

Report of the Guest Lecture of the BuddhistRoad project

02 February 2023 Alexander Zorin (Jerusalem)

TIBETAN TEXTS ON THE CULT OF VAJRAVĀRĀHĪ FROM KARAKHOTO

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

The BuddhistRoad team invited Dr. Alexander Zorin, researcher at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, to give an online BuddhistRoad Guest Lecture on the Tibetan texts on the cult of Vajravārāhī found in Karakhoto. In this talk, Dr. Zorin discussed the contents of several relevant fragments of manuscripts preserved at the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, Russian Academy of Sciences (IOM RAS), Saint Petersburg, and one folio kept at the British Library, London.

The lecture began with a short presentation of the work that was carried out by Alexander Zorin, Alla Sizova and Anna Turanskaya with the collection of the Tibetan texts from Karakhoto kept at the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, in 2018–2020. Its main aim was cataloguing of the collection. The draft version was prepared, but it turned out that many fragments should be studied more precisely so that the correct edition of their texts could be made. Dr. Zorin chose to study Tantric ritual texts that comprise a significant part of the collection.

In the main part of his lecture Dr. Zorin briefly presented contents of all the identified fragments that deal with the cult of Vajrayoginī/Vajravārāhī, a wrathful female *yidam* deity, whose popularity among Tangut Buddhists was previously attested by a variety of Tangut and Chinese Tantric texts. Fragments of five Tibetan manuscripts (four from the IOM RAS, one from the British Library) can be now added to this circle of sources. One of them is devoted to Cakrasaṃvara and his *maṅḍala*, including his consort Vajravārāhī, the others deal directly with her.

The defectiveness of fragments (lack of significant parts of texts) makes their study complicated. However, a number of important details can be extracted. According to the Tibetan manuscripts, Tangut Buddhists knew several forms of the goddess, including Cinnamuṅḍā (lit. ‘the Severed-head one’) and the *maṅḍala* of thirty-seven deities. At least one form attested in the Karakhoto manuscripts, that of Tamasundarī, was never associated with Vajrayoginī/ Vajravārāhī before; it is found in the Kangyur in a different context. Various genres are represented, too, including



rituals of different kinds (protection from disease, rejuvenation, fire offering, *torma* offering, killing of an enemy, etc.) and instructions on practices (incl. collective ones) aimed at realisation of the yogic goals. According to the lecturer, there are good perspectives for comparative textual and religious studies of the relevant Tibetan, Tangut and Chinese texts.



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