

**Institut für Asien- und Afrikawissenschaften
Zentralasien-Seminar**

Tibet-Kolloquium

Alexander K. Smith

PhD Candidate, Ecole Pratique des Hautes Études (EPHE), Paris.

Prognosis, prophylaxis, and the use of trumps in Tibetan lithomancy

This paper will discuss the structure of prognoses offered in a form of pebble-divination (lithomancy) common to the Bön religion of Tibet. The discussion will be drawn primarily from an eleventh century "treasure" (Tib. *gter-ma*) text, one of its nineteenth century witnesses, and an eighteenth century commentary. Following a brief introduction to Tibetan divination practices and to the Bön religion, the method of casting will be discussed. It will be shown that Tibetan pebble divination uses a system of 'trumps' that significantly complicate the distillation of prognoses. In this respect, lithomantic techniques stand apart from other Tibetan divination practices, many of which use similar numeral systems, though lack a mediating structure of 'major' and 'minor' results. It will then be argued that prophylactic rites—which feature in the majority of lithomantic prognoses—are integral to the perceived efficacy of pebble-divination practices. This argument will be based upon textual materials as well as fieldwork conducted in Himachal Pradesh, India between January and July 2013. By way of conclusion, the paper will offer some general comparative remarks on the subject of prophylaxis in divination.

Mittwoch, 11. Dezember 2013

18.00 Uhr c.t.

Invalidenstr. 118, (S-Bahn Nordbahnhof, U6 Naturkundemuseum)

RAUM 217