

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin
Institut für Asien- und Afrikawissenschaften
Zentralasien-Seminar

Tibet Kolloquium

Einladung

Dr. Franz Xaver Erhard (Universität Leipzig)

The Biography of Doring Paṇḍita and the Emergence of Secular Life Writing in 18th Century Tibet

Life writing occupies a central place in Tibetan literature. Molded on Indic *avadāna* literature, the genre was quickly assimilated and formed the indigenous Tibetan genre of *rtogs brjod* or *rnam thar*. Even though generally regarded as historiography in Tibet, international scholarship often speaks of hagiography as the genre was mainly reserved for the narration of accomplished life stories of spiritual masters. Such hagiographies represent a narrative genre largely inspired by Indian epics and *jātakas*, the life stories of Buddha's pre-existences, and describe the development of a Buddhist saint or master as a role model for religious activity, good living or the ideal path to liberation (*rnam par thar pa*). The tradition thus presents us with a highly elaborate and formalized genre of spiritual life stories varying only on account of the type of life described.

Nevertheless, the 18th century saw the shift from a solely religious genre dominated by hagiographies to secular life-narratives and a few examples of life writing departing from such schematic conventions of the genre emerged. Xaver Erhard will introduce *Dga' bzhi ba'i mi rabs kyi byung ba brjod pa zol med gtam gyi rol mo*, generally referred to as *Biography of Doring Paṇḍita*. These memoirs of Rdo ring Bstan 'dzin dpal 'byor (1760–ca. 1810), were composed shortly after 1806, and are perhaps the most detailed account of not only Tibet's ruling elite, but also its culture and society in the 18th century. In describing the basic structural differences to more conventional Tibetan life writing he attempts to show how this text represents a secular, new, and perhaps even modern approach to life writing. In this presentation, he will argue that the author Rdo ring ba Bstan 'dzin dpal 'byor (b.1860), who was obsessed with political and social relations but most importantly with his reputation, utilized or perhaps even invented a new literary genre in order to defend his and his family's social status.

After graduating at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin in 2001 Xaver Erhard lived in Tibet for many years. He holds a PhD in Central Asian Studies from Leipzig University. He has been a Junior Research Fellow in Tibetan and Himalayan Studies in Oxford in 2016/17. His current DFG research project on the Doring Paṇḍita is affiliated at the Leipzig University.

Dienstag, 21. November 2017

18.00 Uhr

Invalidenstr. 118, Raum 507

(S-Bahn Nordbahnhof, U6 Naturkundemuseum)