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INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR LADAKH STUDIES

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THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR LADAKH STUDIES

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For the last three decades, Ladakh (made up of Leh and Kargil districts) has been readily accessible for academic study. It has become the focus of scholarship in many disciplines including the fields of anthropology, sociology, art history, Buddhist studies, history, geography, environmental studies, ecology, medicine, agricultural studies, development studies, and so forth. After the first international colloquium was organised at Konstanz in 1981, there have been biannual colloquia in many European countries and in Ladakh. In 1987 the International Association for Ladakh Studies (IALS) was formed to establish contact and disseminate information and research findings among those interested in the study of Ladakh. Membership is open to all, by writing to the membership secretary or using Paypal through the IALS website. Please go to <http://www.ladakhstudies.org/Membership.html>

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FROM THE HONORARY EDITOR

I am excited to introduce the newest edition of Ladakh Studies, which is now officially a journal. Although I am sure that many of you, myself included, feel a certain amount of nostalgia for our little red newsletter, it is hard not to feel some pride at how the journal has advanced in recent years. This issue marks the first time that all essays have been submitted for an anonymous review process. The resulting fine-grained scholarship and careful use of citations and bibliographic references are ample proof of the benefits of a formal review process for both readers and authors alike. It is my hope that future essays in Ladakh Studies will aspire to similar standards of scholarship. The reorganization of the journal, in which essays are now up front and the IALS news and Ladakh news items are at the end of the journal reflect the renewed mission to scholarship on Ladakh and the recognition that news items and other matters of temporal importance will be found on the website in the future. Please do check the website for ongoing news concerning the IALS and our upcoming colloquium from July 16-19, 2009.

This issue is one of the first to introduce a thematic topic, namely reproductive health in Ladakh. The issue ties together a number of essays on a topic of emergent importance to the social and political landscape in Ladakh. The essays offer insight into the politics behind fertility and family planning in Ladakh as well as their effects on women's reproductive and childbearing choices. While the topic of family planning and its relationship to reproductive health has a long and turbulent history in India, it has been rather neglected in both the media and scholarship on Ladakh until recently. As the essays make clear, reproductive health is central to the health of society and the relationships between various communities of Ladakh.

I would like to take this time to thank a few people for their critical help in easing my transition as editor over the last year. John Bray has solicited, written, and edited several key essays and provided valuable editorial advice; Martijn Van Beek has offered editorial advice and formatting assistance; Abdul Nasir Khan and Tashi Morup have stepped up as the new News Editors; Seb Mankelov has and continues to do a tremendous job with the website, updating information on the Ladakh Studies Journal as necessary; Francesca Merritt has tirelessly attended to important details like membership and ensuring that our journal actually reaches your doorstep; while Monisha Ahmed has helped guide the IALS in the past year and ensure that we have a place to convene for the colloquium in July 2009. My job as editor would have been much more difficult, were it not for the gracious help of these and other people, many of whom I apologize in advance for not singling out individually.

Kim Gutschow
Williamstown, MA, USA
December 2008

FROM THE HONORARY SECRETARY

Work towards the 14th IALS colloquium is underway and we look forward to welcoming as many of you as possible to Leh next year. The dates, as most of you know, are 16th to 19th July 2009. A registration form is included in this issue of LS; you can also register online. Please send in your registration as soon as possible so that we have an idea of numbers. Concerns have been raised that the current economic recession may hit some long-distance travellers but we hope that by next year, things will be looking up.

It is widely recognised that Ladakh has become a very attractive location for feature and advertising films as well as music videos. But it has also been the location for more serious cinema apart from countless documentary films on topics as varied as the oracles, thanngkas, Siachen glacier, the Changpa and pashmina amongst others. For the first time the colloquium will include film as part of its program. The line up so far includes the award winning films *'The Frozen'* (2007) and another on Leh's all women ice hockey team – *'Thin Ice'* (2006). There will be another on the status of nuns in Buddhism *'Shadow of Buddha'* (2008) as well as Rigzin Kalon's *'E Mitsey'*. And probably one of the first feature films made in Ladakh that includes Ladakhi actors, Clemens Kuby's *'Das Alte Ladakh'* (The Old Ladakh) shot in 1986. We hope to encourage new and established Ladakhi actors and filmmakers to screen their work at IALS and use it as a forum for discussion on the role of film in Ladakh. If members of IALS have suggestions for other media that can be shown please let the conference committee know.

While IALS has always tried to encourage presentation of papers from as many of its members as possible, one of the concerns at past colloquia has been on the standard of papers presented. These concerns have ranged from the originality of topics, lack of references and content of papers. In an effort to address some of these issues, the last two colloquia have had review committees for abstracts. But unfortunately an abstract does not always reveal the paper's final content. And when standards fall then we often hit a block regarding publication and funding for future colloquia. One of the ways around this may be to ask for final papers before the colloquium, another may be to have workshops on research and writing methodologies. An alternative may be to bring out our own publications—this is being done with the papers presented at the Kargil conference. While this may set the trend for publication of future colloquia, distribution and storage will be problems I foresee.

It's been a busy summer in Leh this year—there were many conferences and workshops on diverse topics ranging from sustainable livelihood to language and birds of the Changthang. Construction of the Central Asian Museum has begun; the museum is on the look out for artefacts and books. If anyone would like to donate please contact Ghani Sheikh.

Monisha Ahmed
October 2008

REPRESENTATION AND PERCEPTION: WHY REPRODUCTION MATTERS IN LADAKH

– Jennifer Aengst

Although I've been doing research in Ladakh since 2006, I'm still regularly asked why I chose to study reproductive health and why I chose Ladakh as the place for my research. On my first visit to Ladakh, I was interested in comparing how allopathic and amchi medicine addressed different aspects of reproductive health. However, after spending more time in Ladakh, I realized that the debates surrounding fertility were much more compelling to me. Fertility control—whether contraceptive use or more broadly in the spacing and planning of one's family—brings up tricky positions among most Ladakhis. Most of those whose work has to do with reproductive health in Ladakh—gynecologists, ANMs, LHVs—feel that women should have access to a variety of methods of contraception, as well as access to better and more extensive health education. Yet, they work in a context where there is not only overt opposition from some in the community against family planning but also a widespread worry about Ladakh's population.

Contraception and family planning are linked to bigger debates in Ladakh—not only about population (population growth and population composition) but also about Ladakhi identity and marginalization (within the J&K state and the Indian nation). Furthermore, contraception is also considered to be dangerous to the morality of others, such as unmarried adolescents. Though it is sensitive issue (in both a religious and political sense), family planning in Ladakh needs to be examined because it is an opportunity to re-think both 'the political' and Ladakh's relationship to the state.

Reproduction, the State & Marginality

The health of the population and the reproduction of its members has long been a concern of the modern state. When developing states—those receiving international funding for development projects—establish family planning programs, it reshapes the debate on reproduction, 'rights' and modernity. Family planning use has been associated with being modern and a 'good citizen,' while the avoidance and reluctance to use family planning is construed as a sign of 'backwardness' (Van Hollen, 2003). In contested states—those with disputed borders and relations among the population—family planning programs have often evoked additional ethnic/religious conflict (Kananneh, 2002). Family planning in Ladakh differs from other places, not only due to its location at the margins of the Indian state, but also because of occasional ethnic/religious tensions between and among Ladakh's Buddhist and Muslim populations.

In 1952, India was the first country to have an official population control program. Fertility control was seen as essential for poverty alleviation and the state endorsed the message that 'development was the best contraceptive.' India's family planning program has been characterized as a modernist and nationalist project, where 'modern' families

are ‘planned’ families and where the health of the family is linked with the health of the nation (Chatterjee and Riley, 2001). When the national family planning program shifted towards an incentive-based program, this ushered in a new era of coercive state practices, with the most notorious abuses occurring during the 1975-1977 Emergency. Although the national program has since moved away from coercive practices, India’s state-run family planning program remains controversial.

Family planning in Ladakh is distinct from other parts of India—because it is in a border area, where questions of marginality, representation and conflict coalesce. As Veena Das and Deborah Poole have argued, the ‘margins of the state’ are not solely territorial, and borders and margins often reveal who and what is legible to the state (Das and Poole, 2004). Yet the border has also been a site where women’s bodies take on special significance, often delineating the difference between national, ethnic and religious lines. During Partition, the treatment of women’s bodies not only marked the border between two emerging nation states, but also marked the border of different ethnic and religious groupings (Butalia, 2000). While physical crossings of the newly formed border were dangerous during Partition, any crossing of boundaries and borders has the potential to be radically destabilizing. In Ladakhi, maintaining the boundaries between groups—whether through opposition to intermarriage or particular reproductive practices—is still important to many in the community.

Family planning in Ladakh is emotionally charged because it evokes ‘long-contested’ issues, such as representation and ethnic/religious conflict. Questions of representation continue to emerge in Ladakh, as Buddhists and Muslims in the region feel a deep sense of discrimination (Beek, 2001). Marginalization plays out on multiple levels—regionally, nationally, and along ethno-religious lines. Regionally, Ladakhis feel marginalized because the state of J&K has offered few government positions for Ladakhis in a Kashmiri-controlled state government. Nationally, Ladakhis feel marginalized because of the position of the J&K state within the nation of India, where it both a Muslim majority state and has a special status under the Indian Constitution.¹ On ethno-religious lines, Ladakh’s Muslims complain of Buddhist domination of regional politics, while Ladakh’s Buddhists perceive themselves as a minority within a Muslim-controlled state government. Relations between Ladakh’s Buddhist and Muslim community are often described by Ladakhis as communalist, and the comparison is often made between Hindu/Muslim violence in other parts of India and ethnic/religious conflict in Ladakh (Beek, 2004). Communalism not only became normalized through Ladakh’s Agitation but it has also been utilized as a political strategy (Beek, 1996, 2004). It is within this context of political marginalization and communal tensions that population and reproductive practices become contested.

¹ Article 370 in India’s Constitution stipulates that while the Indian Parliament can determine issues of defense, communications and Foreign Affairs, all other laws require acceptance from the J&K State Government. Property and citizenship laws are determined by a separate set of laws formed by the J&K state. One example of this is the prohibition of residents from outside of J&K from purchasing land/owning real estate within J&K.

While concerns about Ladakh's population were building up after the release of the 2001 Census data, vocal opinions against family planning have become more prominent in the past few years.² Community groups such as the Ladakh Buddhist Association (LBA) and Ama Sokspa have specifically worked to convey a pronatalist message to Ladakh's Buddhist population. There have been recent tensions in SNM hospital, with the hospital staff having quite different views on procedures such as ligation and MTPs. Recent developments—such as the expansion of gynecological services (more gynecologists being posted in Ladakh); the introduction of new methods of birth control (emergency contraception and injectables); and emerging debates about HIV/AIDS in Ladakh—has made the issue of reproductive health both more visible and more contentious.

Reproduction as Personal and Political: Beyond the Cliché

Faye Ginsberg and Rayna Rapp's seminal book *Conceiving the New World Order* argued that a focus on reproduction would provide a unique vantage point from which to understand global processes such as transnationalism and questions about knowledge (Ginsberg & Rapp, 1995). There are certainly relevant examples of this from Ladakh. Reproduction posits particular questions about knowledge (amchi or biomedical knowledge for reproductive healthcare), history (other pronatalist movements? At what points in history have Ladakhis been worried about their population?), and power relations (how population becomes politically charged). In the case of Ladakh, I would argue that reproduction is a point from which we can better understand ethnic/religious identity, borders, marginality, religion and politics.

'The personal' and 'the political' aspects of reproduction have particular resonance in Ladakh. Not only do policies—such as family planning—influence one's reproductive strategies, but the local politics are also incredibly influential. When local groups—such as the LBA and Ama Tsokspa—mobilize around issues related to fertility and contraception, it can cause significant repercussions (in both villages and hospitals). Balancing one's reproductive choices with family, religion, culture and the notion of 'rights' is tricky indeed. Decisions women make regarding their fertility—to have (or not have) children; when to have children; to prevent pregnancy (or not); what methods to use (etc.)—are never easy to make. In a small community like Ladakh—where everyone knows each other—it's even more difficult, and certainly more charged, to make reproductive choices that others may not support.

While there are number of works on fertility in the Himalaya, many of these works focus on Tibet and Nepal (Adams, 2002, 2005a, 2005b; Levine, 1997; Childs, 2003, 2005, 2006; Beall, Goldstein, and Tsarong, 1983). Reproductive health research in Ladakh has primarily addressed the effects of high altitude on birth weight, nutrition, polyandry, and birthing practices (Wiley, 2004; Gutschow, 2004, 2006; Childs, 2003, 2005, 2006). Although studies on fertility and family planning in Ladakh are limited,

² As the Indian Census is conducted every ten years, it will interesting to note the reactions of Ladakhis to the next Census, due to be released in 2011.

there is definitely a need to study ethnic/religious conflict and borders via reproduction. Over the course of my fieldwork, this subject of women's reproductive strategies became more significant to me due to the important stories that women would share. When I started interviewing women at SNM hospital, I was convinced that women would not talk to me about so personal a topic. Interviews would begin with basic demographic information and reproductive health background, but women would easily discuss their opinions on family planning, contraception, and other reproductive health issues. When I interviewed women at their homes, I was amazed at how women would share quite personal stories, many of who spoke of difficult deliveries or the loss of a child. I remember a mother in Nubra who calmly described her difficult home delivery—where her son's head got stuck in the midst of delivery, her husband had rushed to get the doctor, and her mother-in-law had considered using the household scissors to cut 'some space for the baby to come out'—and finishing her story, she reiterated to me that despite the difficult and frightening experience she had had, she remained adamant about never going to a hospital. Women spoke of difficult decisions they had faced—such as ligation or abortion—that were additionally difficult because of responses from family members, and religious and political authorities.

There were certainly times when women didn't understand why I wanted to talk with them. There was the older woman in Chamshen who asked me, "Why do you want to talk to me? I am just a donkey and have no education." When I assured her that her opinions were important, she smiled and continued to talk. Despite best intentions of being organized, research in the field goes in so many different directions than expected. The list of people whom I talked with continued to grow throughout the year. I began the year with interviews with women in hospital and home settings, though the list grew to include religious and political leaders, doctors and other medical staff, married men, and unmarried adolescents—all of whom continued to shape the way I view the politics surrounding reproduction in Ladakh.

Family Planning & Pronatalism?

Initially, I was surprised at how many Ladakhis supported both pronatalism and family planning. Those who are strongly pronatalistic believe that Ladakh's Buddhist population is in decline and must be strengthened through increasing reproduction. Yet, many who are pronatalist also support family planning and access to contraception. For them, the message of pronatalism ("reproduce more") and family planning ("a small family is a happy family") do not conflict.

Similarly, women articulated their own positions on family planning in surprising ways. Most Buddhist and Muslim women I spoke with would initially state that family planning was a sin, yet would go one to say that family planning was good and that they were happy using it. This difference between discourse and practice was one that kept emerging throughout the course of my research. How is it that women were able to reconcile this disjuncture between professed morals (family planning is a sin) and action

(contraception is practical)? Both Ladakhi women and men make a clear distinction between temporary methods of birth control (IUDs, pills, condoms) and permanent methods (ligation). Therefore, contraceptive use—specifically with the IUD as the most used method in Ladakh—is unproblematic for Ladakhi women who similarly espouse pronatalist views. Ladakhi women can simultaneously advocate the following seemingly contradictory positions—spacing families, using contraception, supporting pronatalism, and identifying family planning as sin.

Of course, this disjuncture between fertility practices and official discourses is not limited to Ladakh. When states take an active role in regulating fertility—China, Israel, and Romania come to mind—there have been notable resistance strategies employed by women, including ‘counting practices,’ sex selective abortion, increased adoption, and infanticide (Kanaaneh, 2002; Anagnost, 1995; Greenhalgh, 2005; Gal and Kligman, 2000). Throughout India, the link between population growth and electoral politics is quite influential, whereby, “electoral groups perceive fertility control as reducing the political status and leverage of the majority community” (Panandiker and Umashankar, 1994: 96). In addition to politics, the role of religion in India continues to shape fertility—not just via family planning but through a range of new reproductive technologies, such as IVF (Bharadwaj, 2006). In her writings on reproductive technologies in India, Aditya Bharadwaj characterized the division between secular and sacred in India as particularly complex, since both modernity and science are coded as secular (Bharadwaj, 2006). Discussions on the role of religion and science in reproduction resonate politically within the larger debate on secularism in India.

Shyness was a challenge that arose in unpredictable ways. Because family planning and contraception can easily evoke shyness among both women and men, there was a notable difference between people’s public opinions on the subject and their more private confessions. Unmarried girls would ask me questions about reproduction because they were too shy to ask someone at the hospital and because, as a foreigner, I was a safe person to talk to. On the other hand, there were certainly some married friends and family friends who felt uncomfortable discussing my research topic with me. A married friend once admonished me for talking about my research in front of her father-in-law, telling me how awkward it had been for her to listen to our conversation.

On the surface, the community seems to be quite reluctant to address issues surrounding reproduction because of how politicized and stigmatized it can become. The politicization of reproduction has unfortunately impacted the work of local NGOs, many of whom once provided extensive MCH (maternal and child health) programs. Now, there are just a few NGOs addressing women’s health. While many Ladakhis would point to their own shyness about reproduction, they would simultaneously acknowledge how, as one Leh friend noted, “Below the surface, everything is going on”—dating, intermarriage, unmarried sex, extramarital affairs, and infanticide. Yet, the fear—among young women in particular—that their actions might lead to having a bad reputation which would impact their marriage options is a powerful and effective way to keep people conforming to Ladakhi norms.

Reproduction, Population and Ethnic/Religious Conflict

Living in a diverse community where communal tensions at times escalate, I heard much throughout the year about people's negative feelings about politics (politics frequently characterized as 'tsokpo'/dirty as well as complaints of politics mixed with religion) and a sense of marginalization that continues to emerge. Ladakh's Muslims complain of Buddhist domination of regional politics, while Ladakh's Buddhists perceive themselves as a minority within a Muslim-controlled state government. It is within this context of political marginalization that population gets conscripted into the debate on marginality.

Fertility behavior—specifically the use of contraception—is thought by many Ladakhis to be the cause of the declining Buddhist population and the reason for the growing Muslim population. Buddhists often state that “Muslim women don't use birth control,” and more broadly characterize Muslim women as being more constrained by their religion than Buddhist women. On the other hand, while Muslims acknowledge that Ladakh's population is increasing, they do not attribute it to high Muslim fertility. They would point out that Buddhists no longer have the population checks they once had—polyandry and the practice of sending one child into the monastic system—both of which functioned to keep the Buddhist population low. While most Buddhists would agree that traditional population checks (polyandry and lama system) have changed fertility practices, there still seemed to be more emphasis on the perceived fertility differences among Buddhist and Muslim women.

Muslims that I spoke with tended to agree that Ladakh's population is increasing, though most (50%) stated that the population of both Buddhists and Muslims is equally increasing, while only 30% stated that it was just the Muslim population growing. They also maintained that population increase was less influenced by contraceptive behavior and more by additional factors, such as: a) migration (specifically rural to urban migration); b) major improvements in medical care (lower death rate and lower infant mortality); c) son-preference among Muslim women; and d) increased material/monetary resources (having more money meant that one could afford to have more children). Muslims tended to interpret their population growth and changing fertility practices by pointing to class and regional differences. In interviews, Muslims would describe elite and well educated Muslims that lived in Leh and environs as more cosmopolitan, who would use family planning. Balti women, in particular, and Muslims in rural villages near Kargil were characterized as more 'backwards,' who would not use family planning. Yet, despite all the politicization of family planning in Ladakh, my research shows that the majority of Muslim and Buddhist women I spoke with want to space their family and are using contraception.

Given the complexity of the 'population issue,' the feelings of marginalization, and the discussions about fertility practices, writing about family planning in Ladakh can be a difficult endeavor. In such a small community, it is a challenge to write about issues that are sensitive in a responsible and compassionate manner. And then there is the additional challenge of connecting one's research in Ladakh with broader debates going on in Anthropology and the world of policy. But when I think about Ladakhi women I know—the married friend who was too shy to ask the pharmacist for contraception; the ANM who

never talks about family planning because it goes against her beliefs; the overworked gynecologists; the adolescent girls who asked me questions about reproduction, etc.—I once again remember how important it is to tell these women's stories in order to try and understand both how and why family planning has become so controversial recently.

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HOME OR HOSPITAL DELIVERY? THE PERCEPTION AND USE OF BIOMEDICINE IN A RURAL VILLAGE IN LADAKH

– Sandra Bärnreuther

Many scholars have described the biomedicalization of childbirth particularly in North America, but also in other parts of the world (e.g. Martin 1987; Treichler 1990; Ginsburg and Rapp 1991; Davis-Floyd 1992; Davis-Floyd and Sargent 1997; Jordan 1993; Rozario and Samuel 2002; Van Hollen 2003). In the case of Ladakh, several authors have drawn attention to the growing number of women turning to biomedical services for delivery if available (Kuhn 1988; Wiley 2002; Gutschow 2008).³ Andrea Wiley states that “(...) approximately 25% of all births in Ladakh (and over 50% of births in Leh district) were taking place at the hospital during the early 1990s” (2002: 1092). The number of hospital births in Leh has increased since the 1980s and the government is pushing biomedical interventions with public campaigns and financial bonuses. Kim Gutschow shows how cultural control over birth is established at the governmental hospital in Leh through the increasing segregation of delivering women in clinics and their subjection to routine obstetric procedures like episiotomies, lithotomy position, routine separation of mother and babies, etc. leading to a shift of control from the birthing mother to the biomedical practitioner (2008). Additionally, biomedical Medical Aid Centres are established in rural Ladakh where Auxiliary Nurse Midwives, most of them trained at the hospital in Leh, work.

One might conclude—and this is exactly what universalistic approaches to modernity suggest—that a loss of ‘traditional’ concepts and practices and a uni-directional progression towards a ‘modern’—in this case biomedical—future resembling the ‘Western world’ is occurring. But ‘such a linear concept of modernization has long been criticized as both teleological and Eurocentric’ (Jolly 1998: 3). Various authors have shown its inadequacy, for both empirical and theoretical reasons (Sax 2008: Chap 8; cf. Kaviraj 2005; Latour 1993).

Despite the proliferation of biomedical care in Ladakh and the ‘social climate privileging biomedical development’ (Pordié 2008: 145), many Ladakhis in rural areas nevertheless give birth at home. Furthermore, women who deliver at the hospital do not necessarily adopt biomedical interpretations of this event, since biomedical practices and technologies might be re-interpreted, actively transformed and integrated into local contexts, by patients as well as biomedical staff. This is shown by empirical studies in different regional and political contexts that observe the increasing authority of biomedicine and the rising application of biomedical elements and standards with regard to the education and practice of Tibetan Medicine (Adams 2001; Janes 1999, 2001, 2002; Prost 2004). They emphasise, however, that these phenomena should not be considered as a mere adoption or acceptance of biomedical concepts. Tibetan doctors of the *Mentsik’ang* in Lhasa, for instance, also use biomedical technologies to legitimize local knowledge and to prove the scientific validity of Tibetan Medicine instead of questioning its epistemological groundings (Adams 2001). This illustrates the use of ethnographic studies as ‘a method for tracing the

3 For more information on birth in Ladakh from a biocultural perspective see Wiley 1994, 1997, 2004.

situated practices through which modernity is asserted while making evident the displacements such assertions produce' (Pigg 1996: 164).

In my research in a village in rural Ladakh, I tried to explore how Ladakhi biomedical practices are perceived and used with regard to birth. Why do people decide to deliver at home or at the hospital? How do they experience their deliveries and assess their treatment at biomedical facilities? And how are local⁴ and biomedical practices intermingled and negotiated in this particular setting? The research was carried out in a rural village in Leh district, in August and September 2007, as part of a project on maternal and child health initiated by the NGOs *Nomad Recherche et Soutien International* and *Ladakh Society for Traditional Medicines*. It was designed as a pre-study to assess the situation concerning childbirth in a rural village in Ladakh. With the help of a translator I interviewed twenty-four women of different ages⁵ along with seven medical experts.

The village is located about 150 km west of Leh and has approximately 300 inhabitants. The population is Buddhist (*drigung* school) and one mon family resides in the village. Most of the inhabitants are farmers, but many males increasingly earn some cash as horsemen during the tourist season and some people are part of the civil or military service. Various medical resources are available in the village: two amchis, several lamas who do not stay in the village regularly, one *lhapa* and one Medical Aid Center (MAC) staffed with a so-called doctor and two nurses, one of them an Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANM). The 'doctor' received six months of multipurpose training and the ANM attended a two-year training course at the governmental Sonam Norbu Memorial (SNM) Hospital in Leh. Both of them live in the village permanently, which means that they are available most of the time. The MAC is located in a building on the outskirts of the village but does not have any delivery or emergency facilities available and only has access to limited pharmaceutical resources.

For delivery, there is on the one hand the possibility of giving birth at home supported by experienced women or by the ANM. There are no traditional birth attendants in Ladakh and the help of amchis or other medical practitioners is only sought in case of complications⁶. The other option is to deliver at one of the biomedical facilities in Leh⁷. But of course, biomedical practices are not homogenous within Ladakh. Our informants' experiences of the biomedical care at the MAC and at the private Mahabodhi clinic in Leh differed extremely from the situation at the governmental SNM-hospital and were evaluated by them more positively. The approach to birth also differs in the various settings and additionally depends on the particular practitioners involved. However, delivery at the Mahabodhi hospital is too costly (Rs. 1500⁸) for most families and the involvement of the ANM is not thought to be as safe as the hospitals in Leh or as giving birth with the help of

4 I use the terms local and traditional here without implying that these practices are locally bounded, uniform and stable and without intending to depict biomedicine as a non-local phenomenon.

5 Out of the twenty-four women, nine women were under thirty years of age, nine were between thirty and fifty years old and six were over fifty years old.

6 Even if complications occur during home delivery, most women feel shy to turn to medical experts. Besides this, they mentioned that the gossip that arises if one refers to a medical practitioner, would make the delivery even worse.

7 Even though Kargil is closer to the village, all the people we interviewed preferred the trip to Leh.

8 Kim Gutschow, personal communication, Oct. 2008.

knowledgeable relatives or neighbours⁹. Thus in most cases the choice comes down to home delivery supported by experienced women vs. delivery at the governmental SNM hospital in Leh.

Only eight of the twenty-four women we talked to have ever delivered at a hospital. None of the women over fifty years old (Group 1) used biomedical services for delivery. Before biomedical obstetric care was institutionalized in Ladakh in the late 1970s, there was no choice for them but to remain at home. Four of the nine women between thirty and fifty years old (Group 2) gave birth to one of their children in the hospital. In contrast to my expectations, women below thirty (Group 3) did not decide to use biomedical facilities for delivery more often (four out of nine women). However, three out of these four women of Group 3 gave birth to all of their children at the hospital, whereas the four women of Group 2 in each case delivered only one of their children there. Furthermore, antenatal checkups gain in importance since all the interviewed women below thirty (Group 3) made use of prenatal care at a biomedical institution (either at the clinics in Leh or Kargil or at the MAC) during at least

	Group 1 Over 50 years old	Group 2: 30 to 50 years old	Group 3 Under 30 years old
Home Delivery	6	5	5
Home delivery (one of several children)	0	4	1
Hospital delivery (all children)	0	0	3

one of their pregnancies—no matter whether they delivered at home or at the hospital.

Table 1: Number of women who delivered at home or at the hospital according to age group.

The motivations for a delivery at home or in the hospital were various. In the following, I will summarize the points mentioned by the women of the village. However, I am convinced that other factors also play a role that were not articulated by them and that the short amount of time did not allow to investigate¹⁰. The fear of complications during home delivery, or even of losing a child, was a major reason for the decision to go to Leh. Younger women particularly reported that they were afraid of severe pain and child death prior to their first delivery. Of the eight women who delivered their baby in the hospital, four had previously lost a child. One of our informants remarked: “I was really scared after I lost my first child so I went to the hospital.” Most people perceived the risk of complications to be lower at the hospital no matter how they assessed the treatment there in other terms.

⁹ The ANM was regarded as being very inexperienced by some of our informants. She herself confirmed this assessment since her training was very theoretical and she has only attended two deliveries so far during her four year stay in the village. Wiley also mentions the underutilisation of ANMs and notes that this might be due to the young age of the ANMs and their classroom-based training in English (Wiley 2002: 1099).

¹⁰ For instance, the engagement with medical facilities is often closely associated with questions of identity, political rights, prestige, or the desire to be “modern” (cf. Pigg 1997; Janes 1999, 2001; 2002; Adams 2002; van Hollen 2003; Pordié 2008; Sax 2008).

The increasing biomedical care during pregnancy also seemed to be a crucial reason for the decision to give birth in the hospital. The 'doctor' and the ANM of the MAC stated that they refer women to Leh whenever difficulties during delivery are foreseeable. Other women were advised to deliver at the hospital when they went for antenatal checkups to Leh. An important role is also played by mothers or friends who live in regions of Ladakh where home deliveries are decreasing. Additionally, the marital households of the women are involved in the decision making process.

Besides this, many women imagined or described the delivery at the hospital as easier and more pleasant. They expected a better supply of medications, competent doctors and a clean environment. "*The hospital is better; it is clean.*" This term is not only used in a biomedical sense but in association with pollution that occurs during birth (*grib*). One woman specified that the impurities connected with delivery are disposed of quickly in the hospital. "*If they deliver here [in the village] blood and impurities come for many days. In the hospital they clean it after delivery.*" Nevertheless, birth is regarded as an impure event and women do follow the restrictions concerning pollution after hospital deliveries (see below). The same lady also found birthing in the hospital much easier due to injections used to speed up the delivery. "*They give you an injection and then the baby is born easily*". The eager and selective use of certain biomedical features that accelerate delivery is also noted for other parts of South Asia (e.g. Rozario 1998; van Hollen 2003).

Moreover, many favored a certain doctor who is retired by now and chose the hospital because of her, suggesting that personal appreciation of a medical expert is a significant factor. This phenomenon is also mentioned by Wiley and according to her it is due to the doctor's social status and knowledge on reproductive health issues (2002: 1099)¹¹. After her retirement from the SNM-hospital in 2003, this doctor went on to work in the Mahabodhi hospital for a few years. The two informants who gave birth there explicitly stated that they did so because of her presence at the clinic in spite of the costs involved. In addition to biomedical institutions in Leh, women have the option of—and many of them do—consulting a variety of other medical experts in the town, including *rinpoches*, *lamas*, *amchis* and *lhapas*.

Nevertheless, there are also many women who deliver at home. Crucial reasons for home delivery were the accessibility of hospitals and financial circumstances. Despite the road, Leh is still distant and the small foot path leading from the village to the highway used to be hard to pass during winter. In addition, the bus fare and a stay in Leh are expensive if one cannot stay with relatives¹². One of our informants explained that some people "*rather eat meat instead of going to Leh*". Besides this, the women have to leave the village a few weeks before the due date and usually return some weeks later. Besides the costs in Leh, the

¹¹ "Dr. L.'s empathic and humble personality, social position in the traditional Ladakhi hierarchy, and understanding of local concerns make her effective in what could easily be an intimidating foreign hospital context....Her cultural authority makes it possible for women to make use of biomedical services without experiencing conflicts among explanatory frameworks or sacrificing their cultural identity" (Wiley 2002: 1099).

¹² Delivery at the governmental hospital is free of charge except for a small admission fee. According to the gynaecologist of the SNM-hospital, women are supposed to receive money to cover travel costs in case of referral from a peripheral health centre. But it seems that this money does not reach the village and none of our informants mentioned it as a motivating factor for hospital delivery.

non-availability of labour in the village is also problematic, especially during the busy agricultural season in summer when men are increasingly absent because they are working with tourists. But since the road from the village to the highway was completed recently, and with an increasing cash income of many households, delivery at the hospital in Leh is likely to be an option for more and more women in the near future.

Alongside economic constraints women opted for home delivery because of their own bad experiences at the hospital or other women's reports thereof. The following depictions are based on their experiences and accounts regarding the governmental hospital in Leh. One frequently mentioned topic was the unkindness of the nurses. I was told that they did not take care of the women properly, that they would shout at them and would not consider their needs. "*When you tell them you are in pain, they shout at you.*" And, "*Once when I was in pain and feeling cold I asked one nurse to get a blanket and she started scolding me.*" This "generic 'scolding' discourse through which hospital staff address rural populations" (Ram 2001: 78) seems to be a widespread phenomenon in South Asia (e.g. Ram 2001; van Hollen 2003).

Besides this, the waiting room where patients are accommodated with many unknown people differs immensely from the situation at home, where mostly female and familiar persons are present. One young woman described her experience in the following way: "*When I saw the room where the women were lying on the bed I was shocked.*" Many women feel uncomfortable about exposing their pregnancy, which in part might be due to the association of birth with pollution. But on the other hand they usually keep their pregnancy secret to avoid harmful effects like complications during delivery or miscarriages that might arise as a result of envy or gossip¹³ (cf. Nazki 1986; Adams et al. 2005). Moreover, during the actual delivery the mother is taken to the labour ward, where her family members or friends are not allowed to accompany her¹⁴.

The majority of women who delivered in Leh felt uncomfortable during the birth process¹⁵ and found the lithotomic position they had to adopt particularly unfamiliar. "*In the hospital one has to be on a bed and I feel scared of that.*" And, "*How can people deliver in the hospital? They say some scary things like that the feet are hanging to the roof.*" In contrast, women have more control during a home delivery. "*One can do anything in ones home.*" Our informants were also concerned about episiotomies. "*Some women say that they are cut and sutured in the hospital and because of that they are scared.*" These statements show why hospital deliveries are considered to be shameful procedures, especially by older generations.

13 Vincanne Adams et al. (2005: 830 on the Tibetan Autonomous Region) state that another reason to hide one's pregnancy is that "(...) if one anticipates something too much, it can adversely affect the course of events" due to humoral imbalances (*rlung*: desire) or the "immorality of attachment."

14 These reports contrast with accounts of deliveries at the private Mahabodhi Hospital in Leh. Although there seems to be no difference as far as the actual delivery is concerned (except that in the Mahabodhi Hospital, one relative or friend may attend the delivery), the staff, the surroundings and the experiences there were described as more pleasant and culturally meaningful in so far as it had greater similarity to the situation at home.

15 These statements correspond to Wiley's impression of the birth process at the SNM Hospital: "Women labor and birth alone in the hospital, bereft of support by family members, in an environment that can only be described as bleak and impersonal. They have little say over the course of delivery and are expected to be acquiescent and remain stoic as they lie flat on the delivery table with their legs up in stirrups. Observation of numerous births suggest that his stoicism is hard-won and that women experience this method of birthing as extremely painful" (Wiley 2002: 1098).

“*Nowadays, when they get pain, they are taken to Leh to open everything. It is very shameful.*”

These accounts demonstrate that many women experience treatment at the governmental hospital as a standardized procedure in which their expectations play an insignificant role. However, there are diverse and contrasting opinions within the village and some women feel comfortable in the SNM-hospital and prefer it to homebirth. In addition, most people and all the medical practitioners in the village agreed that for difficult deliveries or complications hospitals were the best place to go.

Finally, the use of biomedical facilities for delivery as well as for antenatal care does not necessarily undermine or discard local concepts and practices. For example, most of our informants mentioned antenatal injections and medicines that were given to them in a positive way but none of them employed biomedical theories to explain their use. Some described them as giving strength and one lady equated them with bone soup, a local method of treating weak women. This suggests that people understand the treatment they receive in local terms. Moreover, as already indicated above, our informants visited various medical practitioners in Leh before and after hospital delivery, for instance to receive advice from a *rinpoche* about the appropriate point of time to go to the hospital. And women also obeyed the restrictions regarding birth pollution after childbirth at the hospital like the ANM of the village who—after her own delivery in Leh—was taken back to her home during night time in order to not to offend Paldan Lhamo in Spituk. As noted above, birth is a polluting event that *lha* and *klu* react to and are particularly sensitive to. “*Delivery is considered as grib, lots of grib for lha-klu.*” Hence, various restrictions have to be observed during and after delivery to limit the contact to *lha-klu* and to avoid defiling them until a purification is conducted, since this could have negative consequences such as illness, death of animals, failed harvest and dried up springs (cf. Day 1989; Gutschow 2004).

All in all, I gained the impression that most women do not perceive the decision about where to deliver as a conflict between biomedical and ‘traditional’ methods, but rather as a decision that is reached by considering various factors such as those outlined above, and rarely based on clear preferences for a certain medical system. Biomedical and local concepts and practices are not understood as mutually exclusive; however they are linked, intertwined and thereby constantly reshaped in manifold ways.

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NOTES FROM THE FIELD: THE GEOPOLITICS OF INTIMACY AND BABIES IN LEH

– Sara H. Smith

As I write I am just finishing up nine months of dissertation research in and around Leh town. The aim of my research has been to understand how political and geopolitical practice invokes, affects, and is resisted by and through women's bodies here in Leh. This project grew out of my 2004 MA research on the politicization of religion and everyday life in Leh. During that research, I found that when I asked questions about politics, I heard stories about marriage and babies—especially marriages between Buddhists and Muslims and the babies that might result from such a marriage. This fascinated me: what made marriage between Ladakhis of different religions such a hot political topic? How did babies become a political flashpoint?

As I read more of the literature on politics in Ladakh, worked through my MA and then began my dissertation research in a summer 2007 pilot study, I began to see this as a question of local geopolitical practice. That is, marriage and babies were becoming sites through which territorial struggles were taking place. Others have written with great insight on the relationship between religion, identity, performance and Ladakhi politics (e.g. Aggarwal 2004; van Beek 1996, 1997, 2001; Bertelsen 1997; Gutschow 2006; Srinivas 1998)—but I wanted to take my work in a slightly different direction to examine the ways that these themes are integrated into the most intimate of personal practices: whom we love and how many children we have. Along this line of questioning I could see ways to build on recent developments in my discipline, geography.

Population geography has begun engaging with theoretical advances from feminist and political geography through studies that reveal the gendered, racialized process of migration, the embodiment of national identity, the production of spaces of exception, and the political use of immigration rhetoric (for a review, see Silvey 2004). Thus far, however, these advances have not been applied to the study of marriage or fertility, demographic events that are all but ignored in the geography literature (Boyle 2003; Graham 2000). Simultaneously, drawing on the work of Abrams (1988) and Mitchell (1991), political geography and state theory more broadly have witnessed growing interest in the everyday practices through which the state is enacted in our lives (see Painter 2007).

These questions are particularly relevant to a nascent feminist geopolitics that seeks to challenge the traditional global scale of geopolitical reasoning by uncovering more mundane and everyday ways that geopolitical strategy is practiced and resisted (Dowler and Sharp 2001; Hyndman 2004, 2007; Secor 2001; also see Enloe 1989). The politicization of demographic decision-making is an ideal case study to move forward our understandings of how macro-scale geopolitical strategies to control territory are made material in day-to-day life. Everyone makes decisions regarding whether and whom to love, whether to have children or not—but the potential of these decisions to shape territories mean that they are almost unavoidably given political meaning.

Thus far, studies of embodied nationalisms have effectively begun this process (see for

instance, Korac 1999, 2004; Mayer 2004; Morokvasic-Müller 2004 and Yuval-Davis 1997). In scholarship on the partition of India, the ways through which women's bodies became the nation have been eloquently documented (Butalia 1998; Das 1995; Menon and Bhasin 1998). When women became signs "through which men communicate with each other" (Das 1995:56), and their rights, needs, and lives, became secondary to their symbolic value. While the Partition's tragic and unspeakable violence was "one of the great human convulsions of history" (Butalia 1998:3). My research in Ladakh is meant to provide a glimpse into a similar territorialization occurring through more mundane day-to-day practices.

To explore these issues, I settled on three main methods: a survey, in-depth life history interviews and a participatory oral history project with Leh youth. These were supplemented with interviews with political and religious leaders. In the survey, I talked to nearly 200 Ladakhi women to determine marriage and fertility practices and attitudes, and how these are being shaped by politics. The in-depth interviews go further to get a sense of whether and how women experienced geopolitical narratives and pressures in their daily lives. After a trial run at SECMOL, thanks to Rebecca Norman and the 2008 Foundation Year students, I ran an oral history project in Leh targeting the change in Buddhist-Muslim relations. In this participatory project, I worked with students from Lamdon Model School, Islamia Public School and the Girls' and Boys' Higher Secondary Schools to teach students about oral history and get a sense of how young people perceived the past and future of their own birthplace. The data analysis phase is only now beginning, so these notes from the field are quite preliminary but I hope that they will serve to give a sense of my findings and hopefully elicit some advice from those of you who have many more years of experience.

Several scholars have documented the theme of competitive demography underlying the Buddhist-Muslim tensions that intensified over the 20th century. Van Beek (2001) observes that actions such as the banning of polyandry and changes in inheritance law were at least in part aimed at reducing constraints on Buddhist fertility. Gutschow (2006) points to inter-marriage and contraception as flashpoints for communal practices and rhetoric. As I understand it from my survey so far, Ladakhis are struggling to cope with a bombardment of narratives commenting on their personal decisions. The women I spoke with, whether Buddhist, Shia or Sunni, felt that they were unable to live up to political or religious expectations. As the readers of this journal are aware, Leh district currently has the lowest fertility of any district in India (Guilmoto and Rajan 2002). My survey data makes some of the reasons for this quite clear-there is a heavy emphasis on education and a real concern about sending students to government schools. For this reason, while women suggest that having more children would be nice, they typically employ family planning after two or three children at the most. Every single woman I spoke with (n=192) in the Leh area (mainly Leh, Chushot, Phyang, Thikse) has been told by religious leaders or associations not to use family planning, either for religious or political reasons.

Buddhists, Shia and Sunni Muslims have all been told that it is a sin, but some Buddhist women have also been told more explicitly that they need to have more children or else in the future Buddhists will die out. There is debate among all women about the moral meaning of temporary methods (almost invariably the IUD or 'copper T'). While I

cannot yet quantify this data, I can observe that there is a range of opinions among Buddhists and Muslims on the use of temporary methods. Some women suggest that any interference with the body's natural fertility is a sin—*dikpa* or *gunna*—or that it “is not in our religion.” Other women suggest that the religious laws that apply to permanent sterilization do not apply to permanent methods. That is, they said that sterilization (*ban chos*) was wrong, but that the IUD (*skarches*) was not sinful.

While some women simply stated that the IUD was acceptable while sterilization was not, others explained their logic, which generally fell into two categories. On the one hand, since closely spaced births damage the body, it was seen as excusable that women would use a temporary method to avoid this. Other women suggested that the temporary nature of the IUD made it acceptable, because there was the potential to have more children. Likewise there is disagreement on exceptions for the health of the mother. Some women expressed the sentiment that in principle contraception was best avoided, but that if a woman had been told by her doctor that she was at risk for health problems that constituted an exception. It is worth noting that often women who have already used family planning are very firm in their condemnation of it, feeling that they made a grave mistake during their reproductive years. Most women in the Leh area did express concern about their ability to access family planning services despite some recent efforts in Leh to limit the provision of those services. Gutschow's (2006:485) interviews in Zangskar, as well as anecdotal evidence in Sham and recent events in Nubra, however, suggest that in other parts of Ladakh anti-family planning sentiment may be interfering with health workers' ability to make contraceptives available.

Tied up with this policing of women's bodies is the ongoing concern about marriage between Buddhist and Muslim Ladakhis. I was aware already that the current restrictions on such marriages were fairly recent, and had often been told that in the past such marriages were not considered exceptional. As Gutschow (2006:484), observes in the context of Zangskar, today there is a “deep anxiety about cross-communal marriage or sex.” It was hard for me to judge, based on anecdotal evidence, whether the stories about marriage in the past were just another of the rosy visions of the past that many of us have heard from time to time. In my survey, then, I included some questions about intermarriage and found the answers intriguing—an overwhelming majority of those in the Leh area are related across the supposed religious boundaries. From informal conversations, I had suspected that many were related, but the derision with which such marriages are spoken of today had led me to assume it would not be such a clear majority. Of the sample that I have processed thus far, of 50 women living in or near Leh town, 42 had relatives of the other religion. Furthermore, all but four of the 42 with relatives maintain the relationship by attending events such as weddings and funerals. We can assume that this is a phenomenon especially prevalent in this particular region of Ladakh and that less integrated areas (Sham, Changthang) would have many fewer such cases. In the Leh area, however, this is fairly clear evidence of a blurry religious-identity boundary in the past. This is in stark contrast to the ways people responded when I asked if intermarriage today should be allowed; I was overwhelmingly told it should be prevented—even, on occasion, by the children of such marriages.

In the months ahead, I will be analyzing this data more carefully to work out what the stories of these women tell us about the relationship between geopolitics and the intimate. Is the materiality of the body a source of resistance to political and geopolitical strategies, or a territory easily dominated through political narratives? When do abstract fears of geopolitical risk take over from the day-to-day concerns of home and family? Does desire that crosses religious and political lines blur those lines or strengthen them? I hope to have more to say about these questions at the 2009 Ladakh Studies conference—in the meantime I would appreciate hearing any suggestions from IALS members.

Acknowledgements

Clearly, none of this research would have been possible without the generous participation of Ladakhi interviewees, who kindly gave their time to answer my often-intrusive questions. This research is supported by the Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Program, the Society of Women Geographers, the International Dissertation Research Fellowship Program of the Social Science Research Council with funds provided by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the University of Arizona Social and Behavioral Sciences Research Institute, the Association of American Geographers Political Geography Specialty Group and the Association of American Geographers Qualitative Research Specialty Group.

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BOOK REVIEWS

■ *Horses like lightning—A story of passage through the Himalayas.*

By Sienna Craig (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2008. \$16.95)

– Monisha Ahmed

A passion for horses and a chance meeting with Charles Ramble led Sienna Craig to Mustang and her study of horses. It helped that she was also an equestrian—she got her first horse when she was ten and devoted much of her childhood to horse care, training and participating in competitions.

In 1993, during her junior year at Brown University, Craig went to Nepal for the first time and attended the School for International Training in Kathmandu. It is here that her story begins, largely a nonfictional work based on part memoir and part ethnographic study. After two months in Kathmandu, she opted out of a study of Tibetan nuns and decided on carrying out her independent project on the horse culture of Mustang. She spent one month in Jomsom (Mustang's main town) and set out to familiarise herself with life in Mustang and the importance of horses.

Returning to Mustang two years later, on a Fulbright Fellowship, this is when she embarks on the actual process of learning and understanding the culture of Mustang and the place of horses within this. She studies Tibetan horse texts that cover everything from the origin of horses to how to saddle a horse, how to care for a mare when she gives birth and how to read a horse based on colour and shape. Her work also includes the study of Tibetan treatises on horse care and horse medicine. In the process she also witnessed the healing work of local doctors (*amchi*) who cared for the animal and her respect for their work and the admiration in which she holds these men is evident in her writings. This perhaps kindled her later interest in Medical Anthropology and her doctoral dissertation work from Cornell University which was on the “Science of Healing: Efficacy and the Metamorphosis of Tibetan Medicine” (1999 - 2006).

Though horses dot Mustang's landscape, Craig was to discover that it was not always so. In the old days—before tourism and the ability of people to travel out of Mustang for business and other forms of work—it was only the aristocracy or important officials who were able to own horses. At times they were also the only ones entitled to own horses. It was only as the rest of Mustang's inhabitants entered a cash economy which enabled them to increase their earnings and have some surplus money did the horse become a viable object of ownership. As horses gradually became fashionable symbols of prestige, with it came the compulsion to own the best horse, most elaborately woven saddle blankets, best horse attire and gear. Thus, Craig's work looks at how horses fit into Mustang—as commodities, symbols of social status and a medium of exchange.

But Sienna Craig's work also goes beyond horses to talk about the events that shaped modern day Mustang. She delves into the politics of Mustang versus Kathmandu, the importance as well as the perils of tourism and the growing Maoist movement. She

looks at Mustang's relations with Tibet, China's colonization of Tibet and America's training of Tibetan resistance fighters whose base was in Mustang. While she is sympathetic of the Tibetan refugees that enter Mustang and the hardships that they faced, she is also critical of the resistance fighters and how they exploited Mustang's meagre resources. Many of these were Khampas from eastern Tibet and their presence affected local lives, often negatively. But after the Dalai Lama's appeal for them to give up their arms in the mid-1970s, most of either left or settled in Mustang. It is from these Tibetans that Mustangis also learnt a lot about horses.

Horses like Lightning is a well written book, interesting and imaginative. Siena Craig has managed to weave a remarkable story that pulls together all the elements of life in Mustang and beyond with the lives of the people she encounters during her time in Nepal. Her writing is honest and open but at times she comes across as being naïve to the point of innocence. However, one has to remember that Craig began this journey as a young American student on what was probably her first trip out of the country—certainly her first trip to Asia. She was dealing with cultural dissonance and the inexperience of being in a foreign place. But when she returns as a Fulbright Fellow it is evident her understanding of the culture has grown and that she is better equipped to grasp all the nuances of Mustang.

Now a professor of Anthropology at Dartmouth College, Craig's commitment to and involvement with Mustang did not stop after her doctorate. She went on to set up the non-profit organisation 'Drokpa' with her husband Ken Bauer. They had met when he was a Fulbright scholar studying traditional pastoral management in Dolpo. Drokpa supports pastoral ways of life across the Himalaya, Tibetan Plateau and Central Asia. The organisation partners with these pastoral communities to implement grassroots development and catalyze social entrepreneurship using appropriate tools and replicable strategies.

■ *Beyond lines of control. Performance and politics on the disputed borders of Ladakh, India.*

By Ravina Aggarwal (New Delhi: Seagull Press, 2008)

– Thierry Dodin

The book, originally a PhD thesis in Anthropology, places the Muslim-Buddhist tensions of 1990s Ladakh, as well as more general perceptions of Ladakh, within the contextual frame of the Indo-Pakistani conflict over ownership of the Jammu & Kashmir state. Central to the book's perspective is Ladakh's position at the geographical edge of the Indian state, just next to the notoriously embattled Line of Control (LoC), and its resulting special position within contemporary Indian political narratives. It argues: "*The border becomes a space where the state expresses itself through a habitualized performativity and repeatedly asserts physical and symbolic authority over its citizens, particularly over hybrid zones and migrant bodies that contaminate dominant notions of purity an unsettle orderliness*".

Aggarwal analyses many examples of the depiction of Ladakh and its people in contemporary India and in travel literature of the colonial period, thus providing a good insight into the history of clichés and prejudices related to the region. Her descriptions of, and—often pleasantly sarcastic—comments about, the annual Sindhu Dharshan, a ‘ritual’ initiated by prominent BJP politicians during the 1990s, show how Ladakh’s landscape and geographical position became an instrument for the pronounced nationalistic discourse which emanates from these circles. A discourse in which, she notes, Ladakhis play, at best, walk on parts. But the most deserving part of her book is Aggarwal’s sensitive description of how Ladakhis in Achinathang, the village where she spent most of her field research period, tried to cope with the communal conflict between Buddhists and Muslims, in particular during the difficult times of the social boycott enforced in the early 1990s by the Ladakh Buddhist Association. She shows how a number of traditional social practices disappeared for good, provides details of the dilemmas faced by the villagers caught between conflicting desires of solidarity with their respective religious group and continuation of generally good inter-confessional relationship. Aggarwal, however, also portrays how individuals took initiatives to overcome the most pressing hardships which the conflict inevitably generated, thus underlining the villagers’ deeper conviction that, ultimately, both sides had no other choice than to find common ground.

While there is no doubt that the Indo-Pakistani conflict over Kashmir greatly contributed to fueling inner-Ladakhi tensions after independence, one can also hardly overlook the fact that the problems between Muslim and Buddhist communities were simmering long before the British partition of India. For instance, Abdul Wahid Radhu’s memoirs mentioned in the book provide enlightening evidence that by the early 20th century, both communities had already taken increasingly divergent paths of development, evidently creating a fault line along which further political confrontations occurred. There are also indications that these centripetal forces were themselves rooted in deeper historic ambiguities, albeit, in hindsight, the fuzzy concept of communal harmony might have appeared to many a more convenient reading of the past. Aggarwal does not deny this, nor are these deeper historic ambiguities in any way the subject of her book. The reader searching for an in-depth understanding of the complex history of the interaction between Ladakh’s religious communities will have to regard the contemporary ‘border region’ perception as an episode in a longer historical process. However, he or she will find this episode undeniably well treated in *Beyond Lines of Control*.

■ *Exploration et documentation des pétroglyphes du Ladakh 1996-2006*.
By Martin Vernier (Como: Fondation Carlo Leone et Mariena Montandon, 2007. Preface by Henri-Paul Francfort. 81pp., illus., maps)
– John Bray

This beautifully produced book provides a succinct overview of the current state of research concerning Ladakhi rock art—the numerous rock inscriptions and engravings

scattered across the entire region. These petroglyphs constitute one of the most important aspects of Ladakh's heritage. The book expresses a sense of wonder and delight at their diversity, historical interest and artistic merit, while at the same time sounding an urgent note of warning. All too many ancient petroglyphs have already been destroyed in the course of Ladakh's modernisation process, and the fate of many others hangs in the balance.

The author is an independent scholar based in Switzerland, who since 1996 has set himself the task of undertaking a comprehensive survey of petroglyphs in Central Ladakh, the Markha valley and Zangskar. With the help of questionnaires, bibliographic research and—most importantly of all—on-the-ground investigations, he has recorded a provisional list of well over a hundred sites and thousands of images. His objective is to establish a database which—if the worse comes to the worst—will serve as a record of what has been destroyed and, on a more hopeful note, will provide a resource for future scholarly research.

The book begins with a brief overview of Ladakh's geography and history, and a summary of rock art research dating back to Alexander Cunningham in the late 19th century and A.H. Francke in the early 20th century. It then explains the author's approach to his task. With the help of Global Positioning System (GPS) technology, he is able to record the precise location of every site. In addition to taking detailed photographs, he has also made tracings of the most important figures. The book is beautifully illustrated with what inevitably is no more than a small selection of these photographs and tracings.

One of the most interesting chapters offers a preliminary classification of images: animals, particularly ibexes; people; bodily 'attributes' such as hand and footprints, symbols; objects such as axes and daggers; and scenes—notably including hunting scenes. In a brief inter-regional summary, the author draws comparisons with similar petroglyphs dating back to the Bronze Age in the 3rd to the 2nd millennia BC in Central Asia, Mongolia and Tibet. He also includes a valuable bibliography.

Many of the most important sites are situated along trade routes, including river banks close to former or present-day bridges. These routes are as important now as they were centuries ago, and this continuity in itself poses one of the greatest threats to the survival of many of the most important petroglyphs. The author offers a brief but telling account of how he tried in vain to open a dialogue with the leader of a camp of workers whose task was to smash up rocks for road-building purposes. Other rocks have been defaced with trivial contemporary graffiti.

If Ladakh's rock art legacy is to survive more-or-less intact, it is essential to raise awareness of its value not only among scholars but also among a much wider constituency of local people and officials. Martin Vernier's survey work and this excellent book are important steps in this direction. It is to be hoped that they will be followed by further studies in a variety of languages, both in Ladakh itself and in the wider national and international arenas.

IALS NEWS AND NOTES

■ Peter Marczell-A Short Appreciation – Neil Howard

Editor's note: *Neil Howard has decided that the version of his review of Peter Marczell's Alexander Csoma de Kőrös published in LS 22 no longer represents his views and he does not wish his name to be associated with it.*

I have known Peter Marczell since the 5th colloquium of IALS in 1992 where we discovered that we had a mutual interest in Alexander Csoma de Kőrös's teacher, Sangye Puntsok (although for very different reasons; I believed him to have been an ally of Zorawar Singh the Dogra). From the first I was struck by the elegance and urbanity of Peter's careful scholarship. He was a true gentleman scholar and an amateur in the original sense of a lover of knowledge. No detail was too small to be noticed, so long as it was relevant. His research was painstaking, and often physically demanding, and the analysis of his material meticulous. He was never a light-weight dilettante fussing over details.

Correspondence on Sangye Puntsok followed that first meeting but soon broadened out into a wide range of subjects and into several other fields of common interest and aspects of cultural life and European history. Peter was widely read and had many intellectual interests. Both of us enjoyed the old fashioned art of letter-writing. And it was always stimulating to receive an east European view of our common cultural heritage. I also had the pleasure and privilege of reading and commenting upon many of his papers in draft form. In a world in which scholarship is relentlessly becoming narrow and standardised, even in our minority, somewhat unorthodox backwater, it was always mentally refreshing to engage with Peter's mind and rich experience. Life is duller without him.

■ Conference Report: Golden Jubilee Conference of the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, Gangtok, Sikkim, 1-5 October 2008. – John Bray

The Namgyal Institute of Tibetology was founded 50 years ago by a distinguished group of scholars as well as political and religious leaders. H.H. the Dalai Lama laid the foundation stone. Indian Prime Minister Jawarharlal Nehru gave an address at the inauguration ceremony. The Founder President was then Sikkim Maharajkumar Palden Thondup Namgyal, and the 24 founder members included such luminaries as NK Rustomji, Jamyang Khyentse Rimpoche, the English Buddhist monk Sangharakshita, Babu Tharchin the Christian leader and newspaper publisher from Kalimpong, and the Indian academic NC Sinha. Since then, the Institute has built up one of the most comprehensive libraries of Tibetan literature in the world, established a museum, and brought out a series of valuable publications, including its biannual journal, the

Bulletin of Tibetology. This Golden Jubilee conference therefore had much to celebrate.

The Opening Ceremony included speeches by Shri Balmiki Prasad Singh, the Governor of Sikkim; Chief Minister Shri Pawan Chamling; Senior Presiding Scholar Gene Smith, formerly of the US Library of Congress; Lama Chospel Zotpa of the National Commission for Minorities; and Ashok Sinha, the son of former institute director NC Sinha. Lama Zotpa emphasised the importance of promoting the common cultural and linguistic heritage of communities in the Himalayan region from Ladakh in the west to Arunachal Pradesh in the east.

The overall theme of the conference was “Buddhist Himalaya: Studies in Religion, History and Culture”, and it attracted more than 60 papers as well as a series of workshops on topics such as thangka preservation, textbooks in minority languages and—with an eye to younger scholars—academic conventions on matters such as footnote citations. Ladakh was represented by Dr Nawang Tsering of the Central Institute of Buddhist Studies (CIBS) and Nawang Tsering Shakspo of the J&K Cultural Academy. Other participants with IALS connections included Isrun Engelhardt, Roberto Vitali, Peter Schwieger and John Bray. The conference theme was intended to be broad, in accordance with the Institute's Tibetological traditions. However, as explained by Research Coordinator Anna Balikci-Denjongpa, there has recently been a greater focus on the study of Sikkim itself. She herself offered a review of the challenges and opportunities of anthropological research on the region. Other notable contributions included a paper by Saul Mullard of Oxford University, who has been carrying out groundbreaking documentary research on the formation of the Sikkimese state in the 17th century.

This emerging research agenda inevitably prompts comparisons between Sikkim and Ladakh: both are former Himalayan kingdoms who now belong to the Indian Union; the ruling families of both are—somewhat coincidentally—known as the ‘Namgyal dynasty’; and both face the challenge of deciding how best to preserve and develop the best of own cultural traditions while at the same time adapting to the challenges of the 21st century. It is to be hoped that such comparisons may in themselves prove a stimulus to further research. The Sikkim conference was notable for the its interdisciplinary character, with papers covering art, linguistics, history, anthropology, ‘sacred space’, and the environment—and this too is a favourable augury for future research in both regions.

Associated conference activities included an excursion to Rumtek monastery, as well as dinners hosted by the Governor at Raj Bhavan (the residence, during British times, of the Political Officer Sikkim) and by the Sikkim Culture Minister. The Institute also organised exhibitions of photographs illustrating the history of the Namgyal dynasty, and Sikkim's relations with Bhutan. In the best Sikkimese—and Ladakhi—tradition, the conference was notable for its warm hospitality, and the opportunities for fruitful contact between a wide range of local and international scholars. The participants owe an enormous debt to Institute Director Tashi Densapa, and to all their hosts in Sikkim. A selection of conference papers will be published in due course under the editorship of Alex McKay, the conference's academic convenor.

NEWS IN LADAKH. MAY - OCTOBER, 2008.

– Selected by Seb Mankelov, Abdul Nasir Khan, and Tashi Morup

■ Women outnumber men in J&K voter lists, inquiry ordered

Jammu, May 28, 2008: Kashmirlive.com

As Jammu and Kashmir prepares for Assembly elections later this year, discrepancies in the voter lists have come to light. Jammu, May 27 As Jammu and Kashmir prepares for Assembly elections later this year, discrepancies in the voter lists has come to light. In some segments, the number of women voters has been shown more than male voters, in contrast to census figures. A probe has been ordered. This anomaly pertaining to around six-eight segments across the state was noticed during a review of electoral scene of the state.

It is in the Leh and Kargil district where the figures have shown unreal gender ratio in the voter list. The gender ratio at far-flung area of Zanaskar is also reported to be quite high. Interestingly, the highest gender ratio has been found in the Pulwama segment of south Kashmir. In the Leh segment, for instance, as against the census figure of 823 (sex ratio), the gender ratio has been found at 977. Likewise in the Kargil segment, while the census figure is 837, the voter list mentions 1,014 in terms of gender ratio.

Other segments with such deviations are Nubra in Ladakh, Vijaypur, Suchetgarh, Akhnoor, Chhamb, Samba and Bishnah in Jammu region and some parts in Kashmir valley like Pulwama and Pampore. While the authorities concerned are looking into each and every aspect of the voter list, Chief Election Officer of the state BR Sharma has ordered a probe at block levels to find out the possible reasons for the discrepancies. “We are having a relook at the figures and the formal findings will certainly lead us to some conclusions,” said Sharma.

■ 200 KW transmitter of AIR inaugurated, CM assures good news to Kargilites with in a week

Kargil, May 30, 2008: Daily Excelsior

Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad today assured people of this mountainous district of good news within a week regarding the opening of a university campus even as he spoke about several major development projects going on in the area to improve its economic profile.

The Chief Minister was addressing a huge public meeting here after he inaugurated the 200 KW high power transmitter of AIR Kargil, laid foundation of the power house of the 44 MW Chhutak hydel power project and visited the 4-day public information campaign for flagship projects under Bharat Nirman.

The Chief Minister, in response to the demand for a university campus in Kargil projected by the Minister for Youth Services and Sports, Haji Nissar Ali and Chief Executive Councillor, Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (Kargil), Haji Asgar Ali Karbalai, told the cheering gathering that they would soon hear good news about it. He said he had always been saying that the benefits of the expansion of university campuses in the state should also reach the districts of Kupwara and Kargil. “You do not need to wait for long. In a week's time you will hear good news”, the Chief Minister

said amid thunderous applause from the audience greeting the assurance.

The Chief Minister said that negotiations were on with the owners of some private airline companies for operating civil air service to Kargil. He hoped that this dream would be soon realized. He said in the meanwhile, the two airports of Leh and Kargil were being upgraded. He said only last month he had invited a high level civil aviation Ministry team to visit the airports in the State and inspect up-gradation work. He said the Government in co-ordination with the Air Force had increased the frequency of flights to Kargil.

The Chief Minister welcomed the up-gradation of the AIR Kargil transmitter from 1 KW to 200 KW and said with the inauguration of the high power transmitter the transmission from the station would now be heard not only in the entire Ladakh region but also in almost all the districts of Jammu & Kashmir and the Northern Areas under Pakistan's occupation. He said the transmission hours were also now extended from 5 hours at present to 10 hours. He said for 5 hours the transmission would be in local languages while another 5 hours would be dedicated for Urdu, the state language. He said Urdu language connects the three regions of the State where people speak different languages and dialects. He assured people that the up-graded radio station would promote local culture and languages. Azad also welcomed the assurance by the CEO, Prasar Bharati, B. S. Lalli that local news bulletin would be soon broadcast from AIR Kargil. He said this would further help the Government welfare and development measures reaching the people of the region and their separated brethren across the LoC.

He said the power house of the project, whose foundation was laid by him today, would be completed at a cost of Rs. 250 crore. He said work on the double-laning of the 434 km Srinagar-Leh road was already in progress on 160 kms. He said a tunnel through Zojila and improvement of Kargil-Zanaskar road, were other projects aimed at improving connectivity within the district and the region. Earlier, on his arrival, the Chief Minister, accompanied by Minister for Industries & Commerce, Nawang Rigzin Jora and Chief Executive Officer, Prasar Bharati, B.S. Lalli, was accorded a warm reception at the airport. In his address, Nawang Rigzin Jora Minister for Industries said that the past five years had been years of development for Ladakh region including Kargil district. He said the District's Autonomous Hill Development Council was fully empowered and its financial powers raised from Rs. 5 lakh to Rs 50 crore. He said for the first time in the 60 year's history of the state there were two Cabinet Ministers in the State cabinet while the CECs were also accorded ministerial rank.

Minister for youth services and sports Haji Nissar Ali complimented the Chief Minister, Ghulam Nabi Azad for his special interest in the development of Kargil district. He said he was sparing no effort to put the district on the highway of progress. He demanded university campus, civil air service to Kargil and starting work on Zojila tunnel. CEC LAHDC, Kargil Asgar Ali Karbalai also expressed gratitude from the people of Kargil to the Chief Minister and the CEO, Prasar Bharati for enhancing the area of coverage of the AIR Kargil. He demanded a news section and broadcast of news bulletin from the station in local language, recruitment of local talent, display of temperature of Kargil in Doordarshan news bulletins and up-gradation of local Doordarshan low power transmitter to a full-fledged Kendra.

■ University campuses approved for Kargil, Kupwara

Srinagar, June 3, 2008: Excelsior Correspondent

Five days after the Chief Minister, Ghulam Nabi Azad assured the people of Kargil of 'a good news in a week's time' on their demand for setting up of an university campus in the hilly district of Ladakh region, the Kashmir University Council (KUC), on Monday approved the establishment of two additional campuses of the university in Kargil and Kupwara districts. Mr Azad had also held out assurance of a university campus at Kupwara last month.

The decision about the two additional campuses was taken in a meeting of the KUC chaired by the Governor, Lt. Gen. (Retd), S. K. Sinha, who is also the Chancellor of the University. The Chief Minister and the Pro-Chancellor of the University, Ghulam Nabi Azad, Minister for Higher Education, Gulchain Singh Charak, Vice Chancellor, University of Kashmir, Prof. (Dr.) Riyaz Punjabi, Vice Chancellor, University of Jammu, Prof. Amitabh Mattoo, Vice Chancellor, SKUAST, Kashmir, Prof. Anwar Alam, Vice Chancellor, SKUAST, Jammu, Dr. Nagendra Sharma, Principal Secretary to Governor, Arun Kumar, Commissioner/Secretary, Finance, B.B. Vyas and Commissioner/Secretary, Higher Education, Khizr Muhammad Wani participated.

The setting up of the campuses of University of Kashmir at Kargil and Kupwara has met the public demand for higher education in these remote areas. The university has already started the process of establishing new campuses at Anantnag, Baramulla and Leh even as the Vice Chancellor informed the meeting that the Anantnag campus would be functional next month. With the two new campuses at Kargil and Kupwara, the twin universities of Kashmir and Jammu would have as many as eight additional campuses spread across the State. In another important decision, the KUC approved setting up of the department of Food Science and Technology with introduction of 5-year integrated masters and doctoral programme in food science & technology.

The University Council also approved the revival of Mushir-ul-Haq Chair as Mushir-ul-Haq Chair for Inter-Faith Studies. The Chair would be set up in the name of the former Vice Chancellor of the university and eminent Islamic scholar who was assassinated by militants on April 10, 1990. In yet another decision, taken by the KUC related to introduction of M. Pharma course which is said to have hundred percent employability. In another decision, the University Council approved the transfer of the Institute of Music & Fine Arts, Srinagar to the University of Kashmir. The Institute is currently run by the J&K Academy of Art, Culture & Languages. The Jammu University Council had already approved the transfer of the Institute of Music & Fine Arts, Jammu to the University of Jammu.

The KUC also approved the complete take over of the University Model School and making it as a lab school for its M. Ed course. The KUC also took several other decisions on academic and administrative matters. In his opening remarks, the Governor said that the University of Kashmir had come under sharp focus as reflected in the holding of international seminars on Central Asia and Kashmiriyat, in which delegates from the Central Asian countries and Pakistan participated. The Governor said that the University of Kashmir was traversing the path of excellence. He said the extended campuses of the

university had brought higher education to the doorsteps of the people. He said MoUs had been signed with institutions of repute within and outside the country to improve the quality of education. He called for raising the infrastructure in a time bound manner and emphasised that job oriented courses should get precedence over traditional courses.

The Chief Minister said that in the coming three to four years the quality of education in Jammu & Kashmir would reach standards higher than in the rest of the states. He said it was the duty of the teachers to convince students that obtaining degrees did not mean entitlement to Government jobs. He said during the past five years, the reach of education both at school and higher level had enhanced to the remote and hitherto neglected areas. He said now was the time for consolidation and stressed on the need to pay attention on the quality of education. Earlier, the Vice Chancellor, Prof. Riyaz Punjabi gave a brief account of the academic activities at the university.

■ **Parliamentary Panel takes stock of Ladakh's problems**

Leh, June 5, 2008: Daily Excelsior

A Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture headed by Sita Ram Yechury today took stock of the problems of the remote region in a meeting with the members of Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, Leh and Kargil. The Chief Executive Councillor (CEO), LAHDC, Leh, Chering Dorje put forth several demands before the Parliamentary Committee and hoped that the panel would strongly take up the same with the respective Ministries for early redressal.

The demands included opening of Kailash Mansarovar road via Demchok in view of motorable, safe, short and dependable route, grant recognition to Bhoti language in 8th Schedule of the Constitution, linking Ladakh with all weather road via Parangla, construction of road on Indo-China border, increasing frequencies of air services to Ladakh during tourist season, introduction of private airlines on Jammu-Leh and Srinagar-Leh sectors, grant of Central package to introduce new trekking routes in Ladakh for tourism promotion, special package to Leh for development of adventure and cultural tourism.

The MLA Nubra, Sonam Wangchuk Norbu and MLC P Namgyal also supported opening of Kailash Yatra road via Demchok and Parangla road to Ladakh. The Executive Councillor, Art and Culture, Stanzin Delik urged the Parliamentary Panel to recommend for Khardongla Tunnel and relaxation for tourists to visit restricted area of Nubra. The Executive Councillor, Minority Affairs, Mohd Khan stressed for opening Hanu-Turtuk road and to bring Turtuk on the tourist map. The Executive Councilor, Health, Dorje Motup emphasized for making telephone connectivity in Durbuk and Changthang areas and granting package for promotion of Pashmina in Changthang.

The Executive Councillor, LAHDC, Kargil, Nasir Munshi urged the Committee to recommend early execution of Zojila tunnel as already sanctioned under PM's package, opening of Pahalgam-Panikhar road, special package for conservation of Bamiyan (Afghanistan) type century old Ghandara Buddhist Rock Statues in Kargil and expansion of Kargil airport. Chairman, Parliamentary Committee, Sita Ram Yechury assured that all the demands would be recommended to the Government for redressal.

■ **Govt should heed to Indian violation of Indus water Treaty: Raja Zafar-Ul-Haq**
Islamabad, July 15, 2008: onlinenews.com

The chairman of PML-N, Raja Zafar-Ul-Haq has demanded the government to lodge a strong protest with India over its construction of dam on river Sindh at Kargil. Talking exclusively to Online, he warned that if the dam was constructed, it would pose a severe danger to Pakistan's water resources destroying all agricultural, industry and economy.

He said that PML-N regarded the move as a blatant violation of the Indus Water Treaty, and stressed on the government to take a tough stand over the issue. He reminded earlier violations of India in form of Baghilar Dam, over which the government adopted a very lacklustre attitude, while the appointed neutral expert had also termed it as against the Indus Water Treaty. The newly planned dam on Kargil would affect the water supply of all the Provinces, involving them in severe internal disputes, adding to the woes and crisis of the Country.

■ **Restoration of Buddhist Shrine in Ladakh**

Sumda, By Jigmet Angchuk, July 23, 2008: ANI

The World Monument Fund (WMF) has undertaken restoration work of Sumda Chun, a monastery atop a hill overlooking River Zaskar in Ladakh. Described to be a millennia old, Sumda Chun figures in World Monument Funds list of 100 most endangered sites in the world, surveyed and documented in 2006.

Today, the remains of dozens of fortified monasteries, many still in use, built of mud brick, wood, and stone centuries ago, house extraordinary works of art within them. The artistic works include murals, Thangkas (painted scrolls) and gilded images of Lord Buddha. Though many of these monasteries continue to serve as centers of learning for vibrant monk communities, time has taken its toll on the buildings. These edifices have endured centuries of exposure to the elements and seismic activity.

In a few cases, well-intentioned efforts to shore up buildings have only compounded the damage. But thanks to the endeavours of the Namgyal Institute for Research on Ladakhi Art and Culture (NIRLAC), a Leh-based family trust headed by Chogyal Jigmed Wangchuk Namgyal, for this monastery, bright days lie ahead.

Chogyal Jigmed Wangchuk Namgyals ancestors ruled Ladakh throughout much of its history—from 975 A.D till the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir annexed the their kingdom in 1846. The 11th century murals within the Sumda Chun, are in dire need of conservation and this site has posed major logistical problems as well as conservation challenges for NIRLAC and its international partners.

“We were very concerned to notice the poor condition of mud roof, which had developed holes causing water leakage which could damage the 11th century wall paintings. So, we had to act very quickly, gather some resources, put together some proposals, and put together a very solid conservation report. Over the past two years, we have been fortunate to get funding. To begin with the documentation has been completed. We have made some provisional repairs to the roof, the pasture and now the full restoration is underway,” said Mark Weber, Technical Director, World Monument Fund.

Conservators have to stay on site for weeks while materials are needed for work,

including a tented camp and generators will be ferried by porters and yaks. The site is about 65 kilometers southwest of Leh and 10 kilometers from the nearest road. To reach the site it takes a four-hour hike-from an elevation of 3,300 metres at Chiling to nearly 4,600 metres at Sumda Chun. The complex includes a main sanctuary or assembly hall with its polychromed interior, monks' quarters, several Stupas and Chortens, and a Mani wall.

It is clear from the eroded remains of numerous structures at the site that the monastery once covered a substantial portion of the hillside. Inside the assembly hall, butter wick lamps flicker, illuminating Mandalas and hundreds of images Sumda Chun is a Vajra Dhatu Mandala composed of 37 individually sculpted clay figures, one of the earliest surviving works of its kind.

Sumda Chan suffers primarily from water seeping into the building, which has been aggravated by well-intentioned efforts to protect the site and arrest further decay. A few years ago, stone buttresses were built to bolster the bulging walls of the assembly hall. World Monuments Fund and NIRLAC conservators estimate that saving Sumda Chun will cost not less than 200,000 dollars. The long-term survival of this Himalayan gem will require far more effort in terms of careful planning

■ Heavy rains in Ladakh and HP triggers panic

30 July, 2008: <http://photos.merineews.com>

Frequent rains and floods have triggered panic amongst the residents of Ladakh in J&K and Kinnaur in HP. Moreover, the valuable paintings on the walls of Tabo monastery in HP are threatened because of seepage being caused due to heavy rains. Residents of the high altitude cold desert region stretching between Ladakh in Jammu and Kashmir and Kinnaur in Himachal Pradesh are suffering because of the changing climate that has triggered frequent flash floods and rains, which were virtually unknown in these areas.

Several roads and bridges were washed away in the recent flash flood in Ladakh that generally receives scanty rain. On the other side, the valuable paintings on the walls of over 1000-years-old mud structured Tabo monastery in the frontier region of Himachal Pradesh are threatened because of seepage being caused due to heavy rains. The tribals of these areas have started feeling the pinch of the changing climate. They are now forced to deviate from the traditional architecture of mud houses that keep them warm during the harsh winters, when these areas are snowbound and adopt the technology of brick structures like in plains.

Many wall paintings in the Tabo monastery were damaged sometime ago due to seepage of water from the roof of the mud-structure. Lama Zamgpo of the monastery said that the Archaeological Survey of India, which was taking care of the monastery, has taken steps to prevent further damage to the ancient paintings. A village elder of Nubra near Leh, Tshering Dorjee said that rain was a rare phenomenon in the area, but now we have had enough of it. He attributed the unprecedented phenomenon to the cold desert being converted into greenery. He blamed the government's desert development project for the change in climatic conditions of the area. Dorjee said that the traditional clay houses in Ladakh will not withstand the rains and now the people will have to go in for

cement structures. Floods have washed away several houses, roads and bridges in the Leh and Kargil districts of Ladakh.

P. Namgyal, a prominent leader of the area, said that never before had he seen continuous rain for about one week in Ladakh. Cloud-bursts, like those in Himachal Pradesh, were a new phenomenon in the area. Namgyal said that Ladakh used to register a below freezing temperature of -30 degrees Celsius during winters till the past few years, but now the temperature during the peak winter hovers around -18 degrees Celsius. This has, however, boosted economy of the area as tourism has become a round the year affair. He said that the snow line of the Stok glacier just opposite the Leh town has receded upwards and many smaller glaciers have vanished. The situation has become alarming with the Gompa locality within the Leh town littered with boulders that were carried by a flash flood. All bridges and culverts in the nearby Phyang village were washed away by the rain two years ago. Pinto Nurboo, a hotelier and a member of the state legislative assembly, attributed the change in the climate of the cold desert to the global warming.

■ Parties forge alliance ahead of LAHDC polls

Kargil, August 9, 2008: Greater Kashmir

With only a day left for filing of nominations for elections to Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC), National Conference has forged an alliance with Islameya School Kargil (ISK) while Congress has entered into an alliance with IKMT and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). During his three-day visit to Kargil, senior NC leader Abdul Rahim Rather finalized the list of candidates and met the leadership of Islameya School Kargil. He also visited Sankoo Drass, Tambus Gun Mangole Pur and other parts of Kargil in connection with the election.

NC has announced the names of eight candidates while as the names of the rest would be announced on Sunday. Former minister Qamar Ali Akhooon will contest from Lankarchay constituency. Congress has also announced the names of 15 candidates which include Asgar Ali Karbalayee, who will contest from Poyen and Paskum constituencies. Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) has also announced the names of seven candidates. The PDP hasn't announced any candidate as it has entered into an alliance with IKMT and Congress.

■ India's answer to Tibet rail: PMO clears plan for train to Leh via Rohtang

New Delhi, Pranab Dhal Samanta Aug 11, 2008: IndianExpress.com

In what is seen as India's response to China's Tibet Rail, the Prime Minister's Office has given its in-principle approval to Himachal Pradesh's proposal for a railway line to Leh via the Rohtang Pass. The high-powered China Study Group (CSG) has been asked to provide its assessment by the month-end. Simultaneously, the PMO has already instructed the Railway Ministry to carry out a proper feasibility survey of the Bilaspur-Leh route and submit its report latest by November. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, sources said, is keen that there should be no delay in taking the proposal forward.

The CSG that comprises the Foreign Secretary, Defence Secretary, Home Secretary

besides heads of the Intelligence Bureau and RAW will now look into the project from a strategic perspective and give its comments by August-end. A favourable opinion from the CSG will elevate the strategic significance of the project and remove several funding barriers. The plan on paper is to build a railway line from Bilaspur to Leh covering approximately 400 km which, by a broad estimate, could end up costing around Rs 5,000 crore. Already, the Centre has agreed to provide Rs 1,000 crore for building the railway line from Bhanupalli to Bilaspur, which can be then extended further.

■ More than 2,500 Ladakhis & Tibetans took part in Freedom Torch relay

August 11, 2008: Phayul.com

Ladakh saw one of the biggest gatherings ever on the 8th August when Tibetan Freedom Torch arrives at this autonomous hill region. A mass gathering and a procession rally was organised by Himalayan Committee for Action of Tibet (HIMCAT) in association with Regional Tibetan Youth Congress (RTYC) and Regional Tibetan Women's Association. 2500 Tibetans and Ladakhis took part in the Freedom Torch relay.

The day began at 8 am at Spituk where Jhangtse Choejhe Rah Rinpoche, who will become the next Gaden Tripa, the highest Gelug lineage holder, lighted the torch and carried it till outside of the Spituk monastery and handed over to Chapche Khenpo Rinpoche of Thiktse Monastery. Then, many eminent figures of Ladakh Hill Region, such as the head of Ladakh Buddhist Association (Retd DIG) Mr. Lobsang Rinchen, Ven. Choedak of Ladakh Gonpa Association, Singer and actor Mr. Phonsok Ladakhi, President HIMCAT Mr. Tashi Dhargye Dembir, Executive Councillor of Health Mr. Dorjee Mgodup, Executive Councillor for Forest Mr. Mohd. Khan and Mr. Nazir, President Ladakh Muslim Association along with many scholars.

The relay culminated at Polo Ground and many of them gave very inspiring and emotional speeches relating the two communities of Tibetans and Ladakhis who share many common cultural heritages. On behalf of all the Tibetans in Ladakh region, Mr. Chemi of RTYC gave very inspiring speech both in Tibetan and Ladakhi.

Ladakh saw one of the biggest gatherings ever on the 8th August when Tibetan Freedom Torch arrives at this autonomous hill region. Rinpoche was an emotional sight to be seen, people repeating it with choked voice and moistened eyes. The oath was translated into Tibetan/Ladakhi language. That is why emotion were oozing from everybody's heart.

Every Ladakhi was saluting and paying great tribute to the Tibetans inside Tibet who are facing the harsh and inhuman atrocities in the hands of communist regime of China, and their hope and support in the leadership of His Holiness the Dalai Lama is unparalleled. HIMCAT members were particularly happy for the ITSN for its consideration in bringing the torch, on its last leg in India, to Ladakh on the border of occupied Tibet. They are enthusiastic and optimistic that one day they will carry the same torch into a Free Tibet starting the torch journey from Ladakh. Around 2500 Tibetans and Ladakhis took part in the Freedom Torch relay. Phonsok Ladakhis' Uprising Song 'Longsho' literally inspired the whole crowd to get up and say '*Bodme tso longsho*'.

■ Kisan-jawan-vigyan mela at Leh

Leh , August 14, 2008: ANI

Like previous years, this year also the Defence Institute of High Altitude Research (DIHAR) of the Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO) is organizing Ladakhi Kisan-Jawan-Vigyan Mela (LKJVM) on August 16 and 17 at DIHAR headquarter Leh and on August 23 at Partapur (Siachen Sector) to disseminate relevant agro-animal technologies from lab to land for the benefit of Kisans and Jawans of Ladakh.

The major objective behind organizing this fair is to help local farmers and troops identify themselves with the technologies and get on-the-spot feedback from the scientist regarding any doubts and queries so that the technologies are adopted at the grassroots level and finally the produce goes to the troops. Various other allied organizations are actively participating in the fair to make it more educative and interactive for the local populace as well as for the troops and para-military forces deployed in L sector. Over the year the fair has grown in its size and scope and evolved as a platform for interaction between farmers, troops and scientists.

DIHAR situated at a height of 11,500 feet at Leh has the major mandate to make the hostile terrains of Ladakh reasonably green and productive to sustain its sparse population and the Defence forces deployed in this sector. This laboratory strives to boost the local availability of fresh food for the troops deployed in L sector through local farmers by developing suitable technologies through research and development programmes and development of supplementary herbal products and draught animals for army. DIHAR, Leh since its establishment in 1962 has evolved into a pioneer R&D institute in the field of high altitude agro-animal sciences. To create awareness and interest of various agro-animal know-how and technologies among local population and troops, the fair is being organised since 1992 at Leh.

■ House panel for alternate route to Kailash shrine via Ladakh

New Delhi, 21 Aug 2008: Times News Network

A parliamentary committee has suggested that the government should actively explore the possibility of making the alternate route to Kailash Mansarovar through Demchok in Ladakh a reality.

The panel said the alternate route was safer, dependable and shorter than the one in use since 1981 through the Lipulek pass, which requires cooperation with the Chinese government even though only a limited number of tourists are permitted every year.

The parliamentary standing committee on transport, tourism and culture dealing with the promotion of tourism in J&K said that pilgrim tourism had good potential in all three regions of the state-Jammu, Kashmir valley and Ladakh.

The panel, which submitted its 140th report to the Rajya Sabha chairman on Wednesday, also recommended that the culture ministry and ASI should undertake maintenance of three rock-carved Bamiyan-type statues in the state as these were in need of immediate preservation. These Gandhara style statues of Avalokesteshwara were situated in Barsoo Nallah, Appatii and Mulbekh in Shargole block.

■ Adventure Tours planning to introduce quads in India

August 21, 2008: Travel Biz

To conduct test tour in specific areas next month, New Delhi-based inbound tour operator, Adventure Tours is looking at introducing the special four-wheeler bike, quads in India for their adventure tour packages. Quads will help tour operators to take their clients to inaccessible beautiful locations, which are restricted to tourists due to the rough terrain that cannot be covered by normal transport. First, the travel company will use quads for a test tour and depending on the results will decide on adding the special four-wheeler bike to their packages. The company is looking at Changthang, Tsomoriri and Tsokar near Pangong Lake in Ladakh for introducing the quads drives.

Speaking with TravelBiz Monitor, Rajender Raina, Manager, Adventure Tours offered, "We plan to do a trial tour next month, wherein we will call experts from Europe and monitor the performance of the quads in specific areas where we would like to use them. Only then will we decide on adding them to packages on our itineraries."

■ Installing world's largest solar telescope, City experts studying Leh site

August 25, 2008: Deccan Herald

At an altitude of 14,000 ft, areas close to Pangong Lake, 160 km from Leh, is one of the potential sites identified by Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA), Bangalore for its proposal to come up with the Rs 150-crore National Large Solar Telescope (NLST). Over the next one year, astrophysicists from Bangalore will observe weather conditions around a pristine lake in the cold desert region of Ladakh to find out if it is an apt place to set up one of the world's largest telescopes for studying the Sun. At an altitude of 14,000 ft, areas close to Pangong Lake, 160 km from Leh, is one of the potential sites identified by Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA), Bangalore for its proposal to come up with the Rs 150-crore National Large Solar Telescope (NLST).

Hanle in Leh where IIA already has a two-metre telescope for night sky observation and Devasthal, 50 km from the picturesque Nainital, are the other probable sites. "We will study the Pangong Lake area for a year before finalising the site. We have already collected the weather data from Hanle and Devasthal. The NLST will be a telescope of two-metre diameter," IIA scientist Dr Jagdev Singh told Deccan Herald.

The institute has procured equipment from the US National Solar Observatory for collecting the seeing condition data from the proposed sites. Trials are going on at a site close to Pangong Lake, a 130 km long blue lake bisected by the international border between India and China. "We plan to instal the telescope by 2012," Dr Singh said. If realised, the NLST will be one of the two major solar observation facilities coming up in India after almost half a century. The 38-cm telescope at IIA's Kodaikanal observatory was the last dedicated solar facility, which came up in the 1960s.

The second new solar telescope will be a 50-cm aperture instrument for the Udaipur Solar Observatory which currently houses several smaller telescopes. "The Rs 15-crore multi-application solar telescope funded by the Department of Space is expected to be installed by the end of 2009," USO scientist Dr Ashok Ambastha said, adding

that a Belgian company is making it. “There should be a national policy on manpower so that the existing and new telescopes are not under-utilised. Better coordination among the institutions is needed for optimal use of these instruments,” pointed out Dr Rajesh Kochhar, a former IIA scientist.

■ **Armed forces roped in to save Tibetan antelope, yak etc**

New Delhi, August 26, 2008: PTI

Tibetan antelope, popularly known as Chiru, blue sheep, wild Yak and many other rare and threatened species in the high-altitude Himalayan region have greater hope of survival with wildlife experts and armed forces joining hands for their conservation. A research project has been initiated by Wildlife Institute of India (WII) in collaboration with forest department of Jammu and Kashmir, ITBP and Army in Changthang Wildlife Sanctuary's Changchenmo valley in Ladakh to identify threats and management issues for the survival of these animals.

The idea is also to study the habitat characteristics and seasonal movement patterns of these ungulates, which are on the verge of extinction due to massive destruction of their habitat and hunting by poachers. For instance, wild Yak presently exists only in the Changchenmo valley in Ladakh in the entire Himalayas and are rarely sighted says K Sankar, senior scientist at the Dehradun-based WII who along with his colleague GS Rawat has undertaken the four-year-study. In other areas in Himalayas, the bulky animals who weigh about 1,000 kgs and have long black hair with curved horns on their head are domesticated and their breed is not pure.

“The wild gene of yak is thus very important for future genetic studies for diseases resistance etc. The study aims to evolve a long-term population and habitat monitoring protocol for Yak as other fauna in the region,” says Sankar. Since army and paramilitary forces personnel are always on patrol in inaccessible mountain terrain where temperature plummets to as low as minus 40C during winter, they can do the job better than any wildlife expert, explains Sankar.

■ **Annual Vegetable-cum-Fruit Expo organised in Ladakh**

Leh, Sept 5, 2008: Daily Excelsior

As part of Ladakh Festival, a two-day annual Vegetable-cum-Fruit Expo 2008 was organised by the Chief Executive Councillor, LAHDC, Leh, Chering Dorje at Indoor stadium, here today. Addressing the inaugural function, Mr Dorje appreciated the efforts of the concerned departments for producing such varieties of non-conventional vegetables, fruit and flowers. He expressed satisfaction that the farmers and growers of Ladakh have adopted cultivation of high demand cash crops.

Mr Dorje said that the LAHDC has already initiated many farmer-oriented schemes with subsidies to encourage them towards cash crops. He stated that a pilot project of cold storage for vegetables has been submitted under NABARD. Thirteen varieties of high quality vegetables which include Brinjal, Summer Squash, Bottle Gourd, Cucumber, Garlic, Pumpkin and French Beans were displayed at the exhibition.

Sixteen varieties of highly delicious fruits including dry-fruit were also displayed at exhibition. The president, Farmer's Association, Phuntsog Wangchuk Kalon, said the farmers of the district are getting an annual turnover of Rs 17 crore on agro-products which includes Rs 5.30 crore on milk products.

■ Independents won 17, NC 6 seats in LAHDC elections

Kargil, Sep 6, 2008: NewKerela.com

Seventeen independents, supported by Islamiya school and Kargil alliance were elected to Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC), Kargil while the National Conference (NC) and Congress got six and one seat respectively. In the 26 seat council, two candidates Feroz Khan (Silemoo) and Aga Syed Kazeem (Saliskote) were elected unopposed on NC tickets.

Ladakh Union Territory Front (LUTF) won two seats in the second general elections of the council. Former Chief Executive Councilor Haji Asgar Karbalayee lost from Poyeen constituency but got elected from Paskun seat while two other former councilors Haji Mohammad Ishaq and Kachoo Gulzar Hussain lost this time.

The NC candidate Munshi Mohammad Sadiq lost his Kargil town seat, while another candidate of the same party and former MP Aga Syed Hussain Motahdi lost in Gund Mangole Pora. Following is the party position: National Conference (six), Congress (one), LUTF (two) and Independents (17).

■ Karmapa Stranded in Snow, Airlifted to Leh

Dharamsala, September 21, 2008: Phayul.com

Karmapa Ugyen Trinley Dorjee was rescued and airlifted to Leh in Jammu and Kashmir Sunday after he along with 13 others were stranded in Himachal Pradesh's Lahaul and Spiti district for 48 hours due to heavy snowfall, IANS cited officials. The young head of Kagyu tradition of Tibetan Buddhism was rescued this evening from Baralacha pass in Lahaul and Spiti district was taken to Leh by a helicopter of the Indian Air Force,' secretary (revenue) Rakesh Kaushal told IANS.

"Before the rescue, the administration air-dropped blankets and eatables for the Buddhists and other stranded passengers on Baralacha pass," IANS quoted him as saying. The Baralacha pass is located at a height of 4,883 metres on the 475-km-long Manali-Leh highway.

"The Karmapa is fine and in good health," said Kaushal, who is part of the disaster management committee set up by Himachal government after the torrent rain and snowfall. The Karmapa, the only major monk reincarnate recognised by both the Dalai Lama and China, has been on a religious tour to Buddhist-dominated areas in Lahaul and Spiti district as well as in Ladakh in Jammu and Kashmir since Sep 8.

"He was on his way to monasteries in Lahaul and Spiti from Ladakh when he was held up on the Manali-Leh highway Friday," Lahaul and Spiti Superintendent of Police Prem Kumar Thakur said.

■ DIHAR hosts international conference in Leh on ‘Food and Health Security in High Altitude areas’

Leh, September 16, 2008: News Agency of Kashmir

While the whole world including India is concerned over food security, the food and health security in high altitude areas is even more important in today’s context. Because of the harsh environmental condition coupled with difficult terrain, even the basic requirement is sometimes difficult to fulfil, said M Natarajan, Scientific Advisor to Raksha Mantri, Secretary Defence R&D and DG R&D.

Inaugurating a four-day international conference on ‘Novel Approaches for Food and Health Security in High Altitude’ organized by Defence Institute of High Altitude Research (DIHAR), an establishment of Defence Research Development Organization (DRDO), on the eve of golden jubilee of DRDO at Rinchen Auditorium Leh from 6-10 September 2008, M. Natarajan said that taking Ladakh as an example, the region is strategically important and therefore there is heavy deployment of troops. He said ensuring regular supply of fresh food is a major challenge to all of us and above that due to harsh environmental conditions, ensuring health security of the people living in this part of the world is even more challenging. He said DRDO has been working since its establishment towards ensuring food and health security of the people of Ladakh and the troops deployed here.

“Several laboratories are entirely dedicated to make life easy for people living in this environment. Though it’s a small institute with just 17 scientists, it has contributed immensely towards meeting fresh food availability and greening of Ladakh. The institute works in close collaboration with the Indian army and the civil authority, that is why its technology developed at this institute, has been successfully transferred to the users,” he said.

Giving an overview about the conference, Dr Shashi Bala Singh, Director, DIHAR said the theme of the conference, which is “to enhance performance and sustainable development at High Altitude”, is exceedingly important in today’s context. The envisaged objectives of this conference, she added, was to unravel the new approaches to secure food and health security in high altitudes has got a paradigm shift and an altogether new horizon through sustained and thought provoking scientific sessions during this conference.

“We are witnessing global food crisis which has forced millions to go hungry. Food becomes unavailable to millions due to soaring food prices. I think scientific deliberations and outcome of the conference would help us enhance our understanding of food and health security in such harsh conditions of Ladakh,” she added. Appreciating the R&D (research and development) efforts of DRDO for meeting the fresh food requirement of army which will equally beneficial for boosting the socio-economic status of local farmers, Chering Dorjay Executive Councillor, Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, Guest of honour of the function, said the scientific deliberation during the conference will resolve some of high altitude agro-animal problems viz. pashmina goats, utilization of seabuckthorn etc.

Lt Gen V.K. Ahluwalia GOC, 14 Corps, highlighted the outstanding contribution of DRDO especially Defence Institute of High Altitude Research for yeomen services for

armed forces as well as society of the region. Due to various R&D activities on high altitude agriculture viz vegetables, fruits, medicinal plants, cattle and poultry, Zangskar ponies, tree plantation farmers are meeting 56% fresh food requirement of army. In addition Leh berry juice, DRDO herbal tea and Zangskar ponies have been inducted in services. The greenhouse technology has been well adopted and installed at various locations in 'L' sector including Siachen.

After the inaugural function, the scientific sessions were started with keynote speakers Dr Anil K. Gupta Professor IIM, Ahmedabad, a noted grass root scientist and Dr B. Bhattacharjee member NDMA. Dr. Gupta delivered a key note address on 'Peaks of performance: Socio-ecology of adaptation and innovation in High Altitude areas' while Dr Bhattacharjee presented his paper on 'Food and Health security in High Altitude- Back drop and challenges to R&D community'.

Dr OP Chaurasia, senior scientist of Defence Institute of High Altitude Research (DIHAR), while describing the scientific programmes and highlights of sessions, said presentations were made on Plant & Animal Physiology, Sustainable Animal Production systems, Health and Environmental issues, Biomedical Research to improve Human Health, Ethnobotany and Bioprospecting of Medicinal Plants, Food safety and Post Harvest Technology and Dissemination and Adoption of Technologies.

The eminent scientists viz Prof K R Koundal, Joint Director, IARI delivered lecture on 'Biotechnology for enhancing crop productivity and income', Dr Agnes Rimando, USDA - ARS, USA, on 'Pterostibene: from blueberry with pharmacological properties' Dr RC Sawhney, Director Life Sciences DRDO on 'Performance enhancement at high altitude by herbs, Dr Rao Mentreddy, Professor, Alabama A & M Univ. USA on 'Anecdote to research based validation : two case studies', Dr Thomas Terrill, Scientist Fort Valley State Univ. USA, Dr RB Srivastava, Director, Defence Research Laboratory, Tezpur on 'Challenges for food and health security of soldier in North East India', Dr Zakwan Ahmed Director, Defence Agriculture Research Laboratory, Pithoragarh on 'Crop Improvement programme for high altitude' Dr Brahma Singh, WNRF & WWF on 'Indian high altitude horticulture development' during plant and animal sciences related sessions.

Under the session on Health & Environmental issues and Biomedical research for high altitude, the eminent speakers' viz. Dr Manas Mandal Director, Defence Institute of Psychological Research, Delhi delivered lecture on 'Cognitive function at high altitude', Dr V C Padaki, Director, Defence Bio Engineering & Electro Medical Laboratory, Bangalore on 'Bio-Medical systems for high altitude applications', Dr Almaz Aldashev, Kyrgyzstan, on 'Genetics of high altitude pulmonary hypertension'.

The technical sessions were followed by Academia—Industry Interaction in which several issues : fruit & vegetable processing and its value addition, quality seed production in high altitude environment, seabuckthorn processing & its utilization and commercial cultivation of high altitude medicinal plants were discussed.

■ World Heritage Site in Ladakh on verge of collapse: Hemis Gompa Lamas blame ASI for damage, INTACH demands inquiry into faulty repair work

Aurangzeb Naqshbandi, September 27, 2008: Hindustan Times

Hemis Gompa, a listed World Heritage Site (WHS) in Jammu and Kashmir's Ladakh region, is on the verge of collapse. Two floors and two walls of the structure have been demolished to prevent further damage to the structure. The dilapidated condition of the 17th century monastery was seen by a delegation of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture, which had visited the region in June and recently by a team of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) - Jammu and Kashmir chapter.

The lamas blame the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) for the damage. They said the ASI had repaired the roof of the monastery some years ago. "Soon after the roof leaked rainwater. The seepage resulted in the damage of the walls and the foundation as well. The ASI had carried out faulty repair work," Rev. Sangis Tsering told HT. The INTACH team, led by convenor M Saleem Beg, had visited the ASI protected monastery on the request of the Jammu and Kashmir Tourism Department to suggest measures for its restoration. The officials were shocked to see workers, engaged by lamas, demolishing the first floor of the monastery. "We were shocked to see 30 labourers demolishing the top floor of the monastery. The lamas had engaged them. No structural analysis or basic examination had been carried out before demolition," Beg said in his letter to the ASI Director General.

Tsering said the lamas had engaged the workers after they failed to get any response from the ASI to their repeated requests. "The Hemis Gompa managing committee started the restoration work on its own to prevent the structure from collapsing. The ASI officials haven't visited the site for the past three years. We collected donation and also took money from the committee funds for the repair work," he added.

Ladakh Development Authority chief executive officer S Marup said the two floors and the two walls of the monastery were demolished to save it from further damage. "The rainwater had penetrated through the walls to the foundation. The leakage had increased in the recent past. Some wall painting had also been damaged," he added. HT made repeated attempts to seek comments from the ASI officials in Delhi and Jammu, but they were not forthcoming. In its report, the parliamentary panel, headed by CPM leader Sitaram Yechury, said the ASI was not allowed to take up the conservation work at Hemis monastery by lamas. These monasteries being the treasure house of Buddhist architecture and literature must be preserved to retain its ancient glory, it added.

Listing Hemis Gompa as a WHS, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) had said it is a unique example of a monastic complex of this period, which manifests in its structure the geomantic principles underlying religious constructions of this type. There are also examples of construction techniques and details not found elsewhere. Located at an altitude of 12,000 ft in Ladakh, the monastery is one of the highest settlements in the world and also the oldest and the biggest in the area belonging to the Kargyu School. Lama Tagstang Raspa is believed to

have established it in 1630 and was built by Palden Sara under the patronage of King Sengge Namgyal.

“Architecturally, the monastic complex is unique not only because of its conceptualisation and construction as a three dimensional mandala, but due to its intrinsic design qualities including the rare 17th century murals executed with a variety of pigments and gold paint,” according to the description given by the UNESCO. The committee recommended that the ASI, in coordination with local representatives, should make efforts to convince and persuade lamas to allow it to take up the conservation work so that the glory of the ancient Buddhist monastic tradition and cultural heritage could be saved.

Beg suggested that the ASI should take up its conservation work on the basis of the prepared plan. “ASI needs to wake up and save one of the most treasured pieces of the country's cultural heritage. The neglect of this monument has resulted in collateral damage. It is sad that while the conservation plan for Hemis Gompa was prepared by archaeologists like Romi Khosla, Anuradha Chaturvedi, Amita Beg and others with funding from the Japan Foundation, nobody has given any serious thought to it so far.” In his letter, Beg also demanded an investigation into 'faulty repairs' and called for a dialogue with the lamas so that the restoration work could be taken up at the earliest. “It is matter of grave concern and the ASI cannot let such vandalism happen at one of their most precious sites. The local ASI set up needs to be shaken up and the officials directed to take their job more seriously,” he added.

The committee said Hemis Gompa and other monasteries in Ladakh needed urgent help to preserve their rich cultural heritage that were being damaged in various ways. It asked the ASI to conduct preservation, heritage management and exploration of new destinations of historic importance for promotion of tourism in Jammu and Kashmir, especially in Ladakh region.

■ Youth can be in vanguard of change: Kashmiri woman leader

By Azera Rahman, New Delhi, Oct 1 : IANS

Zahra Banoo looked demure in her white salwar kurta, her head covered and a soft smile never leaving her face. However, behind this facade is the first woman in the history of Ladakh and Kargil region of Jammu and Kashmir to contest elections for a local administrative body. Concerned about the plight of her community, Banoo wants the younger lot, both boys and girls, to come forward and change things for good in the troubled state. Banoo lost the Sep 5 elections to the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, Kargil but remains undeterred. She had contested on Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) nomination.

“I lost the elections, but have something worth much more. I have won respect from the people. I have set an example for the women in my community who now have the confidence to stand up on public platforms and contest for similar posts,” Banoo told IANS when on a visit to the capital during the women Panchayat leaders meet on October 1. Banoo hails from the Kargil district. And in her own words, to stand up for her rights in a society where the role of women in the public sphere is negligible, is an achievement by itself.

"I had to stand against a powerful Agha (shia community head) from the same constituency. But I was undeterred. I knew what message I had to give—that women should not be suppressed by men in the name of dominance of religious clergy," she said. Although missing home on the joyous occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr, which was celebrated in Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday, Bano said she was happy to interact with the women who share similar beliefs like her in the meet. "I want to work on so many issues. Most important of them all is education for the girl child and women empowerment. There are not enough schools and colleges and even when students pass out of these institutes, they don't get jobs. We have graduates doing menial jobs of labourers," Banoo, in her mid 30s, rued.

"In the government schools, posts of teacher are lying vacant for years. When we complained to district commissioner, he had no help to offer. Leh (in Ladakh), in the matter, is more progressive than Kargil," she added. Talking about the law and order situation, Bano said politics and politicians have done nothing but added to the people's misery. "Politics is spoiling the atmosphere of the place. Every party has its own selfish motive, no one thinks about the people. Children lose precious years in school because of the troubles, there is dearth of jobs, Panchayat elections have not taken place since 2006, there are hardly any NGOs to help the common man there. It's sad."

"We hardly have any festivities. Except on Eid. It's only mourning that takes place every now and then," she said. Coming forth of the younger lot in holding public posts, Banoo believes, will solve some of the problems. "Mostly, we have very elderly people as leaders in the community. I am sure if more young people—both boys and girls—come up and take over, things will change. They have a fresh perspective to life and are more pragmatic," she said. "I lost the election, even then I believe this is the beginning of better things," Banoo smiled.

■ Students from Northeast, Ladakh offer to explain cultural pluralism

Chandigarh, 13 Oct 2008: Times News Network

When cultures do not communicate, they begin to contest. In order to explain cultural pluralism and bring students from different communities closer, those from Northeast and Leh-Ladakh regions studying in Government College of Girls, Sector 11, have planned a day-long exhibition in the third week of October. This will be the first time that such an event will be held at a city college with the intention of demystifying cultures and bridging the gap arising out of a lack of knowledge about one another.

In this endeavour, the department of sociology has extended full support and even wants to make it an annual feature. Santosh Kumar Singh, senior lecturer of sociology, said, "The exhibition is a step towards providing space to those who have come far from home. India is not merely about the north. It is also about Kerala, Mizoram and Kashmir. It is very important for us that cultures interact with one another."

Elaborating on various events of the exhibition, Asem Babina from Manipur, a BA third-year student of psychology, said, "We want to inform our friends and teachers about our traditions, various festivals, dance and music. A special mention of various tourist spots, flora and fauna will also be there."

Richen Chumikchan from Ladakh informed TOI that there would be a religious corner where gods and goddesses of their region too would be displayed. Besides, there will be food stalls to give people a taste of cuisines they may have never heard of before. Even as Chandigarh seems to have emerged as the next educational hub for students of the Northeast because of its sound infrastructure, on the flip side, a lack of understanding of their cultures in the city can create a chasm. Narrating her experience, Stanzin Yangchan, a BA second year student from Ladakh, said, “Many times people tend to be sarcastic and ask questions about my nationality and whether I require a visa and passport to come here.” Pinky Sharma of Manipur added, “We are treated as aliens in our own country just because our features are different. Rickshaw-wallas and shopkeepers also try to fleece us.”

■ Training for Human-Wildlife Conflict Management

Srinagar, Oct 14, 2008: Kashmir Observer

The Jammu and Kashmir Department of Wildlife Protection organized a 2-day training programme on capture and tranquilization of wild animals in conflict situations at Leh on October 12 and 13, 2008. The training programme was targeted to sensitize and train the frontline staff of Wildlife division, Leh in handling man-animal conflicts. The wildlife frontline staff from Hemis High Altitude National Park, Changthang Cold Desert Wildlife Sanctuary and Karakorum-Nubra Wildlife Sanctuary including Range officers, Foresters and Wildlife guards participated in this programme.

The veterinary doctors from the Veterinary Department and Sher-i-Kashmir University of Agricultural Science and Technology (SKUAST) Leh, and members of the Youth Association for the development of conservation in Hemis National Park, an NGO of youth from Hemis National Park, were also imparted training during this programme. The training was conducted by the Veterinary Wing of the Wildlife Protection Department in association with wildlife SOS, a Delhi based NGO committed to rehabilitation and rescue of wild animals in the country.

On the occasion, the Chief Wildlife Warden J&K Mr. A.K. Srivastava said that such training programmes have, of late, assumed great importance in handling the man-wild animals conflicts in the state. All the wildlife divisions in the state are being equipped with basic equipments like tranquilizing guns, immobilizing drugs, capture nets, cages and rescue vans etc. A proposal to handle such conflicts outside the protected areas has also been finalized.

In the beginning Wildlife Warden Leh Mr. Tahir Shawl gave a brief introduction about the training programme and man-wild animal conflict situation in Ladakh. Dr. Mir Mansoor, Chief Wildlife Biologist & Veterinarian and Dr. Shabir, wildlife veterinarian of the Wildlife Department gave presentation on the techniques of capture and chemical immobilization of wild animals. This session followed by the practical demonstration of handling and using tranquilising equipment in the premises of Wildlife Department Leh on second day. The trainees interacted with the resource persons and thoroughly learned the techniques of using chemical restrain in wild animals. Jigmet Takpa, Regional Wildlife Warden Ladakh, emphasised the need of education and awareness programme

to sensitize the public about wildlife conflict management and protection measures. He revealed that the incidents of damage to live stock by predators have decreased considerably since the Wildlife Department initiated management inputs like construction of corral pens in and around protected areas to safeguard the domestic live stock from predation by wolf and snow leopard. Mr. Takpa gave away certificates to the trainees on successful completion of the training programmes. Mr. Rauf Ahmed Wildlife Range Officer Leh presented the vote of thanks.

■ Work apace on road projects in Ladakh

Srinagar, October 15, 2008: Rising Kashmir News

A comprehensive road communication programme is under progress in twin districts of Kargil and Leh. The programme envisages better connectivity facilities to the people of the region, officials said on Tuesday. In Kargil district, work on 53 road projects at a cost of Rs. 11.60 crore is presently in execution under state sector while as 27 road schemes have been completed in the district during last financial year. Rs. 16 crore has been spent for completion of these schemes.

Under NABARD and PMGSY more than 38 road projects at an estimated cost of Rs. 44.33 crore are under progress in the Kargil district. The road projects are expected to be completed by the end of this financial year and would connect dozens of villages with the district headquarter Kargil. Presently 835 kms of road length is being maintained in the district which, include 200 kms black topped, 300 kms metalled and 345 kms fair weather roads.

Work on 40 kilometer Kargil-Suru World Bank aided prestigious road project at an estimated cost of Rs. 24.72 crore is also a pace Kargil. Under the road sector a total road length of 1230 kms has so far been constructed in the Leh district, providing road connectivity facilities to 99 villages of the district out of a total of 112 villages. Over Rs. 11 crore have been earmarked in the annual district plan for the year 2008-09 for development of the road sector in the district.

LADAKH BIBLIOGRAPHY SUPPLEMENT NO 19

– John Bray

This supplement lists additions to the *Bibliography of Ladakh* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1988). Please send new references and suggested annotations to John Bray (1208, 2-14-1 Furuishiba, Koto-ku, Tokyo 135-0045, Japan; JNBray1957@yahoo.co.uk).

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