

"Hermes in Tibet: Tantra's exegetical imperative"
Panel Proposal for the 13th Seminar of the IATS in Ulaanbaatar 2013
submitted by Yael Bentor, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Our panel will explore the semantic multivalence of Tantric texts by Indian and Tibetan scholars and practitioners. The focal point will be the *locus classicus* of tantric hermeneutics as found in Candrakīrti's *Pradīpoddyotana* as well as in commentaries on the *Explanatory Tantras* of the *Guhyasamāja* cycle. We will examine how this system of interpretive guidelines facilitated the development of practices such as the creation and perfection stages along with theories explaining their workings, and how it allowed dynamic engagement with the *Root Tantra*. We will investigate how the exegetical method serves to mediate the apparent or actual tension between the unfettered *siddha* and the cloistered monk. Another center of our attention will be the ways the classical tantric hermeneutical methods further evolved in Tibet and were implemented in works of Tibetan scholars and yogis, not confining ourselves to the tradition of the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* but looking into *Cakrasamvara* and other traditions as well.

List of participants and titles of individual papers:

[This is not necessarily the order of speakers]

- 1. Robert Thurman (Columbia University):** "Vajra Hermeneutics Revisited: An Example of Candrakīrti's Use of Six Parameter Scheme in Interpreting the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*."
- 2. David Gray (University of California Santa Clara):** "Making Sense of the Wisdom of the Saints: On the Authority of Works Attributed to the Mahāsiddhas in Tibetan Tantric Exegesis."
- 3. John R. B. Campbell (University of Virginia):** "Re-telling the Greatest Story Ever Told: A Case-Study and Analysis of Indian Tantric Exegesis in Tibet."
- 4. David Kittay (Columbia University):** "Self-Aware Hermeneutics in the *Vajra Rosary Explanatory Tantra* and the Interpretive System of Alaṃkakalaśa, and the Ontological Turn in Buddhist Tantric Hermeneutics."
- 5. Christian Wedemeyer (University of Chicago):** "Interpreting Antinomian Scripture in Tibet: Commentaries on *Guhyasamāja* Chapter Five."
- 6. Yael Bentor (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem):** "Tsongkhapa's impact on Tibetan interpretations of the creation stage of the *Guhyasamāja*."