

Khyentse Center Guest Lecture Series

11.11.2026
16:00 Uhr
ESA-OST, Raum 120

Dr. Michela Clemente

(ISMEO – The International Association for Mediterranean and Oriental Studies,
Petra Kappert Fellow, Centre for the Studies of Manuscript Cultures, University of Hamburg)

Seeking and Acquiring Tibetan Books in the Himalayas

In the first half of the twentieth century, Giuseppe Tucci (1894–1984) organised and carried out twelve scientific expeditions in search of books housed in the numerous libraries scattered in the Himalayas. At the beginning of the 20th century, the sources for the study of the Tibetan language and culture were scarce in Europe. Tucci travelled to Ladakh, Sikkim, Tibet, Nepal, and Pakistan, acquiring an extraordinary documentation of several cultures and collecting a large number of primary sources to investigate numerous aspects of various Himalayan societies, pursuing the pioneering work started in Europe by Alexander Csoma de Kőrös (1784–1842) and Heinrich Jäschke (1817–1883).

Was he looking for specific texts? Where and when was each manuscript and xylograph currently preserved in the Tucci Tibetan Collection acquired? In what circumstances were books collected? My talk aims to unveil multifaceted aspects of Tucci's quest for books through the examination of several sources, including his travelogues, and to reconstruct the provenance of a trove of Himalayan artefacts.

Prof. Dr. Dorji Wangchuk (Director) & Dr. Orna Almogi (Co-director)
Khyentse Center for Tibetan Buddhist Textual Scholarship (KC-TBTS)
Abteilung für Kultur und Geschichte Indiens und Tibets
Asien-Afrika-Institut, Universität Hamburg
Alsterterrasse 1, D-20354 Hamburg