

# Genesis and development of the Tibetan Buddhist Kanjur

## prof. Helmut Tauscher (Univ. Vienna)

### Schedule:

7.4. – 9.4. 2015	27.4-30.4. 2015
Tue 15:50 – 19:00 (C428)	Tue 15:50 – 19:00 (C428)
Wed 17:30–19:00 (C427)	Wed 17:30–19:00 (C427)
Thu 17:30–19:00 (C427)	Thu 17:30–19:00 (C427)

This lecture aims at giving a general survey of an important corpus of Tibetan Buddhist religious literature, called "Kanjur" (*bka' 'gyur*), its origin, development, content and structure.

Literally, the term means "Words [of the Buddha] in translation", and in a very general sense, this broader meaning is, of course, always implied. Nowadays, however, it is – not only within western academia and Buddhist communities, but also by the Tibetan tradition – primarily taken as a technical term denoting a particular body of literature, which, structured and edited in a specific way, contains, at least in theory, all the texts considered as words of the Buddha (*buddhavacana*), translated into Tibetan primarily from Sanskrit, but also from Chinese and, occasionally, from Central Asian languages. According to the Mahāyāna concept of the Buddha, however, the term and concept *buddhavacana* does not imply that these words were necessarily spoken by the historic *nirmānakāya* Buddha Śākyamuni. They can also be revealed by the Buddha in his *sambhogakāya* or *dharmakāya* aspects.

For Tibetan Buddhists, a Kanjur is certainly "a set of sacred texts". Its value exceeds that of a mere literary corpus by far, regardless of how precious this corpus might be. It is considered as representing the Buddha in his aspect of speech, and as such it is – in particular for lay people – an object of veneration and a source of blessing rather than literature to be read. Of course, reciting its words or having them recited by monks, adds to the blessing; understanding their meaning is not required. But also merely touching a volume of a Kanjur or turning its leaves is considered as meritorious.

In recent decades, the study of this particular literary corpus has developed into an independent field of research within Tibetan studies. Taking account of this development, this lecture will also touch upon the objectives, methods, and state of art of Kanjur research, and it will include reports on the latest research activities of Vienna University.

The following topics will be touched upon:

- Historical survey of the reception of Buddhism in Tibet,
- Collection and translation of Buddhist text during the Imperial period (8.-9.cent.),
- Collection and translation of Buddhist text during the period of the Western Tibetan empire (10.-12.cent.),
- Collection and translation of Buddhist text during the Mongol period (13.-14.cent.),
- The proto-Kanjurs,
- The "Old Narthang Manuscript Kanjur",
- Various lines of transmission,
- "Local" or "independent" Kanjurs,
- Ladakhi manuscript Kanjurs,
- Manuscript evidence of earlier collections of canonical texts in Ladakh.