

13th IALS COLLOQUIUM REPORT, ROME 2007

The 13th IALS Colloquium took place in Rome under the auspices of the Università di Roma «Sapienza» from 7-11 September 2007.

Rome was a particularly appropriate venue for an international conference, both because of the city's central role in the history of European civilisation, and because of its strong tradition of Tibetan and Himalayan studies. As Enzo Gualtierio Bargiacchi reminded us, the Italian Jesuit Ippolito Desideri was among the first Europeans to visit Ladakh on his way to Lhasa in the early 18th century, and his reports from the region remain an important historical source. In the 20th century, one of the greatest names in Tibetan studies has been Giuseppe Tucci who visited Ladakh and Western Tibet in the 1930s. Tucci's pupil Luciano Petech published his thesis on the Ladakhi royal chronicles in 1939 as well as the definitive history of *The Kingdom of Ladakh (c.950-1842 AD)* in 1977. Elena de Rossi Filibeck, the Rome-based convenor of the colloquium, is herself a pupil of Professor Petech: she therefore stands in the same distinguished tradition.

Papers

We were particularly pleased to welcome 11 scholars from Ladakh itself. Altogether, more than a dozen nationalities – and nearly as many academic disciplines - were represented among the 60-odd conference participants. This variety was reflected in the range and high quality of the 40 papers presented.

In a short summary, it is impossible to do full justice to all the papers but – for this participant – the following contributions and themes stood out as samples of the colloquium's riches:

- There was a strong panel on the history of art and architecture in the region. This combined careful art-historical critiques on the one hand, with a concern for the conservation and preservation of Ladakh's historical heritage on the other. There is scope for much further research before we fully understand the historical and religious details of the region's art and architecture. Even more importantly, there is an urgent need to ensure that this rich legacy survives the pressures of social, economic and environmental change.
- While the art-historical papers focussed mainly on the Buddhist heritage of Ladakh, many of the historical papers looked at aspects of Islam. These included: a review of the documentary sources for the history of the Nurbakshi sect, and an analysis of the changing points of view that they represent; a discussion of the traditions of Sufism in Ladakh; and an analysis of the traditional and not-so-traditional views of a 20th century Ladakhi Muslim, Abdul Wahid Radhu.
- The themes of social and political change came out in several panels. For example, we learnt about traditional Ladakhi dance, and about the links between music and worship in Buddhist monasteries, but also about the new Bollywood-inspired musical fashions expressed in the CDs aimed at the youth

market in Leh bazaar. On a still more sobering note, we heard about the impact of the 1999 Kargil war on the people in the firing line.

- Social change is accompanied by – and contributes to – environmental change. We heard about the threats to Ladakh’s wildlife as well as current initiatives to address them. We learnt about the challenges to Ladakh’s future food security. And we heard about the religious and social factors that influence current patterns of childbirth in Leh and Zangskar.

Overall, the conference was both historically rooted, and deeply contemporary.

Roman hospitality

The majority of the conference participants stayed in the Villa Aurelia to the south of the river Tiber, and within sight of the dome of St Peter’s Cathedral. The first session opened at the Villa Aurelia. Subsequent sessions were held partly at the Villa, partly at the Facoltà di Studi Orientali of the University, and – on the Saturday afternoon – at the Museo Nazionale d’Arte Orientale «Giuseppe Tucci». Moving between these three locations created certain logistical challenges, but at the same time enabled us to gain more of a flavour of the city of Rome. The baroque splendour of the lecture room at the Museo Nazionale d’Arte Orientale was particularly impressive. As a further delight, the Museum kindly arranged an exhibition of photographs taken by early Italian explorers—notably the early 20th century scholar Filippo de Filippi—in Ladakh and the Karakoram region.

As in previous IALS colloquia, the conference provided an opportunity for exchanges between local Ladakhi researchers and their international colleagues, and between representatives of a wide range of different, but complementary academic disciplines. Among others, Victor Funnell presented no paper, but with great good humour shared the insights of some eight decades of East-West experience with his many new friends. Many of the most fruitful exchanges took place in the Villa Aurelia breakfast room, the wine bar and the bus as well as the three conference rooms. The Oriental Faculty was particularly generous in its sponsorship of the lunches at the next-door hotel, with an excellent view of roof-top Rome.

Publication proposals

We plan to bring out three publications as a result of the conference:

- The Oriental Faculty of Università di Roma «Sapienza» has agreed to publish a selection of papers from the humanities in a supplement to the *Rivista degli Studi Orientali*.
- Subject to the final agreement of an external publisher (with whom negotiations are currently under way), we hope to bring out a separate volume of papers on art history and architecture under the editorship of Erberto Lo Bue.
- Dr Richard Lee is leading a team which plans to produce a volume of papers on the ecology and medicine of Ladakh, drawn both from the Rome colloquium and from previous conferences.

IALS general meeting

The IALS general meeting provided an opportunity to elect a new IALS Executive Committee. John Bray now succeeds the late Henry Osmaston as President of the IALS. Monisha Ahmed was elected Hon. Secretary, and Kim Gutschow Editor of *Ladakh Studies*. Francesca Merritt remains Hon. Treasurer. Martin Mills was subsequently co-opted to the committee as Assistant Secretary. Seb Mankelow will be working with Kim to enhance the IALS website (www.ladakhstudies.org). Martijn van Beek has now stepped down from the committee after ten years' distinguished service.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful for the financial and practical support of the Oriental Studies faculty of Università di Roma «Sapienza», Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente (IsIAO), the Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale «Giuseppe Tucci», and Carlo Cristi of Arte Orientale Tessli.

Finally, I personally – and we all collectively - owe a special debt of thanks to Elena de Rossi Filibeck, the co-convenor of the conference without whom we would never have come to Rome; to Francesca Merritt for her patient organisation of the financial arrangements; and to our fellow members of the conference committee, Monisha Ahmed, Martijn van Beek, Erberto Lo Bue and Martin Mills.

John Bray

IALS ROME PROGRAMME

Friday 7th September

Culture & Society

Petra Maurer (Heidelberg)—*Sa bdag and tortoise. A survey of the tradition of Geomancy in Ladakh*

Elena De Rossi Filibeck (Rome)—*Reflections on the cultural meaning of the Ladakhi marriage songs: a case study on the Wamle bag ston gi glu.*

Bettina Zeisler (Tübingen) "*Ci songkhani dra (onomatopoeia): giving a voice to the event*".

Erberto Lo Bue (Bologna)—*Notes on Buddhist funerary practices in Indian Tibet at the dawn of the 21st century.*

Mohammad Raza (Kargil)—*The Pakistani shelling of Kargil, 1997-1999*

Saturday 8th September

Keynotes and key themes

Enzo Gualtiero Bargiacchi— *Ippolito Desideri's first remarks on Ladakh*

Monisha Ahmed (Mumbai)—*From Benaras to Leh—the trade and use of silk-brocade*

Nawang Tsering Shakspo (Leh)—*Ladakhi folk-dance*

John Harrison (Wales)—*Conservation of architectural heritage of Ladakh*

Sonam Wangchok (Leh)—*Inventory of cultural resources in Ladakh*

Martin A. Mills (Aberdeen)—*Charting the Shugden Ban in Ladakh*

Harjit Singh (New Delhi)—*Changing Ladakh: some observations on environment, society and population parameters of Leh district.*

History of art and architecture

Phuntsog Dorjay (Hannover)—*Introduction of Buddhism and Buddhist art in Ladakh: a study through ancient rock art.*

Neil and Kath Howard (Birmingham)—*Archaeological ruins of rGya Valley.*

Gerald Kozicz (Graz)—*A 12th century Stupa in the neighbourhood of the monastic complex of Nyarma.*

Deborah Klimburg-Salter (Vienna). *The life of the Buddha at Alchi in regional perspective*

Chiara Bellini (Bologna)—*The mGon-khang Paintings in dPe-thub*

Filippo Lunardo (Rome/Bologna) *Tshogs zhing: a wall painting in the new 'Du khang of Spituk (dPe-thub).*

Kacho Mumtaz Ali Khan—*History of Chiktan Razi Khar (castle) and its preservation and reconstruction*

Wolfgang Heusgen (Graz)—*New knowledge about the construction of Wanla temple.*

Andreas Catanese (Leh)—*The Leh Old Town Project: conservation, challenges and discoveries*

Sunday 9th September

History

Georgios T. Halkias (London)— *Modern Pasts: Tracing the 1679 Tibet-Bashahr Treaty*

Christian Jahoda (Vienna)—*Spiti and Ladakh in the 17th-19th centuries: views from the periphery.*

Arik Moran (Oxford)—*Shifting alliances? British imperialism on the Ladakhi frontier.*

John Bray (Tokyo)—*Regional perspectives on the lo-phyag mission from Ladakh to Lhasa*

Pascale Dollfus (Paris)—*Who are "Those of the Black Castle"? Discussing the past of a nomadic group inhabiting the south-eastern edge of Ladakh.*

Islam in Ladakh

Shahzad Bashir (Stanford)—*The Nurbakshis of Baltistan and Ladakh: observations on historical sources.*

Abdul Ghani Sheikh (Leh)—*Traditions of Sufism in Ladakh*

Gulzar Hussain Munshi (Kargil)—*Imambaras, khanqas and mosques of Kargil: The confluence of Buddhist and Islamic art and cultural heritage*

Poul Pedersen (Aarhus)—*Traditionalism in Ladakh: Marco Pallis and Abdul Wahid Radhu*

Monday 10th September

Music and the performing arts

Valentina Cataldo (Bologna)—*Music in Tibetan Buddhist rituals in Ladakh*

Patrick Sutherland (London) *Presentation about the Hirrip, Spiti's lower-caste professional musicians, about their repertoire of songs and music.*

Balwant Thakur (Jammu)—*Changing trends in the performing arts of Ladakh*

Agriculture, sustainability, ecology

Blaise Humbert-Droz – *Can Ladakh's biodiversity withstand the impact of tourism?*

Dorje Dawa & Davide Geneletti (Trente)—*Developing an environmental GIS database for a remote mountainous area. A regional-scale study in Ladakh, Indian Himalaya*

Tashi Morup (Leh)—*The Changthang Wildlife Sanctuary Act and future concerns among nomads*

Seb Mankelov—*Seeds of Change: Contemporary agrarian trends in Central Zangskar.*

Kaneez Fatima (Kargil)—*Women and agriculture in Ladakh*

Mohammad Saleem Mir (Kargil)—*Sustainable agriculture production in Ladakh*

Juliane Dame (Heidelberg)—*Food security in Ladakh: subsistence-oriented resource utilisation and socio-economic transformation.*

Medicine

Christopher C. Wahlfeld (Buffalo)—*Fieldwork: patterns of reproductive health at two hospitals in the Leh district of Ladakh.*

Kim Gutschow (Williamstown, Ma.) & Padma Drolma (Leh)—*Birth in Ladakh and Zangskar: from home to hospital*

Richard Lee (Buffalo)—*Emerging Infectious diseases and the integrity of indigenous cultures and regions.*