

# Conference “Cultural Flows across the Western Himalaya”

15.–18.04.2009, IIAS, Shimla

Deborah Klimburg-Salter

A symposium entitled “Cultural Flows across the Western Himalaya” was held in Shimla from 15<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> of April, 2009, and jointly sponsored by the Indian Institute of Advanced Study (IIAS), the University of Vienna, and the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) sponsored National Research Network (NFN) “The Cultural History of the Western Himalaya from the 8<sup>th</sup> Century (S98)”. Following high tea, the program began on Wednesday afternoon with the invocation by the Venerable Lochen Tulku Rinpoche, Rin chen bzang po. The participants were welcomed by Peter Ronald de Souza, Director of the IIAS, and the inaugural address was held by Mungekar, Member of the Planning Commission and Chairman of the IIAS, Shimla. The distinguished speakers and the important topic “Heritage Preservation in the Western Himalayas” attracted a large capacity audience and we would like to thank both the fellows and the members of the IIAS, Shimla University, and the state and local governments as well as the interested members of the community who attended this opening program.<sup>1</sup>

The deliberations, chaired by Deborah Klimburg-Salter, began with a short statement from Lochen Tulku Rinpoche regarding the importance of Buddhism and Buddhist monuments in the history of Himachal Pradesh. Deepak Sanan discussed the social and economic changes that have occurred in the last two decades in Himachal Pradesh, and how they affected Buddhist monastic life and therefore the conservation of Buddhist monuments. Laxman Thakur offered a stirring critique of the recent preservation projects undertaken by the Archaeological Survey of India (A.S.I.), and the Nako Research and Preservation Project (NRPP, <http://www.univie.ac.at/nako>), and praised a number of individual initiatives by local communities. Verena Widorn presented a very short summary of the history of the NRPP at Vienna University and introduced the

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<sup>1</sup>For a complete description of the participant’s institutional affiliation see the attached program (page xv).

extensive website which contains all the many scientific reports produced during 4 years of work at Nako. Thus Widorn was able to clarify some of the dates for structural interventions at Nako, which were discussed by Thakur and which in fact had taken place before the NRPP began.

Karel Kriz presented work in progress demonstrating “The Virtual Reconstruction of Nako”, a Google Earth based interactive online application that allows the user to explore reconstructed virtual space (CHAPTER 14).

The program held on the following three days was organized according to the structure of the trans-disciplinary research network (NFN), funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) and housed at the University of Vienna, which consists of six sub-projects, each with a distinctive disciplinary orientation (<http://www.univie.ac.at/chwh>). The NFN works closely with the Research Platform CIRDIS (Center for Interdisciplinary Research and Documentation of Inner and South Asia, <http://www.univie.ac.at/cirdis>) funded by the University of Vienna. CIRDIS has initiated the Bon manuscript research unit, the results of which were also presented at the symposium.

### **Panel 1: New Research in Geography—Mapping Cultural History**

The panel on Thursday was chaired by Karel Kriz, who is also the Speaker of the NFN sub-project “Cultural History Information System” (CHIS, <http://www.univie.ac.at/chis>). Kriz focused on the goals and objectives of the CHIS, an application that is being developed at the University of Vienna’s Department of Geography and Regional Research within the context of the NFN (see CHAPTER 1). This research comprises a collaborative spatially enabled system for archiving, analyzing, and visualizing datasets of cultural relevance. William Cartwright spoke about mapping the past and the present. He gave an overview of the development of mapping in a broader sense and then focused on the current scientific situation in the fields of cartography and geo-information science (see CHAPTER 2). Pradeep Srivastava outlined the current situation of topographic mapping and remote sensing in India.

In the afternoon a session was held on applying mapping tools in cultural history. David Schobesberger and Ben Nausner presented a GPS data acquisition tool that was specially developed for the purpose of data capture in field research related to the goals of cultural history (see CHAPTER 3). In the course of a hands-on workshop all conference participants were invited to use the acquisition devices and to capture geo-data (points,

lines and areas) of interest (FIGURE 3.3). After the field work the collected data was visualized in Google Earth, and the relevance as well as the efficiency of the tool was analyzed.

## **Panel 2: Philology and History—Manuscripts, Inscriptions, Trade**

The panel was chaired by Helmut Krasser, Speaker of the NFN sub-project on philosophy. In the paper “Manuscripts en Route” Helmut Tauscher, Speaker of the NFN’s sub-project “Tibetan Manuscripts”, discussed possible streams of interdependence between the various Tibetan traditions of manuscript transmission and routes along which manuscripts might have travelled before they formed those collections that served as bases for the compilation of the various Kanjurs (see CHAPTER 12). As a point of departure he analyzed the proto-canonical manuscript collection of Gondhla (Lahul) with regard to its contents and structure. Thus such questions were considered as which versions of the respective texts it contains, and he compared it with representatives of the two commonly accepted groups of Kanjurs, the Tshal pa and the Them spangs ma group, with the Kanjur of Phugdrag, as well as with other proto-canonical material and the catalogues from imperial Central Tibet (*IHan kar ma*, *’Phang thang ma*).

This comparison showed a strong mobility of manuscripts all over pre-14<sup>th</sup> century Tibet. However, there was a certain predominance of regional travel. Although those versions of texts are predominant at Gondhla that later served as the basis for the Kanjur of Them spangs ma, other known and hitherto unknown traditions are represented as well. A similar situation is to be expected also in other monastic or administrative centres along the main pilgrimage and trade routes, so that none of the Kanjur transmissions follows a homogeneous tradition, and it will be very difficult, if not impossible, to single out all the diverse strands of transmission that mingle in the various Kanjurs.

In the absence of Kurt Tropper, Cristina Scherrer-Schaub read the paper on epigraphic palimpsests. Both scholars participate in the sub-project on inscriptions (<http://www.univie.ac.at/Tibetan-inscriptions>), led at the time of the Shimla Conference by Ernst Steinkellner, and now by Kurt Tropper. Tropper drew attention to epigraphic palimpsests in the Tibetan cultural realm (see CHAPTER 13). Presenting clear examples from different regions and periods, he argued that such palimpsests are probably much more common than is generally assumed. The implications with

regard to dating epigraphic sources and interpreting their contents were also addressed.

**Panel 3: Places, Objects and Travellers—Art along Pilgrimage Routes**

This panel was chaired by Deborah Klimburg-Salter, who is the Speaker of the NFN sub-project on art history and is Director of the NFN. All three speakers in this panel belong to the Art History sub-project and presented the results of that aspect of their research that investigates the impact of the trade and pilgrimage routes in specific areas of the Western Himalayas. The goal was to illustrate how these long distance exchange systems affected the arts of the area. Verena Widorn focused on the ancient pilgrimage routes in Lahul used by both Buddhist and Hindu pilgrims, and demonstrated a certain tendency towards the emergence of what has been called “syncretistic ritual practises in these areas” (see CHAPTER 7). Erika Forte concentrated on pilgrimage to Khotan from China and from Khotan in the direction of India. She summarized the literary sources for this phenomenon and showed a small selection of images from her recent visit to the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg where images from Khotan could closely be identified with art works of the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> century coming from northern Pakistan (see CHAPTER 6). Anna Filigenzi discussed a very similar, even parallel, problem on the basis of the evidence from northern Pakistan, identified in the ancient texts as Uḍḍiyāna, the home of Padmasambhava. Filigenzi’s paper (read by Widorn) showed some images closely related to those found in Pakistan, which relate closely to those that were shown by Forte, thus drawing attention to the close connections between the Buddhist art produced in northern Pakistan and Khotan in the 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> centuries (see CHAPTER 5).

**Panel 4: Buddhist Philosophy in Kashmir**

This panel was chaired by Helmut Krasser, Speaker of the NFN sub-project on philosophy. The four papers shed light on various topics related to Buddhist philosophy and Kashmir. Kashmir was especially relevant to the adoption of Indian Buddhism by the Tibetans as many of the Buddhist Sanskrit works were translated into Tibetan in the country’s capital city Anupamapura, today’s Śrīnagar. The first lecture by Parul Mukherji dealt with aesthetics and its relation to philosophy in Abhinavagupta’s work *Abhinavabhāratī* (CHAPTER 8). Then Patrick McAllister explained Ratnakīrti’s theory of language as presented in his *Aphosiddhi* (see CHAPTER

10). Vincent Eltschinger presented newly discovered works of the “second Dharmakīrti,” the Kashmiri Śāṅkaranandana, and his relation to his contemporary, Abhinavagupta (see CHAPTER 11). Finally, Anne MacDonald explained the transmission and translation of Buddhist texts in Śrīnagar (see CHAPTER 9).

**Panel 5: Bon in the Western Himalaya** This panel was chaired by Charles Ramble, who is developing Bon manuscript research at CIRDIS, Vienna University. On Saturday Samten Karmay presented a paper on an unpublished edict of *lha bla ma* Ye shes ’od (947–1024) who ruled over some parts of Western Tibet in the 10<sup>th</sup> century CE (see CHAPTER 16). Later in his life the king became a Buddhist monk. The text of his edict was recently discovered in the private library of the fifth Dalai Lama (1617–1682) in Drepung Monastery, Tibet. The edict sheds light on the history of Buddhist monastic establishments and the question of religious tolerance vis-à-vis the Bon religion in the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

In the presentation “The Visual Representation of the Bon/Chos Community in Tabo in the 10<sup>th</sup> Century”, Deborah Klimburg-Salter suggests the possible presence of a Bon community in Tabo in the period in question (see CHAPTER 15). This was followed by a presentation of unknown Bon rituals: “The Real Bonpo Atmosphere: Remarks on Two Rituals for Summoning Good Fortune (*g.yang ’gug*)” by Charles Ramble (see CHAPTER 18). The presentation provided illustrations from his fieldwork together with an anthropological analysis. Phuntshog Nyima, a native of Dolpo, Nepal, then presented “Religion and Culture of the Dolpo Himalaya”, describing the religious customs and beliefs of the Dolpo people (see CHAPTER 17). The Bon panel was concluded with a presentation of “Manuscripts and Wall-Paintings from the Caves of Mustang, ca. 14<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> Century” by Charles Ramble. An impressive amount of Bon manuscripts were part of this discovery in Mustang.

Finally, Cristina Scherrer-Schaub shortly summarized the three days of sessions and discussions. She drew attention to the shared underlying structural and theoretical approaches in all of the presentations each of which essentially extended the boundaries of their traditional discipline. She highlighted the innovative character of terms and conclusions which could be achieved as a result of analyzing specific cultural and historical features with a transdisciplinary methodology (see her comments following CHAPTER 18).

All participants were in agreement that the success of the symposium certainly resulted in part from the very real generosity and intellectual interest of all of the staff of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study in Shimla under the direction of de Souza and with the active cooperation of Shashank Thakur. Tauscher offered a vote of thanks to the staff of the IAS, and Klimburg-Salter thanked the NFN staff from the University of Vienna, particularly Michael Zrenner, Linda Lojda, and Matthias Pfisterer, a representative of the sub-project “Pre-Islamic Numismatic History”, led by Michael Alram from the Museum of Art History, Vienna, for their support in the organisation of the conference and the seamless cooperation with the IAS during the conference. The presence of so many distinguished scholars at each and every one of the sessions enabled a very lively discussion, the benefits of which are mirrored in this publication.

The editors express their sincere thanks to the Austrian Academy of Sciences for accepting this volume.

At the last meeting of the conference, Helmut Krasser, with characteristic generosity, volunteered to edit this volume, intended to summarize the 6 years of our collaboration as a research team within the NFN, thus continuing his dynamic role as colleague and mentor in the Austrian Academy of Sciences and the University of Vienna. He possessed that rare combination of gifts—a precise and independent scholar who also took pleasure in encouraging the creative efforts of his students and colleagues. All of us who collaborated with him in the NFN and in this publication are greatly in his debt.

## Conference

# “Cultural Flows across the Western Himalaya”

15.04.–19.04.2009, IIAS, Shimla

**Wednesday, 15.04.2009**

**17.00–19.00 Heritage Preservation**

Chair: Deborah Klimburg-Salter

Opening blessings by Lochen Tulku Rinpoche (Rin chen bzang po, Abbot, Kyi monastery)

Greetings by Prof. Peter Ronald de Souza, Director of the IIAS

The importance of heritage conservation of Buddhist monuments in the Himalaya (Lochen Tulku Rinpoche, Kyi monastery)

Heritage preservation in context of contemporary economic and social development (Deepak Sanan, Shimla)

The Preservation of Cultural Heritage in the Western Himalaya: Current Immediate Concerns and Future Strategies (Laxman Thakur, Shimla)

Nako Research and Preservation Project (NRPP) (Verena Widorn, Vienna)

Virtual reconstruction of Nako (Karel Kriz, Vienna)

**19.30 Dinner**

**Thursday, 16.04.2009**

**PANEL 1: New Research in Geography – Mapping Cultural History**

Chair: Karel Kriz

**08.30–10.00 Panel 1, Sessions A)**

Mapping the past and the present (William Cartwright, Melbourne)

Perspective on the mapping and imaging situation in India (Pradeep Srivastava, Ahmedabad)

Goals and objectives of the Cultural History Information System (Karel Kriz, Vienna)

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University of Vienna, Center for Interdisciplinary Research and Documentation,  
Austrian Science Fund / The Cultural History of the Western Himalaya,  
Indian Institute of Advanced Study Shimla

**(10.00–13.00 Radhakrishnan Memorial Lecture by Vice-President of India)**

**13.00–14.00 Lunch**

**14.00–15.30 Panel 1, Session B)**

**Applying mapping tools in Cultural History**

(Karel Kriz, David Schobesberger, Ben Nausner, Vienna)

**15.30–16.00 Tea-break**

**16.00–17.30:**

**PANEL 2: Philology and History: Manuscripts, Inscriptions, Trade**

Chair: Helmut Krasser

Kanjur Manuscripts en route (Helmut Tauscher, Vienna)

On epigraphic palimpsests and similar phenomena

(Kurt Tropper, Vienna; paper read by Cristina Scherrer-Schaub, Paris)

**19.30 or 20.00 Dinner**

**Friday, 17.04.2009**

**PANEL 3: Places, objects and travellers. Art along pilgrimage routes**

Chair: Deborah Klimburg-Salter

**10.00–11.30 Panel 3, Sessions A)**

On the reconstruction of ancient Buddhist pilgrimage routes through Lahaul (Verena Widorn, Vienna)

A journey “to the land on the other side.” Pilgrims and pilgrimage in Khotan (Xinjiang, China) (Erika Forte, Vienna)

**11.30–12.00 Tea-break**

**12.00–13.30 Panel 3, Sessions B)**  
Reinvented landscapes. Art, faith and trade routes in and around Uddiyana in the 7<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> century CE (Anna Filigenzi, Vienna)

**13.30–14.30 Lunch**

**PANEL 4: Buddhist Philosophy in Kashmir**  
Chair: Helmut Krasser

**14.30–16.00 Panel 4, Sessions A)**  
Understanding *anukṛtīvāda* in Abhinavabharati (Parul Mukherji, Delhi)  
Determination in the *apoha* theory of Ratnakīrti (Patrick Mc Allister, Vienna)

**16.00–16.30 Tea-break**

**16.30–18.00 Panel 4, Sessions B)**  
Recent news from a Kashmirian Dharmakīrti (Vincent Eltschinger, Vienna)

Transmission and translation of Buddhist texts in Śrīnagar:  
A Madhyamaka example (Anne MacDonald, Vienna)

Discussant: Lobsang Shastri (Dharamsala)

**19.30 Dinner**

**Saturday, 18.04.2009**

**PANEL 5: Bon in the Western Himalaya**  
Chair: Charles Ramble

**10.00–11.30 Panel 5, Sessions A)**  
More edicts of *Lha bla ma Ye shes 'od* (Samten Karmay, Paris)

The Visual Representation of the *Bon/Chos* community in Tabo in the 10<sup>th</sup> century (Deborah Klimburg-Salter, Vienna)

**11.30–12.00 Tea-break**

**12.00–13.30 Panel 5, Sessions B)**

“The real Bonpo atmosphere”: remarks on two rituals for summoning good fortune (*gyang gug*) (Charles Ramble, Oxford)  
*Gangs can dol po'i chos rig* (“The religious study of snowy Dolpo”) (Phuntso Nyima, Varanasi)

**13.30–14.30 Lunch**

**14.30–15.00** Manuscripts and wall-paintings from the caves of Mustang, ca. 14<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> century (Charles Ramble, Oxford)

Commentator: Lupon Trinley Nyima (Dholanji)

**15.00–16.30 Summary of the Symposium and final discussion, plans for publication by**

Cristina Scherrer-Schaub (Paris)

Closing blessings by Geshe Sonam Wangdu (Abbot, Tabo monastery)

**16.30–17.00** Closing tea

**19.30 Dinner**

**Sunday, 19.04.2009** Departure



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