

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin
Institut für Asien- und Afrikawissenschaften

Zentralasien-Seminar

Tibet Kolloquium

Dr. Joanna Bialek

The Proto Tibetan clusters sL- and sR- and the periodisation of Old Tibetan

According to Tang Chinese sources, in the year 648 Tibetans sent a mission to the Chinese court asking, among others, for ink and paper manufacturing technology. The etymology of the verb *ɣbri* “to write” < *ri “to cut (e.g., letters in wood)” suggests that Tibetan was first written on wooden tablets (also for the lack of paper prior to 648) and thus could have been invented even some time earlier. As it occurs, at the time of the script invention (most probably between 630 and 640) Early Old Tibetan (EOT) must have had four onset clusters s+Liquid: *zr-*, *sr-*, *zl-*, and *sl-*. However, in Old Tibetan as well as in Classical Tibetan we only find *sr-*, *zl-*, and *sl-*, whereas neither of them is attested in modern spoken varieties of Tibetan. Having reconstructed the development of the onsets in the most conservative dialects from the groups of Western Archaic Tibetan and Amdo Tibetan, I juxtapose these findings with historical facts concerning military conquests during the Tibetan Empire in order to set the possible time frame for the reconstructed sound changes. I argue that the chronology of sound changes can be put in a context of historical events as documented in Tibetan and Chinese sources to the effect that the linguistic data can be shown to conform to historical processes. The approach allows us not only to establish the first linguistically based periodisation of Old Tibetan (and, in fact, the first linguistic periodisation of a Tibetan language at all), but also to explain the modern distribution of Tibetan dialects.

Trained in Religious Studies and Philosophy Johanna Bialek holds a Ph.D. in Tibetology from the Philipps-Universität Marburg (“Studies in the lexis and word-formation of Old Tibetan. Compounds and compounding”). Currently she is employed at the Humboldt-University zu Berlin as a research associate (DFG-Project: “Old Tibetan Annals. A Comprehensive Text Grammar”)

Dienstag, 30. Januar 2018

18.00 Uhr

Invalidenstr. 118, **Raum 507**

(S-Bahn Nordbahnhof, U6 Naturkundemuseum)