

11th IALS COLLOQUIUM REPORT, LEH 2003

The 11th IALS colloquium took place from 21-25 July 2003 in Leh and Choglamsar, and was co-hosted by the Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages. The conference was a notable success, and we thank the Academy for its financial support. We are especially grateful to Balwant Thakur (Secretary of the Academy) and Nawang Tsering Shakspo (Cultural Officer, Leh).

The opening ceremony took place at the government auditorium, next to the polo ground in Leh, and the chief guest was Jammu & Kashmir Chief Minister Jenab Mufti Mohammad Sayeed. The government delegation included: Mangat Ram Sharma, J&K Deputy Chief Minister; Ngawang Rigzin Jora, J&K Minister for Science and Technology; Bashir Ahmed, Minister of State for Education; and Thuptan Chhewang, the Chief Executive of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council. Distinguished guests at the opening ceremony included Skushog Bakula Rinpoche, the patron of the IALS. Ghulam Hassan Khan – Ladakh's national member of parliament – attended one of the sessions.

The Chief Minister presented J&K Academy lifetime achievement awards to a distinguished group of scholars and artists from Ladakh and further afield. The IALS members to be honoured in this way included Tashi Rabgias, Gelong Thupstan Paldan, Abdul Ghani Sheikh and Henry Osmaston..

The actual conference took place in Choglamsar at the Indus Hotel, which for five days became an international *serai*. As ever, we had a strong international mix, with participants from different regions of Ladakh and other parts of India, as well as Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, the UK and the US. Disappointingly, no participants from Baltistan were able to come: we hope that we will be able to make up for this at the next colloquium.

Before the conference, a Ladakhi friend had asked somewhat sceptically whether there was anything of international interest left in Ladakh: he evidently half-expected the answer 'No'. The papers proved otherwise. Altogether, there were more than 60 presentations. For the first time in IALS history, we had to have parallel sessions on the Tuesday and on the Friday afternoon.

One overriding theme that touched on almost all the sessions concerned social change and development: what are Ladakhis gaining and what are they losing? What choices are there? And who should be responsible for making them?

Such questions came up even in less 'obvious' sessions. For example, in the opening panel on Art and Archaeology, Professor Wolfgang Heusgen from the Graz University of Technology discussed problems of architectural conservation at Alchi. There are now plans to construct a hydro-electric project some two to three kilometres up river from Alchi, and the tremors caused by explosives used in its construction threatens to undermine the stability of the temple buildings there. It is important to develop new sources of energy, but what is the right approach?

In the session on wildlife, Rinchen Wangchuk gave a hopeful paper on the possibilities for reconciling wildlife conservation with the demands of local villagers who wish to protect

their livestock from snow leopards. Field investigations and discussions with the villagers showed that it was possible to reduce the number of domestic livestock casualties by building better corrals, thus encouraging the leopards to concentrate on other prey.

Several participants spoke from personal experience in the sessions on ‘culture and traditions’ and ‘development and social change’. Abdul Ghani Sheikh presented a paper on transformation in Kuksho village, which has a mixed Buddhist and Muslim population. In a similar vein, Tsering Norboo discussed how the Wakha-Mulbekh region served as a ‘confluence’ of two faiths – Buddhism and Islam.

Sat Paul Sahni described how he had first visited Ladakh in 1946, and discussed the many changes that he had witnessed in his frequent visits since then. He supported his paper with an extensive slide show: the older pictures of familiar places such as Leh bazaar were particularly striking. Harjit Singh presented personal reminiscences of his first researches in Ladakh in what now seem like the distant days of 1973: he underestimated the challenges of the Khardong-la, and emerged from his adventures thinner and wiser.

Both these veterans were outmatched by an account of an even earlier visit to Ladakh, by Prince Peter of Greece and Denmark in 1938. Martijn van Beek presented a paper written by his colleague Poul Pedersen of Aarhus University. Poul has found papers, photographs and even a short film left by Prince Peter. We were able to see a video version of the film, showing a polo match, and a yak caravan arriving in the bazaar from Central Asia.

The importance of the Ladakhi language came up at several points in the conference. Muhammad Omar Gutu Nadvi, the Imam of the Jama Masjid in Leh, told of his collaborative initiative with Rev Konchok Phandey to translate the Holy Quran into simple Ladakhi. On the final day, Roland Bielmeier discussed the classification of Western Tibetan Dialects. Raja Iftikhar Hussain, who lives in Srinagar but whose family comes from Baltistan, discussed the impact of Balti dialect. Bettina Zeisler discussed the evolution of Ladakhi, and its relationship with classical Tibetan. Papers by Tashi Gyalpo and Konchok Rigzin prompted a vigorous – and appropriately multilingual – debate on the merits of learning classical Tibetan and the extent to which it was possible or desirable to develop a written form of colloquial Ladakhi.

In addition to the conference papers and slide presentations, we benefited from a cultural performance showing dance from all parts of Ladakh on 22 July. The following evening we returned to the polo-ground auditorium for an impressive performance of *Lta sam med pe 'rgyu rjai* by Mipham Otsal's Ladakh Theatre Organisation (LTO). The performance starred Otsal himself and, using mime and other techniques, again raised questions about ‘blind development.’ On the Thursday evening, we saw a presentation of an American film, *Oracles and Demons of Ladakh*, which – among other local celebrities – featured the Sabu Lhamo.

News of the conference was broadcast locally both in the printed media and on television. On my final evening in Leh, I had the pleasure of watching a *Doordarshan* Urdu-language programme showing two IALS members - Abdul Ghani Sheikh and Janet Rizvi – reviewing the conference. They commented that Ladakh was a special place to attract such international interest. Indeed.

John Bray

Postscript

A selection of the papers from the conference has been published by the J&K Academy under the title *Recent Research on Ladakh 2007* (Edited by John Bray and Nawang Tsering Shakspo).

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

MONDAY, 21 JULY

11:00 Opening Ceremony.

Auditorium Hall, Pologround, Leh. Chief Guest: Jammu & Kashmir Chief Minister
Jenab Mufti Mohammad Sayeed.

14:00 – 15:30 Art And Archaeology

Chair: Dr John Crook

Harald Hauptmann: *Rock Carvings and Inscriptions along the Upper Indus*

Jamwal And Tashi Ldawa Tshangspa: *Rock Carvings of Ladakh.*

16:00 – 18:00 Art And Archaeology

Wolfgang Heusgen: *Alchi Sumtsek: a Jewel Endangered*

John Harrison: *The Achi Assoc and the Conservation of the Kanji Tsug-Lag-Khang*

Christian Luczanits: *Alchi Monastery Reconsidered*

Erberto Lo Bue: *Traditional Buddhist Art in 20th Century Ladakh*

TUESDAY, 22 JULY.

Parallel Session One

09:30 – 11:00 Culture And Traditions

Chair: Kaneez Fatima

Ritesh Arya: *Significance of Ground Water Exploration in Ladakh Himalaya*

Corinne Wacker: *Water Management in Takmachik Village*

Abdul Hakim Skampari: *Gur-Gur Tea: The Traditional Drink of Ladakh*

11:30 – 13:00 Culture And Traditions

Sonam Phuntshog Achinathang: *On Puriki Culture*

Nawang Tashi: *Cultural Heritage of Ladakh*

Rigzin Angchuk: *Cho Bagdarskyab*

14:00 – 16:30 Culture And Traditions

Chair: Dr Nawang Tsering

Morup Namgyal – *Wanla Lonpo*

Tsewang Dolma: *Role of Ladakhi Women.*

Abdul Ghani Sheikh: *Transformation in Kuksho Village*

Parallel Session Two

9:30 - 11:00 Wildlife

Chair: Henry Osmaston

Jigmet Takpa: *Wildlife of Ladakh/ Scope of Renewable Energy in Ladakh*
Mohd Abbas: *Wildlife of Ladakh*
Rinchen: *Snow Leopard Conservancy and Ecotourism in Markha*

11:30 - 13:00: Horticulture and Biology

Mohd. Saleem Mir Bhimbhat: *Apricot Wealth of Ladakh*
Dr. O.P. Chaurasia and Dr. P. Gurmet: *Ethnobotany of Ladakh*

14:00 - 15:30: Health

Alessandro Boesi: *Medicinal Plants*
Dr. Jamila Bano: *High Altitude Acute Mountain Sickness in Ladakh*

16:00 - 18:00: Amchi System Of Medicine

Dr. S.T. Phuntsog: *Dharmic Physiology*
Amchi Tsering Phuntshog: *Amchi Medicine and the Environment*

Evening: Cultural Show

WEDNESDAY, 23 JULY

09:30 – 11:00 Development and Social Change

Chair: Prof. Harjit Singh
Sat Paul Sahni: *Change in Ladakh Since 1946*
Tashi Morup: *Distress Migration of Changpas*
Gyurmet Dorje: *Education vs. Economy of Ladakh*

11:30 – 13:00 Development And Social Change

Gerhard Emmer: *Condition of Argons in Ladakh*
Pushp Saraf: *Buddhist Political Activism after 1988*
Gitanjali Chaturvedi: *Trifurcation: a Secular Agenda?*

14:00 – 15:30 Development And Social Change

Chair: Salim Beg
Kaneez Fatima: *Drass Valley. Cultural Educational: a Viewpoint*
Dr. Padma Gurmet: *Amchi System of Medicine*

16:00 - 17:30: Development And Social Change

Sunandan Tiwari, Radhika Gupta: *An Ethnography of Traditional Irrigation Patterns in Leh Town*
Sat Paul Sahni – *Slides on Changes in Ladakh since 1946.*

19:00 Theatre Performance by Ladakh Theatre Organisation (LTO)

THURSDAY, 24 JULY

09:30 – 11:00 Social Research

Chair: Janet Rizvi
Fernanda Pirie: *Dancing in the Face of Death: Losar Celebrations in Photoksar*
Harjit Singh: *Fieldwork Experiences of a Research Scholar in Ladakh in 1973.*

Dr. Nawang Tsering: *Loss of Tibet and its Impact on Ladakh*

11:30 – 13:00 History

Jigar Mohammed: *Moghul Sources for the History of Ladakh*

Skarma Junglay: Fokar: *The Kingdom of Purig*

Dr. Juergen Trebst: *Douglas 1895*

14:00 – 15:30 History and Religion

Poul Pedersen: *Prince Peter's Visit to Ladakh in 1938* (and ten-minute film)

Muhammad Omar Gutu Nadvi: *The Holy Quran and the Teachings of The Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the Ladakhi Language*

16:00 - 17:00: Parallel Session 1: History and Language

Chair: Gelong Thubtan Paldan

Chimed Namgyal: *On the Importance of Learning Ladakhi*

Tsering Norboo (Ayu): *Ladakhi Proverbs*

Tashi Stobdan Lokskya: *Once Ladakh was a Lake*

16:00 - 17:00: Parallel Session 2

Sanjai Dwivedi et al: *Untapped Potential of Horticulture in Ladakh*

Evening: Film Showing (Oracles and Demons of Ladakh)

FRIDAY, 25 JULY

09:00 – 11:00 Law, Language and Linguistics

Ghulam Murtaza: *Ancient Legal System in Ladakh Region*

Roland Bielmeier: *On the Classification of Western Tibetan Dialects*

Bettina Zeisler: *On the Position of the Ladakhi and Balti Language Family*

Raja Iftikhar Hussain: *Impact of Balti Dialect in and Outside J&K State*

11:00 Pre-Closing Ceremony

12.00-13.00 Language And Development

Tashi Gyalpo (Kurja): *Social Status and the Status of Ladakhi Language or "Rangskat"*

Konchok Rigzin: *Complex Pronunciation of Dialect*

H.U. Hamid. *Change and Development in Changthang*

14.30- 15:45 Religion and Culture

Dr Usha Viyas: *Buddhist Marriages in Ladakh*

Tsering Norboo Wakhapa: *Wakha Mulbek. Confluence of Two Faiths*

16:00 – 17:30: Parallel Session 1: Buddhism in Ladakh

Chair: Gelong Thubtan Paldan

Geshe Konchog Namgyal: *History of The Bka-Rgyud-Pa Lineage in Ladakh*

Jamyang Gyaltsen: *An Introduction to the Path Fruit of Sakyapa*

16:00 – 18:30: Parallel Session 2. Buddhism and Social Change

Chair: John Bray

Tsering Samphel: *Vagaries of Demographic Change in Ladakh*

Sonam Wangchuk (Ladakhi): *Buddhism and Contemporary Society in Ladakh*

Robert Cook: *Psychology, Buddhism and Sustainable Development*

John Crook: *Tipun Comes West*

John Crook and James Crowden: *Concluding Poem.*