

Project title (working title)

The transmission of the *Prātimoksa* in Mongolia: scriptural texts in theory and practice.

Abstract

The main subjects of research – the *Prātimoksasūtra* and *Bhikṣunīprātimoksasūtra* – are the texts which are traditionally included in the Buddhist scriptural collections (ancient Indian Tripiṭaka collections of Buddhist text belonging to different schools of Hinayana Buddhism, Chinese collections of Buddhist scriptures, one of the two parts of the Tibetan and Mongolian Buddhist canon – Kanjur). These texts are a part of the Vinaya section of the scriptural collection which is devoted to the explanation of the rules of monastic discipline for Buddhist monks and nuns, codes of behavior concerning practical matters as well as moral and ethical questions. The *Prātimoksasūtra* and *Bhikṣunīprātimoksasūtra* themselves are the lists of regulations determined to be followed by Buddhist monks and nuns respectively.

The research focuses on the study of the Mongolian translations of the *Prātimoksasūtra* and *Bhikṣunīprātimoksasūtra* written in the classical Mongolian language and included into the earliest known manuscript Mongolian Kanjur (1628-1629) and the xylographical edition of the Mongolian Kanjur published in 1718-1720. The texts in question will be investigated in terms of their canonicity and normativity. Analyzing the transmission history of these texts in Mongolia the research project contributes to the ongoing research in the contemporary Mongolian studies about the formation of the Mongolian Buddhist scriptural collections. Moreover the study will give special attention to the terms “canon” and “scripture” and their applicability to the Buddhist texts’ collections. It aims to contribute to a reconsideration of the term “canon” as an analytical category in cultural studies, including emic Asian models of text and normativity.

One of the main goals of the research project will be also to describe and analyze the practical, ritual use of the *Prātimoksasūtra* and *Bhikṣunīprātimoksasūtra* in contemporary Mongolia, thereby concentrating on the oral transmission and the material treatment of the “Buddha word”. It is unlikely that the text of the *Bhikṣunīprātimoksasūtra* was used in ritual activity in Mongolia before the communist revolution of 1921 as there was no order of Buddhist nuns in the country at that time. The *Prātimoksasūtra* at the same time was undoubtedly used in numerous Mongolian Buddhist monasteries which existed in Mongolia in the prerevolutionary time as a basis of a ritual called *gso sbyong* (tib.) and traditionally performed twice a month.

Today we observe a revival of Buddhism in Mongolia and for the first time in the history of Mongolian Buddhism we encounter female Buddhist ordained practitioners. At least one Buddhist nunnery is recorded to exist in the country. Field research will be conducted among today’s Mongolian nuns in order to establish what role the *Bhikṣunīprātimoksasūtra* plays in their private life as well as in the public devotional and ritual practices of their community. Contemporary

Buddhist monasteries for monks also will be involved in the field research in order to check if the tradition of performing *gso sbyong* has been preserved in the country, in what monasteries and under what conditions this ritual is conducted in our days, what the attitude and understanding of this ritual by today's Mongolian monks is.

Project Team

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Project duration

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University unit

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Research area

Philology, cultural studies, social anthropology.

Index terms

Mongolian Kanjur, Buddhist nuns and monks in Mongolia,
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