

Einladung

zu einem Gastvortrag

von

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über das Thema

“Song, Dance, and Instrumental Music in Buddhist Canon Law”

Maintaining a balanced approach to music is a shared challenge in all religions. Depending on the context in which music is used in religious activities, it is either praised as a powerful medium to please the divine or condemned as a sensual allurements that hinders spiritual advancement. This lecture discusses the treatment of vocal and instrumental music as well as the allied category of dance in Buddhism. Specifically, I will analyze how different forms of musical activities were regulated in Buddhist canon law that was formulated in the Indian subcontinent and their subsequent interpretation in Tibet and China.

My investigation of the extant corpus of texts dealing with Buddhist canon law that circulated in Sanskrit, Pāli, Chinese, and Tibetan reveals that ordained Buddhists are allowed to recite but prohibited from engaging in instrumental music or singing. Whether or not chanting is allowed depends on the context. On those occasions when conveying the content of a text is more important than attracting an audience with its musical appeal, such as when giving religious instruction or reading aloud monastic regulations, chanting is prohibited because the elaborate musical intonation blurs the pronunciation of words and distracts the audiences from grasping the meaning of the text. Chanting is allowed and required when melodic appeal is more or equally important as the contents. These occasions include when one praises the Buddha’s virtues or reads liturgical texts at various rituals for funerals, tree cutting, consecrating a contemporary lodge site or addressing divine spirits. Hence, ordained Buddhists who are unable to chant must practice to master the skill in a solitary place. My investigation of Chinese and Tibetan commentaries on novice regulations also demonstrate that despite a number of minor

modifications, East Asian Buddhists are mainly in agreement on the interpretation of regulations concerning reciting, chanting, singing, dancing, and instrumental music as they are presented in Buddhist canon law.

am
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um
16.00 Uhr

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