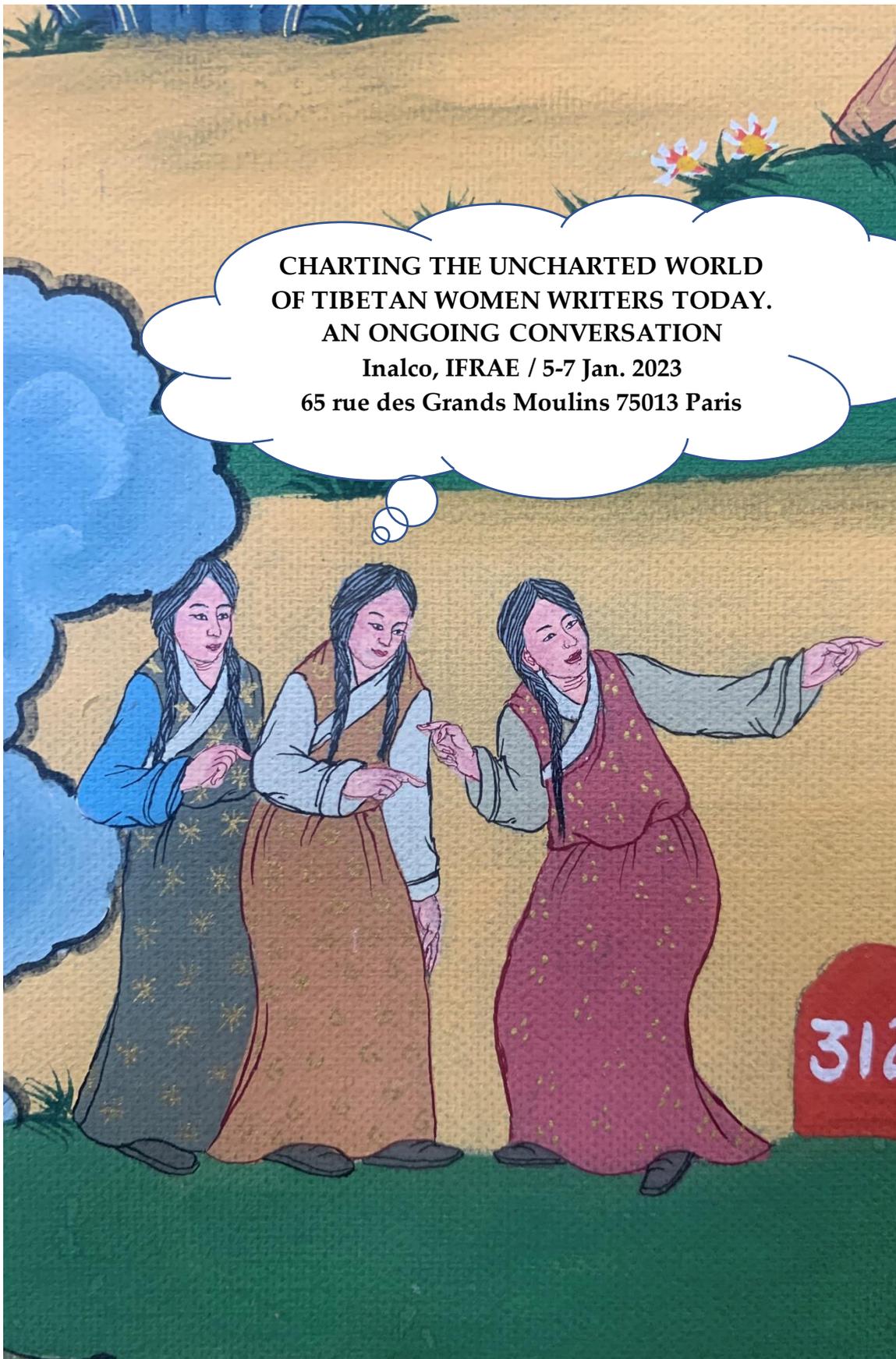


**CHARTING THE UNCHARTED WORLD
OF TIBETAN WOMEN WRITERS TODAY.
AN ONGOING CONVERSATION**
Inalco, IFRAE / 5-7 Jan. 2023
65 rue des Grands Moulins 75013 Paris



Artist: Kalsang Damchoe

ABSTRACTS
(by alphabetic order of name of participant)

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Shelly BHOIL, independent researcher, Co-founder
and Managing Editor of *Yeshe*

**“STANDING STRONG IN BLOOD AND CRAMPS”: A
DISCUSSION ON EXILE TIBETAN WOMEN’S POETRY IN
ENGLISH**

This paper aims to present and offer critical appreciation of poetry in English by eight exile Tibetan women writers—Tsering Wangmo Dhompa, Tenzin Choezin, Tenzin Dickie, Sonam Tsomo Chashutsang, Kalsang Yangzom, Lekey Leidecker, Chime Lama, and Tenzin Tseyang Gonsar—whose works were translated into Brazilian-Portuguese for the University of Sao Paulo’s journal *Cadernos*. The paper will first discuss the arrival of women writers on the Tibetan English literary scene through a brief survey of the literary trends in exile along the two social processes of Tibet’s ‘shangrilization’ and ‘cultural fermentation’ of Tibetans. This will be followed by a close critical reading of the poems to highlight the literary merit of the poems alongside their anthropological value. In the last tier of the paper, the poems will be studied collectively for their gender sensibilities, language choices, and for their singularly Tibetan voice with plural experiences of exile and identity.

❧

Katia BUFFETRILLE, EPHE

**AMNYE MACHEN, AMNYE MACHEN. WOESER, A POETESS
AROUND A SACRED MOUNTAIN**

Amnye Machen, Amnye Machen is the title of a collection of 83 poems written by Tsering Woesser after a pilgrimage we did together in 2018 around Amnye Machen, the main sacred mountain in Amdo. Published first in Chinese in Taiwan in 2020 (*Animaqing Animaqing*, Xueyu Chubanshe), these poems attracted the attention of a French editor of Asian literature who contacted two sinologists and myself to produce a French version of the book. This paper describes, from the point of view of both the pilgrimage companion and editor of the poems, how this pilgrimage took place and fuelled Woesser’s poetic inspiration. In a second part, it focuses on translation issues we met regarding the use of Chinese to depict Tibetan realities and imaginary.

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Tsering Wangmo DHOMPA,
Villanova University

KEYNOTE 1: “MY DAUGHTER WILL TELL MY STORY”

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Shiho EBIHARA, ILCAA,
Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

**CURRENT SITUATION ABOUT TRANSLATIONS OF
TIBETAN WOMEN’S LITERATURE IN JAPAN: IN
COMPARISON WITH OTHER ASIAN WOMEN’S
LITERATURE**

TBA

❧

Holly GAYLEY, University of Colorado Boulder

**‘KORRA’: CYCLES OF LOSS, MEMORY, AND RETURN IN
TIBETAN ANGLOPHONE LITERATURE**

(Restricted to in-person participants)

❧

Janet GYATSO, Harvard University

**KEYNOTE 3: WHY WE SHOULD STUDY TIBETAN WOMEN
WRITERS. AND WHY WE SHOULDN’T**

This paper will reflect, at a second-order level, upon our grounds for studying modern Tibetan women writers and the literature they have produced, and why such an inquiry is valuable. It will start by asking what we are even assuming, in the previous sentence, with such categories as “modern,” “women,” “literature,” and of course “Tibetan.” It will reflect on a recent conversation I had with one eminent Tibetan woman writer on how her work is not – or maybe is -- informed by “premodern” Tibetan writing. It will also ask what is gained by singling out women writers in the context of Tibetan literature, as well as, on the other hand, how doing so might limit the scope – and the audience -- for our work. It will even ask questions about what is gained and what is lost when we focus on “Tibetan” literature per se.

The paper will reflect on how these key categories (along with one more, namely, of course, "feminism") were already very much at stake in recent exchanges among colleagues during the conferences that have led up to the current one here in Paris (i.e. one at Northwestern in fall 2022. and before that at UVirginia as well as at UColorado, Columbia and Harvard, in spring 2022). For example, is the work of singling out women writers inherently feminist? Is the literature produced by Tibetan women inherently feminist? Do Tibetan women contribute something special to our larger understanding of literature in the Tibetan language?

Most of all this paper will be interested in what is at stake in this area of study for those of us who will be gathered at this conference. Here I will try to reflect candidly on what is at stake for me, which includes first and foremost the chance to read literature with, and work with, some wonderful Tibetan lady writers whom I have had the fortune to meet recently. I will consider in this how we can escape the confines sometimes imposed by our own intellectual categories, in order to appreciate most fully the value of what we study.



Kamila HLADIKOVÁ,
Palacký University

YIXI ZHUOMA'S DAUGHTERS: SINOPHONE TIBETAN WOMEN WRITERS AND THE LITERARY ESTABLISHMENT

This paper aims to contribute to ongoing research on the topic of Tibetan women writers done by scholars situated within the diaspora and/or within the Western academia, mostly based in post-colonial discourse and Western gender theories, by pointing out the "double coloniality" Tibetan writers in the PRC have been operating in. The term has been already used to describe the paradox of the "coloniality of colonial legacies" in present-day academia, for example in relation to South America (Gnecco, Dias 2021). In case of modern Tibetan writers in the PRC, the "double coloniality" refers to two competing paradigms – Western (post)colonialism and Chinese ideological concepts that are formulated as anti-imperial and anti-colonial vis-à-vis the West but are in fact effective tools for China's own colonial mission in Tibet since the 1950s. Modern Tibetan writing has been shaped by double (post)colonial legacies that include the Western notion of modernity and knowledge traditions rooted in Western cultures and values, as well as Chinese ideological systems the PRC's literary establishment builds on.

Drawing on numerous Chinese-language sources, this paper sums up the evolution of Tibetan Sinophone

female writing starting with the first paragon of Tibetan female intellectuals with CCP/cadre background, Yeshe Dolma. Born in Gansu in 1925 and educated in inland China, she joined the Communist revolution and became a part of the Communist-led female emancipation as member of Chinese Women's Federation and editor of the journal *China's New Woman*. After the Cultural Revolution she re-emerged as a member of the old revolutionary generation of writers reviving the ideals from the 1950s through narratives embedded in socialist realism and the first-generation ethnic policy based on equality of all 56 "nationalities" of the PRC. Her successors, Sinophone Tibetan female authors writing since the late 1980s up to 2010s, had to deal with expectations and requirements bound by the legacy of politically engaged "minority writers" in the service of government and its nation-building agendas. While situating their works within the context of the Chinese concept of "minority literature" and literary developments in inland China, I follow two major trends, awakening of "ethnic identity" (族裔意识) and introduction of "gender concepts" (性别观念) (Xu 2020). My focus will be on ethnic identity-related literary criticism within the PRC, its interpretations of Tibetan "minority identities" and on various negotiations of rather fluid boundaries of the official literary system which most of these writers are part of.

References:

Gnecco, Cristóbal, and Adriana Schmidt Dias (2021) "A Double Coloniality: The modern/colonial underpinnings of mission archaeology in South America", in Lee M. Panich and Sara L. Gonzales (eds.) *Routledge Handbook of Archaeology of Indigenous-Colonial Interactions in the Americas*.

Xu Yin 徐寅 (2020) "Dangdai Zangzu nü zuojia Hanyu chuanguo gailue" 当代藏族女作家汉语创作概略 (General outline of Tibetan female Sinophone writing), *Xizang yanjiu* 2

<https://www.tibetcul.com/wx/zhuanti/pl/34674.html>



Lama JABB, Oxford University

THE ART OF THE PROVERB IN YANGTZO KYIL'S FICTIONAL WORLD

གཡང་འཛོལ་སྐྱིད་ཀྱི་བརྒྱམས་སྐྱུང་གི་འཛིག་རྟེན་གྱི་གཏམ་དཔེའི་སྐྱུ་རྩལ།

"Among the Ibo", writes Chinua Achebe in *Things Fall Apart*, "the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are palm-oil with which words are eaten."

Replace Ibo with rural Tibetans and palm-oil with འཕྲི་པུ་ butter, and we have a perfect picture of the ordinary

language spoken by the “Tsampa Eaters”. This speech abounds in proverbs that capture, preserve and pass on wisdom and observations of life in distilled, image-laden, memorable words. Many contemporary Tibetan writers employ proverbs for injecting realism and for perfecting rhetoric and stylistic effects. This literary use of proverbs comes across contrived, cumbersome and awkward in some writers, but in others such as Yangtso Kyil it appears natural, effortless and fluid.

In this paper I will present Yangtso Kyil’s three-part མཛེས་སྤྱིན་ཐོ། “Diary of the Grassland” that bears witness to the radical socio-economic changes faced by Tibetan nomads in three decades – the 1980s, 90s and 2000s. This fictional work treats weighty social issues and cultural norms and attitudes through the portrayal of striking characters and creation of lively proverb-rich dialogue. But her use of proverbs is deeper than dialogue or description; her writing style itself (both fictional and factual) is suffused with many features of the Tibetan proverb including stock imagery, syntax, alliteration, brevity and biting humour. Without a good grasp of the Tibetan proverb it would be hard to make sense of her fictional world. It would indeed be impossible to understand and enjoy her delightful art of dialogue and the rich ambiguity with which Tibetan proverbs endow her writing.

(Restricted to in-person participants)



Lara MACONI, CRCAO, Inalco

EMBRYONIC EXPRESSIONS OF MODERNITY: SECULAR FEMININE VOICES FROM EARLY/MID-20TH CENTURY EASTERN TIBET

This paper explores the writings, the personal journeys and the cultural-cum-political activities of a small group of Khampa “modern women” who took active parts and played significant roles in the Sino-Tibetan intellectual and political arena of the first half of the 20th c. Educated in Chinese, emancipated and feminists, Liu Manqing, Kesang Chödön, Lodrö Chötso, Wu Xianglan, Tsering Yangzom, Dondhup Lhamo etc., they all used writing and other intellectual activities as ways of self-expression and self-affirmation. By analysing their lives and careers through the lenses of the political forces and cultural influences at work in Kham during the ROC period, I show the emblematic significance of their cross-cultural activities despite the fact that their stories, for too long underestimated, have been left untold in both Tibetan and Chinese mainstream cultural discourses, and in the international scholarship as a whole.

(Restricted to in-person participants)



Mara MATTA, La Sapienza

KEYNOTE 2

REFLECTING AND REFRACTED LENSES. SENSIBILITIES, SUBJECTIVITIES, SUBALTERNITIES IN SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN’S WRITINGS.



**PADMA 'TSHO (Baimacuo),
South-west Minzu University**

A TIBETAN POEM ON CALLING FOR WOMEN’S HEALTH IN THE LAND OF SNOW

Tibetan women, especially nuns, in Larong Gar, are becoming more educated, and their social status and roles are changing and progressing. Tibetan women are becoming more motivated and active in bettering Tibetan society and culture. Improvements they are pursuing are especially evident in women’s healthcare, where they are making progress through their social concerns, writings, and social action. A prime example of these actions and writings is found in Khenmo Norzin’s poem, “Calling for Women’s Health in the Land of Snow,” to explore the activity and improvements in Tibetan women’s health care. I will discuss three aspects of the poem: (1) the origin; (2) the content; and (3) the importance of the poem.



Chris PEACOCK, Dickinson College

TSERING YANGKYI’S FLOWERS AND DREAMS: TOWARDS A TIBETAN INTERSECTIONALITY?

Tsering Yangkyi (born Shigatse, 1962) began writing fiction and essays in the 1980s. In 2009, she started work on a full-length novel, *Flowers and Dreams (me tog dang rmi lam)*. When it was published in 2016, it became only the second Tibetan-language novel by a woman writer published in the PRC. A recent survey of Tibetan literary journals found that only five percent of contributors were women, the vast majority of whom were poets. Tsering Yangkyi’s impact in the world of fiction, a literary medium thus far dominated by men, is therefore particularly remarkable. In this talk, I will discuss some of the central themes of her novel and consider the productive and provocative new directions in which it may be taking Tibetan fiction. *Flowers and Dreams* revolves around the lives of four young women, all migrant laborers who move to

the city looking for work. In its central concern with the treatment of women in Tibetan society, it can undoubtedly be described as a piece of feminist literature. At the same time, however, we encounter an extensive investigation of issues of class, the rural-urban divide, and questions of religion and ethnicity, all bound up in complex and often inseparable ways. As a result, I will set forth a tentative reading of the novel as a demonstration of intersectional principles; a literary exploration, in the Tibetan context, of how “the major axes of social divisions in a given society at a given time [...] operate not as discrete and mutually exclusive entities, but build on each other and work together” (Collins & Bilge, 2016).



Françoise ROBIN, Inalco/IFRAE

DEKYI DROLMA: THE POETIC ART OF SMALL THINGS

Dekyi Drolma (b. 1967) is among the Tibetan women poets and lyrical prose writers with the longest uninterrupted writing career - she was among the few women whose works were published in Tibetan literary journals as early as the late 1980s. Her literary production is characterised among others by an interest for the commonplace, and by poetic evocations of often otherwise neglected, everyday objects, ranging from milk buckets, *tsampa*, and butter, to pen and eraser. Through a close examination of such writings, autobiographical notes and conversations held with her in previous encounters, this paper will place Dekyi Dolma's production within the wider Tibetan literary scenery and will enquire about the part that gender may play in her poetic stance.



TASHI DEKYID, University of Virginia

LAND AND BODY: REGENERATING PLACE-BASED RELATIONS AND LIFEWAYS IN TIBETAN LITERATURE BY WOMEN WRITERS

In this essay, I explore how contemporary Tibetan women writers articulate and regenerate place-based relations and lifeways in their writings, as well as how Indigenous concepts of Land and body can provide critical understandings of the relationships between women and place-based traditions, and the importance of their active regeneration for Indigenous moral and political struggles.

(Restricted to in-person participants)



**Riika J. VIRTANEN, University of Helsinki,
& KELSANG LHAMO, BDRC**

SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT TRADITION AND MODERNITY BASED ON A READING OF KELSANG LHAMO'S POEMS

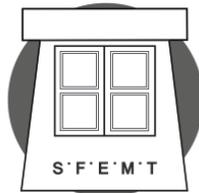
Kelsang Lhamo (bsKal bzang lha mo) is a Tibetan poet and writer who has authored both biographical works and poetry. She has kindly agreed to join the session via Zoom from Bodhgaya, to read two of her poems in Tibetan. These poems, “dNgos grub cig gnongs shig” and “g.Ya' dwangs”, appeared in 2005 in an anthology of Tibetan women writers titled *bZho lung*, which was edited by Pelmo (dPal mo) and published by the Nationalities Press in Beijing. During my part of the presentation, translations of these poems will be read, followed by an examination of their structure, style, language and contents. It is hoped that this may illuminate their connections with the Tibetan literary tradition and modern Tibetan writing. In addition to providing information on the literary works of this remarkable Tibetan woman author, the paper also contributes to understandings of the notion and scope of modern Tibetan literature.

THURSDAY 5 JANUARY / Auditorium	FRIDAY 6 JANUARY / Auditorium	SATURDAY 7 JANUARY / Amphi 2
9.30-10.00 Opening and welcome		
10.00-10.45 Tsering Wangmo Dhompa Keynote 1: "My Daughter Will Tell My Story" (Disc.: CP)	10.00-10.45 Mara Matta Keynote 2: Reflecting and Refracted Lenses. Sensibilities, Subjectivities, Subalternities in South Asian Women's Writings (Disc.: CE)	09.30-10.15 Holly Gayley "Korra: Cycles of Loss, Memory, and Return in Tibetan Anglophone Literature" (Disc.: JG)
10.45-11.30 Katia Buffetrille "Amnye Machen, Amnye Machen. Wooser, a Poetess Around a Sacred Mountain" (Disc.: CP)	10.45-11.30 Françoise Robin "Dekyi Drolma: The Poetic Art of Small Things" (Disc.: CE)	10.15-11.00 Tashi Dekyid "Land and Body: The Regeneration of Place-based Relations and Lifeways in Tibetan Literature by Women Writers" (Disc.: JG)
11.30-12.00 Tea break	11.30-12.00 Tea break	11.00-11.30 Tea break
12.00-12.45 Lama Jabb "The Art of the Proverb in Yangtso Kyil's Fictional World" (Disc.: CP)	12.00-12.45 Riika Virtanen & Kelsang Lhamo "Some Thoughts about Tradition and Modernity Based on a Reading of Kelsang Lhamo's Poems" (Disc.: CE)	11.30-12.30 Concluding remarks
12.45-14.15 Lunch	12.45-14.15 Lunch	
14.15-15.00 Lara Maconi "Embryonic Expressions of Modernity: Secular Feminine Voices from Early/Mid-20th Century Eastern Tibet" (Disc.: HG)	14.15-15.00 Janet Gyatso Keynote 3: "Why We Should Study Tibetan Women Writers. And Why We Shouldn't" (Disc.: NS)	
15.00-15.45 Kamila Hladíková "Yixi Zhuoma's Daughters: The Birth of Sinophone Tibetan Female Writer" (Disc.: HG)	15.00-15.45 Ebihara Shiho "Current Situation about Translations of Tibetan Women's Literature in Japan: In Comparison with Other Asian Women's Literature" (Disc.: NS)	
15.45-16.30 Padma Tsho "A Tibetan poem on Calling for Women's Health in the Land of Snow" (Disc.: HG)	15.45-16.30 Tea break	
	16.30-17.15 Shelly Bhoil "Standing strong in blood and cramps": A Discussion on Exile Tibetan Women's Poetry in English" (Disc.: NS)	
	17.15-18.00 Chris Peacock "Tsering Yangkyi's Flowers and Dreams: Towards a Tibetan Intersectionality?" (Disc.: NS)	

In-person & online (Zoom links next page)

In-person ONLY

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Zoom links:

5 Jan. 2023 – 9.30am-10.45am, 3.00pm-4.30pm (Paris time)

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81246894569?pwd=Smh3TGJ6aVcwK09Ic1ZnOUl0QnJkdz09>

6 Jan. 2023 – all day

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84278181290?pwd=ckR6c0p0U1daL1F5SXFYSjl2MFVnQT09>

7 Jan. 2023 – 11.30am-12.30pm (Paris time)

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81067605348?pwd=Q1FJT3gxV01qV2lPY0FWMEY4WEFBUT09>

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