

***Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* and Buddhapālita's commentary**
A Philological Study on the Basis of the Newly Identified Sanskrit Manuscripts

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Abstract

This doctoral dissertation is a philological study of two incomplete Sanskrit manuscripts that have been newly identified from the Collection of Sanskrit Manuscripts formerly preserved in the China Ethnic Library, now stored at the Tibet Museum, Lhasa. This study is based on the microfilm kept at Peking University. These two palm-leaf manuscripts are heavily damaged. Only fourteen folios are extant, among which three are from a separate copy of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* and eleven from the *Buddhapālita-mūlamadhyamaka-vṛtti*, i.e., Buddhapālita's commentary.

Although the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* was composed by Nāgārjuna as early as the second or third century CE, no relevant Sanskrit manuscript older than the twelfth century had been found. And what is even more frustrating is that all the sources are monogenic, namely, extracted from Candrakīrti's commentary, which was composed in the seventh century. This situation was changed by the finding of these two manuscripts. The three folios of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* amount to approximately one fourth of the entire work. So far it is the only accessible Sanskrit manuscript of its kind of the independent *kārikās*. The *Buddhapālita-mūlamadhyamakavṛtti*, which marks the beginning of the Prāsaṅgika Thought, was composed in the sixth century, being formerly available to us only through a Tibetan translation. The aforementioned eleven folios of this commentary comprise approximately one ninth of the whole work. It is the first time that its Sanskrit text, though incomplete, has been known to the modern world.

The two manuscripts were written in a script that could be named an eastern variety of the post-Gupta script. A paleographical study shows that this script resembles that of inscriptions from Nepal from the second half of the sixth century to the first half of the seventh. By the paleographical date, the two manuscripts will be the oldest extant Sanskrit manuscripts insofar as the Madhyamaka texts are concerned.

Based on the readings preserved by these two manuscripts, some emendations may be suggested to the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* in L. de La Vallée Poussin and J. W. de Jong's editions. Moreover, some hints of the textual lineage can be traced by examining the discrepancies among the verses embedded in different commentaries and reflected in Tibetan and Chinese translations. All of them confirm the earlier conjecture by some scholars that the Sanskrit text of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* may have existed in different versions.

The dissertation is structured as follows:

Introduction: The manuscripts information, the editing method and a philological survey;

Part 1

Chap. 1 The introduction and retrospection of the Madhyamaka studies;

Chap. 2 A paleographical study;

Chap. 3 A re-examination of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* on the Basis of the two manuscripts;

Part 2 The editions of the two manuscripts and a Sanskrit-Tibetan index;

Part 3 Modern Chinese translation of chapters 1, 2, 7 and 13 of the *Buddhapālita-mūlamadhyamakavṛtti*;

Appendix: A preliminary Survey of Sanskrit Manuscripts of the Madhyamaka text preserved in the Tibet Autonomous Region.

Keyword: *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, Madhyamaka, Nāgārjuna, Buddhapālita, Sanskrit manuscript