

Report of the Guest Lecture of the BuddhistRoad project

12 April 2023 Maho Iuchi (Kyoto)

POST-IMPERIAL TIBETAN HISTORY AND KARAKHOTO TEXTS

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

The BuddhistRoad team invited Professor Maho Iuchi, Associate Professor at the Hakubi Center for Advanced Research and Graduate School of Letters, Kyoto University (Kyoto, Japan) to discuss her research focused on Tibetan history, particularly the post-imperial period and its sources. Through her lecture, Prof. Iuchi shared insights into her research she has conducted on Tibetan texts from Karakhoto, especially those belonging to the Stein Collection. These texts are valuable for studying Tibetan history as they are an important source of post-imperial Tibetan history.

At the beginning of her lecture, Prof. Iuchi first discussed the process of cataloging the Stein Collection's Tibetan texts from Karakhoto, which she co-edited and published with Professor Tsuguhito Takeuchi in 2016. Subsequently, she then explained the dates of the post-imperial period and the limited Tibetan historical sources from the same period.

Based on the inventory, Prof. Iuchi provided an overview of the Tibetan texts from Karakhoto in the Stein Collection. She discussed the two important site numbers assigned by Stein and the types of Tibetan text and provided several examples of canonical and non-canonical texts along with images of the texts. Among the non-canonical texts, she discussed the Kagyü (Tib. *bka' brgyud*) and Kadam (Tib. *bKa' gdams*) literature that she has studied so far, and introduced other related studies as well. She explained that she particularly studies non-canonical texts because they highlight the influence of Tibetan Buddhism on the Tangut Buddhism. Prof. Iuchi also mentioned that many Kadampa-related texts have been found at Karakhoto because of the transmitted Tibetan texts recently discovered in the Tibetan mainland; these texts describe the relationship between the Tangut Empire (ca. 1038–1227, in Chinese sources known as Xixia 西夏) and the Kadam school monastery.



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Additionally, Prof. Iuchi further discussed the importance of the excavated texts from Karakhoto in studying the post-imperial period of Tibetan history. She stated four reasons to describe the value of these texts: (1) They are one of the few sources contemporary with the post-imperial period; (2) they provide evidence of Tibetan transmitted texts; (3) as they are excavated texts, it gives us information about Buddhism, Esoteric Buddhism, and rituals of the time; (4) they are a sample of the style, form, and content of manuscripts from the post-imperial period or the Tibetan cultural area. She especially discussed points (3) and (4), comparing them with the Phuri and Tabo texts, which have been excavated from other Tibetan cultural areas. First, Prof. Iuchi highlighted the similarities in the calligraphy used in the canonical texts excavated from Karakhoto, Phuri, and Tabo and showed that they all have Old Tibetan characteristics. As for the non-canonical texts, she compared the Karakhoto and Phuri texts, highlighting the similarities in calligraphy and manuscript sizes. She also pointed out that both the texts contain various esoteric teachings and rituals, which may relate to the fact that the Tibetan texts that were transmitted later mention that esoteric practitioners (Tib. *sngags pa*) were active during the post-imperial period.

The closing discussion focused on the exchange of information and future research. It included a lively conversation about the need for more research, especially on the ritual texts of the Karakhoto, and the need for research on specific ritual texts common to both Karakhoto and Phuri.

