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The Spiti Valley

Recovering the Past & Exploring the Present

Wolfson College
6th-7th May, 2016



OXFORD

Welcome

I am pleased to welcome you to the first International Conference on Spiti, which is being held at the Leonard Wolfson Auditorium on May 6th and 7th, 2016.

The Spiti Valley is a remote Buddhist enclave in the Indian Himalayas. It is situated on the borders of the Tibetan world with which it shares strong cultural and historical ties. Often under-represented on both domestic and international levels, scholarly research on this subject – all disciplines taken together – has significantly increased over the past decade. The conference aims at bringing together researchers currently engaged in a dialogue with past and present issues pertaining to Spitian culture and society in all its aspects. It is designed to encourage interdisciplinary exchanges in order to explore new avenues and pave the way for future research.

There are seven different panels that address the theme of this year's conference, *The Spiti Valley : Recovering the Past and Exploring the Present*, from a variety of different disciplinary perspectives including, archaeology, history, linguistics, anthropology, architecture, and art conservation. I look forward to the exchange of ideas and intellectual debates that will develop over these two days.

On this year's edition, we are very pleased to have Professor Deborah Klimburg-Salter from the universities of Vienna and Harvard as our keynote speaker. Professor Klimburg-Salter will give us a keynote lecture entitled *Through the black light - new technology opens a window on the 10th century*.

It is also our great honour to welcome Tenzin Kalzang Lochen Tulku Rinpoche – the current incarnation of Lotsawa Rinchen Zangpo (958 – 1055) to the first international conference dedicated entirely to the Spiti Valley. Rinpoche will deliver a final word at the close of this event.

I would like to take the time to thank the chairs of our panels for their implication. I would also like to thank our generous sponsors and benefactors for their unflinching support: the Tibetan and Himalayan Study Cluster (THSC), the Tibet Foundation UK, the Ti se Foundation, and our private donors.

I hope you will enjoy the conference!

Yannick Laurent
Conference Convener



CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

Registration (Leonard Wolfson Auditorium)	8.30
Coffee & Tea (Buttery)	8.30
Welcome speech by Professor Ulrike Roelser (Oxford)	9.20
Keynote address by Professor Deborah Klimburg-Salter (Vienna/Harvard) <i>Through the black light - new technology opens a window on the 10th century</i>	9.30
Convener's speech by Yannick Laurent (Oxford) <i>Henry L. Shuttleworth and the History of Spiti</i>	10.00
Coffee break (Buttery)	10.30

PANEL 1

Chair: Mark Aldenderfer (University of California - Merced)

Contesting Antiquity and development: an Interdisciplinary insight into the rock art preservation in Spiti valley, Himachal Pradesh 11.00

Vijay K. Bodh (Panjab University), P. M. Saklani (Garhwal University), Ekta Singh (Garhwal University)

Spiti valley in North Western Himalayan region falls under the administrative unit of Lahaul & Spiti district in Himachal Pradesh. Considerably Spiti hosted as an avenue for commerce and religious teachings. Rock art in Spiti has been identified in several sites but due to vacuum in the archaeology of Spiti valley very less work has been mentioned up till now. Some references of this rock art have been mentioned by few scholars but most of the earlier published petroglyphs and pictographs sites have been shifted and some have disappeared from their original habitat. The revelation of new rock art sites also reflect towards the alarming situation being posed to the historical evidences. At this stage when Spiti, is on the verge of reclaiming its antiquity back to more than 1000 years, a loss of one or two boulders could prevent us from a better understanding of the social and cultural settings of the past. The multidisciplinary paper indulges the expertise from archaeology and social anthropology; it is based on a field visit to the rock art sites in Spiti valley. It is a comprehension of the rock art sites identifying threat perspectives to ancient art form to ensure better preservation and conservation efforts.

The paper adds a new dimension of hydroelectric projects and their direct consequences onto rock art sites in Spiti valley. The paper enlists some of the important rock art sites along with an inventory of potential threats challenging the overall integrity of these sites and also enlists probable solutions that could effectively sustain the tests of social and climatic change.

Over the Long Arc of Time: Cognate themes in Rock Art of Spiti extending from the Iron Age to the Buddhist Era (video conference call)

11.30

John V. Bellezza (Dharamsala)

This paper examines pervasive subjects in the ancient rock art of Spiti and how these might be discernible in its extant cultural legacies. Spirit-mediumship of the lus-g.yar, attendant traditions of the indigenous priests (jo-bo), theriomorphism in the local pantheon, and lore connected to wild animals in contemporary Spiti are compared to potential cognate themes in rock art. This line of inquiry suggests that cultural mechanisms related to long-term continuity in the material and ideological spheres are in operation in Spiti, bridging both the pre-Buddhist and Buddhist eras. Postulating deep chronological roots for Spitian culture has important implications for the identity of the region and its place in the historical dynamics of the Western Tibetan Plateau. As this paper demonstrates, by serving as an index of both endogenous cultural development and inter-regional influences, rock art emerges as a vital resource in the elucidation of the cultural history of Spiti.

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12.00

Nyen Thar (Banaras Hindu University)

Analysis and Etymology of the name "Spiti"

1) Identification of the place to which the name "Spiti" is applied. Presentation of the territory scope and history of the land identified as "Spiti". 2) General analysis of the stages of development and of the meanings of the different spellings of the name "Spiti" (Spyiti, Spiti, Piti). Focus on the chronological order of these different spellings of the name Spiti based on the relevant sources and analysis of some of their different interpretations according to oral tradition and written sources. 3) The reason why this land has been called Spiti. Some geographical and historical proofs of why this land has been called "Spiti" based on the analysis carried out on point 2. 4) Conclusions derived on what I have found from my own sources, especially on the chronology of the name "Spiti" as it appears in the Tibetan language and the original sources.

When the name "Spiti" first appeared in the Tibetan language, what it symbolised at that time, and what each part of the name meant. 5) Introduction to the original sources of this research paper.

Lunch break (Haldane room)

12.30

PANEL 2

Chair: Ulrike Roesler (University of Oxford)

Measure for Measure: Researching and Documenting Early Buddhist Architecture in Spiti 14.00

Carmen Auer (Graz University of Technology)

Over the last 15 years, the University of Technology in Graz has conducted several research projects on Buddhist Architecture in the Western Himalaya. Funded by the Austrian Science Fund, these projects also cover three significant and unique buildings in Spiti. The Temple Complex of Tabo, the Ancient Monastery of Dangkhar and the Temple of Lalung all mirror the early Buddhist architecture. They representatively display the diverse architectural concepts that, initiated by the Kingdom of Guge, have been developed and implemented in the Western Himalayas over several centuries. Presenting the research results, we will deal with the following questions: Which construction technology and materials were used to build these sacred buildings? How does the surrounding topography interact with the architecture? How can contemporary measuring techniques help us in order to generate a significant building representation? How do architectural plans and spatial models enable us to comprehend complex building structures? How do they help in integrating and locating the murals and sculptural details of the interior into the architectural context?

How can 3D models provide us with a deeper insight into the spatial configuration – especially given the effort of field research in Northern India and Tibet and the difficult circumstances? What are the advantages of documentation when it comes to describe the state of buildings as well as building phases, the planning methods, and static systems? What is essential when it comes to static and structural restoration of the historic building structures? Why is an interdisciplinary cooperation crucial? Which are the fundamental elements of such a cooperation? The research results in Spiti show us how to professionally conduct a contemporary building documentation, and how such a documentation maximizes any architectural survey in challenging areas.

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14.30

Kalzang Tsultrim (Norbulingka Institute)

Houses in Spiti Although Spiti society offers numerous cultural elements deserving to be discussed, the peculiarities of house construction in the region call for a detailed analysis, as I will demonstrate in my talk.

The construction process of a Spiti house will be divided into three different parts: The first part deals with the stages of house constructing: from the transition from stone to concrete houses, to the way stones are affected by the seasonal climatic changes in the Spiti region, and concluding with examples of stone built fortress. The second part will introduce the designs and shapes of the houses, taking into consideration the painting colours, the varieties of painting styles and their cultural meaning and the aspect of a typical Spiti drawing room. Furthermore, I will offer examples of modern Spiti houses, showing the actual disposition of the elements previously discussed. In the third part, the influence of colour texture and of natural elements and realms will be analysed, and each perception of the implications of power, karma and destiny will be related to the local culture. In short, we will see how the economic value of a house depends on the structure, quality, colour of the building as well as and its own history. It is worth stressing furthermore that the house is suitable for the extreme climatic conditions of the Spiti region, as demonstrated by numerous scientific studies lately carried out on the most distinguishing features typical of local houses.

Spatial Interaction: The Stupa and the Lhathos of the Rigsum Gönpö of Tashigang in Spiti

15.00

Gerald Kozics (Graz University of Technology)

The hamlet of Tashigang is located high above the upper Spiti Valley near Ki Monastery. The site enjoys a tremendous view towards the mountain ranges which flank the Spiti Valley to the left. On a rock above the hamlet three lhatho-like steles painted in different colours (white, red and grey-blue) literally watch over the site. Such composition is unusual for this region of the Western Himalayas but compares to similar sets representing the Rigsum Gönpö well-known from Mustang - only in the case of Tashigang it is an unexpected representation of a specific group of Dharmapalas. The most significant religious structure is a stupa probably datable to the 15th century in the centre of the hamlet. This monument too, recalls the Buddhist architecture of Mustang as it displays the vertical

re-white-blue/black stripes so common for the temple architecture of that region. The architectural form of the stupa is based on an unusual five-fold combination of a central stupa placed on a large base and four steles in the corner positions. The elevated cult chamber of the stupa was dedicated to a five-fold mandala composition of Amitayus. Today, the chamber is almost sealed off by a wooden ceiling and the room below is decorated with a completely new programme. The proposed paper will present a complete visual reconstruction of the iconographic programme of the stupa and discuss the spatial interaction between the internal compositional order and the topographic and “sacred” environment with specific focus on the three lhathos.

A “Road leading to Spiti from Demjok” : Considerations about the search for alternative routes between Tibet and Spiti in mid-19th Century

15.30

Diana Lange (Humboldt Universität)

In my presentation I will discuss different routes leading to Spiti from Demchok in Western Tibet. These routes are shown on a set of so-called picture maps that belongs to the British Library’ s Wise Collection. The maps were drawn in mid-19th century by a Buddhist lama and commissioned by an Englishman. They cover the areas of Lhasa, Central Tibet, Southern and Western Tibet, Ladakh and Zangskar. Placed side by side, the maps present a nearly continuous panorama from the Yarlung Valley in Central Tibet to Leh in Ladakh. Places on the maps are consecutively numbered from Lhasa (No.1) westwards to the Parang La (No.404) – the mountain pass on the “old established” border between Ladakh and Spiti. The Western Tibet map ends to the west of Demchok and shows different routes that lead from Demchok to the Spiti Valley. There is one route that is difficult to reconstruct and that was obviously not used or described by Western travellers in the middle of the 19th century. Did the person who commissioned the maps asked for information about new or other routes to Tibet? Was the “unusual” route between Demchok and the Parang La a response to such a request? In my talk I will introduce the picture maps and reconstruct the “unusual” route on modern maps and discuss these questions.

Coffee break

16.00

PANEL 3

Chair: David Pritzker (University of Oxford)

Conservation Challenges of the Ancient Tabo Monastery due to Climate Change

16.30

Virendra S. Verma (Institute of Chinese Studies - Delhi)

Tabo Monastery situated in the village of the same name lies at 3280 meters in Spiti valley which has remained quite secluded even in relation to other Himalayan border lands. Spiti is semi desert with its own cultural heritage along the river bearing same name and is encompassed between Kunjum la (4590 m) in the west and a junction of Spiti river with mighty Sutlej in the east. Based on 'renovation inscription' at the entrance of the dukhang and biographical information on Ye-shes-'od and Rin-chen-bzang-po it may be surmised that monastery was built in A.D.996 and renovated in 1042. It is believed to be the oldest and still continuously functioning monastery conclave in India and in Himalayas with its original decorations and iconographic paintings, sculptures, inscriptions and extensive texts intact which cover every inch of the wall space and have survived climate and human ravages for a millennium. The monastery is of singular importance not only of its beauty of its art but also of its role in transmission of Indo-Tibetan Buddhism and culture in 10/11 century to Ngari region in Western region. Keeping in view the immense archaeological importance Tabo Monastery is a monument of national importance now under the care and control of Archaeological Survey of India since 1972. The monastery is made of earthen architecture with wooden ceiling. The mud and wood lend itself to threats in conservation which are intensified with phenomena of climate change. Rain and snow are not rare phenomena which were not seen in the dry desert few decades back though adjoining Kinnaur and Kullu-Manali are forested due to the wet climate. Recent study of precipitation at Lahoul and Spiti have shown 'increasingly wet conditions during the 20th century are found consistent with other long- term precipitations reconstructions...due to global warming.' Some effect on the wall paintings and fragile mud structure has started appearing at the ancient monument of great heritage. It needs to be taken in all seriousness by national and international scholars and concerned authorities.

On spatial relations between Tabo' s monastic structure and its surrounding village environment

17.00

Hubert Feiglstorfer (Austrian Academy of Sciences)

Buddhist monastic structures from the early West Tibetan period follow individual geometrical and proportional concepts. Their three-dimensional aspect which focuses on a geometrically defined common pivot stands in an inseparable relation to its ritual use by pilgrims and devotees. As a result of this programmatic and also practical unity monastic structures such as Tabo are part of a larger whole which extends the spatial relation on a village level and beyond. Particular places in the form of materialized markers within the village compound follow this superior spatial concept and define the pilgrims' movement. Analysis of West Tibetan religious structures and their comparison give an insight into such materialized spiritual concepts. Beside the implementation of an ideal spatial centralisation, the environment of the single religious structures which is connected to this centralised idea shows village-specific patterns. These patterns are harmonised with local characteristics, following social or topographic parameters, inter alia. The architectural concept of Tabo monastery related to its surrounding village environment gives a good example for this kind of spatial organisation which will be discussed in detail. To make its context to other early West Tibetan religious structures understandable examples of other West Tibetan monastic structures will be given and juxtaposed.

17.30

The Mandala Temple dkyil ' khor lha khang at Tabo: historic and iconographic analysis

Amy Heller (Nyon, Switzerland)

In 2010, Geshe Sonam Wangdu, Abbot of Tabo and Ven. Lama Zangpo, Head Administrator, requested my help to document the present state of the mural paintings and statues of the entire monastic complex in view of long-term conservation. While the sculptures and murals of the gTsug lag khang have been thoroughly studied by Tucci (1935), Klimburg-Salter (1997) and Luczanits (2004), this is not the case of the "Mandala Temple". In 1935, Tucci published a brief description of the "Mandala Hall " (dkyil khang, dkyil 'khor lha khang), where he also recorded the very few inscriptions on the chapel walls. Subsequently relatively scant additional research concentrated on the iconographic program of this chapel due to the poor state of conservation of the murals while the history of this chapel was investigated in terms of architectural context by Neuwirth and Auer (2006) and textual documentation by Vitali (1996). The initial construction of the chapel has been tentatively attributed to the second half of the 11th century while the extant mural paintings reflect subsequent phases and renovations. Vitali's study of certain historical

inscriptions on the murals leads him to conclude that these paintings were created at the time of lHa dbang blo gros, a disciple of Tsongkhapa and mKhas grub rje active in mNga' ris during the 15th century but other murals appear to be earlier. I present here tentative iconographic analysis and observations as well as the photographic data of 2010 in the hope of contributing towards a better understanding of the history and successive iconographic programs at Tabo.

Reception (Buttery)	18.00
Dinner – reservation required (Haldane room)	19.00
with a performance from Mongolian artist Bat-Erdene Nyamdavaa	

Saturday 7th May

PANEL 4

Chair: Tsering Gonkatsang (University of Oxford)

Some remarks on Tabo Tibetan – a variety of the Tibetic language of Spiti 9.30

Veronika Hein (Solothurn, Switzerland)

This paper characterises the modern spoken language of the Spiti Valley in a threefold way that represents the three main sections of the linguistic description of Tabo Tibetan: phonology, morphology and syntax. In the first part an introduction is given in the form of some language geography. The borders of the area in which Tabo Tibetan is spoken are illustrated with examples taken from the CDTD (Comparative Dictionary of Tibetan Dialects by Roland Bielmeier et al, in print) and explained from the perspective of diachronic phonology. The second part provides a short introduction to the verbal morphology of Tabo Tibetan. As the verbal system of TT has been found to be one of the most complex ones of all the Tibetic languages described so far, it is worth having a closer look at it and at the linguistic categories of evidentiality and modality, which have proved useful for its description. The third part tries to provide some insight into a coherent text. I will not give a linguistic analysis of sentence structures in this part, but present the beginning of an episode of the local version of the epic of King Gesar, which I audio-recorded in Lari/Spiti and later transcribed and translated. Thus the spoken language is shown in the form of a sound document and its written transcription, which allows us

to work out some more characteristics of the language under consideration, especially also its usage in oral tradition.

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10.00

Lhundup Tsomo (Tibetan Children Village School)

On the Tradition of Chang (Wine) in the Himalayan Region of Spiti. When it comes to the preparation, acquisition, and distribution of food and drinks within the cultural and economic development of human civilization, wine is certainly one of the most important beverages. Due to the high altitude and extreme cold climate of the Himalayan foothills, the inhabitants of Spiti – unlike people from other regions or countries – consider chang a very essential drink, regardless of the impact its consumption has on their general wellbeing. I would like to briefly discuss the cultural significance of chang for the people of Spiti by taking into consideration the following points: 1. The relationship between chang and the Spiti region. No written texts or books have ever been written on the preparation of chang and on how the custom of chang drinking developed in the Spiti region. The information at the core of the present paper has been acquired simply through observation and examination. 2. The love of the people of Spiti for chang. The paper presents the locals' unparalleled love for this beverage and their custom of chang drinking, the nature of the surroundings in which they thrive, and the unwritten memories of the old days through the words of the elderly people of Spiti. 3. Description of the ingredients for the chang produced in Spiti and the methods used to prepare it. Furthermore, the paper discusses the publication of books on the flourishing of a chang drinking tradition in Spiti as well as the methods used for acquiring chang yeast and for preparing it. 4. Chang brewing season and how it is brewed. Despite being available all year round, it is possible to identify three chang brewing seasons: Coon Losar (winter New Year) Chang, Kyinda (Happy Archery) Chang, and Tonnang (Autumn Season) Chang. This classification will be explained in more detail. 5. Varieties of chang and types of drinking style. As different countries in the world have different landscape with varying climatic conditions and different cultures and traditions, the people of Spiti have different varieties of chang and various styles of drinking, which will be

discussed. 6. Chang songs and chang dances represent the uniqueness of the music of Spiti. Chang songs and the dance moves associated to them will be presented. 7. Chang and its relationship with local culture and tradition. What kind of beverage chang was considered to be in the old days, especially in comparison to other local traditions and customs. The way people's perceptions and ideas on chang are nowadays changing will be also investigated. The culture, customs, and ways of life – especially those regarding the tradition of chang drinking – shown by the people of Spiti are quite unique and hard to find elsewhere. In this abstract I tried to outline the main points covered by the paper I am presenting today; they are mainly based on my direct study of the rich chang tradition peculiar to the region of Spiti and its associated culture. I was born and raised in Ladakh, which share with other Himalayan regions such as Spiti similar chang traditions; the exceptional joy and love conveyed by this beverage are at the core of the paper I am humbly presenting to you today.

Coffee break (Buttery)

10.30

PANEL 5

Chair: Clare Harris (University of Oxford)

A dark light in a dark period (1680-1710) of Spiti (video conference call) 11.00

Dieter Schuh (IITBS)

The paper discusses the historical importance of document No-no 4 from the collection of No-no bSod-nams dbang-'dus photographed in Spiti in May 2015. The legal document was issued 1686 in the name of the Ladakhi King Nyi-ma rnam-rgyal in the Palace of Leh. It confirms the appointment of lha-sras ga-ga ma-lig rNam-rgyal and his descendants as replacement persons for the rDzong-dpon of Spiti. Moreover it tells us that 1686 was year of the enthronement of Nyi-ma rnam-rgyal as king of Ladakh. No-no 4 is one of three documents attributed to Nyi-ma rnam-rgyal which bear the same seals. A diplomatic analysis shows that all three documents were certainly not issued in the chancellery of the king of Ladakh in Leh.

On the Scorpion's Back: Materializing a Nyingma Presence in Spiti 11.30

Joseph Leach (University of Michigan)

In the last decade, Nyingma Buddhism has visibly expanded its presence in Spiti largely due to the efforts of Yomed Tulku (b. 1962), the head of Urgyen Sangnag Choling Monastery in the Pin Valley. Prior to the time of Yomed Tulku, Geluk Buddhism dominated most of Spiti while Nyingma Buddhism was primarily present in the Pin Valley. This recent expansion beyond the Pin Valley is manifesting through building activities focused on producing highly visible structures like temples, monumental sculpture, and a new large-scale monastery, in locations such as Lari village in the main Spiti Valley and the formerly Tibetan village of Gyu, in the contested border region between India and China. This paper examines the motivations for the recent expansion and the religious, political, and economic implications it entails for Nyingma Buddhists in Spiti. I argue that in the process of establishing these new structures, Yomed Tulku is intentionally engaging with issues of nationality, sectarian identity, and modernization to further the Nyingma cause in Spiti and foster a local Nyingma presence. As Spiti garners increasing international attention, this paper shows that the region, which is often described as a remote Buddhist enclave, is a central site for understanding how contemporary Buddhism negotiates key issues of modernity, post-colonialism, and nationality.

Lunch break (Dining hall)

12.00

PANEL 6

Chair: Robert Mayer (University of Oxford)

Kungri Tsuglakhang murals' conservation-restoration project

13.30

Melodie Bonnat (Paris, France)

The lecture will present technical and conservation aspects of ancient Buddhist murals painted in 17th century in a remote valley called the Pin valley, in Himachal Pradesh, in Kungri village. The wall paintings decorate the most ancient temple of the valley called Tsuglakhang, dedicated to the rare Nyingma Pema Lingpa tradition. The temple, a four pillar room is entirely painted; the total surface is about 59 sq. m. The creation date is based on the iconography study that show the value of the representations connected to the ritualistic tradition still alive today. However, the paintings study and appreciation is limited. It is known that a fire set by Sikh plunder damaged the paintings in 1841. Since that time, the surface is blackened by a thick soot deposit and the iconography is difficult to distinguish.

A conservation-restoration project is projected by the monastery. This work is a challenge both because of the remoteness of the site and the technical difficulty of the soot removal. An international conservation team is involved in this adventure and already carried out tests that showed interesting results. The condition report was made in 2013 and a preliminary mission was organized in July 2015. Conservators could observe that the paintings were painted with a very fine style and exquisite details. The painting technique consists of pigments probably with animal glue binding media. Colours evoke gold and azurite but a technological study is required to clarify the pigments' nature and certify the paintings' creation date. The project plans to set up a technological study, carry out cleaning, paint layer and mud plaster consolidation with natural products, reintegration of missing part in respect with the conservation-restoration ethic. Specialized conservators are required to complete this delicate work and restore this unique artistic heritage of the Pin valley.

The origins of Padma gling pa' s tradition in the Cloud Valley in Spiti 14.00
Henri Namgyal (INALCO)

For centuries, the bla ma-s of the Cloud Valley (Pin Valley ; sPrin yul ljongs) are practicing a spiritual tradition revealed by the fourth gter ston king, Padma gling pa (1450-1521). The origin of this tradition, far from its main diffusion centers in Bhutan and South of Tibet, was associated with a group of 13 sngags pa-s that founded a retreat place called gSer gling bde chen phug. So far, only the name of one of them was known through the oral tradition: Byang chub bzang po but nobody could explain where and who he received this tradition from. Thanks to some manuscripts kept by the royal family (no no-s) of this Valley, we' ll try to date the introduction of this tradition in the Valley, present who were their teachers, what they received from them and the traces they left in the Valley.

'Buchen' as storytellers, Pin Valley, Spiti 14.30
Pascale Dollfus (CNRS)

Described in early literature as "magicians", "strolling monks", or "friars", Buchen are lay religious specialists who regard themselves as the "great sons" (Tib. bu chen) of the great siddha and bridge-maker Thangtong rgyalpo (Tib. Thang stong rgyal po) (1361/65 – 1480/86). They wander from village to village, performing a spectacular ritual in which a heavy stone is crushed onto the chest of a man to destroy a demon that has taken

up residence there. As this breaking-stone ritual has been discussed in detail by other scholars, I will restrict myself to one of their other skills: storytelling. In fact, Buchen are also professional storytellers, whose repertoire not only contains the famous mantra of Avalokiteshvara (om mani padme hum), but also dozens of biographies or namthar that belong to the Tibetan Buddhist repertoire. From time to time, Buchen use narrative painted scrolls that contain various scenes depicting the main events in the life of the "hero". Using recordings, films, and photographs, I analyse the relationship between text, discourse, images in the interaction between Buchen and their audience.

Documenting the material culture of the Buchen

15.00

Patrick Sutherland (University of the Arts)

The Buchen are performers of rituals, exorcists, actors, storytellers and musicians unique to the Pin Valley in Spiti. Historically, Buchen troupes have toured the villages of Spiti, Upper Kinnaur and parts of Ladakh (and formerly western Tibet) to spread the message and teachings of the Buddha through the medium of entertainment. Buchen are most famous for performing the exorcism ritual entitled the Ceremony of Breaking the Stone, photographed by John Coldstream a century ago, described in detail by the Tibetologist Georges de Roerich in 1932 and contextualised in much greater detail by Pascale Dollfus in 2004. Although the ceremony is now well known and increasingly performed for visiting trekkers and film crews or within local arts and cultural programmes, their winter tours, narrations and theatrical performances of moral and religious folk tales are significantly less researched and possibly disappearing. In 2014 I returned to Spiti to photograph and record their material culture, specifically the objects connected to Buchen performances and still extant within active and dormant Buchen households: the narrative and ritual texts, thangkas, musical instruments, statues, costumes, masks and ritual objects that Buchen utilise. For a reportage photographer, this process of photographic copying held precious little excitement, but the opportunity to talk around the history and ownership of these objects and to delve into family memories revealed some new understanding of Buchen history, roles, interconnections and status.

Coffee break

15.30

PANEL 7

Chair: Fernanda Pirie (University of Oxford)

Power transitions and social change in Spiti Valley, India

16.00

Tashi Tsering (Mount Royal University)

Spiti has a remarkably long history as a frontier region with a traditional Tibetan social structure. This talk will present a discussion of administrative and frontier policies of changing regimes of power that ruled Spiti Valley -- from the old Tibetan empire (7-9th century) to those of the Indian state -- as main sculptors of Spiti's changing social structure and power relations.

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16.30

Thupten Gyatso (Sambatha Tibetan School)

Spiti' s Ancient System of Succession. The System of Property Succession in Spiti – This section covers the basics of Spiti' s system of succession. The eldest son is the heir of the family lineage and thus he inherits and owns all of the family property, such as the family house, wealth etc. If a family has more than one son, the eldest becomes the family' s heir and the others become monks. If a family owns a big and a small house; the system of the inheritance of the big house and the entitlement to the small house is clarified. 2. The Relation of the Property Succession System and the Royal Law – This section mainly covers the system of property succession prevalent among the subjects in Spiti and not among the other two states of former Zhang Zhung. Garsha, Spiti and Khunu were the three states of former Zhang Zhung. This system is found only in Spiti and shows the strong link with the king' s rule of that time. The rulers of Spiti of that time introduced their property succession system not only in Spiti but also in the territories controlled by them. It also shows the connection of the property succession system with the particular time of royal lineage, and the periods of dominance of Spiti by this lineage. 3. The Formation of the Property Succession System by Royal Law – This section traces the system of succession among many of the Kings who administered Spiti, where the eldest son would become king and the others would become monks. The interruption of this practice during a certain period of time led to a meeting of nobles, ministers and the king to decide a strict decree of law to uphold the tradition. The tradition that was practiced not only by the lineages of kings but also by the ministers is clarified here. 4. Reasons for the Establishment of the Royal Law of Succession – The Royal

Law of Succession was established to deal with the struggle between the elder and younger princes for succession to kingship. As there were similar struggles and complications to the inheritance of wealth and property between the elder and younger sons in a commoner household, it was decided to apply the Royal Law of Succession to the common people. Another reason for the introduction of this property succession system was to limit population growth to the state's economic income. 5. The Relation of the Royal Law of Succession to its Ancient Tradition – In this section, it is explained that the succession system of the royal lineage in Spiti, with the eldest son becoming a king and the rest becoming monks, did not arise for the first time in the Western Himalayan area of Mnga Ris. This tradition was there in the early 9th century during the reign of the king Mnga Bdag Khri Ral Pa Chen. 6. The Consequences of the Royal Law of Succession – In this section, the consequences of the property succession system are discussed. As a result of this system, many women of Spiti stayed unmarried, and many men become monks. This led to a decrease in population growth over the centuries. The reason why these women did not agree to marry, and chose to live lonely lives, is also discussed here.

Towards a History of Spiti: Some Comments from the Perspective of Social Anthropology 17.00

Christian Jahoda (Austrian Academy of Sciences)

To date no scholarly historical study has been published which deals specifically with the historical development of Spiti and gives a comprehensive survey of the history of this valley. A substantial number of publications exists on the history of Tabo, in particular the Buddhist monastery (its architecture, sculptures, paintings, inscriptions, collection of manuscripts, etc.) and a few contributions on the history of Kyi monastery, Dankhar and some other places. Despite this in certain periods Spiti emerges only occasionally from the shadows of history so that many questions are still unanswered. The appearance of previously unknown or inaccessible historical sources, inscriptions, documents and historiographical accounts (such as Paṇḍita Grags pa rgyal mtshan's "Royal Genealogy of the Solar Lineage") helps to shed new light at least on certain periods in the history of Spiti. This necessitates not only a re-reading and re-evaluation of past historiographical accounts and approaches but allows also to formulate directions for further research. It is the aim of this paper to discuss in particular selected research questions and topics relevant for the understanding of different historical phases of Spiti from the perspective of social anthropology. This includes a variety

of issues, such as kingship, social stratification (and related questions of social, political and cultural belonging), sacred landscape, cross-border interaction and transfer as well as fundamental characteristics and changes of society over the past centuries and in recent decades.

Closing speech by Lochen Tulku Rinpoche (Kyi Monastery/Delhi, India)	17.30
Group picture	17.40



Photo: P. H. Egerton, 1864

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