

Conference Report by Pascale Dollfus

In June 1997, Aarhus University in Moesgaard hosted the eighth international gathering of scholars in Ladakh Studies; participants came from Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, India, Switzerland and the United States to consider a wide range of issues dealing mainly with history, social anthropology and development.

Convened by Kristoffer Brix Bertelsen, Poul Pedersen, Martijn van Beek and their colleagues, eleven participants came from Ladakh itself, from both Leh and Kargil districts. Their papers revealed a keen interest in sustainable development, non-conventional energy and education.

The colloquium was organised in different sessions based on common themes. The first day was dominated by papers dealing with archaeology and history. Neil Howard (London) described his own pottery finds, and in light of the author's studies of the forts of Ladakh, he discussed the dating proposed by A.H. Francke in his pioneering work on the archaeology of Ladakh. Sonam Phuntsog (Achinathang) outlined the history of political relations between the village of Hanu and the state of Ladakh. Mick Khoo (Boulder, CO) presented some remarks on the observation of solar and lunar eclipses, linked with Rahu. Then Nawang Tsering Shakspo (Leh) spoke on the foremost teachers of the successive kings of Ladakh.

On the second day, Abdul Ghani Sheikh (Leh) presented the economic conditions during the Dogra regime. Next John Bray (London) and P. J. Marzell (Geneva) spoke on two great figures of Ladakhi Studies: The Rev. A. H. Francke and Csoma de Kôrös. An attempt to understand the perception of the inhabitants of high altitude regions was made by Harjit Singh (New Delhi) who conducted a study based on household level data in three villages of Ladakh, Spiti and Lahaul. Then various anthropological papers examined the religious concepts, livelihoods and activities of both nomads and agriculturists. Monisha Ahmed (Bombay) described the Rupshu inhabitants' yearly trek to Tso kar (one of the main salt lakes in Ladakh) and the method by which the removal of salt is organised. Pascale Dollfus (Paris) focused on the local cult to mountain deities performed by the nomads of Kharnak. Reinhard Herdick (Munich) analysed the spatial order of architectural and socio-cultural structures in the village of

Yangthang in western Ladakh. Kim Gutschow (Cambridge, MA) detailed a lay fasting rite known as *smying gnas* which is performed in Zanskar and shed new light on Turner's theory of liminality. Finally in a session called "Community and Belonging", David Pinault (Chicago) discussed the ways in which the annual Muharram rituals celebrated in Leh township have functioned in recent years to mediate communal relations among the Shia, Sunni and Buddhist populations, while Martin Sökefeld (Hamburg) analysed "the nationalist imagination" that has emerged in the Northern Areas of Pakistan, whose inhabitants suffer from much political discrimination.

The third day was entirely devoted to development and education with a set of papers on sustainable development, non-conventional energy sources and ecological agriculture read by Sonam Dawa (Leh), P.G. Dhar Chakrabarti (Jammu), Jigmet Namgyal (Leh) and Mohd. Deen (Leh); Mohd. Raza Abbasi (Kargil) exposed the role of voluntary organisations in the development of Kargil Districts, while Mohd. Jaffar Akhoun (Kargil) spoke on the scope of tourism. In addition, special attention was devoted to education, and particularly to women's issues. David Sonam Dawa (Leh) stressed the problems of primary education in Leh District. Both Kaneez Fatima (Kargil) and Spalzes Angmo (Leh) gave lively papers on women's development and education respectively in Kargil and Leh Districts. Finally Katherine E. Hay (Copenhagen) highlighted the gender dimension of modernisation in Ladakh.

On the fourth and last day in a session called "Language and Literature" Anandamayee Ghosh (Santineketan, West Bengal) examined the continuity of *gzungs skad* (literary language) which prevails in Ladakh from the linguistic point of view in common speech and in the written language. Bettina Zeisler (Berlin) discussed loan-words in the Ladakhi language: mimicry or integration of modern concepts. We may also include under this theme the paper given on the second day by Ravina Aggarwal who, taking the example of a novel written by Abdul Ghani Sheikh, discussed the various problems arising when translating modern literature.

Most of the papers delivered during the colloquium (plus some others ...) will appear in van Beek, Martijn and Kristoffer Brix Bertelsen (Eds.) *Recent Research on Ladakh* 8. Proceedings of the Eighth Colloquium of the International Association of Ladakh Studies, Moesgaard, 5-8 June 1997.