



LEKHA

THE ROBERT H. N. HO FAMILY FOUNDATION CENTER FOR BUDDHIST STUDIES AT STANFORD UNIVERSITY

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Lekha is a Sanskrit word
for letter or writing.

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COVER IMAGE:
Vajradhātu Maṇḍala,
Alchi Sumtsek, ca. 1220.
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CO-DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

The first talk I ever heard by my colleague James Gentry was on a seventeenth-century Tibetan ritual manual that outlines a process of sensory deprivation in an isolated, completely dark hut, designed to induce a series of visions described and depicted visually in the manual. Distant echoes of the practice have cropped up with the recent popularity of the “sensory deprivation tank”—one can sign up for a two-hour float for a little over \$100 just down the street. In intensity somewhere between the two, Chinese monastics have long practiced isolation (*biguan*), in which they seal themselves off from the outside world for a set period of time. In one of the most famous instances of *biguan*, in 1914 the reformer-monk Taixu (1890–1947) retreated into confinement on Mount Putuo for a full three years. Food was delivered to him through a trapdoor. But Taixu continued to indirectly interact with the outside world. The Shanghai newspaper *Shenbao* was delivered to him regularly, and he even wrote letters to the editor.

The challenge in such confinements, whether an hour in a tank in Silicon Valley or three years in a room at Mount Putuo, is twofold: first, to at least endure and hopefully experience insight during the time of confinement, and second, to apply these insights after emerging from it. As we at the Center begin to plan for the year ahead, we are trying to learn lessons from our year of isolation in the Zoomiverse. For me, the greatest lesson is the importance of informal, serendipitous

conversation with colleagues, students, and others interested in Buddhism. Often the most interesting, valuable conversations come before and after a talk, chatting with the person sitting next to me or the next day in the hallway when I ask a student or colleague what they thought of last night’s talk. In planning for Center events, perhaps we can find ways of increasing the opportunities for these sorts of unplanned interactions, an aspect of intellectual life we did not appreciate fully until it disappeared for a year.

Despite the obstacles, The Ho Center faculty and alumni have managed to send out some manuscripts through their trap doors. Michaela Mross is putting the finishing touches on her book, *Memory, Music, Manuscripts: The Ritual Dynamics of Kōshiki in Japanese Sōtō Zen Buddhism*, which will appear in 2022 from the University of Hawai‘i Press. Former postdoc Alexandra Kaloyanides’s book on nineteenth-century American Baptists in Burma is soon to appear from Columbia University Press and has already won the Claremont Prize. And alumnus Jason Protass’s book, *The Poetry Demon: Song-Dynasty Monks on Verse and the Way*, is already available for pre-order from the University of Hawai‘i Press.

As the world begins to slowly open up, our graduate students are emerging from their sensory deprivation tanks to travel abroad. Sangyop Lee will defend his dissertation in the summer, and in the fall,



John Kieschnick
Co-Director of HCBSS

begin a two-year postdoc in Heidelberg funded by The Ho Foundation. Simona Lazzerini will leave soon to carry out a year of research in Japan on the deity Hārītī with funding from the Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai. And Nancy Chu is planning to spend a year in Taiwan doing fieldwork on Buddhist responses to pain. Others will return to campus from abroad or closer by as the department opens up and we gradually resume in-person events.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Kieschnick".

John Kieschnick,
The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation
Professor of Buddhist Studies,
Co-Director of HCBSS



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S OPERATIONAL REPORT



Irene H. Lin
Executive Director of HCBSS

The year 2020 was an enactment of “Groundhog Day” for me. Every morning I wake up with the sense of *déjà vu*, and each day passes as the previous day, with no distinction of weekdays or weekends. Without the separation of home and workspace, I find myself spending most of the hours in front of my computer, working through emails and projects, one after another.

The start of the academic year ushered in a host of unprecedented financial, operational, and administrative challenges for the university and for all its constituent parts. As an event-focused center, the result of the cancellation of all in-person events was far-reaching for us. Without enough event-support work, it was with deep regret that we had to cut back on our staff. We lost Tatiana Deogirikar, who had worked as our events specialist for over five years. Our typical robust

event program was substantially scaled back, since many workshops require long hours of intensive close readings of texts in multiple primary languages, whereas other programs benefit from discussions and interactions in person. Consequently, the events that were amenable to remote formats shifted to either Zoom or Webinar sessions online.

In view of the reduced events and the move to online programming, we took the opportunity to make updates and changes on our digital platforms. We redesigned our Center logo, opting for a more modern and minimalist design. In addition, under the guidance of the Dean’s Office website team leaders, Marion Groh Marquardt and Joey Wibowo, and help from our finance associate, Stephanie Lee, we managed to redesign our Center website in a six-week period and moved to a new Drupal 8 platform. We also created a new online resources section on our website, adding information in the following six areas: introductory books on Buddhism, bibliography on Buddhism, Buddhist organizations in the Bay Area, museums and libraries with large Buddhist collections, bibliography of selected Buddhist films, and Buddhist music and chanting. As we hoped, the feedback from the community has been positive, as people found the new online resources to be helpful during the pandemic. On our YouTube channel, we updated our home page and started to upload captions for videos. Due to the specialized nature of our field and the use of foreign terms, rather than relying on Zoom transcripts,

we had to create our own. We started with current videos and went backwards in time to create captions for our videos. We thank you in advance for your patience as we work through a long list of videos from past years. We will continue our efforts to update and expand on our online resources on a regular basis.

In order to achieve our goal of expanding the coverage of our website, social media channels, and newsletters, we were very fortunate to have Dr. Joseph Leach join our team as our new Communications Manager in April! At present, he is working for us remotely from Chicago. His introduction to Stanford was rather novel. At his new employee orientation, he got an overview of the university as a drone flew over the campus, stopping to highlight points of interest. We look forward to welcoming him to campus sometime next year, when I can personally give him a tour of our beautiful campus. For more on Dr. Leach’s background, please turn to page 26. Going forward, Dr. Leach will be in charge of our print and digital media platforms, and will be managing all of our communication channels.

As we approach California’s reopening, I am hopeful that our event program will resume in person in some fashion for the 2021–2022 academic year, albeit with reduced capacity indoors. As of now, faculty and students plan to be on campus for classes in the Autumn, and our staff members plan to work two to three days in the office and the other days from home, due to safety precautions involving public transportation and safe distancing in confined spaces. We look forward to seeing all of you at our events once again!



THE HO CENTER FOR BUDDHIST STUDIES AT STANFORD
史丹佛大學何鴻毅家族基金佛學研究中心

Irene H. Lin, JD, PhD,
Executive Director of HCBSS

BUDDHISM AND SCIENCE LECTURES

By Joseph Leach



Ana Cristina Lopes and James Duncan Gentry, organizers of the Buddhism and Science Lectures

This Autumn, the Center hosted the Buddhism and Science Lectures, which brought together experts in the field to speak about the topic. The series was organized by Professor James Duncan Gentry and HCBSS Researcher in Residence Ana Cristina Lopes. They virtually welcomed four speakers:

- **John D. Dunne** is the Distinguished Professor of Contemplative Humanities and a faculty member in the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He is also a Fellow and former board member of the Mind & Life Institute.
- **Thupten Jinpa** is President of the Compassion Institute, an adjunct professor in the School of Religious Studies at McGill University, and a Board Chair of the Mind & Life Institute. Since 1985, he has been the principal English translator for H. H. the Dalai Lama.
- **Wendy Hasenkamp** is the Science Director of the Mind & Life Institute and a visiting assistant

professor in the Contemplative Sciences Center and Department of Psychology at the University of Virginia. She holds a doctorate in neuroscience from Emory University.

- **David Germano** is a professor in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Virginia, where he is also Executive Director of the Contemplative Sciences Center and Director of the Tibet Center. He is a Fellow of the Mind & Life Institute.

The lectures took place in conjunction with the Religious Studies course, “Buddhism and Science: A Critical Introduction to the Encounter,” taught by Gentry and Lopes. Students in the course prepared relevant readings in advance of each talk and participated in the subsequent Q & A. This provided an excellent opportunity for students in Buddhist studies at Stanford to connect with leading scholars in the field and deepen their engagement with the course’s themes. The course itself “explores the many facets of the encounter between Buddhism and science. It aims to do so

through discussion and debate of relevant scientific papers, traditional Buddhist literature, science and technology studies, and anthropological literature.”

The lecture-series structure supports exploring a complex topic from multiple angles. While they approach the subject from different perspectives, this group of scholar-speakers are clearly in dialogue with each other. For the most part, the speakers specialize in Tibetan Buddhism and Indian Buddhism, which shapes individual lectures and the series as a whole. Indeed, speakers describe Tibetan Buddhists in general and H. H. the Dalai Lama in particular as a driving force in the contemporary mindfulness movement. Another shared link is the speakers’ ties to the Mind & Life Institute, a key organization supporting research on the topic. These continuities enable the talks to reinforce important points and trace arguments across each conversation. Overall, the series provides an excellent overview of current research on the relationship between Buddhism and science.



John D. Dunne

John D. Dunne: “Buddhist Science as Skill in Means”

John Dunne locates his talk in scholarly debates on the relationship between Buddhism and science before delving into a detailed philosophical discussion. He pushes back against scholarship that critiques the idea of Buddhism as uniquely or exceptionally scientific. Conversely, Dunne asserts that there are ways in which Buddhism is, and has been, scientific. He is careful to differentiate between “Buddhist science” and “Buddhism as scientific.” The former is a neologism not found in Buddhist texts, although there are contemporary efforts to apply it.

He attributes the recent origins of the term “Buddhist science” to the Dalai Lama, who coined it to differentiate three spheres: Buddhist religion (*nang pa'i chos*), Buddhist philosophy (*nang pa'i grub mtha'*, *nang pa'i lta ba*), and Buddhist science (*nang pa'i tshan rig*). Dunne describes the Dalai Lama as particularly invested in advancing the contemporary project of Buddhist science.

Dunne proposes that not only can Buddhism be described as scientific but Buddhism itself can push back against what we think of as science or “scientific exceptionalism.” He delineates three ways he sees Buddhism as scientific: first, its commitment to empiricism; second, the idea that getting at the “truth” through empirical evidence is inherently good; and third, its view of objectivism.

First, Dunne draws on the seventh-

century Indian philosopher Dharmakīrti’s epistemological work. Dharmakīrti is concerned with establishing how we arrive at reliable knowledge (*pramāṇa*). The Indian philosophical context in which he operated held that the testimony of reliable persons (*āpta*) constituted reliable knowledge. Dharmakīrti rejects this position and instead proposes an epistemology grounded in empiricism. He argues that there are three types of epistemic objects: what is perceptible by the senses (*pratyakṣa*); what is inaccessible to perception but inferable (*anumāṇa*); and what is radically inaccessible (*atyantaparokṣa*). For Dharmakīrti, the first two categories are the only means of determining what is real. The third encompasses what we can neither prove nor disprove because it is not subject to empirical investigation.

Dharmakīrti’s rejection of testimony raises the question of how to treat Buddhist scripture. He controversially claims that scripture as testimony is not a means of reliable knowledge, except in special cases (*agatyā*) where not making a judgment hinders Buddhist practice. But even then, he asserts that scripture still does not “prove” anything and must be rejected if it is contradicted by empirical evidence. Thus, Buddhism is scientific because of the commitment to empiricism advanced by Dharmakīrti and his inheritors, who reject testimonial evidence and hold that what is real is determined by what we can perceive and infer.

Second, science and Buddhism share

the idea that describing reality through empirical investigation is inherently good. Buddhism holds that suffering is due to a mistaken view of the nature of reality. Eliminating suffering requires developing a correct view of reality. According to Dunne, this parallels science since scientific inquiry into the nature of reality is in itself valuable.

Third, Buddhism and science are compatible because both seek to arrive at an objectively true account of reality. In Buddhist philosophy, reliable empirical knowledge is not subjective—particular to one individual—but objective—a shared or agreed upon reality. This effort to eliminate the subjective is also a feature of the scientific method.

However, Dunne proposes that there are clear ways Buddhism is not particularly compatible with science, and it might be misleading to use the term “Buddhist science.” First, Buddhism is not scientific because it does not share science’s commitment to continual revision of earlier material. Second, Buddhism diverges from science in its critique of objectivism. Although Dharmakīrti’s epistemology is based on empiricism, he also argues that our perception of the world is not ultimately true. Objective knowledge is functional in that it allows us to be and act in the world, but what it is based on does not exist as an “objective, mind-independent world.” What we observe is itself a product of our subjective reality. Dunne proposes that this is a place where Buddhism can push back against what we think of as scientific exceptionalism.

He concludes that there are key differences between Buddhism and science’s goals, namely, Buddhism aims at the transformation of the individual. For Dharmakīrti and others, functional knowledge of the world is sufficient to that end. Dunne leaves us with a question that gets at a key part of what the dialogue between Buddhism and science aims to determine: Does Buddhism achieve this end and succeed in transforming people through Buddhism’s version of science?

Thupten Jinpa: “A Conversation about Buddhism and Science”

Thupten Jinpa joined us for a “Conversation on Buddhism and Science,” a topic he is uniquely positioned to discuss, as his expertise combines both deep insider knowledge developed as a Buddhist monk and advanced scholarly training in religious studies. He is a former Tibetan monk who holds the Geshe Lharam degree, as well as a BA in philosophy and PhD in religious studies, both from Cambridge University. Jinpa also has a longstanding connection with Stanford University as a former Visiting Scholar with The Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education, where he was involved in developing the Compassion Cultivation Training program.

As the talk’s title promises, Jinpa strikes a conversational tone as he offers his perspective on many of the topics and issues that resonate throughout this series. Indeed, this approach mirrors his understanding of the relationship between Buddhism and science, which he characterizes as a dialogue. In the spirit of a dialogue, Jinpa focuses on what both sides contribute to and take away from the exchange. Although the conversation has not always had an equal give and take, it is increasingly common for members of the monastic Buddhist community to engage with scientists as equal participants in a shared cultural encounter.

“Today, we see mindfulness everywhere.”

Indeed, situating Buddhism and science as equal participants necessitates recognizing contributions that have been overlooked or normalized to the point of erasure. Jinpa notes that Buddhism’s contributions are often overlooked because of their widespread popularity among the general public. The ubiquity of certain ideas like mindfulness effaces their particularity, including their origins in Buddhism. At



Thupten Jinpa

the same time, the surge in public interest in mindfulness allows this Buddhist concept to reach increasingly wider audiences and applications. Mindfulness’ popularity also allows other Buddhist concepts to make forays into public discourse, like compassion training. Jinpa sees these concepts and practices of mindfulness, loving kindness meditation, and compassion training as Buddhism’s key contributions to the dialogue.

He also sees Buddhism as leading the way for science in the exploration of human consciousness. Whereas science focuses primarily on the study of the material world and is just beginning to study the mind, consciousness, and cognitive experience, Buddhism has a long history of investigating these topics. He describes a number of other areas where Buddhism can contribute to the dialogue with science, including the sophisticated classifications of early *abhidharma* texts, Dharmakīrti and Dignāga’s epistemology, and *vajrayāna* resources on consciousness, the breath, and so on.

Jinpa’s attention to insider and outsider categories and to shifts in the balance of power between the two sides of this cultural encounter relates to a core question raised throughout the series, namely, who is “driving” the conversation between Buddhism and science. Who is responsible for the birth or emergence of this engagement? And who is determining the parameters of the conversation? Is it a product of nineteenth-century colonial discourse driven by the West, or is it a

longstanding part of Buddhist traditions of which the West is only recently becoming aware? Perhaps, Jinpa asserts, it is a bit of both rather than one or the other.

If the current encounter between Buddhism and science was inevitable, then both Jinpa and the Dalai Lama advocate taking a proactive approach, so that the Buddhist tradition engages with science from a position of strength, rather than being “dragged into” the exchange. Such a move may allow Buddhism to avoid repeating some of the trends Jinpa sees in the interaction between Christian traditions and science, in which religious institutions have “gradually ceded territory” to science and “the domain of religion has shrunk.”

This proactive approach is not without its critics within the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, who argue that too much is lost when Buddhism is decontextualized and divorced from its ethical foundations. Both Jinpa and the Dalai Lama are aware of this criticism and argue that Buddhism’s adaptation is fine so long as all are clear on what they are doing. Indeed, the process of developing those aspects of Buddhism that can be widely shared, regardless of religion, will also result in identifying the “non-negotiable” aspects of Buddhism, those parts of the tradition that cannot be set aside or “secularized,” like the concepts of rebirth, karma, and non-material consciousness. Such a move is necessary for Tibetan Buddhists, Jinpa cautions, “so we don’t lose our soul in the process of translation.”



Wendy Hasenkamp

Wendy Hasenkamp: “The Science of Meditation: Overview of Contemplative Science”

Wendy Hasenkamp is the Science Director of the Mind & Life Institute (MLI), the organizational juggernaut in the contemporary project of promoting Buddhism and science. Hasenkamp’s talk provides a detailed introduction to a particular area of the dialogue between Buddhism and science. She marshals a suite of evidence produced in recent decades on the relationship between meditation, contemplative practices, and neuroscience.

Hasenkamp begins with a broad history of Buddhism’s move west, emphasizing Buddhism’s adaptability to new cultural contexts. The project of engaging with science began in the 1980s, some decades after the advent of Buddhism in the U.S. She notes that the Buddhism encountered is often described as “hybrid Buddhism,” “American Buddhism,” or “Modern Buddhism,” as a way to differentiate it from the ways it is practiced in Asia and in “traditional cultures.”

Hasenkamp identifies the MLI’s efforts as the real impetus for initiating this dialogue. The MLI was founded in 1991 by the Dalai Lama, neuroscientist Francisco Varela, and entrepreneur Adam Engle. The group envisioned MLI as a means to bridge the gap between science and contemplative practices in order to make science itself more humane and broaden the scope of its conclusions.

She describes the scope and methods of contemplative science projects as very interdisciplinary, spanning physics, philosophy, religious studies, anthropology, cognitive science, neuroscience, psychology, and clinical applications. These projects also pursue two modes of investigation, third-person inquiry, which she characterizes as an objective view, and first-person inquiry, characterized as a subjective view. She equates the first mode with science and the second with Buddhism and contemplative traditions. Given these two realms, a key question for the MLI is: How do we bring these two together and merge third-person and first-person inquiry?

“From my perspective, the engagement between science and Buddhism is really not trying to ‘prove’ that Buddhism is true. That’s sometimes discussed, and I’m sure there are some folks who might take that thread. From my perspective it’s more of a joint engagement in terms of trying to understand our minds [and...] reduce suffering.”

Most research into science and contemplative practice pursues one of two spheres: basic science or clinical and applied science. Thus researchers are simultaneously investigating what is happening in contemplative practice and developing ways to apply those findings. The sphere of applied science produced two main categories of application, mindfulness-based practices and compassion-based training.

At the same time as research into

contemplative practices really took off, there was a surge of popular and media interest in mindfulness and meditation. This complicates public perceptions of research on contemplative practices, especially since media coverage tends to make “bold claims, often based off of the results of one small study.” Media hype also prompts scientific pushback, leading in part to recent efforts to develop more rigorously designed studies. Hasenkamp touches on some of these design elements, like randomized controlled trials and identifying contextual effects, as well as the difficulties of developing studies in a relatively young field.

One area studies are illuminating is meditation itself, how it is defined and what happens in the brain when it takes place. The most widely used definition in the field describes three types of meditation: Focused Attention (FA), Open Monitoring (OM), and Compassion/Loving Kindness. Hasenkamp points out that brain imaging studies cannot produce a “raw” or “static” brain image; they can only highlight contrasts between moments or states. Thus, examining the brain during a moment of meditation is always a comparison to the brain in a different or non-meditative state. Researchers noticed that there were regions of the brain that were active during “rest periods” when the subject was not meditating. This state is described as the “default mode network.” Scientists began to equate this default mode network with “mind wandering” during meditation, those moments when concentration slips or the mind shifts its focus. Hasenkamp observes that while these moments of mind wandering can be stressful for those meditating, they provide an interesting area for researchers to investigate, particularly the possible benefits mind wandering provides for the brain.

Hasenkamp’s talk explores many more aspects of this emerging field. Her presentation is available on the Center’s website and includes a detailed slide presentation with references to numerous studies and their results.

David Germano: “Buddhist Meditation and Higher Education”

David Germano observes that the subject of his talk, the connection between Buddhist meditation and higher education, reflects the two sides of his own life. He describes spending his entire life in higher education, first as a student and later as a faculty member at the University of Virginia (UVA). He also spends extensive time in Asia, primarily at Tibetan religious centers and monasteries. Thus, his life has been shaped by the two kinds of institutions he aims to bring together in his talk. He poses four questions about higher education and the conditions young people face in the contemporary U.S.:

What should be the purpose of higher education?

How do you think young people are doing in terms of well-being?

What is contemplation?

What does it mean to flourish as a student, and how should education contribute to student flourishing?

Germano tackles the second question first, where his response is quite clear. He thinks young people today face an “exponential, historic degradation of well-being” and are worse off than they were in recent decades. This decline challenges educational institutions to respond and change. Key to such a response is identifying what is causing this degradation.

Germano identifies factors in the decline as digital technology, social media, and surveillance capitalism, which modify attentional practices and behaviors from a young age. Other factors impacting well-being include the environmental crisis, racial inequity, socioeconomic inequity, and the social and political environment’s current hostility. These factors cause young people to worry about the future and the widespread suffering they observe in the present. Lastly, he notes that, paradoxically, “there’s been a change in the nature of change,” which has accelerated. And the changes themselves



David Germano

are increasingly complex, which makes coping difficult.

In the face of this, Germano sees the current moment as a tipping point that calls for the transformation of higher education. His focus is on contemplation’s role in this transformation and in promoting student flourishing. He defines flourishing as a “positive dynamic presence” and “a capacity to be adaptive and resilient in the face of change.”

Germano argues that contemplation is central to promoting student resilience. If one of the drivers of degradation is certain ways attention is shaped, then contemplation provides a method for shaping attention. There are a number of ways to conceive of what contemplation is and means: a pause, a deep breath, a moment of reflection. His own view is of contemplation as an aesthetic practice rather than a regulatory tool. Any version of contemplation provides a space for exploration and intentionality, for awareness of why one is doing what one is doing and the values that motivate the action. Achieving flourishing at an individual level requires planning on an organizational and communal level.

So what is contemplative practice? Germano lists a range of things that might fall under that rubric, including physical elements like breathing, verbal elements like chanting, cognitive elements, sensory elements like visualizations, material elements like a cushion, affective elements, and contemplative gestures.

This vast scope calls for a way to organize and describe contemplative practices and their resulting experiences so they can be translated to the university. For example, Tibetan Buddhism utilizes a four-fold structure of preparatory practice, preliminary practice, main practice, and concluding practice. These elements structure individual practices but are also tools for organizing multiple practices, much like a grammar provides the tools of syntax for organizing language. Continuing the metaphor, Germano advocates developing a literacy of contemplation that supports discussing the full range of meditative techniques, procedural instructions, and experiences to support adaptation and fit the needs of the individual student.

Germano pivots to how this relates to promoting student flourishing at UVA, where incorporating contemplative practices in the classroom is not limited to courses in religious studies; it is relevant to any class or discipline. Given this range, he prioritizes adaptability rather than a set syllabus. He lists a number of benefits incorporating a pedagogy of flourishing and contemplation offers, as well as examples of how this pedagogy manifests at UVA, from seven-day retreats for fraternities and sororities to mass seven-minute meditations outside on the campus’ central lawn. Germano’s wide-ranging discussion delineates a host of possibilities for universities interested in incorporating aspects of contemplative practice.

TIBETAN STUDIES INITIATIVE

Christian Luczanits: “New Research on Alchi Monastery, Ladakh”

By Joseph Leach



Christian Luczanits

Art historian Christian Luczanits gave a timely talk surveying recent research on the Alchi temple complex in Ladakh, northwest of the capital Leh. This important Tibetan Buddhist site consists of several temples and *stūpas* with extensive wall paintings, inscriptions, and sculptures. New research on Alchi is

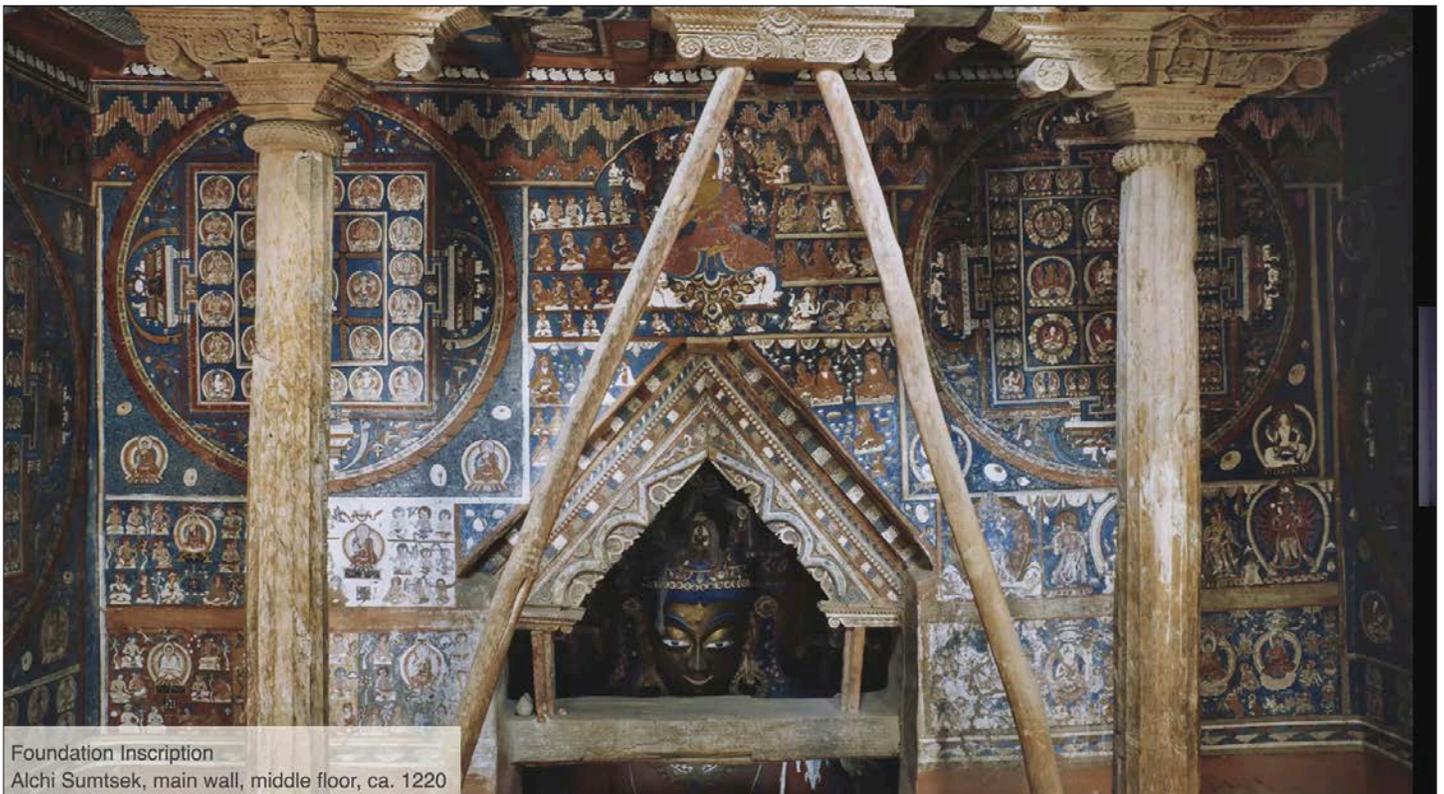
collected in a forthcoming two-volume set that includes a reissue of Roger Goeppe and Jaroslav Poncar’s foundational 1996 work, *Alchi*, which is a key source for studying the temple complex. Thus, the updated publication helmed by Luczanits and others is warmly welcomed.

The two most significant structures in the temple complex are the Dukhang or assembly hall and the three-tiered Sumtsek temple, both of which are the focus of Luczanits’s talk. Luczanits covers much ground in his wide-ranging discussion and touches on several perennial issues. The date of the Sumtsek is an ongoing topic of scholarly debate; most scholars propose that it dates to either the eleventh or thirteenth centuries. Luczanits’s support for the thirteenth century is outlined in this lecture. In addition to discussing the Sumtsek’s date, he explores new findings related to the iconography of a number of wall paintings, Alchi’s relationship to the

Drigung tradition, and the social status and context of Alchi’s founders.

Clarifying Alchi’s dates, iconography, and social context is of broader importance to the study of Buddhism in Tibet and the Himalayas for a number of reasons. Alchi is a rare surviving example of the art and architecture of its time. Its iconography and style attest to the relationships between Ladakh, Western Tibet, and Kashmir. It exemplifies a transitional period marked by the rise of new lineages in Tibetan Buddhism. And it points to a growing emphasis on highest yoga tantra in Western Tibet. Luczanits’s discussion of Alchi’s iconography and inscriptions addresses these points and many others, including proposing a number of new iconographic identifications and interpretations.

Scholars have long been captivated by the small painting of a so-called Green Tārā or Śyāmatārā in the Sumtsek, with



Foundation Inscription, Alchi Sumtsek, main wall, middle floor, ca. 1220. Photography by Jaroslav Poncar.



Indian Siddha Padampa Sangye (d. 1117), Alchi Sumtsek, ca. 1220. Photography by Jaroslav Poncar.

its detailed stippling and distinctive modeling. However, its color and iconography are somewhat unusual. Luczanits proposes identifying the figure as a unique form of Mahāsānti Tārā, which combines elements of multiple iconographic forms, rather than as Green Tārā. For example, the figure holds a blue lily flower in place of either a blue lotus or a white lily. He argues that this combination of elements and the trident she holds, which is particular to the Kashmiri region, mark this figure as a local, non-canonical form of the deity that eventually disappeared.

Luczanits also weighs in on Alchi's historical relationship to the Drigung tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, which is a source of much debate because, among other reasons, it is related to dating the Sumtsek temple. The Sumtsek contains a mural depicting a Drigung teaching lineage with lineage figures identified by inscriptions. They include the monk

Tsultrim 'Od, one of the founders of the Sumtsek, and Jigten Gonpo Rinchen Pel (1143–1217), also known as Drigungpa, who founded the Drigung Kagyu lineage in 1179. Scholars advocating an earlier eleventh-century date see this lineage as a later addition, given Drigungpa's dates, and reject any Drigung affiliation in the temple's foundation.

Luczanits takes a somewhat equivocal position on the issue of Drigung affiliation. He states that the lineage painting in the Sumtsek and the portrait of Drigungpa in the Great Stūpa at Alchi were included because Tsultrim 'Od himself was a Drigung adherent. Luczanits characterizes him as a local family priest who presumably obtained a relic of Drigungpa to enshrine in the Great Stūpa. However, Luczanits also argues that Alchi "probably never was" a Drigung monument. Although Tsultrim 'Od may have personally followed Drigungpa and erected a *stūpa* for him, he was not solely

or primarily responsible for the Sumtsek's construction, which Luczanits argues was produced by a local family as their personal temple. This explains the absence of any reference to Drigungpa in the temple's foundation inscription. Thus, it is inaccurate to describe the Alchi complex as a whole or the Sumtsek specifically as a Drigung monument. This does raise the question of what criteria in addition to a lineage painting, portraits of the tradition's founder, and a likely reliquary of that founder would be necessary to unequivocally qualify Alchi as a Drigung structure.

These and the many other important topics that Luczanits discusses in his lecture are likely developed in greater detail in the forthcoming multi-volume reissue of *Alchi*. His lecture thus provides a welcome preview and builds anticipation for that work's publication.

T. T. & W. F. CHAO DISTINGUISHED BUDDHIST PRACTITIONER LECTURES

Venerable Miao Guang in Conversation with Professor John Kieschnick

By Joseph Leach



Venerable Miao Guang

Professor John Kieschnick spoke with Venerable Miao Guang about her life as a Buddhist monastic in Taiwan and Australia. As their conversation attests, Ven. Miao Guang is a particularly appropriate choice for the T. T. & W. F. Chao Distinguished Buddhist Practitioner Lectures, as her life and experiences bridge both the monastery and the university.

Kieschnick asks Ven. Miao Guang to begin, as many Buddhist monastic biographies do, with a synopsis of her family background. Ven. Miao Guang was born in Taiwan. She recalls an early awareness of Buddhism through her mother's practice, although she did not engage with it directly herself. When she was 11, her father moved the family to Australia, in part so she and her siblings would have better educational opportunities. In Australia, she grappled with adapting to linguistic, cultural, and educational differences, and had many conversations with her predominantly Christian classmates about these topics.

She continued to reflect on these differences in college, as a student at the University of New South Wales, where she majored in Asian studies. She recalls that her relationship to Buddhism changed in this part of her life. The kind of autonomous learning and critical thinking

she was encouraged to pursue in college prompted her to reexamine Buddhism, leading to a deeper engagement with the tradition in her twenties. This deepening engagement eventually led her to pursue ordination and move back to Taiwan shortly after graduating.

Kieschnick notes that ordination often elicits complicated responses from one's family members and asks Ven. Miao Guang how her family reacted to her decision. While her mother and siblings were more supportive, her father was quite opposed.

“My father called my ordination a family revolution.”

It caused a rift between them, although they were able to reconnect some years later. Reflecting on this, Ven. Miao Guang shares some advice for other young monastics facing family resistance. She says to be firm in your motivation. Knowing your own reasons for making this decision will help you convey that motivation clearly to your family. Be kind to your family throughout the process and give them time to come to terms with it. Share your life with them, and do not cut them off. They will have an easier time adjusting if they can see and understand what you are doing.

Kieschnick asks if her own expectations for ordination matched her experiences of monastic life. Ven. Miao Guang had fairly realistic expectations based on her participation in a local temple during her time at university. She certainly faced different circumstances in Australia and Taiwan, noting that she had to adapt to the kinds of changes anyone coming from another country would. Thus she experienced two different periods of

negotiating a new cultural, educational, and religious environment, her initial move from Taiwan to Australia as a child and her subsequent move back to Taiwan as an adult.

In Taiwan, she joined the Fo Guang Shan Institute of Humanistic Buddhism and completed an MA in Buddhist Studies at the affiliated Fo Guang University. Fo Guang Shan (FGS) or “Buddha’s Light Mountain” is the largest and one of the most prominent Buddhist monasteries in Taiwan, and has several branch universities. Her engagement with Buddhism continued to encompass both a monastic life and university studies. Ven. Miao Guang also considered pursuing a PhD, but her teacher discouraged this, advising her to “get a PhD in life” instead! Ven. Miao Guang has studied at and served the FGS throughout her career, and is currently the Deputy Chancellor for International Affairs at the FGS Institute of Humanistic Buddhism. She is actively involved in a number of other FGS projects, including serving as the Director of the Fo Guang Dictionary of Buddhism English Translation Project. She is also the personal English interpreter for her teacher, the Venerable Master Hsing Yun, who founded the FGS. After bringing the discussion of her life and career up to the present, Ven. Miao Guang closed the interview with a brief biography of her teacher, highlighting the various institutions he founded and fosters.

Many aspects of Ven. Miao Guang’s life and decision to ordain are distinctly contemporary and influenced by the particularities of her experiences. But at the same time, as Kieschnick highlights in his questions throughout the conversation, aspects of her life and engagement with Buddhism resonate with longstanding themes and traditions of Buddhist monastic life, making this conversation all the more relevant and widely applicable for audiences.

Venerable Bhikkhunī Veditadhammā in Conversation with Professor Paul Harrison

By Joseph Leach

Venerable Bhikkhunī Veditadhammā joined us over Zoom from Vietnam to speak with Professor Paul Harrison. Ven. Bhikkhunī Veditadhammā is the Abbess of Vien Khong Nunnery and Deputy Head of the Department of Dharma English at Vietnam Buddhist University in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. We are particularly fortunate to have Ven. Bhikkhunī Veditadhammā join us for this series because, as Harrison notes, Vietnamese Buddhism is quite understudied in academia, making this an instructive conversation for all.

Ven. Bhikkhunī Veditadhammā begins the conversation by discussing her background and ordination. Like this year's other T. T. & W. F. Chao Distinguished Buddhist Practitioner, Ven. Bhikkhunī Veditadhammā decided to become a nun after completing university. She describes that decision as motivated by an awareness of suffering. Her childhood was shaped by the events and aftermath of the war in Vietnam, which acquainted her early on with the realities of suffering. Her other motivating factor was viewing family life as less than ideal. In addition to seeing her own parents struggle to raise their large family, she witnessed her siblings face similar challenges within their own families. Thus, life as a Buddhist monastic provides a path of freedom in multiple senses, as well as a means to help others while in pursuit of that freedom. Ven. Bhikkhunī Veditadhammā's career also encompasses extensive monastic and academic training. After her ordination in 1991, she continued to pursue both monastic and university studies, completing her MA, MPhil, and PhD in Buddhist Studies at University of Delhi.

Ven. Bhikkhunī Veditadhammā next discusses her involvement in the international movement to promote the ordination of women, an issue highlighted in one of the films the Center screened

this year. Although, historically, there were lineages of fully ordained Buddhist nuns, they eventually died out in most places. Because the *vinaya* rules require the presence of a quorum of ordained nuns in order to ordain a new nun, the lineages were not revived. In recent years, there has been a push to reestablish full ordination for nuns, in some cases successfully. When she was in India, Ven. Bhikkhunī Veditadhammā heard that a Theravāda *bhikkhunī saṅgha* had been reestablished in Sri Lanka. She traveled there in 2002 and took vows as a fully ordained nun, becoming one of the first Theravāda *bhikkhunīs* in Vietnam. However, she points out that most nuns in Vietnam were either not aware of this possibility or unable to travel to pursue it. This motivated her to help others obtain full ordination.

In 2012, she organized the International Bhikkhunī and Samaneri Ordinations at Mahāprajāpatī Nunnery in Vaiśālī, India, where a truly international group of about thirty nuns received full ordination. This location is significant because it is where the Buddha is said to have ordained the first nun, his aunt and foster mother, Mahāprajāpatī. Since then, she has worked with others to continue to ordain nuns in many countries. The community of Theravāda nuns Ven. Bhikkhunī Veditadhammā fosters in Vietnam, as elsewhere, faces some resistance from within the *saṅgha*, as well as a lack of government recognition in the form of national certification.

The conversation then turns to the coexistence of Mahāyāna and Theravāda Buddhism in Vietnam. Ven. Bhikkhunī Veditadhammā explains that Mahāyāna is in the majority in Vietnam, and within the Mahāyāna, most practice either Zen/Chan or a Pure Land tradition, often oriented toward Amitābha Buddha. She estimates that Theravāda traditions only make up about ten percent of Buddhists in Vietnam



Venerable Bhikkhunī Veditadhammā

and tend to be located in the southern part of the country. A primary practice for Theravāda in Vietnam is *vipassanā*, and monasteries typically organize retreats of varying lengths for both lay and monastic practitioners. Although the community is small, it engages with the flourishing Theravāda communities in other parts of Southeast Asia. For the most part, she says that the Mahāyāna and Theravāda communities peacefully coexist, although there are some extremists within both groups.

Before turning to the Q & A, they discuss Ven. Bhikkhunī Veditadhammā's current position at Vietnam Buddhist University, touching on language offerings, courses, and degree options. In response to Harrison's question about how she negotiates heading both a university department and a monastery at the same time, Ven. Bhikkhunī Veditadhammā describes relying on her communities at both institutions for their support. She also notes how helpful it is for students to have access to digital resources like recorded video lectures when she needs to be away from one campus or the other, something we have all certainly experienced gratitude for in the past year!

T. T. & W. F. CHAO SPECIAL SERIES: MINDFULNESS PRACTICE WORKSHOPS

By Joseph Leach



Irene H. Lin, workshop host

During the Spring Quarter, we hosted the T. T. & W. F. Chao Special Series: Mindfulness Practice Workshops in response to the challenges many experienced this year. This four-part series invited teachers to give a short talk and then lead a mindfulness practice, followed by a Q & A with the audience. Workshops were held on weekdays during the lunch hour, when we might have a bit of time to take a welcome break from the workday. They proved quite popular and drew a sizable audience of regulars, who attended every session. In addition to a number of local participants, the workshop's virtual Zoom structure allowed participants to join us from much farther afield. The audience was quiet at times and lively at others, but each of these four teachers excelled

at meeting participants wherever they were at that moment: at home or the office, shy or engaged, familiar friends or new faces, new or adept practitioners.

While each of the teachers designed their talks and practices independently, a number of themes tie these workshops together. Foremost among them is a focus on the body and the breath. This is perhaps unsurprising since—as most of the teachers note—the *Satipaṭṭhānasutta* or “Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness,” an important text for mindfulness-based practices, emphasizes both. In the *Satipaṭṭhānasutta*, the Buddha describes the four foundations of mindfulness as the contemplation of the body, feelings, mind, and phenomena. The first of these, mindfulness of the body, includes fourteen exercises, the first of which is mindfulness of the breath. Although each of the teachers offers guidance on how to practice mindfulness by being aware of and engaging with the body and the breath, they also provide their own perspectives on and tools for that process. As a whole, this series attests to key themes in current mindfulness meditation practice and highlights a range of techniques and approaches particular to each of the four guest teachers.

Dawn Mauricio: “Remembering: Coming Home to the Heart and Body”

The series launched with Dawn Mauricio, whose workshop title highlights the multivalent term *sati*, important in both Buddhist contexts and mindfulness-based practices. *Sati* is often translated as mindfulness or memory. Mauricio's workshop emphasizes the latter, exploring the close relationship between “remembering,” mindfulness, and the body. She discusses the ways that the body itself can be a repository of memories that surface in different ways during mindfulness practices. She draws

our attention to the ways the body and attention shape each other by beginning with a simple exercise of paying attention to the hands before moving into the extended practice session. Mauricio notes that engaging with memory and embodiment can be an important resource in difficult times, making this practice particularly useful during the taxing circumstances many faced in the past year.

JoAnna Hardy: “How to Practice Self Care during Stressful Times”

JoAnna Hardy's workshop touches on familiar topics and themes while focusing in particular on the relational

and personal aspects of mindfulness meditation practice. She begins her workshop by discussing the importance of acknowledging and honoring one's ancestors, history, and lineage, noting that there is much of value in those traditions that one can use to inform meditation practices. In this respect, she views mindfulness meditation as a relational practice not solely focused on the self. However, it is by developing and attending to one's individual practice that one is better able to relate to others. Hardy celebrates the flexibility and adaptability of mindfulness meditation, noting that Buddhism has something for everyone. It provides many ways to personalize



Dawn Mauricio



Mushim Patricia Ikeda



JoAnna Hardy



Spring Washam

practices to meet one’s own needs and the needs of the large communities, lineages, and traditions in which we are enmeshed. She carries this theme of personalization into the practice, beginning with a simple body scan to check in with the body before moving into the practice.

**Mushim Patricia Ikeda:
“Grounding, Centering, and
Moving Forward: Mindful
Practices to Build Resiliency”**

Mushim Patricia Ikeda’s workshop strikes an upbeat and energetic note! She introduces the workshop by discussing the themes and concepts she includes in the title. During this “time of maximum stress,” it is important to remain grounded and centered in our bodies, and to cultivate resilience so that we can adapt and move forward in the face of challenges. Before beginning the practice, she asks participants to check

in with themselves to gauge how they are doing. She suggests rating one’s overall well-being on a scale from one to ten. In the middle and at the end of the session, she returns to this scale and asks participants to check in with themselves again, noting any changes. She describes this self-assessment as part of our toolkit for managing stress, emotions, and awareness, and a way to build confidence in one’s practice. She moves into an energetic practice that invites participants to stand, move around, shake their hands, and breathe deeply. At the same time, she emphasizes recognizing and working with the limitations of the body, meeting ourselves wherever we are. She maintains an encouraging and celebratory mood throughout.

**Spring Washam: “Grounded
in Awareness: The Path of
Mindfulness”**

Spring Washam introduces the workshop by discussing the title’s key phrase, “grounded in awareness.” She describes this awareness as being grounded in one’s own body and experiences. This body-based wisdom entails recognizing what one already knows deeply. Thus, in the practice, she focuses on working with the body to stay grounded in the present moment. The body provides an ever-present anchor one can return to any time, not just during practice. She notes, “it is always a good time to sit still,” even in the midst of a busy work day. Before ushering participants into the practice itself, Washam discusses the importance of repetition—continually returning to the same themes and techniques—as a means of strengthening one’s practice. This emphasis on the value of repetition is an apt note on which to end a series that traces a number of shared themes throughout each of the four workshops.

FILM DISCUSSIONS

Film Discussion of *Walk With Me: A Journey into Mindfulness* with Paul Harrison

By Joseph Leach



Paul Harrison

Professor Paul Harrison discusses the film *Walk With Me*, providing helpful context for its subject matter and production. Afterwards, an audience Q & A is fielded by Ralph Craig III, a PhD student in Religious Studies.

Walk With Me (2017) explores life at Plum Village, a Buddhist monastery Thích Nhất Hạnh founded in Dordogne, France. Harrison begins by discussing Thích Nhất Hạnh himself, who Harrison describes as one of the most famous Buddhist teachers of the modern age. Thích Nhất Hạnh is a teacher in the Thiền tradition of Vietnamese Buddhism, which is an offshoot of Chan Buddhism in China, more widely known as Zen, the Japanese name for the tradition. Harrison glosses Thích Nhất Hạnh's name as a point of entry to some of the tradition's history and cultural development. He was born in 1926 in northern Vietnam. In 1941, Thích Nhất Hạnh ordained as a novice when he was 16, and took full ordination in 1951. After spending his youth studying Buddhism in Vietnam, he traveled to the United States in 1961 to study at the Princeton Theological Seminary. Later, he was appointed as a lecturer in Buddhism at Columbia University, before returning to Vietnam in 1963. In Vietnam, he taught at a Buddhist university he founded. He returned to the U.S. in 1966, where he worked to bring about a

resolution to the conflict and violence in Vietnam, befriending figures like Martin Luther King Jr. As a result of his views and activism, he was unable to return to Vietnam and spent most of his life exiled from the country. In the late 1960s, he traveled to France, which became his base, and where he eventually founded Plum Village monastery in 1982.

Early on in life, Thích Nhất Hạnh asserted that Buddhist monasticism should be connected with social, political, and environmental efforts. He is credited with coining the term “engaged Buddhism,” which has since become a more widespread phenomenon. Harrison notes that this position is in keeping with themes in both Mahāyāna and mainstream Buddhism, which emphasize the deep causal connections of all forms of life. Throughout his time in exile, he traveled and taught widely, and continued to emphasize the importance of socially engaged Buddhism. In addition to teaching, Thích Nhất Hạnh is a prolific author, producing more than a hundred books in his lifetime. His body of work is incredibly popular and widely accessible. Harrison describes Thích Nhất Hạnh's writing style as “from the heart and to the heart.” Thích Nhất Hạnh was able to return to Vietnam for a brief visit in 2005, after which he continued to reside in France. In 2014, he suffered a

severe stroke, which impaired his speech and mobility, and confined him to a wheelchair. He retired to live at his temple in Vietnam in 2018, where he remains today.

After this biography, Harrison shifts to discussing the film itself. *Walk With Me* was produced over the course of three years, beginning in 2011, by two directors, one of whom was approached to make the documentary because his brother is an ordained monk in Thích Nhất Hạnh's tradition. Filming finished in 2014, right before Thích Nhất Hạnh's stroke, which Harrison describes as particularly poignant. As the title evokes, the documentary shows Thích Nhất Hạnh walking, talking, and teaching, not long before he was unable to do so.

Despite his fame, Thích Nhất Hạnh was adamant that the movie not focus on him, but rather, that directors make the documentary about the community he founded in France. However, he very much remains at the center of the community, and thus at the core of the film itself. Plum Village is a large monastery, with a community of some 200 resident monastics. It also welcomes lay and monastic visitors, including families with children, for varying periods of time.

The film depicts vignettes of life in the monastery, tracing the ebb and flow of the seasons and the many visitors to the center. These vignettes are interspersed with readings from Thích Nhất Hạnh's works and scenes of the surrounding countryside in France. In pace and style, the filmmakers aim to evoke the feeling and meditative experience of living in the Plum Village community.

Since the film is widely available online, audience members viewed it on their own before the discussion. The audience adapted well to the new online film-discussion format, submitting a range of insightful questions.

Film Screening of *The Geshema is Born* and Discussion with Producer/Director Malati Rao

By Joseph Leach

In Tibetan Buddhism, the *geshe* degree—often compared to obtaining a PhD—requires many years of rigorous study and examination. However, until recently, the designation was only available to monks. There was no possibility for women to obtain an equivalent *geshema* degree. This changed from 2012 to 2016, when a group of nuns were finally allowed to pursue this phase of their studies, culminating in the first *geshema* degrees awarded to twenty nuns in 2016. The film *The Geshema is Born* (2019) explores this pivotal change through the story of one nun, Namdol Phuntsok, who was part of the first group to pursue the *geshema* degree. Following a virtual screening of the film, Producer and Director Malati Rao joined Professor James Gentry for a discussion and short Q & A with audience members.

Rao begins her conversation with Gentry by describing antecedents to the events depicted in the film, notably, the closely related debate around *bhikṣuṇī* ordination. *Bhikṣuṇī* is the designation for a fully ordained nun, as distinguished from a novice nun. In Tibet and other Buddhist countries, *bhikṣuṇī* ordination was either never established or else died out. This presents a conundrum, since the full ordination of a nun can only be bestowed by other fully ordained nuns. The cultural exchanges occasioned by Buddhism's globalization have led to a push to reestablish or introduce *bhikṣuṇī* ordination. This proposal, like the push to grant *geshema* degrees, has both garnered support and met resistance within Tibetan Buddhist communities, a tension that the film explores and nuances.

Rao describes her own process of negotiating tensions in the intersections between Buddhism and modernity. Making the film raised important questions for her about Western cultural conceptions of gender equality, and where or if those overlap with how these nuns conceive of and articulate gender and equality.



Malati Rao

“I felt that, all said and done, there’s still no equality [between monks and nuns] because *bhikṣuṇī* ordination has not happened. But when I would talk to the Tibetan nuns, many of them felt that it [*bhikṣuṇī* status] was not that important for them... at first, that would surprise me.”

The more she got to know the nuns pursuing the *geshema* degree, the more she realized that they see even novice ordination as breaking away from social expectations like marriage and childrearing, and conceive of their ordination as a source of agency and autonomy, rather than inequality. It provides a path for liberating themselves as individuals, not necessarily in a soteriological sense, but in the context of the constraints of gendered social expectations. Ordination frees them to pursue the study of Buddhism, which they emphasize as the real goal, rather than gaining a particular title like *geshema* or *bhikṣuṇī*.

Without permission to pursue the *geshema* degree, nuns did not have access to all of the same educational resources and texts as monks. As Rao notes, this lack of equal access to educational resources was a particular hindrance to the nuns in the context of ritual debate, which is central to the Geluk tradition's monastic training. The film does an excellent job of conveying the importance of monastic debate while capturing its characteristic style of rapid speech, broad gesticulations, and punctuating claps.

These debates created an entirely different set of problems for the filmmakers! Rao describes how difficult it was for her to engage with the complexities of debate, particularly when working through translators. Another difficulty the filmmakers had to overcome was negotiating the complex layers of security surrounding an event with the Dalai Lama, who presided over the nuns' graduation ceremony at Drepung Monastery in Mundgod, Karnataka. Just as the group of nuns in the film persevered to obtain their degrees, Rao and her crew overcame these obstacles to produce an insightful and engaging film. *The Geshema is Born* is produced by the Public Service Broadcasting Trust and The Foundation for Universal Responsibility of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

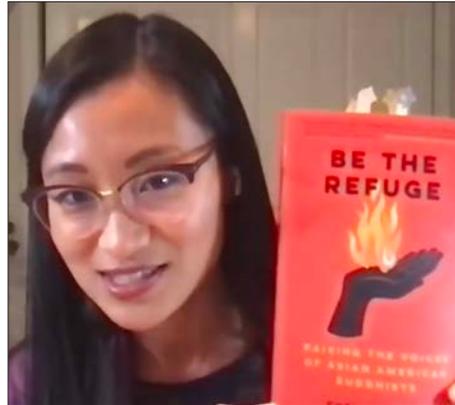
BOOK DISCUSSION

Conversation between Author Chenxing Han and Professor Jane Iwamura on *Be the Refuge*

By Joseph Leach



Jane Iwamura



Chenxing Han

Author and former Buddhist chaplain Chenxing Han joined us to discuss her book, *Be the Refuge: Raising the Voices of Asian American Buddhists* (2021) with Professor Jane Iwamura. Iwamura, whose research focuses on Asian American religions, race, and popular culture in the U.S., is an insightful interlocutor for this exciting conversation.

Han opens by reading selections highlighting the book's main themes. In the broadest sense, it tackles the question: Who are American Buddhists? One passage quotes Iwamura's observation that Buddhism in America is often "Asian religion without Asians," referencing scholarly literature and popular culture's tendencies to focus on white American "convert" Buddhists and elide Asian American "heritage" Buddhists.

One of Han's motivations in writing the book was to push back against the perceived divide between so-called heritage and convert Buddhists. In confronting these circumscribed categories, she aims to challenge the "two Buddhisms" dichotomy, which can stymie conversations about representation and race in American Buddhism. The book is an effort to provide a more nuanced and diverse account of what it means to be Buddhist in America, and counters monolithic and stereotypical representations of Asian American

Buddhists. The text itself, like the subject it addresses, does not fit neatly into any one category. It bridges genres and disciplines, making it approachable and engaging for a wide range of audiences.

Iwamura notes that the book recognizes "American Buddhism's Silent Majority," referring to the fact that although Asian Americans make up the majority of Buddhists in America, they are largely overshadowed by the smaller population of non-Asian American Buddhists. She calls this "a silenced majority," drawing attention to how this discourse is produced and maintained. In their conversation, Iwamura focuses on four areas: the book itself, the research process, the writing process, and current issues.

First, they discuss the book's structure, drawing attention to the table of contents and the thematic organization of the chapters in each of the book's four parts. Han describes how the main parts emerged from considering the commonly utilized categories of first-generation Buddhists, second-generation Buddhists, and convert Buddhists. Rather than adhering to these, she extends and broadens that framework through the categories "Trailblazers," "Bridge-Builders," and "Integrators," weaving all three together in the last section, "Refuge-Makers." The book begins with the chapter "Erasure," which sets the stage

for subsequent themes by exploring how Asian Americans are rendered invisible in the history of Buddhism in America. The book bridges many of the gaps created by this erasure, while also exploring the gaps Asian American Buddhists face themselves: language gaps, generational gaps, cultural gaps. Han ends the book with the chapter "Solidarity" because moving beyond the two Buddhisms framework is an inherently intersectional, expansive, and coalition-building move. It diversifies the voices of Buddhists in America by giving voice not only to Asian American Buddhists but also to the Black, Latinx, and Indigenous peoples in Buddhist communities.

While researching and writing the book, it was really a struggle to figure out a way to organize her material, given the 89 interviews she conducted and the diverse views, identities, and experiences of her interlocutors. The book departs from her MA thesis, which formed the foundation for the research. In adapting this rich body of material, she produces a text that differs from what one might expect to find in a more academic approach. For example, she includes multiple scripts, fonts, and languages, which she uses to convey what it feels like to be in conversation with her many interview subjects. As a result, her text amplifies a chorus of "organic, multifaceted, hybrid" voices.

Han's work proves quite timely, as the conversation pivots to the current wave of violence directed toward Asians and Asian Americans. Han and Iwamura discuss how this violence impacts Buddhist communities and recent media coverage of Asian American Buddhism.

The conversation closes by touching on Han's current project, a memoir about chaplaincy and spiritual friendship, which she sees as an extension of *Be the Refuge's* project of raising individual Asian voices. It is certainly a work to look forward to!

POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW LECTURE

Trent Walker: “*Cetanābhedā* and Cinderella: Multiple Rebirths, Bilingual Sermons, and Popular Narratives in Southeast Asia”

By Joseph Leach

We had an incredible turnout and lively discussion for Trent Walker’s Postdoctoral Fellow lecture this Spring. Walker’s talk is based on his current book project, *Classical Reading, Vernacular Writing: A Bitextual History of Southeast Asian Buddhism*, which examines Indic-vernacular bilingual texts as a technology that enabled the spread of new religious ideas across Southeast Asia from the late sixteenth to the early twentieth century.

He makes three key interventions in his talk. He challenges scholarship on Southeast Asian religion that positions the region as receiving rather than producing religious ideas. He argues that these bilingual texts attest to regional scholastic norms and are not isolated or idiosyncratic products. He demonstrates that such texts are not confined to monasteries or the precolonial period, but extend throughout popular media and the contemporary period.

Walker advances each argument through an analysis of the *Cetanābhedā*, a Pāli-vernacular bilingual text or “bitext” whose title translates to “the scattering of the minds.” It was likely composed in the early eighteenth century and spread throughout mainland Southeast Asia.

The *Cetanābhedā* attests to negotiations between Buddhism and local religion in Southeast Asia over differing understandings of the mind and rebirth. Buddhist traditions typically conceive of consciousness as a mental continuum that connects moment to moment but lacks any underlying permanence. Abhidharma texts organize these consciousnesses in different ways, but normative Theravāda Buddhism posits that at death, this series of mental states is reborn as a whole. However, Walker explains that in Southeast Asia, the primary view of the mind is of a simultaneous plurality of consciousness. In this model, a varying number of souls inhabit the body at once, but are not permanently



Trent Walker

attached to it. They can depart and return, particularly during liminal moments like birth, travel, and death. If they leave the body, they can be called back through rituals like chanting. Walker argues that the *Cetanābhedā* reconciles these two different conceptions of the mind by placing the multiple souls idea within a Buddhist framework and providing Buddhist tools for ensuring the souls remain together at death.

Walker next examines the *Cetanābhedā* as an example of a “bitext” and argues that this bilingual construction was essential to its success. Indic-vernacular bitexts combine Pāli or Sanskrit with a local vernacular language, interspersing or relating the two languages in different ways, often with differing scripts and ink colors. While bitexts can draw upon existing Pāli or Sanskrit sources, they can also utilize “source” texts invented by the author. The *Cetanābhedā* is an example of the latter. This invented Pāli source contributes to the text’s ability to interpolate local conceptions of the mind and rebirth in a Buddhist context. The bilingual structure of the text also works to convey that message in a compelling, poetic manner that would both appeal to and be understood by its non-Pāli speaking audience. The bitext structure also allows it to include new Buddhist tales. The bitexts’ ability to creatively adapt Buddhist narratives to appeal to

Southeast Asian audiences contributed to Buddhism’s spread throughout the region.

In the last part of his talk, Walker examines how one particular narrative, the Asian “Cinderella,” made its way into the *Cetanābhedā*. Although the narrative was not originally Buddhist, the Buddhist framework of the *Cetanābhedā* enables its incorporation. This same adaptability highlights the ways in which the bitext structure enabled the *Cetanābhedā*’s transformation and persistence over time. To illustrate this, he notes that while the manuscript text of the *Cetanābhedā* has been largely forgotten, the text’s version of the Cinderella narrative still exists and is quite popular today, appearing in film, television, on YouTube, and in karaoke videos.

Walker argues that the Pāli-vernacular bitext structure of the *Cetanābhedā* enabled the various innovations he describes. It allows the text to reconcile local non-Buddhist and normative Buddhist concepts, and to reframe non-Buddhist narratives within a Buddhist context. In each case, the new textual products are not passive or inferior copies of a Pāli or Sanskrit source; they are technical and creative innovations. Nor are these techniques and innovations limited to the past; they persist in Southeast Asia today.

GRADUATE STUDENT WORKSHOPS

“Religion, Pain, and Selfhood: Buddhist Studies and Anthropology in Conversation”

By Nancy Chu



Felicity Aulino



C. Julia Huang



Julia Cassaniti



Nancy Chu

In Autumn 2020, The HCBSS hosted its first virtual graduate student workshop, “Religion, Pain, and Selfhood: Buddhist Studies and Anthropology in Conversation.” The workshop brought together scholars of Buddhism working in medical anthropology to discuss how ethnographic studies of pain, loss, and suffering contribute to our understanding of religion, particularly in Buddhist contexts.

The workshop included three speakers:

- **Felicity Aulino**, Assistant Professor of Anthropology, University of Massachusetts-Amherst
- **C. Julia Huang**, Professor of Anthropology, National Tsing Hua University
- **Julia Cassaniti**, Associate Professor of Cultural Anthropology, Washington State University

A lively and rich discussion moderated by Tanya Luhrmann in the Department of Anthropology at Stanford followed the three presentations. Despite the challenges of holding a workshop online (including Zoom fatigue), it was nevertheless a rewarding afternoon spent discussing the intersections of medical anthropology and Buddhism, and cross-disciplinary approaches to understanding care, death,

and healing practices.

The first speaker, Felicity Aulino, discussed the social training of awareness and the resonance of Buddhaghosa’s moral phenomenology in contemporary Thailand. She spoke about her background in public health and palliative care, and how she was led to her study of care and subjectivity among the elderly in Thailand. She shared the inspiration for her recent book, *Rituals of Care: Karmic Politics in an Aging Thailand* (Cornell University Press, 2019) and her use of critical phenomenology as a methodological approach to ethnography. Finally, she discussed how Buddhaghosa came to play a critical role in framing the insights from her work.

Next, C. Julia Huang presented on Buddhist cadaver donation in contemporary Taiwan. She explored the reasons behind the surge in cadaver donations to a medical school run by Tzu Chi, a modern Taiwanese Buddhist organization. Drawing from her fieldwork, Huang described how the modern practice in Taiwan’s Buddhist medical education is to relate to cadavers through imagining their pain, so as to turn science into a means for developing compassion. Huang was a visiting scholar at The Ho Center several years ago, so some of the

attendees were familiar with her work.

Finally, Julia Cassaniti spoke about the Buddha in contemporary health practices of Southeast Asia. Her talk examined the various uses, both rationalist and magical, of the Buddha’s biography for medical purposes in contemporary Thailand. She argued for the Buddha’s influence in healing as creating an intersubjective field of power and potency, dialogically indexed across a wide range of settings. For Cassaniti, knowing this is key to helping us better understand religion and medicine in Southeast Asia.

The Ho Center’s Graduate Student Workshop offers an invaluable opportunity for graduate students to work closely with scholars in their area of interest and to develop their ideas in conversation with experts in the field. Though it was held online this year due to the pandemic, this year’s workshop was no exception. As the graduate student organizer, I am especially grateful to the speakers for their thoughtful contributions, to John Kieschnick and Tanya Luhrmann for their wise and generous advice in putting this event together, and to The Ho Center’s dedicated support, which made this workshop a bright spot in a challenging and unpredictable year.

Conversation between Filmmakers Dan Lindsay and TJ Martin, and co-author Taro Gold on HBO Documentary *TINA* and Tina Turner’s Buddhist Memoir *Happiness Becomes You* (Atria, 2020)

By Ralph H. Craig III



Top from left to right: TJ Martin, Taro Gold; bottom from left to right: Ralph H. Craig III, Dan Lindsay

On May 20, 2021, The Ho Center for Buddhist Studies at Stanford hosted a webinar conversation between Emmy and Oscar winning filmmakers Dan Lindsay and TJ Martin, and bestselling author Taro Gold. The conversation discussed the HBO Films Documentary *TINA* and Tina Turner’s self-help guide and memoir *Happiness Becomes You: A Guide to Changing Your Life for Good* (Atria, 2020). The event was organized and moderated by graduate student Ralph H. Craig III and sponsored by The Ho Center.

Tina Turner is well-known as a global icon, and her career as an entertainer and recording artist spans 60 years. Many people may not know, however, that Turner has practiced Soka Gakkai International (SGI) Nichiren Buddhism since 1972. Between 2009 and 2014, she recorded her daily chanting practice for a series of interfaith albums called *Beyond*. In 2020, Turner released *Happiness*

Becomes You, co-authored with Taro Gold and Regula Curti. Written in the form of a self-help guide, this memoir details the role of SGI Nichiren Buddhism in her life and career. Her religious practice was also featured in the 2021 HBO Films Documentary *TINA*, which uses never-before-seen footage, audio tapes, personal photos, and new interviews, including with Tina Turner herself, to tell her story of triumph over adversity. In the documentary, Turner’s conversion to SGI Nichiren Buddhism and her chanting of “*Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo*” are depicted as the turning point in her life that enables her to end her abusive marriage, achieve solo success, and find personal fulfillment.

The webinar placed the book and the documentary in dialogue with each other in order to discuss the place of Buddhism in Tina Turner’s life and career. The conversation centered around three themes: Turner’s relationship to SGI’s

American organization, SGI-USA; the Nichiren Buddhist principle of “changing poison into medicine”; and Buddhism and the arts. In *Happiness Becomes You*, Turner identifies “changing poison into medicine” as the major theme of her life. In brief, the principle describes the way a person can use adverse circumstances as opportunities for growth and fulfillment. The third theme, Buddhism and the arts, served as a forum to discuss representations of Buddhism in American media. Together, these themes grounded a lively and insightful conversation between the film’s directors and Turner’s co-author. The discussion was followed by a Q & A.

Under the auspices of The HCBSS, events like these educate the wider public about Buddhism and highlight the role of Buddhism in society.

“Hārītī Will Always Protect You’: Healing and Cursing Practices in Two Amoghavajra Texts”

By Simona Lazzerini



Two Views of the Buddhist Deity Hārītī. Japan, Nambokuchō period, ca. 1350. Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum.

In February, I presented a paper at our Graduate Student Colloquium to prepare for a talk at the 2021 Association of Asian Studies Virtual Conference.

I examined the mediating roles of ritual and materiality in two eighth-century ritual manuals translated by Amoghavajra (Bukong Jingang, 705–774), the *Sūtra of the Mantra of Mother Hārītī* (*Helidimu zhenyan jing*) and *Sādhana of the Great Yakṣiṇī Mother Joy and Priyaṅkara* (*Da yaochanü Huanximu bing Aizi chengjiufa*). Both reveal Hārītī’s *dhāraṇī*, list practices for mundane wishes like healing illness and demonic possession, and provide instructions for making images and creating ritual space.

I focused on practices aimed at healing disease, which involve offering food, incense, water, and other goods, accompanied by *dhāraṇī*, *mudrā*, and other procedures. The texts include a

few methods for the opposite: rather than heal, they cause one’s enemies to fall ill. I provided a few peculiar examples of practices that treat infertility, demonic possession, and generic illnesses.

These two Hārītī-centered texts use ritual implements, vocal and bodily practices, and material offerings, which are placed on an altar before an iconographically specified image of Hārītī and empowered through *dhāraṇī* and *mudrā*. The offerings and ritual implements are empowered to heal or curse through Hārītī’s mediating role and the sacrality of the ritual.

Such offerings go back to Hārītī’s origin story. The *Hārītī Sūtra* (*Foshuo Guizimu jing*) and *Mūlasarvāstivāda vinaya* (*Genbenshuo yiqie youbu pinaiye zashi*) recount that after the Buddha converts Hārītī and her progeny, he instructs the monastic community to feed them. The Tang dynasty monk Yijing’s (635–713)

travel diary reports that images of Hārītī in Indian monasteries received daily food offerings and that the laity worshiped her for fertility and healing. Therefore, we see a longstanding connection between worshipping Hārītī images and making offerings for protection and other benefits. In the Amoghavajra texts, these practices are systematized, directed towards the laity, and grant fertility, protection, health, and wealth.

As I argue in my dissertation, Hārītī’s most recurrent and prominent feature is granting protection, whether to monastics or laity. Protection from demonic and human enemies, often in the form of healing and curses, are prominent motifs in these ritual manuals. As a goddess, Hārītī constantly shifts between the divine and the demonic. In esoteric contexts, her supernatural powers also swing between healing and cursing.

“Centering Race and Gender in the Contemporary Study of Religion: A Roundtable”

By Ralph H. Craig III

On December 4, 2020, the Department of Religious Studies and The Ho Center for Buddhist Studies at Stanford hosted a roundtable on “Centering Race and Gender in the Contemporary Study of Religion.” This co-sponsored event was organized and moderated by Chanhee Heo and Ralph H. Craig III, both graduate students in the Department of Religious Studies. The roundtable was the inaugural event in what is hoped to be a series for graduate students, post-docs, faculty, and researchers working at the intersection of race and gender in the contemporary study of religion.

The roundtable featured four panelists:

- **Yavilah McCoy**, CEO and Executive Director of Dimensions Educational Consulting
- **Sylvia Chan-Malik**, Associate Professor in the Departments of American Studies and Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Rutgers University
- **Jolyon Baraka Thomas**, Assistant Professor and Interim Graduate Chair of Religious Studies at the University of Pennsylvania
- **Pamela Ayo Yetunde**, Assistant Professor of Pastoral Care and Counseling at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities

The panelists brought a range of personal experiences and professional expertise to the roundtable’s central question: What are some requisite steps for us to take to make religious studies a more capacious space for scholars and students of color? To answer this question, each panelist spoke for fifteen minutes about the methodological, theoretical, and pedagogical issues that arise in their work; personal reflections on their journey; and their development as scholars. The panelists reflected on a range of issues, such as being scholars and activists of color in the contemporary environment, how they grappled with the tensions between their scholarship and their activism, their struggles to create new language and grammar for their work, and the need to engage different conceptions of what religion is or could be. The reflections were followed by a 45-minute question and answer session with attendees, whose questions included, “How should scholars of color respond when the responsibility for change repeatedly falls on them?”

This roundtable was the beginning of a necessary conversation. Students, faculty, and staff alike shared the demand that the conversation begun by this roundtable move into concrete, meaningful, and transformative action.



From top: Yavilah McCoy, Sylvia Chan-Malik, Jolyon Baraka Thomas, and Pamela Ayo Yetunde

POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW REFLECTION

Trent Walker

What a joy it has been to return to The HCBSS! I had the great fortune of doing my BA in Religious Studies at Stanford, followed by a stint as a research fellow of The HCBSS in 2010–2011. Though in-person encounters have been few and far between this past year, I have greatly appreciated the support of The HCBSS staff, faculty, and graduate students as I find my footing back on the Farm. They have provided the intellectual inspiration, emotional grounding, and practical support that make research possible.

In the Autumn Quarter, my work centered on themes from my book-in-progress, “Classical Reading, Vernacular Writing: A Bitextual History of Southeast Asian Buddhism.” Early in the term, I published two articles on bilingualism and the intellectual history of Buddhist translation in Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam. In November, I gave a public Zoom lecture on Pāli-vernacular bilingual texts or “bitexts” for King’s College London and Shan State Buddhist University, Myanmar. I also finished two essays on Theravāda Buddhist bilingualism, currently in press for two separate edited volumes, and published a translation of a Thai academic essay.

In Winter, my focus shifted to Cambodian Buddhist material. In January, I completed an essay on the history of Buddhism in Cambodia, and later in the quarter, submitted an article (now in press) on the relationship between Khmer inscriptions from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries and the manuscript tradition. In March, my translation of a Khmer funerary chant was published in a literary journal. This piece is part of a broader translation project I am completing this year, tentatively titled “Dharma Songs from Cambodia: Forty-Nine Khmer Buddhist Poems.” This book is intended to complement an anthology of Cambodian secular literature I have been working on, for which I have translated several dozen pieces drawn from inscriptions, legal codes, epic poems, novellas, and



Trent Walker (right), with organizers and volunteers for May We Gather, A National Memorial Ceremony for Asian American Ancestors (May 4, 2021)

popular songs.

In Spring, I was honored to give a public talk for The HCBSS on an eighteenth-century Southeast Asian Pāli-vernacular bitext known as the *Cetanābhedā*. This April talk was preceded by a lecture I gave in March on a similar subject for the Harvard Buddhist Studies Forum. My work on *Cetanābhedā* manuscripts is based on digital images acquired through a short research initiative funded by The HCBSS in the Autumn Quarter and executed by Bounchan Phanthavong and David Wharton of the National Library of Laos. In early June, The HCBSS inaugural postdoctoral fellow Alexandra Kaloyanides and I co-edited a special section of the *Journal of Global Buddhism*. The five essays in the collection reflect on the current state of Theravāda studies in light of a field-changing 1995 essay by Charles Hallisey; my own contribution highlights current research on Pāli, vernacular, and multilingual texts from South and Southeast Asia. In April, I had the privilege of giving a talk and workshop on Cambodian chant for the Buddhist Community at Stanford—hands down one of the most engaging audiences I have ever spoken with!

For the Summer Quarter, I am delighted that several other projects I have been

working on are coming to fruition.

Beginning in June, I will be hosting the Goodman Lectures, a monthly series of online talks organized by the Khyentse Foundation. The Khmer Manuscript Heritage Project—a collaborative effort of the Buddhist Digital Resource Center, the École française d’Extrême-Orient, and the San Jose-based Khmer Buddhist Temple Foundation—is preparing to make the over two million pages of Khmer manuscripts we have scanned available to the public on the web. My ongoing work on the cataloging and metadata for these materials has been made possible by The HCBSS fellowship.

I cannot wait to be in person with The HCBSS community again this coming Autumn. For my second year, I am planning to focus on my main monograph project, *Classical Reading, Vernacular Writing*, and hopefully bring the two book-length translation projects to publication. In Spring 2022, I will be teaching “Buddhism and Magic,” centered on a unique manuscript from Southeast Asia housed at the Cantor Arts Center on campus.

STUDENT REFLECTIONS

Ralph H. Craig III

It goes without saying that the past year has been immensely challenging. Like many, I have a number of friends and family members who contracted the virus during the pandemic. Again, like many, I had to support those friends and family members while also taking care of professional and personal responsibilities. That this was happening to millions of people across the world was little consolation.

At the close of Winter Quarter 2020, Stanford shifted all classes to Zoom, where they have remained ever since. Initially, the shift was exciting, as both students and professors adjusted to a new format. But the novelty quickly wore off as class after class, meeting after meeting, and event after event occurred on Zoom. The resulting fatigue, languishing, and sense of sameness that this caused has been well discussed. And I, along with my colleagues, have felt every bit of it.

And yet, many important developments have occurred during this period. Due to increasing recognition of the historical

and continued inequities that stain our society, Stanford and other universities launched initiatives both to hire and support BIPOC faculty and staff, and to recruit and support BIPOC students. Imperfect and much debated though they may be, as a Black student at Stanford, I view these initiatives as a welcome start.

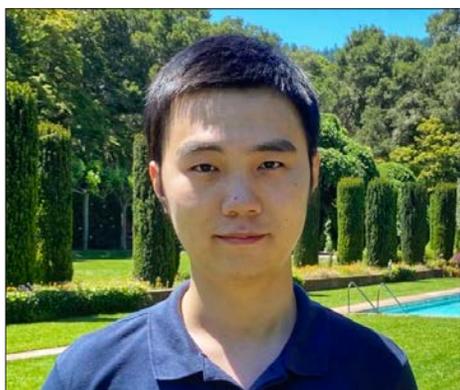
Personally, this year on Zoom has been immensely productive. During this period, I completed all of my coursework and teaching requirements. In January of 2021, I co-organized and moderated a roundtable on race and gender in the study of religion. The roundtable, co-sponsored by The Ho Center and the Department of Religious Studies, featured four panelists from different professional backgrounds. In May, I organized and moderated a film and book discussion on two recent projects about Tina Turner, a longtime practitioner of SGI Buddhism. Being on Zoom made it easier to attend academic events hosted by other institutions without the logistics of travel; it also made it easier to host some events. I also



Ralph H. Craig III

completed and passed my qualifying exams. Finally, I have officially formed my dissertation committee and will begin working on my dissertation prospectus. While challenging, the year was filled with many accomplishments that I can be proud of.

The same is true for my colleagues: though challenged by the pandemic and the innumerable adjustments that had to be made, all have been able to accomplish many personal and professional goals. And all, myself included, look forward to seeing everyone—in person!—this fall.



Kedao Tong

Kedao Tong

unstinting support from The Ho Center for Buddhist Studies at Stanford.

Wrapping up my third year as a PhD student in Religious Studies, I completed coursework requirements and mainly focused on preparing for qualifying examinations. I also focused on teaching. Working as a teaching assistant for courses beyond my immediate areas of expertise has not only sharpened my teaching skills but also expanded my research interests. At this stage, I also started reading sources and gathering relevant primary materials for my dissertation project.

In addition to completing requirements and the major undertakings that occupied most of my time, I am working on two side projects that center around

the *Diamond Sūtra* in the history of Chinese Buddhism, particularly related to translation techniques and the relationship between commentarial and liturgical literature. Engaging with research projects like these allows me to explore new topics and continue writing while also reading for examinations. It was a challenge for me to strike a balance between these different tasks during a year of online instruction and remote learning, particularly with limited access to libraries. Despite this, I was glad to make progress in these areas as I gradually became accustomed to working from home. It would not have been possible without the support of faculty members, staff, and The Ho Center colleagues, and I look forward to reconnecting with the community once the campus reopens.

Writing at the end of the academic year and reflecting on a year of remote learning reminds me again of how special and unexpected a year it has been. Fortunately, I was able to carry on with my studies and research, and fulfill teaching requirements remotely, thanks to the online resources provided by the university and the

Oriane Lavolé

In August 2020, as it became evident that moving to the U.S. to start the Religious Studies PhD program at Stanford would not be possible in the foreseeable future, I pondered whether to start online or postpone my entry to the program. I was stuck in France, partway between Kathmandu, my home for the past seven years, and California, my intended destination. Setting out remotely on this new venture, far from those I was supposed to learn from and with, and from the seemingly ideal setting I imagined Stanford would offer, was more than daunting. And yet, since I had set out to embark once again upon a new cycle of studies, I eventually decided to stick to the plan, although not without some trepidation.

Taking classes on Zoom in the middle of the night (due to the nine-hour time difference) was by no means a smooth and pleasant ride. Despite being physically removed from my professors and fellow students, I have nevertheless found in them a community that provides much more than just pure intellectual exchanges. Having spent the past seven years studying Buddhist philosophy and the Tibetan language in a semi-monastic setting in Nepal, I might have been subconsciously expecting to learn more of

the intellectual than the human qualities of my new academic community. I was always duly impressed by the incredible humility of Ka-Nying Shedrub Ling monastery's *khenpos* and *lopens*, the monastic professors who shared the fruits of their years of painstaking study, debate, and exposition of Buddhist philosophy with us with such grace and kindness. They taught me the Buddhadharma not only by way of discourse, but also by example; my expectations in rejoining Western academia were not quite the same. I stand corrected, for I have learned different, but just as important, lessons from the faculty and students in the Religious Studies department regarding humility, empathy, patience, and many more qualities that they have demonstrated in the midst of trying times for all.

Despite the less-than-ideal circumstances faced by most everyone throughout the world in the past year and a half, I feel incredibly fortunate to have joined the community of scholars at Stanford at this point in time. As exemplified in the Buddhadharma, thought should not be divorced from conduct, and the most brilliant ideas are much better received when they come from a place of intellectual curiosity and sincerity.



Oriane Lavolé

The care and resilience that have (to me) characterized the Religious Studies Department's response to the pandemic have made an otherwise tense and confusing time not only bearable, but even an opportunity for personal growth. In particular, the faculty and students in Buddhist Studies, who have welcomed me as warmly as one can through a screen, and Irene Lin and her colleagues at The Ho Center for Buddhist Studies, who have so enthusiastically offered their support in many ways, have made me feel at home at Stanford in a way I would not have thought possible at such a distance. Thanks to them, I am now eager to make it my actual home for the next few years, and to continue to be inspired by the work they do both inside and outside the classroom.



WELCOMING A NEW STAFF MEMBER:

JOSEPH LEACH Communications Manager

We are delighted to have Joseph Leach join our Center as our Communications Manager. Joseph completed a PhD in Buddhist Studies at the University of Michigan's Department of Asian Languages and Cultures, where his dissertation examined the history of the Nyingma tradition in the Western Tibetan and Himalayan region of Spiti. He began studying Buddhist art history and philosophy as an undergraduate at Smith College, where he obtained a BA in 2007. Joseph specializes in Buddhist visual and material culture in the Himalayas and Tibet, ritual practice, and pilgrimage.



Left to right: Kedao Tong, Simona Lazzerini, Adeana McNicholl, and Sangyop Lee

Awards

Our former Postdoctoral Fellow **Alexandra Kaloyanides**'s book on nineteenth-century American Baptists in Burma, *Objects of Conversion, Relics of Transition*, will soon appear from Columbia University Press and received the Claremont Prize for the Study of Religion.

Simona Lazzerini received the 2021 Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai Fellowship and will be spending next year in Japan to do research on Hārītī (Kishimojin).

Sangyop Lee received the 2021 The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowship in Buddhist Studies. He will begin his two-year postdoc at Heidelberg in the Fall.

Ashwin Ramaswami's paper, "Breath Control and Conceptions of Self: Different Hindu and Buddhist Approaches to the Breath," wins Best Undergraduate Paper in Buddhist Studies for 2020–2021.

New Appointments

The Ho Center for Buddhist Studies welcomes **Joseph Leach** as our Communications Manager. See page 26 for more details.

The Office for Religious and Spiritual Life at Stanford appointed **Zen Master Rebecca Nie** as the new Buddhist Chaplain Affiliate. Rebecca is a Stanford alumna and a Zen (Sōn) Master of the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism. She founded the Stanford Zen Society and was a co-chair of the Buddhist Community at Stanford during her graduate studies.

New Arrivals

Our alumnus **Allan Ding** and his wife Nancy Ouyang welcomed the arrival of their baby boy, Luke Ding-Yang, in May!

Our alumnus **Nicholas Witkowski** and his wife Sophia welcomed the arrival of their baby boy, Kaniṣka Ilya Lo Witkowski, in June!

New Publications

Our doctoral student **Ralph H. Craig III** reviewed Tina Turner's autobiography, *Happiness Becomes You: A Guide for Changing Your Life for Good on Lion's Roar*.

Our doctoral student **Sangyop Lee** published an article, "The Bodhisattva Prātimokṣa of the *Youposai wu jie wei yi jing*: Its Textual Provenance and Historical Significance," in *The Eastern Buddhist*.

Our alumnus **Jason Protass**'s new book, *The Poetry Demon: Song-Dynasty Monks on Verse and the Way* (2021), is available from the University of Hawai'i Press.

Our alumnus **Jason Ānanda Josephson Storm**'s new book, *Metamodernism: The Future of Theory* (2021), is available from The University of Chicago Press.

We would love to hear from you!
Please submit news and updates to
buddhiststudies@stanford.edu

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