

IKGA NEWSLETTER No. 6 / April 2026

The Institute for the Cultural and Intellectual History of Asia (IKGA) is one of twenty-five institutes at the Austrian Academy of Sciences (AAS), Austria's leading non-university institution for research in the natural sciences and the humanities. At the IKGA, long-term research is done on Asian cultures, with an emphasis on cultural and intellectual history. Thirty scholars worked at the Institute in 2025. For more information about the Institute, its history, and its current activities—including upcoming events—please see our [website](#).

The Institute is also involved in the Cluster of Excellence “EurAsian Transformations,” funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF). This research framework, established in October 2023, is aimed to build a sustainable collaborative infrastructure for research, training and knowledge transfer across various historical disciplines. It brings together more than 100 researchers and students from the Austrian Academy of Sciences—as lead institution—the University of Vienna, the University of Innsbruck, and Central European University. For further information on the Cluster and its manifold activities and opportunities, click [here](#).



THE IKGA IN 2025

In 2025, our Institute experienced many changes in membership, as one would expect from an academic institution with significant third-party funding. New talent joined our research community, and more experienced researchers moved on to appointments elsewhere in Austria and beyond. Sadly, we also mourned the passing of two individuals: the Institute's founding director, Gerhard Oberhammer, and a more recent colleague and friend, Michael Hee Ium. Additionally, two senior members, Bernhard Scheid and Horst Lasic, retired. Searches for new members in their respective fields—premodern Japanese studies and the philology of Indian Buddhism—are ongoing. This year, three new third-party funded projects were granted that underscore the Institute's role as an incubator for new research ideas and directions: a European Research Council (ERC) Starting Grant on the narrative foundations of Tibetan Buddhism; an interdisciplinary project funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) that explores the use of machine-learning techniques for scribal recognition with Sanskrit and Tibetan manuscripts; and another project funded by the FWF that examines theories of error in classical Indian philosophy.

OBITUARIES

The IKGA mourns the death of Gerhard Oberhammer, who passed away at the age of 96 on 22 December 2025. He served as the first director of the IKGA (1991–1997) and, over more than three decades, headed the Institute for Indology at the University of Vienna (1964–1997). His main field of research was the history of Indian philosophy, with a focus on Nyāya, Yoga, and the traditions of Vedānta. His scholarship was characterized by integrating phenomenological, religious hermeneutic, and cross-traditional perspectives into his work. Among the most important projects Oberhammer initiated at the IKGA were the “[Dictionary of Indian Epistemology and Logic](#)” (1983–2006) and “The [Tāntrikābhidhānaśāstra](#) Project: A Hindu Tantric Dictionary” (launched in 1993 and ongoing).



We are also deeply saddened by the untimely death of our colleague and friend, Michael Hee Ium, who passed away on 9 April 2025, after a brief and severe illness. Michael, who earned his PhD from the University of California, Santa Barbara, joined the IKGA in January 2025 as a Postdoctoral Fellow within the TibSchol project (“The Dawn of Tibetan Buddhist Scholasticism [11th–13th c.]”; ERC 101001002). He was a textualist and historian of religion, and his research focused on the religions of Tibet and South Asia, in particular on the early history of Ganden Monastery and the construction of the Geluk tradition in Tibet. During his short time at the IKGA as a member of the TibSchol project, we quickly came to appreciate Michael not only for his insightful scholarship, deep intellectual curiosity and enthusiasm, but

also for his warm and gentle nature, humility and compassion. We feel very fortunate to have had him as a member of our Institute, even if his stay with us was cut short and was far too brief. An obituary can be found on the [Institute’s website](#).

NEW INSTITUTE MEMBERS

In 2025, the Institute welcomed three new research fellows, as well as one returning member:

[Vitus Angermeier](#) joined the IKGA in May 2025. He studied Indology at the University of Vienna, completing his doctorate in 2017 with the dissertation “Water in Classical Indian Medicine”. His research project “Epidemics and Crisis Management in Pre-modern South Asia,” funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF), commenced at the University of Vienna in 2022 and will now be concluded at the IKGA. Angermeier works mainly with texts from the Āyurvedic corpus, but also with materials from the Pāli canon, the Indian epics, and the *Arthaśāstra*. He is particularly interested in the perception of nature, geographical concepts, cultural development, medical- and social-historical issues, and ethical frameworks.





Szymon Bogacz has been a Postdoctoral Fellow at the IKGA since September 2025, having joined the ERC-funded project “Ethics of Empty Beliefs: Chinese Buddhist Philosophy in the ‘Period of Disunity’” ([ChinBuddPhil](#); ERC 101077136). Bogacz holds a PhD from the School of Philosophy at the Australian National University and an MA in Eastern Philosophy from Jagiellonian University. He has taught at both institutions in philosophy and Buddhist Studies programs. His current research explores Buddhist philosophy, with a particular focus on the claim—advanced in some traditions—that we should not hold any beliefs or conceptual thoughts. Bogacz’s

research interests extend beyond Buddhist thought to include epistemology in general, philosophy of logic, and philosophy of language.

In February, **Stefan Köck** re-joined the Institute within the framework of the new FWF-funded project “Domain Shintō and Yoshikawa Shintō in Northern Japan, 17th to 18th Century.” The project builds on two earlier projects on Domain Shintō conducted at the IKGA in which Köck was also involved. In this new phase of the research, he is examining the pivotal role of the Yoshikawa Shintō school in fostering reforms that supported the separation of Shintō and Buddhism in various domains in northern Japan.



Luigi Hari Tehel Singh came to the IKGA in April 2025 as a Doctoral Student Researcher. He received his Master’s degree in History and Oriental Studies at the University of Bologna and is now pursuing a doctorate in Tibetan and Buddhist Studies at the University of Vienna. His dissertation project, titled “A Late Indian Buddhist Defence of Idealism,” seeks to critically edit, study, and translate Jitāri’s (940–1000 CE) *Sahopalambhaniyamasamarthana* on the basis of a recently identified manuscript. This dissertation will shed new light on the history of debates concerning Dharmakīrti’s “necessary coapprehension” (*saho-palambhaniyama*) inference up to the tenth

century, and its consolidation as an argument for the non-existence of external objects. In the interim, Singh was granted an Austrian Academy of Sciences DOC Fellowship, commencing in January 2026.

Two long-year research fellows retired at the end of 2025:

Bernhard Scheid joined the IKGA in 1990, focusing his research in Japanese Studies on Shintō and its social and political impact from the medieval period to the modern era. Another research area has been religions in Japan more broadly, work that has provided the basis for the website [Religion-in-Japan: Ein digitales Handbuch](#). **Horst Lasic**, a research fellow in Buddhist Studies at the IKGA since 1993, has focused mainly on philological and historical research on Indian Buddhist epistemology and Madhyamaka.

Lastly, **Nina Mirnig**, who does research on Nepalese religious and political networks in the Licchavi period based on inscriptions, took up the Professorship in the Cultural and Intellectual History of Premodern South Asia at the University of Vienna.

NEW PROJECTS

An ERC Starting Grant was awarded to IKGA Postdoctoral Researcher Reinier Langelaar. The project “[FOUNT: The Narrative Foundations of Tibetan Buddhism](#)” (ERC 101222259) began in April 2026 and will investigate the twelfth-century and later “treasure texts” attributed to King Songtsen Gampo, exploring how these, along with works like the *Maṇi bka’ ‘bum*, shaped Tibetan Buddhist identity, political philosophy, and the cult of Avalokiteśvara.

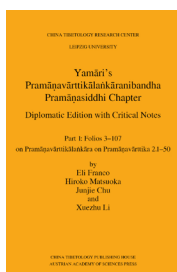
Also granted was the new FWF-funded project “[MASLOTS – Mapping the Scribal Landscape of Tibetan and Sanskrit Manuscripts](#)” (PAT 4919325; project head: Patrick McAllister), being conducted in interdisciplinary cooperation with experts on machine learning at the Technical University Vienna. Commenced in February 2026, the project uses deep-learning methods to systematically identify the hands of individual scribes in specific manuscript collections. It will focus on two groups of manuscripts as case studies: one from the broader corpus of Dunhuang Tibetan manuscripts (ninth century CE), and the other a group of manuscripts containing works by early thirteenth-century Indian Buddhist scholars. Channa Li will collaborate in this project.

Funding was also approved for a second new FWF-funded project, “[Theories of Error in Medieval Indian Philosophy](#)” (PAT 2153325; project head: Marion Rastelli). The project commenced at the IKGA in April 2026. It will focus on historical and philological investigations into theories of error—i.e., erroneous cognition—in medieval Indian philosophy, focusing on Maṇḍana Miśra (660–720?), a figure associated with both the Mīmāṃsā and Advaita-Vedānta schools of thought. The main researcher in this project is Akane Saitō, who has conducted research on Indian philosophy as a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the IKGA for the past few years.

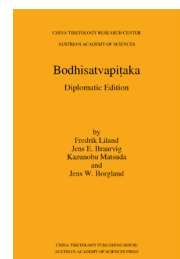
CONTINUING COOPERATION ON SANSKRIT MANUSCRIPTS FROM THE TIBETAN AUTONOMOUS REGION

The agreement between the Austrian Academy of Sciences (AAS) and the China Tibetology Research Center (CTRC) in Beijing, which supports research on Indian Buddhist literature based on Sanskrit manuscripts from the Tibetan Autonomous Region, was extended in 2025, following a visit of a CTCRC delegation to Vienna in 2024. Under the aegis of this agreement, nearly thirty volumes of first-time editions of Buddhist works ranging from the third to eleventh centuries CE have been published (also Open Access) in the joint AAS–CTRC monograph series [Sanskrit Texts from the Tibetan Autonomous Region \(STTAR\)](#).

In 2025, two volumes were published:



Franco, Eli; Matsuoka, Hiroko; Chu, Junjie; Li, Xuezhu, *Yamāri's Pramāṇavārttikāṅkāraṇibandha: Pramāṇasiddhi Chapter. Diplomatic Edition with Critical Notes. Part 1 (folios 3–107, verses 1–50). (STTAR 28)*. Vienna/Beijing: Austrian Academy of Sciences Press/China Tibetology Publishing House, lxx + 386 pp. ([Open Access](#))



Liland, Fredrik; Braarvig, Jens E.; Matsuda, Kazunobu; Borgland, Jens W., *Bodhisatvapitaka: Diplomatic edition. (STTAR 27)*. Vienna/Beijing: Austrian Academy of Sciences Press/China Tibetology Publishing House, xxi + 354 pp. ([Open Access](#))

GUESTS

In 2025, the Institute welcomed ten guests from abroad for collaborative work with members of the IKGA. In particular, the IKGA's long-standing ties with the Japanese scholarly community were further strengthened through research stays of six scholars. Four of them pursued studies in the intellectual history of Indian and Tibetan Buddhism. **Prof. Kazuo KANO** from Komazawa University was an IKGA Visiting Fellow for two months. His stay provided a renewed opportunity to advance his joint work with Pascale Hugon on a descriptive catalog of early Tibetan scholastic works, in particular their study of commentaries on the *Ratnagoravibhāga*, a foundational Indian work on Buddha nature. Also from Komazawa University, **Dr. Tomoya YANOSHITA** visited the Institute for two months as part of his Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS)-funded project on the concept of karma in Tibetan Abhidharma. **Prof. Toshikazu WATANABE** from Kokugakuin University in Tokyo spent his year-long sabbatical leave at the Institute, concluding his stay in March 2025. His research focuses on the logico-epistemological tradition in Indian Buddhist philosophical literature, in particular the preparation of first editions of individual texts based on manuscript copies from the CTRC library. **Yuri SASAKI**, PhD candidate from Nagoya University, visited the Institute to work with Patrick McAllister on a section of the *Pramāṇavārttikālamkāra*, a major work in the Buddhist philosophical tradition by Prajñākaragupta (8th to 10th cent. CE).

The Japanese Studies team at the IKGA was pleased to welcome **Prof. Tomokatsu INOUE** from Saitama University and **Prof. Hisao UEDA** from Kanazawa University, who have both been collaborating closely with the team doing research on Domain Shintō. Their visit included a workshop with Inoue dedicated to the history of early modern Shintō, and reading sessions on recently acquired manuscripts by Stefan Köck supporting his new FWF-project "Domain Shintō and Yoshikawa Shintō in Northern Japan, 17th to 18th Century."

As part of the AAS's *High Level Brain Circulation Visiting Fellowship* program, **Prof. John Taber**, Professor Emeritus in the Department of Philosophy at the University of New Mexico, is a visiting scholar at the Institute for a total of one year in 2025/26. At the IKGA, he is working on a monograph on Indian epistemology, making use of expertise assembled at the Institute and in turn supporting ongoing research with his knowledge and philosophical acumen.

Dr. Yuri Zavhorodnii of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine was invited for a second time to spend one month in residence at the IKGA as part of the AAS "JESH (Joint Excellence in Science and Humanities) Ukraine" fellowship program. His current research focuses on textological aspects of the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad.

PUBLICATION HIGHLIGHTS 2025

Brewster, Ernest, The Essence of Two Truths is the Middle Way : Jizang's (549–623) Arguments against the Tiantai Doctrine of Three Truths. In: Fujii Jun (ed.), *The Dynamic Non-Duality of Dharmadhātu : Elucidations of Buddhist Truth Expressions*. Hamburg: Projekt Verlag, pp. 205–240.

Kellner, Birgit, More from Jitāri and Jñānaśrīmitra : New sources for late Indian Buddhist epistemology and logic from the Tibetan Autonomous Region. In: Horst Lasic, Xuezhong Li, Francesco Sferra (eds.), *Sanskrit Manuscripts in China IV : Proceedings of a panel at the 2023 Beijing Seminar on Tibetan Studies, August 14 to 16*. Beijing: China Tibetology Publishing House, pp. 105–142.

Langelaar, Reinier; Bialek, Joanna, Translating “Tibet” : The Geographic Extent of Bod in Tibetan Historiographies. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 35 (2025): 539–559.

Samuels, Jonathan (trans.), *Buddhist Epistemology in the Geluk Tradition : Three key texts*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, X + 904 pp.

Saito, Akane; Ogura, Satoshi; Yokochi, Yuko (eds.), *Kashmir : A Cultural Crossroads of the Sanskrit and Persian Cosmopolises. Volume 2*. Tokyo: Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa (ILCAA), Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, V + 194 pp.

Schmithausen, Lambert; Silk, Jonathan A. (eds.), *Tilmann Vetter : Studies on Indian Philosophy and on Buddhism*. (BKGA 112). Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, xiii + 282 pp.

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS 2025

In and around early Tibetan scholasticism

In early June, the international symposium “In and around early Tibetan scholasticism,” organized as part of the TibSchol project directed by Pascale Hugon, brought together fifteen speakers who explored early developments in Tibetan scholasticism and contributed to the broader effort to remap the socio-religious landscape of Buddhism in Tibet from the 11th century onward.



Chinese Buddhist Philosophy: From Three Treatises to Five Schools

In August, the ERC-funded project ChinBuddhPhil (“Ethics of Empty Beliefs: Chinese Buddhist Philosophy in the ‘Period of Disunity’” [ChinBuddPhil](#); ERC 101077136), directed by Rafal Stepień, held its second symposium, titled “Chinese Buddhist Philosophy: From Three Treatises to Five Schools.” Twenty speakers addressed a wide array of philosophical themes within the Sanlun school and traced its relationships with other major schools in the history of Chinese Buddhist philosophy.

The Impact of the Thunderbolt II: Reading in and around Kamalaśīla’s Commentary on the Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā

Also in August, Birgit Kellner and Prof. Paul Harrison (Stanford University) held the second workshop in a two-part series entitled “The Impact of the Thunderbolt” on the *Vajracchedikā* and its Indian commentaries. The workshops are part of ongoing research at the IKGA examining the Indian Buddhist philosopher Kamalaśīla’s (ca. 740–795) commentary on this celebrated Mahāyānasūtra, as well as its textual, intellectual and historical contexts.

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Knowledge: The Debate about Validity in Indian Philosophy

In December, Marcus Schmücker and Michael Williams welcomed twelve speakers to an international symposium entitled “Intrinsic and Extrinsic Knowledge: The Debate about Validity in Indian Philosophy,” which traced theories and arguments across different schools and periods of premodern South Asian philosophy concerning what grounds and justifies knowledge.

The Institute welcomed Profs. Harunaga Isaacson (Hamburg University), Bernard Faure (Columbia University) and Mark Teeuwen (University of Oslo) for public lectures. It also held several international source-reading workshops related to its research projects. We were particularly delighted that Profs. Lambert Schmithausen (emeritus, University of Hamburg), and Jonathan Silk (Leiden University/ Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität Munich) joined us for the book launch of Tilmann Vetter's collected papers, which they edited for publication with the Austrian Academy of Sciences Press (see Publication Highlights above).

IKGA Events 2026

The IKGA regularly hosts public lectures and other types of events. Online participation is possible in many cases. Please visit the IKGA's [website](#) for upcoming events, as well as information on how to register for online participation.

AWARDS



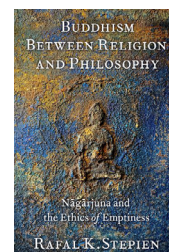
Steinkellner (l.) and Austrian President van der Bellen (r.)

In October, Emer. O. Univ.-Prof. Dr. Ernst Steinkellner received the Austrian Decoration of Honor for Science and Art from the President of Austria, Alexander van der Bellen.

The Republic of Austria's highest distinction for achievements in science and the arts recognizes Steinkellner's outstanding contributions to Buddhist and Tibetan Studies and his pivotal role in establishing these disciplines at the University of Vienna and the Austrian Academy of Sciences. As founding director of the former Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies

at the University of Vienna (in 1973) and as director of the IKGA from 1998 to 2006, he played a central role in shaping the academic landscape of Buddhist philosophy in Austria. His pioneering research on Buddhist epistemology and logic, together with his long-term editorship of the *Wiener Studien zur Tibetologie und Buddhismuskunde* (WSTB), has earned him international recognition. An interview he gave in 2019 for the Oral History of Tibetan Studies project (available [here](#)) offers a vivid impression of his life and work.

Rafal Stepień's monograph *Buddhism Between Religion and Philosophy : Nāgārjuna and the Ethics of Emptiness* (New York: Oxford University Press) won the American Academy of Religion's 2025 Book Award for Excellence in the Study of Religion (Category of Constructive-Reflective Studies). These awards honor exceptional books in the academic study of religion. They recognize publications marked by originality, intellectual rigor, creativity, and significance, as such works meaningfully influence how religion is studied and interpreted.



EurAsia Academy / Vienna Summer School on the Cultural and Intellectual History of Asia

In July 2025, the IKGA and the Department of South Asian, Tibetan, and Buddhist Studies (ISTB, University of Vienna) jointly organized the EurAsia Summer Academy, the latest edition of the Vienna Summer School on the Cultural and Intellectual History of Asia. The Summer School once again benefited from the support of the Cluster of Excellence “EurAsian Transformations.” Held from 7 to 12

July at the ISTB, the one-week program

entitled “Language as a Philosophical and Religious Tool in South Asia” examined the role of language in South Asian philosophical and religious traditions through expert-led lectures and guided discussions. The Academy brought together an international group of scholars alongside a diverse cohort of students and early-career researchers, fostering intensive intellectual exchange and collaboration



The **next EurAsia Academy** (6–11 July 2026) in this field will focus on “[Mantras between Language, Ritual, and Materiality](#).” The Summer School will introduce the participants to the subject of mantras or “potent formulas” in South Asia. Participants will engage intensively with Sanskrit texts from various periods and traditions, including the Vedic tradition, Mīmāṃsā, Āyurveda, and Tantra. Those interested in participating should contact Dominic Haas (dominik.haas@oeaw.ac.at).

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

The IKGA is currently seeking to fill two positions:

Until **30 April 2026**, scholars with a background in Indology or South Asian Studies can apply for a postdoctoral position in “Himalayan Connectivities” that addresses processes of circulation, mediation, and transformation of knowledge and practices in the domains of philosophy and religion, as well as in other knowledge fields; technologies in particular knowledge fields are also a possible topic of investigation. Click [here](#) for further details and to apply.

Until **15 May 2026**, applications can be submitted for a position as Principal Researcher with tenure option in Premodern Japanese Studies with a Focus on Buddhism. The position is open for research on Buddhism in Japan – its doctrines, practices, and/or institutions – with research questions in the history of religion, cultural history, the history of philosophy, and/or intellectual history (any of these perspectives is welcome). Click [here](#) for further details and to apply.

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Ernst Steinkellner (l.) and Austrian President Alexander van der Bellen (r.) (p. 7) | © Peter Lechner/HBF

Participants of the third second Vienna Summer School EurAsian Academy, July 2025 (p. 8) | © Andrey Klebanov 2025

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