

Workshop: Tibetan biographical writings *Abstracts*

The Apical Ancestor: 14th-15th ct. Biography in the Service of the Phag-mo-gru Ruling House

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Byang-chub-'dre-bkol is the apical ancestor of the lHa-gzigs lineage associated with the Phag-mo-gru ruling house, which rose to hegemony over large portions of the Tibetan Plateau in the mid-14th century. This figure's key position in their genealogical tree is illustrated by the fact that his elaborate life-story accounts for over half the space taken up by the expansive pedigree and series of *vitas* preserved in the house's descent charter, the *Rlangs-kyi-po-ti-bse-ru*. This talk will explore his keystone function in the larger context of the genealogy, while also contextualizing his life story and highlighting certain peculiar features of the narrative, which may yield some clues as to its origins. In addition, we will tentatively touch upon the possible developments of his biography, and discuss the dating of his persona, a key matter that has often been invoked to affix a time to both the idiosyncratic *Rlangs-kyi-po-ti-bse-ru*, as well as to one of its most famous literary figures, king Ge-sar of Gling.

Independent Dakini or Yab Yum Duo? Sonam Peldren, Rinchen Pel, and the Role of Life Writing in Tibetan Sainthood

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Previous research on the unusual 14th century Tibetan female saint Sonam Peldren explores her legacy via close reading of an unpublished, handwritten manuscript of the saint's *rnam thar*, or liberation story, authorship of which is attributed to the saint's husband Rinchen Pel. In addition to this text, a similar version of the saint's life story appears in a second document, a mechanically reproduced handwritten text in which Sonam Peldren's life appears not as a standalone tale, but as one half of a whole that includes Rinchen Pel's liberation story as well. This presentation will compare and contrast these two different presentations of Sonam Peldren's tale, focusing specifically on what the different texts can tell us about the process of text creation in the Tibetan context, and the complex and overlapping roles of scribes and editors, subjects and spouses, and masters and disciples in the creation of Tibetan sainthood.

Adrup Gönbo's *Nga rang gi skyid sdug gi rnam thar*:

Modernity and Subjectivity in a Concise Guidebook to the Hidden-Land of France

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With the exception of the Tibetophone Buryat lama Agvan Dorjiev twenty years earlier, Adrup Gönbo (A sgrubs mGon po) was, in 1908, presumably the first Tibetan to set foot in France. Accompanying the French explorer Jacques Bacot on his way back from Khams, Gönbo wrote a short travel account which he intended to address to his brother. Although there is no trace of the original manuscript, Gönbo dictated his unfinished narrative to Bacot who translated it into French. The translated narrative was published in 1910 in several French periodicals and newspapers, and in 1912 as a supplement to *Le Tibet révolté*, Bacot's own travelogue to Tibet. A recently discovered preliminary sketch of Bacot's translation provides us with Bacot's draft and a few lines in Tibetan transcribing the beginning of the text. Based on this material, I argue that Gönbo's narrative is an early effort by a Tibetan, in association with his French translator, to connect the Tibetan world with the European world. In the framework of this workshop, I would like to raise five connected sets of questions: How in the text are the narrator 'staged' and subjectivity expressed in the process of discovering the so-called 'modern' world? Which Tibetan literary genres does this narrative pertain to? What literary difficulties and cultural issues did the translator face in the process of translating this unusual travel account? What do French readers' responses at the time tell us about the text and his author? On Gönbo's return, how did his Tibetan fellows perceive this atypical character who had literally sailed between cultures?