

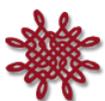
New Directions in Himalayan Studies

**A Joint Berkeley - CNRS
Workshop**

March 1-3, 2019

370 Dwinelle Hall

University of California, Berkeley



INSTITUTE for SOUTH ASIA STUDIES
University of California, Berkeley



Centre
d'études
himalayennes



Himalayan Studies at UC Berkeley in partnership with the Centre d'Etudes Himalayennes (CEH) of the National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS) in France, and with funding support from the France Berkeley Fund, is proud to host a three-day workshop at UC Berkeley that brings together academics and graduate students from both institutions working on the Himalayan region in the Humanities and Social Sciences. The goal of this broadly configured workshop is to develop Himalayan Studies at UC Berkeley as well as explore specific forms of collaboration and lay the ground for developing research partnerships beyond.

Conveners: Alexander von Rospatt (UCB) and Stéphane Gros (CEH)

Speakers:

Kris Anderson (UCB)
Olivia Aubriot (CEH)
Zack Beer (UCB)
Daniela Berti (CEH)
Tracy Burnett (UCB)
Donagh Coleman (UCB)
Yoshika Crider (UCB)
Jake Dalton (UCB)
Ryan Damron (UCB)
Stéphane Gros (CEH)
Fernand Meyer (CEH)
Kunsang Namgyal-Lama (CEH)
John "Zim" Pickens (UCB)
Fabien Provost (CEH)

Caroline Sarrazin (CEH)
Nicolas Sihlé (CEH)
Joëlle Smadja (CEH)
Gérard Toffin (CEH)
Romain Valadaud (CEH)
Alexander von Rospatt (UCB)

Discussants:

Elizabeth Allison (CIIS)
Patricia Berger (UCB)
Lawrence Cohen (UCB)
David Germano (UVA)
David Gray (Santa Clara U)
Isha Ray (UCB)
Nicolas Sihlé (CEH)

Sponsors:

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Agenda

Friday, March 1 : 1:30 - 6:45

1:30: Welcomes and Opening Remarks by

Munis Faruqi, Director of the Institute of South Asia Studies

Keiko Yamanaka on behalf of the Himalayan Initiative at UC Berkeley

The Conveners: Alexander von Rospatt, UC Berkeley, and Stéphane Gros, CNRS

Religious Practices Across Tibet: 2:00-6:45

2:00-4:15 | Session 1: Chair and Discussant: David Gray (Santa Clara U)

2:00-2:30 Fernand Meyer (CEH): *"Extracting Essences." From Materia Medica to Meditative Visualizations in Tibetan Life-sustaining and Rejuvenation Techniques*

2:30-3:00 Zach Beer (UCB): *Controversy and Completion Stage: Analyzing Two "Indian" Commentaries on the Guhyagarbha Tantra*

3:00-3:30 John "Zim" Pickens (UCB): *The Rise of the Guru in Indian and Tibetan Foundational Practices*

3:30-4:15 Discussion

4:15-4:30 *Coffee Break*

4:30-6:45 | Session 2: Chair and Discussant: David Germano (UVA)

4:30-5:00 Jake P. Dalton (UCB): *Observations on An Early Rite of Āveśa from Dunhuang*

5:00-5:30 Nicolas Sihlé (CEH): *From Indic Gaṇacakra to Tibetan Tsok: the Diverse Logics of Commensality in a Key Ritual of Tantric Buddhism*

5:30-6:00 Donagh Coleman (UCB): *Tibetan Buddhist Thugs Dam Deaths and the Dynamic of Presence and Absence*

6:00-6:45 Discussion

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Saturday, March 2: 9:00 - 6:00

Water Management and Use: 9:00 - 12:15

9:00-10:30 | Session 1: Chair and Discussant: Isha Ray (UCB)

9:00-9:30 Yoshika Crider (UCB): *Safe Drinking Water for Community-Managed Systems in Rural Nepal*

9:30-10:00 Romain Valadaud (CEH): *Water Users Associations: Towards Change or of Reproduction of Social Structures? The Case Study of Sitaganj Branch Canal in Sunsari District*

10:00-10:30 Discussion

10:30-10:45 *Coffee Break*

10:45-12:15 | Session 2: Chair and Discussant: Isha Ray (UCB)

10:45-11:15 Caroline Sarrazin (CEH): *What Governance for Nepalese Lowland Water Bodies? Diversity of Representations, Conflicts and Practices in Water Management*

11:15-11:45 Olivia Aubriot (CEH): *How to "Read" an Irrigation System?*

11:45-12:15 Discussion

12:15 *Lunch*

Changing Natures: 2:00 - 6:00

2:00-4:15 | Session 1: Chair and Discussant: Elizabeth Allison (CIIS)

2:00-2:30 Tracy Burnett (UCB): *Seeing with Yaks: a Rebuttal of Western Land Management in the Tibetan Context*

2:30-3:00 Stéphane Gros (CEH): *The Politics of Conversion: Changing Environments and Religious Landscapes in Northwest Yunnan (China)*

3:00-3:30 Joëlle Smadja (CEH): *Territories to Protect a "Pristine Nature": National Parks in the Himalayas, New Places of Power Where Multiple Legitimacies Compete*

3:30-4:15 Discussion

4:15-4:30 *Coffee Break*

4:30-6:00 | Session 2: Chair and Discussant: Lawrence Cohen (UCB)

4:30-5:00 Daniela Berti (CEH): *Ruling on Nature: Rivers and Animals as Legal Persons in Uttarakhand*

5:00-5:30 Fabien Provost (CEH): *Forensic Medicine in India: Reasoning on Bodies in Their Environment*

5:30-6:00 Discussion

New Directions in Himalayan Studies

Sunday, March 3: 9:00 - 13:00

Newar Society, Religion and Art: 9:00-13:00

9:00-10:30 | Session 1: Chair and Discussant: Nicolas Sihlé (CEH)

9:00-9:30 Kris Anderson (UCB): *Raising the Dead and Saving Them: Transformation and Adaptation in Hybrid Funerary Manuals of the Sarvadurgatipariśodhana tantra*

9:30-10:00 Ryan Damron (UCB): *Pilgrimage, Piety, and Politics: The Life and Career of Vanaratna in Fifteenth-Century Nepal*

10:00-10:30 Discussion

10:30-10:45 Coffee Break

10:45-13:00 | Session 2: Chair and Discussant: Patricia Berger (UCB)

10:45-11:15 Alexander von Rospatt (UCB): *Iconic Rituals and ritual Icons. The iconography, use and function of Uṣṇīṣavijayā icons in Nepalese old age rituals*

11:15-11:45 Kunsang Namgyal-Lama (CEH): *Lakṣacaitya Paubhās: Pictorial Representations of a Newar Buddhist Ritual Performance*

11:45-12:15 Gérard Toffin (CEH): *A Religious Drama in Nepal. Divine Masks and Ritual Dances of the Svetkālī Troupe (Nardevī Temple, Kathmandu)*

12:15-13:00 Discussion

List of Abstracts

Friday, March 1

2:00-4:15 | Panel: Religious Practices Across Tibet (I)

Chair and Discussant: David Gray (Santa Clara U)

Fernand Meyer: “Extracting Essences”: From Materia Medica to Meditative Visualizations in Tibetan Life-sustaining and Rejuvenation Techniques

Tibetan techniques known as *bcud-len* go clearly back to ancient Indian procedures called *rasayana* in Sanskrit. Already around the beginning of the Common Era, medical treatises, which became classics of Ayurveda, describe a number of such procedures, considered as constituting one of the eight branches of scholarly medicine, and aiming at rejuvenation and even at immortality. In Tibet, medical literature inherited this trend, but the concept of *rasayana* has been reinterpreted and practices of *bcud-len* extend largely the medical domain. They relate to a cluster of linked notions, images and metaphorical epistemology about body metabolism, cosmology, natural environment, gross and subtle aspects of matter, vital but changing organic fluids *versus* perennial mineral essences, etc. As such, the tradition of *bcud-len* in Tibet has developed a large variety of techniques, differing in their procedures and aims, at the confluence of medicine, alchemy, asceticism, ritual and yogic psychophysiology. The paper intends to document the Indian filiation as well as the reinterpretation and diversification found in Tibetan *bcud-len* practices.

Zach Beer: Controversy and Completion Stage: Analyzing Two “Indian” Commentaries on the Guhyagarbha Tantra

This paper aims to shed light on the early exegetical tradition of the Guhyagarbha Tantra (GGT), a body of literature that recent studies have indicated is crucial for understanding the origins of both Mahāyoga and Atiyoga/Rdzogs chen. Specifically, it will look at passages from two GGT commentaries purporting to be translations of Indian originals: the *Spar khab* attributed to Vilāsavajra and the *Rgya cher ‘grel pa* attributed to Sūryasiṃhprabhā. These two texts figured into complex polemical controversies between Nyingma scholars—with Longs chen rab ‘byams and his followers on one side and the adherents of the Zur tradition on the other—as well as political controversies that drew in the likes of the great Pu hrangs kings Ye shes ‘od and Zhi ba ‘od. The issue at the center of these disputes regarding the commentaries’ authorship and provenance will be addressed. While it might not be possible to determine these with precision, an examination of the two commentaries’ contents, it will be shown, reveals a great deal about the individual texts’ rather distinct positions in the development of GGT hermeneutics. Special attention will be placed on the systems of initiation and scriptural doxography described, as these provide telling signs of the texts’ chronological appearance. More crucially, the paper will examine those passages in the commentaries that treat procedures deemed by the later tradition to entail the “completion stage” (*rdzogs rim*), highlighting a transition from a sexual rite to the complex body-internal technologies emerging in the wake of the *Mukhāgama*. One key mode of analysis will be to investigate how the phrase ‘great perfection’ is used in

both texts, tracing a corresponding shift in valence from a ritual moment in the early Mahāyoga tantras to a separate territory of doctrine and praxis in later discourse that will make room for the emerging Anuyoga-styled subtle energy practices. The paper will thus argue that a historical-critical reading of the *Spar khab* and *Rgya cher 'grel pa* reveals a tentative chronology for their emergence and moreover contributes substantially to our understanding of GGT hermeneutics within the wider scope of early tantric doctrinal developments in Tibet.

John Pickens: The Rise of the Guru in Indian and Tibetan Foundational Practices

The Foundational Practices (Skt. *ādikarma*, Tib. *las dang po pa*) are a genre of ritual compendia that flourished in Late Indian Buddhism. Three prominent Sanskrit compendia were composed in the vicinity of *Vikramaśīla* Monastery in the 11th-12th centuries. Among these texts, the *Ādikarmapradīpa* places the most importance on the *gurumaṇḍala* rite, a method for worshipping one's guru. In 12th-century Tibet, the famous scholar Sonam Tsemo composed *Las dang po pa'i bya ba* — a work clearly imitating the Indian genre, yet showing the development of further practices oriented towards the guru, or lama. The relevant ritual manuals examined here thus suggest that the rise of the *gurumaṇḍala* practice contributed to the development of a broader set of ritualized meditations in Tibet that focused on the lama.

4:30-6:45 | Panel: Religious Practices Across Tibet (II)

Chair and Discussant: David Germano (UVA)

Jake P. Dalton (UCB): Observations on An Early Rite of Āveśa from Dunhuang

This paper will examine a short passage from the *Tattvasaṃgraha-sādhnopāyikā* (De nyid 'dus pa' bsgrub pa'i thabs), a tantric ritual manual preserved in several copies from Dunhuang. The passage in question describes the practitioner merging with the *jñānasattva*, here termed the *samayamudrā*. By comparing the passage's details to related points in the *Sarvatathāgata-tattvasaṃgraha* itself, the paper will argue that the installation of the *samaya* at the practitioner's heart represents the key moment in this early Yoga tantra system.

Nicolas Sihlé (CEH): From Indic Gaṇacakra to Tibetan Tsok: The Diverse Logics of Commensality in a Key Ritual of Tantric Buddhism

Drawing on a selection of sources, both second-hand (primarily textual studies on the Indo-Tibetan tantric tradition) and first-hand (ethnographic data from Mustang and Amdo), I examine the place of commensality in a key ritual practice of this religious tradition: the *gaṇacakra* (Skt.) or *tsok* (Tib. *tshogs*) — variously translated by Western scholars, for instance as “tantric feast”. The argument I wish to make is in no way historical; it is about the diversity of logics in a given ritual form, including within a single instance — depending on the actors considered, as well as on the disciplinary looking-glass one employs.

Donagh Coleman (UCB): Tibetan Buddhist *Thugs Dam* Deaths and the Dynamic of Presence and Absence

In the Tibetan Buddhist tradition of *tukdam* (*thugs dam*), advanced meditators die in meditative equipoise, where their bodies show no signs of decay for days or even weeks after their clinical deaths. From the Tibetan Buddhist point of view, the meditators are resting in a subtle state of consciousness and so are still in the process of dying; yet according to current biomedical and legal definitions they are dead. My presentation will introduce tantric Tibetan Buddhist understandings of the death process and *tukdam*, and juxtapose these with biomedical understandings. The phenomenon disrupts Western categories of life and death, mind and body, and offers a focal point through which to explore such delineations, and different cultural bodies with their distinctive death processes.

In holding off death, *tukdam* speaks to deep existential concerns over presence and absence. Drawing on anthropology, religious studies, and film theory, my presentation will then also look at the phenomenon in terms of this fundamental dynamic of presence and absence.

Tukdam is venerated as a great spiritual accomplishment, with the bodies of the meditators serving as focal points for devotion. The concrete visibility of *tukdam* carries an important religious symbolic function, and in recent years many such deaths have been filmed or photographed and even posted online by devotees. A visual anthropological approach seems apt for exploring the subject, and the complexities of presence/absence, representation, and the use of images and video as part of contemporary religious practice that we here encounter. I'm also a professional documentary filmmaker with several past films from the Tibetan world, and have been working on a film on *tukdam* concurrent with my academic research. My spoken presentation will be structured around video-clips and images from my documentary work-in-progress.

Saturday, March 2

9:00-10:30 | Panel: Water Management and Use (I)

Chair and Discussant: Isha Ray (UCB)

Yoshika Crider (UCB): Safe Drinking Water for Community-Managed Systems in Rural Nepal

Only 27% of the population of Nepal has safe water access, as defined within the Sustainable Development Goal framework, with notable disparities between population subgroups. For example, 34% of the urban versus 25% of the rural population uses drinking water sources that are categorized as meeting target criteria. Promotion of household-level safe water products has been the primary strategy for provision of safe drinking water in communities without safe water access, however this approach has notable limitations. The daily burden of treatment falls on the household, often to women and girls, and products must be maintained or repurchased, a separate added task for busy, low-income households. As an alternative, system-level treatment technologies may have the potential to reduce this burden on households by treating water before it is collected at the tap. In-line, passive chlorination technologies may be especially appealing for small, rural systems, which often have limited technical and managerial capacity for water system management. Furthermore, residual levels of chlorine protect drinking water from recontamination during distribution and storage, an important benefit where water is intermittently supplied, a common feature of small, piped water systems.

Within a larger rural water system improvement project in the Mid-Western Development Region of Nepal, we evaluate the effectiveness of 2 system-level chlorination technologies across 6 small piped water systems (<50 households each) managed by community water user committees. In these remote communities, ceramic household filters have been intensively promoted by a local NGO and are widely used to treat and store drinking water. However, due to factors such as inadequate maintenance and poor product integrity, household water quality still often fails to meet health-based standards and places users at risk for waterborne illness. Through systematic chlorine monitoring and water quality testing, this study evaluates whether in-line chlorination technologies consistently improve water quality within small, rural water systems serving communities with a relatively high baseline knowledge of safe water practices. Through household surveys, we explore additional determinants of sustained effectiveness, including end-user acceptability.

Romain Valadaud: Water Users Associations: Towards Change or of Reproduction of Social Structures? The Case Study of Sitaganj Branch Canal in Sunsari District

In this paper, we are hoping to shed some light on how natural resources users groups can contribute to the change or the reproduction of social relations of power, through the lenses of Critical Realism (Archer 2010). This school of social science improves the analytical depth of the study of the relation between structure and agency. If it agrees with the dialectical view of the constructivists, it however sees agents as potentially

able to reflectively think about and purposely act on the social structures constraining them. Such a theoretical framework is used to look at WUAs in the eastern Tarai. In Sunsari District, most of the irrigation systems, previously run by the government, have been handed over to farmers' users groups called WUAs. But, in rural parts of this region of Nepal, patronage networks still have a strong hold over the population of farmers (Sugden 2013). We argue in this paper that, in this context, powerful actors are much more able to use to their own advantage the weak implementation efforts of government officers in order to comfort the traditional power relations that the participatory reforms aim to weaken. Reflecting socioeconomic inequalities, the WUAs of our case study have become an arena of competition between patronage networks, battling for an access to irrigation budget and social status. Beyond irrigation management, WUAs have been transformed, through the prism of the Nepalese political rationality, into local political institutions. This "evolution" threatens the sustainability of irrigation infrastructures, as well as it has increased the spatial inequalities in access to irrigation water. Such transformation invites us to think about way not to suppress the inherent political dimension of user groups, but rather to think of new institutional forms including this dimension and still working toward a fair and sustainable management of natural resources.

10:45-12:15 | Panel: Water Management and Use (II)

Chair and Discussant: Isha Ray (UCB)

Caroline Sarrazin: What Governance for Nepalese Lowland Water Bodies? Diversity of Representations, Conflicts and Practices in Water Management

In the southeastern part of Nepal, Tarai inhabitants living in rural areas use *pokhāri* – water bodies of various sizes, ranging from ponds to large basins, – as part of their livelihood strategy for various functions and uses: fish farming for economic reasons; for water security for environmental protection, mainly against flooding and fires; for domestic needs as well as religious and symbolic practices. For generations *pokhāri* have played a central role in Tarai villages and can still be found, as is the case in Sunsari and Saptari districts where my fieldwork was based for one year. However, the management of these 'hydrosocial territories' that combine the geophysical characteristics of water and social challenges, has changed in accordance with global institutional discourses targeted towards the economic advantages of *pokhāri* by developing intensive fish farming.

Based on the 230 *pokhāri* located in the two districts, I propose to compare – from a political ecology perspective – the diversity of the representations of institutional actors and local practices in order to identify factors of conflict, as well as sociospatial injustices in terms of water access, property rights and the influence of local management authority. My analysis will therefore focus on social vulnerabilities through the effects of privatization on the use of *pokhāri* and related trouble. I will also highlight forms of silent resistance as an alternative response from villagers to defending *pokhāri* as a common resource, and to reasserting the value of collective water management practices.

Olivia Aubriot: How to “Read” an Irrigation System?

I propose to go back to an article I published in French in the year 2000 under this title. It presented my methodology and the approach used in the study of so-called “traditional” irrigation systems in Nepal. I showed that by analyzing the spatial organization of the physical structure of the network and that of the water distribution of these systems, it is possible to decipher elements that refer to questions of resource access and to the logic that prevails in water sharing. My return to this article confirms the prerequisite followed at that time: to consider water management as a trace of the history of social relations. It also validates the conception of a technique as a social fact and reinforces the idea that the representation of the subject under study orients the approach used. I will therefore go from water management – considered as a social construct – to the co-construction of water-society and the constant interaction between water management and the evolution of society. I will show that technical and institutional changes reveal power relations on different scales, and therefore that the “reading” of irrigation systems refers to social changes which go beyond the local level.

2:00-4:15 | Panel: Changing Natures (I)

Chair and Discussant: Elizabeth Allison (CIIS)

Tracy Burnett (UCB): Seeing with Yaks: a Rebuttal of Western Land Management in the Tibetan Context

This paper employs published literature, immersion of the researcher, and interviews with Tibetan nomads to generate a new understanding of the Tibetan environment. Rather than acknowledge the “environment” as a coherent object lacking agency, this paper identifies the “environment” as a lump term for an assemblage of personalities who have direct relationships with Tibetan nomads. This assemblage has been shown in other studies to include deities and humans; this paper makes the case that yaks—and other co-domestic animals—fit the bill as well. From this grounding conception of the environment, the paper then explains why the imported practices from western rangeland management of measuring land quality, establishing carrying capacity, excluding livestock from land, selling unproductive livestock, exterminating predators and competing foragers, and breeding for docility are incoherent in the contrasting cultural context.

Stéphane Gros: The Politics of Conversion: Changing Environments and Religious Landscapes in Northwest Yunnan (China)

Over the last twenty years, various large-scale environmental protection projects and successive economic development policies have proved to be conflicting driving forces behind change in northwest Yunnan province, China: new economic opportunities for some, various forms of marginalization for numerous others. Based on the case of the Dulong River valley in Gongshan County, this paper addresses the long-term impact of socioeconomic changes linked to environmental policies and poverty alleviation programs, which resulted most notably in the prohibition of shifting cultivation, increased dependence on government subsidies, the reduction of traditional knowledge transmission, and the significant increase in labor migrations and female

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marriage migration. The working hypothesis is that the various marginalizing factors and “livelihood conversions” experienced by the Drung people over the last few decades can be correlated with the progression of “religious conversions” to Christianity, and to pervasive neglect of traditional ritual practices, but also to an increase in the number of suicides. To shed some light on this correlation, the paper highlights on the one hand how a set of factors led to a disruption of cultural references and modes of relations to the environment, and on the other hand how changes in the religious landscape and the incidence of voluntary death can be understood on the basis of a cultural logic.

Joëlle Smadja: Territories to Protect a “Pristine Nature”: National Parks in the Himalayas, New Places of Power Where Multiple Legitimacies Compete

Since the 1970s, dozens of national parks have been set up in the Himalayan range and has thereby led to a spatial reconfiguration. These territories, created to protect “nature,” exert great power in the areas they control and where they have supplanted state organizations: a large part of resource management, social organization, development of the region and governance falls to them. They are controlled by the army both on their border and inside, and in India foresters in charge of their management have extensive legal power. The power of these national parks which is legitimized by the need to protect endangered species can be strengthened and instrumentalized by actors who associate the purity of nature with the religious space (like the *beyul*), the nation (in the case of Hindu ultra-nationalists), and who aim—whatever the case—to drive out certain categories of the population from these territories devoted to a “pristine nature.” These national parks are therefore territories where conflicts over legitimacy unfold opposing the rights of wild animals, farmers and herders, tourists, foresters, etc. My contribution illustrates this with several examples of national parks in the Himalayan range, in Nepal and India.

4:30-6:00 | Panel: Changing Natures (II)

Chair and Discussant: Lawrence Cohen (UCB)

Daniela Berti: Ruling on Nature: Rivers and Animals as Legal Persons in Uttarakhand

Though previously addressed in legal history, the question of attributing legal status to ‘nature’ (including both the environment and animals) has recently taken on a new dimension since the law in various countries has granted the status of ‘legal person’ to natural resources (rivers, mountains, glaciers) as well as to animals. These laws not only draw on ecological or scientific findings and the legal or ethical arguments these findings raise among environmental lawyers and animal right activists, but they also stem from and refer to specific conflicts on which courts have had to decide. In this contribution I discuss three court cases filed at the High Court of Uttarakhand (Indian Himalayas), which show different logics at work behind the link (or the absence of a link) between the idea of nature as a legal person and the principle of responsibility, and how legal and religious arguments may sometimes be combined.

Fabien Provost: Forensic Medicine in India: Reasoning on Bodies in Their Environment

In India as elsewhere, the phrase “forensic medicine” generally refers to a medical specialty seen as an applied form of pathology. For this reason, this discipline is sometimes criticized for its alleged tendency to reduce death to its merely biological aspects. Based on a one-year field work conducted in North Indian mortuaries, I have come to the conclusion that such a view might stem from a superficial interpretation of medical experts’ written reports or oral testimonies in court, but does not reflect the way medico-legal cases are investigated by doctors in practice. In this presentation, I will rely on two cases I have followed in a public hospital of Himachal Pradesh in order to shed light on the various types of knowledge implicated in the formulation of a medico-legal opinion. Thus doing, this presentation will demonstrate that forensic experts’ conclusions and actions are not based on a biological theory of the body, but rather on a biosocial theory of humans in their socio-cultural environment.

Sunday, March 3

9:00-10:30 | Panel: Newar Society, Religion and Art (I)

Chair and Discussant: Nicolas Sihlé (CEH)

Kris Anderson: Raising the Dead and Saving Them: Transformation and Adaptation in Hybrid Funerary Manuals of the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana* tantra

The *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana* (Elimination of All Negative Rebirths), a Buddhist tantra composed in the early eighth century, has long been a source for Buddhist funerary rites in Newar and Tibetan Buddhism. While referring to developments in both the Newar and Tibetan ritual traditions, this presentation will focus on a circa 19th c. Sanskrit-Newari bilingual manual containing *Sarvadurgati* rites for the approach of death and the seven ritually-critical days after it, discussing the ways material from the tantra is adapted and transformed for use.

Recent research on Buddhist ritual literature has observed the transformative potential of ritual manuals, which offer a medium that allows innovation and experimentation within ritual systems. The *Sarvadurgati*, in particular, proved remarkably flexible in this respect, and emerged as a resource that could be adapted on its own, or united with a range of other tantric practices.

In tenth century Tibetan manuals, this led to initiations suitable for the dead as well as the living.

In Sanskrit and Sanskrit-Newari ritual literature, including the manual to be discussed, the *Sarvadurgati* rituals were combined with transfer-of-consciousness (*utkrānti*) rites from other tantric systems.

In its *utkrānti* portion, the ritualist temporarily revived the deceased, bestowed initiations and blessings upon him, and then guided his consciousness to exit the body once more. Combined with the *Sarvadurgati* rites, the complete manual enabled a ritualist to eliminate the deceased's defilements and purify their karma, while at the same time ensuring liberation or rebirth in a heaven or "superior state."

Ryan Damron: Pilgrimage, Piety, and Politics: The Life and Career of Vanaratna in Fifteenth-Century Nepal

In the early years of the fifteenth century, the young Buddhist monk Vanaratna (1384-1468) set out from his home on the far-eastern periphery of the Indian subcontinent to embark on a life of study, teaching, and writing that spanned South Asia and crossed the Himalayan range. After a period of training in India and Sri Lanka, Vanaratna cultivated his career as a *paṇḍita* by shuttling between his Newar patrons in the Kathmandu Valley and his royal patrons at the Phakmo Dru court in Central Tibet. In this presentation I will draw from Tibetan biographical sources and Vanaratna's own compositions preserved in Sanskrit and Tibetan to highlight the religious, political, and social works of Vanaratna in the Kathmandu Valley, and through them further explore the dynamic history of 15th-century Nepal.

10:45-13:00 | Panel: Newar Society, Religion and Art (II)

Chair and discussant: Patricia Berger (UCB)

Alexander von Rospatt: Iconic Rituals and ritual Icons. The iconography, use and function of Uṣṇīṣavijayā icons in Nepalese old age rituals

The original inhabitants of the historical Nepal, the Newars observe an elaborate series of old age rituals that are performed to sacralize and protect the celebrated elders. Requiring months of preparations and spread out over several days, these are the most complex domestic rituals performed in the Newar tradition by Buddhists and Hindus alike. Central to the first old age ritual, the *bhīmarathārohaṇa*, as performed by the Buddhists of Kathmandu are scroll paintings or repoussés, typically dedicated to Uṣṇīṣavijayā, the goddess of longevity. She is depicted in a stupa and surrounded by a host of deities including the planetary deities, whose propitiation forms an integral part of the old age rituals. These paintings or repoussés serve both as an icon of Uṣṇīṣavijayā, and as commemorative objects that depict the key moments of the old age ritual in the register below the main subject, and that record in an inscription at the bottom the date, occasion and principal protagonists of the ceremony. They are produced ahead of the ritual performance and play a central role in the very ceremony they commemorate. That is, the old age ceremony includes the elaborate consecration of these icons, and many of the consecratory rites are performed in parallel for the icons and for the celebrated elders, with the shared agenda of sacralizing the given object.

Numerous *bhīmarathārohaṇa* scroll paintings and repoussés survive, starting with the earliest dated icon from the late 14th century, through the Malla and Śāha era, up to the present, in which the Buddhists of Kathmandu continue to produce such paintings on the occasion of the first old age ritual. This talk will examine the standard iconography of historical icons, while also paying attention to modern developments. It will do so with the aim of shedding light on the function of the icons in the ritual and beyond, and on the vexed question of why such icons were (and are) only produced by Buddhists of Kathmandu, and that only for the first of the three old age rituals.

Kunsang Namgyal-Lama: Lakṣacaitya Paubhās: Pictorial Representations of a Newar Buddhist Ritual Performance

According to Buddhist doctrine, the erection of a *stūpa*, or *caitya*, is considered a meritorious deed, generating inconceivable benefits and great merits. Buddhist texts strongly encourage their construction or reproduction, even in very small sizes and different materials – from common ones to the most precious ones. In this perspective, the adoption of molding and stamping techniques to reproduce in large numbers clay images of *stūpas* is considered an effective ritual means for the progression towards enlightenment. Their multiplication is supposed to increase merit (*puṇyasambhāra*) and thus accelerate this progress. Over the centuries, this ritual practice of molding and stamping has developed in various forms, depending on the regions where it has been disseminated and the different Buddhist traditions.

Newar Buddhists of the Kathmandu valley in Nepal perform a ritual called "*Lakṣacaitya*", which implies the molding of miniatures clay *caityas* (ideally "hundred thousand", "*lakṣa*"). This practice is usually observed during the holy month of Guṇlā as part of the religious observances (*vrata*) within families and religious associations

(*guthis*). To commemorate the accomplishment of this ritual, lay devotees commission scroll-paintings on cloth (*paubhā*). The oldest paintings (late 14th - 15th centuries) depict the *Lakṣacaitya-vrata* by rows of repetitive miniatures *caityas* surrounding a larger one. Later *paubhās* commissioned after the 17th century, however, have more complex compositions with small narrative scenes depicting donors and their families performing the different steps of the ritual performance in an outdoor setting around the Svayambhū mahācaitya.

This paper will present the different depictions of the *Lakṣacaitya* ritual on *paubhās*, focusing on those from the 18th - 20th centuries. It will analyze the evolution of the iconographic programs and show how the representation of the ritual performance became a strong element of the composition.

Gérard Toffin: A Religious Drama in Nepal: Divine Masks and Ritual Dances of the Svetkālī Troupe (Nardevī Temple, Kathmandu)

Masks are a crucial component of the religious life — whether Hindu or Buddhist—, of the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley. They represent a large number of deities, both male and female, who mainly belong to the Hindu pantheon. Masks are consecrated by local priests through a number of rituals to infuse divine power into them. They are regularly worn by non-professional dancers and are presented with a large number of offerings, including the blood of sacrificed animals (rooster, goat, sheep and buffalo). The dances recount dramas, often derived from Puranic Hindu literature, with each story divided into several episodes. They are acted out by a number of male dancers who represent a set of deities and are accompanied by musicians. As soon as the dancer covers his face with a mask, he is supposedly possessed by the corresponding god or goddess. His body trembles throughout the performance and he is subjected to a number of prohibitions. I have already undertaken research on various masked troupes from all over the Kathmandu Valley and have published a booklet on this topic. The aim of this paper is to present new ethnographic data on a Newar group of dance-performers who belong to the Nardevī neighbourhood of old Kathmandu city (one of the city's 32 Jyapu neighbourhoods): Svet Ajimā Gāpyākhā (or Neta Bhulu) The troupe, which has been in existence since Malla medieval times, counts 60 members who are recruited hereditarily from the agnatic line in the locality. They all belong to the Jyapu (farmer) caste. A small number of Tuladhar (an *upāsaka* Buddhist caste, higher-ranking than the Jyapu) also take part in the ceremonies and maintain a form of pre-eminence over the group. The four main, masked gods (*mul dhāmi*) are: Svet Kālī Ajimā, Bhairava, Vārāhī, and Kumārī. I will present them in the course of the lecture. The dance narrates the transgressive love of Kumārī for the demon Candrasūra (*rāksasmāyā*). The gods finally succeed in getting Kumārī to see reason before they kill the demon. Comic elements are limited to a dance performed by persons dressed in two animals: a dog (*khicā*) and a jackal (*dhvā*). The dances are performed during the Pāhān Cahray Festival (March), one of the main festivals in old Kathmandu city. Every twelve years, they are also performed — in theory— (using 18 masks) in Lalitpur and some other localities, but only if supernatural events concur at the same time. In the past, the troupe was funded by revenue from *guthi* (religious) land and thanks to a special yearly allowance granted by the Royal Palace. Neither of these sources of income exists today. To conclude, some analytical considerations will be addressed regarding the link between rituals and

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images among Newars. The role of adorned anthropomorphic forms of deities in religious life is actually one of the main features of Newar culture. This type of link can also be found in other realms, such as scrolled cloth paintings, *paubhas*, which are unrolled during a specific period of the year, and the numerous images painted by Citrakar painters for the different calendar festivals and life-cycle ceremonies.