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16th IALS Conference of the International Association for Ladakh Studies Society and Environment in Ladakh

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History, Literature, Political Science, and Religious Studies. They have worked in equally varied corners of the Himalayan region, ranging across Pakistan, China, India, Nepal and Bhutan, as well as the Tibetan cultural and historical worlds that traverse these contemporary nation-states.

The workshop was punctuated by a keynote panel that brought together Charles Ramble (EPHE-Paris) and James Scott (Yale University) to reflect on the links between studies of the Himalaya and Asian Studies writ large. Both speakers emphasized that the scope of Himalayan Studies is defined by the questions asked, rather than any political or biophysical boundaries. The coevolution of borders and border crossings are an extremely important set of processes within the Himalayan region, and careful empirical attention to these dynamics in the Himalaya can yield important insights for broader discussions of state formation, boundary dynamics, and the ritual production of power in Asian Studies and beyond.

The conference built upon Yale University's historical connections and trajectories in the Himalayan region. These begin with personal relationships to the Kings of Nepal and Sikkim through Yale alumni on official business in the region in the 1940s and 50s, and through the development of Himalayan materials in the libraries and archives across Yale. Established in 2011, the Yale Himalaya Initiative has built upon this legacy, forging connections between faculty working across the university, the disciplines, and various subregions of the Himalaya. Yale's engagement in the Himalayan world continues to expand through contemporary partnerships between units such as the School of Forestry

and Environmental Studies, the School of Public Health, and the departments of Anthropology and Religious Studies, with colleagues and institutions in the region. Such connections have been fostered by a series of summer workshops held in the Himalaya (Dehradun, India in 2011; Kathmandu, Nepal in 2012; and Thimphu, Bhutan in 2013), which have generated a set of ongoing conversations and collaborations that complement those emerging from the Himalayan Connections workshop at Yale.

Austin Lord, Yale University
Andrew Quintman, Yale University
Sara Shneiderman, Yale University

A full conference report and the video proceedings of the event are available online at:

<http://himalayanconnections2013.commons.yale.edu/>.

For further information about the Yale Himalaya Initiative see: himalaya.yale.edu.

16th IALS Conference of the International Association for Ladakh Studies: Society and Environment in Ladakh: Historical Perspectives and Recent Dynamics

**Ruprecht Karl University
Heidelberg, Germany
April 2013**

The 16th Conference of the International Association for Ladakh Studies (IALS) was hosted by the South Asia Institute (SAI), Ruprecht Karl University in the historic university town of Heidelberg, Germany, from 17 to 20 April 2013. The IALS was established in 1987 and acts as a forum for local and international scholars of Ladakh to contact other researchers, present

their research material, and to access past papers. Information is disseminated through conferences held every two years either in Ladakh itself or across various international locations, the publication of conference proceedings, and the bi-annual journal *Ladakh Studies*. The website has a dedicated members' area where members can upload copies of their published material. For more information about the research and other activities undertaken by the IALS, please visit the organisation's website: <http://ladakhstudies.org/>.

The 16th Conference of the IALS was organised by SAI's Department of Geography, the Heidelberg Centre for Environment (HCE) and the IALS. Under the theme Society and Environment in Ladakh: Historical Perspectives and Recent Dynamics, approximately sixty scholars and scientists from across the globe presented papers discussing local history, political transitions, climate and ecological protection strategies, water and environmental management, and cultural identity and transformation in the Himalayan region. Further panels also addressed Buddhist studies and the history of art and architecture in Ladakh. A high number of Ladakhi participants attended, including representatives from local NGOs, the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council Leh, the Sonam Norbu Memorial Hospital, independent Ladakhi scholars, and a number of Ladakhi research students from the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in New Delhi and Jammu University. A total of 87 members registered for the conference, demonstrating the great desire of scholars of Ladakh to share their work and to learn more about the region. The majority of conference participants were accommodated in two neighbouring

hotels close to the old town of Heidelberg.

The inaugural session began with a welcome speech given by Professor Dr Hans Harder, Executive Director of SAI, Heidelberg. This was followed by further introductory speeches from IALS president John Bray and conference convenor Dr Juliane Dame. Day One's panels covered research in urban development, climate change and water management, political change in border regions, and livelihood strategies. Keynote speaker and head of the SAI's Department of Geography, Professor Dr Marcus Nüsser, gave the final day's presentation entitled *Landscape Changes on a Himalayan Scale*. Day One concluded with a welcome drinks reception at SAI.

Day Two's sessions focused upon Buddhist studies, the first of two historical perspectives panels, and presentations examining cultural change, and identity and belonging. The day ended with a memorable site seeing tour of the charming baroque architecture of Heidelberg's old town. One group was given a city tour of Heidelberg's old town and the castle perched on the slopes of Mount Königstuhl above the Neckar River. The tour included a cable car ride and a walk down to the Old Bridge across the Neckar (where the guide informed those present that Prague was "seventy castles" to the east). A further group trekked along the *Philosophenweg* or Philosopher's Way (apparently, Goethe's favourite place for strolling and contemplation), and through the forest to enjoy the natural landscape and scenic views of Heidelberg city and the Neckar. The group was welcomed at a local ecological micro-brewery at Klosterhof Neuburg, a former Benedictine monastery, on

the outskirts of Heidelberg for a short introduction on the process of brewing. The first group joined the second at Klosterhof of Neuburg for dinner at the brewery's restaurant.

Day Three consisted of panels discussing Ladakh's history of art and architecture, the second historical perspectives panel, and a panel discussing Ladakh's cultural and trade connections with neighbouring mountain regions. The Biennial General Meeting of the Association took place after the final session, followed by the conference banquet with South Asian cuisine on the menu. Day Four's panels examined cultural change and contemporary society, health and society, and language and culture. The panels were followed by the closing ceremony and farewell.

The IALS would like to express gratitude to the conference convenor Juliane Dame and her associates for the wonderful arrangements in Heidelberg that ensured the conference's success. We would further like to acknowledge the financial support granted by the German Research Foundation, as well as the South Asia Institute and the Heidelberg Centre for the Environment. The IALS plans to publish papers from the conference in the *Revue d'Études Tibétaines*, the *Tibet Studies* journal, and in further special edition publications currently under discussion. It has been proposed to host the Seventeenth IALS Conference in the Western Ladakhi town of Kargil in 2015.

Andrea Butcher, University of Exeter

International Conference Negotiating Ethnicity: Politics and Display of Cultural Identities in Northeast India

**Vienna, Austria
July 2013**

This international conference was a collaboration by the Institute of Social Anthropology and the Phonogrammarchiv of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, the Doctoral College, "Cultural Transfers and Cross-Contacts in the Himalayan Borderlands," the Department of South Asian, Tibetan and Buddhist Studies of the University of Vienna, and the Indian Embassy in Austria. The main objective was to bring together young as well as advanced scholars from various disciplines to examine recent transformations of cultural identities and ethnicity in relation to inter-ethnic and inter-state relations, borders, politics, agency, migration and diasporas, globalization, and tourism in Northeast India (as politically defined).

The majority of scholars travelled from India; others came from Europe, North America and Australia. H.E. Mr Ambassador Ramachandran Swaminathan, the Indian Ambassador to Austria, delivered the first welcome address emphasizing the importance of scholarship of Northeast India as well as collaborations with scholars working in the West. Other welcome addresses were given by Dr. Phil. Univ.-Doz. Michael Alam (Vice President of the Austrian Academy of Sciences), Univ.-Doz. Dr. Helmut Lukas (Vice Director, Institute for Social Anthropology, Austrian Academy of Sciences) and Prof. Martin Gaenszle (the Deputy Head of the Department of South Asian, Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, University of Vienna, and