Preface

This volume contains the proceedings of the eighth colloquium of the International Association for Ladakh Studies and is dedicated to Henry Osmaston, initiator, driving force, former honorary secretary and current president of the IALS. The present honorary secretary, John Bray, researched and compiled the First Chapter on Henry’s life and work.

The colloquium was hosted by the Department of Ethnography and Social Anthropology of the University of Aarhus, and took place at the Department’s home at Moesgaard from 5-8 June 1997. This former estate is located in one of the most attractive parts of Jutland and the beauty of the forests and beaches was enhanced by that rarest of phenomena: a splendid, sunny, warm Danish summer.

Thanks to generous support from the Aarhus University Research Foundation, the Danish Research Council for the Humanities, and the Danish Development Research Council, we were able to invite twelve participants from South Asia, mostly from Ladakh. Many of these were people who are professionally engaged in development issues. A special effort was made also to encourage participation by Ladakhi women and people from Kargil District, the western half of the region whose population are predominantly Shia Muslims. We are pleased that for the first time both were present at an IALS colloquium.

In all some eighty people from Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, India, Norway, the United Kingdom, and the United States participated in the meeting. As is tradition, contributions on all relevant topics were welcome, and this collection consequently reflects both the depth and breadth of recent research on Ladakh. Editorial intervention has generally been limited to minor cosmetic changes and linguistic corrections. Opinions expressed in the papers are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the editors or the funders of the conference.

The collection includes four papers that were not read at the colloquium (Bray & Butler, Clarke, Grist, and Rizvi) and omits four papers that were presented, but were not submitted for publication here or had been previously published elsewhere.

We have included brief biographical descriptions of the contributors, some of which were compiled from other sources than the subjects. We apologise for any errors that may have resulted.

We would like to thank S.B. Gurong and staff at Adventure Tours and Crystal Holidays for their help in arranging the travel of the Indian participants. We are also indebted to Kim Gutschow and Mick Khoo for their help in the hectic days before the colloquium. Kirsten Ahm, Michael Dupont, and Birgitte Henriksen worked long hours during the meeting to make things work out, from registration to transport and food. We are grateful to the staff at Aarhus University Press. Tonnes Bekker-Nielsen’s efficient guidance and Mary Lund’s painstaking copy-editing helped to improve the manuscript and smoothed the publication process.

Publication of this volume was made possible by financial support from the Aarhus University Research Foundation and the Danish Research Council for the Humanities.

Moesgaard, July 1999

Martijn van Beek
Kristoffer Brix Bertelsen
Poul Pedersen