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EDITORIAL

As your editor spent two months in Ladakh this past spring, much of the news in this tenth issue of *LS* is 'fresh' and based on first-hand reporting. Among the main events of the past six months in Ladakh, apart from a metaphorical landslide in politics, has been a rather serious natural one: in May a mud slide originating somewhere near the Kardong La washed away fields, damaged houses in Gangles and Gompa villages, and destroyed the bridge at Changspa. Miraculously, no human lives were lost. The mud slide was caused in part by sudden unusually warm weather, contributing to another early opening of the Leh-Srinagar road. In spite of the early opening, however, the flow of supplies to Ladakh continues to be hampered by repeated shelling across the LoC in Kargil district.

We are pleased to bring a couple of interesting short articles in this issue. More detailed research findings can be found in the dissertations whose abstracts are included in the present issue. Once again, we would like to remind you to send a short abstract of your thesis, research reports, etc. As announced in the previous issue, we are striving to bring out two issues of *Ladakh Studies* per year but this depends on your contributions. Those of you visiting Ladakh are encouraged to pass on news to us, so we can continue to carry up-to-date reports on developments in Ladakh of interest to our readers.

At this time it is still uncertain where and when the next IALS colloquium will take place. We hope to be able to announce both dates and venue in *LS* 11, which is scheduled for January 1999. See the message from the Hon. Sec. for more details.

Finally, there are several book reviews, a few new publications are announced, and Bray's Bibliography Update no. 7 concludes this issue. I would like to thank the contributors to the present issue, and encourage all of you to follow their example.

Martijn van Beek

ERRATA *LS* No. 9

- * The editor apologizes for inconvenience caused by an error in the phone number of Janet Rizvi. The correct number is: +91-124-360440.
- * A transcription error led to confusion in the book review of Vitali's *Kingdoms of Gu.ge Pu.hrang*. On p. 28 of *LS* 9, Neil Howard identifies an error in Vitali's work. the first "western border" here should read "eastern border".

FROM THE HONORARY SECRETARY

Recent news from Ladakh has been dominated by reports of repeated Pakistani firing on Kargil. By mid-August there were hopes that the situation was returning to normal but a recent newspaper report tells of further shelling on 19 August, just as people had started returning to their homes. As the reporter says, the people of Kargil are 'haunted by a shadow of uncertainty'.

Against this background, our first thoughts are for the people of Kargil - and especially for our friends who attended the Aarhus colloquium. We have them very much in mind, and pray for their personal safety, as well as a rapid return to safer conditions in their home region.

As far as the IALS is concerned, the situation in Kargil casts its own shadow of uncertainty over plans for the 1999 colloquium. Earlier, we had been hoping to hold the colloquium in Kargil district, but this does not now seem to be practical. In early September Abdul Ghani Sheikh plans to convene a meeting of the Ladakh committee to reconsider the situation. We still hope to hold the colloquium in Ladakh next year, but are considering alternatives in case this should prove not to be viable. We will send out more definite news as soon as we have it.

Michael Khoo's article later in this edition of Ladakh Studies reviews Ladakh-related websites and the future of civilisation. It is good to be able to report that the IALS is planning its own website. Thierry Dodin has already set up a trial site using Bonn University's facilities, and we hope to have more to report in the next edition of Ladakh Studies.

John Bray

N.B. The address of the trial site is:
<http://ibm.rhrz.uni-bonn.de:80/~upp701/IALShome.html>

NEWS FROM LADAKH

** STOP PRESS ** STOP PRESS ** STOP PRESS **

TOURISTS TOLD TO AVOID SRINAGAR-LEH ROAD

UNI reports from Srinagar on September 10:

"The Jammu and Kashmir Government is advising tourists to fly to Leh instead of using the 434 km long Srinagar-Leh highway in view of the frequent shelling by Pakistani troops en route. It has been decided to advise tourists to fly to Leh instead of going by road as the border town of Kargil, which falls on the way, has been frequently targetted by Pakistani troops stationed on a edge overlooking the Leh-Srinagar highway, official sources told UNI here. The situation would be reviewed after six months to see if the situation was normal enough to promote the road for tourists, they added."

KARGIL AGAIN UNDER ATTACK

On June 29, Kargil town once again was hit by artillery shells fired by Pakistani troops from across the Line of Control (LOC), according to Indian military sources. An army spokesman told *The Hindu* that Pakistani troops had begun unprovoked shelling in Kargil in the evening. At least thirty shells landed in and around the town. However, no damage to property or human casualties were reported. Once again, the population of the town was reported to have fled, seeking shelter in Chigtan, Suru and Shargol.

The incident came after several days of escalation during which Pakistan accused India of targeting civilian populations in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, or Azad Kashmir, as it is called in Pakistan. The tension followed the explosion of several nuclear devices by both nations in May, and a spate of belligerent rhetoric from J&K Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah and Central Government officials.

Between July 28 and August 10, shelling again took place, this time marking the meeting of the prime ministers of India and Pakistan at the SAARC meeting at Colombo. While Indian Chief of the air staff, Air Marshal S.K. Sareen was reported to have said that the exchange of artillery fire was a "seasonal feature" and that there was "nothing alarming" in it, Pakistan's PM and Foreign Minister repeatedly stated that there was indeed a real threat of war. As is common practice, both sides accused the other of having resorted to "unprovoked firing" and inviting a "measured response". According to the Pakistani newspaper *Dawn*, in all around 125 people, mostly civilians, were killed on both sides in this second round of firing of the summer.

According to Indian newsreports, the Leh-Srinagar road was specifically targeted, and a few shells reportedly hit Kargil and surrounding areas. On one occasion, a civilian truck was hit by a shell near Khurboo, killing four and injuring three people on board. Once again, most of the population of Kargil fled to safer areas.

Last year, Kargil was targeted at several occasions (see *LS9*), leading to the death of some seventeen civilians. The singling out of civilian populations, while not an entirely new development in this region, appears to have become part of what are euphemistically

called 'routine exchanges of fire' along the disputed border. UN observers from the UNIMOG group have been invited by Pakistan to investigate the incidents on their side, while India follows its standard practice of not allowing international intervention in what it regards as a bilateral dispute.

Compiled from reports in *The Indian Express*, *The Times of India*, *Dawn (Karachi)*, and *The Nation (Lahore)*.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE WINS LADAKH LOK SABHA SEAT

For the first time since Independence, the Kashmir National Conference party of Dr. Farooq Abdullah has managed to win the Ladakh Lok Sabha seat. Its candidate, Aga Syed Hussain of Kargil, beat the incumbent Congress (I) candidate, former Union Deputy Minister P. Namgyal, by an unexpectedly large margin of almost 35000 votes. While Congress had campaigned on P.Namgyal's record at the Centre, National Conference workers had stressed the poor record of the Congress dominated Hill Council and insisted that it was time for a change. The NC, which historically has had considerable difficulty in rallying grassroots support in Leh District, this time could point to the appointment by Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah of two ministers from Leh, Togdan Rinpoche and Tsetan Namgyal. Moreover, in May Thikse Rinpoche became the first Ladakhi member of the Rajya Sabha.

A significant factor in the NC victory was that serious differences between factions in Kargil were set aside in a show of support for the compromise candidate. Just prior to the elections, on the eve of moharram, curfew was imposed in Kargil township after clashes between supporters of the Khomeini Trust with members of the Islamiya School faction. Rapid fence-mending by prominent NC politicians, including minister of state Qamar Ali and CM Farooq Abdullah himself, prevented an electoral disaster. There are also signals that NC managed to secure a significant share of the vote in Zangskar, another traditional Congress bastion. Here, according to observers, the reason for the swing may be found in a series of promises to address long-standing demands of the Zangskari population, such as the establishment of a resthouse for Zangskar in Kargil.

The remaining contestants, Bharatiya Janata Party's Spalzes Angmo and the Bahujan Samajwadi Party's Mohammed Yaqoob, failed to have much of an impact. Spalzes Angmo apparently did manage to secure support from sections of the urban youth and ended up with a respectable 8257 votes. The BSP candidate, as had been expected, received support from a mere 1062 people, less than the total of 1081 invalid votes.

compiled from interviews and *The Indian Express*, 8/6/98

RAJYA SABHA SEAT FOR THIKSE RINPOCHE

In May 1998, Thikse monastery's Khanpo Rinpoche, Ngawang Chamba Stanzin, was elected as a member of the Rajya Sabha. He is the first Ladakhi to occupy a seat in the upper house of Indian parliament. Nominated by the National Conference Party, which he had joined after resigning from the Hill Council at the end of 1996, Skushok Thikse

has had a long career in Ladakhi politics. He joined the opposition to Kushok Bakula's Congress party in 1963 and played an active role in the turbulent Congress 'A' vs. Congress 'B' period in the 1970s. Although he never won an election—he lost to Sonam Wangyal in the 1969 Assembly elections—Thikse Rinpoche has always managed to gain considerable support among certain sections of the population. He had also played a vocal and prominent role during the agitation for regional autonomy.

FLASH FLOOD HITS LEH VALLEY

Around 3pm on Sunday, 20 May 1998, a deep rumble filled the air in Leh. Irrigation canals and streams suddenly filled with vast flows of muddy water, causing them to block and overflow. While damage in Leh town was largely limited to clogged canals and muddy streets and paths, upper parts of the valley were badly hit. In Gonpa and Gangles areas, several houses were severely damaged, livestock was killed, and fields washed away. Lower down, in upper parts of Sankar village, many fields were covered in a thick layer of mud and crops were washed away. The bridge in Chanspa was taken out by the army, as the big pipes got blocked and the foundation was in danger of collapsing. A temporary bayley bridge put in place a few days later. All along the *thokpo* embankments and footpaths were severely damaged.

The flood came in the wake of a sudden rise in day temperature. After a rather cool spring in March and April, the weather suddenly warmed up, resembling July rather than spring. Apparently, snowmelt up near the old Khardong pass collected behind a wall of ice and rock, finally causing it to collapse, sending down vast amounts of water and mud. Thankfully, no human lives were lost, although many told stories of narrow escapes. The Hill Council immediately announced relief measures and assured the victims that assistance and compensation would be made available to alleviate their burden.

BATTLE OF THE LOUDSPEAKERS CONTINUES

Although popular support is practically non-existent, what is left of peace and quiet in Leh bazaar—and the increase in traffic and large number of building sites do not leave much—continues to be shattered at regular intervals by calls for prayer from the masjid and retaliatory chanting and singing from Gonpa Soma. Now that the tourist season has gotten under way, it is not uncommon to see tourists stroll into the Gonpa Soma, in search of the source of the music or chanting. They are invariably disillusioned to find a tape player, rather than monks. One visitor, hearing the simultaneous call for prayer and virtual monks, remarked that it was wonderful to find such tolerance, such peaceful coexistence between the faiths. A shopkeeper was quick to point out that quite the opposite was the case.

The speaker war broke out in 1996, when LBA activists took offense to the installation of loudspeakers in outlying parts of Leh, where only a few Muslim families live. Routinely, whenever the call for prayer comes—i.e. also in the middle of the night—a tape is played, usually the entire length of some thirty minutes. Where originally the tape broadcast prayers and recitations, the current one offers a form of

modern muzak that was described by one observer as "intolerable". Moreover, where initially the Buddhist tape was only played during the call for prayer, it now often plays all through the Friday service at the Mosque, and could be heard all through the night of Muharram, when devout Shias spend the night mourning the martyrdom of Hussain.

A Buddhist who lives near the bazaar confided that he had seriously and repeatedly considered shooting down the loud speakers. While local residents may gradually learn to sleep through the noise, for visitors the problem is more serious. The barking dogs of Leh and the generator are being challenged for their position as most annoying feature of the town. Several hotels in the immediate vicinity of Leh bazaar, such as Lingzhi, Galdan Continental and Ibex, have a difficult time attracting, and especially keeping customers.

While a vast majority of Leh-pa are fed up with the whole situation, and while several Muslim leaders have said they would agree to remove the speakers, no Buddhist leaders seem willing to take up the issue. The LBA proclaims that it is no longer responsible for the tape, but that some monks keep up the battle.

MUHARRAM PROCESSION BANNED IN KARGIL

In the first week of May, perhaps for the first time since 1989, the CRPF barracks in Leh lay practically abandoned. The CRPF troops were moved to Kargil to assist in maintaining order in the wake of clashes between supporters of KMT (Khomeini Trust) and Islamiya School supporters. Fights between these factions around the time of Muharram are not uncommon, reflecting among other things disagreements over the way in which the procession should be held. This year's clashes led the authorities to temporarily impose Section 144, which prohibits public gatherings, and ban the procession. A considerable number of Kargili Shias joined the procession in Leh, which passed off without any untoward incident.

KAILASH ROAD UNLIKELY TO OPEN SOON, OR IS IT?

The Hindu reported on June 7:

"Following nuclear explosions by both India and Pakistan and the subsequent increase in tension between India and China, the Jammu and Kashmir Government's plan to open 500-km long Leh-Kailash-Mansarovar road for pilgrim traffic is unlikely to take off."

Soon after assuming office in October 1996, Farooq Abdullah's government expressed its desire to throw open the road, taking up a long-standing suggestion from Ladakh's Tourism Operators Union, who had raised the matter with consecutive central and state governments. Minister of State for Ladakh Affairs Kushok Togdan Rinpoche and Deputy Minister for Tourism Tsetan Namgyal investigated the matter and submitted a report. However, no follow-up action has been taken, and is unlikely for some time to come, the report said.

However, *The Indian Express* carried a PTI report on August 29 that India will shortly hold talks with China on the reopening of the Ladakh-Kailash Mansarovar route following the death of nearly 50 pilgrims in landslides at Pithorogarth district in Uttar

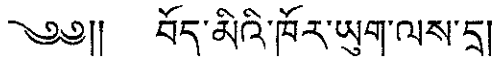
Pradesh, Home minister L K Advani said in Leh. Army officers will take up the matter with their Chinese counterparts at the next border meeting shortly, he said.

Leading Ladakhi political and religious organisations, including Ladakh Buddhist Association, local BJP unit, and the Hindu trust, had submitted memoranda to Advani demanding opening of the route, which was closed following the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1959. The opening of the route will boost the local tourism-dependent economy and restart the defunct border trade between Ladakh and Tibet, the local organisations argue.

The minister conceded that the pace of development in Ladakh was slow compared to other parts of the country. After a first hand experience of difficulty in communicating with Delhi, he said. "This telecommunication business must be improved on a priority basis." The rest of the problems could be rectified in the long run, he added.

NEWS FROM MEMBERS

- ◆ *Clare Harris* was awarded her doctorate in August 1997 and after four years teaching at the School of World Art Studies, University of East Anglia, is moving in September to take up a post as lecturer in the Anthropology Department at the University of Oxford. She will also be curator of Asian collections as the Pitt Rivers Museum - which has large holdings of Himalayan and Tibetan artefacts as well as 600,000 photographs including expedition material from Tibet. Her e-mail address will (hopefully) be clare.harris@anthro.ox.ac.uk. She will be pleased to hear from fellow Ladakh-o-philes.
- ◆ Long-time member *Nicky Grist* received her doctorate from Goldsmiths College at the University of London in June. Her thesis, *Local Politics in the Suru Valley of Northern India*, was supervised by Sophie Day. See the abstracts section for details.
- ◆ *President Osmaston* has gone to Brittany with all 19 members of his family (wife, children, children's spouses, grandchildren) to celebrate his Golden Wedding anniversary.



TEN: TIBETAN ENVIRONMENT NETWORK **An Initiative by Tibetans for Tibetans**

Dalha Tsering (London) & Yeshe Lhundup (Choglamsar)

Tibetans in Ladakh are, in some ways, lucky to be in Ladakh, a land with many similarities to their original homeland, Tibet. On the other hand, having lost their livestock and with virtually no knowledge of agriculture, they had to settle down as a refugee community relying on agriculture. Most of the Tibetan refugees in Ladakh are former pastoral nomads from Ngari - western Tibet.

70% of the land allocated to the Tibetans three decades ago still remains uncultivated. The reasons are: shortage of water; poor soil quality; lack of financial and other resources; lack of inspiration and initiative; inadequate experience in farming; poor water management and irrigation system.

The yearly stock of food has to be produced within the four summer months (June - September) before the road closes and the land freezes. 85% of Tibetans living in Choglamsar (the Tibetan settlement, 7 kilometres from Leh) make their living by working as seasonal coolies and carrying out other occasional manual labour (often for the Indian Army, which maintains the roads in the area).

In July 1994, a small group called Tibetan Environment Network (TEN) was set up to tackle these issues. TEN is an initiative by local Tibetans for local Tibetans and works closely with the Choglamsar based Chief Representative of the Tibetan Government in Exile. The people involved in TEN are farmers, labourers, teachers, students, taxi drivers, shopkeepers, the un-employed and group leaders (at the refugee camp) of all age and genders. Thanks to ApfTibeT, a charity based in the UK, the people who run TEN have been trained in agro-forestry and the environment.

TEN's on-going work at Choglamsar and with Tibetan nomads in Chang Thang includes educating local Tibetan people on basic health hazards and threats to the environment through: regular public talks; monthly video shows; presentations on local radio; evening adult education schemes; painting environmental messages throughout the camp; production of locally appropriate teaching materials, books, videos etc.; providing a reading room with books on health, environment and Tibet.

TEN works to *improve the infrastructure* of the environment at the Tibetan settlement by building greenhouses, solar-heated community centres and composting toilets for the community.

TEN *helps to keep the environment clean* by providing rubbish bins and garbage pits, and organising for these to be emptied regularly.

TEN *encourages local Tibetans* to grow vegetables, animal fodder and food-grains by subsidising seeds and fencing, providing training at TEN's organic farm, organising a farmer's fair every year

TEN is achieving these objectives with the help of and funds from individuals and organisations like AptTibeT, Tibet Society and Tibet Foundation in the UK; and TRAS and THEO in Canada. But above all it is the involvement, encouragement and voluntary services offered to TEN by the local Tibetans, which is the key to our success.

Anyone interested in knowing more about the work of TEN or who wishes to give practical or financial help, please contact us.

Even small assistance will make a positive difference to the challenges, which lie ahead for TEN. Thank you for your support

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HOW MANY MAHMUD SHAHI RUPEES TO A TARAK OF PASHM?

- or -

Making sense of H H Wilson

Janet Rizvi

Probably most of us in the IALS, not only the historians, have referred repeatedly to Moorcroft's published *Travels* during our researches. We all know that Moorcroft's papers were edited and prepared for press by H H Wilson, the scholar whom Moorcroft himself selected for the purpose. Unfortunately, though, what Moorcroft said, and what Wilson makes him say, are not always identical.

The quantity of shawl-wool annually imported [from Leh into Kashmir] varies between five hundred and one thousand *horse-loads, each of which is equal to nearly 300 lbs.*' (Moorcroft and Trebeck 1841, II 165; emphasis added).

'A kharwar, or ass-load, is not an indefinite term, but a measure of sixteen taraks. This, which is the standard of Kashmir, is equal to six sers, a ser is equal to twenty pals, and a pal ought to be equal to three Mohammad Shahi rupees and a third. At this rate the ser should weigh nearly two pounds (the rupee being 173.3 grains). *The actual ser, however, is not above one pound avoirdupois, and an ass load is, therefore, about ninety-six pounds. A horse-load consists of twenty-two taraks.*' (Moorcroft and Trebeck 1841, II, 135-6 emphasis added).

It takes only a little simple calculation to work out that, whereas on p. 165, the horse-load (which equally with the ass-load is being treated as a measure of weight rather than a mode of transport) is equivalent to nearly 300 pounds, on p. 136, it is stated to be equivalent to $(96 \div 16 \times 22)$ pounds, i.e. 132 pounds. Oh dear. Since my interest is in establishing approximately the amount of pashm (shawl-wool) passing annually from Leh to Srinagar, and this is measured by horse-loads, I have a problem.

So let's see if other writers on Kashmir can throw some light. Vigne, usually an accurate observer, about 15-20 years after Moorcroft puts the tarak at six Kashmiri seers, or $4\frac{1}{2}$ 'Lodiana' seers of 2 lbs. On this basis he reckons the kharwar at 144 lbs.; the 22-tarak horse-load would work out at 198 lbs. (Vigne 1842, II, 429). Walter Lawrence lived and worked in Kashmir as Settlement Officer for several years towards the end of the nineteenth century and went with thoroughness and accuracy to rival Moorcroft's own into all aspects of the country. Writing in the 1890s, he asserts that the kharwar, consisting of 16 tarak of just over 11 lbs., worked out at 177.7 lbs. (Lawrence 1895, 242-3). By this reckoning, a horse-load would work out to just over (11×22) , or 242 lbs. This is helpful, because it corresponds to the actual situation of transport in the western Himalaya, where 3 maunds (240 lbs.) was the heaviest load a horse could be expected to carry. In the latter part of the nineteenth century when the British authorities attempted to regulate the trans-Ladakh trade, they imposed a maximum of $2\frac{1}{2}$ maunds (200 lbs.).

It thus seems likely that the precise standard varied from time to time and place to place; there was also some variation according to what was being weighed. 'By local custom a kharwar of shali [rice paddy], maize and barley consists of only 15 taraks, of 166 $22/95$ lbs.' (Lawrence 1895: 243n.). Moorcroft himself observes that *asali tus*, the

pashm of certain wild ungulates, even softer and finer than regular pashm, is sold by the ser of only 18 pal — i.e. 4 pal less than the regular ser used for pashm (Moorcroft MSS:D164/32). It is against this background we have to consider the observation that the ser ought to be nearly two lbs., but in practice is not more than one, the kharwar accordingly being put at 96 lbs. This is stated in the context of the amount of rice produced in Kashmir, and may not be relevant to quantities of pashm. So I'm no further on. The problem is compounded by the mention of the horse-load 'of nearly 300 lbs.' To try to sort the whole thing out there seems to be no alternative but to tackle the original papers.

Moorcroft's letters and journals are admittedly a nightmare to find your way about in, they are so chaotic and his style is so prolix and his handwriting so illegible. But if you know what you're looking for, you can usually find it. I looked and I looked and I looked; but nowhere could I find a reference to 'nearly 300 lbs.' in this context, or any other. In any case, it seemed an unlikely figure, out of proportion with the actual load a horse was expected to carry. I was forced to the conclusion that the 'nearly 300 lbs.' was a fiction, an interpolation by Wilson, a scholar without direct experience of the western Himalaya. Very possibly on the plains pack-horses did carry burdens of 'nearly 300 lbs.'; but really, this kind of editorial gloss is not quite good enough.

What Moorcroft actually wrote — well, there are two statements that seemed germane to my purpose. 'The shawl wool is brought in loads which differ much in weight' (Moorcroft MSS: D260/4). Oh thanks a lot. — But hang on, here's something to chew on. 'Each [horse-] load weighs 22 Turuks each Turuk consisting of six Ser, a Ser weighing 22 Pul and each Pul of the weight of three and a third Mahmood Shahi Rupees.' (Moorcroft MSS: D264/27). OK, fine. But how am I to get a reasonably accurate interpretation of Moorcroft's 'turuks', 'sers', 'puls' and 'Mahmood Shahi Rupees'? It all hinges, doesn't it, on the weight of a Mahmood Shahi rupee, and how on earth am I to establish that?

Hang on again, didn't the *Travels* have something to say about that? — here it is, vol. II p. 136 ... 'the rupee being 173.3 grains'. So where does Moorcroft specify that? Nowhere that I can see. Oh my Gawd — looks as if it's old Wilson putting in his oar again. Think ... *think*, woman. OK — so what's a Mahmood Shahi rupee anyhow? Who the hell was Mahmood Shah? Well, for your information (and mine) Mahmud Shah reigned in India from 1719 for twenty years, the only one of the Mughal emperors after Aurangzeb to sit on the throne for more than a year or two, a precarious stability that was destroyed by the Persian invasion of 1739. It seems reasonable to infer that he was the last of the Mughals whose reign was long and prosperous and — in its initial stages at least — peaceful enough to permit the minting of a standard coinage in sufficient quantities to outlast the emperor after whom it was named. It was nearly 1840 before the British created their own standard of coinage, weights and measures. Thus it is quite likely that in the early 1820s, when Moorcroft was describing conditions in Kashmir and Ladakh, and up to the 1830s when Wilson was working on his papers, the Mahmud Shahi rupee was still taken as the standard all over north India. The '173.3 grains' might well be an interpolation by Wilson; but unlike the horseload of 'nearly 300 lbs.', this time it seems fair to assume that he knows what he's talking about.

So far so good ... but *grains*? Like anyone who had their schooling in UK before the 1970s, I spent amazing amounts of time and mental energy mastering the eccentric

avoirdupois system of weights: 16 ounces (oz.) = 1 pound (lb.); 14 pounds = 1 stone; 8 stones = one hundredweight; 20 hundredweight = one ton. Grains didn't feature. Well, actually it only takes a reference to the dictionary to find out about grains; and you'll never in a million years guess how many grains make up an ounce. Obviously it'll never be something sensible like 20, or 50 or 400, or even 240 or 360. Then 256? — wrong. 512? — wrong again. There are *four hundred and thirty-seven point five* grains to an ounce avoirdupois and if you don't believe me go check it out.

So there I was all the way. Taking Moorcroft's figures, the weight of a Mahmud Shahi rupee, 173.3 grains, divided by 437.5 equals 0.396 oz. One pal equals 3.33 Mahmud Shahi rupees, or 1.32 oz. One seer equals 22 pal equals 29.01 oz.; divide by 16 to get 1.81 lbs. Six seer to the tarak: 10.86 lbs. Twenty-two tarak to the horse-load: 238.92 lbs.; near enough to the 242 lbs. inferred from Lawrence's figures. If you insist on going metric, divide by 2.2 to get 108.6 kilograms. And that is precisely what I should expect the weight of an actual horse-load to be. Three cheers for Moorcroft — right as usual.

All researchers are obliged to indulge in a little detective work like this from time to time, I guess. When you find what you were looking for you feel pretty chuffed about it. PS. At some time between (let us say) Vigne and Cunningham, who visited Ladakh in 1847, the British introduced one standardized system of weights and measures, tidying up the whole gamut of chaotic and varying local systems; many of these however refused to be altogether superseded by the new standard system, and some of them — as Henry Osmaston and Tashi Rabgias have established in *Himalayan Buddhist Villages* (Chapter 4, 'Weights and Measures used in Ladakh') — remain in use today. The standard system was based on the maund, which normally consisted of 40 seers, each seer being equivalent to 2 lbs. avoirdupois or 0.91 kilograms; the maund was thus about 36.36 kilograms. But nothing is as simple as it seems, and Cunningham for reasons best known to himself quantifies the commodities of Ladakh's trade by the 'small maund' of 16 seers or 32 lbs. or about 14.55 kilograms. So you have to look out. And the best of luck to you.

Henry Osmaston adds:

"The reason why the ounce is 437.5 grains is because there are exactly 7000 grains to an avoirdupois pound of 16 ounces, defined as such by Queen Elizabeth I in 1588 and reconfirmed in 1824. But perhaps this is too prosaic and would spoil the fun. Originally the grain was defined as 'the weight of a grain of wheat taken from the middle of an ear'."

SANDSTORMS, SMOKE AND CHEST DISEASE IN LADAKH

Keith Ball

Those of us who were in the party visiting Zangskar led by John Crook and Henry Osmaston in 1980 will clearly remember the sandstorm which took place during the Dalai Lama's visit when he addressed the assembled company at Padum. The storm made it impossible to proceed, so HH sent the villagers home to return next day, by which time it had cleared. It was not until several years later that, apart from the discomfort they caused, the potential harm to human health of the sandstorms was recognised.

About ten years ago Dr Tsering Norboo of Leh produced a chest radiograph (X-ray) of a Ladakhi man which showed signs suggestive of pneumoconiosis or silicosis. This was most surprising since the usual sources of silicosis in other countries are coal mines or dusty factories, which do not exist in Ladakh. Silicosis not caused by occupation has only recently been recognised to be a significant health problem. It was therefore decided to find out how often silicosis occurred in Ladakh.¹

The village of Chuchot Shamma near Leh in the Indus valley was selected for a research study. A group of middle-aged men and women were invited to the SNM Hospital in Leh where chest radiographs were taken. They were compared with a similar group of men and women from the village of Stok which lies about 300m (1,000 feet) higher. Radiographic signs of silicosis were found in both villages, but were more frequent in Chuchot Shamma, and more often in women than in men. These signs of silicosis did not necessarily mean that any disability resulted, although they showed that exposure to airborne sand or loess had occurred. However, a few villagers were seriously affected. A woman farmer aged 49 showed signs of advanced silicosis. She was very short of breath, and some months later died of respiratory failure.

These findings were confirmed by a larger study carried out by the Indian National Institute of Occupational Health of subjects from three Ladakhi villages in the Indus valley.² Nearly half those in Chuchot Goma, the village adjacent to Chuchot Shamma, had signs of silicosis. It was concluded that exposure to free silica from dust storms, together with soot from domestic fuels, was the cause of the silicosis found.

Ladakh is covered by a layer of loess, a fine silica-rich dust consisting of particles of less than ten microns and therefore respirable. Unlike most sands, where the particle size is around 200 microns or more, loess penetrates deeply into the lungs - causing damage. Loess is widespread over much of Eastern Asia and China, and produces a very fertile soil. With the help of Prof. Ed Derbyshire, contact was made with doctors in the Gansu province of north-west China who reported similar health problems associated with dust storms. It is hoped to cooperate with them in future.

Prevention poses particular problems. Research into the source of the dust is essential. It may be possible to extend vegetable cover over affected areas and to discourage domestic habits and farming practices which disseminate the dust. Simple cotton masks have been used, but they do not obstruct the very fine loess particles. Preliminary trials have been carried out using a material which can filter off the loess. With the help of the Ladakh Environmental and Health Organisation (LEHO), masks have been produced and distributed in the affected villages, and they appear to be

popular. If their effectiveness is confirmed, they could be used especially when undertaking dusty domestic and farming activities. Much dust is also raised by cars and trucks on unmetalled roads, and the provision of hard dust-free road surfaces is needed. Finally, people should be taught to avoid dust inhalation wherever possible.

Chest diseases, including pneumonia and bronchitis are commonly found in Ladakh, and are probably an important cause of the high infant mortality. But other factors apart from dust inhalation may be very important. Traditional Ladakhi houses have small winter kitchens where smoke from open fires escapes through a hole in the roof. The blackened walls show clear evidence of the air pollution which must also have blackened the lungs of those who lived huddled together during very cold winters. William Moorcroft's experiences during his travels in Ladakh in the early 19th century are well described:

He was appalled at the acrid smoke from they yak-dung fires which filled every Ladakhi living room in winter, and he often insisted that the fire be put out, or he lay on the floor to clear his streaming eyes before he could treat some of his patients.³

Fortunately, many houses have now installed effective chimneys. Other heating methods are helping to reduce domestic smoke pollution, including solar-heated houses using special 'Trombe' walls, together with gas heaters and *bokhari* stoves.

Cigarette smoking, which is too often encouraged by the example of tourists and by pressures from tobacco companies, is set to cause further health problems, although the activities of Ladakh Action on Smoking and Health (LASH) continues to promote a strong anti-smoking message. A survey in 1995 of smoking habits in boys in the Lamdon, Islamic and Moravian schools in Leh showed that by the age of 18 one third had experimented with smoking; one in seven had smoked at least one cigarette a day for three months; and nearly one in ten were regular smokers. The figures were similar in each of the schools, and 29% of the school children said that their fathers were smokers.

Chest diseases are important causes of death and disability in Ladakh. Research into their causes and prevention is helping to reduce the problems they cause.

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A WALK ON THE COLD SIDE

Steve Berry

It was snowing slightly as we dropped down on to the ice of the Zaskar River gorge for the first time. Constant melting and freezing had produced a firm crust, easy to walk on without crampons. At the river edges the ice was thick, but the centre was mushy or open, leaving a fast-flowing stream of black water. A slip into this would be fatal, for were you not swept instantly under ice further downstream, the temperature would finish you in minutes. In places the icy rim narrowed to a pavement no more than two feet wide, and here we would let the porters go first. Day after day we walked with death flowing just yards from our feet; it made you very careful where you stepped.

This impressive 90-mile gorge, linking Leh, capital of Ladakh, with Padum, the chief township of Zaskar, is only passable in midwinter when the raging river freezes over. Then, it becomes the only way in or out of Zaskar as the 16,000 ft passes guarding the country are closed by snowfall. I first heard about it in 1987 when a Zaskari friend told me how he used to do the journey regularly as a postman. Three years went by before I had a chance to try it myself. None of my climbing friends could be persuaded to come along, but arriving in Leh in January, I met a British couple who were as keen as I was and we set out with seven Zaskari porters and my old friend Dorji, the cook. The winter had not been particularly cold and we knew it was touch and go whether we could get through.

The first day brought us to a small village of flat-topped, mud-brick houses - appropriately named Chilling - where, since it was one of the main centres for brass and ironware in Ladakh, we felt confident of finding a fire to warm ourselves by. Ladakh, and Zaskar in particular, endures one of the coldest winters on earth. Night-time temperatures of minus 67° centigrade have been recorded in one village, and the thermometer regularly drops to minus 40° in Leh. Not surprisingly, people stay indoors a lot: animals on the ground floor, family on the first, and firewood, yak dung and hay piled high upon the roof. Inside, pot-bellied stoves or open hearths belch acrid smoke and ceilings blacken with soot. No wonder the Ladakhis suffer continual chest complaints. We sat drinking chang one night when it began raining black drops from the ceiling as the meagre heat melted the fastening ice. The trick was not to let them get into the chang.

Soon all habitation was left behind as we headed into the bowels of the gorge. The journey is continually spectacular. Cliffs rise thousands of feet into the rarified air, sharp peaks of 18,000 ft and more guard crucial junctions where frozen streams seep down from unvisited valleys. Petrified waterfalls hang waiting for the spring thaw, and occasional hot springs leak from subterranean passages. This part of the Himalaya is where the ancient continent of Gondwanaland and the tectonic plate of India collided in recent geological time. You see the rock strata of one continent lying atop the other, and in neighbouring Spiti prehistoric ammonites show the form of creatures that lived in the Tethyan Ocean all that time ago.

At first we made good progress, past where the Ladakhis had once attempted to forge a permanent mule track up the gorge, but which had now mostly collapsed or been obscured by landslips. Just beyond the junction with the Markha valley - snow eddying about us, grey clouds lowering ahead - we started to understand the problems of attempting the Tehadur (as this river is called when frozen) in a less-than-desperately cold winter. At one corner the whole of the ice on our bank had been bitten away by the torrent. For the first of many times we were forced to clamber up the mountain-side, traverse a hundred feet or so above the water, then descend to consolidated ice further upstream. Sometimes this was easy, but elsewhere would involve inching across wet or snow-covered slabs and precarious ledges. Twice we could only regain the ice by abseiling, although our Zanskari friends would have been just as happy to lower themselves down the rope, hand over hand, without any belay at all.

That night we stopped at a cave beside the river, too small for all of us to sleep inside, so we pitched our tent on the ice. It was minus 20° - cold, but not the diabolical cold we needed. The deeper the freeze, the safer the ice, even though it is then more difficult to tolerate. You cannot win. After two more days our luck ran out. The ice had been taken out completely at one bend where the near-vertical cliffs were impassable. We had no option but to turn back.

Almost immediately, the weather changed and our frigid world of whites, greys and the light brown shades of the cliffs, was bathed in sunshine. The river varied from jade green, through shades of aquamarine and turquoise, to bright sapphire and a deep cobalt blue. It was like walking into a jewelbox, but the ice was melting fast. Places where we walked only yesterday had now disappeared. We were forced on to the cliffs more and more. Nearing the end of one of these traverses, and only thirty feet above the by-now very thin fringe of ice at the water's edge, my feet skidded from beneath me on snow-covered slabs. Hurtling downwards, I thought, 'Okay. Broken legs minimum.' But I was lucky and escaped with only a sore arse from bumping down the rocks. We roped the loads down this section - along with most of the porters.

At times I walked ahead of the group, and early one morning came across two fresh sets of snow leopard tracks. Twenty minutes later, under a cliff next to the river, I found the still-warm carcass of a blue sheep, which must have been chased too close to the edge above. I could feel the leopard's eyes watching as I waited for the porters to catch up, and I was all for leaving him his kill. Our men had other ideas. In a trice they had it skinned, jointed and the meat distributed. Someone took the hide, and the head was burnt in a fire - all so quick and efficient, but tough luck on the snow leopard. Tough on us too, that we failed to make it all the way through to Zanskar. With no decent map available, we were unsure how far we had been, but imagined it was quite close.

Four years went by before I could try again. But this February I was back as guide to two others. Rumour had it that this winter in Ladakh was the coldest in living memory and, sure enough, from the time we landed in Leh until our return to Delhi we were freezing! I worried that heavy snowfalls might mean avalanches in the gorge, especially as I'd heard that last year some came down from the surrounding mountainsides and broke the ice on the river. However, it proved no problem; we never felt threatened.

Every year, hard winter or not, the ice lingers long enough for the Zanskaris to get in some trading with Leh. Traditionally this was always in yak butter, produced during the

summer in their high mountain kingdom. They would exchange a proportion for luxury items not available in Zanskar. Some of our porters had done the journey thirty times or more, often making two trips in a single winter. The market for yak butter is on the wane as cheaper alternatives arrive by lorry from India, but I am sure these people will find other reasons for undertaking the winter journey: men are not men in Zanskar if they have not braved the Tchadur.

The first European to complete the trip down the gorge was James Crowden in 1977 and, so far as I could tell, we had been the second British party in 1990. Now, word has got around and this winter no less than fifteen westerners were on the ice. We left on the first day of February under a clear blue sky, the temperature a touch below zero, though it froze harder at night. This time I felt full of confidence: the river was well and truly frozen. Among our fourteen porters, I was delighted to find my old friend Tashi, the one to have given me this mad idea in the first place, and also Dorji-the-cook, a devout and interesting man married to an oracle. His Buddhist compassion extended even to wiping my nose when I had a stinking cold.

I was amazed to find that this year large stretches of the ice were silky smooth; we could have skated them, but it varied dramatically. In places, the ice had formed when the river level was much higher, had then collapsed and re-frozen when it dropped, so that the surface became a jumble of contorted plates. Elsewhere it was more like flexi-plastic. The porters went ahead sounding the surface with their large staves and occasionally sliding their loads in front of them to spread the weight. There are no true rapids in this gorge, but from time to time relatively fast stretches of water had checked the formation of ice and we took to the rocks above the river. Mostly, we scrunched along a corrugated surface, sliding like children on the glassier bits. Sometimes the ice was so clear you could see through layers of bottle-green to the boulder-strewn river bed deep below.

One day Nawang Phuntsog plunged up to his waist in water, and only the load on his back and his staff stopped him from going under the ice. We hauled him out and I lent him some spare trousers. These men are as tough as I have ever met: each evening they would stand barefoot on the ice, in a biting wind, washing their feet in the river, and at the end of the journey stripped right off to bathe and wash their hair so that they could look smart for going into town.

They carried loads of around thirty kilos and kept up a constant pace all day, sometimes for nine or ten hours. In the evening when we weedy westerners were only just hanging in there, they would be singing and chattering as they scrambled the river banks in search of flotsam for firewood. Cooking and drying out would go on all evening. Endless bowls of salt-butter tea and *tsampa* were produced, as steaming socks and boots made a quite unforgettable stench.

Once the sun retired from the gorge the big chill attacked in earnest. We huddled around the fires in the inner recesses of the smoke-blackened caves, trying simultaneously to capture the heat yet avoid the eye-stinging smoke, and always watchful lest flying sparks should melt holes in nice new goretex jackets. The worst part was going outside to the tent, where it was so diabolically cold piss froze the instant it hit the ground. Kind-hearted Dorji brought hot-water bottles for us lesser beings, and we quickly knew no shame in using them. Mornings, as we downed porridge, eggs and coffee, we begged the sun to get a move on, watching as the porters squirreled away food and kerosene for the return journey, out of reach of wild animals.

On the fourth day we passed the spot where we'd turned back before, to discover it was nowhere near the end of the gorge. Only now were we arriving at some of the most spectacular sections. Monolithic cliffs of contorted strata rose sheer on either side, so close together our crashing footsteps produced almost instantaneous echoes. Frozen waterfalls cried out to be climbed. Twisting bends in the river created frightening whirlpools and eddies, mirroring the spinning motion, hung by their feathers from invisible thermals.

We learned to spot small groups of blue sheep or ibex high on the mountainsides from their criss-cross tracks on the snow. Thank god, the Indian government has put a ban on all hunting in the region. This may have been why our porters were initially reluctant to talk about the yeti - or *dredmo* as they call it - but one evening their tongues loosened. Ten years ago, it seems, one of these creatures came into their village at night and attacked some animals in an enclosure. The men banded together to chase it away with sticks and stones. It was, they said, larger than a man, and completely covered in long brown hair, with long claw-like nails, and a distinctly humanoid face. More recently, a dredmo had been preying on animals in a village several days' march from theirs. Men from this village shot the intruder, and the poor dredmo, unsure from where the attack was coming, scabbled in the earth trying to make a hole in which to hide. Its body was left where it lay.

On the sixth day we began to leave the gorge proper, and found ourselves in a broad valley, flanked by elegant peaks. Bizarre clouds striped the sky and snow lay several feet deep. We hugged the edge of the partly-iced river, whose bare water was steaming slightly. Green algae on exposed boulders testified to the presence of hot springs. Our porters pushed ahead now, excited at the prospect of seeing their families, but Bill, the oldest member of our party, was complaining of a painful hip joint and wanted to know if I could arrange a helicopter to take him out. I knew that one of the two 'kings' or *gyalpos* of Zanskar was expected to be in Padum for a festival at Karsha monastery, so I directed our steps there. The silhouette of the large and rambling monastery, stepped up the hillside, ranks among my most arresting Himalayan images, its size and impossible position emphasizing its mystical dominance over the wide Zanskar valley. As we tramped towards it through the snow, it never seemed to come any closer.

Next morning the Tourist Officer of Zanskar, introduced us to the gyalpo, a good-looking man in his late fifties, who promised to help us all that he could. The bureaucratic wheels went into motion and a few days later a helicopter arrived to rescue Bill. The rest of us could only afford one day's rest in Karsha if we were to be back for our flight to Delhi. The return trip down the ice beckoned in worsening weather.

By sheer good fortune only six inches of snow had fallen by the time we re-entered the gorge. The weather felt 'warm', and the cloud cover meant there was no deep freeze at nights. But the water level had begun to rise, forcing us to wade in many places where the meltwater was knee deep over the ice. The Zanskaris knew one section, a canyon with vertical rock walls on both sides, was make or break: if the ice had been swept away here, or the water was too deep over the ice, we would have to turn back. To our horror, there remained only one or two feet of mushy ice glued to the rock on one side of the river. The lightest man prodded forward with his stave, disappearing from view. After an age, we heard faint shouting and followed. I believe it was only our faith that kept that ice fringe in place.

Once through, we made a rapid escape down the heart of the gorge, tiny specks at the bottom of this amazingly ancient chasm, where time has stood still for millions of years. Clouds wreathed the upper cliffs, letting the sun glow only dimly through the high mist. How I would love to go back, but maybe that would be tempting fate too far...

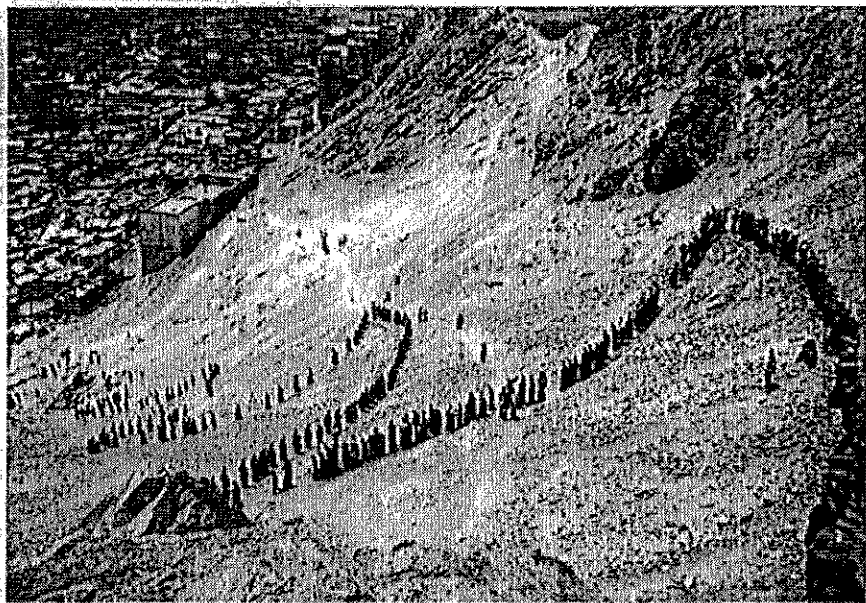
Anyone interested in making a journey like the one described here can contact Steve Berry at Himalayan Kingdoms, 20 The Mall, Bristol BS8 4DR. Phone 0117-923-7163.

PAY YOUR DUES, PLEASE!

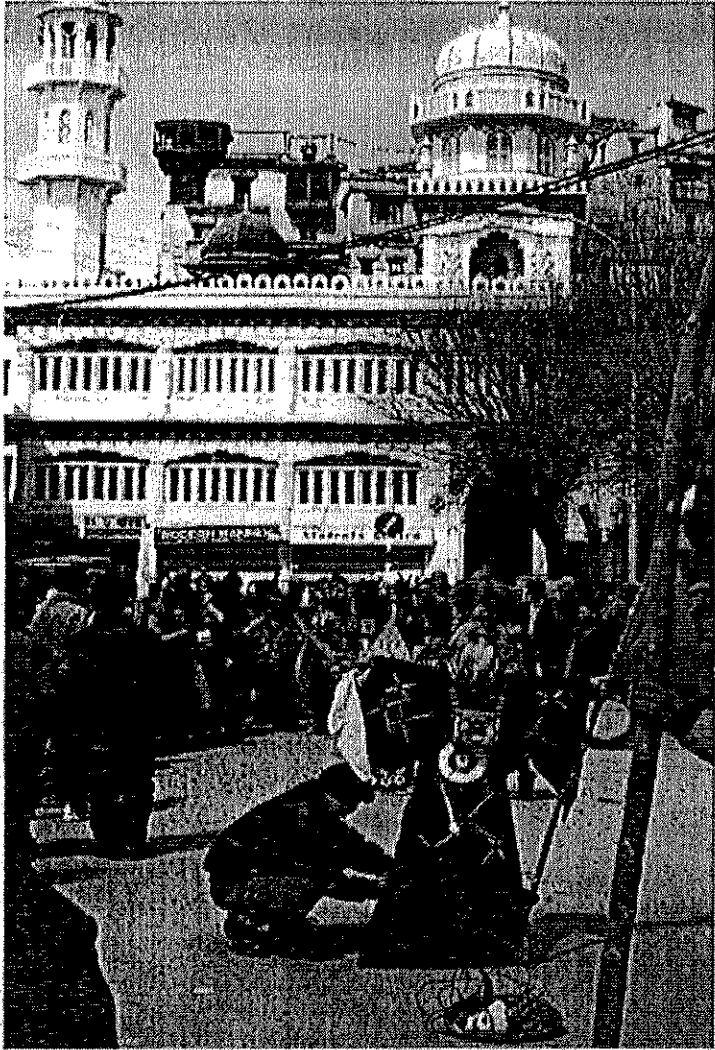
Our Association survives only on membership fees. We have no other sources of income, but do have debts to service. Doubling the frequency of the newsletter means doubling the most substantial of our operating costs. In India, local memberships are used to pay, for example, communications costs between Leh and abroad in connection with IALS activities. So: PLEASE pay your membership. For details, see inner back cover.



Chanspa Bridge after the flood. 24 May 1998. Photo: MvB.



Buddha Murnima procession, 11 May 1998. Photo: MvB



Apo Garam Singh (gtor bzlog), 5 April 1998. Photo: MvB

ZANGSKAR SKI SCHOOL

The first cross-country ski school in the Himalaya

Ben Stephenson

For the past four years I have been carrying out a PhD on the geology of the Zangskar-Kishtwar Himalaya with Mike Searle at Oxford University. During one visit to Zangskar in 1995, Mike, I and two friends walked along the frozen Zangskar river, commonly known as the Chadur, studying the structure of the rocks between Chilling and Hanumil in the gorge. We then skied out of Zangskar over the Pensi La down to Sanku. I had read of at least two other foreign groups making long ski tours through Zangskar, but it was only at this time that I fully realised the huge potential of Zangskar for cross-country skiing, and moreover the immense benefits that cross-country skis would bring to the Zangskaris during the 6-7 months that their region is blanketed with snow. (For those who have never tried cross-country skis, they enable one to travel easily over flat or undulating terrain by simply walking on the skis which allow your heels to lift. The more common 'downhill' skis keep your heels fixed to the skis and are very difficult and tiring to use on flat ground or uphill). Villagers would arduously wade waist-deep through the snow to intercept us and give us letters to deliver to Rangdum and Jildo, whilst we glided by, relatively effortlessly.

We felt privileged to have had the opportunity to travel in Zangskar on skis, but also a sense of injustice that the Zangskaris themselves didn't have the same opportunity. One might wonder whether the Zangskaris actually want skis? Certainly anyone who has been to Zangskar in winter can't have failed to notice the multitude of children who strap hosepipes to their boots and with the aid of willow sticks descend tricky slopes at break-neck speeds with an astounding amount of control. I also met Angdus from Reru who is a carpenter. He skilfully constructed his own skis from hard-wood boxes used for packing glass with plastic containers and wire for bindings. He was the talk of Lungnak when he used them to ski to Padum and back. Then there was a friend from Jildo whose wife became dangerously ill during pregnancy in February. Because of the deep snow, fellow villagers were reluctant to travel to Parkachik to raise the alarm, and only after four weeks did the helicopter arrive to evacuate him and his wife safely to Leh. With skis the journey to summon help would have been a far less daunting ordeal. These experiences inspired me to try and set up a ski school with equipment from Europe.

I discussed this idea in 1997 with my good friend Amin Zangskari of Padum, who is the 'corner stone' of the whole project. Amin was extremely encouraging and suggested many ways in which cross-country skis could help Zangskaris. Amin was the first registered guide in Ladakh. He is now the outdoor education instructor for Zangskar and the owner of a pair of skis given to him after guiding a foreign skiing expedition. He has used them to teach Zangskari youths and this had given him first hand experience of their enthusiasm and talent. I discovered Amin had set up a non-religious, non-profit-making NGO registered as a society with the Indian government (no. 2821-S) called the Zangskar Development Project Society (ZDPS), whose aim is to raise the standard of living of Zangskari people. Amin, being the founder and secretary of this Society, had assembled a group of enthusiastic volunteers representative of Lungnak, Sham, Stod and

Rangdum regions, all committed to the aims of ZDPS. This Society provided an ideal umbrella organisation for the Zangskar Ski School.

With the aid of financial sponsorship from Shell International oil company, a generous donation of ski poles from the Norwegian company SWIX and many donations of second hand ski equipment from British skiers, principally from the Eagle Ski Club, I was able to assemble 35 pairs of skis, boots and poles and air-freight them all to Delhi. Unfortunately Indian customs officials charged a not-insignificant import duty. Indian Airlines very kindly offered to transport this equipment carriage-free to Leh, whereupon it travelled by bus to Kargil and by helicopter to Padum. My father and I dropped into Padum in the beginning of April of this year with the 260 kg of equipment.

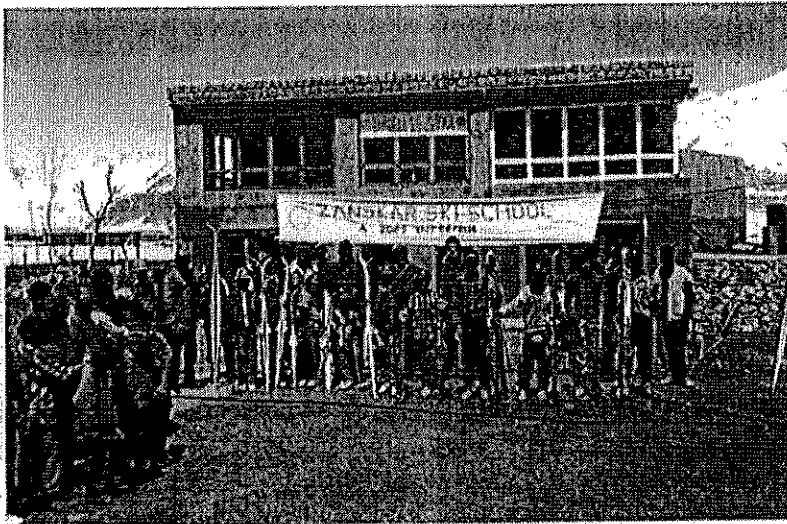
The Zangskar Ski School was officially inaugurated on Sunday 19th April by the sub-divisional magistrate for Zangskar, the occasion was recorded on video by the Zangskar Information Officer and a report was broadcast on Ladakh and Kashmir radio stations. The skis had arrived too late in the season to take full advantage of the snow, but despite this Amin and I managed to give 3-4 weeks of ski tuition to 42 girls and boys from the Padum region. On the first day we organised a hose-pipe ski competition, as a publicity exercise, and we soon learned who were the most eager to learn to ski. Lessons were given to the same group for 5 days and it wasn't long before we had compacted snow on the surrounding slopes to allow more easy turning. The balance of the Zangskaris was excellent, but it was their fearlessness that was most impressive, pointing skis straight downhill at every opportunity. Technique improved exceptionally quickly, especially given the lack of pisted slopes in Zangskar and frequently changing snow conditions.

As word spread about the ski school we received requests from villagers from Reru, Pishu, Phe and Sani to bring the skis to them, and in future years the aim is to extend ski instruction to other villages. To increase respect for the equipment, worth many thousands of pounds, it was decided that next year, a small, refundable deposit will be charged. No charge was nor will be made for their use or for the tuition. Amin also plans to draw up a 'consent form', requesting permission from the parents of the younger skiers to participate and explaining some of the potential risks of skiing.

For Zangskaris skiing can be much more than a sport. The long term potential benefits of the ski school include:

- (a) Education - Often children in Zangskar cannot get to school because of the deep snow and those that do find effective learning is severely inhibited by the sheer physical effort in getting to school.
- (b) Health - Zangskaris, especially children, often fall ill when their clothes become wet after wading through deep snow and rheumatism is becoming more common.
- (c) Communication - Villagers in Zangskar are widely scattered and there is no means of communication between them. Some villages, for example Jildo, are particularly isolated and in the event of an emergency help can be very slow to arrive.
- (d) Sport - The ski school will provide a sporting activity for the youth of Zangskar during the long and immobilising winter period, thereby promoting fitness.
- (e) Tourism - Zangskar provides superb opportunities for cross-country skiing in the winter and for ski-mountaineering in the summer. If Zangskaris were proficient at skiing they could accompany tourists as mountain guides, as in the summer.

Ideally, every young person in Zangskar would have access to cross-country skis. The Zangskar Ski School is a small but crucial initial step towards this goal. The project is still in its infancy, but it is hoped that two Zangskaris, one man and one woman, will be able to act as permanent instructors for the ski school. If anyone would like to be a self-funded instructor for a few weeks, then your help would be gratefully appreciated. Also, I am still receiving donations of ski equipment to take to Zangskar in future years, especially cross-country/Nordic/Telemark skis and boots. If you would like to know more about the ski school, future plans of the ZDPS, or you have suggestions or comments to make, then please contact either Ben Stephenson in the UK (Laburnum Cottage, Broomheath Lane, Tarvin, Chester, CH3 8HD, email: bens@earth.ox.ac.uk) or Amin Zangskari in India (c/o Iqbal Chemist, Kargil, Ladakh, J&K, INDIA, tel/fax: Padum 01983-45018).



Zangskar Ski School. Photo: Ben Stephenson

VIRTUAL LADAKH 1

Michael J. Khoo

The Web: Civilisation and its Contents?

The explosive growth of the Internet has been heralded as one of the most significant advances in social technology in the last decade. For those of us with computers, hundreds of millions of pages of information are now a mere computer key stroke away; cruising the Information Superhighway has become the newest way to get the information that you require *right now*. Unfortunately, the military technologists who originally designed ARPANET, the computer network which evolved into the Web, omitted one vital function from the Webs design: the ability to filter out spurious and fluffy (dis)information. While the Web certainly does deliver the informational goods, and in spades, it does this regardless of quality, and does nothing to tell you whether the site which is taking half an hour to load on your screen was put together by people who can write sentences of more than ten words and contains just the thing you are looking for, or is rather the self-indulgent rambling of someone who has spent the last five years bathing their neurons in a solution of Mountain Dew and pizza.

We at the IALS might think that, luckily, such problems do not necessarily apply to us; perhaps a subject as obscure as Ladakh is not overly represented on the Web, and further, what information that *does* exist there must surely be of a reasonable quality. It might therefore surprise some of our members to know that a recent (June 1998) search of the Web using either Altavista or LookSmart produced a staggering 4816 hits for <Ladakh>. Just in case Ladakh sounds like to broad a subject to go after, how about <Zanskar>? 1145 matches. <Karsha> ? 135 matches.

Obviously, no-one has the motivation, or more importantly the stamina, to plough through all this stuff (unless perhaps they have told their Professors that this is going to be one of the research projects for their thesis). The short descriptions given by the search engines beneath each URL (the address which locates each web page on the WWW) *do* help to give a clue as to the content of the website; thus, for instance, on match 2 out of 135 for <Karsha> on LookSmart we learn that Karsha is a yellow labrador whose owners are selling a German Shepherd [1]. However, at a maximum of 20 site descriptions per page, that still leaves us having to load 240 pages just in order to look at AltaVistas *list* of Ladakh websites.

Therefore, what follows is a short tour of some of the good, the bad, and the just plain ugly of the web-sites out there. Skimming through the searches, it becomes obvious that the sites break down into a few broad categories, including: NGOs, etc; travel agents, trekking companies, etc; home pages of people who have been to Ladakh and who now see fit to display their holiday snaps on the web; publishing companies and booksellers

(especially of trekking and touring guides); and bulletin boards, were people talk about Ladakh on-line.

[2] Given the number of westerners hanging around the various bars of Leh who can be seen pecking away at their laptops, one would have thought that there would have been more of a Ladakhi voice on the Web. However, the only site which might be seen to be to some degree the voice of a Ladakhi, rather than a description of Ladakhis, is the site the Yuthog Foundation for Tibetan Medicine, the project of Amchi Tsewang Smanla, late of LNP. Run from Germany, the site has details of their projects, as well an article on Traditional Tibetan Medicine in Ladakh, details of Amchis tours in Europe and the medicinal plant treks he leads in Ladakh, and a number of useful links to other sites which describe Tibetan medicine and astrology.

[3] Perhaps the best-known NGO in Ladakh is the Ladakh Project, whose parent organisation is ISEC, the International Society for Ecology and Culture. ISEC maintain a large web site outlining their philosophy and their fight to reverse the trend towards global monoculture. The philosophy of ISEC and Helena Norberg-Hodge has been widely received; LookSmart threw up 382 matches for <Norberg-Hodge>, including interviews, articles, and reviews, as well as other people's responses to ideas of ecology.

[4] SECMOL, despite its embracing of high-tech solar and computer systems at their 'greening the desert' operation outside the village of Phey, as well as the impressive desk-top publishing of Ladags Melong in Tibetan, English, and Urdu, still does not have a web site (although some its former volunteers do). However, of interest might be the web-site of Operation Dagsværk, the Danish NGO which awarded SECMOL a large grant in 1997. The site describes the philosophy of Operation Dagsværk, and projects they have supported in other countries.

[5] One reference to Karsha which does not contain any pictures of labradors is an article by Juan Li in Asian Arts magazine titled, Images of Earth and Water: The Tsa-Tsa Votive Tablets of Tibet, which describes the making and use of tsa-tsa, along with several galleries of photographs showing tsa-tsa, and their making at Karsha gompa. The article is quite long, and footnoted. From the article you can link back to Asian Arts magazine, and to their other articles.

[6] One list of URLs which everybody should bookmark are the addresses of the online editions of various Indian newspapers; there is a general index to all online Indian papers at webhead.com. Of this list, papers which are of use to Ladakh scholars for instance, as in the recent bouts of shelling around Kargil include The Hindu [7], The Hindustan Times [8], The Indian Express [9], India Today magazine [10], Frontline [11], The Madya Pradesh Chronicle [12], and the Times of India [13]. For a view from across the LOC, see Lahore-based daily Dawn [14] and Karachi's The Nation [15].

[16] And finally, if all this serious scholarly stuff lulls you into a torpor, then some light relief is called for. You could try, for instance, the Lonely Planets website, which has 'Thumbing the Himalaya, a hilarious and disturbing account of Lonely Planet author

Dani Valent's ill-fated bus trip from Ladakh to Himachal Pradesh, complete with hilarious and disturbing crayon-like drawings of packets of biscuits and rolls of toilet paper.

Well, 16 down, and a mere 4803 to go. If IALS members have a favourite web-site, which appeals to them for whatever reason, please let me know. All contributions will be gratefully acknowledged in the next issue.

- [1] <http://www.thepetchannel.com/tpc-cgi-bin/Forums/get/Responses/Dogs/17/1/6.html>
- [2] <http://www.uni-tuebingen.de/psi/yuthog/>
- [3] <http://www.gaia.org/ladakh/>
- [4] http://www.od.dk/od_english/
- [5] <http://www.asianart.com/li/tsatsa.html>
- [6] <http://webhead.com/WWWVL/India/india216.html>
- [7] <http://www.webpage.com/hindu/index.html>
- [8] <http://www.hindustantimes.com/>
- [9] <http://www.expressindia.com/>
- [10] <http://www.india-today.com/>
- [11] <http://www.the-hindu.com/fline/index.htm>
- [12] <http://www.mpchronicle.com>
- [13] <http://www.timesofindia>
- [14] <http://dawn.com/daily/today/index.htm>
- [15] <http://www.nation.com.pk/>
- [16] <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/journeys/thumb/thumb.htm>

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS

Nicola Grist, *Local Politics in the Suru Valley of Northern India*. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis. Goldsmiths College, University of London, 1998, pp. 299.

This thesis addresses the politics of the *yokma-pa*, a Shiite faction in the Suru valley in the Ladakh district of Jammu and Kashmir state, in Northern India. I use the term factions as this is one of two Shiite religious groups in the area that between them contain the majority of the population, and are normally opposed to each other.

Recently, the *yokma-pa* have apparently undergone a major political shift from the 1960s, when they had a millenarian ideology and were primarily concerned with their own local religious agenda. In the 1990s, they have taken on the role of an interest group in the context of electoral politics and the local administration. Education is a major contemporary issue in the area, and through opening their own English medium private school in Suru, they are addressing the stereotype held by the administration and in popular discourse in the area that Shiihs in Suru are backward and irrational. The thesis demonstrates the continuity between these two phases. It also shows that the *yokma-pa* constitutes a legitimate political organisation, at the same time as being a religious organisation and a faction.

This thesis makes an important contribution to the anthropology of Ladakh, since there is now a large amount of detailed ethnography on Buddhists, but very little on Muslims, who also remain relatively neglected in the ethnography of India more generally. It may also contribute to academic debates on political forms in India in the context of the current political crisis, especially the rise of Hindu communalism, since there is a dearth of contemporary studies of local politics.

Martin A. Mills, *Religious Authority and Pastoral Care in Tibetan Buddhism: The Ritual Hierarchies of Lingshed Monastery, Ladakh*. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1997.

The work comprises an ethnographic description of the religious and ritual life of the Gelukpa Order Kumbum Monastery in Lingshed Village, Ladakh, in turn the basis of an analytic discussion of the nature of religious authority in the Gelukpa Order. To do this, the work concentrates on three areas:

- i) The internal structuring of Gelukpa monasteries both as collections of hierarchically-ordered religious specialists, and as heterogenous symbolic domains, divided up into regions of comparative purity;
- ii) indigenous understandings of ritual hierarchy (*rim.pa*), sponsorship (*sbyin.bdag*) and blessing (*byin.rlabs*) in terms of the relationship between monasteries and village household estate as kin and land-holding groups; and
- iii) a critical examination of a variety of ritual forms - recitation (*chos.sil*), blessing of the fields (*bum.shor*), purification (*lhrus*), Dharma Protector rites (*bskang.gsol*), and tantric empowerments (*dzhang*) - particularly in terms of the way they symbolically

reconstruct households and cultivated territorial domains as objects of Buddhist hegemony.

The final part of the thesis is given over to an examination of the ritual relationships between Lingshed Monastery and the cult of local area gods (*yul.lha*, *gzhi.bdag*, and *sa.bdag*) in Ladakh and Tibet. Having examined the institutional structures linking these two conceptual domains, I argue that discourses about locality and chthonic embodiment are central to Tibetan understandings of political and social personhood, and therefore that the distinction between the key monastic roles of ordinary monk (*grwa.pa*) and incarnate lama (*sprul.sku*) must be understood in such terms.

Isabelle Riaboff, *Le Roi et le Moine. Figures et principes du pouvoir et de sa légitimation au Zaskar (Himalaya occidentale)*. Doctoral thesis. University of Paris X - Nanterre, 1997, pp. 401, 3 vols., photographs, maps, diagrams.

This dissertation is the result of twenty-two months of fieldwork in Zaskar in the western Himalayas (Jammu and Kashmir State, north-western India). It is a study of the connections between religion and polity in a Tibetan community. The author examines the separation between the monastic authorities and the Zaskari monarchistic structures (the King of Zangla, leader of a small kingdom, maintained his prerogatives until 1950).

After a lengthy introduction to Zaskar's geography and history, the thesis successively describes the main features of Zaskari social order, the political and religious figures, the economic foundations of the exercise of power and the ritual roles played by the King and the monks which symbolically contribute to ensure their authority and power.

In conclusion, the author considers the association between the Tibetan king and monk in comparison with the Hindu king and Brahmin as analysed by Louis Dumont. In both cases the hierarchy is linked to the distinction between status and power, and the pair is in a "hierarchical reversal" form of relationship. However, great divergences appear: on one hand, the Tibetan monasteries and hierarch's economic life is not entirely comparable to the material dependence of the Brahmins upon their clients; on the other, the Buddhist king is somehow linked with the divine sphere (indeed, the idea of a strictly secular nature of the Hindu king, asserted by Dumont, is decried by numerous Indianists).

BOOK REVIEWS

***Alchi. Ladakh's Hidden Buddhist Sanctuary The Sumtsek*, by Roger Goepper (text) and Jaroslav Poncar (photographs). With additional material from Robert Linrothe and Karl Ludwig Dasser. Serindia Publications, London 1996. Hardcover. ISBN 0 906 026 385. UKP 80. US Edition: Shambhala Publications. ISBN: 157062240X. USD 150.**

Anyone who has visited the religious complex at Alchi will undoubtedly share the view of its founder Tshultrim Ö that it is a "pile of jewels". Goepper and Poncar's latest publication focuses on the Sumtsek (three-storeys), just one of the buildings at Alchi but such a box of treasures that it must be seen as one of the most important Buddhist buildings in India. Within the Indo-Tibetan area only Gyantse Kumbum has comparable significance, due to its equally complex painting cycle, but it was completed two centuries later.

Alchi: Ladakh's Hidden Buddhist Sanctuary, appropriately, is also a gem. Goepper's text provides historical background, evidence based on recently discovered inscriptions dating the building to c. 1200 A.D. and analyses the murals with forensic accuracy. The text is illustrated with superb photographs by Poncar, who must also be credited with an extensive knowledge of the buildings at Alchi—it was he who discovered the inscriptions inside the "Great Stupa", no doubt as a result of his ability to reach nooks and crannies with his camera that even the most athletic art historian might miss!

Goepper's erudition in the field of Asian art studies means that his analysis of the stylistic and iconographic content of the Alchi murals eclipses Snellgrove and Skorupski's treatment in *The Cultural Heritage of Ladakh*. He elaborates on the eclecticism of the Alchi artists' sources, pin-pointing motifs derived from, amongst others, Sassanian, Gandharan, Kashmiri as well as local imagery. His close-focus discussion of even the smallest detail—many of which are not readily visible to the average torch-wielding visitor—brings the atmosphere of elite culture in 12-13th century Ladakh to life, emphasising the sheer sumptuousness of the aesthetic experience that the artists sought to realise. Incidentally, Goepper agrees that these artists must have been Kashmiri.

Quite apart from the ravishing appearance of the goddesses, bodhisattvas and mandalas in the Sumtsek, the royal and priestly patrons of the building are seen to enjoy textiles of great beauty, dance and music and to inhabit a locale which embraced worship of Siva and Vishnu as well as the Buddha (see discussion of Avalokitesvara's dhōti). Goepper and Poncar's work reminds us that the Sumtsek is not only an artistic tour de force, but a document which can reveal something of the social lives of medieval Ladakh. From an art historical point of view it enables us to examine depictions of deities (such as Palden Lhamo) in a period before the implementation of a more consistent Central Tibetan canon. Architecturally, Alchi is built on a flat plain unlike every later monastery in Ladakh, giving it greater affinity with the earliest religious buildings of Tibet—such as the mandalic Samye.

The question of the relationship between the built form of the Sumtsek and its painted skin is discussed by Robert Linrothe in this publication. This approach, though tentative at this stage must be emulated by anyone who seeks to do further work on the Alchi complex—or any Tibetan Buddhist building for that matter, as it will begin to answer what must be a key question for today's students of art and religion. What did the original patrons and users of such sites experience when they entered these "hidden sanctuaries"? Luckily for us, and for the future of this delicate jewel, we need not expose it to our flash-bulbs and bodies. It is no longer hidden but revealed in a publication which (hopefully?) makes the touristic invasion of the Sumtsek redundant.

Clare Harris

Ein Labyrinth von Identitäten in Nord-Pakistan. Zwischen Landbesitz, Religion und Kaschmir-Konflikt, by Martin Sökefeld. Pp 383, 8 maps, 2 illustrations. Summary in English. Culture Area Karakorum Studies vol 8, Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, Köln, 1997. ISBN 3 89654 158 8. Paperback, Price: DEM 88. Also Ph.D. dissertation, University of Tübingen, 1996.

This book is an attempt to clarify the complexity of identification processes in Gilgit. Sökefeld went to Gilgit with the view to define identity groups among the local population by analysing local discourses. Instead of clear-cut groups, however, he was to find nothing but a "labyrinth of identities" paved with contradictory and paradoxical ethnonyms and qualities attributed to the thus labelled groups. These turned to be closely linked to local conflicts and the repercussions of supra-local conflicts in Gilgit.

The basic differentiation emerging from Sökefeld material is the opposition between 'insiders' (people from Gilgit) and 'outsiders' (lowlanders or inhabitants of the surrounding valleys). This opposition provides the basis for the first conflict analysed by him, a dispute over land-ownership. A closer look, however, reveals that even this distinction tends to be fuzzy since a considerable number of 'outsiders' have become integrated (albeit to different degrees) and diverging perceptions of this process of integration exist within the 'insider' group. A second conflict conditioning local identity discourses is the intra-muslim antagonism between Sunnis, Shias and Ismailis. Though strong influences from orthodox ideologies from the lowland and the integration of the area into the Sunni-dominated state of Pakistan did play a dominant role in this conflict, further local factors like economical, electoral and intra-regional antagonisms prove to have deeply influenced it as well. Both these local and supra-local factors have deeply conditioned group identification and differentiation in Gilgit. Finally, changing attitudes of the local population towards the integration of Gilgit within Pakistan ultimately led to the emergence of a local 'nationalism', giving rise to completely new concepts of identity.

Sökefeld conclusion is that discourses on identity in Gilgit are basically contextual since they are embedded in those conflicts and reflect nothing more than positions adopted by individuals towards the conflicts. This leads the attempt to define 'Objective' identities *ad absurdum*.

This book is an excellent contribution to the understanding of plural societies. I particularly appreciated its sense for individual human concerns and its sympathetic scepticism towards theory. It is certainly worth reading for Ladakh scholars, since the social and political situation in Ladakh – though by far not as complex as in Gilgit – offers many parallels.

Thierry Dodin

The Mouths of People, The Voice of God: Buddhists and Muslims in a Frontier Community of Ladakh, by Smriti Srinivas. Pp. 219 incl. index, map, b/w photographs. Oxford University Press, Delhi 1998. ISBN 0-19-564229-5. Hardbound. IRS 425.

Drawn from a doctoral thesis written for the Delhi School of Economics, this volume focuses on a region for which social scientific data have been practically non-existent, and hence serves to remedy some significant gaps in scholarship on the region. Based on fieldwork carried out mostly in 1990-91 in two villages in Nubra the book, as its title suggests, takes its starting point in the division of the population in Muslims and Buddhists. Tegar has an almost exclusively Buddhist population, while Hundar has a mixed population.

After an introduction situating the study and the organization of the book, the author provides a brief introduction to the Ladakh region, its history and its social groups, which follows a largely religiously defined logic. Synthesizing much of the recent literature on the topic, a useful section on “Ladakh and Administration by the Indian State” offers an eight-page overview of some of the main political events in Ladakh since the Dogra conquest.

The remainder of the book deals specifically with Nubra and is divided into two parts. The first part, pp. 31-122 offers a more detailed discussion of levels of integration and exchange among individuals and households and the different levels of community this ‘creates’. The first level is the household, the secondary level “relates households to other households through diverse practices”; the tertiary level “relates a household to other households by marriage creating the category of the kindred” (47-8). This is followed by more detailed ethnographic treatment of these three levels in chapters 4-6.

Part two offers a number of case studies in an “attempt to understand how social categories are a support not only of symbols but also structures of feeling”. This section mainly deals with spirit possession and seeks to move beyond “utilitarian and economic frames” that dominate anthropological studies of exchange, to investigate ways in which linguistic and other symbolic forms of exchange between communities, households, and individuals are linked. The dramatic changes that Ladakh has been witnessing have caused a “recasting of bodies of persons and the social body”. The author argues that “new forces and the release of emotional and physical energies ... cannot be captured by looking merely at traditional ritual forms.” (180)

Srinivas' study stands out among published monographs on Ladakh for its emphatic efforts to draw on contemporary social theory to analyze the ethnographic material. She does not ignore the context in which her research takes place. The social boycott called by the LBA in 1989 was in force during her fieldwork in Nubra and rather than relegating it to 'background' of the study, Srinivas seeks to incorporate it into her analysis. In these respects, this monograph constitutes a break with the conventions of much 'classical' scholarship on Ladakh.

If there is a weakness in this book, it is a problem of balance. First, while the book's title suggests a (comparative?) study of Muslims and Buddhists, the bulk of the material in fact deals with the Buddhists of Tegar, and the case material of chapter six exclusively discusses Buddhists. The links between the theoretical discussions at the start of the book—i.e. the concept of frontier and the connections between linguistics and social theory—and the ethnographic material in part One could use a clearer presentation. As it stands, the book's final chapter's theoretical arguments are clearly connected to the spirit possessions of the preceding chapter 8, but appear to have little relation with Part One. One important factual mistake is that the social boycott imposed on the Muslim community by the LBA was lifted only at the end of 1992, not as Srinivas suggests "since 1991", despite a commitment of the LBA to that effect.

While Srinivas consistently brings post-1947 developments into her discussion and offers original theoretical considerations in this respect, her analysis nevertheless relies on the received dichotomy of 'traditional' and 'modern' society. In her discussion of exchange at the different levels of integration, for example, she effectively states that pre-1947 Ladakh was characterized by symmetrical exchange, while the modern is characterized by asymmetry. This is also reflected in her assertion that 'traditional' forms of political alliance have been "replaced entirely" by modern forms, i.e. LBA and LMA. This underestimates cross-cutting political affinities and antagonisms and the continuities between pre- and post-1947 political and social practices, especially the salience of 'traditional' hierarchy.

Mouths of People, the Voice of God offers a considerable amount of solid ethnographic material as well as interesting theoretical propositions. Despite some imbalances this is a valuable and important book. It illustrates a recent trend in scholarship on Ladakh that seeks to position itself in closer contact with contemporary anthropological and sociological theory. It provides insights into village community in a hitherto largely unresearched part of Ladakh, and represents the first monograph to be based on post-1989 research. It will be of value to all readers with an interest in contemporary Ladakh.

Martijn van Beek

Recent Research on the Himalayas, by Prem Singh Jina (ed.). Pp. 219, tables, map. New Delhi, Indus Publishers, 1997. Hardback. IRS 350.

This collection edited by Dr Jina of the Central Institute of Buddhist Studies contains 25 articles by 18 contributors. The editor has authored ten papers himself, and co-authored one. Unfortunately, most papers fail to meet even modest standards of scholarship. Many of the editor's own contributions restate the commonly known and liberally borrow from previously published works, sometimes without acknowledging the sources. Several other papers fail to make even a single original point, and the vast majority appear to be based on secondary sources, rather than any original research.

The specialist reader may find a comment or reference here or there that may prove helpful, but otherwise one is confronted again and again with statements such as: "People of Nubra are cheerful, social and hospitable in nature. They are always ready to work for the welfare and say 'Kasa O' which means 'Yes, Sir'." (Zain-Ul-Abidin, "Nubra Valley at a Glance"). In one contribution, Dr Jina provides a list of the publications of A.H. Francke. Unfortunately, we are given a list which includes journal abbreviations like ZDMG, IA, MAS-C, OO and OJ, without being given their full names.

Throughout the book, there are abundant typing and transcription errors, especially when it comes to Tibetan and other 'foreign' languages. We are told, "There is also a popular idiom in Ladakhi language, that is, 'myal-xa-gnas-ws-skyid.'" (p. 108) One of Francke's texts is listed as "Two aut stories from the ancient kingdom of western tibet (a contribution to the question of the goddigging aut)."

While one welcomes the publication of work by local scholars, this volume does little to promote knowledge about the region. At Rs. 350, a Western reader might shrug and buy the book for the few short items that offer some interesting points. But generally one wonders why such a poorly conceived and practically unedited volume is published at all. Do we really need another text that tells us that Ladakhis "always spend their time chanting and drinking butter tea with strangers despite the language barrier ... They are completely unaware about Western civilization... How nice and simple people they are! ... villagers here are harmless." (Jina, "Modernisation and Buddhism in Ladakh")

Martijn van Beek

NEW BOOK

THE GUIDE TO THE BUDDHIST MONASTERIES AND ROYAL CASTLES OF LADAKH

By

Thupstan Paldan

Our member Gyelong Thupstan Paldan has recently published a revised and expanded edition of his 1982 guidebook.

The new edition, published privately by the author, contains brief introductions to “the land and people” and a brief history of Ladakh.

Next, he provides brief descriptions of 29 monasteries and castles in the Indus Valley, Nubra, and Zangskar.

A third section, the bulk of the book, offers brief descriptions of the Buddhist pantheon, as well as mandalas, dharmapalas, historical figures, and Buddhist symbols and ritual objects.

A useful addition is a 25-page “guide to Ladakhi speaking”, consisting of short phrases and lists of vocabulary.

The booklet contains illustrations of some of the places, deities, and symbols discussed in it.

With its 97 pages, it is a slim volume that gives visitors reasonable amounts of information that should help to enrich their experience of Ladakh’s main cultural sites.

The booklet is available from bookshops in Leh bazaar.

Leh: by the author. 96 pages, plus illustrations.

NEW MAP

TREKKING MAP OF LADAKH

by

Sonam Tsetan and Henk Thoma

Based largely on the personal experiences of the authors, this new trekking map offers an overview of the major trails in the Ladakh region. It covers not only the classical trekking areas, but also the areas newly accessible to foreign visitors, such as Nubra, Panggong and Rupshu.

The map, which is nicely produced on waterproof paper, indicates important monasteries and temples, as well as information on springs. A simple line drawing, it does not show relief or isographs, limiting its usefulness for those who might wish to venture beyond the beaten track.

An accompanying booklet contains short descriptions of itineraries, information on particular difficulties, such as river crossings, potential landslides, falling rocks, etc. It also offers suggestions regarding preferred seasons for each trek.

An index of names also provides altitudes for a reasonable number of places identified on the map. Names are given in a phonetic approximation, rather than in an orthographically correct form.

The map is available from bookshops in Leh, as well as many restaurants, at a price of Rs. 175 (as of May 1998).

A simpler Ladakhi language version was distributed free with the May 1998 issue of *Ladags Melong*.

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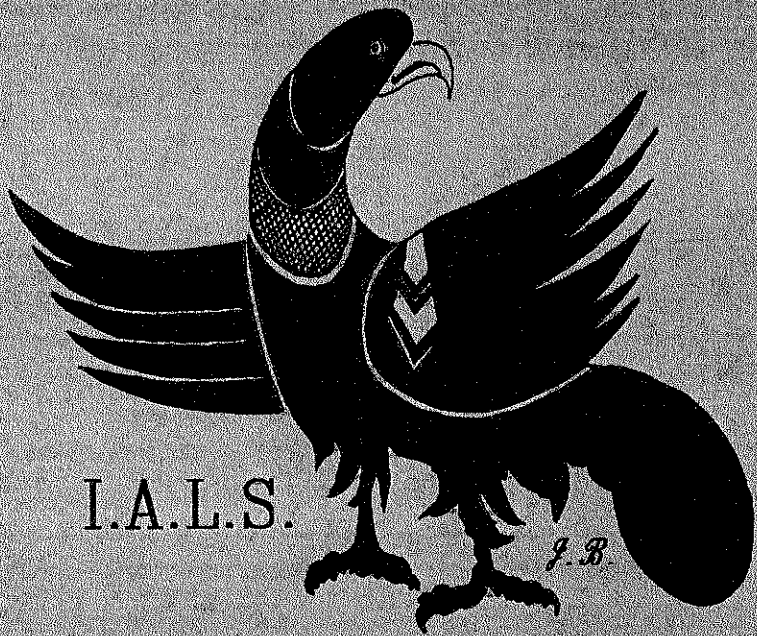
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