Russian Tibetological Translating School: History, Current State and Future Prospects

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Abstract

Russian Tibetological studies began in XIX century. In the end of the XIX—the beginning of the XX century so-called “The Petersburg school of Buddhology” was established. The works by Tsyben Zhamtsarano (1881-1942), Bazar Baradin (1878-1938), Gombojab Tsybikov (1873-1930) greatly affected the establishment of tibetology in Buryatia. The succeeding generations of Buryat tibetologists concentrated their efforts on the problems of source study and historiography, study of culture of Tibet and Mongolian peoples, history of Mongolia, Tibet and neighbouring countries, philosophic problems of Buddhism, etc.

Key words: Russian Tibetology, Buryat-Mongolian Buddhology, Buddhist and Tibetan studies of the SB RAS (IMBT SO RAN), Institute for Mongolian.

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The day of submission: 2009.12.25 / Completion of review: 2009.12.31 / Final decision for acceptance: 2010.1.8
I. Russian Buddhology: First Steps

In Russia Tibetological studies began with the works of academician of Petersburg Academy of sciences J. I. Schmidt (1779-1847) who published a number of articles and translations on Buddhology. They are as follows: “On a few of the chief theses of Buddhism” (Readings in the Imperial Academy of sciences, 1829 and 1830. The scientific sections: historical, philological, political. St.-Pb., 1831, book 1, No 6, pp. 40-46; No 7, pp. 47-51; “Über einige Grundlehren des Buddhismus”; “Über die sogenannte dritte Welt der Buddhaisten”; “Über das Mahajana und Pradschnaparamita der Buddhen” (Memoires de l’Academie. 1815-1837, T. 3, 4). Schopenhauer refers to one of those works in his famous work “World as will and idea.” Adjunct of the Academy of sciences R. Lents (1808-1836) founded in London a manuscript of the first of Buddha’s biographies that became known in Europe, i.e., ‘Lalitavistara.’ Professor of Kazan University O. M. Kovalevski (1801-1878) published the work “Buddhist cosmology” (Sc. Proceedings of the Imp. Kazan University, 1835, book 2, p. 373-427; book 4, p. 217-289; 1837, book 1, p. 98-135). Academician A. A. von Schifner (1817-1879) published the translation of the historical treatise of a famous Tibetan scholar Taranatha (Taranatha’s Geschichte des Buddhismus in Inden. St. Petersburg, 1869), and he also prepared for publication a collection of Buddhist tales (Tibetan Tales Derived from Indian Sources. London. 1906). The first buddhological centers were opened in St.-Petersburg, Kazan and Peking where the Russian religious mission was functioning. P. I. Kafarov (1817-1878, Palladiy in monkhood) who headed the mission for many years together with academician V. P. Vasiliev (1818-1900) were the founders of the cinological branch in Russian Buddhology.

An outstanding treatise by V. P. Vasiliev “Buddhism, its doctrines, history and literature” (in 3 vol., St.-P., 1857-1869) was translated into German and French. The founder of the Indological Buddhism in Russia became I. P. Minayev (1840-1890). In his work “Buddhism. Studies and materials” was translated into French (St.-Pb., 1887. Vol. 1., fasc. 1,2). He