

RECENT RESEARCH ON LADAKH 7

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Thierry Dodin & Heinz Räther



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## FOREWORD

### Ladakh Studies: Notes and Questions on their State of the Art

Ina Rüsing  
Ulm

The conference tradition of the International Association for Ladakh Studies began at the University of Konstanz, Germany, in 1981. The results were published in a much cited volume edited by Detlef Kantowsky and Reinhard Sander in 1983. The title of this first volume, *Recent Research on Ladakh. History, Culture, Sociology, Ecology*, and the list of the 22 contributions clearly point to the interdisciplinary and international nature of this field of research.

Now, in 1997, the Proceedings of the Seventh International Colloquium, held in Bonn in 1995, are being published here as volume 9 of the *Ulmer Kulturanthropologische Schriften* (UKAS) (Ulm Cultural Anthropology Studies) in which the senior editor of the first Ladakh volume is also co-editor.

Based on the six volumes published so far

*First Colloquium 1981, Konstanz, Germany*  
KANTOWSKY/SANDER 1983

*Second Colloquium 1985, Pau, France*  
DENDALETCHÉ 1985

*Third Colloquium 1987, Herrnhut, Germany*  
ICKE-SCHWALBE/MEIER 1990

*Fourth Colloquium 1989, Bristol, Great Britain*  
*Fifth Colloquium 1992, London, Great Britain*  
OSMASTON/DENWOOD 1995

*Sixth Colloquium 1993, Leh, Ladakh/India*  
OSMASTON/NAWANG TSERING 1996

*Seventh Colloquium 1995, Bonn, Germany*  
DODIN/RÄTHER 1997

several minor observations may be made on these sixteen years of research on Ladakh.

(1) Table 1 summarizes the international composition of the contributors. Obviously, most of the authors came from the country in which the Colloquium was held. With the exception of the rather untypical Sixth Colloquium in Leh, Ladakh, the number of participants from Ladakh itself are consistently and deplorably under-represented. The Seventh Colloquium in Bonn does, however, set a hopeful sign.

Table 1: Contributions to Ladakh research by institutional affiliation of the author

	1 Kon- stanz 1981 1983	2 Pau 1985	3 Herm- hut 1987 1990	4 Bris- tol 1989 1995	5 Lon- don 1992 1995	6 Leh 1993 1996	7 Bonn 1995 1997	Total	%
Ladakh	1	2	2	4	-	15	6	30	19,3
other parts of India	-	1	2	2	-	4	1	10	6,5
Great Britain	6	4	5	9	6	5	5	40	25,8
USA	-	2	-	1	1	3	3	10	6,5
France	2	5	4	2	2	-	2	17	11,0
Germany	7	4	12	2	2	3	6	36	23,2
Austria	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	2	1,3
Switzerland	2	-	-	-	1	1	1	5	3,2
Netherland	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	1,9
Hungary	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	0,65
Denmark	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	0,65
	22	18	26	20	13	31	25	155	

(2) The Ladakh conference contributions may also be analysed by field of study.<sup>1</sup> Most of the articles contribute to more than one of the following fields:

E	Anthropology/Ethnology
S	Anthropology/Sociology
H	History
HS	History of Science
T	Tibetology
R	Religious Studies
EGAE	Ecology, Geography, Agriculture Sciences, Economy
D	Development Studies

1. Classification by Thierry Dodin.

and thus had to be classified multiply. In order to get an impression of the weight of these fields percentages were assigned to the component fields.

Thus, an article that was classified as belonging to Tibetology and Ethnology was assigned 50 % for each of these fields. Then these partial contributions were summed up and their net percentages calculated. This is, as all quantitative approaches of this kind, a rather coarse procedure, but it does at least give a first impression of the disciplinary composition of Ladakh Studies. Table 2 summarizes the results.

Table 2: Ladakh Studies: composition by field

	1 Kon- stanz 1981 1983	2 Pau 1985	3 Herm- hut 1987 1990	4 Bris- tol 1989 1995	5 Lon- don 1992 1995	6 Leh 1993 1996	7 Bonn 1995 1997
E Ethnology	21,9	29,6	20,9	19,4	14,1	10,2	17,6
S Sociology	23,8	-	1,2	-	2,6	8,1	17,6
H History	7,5	16,7	7,4	19,4	26,9	11,3	18,6
HS History of Science	-	2,8	20,3	2,8	34,6	6,4	3,9
T Tibetology	11,4	21,3	14,8	13,9	14,1	12,4	21,8
R Religious Studies	19,4	10,2	9,8	11,1	-	20,4	7,1
EGAE Ecology, Geograph. Agric. Studies ...	8,0	19,4	21,5	30,6	-	17,2	3,5
D Developm. Studies	8,0	-	4,1	2,8	7,7	14,0	9,9

We may observe that the orientation of the organizing research group or university institute obviously reflects the disciplinary composition of the contributions presented. For instance, sociology (or sociological oriented anthropology) was strongest in Konstanz, Tibetology strongest in Bonn. Most contributions consistently come from Anthropology/Ethnology (Cultural Anthropology) followed by Tibetology, whose relative contribution to each conference is also rather stable.

(3) As to the continuity of participation of researchers in this sixteen-year-period, one-time participants constitute the majority (70 %).<sup>2</sup> The percentage is not changed when we disregard the untypical Sixth

2. 70 singular, 30 multiple participants, N = 100.

Colloquium in Leh.<sup>3</sup> Thirty researchers (30 %) took part (or contributed a paper) more than once and their contributions constitute 55 % of all articles.

Table 3: Singular and multiple participation

Number of participations	Number of participants	Number of contributions
6	1	6
5	2	10
4	4	16
3	7	21
2	16	32
1	70	70
	100	155

Table 3 shows that research on Ladakh rests on a relatively small number of continuous researchers and a relatively large number of "one-shot-people". This is perhaps not uncommon for a regionally defined interdisciplinary field of research (comparative data are not available). But it may - together with the other minor observations presented here - nevertheless give rise to some reflection and discussion among Ladakh researchers about

- how interdisciplinary and international Ladakh studies really are,
- what it means that Ladakhis are relatively absent in Ladakh research,
- how the coherence of Ladakh studies should be evaluated - etc.

Each field of research, at a certain stage of development, does posit these questions of the state of the art, tries to evaluate its development, its premises and promises as well as its shortcomings. It may be time for Ladakh studies to do the same. We are happy to publish the present volume in order to facilitate the material necessary for such a reflection on their state of the art.

Ina Rösing  
Department of Anthropology, University of Ulm,  
May 10, 1997

3. 55 singular, 26 multiple participants, N = 81 (68%/32%).

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Only in the last two decades has Ladakh (northwest India, once known as Little Tibet) been readily accessible for study, but in that short time it has been the focus of much attention by students in many disciplines. These have been attracted by the interest of its

physical situation at high altitude in the rain-shadow of the geologically active Himalaya; by the natural ecology of this rugged desert and the skilful adaptations of pastoralism and agriculture; by the sociology, history and cultural tradition, especially as a surviving example of Tibetan Buddhism; and by the problems presented by modern development and conservation. Informal study groups organised international colloquia on Ladakh in 1981 at Konstanz (Federal Republic of Germany), in 1985 at Pau (France) and in 1987 at Herrnhut near Dresden (German Democratic Republic). The 4th IALS Colloquium was at Bristol (UK) in 1989; the 5th at SOAS in London in 1992; the 6th in Ladakh in 1993; the 7th at Bonn in 1995. The proceedings of these have been published\*. The 8th will be at Aarhus, Denmark, on 5-8 June 1997.

At Herrnhut the International Association for Ladakh Studies (IALS) was formed with an international committee of distinguished scholars. The functions of the IALS are to provide contacts between all who are interested in the study of Ladakh, and to disseminate information about proposed and completed research and publications. To do this the IALS organises colloquia, arranges publication of the proceedings, and publishes an occasional newsletter, "Ladakh Studies". This includes information about conferences, planned and current studies, requests for specific information and help, short reports, publications and general information about Ladakh. The close integration of resources, culture and religion in Ladakh demands a holistic approach, and members of the IALS are concerned with a wide variety of topics. Membership is open to all who are interested in Ladakh; for further information apply to the Hon.Sec.

- \*D.KANTOWSKI & R.SANDER (eds.) 1983 Recent Research on Ladakh: history, culture, sociology, ecology. Weltforum Verlag, Munich.  
 C.DENDALETCHÉ (ed.) 1985 Ladakh, Himalaya Occidentale: ethnologie, ecologie. Recent Research No.2. Acta Biologica Montana 5, Pau.  
 L.JICKE-SCHWALBE & G.MEIER (eds.) 1990 Wissenschaftsgeschichte und gegenwärtige Forschungen in Nordwest-Indien. Dresden Museum of Ethnology.  
 H.A.OSMASTON & P.DENWOOD (eds.) 1995 Recent research on Ladakh 4 & 5. School of Oriental & African Studies, London; Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi.  
 H.A.OSMASTON & NAWANG TSERING (eds.) 1996 Recent Research on Ladakh 6. University of Bristol, UK; Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi.  
 T.DODIN & H.RATHER (eds.) Recent Research on Ladakh 7. (present volume)  
 N.B. The first two are out of print and the third is nearly so (apply Hon.Sec., price £11).

## PREFACE

The 7th colloquium of the International Association of Ladakh Studies (IALS) was held from June 12 - 15, 1995, at the Arnold-Janssen-Haus in Sankt Augustin near Bonn, Germany.

The IALS had entrusted the organisation of it to the editors of this volume, both being members of the staff of the Seminar für Sprach- und Kulturwissenschaft Zentralasiens (Institute of Central Asian Studies) at the University of Bonn.

The symposium was attended by about 80 participants from all over the world, 35 of which presented papers. We were particularly pleased by the participation of 13 colleagues from Asia, the highest ratio so far among the IALS-symposia outside India.

Besides the papers itself several participants presented their ongoing research in the form of posters. Three high-quality films not generally known even to insiders of Ladakh studies, a slide show by Ferry Erdmann on traditional art in Spiti and Kinnaur and an exhibition of photographs on Ladakh by Uwe Gielen completed the program.

During the preparation of the colloquium three topics came up, reflecting the special areas of interest in the current study of the Western Himalayan region. Due emphasis was given to these topics in the sessions of the colloquium.

These three are:

1. The study of Baltistan, the westernmost area under the scope of the IALS. For the first time a participant from Baltistan itself presented a paper at an IALS-colloquium. Mehr Dad spoke on "Education in Baltistan". Unfortunately his paper could not be included in the present volume, but it is going to be published elsewhere.

The other papers on Baltistan were presented by colleagues from Bonn, which reflects the long-standing interest researchers from this city have in that region. Hopefully these contributions will help to firmly establish research on Baltistan under the auspices of the IALS.

2. Studies on the contemporary social and political history of Ladakh formed the second major section. This has to be seen in the context of the important developments in Ladakh especially since 1989, which have led to fundamental changes in the social and political structure of the area, culminating in the establishment of the long expected Ladakh Autonomous Development Hill Council just a few weeks prior to the colloquium.

Questions about identity and ethnicity have been raised in a number of papers, resulting in controversial discussions about our understanding of Ladakhi society.

Be that as it may, it is to be hoped that the new structures will enable Ladakh to get along better with the challenges and drawbacks of modernity.

3. Lastly several papers examined Ladakh's historical links with Central Asia and the consequences of Ladakh's position as a junction between Central and South Asia for the social, political and economic history of the region.

The current revival of Inner Asian trade makes these studies particularly important for the present also.

Besides these central issues a large number of papers focussed on other important aspects of the Western Himalayas.

These covered areas such as astrology, traditional medicine, spatial organisation, local cults, etc., thus presenting lots of new information on a variety of topics.

Good examples for this are the contributions of Khoo and Riaboff, centering on local peculiarities in a larger Tibetan/Himalayan context and thereby deepening and enhancing our knowledge of Ladakh and its traditional culture.

Although basically being the proceedings of the colloquium, this volume both goes beyond and falls short of the colloquium itself. It goes beyond it in that several papers not read in Sankt Augustin

due to the inability of its authors to attend personally (Dollfus, Grist, Gutschow, Khoo) are included.

It falls short of it in that unfortunately a number of papers read were not submitted for publication:

Crook, J.H.: The Indigenous Psychiatry of Ladakh

Gielen, Uwe P.: A Death on the Roof of the World

Khoshal, Sanyukta: Rituals and Ceremonies connected with Agriculture - Folk Traditions

Mann, R.S.: Culture and Ecology in Ladakh

Mehr Dad: Education in Baltistan

Singh, Harjit: Ladakh - An ecological Entity

Warikoo, Kulbhushan: Hemp Trade between Ladakh and Xinjiang, 1846-1947

Zeisler, Bettina: The Three Creators of "The Lower Ladakhi Version of the Kesar Saga" and the End of the Oral Tradition

Neither the colloquium nor the proceedings would have been possible without the help of a number of persons and institutions.

The editors want to extend their deepest gratitude to:

- the Institute of Central Asian Studies and its director, Prof. Dr. Michael Weiers for making the colloquium possible

- the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Council) and the Ministry of Science of the Federal State of North Rhine-Westphalia for generously providing the funding

- Elena Höger, Bianca Horlemann, Veronika Ronge and Holger Rennert for their invaluable help during the colloquium itself

- Jean-Marc Dodin for designing the logo of the conference

- Mick Khoo and John Bray for partly editing some of the papers

- SECMOL for its computer facilities in Ladakh

- and last but not least the Institute of Cultural Anthropology at the University of Ulm and particularly its director, Prof. Dr. Ina Rösing, for generously including the present volume in their UKAS-series.

Thierry Dodin & Heinz Räther

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April 1997