



Mngon brjod in Tibet: Reading two Palm-leaf Manuscripts of the *Amarakośa* and *Kāmadhenu*

Dr. Yilan Chen

Abstract

This talk presents preliminary findings on two 12th–14th century palm-leaf manuscripts of Sanskrit lexical works transmitted from the subcontinent to Tibet: the *Amarakośa* and its commentary, the *Kāmadhenu*. These manuscripts serve as early witnesses to the formation of *mngon brjod* within the Tibetan scholastic system of the “Minor Five Sciences” during the Later Diffusion period.

Each manuscript is treated differently based on its material condition. While the *Amarakośa* manuscript is examined as a pedagogical artifact—revealing its circulation in the Tsang region and the local scholarly habits surrounding it through the physical structure and interlinear Tibetan notes—a strict textual approach is adopted for the *Kāmadhenu* manuscript. This involves deciphering its multi-layered colophon and collating the Sanskrit text against Situ Pañchen’s (1699–1774) Tibetan translation, with the aim of producing a critical edition.

Speaker

Dr. Yilan Chen is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Oxford. She received her PhD from Peking University and MA from Tibet University. Her doctoral dissertation was titled “A Carriage of Language Arts in Tibet: Zhwa lu lo tsā ba Chos skyong bzang po and the *Kāmadhenu* (’Dod ’jo’i ba mo).” Her research interests lie in the philological study of Sanskrit lexical texts, with a particular focus on comparing Sanskrit originals with their Tibetan translations from the Later Diffusion period.

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