

THE FORMATIVE HISTORY OF BUDDHISM IN MONGOLIA IN THE 16TH AND 17TH CENTURIES: A REASSESSMENT

LECTURE BY KARÉNINA KOLLMAR-PAULENZ



Mahākāla statue in Erdeni Dzu monastery, Mongolia © Kollmar-Paulenz

There is a broad consensus among researchers that Buddhism in the Mongolian regions has been shaped by the dGe lugs pa school of Tibetan Buddhism since the late 16th century. This school prevailed in such a way that the other Tibetan Buddhist schools had little or no presence in Mongolia. The resulting monolithic Buddhist landscape in Mongolia is often compared to Tibet where, although at times in conflict with each other, different traditions always co-existed.

However, a closer look at the sources available to us indicates that the development of a specifically Mongolian Buddhism is by no means solely

indebted to the dGe lugs pa. Mongolian chronicles like the anonymous *Erdeni tunumal neretü sudur* of 1607 or the *Erdeni-yin tobci* written by the Ordos noble Sayang Secen in 1662 testify to the activities of the rNying ma pa and Sa skya pa alongside dGe lugs pa monks at the turn of the 16th/17th century. Later historians like Isibaldan (19th c.) comment on the peaceful coexistence of the Sa skya pa, dGe lugs pa, Karma pa, rNying ma pa and even Jo nang pa in the Qalq-a regions as late as 1835.

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