

## MINORITY LANGUAGE IN TODAY'S GLOBAL SOCIETY

February 21-22, 2009

**T**RACE FOUNDATION'S lecture series is entitled *Minority Language in Today's Global Society*. The lecture events in the series will bring together speakers from diverse national and disciplinary backgrounds to examine and share experiences on the selected topics at hand, with a special comparative focus on Tibetan language communities in China.

**The lectures are free and open to the public.** A series publication will be produced and distributed.

### SPEAKERS

**Shawo Dondrup**, Project Manager, Trace Foundation Hainan Prefecture Junior Middle School Pilot Project, Qinghai Province, P.R. China

**François Grin**, Professor of Economics, School of Translation and Interpretation (ETI), University of Geneva, Switzerland

**Nangsal Tenzin Norbu**, Instructor of Modern Tibetan Language, Weatherhead East Asian Institute, Columbia University, New York

**Tove Skutnabb-Kangas**, Professor Emerita, University of Roskilde, Department of Languages and Culture, Denmark and Åbo Akademi University, Department of Education, Vasa, Finland

**Minglang Zhou**, Associate Professor and Chair, East Asian Studies, Dickinson College, Pennsylvania

### PERSPECTIVES IN MOTHER TONGUE EDUCATION

#### Day 1

**Date:** Saturday, February 21st, 2009

**Time:** 10am-5:30pm, followed by a reception

#### Day 2

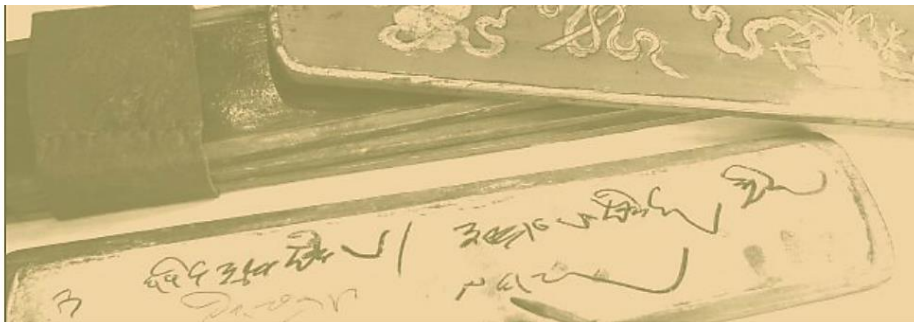
**Date:** Sunday, February 22nd, 2009

**Time:** 9am-12pm

**Place:** Trace Foundation & Latse Contemporary Tibetan Cultural Library  
132 Perry Street, 2B, New York, NY 10014

**Contact:** [events@trace.org](mailto:events@trace.org) or 212-367-7380

**\*Registration requested.** To register, please call or email us with your name, contact email, telephone, affiliation, and mailing address.



### MORE ON THIS LECTURE

**I**n recognition of International Mother Language Day, which was proclaimed in 1999 by UNESCO to promote linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism, the second lecture event will focus on mother language in education. According to UNESCO, many studies show that instruction in the mother tongue is more effective for achievement not only for the first language, but also for other subject areas and for second language learning. Despite these findings, mother tongue education is still far from being a widely-accepted model, often due to social, economic, political, or even technological challenges. **Why is mother tongue an issue in education? What does mother tongue education look like in practice? Is it truly worthwhile in terms of real costs and benefits?**

In China, over 120 languages are spoken; of these, 60 are officially recognized and are protected and supported by legal and policy initiatives. However, one language, Mandarin Chinese, is essential for participation in the broader national economic and cultural life. Because of the challenges this situation



poses, China has in recent decades adopted bilingualism as a policy goal. In terms of education, many different models of bilingual education exist, with varying ranges of emphasis on the use of mother tongue as the language of instruction. **For minority language communities, what education models are most effective for ensuring both achievement and multilingualism? What models are in practice in western regions of China today? What do these models imply for the vitality of Tibetan language?**

These are just some of the questions and issues we will attempt to explore during this lecture event. On Saturday, February 21st, each speaker will present a paper, followed by a discussion with fellow speakers, and a chance to take questions and comments from the audience. The day will end with a reception. On Sunday, February 22nd, the speakers will participate in a roundtable discussion examining the implications for Tibetan and other minority languages in education and achievement in China.

**TRACE FOUNDATION LECTURE SERIES PROGRAM**

Trace Foundation has launched a lecture series program to examine various topics related to development in culture, education, healthcare, and rural development from a global perspective, with a special comparative focus on communities in western China. Each lecture series will focus on a different topic, such as minority language, development models, land use, cultural preservation, tourism and local communities, education, gender awareness, indigenous medical knowledge, interethnic community bridge building, and more.

Trace Foundation has been working with communities in western China for 15 years, funding and implementing projects in cooperation with local counterparts and individuals in culture, education, healthcare, and rural development. In launching this lecture series, the Foundation aims to create a forum for exchange and discussion between specialists from diverse regional, disciplinary, and professional backgrounds. It is the hope of the Foundation that such a forum will lead to greater insights, cooperation, and new activities in the work of all those involved.

*For upcoming lectures series events, please check our website.*

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