



LEKHA

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

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Issue 7 • 2018

Lekha is a Sanskrit word for letter or writing

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“Detail of a drum slab, Amarāvati Stūpa,
British Museum”

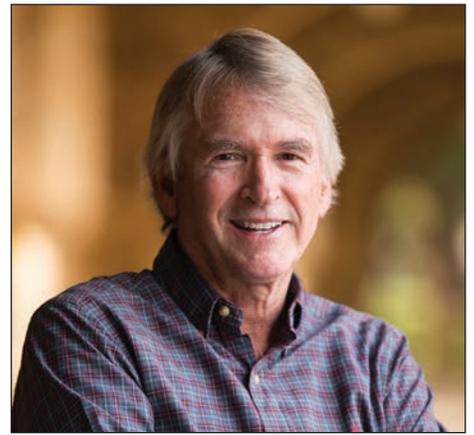
CO-DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Every summer we in the Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Center for Buddhist Studies at Stanford look back on another busy year of events and activities, but 2017–2018 has been an unusually busy year, with more than its fair share of celebrations and discoveries, completions and new beginnings. Undoubtedly the high point came in November, when we marked the 20th anniversary of the initial establishment of the Center with a series of events: a well-attended international conference at Stanford's Humanities Center devoted to the theme of Buddhist Aesthetics, with four separate panels on manuscripts, music, clothing and art; a performance of Japanese *shōmyō*, or liturgical chanting, featuring 15 monks from the Karyōbinga Shōmyō Kenkyūkai; a concert by the well-known Tibetan Buddhist singer Ani Choying Drolma from Nepal; and an exhibition at the Cantor Arts Center, the Buddha's Word @ Stanford, showcasing manuscripts and blockprints held in various Stanford collections. The exhibition, which ran from October to February, was put together by Cantor's Curatorial Fellow for Asian Art Dr Ellen Huang, Assistant Professor Michaela Mross and myself, and was linked to a class of the same name co-taught by Michaela and me in the Fall Quarter, enabling students to explore the various items on display, many of which had never been shown before.

Indeed, putting the exhibition together was something of a voyage of discovery, especially in regard to the pieces collected by the well-known pioneer of the study of Tibetan Buddhism, Walter Yeeling Evans-Wentz (1878–1965), a Stanford undergraduate (class of 1906). Evans-Wentz, who narrowly escaped being a casualty of the Great San Francisco Earthquake of 1906—he tried to climb from his window onto the roof of Encina Hall during the tremors and was left dangling perilously from the gutter—later went on to major in anthropology at Oxford. He spent a lifetime travelling and collecting, gifting many of his acquisitions to Stanford. Among the many treasures coming to light in the Evans-Wentz Collection when we put our exhibition together were a complete palm-leaf manuscript of the Pali

Abhidhamma enclosed within splendid silver covers which was still sewn tightly into the cloth bag in which it had presumably been shipped from Sri Lanka in 1917—it had remained unopened for a hundred years—together with four volumes of an illustrated manuscript copy of the Tibetan translation of the *Śatasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, possibly dating to the 17th or 18th century. The latter may have been acquired by Evans-Wentz in Peking during a trip to China in the 1920s. The complete text of this de luxe production must originally have totalled 14 volumes, whereabouts now unknown, although our graduate student Allan Ding managed to track down one volume in the Rare Books collection of the Library of Congress. These two manuscripts and various other items in the Cantor collection, in the East Asia Library, and in the Special Collections department of the Green Library made a very interesting exhibition, and at the same time demonstrated how far back Stanford's involvement with the study of Buddhism goes, long before the first actual appointment of a Buddhist Studies scholar in the Religious Studies Department in 1980 (Evans-Wentz Professor Emeritus Carl Bielefeldt).

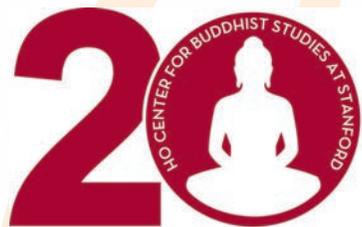
However, Evans-Wentz is not the only important figure in this regard. Thanks to a stint in Special Collections by Professor Peter Skilling following our Buddhist Aesthetics conference, I also became aware of the contributions of another Stanford graduate, David Brainard Spooner (1879–1925), class of 1899, who went on to become Deputy Director General of the Archeological Survey of India, and was responsible for the excavation of significant Buddhist sites like Sahri-Bahlol, Takht-i-Bahi, and Nalanda. Peter Skilling and I spent many fascinating hours with the Spooner Collection, finding such treasures as a photograph of an official meeting with the 13th Dalai Lama at which he was formally presented with relics of the Buddha and an account of Stanford University penned by Spooner for publication in an Indian newspaper. From the latter I learned that students at Stanford in those early days were blessed by the absence of two things from their lives: fees and grades. How things have changed!



Paul Harrison,
Co-Director of HCBSS

Considering the contributions made by these two early Stanford figures and the rich legacy left by them in our archives, one realizes how Stanford's connection with Buddhist Studies goes back not twenty years, but over a hundred. Perhaps there are more such discoveries to be made. Looking in the other direction, to the future, I am also happy to report that the Shinnyo-en Foundation has kindly permitted Stanford to redesignate the Shinnyo-en Visiting Professorship endowment as the Shinso Ito Professorship Fund. We will be conducting a search for this position, with a preference for the study of Vajrayāna Buddhism, in the coming year. This will bring the number of Buddhist Studies faculty in the department up to four, and extend our coverage of the tradition in a way which we have long aspired to do. The Shinnyo-en Visiting Professorship, which has made vital contributions to our program, will cease to be, although we plan to continue inviting distinguished scholars to spend short periods of time at Stanford using other funding. In the meantime, we look forward to the visit of the last holder of the position, Professor Michael Radich of Heidelberg University, who will be with us for the Spring Quarter of the 2018–2019 year. We also look forward to welcoming four new graduate students in the Fall Quarter, and to the start of another stimulating and productive year for the Ho Center for Buddhist Studies.

Paul Harrison,
George Edwin Burnell Professor of
Religious Studies
Co-Director of HCBSS



CELEBRATING OUR TWENTY YEAR MILESTONE

by Irene Lin, Executive Director, HCBSS

*"The Buddha's Word @
Stanford" exhibition
at Cantor Arts Center.*



The Stanford Center for Buddhist Studies was originally founded in 1997. In 2008 it was renamed The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Center for Buddhist Studies at Stanford (HCBSS) as a result of a generous endowment from The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation with matching funds from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

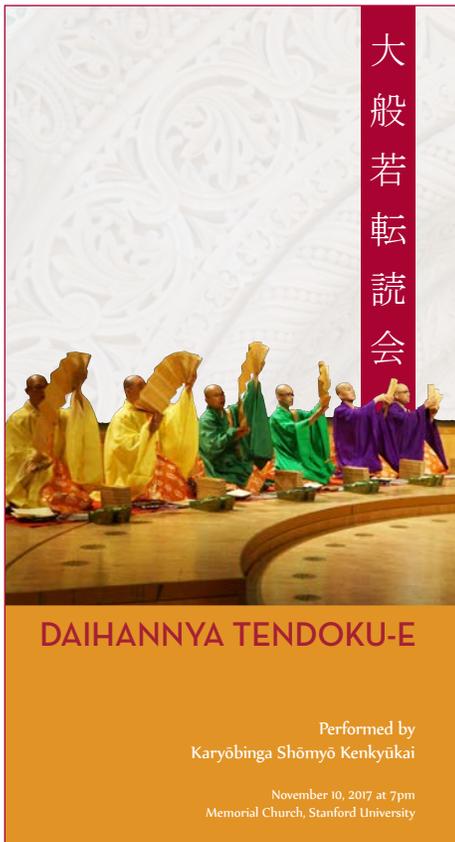
This autumn we celebrated our twentieth anniversary focusing on Buddhist aesthetics as the theme of our events. "The Buddha's Word @ Stanford" exhibition at Cantor Arts Center from October 18, 2017 to February 2, 2018, kick-started our celebration. It was linked to a new course co-taught by Paul Harrison and Michaela Mross. The course and exhibition showcased Buddhist manuscripts and prints held at the Cantor and in Stanford libraries, ranging in dates from around the 11th century to the early 20th century, and originating from various parts of the traditional Buddhist world, from Sri Lanka to Japan. The Buddha's Word highlighted the written word not simply as the visual counterpart of speech but as a thing of beauty and sacredness in and of itself.

As part of the Center's 20th anniversary celebrations, we invited international scholars to a 2-day conference at Stanford on Buddhist Aesthetics. The conference featured four panels: Buddhist manuscripts,

(continued on p.6)



Karyōbinga Shōmyō Kenkyūkai performance of shōmyō: Daihannya Tendoku-e (top); Ani Choying Drolma accompanied by her band (middle); audience at the performance at the Stanford Memorial Church (bottom).



大般若転読会

DAIHANNYA TENDOKU-E

Performed by
Karyōbinga Shōmyō Kenkyūkai

November 10, 2017 at 7pm
Memorial Church, Stanford University

20TH ANNIVERSARY
PERFORMANCE BROCHURES



BUDDHIST
CHANTS
AND
SONGS

ANI CHOYING DROLMA

NOVEMBER 11, 2017
5:00PM

Stanford Memorial Church
Stanford University

Buddhist music, Buddhist clothing, and Buddhist art. In addition to the scholars, we also brought 15 Japanese Buddhist monks from the Karyōbinga Shōmyō Kenkyūkai under the leadership of Reverend Aoki Yūkō, abbot of Hasedera Temple, to perform shōmyō: a vocal music performance of the Daihannya Tendoku-e, a “rolling reading” of the *Great Sutra on the Perfection of Wisdom (The Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra)* at the Stanford Memorial Church. The audience was awed by the moving and beautiful chanting of the monks. This rare performance outside of Japan was enjoyed by all!

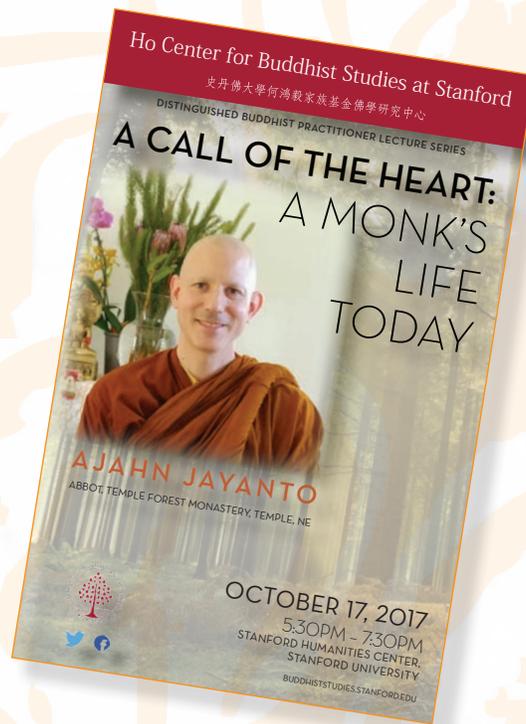
The celebrations closed with a performance of Buddhist chants and songs by Ani Choying Drolma, accompanied by her band. Ani Choying, a Nepalese Buddhist nun, is renowned for her humanitarian efforts and her singing. Her music combines Tibetan melodies with traditional and contemporary instruments. To date she has recorded 11 albums. Her performance was much appreciated by both old fans and new listeners.

We would like to thank everyone who came to celebrate our milestone with us! We appreciate all of our co-sponsors who helped to make this celebration possible. They include the Department of Music, the Department of Religious Studies, the Center for East Asian Studies, the Center for South Asia, the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures, the Office of Religious Life, the Stanford Humanities Center, and the Tibetan Studies Initiative. In addition, we would like to thank our graduate students, Simona Lazzerini, Adeana McNicholl, Grace Ramswick, Daniel Tuzzeo, and Ding Yi who graciously stepped in to help us with all the events, working all hours of the day! Our postdoctoral fellow, Eric Huntington, also pitched in during the celebration. We especially want to mention John McCandless, the husband of Simona. When we were unable to find the ritual furniture for the shōmyō performance, he volunteered to make the furniture with the help of his woodshop students at the high school in Connecticut where he teaches. He then flew the furniture out to the Bay Area for our performance. A heartfelt thanks to John who kindly came to our rescue. Last but not least, we would like to thank our dedicated staff members, Tatiana Deogirikar and Stephanie Lee, who worked overtime for weeks leading up to the celebration and afterwards to make all of the events happen and to ensure they ran smoothly without a hitch! This great milestone celebration would not have been possible without everyone’s hard work and dedication. It is the result of the joint effort of the HCBSS family of professors, postdoctoral scholars, students, and staff!

TT & WF CHAO DISTINGUISHED BUDDHIST PRACTITIONER LECTURES

“A Call of the Heart: A Monk’s Life Today”

Venerable Ajahn Jayanto, Abbot of the Temple Forest Monastery in Temple, New Hampshire (by Irene Lin)



Venerable Ajahn Jayanto

Venerable Ajahn Jayanto talked to us about how he started on his spiritual journey. The impetus came when he traveled to different parts of the world during his college years. After visiting Europe, the Middle East, and Egypt, he went to India and embarked on a personal pilgrimage to discover the deeper meaning of being and truth. Still searching, he continued his spiritual journal to Nepal, Tibet, and Thailand, visiting various teachers as he traveled. By the time he returned to the States, he was a changed person, seeing that there was a way to deepen his experience of life.

Subsequently, Ajahn Jayanto went to practice at the Insight Meditation Society in Barre, Massachusetts and spent 6 months there. He saw that it is possible to discover how we are and why we are through insight or the contemplative path. He found that even though the Buddhist path is one that everyone can travel

internally, the Buddhist monastic life is the only way to fully follow the path, making it a priority over mundane goals. He said, “If meditation in lay life is a tool to develop the heart, the monastic life is akin to putting a battery to it and making it a power tool.”

As a result, in 1989 he joined the monastic community of Ajahn Chah and Ajahn Sumedho at Amaravati Buddhist Monastery in England, a Theravada Buddhist monastery in the Thai Forest Tradition. There Ajahn Jayanto discovered the meaning of living as a renunciant— living in the world and not of the world. Renunciation became something that made sense to him. He said, “It is not to run away from experiences, not judging what one gives up, but rather recognizing that by giving things up and making things simple, one creates an intensity to learn the ways of our mind and heart.” He discovered that

through daily life one finds out how one makes oneself unhappy and suffer. In summary, he said, “It is not enough to learn the teachings of the Buddha, but rather we need to practice or enact the teachings in order to not be caught in suffering.”

After training at Amaravati Buddhist Monastery for eight years, Ajahn Jayanto traveled to Thailand, Taiwan, Japan, and Korea for further practice. In 2006, he returned to Amaravati for a few years before moving to New Hampshire in 2014. There, he helped guide longstanding local efforts to establish a branch monastery of the Ajahn Chah community, the Temple Forest Monastery in Temple, New Hampshire. He now serves as the Abbot of Temple Forest Monastery.

“Re-Focusing Buddhism in Modern Japanese Society: New Dimensions in Contemporary Japanese Buddhism”

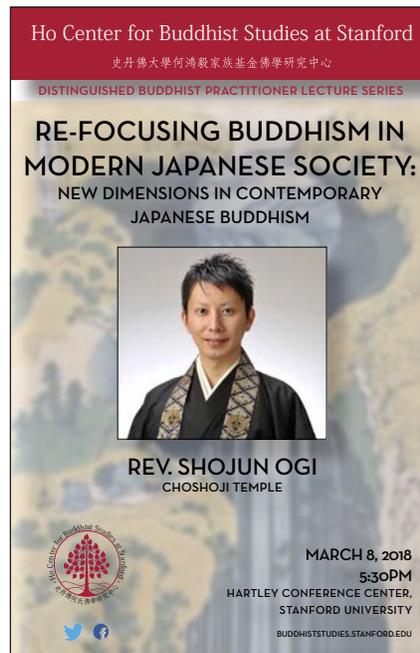
Reverend Shōjun Ōgi, Chōshōji Temple, Yamaguchi, Japan (by Irene Lin)



Reverend Shōjun Ōgi

This year Reverend Shōjun Ōgi, the vice resident priest of Chōshōji Temple of the Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-ha sect in Yamaguchi, Japan, came to Stanford to talk to us about the attempt to re-focus Buddhism in modern Japanese society. Reverend Ōgi began with a historical account of the development of Japanese Buddhism and discussed how especially after World War II, Buddhist temples came to focus on performing funerary rites and commemorative memorials on the one hand and on performing ritual prayers and selling talismans for good fortune, happiness, and safety on the other. However, as Japan began to modernize, the role of Buddhism began to decline in contemporary Japanese society.

Faced with the declining relevance and importance of Buddhism in the lives of modern Japanese, some Japanese Buddhist priests have begun to examine their religion and their role in modern society. In order to revitalize Buddhism and make religion more relevant in contemporary



society, Japanese Buddhist priests, especially the young priests like himself, have begun to create and implement a variety of new ideas and activities to meet the changing needs and challenges of Japanese society in the 21st century.

Reverend Ōgi gave examples of the revitalization efforts. For instance, after the 2013 earthquake and tsunami, Buddhist priests started offering psychological support to the victims. This became the cornerstone for the Japanese government to establish a new religious license for interfaith clinical religious chaplains. These chaplains would go to hospitals, social facilities and disaster-affected areas to offer spiritual and religious care without trying to solicit or promote religious faith. Their work goes beyond religious sectarianism since they work with victims regardless of their religious affiliation.

Another example of making Buddhism more relevant to contemporary Japanese society is the establishment of the “tera

oyatsu club” or “temple munchies club.” Since temples often have an overabundance of rice and sweets they receive as offerings from parishioners, about 800 temples and 300 organizations have started to give rice and sweets to assist single-parent families. It is an economic way for temples to help families in need with resources they have in abundance.

According to Reverend Ōgi, in response to the recent activism of Japanese Buddhist monks, the mass media now has a renewed interest in Buddhism. A major Japanese TV station, Asahi TV, created a new television program called “Bucchakeji” or “Being Frank Temple,” hosted by a famous Japanese comedian duo, Bakusho Mondai. In this new program, Buddhist priests are invited along with celebrities to sit face to face with the comedian duo to openly discuss the practice of Japanese Buddhism, its history and its current state, and to tackle questions from viewers.

Another innovation to bring Buddhism to society is the rise of “tera cafés” or “temple cafés.” Priests from different Buddhist sects are available at the cafés to talk to customers about any issues or problems they are facing. This way people can nourish their body and their mind at the same time.

Finally another area where there are new developments in response to the changing population is the offering of nondenominational or nonreligious funerals and memorial services. Unlike feudal Japan where the government required people to register at a specific Buddhist temple, many people now have moved away from their ancestral hometowns and no longer have an association with their family temples.



Reverend Shōjun Ōgi is a guest speaker on a television program called “Bucchakeji” (Being Frank Temple), Asahi TV station.

In order to meet the needs of new urban dwellers, priests offer funeral and memorial services to those who have no temple affiliation. The two parties enter into a contract specifying the type of services desired and the fees charged. Some services are even available on online websites such as Amazon and Rakuten in Japan.

Today young priests in Japan are innovative in coming up with new ways to make Buddhism a part of everyone’s daily lives. Reverend Ōgi himself is no exception. He has written a number of books to make Buddhism easier to understand for the general public. He even has a book titled “Simple Buddhism in Simple English,” which is an attempt to use English terminology to explain Buddhist concepts and doctrines to the Japanese. Furthermore, Reverend Ōgi teaches at major Japanese companies. The companies ask him to talk about Buddhism to their stressed-out employees.

He introduces the concept of selfless life to those who focus on self-centered lives to help them reorder their minds. His teaching of Buddhism goes beyond employees at business corporations. It also extends to airline attendants. Invited by Japanese airlines, he speaks on Buddhist teachings. The idea is that by learning about the selfless outlook on life, the attendants will be able to reorient their self-centered mind to offer the famous “Japanese hospitality” to the passengers. Finally, Reverend Ōgi also appears on a local TV channel once a month to speak on his regular 10-minute segment on Buddhist teachings.

Closer to home, in his hometown with a small population of 6,000 made up of mostly the elderly, he offers clinical services at his temple since the town only has two clinics with two doctors who are both over 80 years of age. Reverend Ōgi invites doctors to give free health check-ups to the elderly in the morning. Check-

ups are followed by a dharma talk by him in the afternoon. He emphasizes both body and spiritual well-being. In addition to the regular health check-ups, he also attempts to address the rising problem of dementia in his town. To address this phenomenon, he started a dementia café, giving opportunities to patients, their families and their caretakers to share their worries and concerns with others living in similar circumstances.

Reverend Ōgi’s tireless efforts are an admirable example of the sense of renewed purpose and reinvigorated effort of young Japanese Buddhist priests to revitalize the dharma in the face of modern societal needs and concerns. The increasing diversification of the Buddhist priests’ duties and activities shows what “engaged Buddhism” is all about in Japan.

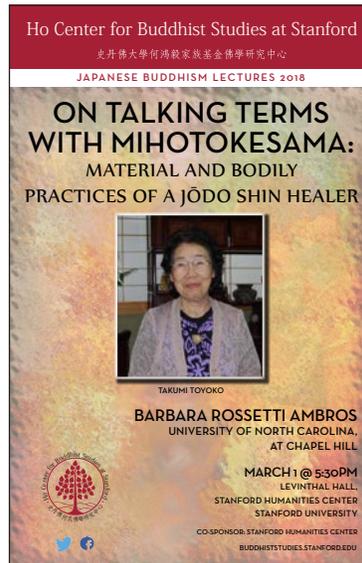
JAPANESE BUDDHISM LECTURES

“On Talking Terms with Mihotokesama: Material and Bodily Practices of a Jōdo Shin Healer”

Barbara R. Ambros, University of North Carolina (by Simona Lazerini)



Professor Barbara R. Ambros



On March 1st, Prof. Barbara R. Ambros from the University of North Carolina gave a talk on Takumi Toyoko (b. 1929), a Jōdo Shin healer from the Hokuriku region in Japan. After her husband got sick in 1976, Takumi began to communicate with the Buddha Amida, as well as other Buddhist deities, kami, ancestors, and animal spirits. During such visions, dreams, and sometimes even states of possession, Takumi employs her body and manipulates icons and other material objects to interact with these divine powers and to heal her clients.

In her talk Prof. Ambros argued that Takumi and her followers challenge the stereotypical idea of the Jōdo Shin school as being against “magic” and folk religion. Takumi in fact does not emphasize scriptural authority, but centers her religious experience on faith and devotion to Amida and other deities, as well as embodied practices. Based on her ethnographic fieldwork and Takumi’s autobiography, Prof. Ambros showed how the life of this octogenarian healer is an example of the construction of Jōdo Shin identity in contemporary Japan.

Prof. Ambros started her talk with the biography of Takumi, whom she met for the first time in 2012. In her autobiography and in the poems she often writes, Takumi employs Jōdo Shin language, but her bodily practices and materiality, and the worldly benefits she can bestow on her followers could be labeled as superstitious folk beliefs. According to Prof. Ambros it is exactly this combination of Jōdo Shin school discourse and folk religion that simultaneously reaffirms and challenges normative understandings of this Pure Land branch.

Takumi’s story is significant for other reasons as well: women’s voices are often unrepresented in the Jōdo Shin tradition. Her decentralized confraternity does not rely on clergy or male authority, but instead is founded on mystical experience, secrecy, and shared vocabulary. Takumi has created a new hybrid tradition, based on existing practices and new visionary knowledge. According to Takumi, Amida gave her a mission, which is bringing the buddhas and kami to the world to heal people’s hearts, minds, and bodies.

Additionally, Takumi has created a special corporeal and material engagement with the icon of Amida installed at her home altar. The presence of the buddha therefore is tied to a specific locale, as with a kami.

Prof. Ambros explained that Takumi often engages in dramatic performances, such as suddenly dancing and singing in public, or having close physical contact with strangers. Her encounters with Amida and other deities manifest exactly in this way and transform her facial expressions, tone of voice, and body movements. This behavior may remind people of shamanic performances or practices associated with New Religious Movements. Yet, Takumi identifies herself as a Jōdo Shin member devoted to Amida and his nembutsu, not very interested in texts, engaged in body practices, possession, and exorcism. According to Takumi, these very different practices do not represent a problem for her and can all coexist at the same time. Worldly benefits and visionary knowledge are the foundation of Takumi’s practice, which is also grounded in the Pure Land tradition.

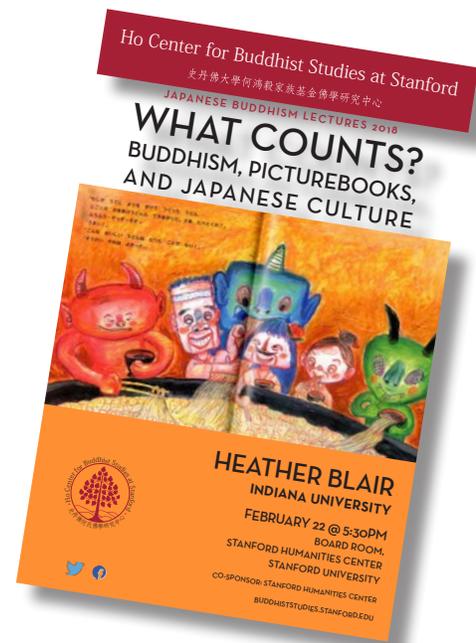
Prof. Ambros concluded her talk by affirming that, even though visions and material practices are often considered heterodox in mainstream Jōdo Shin Buddhism, Takumi’s embodied and affective practices defy hegemonic constructions of a Jōdo Shin identity in contemporary Japan.

“What Counts? Buddhism, Picturebooks, and Japanese Culture”

Heather Blair, Indiana University (by Simona Lazerini)



Professor Heather Blair



On February 22nd 2018, Prof. Heather Blair from Indiana University gave a talk on the interactions between religion, mainly Buddhism, and modern Japanese picturebooks. By drawing from a diverse body of sources dated after World War II, Prof. Blair analyzed religious imagery, plots, and characters in picturebooks in order to understand what being “culturally Buddhist” in modern and contemporary Japan might mean.

Picturebooks imbued with religious references and images are usually published by mainstream secular publishing companies and do not necessarily have confessional purposes. According to Prof. Blair’s fieldwork, contemporary Japanese readers do not see these picturebooks as “Buddhist”, but they still create a doublemindedness among children and adults, establishing an ironic engagement with Buddhist ideas. Moreover, images become as important as the text and help readers better understand the story. This interdependence between text and image sends different messages to children and adults, who receive picturebooks

differently. As a result, picturebooks are packed with many layers of meaning, which create different and even ambivalent reactions in their readers.

Throughout the talk Prof. Blair emphasized how picturebooks allow readers to create an ironic and playful engagement with Buddhist ideas and imagery. This attitude can shed light on what religion can be in modern Japanese society, and how “unmarked” religious symbolism can shape contemporary life. To cite an example, hell is a very common theme in picturebooks, where it becomes ridiculous and ironical, but its popularity points to the fact that it still plays a relevant role in Japanese society. By providing several examples of picturebooks including *Lord Jizō and Going Up*, Prof. Blair demonstrated how children’s literature can create a fun and pleasurable engagement with Buddhism, and even provide some degree of instruction. Religious figures, including buddhas, bodhisattvas, gods, and even demons, are in fact humanized and establish emotional interchanges with the readers. As a result, picturebooks portray

a humanistic view of Buddhism, where deities become part of people’s everyday life. Moreover, despite not having a clerical or confessional agenda, picturebooks often convey ideas of devotion and piety: characters like Daruma-chan are funny, playful and sometimes grotesque, and yet a deeper understanding of picturebooks reveals that these figures can also provide moral and didactic teachings for children.

In her study of the role of Buddhism in children’s literature, Prof. Blair argued that picturebooks promote a doubleminded engagement, where Buddhist ideas are simultaneously questioned and reaffirmed. Additionally, picturebooks allow readers to associate Buddhist (and religious) culture with Japanese everyday life. As a result, Prof. Blair came to the conclusion that children’s literature can shed light on how Buddhism has been constructed for children, and how it operates in modern and “secular” Japanese society. Unmarked religiosity in picturebooks allows us to reflect on what counts in the study of Japanese Buddhism and how we might make sense of it.

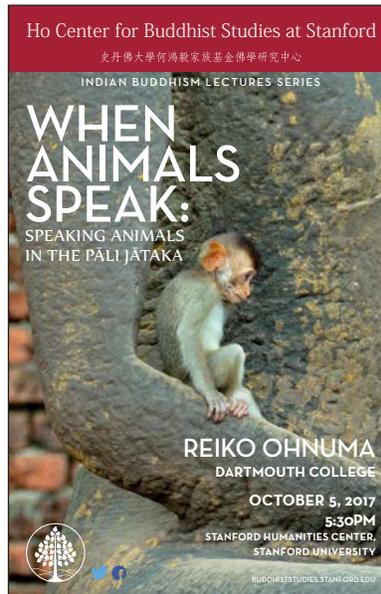
INDIAN BUDDHISM LECTURES

“When Animals Speak: Speaking Animals in the Pāli Jātakas”

Reiko Ohnuma, Dartmouth College (by Adeana McNicholl)



Professor Reiko Ohnuma



Dr. Reiko Ohnuma, Professor of Religion, Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, and Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies at Dartmouth College, opened our Fall quarter programming in October. Prof. Ohnuma spoke to us about some of her research based on her most recent book, *Unfortunate Destiny: Animals in the Indian Buddhist Imagination*.

In her talk, Prof. Ohnuma examined Pāli *Jātakakathā* stories about anthropomorphic animals who think, speak, plan, and reason. Jātaka tales featuring anthropomorphic animals with the capacity for language and reasoning are distinct from the doctrinal texts that understand animals as irrational beings who have limited moral agency. How then, she asks, should we interpret narratives in which animals speak? Do these animals merely stand in for metaphorical human beings, or does their animality continue to matter? What do these animals speak about?

Rather than viewing the anthropomorphic animals of the Jātakas as allegorical

humans, Prof. Ohnuma argues that their animality continues to matter. When given a voice, animals speak of rampant human violence and exploitation of the animal world. Animals communicate to shed a light on the moral shortcomings of humans. In many of these stories, speaking animals display greater virtue than human beings, preach the dharma, and convert immoral humans to morality. Such animals call humans to follow a greater moral standard and to live up to their moral capacity.

Prof. Ohnuma discussed the role of human language itself in anthropomorphic animal Jātakas, focusing particularly on the difficulty of communicating across the human-animal divide and the tragedies that follow miscommunication. She examined stories about animal sacrifice in which language is used to bridge the human-animal divide and to shift our perspective toward the suffering sacrificial animal. In stories like the *Mattakabhatta Jātaka* and the *Lomaḥaṃsa Jātaka*, successful communication between humans and animals leads to humans seeing the

world as a communion of subjects. The sacrificers in these narratives, upon understanding the kinship between humans and animals, renounce animal sacrifice. Other Jātakas, like the *Atthasada Jātaka*, highlight the difficulty of communicating across the human-animal divide, relying on ascetics to translate the cries of animals. Once translated, animal cries speak to the widespread exploitation of the animal world at the hands of humans.

Human language plays an ambiguous role in the Jātakas. While language renders animals anthropomorphic, the speech of animals is rooted in their experience as animals. Sometimes, animals speak precisely to critique the slippery, deceptive nature of human language, as in the *Javanahaṃsa Jātaka*, *Sālaka Jātaka*, and *Ahikuntaka Jātaka*. In these stories, human language, while complex and world-creating, is untrustworthy. In contrast, the cry of animals, while apparently simple, are honest. The honest voices of animals critique the moral shortcomings and greed of humans. In this way, their animality continues to matter.

The Pāli Jātakas use anthropomorphic animals to negotiate the ambivalent relationship between humans and animals. In humanity's relationship to the animal, there is a simultaneous identity and otherness. Buddhist doctrine, with its focus on soteriology, describes animals as the Other to humans. The Pāli Jātakas, however, take a more ethical approach, drawing our attention to humanity's kinship with animals. The Jātakas pull humans away from their self-centered ambition in order to root that ambition in ethical human-animal relations. They suggest that when animals speak, we should listen.

“Lines in Water? On Drawing Buddhism’s Boundaries in Ancient India”

Oliver Freiberger, University of Texas at Austin (by Adeana McNicholl)



Professor Oliver Freiberger

Professor Oliver Freiberger, Associate Professor of Asian Studies and Religious Studies at the University of Texas at Austin, gave a lecture in May that explored the ways in which religious agents and modern scholars forge religious boundaries.

Prof. Freiberger asked where and how we, as scholars, draw lines between different religious traditions. Is there an objective method of doing this? What do we do if various texts and authors disagree with each other? To answer these questions he led us through two case studies: the portrayal of the Middle Way in the Buddha’s First Sermon and the portrayal of the Buddha as the *avatāra* of the Hindu god Vishnu in the *Purāṇas*.

To analyze these texts, Prof. Freiberger introduced a theoretical schema termed “LIMMA” (short for location, interpretation, means, motives, and actors). He argued that in order to understand the variety of boundary-making activities in ancient Indian texts, scholars should consider where the

boundary is being drawn (regarding social norms, ritual, philosophy, etc.) and how actors explain, interpret, and evaluate the difference between themselves and others. This might occur by way of outright rejection, inclusion, subordination, or full acceptance. We must also consider the means by which boundaries are expressed and enforced (through poetry, art, ritual conduct, patronage, law, etc.), the motives behind drawing the boundary, and the actors involved in creating identity constructions.

Buddhist Studies scholars from the nineteenth century up to the present day used the concept of the Middle Way, as illustrated in the Buddha’s First Sermon, to draw boundaries between Buddhism and other ascetic traditions. Scholars would conjecture links to between the Middle Way and Buddhist identity and then use those imagined links to make normative historical statements about what it meant to be Buddhist in ancient India. In reality the First Sermon of the text does not mention other ascetics at all. In addition, other Buddhist texts in the Pāli

Canon appear to endorse ascetic practices. Therefore, Prof. Freiberger argues, the Middle Way in ancient India was a rhetorical tool that addressed extreme asceticism both within and outside of the Buddhist tradition. For his second case study, Prof. Freiberger presented three different texts with three distinct methods of presenting the Buddha’s role as Viṣṇu’s tenth *avatāra*. In the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* Vishnu manifests as the Buddha in order to delude demons with false teachings, thereby making them easier to convert. Here, Vishnu appears as the origin of Buddhism, presented as a false teaching for deluded people. A second story, the *Gītāgovinda*, praises the Buddha (as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu) for taking a moral stance against sacrifice. The *Gītāgovinda* only praises the Buddha, without mentioning anything negative about him. In the third story, another passage from the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, the Buddha appears in the world to protect people from heretics. Therefore, in a single text, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, the Buddha appears as an *avatāra* that can both delude heretics and protect people from heretics. These texts show how, even within the same genre of texts, a variety of actors use the same motif to draw competing religious boundaries.

Given that within the same textual corpus (here the Pāli Canon and the *Purāṇas*) we find multiple boundary-drawing projects, how are we, as scholars, to distinguish religious boundaries? Prof. Freiberger suggests that when reading ancient Indian texts, we, as scholars, should study how Buddhists, Jains, and Brahmins create boundaries, rather than participate in making boundaries ourselves. In doing so, we become more aware of the ways religious actors create a multitude of boundaries between “us” and “them” within even a single religious community.

“Snakes and the Rain: Nāga Imagery, Water Management, and Buddhist Rainmaking Rituals in Early South Asia”

Robert DeCaroli, George Mason University (by Adeana McNicholl)



Professor Robert DeCaroli

Robert DeCaroli (Professor of Art History at George Mason University) closed out our Spring quarter programming with a talk on his current research on nāga imagery in early South Asia. Prof. DeCaroli examined nāga imagery and water management at South Asian Buddhist monastic sites in connection with rainmaking ritual texts.

Buddhist ritual texts that elucidate the details of weather regulation developed by the fifth century C.E. These texts prescribed rituals that employed a variety of techniques, including mandalas, sacred diagrams, and food and water offerings, so that one might control the weather. Nāgas, serpent deities who control the rains, are frequently at the center of promises for proper rainfall within Buddhist *dhāraṇī* literature. Rituals for weather control were effective not through the power of the ritualist, but rather through the power of the local nāgas. These rituals were designed to convince the nāga to assist with water management through numerous methods, including appealing to the nāga's sense of Buddhist morality and compassion, reminding the nāga of the karmic benefit of providing seasonal rains in the proper amount, or asking the

nāga to recall ancient oaths they had made. Some techniques are more coercive, resorting to threats if the request in the ritual is not met. These rites, Prof. DeCaroli argues, are the natural culmination of a process of association between nāgas, water control, and the monastic community. This process began long before these rituals were first composed.

To see this connection, Prof. DeCaroli argues that we must look beyond textual sources and consider the history of Buddhist material culture and monastery construction. Water control was critical for rock-cut monasteries in South Asia, which were built primarily between the second century B.C.E. and the fifth century C.E. In the western Ghats, monastic sites like Kanheri, Ajaṅṭā, and Bedsā featured an elaborate system of gutters and cisterns to regulate and store water. Equally important to engineering solutions for managing water, however, were religious solutions, as evident in images of nāgas at Buddhist monastic sites. Across South Asia, including Kānherī, Pītalkhorā, Ajaṅṭā, Sāñcī, and Sri Lanka, nāga images accompanied cisterns, dams, and pipes, suggesting that nāgas were active presences at these sites and had the capacity to impact monastic life.

The presence of nāga images at monastic sites highlights the connection between nāgas, water management, and the monastic community. Support for this claim is provided by literary sources, including the travelogues of the Chinese pilgrims Faxian and Xuanzang, who wrote

accounts about the ritualized monastic upkeep of nāgas to encourage weather control at Buddhist sites. Stories about the conversion or the piety of nāgas are attested in early texts and images. In conversion tales, typically a nāga creates a water problem, and the crisis impels the people to seek assistance from the Buddha. A Buddhist solution is then provided, usually involving subduing the nāga and turning him into a Buddhist protector deity. These conversion stories tame and bind wild nāgas to Buddhist ethics while simultaneously providing methods of controlling the weather.

Nāga images and stories, Prof. DeCaroli suggests, may not have been intended solely for a human audience. Buddhist narratives featuring nāgas contain reminders to the nāgas about good behavior. In the same way, Ajaṅṭā's wall frescos feature images of nāgas in Jātaka stories, where they are portrayed as seekers of higher spiritual states, who, like humans, can benefit greatly from Buddhist teachings. It is possible, Prof. DeCaroli suggests, that just as Buddhist narratives remind nāgas of their commitment to Buddhist morality, so too these images remind the nāgas inhabiting Ajaṅṭā about their own devotion and their duties regarding water management.

This broader historical context, informed by archaeological and textual records, suggests water management is at the center of Buddhist interaction with nāgas. Buddhist rainmaking rituals, therefore, are not a novel departure from Buddhist practice, nor are they tangential to Buddhist monastic life. These rituals are rather the formalization of a long-standing association between monastics, nāgas, and weather control that can be traced over the course of centuries.

SPECIAL TOPIC SERIES

“Reconfiguration and Revival: Newar Buddhist Traditions in the Kathmandu Valley (and Beyond)”

Todd Lewis, College of Holy Cross (by Yi Ding)

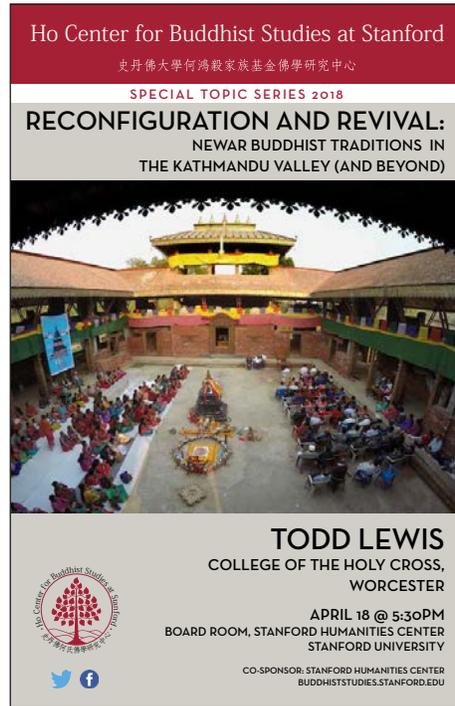


Professor Todd Lewis

On April 18, 2018, Professor Todd Lewis at College of the Holy Cross paid a visit to the Ho Center and shared with the Stanford audience his recent research in the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal.

Prof. Lewis began his talk with a fond memory of the late Stanford Professor G. William Skinner, who encouraged him to pursue the anthropological approach to Newar Buddhism. Prof. Lewis then reevaluated the field, pointing out the existing bias against Newar Buddhism in modern scholarship. He argued that Newar Buddhism as a living tradition of Indian Buddhism remains central to our understanding of both historical issues in Indian Buddhism and modern developments in South Asia.

Prof. Lewis demonstrated elements of revitalization in Newar Buddhism with what he had seen in recent years as an anthropologist. Buddhist merchants,



together with their Guthis (a type of Newar social organization), have been the ones responsible for the wealth generated in the valley. They organize Buddhist events and their families pay for the festivals. The votive market, artisans, and merchants are part of the matrix that makes Buddhism successful. Practitioners have also integrated Buddhist practices from the Tibetan side. Traditionally, different merchant groups form Bājans and the boys march through the streets to make a daily pilgrimage to Swayambhu; in recent years, girls have been allowed to participate in the procession as drummers and they have been joining this important ritual with great enthusiasm. A school for Buddhist priests (*vajrācāryas*) was established and a new generation of Buddhist priests has been educated and initiated. One of the students obtained a Ph.D. degree from India and became a prominent local figure; another *vajrācārya* developed an international clientele that

attracted foreign followers from as far as Korea, Taiwan, and other places. Tantric initiations, which in the past were kept secret for the elite few, have been carried out for affluent urban Buddhists, as a way to “democratize” the Tantric tradition. Social media are utilized to reach out and expand the circle. Old forgotten rituals have been revived, such as the *Nāmasaṃgīti Jātra* and *Vrata*. New rituals have been invented, such as female’s participation in chanting the *Pañcarakṣā*, the most popular apotropaic text in Buddhist history. Prayer flags printed with mantras are made and sold to locals and pilgrims. Most important of all, a new Buddhist monastery sponsored by Newar Buddhists was constructed in Lumbini, the birthplace of the Buddha. During the process, people crossed caste boundaries to finance the project and to cooperate with each other. The Newar construction rituals were brought to Lumbini. In a classical sense, Newar householders and monks turn wealth into merit through both shrine constructions and ritual performance.

Though many scholars have predicted that Newar Buddhism would wither away because of religious competition and the Hindu biases of the modern Nepalese state, there has been success in revitalizing the tradition. Led by younger *vajrācāryas* and scholars, Buddhist leaders have introduced a welter of new spiritual initiatives and institutional innovations, along with gender and caste reforms. Supported by merchants, nouveau-riche landholders, and a growing number of migrants living abroad, Newar Buddhist traditions have shown remarkable resilience and stayed relevant in a fast-changing world.

CHINESE BUDDHISM LECTURES

“Born in the Latter Days of the Dharma: Ecology and Eternity in a Song-Dynasty Buddhist Monastery”

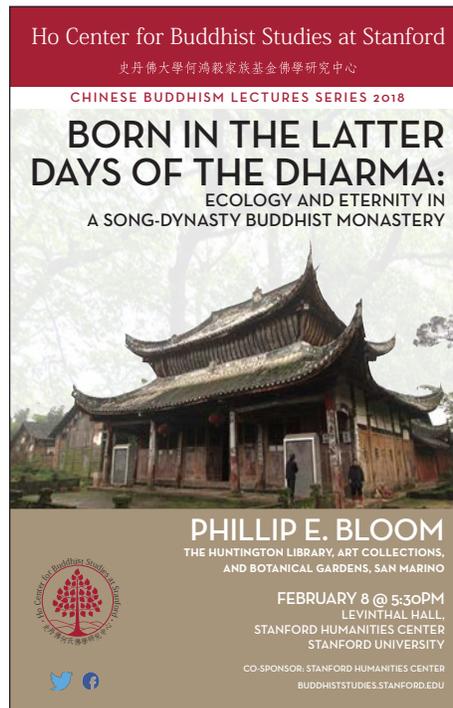
Phillip E. Bloom, Indiana University (by Yi Ding)



Professor Phillip E. Bloom

On February 8, 2018, Prof. Phillip Bloom visited the Ho Center and gave a lecture on his interpretation of an understudied Buddhist site in southwest China. He currently serves as Director of the Center for East Asian Garden Studies and the Curator of the Chinese Garden at the Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens.

Prof. Bloom started his talk with an introduction to the site. The Stone-seal Mountain (*shizhuanshan* 石篆山) complex includes an 11th-century hilltop Buddhist sanctuary located in the Dazu 大足 County, Chongqing Municipality, and the surrounding caves, sponsored by a lay patron called Yan Xun between 1082 and 1096. Yan Xun seems to have been a wealthy member of the local gentry who did not hold an official post but instead made his fortune from his land holdings. The stele inscription composed



by him, of which a re-carved version was discovered in 2003, is the most important primary source for the study of the site. As the inscriptions in some of the caves indicate, the site has a connection with the performance of the “water-land retreat” (*shuilu zhai* 水陸齋), a ritual of universal salvation widely performed in China from the 9th century to the present. It involves summoning the beings of the cosmos to a ritual arena where they are then bathed and offered food, and is performed to generate post-mortem merit. As the inscriptions attest, the “water-land retreat” was also commonly performed to celebrate the completion of images, buildings, and bridges, though it is unlikely that the niches were actually constructed for the constant physical performance of this ritual, for the site sprawls over half a kilometer. Instead, mostly likely a kind of regular offertory ritual was performed before the carvings.

Yan Xun, the patron of the site, writes, “Before and behind, to the left and to the right of the niches, halls, and towers, I also planted conifers and various flowering and fruiting trees. ... In the spring and on festival days, (the mountain) often serves as a site where local people worship and that they visit together.” In the following section of his stele, the text begins to read like a list of museum regulations, for example, he says, “don’t touch the art, don’t damage the plants, and don’t misbehave.” More interestingly, he also proclaims that the botanical features around the sanctuary should be preserved. Given Yan’s claims, it seems possible that Yan conceived the site as an environmental ritual framework for the eternal generation of merit. The site’s images, buildings, and forests collectively work together to inspire the visitor’s devotion to the Buddhist path.

At Stone-seal Mountain, architecture, image, and text work together to transform the natural environment into a site for the eternal performance of Buddhist ritual. The site renders ephemeral ritual eternal through the use of the visual language of ritual. The use of cloud imagery serves as a signifier of rites of summoning and of the subsequent descent of deities; *dhāraṇī* pillars act with their own form of ritual agency; the site as a landscape catalyzes visitors to become part of this eternal ritual process. The site shows that ritual can be much more than the temporally and spatially circumscribed activity that we typically think it to be.

SHINNYO-EN VISITING PROFESSOR LECTURES

“A Possible Buddhist Influence on Chinese Political Thought”

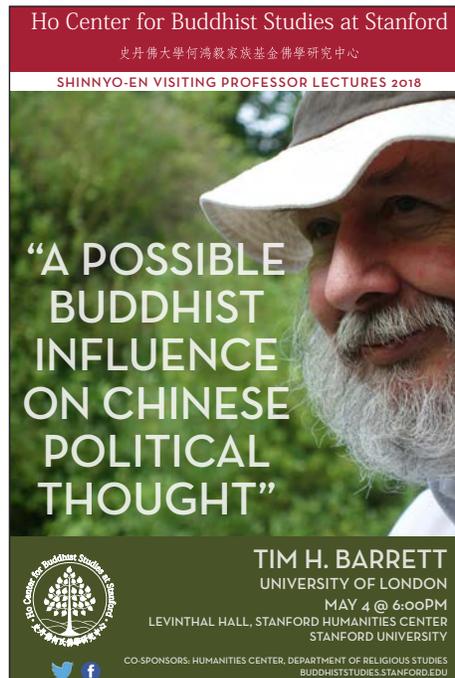
Tim H. Barrett, University of London (by Yi Ding)



Professor Tim H. Barrett

On May 4, Prof. Tim H. Barrett, Emeritus Professor at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, delivered a thought-provoking lecture on the possible intersection between Buddhism and Chinese political thought. He began his talk by bringing Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲's (1610–1695) sharp critique of autocracy to the audience's attention, and then asked the question, “Where did Huang get his ideas?” He suggested that during the course of Chinese history one subversive Buddhist idea might have slipped in and exerted a hidden but not inconsequential influence.

Although it has been a well-known fact that Chinese rulers made use of Buddhism to bolster their power, some Buddhist ideas concerning kingship found in Indian sources are quite negative. For example, while the story of the Buddha clearly involves giving up political power, the rejection of kingship seems to be an



element of Buddhism that did not go down well in China. In general, negative attitudes towards kingship did not flourish in China, where autocracy has been the norm.

However, Huang Zongxi is not the only exception. Scholars have noticed that Deng Mu 鄧牧 (1247–1306), a forgotten political thinker who lived under Mongol rule as a disgruntled hermit, might have provided Huang with his distaste for autocracy and kingship. Deng claims, “In the beginning of mankind, probably no one was pleased about becoming a king. If someone is unlucky enough to win the hearts of the people, he could not really refuse the throne. In those days, the kings ate mostly unhusked corns, bean pods, and coarse vegetables. ... They wore linen garments during the summer and deerskin in winter.” Here Deng is arguing for what we might call an imagined primal state and the “conscriptio” of the king.

Deng Mu's slim volume informs us that he was heavily influenced by the prose stylist Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773–819) in the Tang, who was a committed lay Buddhist. Although Liu's writings have been praised and canonized for their style, his philosophy and political thought have been given short shrift by literati and scholars alike, except for the propagandists during the Cultural Revolution who took an interest in his “anti-Confucian” political views. In his renowned essays such as “On Enfeoffment,” Liu proposes the dystopian origin of the kingship: “As the competition for resources exacerbated the problem of the lack of security, there was a need to resolve consequent disputes. When someone was wise and enlightened, those who submitted to him must be many. When they were told to sort themselves out and did not listen, they must be made to feel pain and so were afraid. From this, rulers, leaders, punishments and governments came into being.”

Where does the idea of kingship by common conscription come from? Aside from Deng Mu and Liu Zongyuan, another possible source would be Buddhism, especially the tale revolving around Mahāsaṃmata (“The Great Appointee”), the first king of mankind in the present world. The story of Mahāsaṃmata is mentioned in the Āgamas/Nikāyas as well as scholastic sources, including the third chapter of the *Abhidharmakośa*. Mahāsaṃmata is described as a king who was appointed by the populace. Although Chinese pre-modern literati tended to conceal their knowledge of Buddhism when they wrote for non-Buddhist readers, a certain level of familiarity with the Abhidharmic accounts can still be inferred.

THE EVANS-WENTZ LECTURES

“On Death and Rebirth, and What Happens in Between: Two Buddhist Accounts of Why it Matters”

Rupert Gethin, University of Bristol (by Adeana McNicholl)



Professor Rupert Gethin

Rupert Gethin, Professor of Buddhist Studies at the University of Bristol and President of the Pāli Text Society, delivered this year’s Evans-Wentz lecture. Prof. Gethin investigated the intellectual exchange and parallels between the Sarvāstivāda traditions of the North and Theravāda in the South by exploring how Abhidharma thinkers articulated and understood the logic of the intermediary stage between death and rebirth (*antarābhava*).

The question that Abhidharma/Abhidhamma thinkers addressed regarding the existence of *antarābhava* was how one could die in one location and be reborn in another location. The dispute about the existence of *antarābhava* is driven by theoretical concerns, rather than religious concerns. The intermediate existence is not, in these materials, a last opportunity to change one’s destiny. Vasubandhu, in the *Abhidharmakośa*, advocated for an in-between state after

death and before rebirth, while the Theravada commentators advocated for immediate rebirth. The Pāli commentators believed that it was possible for one to die in one place and arise in an alternate location, regardless of distance, in the very next moment. The beliefs for and against *antarābhava*, however, did not correspond exactly to a Mahāsāṃghika/Sthavira split or to a North/South split.

Both Vasubandhu and the Pāli commentators were conscious of disputes regarding the existence of *antarābhava*. Buddhaghosa’s commentaries on the Pāli texts do not mention a dispute, but his language shows that he was conscious of the debate. Buddhaghosa, who was against *antarābhava*, conscientiously provides concrete examples where something happens at one place, while its effect happens elsewhere. These examples were intended to demonstrate that rebirth in another location could happen instantly. Contrary to Buddhaghosa, Vasubandhu

immediately acknowledges that some people deny the existence of *antarābhava* in his discussion of intermediary existence in the *Abhidharmakośa*. Vasubandhu employs various examples to refute the claim that causality occurs across a gap, with particular attention to the relationship between objects and their reflections in mirrors.

Prof. Gethin’s analysis of the Theravāda commentarial *ṭīkā* literature revealed that the commentator of the *Kathāvatthu-anuṭīkā* (likely Dhammapala) had the *Abhidharmakośa* in front of him. While there is nothing about *antarābhava* in the *Kathāvatthu*, nor in its commentary or its first sub-commentary (the *mūla-ṭīkā*), *antarābhava* is discussed at length in the late sixth-century to early seventh-century *anu-ṭīkā* commentary. In his commentary, Dhammapala does not mention the *Abhidharmakośa* by name. However, when providing examples of instances where two different things appear to be in the same place in order to refute the idea of *antarābhava*, Dhammapala quotes Vasubandhu’s argument and follows it closely. This demonstrates that the *Abhidharmakośa* was present in Sri Lanka during the end of the sixth century/the beginning of the seventh century.

Therefore, as Prof. Gethin demonstrated, we better understand the intellectual exchange between Northern Buddhist thought and Southern Buddhist thought when we examine Pāli sources alongside Northern sources.

GEBALLE RESEARCH WORKSHOP

“Frames of Scale and Geo-Spatial Transformations in the Buddhist Maṇḍala”

Eric Huntington, Postdoctoral Fellow at the Ho Center for Buddhist Studies at Stanford (by Daniel Tuzzeo)



Postdoctoral Fellow Eric Huntington

This year saw the launch of a new Stanford Humanities Center Geballe Research Workshop proposed and coordinated by Department of Religious Studies Ph.D. candidate and the Robert H.N. Ho Family Foundation Doctoral Fellow, Daniel Tuzzeo. The Asian Representations and Constructions of Space (ARCS) workshop was funded by the Stanford Humanities Center and co-sponsored by the Ho Center for Buddhist Studies at Stanford and the Departments of East Asian Languages and Cultures, History, and Religious Studies.

This generous support allowed the workshop series to invite nine scholars from various disciplines to share their work-in-progress concerning geographical, cosmological, and ritual space in historical Asian contexts from ancient and early modern India, China, Japan, and the Himalayas. Speakers introduced participants to art, architecture, maps, manuscripts, gazetteers, and digital

tools that formulate and depict a broad range of spatial realms. Many meetings were hosted by the new, cutting-edge David Rumsey Map Center in Stanford’s Green Library and varied in format, ranging from book chapter workshops to formal lectures and a digital humanities bootcamp.

Commencing the ARCS series was “Frames of Scale and Geo-Spatial Transformations in the Buddhist Maṇḍala,” led by the new Postdoctoral Fellow at the Ho Center for Buddhist Studies at Stanford, Eric Huntington. Owing to his specialization in Himalayan Buddhist cosmology, art, ritual, and philosophy—the topic of his forthcoming monograph, *Creating the Universe in Himalayan Buddhism* (University of Washington Press)—Dr. Huntington was the clear choice to inaugurate the workshop series. In introducing participants to the forms and functions of Buddhist maṇḍalas in South Asia, Dr.

Huntington set the stage for the ARCS series by explaining varying Buddhist theories of cosmological and geographical space and the roles they play in structuring the ritual lives of Buddhists throughout history, up to the contemporary period. Participants were treated to a variety of diagrams and photographs, many created by Dr. Huntington himself, that demonstrate the ways in which Buddhists have created ritual and ontological universes. As elucidated in the talk and thought-provoking question and answer period, this iterative act of world-creation in Buddhist South Asia serves to construct an organized system in which to carry out rituals while also providing both spatial and methodological frameworks which inscribe structure, order, and formulae for carrying out those very rituals.

No small feat, Dr. Huntington managed to clearly convey an array of complex concepts to a broad audience consisting of faculty, graduate students, undergraduates, and members of the public. In turn, participants responded with a variety of questions and reflections and left intrigued. Dr. Huntington’s talk was a fitting beginning to the ARCS series, laying the groundwork and scaffolding for discussing and thinking about not only Asian maps and cosmological depictions, but also the interrelated active processes of representing and constructing space as a field of ontology, activity, and structuring principles.

GRADUATE STUDENTS WORKSHOPS

“Buddhist Theories of Embodiment”

Reiko Ohnuma, Amy Langenberg, Rajyashree Pandey (by Adeana McNicholl)



Reiko Ohnuma

Professor of Religion, Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, Dartmouth College



Amy Langenberg

Assistant Professor of Religious Studies, Eckerd College



Rajyashree Pandey

Reader in Asian Studies in the Politics Department, Goldsmiths, University of London

In Fall 2017 the Ho Center for Buddhist Studies hosted the Third Annual Graduate Student Workshop, titled “Buddhist Theories of Embodiment.” This year’s workshop was organized by Adeana McNicholl (Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Religious Studies). Her dissertation investigates ghost narratives in South Asian Buddhist literature, taking up as two major themes the role of gender and embodiment in these stories. This half-day workshop brought together three scholars whose work engages with the theme of embodiment: Professors Reiko Ohnuma (Professor of Religion, Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, and Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, Dartmouth College), Amy Langenberg (Assistant Professor of Religious Studies, Eckerd College), and Rajyashree Pandey (Reader in Asian Studies in the Politics Department, Goldsmiths, University of London).

This workshop coincided with the ten-year anniversary of Reiko Ohnuma’s first book on bodies, *Head, Eyes, Flesh, and Blood: Giving Away the Body in Indian Buddhist Literature* (2007). During the workshop Prof. Ohnuma reflected on a decade of research about different types of bodies in

Buddhist literature, including the beautiful bodies of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, the controlled bodies of disciplined monks, the disgusting bodies of tempting women, the nurturing bodies of loving mothers, and the suffering bodies of animals, ghosts, and hell-beings.

Amy Langenberg’s talk bridged material from her recent book, *Birth and Buddhism: The Suffering Fetus and Female Freedom* (2017) and her new research on discourse about the female reproductive system in Buddhist vinaya texts. In both her new research and her recent monograph, Prof. Langenberg demonstrated how the category “woman” was constituted in close relation to the process of procreation. Prof. Langenberg’s careful reading of different vinaya texts revealed inconsistencies in tone across a range of texts, allowing her to discern a distinctly feminine voice from a distinctly masculine voice in writings regulating female menstruation. This suggests, she concluded, that women influenced monastic legal structure.

Rajyashree Pandey’s presentation was based on her recent book, *Perfumed Sleeves and Tangled Hair: Body, Woman, and Desire in*

Medieval Japanese Narratives (2016). In Prof. Pandey’s book, and in her presentation at the workshop, she interrogated the notion of embodiment and agency in medieval Japanese Buddhist texts, arguing that these terms are not universal or ahistorical. In her talk Prof. Pandey particularly focused on the notion of female agency, warning against studies that project notions of female agency onto medieval Japanese literature. Prof. Pandey argued that agency in Japanese Buddhist literature was not the sole prerogative of human beings. Rather, in these texts supernatural beings and even objects have agency.

The third annual Ho Center for Buddhist Studies Graduate Student Workshop encouraged students and faculty to reflect on representations of various types of bodies in South Asian Buddhist narratives, legal texts, and medieval Japanese Buddhist literature. The workshop series is a valuable resource for graduate students to develop relationships with scholars on the cutting edge of the field of Buddhist Studies and to workshop ideas within their own work.

HWEI TAI SEMINARS

“Controversies in the Doctrine and Practice of Self-immolation in Medieval China”

James A. Benn, McMaster University (by Simona Lazzerini)



Professor James A. Benn (center) leads the 2-day Hwei Tai Seminar with faculty and graduate students at Stanford University.

This year's Hwei Tai Seminar was led by Prof. James Benn from McMaster University and focused on controversies in the doctrine and practice of self-immolation in Medieval China. The seminar took place on the weekend of April 21st and 22nd, and allowed students and faculty to read and translate four different texts related to the fascinating and controversial issue of self-immolation.

On Saturday we read chapter 96 (sheshen pian 捨身篇, the chapter on self-immolation) from the *Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠林, a seventh-century Chinese Buddhist compendium, and examined how its compiler, Daoshi 道世 (596?–683), approached the theme of self-immolation, how he justified it, and what kinds of texts he used to support his view on the practice. Throughout the *Fayuan zhulin*, Daoshi mentioned many somatic practices, including burning the body, within the context of the propagation of Buddhism. The author also selected Mahāyāna texts, hagiographical material, and other sources which advocate for the legitimacy

and power of self-immolation. We then translated an excerpt from the *Lotus Sūtra* chapter on the Bodhisattva Medicine King, the *locus classicus* for self-immolation in Chinese Buddhism. This text in fact provided the scriptural liturgy, authority, and legitimation for the practice, and was extremely popular in medieval China, to the point that it circulated independently. On Sunday, after a short recap, we dived into more passages from the *Fayuan zhulin*: the first one, based on the *Mañjuśrī-paripṛcchā* (Questions of Mañjuśrī), provides different reasons to justify the practice of self-immolation, and deploys key Jātaka tales as further scriptural supports. The final text we worked on was the hagiography of Daodu 道度, a dhyāna master who performed self-immolation in 526 in a spectacular fashion.

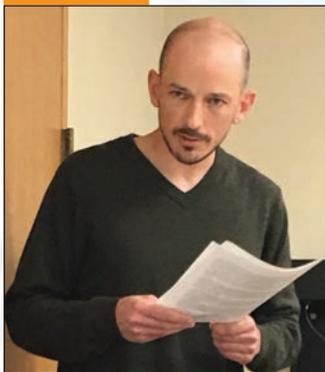
Throughout the seminar students and faculty were led by Prof. Benn's expertise and tried to make sense of how Buddhists in medieval China talked about self-immolation, how they justified it, but also how this category was constructed.

The texts we translated, as well as other surviving sources, helped us examine controversies and other issues related to self-immolation, for instance how it is or is not identified as a form of suicide, whether it is a major offense in the vinaya, and what kinds of outcomes it can produce. Prof. Benn also shed light on several problems scholars face when dealing with self-immolation, including textual transmission, the recycling of old materials, the lack of context, and the issue of multiple voices.

Hwei Tai Seminars, besides being a unique opportunity to work with renowned scholars of Buddhist Studies, are an important occasion to enhance students and faculty's philological skills. This year Prof. Benn reminded us that not only is it imperative to read sūtra material in context, but also that translation is a fundamental practice in the field of Buddhist studies. As a matter of fact, translation is not just a philological exercise, but also a creative project.

Congratulations!

Rafal Felbur



Rafal Felbur successfully defended his dissertation titled “Anxiety of Emptiness: Self and Scripture in Early Medieval Chinese Buddhism with a Focus on Sengrui” on March 8, 2018.

Adeana McNicholl



Adeana McNicholl (Ph.D. candidate, Department of Religious Studies) received a 2018 Mellon/ACLS Dissertation Completion Fellowship Award for her dissertation: “Hungry Ghosts and Celestial Seductresses: Preta Narratives in Early South Asian Buddhism”. The Mellon/ACLS Dissertation Completion Fellowships Program awards 65 fellowships annually. The fellowships support a year of research and writing to help advanced graduate students in the humanities and social sciences in the last year of Ph.D. dissertation writing. This program is made possible by a generous grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Simona Lazzerini



Simona Lazzerini, (Ph.D. candidate, Department of Religious Studies) wrote a book review of *Goddess on the Frontier: Religion, Ethnicity, and Gender in Southwest China* by one of our alumnae, Megan Bryson, in Reading Religion (RR), a book review website published by the American Academy of Religion.

Daniel Tuzzeo



Daniel Tuzzeo (Ph.D. candidate, Department of Religious Studies) was awarded a 2018-19 Mellon Foundation Dissertation Fellowship through the Stanford Humanities Center. His dissertation, titled “Crafting Cosmologies: Buddhist Cartography and the Spatial Imagination in Medieval China,” examines sixth- to tenth-century Dunhuang manuscripts and murals that map the imagined Buddhist cosmos.

Eric Huntington



The Edward Cameron Dimock, Jr. Prize in the Indian Humanities was awarded to Eric Huntington, Ho Center for Buddhist Studies postdoctoral fellow for his book manuscript, *Creating the Universe: Depictions of the Cosmos in Himalayan Buddhism*.

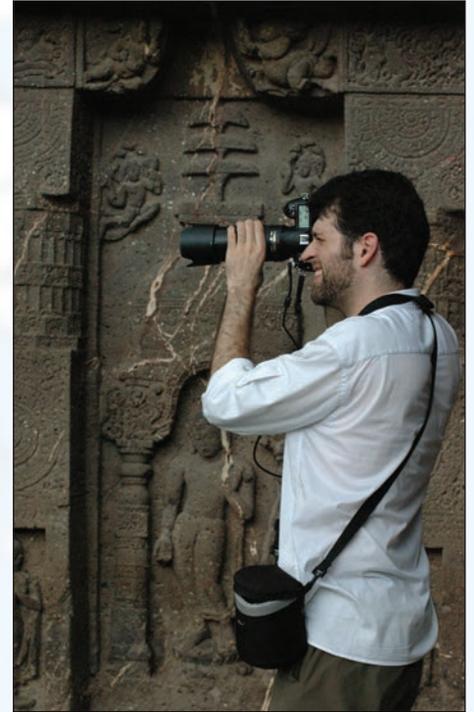
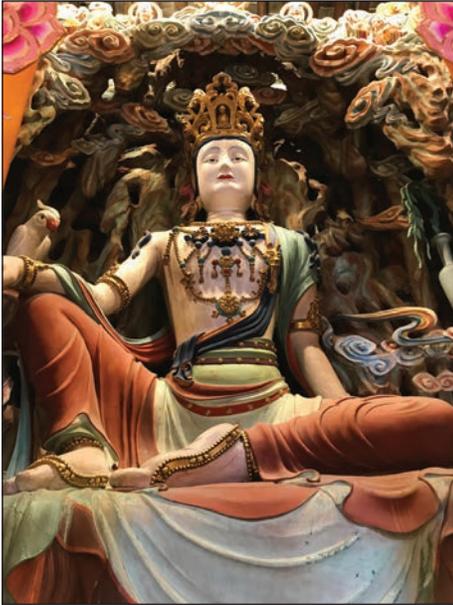
Trent Walker



Trent Walker, Stanford alumnus (B.A. 2010) and a past HCBSS research fellow, successfully defended his Ph.D. thesis, “Unfolding Buddhism: Communal Scripts, Localized Translations, and the Work of the Dying in Cambodian Chanted Leporellos” at U.C. Berkeley on April 25, 2018. He graduated on May 15.

FIRST YEAR REFLECTIONS

by Eric Huntington, Postdoctoral Fellow at the Ho Center for Buddhist Studies at Stanford



(from right to left): Postdoctoral Fellow Eric Huntington at Ajanṭā caves, India; Feilai peak, Lingyin, Hangzhou, China; Longhua temple, Shanghai, China.

It has been my incredible good fortune to join the Ho Center during its twentieth anniversary year, a time of great celebration and unusually plentiful events. One can hardly imagine a more welcoming, stimulating, and productive environment for the academic study of Buddhism.

Without a doubt, the most remarkable feature of the Ho Center has been its incredible community. Irene Lin, Tatiana Deogirikar, and Stephanie Lee exceeded all expectations in producing a nearly endless stream of eminent scholars for the twentieth anniversary conference and the many other lectures and workshops that never failed to educate. John Kieschnick, Paul Harrison, and Michaela Mross made me most welcome in the department and provided wonderful support and conversation. The graduate students also deserve special mention not only for their amazing dedication and collegiality but also for having organized symposia and lecture series, contributed to conferences,

and otherwise shown their leadership in the field.

During this first year of my postdoctoral fellowship, I finalized the manuscript and copyediting for my first book, *Creating the Universe: Depictions of the Cosmos in Himalayan Buddhism* (University of Washington Press), which recently won the 2018 AHS Dimock prize for best first book in the Indian humanities. This work combines methods from religious studies, area studies, and art history to reveal the significance of cosmological thought, practice, and creativity over the long history of Buddhism in India, Nepal, and Tibet. With this project completed, I began a new book on Buddhist approaches to visuality and materiality that will similarly expose the everyday importance of seemingly esoteric realms of Buddhist thought. Bridging these two topics, I also wrote an essay on issues of vision, space, and time in tantric mandalas.

Another truly rewarding part of my first year at Stanford was the undergraduate class I taught on relationships between Buddhist natural philosophy, ritual performance, and visual art. Breaking down traditional philosophical discourse into modern scientific categories of cosmology, biology, and physics, the course encouraged students to appreciate the complex consequences of adopting a Buddhist worldview. By understanding rituals and sacred objects as technology, students also learned to articulate the subtle relationships between topics as diverse as the Indian analysis of fetal development, Tibetan masked dance performances, and worship of the Buddha's relics.

My warmest appreciation goes to all of the faculty, staff, and students who have made my time here so valuable and enjoyable. I look forward to a wonderful second year of continuing scholarship, teaching, and edifying discourse.

HCBSS Staff:

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Co-Director

John Kieschnick
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