

TIBETAN MONASTIC CURRICULA: WHEN DID THEY FIRST EMERGE?

Dr JONATHAN
SAMUELS

Institute for the Cultural and Intellectual
History of Asia, Austrian Academy of Sciences

Jan 9, 2025,
17:30

Seminar Room 1

of the Department of South Asian,
Tibetan and Buddhist Studies,
University Campus,
Spitalgasse 2, Hof 2.7, 1090 Vienna

ཀམ་ལ་ཕྱི་ལ།
迦玛希拉

Gyantse Palcho Monastery in Tibet
Gerd Eichmann, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

Contemporary scholars rarely question the use of the term “curriculum” in the context of discussing medieval Buddhist monasteries, although they have differing (and sometimes unconventional) notions of what the term denotes. These subjective understandings are ill-suited to addressing basic historical questions, such as whether medieval Buddhist monastic institutions truly had a concept comparable to the western notion of a curriculum, and if they did, when such a thing emerged.

This presentation aims to demonstrate ways in which Tibetan historical sources can be utilised to address such questions. It will explore evidence supporting the view that a concept comparable to that of a curriculum—in the sense of a prescribed course of studies—gradually evolved in the Tibetan monastic sphere between the 12th and 14th centuries, as well as the stages and ideas involved in the process. It will also consider features that appear to distinguish the curricula of Buddhist monasteries from those in other cultural contexts.

About the speaker

Jonathan Samuels holds a DPhil from Oxford University. He also holds the scholastic title of Geshe, having completed the extensive course of studies within the Tibetan monastic tradition. He currently works at the IKGA (Austrian Academy of Sciences) for the TibSchol (“The dawn of Tibetan Buddhist scholasticism 11th – 13th c.”) research project. His book-length publications include *Buddhist Epistemology in the Geluk School* (due for release May 2025) and *Colloquial Tibetan: a complete guide for beginners* (2014).

Please join our mailing list in order to receive more information about talks and other events! <https://stb.univie.ac.at/en/news-events>

