



# Tibet und Himalaya-Colloquium

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**Dienstag, 21.10.2025, 18 Uhr c.t.**

**Universität Bonn, IOA, Raum 4.005**

Brühler Strasse 7, 53119 Bonn

## ***Lha gzhung chen mo***

**The pagan ritual of the Monpas in the eastern Himalayas**

*Kalsang Norbu Gurung (École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris)*

### Abstract

This presentation delves into a pagan ritual practiced by the Monpas in the northern region of the Tawang district in the eastern Himalayas. The ritual is a distinctive form of indigenous ritual practice deeply rooted in tradition of the local communities, involving specific priestly figures known as Aya who perform offerings and invocations to local deities for protection, fertility, and prosperity, which in many ways differs from the later organised Bon rituals. However, the ritual practices also emphasize maintaining a harmonious relationship between humans and supernatural forces through recitations and sacred offerings. Since the focus of my current research project (ERC funded Pagan Tibet, EPHE Paris) is to pursue the questions that allow us to understand the older popular tradition of Tibet and the Himalayas, I will look into the “*lha grub*” or “*lha ’gug*” ritual performed by an Aya Bonpo priest in Tawang on the basis of its primary text *Lha gzhung chen mo*. I will explain how the ritual is performed and what its peculiarities are compared to the later organised Bon and Buddhist rituals, and I will discuss this ritual’s importance to understanding the so-called indigenous practice of Tibet and the Himalayas. This ritual also shows the complex interaction between Buddhist and Bonpo influences in the Himalayan villages, the role rituals play in preserving cultural identity, and the adaptive nature of the Aya Bonpos in contemporary times.

Kalsang Norbu Gurung received his PhD from Leiden University in 2011 and joined the department of Mongolian and Tibetan Studies (IOA) as Tibetan Lektor in 2011. From 2012 to 2019, he worked in two consecutive research projects (Social History of Tibetan Societies) funded by the ANR-DFG at the University of Bonn and from 2016 to 2022 he worked for the project “Union Catalogue of Oriental Manuscripts in Germany” (KOHD) at the Göttingen Academy of Sciences and Humanities. He is currently working for the ERC-funded research project Pagan Tibet at the East Asian Civilizations Research Centre (CRAO), EPHE-PSL, Paris. His publications include articles on Bon religion, Tibetan myths and ritual practices, and social and economic history of Tibetan societies.

**ALLE INTERESSIERTEN SIND HERZLICH EINGELADEN**



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