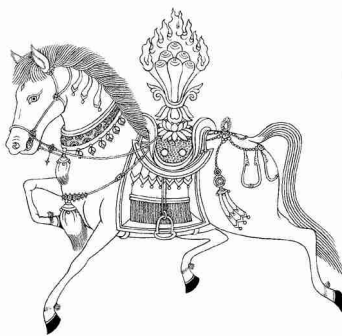


# Bon, Shangshung, and Early Tibet

## Abstracts and Biographies



School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London  
9-10 September 2011



BRITISH  
ACADEMY





**Prof. Mark Aldenderfer**  
(University of California, Merced)

### **Variation in mortuary practice in pre-Buddhist Tibet and the High Himalayas**

One of the most powerful approaches to the study of ancient religious practice is the study of mortuary patterns. The disposal of the dead is richly symbolic; artifacts that accompany the deceased, the treatment of the body, and the construction of the mortuary facility each reflect ritual practices that are themselves informative of aspects of religious belief. Mortuary practice may also reveal insights into rank, status, and privilege.

Because mortuary practices are inherently conservative, changes in them tend to signal significant changes in religious beliefs that may be created, among other things, by contact with “foreign” ideologies, revitalization movements, or competition between rival religious practitioners.

Although the study of mortuary practice on the Tibetan plateau and the High Himalayas has been dominated by textual analysis, archaeology is beginning to offer a distinctly different perspective on religious practice in the region. In this presentation, I will describe mortuary practice from far western Tibet, Upper Mustang, and the central plateau, and will examine how mortuary practice changes from ca. 500 BCE to CE 1100-1200 with an emphasis on the identification of the causes that may be implicated in their transformation.

*Mark Aldenderfer joined the University of California, Merced as the dean of the School of Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts in January, 2010. Prior to accepting the position of dean he taught at the University of Arizona, UC Santa Barbara, and Northwestern University. He received his PhD in archaeology from the Pennsylvania State University in 1977 and is best known for his comparative research into the prehistory of high altitude adaptations and for his contributions to quantitative methods in archaeology. He is likely to be the only archaeologist who has done research on the three high plateaus of the world—Tibet (since 1997), the Andes (since 1984), and Ethiopia (1973-74). The research themes he has explored over the course of his career include the origins of settled village life, human adaptation to high altitude environments, the archaeology of religion, specifically of Tibetan Buddhism, and the development of scientific visualization tools for archaeological fieldwork and heritage preservation. He has also served as editor of several journals, including Latin American Antiquity and Current Anthropology, the premier four-field journal in anthropology.*



**Dr. Henk Blezer**  
(Leiden University Institute for Area Studies)

### **Where to look, for the origins of Zhang zhung-related scripts?**

As stories go, in the good old days of Bon, larger or smaller parts of what we now call Tibet outshone the Yar lung dynasty and long-lived masters and scholars in Zhang zhung transmitted Bon lore in their own Zhang zhung languages, also in written form, such as in sMar chen and sMar chung scripts. Bon writ supposedly also existed in the sPungs chen and sPungs chung script varieties, which are said to derive, somehow, from a region called Ta zig, an area which is generally

placed far west, beyond the borders of Western Tibet. So far, the samples for the mentioned scripts that we actually have in hand are no more than a few centuries old, at most. Where did these scripts come from and when did they first evolve? Can we tell at all, or is this one of those many Bonpo enigmas that we simply cannot solve with sufficient certainty?

*Dr. Henk W.A. Blezer has been involved in academic research and publication on Indian and Tibetan Buddhism and Bon since the early nineties. He organised the Ninth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies at the IIAS, Leiden University (2000), and published the proceedings (Brill 2002, ten volumes). He has worked on Bon traditions for more than fifteen years and was Principal Investigator in the Leiden-based "The Three Pillars of Bön" research programme (2005-2010), on the formation of Bon identity in Tibet, at around the turn of the first millennium AD. He presently teaches Buddhism at Leiden University.*



**Dr. Cathy Cantwell**  
(The Oriental Institute, University of Oxford)

**Restoring the text of a Mahāyoga tantra witnessed in Early Tibet:  
an early version of the 'phags pa thabs kyi zhags pa pad ma 'phreng gi don bsud pa**

The 'Phags pa Thabs kyi zhags pa padma 'phreng gi don bsud pa (A Noble Noose of Methods, the Lotus Garland Synopsis, hereafter abbreviated as Thabs zhags), is a famous rNying ma Mahāyoga root tantra, versions of which are found in the Ancient Tantra Collection (rNying ma'i rgyud 'bum) and in the Kanjur (bka' 'gyur). It also has a commentary, witnessed in the Tenjur, and also in a Dunhuang manuscript kept in London (IOL Tib J 331). Critically editing the root text, with reference to some twenty-one editions of the text (including the root text lemmata within the commentary editions), has brought to light a rather startling discovery. All the principal transmitted editions of the root text, including the printed Kanjur editions and other Kanjur texts of the Tshal pa line, and the influential Ancient Tantra Collection versions of Dergé (sDe dge) and of the Bhutanese manuscripts, have inherited shared indicative scribal corruptions. These corruptions are also shared by the Dunhuang manuscript, so they must have entered the tradition by the time the Dunhuang text was copied, perhaps in the tenth century. However, the errors are avoided both in the South Central Ancient Tantra Collection manuscripts, and also in three local Kanjur manuscripts. With the help of these texts, we can now restore the archetype (the ancestor of all extant versions) for much of the text.

*Dr. Cathy Cantwell is a Research Officer and a Member of the Buddhist Studies Unit at the Oriental Institute, University of Oxford. She is currently working on two AHRC funded research projects on Tibetan ritual and meditative texts. Recent publications have included, Early Tibetan Documents on Phur pa from Dunhuang (2008), and The Kīlaya Nirvāṇa Tantra and the Vajra Wrath Tantra: two texts from the Ancient Tantra Collection (2007), both written jointly with Robert Mayer, and published by The Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, Vienna. Cathy is also author of Buddhism: The Basics (2009), London, Routledge.*



**Dr. Brandon Dotson**

(Institut für Indologie und Tibetologie, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München)

### **Imagining orality in early Tibetan ritual texts**

In traditional Tibetan modes of knowledge production and transmission, orality plays a key element. Oral learning and oral transmission have long infused written expression, such that one might refer to certain genres of Tibetan writing as oral literature in the same sense that many refer to the Christian Gospels as oral literature. As a cover term, oral literature can refer to compositions as disparate as the Iliad or a nursery rhyme. Sometimes, though, it remains frustratingly vague, as when it is used to posit a hypothetical prehistory of a text or of a textual tradition. With only the textual artefact in our hands, we are left to imagine (based, if we're lucky, on living traditions as in the case of the chanting of the Vedas) the earlier transmission of tradition. In this context, Tibetologists have variously imagined an epic or bardic origin for the Old Tibetan Chronicle and its songs, and an ecstatic or oracular basis for the written prognoses we find in Old Tibetan divination texts. With an eye to illuminating the "pool of tradition" (to use Lauri Honko's term) from which the Old Tibetan Chronicle draws and of which it is a part, I will examine the overlapping content and register of songs and divination prognoses, and consider the "performance notes" found in ritual texts in order to determine what these tell us about modes of textual production, about the rituals themselves, and about oral tradition in early Tibet.

*Brandon Dotson was Senior Lecturer in Tibetan at SOAS from 2006–2008. He is now a Visiting Researcher at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich, where he leads the research project "Kingship and Religion in Tibet," sponsored by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. He is author of *The Old Tibetan Annals: An Annotated Translation of Tibet's First History* (Vienna: VÖAW, 2009), and several articles on history, narrative, and ritual in early Tibet. Dotson is currently preparing a translation and study of the Old Tibetan Chronicle.*



**Dmitry Ermakov**  
(Oxford University)

### **Bon as a multifaceted phenomenon – looking beyond Tibet to the cultural and religious traditions of Eurasia**

Bon is a complex phenomenon which was once spread far beyond Tibet, but do its origins lie beyond the Tibetan Plateau? I shall examine this by looking at certain cultural phenomena.

Firstly, I would argue there are four types of Bon: *gdod ma'i bon*, *g.yung drung bon*, *bon gsar ma* and what I have dubbed Mixed Bon, which comprises a conglomeration of the first three types along with various elements from other religions.

Secondly, I take a closer look at the Deer Cult which was common throughout Eurasia from Palaeolithic times until today using archaeological evidence such as Deer Stones as well as myths and ritual costumes from France, the Caucasus, South Siberia, Mongolia, Amdo and West Tibet to demonstrate the importance of the Sky Deer. I then relate this to the Bon culture of Zhang Zhung, in particular to the *srang* from a *g.yang 'gug* ritual.

Having established possible routes this cross-pollination of ideas and cultural mores may have taken to and from Tibet, I move onto the question of whether Bon mdo sngags gsems gsum may also have originated outside Tibet. In view of the lack of textual evidence, I base my argument on concrete archaeological finds, namely rock carvings of stupas/mchod rten found in Gilgit and Ladakh. I then compare these with the depictions of Bonpo mchod rten described in gZi brjid. In the light of the breadth and depth of the Bon tradition, a multi-disciplinarian approach is needed to better understand this multifaceted phenomenon and its multiple origins.

*Dmitry Ermakov, b. 1967, Leningrad, USSR, began studying music at the age of six. Two years later he enrolled for art and archaeology classes with B. Piotrovsky (Director, Hermitage Museum) and G. Mezentzeva (Prof. Archaeology, Kiev University), going on to participate in archaeological digs in Ukraine and Khakassia. He has studied Tibetan Buddhism since 1989, Bon since 1995, and began fieldwork on Bø Murgel in Buryatia, 1990. Author of a monograph Bø and Bön, he has worked on over 50 edited transcripts of teachings by Lopon Tenzin Namdak, as well as Masters of the Zhang Zhung Nyengyud, and The Heart Essence of the Khandro. Research Assistant to Charles Ramble, Oxford University (2009-10).*



**Prof. Shung Karma Gyaltsen**  
(Institute of Tibetan Medicine & Astrology of Ngari Prefecture)

ཞང་ཞུང་སྐབས་ཀྱི་མཁར་རྫོང་དོན་འཛིན་བྱེད་སྣང་ས་སྐོར་གྱི་ཐོག་མའི་ཞིབ་འཇུག

**(Introducing the castles of Shangshung)**

This presentation will have four sections: 1) the need to research and identify castles. Comments on the names and characteristics of castles as they occur in edicts, etc. 3) a few remarks on castles which can be identified today. 4) Although some cannot be identified today, we are able to know clearly that that they are castles form the Shangshung period.

ཉམ་ཁར་རྫོང་ཁག་གི་དོན་འཛིན་དང་ཞིབ་འཇུག་བྱེད་དགོས་པའི་དགོས་པ།    ༢ཡིག་ཚགས་སུ་འཁོད་པའི་མཁར་རྫོང་མིང་དང་བྱུང་ཚེས་རོབ་ཙམ་གླིང་ག།  
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 སྟབ་པ་ཁག་ཅིག    ༥མཇུག་བསྟུན་གཏམ།

*Born in the year 1974, Shung Karma Gyaltsen became a disciple of Gelong Tenzin Wangdrak Rinpoche in 1984, from that year until today he has edited historical documents of Ngari. In 1994 these studies on Ngari history culminated in the book Mnga' ris lo rgyus 'brel gtam rin chen phreng ba (The precious garland explaining Ngari history). In 2003 he was junior editor of Shangshung cultural books an magazines. In 2005 he became secretary of the committee on the promotion of Shangshung culture. In 2009 he acquired the title of junior 'bum-rams of the Ngari Medical and Astrological College.*

༡༩༧༢ལོར་སྐྱེས།    ༡༩༩༤ལོ་ནས་དགེ་སློང་བསྟན་འཛིན་དབང་གྲགས་རིན་པོ་ཆའི་དགེ་ལྷན་གྱི་ལྷན་འགྲུས།    ༡༩༩༤ལོ་ནས་ད་ལྟའི་བར་མངའ་རིས་ལོ་ཐོ་རྩོམ་སྒྲིག་  
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**Dr. Amy Heller**

(Centre de recherche sur les civilisations de l'Asie orientale, CNRS Paris)

### **On silver and gold vessels from Tibet and their inscriptions**

In the past twenty years, systematic archeological investigations of Tibetan tombs and chance finds have yielded a range of jewelry and vessels in gold and silver, both cast and repoussé, as well as textiles with similar design motifs, which reflect the dynamics of multicultural exchange during the expansion of the Tibetan Empire (7th- mid-9th century) along the Silk Routes. We will study here examples of such jewelry and vessels, some of which bear inscriptions in Tibetan language which describe their use in funerary or ritual context. These objects are concrete proof of Tibetan participation in the flourishing international commerce, indicating as well their esteem of Sogdian craftsmen skilled in metalwork and weaving. Many artefacts reflect the importance accorded to horses due to their active role in ancient Tibetan funerary customs, as principal guide to the deceased in the afterlife conceived on a terrestrial model of a land of joy. Coffin panels painted to show the paradise of this afterlife depict scenes of celebration of banquets by people wearing jewelry who use cups, rhytons, ewers, platters as well as archers mounted on horses in full regalia performing of ritual hunt of the yak and deer.

*Dr. Amy Heller, born in 1951 in New York, studied art history at Barnard College, Columbia University. She studied Tibetan language and civilisation at Langues Orientales in Paris, specialized in Tibetan history and philology at the École Pratique des Hautes Etudes, and also studied Tibetan religions. Visiting Professor at University of Roma 2006/2008, and Centre for Tibetan Studies, Sichuan University, Chengdu 2007-2011. Swiss citizen since 1980, she supervised the Swiss government conservation project in Lhasa 2004-2006 to renovate the roof chapel of the Ramoche temple. Author of Tibetan Art (1999), Early Himalayan Art (2008) and Hidden Treasures of the Himalayas, Tibetan Manuscripts, paintings and sculptures from Dolpo (2009).*



**Prof. Marc des Jardins**

(Concordia University)

### **The history of the Ye shes Monastery and the survival of Bon in Eastern Tibet**

Throughout its long period of history, the Bonpos suffered from increasing pressures. Many of their temples and monasteries were seized and converted to suit the new belief system of the Buddhist Establishment. Restrictions placed on their faith and practices, once universal in the land, were at times severe enough to force some communities to convert or to go into exile. However, there are still many Bonpos left in the Tibetan world. They are found, not surprisingly, in remote areas or along the Sino-Tibetan borderlands where the authority of the Lhasa (pre-1950s) or the Chinese governments were weak. Today, these communities face the same challenges as the rest of Tibetan society. However, many Bonpos remain subject to alienation by the surrounding Buddhist society. Despite continued criticism, these groups have survived with varying degrees of success, and with a wide range of strategies.

The goal of this research is to investigate these strategies, which enabled the Bonpos to keep practicing their religion; to retain their existence as a religious minority; preserve their unique ethnic identity, and to show their contributions to local society and to the greater area of Eastern Tibet/ South-western China. This paper focuses on the Bonpos of Nyag rong (xinlong), a monastic community that grew in importance in the Kham area after the destruction of the sMan ri Monastic University in Central Tibet in the 1950s.

Moreover, the particular transmission of learning in Nyag rong differs with other regions in that it transmits ritual and meditative practices associated with the New Bon (bon gsar ma) movement whereas the others are prone to the more orthodox transmission of the Old form of Bon (bon rnying ma). Despite the New Bon factor, this community is ancient and dates from the ninth century. It exists in an area, which over time became overwhelmingly Buddhist. There are over forty Buddhist for eight Bonpos establishments in Nyag rong.

The study of the Bonpo-Buddhist dynamics will provide important keys to understand the mechanism of social relevance of minority groups, which coexist in a traditional society that has carried on strong antipathy against its own religious minority groups.

*Dr. J.F. Marc des Jardins is an Associate Professor in the Department of Religion at Concordia University, Montreal. He is a specialist on Chinese and Tibetan religions. He completed his PhD in East Asian Studies at McGill University in 2002 and pursued Post-Doctoral Research at the Institute of Asian Research at the University of British Columbia. He has been conducting field-based research in the Tibetan territories of China since 1991 and is one of the few specialists in North America on the Bon religion of Tibet. He is a founding member and the Secretary-Treasurer of the International Association for Research on Bon. He has published and given conferences on Esoteric Buddhism and Tibetan religions in Europe, Asia and North America. He is currently engaged in several long term research projects relating to Tibetan Bon religion, society, history and culture along the Sino-Tibetan borderlands.*



Keynote

**Prof. Samten Karmay**

(Centre de recherche sur les civilisations de l'Asie orientale, CNRS Paris)

### **Queen of the World and her twenty-seven daughters**

In one of the tantric rituals of the Bon tradition in Tibet Srid pa rgyal mo, 'Queen of the world' occupies an important position as a religious guardian. She belongs to the class of the dbal goddesses who are often mentioned in the texts translated by David L. Snellgrove (The Nine Ways of Bon, 1967). There are many myths about her association with a number of deities as her partners. The ritual text that describes and explains her iconographic significance is written in an archaic language giving the impression that it is of ancient origin. The Bon tradition presents it as a treasure text (gter ma) and claims it to belong to a period much earlier than the 11th century A.D. However, a recent finding of ancient Bon manuscripts from a ruined Buddhist stupa in southern Tibet sheds light on the origin of the ritual text. In my view, it highlights the kind of material that served as source for composing the treasure text. An attempt will be made to present a comparative analysis between the two texts thereby putting the gter ma text into a proper historical context. The goddess



and the first nine of her 27 daughters were often performed as 'cham dance in monasteries in Tibet to entertain public spectators.

*Samten Karmay was born in 1936 in eastern Tibet. He received a Geshe degree from the Bonpo monastery of Kyangthang in 1955, and also studied at Drepung monastery. In 1959 he and his family fled to India. He came to SOAS in 1961 at the invitation of David Snellgrove under the auspices of a Rockefeller Foundation grant, and holds an MPhil and PhD from SOAS. In 1980 he moved to France, where he worked closely with Rolf Stein. He became a researcher at the CNRS from which he has received a Silver Medal for his contribution to Human Sciences. He was President of the International Association of Tibetan Studies between 1995 and 2000.*



**Dr. Dan Martin**  
(Tibetan Classics Project)

### **Knowing Zhang-zhung Language: The Very Idea**

In my experience, on those occasions when the subject of Zhang-zhung language has come up in conversation, it almost invariably turns toward the question of whether or not Zhang-zhung is a dead language, or, as it may also be put, 'Does anybody *know* Zhang-zhung today?' Of course in a sense, if anyone anywhere is making any use of a language, or attempts however feebly to learn it, it cannot be regarded as entirely dead. The question we will consider is the following related, but still quite different one, 'Is it possible for us today to know the Zhang-zhung language that existed in the centuries surrounding the 8th-century fall of the western Tibetan kingdom of Zhang-zhung?' The answer to this question will lead us to consider the early evidence of the language along with problems in manuscript transmission, lexical resources, Tibeto-Burman comparisons and so on, ending in a Powerpoint-assisted guided walk through a passage in the *Innermost Treasury of Existence (Srid-pa'i Mdzod-phug)* to illustrate the range of obstacles that rise up to confront us in our quest. I hope we will be able to end on a note of optimism.

*Dan Martin is a teacher, researcher and translator engaged with literary, cultural and historical issues associated with Tibet, Tibetan medicine, Buddhism and Bon. Although he would rather retire into the 12th century, he finds himself in the 21st hard at work as a literary translator for the Tibetan Classics series.*



**Dr. Robert Mayer**  
(The Oriental Institute, University of Oxford)

### **The Ka ba nag po, the earliest Bon Phur pa tantra**

One of the earliest Bon Phur pa texts is the Ka ba nag po, a tantra revealed by the great tertön Khu tsha Zla 'od (b. 1024). He was an important figure in 11th century Bon, and was represented in some later literature as simultaneously a Buddhist tertön and a previous incarnation of the great Buddhist master mKhyen brtse dbang po (1820–1892).

The Ka ba nag po is in several ways very similar to the Nyingma phur pa literature of its time, despite the fact that its unmistakable Bon identity is emphasised at every turn. In this paper we try to analyse how the Ka ba nag po and some of its early Nyingma counterparts negotiated issues of eclecticism and purity: can we learn anything from the different ways in which they combined and represented Indic and non-Indic motifs?

*Rob Mayer has been Research Officer in the Faculty of Oriental Studies, Oxford University, since 2002. Before that, he was Professor of Tibetology at Humboldt University, Berlin, and before that, Lecturer in Religious Studies at the University of Wales. His research interests include the rNying ma tantric tradition.*



Video address

**H.E. Tenzin Namdak**  
(Triten Norbutse Monastery)

### **Reflections on half a century of Bon studies**

*Born in the Kham province of eastern Tibet, Tenzin Namdak studied at Yungdrung Ling and Menri monasteries, earning his Geshe degree in 1953. He began teaching at Menri immediately after completing his studies. Following the Lhasa uprising, in 1960 he fled to Nepal. There he met David Snellgrove, who invited him to SOAS under the auspices of a Rockefeller Foundation grant. Tenzin Namdak remained in England until 1964. He next moved to India, where he spent many years helping to establish and maintain the Bonpo community in Dolanji. He assisted in the publication of many Bonpo scriptures and was instrumental in founding two Bonpo seminaries. He has subsequently written, traveled and taught widely. He is a tireless leader of the Bon community as a living religious tradition.*



Keynote

**Prof. Namkhai Norbu**  
(Università di Napoli L'Orientale and International Shang Shung Institute)

### **The light of Kailash: Tibet and Zhang Zhung**

This lecture will introduce the second volume of Professor Norbu's magisterial study, 'The light of Kailash'. This second volume entitled "The History of the Immediate Period: Tibet and Zhang Zhung", is focused upon human generations, the Bonpo lineages, the spread of Bon during the lifetimes of the first Tibetan monarchs, the dynasties, written language, and civilisation of ancient Tibet, as well as upon the reigns of specific kings, the Bon religion, and Bonpo religious figures (Dran-pa Nam-mkha' in particular) of Zhang Zhung during this period.

*Namkhai Norbu was born in eastern Tibet in 1938. He studied at Derge Gonchen monastery and was the student of many prominent lamas from diverse traditions. He taught Tibetan in China in the 1950s. In the course of an extensive pilgrimage Namkhai Norbu was in Sikkim at the time of the 1959 Lhasa uprising. In 1960 he went to Italy at the invitation of Giuseppe Tucci under the auspices of a Rockefeller Foundation grant. He was Professor of Tibetan and Mongolian Language and Literature from 1964 to 1992 at the Naples Eastern University. In 1976 Namkhai Norbu began to give Dzogchen instruction in the West. He quickly became a respected spiritual authority, and has created centers for the study of Dzogchen around the world. He has inspired the creation of the International Shangshung Institute and most recently the London Shangshung Institute for Tibetan Studies.*



**Prof. Charles Ramble**  
(École Pratique des Hautes Études)  
*and*  
**Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung**  
(Triten Norbutse Monastery)

### **The work of the Kalpa group in Bon studies**

This presentation will discuss the work of the Kalpa Group to support Bon communities and Bon studies. The Kalpa group's activities include supporting the Bon monastic tradition, supporting traditional Bon communities, the publication of books and production of films about Bon, and the scientific investigation of Bon yogic techniques. This presentation will particularly focus on collaborations between the Kalpa group and Oxford University on the 'Oxford Bon Project' and will consider future endeavours which the Kalpa group plans.

*Charles Ramble is a professor at the École Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris. He is director of the Oxford Bon Project, and president of the International Association for Tibetan Studies. He was Lecturer in Tibetan and Himalayan Studies at the Oriental Institute, Oxford University. He convened the 10th seminar of IATS in 2003 at Oxford. Dr. Ramble spent over 15 years in Nepal and Tibet, and has published four books related to his main research interests: pilgrimage, the Bon religion, Himalayan civil religion and social history.*

*Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung Rinpoche is the abbot of Triten Norbutse Monastery in Kathmandu, Nepal, one of the two main Bon monasteries outside of Tibet. He was born in 1969 in Dhorpatan, a remote area of western Nepal. At age 11 he began his studies at Tashi Gegye Thaten Ling monastery, later transferring to Menri Monastery in Dolanji. For 13 years to come, Khenpo Rinpoche studied the complete Bon philosophical system of sutra, tantra and dzogchen. From 1989 through 1992 he served as accountant, treasurer, and then president of the school, and for a time he also served as the monastery's ritual leader and discipline master. In 1994, having successfully completed the traditional 13-year course of study he was awarded the geshe degree. In 1996 he was appointed principal teacher of Triten Norbutse Monastery. In 2001, he became abbot of Triten Norbutse Monastery.*



**Prof. Donatella Rossi**  
(Università di Roma La Sapienza)

**Visions, prophecies, and dreams.**  
**A perspective from some Bonpo texts belonging to the IsIAO Tucci Collection**

As it is known, divination has always represented a core element in the spiritual and mundane life of Tibet in general, and of the Bonpo tradition in particular. In the seventy-eight volumes that form the Bonpo textual collection of the IsIAO Tucci Fund (See E. De Rossi Filibeck, *Catalogue of the Tucci Tibetan Fund in the Library of IsIAO*, Vol. 2, IsIAO, Rome, 2003, pp. 260-309) we can discover several texts dealing with visions, prophecies, advices, essential oral instructions, dreams, and so on, transmitted by teachers and mkha' 'gro mas. This is particularly the case for Volume 514, which contains forty-six of such texts. The present contribution will analitically introduce four short texts - the Bla ma'i lung bstan gyis gdams pa (514,10), which contains a prophecy about religion; the Kye ma 'Od mtsho'i gdams pa (514,12); the mKha' 'gro'i lung bstan (515,19); and the gSal byed byang bu (514,44), which is related to the interpretation of dreams – with the aim of providing inspiration for further research work on the topic, and for a more dynamic interest in the wealth of knowledge that the still inedited Tucci Bonpo Collection embodies.

*Donatella Rossi holds a PhD in History of Religions and Tibetology from the University of Oslo. She is Associate Professor at the Italian Institute of Oriental Studies, Sapienza University of Rome, where she teaches BA and MA courses on religions and philosophies of Eastern Asia, and Tibetan Language and Literature. Her main research interests are focused on the Bon tradition.*



**Prof. Geoffrey Samuel**  
(Cardiff University)

**Revisiting the problem of Bon identity: Bon priests and ritual practitioners in the Himalayas**

Bon studies in the West took off in the 1960s through the work of David Snellgrove, Samten Karmay and Per Kvaerne, and by now has become a significant sub-field within Tibetan studies. Its central focus has been on the community of lay people and religious practitioners which today identifies itself as Bon-po, and on the monasteries, lamas, religious practices and texts associated with it (g.Yung drung Bon), and to a lesser degree on pre- or non-Buddhist elements of early societies on the Tibetan plateau, particularly Zhang-zhung. Meanwhile, anthropologists working among Buddhist communities in the Himalayas (Tamang, Khumbo, Bhutan) have described a substantial range of religious practices and practitioners termed Bon, Lha Bon, etc, with little apparent connection to the practices and identity of the contemporary Bon-po community among the Tibetans. These studies, which focus on relationships to local deities, have been largely ignored by scholars of Bon religion. In this paper, I survey these practices, and ask how they relate them to the other senses in which Bon is used within Tibetan societies, and what implications they have for Bon studies as a whole.

*Geoffrey Samuel is a Professor at Cardiff University, Wales, UK, where he directs the Body, Health and Religion (BAHAR) Research Group. His academic career has been in social anthropology and religious studies, and his books include Mind, Body and Culture (1990), Civilized Shamans:*

*Buddhism in Tibetan Societies (1993), Tantric Revisionings (2005) and The Origins of Yoga and Tantra (2008). He is currently working on material on Tibetan yogic health practices and Tibetan medicine, and on a research project on young Bangladeshis, Islam, marriage and the family.*



**Dr. Fabian Sanders**

(Università Ca' Foscari Venezia and International Shang Shung Institute)

**Ancient rituals in a twilight world,  
on the presence of Bon Priests in Monpa areas of Arunachal Pradesh**

This presentation focuses on some aspects of religious and ritual life among the Monpa people and some of its many sub-tribes that live in the western districts of Arunachal Pradesh in India. Until very recently this area, especially the more remote valleys south of the Se pass, has been mostly cut off from any contact with alien disturbing influences, like missionaries and mass media. Even the spread of Buddhism, which has been well established in the Tawang area for many centuries, is only marginally and intermittently present here. The isolated Buddhist 'village priests' live side by side with other ritual performers who call themselves bonpo. Both share a mostly conflictual relation, apparently due to the practice of animal sacrifice, with a third group of religious operators, which we might call shamanistic. In four expeditions to this area, over a period of eight years, we have been able to observe the Lamas, Oracles, Bonpos, Spirit Mediums and some of their rituals, and we have had a glimpse on the complexities of the religious life in these villages, the hierarchies, mutual influences and changing relations.

*Fabian Sanders teaches Tibetan language and literature at the Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia and Tibetan language and translation courses for the International Shang Shung Institute. Alongside the research on and translation of classical Tibetan texts he has participated in a number of field research projects with a multidisciplinary team of the Università Ca' Foscari.*



**Dr. Sam van Schaik**

(International Dunhuang Project, The British Library)

**New sources on 'Bon' and 'Chos' in the 9th-10th centuries**

What is the relationship between the Bon tradition that flourished in Tibet from the eleventh century onwards and the pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet? This question has been addressed by traditional and modern scholars, but remains a source of dispute. Some have argued that it is anachronistic to refer to these pre-Buddhist religious practices as Bon. One problem is that it is not always clear what the term 'bon' refers to in the earliest sources. Some have seen it as a reference to a specific kind of ritual, others to a religious movement. In this paper I introduce some early manuscript sources from the Dunhuang cave which refer to Tibetan non-Buddhist rituals and beliefs. I look at some of the specific uses for the term 'bon' in these sources and argue that this must be understood in conjunction with the term 'chos'. In the early sources, 'chos' does not usually signify Buddhism per se, but any system of belief and practice. I suggest that 'bon' signified specific forms of ritual

practice, particularly associated with illness, death and funerals, with the related terms ‘lha bon’ and ‘mo bon’ referring to the supplication of deities and the practice of divination, respectively. Furthermore, the whole complex of non-Buddhist Tibetan rituals and beliefs (including ‘bon’) was considered to be one form of ‘chos’.

*Sam van Schaik is a Senior Researcher for the International Dunhuang Project (IDP) at the British Library. His current research project, sponsored by the British Academy, is on the Tibetan Zen texts. Recent publications include a volume co-edited with Matthew Kapstein entitled Aspects of Esoteric Buddhism at Dunhuang (Brill, 2009), and Tibet: A History (Yale University Press, 2011).*



**Prof. Tsering Thar**  
(Central University for Nationalities)

### **King Drigum Tsanpo’s death and its historical significance**

According to historical resources in Buddhism in Tibet, King Drigum Tsanpo was killed by Lo ngam, a his minister, because the king challenged him arrogantly, but, historical resources in Bonpo tradition provides a different version for reason of the killing: it was caused by introduction of Buddhism in Tibet in the very first time. The resources in both Buddhist and Bonpo traditions are appeared in later time, even several hundred of years later, but obviously both of them have based on oral history so that we could not still ignore their historical value. This paper will have a comparative study on oral records on Drigum tsanpo in both Buddhist and Bonpo traditions, try to understand the reason of Lu ngam’s killing and to date again introduction of Buddhism in Tibet.

*Tsering Thar, Professor/Dean of College for Tibetan Studies, Central University for Nationalities, the Board Member of IATS and Vice-President of IABR-AIRB (International Association of Bon Research).*



**Dr. Ronit Yoeli-Tlalim**  
(Goldsmiths, University of London)

### **Between medicine and ritual: Tibetan 'medical rituals' from Dunhuang**

In the Tibetan medical manuscripts from Dunhuang we find methods of treatment both of the type that we might call ‘medical’ and of the type which we might call ‘ritualistic’. In this paper I will discuss a few examples of ‘ritualistic treatments’ as found in the Tibetan medical manuscripts from Dunhuang. The questions which this paper will address are: How can we define the differences between ‘medical treatment’ and ‘medical ritual’? Can these ‘medical rituals’ help us to learn anything about early Tibetan rituals?

*Ronit Yoeli-Tlalim (History, Goldsmiths) has been working on the history of Tibetan medicine and more generally on the transmissions of knowledge along the Silk Road. Her publications include: (co-editor with Anna Akasoy and Charles Burnett), Islam and Tibet: Interactions along the Musk*

*Routes* (Ashgate, 2011); "On Urine Analysis and Tibetan Medicine's Connections with the West" In: Sienna Craig et al. (eds), *Studies of Medical Pluralism in Tibetan History and Society*, Halle: International Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies GmbH (2011), pp. 195-211; "Tibetan 'Wind' and 'Wind' Illnesses: Towards a Multicultural Approach to Health and Illness," in *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* vol. 41 (2010) 318-324.



**Prof. Zhaba**  
(Central University for Nationalities)

### **Study on stages of myth in Bon tradition**

Ancestors of the Tibetan race worshipped birds at the earliest, probably it was a close attention to their special skill of fly, they noticed that birds are different with the others, they are able to fly in sky freely, so that ancients paid more attention to birds' special skill and life courses. As its result, they noticed that different birds are bred from eggs, they were originated from eggs, according to this discovery farther, they believed that everything comes from egg, and the myth about also earth and every things on it came from egg was created.

#### 2. The bird worship and Bonpo myth

With coming into being of the metempsychosis, the egg became the intermedia from a life to another in their knowledge, this kind of imagination was able to connect logically deities and birds, deities and human beings, farther more, a mode of thinking in which deity creates egg, and egg creates bird; and deity creates egg and egg creates human being was appeared.

#### 3. The deity worship and Bonpo myth

When Bonpo myth was evolved into the stage of personification, the deities in heroism, functionalization and genealogy are appeared in Bonpo myth.

*Zhaba is a Professor at Central University for Nationalities.*

