

Report of BuddhistRoad Guest Lecture

22 April 2021 Emanuela Garatti (Paris)

MYTHICAL AND HISTORICAL DISCREPANCIES: CHINESE PRINCESS WENCHENG AND THE PRINCESS OF JINCHENG AS PRESENTED IN OLD AND CLASSICAL TIBETAN AND CHINESE SOURCES

invited lecture at the BuddhistRoad project, CERES, Ruhr-Universität Bochum

The ERC project BuddhistRoad invited Dr. Emanuela Garatti, post-doctoral researcher at Centre de recherches sur les civilisations de l'Asie orientale (CRCAO/EPHE), to give a virtual lecture on the representation of the Chinese Princess Wencheng (628–680/682, 文成) and the Princess of Jincheng (ca. 689–739, 金城) in old and classical Tibetan and Chinese sources.

Dr. Garatti firstly introduced Princess Wencheng and Princess of Jincheng and their role in the relations between the Tibetan Empire (Tib. *Bod chen po*, ca. 7th c. to 842) and the Tang (618–907, 唐) Chinese courts. Placing these two princesses in the context of the intra-dynastic marriages system that was widespread in whole pre-modern Asia, Dr. Garatti provided charts with data that she elaborated concerning the Chinese matrimonial system of 'kingship through alliance'/'harmony through kingship' (Chin. *heqin* 和親) and its peculiarities during the Tang Dynasty, as well as figures concerning the intra-dynastic matrimonial alliances developed by the Tibetan imperial court with different kingdoms and territories in Asia, some of them defined as 'uncle nephew' (Tib. *dbon zhang*) relation. The crossing of these two sets of information allowed Dr. Garatti to draw a picture of a complex and dense network of women exchanged between courts who often played an active role in the court where they were sent. In this context, the role of Princess Wencheng and Princess of Jincheng at the Tibetan court was defined as political and diplomatic in their relation between the Tibetan and the Chinese courts. While Old Tibetan Dunhuang documents provide very scarce information about the two Chinese princesses, Chinese classical sources (such as the *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書 [Old Book of the Tang Dynasty], *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書 [New Book of the Tang Dynasty], *Tang huiyao* 唐會要 [Assembled Essentials of the Tang], *Cefu yuangui* 冊附元龜 [Prime Tortoise of the Record Bureau], *Zizhi tongdian* 資質通典 [Comprehensive Mirror in Aid of



Governance]) supply detailed accounts of Princess Wencheng's and Princess of Jincheng's activities at the Tibetan court: it appears that both women participated in diplomatic activities such as demands for supplementary intra-dynastic marriages (679) or the establishment of the frontier during the sealing of a peace agreement between the two courts (733). The diplomatic role of Princess of Jincheng seems to have been particularly important as she entertained a fruitful correspondence with the Chinese ruler throughout her presence at the Tibetan court. According to Chinese classical sources surveyed by Dr. Garatti, Princess of Jincheng also had a role in cultural brokerage by asking and obtaining for a set of Chinese Confucian Classics to the Tang court in 731 brought to the Tibetan court.

While the agency of the two princesses in political and diplomatic deeds is clearly shown in early sources, later Tibetan historiographical documents shifted their attention to the religious role of Princess Wencheng and Princess of Jincheng and completely ignore the political agency of the two Chinese princesses. In these sources, starting from the 11th and 12th centuries, the two Chinese princesses are consistently presented as having played critical roles in introducing and promoting Buddhism in Tibet during the imperial period. By providing a survey of different textual sources, Dr. Garatti showed that this representation of the two princesses started in early documents: in the *Li yul chos rgyal kyi lo rgyus* [Religious Annals of the Li Country] (P.T. 969) from Dunhuang (敦煌), but also in texts such as the *dBa' bzhed* [Testament of the Ba] and the *bKa' chems ka khol ma* [Pillar Testament], Princess Wencheng is already depicted as an active Buddhist patron in Tibet. What could seem as a fundamental discrepancy in the treatment that early and later sources make of Princess Wencheng and Princess of Jincheng's contribution to the Imperial Tibetan court, is in fact a gradual shift from their role as a political representative to religious representative. The epitome of such religious image can be found in later historiographical texts such as the *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long* [Mirror of Royal Genealogies], which perpetuates the image of Princess Wencheng as legitimiser of Buddhism's presence in Tibet.

By surveying different historiographical material, Dr. Garatti demonstrated not only how various sources depicted the two princesses and their role at the Tibetan court, but also showed how Princess of Jincheng was gradually erased from the historical narrative and Princess Wencheng emerged as a prominent character of the Tibetan imperial period.

