



Letter from the Editors

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The *Journal of Tibetan Literature* began in 2020 as an experiment to create a new platform for profiling the contributions of Tibetan authors and appreciation for the literary qualities of their work, from the earliest period of Tibetan writing to the present day. This project began with support from Tsadra Foundation to research existing digital publishing platforms and open-access publishing best practices, and eventually establish a peer-reviewed academic journal, customize a web platform for its publication and distribution, and launch the first issues.

As the initial grant period now draws to a close, we would like to thank the Tsadra Foundation for supporting the journal's creation and its first five volumes, eight issues in all including this double issue. While the journal's focus on Tibetan literature did not fall strictly within the Foundation's mission to make Buddhist teachings more widely available, Tsadra leadership offered full and enthusiastic support for this related effort to amplify Tibetan voices and scholarship about Tibetan culture. We are deeply appreciative of Tsadra Foundation's investment in the project.

The financial landscape for academic publishing in general, and small-scale open-access journals in particular, presents numerous challenges. We began with a commitment to pay for editorial labor, which entailed a modest but substantive salary for a managing editor as well as wages for copyediting, translation (of abstracts and titles), and professional layout and design. We also committed honoraria for the original cover artwork. The founding editors worked on a volunteer basis throughout the journal's publication history. This labor, together with the cost of hosting the journal on a professional platform, constituted the overwhelming majority of the journal's annual budget. We were also committed to the principle that the entirety of the journal's contents should be available for free, with no paywalls or subscription fees. Taken together, the commitments to pay for skilled production labor and to make the results of such labor free to the reading public result in a publication model that is challenging to sustain. We are happy and grateful that other venues for open-access publication about Tibetan literary traditions remain active, including *Himalaya*, *Revue d'Etudes Tibétain*, and *Yeshe*.

We are currently actively seeking support for JTL to continue its mission. As we look for support, we have decided to pause publications for the time being, with the hope that it will resume again in the future. In the meantime, we remain committed to keeping all of the journal's published materials—including scholarship, critical essays, translations, interviews, and artwork—freely and widely available online.

We offer thanks also to each member of the Journal's editorial board, who have guided the shape and scope of the journal for the last five years. Finally, we would like to thank our two Managing Editors, Tenzin Dickie and Riga Shakya. Tenzin Dickie served as the founding Managing Editor, and was pivotal in ensuring the integrity of the journal's first issues. We could not have brought JTL to publication without her. Riga, likewise, was absolutely crucial to the success of the journal's latter issues. Both Riga and Dickie worked closely on every aspect of the journal, and in particular they coordinated the artists whose work graces the cover of each issue and with the writers, scholars, and critics we interviewed over the first five volumes. Dickie and Riga—thank you. We owe a deep debt of gratitude to you both.

This double issue contains a wealth of new research, translation, and criticism. The issue begins with a fresh look at one of modern Tibetan literature's most important figures. Christopher Peacock's contribution "Paths, Waterfalls, and Awakenings: Döndrup Gyel and the Development of Tibetan Nationalist Discourse in Modern China" considers several works by the prominent contemporary Tibetan author Döndrup Gyel to highlight the author's attempt to "awaken the consciousness" of the Tibetan people. Peacock presents readings of "The Narrow Path," "Waterfall of Youth," and Döndrup Gyel's last "testament" in conjunction with critical Tibetan literary reflections on these works to underscore how they may be understood as drawing on themes of national crisis, cultural self-examination, and radical progressivism witnessed in China's May Fourth literature.

In "Gsan-yig in Bridging the Historical Gap of the Abhidharmakośa Tradition in Tibetan Buddhism," Mriti Gyana explores lineage transmissions of the *Abhidharmakośa* in Tibet. Tibetan tradition, Gyana argues, recognizes two principal Abhidharma traditions, namely the "Upper Abhidharma" of the Yogācāra school and the "Lower Abhidharma" of the Sarvāstivāda school. Upper Abhidharma is, in essence, the tradition of thought originating with the Asanga's *Abhidharmasamuccaya*, while the Lower Abhidharma traces itself back to Vasubhadhu's *Abhidharmakośa*. Gurung focuses on the complex history of the latter, particularly the issue of this tradition's continuity following the Early Diffusion of Buddhism in Tibet (7th–9th century CE). While some historical accounts suggest that this teaching lineage was lost and then reintroduced by Paṇḍita Smṛti Jñāna around the 10th century, Gurung demonstrates that the Fifth Dalai Lama was aware of this historical rupture and took pains to address it by positing an innovative convergence between the *Abhidharmakośa* teaching lineage to that of the *Abhidharmasamuccaya*. Gurung uses the Great Fifth's *Flow of the Ganga*, perhaps Tibet's most celebrated "record of teachings received,"

a major genre of Tibetan writing on literary history, as well as other such works by Amyeshap and the Eighth Karmapa.

This issue also includes a number of original translations. Ronwo Lugal Dondrup translates three poems by Pematso (Padma mtsho), known by her pen name Chimay ('Chi med), one of Tibet's most prominent contemporary female poets and a Tibetan language teacher from Reb-gong, Amdo. Joie Szu-Chiao Chen presents an annotated translation of Shuchen Tsultrim Rinchen's (Zhu chen Tshul khri ms rin chen, 1697–1774) poem entitled "The Pond of Blossoming White Lotuses: An Ornamental Ode to the Goddess of Melodies, Sarasvatī," together with a comprehensive translator's commentary. Lucia Galli translates the short story "Toilet" (Spyod khang) by Tsewang Gyel (Tshe dbang rgyal), writing under the pen name Tsadeu (Tshwa rde'u), a writer and reporter for the legal affairs desk at Amdo TV. As Galli notes, this story about a seemingly mundane subject reflects broader issues and serves as "a vehicle for exposing the uncomfortable realities underpinning ecological resettlement initiatives and rural sanitation campaigns in the nomadic regions of western China."

Dominique Townsend contributes an essay on the library of Hubert Decler, scholar and translator of Buddhist traditions in Tibet and Nepal, and longtime Academic Director of the School for International Training's Tibetan Studies Program based in Kathmandu, Nepal. "Sorting through the Library of Hubert Decler and Finding What it Means to be Rimé" honors Decler's life, scholarship, and lasting legacy while reflecting on how one individual's library might suggest scholarship that is disciplined, determined, expansive, and inclusive, while reflecting "a life spent reading widely, across traditions and genres, with a *rimé* thinker's open mind."

This issue concludes with an interview with Tibetan writer Tsering Yangzom Lama. Lama's first novel, *We Measure the Earth with our Bodies* (2022), was shortlisted for no less than ten literary awards, and won both the Banff Mountain Book Award and the GLCA New Writers Award. Lama also writes short fiction, poetry, drama, and criticism. We spoke with Tsering about the intersections and dissonances between academic writing and fiction writing, about the potential of fiction to enhance cultural memory, and about the "magic" that stories can perform for Tibetan readers and writers. Such magic still manifests, she suggests, even when Tibetan storytellers today are "troubled" by the twin obligations of navigating "a reading public that insists on receiving a story of suffering as something dignified, affirming, even triumphant," while also responding to "the national narrative"—subjects she explores in her recent article, "Feeling, Knowing, Interpreting: On Tibetan Lives and Objects" which opens the recent edited volume *Among Tibetan Materialities* (Heidelberg Asian Studies Publishing, 2025).

The cover of this issue includes a painting by Kunsang Gyatso, a contemporary artist born in Helambu, Nepal. His art draws, in part, from a long interest in ubiquitous forms of Buddhist ritual practice including the creation of *torma* offerings. His painted work, he suggests, "became

a way to explore how forms can hold memory and meaning, and what one's inherited sensibilities and leanings might reveal about identity and the tensions surrounding it.”

We hope you enjoy reading this issue of the *Journal of Tibetan Literature*.