

Einladung

zu einem Gastvortrag

von

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"Observations on a Theogonic Myth Found in a Tibetan
Magical Ritual"

In the religious literature of the Tibetan Bon tradition we find very interesting theogonic or cosmogonic narratives, mythical accounts, apotropaic and exorcist rituals that are rarely found in the Buddhist Tibetan mainstream literary traditions and that have generally been considered by the followers of the Bon school, and sometimes by academic research, as a heritage of the archaic cultural milieu of indigenous pre-Buddhist Tibet. The study of this early lore is far from complete, due to the huge bulk of material, absorbed, reframed and reformulated in the later systematized Bon literature which still awaits investigation. Among this great quantity of material, I would like to focus our attention on a particularly interesting magical ritual, belonging to the "Blazing Water" (*dbal chu*) cycle of practices which, according to the tradition, originated in prehistoric Zhang-zhung and to the later systematization of the Bon doctrines, found in the 14th-century treatise of the *gZi brjiid*, belongs to the *'Phrul gshen theg pa*, the "Vehicle of the Magic power" that collects the black art rituals for subduing and destroying enemies.

In this text it is possible to observe a variety of elements, some of which are clearly Buddhist interpolations. This is a very common pattern found in Bon literature where Buddhist symbols, imagery and ideas are assimilated and integrated into the literary corpus, although with formal variants that differentiate the narrative from the mainstream Buddhist tradition. On the other hand in the text we find some "exogenous," non Buddhist, metaphors which function as distinctive, reiterated tropes in a literature that, although clearly modelled on the Buddhist *tantras*, aims at differentiating itself, with the inclusion of easily recognizable figures of speech that have an evident connotation of "otherness." Whether these elements are the result of archaic or late influences and contaminations it is not possible to say since their precise origins are not traceable. The reason for this is that Bon literature is quite late

and stratified; in this case, for instance, we are confronted with a post-11th-century *gter ma* text. However it is interesting to note that even in this case, as in many other Bon ritual manuals, the “non Buddhist” figures of speech we find function as a easily recognizable sign-posts that contribute to create of a specific rhetoric, which tends to emphasize the alterity of this narrative from the Buddhist mainstream traditions delineating the identity of Bon literature.

am
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um
16.00 Uhr

ESA-OST, Raum 209

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