

ILLUSTRATED MANUSCRIPT OF "ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND VERSES" IN THE MONGOLIAN FUND OF THE ST. PETERSBURG BRANCH OF THE INSTITUTE OF ORIENTAL STUDIES

The canonical work "One Hundred Thousand Verses" (or "The Great Yum", Skt. *Mahā-Prajñāpāramitā* in one hundred thousand *ślokas*) takes up 12 huge volumes in the Peking edition of the *Ganjur* in the Mongolian language. In the manuscript fund of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies it is represented by two block-print editions and by four manuscripts. Both xylographs and three of the manuscripts are illuminated [1]. Generally, in books of this kind deities of the Buddhist pantheon are represented on the first and the last (additional) pages of each volume, which is common for block-printed editions and manuscripts containing Buddhist canonical texts.

The copies of the "Great Yum" from St. Petersburg are especially valuable for the study of the history of Buddhist iconography and of Mongolian iconography in particular. The matter is that all the copies of this work belonging to the Mongol collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies differ both in the number of illustrations (from 24 to 112) and the contents of the pantheon they represent. Besides, the miniatures are of different quality and executed in different techniques.

In our view, the most interesting are one of the copies of the block-print edition of the "Yum" and two of the manuscripts. The 12-volume block-print edition was produced in Peking in 1714 (Xylograph K 1, No. 1 of the collection). On the first leaf of each volume there are two monochrome engravings representing Buddhas. The last leaves of all volumes represent four *mahārājas*. One more copy of the same edition (K 1, No. 2) is different from the first one, primarily because all its engravings are artfully coloured and gilded. Besides that, on its last leaves we find,

apart from the four *mahārājas*, representations of four other Buddhist deities.

One of the illustrated manuscripts of the "Yum" (Q 401) was first described in the G. Kara's "Books of the Mongol Nomads". He points out that the water-colour icons of the 12-volume manuscript of the "Yum" are artfully painted, among them portraits of historical personages [2]. They are executed in 8—10 different colours selected in conformity with the rules of iconography, with exquisite taste. The above mentioned portraits of historical personages depict Tszonhava, the reformer of Tibetan Buddhism, and the supreme hierarchies of the Tibetan church — Dalai Lama and Paṇchen Lama.

One manuscript of "The Great Yum" in the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies (call number K 24) may be viewed as most artfully illuminated. It was copied, according to its colophon, in 1676. This manuscript is really unique, as its illustrations represent a very original pantheon which finds no parallels in other manuscripts or block-print editions. All the miniatures are executed with great artistic taste and look exquisite (see illustrations to the paper on the front and back covers). Unfortunately, only eleven of the twelve volumes are present in the collection. Volume three is missing, the last illuminated leaf of the first volume is lost, too. In all, we have at our disposal 21 illuminated leaves representing 53 personages of the Buddhist pantheon. One may only regret this loss (no less than 8 miniatures), because this copy presents the most perfect example of professional icon-painting among all the other illustrated Mongolian manuscripts preserved in the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies.

Notes

1. A. G. Sazykin, "Illustrirovannye rukopisi i ksilografiy "Sta tysiach stikhov"" ("Illustrated manuscripts and xylographs of "One Hundred Thousand Verses""), *Kniga Mongolii. Al'manakh bibliofila*, Fasc. 24 (Moscow, 1983), pp. 229—32, 16 Plates.

2. D. Kara, *Knigi mongol'skikh kochevnikov (Sem' vekov mongol'skoĭ pis'mennosti)* (Books of the Mongol Nomads. The Seven Centuries of Mongol Script) (Moscow, 1972), p. 133.