

# International Symposium on Bon

**Triten Norbutse Monastery, Kathmandu  
10–11 December 2012**



## MONDAY 10 DECEMBER

9:00

**Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung**  
*Introductory remarks*

9:15

**Marietta Kind**  
*The Treton and Khyungpo lamas and their impact on  
the propagation of Bon in Dolpo*

10:00

**Yasuhiko Nagano**  
*Bon Studies in Japan*

10:30

**Tea and Coffee**

11:00

**Dangsong Namgyal**  
བོན་དང་སྟོན་པ་གཤེན་རབ་ཀྱི་མཛད་པ་ལ་ངོས་འཛིན་བྱེད་ཚུགས།

11:45

**Françoise Pommaret**  
*Bon in Bhutan: what is in the name?*

12:30

**Lunch**

## TUESDAY 11 DECEMBER

9:00

**Ricardo Canzio**

*Bonpo ceremonies. What's going on here?*

9:45

**Samten Karmay**

*The Bonpo thangka (C 2006.66.53) kept at Rubin Museum of Art revisited*

10:30

**Tea and Coffee**

11:00

**Charles Ramble**

*Bon: a vital part of the cultural heritage of Nepal*

11:45

**John Myrdhin Reynolds**

*The cult and practice of the Bonpo wrathful deity Walchen Gekhod, also known as Zhang-zhung Meri*

12:30

**Lunch**



# ABSTRACTS AND INFORMATION ON THE SPEAKERS

**Ricardo Canzio**

*Bonpo ceremonies. What's going on here?*

Are the drums and the cymbals striking two or three? And why strike three here and two there? Can a performative prescription be altered and for what reasons? Is this tone of recitation the “right” (prescribed) one for this section of the ceremony? What about the structure of ritual texts? In fact they often follow in detail the structure of the mandala of the main deity involved. How are texts modified during chant? What about the classification of ceremonies and their performative features.

Answers to these and many more apparently straightforward and simplistic questions that a candid researcher would ask open a whole world of interpretive possibilities. We find a tightly knit set of relationships between philosophical concepts, mythical symbology, gestures, ritual actions, special gaits during protocolar activities, instrumental features, dance steps, chanting and recitation informing the texts (oral or written) that provide the basis of a ceremony.

A graduate of SOAS, lately Professor of Musicology at National Taiwan University, Ricardo Canzio has taught in France, Switzerland, Spain and Brazil and done ethnomusicological research from the Amazon to South and Southeast Asia with stints in Europe and the Pacific. He has been in contact with the Bonpo tradition since the late 1970s.

**Samten Karmay**

*The Bonpo thangka (C 2006.66.53) kept at the Rubin Museum of Art revisited*

The *thangka* (C2006.66.53) kept At Rubin Museum of Art in New York depicts 38 Bonpo deities. The painting was shown at the exhibition of Bon art in 2007–2008 at the Rubin Museum and was published in the catalogue of the exhibition, *Bon, the Magic Word*, but the identification of the deities at the time was not certain. However, recently leafing through a certain number of Bon texts I came across a text that sheds light in a precise manner on the problem of identification. The paper again takes up the question of identification of the deities and their function in Bon rituals.

Samten Karmay was a Director of Research at the Centre National of Scientific Research (CNRS), Paris. He is now retired and continues to publish articles and books related to Tibetan Studies.

### **Marietta Kind**

#### *The Treton and Khyungpo lamas and their impact on the propagation of Bon in Dolpo*

Dolpo is one of Nepal's remotest culturally Tibetan enclaves with a large community that follow the Bon religion. The Bon masters of the Treton and Khyungpo families were based in Pugmo and played an eminent role in propagating Bon in the region. Excerpts from the biographies of these early settlers based on oral accounts and textual sources will provide an insight into their lives and manifold activities from the subjugation of powerful local deities up to the establishment of numerous monasteries and pilgrimages in Dolpo.

The descriptions will be accompanied with photos and illustrations of the places of action.

The anthropologist Marietta Kind gained her PhD at the Universities of Zurich and Oxford. She has worked as a lecturer and research fellow at the Ethnographic Museum of Zurich University. With her Taprizia NGO she supports a school in Dolpo and the cultural heritage of this region.

**Yasuhiko Nagano** is Emeritus Professor at the National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka, Japan. He studied linguistics at the Universities of Tokyo and California, Berkeley, and has published extensively on a variety of Tibeto-Burman languages (including Zhang-Zhung) and is the editor of the Bon Studies Series, that has so far produced a dozen volumes on aspects of the Bon religion.

### **Françoise Pommaret**

#### *Bon in Bhutan: what is in the name?*

*Bon* in Bhutan is a polymorphous and often misunderstood set of beliefs. This paper will explore the different meanings of the word and the set of beliefs and rituals which are associated with *Bon* in Bhutan. This will take us far from the *Yundrung Bon* as defined today but probably closer to the *Bon* as a pre-Buddhist belief and its link to identity.

Françoise Pommaret, PhD, is a cultural anthropologist, Director of Research at the CNRS (National Centre for Scientific Research, France) and Research advisor at Institute of Language and Culture (ILCS), Royal University of Bhutan. She has been associated with Bhutan in different capacities since 1981 and has published numerous scholarly articles and books on different aspects of Bhutanese culture and religions. She was the co-editor and co-author of *Bhutan: mountain fortress of the gods*, Serindia, London, 1997 as well as the co-editor and co-author of *Bhutan. Tradition and change*, Brill, Leiden, 2007. Her wide audience book in English is *Bhutan, a cultural guidebook*, Odyssey Guidebook, Hong-Kong (1990, reprint 2003, 2006, 2010) as well as *Tibet, an enduring civilization*, Abrams Discovery series, NY, 2003. Both have been published in several languages. Dr Pommaret has lectured intensively in numerous academic institutions around the world and has been guest-curator for several exhibitions.

### **Charles Ramble**

*Bon: a vital part of the cultural heritage of Nepal*

Bonpos believe that the area that is now Nepal was visited by some of their most eminent masters in very early times, and there is documentary evidence that Bon was present in the Kali Gandaki region over a thousand years ago. Within the past two decades, thanks largely to the establishment of Triten Norbutse monastery, Bon is again establishing its position as a major religious tradition of Nepal. However, its gradual decline in past centuries, together with inaccurate historical accounts, have obscured the importance of the religion in certain regions. This presentation will review the evidence concerning the presence of Bon in the high Himalayan region since the tenth century, and will present new evidence of patronage of the religion by major political figures of the past.

Charles Ramble studied Social Anthropology at the University of Oxford, UK. In 2000, after more than fifteen years in Nepal and Tibet, he took up the position of Lecturer in Tibetan and Himalayan Studies at Oxford. In 2006 he was elected President of the International Association for Tibetan Studies. Since 2010 he has been Director of Studies at the École Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris.

### **John Myrdhin Reynolds**

*The cult and practice of the Bonpo wrathful deity Walchen Gekhod, also known as Zhang-zhung Meri*

The ancient Bonpo wrathful deity Walchen Gekhod, "the great flaming one, the subduer of demons," was especially associated with the sacred mountain of Gangchen Tise, or Mount Kailas, and was the patron deity of the old Zhang-zhung kingdom in Northwestern Tibet, which was incorporated into the growing Tibetan empire in the 8th century CE. In his special aspect of Meri, "the fire mountain," he became the Yidam meditation deity of the masters of the Zhang-zhung Nyan-gyud lineage of Bonpo Dzogchen teachings and in particular the tutelary deity of Gyerpung Nangzher Lodpo, of whom it is said that he received the Dzogchen precepts from his master Tapihritsa and was the first to set down these same precepts in writing in the Zhang-zhung language. It is traditionally asserted that these precepts descended from the Buddha Tonpa Shenrab and from his disciple Sangwa Dupa. In this study we examine the origin myths of Gekhod found in the ritual texts of the dMar tshan and dKar tshan, the iconography of Meri and Gekhod and their respective mandalas, and the instructions for ritual and tantric transformation practice found in various commentaries to the sadhana texts. Gekhod Meri remains one of the five principal Tantras and Yidam practices of the Father Tantras (*pha rgyud*) found in the Ye-gshen rgyud class of the Higher Bonpo Tantras and he is still practiced today among the Bonpos of Tibet.

John Myrdhin Reynolds (Vajranatha) is a translator of Tibetan, a scholar in the fields of Tibetan Studies, Buddhist Philosophy, and Comparative Religion, who has taught at a number of universities in the West. He was ordained as a Ngakpa Lama in the Nyingmapa tradition by HH Dudjom Rinpoche, and for more than fifteen years he has worked closely with Lopon Tenzin Namdak on the translation of early Bonpo Dzogchen and Tantra texts. His works include *The Oral Tradition from Zhang-Zhung*, *The Golden Letters* and *Self-Liberation*.