

# COLLOQUIUM BY GERALD ROCHE

NEW VIEWS OF TIBET'S LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY

TIME: 5:00-6:00 PM, THURSDAY, 14 DECEMBER 2017

VENUE: ACADEMIC BUILDING 1079

*New Views of Tibet's Linguistic Diversity*



**Speaker:** Gerald Roche, DECRA Research Fellow, Asia Institute, The University of Melbourne

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## ABSTRACT:

Research on Tibet's linguistic diversity in the West dates back to at least the mid-nineteenth century. However, a surge in descriptive and documentary linguistics in the twenty-first century has radically altered our understanding of Tibet's rich and complex linguistic ecology. This presentation will provide an overview of this emerging picture of Tibet as a cradle of linguistic diversity in the heart of Asia. The talk will have two main aims. The first is to present

a synthesis of recent linguistic research in Tibet, thus providing some basic background information on how many languages are spoken in Tibet, where, and by whom. The second aim of the talk is to present some new findings about language endangerment in Tibet, and the social, political, and historical processes underlying that endangerment. Taken together, these two aspects of the presentation will provide a new view on Tibet's linguistic diversity, demonstrating that it is not only much richer than previously thought, but also more fragile.

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BIO:

Prof. Gerald Roche is an anthropologist and ARC Discovery Early Career Research Fellow at the University of Melbourne's Asia Institute. His research focuses on the cultural and linguistic diversity of China's Tibetan regions, and how this diversity is being transformed in the 21st century. His anthropological interests currently relate to language endangerment, maintenance, shift, and revitalization, as well as issues of language and social justice. Before joining the Asia Institute, he was a post-doctoral research fellow at Uppsala University's Hugo Valentin Centre, a trans-disciplinary research center focusing on the ethnic dimension of human life, particularly in relation to discrimination, genocide, and assimilation. Prior to this, he lived on the northeast Tibetan Plateau for eight years, working as an applied anthropologist, and also undertaking research for PhD in Asian Studies from Griffith University. His PhD research examined issues of variation in change in a ritual complex of the Monguor (Tuzu) people. As an applied anthropologist, he has collaborated with local people on various educational and cultural initiatives, including the creation of the world's largest online archive of oral traditions from the Tibetan Plateau, and the publication of the first nationally-distributed English language textbooks designed specifically for Tibetans. His publications have appeared in *Asian Ethnicity*, *Asian Ethnology*, *Language Documentation and Description*, *Anthropos*, *Himalaya*, *China Review International*, *Studia Orientalia*, and *Asian Highlands Perspectives*, and he has forthcoming publications in *Modern Asian Studies* and the *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*. His current research project looks at ethnic politics and linguistic diversity in the Tibetan regions of China. The study examines the

sociolinguistic predicament of the Monguor population of Rebgong, a multiethnic and multilingual region on the Northeast Tibetan Plateau where the Monguor constitute a linguistic minority.

This event is open to all. For any queries email [yg73@duke.edu](mailto:yg73@duke.edu) or call 3665 7149.

Hope to see you all.

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