

**ERC Advanced Grant 2020  
Research proposal [Part B1]**

**Tibetan Bonpo Textual Treasures Preserved at the  
Central National Library of Rome: A (Re-) Discovery.**

**BoND**

**Cover Page:**

Name of the Principal Investigator (PI): Donatella Rossi

Name of the PI's host institution for the project: "Sapienza" University of Rome, Dept. Italian Institute of Oriental Studies - ISO

Proposal duration in months: 60 (sixty) months

**Proposal Summary**

The Tucci Tibetan Collection, a precious trove of manuscripts and xylographs gathered by Giuseppe Tucci (1894-1984) during his scientific expeditions to Western (1933, 1935) and Central Tibet (1937, 1948), is accessible again after having been unavailable for many years. The Collection includes scriptures considered as truly representative of the vast and diversified Tibetan literature. Among these treasures are 78 volumes belonging to the ancient religious tradition of Tibet called *Bon*. Scriptures have always played a central role in the lives of Tibetan people, who copied, multiplied, worshipped, spread, and transmitted them over the centuries. Nowadays Tibetan texts are being studied from a material perspective as well, since knowledge of their visual appearance, characterising features, and social life has become crucial to preserve them and the extraordinary civilisation they represent. Nevertheless, research on *Bon* manuscripts is still in its infancy while *Bon* xylographs have never been investigated thus far.

The proposed Project—hosted at "Sapienza" University of Rome—intends to: 1) digitise the *Bon* corpus; make it accessible online; provide an in-depth cataloguing of the texts; 2) investigate the Collection from codicological, art-historical, and material viewpoints; collect information on book production; explore approaches and methods of book conservation which respect the sacredness of scriptures; 3) provide a critical taxonomy and hermeneutical analysis of the metaphysical texts included in the *Bon* corpus.

In order to achieve such multidisciplinary objectives, the Project envisions the employment of a group of specialists in different sub-fields, supervised by the PI, as well as fieldwork in Indian and Nepalese areas where *Bon* communities are established. The Project is the first of its kind; its objectives will break new ground in the study of the Bon culture and will contribute to the preservation of a unique cultural heritage.

## Section a: Extended Synopsis of the scientific proposal

### Introduction

*Bon* (pron. bö̃n) is the name of what its followers consider the primeval, autochthonous spiritual and cultural tradition of the Tibetan civilisation. According to the ancient *Bon* worldview (still maintained nowadays), the environment displays itself in a tripartite fashion and is composed of three different dimensions—heaven above, earth in the middle, and the subterranean world below—each dominated by different classes of beings and elemental forces. The ability of interfacing with, and the numerous techniques and ritual ceremonies for effectively dealing with those dimensions were entrusted to, and represented the prerogative of 'hierophants' who were specialised in distinct and specific ritual actions meant to control the positive and negative forces or neutralise harmful situations created by supernatural or nonhuman beings so as to guarantee the welfare of people and livestock. These hierophants also played a powerful role as royal guards and counselors of Tibetan monarchs until at least the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE, when the Tibetan empire reached its apogee (Haar 1969). It is traditionally claimed that in archaic times, a master called Tönpa Shenrab (Tib. sTon pa gShen rab) systematised precepts and praxes of the existing tradition creating a sophisticated system named *Eternal Bon* (*g.yung drung bon*). After the introduction of Buddhism as state religion in the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE, *Bon* declined. However, it continued to live on, organised its philosophical and liturgical literature in a Canon of 154 volumes (Martin, Kværne & Nagano 2003), and survived till the present time counting thousands of followers and numerous active monastic institutions both in Tibet proper and in the Himalayan regions.

### Project Background

Until the middle of the last century Tibetanists considered *Bon* as a total plagiarism of Buddhism. That was mostly due to information gleaned from the widespread 'orthodox' literature pertaining to the Buddhist sect that theocratically ruled Tibet in modern times. In the 1960s however, a scholar of the calibre of David L. Snellgrove (1920-2016) invited a group of *Bon* monks and organised the first ever translations of *Bon* textual sources (Snellgrove 1967). Since then, the study of *Bon* developed into a distinct and prestigious research branch of Tibetology, a fact which demonstrates how important the *Bon* tradition is for understanding not only the cultural history of Tibet *per se* but also in terms of relevance to interdisciplinary research and debate in the fields of Asian Studies, Socio-cultural Anthropology, Religious History, and Comparative Religions.

### Project Justification and Relevancy

The Giuseppe Tucci (1894-1984) Tibetan Collection now preserved at the Central National Library of Rome (BNCR) is a textual treasure trove containing about 2600 volumes acquired by the famous explorer during his numerous expeditions to Tibet (1933, 1935, 1937, 1948). The Collection has been entirely catalogued by Elena De Rossi Filibeck (De Rossi Filibeck 1994, 2003, 2020). Nevertheless, it remained virtually unexplored so far, due to institutional restrictions and political contingencies that made it *de facto* inaccessible to scholars as of 2011. Now that circumstances have changed, it is the belief of the Project proponent that the Tibetan Collection should be shared with international scholarly and non scholarly communities including, if not most importantly, the Tibetan ones. In reason of the research expertise of the PI and of the envisaged research team, the Project intends to focus on the 78 volumes related to the *Bon* religion (vols. 489-566). This scientific proposal is conceived as a first leading step and groundbreaking endeavour towards a more comprehensive research plan to be hopefully applied, in due course, to the Tucci Tibetan Collection in its entirety.

### Project Objectives and Implementation

**The First Objective** aims at digitising the *Bon* collection, making it accessible online and providing an in-depth cataloguing of the texts. It will be carried out by two scholars expert in the *Bon* tradition (Researchers 1 and 2), and an IT specialist (Researcher 3). Researchers 1 and 2 will digitise the *Bon* collection and work at its detailed cataloguing by studying each text and describing literary genre, author/editor/treasure discoverer, chapter titles, incipit, explicit, colophons. They will also provide information on possible further editions and translations as well as studies undertaken on each text. Information will be inserted into the Database, which will be built by Researcher 3, and marked up to be searchable. A similar in-depth cataloguing of *Bon* texts has so far only been undertaken for the Tibetan Bonpo Canon, and the PI was among the scholars who achieved such result; she will therefore participate and supervise this task, giving team members advice when needed. The Database will also contain images of the texts, codicological features, material analysis, conservation data, semantic and philosophical aspects. Researcher 3 will also build a Website, accessible

from the second year, which will include information on the various facets of the project for scholars and general audiences, including any events and outreach activities.

**The Second Objective** aims at investigating the codicology of *Bon* manuscripts and xylographs, identifying materials, gathering information on book production, exploring approaches and methods of conservation respecting the spiritual and environmental value of scriptures, and applying such methods to treat selected items. Books have always played a central role in the lives of Tibetan people. This is evident by looking at the hundreds of thousands of manuscripts and xylographs realised by Tibetans, and then copied, multiplied, worshipped, spread, and transmitted uninterruptedly from masters to disciples over the centuries. In recent years, Tibetan books have started to be studied in their entirety, and the interest for their visual aspect, material features, and social life has become crucial to preserve this cultural heritage. New research lines have been opened and continued to expand, breathing fresh life into Tibetan studies (Almogi 2016; Almogi, Kindzorra, Hahn & Rabin 2015; Clemente 2020; Diemberger 2012; Diemberger, Elliott & Clemente 2014). However, research conducted thus far mainly focused on Buddhist books. The production of *Bon* scriptures has always been neglected until very recently, when the *Mardzong* and the *Drangsong* collections were re-discovered and dedicated projects were undertaken to study them (Helman-Ważny 2018; Helman-Ważny & Ramble [forthcoming]). Despite this pioneering research, the study of *Bon* books is still in its very infancy and further investigation is necessary to understand codicological features, artistic facets, materiality, economic context, literary, and religious aspects of the production. The *Bon* corpus of the Tucci Tibetan Collection is ideal to carry on such investigation: it is heterogeneous, vast (13369 folios), and mostly well preserved. Books will be examined in their various aspects by a team of experts led by Dr. Michela Clemente (currently Researcher at Sapienza, Dept. Italian Institute of Oriental Studies - ISO and Scientific Director of the Tucci Tibetan Collection):

A. Codicology (Dr. Clemente, in collaboration with R1 and R2): Studies will focus on format and layout, ornamentation, seals and signatures, *ductus*, orthographic peculiarities, and on book production. Information will be inserted in the Database, processed and compared with available data related to Buddhist books (Clemente 2018; De Rossi Filibeck 2006; Helman-Ważny 2014; Helman-Ważny & Van Schaik 2013; Scherrer-Schaub 1999; Scherrer-Schaub & Bonani 2002). Additional *Bon* books available in European collections will be examined to integrate and scrutinise data. Primary sources containing information on materials used in book production and on artists involved in the creation of artefacts will be searched and studied (also by R4 and R5, see below and WP2). Available data on artists and their training are scarce and only related to the production of Buddhist xylographs (Clemente 2017; Clemente [in press]; Clemente & Lunardo 2017) but such data would be crucial in order to date and locate the provenance of manuscripts and prints as well.

B. Art-history: Examination will be carried out by Researcher 4, a Tibetologist with background in art history and experience in analysis of illuminated/illustrated books, through: i) miniatures (arrangement, iconographic identification, stylistic analysis); ii) fully decorated pages; iii) frontispieces; iv) decorations of the side margins of the folios. The artistic study of the *Bon* tradition is in its infancy (Kværne 1995): miniatures and illustrations have so far never been analysed and only a few studies have been undertaken on the same subject in Buddhist scriptures (cf. De Rossi Filibeck 2002; Heller 2009; Jackson 1996; Lunardo 2020; Pal & Meech Pekarik 1988). Besides, a study of frontispieces has only been carried out on Buddhist prints from Mang yul Gung thang, South-Western Tibet (Clemente & Lunardo 2017). Consequently, research on frontispieces and drawings will provide a pioneering and ground-breaking contribution to this field. The project envisages fieldwork in relevant places for *Bon* book production (the New Menri Monastery, Dolanji, India; the Triten Norbutse Monastery, Kathmandu, Nepal; Dolpo, Nepal; Mustang, Nepal). Books preserved in local monasteries will be examined and preliminary results will be discussed with representatives of *Bon* communities and artists; ancient book traditions and contemporary revivals of such traditions will be investigated; *Bon* primary sources on materials used in book production and artists will be searched and studied (see above and WP2);

C. Materiality will be investigated by Researcher 5, a Tibetologist with background in biology and botany, through: i) a scientific examination of material samples from selected books of the Tucci Tibetan Collection (WP2: 2<sup>nd</sup> stage); ii) a study of the primary sources on materials used in book production (see above and WP2); iii) fieldwork conducted in the above-mentioned areas to collect data on book production, identify plant species used for paper, ink and pigments components (Boesi 2016), wood for covers and blocks (Boesi 2020). Identification of plant species and examination of paper will be done *in situ* thanks to already existing collaborations (WP2: 3<sup>rd</sup> stage). Information on materials used for Buddhist books realised in the same areas will also be gathered to understand differences and similarities between extant traditions. Results will be input in the Database;

D. Conservation. An appropriate conservation is essential to keep scriptures alive. However, according to some Tibetans, books are defaced if restored, and that explains why book conservation has not yet developed in Tibet as a discipline (Helman-Ważny 2014: 201-206). Researcher 6, a paper conservator with experience in Asian book treatment, will investigate approaches and methods of conservation respecting the sacredness of scriptures. Raw materials and preparation methods make paper, woodblocks and covers, inks and pigments extremely different in properties and aspect. Materials identification is therefore fundamental to understand how to preserve books in good condition and how to treat them whenever necessary. It may also be helpful to assess date and provenance of artefacts (Delia 2020). Papermaking in Asia has a millennial history (Hunter 1978; Laufer 1931) and despite the recent revival of the ancient manufacturing tradition in the Himalayas, the kind of paper produced in that region has never been tested to verify whether its features could be used in conservation; consequently it is not usually employed for mending tears and losses. Researcher 6 will explore use of the paper; investigate experimental solutions for particular damages; treat a short selection of books; and organise an exhibit to illustrate methodologies and share innovative solutions (WP2: 4<sup>th</sup> stage).

**The Third Objective**, which will be implemented by the PI in reason of her research expertise on the subject-matter (cf. References and Ten years track-record), is philological and hermeneutical in nature.

The *Bon* religious tradition is classified into nine philosophical, soteriological, and liturgical paths styled *Nine Vehicles* (*theg pa dgu*). The *Nine Vehicles* are studied and practiced by lay people and clergy alike. The *Nine Vehicles* also include funerary praxes, apotropaic rituals, divination methods as well as medical diagnosis. The doctrinal epitome of this taxonomy, the most eminent and essential one, is called *Great Perfection* (*rdzogs pa chen po*), a philosophical system dealing with metaphysical and ontological principles which are believed to bring adepts to full spiritual realisation (Buddhahood), that is to say, comprehend the true nature of the Absolute and of all universal phenomena. It is significant to note in this regard that 50 texts of the *Bon* corpus belong to the *Great Perfection* philosophical system.

The Project will be hosted at "Sapienza" University of Rome (Dept. Italian Institute of Oriental Studies – ISO). According to the requirements of Italian governmental regulations, only people currently employed at the Host Institution can be mentioned by name in the proposal. Other team members are consequently mentioned by their sole profile; however, the PI is aware of the availability of scholars with the required expertise.

### **Methodology**

In order to achieve the above-mentioned Objectives the Project will feature three Work Packages:

#### **Work Package 1 (WP1) (Years 1-5)**

##### **Activities:**

1<sup>st</sup> Stage: Digitisation and in-depth Cataloguing: Digitisation will be carried out by R1 and R2 with a planetary scanner, with the assistance of R3. Images will be uploaded onto the Website and linked to catalogue entries. Cataloguing of the *Bon* corpus will be undertaken by the PI, R1, and R2, who will also upload information onto the Database and mark up significant data (names, places, dates, technical terms, etc.) with the assistance of R3. Detailed cataloguing will be carried out by studying each text, describing literary genre, author/editor/treasure discoverer, chapter titles, incipit, explicit, colophons, and providing information on possible further editions, translations and studies undertaken on such text.

2<sup>nd</sup> Stage: Database building and Website: the Database will be built using xDams, an open source web-based platform which can easily be adapted by R3 to the specificity of the Collection. xDams is created to use the XML (Extensible Markup Language) format based on TEI (Text Encoding Initiative) guidelines that enables mark-up of relevant data to make them searchable. xDams provides a user-friendly front-end to facilitate data input. R3 will assist team members with data input and implement the template whenever necessary. The Database will include all information collected by researchers at the end of the Project. R3 will be responsible for the creation of the Project Website which will be linked to the Database. Contents will be provided by team members according to their own expertise.

**Agents:** PI, R1, R2, R3.

**Results:** Online Catalogue (Database); Website.

#### **Work Package 2 (WP2) (Years 1-5)**

##### **Activities:**

1<sup>st</sup> stage: Examination of the collection; input of data and study of primary sources on materials used in book production and artists. Books will be examined by Dr. Clemente and R4 in collaboration with R1 and R2

through format and layout (size, number of leaves, foliation, margins, lines, guidelines, marginalia, binding, etc.), ornamentation (book cover, frontispiece, illuminations/illustrations, ornamentals signs and punctuation marks), seals and signatures, *ductus* and orthographic peculiarities. Information will be input in the Database and also cross-checked with data obtained by examining *Bon* texts of other collections, namely those of The British Library and the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, and with information acquired from primary sources on materials used in book production and artists.

2<sup>nd</sup> stage: Examination of the materiality of manuscripts and xylographs. Analysis of paper (about 40 samples), wood (15 samples), inks and pigments (about 70 texts) will be carried out by R5 on selected material using the following research methodologies and approaches:

**Paper and Wood** samples will be examined with a transmitted light microscope and a scanning electron microscope at the Department of Biosciences, University of Milan (Italy). Samples of paper manufactured in Himalayan areas will also be examined by R5 and tested by R6 to be used to treat selected items. If needed, radiocarbon dating will be undertaken using milligram-size samples. Fragile and small wood samples will be embedded in epoxy resin which provides a firm and non-intrusive matrix for thin sectioning and well preserves the wood's characteristics.

**Pigments and Inks** will be analysed with a range of non-invasive imaging and spectroscopic methods, including near-infrared (NIR) and ultraviolet (UV) imaging, reflectance spectroscopy in the UV-visible-NIR range and X-ray fluorescence (Panayotova, Jackson & Ricciardi 2016; Ricciardi & Pallipurath 2016). Samples can be examined at both the Department of Biosciences, University of Milan, and at the Central Institute for the Pathology of Archives and Books (ICPAL).

3<sup>rd</sup> stage: Fieldwork to identify materials, analyse manuscripts and xylographs, collect information on book production, and document living traditions of craftsmanship. Fieldwork (New Menri Monastery, India; Triten Norbutse Monastery, Kathmandu; Dolpo, Nepal; Mustang, Nepal) will be conducted by R4, R5, and R6. R4 will analyse books preserved in local libraries, discuss preliminary results with representatives of the *Bon* communities and artists, investigate ancient traditions of book production and current revival of such traditions. R6 will look for samples of paper produced by local enterprises to be tested for conservation purposes. R5 will identify and study plants species and glean information on book production. The study of paper plants will include collection of plant specimens in the field, preparation of herbarium samples and their botanical identification at specialised herbaria. Materials will be analysed and identified *in situ* at the National Herbarium and Plant Laboratories, Godawari (Kathmandu, Nepal) and/or the Herbarium of the Botanical Survey of India at Dehradun. The Project envisages 3-months fieldwork for R4 and R5 for Years 2 through 5. R6 will travel 2 months during the implementation of the Project.

4<sup>th</sup> stage: Investigation of approaches and methods of conservation; examination of selected manuscripts and xylographs of the Tucci Tibetan Collection to be restored; treatment. Activities will be carried out by R6. Previously treated books will be selected and conservative approaches and methods will be studied to identify the best possible way to intervene taking into account data gathered during fieldwork (see 3<sup>rd</sup> stage). Items to be restored will be selected in collaboration with Dr Clemente, studied by the team, and treated by R6 using paper manufactured in the Himalayan areas. An exhibit of restored books will be organised.

**Agents**: Dr. Clemente, R4, R5, R6, in collaboration with R1, R2, R3, under the supervision of the PI.

**Results**: Restoration; 2 Open Access monographs, a co-authored book, a catalogue of the exhibit.

### **Work Package 3 (WP3) (Years 1-5)**

**Activities**: i) an in-depth cataloguing of the 50 textual sources on the *Great Perfection* tradition already identified in the Collection following the devised template for the *Bon* Collection Online Catalogue and Database interfacing; ii) an in-depth taxonomical analysis of the texts to identify genres and rubrics; iii) a philological and hermeneutical analysis of the texts; iv) a search for and comparison of the sources in other *Bon* corpora preserved in India and Nepal; v) systematisation of the above-mentioned results.

**Agents**: PI

**Results**: Open Access monograph

### **Dissemination**

Considerable effort will be devoted to the production of outputs for both academic and non-academic audiences such as: creation and long-term maintenance of the Project Website; an online Catalogue of the *Bon* texts of the Collection with relevant interfacing Database; a final International Conference with leading specialists with publication of the *Proceedings*; an Exhibit to be held concurrently with the final International Conference featuring workshops for children and adults on Tibetan calligraphy, traditional papermaking, and pigments manufacture; a Catalogue of the Exhibit; Guided visits to the Tucci Tibetan Collection; Four Open

Source monographs: 1) a monograph on codicology; 2) a monograph on art-historical aspects of *Bon* manuscripts and xylographs; 3) a co-authored volume on materiality and conservation; 4) a monograph on the *Great Perfection* texts of the Collection; team participation to the Seminars of the International Association for Tibetan Studies (IATS) for presentation of the Project and groundwork results, with publication of the Proceedings on specialised online *Review*.

### **Project Assets**

The Project has secured the competence of seven renowned Tibetologists who will serve as members of the Advisory Board. Moreover, it is endowed with a network of 21 Affiliates spanning from university institutions to specialised research and resource centres.

### **Ethical issues**

The Project does not entail ethical issues. The PI is aware of and will comply with European and national legislation and fundamental ethics principles. She will strictly verify that Researchers too are aware of and will comply with European and national legislation and fundamental ethics principles. Environmental issues will be carefully assessed; no protected or endangered plant species will be collected.

### **Project Risks Assessment**

The main risks for the Project are related to Fieldwork, in that certain locations may present unforeseen logistic impediments. For that reason, fieldwork will be accurately planned with special attention to the best possible weather conditions and targeted locations will be monitored vis-à-vis current or ongoing political contingencies. In order to address risks of fieldwork impediments the Project has purposely envisaged fieldwork in 4 different areas which are all equally eligible for their long-standing tradition of *Bon* manuscripts.

### **Why Donatella Rossi as PI for this Project**

There are four sets of reasons that make Donatella Rossi the ideal candidate for the role of PI for this Project. The first one is linked to her pre-academic working experiences in the private sector and international organisations, during which: a) as manager of two representative offices in the People's Republic of China, she acquired soft and hard skills related to financial, negotiatory, and personnel management responsibilities, team-building, problem-solving, capacity of operating and delivering results under stressful and time-constrained circumstances; b) as Junior Professional Officer stationed at the UNESCO Regional Office for Science and Technology (UNESCO R.O.S.T.S.E.A, Jakarta, Indonesia), she was trained in all phases of project development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

The second one is related to her knowledge of the *Bon* corpus of the Tucci Tibetan Collection as she was asked to make its preliminary assessment by the President of the Italian Institute for Africa and the East in 2008 (Rossi 2009). On that occasion, she realised how significant the collection was and decided to make efforts for digitising it, making the texts available to scholars, and study the collection in detail. However, the abrupt closedown of the Institute and its Library made the achievement of this task impossible till now. Her knowledge of the Collection manuscripts and xylographs makes her the ideal supervisor for the activities of Work Package 2.

The third one is connected to her long-term research interests, studies, fieldwork, and scholarly productive career in the Tibetological sphere with specific focus on the metaphysical and ontological aspects of the Tibetan *Bon* religion on which she published her Ph.D. dissertation (*The Philosophical View of the Great Perfection in the Tibetan Bon Religion*, Ithaca, New York: Snow Lion Publications, 1999) which represents the research target of Work Package 3. Furthermore, her participation as one of the seven leading *Bon* specialists for the first cataloguing of the Tibetan *Bon* Canon at the Royal Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters (Martin, Kværne & Nagano 2003) endowed her with an in-depth theoretical-methodological, and practical knowledge and constitutes an exclusive asset with respect to the polyhedral tasks that a PI would be called to perform in the realisation of the Project. Moreover, these skills will be fundamental to organise and supervise Work Package 1.

The last one is linked to her established relationship with experts and knowledgeable representatives of *Bon* communities in Asia, in particular with the Bonpo Dialectic School at New Menri Monastery in Dolanji, India, which will be essential for the organisation of fieldwork for Project participants.

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- D. Rossi (2009), "A Brief Note on the Bon po Texts of the Giuseppe Tucci Fund Preserved at the Library of IsIAO". *EAST AND WEST* 59/1-4: 337-45.
- D. Rossi (1999), *The Philosophical View of the Great Perfection in the Tibetan Bon Religion*, Ithaca, New York: Snow Lion Publications.
- C. A. Scherrer-Schaub (1999), "Towards a Methodology for the Study of Old Tibetan Manuscripts: Dunhuang and Tabo". In C.A. Scherrer-Schaub & E. Steinkellner (eds.), *Tabo Studies 2: Manuscripts, Texts, Inscriptions and the Arts*, Rome: Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente, pp. 3-36.
- C. A. Scherrer-Schaub & G. Bonani (2002), "Establishing a Typology of the Old Tibetan Manuscripts: A Multidisciplinary Approach". In S. Whitfield (ed.), *Dunhuang Manuscript Forgeries*, London: The British Library, pp. 184-215.
- D. L. Snellgrove (1967), *The Nine Ways of Bon: Excerpts from the gZi brjid Edited and Translated*, London Oriental Series, vol. 18, London: Oxford University Press.

**Section b: Curriculum vitae****PERSONAL INFORMATION**

Family name, First name: Rossi, Donatella

Researcher unique identifier: ID ORCID 0000-0003-4605-3282

Date of birth: October 12<sup>th</sup>, 1958

Nationality: Italy and USA

URL for web site: <https://web.uniroma1.it/diso/en>

**• EDUCATION**

- 1998            PhD in History of Religions and Tibetology  
Faculty of Humanities, Dept. of Cultural Studies and Oriental Languages, University of Oslo,  
NORWAY
- 1985            MA Degree *summa cum laude*  
Faculty of Letters, Institute for Indian and Far East Asian Studies, Sapienza University of  
Rome, ITALY

**• CURRENT POSITION**

- 2003 –           Associate Professor (National Scientific Qualification as Full Professor obtained in 2014)  
Faculty of Letters and Philosophy, Dept. Italian Institute of Oriental Studies (ISO), Sapienza  
University of Rome, ITALY

**• PREVIOUS POSITIONS**

- 1998 – 2002    Associate Professor, Dept. of Religious Studies, Marylhurst University, Oregon, USA
- 1996 – 1998    Adjunct professor College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Portland State University,  
Oregon, USA
- 1989 – 1991    Junior Professional Officer, UNESCO, Regional Office for Science and Technology of  
South East Asia, INDONESIA
- 1987 – 1989    Vice Representative, Danieli Company, Beijing Representative Office, PEOPLE'S  
REPUBLIC OF CHINA
- 1985 – 1987    Representative, Sky Ho Trading Co., Beijing Representative Office, PEOPLE'S  
REPUBLIC OF CHINA

**• FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS**

- 2014 – 2015    Visiting Fellowship - Internationales Kolleg für Geisteswissenschaftliche Forschung (IKGF),  
The International Consortium for Research in the Humanities "Fate, Freedom and  
Prognostication", Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg (FAU), GERMANY
- 1995 - 1996    Research Fellowship - Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters, NORWAY
- 1994 – 1995    Visiting Fellowship - Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai (BDK), Japanese Society for the Promotion of  
Buddhism, Faculty of Letters, Department of Buddhist Studies, University of Kyoto, JAPAN
- 1993 – 1994    Research Scholarship - Japanisch-Deutsches Zentrum Berlin (JDZB), Faculty of Letters,  
Department of Buddhist Studies, University of Kyoto, JAPAN

**• SUPERVISION OF GRADUATE STUDENTS AND POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWS**

- 2009 – 2020    Seven (7) PhD Supervisions, Faculty of Letters and Philosophy, Dept. Italian Institute of  
Oriental Studies -ISO, Sapienza University of Rome, ITALY

- **TEACHING ACTIVITIES**

- 2003 – Associate Professor - BA and MA courses on East Asian Religions and Philosophies and Tibetan Language and Culture, Sapienza University of Rome, ITALY
- 1998 – 2002 Associate Professor - BA and MA courses on Religions and Philosophies of Asia; Coordinator of the Master of Arts in Applied Theology, Marylhurst University, Oregon, USA
- 1996 – 1998 Adjunct professor - BA and MA courses on History of Religions, Religions and Philosophies of India and Far East Asia, Portland State University, Oregon, USA

- **ORGANISATION OF SCIENTIFIC MEETINGS**

- 2016 Convener (PI), Final Workshop for Project "Dialectics of Buddhist metaphysics in East Asia. Tibet and Japan: An Inedited Comparison", six participants, Sapienza, ITALY
- 2016 Convener, Panel on Tibetan Divination (No. 37), XIV Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies (IATS), University of Bergen, seven participants, NORWAY
- 2014 Convener, International Workshop on "Divination in Tibet and Mongolia: Past and Present", IKGF, Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg (FAU), nine participants, GERMANY

- **INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 2019–2020 Tutor for junior professors - Sapienza University of Rome Teaching Quality and Innovation Programme (QuID), ITALY
- 2015 – Member of the Teachers-Students Committee, Faculty of Letters and Philosophy, Sapienza University of Rome, ITALY
- 2013 – Member of the Quality Insurance Committee for the courses of the Department Italian Institute of Oriental Studies - ISO, Sapienza University of Rome, ITALY
- 2012 – Referee for the National Research Evaluation Agency (ANVUR) of the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR)

- **REVIEWING ACTIVITIES**

- 2019 Reviewer of manuscript, Brill Publishers, THE NETHERLANDS
- 2018 Reviewer of Clusters of Excellence Funding Line project proposals for the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG), GERMANY
- 2016 – Editorial Board, *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* (RSO), Sapienza, ITALY
- 2016 Tenure Reviewer, University of Colorado Boulder, Dept. of Religious Studies, USA
- 2015, 2017 Reviewer of fellowship applications, IKGF, FAU, GERMANY
- 2015 Reviewer of project proposal for the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG), GERMANY

- **MEMBERSHIPS OF SCIENTIFIC SOCIETIES**

- 2017 – Founding Member, Associazione Italiana di Studi Tibetani e Himalayani (AISTHiM)
- 2006 – Member, Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente (IsIAO, now International Association for Mediterranean and Oriental Studies (ISMEO)
- 1995 – Member, Association for Asian Studies (AAS)
- 1989 – Member, International Association for Tibetan Studies (IATS)

- **MAJOR COLLABORATIONS**

- 2015 - Research Partner, Divination in Tibet, The International Consortium for Research in the Humanities (IKGF), Prof. Dr. Michael Lackner (Director), Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg (FAU), GERMANY

*Appendix: All on-going grants and submitted grants applications of the PI (Funding ID)***On-going Grants**

<i>Project Title</i>	<i>Funding source</i>	<i>Amount (Euros)</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Role of the PI</i>	<i>Relation to current ERC proposal<sup>2</sup></i>
Fate and Immortality in Asia: A Cross-cultural Perspective	Sapienza University of Rome	14.065,00	2019-2022	Project Coordinator	No scientific overlap with this application
Codicology, Paleographic Traits, and Philosophical Hermeneutics of the Bon-po Texts preserved in the Giuseppe Tucci Fund at the National Library, Rome (Researcher Position)	Sapienza University of Rome	107.198,97	2020-2023	Scientific Advisor	This research is complementary to the current proposal, in particular with Objective 2. Preliminary investigations undertaken for this project served as the basis to prepare parts of this application. The research to be carried out in the following months will complement information collected by Project participants.
Hermeneutical Classification of the Giuseppe Tucci Fund's Bonpo Texts on divination preserved at the Central National Library of Rome (Postdoc Fellowship)	Sapienza University of Rome, Department of Oriental Studies - ISO	23.786,82	2019-2020	Scientific Advisor	No scientific overlap with this application

<sup>2</sup> Describe clearly any scientific overlap between your ERC application and the current research grant or any grant application.

**Grant applications**

<i>Project Title</i>	<i>Funding source</i>	<i>Amount (Euros)</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Role of the PI</i>	<i>Relation to current ERC proposal<sup>2</sup></i>
II AISTHiM Conference: Traditions Translations Transitions in the Cultural History of Tibet, the Himalayas and Mongolia	Sapienza University of Rome and International Association for Mediterranean and Oriental Studies (ISMEO)	12.168,00	7-9 July 2021	Convener	No scientific overlap with this application
The Oriental School of Rome: History, Figures, Cultural Scene, Manuscript and Book Collections	Sapienza University of Rome	50.000,00	2021-2023	Project Member	No scientific overlap with this application

**Section c: Ten years track-record****MONOGRAPHS**

2013. *Corso di Lingua Tibetana Moderna per Italiani* (Modern Tibetan Language Course for Italians). Milan: Casa Editrice Libreria Ulrico Hoepli.

**TRANSLATIONS**

2015. Namkhai Norbu, *The Light of Kailash. A History of Zhang Zhung and Tibet. Volume Three, The Later Period*, (translated from the Tibetan and edited by Donatella Rossi). Arcidosso (GR): Shang Shung Publications, 362 pp.

2013b. Namkhai Norbu, *The Light of Kailash. A History of Zhang Zhung and Tibet. Volume Two, The Intermediate Period*, (translated from the Tibetan and edited by Donatella Rossi). Arcidosso (GR): Shang Shung Publications, 305 pp.

2013a. Namkhai Norbu, *The Light of Kailash. A History of Zhang Zhung and Tibet. Volume One, The Early Period* (translated from the Tibetan and edited by Donatella Rossi). Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 261 pp.

**EDITORSHIPS**

2019. Petra Maurer, Donatella Rossi, and Rolf Scheuermann, *Glimpses of Tibetan Divination. Past and Present*. Leiden: Brill, 218 pp. *Preface*, pp. xxii-xxiv.

2018a. *Fili di Seta. Introduzione al Pensiero Filosofico-Religioso dell'Asia* (Silken Threads. Introduction to Asian philosophic and religious thought). Rome: Astrolabio Ubaldini Editore, 736 pp. *Preface*, pp. 7-12.

2018b. *Proceedings of the workshop "Dialectics of Buddhist Metaphysics in East Asia. Tibet and Japan: An Inedited Comparison"*, *Sapienza, May 13th 2016. Rivista degli Studi Orientali* (RSO), Nova Serie, Vol. XCI, Suppl. nr. 1, 144 pp.

2016. Donatella Rossi and Charles Jamyang Oliphant of Rossie, *Sharro. Festschrift for Chögyal Namkhai Norbu*. Schongau (CH): Garuda Verlag, 364 pp.

**ARTICLES**

2019a. "The Don gsum (Three Teachings) of Lady Coza Bonmo. A Bon po *gter ma* from the G. Tucci Tibetan Fund. Part Two." In *Revue d'Études Tibétaines*, Jean-Luc Achard (ed.), Number 51, *Perspectives on Tibetan Culture*, pp. 310-321.

2019b. "Identifying the Magical Displays of the Lords of the World: The Oneiromancy of the *gSal byed Byang bu*." In *Glimpses of Tibetan Divination. Past and Present*, Petra Maurer, Donatella Rossi, and Rolf Scheuermann (eds.). Leiden: Brill, pp. 136-160.

2019c. "Mi'am-ci: Exploring the Strange and the Wondrous in the Land of Snows." In *Wind Horses. Tibetan. Himalayan and Mongolian Studies. Proceedings of the Founding Conference of the Italian Association of Tibetan, Himalayan, and Mongolian Studies (AISTHiM), Procida, Sept. 2017*, Andrea Drocco, Lucia Galli, Chiara Letizia, Giacomella Orofino, and Carmen Simioli (eds.), *Studi Asiatici Serie Minor*, Vol. LXXXVIII, pp. 443-454.

2018a. "Faith or Fate? The Path towards Immortality according to the Tantric Traditions of Tibet." In *Micrologus*, Agostino Paravicini Bagliani (ed.), Vol. XXVI, pp. 27-46.

2018b. "Transcendence and Immanence. A Brief Exposition of The View (*Ita ba'i stong thun*) from the *rDzogs pa chen po Yang rtse klong chen* Cycle." In *Proceedings of the workshop "Dialectics of Buddhist Metaphysics in East Asia. Tibet and Japan: An Inedited Comparison"*, *Sapienza, May 13th 2016. Rivista degli Studi Orientali* (RSO), Suppl. 1, pp. 91-110.

2016a. "The *Yid ches lung gi sgron ma* [The Lamp of the Truthful Transmission]. A Bonpo Rediscovered Text from the *rDzogs pa Chen po Yang rtse klong chen* Cycle." In *Sharro. Festschrift for Chögyal Namkhai Norbu*, Donatella Rossi and Charles Jamyang Oliphant of Rossie (eds.). Schongau (CH): Garuda Verlag, pp. 200-212.

2016b. "The Three Teachings (*Don gsum*) of Lady Co za Bon mo. A Bon po *gter ma* from the G. Tucci Tibetan Fund" (Part One). In *Studies in Honour of Luciano Petech. A Commemoration Volume, 1914-2014*, Elena De Rossi Filibeck, Michela Clemente, Giorgio Milanetti, Oscar Nalesini, and Federica Venturi (eds.). *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* (RSO), Nuova Serie, Vol. LXXXIX, Supplement Nr. 1, pp. 155-163.

2015. "Alcune Riflessioni sull'Interrelazione fra la Semantica e la Divinazione." In *From Bhakti to Bon*, Hanna Havnevik and Charles Ramble (eds.). Oslo: Novus Press, pp. 449-62.

2012. "A preliminary note on the mandalas of the Bonpo tradition." In *Tibetan Art between Past and Present: Studies dedicated to Luciano Petech, Proceedings of the Conference held in Rome on the 3rd November 2010*, Elena De Rossi Filibeck (ed.). *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* (RSO), Vol. 84, pp. 83-91.

2012. "Bod/Tibet: sfide alla costituzione di un'identità." In *L'identità nazionale nel XXI secolo in Cina, Giappone, Corea, Tibet e Taiwan*, Marina Miranda (ed.), "Sapienza" Università di Roma, Dipartimento Istituto di Studi Orientali - Iso, Dottorato di Ricerca in Civiltà, Culture e Società dell'Asia e dell'Africa, Curriculum Asia Orientale. Roma: Libreria Editrice Orientalia, pp. 69-77.

#### ENCYCLOPEDIA ENTRIES

2011. "La medicina cinese" (Chinese medicine). In *La Grande Storia, L'Antichità*, UMBERTO ECO ed., LE GRANDI COLLANE DEL CORRIERE DELLA SERA, Vol. 02. Milan: Encyclomedia Publishers srl, pp. 517-523.

2011. "La medicina indiana" (Indian medicine). In *La Grande Storia, L'Antichità*, UMBERTO ECO ed., LE GRANDI COLLANE DEL CORRIERE DELLA SERA, Vol. 02. Milan: Encyclomedia Publishers srl, pp. 524-533.

#### BOOK REVIEWS

2017. Erberto Lo Bue (ed.) *Il Tibet fra Mito e Realta: Tibet between Myth and Reality*, *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* (RSO), Nuova Serie, Vol. LXXXIX, 112-114.

2012. *Giulio Aleni (Ai Rulüe), Vita del Maestro Ricci, Xitai del Grande Occidente*, Gianni Criveller (ed.). Brescia, Fondazione Civiltà Bresciana – Centro Giulio Aleni, in *Ming Qing Studies 2012*, Aracne Editrice, Collana Asia Orientale, Roma, pp. 267-268.

2010. *L'Alchimia del Soffio. La pratica della visione interiore nell'alchimia taoista*, Monica Esposito, Roma, Ubaldini Editore, 1997, *Ming Qing Studies 2010*, Roma, Scriptaweb, pp. 369-70.

#### MULTIMEDIA PUBLICATIONS

2014. *Practice of Divination: The Tibetan Zhang Zhung Ju thig Divination System*, DVD, ca. 39 min., created for the International Consortium for Research in the Humanities (IKGF, University of Erlangen-Nürnberg - <http://www.ikgf.uni-erlangen.de/videos/documentaries/>).