

CHARLES RAMBLE, CURRICULUM VITAE (ABRIDGED)

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• EDUCATION

1985 DPhil., Social Anthropology, University of Oxford, UK.

1979 BA (Joint hon), Psychology and Anthropology, University of Durham, UK.

• CURRENT POSITION(S)

2009 – Directeur d'études (première classe), Section des Sciences Historiques et Philologiques, École Pratique des Hautes Études, France.

• PREVIOUS POSITIONS

2000 – 2010 University Lecturer in Tibetan and Himalayan Studies, University of Oxford, UK.

• FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

2017 – 2019 Mercator Fellow, Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures, University of Hamburg.

2018 Onon Prize for outstanding contributions to Inner Asian Studies. Mongolia and Inner Asia Studies Unit, University of Cambridge

• (CO-)SUPERVISION OF GRADUATE STUDENTS AND POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWS

2006 – PhD/DPhil completed: 24 (18 at University of Oxford, 4 at EPHE, 1 at University of Leiden, 1 University of Oslo)

In progress: 14 (13 at EPHE, 1 at University of Oxford)

2004 – 2022 Supervision of 14 postdoctoral researchers (6 at University of Oxford, 8 at EPHE)

• TEACHING ACTIVITIES

2000 – 2010 Tibetan language and literature, Tibetan and Himalayan civilisation (Masters and Bachelors, University of Oxford, UK.

2009 – present Tibetan history and philology, EPHE – PSL University, Paris, France

• (CO-)ORGANISATION OF SCIENTIFIC MEETINGS (since 2018)

2022 Workshop *The Elusive Connection: Manuscripts and Rituals of the Bön and Naxi Traditions* (16 participants). 18–19 March, The Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures, University of Hamburg.

2021 Conference *Kucha and Beyond: Divine and Human Landscapes from Central Asia to the Himalayas* (29 participants). 2–4 November. University of Leipzig.

2020 *Fifth International Conference of Bön Studies* (14 participants). 22–23 January. Triten Norbu Monastery, Kathmandu.

2019 Workshop *Manuscripts, Rituals and Magic in the Bön Religion*. 22–23 March, The Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures, University of Hamburg, Germany.

2018 Conference *The Image as Instrument and Reflection of Ritual in Central Asia and the Himalaya*. 5–7 November. L'Università di Napoli "l'Orientale", Naples.

2018 Conference *Animals and Social Status in the Tibetan World*. 15–16 June. Conference of the project "Social Status in the Tibetan World."

2018 Workshop *Bön Manuscripts in Context*. 16–17 March, The Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures, University of Hamburg, Germany.

• INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

- 2017 – Director of équipe Tibet, Bhutan et Aires Culturelles Tibétaines (Centre de recherche sur les civilisations de l'Asie orientale [CRCAO], UMR 8155, Paris)
- 2015 – 2018 Member of advisory body, Maison Archéologie et Ethnologie, Université Paris Nanterre.
- 2014 – 2018 Member of Scientific Advisory Board, Institute for Social Anthropology, Austrian Academy of Sciences, Austria.
- 2013 – Editorial board, *Wiener Studien zur Tibetologie und Buddhismuskunde*, Vienna, Austria.
- 2011 – 2017 Member of editorial board member of journal *Etudes mongoles, siberiennes, centrasiatiques et tibétaines*, France.
- 2010 – Co-director, Centre de Documentation sur l'Aire Tibétaine, Paris, France.
- 2008 – 2012 Member of the selection committee for Section 38 of the CNRS (National Centre for Scientific Research), France.
- 2007 – 2013 Member of the scientific committee of the Centre for Interdisciplinary Research and Documentation of Inner and South Asian Cultural History (CIRDIS), University of Vienna.
- 2003 – Editorial board member, Brill's Tibetan Studies Library, Netherlands.

• MEMBERSHIPS OF SCIENTIFIC SOCIETIES

- 2018 – present President, Société Européenne pour l'Étude de l'Himalaya et de l'Asie Centrale (SEECHAC)
- 2014 – present Member, Société Asiatique, France.
- 2012 – 2015 Founding member and member of scientific council of SFEMT (French Society for the Study of the Tibetan World) France
- 2011 – 2016 Member of scientific council of EFEO (French School of East Asian Studies), France
- 2010 – 2016 Founding member and member of scientific council of AIRB (International Association for Research on Bön), Montreal, Canada
- 2008 – 2013 President, International Association for Tibetan Studies.

• MAJOR COLLABORATIONS

- 2019 – 2022 Prof. Agnieszka Helman-Ważny, National Science Centre, Poland, "Protecting the Kingdom with Tibetan Manuscripts: Codicological and Historical Analyses of the Royal Drangsong Collection from Mustang, Nepal"; project no. 2018/30/M/HS3/00372
- 2021 – 2022 Dr Alexander Zorin, Russian Academy of Sciences, St Petersburg, "Exploring the Origins of Tibetology: a Russian-French Collaborative Study of the First Tibetan Manuscripts in Europe"; co-financed by the CNRS (collaboration currently suspended).
- 2016 – 2020 Prof. Peter Schwieger, University of Bonn, "Social Status in the Tibetan World" (ANR / DFG project: FRAL_2016_TibStat).
- 2015 – 2019 Dr Agnieszka Helman-Ważny, University of Hamburg, "The Mustang Archives: Analysis of Handwritten documents via ethnographic study of papermaking traditions in Nepal" (DFG project: https://www.manuscript-cultures.uni-hamburg.de/mustang_e.html).
- 2012 – 2016 Prof. Peter Schwieger, University of Bonn, "The Social History of Tibetan Societies, 17th-20th centuries" (ANR / DFG project: FRAL_2011_SHTS).
- 2012 – 2014 Prof. Deborah Klimburg-Salter, University of Vienna, "Text, Art and Performance in Bön Ritual" (FWF project: P24702).

Ten year track-record

In 2009, after ten years as the first University Lecturer in Tibetan and Himalayan Studies at the University of Oxford, Charles Ramble (CR) was elected to the chair (*directeur d'études*) of Tibetan History and Philology at the EPHE in Paris, the post he currently holds. The past decade has given him the opportunity to pursue research in the fields of his particular interest, to develop international collaborations and to train graduate students in specialised fields of Tibetan Studies. International interest in his work has increased over this period, and within the past five years he has had doctoral students from 8 countries. He is currently the supervisor or co-supervisor of 13 PhD candidates. Since 2012, 9 of his supervisees (4 at the EPHE, 4 at the University of Oxford and one at the University of Oslo) have obtained their doctorates (2 others at the EPHE will defend in 2022), and 5 post-doctoral researchers have completed their habilitations at the EPHE under his direction. At the EPHE, he has also supervised the research of 10 other post-doctoral researchers, for 6 of whom he was able to provide contracts in international research projects of which he was the co-director.

Since 2012, CR has published 3 articles in peer-reviewed journals and 22 articles or chapters in peer-reviewed volumes or special issues of journals. He is also the single author of 2 monographs and the co-author of 4 others, as well as the co-editor of 6 collective volumes (2 others are forthcoming). The PI's two main areas of scholarly interest are Tibetan social history and rituals of the Tibetan Bön religion. Originally trained in social anthropology (in which he holds a DPhil from Oxford, 1985), he emphasises the importance of fieldwork and knowledge of spoken language (having lived in Nepal for 15 years between 1980 and 2000 he speaks Nepali and two dialects of Tibetan) even for research based primarily on written sources. His work on Tibetan social history developed mainly in the framework of two bilateral international projects funded by the French ANR and the German DFG, in which he was co-director along with Prof. Peter Schwieger of the University of Bonn. The first of these projects ran from 2011 to 2016 ("Social History of Tibetan Societies, 17th-20th Centuries") and the second ("Social Status in the Tibetan World") from 2016 to 2020. Until now, historical studies of Tibet were based largely on histories written by Tibetans themselves, and concentrated on events and people of national importance. Following in the footsteps of the French *Annales* school and the legacy of G.M. Trevelyan, among others, in the UK, the projects sought to shed light on the lives of "people without history" through the study of documents and archives. As a research associate with the University of Bonn in the 1990s CR had photographed several thousand Tibetan documents from private and community collections in the district (and former kingdom) of Mustang, in Nepal, and these materials formed the core of his contribution to the project. 2013 and 2016 saw the publication of the second and third volumes in a series entitled *Tibetan Sources for a Social History of Mustang* (nos 4 and 9, below), of which he is the sole author; a fourth volume is forthcoming. The volumes provide facsimiles, edited transliterations, English translations and discussions of archival collections. Most of the documents are written in a highly idiosyncratic Tibetan idiom, mixed with words from local dialects and neighbouring languages. Since he began his research in Mustang in the 1980s, Tibetan has come to be replaced by Nepali as the language of local administrative documents, and the value of those volumes lies in the fact that knowledge of this idiom, and therefore access to the meaning of the archives, will probably soon be lost, since there is unlikely to be anyone in Mustang who is able to read the texts. The PI has described the history of the emergence and decline of this unique diplomatic tradition in a recent article (no. 8). The documents in these volumes, as well as many others that are still being processed for future publication, have provided a basis for other analytical studies by CR. These include a co-authored book on the history and economic organisation, as well as the art and architecture, of a long-abandoned nunnery (the only social-historical study of a Tibetan Buddhist convent to date), as well as articles on trade, taxation, economic status in relation to crime, organisation of ceremonies, and state-periphery relations. Of the six young researchers who had contracts in the French team under CR's supervision, four now have academic positions. Other, more general, topics on which he has published in the domain of social history include the advocacy of Tibetan fiction writing as a source for social history (no. 5), and the relevance of the biographical genre for understanding the social importance of certain objects (no. 3).

The particular competence of CR to undertake the present project derives from his other main research interest: the minority Bön religion and the nameless complex of community-based cults to which he was the first to apply the term “Pagan”.¹ His DPhil thesis (1985) was the first ethnographic study to focus on a Bön community, based on both fieldwork and the use of scriptures and local archives, and his subsequent studies of the religion include explorations of pilgrimage, astrology, biography, iconography, divination (no. 6) and the epic tradition (no. 2). With Prof. A. Helman-Ważny of the Universities of Warsaw and Hamburg, a specialist of Tibetan paper, he has published two monographs on manuscripts from Mustang, one of them a study of an important discovery (in which he was involved) of mainly Bön texts in a cave in the Himalayas (no. 1). His main attention since 2012 has been devoted to Bön ritual, both Indian Buddhist-inspired tantric rites and also categories of ritual that have a significant Pagan, non-Buddhist element. He has argued that this religion, which lacks the eschatological component of Buddhism and Yungdrung Bön, is best understood as a legal system (no. 7). Although he has published several articles on Pagan religion and the importance of the Leyu texts (e.g. no. 10), the main platform for the dissemination of his work is a website devoted to Bön ritual texts and performances (<http://kalpa-bon.com/>). The site offers some 50 ritual texts, comprising ±1000 folios in facsimile and transliteration, with annotated English translations and/or paraphrases of approximately 200 folios. With the exception of the Leyu texts presented on the site, almost all were photographed by himself during the course of years of fieldwork. In addition to this material, the site has descriptions of particular performances that contain links to the texts that are being used, as well as to particular points in video recordings corresponding to the action described. He has so far made some 20 hours of English-subtitled video recordings of these rituals publicly available on YouTube.²

In the past ten years CR has co-organised 15 international conferences and workshops, and has presented papers at 46 other scholarly events (conferences and invited lectures). These events have been held in 11 countries other than France: Austria, Canada, China, Czech Republic, Israel, Mongolia, Nepal, the Netherlands, Norway, the UK and the USA. During the Covid confinement he also gave invited lectures at workshops held in Hungary, Poland and Russia. From 2017 to 2019 he was a Mercator Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures at the University of Hamburg, and in 2018 he was awarded the Onon Prize for outstanding contributions to Inner Asian Studies the University of Cambridge. In addition to the institutional memberships and responsibilities listed above (see Section c), CR has been an evaluator for various funding bodies, including AHRC (UK), ANR (France), DFG (Germany), EAP (Endangered Archives Project, UK) ELP (Endangered Languages Project, UK), ERC, Fonds de recherche du Québec (Canada), and FWF (Austria).

References

1. Helman-Ważny, A. and C. Ramble. 2021. *The Mustang Archives: Analysis of Handwritten Documents via the Study of Papermaking Traditions in Nepal*. Turnhout: Brepols.
2. Ramble, C. 2021. Tibet’s other epic: a tentative investigation of common features in the Gesar Cycle and the Bönpo *gZi brjid*. In Matthew Kapstein and Charles Ramble (eds) *The Many Faces of King Gesar. Homage to Rolf A. Stein*. Leiden: Brill.
3. Ramble, C. 2020. Bearers of the past, bridges with the beyond: the complicated lives of ordinary objects. In F. X. Erhard and L. Galli (eds) *The Selfless Ego: Conjuring Tibetan Lives*, vol. 2. Special issue of *Life Writing* 17(3), 411–28. [10.1080/14484528.2020.1773027](https://doi.org/10.1080/14484528.2020.1773027).
4. Ramble, C. 2019. *Tibetan Sources for a Social History of Mustang, Nepal. Volume 3: the Archive of Kunzang Chöling Convent*. Andiast: International Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies.
5. Ramble, C. 2019. The Tibetan novel as social history: reflections on Trashi Palden’s *Phal pa’i khyim tshang gi skyid sdug*. In L. Galli and P. Schwieger (eds) 2019. *Reflections on Social Status in the Tibetan World. Revue d’etudes tibétaines* 49, 149–91. [hal-03112195](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022296719000195)

¹ Ramble, C. 1998. The classification of territorial divinities in Pagan and Buddhist rituals of South Mustang. In A.-M. Blondeau (ed.), *Tibetan Mountain Deities, their Cults and Representations*. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.

² Links to these videos, which were made in collaboration with Kemi Tsewang, may be found at <http://kalpa-bon.com/performances>

6. Ramble, C. 2019. Signs and portents in nature and in dreams: what they mean and what can be done about them. In Petra Maurer, Donatella Rossi and Rolf Scheuermann (eds) *Glimpses of Tibetan Divination, Past and Present*. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 118–35. [\(hal-03203457\)](#)
7. Ramble, C. 2019. The legal foundations of Tibetan religious thought. In D. Arnold, C. Ducher and P.-J. Harter (eds) *Reason and Lives in Buddhist Traditions: Studies in Honor of Matthew Kapstein*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 35–51. [\(hal-03112119\)](#)
8. Ramble, C. 2018. Producing ‘South Asian’ Tibetan documents in highland Nepal, 19th to 20th centuries: the emergence and disappearance of a local diplomatic tradition. In S. Cubelic, A. Michaels and A. Zotter (eds), *Studies in Historical Documents from Nepal and India*. Heidelberg: Heidelberg University Publishing (HeiUP), 109–32. [\(hal-03112190\)](#)
9. Ramble, C. 2018. *Tibetan Sources for a Social History of Mustang, Nepal. Volume 2: the Archives of the Tantric Lamas of Tshognam*. Andiast: International Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies.
10. Ramble, C. 2014. [Real and imaginary Tibetan chimeras and their special powers](#). *Mongolo-Tibetica Pragensia* 6(2), 14–33.