

Wednesday 12 December 2018 – 18.00 - 19.30, INALCO (Room 3.04)  
65, rue des Grands Moulins, 75013 Paris

**“The Rise and Fall of Guandi, the Chinese God of War, in Tibetan Buddhism”**

by

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*“A late 18th century thangka of Tibetanised Guanyu (Kwan lo ye/ Sprin ring rgyal po)”  
Credit: Himalyan Art Resources item no. 88591*

Under the Dalai Lamas’ government of Tibet (1642-1959) the avowed aim of politics was to serve religion. But sometimes it was religion that served politics. Based on a voluminous Tibetan-language literature (much of it ritual texts), this talk will look at the manner in which Guandi, the Chinese god of war, was incorporated into the pantheon of Tibetan Buddhist protectors during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. It will show how this development in the religious/literary sphere, which was led by (mostly Mongolian) Geluk lamas with links to the imperial court, closely mirrored the various stages in the establishment and consolidation of a Qing Protectorate in Tibet and the presence of Chinese military garrisons there. The talk will also try to show that as Qing military power weakened during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the identity of Guandi and the temples devoted to him in Inner Asia, became increasingly overgrown and obscured by his superscription as a completely different figure, namely Gesar Gyalpo/ Geser Khan, the eponymous hero of Tibetan and Mongolian epic traditions. By the time of Tibet’s independence (1913-1951), the identity of Guandi and the temples originally devoted to him in Tibet, had been all but forgotten.

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