

Tibet Kolloquium

Prof. Dr. Daniel Berounsky
Charles University Prague

Burning the incestuous fox: a Tibetan smoke purification ritual (wa bsang)



Burning incense is mostly interpreted as a particular offering “pleasing the five senses” (Tib. *'dod yon lnga*) of Buddhas and divinities within the Buddhist milieu in Tibet. Although the widespread habit of burning fragrant plants (Tib. *bsang*); namely the juniper; could be interpreted in a similar way by the followers of Buddhism in Tibet, the older ideas underlying its use are apparently different. Some textual sources describe its mechanism as that polluting acts of the human society (such as incest, pollution of the hearth, murder of the relative, physical contact with corpse, etc.) hit the deities and their pollution subsequently strikes humans back by famine, wars, epidemics, etc. The smoke of juniper and other fragrant plants is thus a means of purification of the deities. The usage of fragrant plants is rather common, but there still exists a hitherto unknown tradition of burning foxes (Tib. *wa bsang*) as a means of purification of the pollution caused by murder (Tib. *rme/dme*) and incest (Tib. *mnol/nal*) in eastern Tibet. The presentation will be based on nine Tibetan textual sources dealing with this ritual, which resurfaced only recently. Some of them mention also badger and monkey along the fox as the animals purifying such pollution.

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18.00 Uhr

Invalidenstr. 118, Raum 507