

Report of the Guest Lecture of the BuddhistRoad project

10 June 2020 Zhouyang Ma (Cambridge, MA)

INTRODUCTION TO SPECULATIVE THINKING: AN UNIDENTIFIED WORK IN TANGUT TRANSLATION OF MAJA JANGCHUP TSÖNDRÜ (D. 1185, TIB. RMA BYA BYANG CHUB BRTSON 'GRUS)?

invited lecture at the BuddhistRoad project, CERES, Ruhr University Bochum

The BuddhistRoad team invited Zhouyang Ma, a PhD candidate at Harvard University, to give a virtual lecture on the authorship, content, and significance of a Tibetan Buddhist text translated into Tangut, which is entitled *sew2 jji1 'o2 šji1 džju1 sji2 lju2 tshji2* 撒循謬羅懽統效敵 [The Ornament which Clarifies the Introduction to Speculative Thinking] and recorded as Tang. 314 in catalogues of Tangut Buddhist texts.

Zhouyang Ma identified five extant fragments of different manuscripts of this work in the Karakhoto collection. After he reviewed previous scholarship on the identity of the author's identity, he argued that the author was Maja Jangchup Tsöndrū (d. 1185, Tib. rMa bya Byang chub brtson 'grus), the Tibetan scholar who is famous for his thoughts on Prasaṅgika-Madhyamaka. Zhouyang Ma found two more lines of the colophon in the text that were previously overlooked by other scholars., the first line being a detailed authorship statement, while the second is a statement of the translator. The first line also contains the key information “peacock” (Tang. *wor¹ le²* 纛纛; Tib. *rma bya*), on which base Zhouyang Ma established his argument that Maja Jangchup Tsöndrū was the author of the work. He further substantiated his argument by locating similar words and expressions in other works of Maja.

Having identified the author as being Maja Jangchup Tsöndrū, Zhouyang Ma briefly examined the content of the text and claimed that the it was a typical summary (Tib. *bsdus pa*) on Buddhist epistemology (Skt. *pramāṇa*; Tib. *tshad ma*) of the Sangpu Neutok (Tib. gSang phu ne'u thog) scholastic tradition. He also pointed out some multilingual features regarding the Chinese numerals and Tibetan letters that were written alongside the Tangut text and argued that the Tangut Buddhists who used these manuscripts for scholastic training were conscious of Buddhism as a multilingual phenomenon.



Finally, he tried to connect Maja with the somewhat elusive figure of the “Grand Master Diligence” (Tang. *Khu¹ dzji¹ mār² dzji²*, 纒飛禱訖) appearing in some Tangut sources. “Grand Master Diligence” is known for having transmitted some Buddhist teachings on the Great Seal (Skt. *mahāmudrā*; Tib. *phyag rgya chen po*) to the Tanguts. Based on their shared religious names, active locations, active time periods, and expertise, Zhouyang Ma stated that it was highly probable that Maja and the “Grand Master Diligence” were the same person.

Zhouyang Ma concluded by stressing the significance of the work because it indicates the intellectual exchanges between the Tibetans and the Tanguts. In particular, the work, as one on Buddhist epistemology, showed the Tanguts’ interests in doctrinal and philosophical texts, which was not often addressed by previous scholars. Also, if the assumption that Maja and the “Grand Master Diligence” were the same person is to be accepted, then it informs us of a crucial aspect of the rise of Tibetan Buddhism in the Tangut Empire (ca. 1038–1227) and proves that the Tanguts received both tantric teachings and scholastic training as a coherent whole.

