



ONE FRUITFUL AND UNFORGETTABLE  
YEAR IN GRUNEWALD  
WEIRONG SHEN

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I was very excited to be accepted as a Fellow for the academic year of 2014/15 by the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin. Berlin was not entirely new to me, for I had worked at Humboldt University as a guest professor in the academic year 2001/02. Nevertheless, I was eager to come back to the city. After an absence of twelve years, I was looking forward to returning to the high scholarly community in Germany to refresh my cherished memories of my eight years' worth of experience in German universities.

My one-year stay at Wiko around the Grunewald was indeed a fruitful and unforgettable experience for me. Wiko was a great home for me to live and to work in; within it, I had the great fortune not only to live in a wonderful apartment with the highest ceiling I

have ever had, but also to live among excellent and friendly scholars of various international origins and backgrounds. It was especially fortunate for me that I was able to work closely together with two excellent colleagues, Tsering Gyalpo and Guntram Hazod, in the same field of Tibetan Studies. As members of the Focus Group “Tibetan Genealogies”, we were truly focused and very close to each other. We conducted inspiring discussions on our common and individual research projects, or on the Tibet issue in general, on a daily basis. During the last ten months we developed not only personal friendships, but also detailed plans for numerous cooperative research projects that we intended to undertake in the near future. As a result, it was like a thunderbolt out of a clear sky when I lost my dear colleague and close friend Tsering Gyalpo at the very end of our stay at the Wiko. I am still overwhelmed by the shock and sadness of his sudden passing and trying to recover from this unexpected and unacceptable loss. I am afraid that I will be too timid to come close to the Grunewald any time soon, for it will renew my deep sadness and suffering from this grave loss. However, soon I am going to have to pronounce myself homesick for the Wiko and Grunewald. I am very thankful to the Wiko for granting me this precious opportunity and very grateful to all the Wiko staff who have made my one-year stay a very enjoyable and pleasant one.

As a member of the Focus Group “Tibetan Genealogies”, I have profited from the cooperative work with my two colleagues. My Wiko project focuses mainly on the history of the transmission of Tibetan Tantric Buddhism in Central Eurasia and China. The essential focus of my research is to make clear the transmission lineage of a specific doctrine and practice of Indo-Tibetan Tantric Buddhism from India, via Tibet to Central Eurasia and China. In the past, the study of the lineage and genealogy of various religious traditions of Tibet was based mostly on textual criticism. As a historian and philologist, I have worked exclusively on Buddhist texts in various languages from the 11th to 15th centuries. Through our extensive exchanges and discussions, I have been introduced to ethnographic and artistic materials for my own research. A great number of murals, paintings, and inscriptions, some of them discovered by Tsering Gyalpo himself in recent years, have turned out to be very useful and inspiring for my research projects. In the meantime, my old interest in the history of Tibetan reincarnated lamas, such as that of the Dalai lamas, has been revived. This was the very first time that there was always a very learned native Tibetan scholar around whose help I could count on to explain difficult points in the text that I was working on. One focal point of my research at Wiko is Tantric Buddhist hermeneutics. To make sense of Tantric Buddhism and effectively interpret the antinomian

rituals and practices of Buddhist tantras, I consulted and translated a great number of Tibetan texts, and published several essays on this topic while working at Wiko. Without Tsering's help, it would have been impossible for me to accomplish these tasks with certain confidence.

During my one-year stay, I have successfully completed one book manuscript: "Historical Studies of Tibetan Tantric Buddhism in Central Asia and China: the First Volume of the Study on *Dacheng Yaodao Miji* (The Secret Collection of Works on the Essential Path of the Great Vehicle)." It is an essential part of my Wiko project that deals with the most important collection of Chinese translations of Tibetan Tantric Buddhist texts from the 11th to 15th centuries. Afterward, I was preparing the second book manuscript "Rescuing History from Tantric Sex: History of Tibetan Buddhism in the Tangut Xia Kingdom and the Mongol Yuan Dynasty", which will be the final result of my Wiko project. I gave my Wiko talk with the same title. I expect to complete this book manuscript by the end of the year. During my stay at Wiko, I worked intensively on "The Identity of the Mongol Yuan Dynasty and the *mChod yon* Relationship between the Great Mongol Khans and Tibetan Lamas in Medieval Tibetan Historiography", which can be considered the *Nebenaktion* of my stay at Wiko. With the paradigm shift from the dynastic circle to global history, dynasties established by non-Han Chinese rulers in Ancient China, especially the Mongol Yuan and Manchu Qing dynasties, were considered Eurasian or Inner Asian empires rather than dynasties of China. This issue has caused great controversies among historians worldwide. I want to join this discussion by examining Tibetan sources to see how medieval Tibetan historians placed the Mongol Yuan dynasty within the framework of Ancient Chinese history and how they viewed the relationship between Tibetan lamas and Mongol khans.

One great benefit of my experience at Wiko is that I have had the great opportunity to interact with excellent scholars from various disciplines from all parts of the world on a daily basis. Although it was often quite difficult for me to follow all the lectures given by the other Fellows, I did benefit a great deal from communications with them. The depth and breadth of the Western scholarship in both theoretical discourse and philological *Gründlichkeit* continuously impressed me and inspired me to undertake my own academic endeavor in a more meaningful way. I am grateful to Wiko for giving me the freedom to deliver numerous talks in various universities in Europe and the US, such as Leipzig University, Hamburg University, and Munich University in Germany, Olomouc University in the Czech Republic, and Columbia University in the US during my stay at Wiko.