



## International Workshop: Tibetan Borderlands

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Department of Asian Studies, Palacký University Olomouc, Křížkovského 14, Olomouc, room: TBA

There is a certain ambiguity concerning the perception of the peripheral areas of “ethnographic Tibet.” Tibetans themselves view these areas as locales of purity, of pristine habits and manners, yet at the same time as barbarian and dangerous.

There are locations along these border regions where foreign enemies could appear, and where barbarians follow their strange habits. But the borderlands also contain the “hidden lands” (*sbas yul*), which preserve an untouched purity of religion and society. Such hidden lands first appeared following the Mongol incursions of the 13<sup>th</sup> century: this in turn gave rise to a millenarian movement, rooted in the belief that the deteriorated manners in the rest of Tibet would be rejuvenated due to the original and uncorrupted teachings preserved in the pure lands of the peripheral locations.

Critical researchers might find the ambiguity inherent in the Tibetan Borderlands to be manifest on many different levels. On the one hand, the weak control of the central government allowed certain ancient cultural features to be preserved in the borderlands. On the other hand, the borderlands were places of contact between Tibetans and other neighbouring peoples. They mark not only cultural, but also political boundaries, and at the same time create a milieu in which unique local customs, language patterns, settlement forms and social communities can emerge. Such peculiar societies, with their rich cultural and religious traits, are a rewarding subject of research within the field of Tibetan Studies.

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