

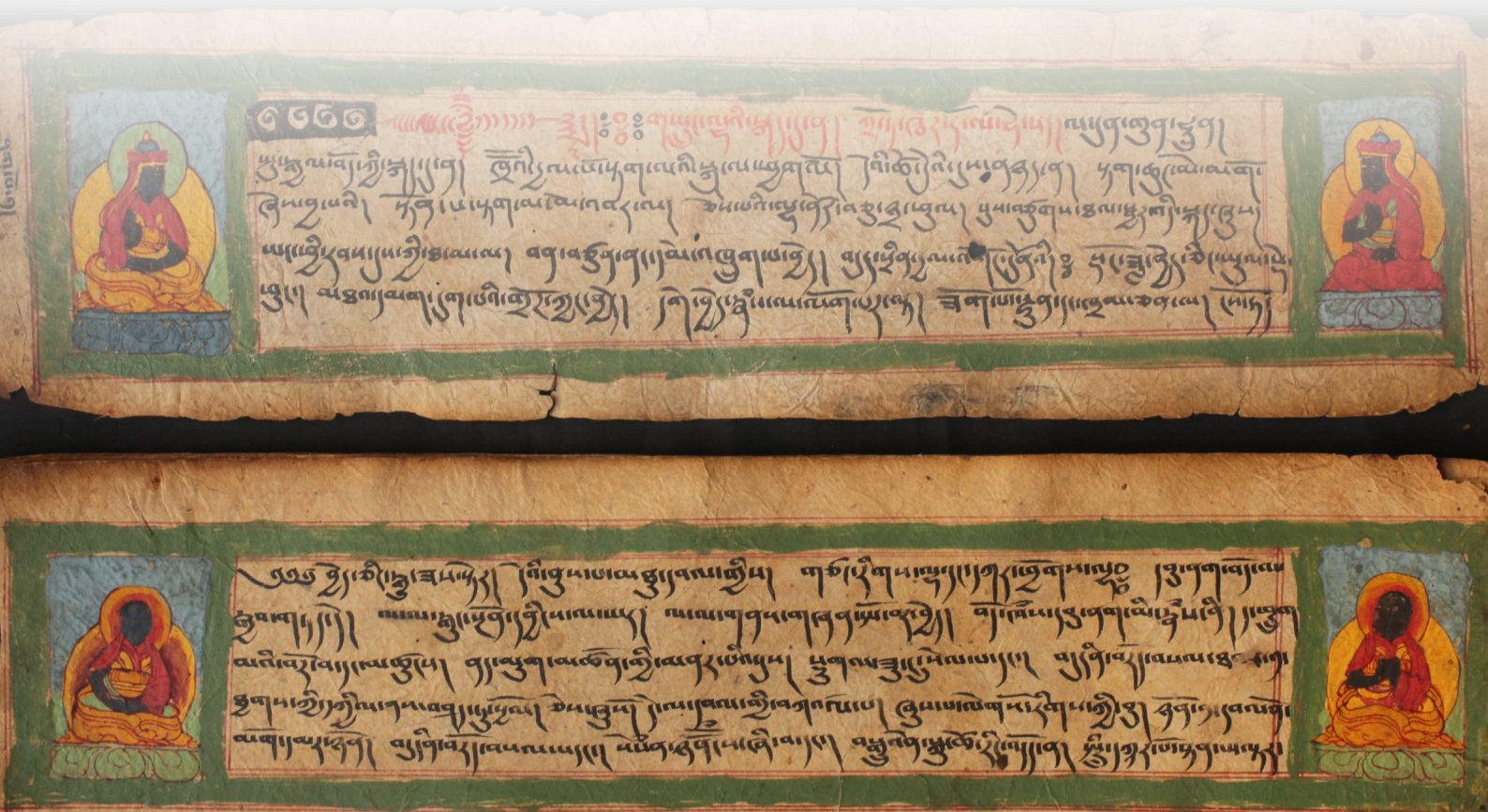
The elusive connection: Manuscripts and rituals of the Bon and Naxi traditions

FRIDAY-SATURDAY, 20-21 MARCH 2020

A workshop hosted by

THE CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF MANUSCRIPT CULTURES,
UNIVERSITY OF HAMBURG

CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF MANUSCRIPT CULTURES
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Manuscripts have been essential in supporting the efforts of Bon monks, nuns and hereditary priests to preserve their unique culture and rituals, as well as the attempts of scholars elsewhere to understand not only the Bon religion but also the early cultural and intellectual history of Central Asia. Manuscripts account for the entire range of Bonpo literary production, from all the major canonical works such as the Bonpo Kanjur, or the so-called New Collection of Bonpo Katen, to the collected writing of famous masters, and the plethora of ritual texts that have been unexpectedly coming to light in many parts of the region during the first decade of the twenty-first century. These manuscripts are of great importance for gaining new insights into largely unknown cultural developments on the Tibetan Plateau and its connections to other traditions present in the region.

There is also a growing body of evidence to suggest that a connection between the rituals of the Naxi dongba priests and those of the Bon religion of Tibet is more than merely speculative. However, despite a growing number of scholars exploring Bon and Naxi manuscript traditions, there is still only little evidence for a possible common ground which both traditions may share. While some examples of Bon manuscripts recently revealed may date from as early as the ninth century, most of the extinct Naxi dongba pictographic ritual texts were produced within the last two centuries. However, most of physical manuscripts of both traditions have not been dated, and so far have attracted only little attention as material objects. While irrefutable instances of Bon-Naxi connections may be rare, the case for a link is reinforced via the ritual texts of a class of priests in Gansu and Sichuan known as le'u. This very large corpus of material – which continues to grow as new discoveries are made – contains texts that seem to provide a bridge between the archaic rituals of Central Tibetan Bon and those of the Naxi. Furthermore, certain aspects of Naxi ritual themselves may elucidate mysteries surrounding Tibetan ritual. Similarities may also be seen in mythical narratives and figures, iconography, or even habits of using the same materials and technologies. Naxi paper has been thought to be unique, with influence from, among other things, the papermaking traditions of the Tibetan community. But many questions remain when we consider this region with its complex history of interaction between various ethnic groups.

The previous workshops were intended to be an open-ended discussion on the existing Bon manuscript collections which, besides being a record of history and religion in its textual sphere, are also material objects being a part of sustainable cultural world heritage. Along the same lines, we would like to continue an interdisciplinary discussion that will make it possible to see Bon manuscripts in the wider perspective of manuscript studies. However, on this occasion we would like to place the emphasis on the Bon-Naxi connections found in both traditions and revealed by multidisciplinary studies. The participants are specialists of different academic disciplines, and will present their research on a variety of topics including different collections of Bon and Naxi manuscripts, the concepts and history of both traditions, and the science and technology of book studies.



Programme

FRIDAY

10:00–10:10	Welcome
10:10–10:40	Charles Ramble: <i>Long-distance networks among Bonpo communities: historical conduits of tangible and intangible heritage</i>
10:40–11:10	Daniel Berounsky: <i>The Tibetan Sadak Collection (Sa bdag 'bum) and the Chinese king Kongtse</i>
11:10–11:30	Coffee break
11:30–12:00	Amy Heller: <i>Imagery of Birds, Deer and Priests during the Tibetan Empire according to archeological artefacts and manuscripts Pelliot tibétain 37 and Pelliot tibétain 60: Buddhist, Bon-po, Naxi or...?</i>
12:00–12:30	Agnieszka Helman-Ważny: <i>A shared craft tradition? Papermaking plants and technologies identified in both Bon and Naxi manuscripts</i>
12:30–14:30	Lunch
14:30–15:00	Kalsang Norbu Gurung: <i>Similarities and differences between Tonpa Shenrab Miwo and Dto-mba shi lo mi wu</i>
15:00–15:30	Sam van Schaik: <i>Manuscripts as part of a practice tradition: documenting ritual specialists with the Endangered Archives Programme</i>
15:30–15:50	Coffee break
15:50–16:20	Marc des Jardins: <i>The compendium of the Lords of the earth and the Chinese spirit tradition reflected in it</i>
16:20–16:50	Cristiana Turini: <i>Calling the soul back. Ritual space and manuscripts among the Naxi people</i>
16:50–17:20	Henk Blezer: <i>A Little-Known Set of Tsa ka li pertaining to a yet Unidentified Tibetan Death Ritual</i>
20:00	Dinner

SATURDAY

9:30–10:00	Naljor Tsering: <i>Cataloguing a collection of Le'u Bon manuscripts from Drugchu ('Brug chu)</i>
10:00–10:30	Nyima Oser: <i>Bon ritual texts associated with the Chinese king Kongtse</i>
10:30–10:40	Coffee break
10:40–11:10	Ewa Paśnik-Tułowicka: <i>Naxi Manuscripts Found in the Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw – Preliminary Study of the Collection</i>
11:10–11:40	Jakub Hrubý: <i>Tanchang Qiang and the history of the Gansu-Sichuan borderlands in the medieval period (2nd-7th century A.D.)</i>
11:40–13:00	Round table discussion



Abstracts

Tibetan Sadak Collection (*Sa bdag 'bum*) and the Chinese king Kongtse

DANIEL BEROUNSKÝ, CHARLES UNIVERSITY, PRAGUE

It has been shown with increasing evidence that there is a link between the Naxi ritual texts, the ritual texts which recently resurfaced in eastern Tibet (so-called *le'u* manuscripts), and the *Nyen Collection* (*Gnyan 'bum*, a collection of myths contained in the Bon Kanjur). The extent of their mutual relationship is, however, still awaiting more precise determination. In this contribution I would like to pay attention to another Tibetan collection of myths dealing with the 'lords of earth' (*sa bdag*), which might have influenced both Naxi and *le'u* rituals. It is called Sadak Collection (*Sa bdag 'bum*) and contains parts which appear to be a candidate for early Tibetan ritual tradition ascribed to the Chinese king Kongtse. While there are certainly texts related to the Chinese king Kongtse among the *le'u* manuscripts, it is not certain if such a layer is also present among the Naxi texts. Clarifying it could be another step towards better understanding of their mutual relationship.

A Little-Known Set of *Tsa ka li* pertaining to a yet Unidentified Tibetan Death Ritual

HENK BLEZER, LEIDEN UNIVERSITY, VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT AMSTERDAM

In this presentation, I should like to relate a set of 19 *tsa ka li* that pertains to a yet unidentified Tibetan death ritual, to the well-known Bon *Du tri su* death ritual, in particular as it is performed in Menri, and to one of its corresponding sets of *tsa ka li*. The latter were extensively studied by both Brauen (1972/1978) and Kvaerne (1981/1985). The cards of the unidentified death ritual are from the collection of Andries Hummel and have been studied by Béla Kélenyi (Delft: Cloud Press, 2012).

Both sets of *tsa ka li* invoke ancient ritual tropes, which partly are also known from Dunhuang ritual texts. Where the *Du tri su* sequence for these ancient-looking tropes strongly suggests 'continuity from above', in the set pertaining to the unidentified death ritual these references seem more consistent with the rest of the cards and thus look more original in their context or embeddedness.

The main Tibetan sources relevant to the present-day *Du tri su* death ritual consist of fairly recent writings by bSod nams blo gros, who was born in 1784 and became Abbott of Menri in 1810. These compositions are said to have been received by him as a *snyan brgyud* from the founder of Menri, mNyam med shes rab rgyal mtshan (1356–1415):

- » *Du tri su'i sgrib sbyong gi grub gzhung ma rig mun sel sgron me 'khor ba ngan song dong sprugs,*
- » *Tshe 'das kyi gsur bsngo snang ba'i dod dgu gter mdzod,* and
- » *Du tri su'i sgrib sbyong gi grub gzhung las g-yung drung sa bcur bgrod pa'i smon lam* (Kvaerne 1985).

It will be interesting to get an idea of any extant ritualist sources and also of the rough timeframe of the unidentified death ritual.

Similarities and differences between Tonpa Shenrab Miwo and Dto mba shi lo mi wu

KALSANG NORBU GURUNG

Abstract: In 1937, Joseph F Rock published a translation of a Na-khi manuscript regarding the myth of Dto-mba shi-lo, the founder of Moso shamanism. He expressed the opinion that Dto-mba shi-lo was none other than the founder of Bon, Tonpa Shenrab Miwo. Almost seventy years later in 2003, Lhakpa Tsering, a Tibetan scholar, has compared the stories of the two founders, and also translated a similar manuscript into Tibetan (but probably from a Chinese version) and indicated that the Tonpa Shenrab's myth was the source of the latter myth. I have found some differences in reading the manuscript regarding the life of Dto-mba shi-lo by the above two scholars; furthermore, they have a different understanding of the Bon religion, apparently due to the different time period. In this presentation, I will revisit their works and investigate further the relation between these two myths and the two founders. I will further explore if this myth of Dto-mba shi-lo represents the original myth of Tonpa Shenrab Miwo as Joseph Rock suggested, or the life account of the latter was the source of the former account as Lhakpa Tsering indicated. Since some details in the two accounts are not entirely the same, I will also try to understand what these differences in the stories tell us and how the myth of the two figures diverged over time, if indeed they do belong to the same source.

The compendium of the Lords of the earth and the Chinese spirit tradition reflected in it

MARC DES JARDINS, CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY, MONTRÉAL

The compendium of the Lords of the earth (*Sa bdag 'bum*) is a composite work included in the Bon Canon (Vol. 140) which focuses on myths and rites associated with a collection of deities minding the cosmos. The presence of Chinese themes in it is ubiquitous, ranging from the miraculous deeds of a character by the name of Confucius (Kong tse 'phrul kyi rgyal po) to the propitiation of Chinese spirits that are in charge of the various parts of

the manifested world. This paper seeks to document these and attempt to appraise these acknowledged 'Chinese' borrowings in lieu of indigenous Tibetan categories.

Imagery of Birds, Deer and Priests during the Tibetan Empire according to archeological artefacts and manuscripts Pelliot tibétain 37 and Pelliot tibétain 60: Buddhist, Bon-po, Naxi or...?

AMY HELLER, UNIVERSITY OF BERN, CRCAO

This presentation will focus on representations of birds and deer among archaeological artefacts of the Tibetan Empire and the Silk Route as well as the Tibetan manuscripts from Dunhuang. Their representations in diverse archaeological artefacts help to contextualize drawings of birds and deer among the Tibetan manuscripts, in particular the enigmatic drawings of Pelliot Tibétain 37 and Pelliot Tibétain 60, with dancers wearing deer-or antelope-headed masks. In these two manuscripts, there are also drawings of anthropomorphic figures, some of which may be deities while others appear to represent ritual specialists (female and male). The appearance of these ritual practitioners may present parallels, in terms of their costumes and attributes, with drawings in the Mokotoff manuscript as well as drawings produced in the Naxi traditions. This presentation will explore the visual parallels; however it is too premature to firmly establish an identification within a specific religious tradition.

A shared craft tradition? Papermaking plants and technologies identified in both Bon and Naxi manuscripts

AGNIESZKA HELMAN-WAŻNY, UNIVERSITY OF HAMBURG, GERMANY

Tibetans established their own papermaking tradition and created a unique type of paper by using specific plants and technologies. Paper pulp is prepared by beating the materials upon a stone with a wooden mallet; this pulp is then mixed with water and poured on the "floating" mould placed on a water surface in measured quantities. The papermaker moves the frame in the water until the pulp entirely and equally covers the surface of the mould; he then tilts the frame until the water drains off. The papermaking moulds with newly made sheets of paper are left undisturbed until the sheets are dry. The same technology, however, sometimes with slight modification, was identified in a large group of studied Naxi manuscripts.

The high altitude of the Tibetan Plateau and the extremes of its climate make the vegetation distinctive from all other areas of Asia. Original Tibetan paper was made mainly from the phloem of shrubs or roots belonging to the *Daphne*, *Wikstroemia*, *Stellera* and *Edgeworthia*

species which also have poisonous properties. The rarest plants used for the production of Naxi paper are those from the *Wikstroemia* genus, specifically *Wikstroemia delavayi* and *Wikstroemia lichiangensis*, which are found only in Yunnan Province, Sichuan Province, and the Tibetan Autonomous Region in China. The bast of these plants is robust and the paper made from them has an eminently suitable surface for writing with hard bamboo pens.

Independently of cultural or religious affiliation the production of paper probably played an important economic and social role in areas where it was produced, often associated with local production of manuscripts. It is likely that it was also an important trade commodity. The usage of plants with poisonous properties in the paper makes it resistant to damage caused by insects, and, ultimately, it is longer lasting than other types of paper. It is also likely to have been preferred for usage in ritual manuscripts. This talk will present the distinctive features of papermaking technology, components and properties of paper identified in both Bon and Naxi manuscripts preserved in museum, library and private collections in Europe and Asia. It will also discuss the complexity of papermaking tradition, sometimes locally shared by various communities.

Tanchang Qiang and the history of the Gansu-Sichuan borderlands in the medieval period (2nd-7th century A.D.)

JAKUB HRUBÝ, ORIENTAL INSTITUTE OF THE CZECH ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

The Sino-Tibetan frontier region has always been a place of immensely rich cultural and ethnic variety. Various smaller ethnic groups have for centuries lived in the shadow of the larger powers of Tibet and China, contributing a fair share to the intermingling of the cultures and peoples in the region. Any attempt at reconstructing their early history is severely limited by the scarcity of the sources. Not having left any records of their own, one has to rely mainly on the testimony of the Chinese sources, mostly the surviving dynastic histories compiled by the historians of the imperial courts who used to monitor the situation along the borders for the strategic reasons. Different groups of people, labelled as Di or Qiang, come intermittently into and out of the view of the records, yet the nature of the recorded information often leaves much to be desired. However, a close reading of the Chinese texts can contribute to our understanding of the political history as well as shifts in the power structure and ethnic makeup of the region which might be useful while pondering possible origins of certain cultural phenomena encountered nowadays along the Sino-Tibetan frontier. Using Chinese dynastic histories (mainly *Weishu*, *Zhoushu*), the paper will attempt to map the medieval history of the Gansu-Sichuan borderlands, focusing on the polity of the Tanchang Qiang 宕昌羌, following their political history and interactions with other Qiang groups as well as neighbouring polities such as Tuyuhun and Di of Chouchi 仇池.

Naxi Manuscripts Found in the Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw – Preliminary Study of the Collection

EWA PAŚNIK-TUŁOWIECKA, UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW, POLAND

At the end of November 2018 at the Faculty of Oriental Studies of University of Warsaw (FOS) a mini-collection of three Naxi manuscripts was discovered. The provenience of the manuscripts remains unknown. Because this mini-collection has never been researched, the main aim of this paper is to present preliminary findings of the study carried out with my colleague Olgierd Uziembło, MA, who is linguistic specialist. The connection with Bon rituals at this point is uncertain, but placing the FOS manuscripts in the context of other collections and deciphering their possible meaning will perhaps reveal the influence of Bon rituals.

Long-distance networks among Bonpo communities: historical conduits of tangible and intangible heritage

CHARLES RAMBLE (EPHE – PSL, CRCAO, PARIS)

The legend of the dispersal of Bonpo masters to the frontiers of Tibet and adjacent lands during the persecution of their religion by the Emperor Trisong Detsen in the 8th century is well known from numerous works. Since the time of this quasi-mythical episode, the members of these far-flung communities – however they might actually have originated – have been far from static, and subsequent centuries have witnessed extensive interactions among groups of Bonpos that are sometimes separated by vast differences. Historically, the great majority of abbots of Menri monastery in West-central Tibet were, like its 14th/15th-century founder, natives Gyalrong (Jinchuan) in the far east, while its most eminent (the 23rd) was from Derge in Kham. The colophons of Bon manuscripts in northern Nepal reveal that many of them were composed or copied in Central or East Tibet. The historical connections between Bon centres within and beyond Tibet are not well understood, and a study of these networks could lead to a clearer picture of the diffusion of local religious traditions, the movement of artefacts such as manuscripts, and the generalisation of regional codicological and grammatical features in Bonpo texts. Following a preliminary sketch of this long-distance mobility, this presentation will discuss the particularly close relationship that seems to have developed between the rulers of Gyalrong and the Yangal clan of Dolpo, respectively the eastern- and western-most outposts of the Bon religion, both of them lying outside the frontiers of Tibet.

Manuscripts as part of a practice tradition: documenting ritual specialists with the Endangered Archives Programme

SAM VAN SCHAİK, THE BRITISH LIBRARY

Many of the major museum and library collections in Europe are the direct result of the collecting activities of colonial explorers, soldiers and administrators. As such, the collections represent the interests and prejudices of these people, rather than the practices of the original custodians of the material. This has directly affected how generations of scholars have conceptualised the cultures that they study. In this presentation I show how three projects sponsored by the Endangered Archives Programme have resulted in a digital archive that preserves the integrity of the ritual practice traditions. These collections show the ritual and religious specialisations of different practitioners, and situate manuscripts alongside other artefacts used for teaching and performance. This way of presenting these materials differs greatly from the customary way of organising collections in museums and libraries, and offers greater insights into how manuscripts fit into traditions of practice.

Cataloguing a Collection of *Le'u Bon* Manuscripts from Drugchu ('*Brug chu*)

NALJOR TSERING, ÉCOLE PRATIQUE DES HAUTES ÉTUDES EPHE, PARIS

This collection of Bon manuscripts from Drugchu ('*Brug chu*), in eastern Tibet, is entitled '*Brug chu'i dmangs khrod gna' rabs bon gyi dpe rnying phyogs bsgrigs*, An Ancient Bon Manuscript Collection from Drugchu, which follows the publication of two huge sets of folk Bon literature: An Ancient Tibetan Bon Manuscript Collection from Datshang (*mDo smad mda' tshang yul gyi gna' dpe phyogs bsdus mthong ba don ldan*, 30 volumes) and the the Ancient Tibetan Bon Manuscript Collection from Domé (*mDo smad yul gyi gna' dpe phyogs bsdus mthong ba 'dzum bzhad*, 60 volumes). The Drugchu collection is planned to be published in 100 volumes in four sets of 25 volumes. Since 2018 three sets, a total of 75 volumes, have been released. This paper offers a basic analysis of the collection in two phases: first, a presentation of the volumes' contents according to the published catalogues, with standardised orthography and classification of the texts according to their type; and secondly, a comparison of the published catalogue with the content of the texts themselves, with an attempt to explore the transmission history of a selection of the works and their relationship to *le'u* texts from neighbouring areas.

Calling the soul back. Ritual space and manuscripts among the Naxi people

CRISTIANA TURINI, UNIVERSITÀ DI MACERATA

Naxi reality is inhabited by a great number of different supernatural beings whom they have to confront daily, and many of them can cause illness in a variety of ways. The most common one is soul stealing. Demons, spirits and even deities can steal people's souls with different purposes and if ritual intervention is not immediate or if it is not adequate, death can occur.

Although vast corpora of Naxi manuscripts have been published in 1999 and 2000 in a hundred volumes containing an annotated collection of *dongba* ritual texts, since the death of the last generation of great *dongbas* it has become more and more difficult to relate Naxi manuscripts to genuine ritual activities and ceremonies.

This paper will present the ritual space, the paraphernalia and a summary of the contents of the most important manuscripts chanted in a Naxi healing ceremony to the Shu spirits documented during one of my research trips to the areas of Shuming, Mingying, Tacheng and Dadong in north-western Yunnan province. Some information on the ritual practices dealing with the purification of pollution opening this ceremony will be also touched upon.