



Potent Substances in Sowa Rigpa and Buddhist Rituals

4 November 2022,
3 p.m. (c.t.)

Department of South Asian, Tibetan and
Buddhist Studies, seminar room 1
Spitalgasse 2, Hof 2.7, 1090 Vienna

For online participation
please register by 3 November:
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Photo: Tibetan medicines in a Sowa Rigpa clinic in Kathmandu. 2022. Photo by Jan van der Valk.



PRESENTERS:

Dr. Barbara Gerke, ISTB, University of Vienna (Project PI)

Dr. Jan van der Valk, ISTB, University of Vienna (Project post doc)

Dr. Tawni Tidwell, Postdoctoral Research Associate, Center for Healthy Minds, University of Madison, Wisconsin & Numata Guest Professor at ISTB during the winter semester of 2022 (Project Research Associate)

Dr. Calum Blaikie, Austrian Academy of Sciences, [FWF-project](#) „Integrating Traditional Medicine: Sowa Rigpa and the State in India“ (Project Research Associate)

In this three-year [FWF-funded project](#) we have been researching the interrelationships between materiality, agency, and potency in Tibetan medical and Buddhist ritual practice. How can we better understand processes of “potency-in-becoming” and how regimes of potency are cultivated across medicines? What constitutes the agency of potent substances and their ritual contexts? How is potency crafted, generated, sculpted, infused, maintained, or lost? What is the role of texts, lineage, and environment? How are changes in Sowa Rigpa recognition and medical education affecting the making of medicines? As a [team](#) and in collaboration across projects, we introduce findings from textual and ethnographic fieldwork in India and Nepal to evaluate our hypothesis that potency emerges in fields of practice. We argue that medical and ritual practitioners approach substances as carriers of potency, which must be actualized and enhanced through skillful intervention (e.g., processing and/or consecration) to become suitably active. We also show how established lineage practices, governmental regulations, and ways to pass on skills of medicine production shape ideas of potency. We will present case studies and examples from medical texts and our fieldwork to summarize the key themes of this collaborative project, which will be completed in May 2023, and published in an open access monograph with Heidelberg Asian Studies Publishing (HASP).

This lecture will be in hybrid format. All are welcome!