Snow on the Mountain

In This Issue
Powerful Women
Powerful Women

Two amazing women leading ACIP’s National Library of Mongolia Project and how they are working to Keep Wisdom Alive!

Click on photo to see video of Christina Kasica and Dr. Sainbileg in action
ACIP’s very own Christina Kasica, Chief Strategy Officer, has worked for us for over four years. One of her main roles for ACIP is to manage the digital preservation of one of the largest collections of Tibetan and Mongolian manuscripts and block prints at the National Library of Mongolia. ACIP, in 2018, requested a grant from Khyentse Foundation to fund this massive project. The work involves digitally scanning the library’s vast collection of 41,000 ancient volumes, as well as digitally cataloguing every title within these volumes. We estimate, within a seven-year period, ACIP will scan nine and a half million pages of rare Buddhist texts.

ACIP officially began the project at the National Library of Mongolia in July of 2018. Christina headed a team of Tibetan Buddhist scholars and technology specialists and began the work with the National Library’s staff.

Mongolia is famous for its powerful women. The director of the National Library, Ichinkhorloo Bayarkhuu, is a nationally acclaimed poet. The deputy director, Terbish Bayarlakh, is also a powerful woman. Along comes another very special young woman, Dr. Sainbileg, a Tibetan and Mongolian Buddhist scholar, who was officially appointed Operations Manager of the National Library’s Project.

We are so blessed to have these brilliant women and delighted to feature Christina and Dr. Sainbileg in this month’s newsletter so you can also meet the brilliant minds behind our historic project at the National Library of Mongolia.

Christina Kasica has a very interesting background. She spent ten years in a Ph.D. program at Harvard. Her early career was spent working for start-up software companies and social justice not-for-profits. With that amazing background, Christina discovered Buddhism in 2009, which impacted how she viewed herself and the world.
These comments from Christina say it all:

“The Greek philosopher Socrates, who’s a personal favorite of mine, used to go around telling everyone “Ouk oida.” That means “I don’t know” in ancient Greek. I always thought I’d want that carved on my headstone. But since becoming a Buddhist, I don’t want that anymore. Thanks to the teachings, I know what to do in every life situation. It’s just living it, that’s challenging! So it’s very precious to me to be able to spend my days working to preserve this ancient cultural tradition in very concrete ways. I’m truly fortunate.

Many of the 300,000 volumes in this library have not been opened for hundreds of years. We literally discover new texts every day. It’s so exciting! This year, in 2020, we are entering Phase Three of the four-year grant and have firmly established operations. In 2020 we want to offer our sponsors an opportunity to help us so we launched the Keep Wisdom Alive campaign.

Dr. Sainbileg and I share this reliance on Buddhism. I remember when I first met her in Ulaan Baatar. She was working part-time at the library for the director. She welcomed us and was very, very helpful and I remember thinking, even before we made her the offer to work for ACIP, She’s the one to manage the team on the ground here.

She’s one of only two English speakers in the whole place. She went off to Korea to get her Ph.D at a young age. Last time we were in Mongolia, we gave her roses as a small token of our esteem and appreciation for her great work. We even shared fermented mare’s milk — a traditional Mongolian delicacy!”

Christina, Dr. Sainbileg and Bayarlakh enjoying fermented mare's milk in Ulaan Baatar.
Dr. Sainbileg is the Operations Manager of the National Library of Mongolia. She plays a key role in ACIP’s success in preserving one of the largest remaining uncatalogued and unscanned collections of Tibetan and Mongolian manuscripts in the world.

Dr. Sainbileg earned her Ph.D. in Buddhist Studies in the Department of Philosophy at the Academy of Korean Studies in Seongnam, South Korea. She received her B.A. and M.A. degrees from the Department of Philosophy at the National University of Mongolia in Ulaan Baatar.

Dr. Sainbileg gives us some insight on her involvement with the library.

“I always loved classical literature and was always interested in philosophy. Through this, I discovered Buddhism, which changed my life.

I am a researcher by profession. I have a strong interest in Buddhist culture, particularly written treasures. Mongolia has a long history of Buddhist literature in the Mongolian and Tibetan languages back to the fourteenth century. We have lots of treasures!

For me, this work is preserving not only treasure that belongs to the Mongols, but also to humankind.

I’m very happy to be opening access to this material for other researchers around the world. It’s not easy to do research in this field. So it makes me very happy to help others do better research and have the ability to access the required materials with no difficulty and no limits. I am so enthusiastic about being able to contribute to this, and it makes me appreciate every single page of every single book.

Preserving cultural heritage is one of the most important things in my life. I’m involved, for example, in a number of UNESCO activities that aim to safeguard cultural heritage. So I am grateful for ACIP’s support in safeguarding our treasure here in the National Library of Mongolia.

I really enjoy welcoming visitors to the project and showing what we do here. Last summer, the American ambassador to Mongolia, Michael Klecheski, dropped by. And we recently played host to the famous Professor Vesna Wallace of the University of California, Santa Barbara, when she was visiting Ulaan Baatar.
There’s a lot of other things that are important to me — health, well-being, family, and so on. According to Buddhist theory, we will be reborn in this cyclic existence until we achieve enlightenment. But we can only feel the momentary unification of body and mind that is “Today’s I.” So every moment of life is precious. I want to spend it meaningfully.

Like many people today, I have concerns about the future. I hope the world will be ok, but ecological change is a big danger that people must pay more attention to. All human beings should take care of the earth and mother nature. Another of my hopes is that in the future many more people will get interested in Buddhism and will write about our Mongolian collection and make it known around the world.

I love music, meditating and hiking in my spare time. I like all positive things that make people happy.”

To date, ACIP has digitized 1,533 volumes comprised of 473,188 pages and cataloged 24,100 titles comprising 1,929 volumes at the National Library. We still have another 39,467 volumes to go. Since our grant will only last until 2022, we need help now, to keep this project going. We anticipate it will take until 2026 to finish. That’s why we have initiated our Keep Wisdom Alive campaign to help us fund the completion of preserving the entire collection at the National Library of Mongolia.

Together we can do this with you! You can help, and plant amazing seeds of wisdom, by sponsoring a volume for only $120. We need sponsors for 39,500 volumes. We have this exciting vision—each sponsor will have their names preserved on the metadata of the digital scans of their volume, forever.

Thank you for your support and generosity.
Keep Wisdom Alive Campaign

The Campaign

Our cultural preservation work has very concrete outcomes. Our campaign strategy is to connect individual people with individual volumes of manuscripts and block prints. If donors have a personal connection to actual manuscripts, it will make our preservation effort more transparent.

Therefore we want to offer a unique opportunity for our donors. For your one-time donation of $120, we will inscribe your name on the manuscript metadata, forever to be preserved with that particular volume.

There are different levels of donations: text and collection donations. Text Donors can make a one-time gift to preserve one text volume, and Collection Donors can make a one-time gift to preserve 108 volumes.

**P R E S E R V E O N E T E X T**

$120 ~ preserves one text volume.

**P R E S E R V E A W H O L E C O L L E C T I O N**

$12,000 ~ preserves 108 volumes.

**W I S D O M K E E P E R**

$50,000+ ~ significant donations, please contact Executive Director, John Brady.

Please join us by spreading the word of this exciting campaign at [https://asianclassics.org/get-involved/keep-wisdom-alive/](https://asianclassics.org/get-involved/keep-wisdom-alive/)
An Interview with Marija Moertl
Mastermind behind ACIP Russian Gold Club

by ACIP’s Vimala Sperber

In the summer of 2014 I met an incredible young woman who just married Peter Moertl, a friend of mine. I knew Peter was very special. When he introduced his new wife Marija, I thought “Wow! Peter’s “partner planting seeds” have totally blown up and in a miraculous way! How can I plant such an angelic partner myself?”

Since then Peter and Marija have become one of those inspiring super-couple influencers helping people world-wide on how to have success in their lives, their health, wealth, relationships, meditation and yoga. I didn’t know then that I would be working with Marija just a few years later.

We began in the summer of 2018 with Marija starting an ACIP Russian Facebook page in order to fundraise for ACIP. By January 2019, Marija launched a FaceBook group; the ACIP Russian Gold Club. A meditation series with John Brady and his wife Connie became very popular. You can still watch this series on the ACIP Russian Gold Club (in English, subtitled in Russian) by joining for as little as $1 a month.

Check out: ACIP FaceBook Russian Gold Club: https://www.facebook.com/groups/goldclubACIP/
To sign up: https://asianclassics.givingfuel.com/aciprussian-gold
I watched the amazing flowering of the ACIP Russian Gold Club. Hundreds of Russian speaking people from all over the world were joining and becoming part of this special club. Marija now has over 70 volunteers helping her grow Gold Club. It’s a miracle to watch how this has manifested from the tiny seeds we all have planted.

In the last few months the Gold Club idea is catching on with some of our other coordinators: Silvia Engelhardt’s group is inspired to do an online community for European languages, Pau Franco’s Spanish speaking group, and Yao Li Hsu’s Chinese speaking communities.

The good seeds are spreading! If you are curious how Marija creates such success, and want to know how you can get involved – please check out the video interview of Marija from the ACI Bali Lam Rim Retreat that was held in December 2019.
Vimala: Dear Marija – You seem to excel in everything you do! You are absolutely gorgeous, you have an exciting life teaching with an amazing loving husband right alongside you. You are helping so many people and also you have had great success in helping ACIP with fundraising. And then you came up with this Facebook group, “ACIP Russian Gold Club” a paid content crowdfunding Facebook group that is thriving after just one year to date. Through Gold Club you are bringing ACIP over four figures a month in donations. That number keeps growing! How did you manifest this amazing Gold Club? Please give us your secret!

Marija: “I wanted to help my teacher, John Brady, who is the Executive Director of ACIP. He asked me to help with ACIP in the Russian speaking world. There were not many private donors when I started, and there was not an organized project focusing on donations anywhere in the world for ACIP. My husband Peter and I have been teaching ACI courses (their material is based on ACIP—the Snow on the Mountain) for the past eight years in Ukraine and Russia. I realized at some point that many people would want to support saving the ancient wisdom but they don’t have a lot of money. So I decided to try crowdfunding – meaning to give each person the opportunity to participate in the saving and sharing of this wisdom even when it's just one dollar a month.

As a teacher I believe it is very powerful to support ACIP from a karmic point of view to reach nearly any kind of goal you have. ACIP is simply one of the most powerful karmic objects you can imagine.

The next step basically was that Peter, Max Dzhabali (our ACI organizer in Ukraine) and I were putting our heads together to find out how we can explain WHY it is so important to support ACIP. We also thought about how we could give people something back for their regular support and donations. This is how the idea started, I thought it would be a good idea to do an online ‘THANK YOU’ teaching based on gratitude. This would give the donors something back and show them why their support is valuable by explaining the ideas from the books they help to save.

That’s how it started in January 2019. Now in the middle of Feb 2020 we have more than 1700 members – all regular donors – and we are collecting over US$20,000 each month. Behind that there is a lot of work and a big, fantastic and passionate team. They are all volunteers, they are wonderful and without them this would not be possible at all.”
Now we all see and feel how this rapidly growing community of like-minded people are supporting each other, they start to study and practice together and interact online and offline. When we meet at ACI events these days we often meet new “Gold Clubbers” from all around the world. Right now we are in Moscow and there are participants from many Russian cities, from all over the former Soviet Union but even Russian speakers from Canada and Dubai.

It touches my heart deeply and gives me the energy to continue when I hear and read hundreds of success stories from “Gold Clubbers” who regularly support ACIP, and start to study the teachings.

Vimala: “What are your plans for 2020?”

Marija: We are planning to start the Keep Wisdom Alive in our Russian speaking community. It’s very exciting for us. Donors will have an opportunity to have a personal connection with a specific ancient book that they are saving.

Our goal for the end of 2020 is to have 2500 members and increase our monthly regular donations to US$30,000 a month.

2020 is dedicated to a healthy way of life, yoga, meditation and healthy diet. We are planning to do some special online courses and some offline events around these topics. We are planning a Lady Niguma yoga retreat in Kiev from the 21st to 26th of August. This is the first time that we will do a Lady Niguma yoga retreat in the Russian-speaking world. Participants from all over the world are very welcome. The retreat is going to be in English with Russian translation.

We will keep you posted in the upcoming ACIP newsletters as registration opens in April. Before the yoga retreat – on the 20th of August – we plan to have an ACIP gala fundraising dinner in Kiev with John Brady and his beautiful wife Constance O’Brian. This will be a very elegant occasion where the executive director of ACIP John Brady and Connie will come to Kiev for the first time. Anyone who is a Gold Club member worldwide is welcome to join – so please mark your calendar and come join us!”

For more information about ACIP Russian Gold Club please contact: Help.aciprussian@gmail.com
Bets Greer sheds some Light on the Path to Freedom

ACIP’s Diamond Cutter Classics translation program began in 2017 and focuses on translating ancient core texts of Asian wisdom. The program is held three times a year at the Sedona College of International Management (SCIM) in Sedona, Arizona, USA, and the tenth term was just completed in January 2020. In each term, there is a core of ten students learning to master the Tibetan language in order to translate the texts, alongside studying the precious ancient wisdom teachings which each book holds inside.

Snow on the Mountain is honored to feature these amazing translators about their books, beginning with Bets Greer this month, who’s working on:

*Light on the Path to Freedom*
by Choney Lama, Drakpa Shedrup
A book about how to meditate on emptiness

When we got in touch with Bets Greer to talk about her work with ACIP and the book she’s translating, we found her in the light-filled study of her new home in the Verde Valley area of Arizona (which she attributes to having diligently worked the four karmic steps to be close to her teacher and fellow dharma practitioners).

Bets met the dharma 25 years ago, after her best friend’s death at age 33 pushed her into the depths of depression. Before then, she’d never been a particularly happy person, often sad even though she was surrounded by good fortune: a loving family, loving friends, good health, influential work, excellent education (Harvard MPA with honors), beautiful environment, and on and on. She had always thought something was missing. When her friend died, the thought entered her mind that she should end her life. That thought shocked her so much that she sought help, and at the same time she listened to a friend who suggested she explore meditation. She was intrigued by a notice about a retreat on the gradual path to enlightenment, and signed up, knowing nothing. When she heard the teachings on compassion, karma, and emptiness, the life-long veil of sadness and despair vanished, and her life shifted dramatically: she started consciously planting seeds for wisdom and compassion.
Bets immediately started volunteering and financially supporting many dharma projects, looking for work that would allow her to be generous while having the time to volunteer, study, and do retreat during her free time. She ended up writing award-winning documentation for Microsoft at a job which, after several years, allowed her to quit and move to Arizona to study at and support Diamond Mountain, where she eventually did a three-year retreat.

Since the retreat, Bets continues to create the causes for wisdom and compassion to spread throughout the world, and she now works at what she considers her dream job: learning to translate Tibetan into English, helping other translators, editing dharma books, and supporting various ACIP projects.

ACIP’s Diamond Cutter Classics translation project is translating the ancient books of Asia into modern languages. Based out of the Sedona College of International Management in beautiful Sedona, Arizona, the project is training young translators to take the ancient classics and translate them into modern languages to present them in a way that makes these books accessible and practical for today’s world. As ACIP has over 200,000 pages of ancient source literature in our database, this grand task is estimated to span hundreds of years.

Each of the ten translators is working on a text representing a different subject of Buddhist thought or practice. The subjects follow the course of study that a geshe, or master of Buddhism, goes through during monastic education. The subjects they’re currently working on are: vowed morality, higher knowledge, logic and perception, Mind-Only, Lower Middle Way, Higher Middle Way, meditation on emptiness (what Bets is working on), developing the good heart, comparative philosophy, and karma and its consequences.

Each of the subjects has its own unique dialect. Working together in a group (affectionately named the “Mixed Nuts”) to translate them affords each translator an opportunity to be exposed to all of the unique writing styles found in the Buddhist scriptures, thus producing well-rounded translators with a vast awareness of the more subtle nuances of the languages.

In *Light on the Path to Freedom*, author Choney Lama goes into detail about the fine distinctions among the different Buddhist philosophical schools related to what they each mean by the phrase “things lack a self-nature.” This isn’t just an esoteric exercise. Each philosophical school’s understanding has something to teach us about how we misunderstand things in our everyday lives. Choney Lama repeats throughout the book that it’s important for us to understand these ideas intellectually, but always follows by saying that that’s not enough—we must meditate on it!
The key to getting out of the cycle of suffering is seeing, directly, how the self doesn’t exist in and of itself. And so we need to understand the highest meaning of that phrase so we know what to look for in meditation. At the end of the most recent translation term in January, the team reached a very exciting point in the text where Choney Lama begins his discussion on exactly how we should take our understanding onto the meditation cushion.

We expect the last class on the book will be given during the next term, in May 2020, and then the book will go through an extensive editing process. In the midst of that, Bets will go into a solitary meditation retreat on the book, and then use her experience to design a retreat that she plans to share with others about how to meditate on emptiness. She hopes she can start leading group retreats by the end of 2021 at Diamond Mountain, Arizona, or wherever else people would like her help.

In addition to her translation work, Bets’ skills as a long-time professional writer and editor are being put to good use editing the books that are being produced by the Mixed Nuts team. Bets also works on developing content for a Tibetan-English dictionary and does other work on the ACIP database. She has also been twice to Shenzhen, China, where fellow translators Stanley Chen and Alison Zhou have assembled a team to translate texts from English into contemporary Chinese. Bets assists the translators by teaching her book and others’, and helps the translators with the more difficult aspects of the English language. She said of her time there that she’d never been treated with such kindness, generosity, and respect. The group is so dedicated and eager to make this material available to over a billion people.

What exactly are the Mixed Nuts?

A favorite snack during ACIP’s Diamond Cutter Classics translation classes is mixed nuts; there’s often a bowlful on the class table to provide protein and extra energy to keep the translators going.

One day our teacher, Geshe Michael Roach, affectionately called the translation team the “Mixed Nuts,” insinuating they were a mixed bag of nutty, super brilliant, budding students of mixed cultures and ages who have been coming together to learn how to translate the most important books of Buddhist scriptures into English. Along with these ten primary translators are secondary translators who also attend the classes; they'll be working on translating the English translations into languages such as Chinese, Spanish, German, Russian, etc.

For more information about the Diamond Cutter Classics Series and the Mixed Nuts, check out the story on Bets Greer and how her text sheds Light on the Path to Freedom. You can also visit: diamondcutterclassics.com where you can see all in-process translations of the books and even comment on them or leave your questions. You can also email the translation program at: Mixednuts@sedonacollegeinternational.com
We at ACIP are so grateful to be a part of this important translation program. The future of preservation depends not only on saving the ancient manuscripts, but bringing them to life by translating them and then bringing their wisdom into the contemporary world. The translation program is doing just that. Thanks to all of you helping us keep our wisdom alive.

Thank you for all your support! Love from Bets and our Mixed Nuts translation team. Standing left to right: Yan Tang, Alison Zhou, Stanley Chen, Ben Kramer, Word Smith, Bets Greer, Adam Andrade. Sitting left to right: Sugeng Shi, Nick Lashaw, Geshe Michael Roach, Seiji Arao.

For more information about the Diamond Cutter Classics Series, please visit: diamondcutterclassics.com
Email the translation program at: Mixednuts@sedonacollegeinternational.com
Ways to Support ACIP

ACIP Needs Your Help

ACIP is doing exciting work around the world to help find and preserve the ancient wisdom texts endangered by environmental and cultural change and upheaval. We’re making these works available for free online on our website. And we hire, whenever possible, women from underserved or impoverished communities, train them to scan, catalog, and transcribe, and give them salaries and benefits to enrich their lives and the lives of their families.

But ACIP needs your help to keep helping others. We make it as easy as possible. Your help can come in many ways and many amounts:

A One-time Gift in Any Amount
  • Donating conveniently online or sending a check

A Dollar-a-Day
  • Signing up for our dollar-a-day program. We will charge your credit card or debit card $30.41 a month (a dollar a day).

Regular Monthly
  • Committing to a regular monthly donation.
  Any amount — large or small, will help greatly.

Many of you are current, generous donors who have been supporting ACIP for a long time. Our heartfelt thanks go out to you. You make our work possible. We could not do it without you.

Thank you for your support and generosity.

Sincerely,
John C. Brady
Executive Director, Asian Classics Input Project

DONATE