

Ho Center for Buddhist Studies at Stanford

Robert H.N. Ho Family Foundation Center for Buddhist Studies at Stanford University

史丹佛大學何鴻毅家族基金佛學研究中心

Newsletter

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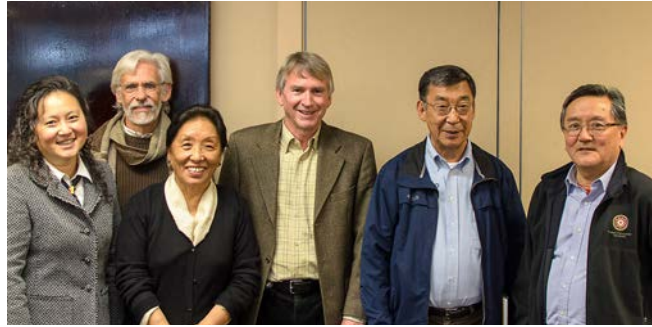
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Greetings from Our Associate Director



From Left to Right: Irene Lin, Carl Bielefeldt, Rinchen Khando Choegyal, Paul Harrison, Venerable Ngari Rinpoche (Tenzin Choegyal), Tenzin Tethong

I am delighted to introduce the first newsletter for the Ho Center for Buddhist Studies at Stanford (HCBSS). We would like to keep you informed of developments at our Center, share the highlights of our program of events, and introduce you to the community of faculty, students, visiting scholars, guest speakers and staff who make Buddhist Studies thrive at Stanford.

The big news this last year was the establishment of Stanford's first professorship dedicated to the study of Buddhism, made possible by a generous gift from our benefactor, the Robert H.N. Ho Family Foundation, with matching funds from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The international search for the first holder of the chair took place earlier this year, and we will be announcing the successful candidate in the fall. The new faculty member will be a specialist in Chinese Buddhism, complementing the existing expertise of our co-directors, Carl Bielefeldt in Japanese Buddhism and Paul Harrison in Mahayana Buddhist literature.

The other big event, which greatly improves the operation of our Center, was the addition of Ms. Lori Chinn, who joined our team in January as Program Coordinator. You can find out more about Lori in the short article about her in this newsletter. Lori has a strong background in art, graphics, and communications, so she will be designing our posters and newsletters, maintaining our website, coordinating events, and developing social media for our Center. Our co-directors join me in welcoming Lori on board.

Turning to event highlights, I want to share two series that have been especially popular with the community at Stanford and beyond. For the fifth year in a row, we have partnered with Stanford's Continuing Studies program to offer the Buddhist Art Seminars, with support from the TT & WF Chao Fund. Due to the demand, this year we increased the seminars from two a year to three a year. They take place on a Saturday afternoon from 1 to 4 p.m., usually in the Annenberg Auditorium. This program brings art historians to Stanford to speak on the latest research in different areas of Buddhist art. Topics have ranged from the earliest Buddhist art in India to Tibetan and Japanese Buddhist art, and the art and architecture of Thai Buddhist temples.

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This year we brought Juhjung Rhi from Seoul National University to speak on Buddhist images in Gandharan monasteries, Yukio Lippit from Harvard University to talk on meaning and materiality in Japanese Buddhist sculptures, and Qiang Ning from Connecticut College to discuss Buddhist images from the Dunhuang cave shrines. The feedback I have been getting on this series has been very positive. Regular attendees have told me that as a result of the seminars, they have made trips to the areas and sites discussed in the lectures. I am thrilled to hear about the impact of these Buddhist art seminars! We will continue this series in the coming year, bringing Christian Luczanits, a curator at the Rubin Museum in New York, to speak on art from Mustang, and Boreth Ly from the University of California, Santa Cruz to lecture on Theravada Buddhist arts of Mainland Southeast Asia. Please check our website for further details.

The second series I want to feature is the TT & WF Chao Distinguished Practitioner Lecture Series. Now in its fifth year, this is a joint program of our Center, the Buddhist Community at Stanford, and the Office for Religious Life, designed to bring Buddhist practitioners to Stanford. The format of the program is an optional guided meditation session for half an hour led by the speaker, followed by a talk and a Q & A session. We strive to bring a wide range of speakers from different Buddhist traditions, both monastic members and lay practitioners to speak on various aspects of Buddhist practice. This year we were able to invite Venerable Bhikkhu Pasanno from Abhayagiri to discuss the teachings from the forest tradition and Dr. Simon Child from the Western Chan Fellowship, a dharma heir of the late Chan Master Sheng Yen of Dharma Drum Mountain in Taiwan, to address the adaptations that are possible and appropriate to facilitate the transmission of Buddhism in Western cultures.

We were also privileged to bring the Venerable Ngari Rinpoche (Tenzin Choegyal), the youngest brother of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, from Dharamsala to run a two-Saturday workshop on the Four Noble Truths. The workshop was oversubscribed on both days but we did not turn anyone away who showed up without registering. Ngari Rinpoche held everyone's attention and interest with his unique teaching style and his ability to make the Four Noble Truths understandable in terms of our daily lives. Aside from his insightful and critical comments, Ngari Rinpoche also possesses a witty and cutting sense of humor that had the audience roaring with laughter throughout the workshop. As a result no one felt tired after a 6-hour event but rather was recharged and reinvigorated! During breaks and at the end of each workshop, Ngari Rinpoche tirelessly stayed behind to talk to the attendees and to answer their questions and listen to their comments.

After such an exciting and fruitful year, we will seek to further our rigorous, illuminating and diverse programs next year. Our theme next year will be compassion. We will have a lecture series on the way compassion has been interpreted and understood in different Buddhist traditions, in addition to how it has been applied to Buddhist practices. We plan to run a special workshop/retreat on compassion in collaboration with Continuing Studies in the spring.

I look forward to your feedback on our newsletter and programs in addition to seeing you at our events next fall when the academic year starts once again.

Irene Lin
Associate Director



Irene Lin

HCBSS Highlights

Hwei Tai Seminar in Buddhist Studies

Every year we invite an expert in a particular Buddhist text or set of texts to lead an intensive weekend seminar in which participants read passages from several primary sources. Each word or phrase from the texts is meticulously examined before the seminar members agree on a particular translation or interpretation. Often sources from similar genres or periods are also studied and available versions/variants of the texts are compared to arrive at the meaning of the passages. Although the schedule is demanding, starting at 9 a.m. and ending at 5 p.m. on both Saturday and Sunday, the seminars continue to draw many faculty and graduate students from Stanford; the University of California, Berkeley; the University of California, Santa Cruz; and the University of San Francisco.



Stefano Zacchetti

In the fall, Professor Stefano Zacchetti from the Ca' Foscari University in Venice (since then appointed Numata Professor of Buddhist Studies at Oxford) led the annual Hwei Tai Seminar. He focused on readings from the *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論 (T 1509), a Prajñāpāramitā commentary translated by Kumārajīva at the beginning of the 5th century CE that has been arguably one of the most influential texts in the history of East Asian Buddhism.

Shinnyo-en Visiting Professor

Our Shinnyo-en Visiting Professor this year was Professor Chen Jinhua from the University of British Columbia. Professor Chen received his Ph.D. from McMaster University. His research interests are in the areas of East Asian state-church relationships, monastic hagio/biographical literature, Buddhist sacred sites, relic veneration, Buddhism and technological innovation in medieval China, and Buddhist translations. His publications include *Making and Remaking History* (Tokyo, 1999), *Monks and Monarchs, Kinship and Kingship* (Kyoto, 2002), *Philosopher, Practitioner, Politician: The Many Lives of Fazang (643-712)* (Leiden, 2007), *Legend and Legitimation: The Formation of Tendai Esoteric Buddhism* (Brussels, 2009), and *Crossfire: Shingon-Tendai Strife As Seen in Two Twelfth-Century Polemics* (Tokyo, 2010).



Chen Jinhua

In the spring quarter, Professor Chen taught a graduate seminar on the Buddhist commentarial tradition in fourth-century China. Seminar participants benefited greatly from his expertise in reading Buddhist commentaries and his vast knowledge of Chinese classics. Toward the end of his stay, Professor Chen gave the annual Shinnyo-en Visiting Professor Lecture on “When and How the Marginal Became Central: Borderland Complex in East Asian Buddhism.” The lecture was well attended and well received by both Stanford community members and representatives from the Shinnyo-en Foundation and Temple.

Visiting Scholars

This year we have two visiting scholars at our Center from Japan. One is Dr. Miyazaki Tensho, who will be with us for two years. He is a research fellow of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science. Dr. Miyazaki received his M.A. and Ph.D. from the Department of Indian Philosophy and Buddhist Studies at the University of Tokyo. He is here to further his study of one of the earliest Mahāyāna sūtras to be translated into Chinese, the *Ajātaśatrukaukṛtyavinodana-sūtra*, under the direction of Professor Paul Harrison, a specialist in Mahāyāna sutras. Dr. Miyazaki got married over the new year and was joined by his wife earlier this year. Congratulations and best wishes to the newlyweds!



Miyazaki Tensho

The other visiting scholar is Minoura Akio, Associate Professor at Otani University in Kyoto, who will be with us for one year. He also received his Ph.D. in Buddhist Studies from Otani University. Professor Minoura works on Indian Abhidharma treatises and is furthering his research at our Center under the guidance of Professor Harrison. He plans to examine new methodological approaches to Buddhist Studies with a view to better understanding Indian Buddhism. Professor Minoura and his wife joyfully announced the birth of their baby boy in June. Congratulations!



Minoura Akio

Symposium on the Tulku System in Spring Quarter

On April 28, the Ho Center for Buddhist Studies and the Tibetan Studies Initiative held a symposium to explore the Tulku (*sprul sku*) system, which has been an extremely important aspect of Tibetan society and Tibetan religious life for many centuries, and continues to this day to capture the imagination of people around the world. The Tulku system is unique to Tibet, and to those cultures whose development has been influenced by Tibetan Buddhism, including Mongolia and the Himalayan states. While the notion of rebirth, or reincarnation, is found throughout the Buddhist world, nowhere else do we find this particular practice—of identifying young children as the rebirths of religious teachers and leaders who have recently passed away, and then installing them in their place—developed as thoroughly and as systematically as in Tibet.

The symposium provided an opportunity for in-depth exploration and discussion of the Tulku system. We invited three Tulkus from very different backgrounds, Venerable Arjia Rinpoche, Venerable Telo Rinpoche and Venerable Thepo Rinpoche, to participate so that they could offer an insider's perspective on this extraordinary historical phenomenon. (At the last minute, Telo Rinpoche had to cancel his trip to the U.S.; so he participated in the entire symposium by Skype from Kalmykia.) While the Tulku system can be considered from any number of angles—historical, social, religious, political, psychological, educational, and so on—each participant addressed those features that he considered most important and interesting, while reflecting on his own experience. The Rinpoches concluded by discussing the future of the Tulku system both in the exile community and in Tibet itself.

Venerable Arjia Rinpoche was recognized at the age of two by the Panchen Lama as the reincarnation of Lama Tsong Khapa's father and as the throne holder and abbot of Kumbum Monastery. When he arrived in the United States, he started the Tibetan Center for Compassion and Wisdom (TCCW) in Mill Valley, California. In 2005, His Holiness the Dalai Lama appointed him director of the Tibetan Mongolian Buddhist Cultural Center (TMBC) in Bloomington, Indiana, where he now resides.

Venerable Telo Rinpoche was born in a Kalmyk family in Philadelphia. He received his training as a Buddhist monk in India and was recognized by His Holiness the Dalai Lama as the current reincarnation of the Buddhist Mahasiddha Tilopa. In 1992, he was elected as "Shadjin Lama" (Head Lama) of Kalmykia by the Kalmyk people and was entrusted with the task of leading the process of spiritual restoration of one of the three Buddhist regions in Russia. He initiated the first ever Mongolian and Russian Buddhist Festival, which was successfully held in Dharamsala (India) in 2007. Since 1992, he has served as the spiritual head of the Buddhists in Kalmykia. He divides his time between Kalmykia and his family in Colorado.

Venerable Thepo Rinpoche was recognized as the 8th Thepo Tulku and trained in the Ganden Shartse Monastery. From 1975 to 1980, he worked at the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives and served as a special cultural advisor for the Smithsonian Institution Tibetan Library. He is currently a board member for the Tibetan Association of Northern California.

Professor Donald Lopez from the University of Michigan served as the moderator for the symposium. Our co-director, Professor Paul Harrison, and the Chair of our Tibetan Studies Initiative, Mr. Tenzin Tethong, were brought in on the discussion as well.



Left to right: Tenzin Tethong, Donald Lopez, Venerable Arjia Rinpoche, Venerable Thepo Rinpoche, and Paul Harrison
On screen: Venerable Telo Rinpoche

Response from a Graduate Student

Simon Wiles, First Year

My name is Simon Wiles and I've just completed my first year in the Buddhist Studies Ph.D. program in the Department of Religious Studies at Stanford.

My interest in Buddhism and Buddhist Studies began in my late teens, and intensified while studying for a bachelor's degree in philosophy. At that time, I also became very interested in philosophy of science, and other topics related to epistemology.



After some consideration, I decided to follow up my undergraduate degree with a Master's degree in Buddhist Studies, which I obtained from the University of Bristol. At that time, I worked primarily with Pali materials, and became interested in Pali Abhidhamma and path structures in early Buddhism. In the course of writing a Master's dissertation on the Pali *Paṭisaṃbhidāmagga*, I became increasingly aware of the importance for investigating such topics of having access to the material preserved in the Chinese tradition, and so after graduating with an M.A., I decided to relocate to Taiwan to begin to develop some of the necessary language skills.

When I arrived in Taiwan, however, instead of engaging in intensive language study as I had intended, I became involved with the IT section of Dharma Drum Buddhist College. I spent more than three very happy and productive years at Dharma Drum Mountain, during which time I had the opportunity to make use of my extensive technical background to support the College's IT infrastructure, and subsequently to work full-time on the exciting Digital Archives projects for which Dharma Drum Buddhist College has become known.

I left Dharma Drum Mountain last summer, with no small amount of sadness, to begin doctoral studies at Stanford, under the guidance of Professor Harrison. My first year has been an exhilarating and intense experience, in the course of which I have benefited from many opportunities to be involved in academic activities of the very highest quality, from the graduate-level seminars which form the core of my own academic training, to the rich and wide-ranging programme of lectures, seminars and workshops organized by the Ho Center for Buddhist Studies and other groups in and around Stanford. I have also taken advantage of some of the non-academic activities on offer within the Stanford community, including regular sitting practice with the Stanford Zen Group, for whom I have agreed to serve as an officer next year.

I am currently in Taipei, attending the intensive summer school at National Taiwan University's International Chinese Language Program. More significantly, however, I am delighted to report that as of a week ago I am now a married man, my new wife and I having just completed our nuptials on the island of Guam. Hsiaolin, who was born and raised here in Taiwan, will be beginning her own graduate studies at Stanford when we return to the Bay Area in September, and we are both very much looking forward to the new academic year.



Bottom from left to right: Paul Harrison introducing Venerable Bhikkhu Pasanno; Gananath Obeyesekere; Rinchen Khando Choegyul

Response from a Graduate Student

Rafal Felbur, Fourth Year



Though the Schøyen Collection of manuscripts is housed in an unassuming private residence amidst peaceful Norwegian farmland, its impact on our knowledge of world history can only be described as revolutionary. Its staggering 14,000 manuscripts in some 120 languages span five millennia, representing an astonishing spectrum of cultural traditions (from Babylonian and Assyrian, to Greek, Roman, and medieval) as well as of the human experience (from astrology, mathematics and medicine, to divination, prayer, and philosophy). Importantly for us at Ho Center for Buddhist Studies at Stanford, the collection also includes some of the oldest surviving Buddhist manuscripts. Retrieved from the Bamiyan area in modern day Afghanistan (the site of the giant Buddha statues destroyed by the Taliban in 2001), their significance for our understanding of Buddhism has been aptly likened to that of the Dead Sea scrolls for our comprehension of the biblical traditions. While questions continue to be asked regarding the circumstances of their acquisition – as is perhaps unavoidable in such high-profile cases – there is no questioning the value of the work that scholars around the world have been able to produce on the manuscripts, as they carry out the painstaking process of preservation, cataloguing, editing, and translation.

A minor contribution to this process was made this spring quarter at the Ho Center under the tutelage of Professor Paul Harrison. An editor of the series *Buddhist Manuscripts in the Schøyen Collection* and one of the world's leading experts on early Buddhist manuscripts, Professor Harrison led a graduate seminar on one of the Sanskrit Mahayana texts in the collection, a short tantric text titled *Viśeṣavatī-dhāraṇī*, written in the 6th century on birch bark in a beautiful form of the Gilgit-Bamiyan script. First, the many pieces of the badly damaged manuscript were digitally reassembled. Then, the manuscript was transliterated, that is, represented in the Roman alphabet as faithfully as possible, with due attention to its many corruptions, such as omissions, spelling errors, ink blots, bleed-throughs, faded letters, broken or folded-over edges of the birch bark, and so on. Finally, these imperfections were smoothed out in an attempt to reconstruct the text's putative original form. In the next step, the text will be translated into English and published with the complete scholarly apparatus, and thus made available for further investigation.

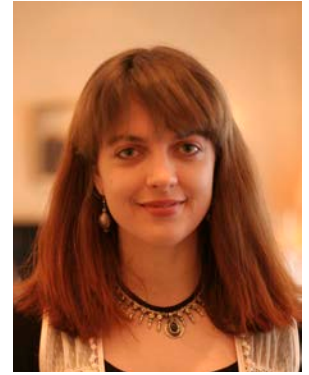
The text's hero, a monk named Vayakhyāna, is traveling by foot to a distant city. After a number of days on the road, he encounters on his path a "figure of giant stature," thirty feet tall. It turns out to be none other than the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī. The Bodhisattva explains that he has appeared to the monk in order to prepare humankind for the impending catastrophe which, he proclaims, will be triggered by a war among the denizens of Mount Sumeru. "When the devas are defeated, demons will have their way," he announces: unleashed in the human realm, they will take on female form, and will cause all kinds of illness and destruction. After describing this in much gruesome detail, Mañjuśrī offers to the monk a "Sacred Superior Dhāraṇī" which has the power to heal all illnesses and avert all misfortune, not only for the devotee, but for his family, as well as for the country at large. He then exhorts Vayakhyāna to recite the text with trust and devotion: the more singleminded the devotee's recitation, the greater the dhāraṇī's power.

If we take Mañjuśrī at his word, through our work on the text in the seminar, we should have activated the dhāraṇī powers fully. After all, in the ten weeks of reassembling, transliterating and reconstructing the text, we read the dhāraṇī many times over with great attentiveness. Nowadays, it may be hard to believe in the magical power of texts, at least not in any simple sense. But, even if our work on the dhāraṇī did not, pace Mañjuśrī, render us immune from illness and misfortune, it helped protect the text itself from the bad death of historical forgetfulness - a fate not at all unlikely, given the physical frailty of this ancient manuscript, and the political volatility in the area of its origin.

2012 California Wake Up Tour: Day of Mindfulness at Stanford

Hannah Kopp-Yates, Senior, President of the Buddhist Community at Stanford

On Saturday April 14th, a group of monks and lay followers of Thich Nhat Hanh facilitated a day of meditation and mindfulness for people on campus. With the enthusiasm of a rock band on the road and the equanimity of, well, zen monks, the Wake group guided us in exercises and dialogue to bring us into a more natural and joyful rhythm of living. We were encouraged to sink into an awareness of our physical sensations as an anchor in the present. We didn't just sit in silence—we ate, we walked, and even did some aerobics, all the while dwelling in the present moment!



As we held our meals in our hands before eating (for what my growling stomach considered an eternity), we mentally thanked all of the beings who had caused this food to arrive on our plates: the soil microorganisms, the pollinators, the farmers, the cooks, and anyone or anything else that might have been involved. After we offered those grateful thoughts, my food tasted so much more delicious! Remembering that the work of so many strangers would nourish and power me through the day, I felt joy with every step as we did a walking meditation through Kingscote Gardens.

In Thich Nhat Hanh's own words:

People consider walking on water or in thin air a miracle. But I think the real miracle is not to walk either on water or in thin air, but to walk on earth. Every day we are engaged in a miracle which we don't even recognize: a blue sky, white clouds, green leaves, the black, curious eyes of a child—our own two eyes. All is a miracle.

Many thanks to the Wake Up tour for sharing their wisdom with us!

Meet Our New Program Coordinator

A graduate of Mills College, Lori Chinn majored in Art History with a double minor in Ethnic Studies and Music. Before she arrived at HCBSS, she worked as the program assistant, curatorial and administrative coordinator, and program manager at the Mills College Art Museum. She is currently on the advisory board for the Asian American Women Artists Association in San Francisco and her interests include work by Asian and Asian Pacific American artists who explore the intersections between art, history, science, culture, and religion. In her free time, Lori enjoys reading, spending time with family and friends, visiting museums and galleries, and taking photographs using the Instagram app.

Lori looks forward to meeting you at upcoming events and connecting with you on Facebook and Twitter!



2012–13 Upcoming Events

Thursday, October 18, 2012, 7:30 pm
Osmund Bopearachchi (Paris IV-Sorbonne University)
*Alexander the Great and Dionysus in India:
The Greek Interaction with Early Buddhist Art*

Thursday, November 1, 2012, 6:45 pm
Gil Fronsdal (Insight Meditation Center)
The Sources of Compassion

Saturday, December 1, 2012, 1:00 pm
Christian Luczanits (The Rubin Museum, New York)
Mustang, Gateway to Tibet

Please visit our website: <http://hcbss.stanford.edu>
for a current list of events and to sign-up for our mailing list!