

# From Archives to Herstory

## Women's Contributions to the Study of Asian Religions

October 7, 2025  
8:30–17:30

Seminar Room 2  
Schenkenstraße 8–10  
1010 Wien



Registration until September 29, 2025 to: [religionswissenschaft@univie.ac.at](mailto:religionswissenschaft@univie.ac.at)

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Recent scholarship advocating for global religious history emphasizes the need for religious studies to move beyond eurocentrism, to deconstruct ideologically charged and historically evolving concepts, and to acknowledge the diverse (non-western) players and exchanges involved in the co-production of knowledge on religions. This workshop seeks to contribute to this broader conversation about the necessity of epistemic decentring within the discipline, focusing on the role of women researchers in shaping religious studies.

As feminist studies have demonstrated, in a male-dominated society, women face the challenge to develop multiple strategies to travel, publish, and carve out new spaces for themselves. In academia, this often means sacrificing a traditional academic career and instead creating alternative profiles. Consequently, the knowledge of religions produced by women researchers cannot be attributed solely to scholars, but also to writers, artists, practitioners, and individuals whose contributions have been overlooked so far.

This workshop specifically highlights personal archive collections as a vital space where overlooked encounters, silenced voices, and inventive strategies can be brought to light. To facilitate comparison, we will focus on the entangled history of Europe and Asia, which we view as a particularly rich area in the *herstory* of religious studies. Such an endeavour, however, requires theoretical awareness, methodological caution, specific practical skills, and an interdisciplinary dialogue, which we aim to foster openly and directly by sharing our experiences with archival materials from women researchers and by stimulating exchanges on our individual research agendas and practices.

## Programme

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8:30 Welcome

8:45 Introduction by the organizers

Dolores Zoé Bertschinger and Samuel Thévoz

9:00

Nadia Cattoni, “Who Is Silenced? Gender, Orientalism, and Dominant Perspectives in Archives and Academic Research”

10:00

Marleen Thaler, “Margaret Kobelt’s Contribution to the Project of Modern Kundalini Research”

11:00

Dolores Zoé Bertschinger, “Olschak’s Archive: Gender, Authority, and the Politics of Recognition in Tibetan Studies”

12:00 Lunch Break

14:00

Samuel Thévoz, “‘I Have Produced Works Aimed at Fighting for Our Cause:’ Archives as a Gateway to a Modern Buddhist Writer’s Agenda, Networks, and Works on Asian Religions”

15:00

Bettina Stehli, “Listening to What’s Missing: Feminist Conversations, Archives, and Spiritual Knowledges”

16:00 Break

16:15 Concluding discussion

Tracing Feminist Footprints: Women’s Engaged Scholarship and Archival Voices in Asian Religious Studies

17:30 End