

**Inner Asian and Altaic Studies
Lecture Series 2023-24**



Buddhism and Politics in 17th-c. Mongolia

Prof. Agata Bareja- Starzyńska
University of Warsaw

Abstract:

The talk will focus on the interplay between Buddhism and politics in the 17th century on the Mongolian lands. It will be shown through the lens of the biographies of two prominent Buddhist masters of Western and Eastern Mongols: the Oirat Zaya Pandita Nam mkha'i rgya mtsho (1599-1662) and the 1st Khalkha Jetsundampa Zanabazar (1635-1723). They played significant roles in introducing Tibetan Buddhism among Mongols albeit in very different ways living at the time of the great Fifth Dalai Lama (1617–1682) in Tibet and the Kangxi Manchu Emperor (1654-1722) in China.



Aiming at disseminating new religion among their compatriots they were involved in the very productive creation of Buddhist “supports”: translations, in the case of the Oirat Zaya Pandita, and sculptures, in the case of Zanabazar. Their religiously focused activity brought them moral authority and made them important leaders in their communities. The religious authorities that they gained, were, however, used by politicians to their ends.

The lecture will show, as well, the conflict between Western and Eastern Mongols which for centuries shaped their relationship. The invasion of the Oirats on the Khalkha lands in 1688 resulted in the turn made by the Khalkha Mongols from being under the political umbrella of the Tibetan Dalai Lama’s government to the protection of the Manchu Emperor. Through this shift from Tibet to the Qing Empire, Khalkha Mongols influenced the political balance in Inner Asia. The lecture is aimed at presenting the policy played by Tibetans, Mongols, and Manchus in shaping this development.

Wednesday, February 7, 2024

1:15 pm-2:30 pm EST

Thomas Chan-Soo Kang Room, S050 CGIS-South

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