CURRENT VENTURES IN TIBETAN INTELLECTUAL, TEXTUAL, AND SOCIAL HISTORY
A SHOWCASE OF VIENNA-BASED RESEARCH PROJECTS

Workshop Program

April 5, 2022,   15:00–18:00 (CEST)

Chair: Pascale Hugon (IKGA, TibSchol)

15:00–15:30   Markus Viehbeck (ISTB/LMU-Munich)

 Himalayan Sūtra Collections – Textual, Material, and Social Perspectives

15:30–16:00   Filippo Brambilla (ISTB):

 Emptiness of Other (*gZhan stong*) in the Early Jo nang Tradition

16:00–16:15   Coffee break

16:15–16:45   Reinier Langelaar (IKGA):

 Remembrance and Reification: The 'Tibetans' and the *bKa'-chems-ka-khol-ma*

16:45–17:15   Serena Biondo (IKGA):

 Mapping Networks of Early Tibetan Scholasticism

17:15-17:30   Coffee break

17:30-18:00   General discussion

Abstracts

Himalayan Sūtra Collections – Textual, Material, and Social Perspectives
Markus Viehbeck (ISTB/LMU-Munich)

The proposed project is part of a long-term research initiative under the label "Tibetan Manuscript Project Vienna" (TMPV), which aims to document, preserve, and research endangered manuscript collections of Tibetan canonical literature in the Himalayan borderlands. The particular focus of the current research phase is on so-called "Sūtra collections," which represent a model of canonical collection that precedes the more commonly known later mainstream Kanjurs, and differs from the latter not only in structural organisation but also with regard to textual contents. These Sūtra collections therefore provide unique opportunities for studying the formation of the Tibetan canon before its consolidation in the fourteenth century. In the context of the preceding project, several Sūtra collections were identified in different localities in the remote Himalayan areas of Mustang and Dolpo and already partly digitised. The current project will continue these documentation efforts, add further material from manuscript collections yet to be documented, and, most importantly, propose a comprehensive analytical approach for studying these Sūtra collections from different research perspectives.

Emptiness of Other (*gZhan stong*) in the Early Jo nang Tradition
Filippo Brambilla (ISTB)

Our current FWF research project, "Emptiness of Other (*gZhan stong*) in the Early Jo nang Tradition," is a pioneering attempt to determine how the distinctive Jo nang view of emptiness of other was first articulated by Dol po pa Shes rab rgyal mtshan (1292–1361) and subsequently clarified and systematized by his direct students. Although Dol po pa's hermeneutics entails the integration of exoteric and esoteric Mahāyāna sources, recent scholarship has focused primarily on elements of the Jo nang doctrine pertaining to exoteric sources. To supplement the research to date, the current project gives special attention to the tantric basis of Dol po pa's positive appraisal of emptiness *qua* buddha nature. In particular, it explores the relationship between the emptiness of other and the suprasensory experiences associated with the completion stage practice of the *Kālacakratantra*. In addition to the primary goal of investigating and analyzing textual sources, the project also makes critical use of information gathered from discussions with traditional scholars in Eastern Tibet, India, and Nepal.

This presentation will outline the primary sources selected and analyzed to date and provide a synoptic overview of our project and some of its key findings.

Remembrance and Reification: The 'Tibetans' and the *bKa'-chems-ka-khol-ma*
Reinier Langelaar (IKGA)

The project "Buddhist Narratives and 'Tibetan' Ethnogenesis" traces the history of what today is still the most popular origin myth of "the Tibetans" (Tib.: *bod-pa*), which traces their ancestry back to a union between a saintly monkey and a blood-thirsty rock-demoness. The project examines the role that Buddhism played in molding and propagating this narrative, and how this helped shape and solidify the ethnic category of "the Tibetans" over time. Spanning some eight centuries (from the 12th to the early 20th c.), the research addresses ongoing interdisciplinary debates on the nature and prevalence of inter-regional identities prior to the age of modern nationalism.

The hypothesis is that the Buddhist circulation of this narrative helped propagate and sustain the notion of "the Tibetans" even during long absences of centralized state power. Related research questions include: How exactly was this origin narrative used, and how did it change across time and space? How widespread and well-known was it? What roles did Buddhist authors and actors play in Tibetan ethnogenesis, and how contested was this process?

At the heart of this research lies a philological endeavor to chart the literary usage and narrative developments of this early origin myth. Attested as early as the 11th or 12th c. CE in the famous *bKa'-chems-ka-khol-ma*, it reappears, in various permutations, in countless further sources. This paper will share some preliminary results concerning the narrative's form in early treasure texts (*gter-ma*) and, more particularly, share new insights into the textual history of the *bKa'-chems-ka-khol-ma* itself.

Mapping Networks of Early Tibetan Scholasticism
Serena Biondo (IKGA)

The ERC-funded project "The Dawn of Tibetan Buddhist Scholasticism (11th-13th c.)" (TibSchol, ERC-H2020-101001002) integrates the contextual aim of reconstructing the early Tibetan scholastic landscape with the conceptual aim of exploring the Tibetan scholastic method. TibSchol takes advantage of the recent surfacing of large numbers of early scholastic writings in manuscript form, and advocates for a broad-scale approach to this corpus.

This presentation focuses on one of the subprojects: "Persons, Schools, and Networks in Early Tibetan Scholasticism." Its aim is to map personal and intellectual networks of Tibetan scholastic thinkers and to explore their religious and institutional affiliations as well as their scholarly and socio-religious activities. After presenting the method and the tools used in the project to collect and organize data, I will provide an overview of early findings obtained from my on-going survey of colophons of works in the *bKa' gdams gsung 'bum*.