

## Preface Maria-Katharina Lang



This project publication is a result of the involvement with the Mongolian collections of the research traveller Hans Leder. In 1996 I selected one artefact at the Weltmuseum Wien – the former Museum of Ethnology Vienna – a pendant that had been part of the elaborate headdress worn by women in northern Mongolia, to narrate the histories related to this item, most importantly the life stories of Mongolian women in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. During the research it turned out that the piece and the collection in Vienna was one part of the collector's far larger collection of more than 4,000 objects, mostly Mongolian Buddhist ritual artefacts, held in several ethnographic museums in Europe. The research funding programme *forMuse* ("Research at Museums", Austrian Federal Ministry for Science and Research) exactly fitted frame to realise the idea of reconnecting these collections in several ways.

On closer regard, the scope, authenticity and integrity make the Mongolian collections of Hans Leder unique, and this imposes a certain responsibility: to conserve them, as one task for the museums, and when doing research to try to relate them more closely to the histories they are connected to. One way to do this is to tell "what" they are through their iconography. Another way is to let them "re-travel" and document the contexts they were made for and of which they had been part, to learn what these things might have meant to people and re-trace the artefact's (life-) histories in their place of origin, in Mongolia. The focus of this compilation is on the artefacts themselves. They are presented in selected object groups as part of larger collections – through which their histories in connection and interaction with people become visible.

This volume brings together multiple points of view on artefacts: those of the Tibetologist, the Mongolist, the religious-studies scholar, the artist and the social and cultural anthropologist. The first chapter, by myself, offers an approach to the collection's histories and relations by shedding light on the collector's biography and the movement of artefacts. Lhagvademchig S. Jadamba draws upon past and recent developments of Buddhism in Mongolia from an insider perspective. Olaf Czaja chose to overview the large group of painted and printed images in the collections: thangkas, paintings and *tsakli* as well as amulets and manuscripts. Béla Kelényi elaborates on the specific object groups of votive tablets (*tshatsha*), representations of the Five Personal Protective Deities and prayer flags. In our contributions, Krisztina Teleki and I reunited and analysed the scattered groups of wooden figures of the characters of the Mongolian Tsam dance. Ágnes Birtalan examined representations of the "White Old Man" and the equestrian warrior deities in their textual and iconographic traditions as well as their specific Mongolian characters.

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**Note on Transliterations**

In this publication different forms of transliteration are used according to the specific focus of the individual authors (philologists, social anthropologists, Tibetologists etc.). Popular spellings are used for established names and notions: for example “Chinggis Khan” instead of “Činggis Khan”. There is no widely shared well-established system for transliterating Mongolian. Nevertheless, the editors have tried to harmonise the text where reasonable. In general we have oriented ourselves on more common terminology within Mongolian studies to provide the reader with a more comprehensive readability.

**Illustrations**

Where the object photographs were of poor quality we have used them only in the preview images accompanying the articles and not in the “Figures” section.



Hans Leder at the age of 61  
(1904; Jisl 1963: 53)