TRADITION AND INNOVATION IN VAJRAYĀNA BUDDHISM

A Mandala of 21st Century Perspectives

JULY 1 - 3, 2016
THIMPHU, BHUTAN

Organised by Central Monastic Body and Centre for Bhutan Studies & GNH Research
His Majesty the King, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck and Her Majesty the Queen, Gyaltsuen Jetsun Pema Wangchuck
His Royal Highness the Gyalsey, Jigme Namgyel Wangchuck
His Holiness the Je Khenpo, Trulku Jigme Choedra
PREFACE

The Central Monastic Body and the Centre for Bhutan Studies and Gross National Happiness Research (CBS and GNHR) are delighted to welcome you to the inaugural International Conference 'Tradition and Innovation in Vajrayāna Buddhism: A Mandala of 21st Century Perspectives’, in Thimphu, Bhutan. This document outlines the conference’s objectives and the presentations and biographical profiles of the speakers. The conference organizers received 106 abstracts from a diverse range of scholars and practitioners. Out of these, 59 abstracts were accepted as being in line with the objectives of the conference. All abstracts submitted for the conference went through a rigorous review and selection process. The papers presented at the conference will later be published as conference proceedings. We appreciate the dedicated involvement of Ian Baker, a board member of the International Society for Bhutan Studies (ISBS), for leading the review process and editing the presentation summaries.

More than 400 international participants are registered for this inaugural conference, making it a major event of its kind in the Kingdom of Bhutan. The convening of this conference enables us to auspiciously receive a number of great spiritual leaders and scholars in Bhutan, thus establishing important contacts and beginning a rich dialogue for advancing the global reach of Buddhism in the 21st century. For us in Bhutan, it is a highly symbolic year to initiate this broader exchange. We celebrate this year as the 400th year of the Founding Process of the nation by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel and as the birth anniversary year of Guru Rinpoche Padmasambhava. Above all, the birth of His Royal Highness the Gyalsey, Jigme Namgyel Wangchuck, on 5th February, 2016, emblazons this year as a highly historic one for Bhutan.

Since its inception in early 2016, this conference has manifested through the guidance and support of Bhutan's highest authorities. The Central Monastic Body and the Centre of Bhutan Studies & GNH Research submit our deepest gratitude to His Majesty for his blessing of this joint initiative. Equally, His Holiness the Je Khenpo and Their Eminences, the Lopōns of the Central Monastic Body have provided their wise counsel, direction, and material support in the preparations for the conference.
Since the dawn of the nation, the people of Bhutan have always been Buddhist. His Majesty the King of Bhutan is increasingly revered throughout the Buddhist world as a wise and compassionate monarch whose visionary leadership and policies have relevance far beyond the boundaries of the Kingdom. More than any previous Bhutanese monarch or ruler, His Majesty’s reign witnesses the crucial effort to harmoniously blend development and modernization in Bhutan with spiritual values, in the face of accelerating globalization. This conference is but a small contribution to help strengthen the role and practice of Buddha dharma in Bhutan and to foster its thriving in the larger world.

The Central Monastic Body and the Centre of Bhutan Studies are enormously indebted to the Hon’ble Prime Minister of Bhutan, Tshering Tobgay. His unstinting and decisive support for the conference not only reveals his spiritual temperament, but his unquestionably broader view that the severe challenges facing humanity require a re-catalysation of spiritual values and traditions.
Background and Objectives

This international conference in the Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan was initiated by the Central Monastic Body and the Centre for Bhutan Studies & GNH Research. The Centre for Bhutan Studies is an institute dedicated to promoting His Majesty the Fourth King, Jigme Singye Wangchuck’s development philosophy of Gross National Happiness and conducting multidisciplinary research about Bhutan. The conference will illuminate issues of continuity and change within both historical and contemporary expressions of Vajrayāna Buddhism. As a textual tradition, Vajrayāna, or Tantric Buddhism developed in India from the 8th century onward as a creative response to changing socio-cultural conditions, building on earlier traditions of spiritual practice. Vajrayāna subsequently shaped the art, culture, and consciousness of much of Asia, and especially the Himalayan regions of Tibet, Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan. Vajrayāna continues to evolve today, and this inaugural conference is the first time that these culturally creative processes are being explored from within the tradition.

‘Tradition and Innovation in Vajrayāna Buddhism’ will explore the dynamism of transmission as Vajrayāna engages the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. Speakers range from Bhutanese and Tibetan lineage holders to neuroscientists, academics, and international scholar-practitioners who have adapted Tantric Buddhism’s methods of individual and collective transformation to the emerging technologies, priorities, and social concerns of the contemporary world.

The three-day series of talks and presentations will address Vajrayāna’s dialogue with 21st century medicine and science as well as its current and historical interface with the visual and performing arts. Presentations will emphasize Vajrayāna’s long history of creative adaptation within wider processes of continuity and change and the current globalization of Himalayan Buddhist culture. The conference will specifically address the role of body-mind yogic practices within Vajrayāna Buddhism and their applicability within an increasingly trans-cultural and technologically driven world.

Academic conferences typically provide opportunities for scholars to share their current research with university colleagues. The inaugural ‘Tradition and Innovation in Vajrayāna Buddhism’ conference differs in that it offers a
Background and objectives

The conference provides a unique opportunity for leading intellectuals and practitioners to discuss their perspectives with a wider international audience and, specifically, to share knowledge with representatives of Vajrayāna culture in the last remaining Himalayan Buddhist Kingdom. The conference format will thus promote an engaging exchange of ideas towards a deeper appreciation of Vajrayāna’s evolving role in 21st century global society.

The conference is structured on the interconnected categories of View, Practice, and Application and explores emerging models of Vajrayāna within traditional Bhutanese culture as well as internationally in regard to Tantric Buddhism’s deep history of creative adaptation to changing social and cultural contexts. The conference is open to the general public and promotes an empowering exchange of ideas and perspectives for enriching Vajrayāna Buddhist culture and its global trajectories.
Abstracts and profiles
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Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Vajrayāna Buddhism

Empowerment, Oral Transmission, and Verbal Instruction in Vajrayāna Buddhism

His Eminence Lopön Kinley

Biographical Profile

His Eminence Lopön Kinley is a Vajra Acharya, Dorji Lopön, one of the five ‘precious learned masters’ (lopön) in Zhung Dratshang, the Central Monastic Body, next to His Holiness the Je Khenpos in their work on behalf of all beings. His Eminence heads all the Meditation Centres.

What is Vajrayāna, where did it come from, and where is it going?

Dr. Geoffrey Samuel

Vajrayāna Buddhism most likely originates in the complex religious and political milieu of early mediaeval India. The tradition evolved from Indian Buddhism, incorporating elements from many sources to provide an alternative vision that rivaled the Shaivite and Vaishnavite traditions against which it competed, and was successfully exported to much of the rest of Asia. In Bhutan, Tibet, and other Himalayan societies, the Vajrayāna became a core vision around which society cohered. It provided both the key path to Buddhahood and a body of techniques and methods vital for meeting the concerns of everyday life. In these Himalayan societies, Vajrayāna grew out of and was reinforced by central societal themes and concerns. Vajrayāna practitioners were supported by a world in which Vajrayāna not only made total sense, but was also the central cultural achievement around which much of everyday life revolved. Vajrayāna shaped and was in turn shaped by the world around it, in a set of mutually reinforcing relationships.
Day 1: Friday, July 1, 2016
What though of Vajrayāna in today’s global society? Bhutan’s social fabric encodes continuity with the past, but change is rapid and the key assumptions of pre-modern Bhutan are rapidly losing purchase in the present. Elsewhere, as in Tibet, change has been more rapid and more destructive. Vajrayāna teaching lineages have spread around the planet, but the great lamas of the past have mostly gone, and their successors have grown up in a very different world, focused around a materialist understanding of reality and the dominance of economic forces. Can they and their followers find a viable role for Vajrayāna in its new global context? Can Vajrayāna practices become valued and productive aspects of the very different world in which it now lives? This presentation will address two main areas in which the techniques and philosophy of Vajrayāna may have a critical contribution to make to the global society of the mid-21st century: Vajrayāna Buddhism’s understanding of health, wellness and healing, and its vision of human life as part of an ecological whole.

Biographical Profile

Geoffrey Samuel is an Honorary Associate at the University of Sydney, Australia, where he directs the Body, Health and Religion (BAHAR) Research Group, and Emeritus Professor at Cardiff University, Wales, U.K. His academic career has been in social anthropology and religious studies, and his books include Mind, Body and Culture (1990), Civilized Shamans: Buddhism in Tibetan Societies (1993), Tantric Revisionings (2005), The Origins of Yoga and Tantra (2008) and Introducing Tibetan Buddhism (2012). His current research interests include Tibetan yogic health practices, Tibetan medicine, and the dialogue between Buddhism and science.

Interwoven Traditions: Vajrayāna Buddhism and the Silk Road

Dr. Choodamani Nandagopal

Known as the ‘Diamond Vehicle’ for removing obstacles on the path to Buddhahood, Vajrayāna Buddhism’s magical and yogic qualities led to the ideal of the siddha, a woman or man in harmony with the cosmos. Following the earlier spread of Buddhism along the Silk Road to Kashmir, Gandhara, present-day Afghanistan, and China, Vajrayāna adopted practices from both
Hinduism and Taoism and evolved into new syncretic forms of Buddhism in Nepal, Bhutan, and Tibet from the 8th century and earlier.

The Silk Road was a path of merchants, pilgrims, and adventurers and connected the Himalayan kingdoms with Greece and China. From the 8th to 12th centuries, Tibet occupied a strategic position on this ancient trade route. Mongolia, Bhutan, Nepal, and Sikkim all came under Tibetan influence and embraced Vajrayāna Buddhist culture, which continues to flourish in Bhutan today. In part because of Bhutan’s remoteness and supportive monarchy, the kingdom has become a repository of rich cultural and religious traditions, reflections of which can be seen in India, Tibet, and China. This presentation explores the important role that Vajrayāna Buddhism has played in unifying and enriching the countries of the Himalayan region, and highlights Bhutan’s current role as a global model for environmental stewardship and ecological sustainability, based on Buddhist principles promoting harmony and universal happiness.

Biographical Profile

Professor Choodamani Nandagopal holds a PhD in Art and Archaeology and is the recipient of five International and two Indian research fellowships. Widely published in the field of Indian art and culture, she is currently Dean of Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences at Jain University in Bangalore, India. As part of UNESCO Fellowship on Silk Road Studies, she has studied Bhutanese art in the context of cultural interactions along the Silk Road.

Padmasambhava, Yeshe Tsogyal, and the Sacred Geography of Bhutan

Dasho Karma Ura

Padmasambhava, the tantric master credited with having established Vajrayāna Buddhism in Tibet in the 8th century, is well known for having first visited Bhutan. According to traditional accounts, Padmasambhava arrived in Bhutan and performed various miraculous feats before travelling to Tibet where he instructed King Trisongdetsen in the innermost Vajrayāna practice of Dzogchen, or ‘Great Perfection’. The king bestowed on him his favored queen, Yeshe Tsogyal, ‘Royal Lake of Primordial Wisdom’, who later realized her Buddha nature through the practice of tummo, or ‘fierce fire’, and preserved Padmasambhava’s precious teachings by concealing...
them as hidden treasures, called terma, to be revealed in later centuries. Padmasambhava is said to have later returned to Bhutan and arrived at the iconic site of Taktsang, or ‘Tiger’s Nest’, by riding in tandem with Yeshe Tsogyal, who had transformed herself into a flying tigress. What lies behind these ancient tales and the sacred sites such as Taktsang and Senge Dzong with which this miraculous couple is associated? What truths about our innermost nature, and the nature of Vajrayāna Buddhism, can be discerned from the eight manifestations that Padmasambhava is said to have assumed – from scholar, to lover, to ascetic, to scorpion-wielding magician – in order to subdue and transform obstructive circumstances? This presentation will look at Guru Rinpoche, the ‘precious teacher’, and his consort Yeshe Tsogyal as archetypes of our own awakened nature whose tangible presence in the Himalayan landscape offers a continual reminder of the unity of mind and nature, the past and present.

Biographical Profile

Dasho Karma Ura is the Chief of the Centre for Bhutan Studies & GNH Research, an institute dedicated to promoting His Majesty the Fourth King, Jigme Singye Wangchuck’s globally influential development philosophy of Gross National Happiness and conducting multidisciplinary research about the culture and history of Bhutan and policy studies. He studied in St Stephen’s College Delhi; Magdalen College, Oxford University; and University of Edinburgh, Scotland, thanks to scholarships. He writes and paints and designs things, when he is not a bureaucrat. He is also forced to give talks in many international fora. Under the inspired patronage and direction of Her Majesty the Queen Mother HM Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck, herself an author and social worker through the Tarayana Foundation, he has had the opportunity to co-create masked dances and costumes for the annual Dochula Druk Wangyal Festival, temple murals, and the Biggest Golden Butterlamp of Eternal Flame of Druk Wangyal. The Centre for Bhutan Studies is currently engaged in creating a conceptually new facility for the city of Thimphu, called the Library of Mind, Sound and Body, to connect these three aspects of being with wellbeing and happiness.
Eli Jellenc

Many may now take as given the uniqueness, productivity, and significance of the Vajrayāna tradition's trans-cultural encounter with Western thought, but we are just beginning to understand why and how it is so. As Himalayan Buddhist adepts undergo fMRI scans in American and European laboratories, and with theories of evolutionary ecology and particle physics now featuring alongside the ancient sutras in Tibetan monastic syllabi, these two diverse worldviews continue to inform each other in surprising and progressive ways. In contrast to the instrumental logics of geopolitics and business that so dominate relations between most cultures or nations, the qualities that instead characterize the Vajrayāna–Western dialogue are the primacy of its philosophical, contemplative, scholarly, and artistic voices and their mutual striving for aims no less than wisdom, wellbeing, liberation, and enlightenment. How can we better understand this dialogue and its transformations, and, in so doing, how might we then best guide our efforts to ensure its continued flourishing?

This presentation explores the frontiers of the cultural synthesis now interweaving the wisdom and meditative practices of Vajrayāna with the philosophy, literature, and science of the West. I will emphasize that each tradition is more pluralistic, intricate, and dynamically evolving than the caricatures often depicted in conventional narratives, and I will show that the two share more common ground than is assumed. Empirically, I will consider the implications of pervasive biases on both sides, such as the West's incomplete consideration of Vajrayāna's more arcane, advanced aspects, notably Dzogchen (rdzogs chen) and Mahāmudrā, as well as Himalayan Buddhist thinkers' tendencies to ignore Western luminaries such as William Blake, Carl Jung, and Paul Ricoeur. In terms of methodology, I will question how Western anthropologists and philosophers, though acting as the West's primary interpreters of the Vajrayāna world, rarely consider that contemplative techniques or yogic prowess might inform their craft, just as yogis might learn new insights from anthropologists and cognitive scientists about culture and the mind. More deeply, although the West has never approached the systematic rigor of Vajrayāna's meditative practices, the latter's foundational concepts and epistemic insights are far from being as ‘foreign’ to Western philosophy and literature as is often assumed. In learning how and why the Vajrayāna and Western traditions understand one another, and how they have sometimes failed to do so, we may begin to expand the horizons of what may be achieved together.
Biographical Profile

Eli Jellenc is a student of Dzogchen, as taught by Bhutan's Tulku Tenzin Rabgay, and an independent anthropological researcher studying contemplative traditions across cultures, their accompanying philosophies, and psychological implications. He has previously practiced other varieties of meditation including Zen Buddhism, Christian contemplative practice, and Advaita Vedanta. His day-job is that of an international security advisor and analyst, based in London. He holds a Masters degree in International Relations from Georgetown University in the United States.

When a Return to Tradition Appears as Innovation: Essential Insights into the Origins of Vajrayāna Buddhism

Ngakma Mé-tsal Wangmo & Naljorpa Ja’gyur Dorje

Vajrayāna as it was first transmitted in India and Tibet bears little resemblance to the institutionalized forms current in the contemporary world. As a result, the very essence of Vajrayāna thought and practice has often been obscured by secondary cultural and political developments. This presentation will illuminate the original ethos and practice of Vajrayāna, prior to its later culturally determined modifications. Central to this is the advanced psychology expressed in the lives and teachings of the tantric mahāsiddhas and their relevance to Buddhist practice in everyday life. This presentation will thus explore several interconnected subjects that reveal the deep relevance of the original Vajrayāna teachings in the world today. These subjects are as follows: 1) The 84 Mahāsiddhas as visualization and mantra practices, from the revealed treasures (gTérma) of Jomo Pema ’ö-Zér, which, along with their associated hagiographies, elucidate the principles and functions of individual life in the process of liberation; 2) The history of the gos dKar lCang lo’i sDe (ngakpa sangha), as distinct from the more widely known tradition of Tibetan Buddhist monasticism; 3) The mKha’ ’gro dPa bo nyi zLa me long rGyud, essential teachings on vajra love as an approach to the non-dual state of liberated awareness; 4) Insights into Aro gTér sKu-mNyé: the 111 Dzogchen long-dé cycle of psycho-physical practices for realizing non-duality, exercises which employ the body as the portal of discovery; 5) Essential Vajrayāna psychology as applicable in the contemporary world, where every state of mind, however distressed or
Abstracts and profiles distressing, is linked dynamically to an aspect of the intrinsic freedom of the non-dual play of the elements.

Biographical Profiles

Mé-tsal Wangmo and Ja’gyur Dorje are a teaching couple within the Aro gTér lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. They have been ordained as go kar chang lo practitioners and students of Ngak’chang Rinpoche and Khandro Déchen, the lineage holders of the Aro gTér since the 1990s. They combine careers in IT project management, education and Chinese medicine with family life and practicing and teaching Vajrayāna. As well as teaching publicly, they have personal students in Britain, mainland Europe, and South America.

Vajrayāna’s Impact on Ancient Myanmar (Burma)

Dr. Khin Zaw

Civilization in Myanmar began with its earliest known inhabitants, a Tibeto-Burman-speaking people known as the Pyu. Pyu city states were located along a network of overland trade routes on the Southern Silk Road that connected China with India and thus brought Buddhism to what is now Myanmar before the 4th century C.E. Pyu material culture including stone figurines, terracotta tablets, coins, urns, beads, and other wares reveal the simultaneous presence of various Buddhist schools, including Theravada, Mahayāna, and Vajrayāna, as well as Hinduism and indigenous animist traditions. Pyu civilization lasted approximately a thousand years until the early 9th century, when its city states were plundered by invading Nanzhao forces from what is now modern Yunnan. The Bagan empire subsequently emerged in 1044 C.E., unifying for the first time the regions that would later comprise present day Myanmar and lasting until 1287 C.E. This presentation will explore traces of Vajrayāna Buddhism in the late Bagan Empire in the form of the little known Ari monks who practiced methods of tantric alchemy that was later forbidden in favor of orthodox Theravada Buddhism, but which nonetheless persist in Myanmar today. Popular remnants of Myanmar’s Mahayāna and Vajrayāna past also include artistic representations of Bodhisattvas such as Avalokitesvara, Padmapani, Manjusri, Tara, and Lokanatha., testimonies to Myanmar’s rich syncretic past and the inclusive, adaptive, and varying nature of Vajrayāna Buddhism.
Biographical Profile

Dr. Khin Zaw is a medical doctor, pathologist, and educationist currently based at the International Medical School of Management and Science University in Malaysia. Founder of Srivatsa (Thiriwitsa) Publications in Yangon, Dr. Khin Zaw has published thirty-eight books, comprising novels, biographies, essays, folklore, history, and poetry. His historical novel Silavamsa Dah (‘The Sword of Virtuous Lineage’) based on the Second Anglo-Burmese war (1851-1853), was conferred the National Literature Award of Myanmar for 2013.

Coalescing Creativity and Conservatism in Vajrayāna Buddhism

Dr. Karma Phuntsho

The history of Vajrayāna Buddhism is a relentless story of negotiations between novelty and fidelity, innovation and allegiance. While on the one hand, the Vajrayāna traditions ardently insist on a pure and unbroken transmission, on the other, they exude the highest degree of innovation and adaptation. The tantras, which form the locus classicus of the Vajrayāna system, prima facie contradict mainstream Buddhist teachings in theory and practice. The acts of Vajrayāna’s founding figures – the mahasiddhas – deliberately challenge conventional notions of spiritual authority and path in order to awaken more encompassing sensibilities. The tertons, or ‘spiritual treasure revealers’ of Himalayan Vajrayāna, while claiming to be legitimate heirs to ancient knowledge, became known for expedience and impact through novelty and freshness.

Yet their innovations, adaptations, and accompanying apologetics were not always accepted and were sometimes even spurned and rejected as phony inventions. What parameters are then used to determine authenticity within Vajrayāna traditions and who draws the thin and blurred line between innovation and invention? What do Buddhist hermeneutics regarding authenticity and adaptation tell us about the transformation of Vajrayāna through processes of apotheosis, syncretization, and assimilation and emerging forms of Vajrayāna in our modern scientific secular society?
Biographical Profile

Dr. Karma Phuntsho finished monastic training and taught in Ngagyur Nyingma Institute before joining Oxford University to read Sanskrit and Classical Indian Religions. He received a D.Phil in Buddhist Studies and worked as a Researcher at CNRS, Paris and as a Spalding Fellow in Comparative Religions at Cambridge University. In Bhutan, he is the founder of the Loden Foundation, a charity promoting education and entrepreneurship in Bhutan, as well as the Shejun Agency for Bhutan's Cultural Documentation and Research. He has published eight books including *The History of Bhutan*, translations, book reviews, and articles on Buddhism, Bhutan, and Tibetan Studies.

Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel and his Contributions to Vajrayāna Buddhism: A Four Hundred Year Retrospective

Khenpo Phuntsho

Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel (1594–1651) was a Tibetan Buddhist lama who unified Bhutan as a nation-state in the first half of the 17th century. In addition to reconciling the various warring fiefdoms in the 1630s, he established a distinct Bhutanese cultural identity, separate from the Tibetan culture from which it derived. Born in Tibet and enthroned as the 18th abbot of Ralung, the first Drukpa Kagyu monastery to be built in Tibet, Ngawang Namgyal was compelled to flee Tibet in 1616 in order to escape the persecution of the powerful king of Tsang, a supporter of the rival Karma Kagyu order of Tibetan Buddhism. Ngawang Namgyal thus left for western Bhutan, where the Drukpa Kagyu school had already been established, and founded Cheri Monastery in 1619 at the north end of the Thimphu valley. In 1629, he founded his first fortress, Simtokha Dzong, near Thimphu at a place where control could be exerted over traffic between the Paro valley to the west and Trongsa valley to the east. Over his 35 years as the temporal and spiritual ruler of Bhutan, Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal repelled a series of Tibetan invasions between 1616 and 1679 and overcame internal opposition to unify the country for the first time in its history. So important was the Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal to the stability of Bhutan during this period that his death was kept secret. In 1651 his closest aids announced that Shabdrung had entered strict meditative retreat and continued to maintain so for more than fifty years, issuing edicts in his name until 1705.
Biographical Profile

Khenpo Phuntsho is the Head Abbot of Sang Chokhor Shedra.

The Legacy of the Je Khenpos: Bhutan's Supreme Religious Authorities

Kunzang Thinley

Biographical Profile

Kunzang Thinley is the Head Abbot at Tango University.

Liberating Narratives: The Form and Function of Sacred Life-Stories

(nam thar) in Himalayan Buddhism

Sangseraima Ujeed

Biographies, both written and oral, are a prominent means for conveying the essence of Vajrayāna Buddhist ideology and practice. This presentation will outline the most prominent features of biographical narratives within the tantric Buddhist tradition and demonstrate the ways in which these narratives guide both understanding and practice. Special emphasis will be given to the narratives of the male and female tantric mahāsiddhas whose life stories lie at the heart of various Vajrayāna Buddhist lineages throughout the Himalayan world. Special attention will be given to exemplary elements within the life story of the Vajrayāna Buddhist master Za-ya Pandita as they pertain to the female mahāsiddha Laksmimkara. Larger questions will be addressed as to how biographies function within traditions of Vajrayāna Buddhism to promote behavioral ideals and enlarge experiential understanding of core Buddhist principles.

Biographical Profile

Sangseraima Ujeed is a PhD student at the Oriental Institute at the University of Oxford, UK, whose research focuses on the transmission of
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Vajrayāna Buddhism in Mongolia and its expression within biographical and autobiographical narratives.

Kvetoslav Minarik and the White Dynasty of Gurus: A Living Vajrayāna Buddhist Tradition in the Czech Republic

Radim Brixi

This presentation focuses on the 20th century transmission of Vajrayāna Buddhism in Czechoslovakia through Kvetoslav Minarik (1908–1974), a tantric Buddhist initiate who reformulated traditional Mahayāna Buddhist teachings in accordance with contemporary European psychology and philosophical values. His teachings were specifically based on the Kagyupa lineage of Tibetan Buddhism, and the lineage supplication maintained by his school reads: ‘Great (Heavenly) Vajradhara, Tilopa, Nāropa, Marpa, Milarepa, Kvetoslav’. Self-described as the sixth in a so-called ‘white dynasty of gurus’, was Kvetoslav Minarik a gifted mystic who adapted the Vajrayāna Buddhist teachings of Tilopa and Milarepa to a new cultural environment and historical time? This presentation will explore concepts of transmission and adaptation as they pertain to Vajrayāna Buddhism in the contemporary, trans-cultural world.

Biographical Profile

Radim Brixi was a student of Guru Josef Studeny, a close disciple of Kvetoslav Minarik and his Kagyupa teachings until his death in 2011. He was a teacher at the Department of Systems Analysis at the University of Economics in Prague and is currently undertaking advanced doctoral research in the field of Managerial Psychology and Sociology

The Iconographical Arts of Tantric Buddhism

Khenpo Nima

Biographical Profile

Khenpo Nima is a researcher at the Research Division in Tango University.
Ariana Maki, PhD

For initiated viewers, the murals, scroll paintings, and sculptures visible in Vajrayāna Buddhist temples and shrines illustrate key rituals, deities, and lineage masters that provide important supports (rten) for Vajrayāna Buddhist practice. These objects often carry additional, deeper meanings that can only be understood when taking into account the artists and patrons who contributed to their creation. Drawing on new research, this presentation focuses on particular artists who created works for display and use in Bhutanese ritual environments, with special attention paid to objects created in the early post-Zhabdrung era in the late 17th century. Particular attention will be given to one of the foremost artists in Bhutanese history: Tsang Khenchen Palden Gyatso (gtsang mkhan chen dpal ldan rgya mtsho; 1610-1684), who arrived in Bhutan in the second half of the 17th century. Tsang Khenche and the Bhutanese students he trained constitute a major foundation of Bhutanese art on a national scale. This presentation discusses the impact of Tsang Khenchen and his atelier in highlighting important Vajrayāna Buddhist rituals, practices, and lineage masters through their artistic output. Due to the comparative political and social stability of Bhutan over the centuries, works attributable to Tsang Khenchen and other important artists survive intact to the present. These works offer evidence of the ways in which Bhutanese art evolved in the 17th century in tandem with the emergent nation, and how resulting works employed Vajrayāna Buddhist imagery to reflect a distinctly ‘Bhutanese’ identity and artistic style. The artistic creations of Tsang Khenchen Palden Gyatso thus represent key reference points in Bhutanese art history and its integral relationship with Vajrayāna Buddhist traditions.

Biographical Profile

Ariana Maki is an art historian specializing in Buddhist art and iconography. She is presently Associate Curator of Himalayan Art Resources and a Lecturer in Art History and Religious Studies at the University of Colorado in Boulder, Colorado. She has been a research affiliate of the National Library and Archives of Bhutan since 2012.
Visual Embodiments of Vajrayāna Buddhism across Cultures and Domains

Gaelle Bellec Nado

Throughout its history, Vajrayāna Buddhism has been conveyed through its highly distinctive artistic forms and the symbolic power invested in those forms. In the 21st century, the Kingdom of Bhutan is the primary repository and contemporary expression of this artistic and religious heritage. The production of Vajrayāna Buddhist art in Bhutan is conducted according to traditional formulas, while at the same time artists and craftsmen have improved their skills and availed themselves of modern materials and techniques. This presentation will explore the ways in which traditional Vajrayāna Buddhist art is represented and perceived in the Western world, from Buddhist stupas signifying enlightened mind to museum displays introducing alternative views of human nature and the cosmos. The choices made by Buddhist artists today in representing Vajrayāna in new cultural and religious environments will be pointed out as primary indications of the future form and function of Vajrayāna Buddhism in a transcultural world.

Biographical Profile


The Value and Meaning of the Vajrayāna Stupa

La Son

The Stupa is an ancient form of sacred architecture that represents enlightenment in material form. Stupas exist in every Buddhist tradition as powerful agents of spiritual purification and transformation. This presentation begins with an overview of the value and meaning of the Buddhist stupa and proceeds to an analysis of the Vajrayāna Buddhist stupa as an expression of the Five Buddha Wisdom Mandala, in which the stupa’s...
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Base, dome, spire, parasol, and jewel crown symbolize the five universal elements, five elemental processes within the human body, and their relationship to five psychological dispositions and enlightened qualities. The correspondence of the stupa structure with the ‘inner mandala’ of the subtle body will also be demonstrated, as exemplified, for example, in the sok shing, a tapered, four-sided cedar column at the center of the stupa that represents the body’s central channel and life force. Printed or carved mantras represent qualities of the central channel, while tsa tsa, wealth vases, and sacred substances invested into stupas represent vital energies that replenish the Five Elements and foster temporal and spiritual prosperity. Many other aspects of stupa design will be analyzed that reveal the Vajrayāna stupa as a fully realized mandala, or distillation of the Buddhist cosmos and evocation of the path to enlightenment. In the view of Vajrayāna, a stupa offers a gateway for merging a practitioner’s innate wisdom with self-existing enlightenment. The stupa in Vajrayāna is thus the union of the outer universe, the human body, and the primordial wisdom of the Buddha.

Biographical Profile

La Son is a PhD Candidate at the Viet Nam Institute of Social Sciences and a Researcher at the Viet Nam Institute of Tradition and Development. He holds a Bachelor of Philosophy from the Viet Nam Institute of Journalism and Communication and a Masters degree in philosophy from the Viet Nam Institute of Philosophy (M.A). He is also an initiate of Vajrayāna Buddhism within the Drukpa Kagyu lineage.

Maintaining the Purity of Vajrayāna in an Era of Rapid Social Change

Sakya Khenpo Jamyang Lekshey

The teachings of the Secret Mantrayāna, or Vajrayāna tradition have spread throughout the modern world, but this popularity has come at a high price. Whereas in older times great hardships were undertaken to receive these teachings and preserve their purity, the transmission of Vajrayāna has now become diluted and corrupted. Often treated as a commodity, spiritually unprepared students often fail to appreciate the profound nature of these teachings and are unable to maintain the sacred commitments or samayas that enable the successful accomplishment of the practice, thus contributing
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to Vajrayāna’s general decline. In a fast changing world, it is essential that all
who value the Vajrayāna tradition for what it is do everything in their power
to restore and preserve its purity in order to pass it down to future
generations while adapting to the requirements of modern times.

Biographical Profile

Sakya Khenpo Jamyang Lekshey is abbot of Sakya Centre, a Buddhist
monastic institute in Dehra Dun, India, established by His Holiness Sakya
Trizin, the supreme head of the Sakya order of Tibetan Buddhism. During
his tenure, he established the Sakya Nunnery and Sakya Hospital in India;
Sakya Thupten Ling in the United Kingdom; Sakya Drogon Ling in Spain;
and Sakya Dhar Khab Ling in Chez Republic. His principal teachers are H.H.
Sakya Trizin and H.E. Luding Khen Chen Rinpoche. His previous teachers
include the late H.H. Penor Rinpoche, H.H. Trushik Rinpoche, H.E. Chogye
Trichen Rinpoche, and H.E. Kalu Rinpoche.

Tashi Gomang: Portable Buddhist Shrines

Tshering Tashi

Tashi Gomangs are national treasures of Bhutan that speaks to the creative
adaptability of Vajrayāna Buddhist tradition. But these portable altars have
been under researched and their tradition of use is at the brink of extinction.
According to oral accounts, Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal instituted the
tradition in the 17th century. In the past, all Dzongs owned a Tashi Gomang.
So did a few privileged monasteries, but no individual had the right to own
one. Buddhist institutes loaned the Tashi Gomangs to pseudo-monks,
popularly known as Lam Manips. The Lam Manips carried the Tashi
Gomangs on their backs from village to village, where the travelling monks
entertained inhabitants by reciting prayers and sharing stories. In return, the
villagers offered them grain, part of which was offered to the Tashi
Gomangs’ owners.

Tashi means ‘auspicious’ and Gomang literally means ‘multiple doors’. Some Tashi Gomangs have as many as 108 doors, but each will have a
minimum of sixteen. According to initial research, there are four types of
Tashi Gomang, and each is a work of art that encompasses all thirteen
traditional Bhutanese arts and crafts and fits neatly into a wooden box.
Current research has revealed 28 of these portable shrines in Bhutan, but
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only two are actively being used. The remaining Tashi Gomang have either been sealed in their cases or are collecting dust in the corners of monasteries and Dzongs. Most are in poor condition. Today, only two Lam Manips remain. One is 74 years old and the other is 85. Both have dedicated their lives to carrying on this tradition of Himalayan Buddhism.

Biographical Profile

Tshering Tashi is a Bhutanese writer based in Thimphu. He is the author of several books on Bhutan, including Myths and Memories, and regularly contributes articles to Kuensel and international periodicals. He is passionate about preserving Bhutan’s culture and traditions and recording its oral history. He is Director of the annual Mountain Echoes Literary Festival.

Buddhism in the United Kingdom: A Case Study

Captain Kaji Sherpa

This presentation will offer a concise history of Buddhism in the United Kingdom, culminating with the founding in 2007 of the Buddhist Community Centre UK, a monastic center in Aldershot, England officially inaugurated by His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Yangsi Rinpoche as Tashi Dongak Choeling and consecrated by His Holiness the Dalai Lama in 2015. A registered charity organization run by a team of volunteers with an aim to providing a peaceful setting for meditation and a community of support for promoting Buddhist values, the Buddhist Community Centre UK has over 600 trustees and more than 63,000 members. The Centre has hosted many prominent teachers, including Dilgo Khyentse Yangsi Rinpoche, Rabjhang Rinpoche, Shakya Trizin Rinpoche, and Dupsing Rinpoche.

Biographical Profile

Captain Kaji Sherpa joined the British Army in 1980 at the age of sixteen. During his twenty-four years in the Army, he served in over twenty countries, leading both British and international troops in various peace-keeping operations. He was also the first serving British Gurkha Officer to challenge the British Government for the right to British citizenship, changing the outdated terms and conditions of services and leading to over
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150,000 Nepalese/Gurkha families gaining citizen rights and equal pay and pension. He also introduced Buddhist lamas into the British Army, as providers of pastoral care and support for serving soldiers.

Establishment of Sangha Community in Bhutan

Khenpo Rinchen Choezang

Biographical Profile

Khenpo Rinchen Choezang is the Principal at Dechen Phodrang Monastic School.

Vajrayāna Buddhism in the 21st Century

Dr. Hemant Kumar Jha

The socio-religious fabric of the world today is torn by the threats and challenges of terrorism, fundamentalism, and nuclear war. Amenities are available for material comfort, but people are increasingly frustrated and distressed. In the name of progress and development, nations as well as individuals are losing their peace of mind. However, all over the world, people have witnessed how Buddhism has nurtured and enriched the cultures and civilizations of Asia. Buddhist values of assimilation and inclusion hold a key for solving some of the world’s most entrenched problems. The ritual practices of Vajrayāna Buddhism have remained an enduring refuge for individuals and communities alike. This presentation explores how Buddhism, as well as analogous traditions of yoga, can confront the challenges and threats of the 21st century and offer solace and pragmatic solutions in a strife-torn world.

Biographical Profile

Dr. Hemant K. Jha is an Associate Professor in the Amity School of Liberal Arts at the Amity University in Haryana, India. He has taught English language and Literature for more than three decades and has published numerous research papers on subjects pertaining to art, culture, and religion. He is the author of Hindu-Buddhist Festivals of Nepal.
Bodhisattva Leadership in the Modern World

Dr. Tashi Gyeltshen

This presentation offers a view of leadership based on the teachings of Buddha Gautama, who taught that happiness can be achieved by realizing the Four Noble Truths and following the Noble Eight-fold Path. However, many centuries after Buddha Gautama’s death, Buddhist principles diversified to include the all-pervasive emptiness, compassion, and altruism of Mahayāna and the skillful means of Vajrayāna for achieving those qualities in all aspects of human life. Central to Mahayāna and Vajrayāna doctrine is the ideal of Bodhicitta, the selfless aspiration to bring all beings to enlightenment, and its comprehensive enactment through application of the Bodhisattva Vow.

Based on the Mahayāna Buddhist ideal of the Bodhisattva, this presentation will elucidate a more encompassing view of what leadership can mean in contemporary society. Bodhisattva Leadership, as presented here, is based on principles of universal Buddha nature and actively promotes these qualities in communities and organizations. This presentation will outline key principles of Bodhisattva Leadership, encompassing concepts of Buddha nature, mindfulness practice, inclusive altruism, the development and application of positive leadership attributes in all areas of social and environmental concern, towards the ultimate fruition of collective human flourishing.

Biographical Profile

Dr. Tashi Gyeltshen is a Senior Lecturer at Samtse College of Education at the Royal University of Bhutan, with prior experience as a teacher and principal in Bhutanese secondary schools. His PhD study on academic leadership revealed to him the positive influence of Buddhist values on the culture and lives of the Bhutanese people and the practicability of applying ancient wisdom to contemporary organizations and social settings.
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The Great Transmission

A Film by Pema Gellek

This film by Pema Gellek, the daughter of the contemporary Nyingma master Tarthang Tulku Rinpoche, reveals the centrality of textual transmission in the history and trajectory of Vajrayāna Buddhism. *The Great Transmission* recounts Tibet’s 1,200-year legacy of compiling, preserving, translating, and disseminating Buddhist texts as the Himalayan world became the inheritor of an ancient literary, artistic, and spiritual heritage. This body of literature, which by its sheer scale, sophistication, and philosophical depth constitutes one of the greatest achievements in history.

In the wake of China’s Cultural Revolution, Tibet’s vast repository of sacred texts was nearly entirely destroyed, along with the knowledge of its Vajrayāna practices and traditions. This film highlights the continuing work of the Tibetan lama Tarthang Tulku to restore and transmit this endangered body of knowledge in the modern world, through the collection, editing, printing, and distribution of irreplaceable Buddhist texts in one of the largest free book distributions in history. The film is ultimately a compelling case study of an immense effort to preserve a body of literature with profound universal value that could easily be lost to humankind.

Biographical Profile

Pema Gellek is Director of the Guna Foundation and Prajna Light Foundation, and a faculty member at Dharma College. She holds an M.A. in International Politics from American University and a B.A. in Asian Studies from Mary Baldwin College. and studied extensively with Buddhist masters in Nepal. She is the second of the three daughters of the Nyingma master Tarthang Tulku Rinpoche and a direct disciple of H.H. Chadral Sangye Dorje Rinpoche. She is the director of *Light of the Valley* (2011), *Prayers of the Ancient Ones* (2013) and *The Great Transmission* (2016).
Vajrayāna Buddhism in Practice

From Yogis to Monks: Historical Transformations within Vajrayāna Buddhist Sanghas

His Eminence Lopön Samten Dorji

Biographical Profile

His Eminence Lopön Samten Dorji is Tsulak Lopön of Zhung Dratshang, the Central Monastic Body. He is one of five ‘learned masters’ (lopön) nominated by Je Khenpo, the Chief Abbot of the Central Monastic Body and Bhutan’s supreme religious authority.

The Form and Function of Meditation Centers in Bhutan

Khenpo Kinley Tenzin

Biographical Profile

Khenpo Kinley Tenzin is the Abbot at Dodeydra Shedra.

Empowerment, Oral Transmission, and Verbal Instruction in Highest Yoga Tantra

Choten Dorji

Buddhism continues to spread throughout the world, but not all practitioners comprehend the paradoxical perspectives, meditational practices, and enlightened activities central to the Vajrayāna tradition. Without proper instruction, it is possible to misunderstand Vajrayāna as
Abstracts and profiles counter to the Buddha’s teachings. Nonetheless, with diligence, proper motivation, and close guidance by a qualified tantric master, Vajrayāna offers an unexcelled path to spiritual enlightenment. In Vajrayāna today, faith is readily lavished on recognized reincarnate lamas (tulku), but less attention is given to the teachings of often highly qualified lamas who lack the title of tulku. This presentation will outline the traditional means by which Vajrayāna Buddhism is transmitted and received in order to clarify potential misunderstandings.

Biographical Profile

Choten Dorji holds a Bachelors Degree in Tibetan Buddhism from Lekshed Jungney Shedra in Punakha, Bhutan, and lectured there for three years. He holds a Masters Degree in Buddhist Studies from the International Buddhist College in Thailand and is currently working on his PhD Dissertation on ‘The Mahāyāna Influence on the Development of the Bodhisattva Ideal in Theravāda Buddhism: An Analytical Study’ at Acharya Nāgārjuna University in India.

Exploring and Understanding the Mystery of Human Life

Zen Master Shih Lien-Hai

Do we understand the functioning of our own bodies? Do we understand our own inner hearts and mind? Do we understand our affinities with others and the nature of our relationships? Or the relationship between the world and what we call our selves? Do we know what gives rise to illness and distress and the fluctuating emotions of happiness, anger, sorrow, and joy? Do we comprehend the relationship between the Buddha and our innermost heart? Are we able to transcend the cycle of birth, death, sickness and old age and create an alternative destiny? These questions lie at the heart of the Buddhist tradition and thus infuse all Vajrayāna Buddhist practice. In this presentation, Venerable Zen Master Lien Hai will deepen our understanding of the journey through life towards ultimate Awakening, or Buddhahood.
Biographical Profile

Zen Master Shih Lien-hai was ordained by Patriarch Pai-sein and inherited the dharma lineage of numerous Mahayana Buddhist traditions, including Ten Tai, Ling Chi, and Chao Tung, which emphasize direct realization of the Buddha’s experience of Awakening. He is also Professor, General Administrator, and Dean of Students at the Institute of China Buddhism in Taiwan and is dedicated to the international promotion and implementation of Buddhism.

Embodying the Vision: Vajrayāna Buddhism in Practice

David Verdesi

Vajrayāna Buddhism is presented as a direct approach to realizing one’s Buddha-nature that, in distinction to the gradualist methodology presented in Hinayāna and Mahayāna, famously ‘takes the result as the path’. Vajrayāna, or tantric Buddhist techniques thus work directly with the body’s innate physiology and psychological processes in order to realize the liberated condition of nirvana within everyday experience. This presentation will offer an overview of the core methods and techniques of Vajrayāna Buddhism as they relate to the three traditional ‘gateways’ of body, speech/energy, and mind and the so-called ‘Six Yogas of Naropa’ that are undertaken at various phases of waking, dreaming, sleeping, and dying. The presentation will focus in particular, however, on tantric Buddhism’s exposition of visionary experience: the direct ‘seeing’ of one’s transpersonal enlightened essence as the penultimate form of self-knowledge and the awakening of dormant capacities of the mind and body expressed in terms of ‘clear light’, ‘illusory body’, and ‘rainbow body’. Special attention will be given in this presentation to distinguishing inherited cultural forms of Vajrayāna from underlying, and more widely applicable, core principles. Experiential exercises will be introduced that explore the phenomenology of visionary experience within Vajrayāna Buddhism on a practical level: using specific body postures, breathing techniques, and altered forms of perception to gain direct insight into our ultimate, self-existing Buddha nature.
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Biographical Profile

David Verdesi is the founder of Human Potential, Research and Development (HPRD) and conducts seminars and training programs throughout the world in the fields of phenomenology and transpersonal anthropology. His professional research has focused on in-depth studies among highly achieved adepts in Africa, Brazil, Nepal, India, Indonesia, China, and Siberia towards the development of experiential algorithms underlying traditional methodologies for realizing humankind’s fullest psychophysical capacities. With extensive knowledge and accomplishment in yogic, Taoist, and tantric Buddhist practices, David Verdesi’s ongoing research elucidates a unified theory of human development that encompasses yet transcends traditional forms and techniques and points directly to the transcendent nature of mind and consciousness. His training seminars present practical methods for understanding the abiding principles that underlie inherited systems of belief and for realizing more expansive models of self and reality.

Buddhism in Practice: Transforming Education and Agriculture and Preserving the Environment

Dr. Dhammapiya

In this presentation, Dr. Dhammapiya will share his perspective that where ‘Compassion is the Religion, Truth is the Faith, and Service is the Way of Life’. Dr. Dhammapiya has applied this vision in educational projects in India’s Northeast that aspire to establishing sustainable models for environmental conservation by creating community forests, preserving sources of pure water, promoting organic agriculture, and leading simple community-based lifestyles that provide viable models for reversing humankind’s negative impact on nature and itself. These works represent Buddhism in practice in the secular world with implications that ultimately transcend Buddhist tradition and embrace all humanity and the natural world.

Biographical Profile

Dr. Dhammapiya is the Founder and Chairman of Dhamma Dipa Foundation and the Bahujana Hitaya Educational Trust in Tripura, India. He is also the founder of Dhamma Dipa International Buddhist Academy.
The Core Curriculum at Bhutan's Tango University of Buddhist Studies

Khenpo Karma

Biographical Profile

Khenpo Karma is the Deputy Abbot at Tango University

Mind-Body Practices in Vajrayāna Buddhism, as revealed in Pema Lingpa’s ‘Secret Key to the Winds and Channels’ (rtsa rlunggsang ba’i lde mig)

Ian Baker

The Great Perfection or Dzogchen (rdzogs chen) teachings of Himalayan Buddhism are upheld as revealing the ultimate unconditioned nature of human consciousness, without recourse to the transformational rites and practices that characterize the tantric, or Vajrayāna, form of Buddhism from which Dzogchen emerged. Nonetheless, as this illustrated talk will clearly show, the practice of Dzogchen traditionally includes demanding physical exercises that push the body—and thereby consciousness—beyond conventional limits and constraints. Dzogchen’s body-oriented approach to the realization of habitually dormant cognitive and existential capacities is vividly portrayed in 17th century wall paintings in a once secret meditation chamber in Lhasa that were created during the reign of the Sixth Dalai Lama and which illustrate a Dzogchen ‘treasure text’ (gter ma) revealed two centuries earlier by the Bhutanese saint, Orgyen Pema Lingpa (padma gling pa) (1450-1521). Embellished with illuminating passages from Pema Lingpa’s ‘Compendium of Enlightened Spontaneity’ (Rdzogs chen kun bzang dgongs ’dus), the Lukhang murals vividly reveal the demanding ‘magical movements of channels and winds’ (rtsa rlung ’khrul ’khor) held to facilitate realization of the mind’s inherent ‘Buddha Nature’ (de gshegs snying po, Skt: tatha gatagarbha). This presentation will explore the function of body-mind
Abstracts and profiles practices within Vajrayāna Buddhism and Dzogchen as well as the politics of concealment and revelation that have led to lingering misunderstandings about the nature and purpose of these deeply embodied practices that have persisted alongside, but distinct from, monastic traditions emphasizing ritual and scriptural study.

Biographical Profile

Ian Baker is an anthropologist and Buddhist scholar who has published seven books on Himalayan cultural history, environment, art, and medicine including The Dalai Lamas Secret Temple: Tantric Wall Paintings from Tibet, The Tibetan Art of Healing, Buddhas of the Celestial Gallery, The Heart of the World: A Journey to the Last Secret Place, and the forthcoming Tibetan Yoga: Secrets from the Source. He has also written for National Geographic Magazine who named him one of seven ‘Explorers for the Millennium’ for his extended field research in the hidden-land of Pemako in the eastern Himalayas. Ian studied Literature and Anthropology at Oxford University and University College London and served as lead curator for a 2015-2016 ‘Tibet’s Secret Temple: Body, Mind and Meditation in Tantric Buddhism’ exhibition in London that centered on life-size facsimiles of 17th century wall paintings illustrating Pema Lingpa’s ‘Secret Key to the Winds and Channels’ and other texts from Pema Lingpa’s ‘Compendium of Enlightened Spontaneity’ (Dzogchen Kunsang Gongdu). He is an advisory board member of the International Society for Bhutan Studies (ISBS).

Reflections on Pema Lingpa's 'Key to the Eight Principal Tantric Medicines', and its Relevance Today

Dr. Cathy Cantwell

The category of the Eight Principal Tantric Medicines (sman rtsa brgyad) is ubiquitous in tantric sources, such as the regular medicinal cordial offerings (sman mchod) found in many tantric sādhanas. These substances form some of the key ingredients to be included in medicinal accomplishment (sman sgrub) practices, when sacred medicinal pills are compounded and consecrated in the course of a Major Practice Session (sgrub chen), conducted over a number of days. The category is referred to in early sources, such as in the works of the ancestral forefathers of the Nyingma school, the twelfth century Nyang ral Nyima Özer (nyang ral nyi ma 'od zer) and the thirteenth century Guru Chöwang (gu ru chos dbang). In the revelations of the national...
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saint of Bhutan, Pema Lingpa (*padma gling pa*, 1450-1521), we find a short pithy text relating to this classification: A Key to the Eight Principal and Thousand Branch Medicines (*rtsa brgyad yan lag stong gi lde mig*, Pema Lingpa Collected Works 1975-1976, Thimphu: Volume Ta: 391-397). This presentation explores the text and themes that live on in later works and contemporary practice.

**Biographical Profile**

**Dr. Cathy Cantwell** has been a member of the Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Oxford, since 2002. She is President of the UK Association for Buddhist Studies and is currently a KHK Visiting Research Fellow at the University of Bochum. Her work focuses on Tibetan and Himalayan tantric rituals of all periods from the 10th century CE, and especially the ritual texts and practices deriving from the “Early Transmissions” (*snga 'gyur rnying ma*). This work has included text critical and historical analysis, as well as ethnographic study of contemporary rituals. Her most recent book publications are, *A Noble Noose of Methods, the Lotus Garland Synopsis: A Mahāyoga Tantra and its Commentary* (Vienna 2012, together with Robert Mayer), and “Buddhism: The Basics” (London 2010). She has recently jointly edited a Special Edition (with Robert Mayer, Jowita Kramer and Stefano Zacchetti) of the Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies (Volume 36/37, 2015), entitled, *Authors and Editors in the Literary Traditions of Asian Buddhism*.

**Meditation and Mindfulness in Modern Education**

**Dr. Tamara Ditrich**

Meditation plays a prominent role in all current schools of Buddhism. The recent spread of Buddhist meditative techniques across the world has facilitated the introduction of meditation, particularly mindfulness, into a variety of new environments, especially in therapeutic and wellness contexts. Although meditation techniques have been adapted to new environments throughout the history of Buddhism, the recent trend of abstracting meditation from its Buddhist roots means that it is now presented in entirely new contexts. This presentation will examine the transplantation of meditation and mindfulness into new paradigms and
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unprecedented contexts that give rise to new issues, consequences, and concerns. It will be discussed whether positioning meditation primarily as a tool for achieving improved wellbeing reduces the breadth and depth of its application for more deeply investigating ethical behaviour and opening up deeper insights into human consciousness and its potentials.

With these questions in mind, a new twelve-week mindfulness training program for Australian high schools was designed in 2013. It has been implemented in several schools in Australia, and a research project conducted in one school. This presentation will outline the theoretical foundations of the program, which draws from and is structurally based upon traditional Buddhist practices of mindfulness, concentration, loving kindness, and compassion, with strong emphasis on cultivating ethical behavior, developing insight and kindness, and promoting internal and external conflict transformation. The presentation will outline the links between the training program and the major themes emerging from the research project and explore how these findings may potentially apply to educational systems in Bhutan within a historical Vajrayāna Buddhist context.

Biographical Profile

Dr. Tamara Ditrich is Head of Applied Buddhist Studies at Nan Tien Institute and Researcher at the University of Sydney, Australia. Her academic background encompasses Buddhist Studies, Sanskrit, and Vedic philology. She has over thirty years of teaching and research experience at various universities in Europe and Australia and over forty years of Buddhist meditation practice, under the supervision of renowned meditation teachers in India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Europe, and Australia. Her current research interests include the application of Buddhist philosophy and meditation techniques in contemporary education.

Is Mindfulness Meditation an Effective Strategy for Reducing Stress?

Phurba Sherpa

Stress is one of the most common challenges currently facing international healthcare professionals. Long-term stress leads to a cascade of physiological and psychological consequences that negatively impact individuals, families, and society as a whole. Mindfulness meditation, derived from traditional
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Buddhist meditation practices, has become increasingly popular as an effective therapy for reducing stress and has been positively associated with enhanced decision-making, compassionate behavior, and increased physiological and psychological wellbeing. This presentation will examine the evidence and explore the efficacy of Buddhist mindfulness and meditation techniques outside their traditional contexts.

Biographical Profile

Ms. Phurba Sherpa is an advisor of the Buddhist Community Centre UK Youth Committee, a medical student at Keele University, UK, and a registered nurse with the UK National Health Services Foundation Trust. Her research interests include the positive impact of mindfulness and meditation on health and wellbeing.

The Power of Kundalini: Awakening Buddha Nature though Hidden Resources within the Body

Dr. Omanand Guruji

It is a well established fact that Vajrayāna Buddhism, and especially the Yogini Tantras of the Highest Yoga Tantra systems, were deeply influenced by Shaivite Tantrism and Shakta cults prevalent in 8th to 10th century India. Although female deities such as Tara and Vajra Yogini abound in Vajrayāna as objects of devotion, the innermost practices that use such dynamic forms as supports for inner transformation are relatively little known. This presentation will illuminate the role of Shakti, or female divine power, in Tantra generally, and in Vajrayāna in particular. The esoteric Tantric traditions recognize two forms of Shakti, one being ultimate enlightenment and the other being the opening or awakening of the human body’s innermost nervous system in the form of Kundalini, the habitually dormant biophysical energy at the base of the spine. It is this ‘inner fire’ that is cultivated through Tantric Buddhist practices such as Tummo, or ‘inner fire’. This presentation will disclose key methods for activating this divine resource within the human organism, and thus accelerating the path to existential freedom and liberation from suffering.
Biographical Profile

Dr. Omanand Guruji is one of the chief disciples of H.H. Mahamandleshwar Swami Shri Paramanand Giriji Maharaj. He is the author of twenty-eight books, numerous DVDs, and published articles on yoga related topics. He served as President of Hindu University of America in Florida, USA and currently serves as Honorary Patron of Paramanand University Trust, Paramanand Institute of Yoga Sciences & Research, and International Association of Indian Yoga & Therapy. He supervises students pursuing doctorates in yoga and specializes in contemporary applications of meditation, traditional yoga therapies, and the transmission of Chid Shakti Prakriya, a technique for revealing the full potential of human embodiment.

Meditation, Mantra, and Marathon Monks in Japan

Dr. Barbara S. Morrison

Mantrayâna Buddhism, also known as Vajrayâna Buddhism, came to Japan from China in the 9th century C.E. primarily through the efforts of Kûkai (posthumously known as Kôbô Daishi: 774-835) who established Shingon Buddhism in 816 C.E. on Mt. Koya in Wakayama Prefecture, Japan. Kûkai’s colleague Saichô (posthumously known as Dengyô Daishi: 767-822) also brought Vajrayâna teachings from China to Japan and founded Tendai Buddhism on Mt. Hiei in Shiga Prefecture. Kûkai’s teachings remain fundamentally esoteric in nature while Saichô’s more eclectic approach, including his exoteric emphasis on the teachings of The Lotus Sutra, enabled exoteric developments of Vajrayâna such as Pure Land Buddhism (Hônen: 1133-1212) and New Pure Land Buddhism (Shinran: 1173-1263).

This presentation will focus primarily on Shingon Buddhism in order to explore Kûkai’s innovations regarding Vajrayâna Buddhism in Japan, at a time less than one hundred years after Padmasambhava’s historic introduction of Vajrayâna Buddhism in Tibet and Bhutan. With the understanding that a fundamental teaching of esoteric Buddhism lies in the realization that enlightenment can be achieved in this lifetime (in this very body), this presentation will use the framework of the three mysteries (sanmitsu); i.e. body (physical training), speech (mantra), and mind (meditation) in order to think through the ways in which Kûkai’s profound thinking on letters, language, and human embodiment created a particular
interpretive lens that has since characterized the larger tradition of Vajrayâna Buddhism in Japanese culture.

This presentation will specifically explore Kûkai’s conception of consciousness (mind) as a further addition to the five elements of earth, water, fire, wind, and space (rokudai taidai), his synthesis of mantra and mandala; and his elucidation of cosmic speech (hosshin seppô) as a means of sacralizing all phenomena. In considering the future of Vajrayâna Buddhism trans-nationally, this presentation will explore the ways in which Shingon principles concerning the sacred equality of all beings and its keen awareness of semiotic processes may be applied outside of the tradition to inculcate mindfulness and critical thinking into all spheres of human endeavor.

Biographical Profile

Dr. Barbara Morrison, PhD holds a Master’s Degree in Japanese Literature from Columbia University and a Ph.D. in English Literature from the University of North Dakota. She currently teaches Gender and Culture Studies as an Associate Professor in the International Department at Utsunomiya University in Tochigi Prefecture, Japan. She received tokudo (ordination) in Shingon Buddhism in 2002 at Yochiin temple on Mt. Koya and continues to explore the ways in which writing, thinking, art and Shingon / Vajrayâna practice can combine to support a life of joy and purpose.

The Five Elements in Everyday Life: Foundations of Vajrayâna Buddhist Thought and Practice

Dr. Asa Hersh (Lama Jinpa)

Literally millions of prayer flags flutter over the Kingdom of Bhutan, and now the West, displaying the five-fold wisdom of Air (lung), Earth (sa), Fire (meh), Water (chu) and Space (namkha). This five-element model lies at the core of Vajrayâna Buddhism and forms an integral part of every empowerment, deity practice, and offering ritual, as well as diagnosis and treatment in traditional Buddhist Medicine. Yet the applicability of this body of knowledge in daily life, and its impact for the Gross National Happiness
Abstracts and profiles of Bhutan and the larger world have yet to be fully realized. This richly illustrated presentation will demonstrate how the Five Elements that form the foundations of Vajrayāna Buddhist thought and practice can support therapeutic practices promoting optimal physical health and wellness. But beyond the Five Elements’ external manifestations and applications lies a largely unknown system of depth psychology that can be described as the ‘Pentad Mind’. This elegant and easily applied system of transformative psychology can facilitate personal and interpersonal understanding in a way that has hitherto proved elusive for both patients and professional practitioners. The ancient knowledge and principles that will be presented in this presentation derive directly from texts and practices of great tantric Buddhist masters such as Pema Lingpa, Thangtong Gyalpo, Machik Labdron, and Kalu Rinpoche and have been refined over a 35-year period so as to make them highly understandable and applicable in the 21st century world.

Biographical Profile

Dr. Asa Hersh (Lama Jinpa) completed a traditional three-year retreat in 1989 under the auspices of His Eminence Kalu Rinpoche, later obtaining ordination as a Ngakpa with Kunzang Dechen Lingpa in Arunachal Pradesh, India. Specializing in the practice of Chod, he has taught and translated many rare Tibetan texts related to this lineage. As a Naturopathic Physician and practicing Homeopath for over forty years, he has applied and integrated the Five Element system into a deeply transformative methodology for therapy, self-healing, and spiritual growth. He is the author of three books published by Penguin/Random House, with two additional forthcoming books on Five Element Healing and the Pentad Mind. He lectures on related topics throughout the United States, Canada, and Asia.

Dakini Script: Textuality, Transcendence, and the Role of Women in Vajrayāna Buddhism

Dr. Kuenga Wangmo

This presentation explores the esoteric textuality at the heart of the Nyingma tradition of Vajrayāna Buddhism and its connection to female embodiments of enlightened activity known in Sanskrit as dakini and, in Tibetan, as kha dro, or ‘space travelers’. As embodiments of primordial intelligence deeply associated with the transmission of tantric Buddhism and the revealed
‘treasure texts’ (*ter ma*) central to the Nyingma school of Himalayan Buddhism, dakinis function on outer, inner, and secret levels to convey the deepest truths of Vajrayāna Buddhism and to lead its practitioners to more inclusive forms of knowledge. Central to their manifestations are the so-called ‘dakini scripts’ (*khandro dayig*) that reveal dimensions of thought and reality beyond the mundane world. This presentation will explore the role of dakinis in Vajrayāna Buddhism and the esoteric texts with which they are intimately connected.

**Biographical Profile**

**Dr. Kuenga Wangmo** is a Harvard and Cambridge-trained archaeologist who has worked on sites in Bhutan, India, and the United States. She has a post-doctoral degree from the Courtauld Institute of Art in London. She is advisor to the Centre for Archaeology and Historical Studies (CAHS) at the Royal University of Bhutan. Her National Geographic supported field research in Bhutan pertaining to pre-Buddhist archaeological sites has revealed new aspects of Bhutan's history and traditions. She currently works and lives in Thimphu.

**Feminine Wisdom in Vajrayāna Buddhism**

Dr. Tashi Zangmo

This presentation will highlight the importance of women’s participation in the development and unfolding of Vajrayāna Buddhism. Female enlightenment is not a mythical narrative but a historical reality. The history of Vajrayāna reveals many women who have achieved enlightenment, from Khandro Yeshe Tsogyal and Khandro Mandarava to Geylong-ma Palmo, Jetsun Dolma, Machig Labdron, and many others in Bhutan during the time of the tantric Buddhist master Drukpa Kunleg (15th century). Full realization for women is equally possible today. Many examples abound of treasure revealers (*tertonpa*) who relied on the unbounded wisdom of dakinis, or realized female adepts, to accelerate their access to sacred knowledge. The most illustrious example in Bhutan is Guru Padmasambhava, who departed from Singye Dzong, near the border with Tibet, and reached Taksang, or ‘Tiger’s Nest’, on the back of his consort Khandro Yeshe Tsogyal, who had transformed herself for this purpose into a flying tigress. In Tibet, in the 11th
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century, the female adept Machig Labdron is held to have performed
numerous miracles and to have effectively challenged her male counterparts
through the practice of Chod, or ‘cutting through’, illusions and attachments.
Jetsun Dolma (Tara), an enlightened being, similarly determined to be born
life after life as a woman in order to liberate sentient beings through female
form. This presentation will draw renewed attention to the ways in which
Vajrayāna Buddhism deeply honors feminine wisdom, and point to ways in
which those qualities can be further advanced within tantric Buddhism
today.

Biographical Profile

Dr. Tashi Zangmo is the Executive Director of the Bhutan Nuns Foundation
(BNF). She holds a Bachelor’s Degree in Buddhist Higher Studies from the
Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies in Sarnath, Varanasi, India. In
1999, she earned a second Bachelor’s degree in Development Studies from
Mount Holyoke College in the United States. She subsequently earned a
Master’s and a PhD degree in International Education from the University of
Massachusetts in Amherst, Massachusetts.

Yoginīs of Fire and Light: Gebchak Gonpa in Tibet

Elizabeth McDougal (Ani Chozom)

Gebchak Gonpa, presently a community of 350 nuns in Nangchen, Eastern
Tibet, was established in 1982 by Tsangyang Gyamtso, a heart disciple of the
first Drubwang Tsoknyi Rinpoche. With patronage of the Nangchen king,
Gebchak Gonpa soon developed into an autonomous female lineage that
was renowned in the region for the nuns’ yogic accomplishments. The
Gebchak nuns practice Tsangyang Gyamtso’s commentary on a Ratna
Lingpa terma, that he adapted for the female mind-body experience. A
salient component of Gebchak’s practice system is tsa-lung (the general
practice category that includes tummo) and ‘unifying prāṇa and mind’ (lung
sems dbyer med pa) is a guiding principle in all of the nuns’ ritual and
meditation practices. A Chu-rey (‘wet sheet’) ceremony takes place in
January each year where the nuns dry off wet sheets with their bodily heat
generated in tummo practice. In 2010 nearly a quarter of the nuns
demonstrated mastery of tummo yoga in the public Chu-rey ceremony.
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Amidst drastic changes to all levels of life in Tibet since the 1980s, Gebchak Gonpa’s senior nuns and lamas are determined to preserve their original practice system without alteration. So far they have been successful in doing so, protected as they are by their remote location where there are no cell phones or internet. At many other gonpas in Nangchen, and throughout Eastern Tibet, there is a significant population shift over the last ten years of monks and nuns moving away from retreat centers and into study centers, where they are pursuing Buddhist scholarly degrees. This shift is in response to the needs of Tibetan Buddhist modernization on the Plateau where degrees ensure a more secure livelihood, and rationalization ensures that the religion survives in socialist China with its materialist orientation. As a result, although the Gebchak nuns still practice the same curriculum for which they were once praised, today they are criticised by local Tibetans for their lack of scholastic study.

How are communities of yogic practitioners surviving in Tibet under rapid modernization of China’s ‘Develop the West’ campaign and its socialist policies on religion? And how might the Gebchak nuns continue to preserve the original forms of their practice tradition? Along with an introduction to Gebchak Gonpa and its female lineage of yogic practice, these are the questions to be addressed in the presentation.

Biographical Profile

Elizabeth McDougal (Ani Tenzin Chozom) lived as a Tibetan Buddhist nun in India for fifteen years at Dongyu Gatsal Ling Nunnery, Tsogyal Shedrub Ling Nunnery, and at Banaras Hindu University in Varanasi. Since 2006 she has been working for Gebchak Gonpa in Nangchen, Eastern Tibet, as the Nunnery’s English secretary and translator. Fascinated by the Nunnery’s position as a vestige of traditional yogic culture in a region where the ancient has quickly transformed into the modern, Elizabeth is currently pursuing research on the topic at the University of Sydney.
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**Nuns in the Dragon Kingdom**

Ani Namgyel Lhamo

The earliest role models of male and female adepts within Vajrayāna Buddhism were non-monastic mahasiddhas, or ‘realised masters’, who attained enlightenment through integrating their realization with everyday life. Nonetheless, Vajrayāna Buddhism developed in Tibet within a parallel monastic context through which Buddhist knowledge and traditions could be handed down to future generations. Even in Buddha Sakyamuni’s own time, he was at first reluctant to ordain female practitioners as renunciate nuns (bhikkunis) but, as in all aspects of Buddhism, traditions evolved and Buddhist nuns today are primary vehicles for the continuity of Buddhist tradition and its dissemination in both monastic communities and secular society. This presentation will address the role of Buddhist nuns in Bhutan and the ways in which their practice furthers the Mahayāna and Vajrayāna Buddhist ideals of wisdom, compassion, and altruistic action.

**Biographical Profile**

Ani Namgyel Lhamo is an ordained Buddhist nun who works with the Bhutan Nuns Foundation (BNF). She holds a Master’s Degree in Buddhist Studies from Central University of Tibetan Studies in Sarnath, Varanasi, India.

**Dakinis head West: Eminent Yoginis in America**

Angela Dietrich

Buddhism in general, but Tibetan or Vajrayāna Buddhism in particular, is more often than not associated with positions of male leadership. However, especially in regard to the yogic traditions most commonly practiced in the Nyingma lineage, there have always been females in various, mostly non-monastic, leadership roles. This extends back to the time of Padmasambhava whose two main consorts were respected and accomplished practitioners in their own right. Most notable is Yeshe Tsogyal who is said to have been an emanation of both Vajra Varahi and Tara and who Padmasambhava memorably praised as having achieved a level of attainment equal to his own.
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This presentation will focus on female practitioners of Vajrayāna Buddhism who were born and bred in the West, specifically in the United States, and who serve as international role models for spiritual empowerment in the contemporary world. One of the best known is Lama Tsultrim Allione, considered an emanation of Machig Labdron (1055 – 1145), the latter a reincarnation of Yeshe Tosgyal, who was instrumental in spreading the practice of Chod, the only Vajrayāna practice recognized as being native to Tibet. With a center in Colorado, Lama Tsultrim is the author of several important books, including a biography of Machik Labdron. Another American woman, Jetsunma Akhon Norbu Lhamo, was recognized by H.H. Penor Rinpoche in 1988 as a tulku, or reincarnation of Genyenma Akhon Lhamo, the sister of Rigdzin Kunzang Sherab who was the first throneholder of the Palyul lineage. This was the first time that a Western woman was recognised as a tulku and, due to her eminence and diligence, her center in Maryland has become one of the largest Vajrayāna communities in North America. In 1994, she was further recognised as an emanation of Lhacham Mandarava, the second main consort of Padmasambhava, by the Nyingma master H.H. Kusum Lingpa. This identification was later reiterated by H.H. Ngawang Tenzon, who was at the time the Dorje Lopon, or chief religious official of Bhutan, while visiting her monastery in 2004.

This presentation will focus chiefly on the contributions of female practitioners to the spread of Vajrayāna’s yogic traditions, whose adepts include rnal ‘byomas (yoginis), ras mas (‘cotton clad yogins’, expert in the art of tummo), gomchenmas (meditators), and das log mas, oracles who have returned from the dead, amongst others. It appears that such specialities are most prominently practiced by females who are not nuns or gelong mas, but rather non-celibate vow-holding practitioners of tantric Vajrayāna Buddhism. This presentation will thus seek to redefine the boundary between lay and monastic Vajrayāna practitioners and identify a significant trend in the transmission of non-monastic Vajrayāna practices by contemporary female adepts, complementary to the feminist Buddhist aspiration to achieve ordination for nuns in the hitherto male dominated institutions of Buddhist monasticism.

Biographical Profile

**Angela Dietrich** holds a PhD in Nepalese Culture from Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu, Nepal and a Master’s degree in the Anthropology of South Asia from Heidelberg University in Germany. She has worked as

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an educational consultant for international colleges and universities and has published two books, including *Tantric Healing in the Kathmandu Valley: A Comparison of Hindu and Buddhist Tantric Healing Traditions* (1998), and numerous academic research articles in the field of Asian religions and cultures, with special reference to Buddhism. She also served as associate editor for the Buddhist journal, *Seeds of Peace*, dedicated to a socially engaged, modern form of Buddhism able to respond to contemporary challenges.

**Exploring Vajrayāna Practices during Three Years Retreat**

Khenpo Karma Lhendup

**Biographical Profile**

**Khenpo Karma Lhendup** is a researcher at the Research Division in the Central Monastic Body

**The Alchemical Body: Nutritional Perspectives on Tantric Buddhist Practice**

Elizabeth Lee

Over millennia, Hindu and Buddhist yogins and Chinese Daoist masters refined their knowledge of extracting life-sustaining nutrients from natural substances, not only for survival, but also to purify and strengthen the physical body and its energetic processes. From the nettle-based diet of the Tibetan yogin Milarepa to the gold-pills of the Chinese adept Ko Hu, advanced practitioners used methods of ‘external body alchemy’ (Tibetan: Chu Len; Sanskrit: Rasayana) to strengthen and transform their physical bodies. The practice of external body alchemy also helped to refine the practitioners’ subtle nervous system and to prevent harm when practicing ‘internal body alchemy’ such as Nei Gong, Kundalini, and Tummo. Notable failures occurred in ancient China when the weakened bodies of emperors who lived excessively stressful or luxurious lifestyles could not withstand the internal transformations brought about by alchemical ‘immortality pills’. Similar circumstances result today when contemporary practitioners undertake traditional fasting regimens or Kundalini-related practices.
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without first making their bodies suitable vessels. To create the ‘immortal body’ within the corporeal body requires extensive preparation of the physical body through a variety of actions involving dietary, respiratory, and body-mind disciplines, as well as regenerative sexual practices. A healthy lifestyle is thus an essential foundation for avoiding illness and ensuring the efficacy of advanced yogic and meditative practices. This presentation will introduce key nutritional concepts for ensuring optimal health and achieving our highest potential as human beings.

Biographical Profile

Elizabeth (Liz) Lee is a Vajrayāna Buddhist practitioner, holistic health consultant, and Reiki master, based in Hong Kong. Her integrated approach to health, healing, and spiritual practice draws from her professional background in diverse forms of Eastern and Western mind-body medicine, as well as from Indian yoga and Chinese Daoism. She specializes in energy-food based nutritional therapies and in root-cause resolution of entrenched psychiatric syndromes endemic in modern life.

Mindfulness of Dream and Sleep: A Bridge towards Dream Yoga?

Charlie Morley

Lucid dreaming is an important precursory skill to the Vajrayāna practice of Dream Yoga. The Mindfulness of Dream and Sleep approach has been developed to help bridge the gap between the often superficial scope of Western lucid dreaming trends and the often inaccessible Tibetan dream yoga practices. Mindfulness of Dream and Sleep is a practice that uses the best of both Tibetan and Western lucid dreaming techniques to help practitioners to use the thirty years that they spend asleep for spiritual and psychological growth. In this presentation Charlie Morley will offer, at the request of his teacher Lama Yeshe Losal Rinpoche, a series of methods for developing lucid dreaming within the context of Vajrayāna Buddhism and offered to Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike.
Biographical Profile

Charlie Morley received ‘authorization to teach’ within the Karma Kagyu school of Tibetan Buddhism from his teacher Lama Yeshe Rinpoche, the abbot of Samye Ling Monastery. For more than eight years, he has run retreats and workshops on lucid dreaming and dream yoga around the world and has written two books on the subject that have been translated into ten different languages. He is currently based at Kagyu Samye Dzong Buddhist Centre in London.

Terma: A Prophecy

A Film by Zuri Rinpoche

When an ancient Buddhist scripture is discovered, a senior Buddhist monk embarks on a long journey in search of a young boy who is prophesied to be a reincarnate Lama destined to propagate Buddhadharma for the benefit of all sentient beings. After Rigzen Lingpa is recognized as the one who will fulfill the prophecy, he spends his life mastering the teachings of the Buddha. When he is a young lama presiding over a monastery in eastern Bhutan, a young girl from Thimphu returns home to her ailing mother. When she takes her mother to receive blessings from the lama, they experience a powerful connection. Together, they embark on an incredible journey in search of the real meaning of the Terma. What they discover will change their lives forever that will defy and challenge the conventional belief and accepted social values.

The Film won the Platinum Award at the Asia Pacific International Filmmaker Festival. It is yet to be premiered in Bhutan.

Biographical Profile

Zuri Rinpoche is born in Bhutan, the Venerable 8th Zuri Rinpoche was recognized by His Holiness the 16th Karmapa at two months old. He was bestowed the Dharma name Karma Migyur Tenpei Gyaltshen Jigme Gocha. Zuri Rinpoche is the Director of the Film. Zuri Rinpoche resides and teaches at the Karma Thegsum Dechenling Monastery in Eastern Bhutan.
Applications and Investigations of Vajrayāna Buddhism in the 21st Century

The Flourishing of Vajrayāna Buddhism in Bhutan and its Way Forward

His Eminence Lopön Sangay Dorji

In this presentation, one of Bhutan’s supreme religious authorities will offer an overview of the state of Buddhist culture in Bhutan and the role of the Central Monastic Body (Zhung Dratshang) in ensuring the welfare of Bhutan’s inhabitants and environment. Special emphasis will be given to the distinguishing features of Vajrayāna Buddhism as the Third Turning of the Buddhist Wheel of Doctrine.

Biographical Profile

His Eminence Lopön Sangay Dorji is Leytshog Lopön at the Zhung Dratshang, Bhutan’s Central Monastic Body. He is master of activities related to the spiritual community and initiates and supports projects that disseminate and advance Vajrayāna Buddhist culture and traditions.

Ritual Arts and Performance in Bhutanese Monastic Tradition

Khenpo Ugyen Namgyel

Biographical Profile

Khenpo Ugyen Namgyel is a Leytshog Dungchen, Secretary of Administration and Development in the Central Monastic Body.
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Secrets of the Kung-Fu Masters: Neuroscientific Perspectives on Esoteric Buddhist Mind-Body Practices

Dr. James Wang

The highly physical mind-body disciplines in Buddhist Shaolin, Tibetan Tantra, and Daoism are all based on the transformation of vital energy (Prana, Lung, Chi) within the physical body. They optimize the mind-body connection by regulating breathing and directing consciousness to specific parts of the body to generate cell energy and expand the flow of energy and awareness throughout the body. However, these esoteric forms of Buddhist practices have largely been kept secret and their internal processes have thus remained poorly understood. In this presentation, martial arts master and neuroscientist James Wang will explicate the forms and function of Shaolin Buddhist practices of Kung Fu, literally ‘human achievement’, that were used to improve health and prepare the body for advanced forms of meditation. Through live demonstrations, he will show the inner meaning of practices that focus on the spine and tendons which can be applied in everyday life to improve physical and mental health, deepen meditation, and cultivate the subtle essences of our innermost being. Through the language of neuroscience, the ancient secrets behind these practices can finally be revealed for the benefit of humanity.

Biographical Profile

Dr. James Wang is a master of ancient Buddhist practices that cultivate the physical body to reveal hidden dimensions of the mind. He holds a PhD degree in Neuroscience from the Institute of Neuroscience at the National University of Yang-Ming in Taiwan and combines his knowledge of science with his work as a movement therapist and teacher of mind-body disciplines that distill the essence of esoteric Buddhist practices into practical methods that can be applied and implemented in everyday life.
Decoding the Serpent Power: An Exploration of Kundalini and Tummo from the Frontiers of Science

Dr. Jeanne Lim

Known in Vajrayāna Buddhism as Chandali or, in Tibetan, Tummo, Kundalini has been a phenomenon cloaked in the myths and mysteries of ancient traditions. As a subject of inquiry, it fascinates yogic aspirants and modern scientists alike, but until now its psycho-physiological processes have remained obscure. This presentation will propose a Western theoretical model that views Kundalini as a form of bio-physical energy and proposes hypotheses to explain its functioning within the human organism. These subjects are explored from the edge of science as some of the hypotheses made and references used in this presentation are outside of the paradigms of mainstream science.

In order to explore new solutions, we need to ask different questions, as well as give careful consideration to information outside of published scientific work. To do so, it is important that this exploration includes the latest theories and studies derived from logical contemplation of quantum and energy theories, even though some of these hypotheses have not been empirically tested and validated. This presentation will discuss Kundalini both in terms of its bioenergetic origins and the causes of its awakening. The key questions that the presentation will address are as follows: What is Kundalini? What is the origin of Kundalini (or Tummo) energy? What is the primary cause of Kundalini awakening? What is the path of Kundalini awakening? What are the implications of the Kundalini awakening?

Biographical Profile

Dr. Jeanne Lim has worked in the high-technology industry for over twenty years. She is currently the Chief Marketing Officer of Hanson Robotics and was a Marketing Director for Dell, Cisco, and 3Com and a Business Manager for Apple Computer. Jeanne has a PhD degree in Integrated and Holistic Health from the Energy Medicine University, an MBA degree from the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, and a BA degree from the University of California, Berkeley. She is a certified yoga instructor and has completed a training program in Traditional Yoga Studies.
Abstracts and profiles
The Role of Astrology in Vajrayāna Buddhism

Ugyenla

Biographical Profile

Ugyenla is the Abbot at the Pangri Zampa Institute of Astrology.

Mandala Symbolism in Vajrayāna Buddhism

Nalini Rao

This presentation explores the symbolic and philosophical dimensions of the concepts of the cakra and mandala in Vajrayāna Buddhism, particularly in regard to mandala symbolism and design in the Bhavacakra and Kālachakra Tantras. Tracing the imagery of the cakra in the philosophy of Nagarjuna, as concentric circles of Buddhist teachings, and in the cave paintings at Ajanta, the presentation will elaborate on the complex forms and dynamics of mandalas within the pantheistic mysticism of Yogacara and Vajrayāna Buddhism, revealing them as nested depictions of enlightened Body, Speech, and Mind, with Wisdom and Great Bliss at the center, in the form of the Kālachakra deity in union with his consort. As complex representations of the movement of macrocosmic and microcosmic energy within the human body, mandalas serve as conceptual devices for understanding the multi-leveled inter-relationship between the individual and the cosmos, symbolizing time as a cakra, or wheel without a beginning or an end. Mandalas thus serve on the level of tantric ritual and meditation as means for harmonizing consciousness with cosmic processes. Depicted as interconnected palaces, mandalas represent the creative generation of a celestial environment, a dynamic imaginative vision that ultimately permeates all phenomenal reality.

Biographical Profile

Nalini Rao holds a PhD in Art History from UCLA and a PhD in Archaeology from the University of Mysore, India. She is currently Professor of Art History, with specialization in Indian Art, and is also the Chair of the S. R. Rao Memorial Foundation for Indian Archaeology. Her books include Boundaries and Transformations, Royal Imagery and Networks of Power at
The Five Dhyani Mudras in the Visual Arts of Vajrayāna Buddhism

Nilima Sikhrakar

Mudras refer to sacred hand gestures as well as to female tantric deities that are paired with Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in Vajrayāna Buddhist art and ritual from the 10th century onward. This development led to the five principal meditation deities of Vairocana, Ratnasambava, Amitabha, Amoghasiddhi, Aksobhya being coupled with their corresponding mudras; Dharmachakra, Varada, Dhyana, Abhyaa, and Bhumisparsha, each representing qualities of enlightenment. This presentation will explore the ways in which the rich existential symbolism of the Five Dhyani Mudras have influenced modern and contemporary Asian art, in particular the works of Marchel Duchamp, Billy Viola, Gonkar Gyatso, Ang Tsering Sherpa, Arpana Caur, and Zhang Huan. The presentation will further address the inner symbolism of the Dhyani Mudras and their potential applications with visual art therapy.

Biographical Profile

Nilima Sikhrakar is a visual artist born into a Newari Buddhist family in Kathmandu, Nepal. Her upbringing drew her to study thangka painting from the age of thirteen from the eminent Newar artist, Prem Maan Chitrakar. She completed her IFA at the Lalit Kala Campus in Kathmandu, Nepal in 2002; her BFA at the College of Fine Arts (C.K.P) in Bangalore, India in 2006; and her MVA at Jain University in Bangalore, India in 2014. She currently works as a visual art, highly influenced by Vajrayāna Buddhist culture.
Transcending Monasticism: Tantric Buddhist Culture in the Kathmandu Valley of Nepal

Sanoj Sakya

Vajrayāna Buddhism began in India with the emergence of the first Buddhist Tantras in the early centuries of the common era. Newar Buddhism is a form of Vajrayāna Buddhism originating and widely practiced in, but not limited to, the Kathmandu Valley of Nepal. Newar Buddhism is a complete package in itself, i.e. it has its own sets of rituals and ideas that are used throughout different phases of a person’s life and manifested in various forms of meditational practices as well as dance, painting, and sculpture. Many of these ideas and traditions have changed over the centuries in order to adapt to the changing times and changing mindsets. Thus they are not artifacts which used to hold value at one point in history; they are part of a living tradition and are equally relevant today. The tradition of the householder monk is an excellent example of the contemporary relevance of the Newar Buddhist tradition of Vajrayāna. The householder monk or the priest can conduct rituals that would normally require a monk even while being a householder and supporting his family. He does not have to look to society's charity to support himself. At a time of rising living costs, this is a very good way to rid society of the burden of supporting a monastic community while advancing the fundamental ideals of Buddhist culture.

Biographical Profile

Sanoj Sakya holds a Master's degree in Buddhist Studies from Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu, Nepal. His research interests focus on the art of Vajrayāna Buddhism.

Vajrayāna’s Relevance to Contemporary Complex Systems Science and Engineering

Dr. Paola Di Maio

The contemporary world is characterized by technological advancement and increasing interest in the dynamics and limits of human consciousness. Yet despite the discovery of subatomic particles and quantum mechanics, science’s insight into the nature of mind remains fundamentally limited. Vajrayāna Buddhism has offered an alternative, experiential approach to
realizing one’s inherent nature, bolstered by often fabulous claims including technologically unassisted physical flight and leaving hand and footprints in solid rock. To what degree are such seemingly unrealistic accomplishments humanly possible? This presentation offers an overview of Integral Systemics and Intelligence Automation that reveals correspondences between Vajrayāna Buddhism and complex systems research and engineering. The presentation further emphasizes Vajrayāna as a deeply innovative, open-ended tradition that, in seeking seemingly impossible manipulation of natural elements, shares common ground with aspects of complex systems science including virtualization, multiple views, dependent arising, transformation, and non-dual perspectives that can help to illuminate complexities of Vajrayāna Buddhist doctrine.

**Biographical Profile**

**Dr. Paola Di Maio, PhD** is a multilingual scholar in socio-technical systems engineering and management, specializing in cognitive science and systems engineering design. She is a Fellow of the SPES Institute in Leuwen Belgium and holds a PhD in Knowledge Systems Engineering. She is also a practitioner of Dzogchen and Mahāmudra at Palpung Sherabling.

**Bardo: The Intermediate State**

Khenpo Khandu

**Biographical Profile**

**Khenpo Khandu** is the ex-Abbot of Simtokha Shedra and currently working at the Central Monastic Body.

**Buddhism and Environmental Ethics**

Adele Naidan Hu

This presentation will address environmental ethics and ethical approaches to environmental preservation, drawing from ancient Buddhist teachings...
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and Vajrayāna in particular. Vajrayāna Buddhism holds at its core the ability to transform circumstances through concerted positive intention. Such processes begin with the recognition of challenges arising from cycles of causation and effect, the root of current environmental problems. Ethics are manifestations of positive intentions. By drawing lessons from Vajrayāna Buddhist teachings and practices and reframing intentions, humans can address the root causes of environmental imbalance and adopt values aligned with Bhutan’s principles of Gross National Happiness (GNH). Once intentions are set on this positive trajectory, an inevitable momentum will build up through combining positive motivation with creative approaches in science and technology, establishing dynamic ethical approaches such as impact investment and compassionate capital that promote solutions to environmental challenges. Environmental economics and compassionate capital reflect the principles of the Bodhisattvas of wisdom, power, and compassion for transcending ignorance, frustration, and greed and transforming extractive technologies into technologies based on self-renewing resources. In this way, ancient Vajrayāna Buddhist principles can illuminate a way forward towards responsible and ethical global development.

Biographical Profile

Adele Naidan Hu is a pre-law student majoring in International Studies and Economics at Bryn Mawr and Haverford Colleges in Pennsylvania, USA. Her current research interests focus on environmental ethics in Asian philosophies, in particular Buddhism

Vajrayāna Buddhism and Society

Tshering Dorji

Biographical Profile

Tshering Dorji is the Abbot at Simtokha Shedra.
What is Vajrayāna?: A View from Within the Tradition

Khenpo Sonam Bumden

Biographical Profile

Khenpo Sonam Bumden works at the His Holiness the Je Khenpo’s Office at the Central Monastic Body.

Searching for Shangri-La

Laurence Brahm

Although I led three expeditions on the Himalayan Plateau between 2002 and 2004 in search of the legendary realm of Shangri-La I never found it. James Hilton was the author of Lost Horizon, the book that, together with the subsequent 1937 Hollywood movie by Frank Capra, introduced the principle of Shangri-La to the modern world. But Hilton never visited the Himalayas or Asia. His writings were based on reports by National Geographic’s first bureau chief in the Himalayan region, Joseph Rock. But the concept of a realm where spiritual attainment was more important than material gain became very popular in the West, particularly in the 1930s during the Great Depression and the interim between two World Wars when people lost faith in material measurements of success.

‘Shangri-La’ derives from Shambhala, a foundational myth in the Kālachakra Tantra of Vajrayāna Buddhism. The legendary realm of Shangri-La signifies respect for planetary integrity and harmony. Values in Shangri-La were based not on material acquisition, but on harmony and spiritual attainment. The difference between Shangri-La and Shambhala and the material world with which we are familiar can be discerned in the difference between GNH and GNP.

This presentation will draw upon lessons learned from these expeditions in search of Shangri-La in understanding how environmental economics, social enterprise, and impact investment are becoming the new mainstream. Drawing upon Buddhist values, and particularly the power of positive transformational intention that is central to the Vajrayāna vision of building...
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A better world, this presentation will reveal a template in which values of success are measured by human, economic, and environmental health rather than unsustainable growth.

Biographical Profile

Laurence Brahm is a global activist, international lawyer, political economist, author, and chief economist of the New Earth Institute, as well as a practitioner of Vajrayāna Buddhism. He is the architect of two fresh economic paradigms: the Himalayan Consensus and the African Consensus. These concepts evolved from decades of advising on international investment and economic and financial reform, while pioneering one of the earliest social enterprise projects in the Himalayan region. A firm believer in multi-stakeholder approaches to economic and political development and transformational ideals, his Vajrayāna-inspired vision has encompassed architectural design, cultural heritage conservation, filmmaking, and writing. He has served as an interlocutor and mediator providing second track dialogue on complex international and cross-cultural issues.

Pragmatic Applications of Buddhist Economics

Palak Sharma

This presentation focuses on practical dimensions of Buddhist economics in its valuing of life and intentions and the welfare of all beings over financial gain. In practical terms, the presentation will outline the scope of Buddhist economics in connection to interest rates and demonstrate how human and natural environment can be changed through the way we use money. E. F. Schumacher’s work within Buddhist Economics will be analyzed, and interest rates in a Buddhist society will be proposed on the basis of Buddhist principles, contrasting these with Keynesian concepts. Externalities and intentions will be analyzed through perspectives offered by the Aditta Pariya Sutra that assign value to limited resources and outline the pitfalls of excess production as per Keynes’ ‘aggregate demand’. As a result of credit run economies and multiple construction loans, many nations, especially Europe, are facing potential economic disaster. This presentation will help answer the question ‘why’ through a Buddhist economic perspective. Once the dynamics of financial loans are understood at their source, the Śrāvakayāna Sutra reveals that, from a Buddhist perspective, money is an entanglement from which we should be freed. The essential
‘essencelessness’ of money in this *samsaric* world thus raises questions regarding how interest rates should be levied. Since money has little to no intrinsic value in Buddhism, and plenty in economics, the presentation will show how Buddhist economics include value for money via intentions and externalities. Lastly, the *Chavalatta Sutra* allows us to recognize that the externalities caused by a loan can be used to gauge how little/much interest can be levied. The concept of ‘asymmetric justice’ introduced in Amartya Sen’s book *The Idea of Justice* will be addressed to illuminate how interest rates, justice, and Buddhist principles can be understood as an integral whole. Amalgamating the ideas of capital can help us understand how the environment can be saved by economics.

**Biographical Profile**

Palak Sharma is a graduate of Symbiosis International University, with a major in Economics and minor in International Relations. She is also the creator of iampasha.org, an online blog for Buddhist Economics. She will be speaking on the subject at TEDx SIU Viman Nagar (Pune, India) in October 2016. Palak is currently interning at Gateway House, Indian Council for Global Relations, Mumbai, India. She is also working with Global Shapers Community and World Economic Forum to replicate the GNH index as Community Development Index in Pune, India.

**The Neurobiology of Awakening: Neurophenomenological Perspectives on Mindfulness and Dzogchen**

Dr. Elena Antonova

Yogācāra’s 8-fold model of consciousness is used in Dzogchen teachings to differentiate between 'consciousness' and 'awareness' (Rigpa). Consciousness and awareness are often used interchangeably in Cognitive Neuroscience. However, Philosophy of Mind differentiates between the two, sometimes in ways similar to Dzogchen. Depending on what we mean by these terms, we would expect different neural dynamics to be associated with them. In this presentation, I will first outline the neural correlates of the first seven consciousnesses from the known brain's architecture and function. I will then show how the phenomenological stages of mindfulness practice correlate with the known neural dynamics associated with sustained
selective attention, open monitoring, and 'softening' of the sense of self. I will then present preliminary data using functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) in Dzogchen practitioners resting in Rigpa, which challenges the predictions of mainstream cognitive neuroscience as to what the neural dynamics of a highly cognizant and awake 'state' should look like.

Biographical Profile

Dr. Elena Antonova is a Neuroscientist and Lecturer at the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience at King's College London. Her main research interest is the neuroscience of mindfulness and meditation, in particular the changes in structure and function of the brain in long-term practitioners of the Tibetan Buddhist traditions of Dzogchen and Mahāmudrā. She is an active member of the Mind and Life Institute, an organization that aims to facilitate interdisciplinary research into the effects of contemplative practices. She co-organized the Mind and Life Institute’s first two European Summer Research Institute programs and currently conducts field research pertaining to advanced Vajrayāna practitioners in the Himalayan region.

Neurocognitive Correlates of Vajrayāna Meditational Practices

Dr. Maria Kozhevnikov

Based on evidence of parasympathetic activation, early research defined meditation as a relaxation response. Later research categorized meditation as involving either focused or distributed attentional systems. Neither of these hypotheses received strong empirical support, and most of the scientific studies of meditation investigated only Theravāda style practices. For the research outlined in this presentation, we collected Electrocardiographic (EKG) and Electroencephalographic (EEG) responses using a participant pool of experienced Theravāda practitioners from Thailand and experienced Vajrayāna practitioners in Nepal and Eastern Tibet. Both focused (Shamatha) and distributed (Vipassana) attention meditations of the Theravāda tradition produced enhanced parasympathetic activation, indicative of a relaxation response. All Vajrayāna meditative practices, including focused (Yidam) and distributed (Rigpa) meditations, produced sympathetic activation indicative of the state of arousal (the state of being awake and responsive to stimuli). Of all Vajrayāna meditative techniques tested, Tummo showed the highest sympathetic activation. Consistent with Tibetan texts that describe
Shamatha and Vipassana techniques as calming and relaxing the mind, and Vajrayāna techniques as promoting vivid wakefulness, we found that Theravāda and Vajrayāna meditations are based on different neurophysiological mechanisms. Overall, Vajrayāna is characterized by arousal, rather than relaxation response, which has been the predominant neurophysiological explanation of all Buddhist practices. Further research may distinguish degrees of arousal associated with positive states of physical and psychological health and enhanced psycho-physiological capacities.

**Biographical Profile**

**Dr. Maria Kozhevnikov** received her PhD from the Technion Israel Institute of Technology and University of California Santa Barbara. She holds faculty positions at Rutgers and George Mason Universities and previously served as Program Director for the Science of Learning Centers Program at the US National Science Foundation, managing awards for learning across multiple disciplines. Her current primary appointment is as an Associate Professor of Psychology at the National University of Singapore. She also holds an appointment as a Visiting Associate Professor at Harvard Medical School. Her current research focuses on examining neural and cognitive mechanisms underlying individual differences in visual imagery and how individual differences in visual-spatial imagery affect more complex activities, such as learning and problem solving in mathematics, science, and art. Building on her earlier years of field study in Nepal, India, and Tibet, she also continues to research attentional and visualization processes associated with different forms of meditation. She is particularly interested in neurocognitive processes underlying Vajrayāna meditative practices and how these differ from meditative and mindfulness traditions associated with Theravāda.

**Innovative Futures: The Vajrayāna Tradition and ‘Taiwan To-Go’**

**Dr. Christie Chang & Dr. Frank Tien**

Buddhist teachings have reached all corners of the globe and survived for more than 2,500 years, not only because of their moral philosophy, but also because of their inherent adaptability to different cultural environments. The flexibility of the Buddhist way of life has enabled diverse and innovative
Abstracts and profiles

collaborations between intellectuals and artists in many communities. This presentation will profile a creative collaboration that occurred between a Karma Kagyu Buddhist center in Taiwan and a network of local artists led by ‘Taiwan To-Go’. With photographs, video clips, as well as music and 3D-printed Buddha statues, the presentation will offer glimpses of performances and innovative presentations in which Buddhist teachings have been skilfully integrated with local performing art, music, and Taiwanese tea culture. Such adaptations reveal the ways in which Vajrayāna has taken root in Taiwan, not only through the spread of its unique teachings and practices, but also through a creative synthesis with pre-existing traditions of Theravāda as well as Han Chinese Buddhist traditions.

Biographical Profiles

Dr. Christie Yu-ling Chang received her Ph.D. in Linguistics from the University of Hawai‘i. She served as the President of Sakyadhita International Association of Buddhist Women between 2008 and 2012. Currently, in addition to serving as the President of Sakyadhita Taiwan, she is also Chair of the Steering Committee for the International Lay Buddhist Forum (ILBF). Earlier, Christie taught linguistics and translation at National Taiwan University as well as graduate programs in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language at National Chengchi University. Currently, Christie is the Resident Director of Taipei Study Center for the Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE) in Taiwan. Dr. Frank Yun-Fu Tien received his Ph.D. degree in Intellectual Property Law from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing, China. He was previously in charge of the mainframe system at a commercial bank in Wall Street after receiving a M.A. in Computer Sciences from the City College of New York. He has more recently initiated research into relationships between Buddhist chanting, Chinese music, medicine, healing, and philosophy. He co-founded the Institute of Sounds and Acoustics in Taiwan and serves as its current Deputy Director.

The Vajrayāna Arts of Sacred Dance, Mandala Design, and Chanting (gar thik yang sum)

His Eminence Lopön Tandin Tsewang

This presentation by Bhutan’s foremost authority on ritual tantric dance will highlight the role of sacred performance in Vajrayāna Buddhist tradition.
Originating from the time of Padmasambhava as a means of overcoming obstructive forces, tantric Buddhist dances called Cham are also a means for embodying and expressing the qualities of tantric Buddhist deities. Cham represents a bridge between exoteric and esoteric Buddhist practice as well as a dynamic integration of sacred narrative, performance art, yogic practice, and mindfulness in movement. In the 21st century, these traditions of sacred dance continue to evolve and take new forms.

Biographical Profile

His Eminence Lopön Tandin Tsewang is Yontön Lopön, one of five ‘learned masters’ within the Zhung Dratshang, Bhutan’s Central Monastic Body. He is the gar thik yang sum, or master of knowledge of the art of spiritual dances, mandala creation, and chanting and ensures the continuity and integrity of ancient tantric ritual practices.
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