

The Restoration of a rare Work: the Mongolian Manuscript of Sūtra of Transcendent Knowledge

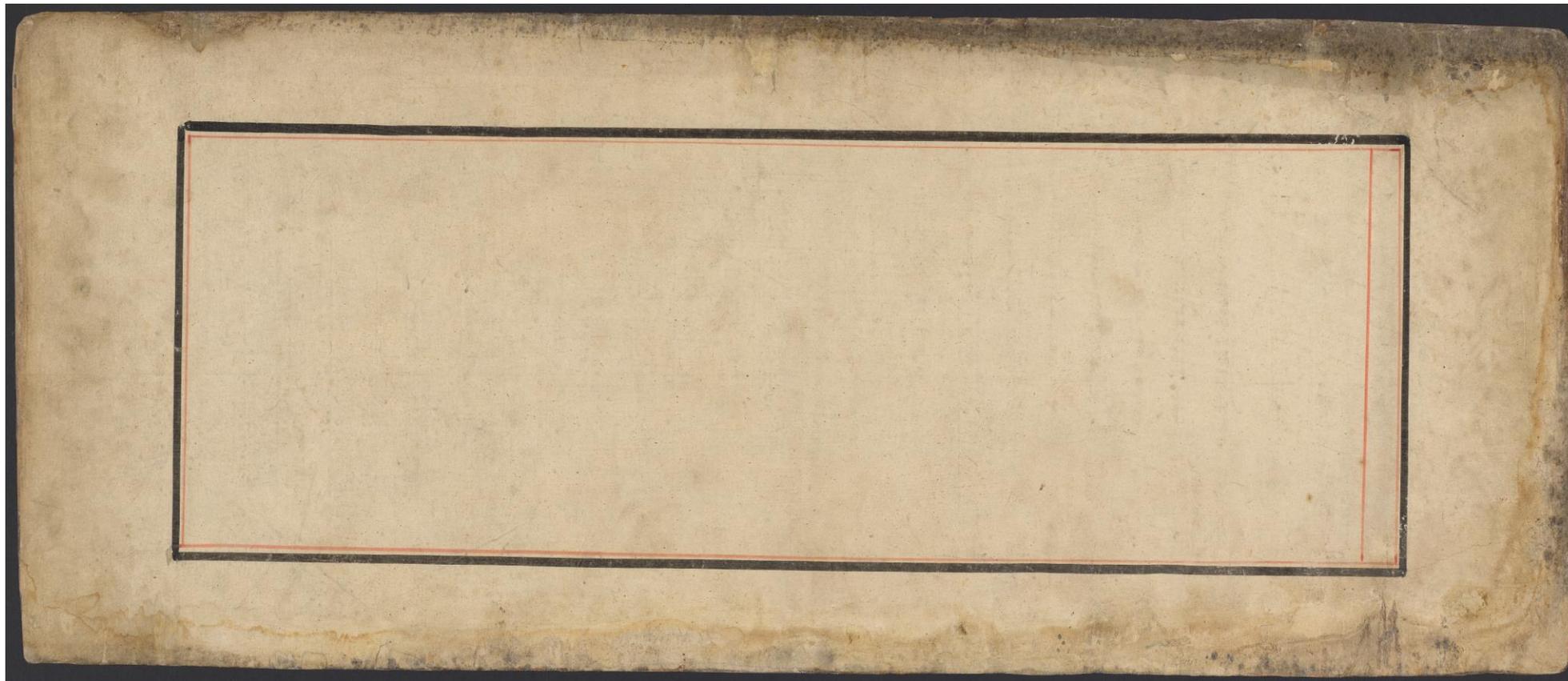
Bibliothèque d'études chinoises du Collège de France
Delphine Spicq

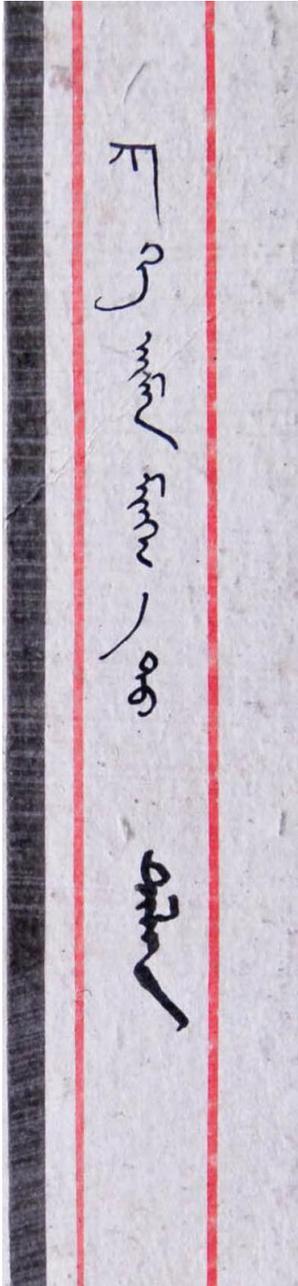
44th EASL CONFERENCE Berlin, 4–6 September 2024

The two wooden covers and the 443 folios



The first blank page





Tibetan letter Ka

Mongolian phonetic transcription of the previous syllable 'Ka' for Kanjur

naiman' means 'eight

mingghatu' means 'thousand' + suffix 'with'. Can also be written separately: 'minggh-a-tu'.

These two elements mean 'with the eight thousand', referring to the 8000 verses.

Folio # 70

NB: The two different types of black ink are clearly visible.

- the sūtra: the *Naiman minyatu-yin sudur orusiba*, 'the sūtra of [the version] in eight thousand [verses]', the Mongolian translation of *the Ārya-āstasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sutra*, the sūtra of transcendent knowledge.
- This is the original text of the Prajñāpāramitā which in Mahāyāna Buddhism focuses on the essential notion of the emptiness of phenomena, the principal of virtues, which in its transcendence encompasses the other five virtues or supreme qualities

- The text consists of 8,000 śloka or verses and takes the form of a dialogue between Buddha Śākyamuni, his three disciples Subhuti, Sariputra and Ananda, and Indra/Sakra, the chief of the gods (called Khurmasta/Ahura Mazda in Mongolian versions), who plays the role of the profane.
- The texts of the Buddhist canon devoted to the Prajñāpāramitā refer to the direct teachings of the Buddha and are considered fundamental

- **The Kanjur Manuscripts**

- The complete translation of the Tibetan canon into Mongolian, commissioned by Ligdan Khan (r. 1604-1634) in 1629: the Golden Kanjur, calligraphed in Kökeqota (now Hohhot) in gold letters on blue-black paper, comprising 113 volumes (13 survived and are kept in the library of the Inner Mongolian Academy of Sciences).
- Four manuscript copies of the Kanjur survive: An incomplete copy (71 volumes at the Mongolian Academy of Sciences, the copy at the Collège de France, the copy at St. Petersburg University, and another copy at the Siberian branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Buryatia).

- **The printed Kanjur**

- After the defeat and death of Ligden Khan in 1634 and the rallying of the remaining Mongolian tribes (with the exception of the Dzungars, conquered in 1759) in 1691, Emperor Kangxi 康熙 (r.1661-1722) commissioned the revision and printing of the handwritten Mongolian Kanjur.
- This work was carried out between 1717-1720: the result, in 108 volumes, was xylographed in cinnabar ink. This printed Kanjur was used to translate the Buddhist canon into Manchu. A copy is kept in the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

The manuscript before restoration



Folios before and after restoration



the packaging box



The wooden board before and after restoration



Buddhist ornamentation was also applied to the edges of the leaves



Thank you !