Notes on Romanization and Naming Practices

TIBETAN TERMS ARE TRANSCRIBED ACCORDING TO THE “THL Simplified Phonetic Transcription of Standard Tibetan” (Germano and Tournadre 2003). This system does not always reflect the phonetics of the oral Amdo Tibetan spoken in my field areas. However, as the only relatively standard phonetic transcription system for Tibetan, I have privileged its legibility for a wider readership over the desirability of being entirely faithful to local sounds. Familiar spellings are used for places such as Shigatse and Labrang and names, such as Arjia Rinpoche. At the first occurrence of a Tibetan term, I add the transliteration in square brackets, following the so-called Wylie system. In the interests of readability, I use the short version of monastery names, but at the first occurrence I provide the full name in an endnote with the “Wylie” transliteration in square brackets, as well as the Chinese name in Pinyin. I also provide “Wylie” and, where relevant, Pinyin versions at the first mention of places and historical figures so that these are more readily identifiable to specialists, but I have not done so for pseudonyms. Chinese terms follow the Pinyin system, without the use of diacritics to indicate tones. Tibetan, Sanskrit, and Chinese terms are italicized unless a term is common in English and not treated as a foreign word (for example, lama, karma, or the Buddha). Foreign terms are Tibetan unless I have indicated that they are Chinese (Ch.) or Sanskrit (Skt.)—for example, (Ch. xin) or (Skt. siddha).

To protect the anonymity of my interlocutors, I have changed all personal names. In most cases I provide relevant biographical details in the text when I refer to or cite individuals and use the same pseudonym for individuals who are cited more than once. However, in a few places I have omitted or changed details or names. Being explicit about where I have done this would defeat the purpose.