



## Nathan W. Hill

# The 23rd letter of the Tibetan alphabet: the controversy continues

This talk explores the contentious interpretations of the Tibetan letter 'ᱵ' and its orthographic and phonetic function, polemically engaging with Axel Schuessler's recent work on this question. While Schuessler views the usage of 'ᱵ' as an orthographic convention without phonetic significance, this presentation argues for a historically motivated phonological significance of the letter's various uses. By drawing parallels with the capricious nature of the English 'h', we examine how both letters serve not merely as orthographic artifacts but as products of the history, including the phonological history, of their respective languages.

**Thursday, April 25**  
**17:30**

**Seminar room 1**  
**ISTB, University Campus,**  
**Spitalgasse 2, Hof 2.7,**  
**1090 Vienna**

### About the speaker

Nathan W. Hill is Sam Lam Professor in Chinese Studies and Director of the Trinity Centre for Asian Studies. He earned his Ph.D. from Harvard University in 2009 and previously taught Tibetan and historical linguistics at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. He researches Tibeto-Burman/Sino-Tibetan historical linguistics. He has published on Old Tibetan descriptive linguistics, Tibetan corpus linguistics, Tibeto-Burman reconstruction and comparative linguistics, the history of Chinese, and the typology of evidential systems. He has led research projects funded by the European Research Council, the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council, and the British Academy.

