

## Preface: Ancient Currents, New Traditions

Franz Xaver Erhard (Oxford), Jeannine Bischoff (Bonn),  
Lewis Doney (London), Jörg Heimbel (Hamburg),  
Emilia Sulek (Leiden)

**L**ittle more than one year has passed since the Fourth International Seminar of Young Tibetologists (ISYT) was convened at the University of Leipzig, Germany (7–12 September 2015). It is now our pleasure to present *Ancient Currents, New Traditions: Papers Presented at the Fourth International Seminar of Young Tibetologists* to our colleagues in Tibetan Studies, comprising thirty articles selected from that seminar. These proceedings give a representative overview of the exciting current research trends among a younger generation of Tibetologists. Besides strong contributions from Cultural and Social Anthropology, from Art History and Social Sciences, new approaches to ancient texts promise to rejuvenate the more traditional discipline of Tibetan Philology. Moreover, some contributors have set foot in uncharted terrain by exploring new literary sources or ventured into hitherto unstudied domains of Tibetan culture.

The ISYT has clearly matured and established its place in the field of Tibetan Studies. Last year's seminar saw more than one hundred participants and some eighty presentations by young scholars from over fifteen countries in Europe, Asia and the Americas. The seminar focused on Tibet and the Himalayas and brought several disciplines to bear on the area, from Ethnography to Architecture and from Philosophy to Development Studies. Topics included Tibetan religious and political history, issues surrounding modern pastoralism, domestic practices and rituals, contemporary society, modern literature and Tibetan identity politics.

The ISYT, which held its first seminar in London in 2007 with some forty young scholars of Tibetan Studies, has expanded significantly in the past ten years. Two further conferences were held in Paris (2009) and Kobe (2012), attracting growing numbers of doctoral students and early career academics. Last year the Institute of Indology and Central Asian Studies at the University of Leipzig, which can boast more than one hundred years of history in Tibetan Studies or *Tibetologie* (see Per Sørensen's contribution in this volume),

was proud to host the fourth and so far largest seminar.

Even though the seminars have grown in size over the years, they remain small and informal enough to create a welcoming atmosphere for scholarly and personal debate, exchange and discovery. They thus continue to aid the development of a still small community of young scholars with a strong shared interest in Tibet and her culture.

It is thus with deep sadness that we heard in January of the untimely death of Viacheslav Toloknov, who presented at last year's seminar on different generations of Tibetan immigrants in northern India. As an upcoming young Russian anthropologist at the Russian Academy of Sciences, he was one of the next generation of Tibetologists from whom we will no longer have the benefit of learning in person. He was also a kind and decent man with whom it was a pleasure to spend time at the seminar. He will be missed.

At its business meeting during the Leipzig Seminar, the ISYT board of advisors accepted the application of St. Petersburg State University to host the upcoming seminar in 2018. We are very much looking forward to this seminar, and fully trust that it will carry on the fine legacy of the ISYT into the future.

As another and equally important result of the seminar at Leipzig, we are now able to present this volume jointly edited by the organisers of the Fourth ISYT. In assessing the many fine contributions submitted by those who took part in the seminar, we sent out all articles for double-blind peer review. We would like to thank all the reviewers for taking time out of their busy schedules to read these pieces thoroughly and give insightful and helpful feedback on a whole range of issues. We would also like to thank all those colleagues without whose help and support neither the Leipzig seminar nor the proceedings could have been realised. Their willingness to help shows the selflessness and vigour that typifies the field of Tibetan Studies in general. We would like to acknowledge their invaluable support here:

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We hope that you enjoy reading these contributions and are inspired by them as much as we were when hearing them last year and have been while preparing this volume of the *Revue d'Etudes tibétaines*. Jean-Luc Achard has ably seen these proceedings to publication, and for that we would like to thank him once again. This volume will also be published in hard copy with Edition Tethys Berlin, and will be available in 2017.

