From the Danish Himmelbjerget to the Tibetan Highlands – An Interview with Per K. Sørensen*

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Q. Per, looking back almost 45 years of studying the culture on the Roof of the World and reading endless amounts of Tibetan literature in all its diversity, we find that this is a fitting occasion to conduct an interview to hear about your path to our discipline or Fach as we say in German. You have witnessed the unparalleled development of Tibetology at close range. How did your career take form, how did it all start? Here at the beginning, please tell us about your family background?

A. Oh, I doubt it will interest anyone, but in fact I grew up in a normal working class home and neighbourhood in Copenhagen. The way for me to towards Tibet and on to Tibetology had a lot to do with – surely something we all can recognise – fantasies about the mysterious and inaccessible world on the "Roof of the World." In my case coming from a lowland country where the highest point in Denmark barely being more than 150 metre above sea-level – no kidding, represented by a small hill appropriately (and totally seriously) in Danish called Himmelbjerget ("The Mountain of Heaven"), it was obvious that you take a liking to real mountains, and quite early on I entertained such fantasies, greedily consuming books and pictures of the world of mountains. To be true, it all started, being probably no more than 10 or 12 years of age, with fantasies of picturesque Switzerland and the Alps. I think I knew, as a young lad, all about the towns and valleys and mountains in Switzerland by name, without ever having set foot there. Gradually, the interest for geography and mountains widened and intensified, and it eventually moved towards the Himalayas. I have always been carried away by fantasies. It was all armchair wisdom I gleaned from traveller's books, and in particular, it probably was the adventure of Heinrich Harrer's Seven Years in Tibet that had an extraordinary impact on me. It was an amazing read, exciting and adventurous, no wonder it became a world success. I read and reread it many times, I think, underlining many passages, and I was so enticed that I started to read as much as I could about the life in Tibet and Lhasa. Much later, incidentally, I even went to Kitzbühel in Austria to visit Heinrich Harrer privately.

Q. Erik Haarh is a well-known Tibetologist who was to determine much of your interest on a more serious level? How did this come about?

A. Correct. At that point, I had no clue whatsoever whether one actually could study Tibetan. I was barely 18 years old; Tibetan studies at the most were exotic and practically non-existent, and, with a few exceptions, mainly cultivated by Sanskritists reading the Buddhist canon where Tibetan proved indispensable due to the relative accuracy in their rendering of often lost Sanskrit original sources. Now, we should not forget that accessing material on Tibet was not so easy as in our days with the internet. One day, it was in 1969, I stumbled upon a newspaper article about an historian of religion, who was about to defend his dissertation, the huge chef d'oeuvre of his called The Yarlung Dynasty. It was a long interesting article about the author behind the book, Erik Haarh (1929–1993), my future teacher (here root-teacher would probably be an appropriate word to use). The article spoke volumes about the hardship he encountered

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as a librarian at the Royal Library of Denmark, the huge amount of sources in different languages he had to consult in order to write his book. He was at that point responsible for the Oriental Collection stored there and at the same time, the article described how the writing of this groundbreaking thesis consumed most of the time of his family life during long evenings and weekends. Working on this book, a solitary undertaking, where you enter uncharted territories all by yourself, meant that at the point of submitting his thesis, Erik faced a divorce. Nevertheless, I soon found out that at the University of Copenhagen, it actually was possible to study Tibetan and Mongolian, aside from all the other major Asian languages, like Sanskrit, Chinese and Japanese. Erik offered some courses in classical Tibetan. The reason for the small Tibetan programme was that research on Central Asia in fact has a long tradition in Denmark. Erik Haarh had an interesting career: in the 1950's he studied in Rome with Giuseppe Tucci, a sojourn that nourished his interest for Tibetan history, a favourite topic of Tucci. It was an interest that Erik at a later point urged me to cultivate. In a way we have here a short bla ma brgyud pa from Tucci, Haarh to my humble person (obviously as Erik's primary student) and now continuing to my students. This is what tradition and continuity probably are all about. As to Erik and his importance, it might be worthwhile to refer to Gene Smith who once wrote that during one of his first trips to Europe, in the early 1960's, he passed through Copenhagen and spent a few days with Erik at the library. It proved to be a sort of highlight on Gene's trip and he later wrote how impressed he was by Erik's broad reading and profound knowledge of Tibetan literature. Well-read scholars of Tibetan history in Europe at that time were rare, the pioneering French and Italian scholars for sure, and the Hungarians (rightly proud of the legacy of Csoma de Kőrös), so Géza Uray in Hungary, to mention the most prominent ones. Erik's The Yarlung Dynasty is a wonderful, solitary piece of work that proved to have great impact within Tibetology, by focusing not least on Tibetan post-imperial historical sources. In my eyes, it is still a highly readable, in no way outdated study on the religious cosmology and ideology of the early kings of Tibet. I am sure

Fig. 1. Erik Haarh in Copenhagen 1962, in the middle the later lecturer in Tibetan Tarab Tulku.

Tibet er hans livsopgave

31-årig magister i tibetansk

Af Jens Kerte

Nationalskatten

Mere end en flirt

Kvalig forskning

Fig. 2. Per K. Sørensen in an article of the Danish newspaper Politiken, which announces his Master's degree in Tibetan Studies in 1981, the first ever in Northern Europe.

you will endorse this assessment. At the same time, our knowledge of Tibet's earliest history and religious ideology prevailing then was about to take a Quantum Leap with the French school of Marcelle Lalou, Rolf Stein and Ariane Macdonald (later Ariane Spanien) as well as Anne-Marie Blondeau who almost exclusively focused on the unique sources from Dunhuang. Still, I am surprised that Erik's large opus never was reviewed. The reason could well be that it either was difficult to review because of it many topics presented in such a comprehensive way or it was because up through the 1970' and 1980's, much of the research on Tibet's earliest history was, with some good reason, disproportionally focusing precisely on the extant Dunhuang material.

Now, what is funny: well before I was allowed to be enrolled at the university, I decided to call upon Erik both at the university and privately. I remember vividly how I quite unpretentiously went to his private home. He surely must have been quite surprised at having at his doorstep a young man who was about to shower him with simple questions about culture and language. I am not quite sure why, but my energy and perseverance might have impressed him, to the extent that he invited me to come regularly, in fact every Saturday. For months we read classical Buddhist texts in Tibetan at his private home. What a gesture! Before I entered the gate to the university, I was well underway into the niceties and complexities of classical Tibetan. Most Tibetologists were using the Buddhist religion or dharma as their gateway into our studies, this was less the case for me, though I did move around in the incipient milieu of the dharma circles in Copenhagen too, especially around Ole and Hannah Nydahl who had just arrived from Nepal full of entrepreneurial and spiritual energy for the Buddhist religion. They were, as we know, quite successful in establishing dharma centres around the world. For me, my key interest remained with the books and texts.

Q. You became the first magister (Master) in Tibetology in Northern Europe?

A. So it seems, throughout the 1970's, I studied at the university all along also Sanskrit, at times also Chinese and Japanese alongside with Tibetan, at the same time I had to work to make a living. There were few stipends around indeed, at least not for me and well into the 1980's, after I had submitted my master thesis I had to attend to work, almost everyday in order to make an outcome. These years of work, mostly postal work often at night, surely has deprived me of the opportunity to write a few monographs more. Still, although the perspective was anything else than rosy, I kept upholding my interest and motivation. Finally, in 1981, a few years beyond schedule to be true, I submitted my thesis, and for some odd reason, this event aroused some interest in the local newspapers and media. I recall how one early morning at nine o'clock – after another night with work until five o'clock into the morning, a number of journalists was knocking on my door and wanted to make

an interview with this strange young man. I had no clue why, but the idea of someone who took upon himself to study such a subject and being the first in Scandinavia aroused the media's curiosity. Numerous newspapers found it worthwhile to report the incidence.

Fig. 3. Per K. Sørensen in Lhasa 1985.

Q. You had worked for a long time on a Tibetan master narrative, if one may say so, The Mirror Illuminating the Royal Genealogies.

A. This 14th century work indeed caught my attention for various reasons; one was Erik's persistence to look at it as a key source for understanding the creation of a national myth. In a number of ways the text came to represent a sort of prototype of Tibetan historiography, repeatedly quoted in most subsequent Tibetan history books that deal with Tibet's golden imperial era. Genealogies, whether royal or otherwise, are expressions of social or, as here, national memories. The reason for its popularity is evident: its normative compositional structure that in many ways is emblematic of Tibetan historiography. It thus turned into a model for countless other historiographical writings in Tibet and the core content of the work constitutes, as you mentioned, a sort of master narrative of Tibetan historical writings, replete with fictionalised histories that became part and parcel of a national epic of Tibet. Another aspect was the relative simplicity of the language and its normative, literary style. Over the years it served for me as a point of departure for trawling, in a more systematic way, through numerous sources in order to understand the history and formation of the text and its genesis. It was indeed well worth doing. More generally, my experience from reading Tibetan literature, whatever genre, is that you benefit enormously from allowing yourself a very broad reading of different kinds of sources, irrespective of which epoch you read. The literary and linguistic richness is baffling. Tibetan literature surely counts as one of the truly rich and diverse traditions found among the Asian civilisations. For my part, I have benefitted enormously from my curiosity for a wide range of literary sources. The texts supplement themselves in numerous ways, often a concept, however complex, or an expression, a phrase keeps stunning me in its semantic diversity, at times a phrase traced in a totally different context has improved my understanding of its use in another context. What I want to say, I fell I have a much firmer understanding and appreciation of numerous literary genres and their language. I find great pleasure and a genuine interest in travelling criss-cross through the Tibetan literature, and reading a variety of sources, whether religious, historical, literary, poetics, medical literature or – what in particular fascinates me – folk or popular literature, what is known as oral literature.

Q. Please tell us more about your experience with oral literature.

A. Well, this genre, hitherto depressingly little studied, has interested me for years. It started with the celebrated songs of the 6th Dalai Lama and it was a gateway to a (folk-)literary universe to me, with a rich metaphorical and figurative language that often remains unregistered in standard dictionaries. Oral and folk literature, whether poetic, figurative and idiomatic, possesses a wealth of uncharted phrases, often with ambiguous or equivocal semantics, in fact a language of its own. For instance you find it vividly present, say in the biographies and songs of Milarepa, to mention one prominent example. Fortunately, during the last couple of years some progress has seen the light of the day. One genre of tremendous intricacy is proverbs. Paremiological studies are still a neglected area within Tibetology. Compiling a dictionary that records this kind of language is an urgent desideratum.

Q. After some years, you got the vacant chair in Leipzig. The chair in Central Asian Studies (Tibetan and Mongol Studies) at the second oldest university in Germany (over 600 years old, only surpassed by Heidelberg) had survived the vicissitudes and the regime change in East Germany with the reunification in 1990. How did it happen?

A. This is nothing to talk about. But it is true, Leipzig indeed has a long history in Oriental Studies and can pride itself of some pioneers in Central Asian studies too, to mention a few, the versatile Berthold Laufer, Erich Haenisch, Paul Ratchnevsky, Friedrich Weller and my predecessor Manfred Taube. Interesting here is the combination of Tibetan and Mongolian studies. To be true, the history behind the appointment is extraordinary to say the least and possibly interesting to tell. In fact, following its announcement, I didn't apply for the position within the time limit imposed. Still, I had no assignment anywhere after I had the fortune of being in Bonn on a Humboldt stipend. On the contrary, I encouraged a number of colleagues to apply for Leipzig; in the end, an impressive number of senior scholars was among the applicants for the vacant position too. What unusual is, a few days after the commission had gathered to interview the candidates, I suddenly received a letter from the head of the search committee, Bernhard Kölver, who kindly encouraged me to apply in spite of the fact that the deadline since long had expired. I had no idea why. One incident might have played a role, somehow. Those among the older Tibetological generation who knew about the academic situation at the end of 1970's, the 1980's and part of the 1990's, surely recall how Jan Willem de Jong as chief-editor in his Indo-Iranian Journal (IIJ) with his incredible erudition and broad reading was roundly feared for his critical reviews of countless books, one might not believe it today, but a positive review from his pen, often the exception than the rule, hence was received with considerable relief. He literally read everything he got his hands on, and as chief editor of IIJ, it was quite a lot and he read, it appears, most of the review copies offered to IIJ for review. There is a lot of Old School tradition in his approach. In case of my Divinity Secularized, a critical study of the songs ascribed to the Sixth Dalai Lama which I earlier (1990) had submitted as my doctoral thesis, a collection rich in folk-literary vocabulary, de Jong kindly reviewed and lauded it profusely, beyond any reasonable measure. At that time, such reviews had some impact, and from the pen of de Jong a huge one.

Now, back to the position in Leipzig. Anyhow, one Saturday, quite extraordinary, the entire committee reassembled in Leipzig from all over Germany for the sake of my belated candidacy only: I had arrived in Berlin from Copenhagen with the night-train early in the morning, and following the interview in Leipzig in the afternoon, I returned to Berlin and back to Copenhagen. Sunday morning, I was utterly surprised when I got a call again from Leipzig asking me to accept the offer and start in Leipzig. What a story, quite unusual, life is truly unpredictable.

Q. I know your have been to Bhutan countless times, tell me about this project.

A. Yes, Bhutan is something close to my heart and a fortunate commitment that I had the pleasure of initiating, being involved with from the very start. It was a development aid project sponsored by Denmark, a twinning project that started in the mid 90's and lasted for almost 15 years, and situated in the cultural area (there are not too many of such projects) between the National Library of Bhutan and the Royal Library of Denmark. The primary long-term objective was to assist Bhutan through comprehensive institutional strengthening in surveying its huge indigenous scriptural tradition (largely written in chos skad or classical Tibetan and in the local rdzong kha idiom), comprising not only the holdings kept in the National Library but all over the country, where local collections were covered by a number of survey teams. To this purpose, a huge electronic databank was developed, tailored to the specific needs and modalities of Tibetan literature. By now, the entire collection of indigenous books and manuscripts at the library and many collections throughout the country have been inventoried; during our work on location we have traced a good number of rare texts. It has been gratifying and for me a true blessing to have this welcoming opportunity to go on "text-hunts" for scriptures throughout Bhutan, where we occasionally and predictably were able to trace many exciting books. The databank is currently accessible online and in terms of the amount of entries probably one of the largest in the world. In addition, with a number of Bhutanese colleagues, we have conducted research on a number of interesting historical figures in Bhutan's history. It has been a great success, I think, and it had been a pleasure to work in Bhutan.

Q. Returning to historiography, the agreement between Vienna (Austrian Academy of Sciences, AAS) and the Tibetan Academy of Social Sciences (TASS) also opened up for the possibility for you to be involved in this fruitful collaboration.

A. Yes, it was Ernst Steinkellner, the ubiquitous and indefatigable scholar who has made Vienna a key centre of research in Europe. Recalling my huge interest in Tibetan historiography, he kindly thought of me to be the one who could look at the significance of this new version of Sba bzhed, an exemplar of this very old text that holds an unique position within Tibetan historical writing (Dan Martin in his fine survey of historical sources, incidentally, lists it as no. 1). Access to this rare manuscript had been made possible though the fruitful cooperation between the academies in Lhasa and Vienna. Guntram, you surely can tell much more, since you have been involved from the very start. As to Sba bzhed or here Dba' bzhed, the text has baffled us for long since its initial publication by Stein in the 1960's. Its final publication by Pasang Wangdu and Hildegard Diemberger, to which I then wrote an introduction, is a major, albeit evidently initial investigation into this text tradition, much more research is needed to unravel the remaining niceties of this complex text.

As you know, apart from my Dba' bzhed commitment my contacts with the Vienna – TASS collaboration became a fairly deep and long-lasting dimension following the meeting of the two of us at Bloomington (the 8th IATS conference in 1998). You had just come across a bundle of rare historical texts in the G.ya' bzang monastery (in Upper Yar lung, Lhoka region). For some odd reason you posed a question, knowing my interest for historical sources, whether I by chance knew of a testament ascribed to Srong btsan sgam po, a text evidently that stood in direct relation to the Ma ni bka' 'bum and Bka' chems Ka khol ma. The text was called Bka' chems Mtho mthing ma, an extremely rare 13th century adaption of these texts evidently written or composed by the G.ya' bzang founder Chos kyi smon lam in order to tinge his work with the authenticity and legitimacy of these "royal testaments." Now the coincidence: an unique exemplar of this text had survived in a monastery in Nepal and had been copied by the staff of the NGMPP programme. What's more: I had studied and commented on this text in my aforementioned book (Tibetan Buddhist Historiography. The Mirror Illuminating the Royal Genealogies), a circumstance that had not escaped you, but unknown to you was that a unique, and sole exemplar of the manuscript had survived. This proved to the auspicious beginning of our years-long work on medieval institutions and landscapes in Central Tibet. In the end, it paved the way for a number of publications in the field of philology, history and culture related to Tibet's rich historical past. I have been fortunate to be part of the publication work, which is related to the rich cultural history of Tibet, conducted in our attempt to unravel innumerable cultic, religious and political bonds that had linked people, institutions, sanctuaries and territories throughout parts of Central Tibet. Such inquiries could be expanded endlessly in order to fill up still-yawning gaps in our knowledge of a congeries of hegemonies that both shaped and determined the regional as well as the supra-regional history of the Snowland in medieval time. The philological, topographical and anthropological inquiries conducted in this process have been exciting challenges, impossible without good and inspirational team-work. Although cumbersome and painstaking, I feel that a holistic approach, whenever feasible, allow you to draw a far more accurate and precise picture whether of an epoch, an institution or of an area, or as the approach we have chosen, a combination of these. The relational nature between historical sites, the individuals involved and the cults and rituals, religious or political, executed, becomes more evident.

Q. You often dive into a topic making no limits and reservations, be it a period or an historical person, one gets the impression that you never rest before you have read everything about the topic in the indigenous sources. What drives you to take such a dramatic stance?

A. I don't think that is something special. We all have that feeling, you want to get behind the scene and you are not satisfied before you have at least scanned through all available literature concerning the topic whether it being an epoch, a person or an institution or a textual tradition for that matter. One example is the controversial person of Lama Zhang and his institution Tshal pa Bka' brgyud pa, or the history of Lhasa and the role that water (here flooding), geography and environment played in the formation of the site. Also here one benefits immensely if one allows oneself to look into all the genres that even remotely relates to the topic in question. Yet, in the end, what you write is always an attempted construction, one day later a new source turns up and you have to reject your former assumption or thesis! There are never final answers. As Michel Foucault said in another context: "If you knew when you began a book

what you would say at the end, do you think that you would have the courage to write it?“ (in his Discipline and Punish). Well, to be true this is the point. Isn't it marvellous that you never really know what comes up in the end? Starting from scratch, often empty-handed, and in the end you often have something quite different. It can be scaring, yes but it is the writing process and the incessant altering in your understanding that count and this is the personal reward or gratification, if you want. And understanding takes time, information and data collected must be consumed and only slowly surfaces a (hopefully) more appropriate understanding.

Q. As a person and scholar who never ceases being fascinated by Tibetan texts and its rich scriptural tradition, we would like to ask what fascinates you so much, what is the mystery behind the texts?

A. Well, first of all language is a magic creation, ever changing and utterly flexible, its most inimitable wonder thus is its sheer richness and diversity in expression. And the vocabulary and writing style changes with the author involved, it may sound banal, but precisely this is its strength. So on the one hand, the affluence found in the Tibetan language, whether written or oral, whether anonymous or authored, and irrespective of period and not least genre, is truly staggering. On the other hand, a considerable element of conservatism in terms of phrases and semantics can be observed. I love to find samples of expressions, idioms, or plain words that haven't changed whether you find it, say in Dunhuang sources or in modern books or in spoken vernacular. In whatever context, they often purport the same semantic meaning and the spelling is largely the same. For more than a millennium, due to its relative isolation, Tibet in many fields remained a society (and so her language) of remarkable inertia. Imagine any other country and any other language where any young schoolboy with some luck can read a modern and a classical text without major problems. My enthusiasm is also aroused by the numerous genres and literary expressions found in classical and modern texts. We should never forget, if we look back in time, that an educated Tibetan, as a scholar and as a writer, was almost exclusively a trained monk (in a few cases they were lay literati) who dominated the scholastic and intellectual scene, a situation not much different from other medieval societies for that matter. And most often they were erudite polyhistors, with an encyclopaedic knowledge and well versed in all fields of writing and composition, whether in the field of logic, history, doctrine, philosophy or poetry and so on. They mastered it all. Their monastic socialisation and training meant that they mastered the conventions and norms needed in order to handle topics and writing styles of different nature. I mentioned it before, but this keeps fascinating me, and it is a reason why I keep reading texts of any nature written in Tibetan. The benefit, in my eyes, is that by reading more broadly and cross-disciplinary, so to say, you often experience that an expression or phrase that had caused problems in one (con)text through its use in a different semantic context becomes far more comprehensible. Reading different texts and genres is time-consuming, and not to the liking of all Tibetologists working with texts caught as they often are within their thematic specialisation, still the benefits are at hand. Written sources are witnesses of the past, a reflexive and telling mirror to the past, and most often the only ones, and if available they are easily accessible.. As Hrabanus Maurus [9th cent.] once said: “The written word alone flouts destiny, revives the past.” This holds true for historical sources, and although representing subjective or ideological constructions, with critical precaution and appropriate awareness

Fig. 4. Among Friends: with Chapel and Dungkar Rinpoche at the IATS Conference in Fagernes, Norway, 1992.

of the pitfalls that lurk in those witnesses of the past, we can still make good use of them in our attempt to reconstruct the past. Another well-known quality when we talk about Tibetan Buddhist texts is their relatively high reliability. I never stop admiring how those people on the Roof of the World, isolated in this barren landscape and with limited manpower managed with such determination and motivation to translate accurately and with precision such complex philosophical and doctrinal (mainly Sanskrit) texts into the grammatically and semantically far less sophisticated language of their own. What an achievement! With the help of an available Tibetan translation, it is possible to reconstruct a lost Sanskrit original, precisely due to the relative reliability in their transmission of the written legacy of Buddhism. Tibet surely remains such one civilisation with an enormous output of texts and written scripture, whether translations of canonical Indian texts or their own indigenous literature, not least their sheer endless number of hermeneutical and commentarial, literary productions generated by them throughout most of the past millennium.

So as a researcher a simple advice: one should leave no stone unturned, and with pragmatism and a good amount of curiosity keep digging into the past, my interest was what the texts offered us, by doing a sort of textual archaeology.

Q. What is in for the future? Here at the end, what would you suggest any newcomer and any student of Tibetan studies, what do you see of particular interest?

A. This is a difficult question. Well, the ideas and the topics that await the intrepid student are readily at hand, I would argue. And the chances are many. Firstly, we must take note of the fact that Tibetology by now is a well-established discipline of its own, well within academia, at the universities, but certainly also outside those halls of education. Tibetological positions have mushroomed in academic circles. How wonderful. When I look back 40 years, in the 1970's, a major Tibetological publication was published just once a year at best, today one can barely count the yearly output, and the figures are more impressive when we look at the number of scientific articles produced. Gratifying too is the enormous breadth and topical diversity within our discipline, again in the past those working on Tibet or reading Tibetan were mostly bibliophile philologists, today in the wake of Tibet being more accessible, fieldwork is a must, although not all scholars seem to draw appropriate benefit from this possibility. Academically, Tibetology has become a worldwide phenomenon. The current IATS conferences started in Zürich in the mid-1970's, with a truly modest number of participants, and the upcoming 14th IATS conference in Bergen (Norway) will host and accommodate probably over 500 scholars who shall attend numerous panels, with a topical diversity unknown in the past. What a success! Tibet is and must be on the map, not only politically, but also due to the fact that its culture and civilisatory achievement and its spiritual legacy are well worth documenting and studying. Throughout history, whenever another civilisation or culture entered into contact with the Tibetans, the other civilisation often were the recipient of lasting influences stemming from the Snowland – sure it was or became a two-way traffic, replete with cross-polination, if you can use this word, but the cultural impact and fillip exerted by the Tibetans was enormous; just look at the dominant influence that Tibetan Buddhism holds not only in the neighbouring countries, exporting with great success their understanding of Buddhism, a phenomenon to be observed around the world even today in the trail of the diaspora.

So the premises for a student and a newcomer could not be better. I cannot give any concrete advice. He or she must find his or her own way and this may take a while. Important is to remain ever curious. When I observe the young scholars they indeed prove diligent in posing the right questions and seeking interesting new topics. What I personally find fascinating is the combination of text and field work, of material data, the combination is useful, say in unravelling the history of an area or a territory laden with history or vestiges of historical activity – to be true we have attempted to demonstrate this approach in a number of micro-histories of certain central sites in Tibet, such as in Yar lung and the Lhasa area. A desideratum is to include archaeological inquiries into these investigations, you yourself have paved the way and thus turned a page in Tibetan historiography by systematically registering the numerous, mostly imperial-time, tumuli sites scattered throughout Central Tibet. As you know, this is a commitment for the future. Any proper study in this exciting field still needs to be permitted by the authorities. It can eventually only be done in collaboration with local scholars. But a beginning has been made. Another topic of personal interest is the huge amount of local, narrative literature that the Tibetans can boast of, I am not particularly referring the rich Indic Buddhist heritage, but to the indigenous literature. What an intriguing field, and it has barely been researched.

Q. Thank you Per.