reference to Ladakh*  
Ghulam Hassan Hassni - *Balti Proverbs and Idioms*