

SYMPOSIUM

Moving Borders: Tibet in Interaction with Its Neighbors

Symposium participants and abstracts:

Karl Debreczeny is Senior Curator of Collections and Research at the Rubin Museum of Art. He completed his PhD in Art History at the University of Chicago in 2007. He was a Fulbright-Hays Fellow (2003–2004) and a National Gallery of Art CASVA Ittleson Fellow (2004–2006). His research focuses on exchanges between Tibetan and Chinese artistic traditions.

His publications include *The Tenth Karmapa and Tibet's Turbulent Seventeenth Century* (ed. with Tuttle, 2016); *The All-Knowing Buddha: A Secret Guide* (with Pakhoutova, Luczanits, and van Alphen, 2014); *Situ Panchen: Creation and Cultural Engagement in Eighteenth-Century Tibet* (ed., 2013); *The Black Hat Eccentric: Artistic Visions of the Tenth Karmapa* (2012); and *Wutaishan: Pilgrimage to Five Peak Mountain* (2011). His current projects include an exhibition which explores the intersection of politics, religion, and art in Tibetan Buddhism across ethnicities and empires from the seventh to nineteenth century.

Art, Politics, and Tibet's Eastern Neighbors

Tibetan Buddhism's dynamic political role was a major catalyst in moving the religion beyond Tibet's borders east to its Tangut, Mongol, Chinese, and Manchu neighbors. Tibetan Buddhism was especially attractive to conquest dynasties as it offered both a legitimizing model of universal sacral kingship that transcended ethnic and clan divisions—which could unite disparate people—and also promised esoteric means to physical power (ritual magic) that could be harnessed to expand empires. By the twelfth century Tibetan masters became renowned across northern Asia as bestowers of this anointed rule and occult power. The use of reincarnation in particular as a means of succession was a unique Tibetan form of political legitimacy employed by courts in Tibet and brought to empires to the east. Images were one of the primary means of political propagation, integral to magical tantric rites and embodiments of its power. In politics Tibetan Buddhism was a path to legitimation and a means to power, its ritual a potential weapon of war, and art its conduit.

Brandon Dotson is Associate Professor of Buddhist Studies at Georgetown University. He did his graduate training at Oxford University (2007), and has worked and taught at Oxford, the School of Oriental and African Studies, and Ludwig-Maximilian University of Munich. He has worked extensively on Tibetan Dunhuang manuscripts, including Tibet's first historical records, legal texts, and ritual texts. His most recent books are *Kingship, Ritual, and Narrative in Tibet and the Surrounding Cultural Area* (ed., 2015) and *Codicology, Paleography, and Orthography of Early Tibetan Documents* (with Helman-Wazny, 2016).

Cosmopolitanism and the Tibetan Empire

From the time of the Tibetan Empire (c. 608–866), if not before, Tibet has been a crossroads for people, ideas, technologies, and objects. The earliest Tibetan writings, in the form of pillar inscriptions and excavated manuscripts, portray a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual empire fluent in the cultural vocabularies and vernaculars of its Chinese, Indian, and Central Asian neighbors. This talk spotlights a selection of manuscripts and objects that emphasize the negotiation of borders, whether political, linguistic, religious, or cultural.

Deborah Klimburg-Salter is University Professor Emeritus, CIRDIS, Institute for Art History, University of Vienna; and Associate, Department of South Asian Studies, Harvard University; and was Adjunct Curator for the Giuseppe Tucci thangka collection at the National Museum of Oriental Art “Giuseppe Tucci,” Rome. She has taught as a guest professor in distinguished universities in Europe, North America, and Asia, and was the founding director (2006–2015) of CIRDIS (Center for Interdisciplinary Research and Documentation of Inner and South Asian Cultural History). Since 2004 Klimburg-Salter has been director of a curatorial training program through the National Museum of Afghanistan in Kabul and the University of Vienna. She directs the research project *Cultural Formation and Transformation: Shahi Buddhist Art and Architecture from Afghanistan to the West Tibetan Frontier at the Dawn of the Islamic Era*. Her research interests focus on South and Inner Asia, from Afghanistan through Northern India, as well as the arts of Tibet; and heritage preservation in the Tibetan Cultural Zone. Her publications include more than 60 articles and 18 authored, edited, and coedited books and exhibition catalogues. Her most recent publication, *Discovering Tibet: The Tucci Expeditions and Tibetan Painting*, is the catalogue that accompanied exhibitions by the same name in Rome and Genoa, as well as the exhibition “Unknown Tibet: The Tucci Expeditions and Buddhist Painting” at Asia Society Museum, New York.

The Cosmopolitan Vision of the Gu ge Court

Despite its geographic isolation at the western end of the high Tibetan plateau, the affluent Kingdom of Gu ge considered itself intimately connected to the world beyond its frontiers. At various phases this dynasty reaffirmed its Kashmiri cultural heritage and its adherence to the Central Tibetan Gelugpa reform movement. In addition, in the early seventeenth century the dynastic rulers welcomed Jesuit missionaries, allowing them to establish churches in their kingdom. This paper examines selected paintings from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and reveals the skillful manipulation of a sophisticated visual rhetoric which presented both their Kashmiri heritage and their courtly connections to Gelugpa monasticism. The aesthetic impact of these extraordinary paintings is reinforced by the use of the finest pigments, lavishly embellished with gold, projecting an aura of economic affluence. Both the style and the iconography of these thangkas reaffirm the visual rhetoric which is displayed in the monumental art at Tholing and Tsaparang, as well as in literary texts. As demonstrated in the paper, the multi-valiant visual symbolism projects the image of the symbiotic relationship between secular power and religious authority.

Rob Linrothe is Associate Professor in the Department of Art History at Northwestern

University. His research is mainly based on fieldwork in Ladakh and Zangskar. He received a PhD in Art History from the University of Chicago. In 2016–17 he received a Senior Fellowship from the American Institute of Indian Studies to conduct fieldwork in eastern India; in 2008–09 he was a Scholar-in-Residence at the Getty Research Institute. Among recent publications are “‘Utterly False, Utterly Undeniable’: The Akanistha Shrine Murals of Takden Phuntsokling Monastery,” *Archives of Asian Art* (2017); *Seeing into Stone: Pre-Buddhist Petroglyphs and Zangskar’s Early Inhabitants* (2016); *Collecting Paradise: Buddhist Art of Kashmir and Its Legacies* (2015); “Site Unseen: Approaching a Royal Buddhist Monument of Zangskar (Western Himalayas),” *The Tibet Journal* (2015); and “Mirror Image: Deity and Donor as Vajrasattva,” *History of Religions* (2014).

Almost an Echo of Life: Sponsor Figures in Tucci Paintings and Their Indian Conventions

Writing about the paintings he acquired in the Western Himalayas and Tibet, Giuseppe Tucci observed that “in the most ancient [paintings on cloth] which closely follow the prescriptions of the [Indian] *pata*, the donor’s image is not lacking; he is represented with his family and the officiating lamas . . . Almost an echo of life thus reaches these paintings and speaks with the voice of human desires.” This paper will explore the conventions for representing sponsor figures and officiating lamas in paintings in the exhibition, and their relationship to those employed in eastern Indian sculpture.

Luo Wenhua is Research Fellow at the Palace Museum in Beijing and Director of the Research Center for Tibetan Buddhist Heritage. His main area of research is the art history of Tibetan Buddhism and the artistic relationship between China and Tibet. Since 2008, he has led a team from the Palace Museum that completed field work in Western Sichuan Province (ancient *Kham*) and published *The Ming Dynasty Tibetan Buddhist Murals in the Lhakhang Temples in Minyag District* (Gugong Publications, 2013). Since 2013, his team has collaborated with Jokhang, Lhasa, to inventory, digitize, and establish a database of all the collections of Jokhang. His team also completed the digitization of the murals in Gongkar Chosde Monastery in 2014 and published *Gongkar chosde Monastery: A Milestone of Tibetan Buddhist Art* (Gugong Publication, 2015).

A Turning Point: The Murals of Gongkar Chosde and Khyentse Painting School

Gongkar Chosde Monastery is located seventy kilometers southeast of Lhasa. Its murals represent a significant turning point in Tibetan Buddhist painting in the mid-fifteenth century. A syncretic style exhibiting strong and lavish Chinese influence unexpectedly appeared in the fifteenth-century murals, while most Tibetan artists preferred to follow Nepalese aesthetic tradition. Khyentse Chenmo, leader of a local workshop and a great Tibetan painter, oversaw the production of these paintings. Luckily half of the murals have survived to the present day. The new unique style and renovation initiated by the Monastery have had a lasting influence.

Robert Mayer is University Research Lecturer in Tibetan and Himalayan Studies, The Oriental Institute, University of Oxford, where he has been since 2002, and Research Fellow, Ruhr Universität, Bochum. He is a specialist in the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism, and has

authored a number of books, monographs, and articles, many with his wife and collaborator, Dr. Cathy Cantwell. These include *A Noble Noose of Methods, the Lotus Garland Synopsis: A Mahayoga Tantra and its Commentary*, *Early Tibetan Documents on Phur pa from Dunhuang*, and *The Kilaya Nirvana Tantra and the Vajra Wrath Tantra: Two Texts from the Ancient Tantra Collection*. Currently his main research interest is the early history and pre-history of the gTer ma tradition. Other interests have included indigenous Tibetan religion in relation to Buddhism, proto-Nyingma texts from Dunhuang, early Bon tantrism, and the philology of Tibetan manuscripts.

Geographical and Other Borders in the Symbolism of Padmasambhava

The founder of Tibetan Buddhism, Padmasambhava, was native to Uddiyana, a geographical border region where Tibetan and Indian civilizations were in close proximity. The earliest references discovered at China's Dunhuang caves describe him enriching Indian Tantric Buddhism with indigenous Tibetan symbols, deities, and ritual forms, to create a new Tantric Buddhism. If a Dunhuang text is to be believed, the initial flourishing of his school appears to have been concentrated along Tibet's southern borderlands, rather than in Tibet proper. The narratives describing Padmasambhava are also unique in Tibetan literature in the way they straddle the boundaries of history and ritual. There is probably no one in the Tibetan imagination more consistently associated with the straddling of borders than Padmasambhava, yet also no one in Tibetan religion who inspires more widespread devotion and confidence.

Andrew Quintman is Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Yale University, specializing in the Buddhist traditions of Tibet and the Himalaya. His areas of research include Buddhist literature and history, sacred geography and pilgrimage, and visual cultures of the wider Himalayan region. He is also interested in the religious and literary histories of Tibet's unique southern border communities. His recent book, *The Yogin and the Madman: Reading the Biographical Corpus of Tibet's Great Saint Milarepa* (Columbia University Press, 2014), won the American Academy of Religion's 2014 Award for Excellence in the Study of Religion and the 2015 Heyman Prize for outstanding scholarship from Yale University. In 2010 his new English translation of the *Life of Milarepa* was published by Penguin Classics. He is currently working on two new projects, one exploring Buddhist religious and literary culture in the borderlands of Tibet and Nepal, and the other examining the life of the Buddha through the visual and literary materials associated with Jonang Monastery in western Tibet.

Peripheral Visions: An Indian Buddha in the Tibetan Imaginary

India holds a central place in the story of Buddhism's arrival to Tibet, even as it lies on the geographic periphery of the Himalayan plateau. This paper explores images, texts, and narratives of Buddha Shakyamuni's life from the Tibetan monastery of Jonang Puntsokling, seat of the acclaimed Buddhist master Taranatha (1575–1634). This extraordinary program of literary and visual works, executed by Taranatha in the early seventeenth century and examined by Giuseppe Tucci some three centuries later, projected the presence and prestige of a distinctly Indian Buddha onto the Tibetan landscape.

Moderators:

Adriana Proser is John H. Foster Senior Curator for Traditional Asian Art at Asia Society Museum in New York. A specialist in Chinese art, she has organized and co-organized more than forty exhibitions featuring diverse works from all over Asia, including “Pilgrimage and Buddhist Art.” Proser has also coordinated and served as in-house curator for international loan exhibitions such as “The Buddhist Heritage of Pakistan: Art of Gandhara” and “Gilded Splendor: Treasures of China’s Liao Empire” for Asia Society Museum. She has edited and contributed to several catalogues including *Buddhist Art of Myanmar* (Asia Society Museum and Yale University Press, 2015), *Golden Visions of Densatil* (Asia Society Museum, 2014), and *Pilgrimage and Buddhist Art* (Asia Society Museum and Yale University Press, 2010). Proser was formerly Assistant Curator of East Asian Art at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and has taught East Asian Art History at the University of Pennsylvania, Loyola College in Maryland, and Columbia University.

Gray Tuttle is Leila Hadley Luce Associate Professor of Modern Tibetan Studies at Columbia University. In *Tibetan Buddhists in the Making of Modern China* (Columbia University Press, 2005), he examines the failure of nationalism and race-based ideology to maintain the Tibetan territory of the former Qing empire as integral to the Chinese nation-state. He discusses the critical role of pan-Asian Buddhism in Chinese efforts to hold onto Tibetan regions (one quarter of China’s current territory). His current research project, for a book tentatively titled *Amdo (Qinghai/Gansu): Middle Ground between Lhasa and Beijing*, focuses on Tibetan Buddhist institutional growth from the seventeenth to the twentieth century and how economic growth in the Sino-Tibetan borderlands fueled expansion and renewal of these institutions into the contemporary period. He co-edited *Sources of Tibetan Tradition* for the series *Introduction to Asian Civilizations*, *The Tibetan History Reader*, and *Ethnic Conflict and Protest in Tibet and Xinjiang* (Columbia University Press).

Leonard van der Kuijp is Professor of Tibetan and Himalayan Studies and chairs the Department of South Asian Studies and the Committee on Inner Asian and Altaic Studies at Harvard University. Best known for his studies of Indo-Tibetan Buddhist intellectual history, he is the author of numerous works on Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism. More recent publications include *An Early Tibetan Survey of Buddhist Literature* (with K. Schaeffer, Vol. 64, Harvard Oriental Series, Cambridge, 2008), and *Bcom ldan ral gri (1227–1305) on Buddhist Epistemology and Logic: His Commentary on Dignaga’s Pramanasamuccaya* (with A. McKeown, Wiener Studien zur Tibetologie und Buddhismuskunde, Heft 80, Vienna, 2013). In 1993 van der Kuijp received a MacArthur Fellowship for “pioneering contributions to the study of Tibetan epistemology, biography, and poetry” and in 2016, he received a Guggenheim Fellowship. Prior to coming to Harvard University in 1995, van der Kuijp worked with the Nepal Research Center in Kathmandu, Nepal, and taught at the Free University, Berlin, and the University of Washington, Seattle. In 1999, he helped E. Gene Smith found the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center (now Buddhist Digital Resource Center) and served as president of its board until 2017.