



**LEKHA NEWSLETTER**  
**Issue 11 • 2022**

*Lekha* is a Sanskrit word  
for letter or writing.

**EDITORS AND WRITERS:**

Irene H. Lin  
Jaakko Takkinen

**LAYOUT:**

Stephanie Lee

**CONTRIBUTORS:**

Ralph H. Craig III  
James Gentry  
Oriane Lavolé  
Serena Lee  
Rebecca Nie  
Trent Walker

**COVER IMAGE:**

Extract of illuminated meditation  
manuscript from Siem Reap  
province, Cambodia, catalog  
code FEMC 413-R.05.06.01  
(BDRC W1FEMC039097),  
digitized by Buddhist Digital  
Resource Center as part of the  
Khmer Manuscript Heritage  
Project, sponsored by A Khmer  
Buddhist Foundation

## IN THIS ISSUE

### 3 CO-DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

### 4 T. T. & W. F. CHAO BUDDHIST ART & FILM SERIES

- *The Mountain Path* – Film Screening and Discussion with Director Edward A. Burger
- *Wandering... But Not Lost* – Film Screening and Discussion with Director Paul MacGowan

### 6 T. T. & W. F. CHAO CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS

*Buddhist Bilingualism: Pāli-Vernacular Sermons, Exegesis, and Literature in Early Modern Thailand.* Organized and moderated by Trent Walker.  
Speakers: Assanee Poolrak, Jiaranai Vithidkul, and Tossaphon Sripum

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

Conversation between Reverend Zenju Earthlyn Manuel and Michaela Mross

### 9 HWEI TAI SEMINAR IN BUDDHIST STUDIES

Speaker: Janet Gyatso

### 10 THE EVANS-WENTZ LECTURESHIP

Speaker: Charles Hallisey

### 11 JAPANESE BUDDHISM LECTURE

Speaker: Paula K. R. Arai

### 12 12<sup>TH</sup> GARFIELD FORUM: “BUDDHISM AND VIOLENCE”

Speakers: Daniel Arnold, John Clifford Holt, and Alicia Turner

### 14 WE ARE STANFORD: A FESTIVAL OF REFLECTION AND RENEWAL

- *Looking Back, Looking Forward: Chants, Prayers and Meditation*
- *Heart Sutra in Augmented Reality*

### 17 TIBETAN STUDIES

Reading Workshop: *Visionary Encounters with Luminous and Empty Forms in Indian and Tibetan Buddhist Tantric Traditions*

### 18 SPECIAL CAMPUS EVENT

*Buddhist Nun Jeong Kwan Seunim Teaches Korean Temple Cuisine at the Farm*

### 19 POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW REFLECTION

Trent Walker

### 20 STUDENT REFLECTIONS

Ralph H. Craig III and Oriane Lavolé

### 22 CAMPUS AND ALUMNI NEWS

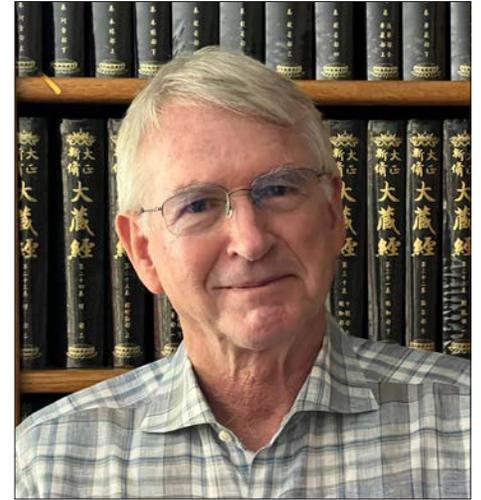
# CO-DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

When my co-director John Kieschnick wrote his report for the 2021 issue of *Lekha* he referred several times to the prospect of resuming our operations as the university and the world opened up after the pandemic. Alas, there has been no after: the pandemic has continued for another year, and the opening up we were all looking forward to has turned out to be less than we hoped for. To be sure, in-person classes resumed on our campus last fall, but masks continue to be required, and in all sorts of ways the restrictions and adjustments necessitated by the long battle with COVID-19 have gone on affecting our lives. In the case of the Center, our events have resumed, but in compliance with university regulations they have been largely restricted to Stanford personnel, and so we have not been able to return to anything approaching normal.

*Kṣāntipāramitā*, patient acceptance to a transcendent degree, is, as is well known, one of the key practices and virtues of bodhisattvas. Somehow, we have all been given the opportunity to cultivate this perfection, with differing degrees of success. A global pandemic lasting now almost three years has tested our fortitude, while other developments over the last year have added to the challenge. We have seen Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, with all its consequences, as well as continuing evidence—as if more were needed—of the advancing effects of climate change here in the United States and around the world. Other plagues beset us as well, some new, some of long standing. The *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* defines crisis as a turning-point in the progress of anything or a state of affairs in which a decisive change for better or worse is imminent. It is hard to

remain optimistic when the turning-point appears to be behind us, and a change for the better seems less likely than one for the worse.

If the message of the Buddha is the possibility of triumph over *duḥkha*, now seems to be the perfect time for it. In the face of adversity, in any case, giving in to despair is not an option. And so we carry on—staff, students, and faculty affiliated with the Center—doing our jobs, pursuing our studies, and sharing our results. On the staff side we welcome Jaakko Takkinen who joins us as our Communications Specialist, and we look forward to another appointment soon on the events side of our operations. Some of our students have at last been able to go overseas to do field work, after considerable delays—Nancy Chu to Taiwan and Simona Lazzarini to Japan—while others have been making progress here at home. For example, Ralph H. Craig III's religious biography of Tina Turner has just moved into production. We also take pleasure in following the progress of our Buddhist Studies alumni: Nick Witkowski will take up a position at the University of San Diego at the end of August, while Rafal Felbur will move from his Leiden postdoctoral fellowship to a position at Heidelberg, where he will join Stanford alumnus Sangyop Lee. Meanwhile our faculty have been busy too: my co-director John Kieschnick published his long-awaited monograph *Buddhist Historiography in China* with Columbia University Press, while Michaela Mross's *Memory, Music, Manuscripts: The Ritual Dynamics of Kōshiki in Japanese Sōtō Zen*, has finally appeared in the University of Hawai'i Press's Kuroda Series. This year has also seen the appearance in print



Paul Harrison  
Co-Director of the HCBSS

of *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa: The Teaching of Vimalakīrti*, which I translated from the Sanskrit together with Luis Gómez (Mangalam Press).

For those of us devoted to Buddhism and its study, these and other like achievements are things to take satisfaction in and be proud of, and are, one hopes, additions, however modest, to the quantity of *sukha* in the world, and not to its *duḥkha*. After all, where there is darkness, any light that shines is welcome, as it enables us to move forward.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul Harrison".

**Paul Harrison**

The George Edwin Burnell  
Professor in Religious Studies,  
Co-Director of the HCBSS



## T. T. & W. F. CHAO BUDDHIST ART & FILM SERIES

### *The Mountain Path* – Film Screening and Discussion with Director Edward A. Burger

By Irene H. Lin



Edward A. Burger

On March 17, 2022, the T. T. & W. F. Chao Buddhist Art and Film Series hosted an online screening of film director Edward Burger's *The Mountain Path*. This documentary was produced from the original footage he gathered over 15 years to make his earlier film, *Amongst White Clouds*. *The Mountain Path* presents a new perspective, voice-over narration, editing style, and new footage of interviews with recluses in the Zhongnan Mountains of China. The film captures Burger's spiritual journey as he travels the mountains of China in search of a Buddhist hermit master. The viewers are transported into the world of the hermits in remote solitude and afforded glimpses both of their dedication and the challenges they face in their practice.

For those who missed this film screening, the documentary will soon be available to view online through the Buddhist Film Channel (<https://buddhistfilmchannel>). The Buddhist Film Channel will be the first independent international digital platform to offer Buddhist feature films, shorts, television programs, video talks and interviews from all over the world. This new channel is a project of the Buddhist Film Foundation (<https://buddhistfilmfoundation.org>), headed by the executive director and chief programmer, Gaetano Kazuo Maida. The programs will be available to viewers on a pay-per-view basis as rentals or download-to-own. The films will be presented in English or have English subtitles (and

other languages via subtitles). *The Mountain Path* will also be available on Blu-ray and there will be other online film screenings too.

After the screening, Professor John Kieschnick spoke with Edward Burger about his experience of living with hermits in the Zhongnan Mountains. Burger pointed out that even though the hermits choose to live in remote places, they are still very much connected to both monastic and lay communities. People hike up the mountains to bring them essentials like a bag of rice or a jug of oil, things that these hermits cannot get or produce themselves in the mountains. In return, the hermits offer teachings to people when they climb up to their dwellings. Therefore, in this way, there is a kind of scattered community up in the mountains. Kieschnick asked if Burger got the sense that the hermits were trying to get away from something or escape distractions. Burger's response

challenges hermits face as they work the land, and we see living creatures, such as ants, furiously and fervently feeding on the corpse of a caterpillar—reminding us that amidst the sanctuary offered by the mountains, different battles rage on for those who strive to survive. No matter where we go, life and the necessities of life are ever-present. Referring to the scene of the ants attacking the caterpillar and the ladybug scurrying away quickly, Burger remarked,

I see that as a part of a landscape that represents what we discover when we look inward, when we move inward in our practice. And so as practice deepens, and we move from seeing the mountains as mountains, and we go deeper into the valley, so to speak, into the depths of ourselves, we discover a broad spectrum of things. And we need to be at home there and comfortable with that, and even inspired by it because that's where the practice is happening.



*The Mountain Path*

was that it is not so much about getting away from something as moving into something which they choose deliberately, a sanctuary of solitude.

Next, Kieschnick and Burger discussed the ambivalence of living in such remote isolation. Through the gaze of the camera lens, Burger successfully captures the tranquility and beauty of the landscape, in contrast to the harsh reality of life in the mountains. For example, we see the

Burger's goals in making the film included showing the landscapes surrounding the hermits from a perspective of an artist and a practitioner of the tradition, and illustrating how the landscapes around these hermits represent their inward landscapes and their inward journey through those landscapes. He successfully achieves both these goals. We look forward to more films from him.

## ***Wandering... But Not Lost* – Film Screening and Discussion with Director Paul MacGowan**

By Jaakko Takkinen

The Ho Center for Buddhist Studies organized an online screening of the film *Wandering... But Not Lost* on September 29, 2021. The film documents how Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche, an internationally renowned master of the Karma Kagyu and Nyingma traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, embarked on a wandering retreat in the Himalayas and the plains of India that lasted for four and a half years. While traditional three-year retreats are not unusual among advanced practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism, an extended retreat as a wandering yogi has become rare. Indeed, Mingyur Rinpoche's main living teacher, Tai Situ Rinpoche, describes in the film how his disciple's retreat journey follows the tradition of great Buddhist masters of the past—beginning with Śākyamuni Buddha—who left the comfort of their homes and led a wandering existence to be able to focus on their practice without distractions.

The film is directed and produced by filmmaker Paul MacGowan, who traces Mingyur Rinpoche's wandering retreat and invites viewers to visit many of the places that were significant on this journey. Some of the most notable locations in Nepal Himalayas include Lapchi, where the famous Buddhist saint Milarepa is believed to have meditated, and the meditation cave in Langtang, which is associated with Guru Rinpoche or Padmasambhava. The film weaves together tranquil footage from the Himalayas and scenes from the frenetic urban centers of South Asia, illustrating

how Mingyur Rinpoche's meditation practice remains constant regardless of external circumstances. The visually striking materials are enriched by Mingyur Rinpoche's remembrances of obtaining important insight in various kinds of situations, whether meditating in a crowded train or contemplating the simple act of eating *tsampa*.

The episodes depicted in the film revolve around key concepts of Buddhist doctrine, such as attachment, impermanence, and compassion. For instance, as Mingyur Rinpoche recounts his near-death experience after a bout of food poisoning in Kushinagar (Kūśinagarī, the site of the Buddha's passing), he explains how he felt his senses withdraw as he became weak in his body and began practicing dying meditation as he had been trained to do when death approaches. In addition to recounting how he rested in pristine awareness during this meditation, he describes having experienced a strong sense of connection to other beings, which in turn aroused a strengthening of compassion—a fundamental element of Mahāyāna Buddhist practice.

The screening was followed by a discussion led by James Gentry, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies, and a specialist of Tibetan Buddhism. During the discussion MacGowan reflected on how making the film was a personally transformative experience. He noted how Mingyur Rinpoche always appears to be teaching through the way in which he



Paul MacGowan

interacts with the world—his demeanor does not change regardless of the circumstances, which was inspiring for MacGowan as he had to deal with the challenges of filming in India and Nepal. He described how working so closely with Mingyur Rinpoche moved him to let go of his instincts of trying to be in full control of the documentary film-making process. MacGowan described how one specific teaching given by Mingyur Rinpoche resonated with him during the project, for which he felt great responsibility: “Try your best and let go of the result.”

The structure of the film provides a useful general introduction to Buddhist thought, illustrated by concrete examples from Mingyur Rinpoche's lived experience during his retreat. While it remains something of a taboo within the Buddhist world to publicly discuss meditational attainments, the film succeeds in striking a balance between depicting the hardships of such an arduous undertaking and providing concrete examples of how Mingyur Rinpoche faced difficulties by relying on his extensive training and practice. The vivid and deeply personal recollections of his experiences inspired timeless insight encapsulated in the film: “Our true nature is like a diamond. If you put a diamond against a different background, the color may change, but the nature of the diamond never changes. Normally, what we see is only the color, we don't see the pure diamond.”



*Wandering... But Not Lost*

## T. T. & W. F. CHAO CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS

### “Buddhist Bilingualism: Pāli-Vernacular Sermons, Exegesis, and Literature in Early Modern Thailand”

Organized and moderated by Trent Walker. Speakers: Assanee Poolrak, Jiaranai Vithidkul, and Tossaphon Sripum

By Trent Walker

Thanks to an emerging cohort of dynamic young scholars, Buddhist Studies is thriving in Thailand. I was fortunate to have a chance to be in conversation with three accomplished Thai researchers from this new generation for an online workshop on April 30, 2022. Each of the three presenters recently completed their doctorates in Thai or South Asian literatures at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, with a special emphasis on Buddhist texts and traditions. While social science research on Thailand is comparatively robust in North American institutions, academic events that take a humanistic approach to Thai literature and religion can be harder to find, so it was a special privilege to host this event at Stanford.

The theme of the workshop, “Buddhist Bilingualism,” emerged from a growing interest among Thailand-based scholars in the complex relationship between Indic and Southeast Asian languages and religions. Many of the palm-leaf and bark-paper manuscripts that were produced in early modern Siam (today’s central Thailand) were bilingual. In my own work in this area, I typically refer to such compositions as “bitexts,” in that they use two languages (typically Pāli and a local vernacular, such as Siamese/Thai) to express a single narrative, sermon, or technical treatise. Such bitexts challenge the neat boundaries we often

impose between South and Southeast Asian intellectual worlds, especially in the Buddhist sphere. The overall goal of the workshop was to consider what the interaction between Pāli and Thai in these bitexts might teach us about the nature of Buddhist translation writ large.

After I gave a brief overview of Indic-vernacular bitexts in Southeast Asia, we moved into the three main talks that anchored the workshop. The first presentation was by Dr. Assanee Poolrak, who is currently a lecturer in the Department of Thai, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University. Many of us in the field of Thai studies have had our thinking on language transformed by Poolrak’s groundbreaking PhD dissertation, “Expressions in Thai Literature in Relation to Expressions in Pāli and Sanskrit Literature” (in Thai), which revealed that many Thai expressions are in fact calques of common Indic phrases. Such calques, as Poolrak shows, were often developed in the process of composing Pāli-Thai bitexts for Buddhist and literary purposes.

Poolrak’s presentation for the workshop, “On ‘Bitextualizing’ *Thetsana Rueang Nithan Mikathura*” showed us one of the most surprising bitexts of all in Thai literature, namely King Chulalongkorn’s (Rama V) transformation of Gilbert and Sullivan’s comic opera *The Mikado* into a Pāli-Thai sermon. By analyzing the

relationship between the Pāli and Thai portions of this remarkable translation, Poolrak demonstrated how the king created a “serious parody” of *The Mikado*, keeping the humor of the overall narrative but adding Pāli *gāthās* that offered moral instruction and Buddhist reflection. In his presentation, Poolrak also revealed that, unlike in most bitexts, the Pāli portions of King Chulalongkorn’s version of *The Mikado* were added only after the Thai translation was complete. These “invented” Pāli portions, penned by a highly educated poet in the royal court, hewed closely to the established conventions for Pāli-Thai bitextual sermons in the nineteenth century, effectively bridging Buddhist genres and the comic opera at hand.

The next presentation was by Dr. Jiaranai Vithidkul, currently a lecturer in the South Asian Languages Section, Department of Eastern Languages, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University, where her research interests include Buddhist manuscripts in Thailand, Siamese-inflected forms of the Pāli language, and the role of Indian mythology in Thai culture. Vithidkul’s Thai-language dissertation is among the most insightful reexaminations of how Pāli was actually composed in Southeast Asia. By focusing on a recently discovered *codex unicus* of a Pāli historical chronicle from early nineteenth-century Siam, the



Palm-leaf manuscript of the *Maṅgalatthadīpanī*, carved and annotated in nineteenth-century Cambodia (Photo credit: Khmer Manuscript Heritage Project, Buddhist Digital Resource Center)



Assanee Poolrak



Jiaranai Vithidkul



Tossaphon Sripum



Trent Walker

*Mahāyuddhakāraṃsa*, she revealed to the Theravāda studies community the impressive extent to which the Thai language had come to influence Pāli style in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Vithidkul’s presentation, “Siamese Pāli Language in *Mahāyuddhakāraṃsa*,” used a range of specific examples to highlight some of the key findings from her dissertation. In particular, she argued for the existence of a distinctive form of the Pāli language, which she calls “Siamese Pāli,” that was used in compositions by Somdet Phra Phonnarat and other luminaries of the late Ayutthaya (1351–1767) and early Bangkok (1782–present) periods. As Vithidkul explained in response to an audience question, Siamese Pāli was in full force from the late eighteenth century through the middle of the nineteenth, when the monastic education reforms initiated by King Mongkut (Rama IV) led to a return to standard, Indic-style Pāli grammar and orthography. In the *Mahāyuddhakāraṃsa*, translated from Thai to Pāli in 1806, many distinctively Southeast Asian approaches to Pāli are apparent, including the derivation of new Pāli terms on local models,

syntactical constructions based on Thai, and orthographic conventions shaped by vernacular pronunciations rather than Indic ideals.

In many ways, Poolrak’s and Vithidkul’s presentations were mirrors to one another: Pāli has influenced Thai literature as much as Thai has influenced Pāli literature in Thailand. The lively discussion that followed their talks brought these issues to the fore. The final talk, by Dr. Tossaphon Sripum, connected these Pāli and bilingual Pāli-Thai compositions to the world of performance, from the eighteenth century to the present. Sripum is currently a lecturer in the Department of Thai, Faculty of Arts, Silpakorn University, in Nakhon Pathom, just outside of Bangkok. I have been particularly inspired by the way his scholarship weaves together written texts and their musical performance; those of us working on Buddhist sermon practices have much to learn from his approach. His dissertation, “*Bot Lae Thet Mahachat* in Contemporary Thai Society: Roles and Significance as Ritual Literature” (in Thai), concerns the melodic recitation of local, vernacular-language episodes of the *Vessantara Jātaka* in modern-day Thailand, drawing on both textual studies and

extensive fieldwork.

Sripum’s presentation, “Functions of Pāli Gāthā and the Interplay between Textuality and Orality in *Thet Mahachat*,” was a master class in how to think about the relationship between language, written artifacts, and Buddhist performance. By focusing on how Pāli prose and verse passages (collectively known by the Pāli loanword *gāthā* in Thai) in bilingual sermon versions of the *Mahāvessantara Jātaka* served to structure both the content and its melodic realization, he showed us how to see bitexts as living forms of performance and not just textual relics. Sripum riveted us all with a live demonstration of the enormously intricate and vocally demanding forms of chant used to recite such sermons.

Poolrak, Vithidkul, and Sripum not only uncovered many little-known facets of the Buddhist interface between Pāli and Thai, but also gave me hope for the future of the humanistic study of Southeast Asian Buddhism, grounded in the careful study of texts, ideas, objects, and the arts. Despite the challenges of online events, I was thrilled that the HCBSS made this rare “visit” of Thai Buddhist Studies scholars to the United States possible.

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

### Conversation between Reverend Zenju Earthlyn Manuel and Michaela Mross

By Irene H. Lin



Reverend Zenju Earthlyn Manuel



Michaela Mross

The T. T. & W. F. Chao Distinguished Buddhist Practitioner Lectures have evolved over the years, both in format and content. Currently the series takes the form of a dialogue between our invited speaker and a Buddhist Studies faculty member. In the Fall Quarter, Reverend Zenju Earthlyn Manuel—ordained Zen priest, medicine woman of the drum, poet, and author—engaged in a stimulating and thought-provoking conversation with Michaela Mross, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies, a specialist in Sōtō Zen Buddhist ritual and music, *kōshiki* (Buddhist ceremonies) in particular.

Mross lauded Zenju’s new book, *The Shamanic Bones of Zen: Revealing the Ancestral Spirit and Mystical Heart of a Sacred Tradition*, as a welcome addition to Zen scholarship, especially on American Zen. She remarked on the tendency to disregard or overlook rituals in Western Zen communities and publications on Western Zen, and was curious about Zenju’s inspiration for writing a book on rituals and ceremonies. Zenju responded that since she lives in New Mexico among so many ceremonial tribes and communities, there is always some type of ceremony taking place. Due to the indigenous earth-based ceremonial practices in her life as she walks the path of Zen, she could recognize the importance of rituals and ceremonies in

the tradition. She explained,

From my mind and body, ritual and ceremony are a profound way to transform one’s life and to be awakened without hearing others’ voice to guide one to enlightenment. Often people feel they need to be guided to enlightenment by teachers, but in my own experience, just doing the rituals and ceremonies provides the space and creates the illumination needed and also mimics the vastness of life.

In making this observation, Zenju is not necessarily trying to convince people that Buddhism or Zen is shamanic, even though she experiences it as such. She felt that it is important to talk about this aspect of Buddhism, especially Zen, that is often overlooked in the West. As a Zen priest, she wants to help people understand the calling, what is going on in the tradition. Zen is actually all about rituals and ceremonies and they are the gateways to the tradition. She points out that in the secular world, meditation is just sitting, being calm and quiet, and achieving something. But that is not the case in Zen. For her, *zazen*, or meditation, is just sitting without the expectation of achieving anything. Seated meditation, along with bowing, chanting, or offering incense are rituals one practices and experiences as

acts of awakening in and of themselves.

Mross asked Zenju how she transitions from stillness to movement in these rituals, especially since movement is the opposite of stillness. In response, Zenju stated that one moves with the stillness while in action, whether sitting, walking, or chanting. One cannot force oneself into the practice of *zazen*. She elaborated, “When you begin the practice of stillness and *zazen*, it takes time for the body to understand that you are not playing with the mind. You are teaching the body to be still, despite the movement of the mind or the body.” She teaches her students that instead of meditating, they should allow meditation to come to them—allow the stillness or calm to come to them.

Zenju turned then to the transformative power of rituals. For her, rituals such as meditation are not just a form of therapy or medicine to improve mental wellbeing, but they have spiritual or shamanistic significance. Zenju elaborated on the importance of rituals in the Zen tradition:

The wisdom is there in these chants, in this bowing, and in this way of doing things. We even have *ōryōki*, which is ceremonial eating, and these practices are specifically designed to bring that wisdom and awakening to you, even if you are troubled or have a troubled mind.

She emphasized that the awakening experience is not something to be sought beyond everyday life and is not to be reduced to a means to attain something else. People should not perform certain rituals for the purpose of gaining peace, or for becoming more loving or for getting something else they desire. Rather it is through life’s acts, when you are doing these rituals and ceremonies that mimic everyday life—standing, walking, sitting, lying down, eating, sleeping, working—that awakening occurs and transformation takes place.



## THE EVANS-WENTZ LECTURESHIP

### Charles Hallisey: “Expanding the Ways We Read the Expanding Biographies of the Buddha”

By Jaakko Takkinen



Charles Hallisey

The 45th Evans-Wentz lecture was given by Charles Hallisey, the Yehan Numata Senior Lecturer on Buddhist Literatures at the Harvard Divinity School. His talk titled “Expanding the Ways We Read the Expanding Biographies of the Buddha” examined the various ways in which the biography of the Buddha continues to expand, and how separate texts can be productively read together to create an understanding of a more human Buddha that is not solely based on historical facts.

The notion of the expanding biography of the Buddha is an allusion to an essay by Hallisey’s doctoral advisor, Frank E. Reynolds, titled “The Many Lives of Buddha: A Study of Sacred Biography and Theravāda Tradition” (1976). Among other things, Reynolds proposed that the Theravāda historical chronicles (*vamsa*) should be seen as the continuing chapters of the biography of the Buddha, and that the biography of the Buddha went on expanding as the history of Theravāda Buddhism unfolded.

Expanding on his teacher’s work, Hallisey noted that a typical approach to study the abundance of resources dealing with the life of the Buddha is to treat them nearly atomistically—as individual works that illustrate the creative imaginations of Buddhists of different times and places.

To combat the limitations of such an approach, Hallisey proposed that a more productive way to engage with the texts is to intentionally connect them in our reading practices, which enables us to see that reading different texts in combination with each other creates effects that individual texts would not achieve at all.

As an example of how such a method of reading texts in combination enhances our understanding of Buddhist literature, Hallisey discussed “The Story of Kunala” from the *Aśokāvadāna*—a collection well known in the Theravāda tradition despite not being a Pāli source. Monk Yashas, Śākyamuni Buddha’s sixth convert, asks Emperor Aśoka what he has planned for the religious training of Kunala, the Emperor’s son. According to the text, Aśoka remains silent on the matter. Soon after, Kunala is sent away on official business, and the road for him to go on is prepared in a very specific manner: Aśoka had the city and the roads beautified—he cleared the road of all old people, sick people, and poor people. Hallisey asserted that these actions are noteworthy, because they reflect the actions of the Buddha’s father, Śuddhodana, when his son, Siddhārtha Gautama, was about to exit the royal palace. Hallisey pointed out that while Aśoka did not explicitly respond

to the question presented by Yashas, his actions echo similar sentiments as in the case of Śuddhodana: he did not want his son to leave home and devote himself to spiritual life. Hallisey argued that triggering this literary pattern gives us a way of having “a rich imagination of context” that allows meaning to emerge. Reading texts in combination, therefore, allows us to understand the meaning of one text by knowing the other text, and according to Hallisey, the notion of the “Expanding Biographies of the Buddha” provides tools for this rich imagination of context to take place.

Throughout his lecture, Hallisey supported his argumentation by referring to literary theorists such as Daṇḍin (7th–8th c.), an expounder on poetics from the Theravāda Buddhist center of Kanchipuram, who suggested that an important quality of a text occurs with a recognition of similarity across difference. Hallisey proposed that with the help of such heuristic aids drawn from literary studies—both of European and Buddhist Asian provenance—we begin to see that the separate parts of the “Expanding Biographies of the Buddha” are connected to each other in unexpected ways. They are not merely separate atoms in a constellation, but speaking to each other, if only we pay sufficient attention.

## JAPANESE BUDDHISM LECTURE

### Paula K. R. Arai: “Blossoming in the Mud: Healing Practices of Japanese Buddhist Women”

By Irene H. Lin

On October 14, Paula Arai, the Urmila Gopal Singhal Professor in Religions of India at Louisiana State University, gave a talk on the key roles monastic and lay Buddhist women played in the formative years and the subsequent development of the Sōtō Zen sect in Japan. She used the metaphor of blossoming in the mud—women being like the lotus which blooms in muddy water—to illustrate how both monastic and lay Buddhist women creatively navigated an order and society dominated by males, boldly pushed through boundaries and barriers, and resolutely led the drive for equal status, resources, and recognition of women in the sect.

First, Arai spoke about how Sōtō Zen female monastics interpreted the central teachings of Dōgen (1200–1253), the founder of Sōtō Zen, to justify an affirmative stance toward women. Drawing their legitimacy from Dōgen, they worked tirelessly to bring the Sōtō Zen institution and its regulations into closer accord with what they argued was Dōgen’s intent in his writings that mention women. For example, in his 1231 text *Bendōwa* (*The Discourses on the Practice of the Way*), Dōgen wrote that male and female practitioners are equal. Another text the nuns relied on was the *Raihaitokuzui* (*Prostrating to the Marrow of Attainment*), in which he stated, “It is irrelevant whether a guide has male or female characteristics and the like. What counts is that the guide be a being of virtue of thusness.”

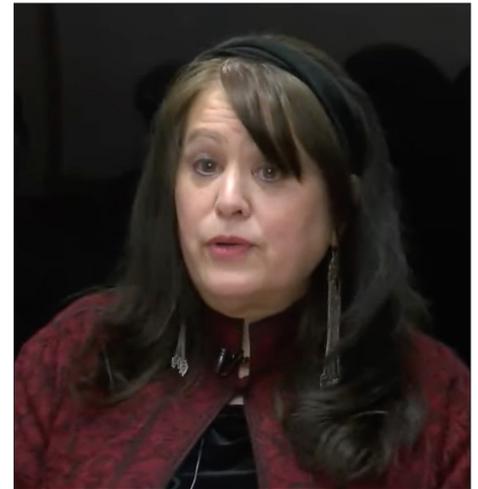
Arai underscored that Dōgen’s point was that women can be competent teachers and thus they are qualified to teach men. In view of how Dōgen expressed his positive views of women in his philosophical writings, she argued that he supported males and females on equal terms. When Dōgen first established Eihei-ji (The Temple of Eternal Peace), women were not allowed to practice there. However, a number of monastic women were under

his tutelage through the end of his life, and his male disciples continued to take female disciples after his death, a practice which continues today.

Arai shifted her focus to contemporary female Zen monastics, and noted that until the early part of the twentieth century, not only did nuns lack training facilities supported or authorized by the sect administration, but they also were not allowed to enter Komazawa University, a center of learning for Sōtō Zen monks. In addition to limited resources available to them, nuns also faced the requirement of longer training, sometimes two or three years more than their male counterparts. From the 1880s, nuns began to organize to force male leaders to change the regulations so male and female monastics would be treated equally despite the male-dominated institutional hierarchy. After succeeding in providing the educational foundation for nuns by setting up monastery schools for resident Sōtō nuns, they moved to establishing the Tokubetsu Nisōdō (Special Advanced Monastery for Monastic Women) in 1970, enabling them to train high-ranking teachers, equal to the highest male monastics.

Next, the nuns turned their focus to rectifying other inequities of the sect administration’s regulations. The fight for equality in monastic, teaching, and temple ranks was carried out through the Sōtōshū Nisōdan (the Sōtō Sect Nuns’ Organization), an official organization established by Sōtō nuns in 1944 to address their needs. Kojima Kendo led their efforts, and nuns advanced from ranks below all monks to being permitted to attain the highest levels of their male counterparts. Kojima’s work was recognized by the sect with an award of excellence in 1952, and she was honored with the role *shōkōshi* (“honored head celebrant”) during the 700th Memorial of Dōgen’s successor, Koun Ejō, in 1980.

Finally, Arai turned to domestic female



Paula K. R. Arai

Zen practitioners—lay women who had to navigate the muddy waters on the home front, attending to daily tasks, life crises, and healing. She emphasized that a key role of lay women was to oversee the emotional and health needs of their families. The healing practices they engaged in ranged from cleaning and maintaining the home altar to contemplative, religious, and artistic activities such as calligraphy or scripture copying. Arai stressed that all these practices represented an art of seeing the interrelatedness of things which gives rise to gratitude, fosters peace, and strengthens intimate connections to family and friends, living and dead, to nature and to the cosmos.

In conclusion, whereas in the monastic sphere women effectively changed the institutional structures and regulations to support their practice on an equal footing with their male counterparts, on the domestic front, women successfully brought Zen home to transform their daily lives with meaningful healing practices. Both monastic and lay women in the Sōtō Zen sect demonstrate creativity, wisdom, resilience, and strength in transforming suffering into flourishing, like lotuses blossoming in mud.

## 12<sup>TH</sup> GARFIELD FORUM

### “Buddhism and Violence”

Speakers: Daniel Arnold, John Clifford Holt, and Alicia Turner

By Jaakko Takkinen



Painting untitled, artist anonymous (Photo credit: John Clifford Holt)

The 12th Howard M. Garfield Forum—an annual mini-conference hosted by the Department of Religious Studies focusing on a topic at the intersection of religion, ethics, and public life—was organized this year by The Ho Center for Buddhist Studies and featured the theme, “Buddhism and Violence.” Three speakers were invited to discuss the topic: Daniel Arnold, Associate Professor of Philosophy of Religions at the University of Chicago Divinity School; Alicia Turner, Associate Professor of Humanities and Religious Studies at York University; and John Holt, the William R. Kenan, Jr. Professor Emeritus of the Humanities in Religion and Asian Studies at Bowdoin College. Using the co-authored editorial previously published by Arnold and Turner in the *New York Times* titled, “Why Are We Surprised When Buddhists Are Violent?” (2018) as a starting point, each discussant engaged with the subject of Buddhism and violence from various perspectives.

Arnold, a specialist in Indian Buddhist philosophy, began the presentations by challenging the notion that certain kinds of religious beliefs lead to violence or the absence of violence. According to

Arnold, Buddhist thinkers have typically emphasized that there is a profound difference between merely assenting to a belief (e.g., the belief that all sentient beings deserve compassion) and actually living in ways informed by that belief. He called to mind the central Buddhist notion of *bhāvanā*, “development” or “cultivation,” which illustrates the fact that Buddhism is essentially about practice: “the disciplined practices of the Buddhist path were designed to make vividly real or practically significant the truths of the tradition,” as Arnold put it.

Arnold argued that it is problematic to rely on the deeply ingrained Protestant presuppositions that construct the idea of religion as primarily about matters of subjective, privately held inward belief. Moreover, he suggested that for Buddhists there is no straightforward relationship between the beliefs people hold and the likelihood that they will behave in corresponding ways. Therefore, Buddhist traditions might suggest completely different ways of framing the problem of how people can do abominable things, and for Arnold, the question whether religious beliefs lead to violence or its absence is

fundamentally misguided.

Next, Alicia Turner’s presentation unpacked the popular notions of Buddhism as a tolerant religion and Buddhists as peaceful people. She showed how these essentialized characteristics were eventually used to justify Buddhist nationalist violence in Burma in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. She noted that the idea of Buddhist tolerance is not an isolated concept, but rather has historical particularities that are intimately related to Myanmar’s colonial past.

Turner presented three specific elements that constituted tolerance for the British in Burma: allowing religious others, particularly Christians, to proselytize and to have full access to public life and government positions; permitting Europeans to sleep with and marry Burmese women; and giving Europeans access to Buddhist temples and monasteries, even while wearing their shoes. These elements rendered Burmese Buddhists accessible to the British, in contrast to Hindus and Muslims, who were seen to be held back in the colonial discourse by superstitions or prejudices

that disallowed outsiders to access their ritual spaces or their communities. Consequently, the idea of tolerance became fixed as a Burmese trait in the early nineteenth century, and by the late twentieth century it was further transformed into tolerance becoming an essentially Buddhist quality.

To bolster her argument, Turner discussed how the idea of Buddhism as a world religion developed in the nineteenth century to locate traits that Europeans saw as particularly liberal and modern. She delineated how Buddhism became a textual object that operated in Europe, and therefore those who had access to the texts were believed to be able to proclaim what “real” Buddhism actually was—as a consequence, the qualities of the Buddha found in the texts superseded the people who actually practiced Buddhism. To exemplify the tendency of early European scholars of Asian religions to valorize Buddhism, Turner described how Monier Monier-Williams, a pioneering scholar of Sanskrit and the textual study of Asian religions, proposed that “universal tolerance is the essence of Buddhism.”

Turner demonstrated that the Burmese discourse that has justified the contemporary violence against the predominantly Muslim Rohingya minority, appealed to the presumed tolerant nature of Buddhism, amplifying fears that Buddhism could be lost by being overrun by less tolerant religious others. She showed how the Burmese nationalist rhetoric frames Buddhism as being threatened by “Jihadists and extremists,” and thus the Buddhist doctrine of tolerance is perceived as a weakness, rendering Buddhism vulnerable.

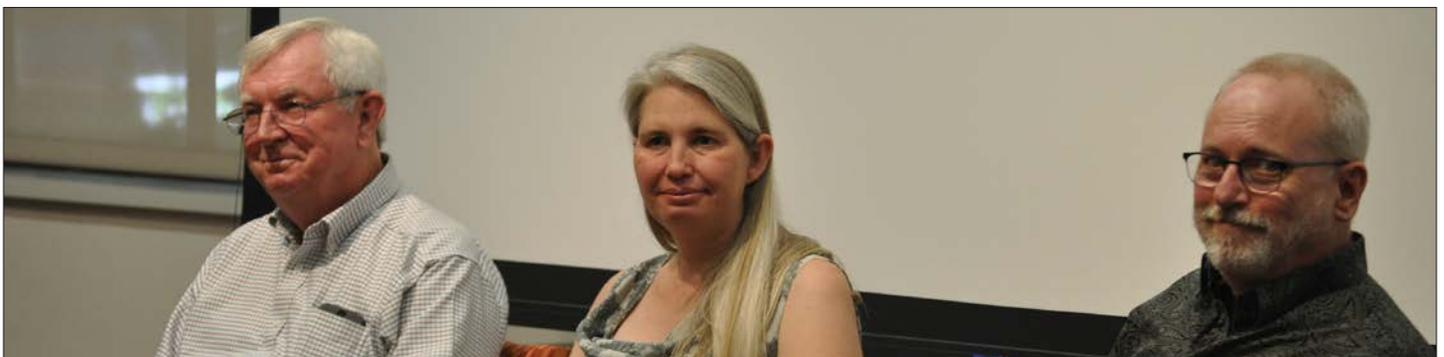
Turner concluded that to better understand Buddhism and violence in Myanmar—such as the anti-Muslim riots in 1938 or the current ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya people—it is imperative to acknowledge that perceiving Buddhism as tolerant is directly connected with how Buddhism has been invented and projected in the world religions discourse as a “good” religion, in contrast to how Islam has been constructed as an inherently intolerant tradition. To remedy the valorization of certain religious traditions, Turner encouraged the audience to take a closer look at our preconceived assumptions, which in this case are based on a history of colonial discourse that contrasts Buddhism with other religious traditions.

John Clifford Holt, who has written about religious conflict between Buddhists and Muslims in contemporary Sri Lanka, delivered the final thought-provoking talk of the Forum. To illustrate characteristics of Buddhist militancy in Sri Lanka, Holt played a video recording of a fiery speech delivered by Buddhist monk Galagoda Aththe Gnanasara Thero, the Secretary General of Bodu Bala Sena (“Buddhist Power Force”), a Sinhalese Buddhist nationalist organization. The monk’s speech suggested that Sri Lankan Buddhists are treated unfairly, especially in matters related to business. For Galagoda Aththe Gnanasara Thero, as for many other Sinhalese people, Sri Lanka is an essentially Buddhist country. According to Holt, this idea is largely derived from the *Mahāvamsa*, a monastic chronicle of the history of the island, which portrays the Sinhalese as those who have perpetuated the Dharma in spite of

waves of hostilities throughout history. Holt argued that this view of Sri Lanka as a Buddhist nation has had serious implications for minority religions on the island.

However, Holt was careful not to argue that religion is the underlying cause for violence in Sri Lanka, and suggested that religion is just one force among many dynamics that impact the way people perceive the world—other factors, such as political or economic forces also need to be taken into consideration. Furthermore, he proposed that it is crucial to look at the culpability of state actors when thinking about the problem of Buddhism and violence, since violent sentiments among Buddhists typically appear to flourish in states that are leaning towards authoritarian rule.

The presentations sparked intriguing questions from the audience. In response, Arnold further elaborated on how early predictions about the future decline of the tradition in Buddhist texts eventually led to cultivating royal patronage, and later lent a resonance to the idea of the tradition being under siege and thus in need of protection in contemporary contexts, such as in Myanmar and Sri Lanka. Holt concluded that the problem of violence and Buddhism is not merely an academic question, but a real issue for Buddhists who grapple with it in their lived experience as Buddhists. He also reminded the audience that we need to be careful not to jump to conclusions about who is a “real” Buddhist: “Just because they are not ethical does not mean that they are not Buddhist.”



Left to right: John Clifford Holt, Alicia Turner, and Daniel Arnold

# WE ARE STANFORD: A FESTIVAL OF REFLECTION AND RENEWAL

## “Looking Back, Looking Forward: Chants, Prayers, and Meditation”

By Irene H. Lin



Lighting of lotus candles (Photo credit: Robert Most)

### “We are Stanford: A Festival of Reflection and Renewal”

To mark the return of the full Stanford community to campus after a long absence, the university hosted “We are Stanford: A Festival of Reflection and Renewal” at the beginning of the Fall Quarter. This university-wide festival offered a diverse range of ritual, artistic, commemorative, and celebratory programs to express and process all that we have been through, individually and collectively, since the start of the pandemic. Two dozen campus departments and programs partnered to plan events, engaging themes of grief, loss, remembrance, community, gratitude, hope, and joy. Altogether, the festival was an active invitation to care for oneself and others as we rebuild the Stanford community.

### “Looking Back, Looking Forward: Chants, Prayers, and Meditation”

The HCBSS co-sponsored the Festival of Reflection and Renewal and together with the Office of Religious and Spiritual Life, we hosted an evening of chants, prayers, and meditation at the Windhover Outdoor Space to reflect on the past year and to look forward to the new year. Stanford affiliates—including students, researchers, faculty, staff, and alumni—joined this special event. The Buddhist Chaplain Affiliate at Stanford, Rebecca Nie, made opening remarks followed by the chanting of the *Metta Sutta* in English, led by alumnus Reverend Jin Chuan and Reverend Jin Wei from Berkeley Buddhist Monastery. Those who were familiar with the *sutta* joined the prayer in unison. Two Buddhist Studies PhD students, Oriane Lavolé and Ralph H. Craig III, then chanted praises to Tārā in Tibetan, and Stanford alumnus and postdoc,

Dr. Trent Walker, sang an excerpt from the Cambodian Dharma song “Funeral March” in Khmer and English. The participants were awed and moved by the haunting and beautiful Dharma song.

As the solemn “Funeral March” ended, Reverend Jin Chuan offered a prayer before the lighting of candles. The Windhover Outdoor Space lit up gradually as participants turned on their LED lotus candles and joined in the prayer, one by one. The flickering candlelight reflected the sparks of hope, marking the commitment and unity of the community. Everyone joined the walking meditation led by Rebecca Nie around the labyrinth in silent solidarity. The evening of chanting, prayers, and meditation provided a much-needed respite during these challenging times.



1



2



3



4



5

1) Trent Walker; 2) Rebecca Nie; 3) Left to right: Oriane Lavalé and Ralph H. Craig III; 4) Left to right: Reverends Jin Chuan and Jin Wei; 5) Walking meditation around the labyrinth (Photo credit for all photos on this page: Robert Most)

## “Heart Sutra in Augmented Reality”

By Rebecca Nie

*Heart Sutra in Augmented Reality* is a monumental scale multimedia expression of one of the most widely recited Buddhist texts made dynamic with electroacoustic music and algorithm art and projection mapped onto Stanford University’s historical Memorial Church. With the sponsorship and support of The Ho Center for Buddhist Studies at Stanford, Stanford’s Office for Religious and Spiritual Life, and the Stanford Department of Theater and Performance Studies, new media artist Rebecca Nie—also the Buddhist Chaplain Affiliate at Stanford—envisioned and created the project in collaboration with composer and vocalist Cecilia Wu, and electroacoustic musicians Scott Miller, Jane Rigler, and Chris Chafe. The video recreation of the augmented reality (AR) installation can be viewed on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vSGVRu3mAiU>).

*Heart Sutra in AR* explores digital art, heritage, and meaningful transformations of historical public spaces through computer art. The non-fungible token (NFT) musical component of *Heart Sutra in AR* integrates chanting traditions in Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, as well as electroacoustic music and network audio technology. It draws upon sacred art traditions in vocalism and drumming. The visual elements integrate religious architecture, calligraphy, and portraits to present a new genre in

representational art, “Sacred Futurism.” The aim of this genre is to mobilize the global imagination of a technological future. As members of an ever more science and technology-driven global society, we need to imagine a future that has a place for humanity’s heritage of wisdom and healing traditions to build towards universal enlightenment. Classically trained in these artistic and religious fields, the artists intentionally transpose these time-tested expressions with algorithm-driven futuristic visual dynamics and technology-packed musical techniques.

The impact of *Heart Sutra in AR* as an NFT audio-visual piece and as an AR installation at Stanford’s Memorial Church is manifold. *Lion’s Roar* reported on it shortly after its debut. Moreover, the audio-visual production has been featured worldwide by music and film festivals, such as the Berlin International Art Film Festival, Toronto International Women Film Festival, New York City Electronic Music Festival, the International Computer Music Conference, CMS/ATMI National Conference 2022, and The Seventh Computer Art Congress. A paper detailing the artistic concepts and technologies behind this installation titled “*Heart Sutra: Reflections and Mediation of Cultural-Wisdom Heritage and The Contemporary World through NFT and Augmented Reality*,” will be published by Europa in *International Journal of*

*Distributed Systems and Technologies*.

As the centerpiece of the closing ceremony of We Are Stanford: A Festival of Reflection and Renewal, *Heart Sutra in AR* is an artistic call for self-care and community care as we build a future, here and now, with the power of innovation and resilience. Its creative process is a statement of teamwork made possible only recently with the development of network audio technology, GPU-level algorithmic music visualization, and high-precision 3D projection mapping systems. The concepts, techniques, and creative vocabulary of *Heart Sutra in AR* are both ancient and new. Being one of the world’s first monumental scale NFT public art, this media art piece revitalizes treasured Buddhist expressions and their positive impact on the contemporary world.

With multisensory expressions, *Heart Sutra in AR* narrates the contemplative concept of “play of reality”—understanding things are illusory, and that boundaries are not always firm and stable in our limited three-dimensional universe. All distress and happiness are passing, temporary, and transformative. Through its music and visual heritage, as well as media arts and technological implementations, *Heart Sutra in AR* beckons the audience to transcend their suffering by embodying the nondual wisdom of enlightenment.



*Heart Sutra in Augmented Reality* at Memorial Church

## TIBETAN STUDIES

### Reading Workshop: “Visionary Encounters with Luminous and Empty Forms in Indian and Tibetan Buddhist Tantric Traditions”

By James Gentry



Reading workshop

On the weekend of May 30 and 31, Stanford University’s Ho Center for Buddhist Studies hosted the reading workshop “Visionary Encounters with Luminous and Empty Forms in Indian and Tibetan Buddhist Tantric Traditions.” The workshop had originally been planned for spring 2020 but was postponed indefinitely due to the COVID pandemic. Its conception was inspired by my collaborative project with Professor David Germano at the University of Virginia—now in its fifth year running—to study the one-thousand-year history of the Tibetan Buddhist contemplative practice of “dark retreat”: the withdrawal for extensive periods of time in an enclosure entirely sealed off from any light source to induce visionary experiences that can lead to Buddhahood.

Since contemplative practice featuring visionary experiences is not unique to the dark retreat tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, but part of a much broader current of Buddhist theory and practice, an important part of our project has been to identify possible antecedents of Tibetan dark retreat in Indian Buddhist Tantric traditions and connections with other strands of Tibetan Buddhism. The workshop was intended as a preliminary exploration of these relationships by bringing together an international team of scholars specialized in a range of loosely connected Buddhist Tantric visionary traditions across the India-Tibet divide.

Toward this end, the format of the workshop was for participants to pre-

circulate textual passages from the traditions they study in Sanskrit, Tibetan or both languages, together with draft English translations, and to methodically guide us through their passages, introducing their selection criteria and the broader relevance of their selections. Fourteen scholars from the US and Europe participated, eleven in person and three virtually through Zoom. Each participant’s session was 50 minutes in duration, including questions, answers, and discussions. The workshop concluded with a 50-minute session of open discussion. Interested graduate students and scholars from Stanford, UC Berkeley, and the Mangalam Institute were also in attendance in person and took part in discussions.

Presentation topics included precedents of the Tantric Buddhist visionary language of the *kriyā*, *yoga*, and *mahāyoga* tantras in non-Buddhist Indian literature; how visionary experiences figure in Indian Buddhist *yoginī* and *yoganiruttara* tantras such as the *Śrīḍākārṇava* and *Kālacakra*, among others; doctrinal accounts and analyses of visionary experience in the writings of Ratnākaraśānti, Vāgīśvarakīrti, and other late Indian Buddhist commentators; comparisons between the visionary traditions of the Indian *Kālacakratantra*, Indian *mahāyoga* tantras, and the Tibetan Great Perfection (*rdzogs chen*); different facets of early and later Tibetan Great Perfection visionary practice connected to its Seminal Heart (*snying thig*) tradition; Tibetan Jonang interpretations of the *Kālacakra*’s

visionary practices; and comparisons with the visionary tradition of Tibet’s Bön Great Perfection tradition.

Discussion touched on pragmatic questions concerning the contexts and techniques in these diverse traditions for eliciting visions—how, where, and by whom they are to be evoked; phenomenological issues concerning what such visions look like for the practitioner, in both prescriptive and descriptive terms; debates about the ontological status of visions—whether they are the conditioned effects of meditation training, the unconditioned reflections of intrinsic buddha-nature, or something else; and soteriological understandings of how, if at all, they ought to figure on the path toward awakening—as signs of progress along the path, or the very color and shape of awakened cognition itself.

Conversations were lively and advanced our collective knowledge about this important aspect of Buddhist thought and practice. We are currently in the planning stages of developing our discussions and sharing them with a wider public by organizing an edited volume of papers and an associated conference.

#### Workshop Participants:

- **Filippo Brambilla**, University of Vienna
- **Jake Dalton**, UC Berkeley
- **Ronald Davidson**, Fairfield University
- **Douglas Duckworth**, Temple University
- **James Gentry**, Stanford University
- **David Germano**, University of Virginia
- **David Gray**, Santa Clara University
- **Kurt Keutzer**, UC Berkeley, Emeritus
- **Klaus-Dieter Mathes**, University of Vienna (via Zoom)
- **Giacomella Orofino**, University of Naples (via Zoom)
- **Gregory Seton**, Dartmouth College (via Zoom)
- **Michael Sheehy**, University of Virginia
- **Davey Tomlinson**, Villanova University
- **Vesna Wallace**, UC Santa Barbara

## SPECIAL CAMPUS EVENT

### Buddhist Nun Jeong Kwan Seunim Teaches Korean Temple Cuisine at the Farm

By Serena Lee



Venerable Jeong Kwan Seunim's cooking demonstration at Stanford (Photo credit: Dexter Simpson)

On May 2, 2022, the Venerable Jeong Kwan Seunim—a Seon Buddhist nun and world-renowned chef—paid a visit to the Farm. The 2022 Asia's 50 Best Icon Award recipient spent the afternoon giving Stanford community members a culinary demonstration steeped in the Buddhist tradition.

At the vanguard of sustainable, vegan cooking, Jeong Kwan Seunim is on a mission to share Korean temple cuisine with the world. She introduced herself by pointing out that she is not here as a chef, but rather as a Buddhist practitioner who cooks. Her story is about faith as much as it is about food.

The self-effacing “Philosopher Chef” has lived a life defined by seemingly spontaneous actions that ultimately weave a deliberate, resolute tapestry that is her calling to be a Buddhist nun. Recalling peering over her mother's shoulders in the kitchen as a child, Jeong Kwan Seunim's first experiences of learning to cook demonstrate her steadfast ability to observe and understand the present moment. Similarly at the age of 17,

when she ran away to join the monastery, Jeong Kwan Seunim also learned about Buddhism and Korean temple cuisine by observing the senior nuns at Baekyangsa Temple. With a deep reverence for tradition, she is indebted to all her mentors for her extensive knowledge of food.

Teaching Korean temple cuisine at the O'Donohue Family Stanford Educational Farm, Jeong Kwan Seunim's every thought, word, and action is vitalized by the steady pulse of Buddhism. Food, she explained, is a source of energy to fuel the practice of Buddhist monastics. She sees nourishment as a medium for connecting the physical to the mental and the spiritual. Eating, unaffected by glut or greed, is therefore an act of Buddhist renunciation.

Before cooking, she prayed and meditated on the coexistence and interdependence of all sentient beings. Through her interpreter, Jeong Kwan Seunim engaged the audience in a chant, “... to prepare our bodies and minds to receive this food we know ourselves to be unworthy of, yet to receive it with gratitude in pursuit

of enlightenment.”

Jeong Kwan Seunim's culinary credo is that all ingredients have an essential form to return to. She likens this idea to formal sitting meditation, which encourages the equanimous balancing of internal and external energies. When Jeong Kwan Seunim triumphantly holds up a plump shiitake mushroom, the unassuming fungus betrays nothing of the journey it has traveled. Homegrown in her hermitage, the shiitake is air-dried for a week in the cool mountain air of Naejangsan. First boiled, then steamed, the shiitake returns to its plumpness. Primed to absorb more flavor than if it were freshly picked, the result bears a wonderfully chewy texture and an accented umami flavor.

Jeong Kwan Seunim restores balance not only within her ingredients, but also between people and the world they inhabit. No matter where she is, she cooks with ingredients from her garden in Jangseong County, South Korea, combining them with local produce harvested from her immediate surroundings.

Presenting an effortless simplicity that cradles within it an exacting complexity, her cooking nurtures the life forces of its ingredients and nourishes people. Dynamically balanced, made with intentionality and spontaneity, the finished dishes mimic the harmony presiding in nature.



Lotus (Photo credit: Dexter Simpson)

## POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW REFLECTION

### Trent Walker

Buoyed by a vibrant calendar of events, generous faculty mentors, and an exceptionally welcoming group of graduate students, my time at The Ho Center for Buddhist Studies at Stanford has flown by. Two years have disappeared in a flash, and this in-person year has been a most welcome relief. I am thrilled to be continuing for one more year of learning from my students, friends, and colleagues at Stanford.

In the Fall Quarter, I focused on completing my first book, *Until Nirvana's Time: Buddhist Songs from Cambodia*, which is now in the final production stages and set to come out on December 27, 2022. During this term, I also published three works of public scholarship in *Buddhadharma*, *Insight Journal*, and *Tricycle*, on themes including Khmer poetry and cultural appropriation. The highlight of the quarter was teaching “Buddhism and the Family in Southeast Asia.” The intellectual courage of my students to explore the course themes with depth and candor moved me greatly. Most who joined the class identified as Cambodian or Vietnamese American, and their specific, experientially grounded insights taught me more than I could ever teach them.

In the Winter Quarter, my work turned outward and I was able to share my research through both online and in-person events. An early highlight was an online workshop on two of my articles on Pāli-vernacular bitexts, conducted by the Textual Microcosms project at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. In late February and early March, I gave a series of invited talks and workshops at Brown, Skidmore, and the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies. Over the course of the past year, I also gave online talks for two conferences (one organized by the UK Association for Buddhist Studies, another by the Institute of Advanced Study), created several pre-recorded lectures on Buddhist music and Burmese manuscripts for the University of Toronto and the Aga

Khan Museum, and gave a Zoom lecture on Khmer epigraphy for the University of Hawai‘i. I have also continued to host the monthly Goodman Lectures for the Khyentse Foundation, which gave me the pleasure of being in conversation with Buddhist Studies professors from various universities, including Edinburgh, Rice, Chulalongkorn, Eötvös Loránd, Northwestern, Berkeley, Hamburg, Pune, and Michigan.



Lao New Year goddess Nang Songkan, pictured in a multilingual Tai Lū manuscript that circulated near Luang Prabang in late 1940s

I was delighted to teach again in the Spring Quarter. My course, “Buddhist Magic,” was centered around an unstudied bark-paper manuscript in a combination of South and Southeast Asian languages. Along with TA and Buddhist Studies PhD student Julia Hirsch, my students and I spent the quarter deciphering the illustrations, calendrical diagrams, and multilingual spells compiled in this unique grimoire. As I should have expected, this new generation of Stanford undergrads has proven up for any challenge! As their

collective final project, the students put together a brilliant website, accessible at [tiny.one/buddhistmagic](http://tiny.one/buddhistmagic).

As international travel became possible again later in the Spring, I accepted conference invitations to speak on Buddhist nuns at the University of Perugia, Italy (May) and on Pāli chant at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (June). Five of my academic essays were either published or entered the production stage this term, including pieces on Cambodian religious history, Khmer legal texts, Pāli-Khmer sermon aesthetics, Theravāda bilingualism, and metaphors for the interface between Pāli and various Tai languages, such as Lao, Shan, and Thai. Two of my translations of essays by Thai Buddhist Studies scholar Santi Pakdeekham were prepared for publication this term as well. On the Buddhist music front, the studio album for Him Sophy’s *Bangsokol: A Requiem for Cambodia* (for which I wrote the libretto) was released on streaming platforms in May.

Finally, much of my research time in the Spring was devoted to putting the final touches on *Out of the Shadows of Angkor: Cambodian Poetry, Prose, and Performance through the Ages*, an anthology I co-edited for *Mānoa: A Pacific Journal of International Writing* and University of Hawai‘i Press. This has been an enormously complex project with nearly sixty authors and translators across the world. My translations include twenty-eight songs, inscriptions, and Buddhist poems from Khmer, Northern Khmer, Pāli, and Sanskrit from the seventh through twenty-first centuries, along with an introduction to Cambodian literature. The book will be released on September 30, 2022.

None of this would have been possible without the support of the HCBSS, its staff, and its sponsors. I am very much looking forward to next year, including the “Buddhism and the Bay Area” course I will be teaching this coming Fall Quarter.

## STUDENT REFLECTIONS

### Ralph H. Craig III

From June 18 to June 27, 2021, I traveled to the cities of Memphis, Brownsville, and Nashville in Tennessee on an HCBSS Research Grant. This was a research trip in support of my forthcoming book, *Wildest Dreams: A Religious Biography of Tina Turner* (under contract). This book, to be published in Eerdman's Library of Religious Biography series, explores the place of religion in the life of Tina Turner, a practitioner of Soka Gakkai International Nichiren Buddhism for nearly fifty years.

Brownsville is the seat of West Tennessee's Haywood County. Tina Turner was born in Brownsville in 1939, raised in the small cotton farming community of Nutbush and spent her early years in the surrounding towns (Ripley, Jackson, and so on). Traveling to Brownsville on the "Tina Turner Trail" (a phrase which I coined, and which the director of the West Tennessee Delta Heritage Center assured me they would use going forward) was an eye-opening experience. I was able to see the vast landscape of the Poindexter Farm where Turner grew up with her sharecropping family (her father served as an overseer on the farm). While this land was vast, comprising strawberry fields and cotton fields, when Turner and her family were not picking cotton or strawberries, they would have had access to very little of the land, due to the Jim Crow system of racial apartheid. And indeed, the legacy of slavery and history of racism pervade



Left to right: Achana Jarrett, Executive Director of the Brownsville Haywood County Arts Council, Sonia Outlaw-Clark, Director of the West Tennessee Delta Heritage Center, and Ralph H. Craig III

West Tennessee. I was also able to see both Woodlawn Missionary Baptist Church where Turner worshipped with her family and Spring Hill Baptist Church where she first raised her voice in song.

In nearby Ripley I saw the foundation of the (in)famous "Hole," a miniature version of Memphis' Beale Street. Turner wrote in her memoirs about going down to the Hole with her sister and cousins to retrieve her parents after late night hangs that included barbecue ribs, sordid affairs, and drunken knife fights. Tony Joe White would later capture Turner's descriptions of the Hole in the song "Steamy Windows" on the *Foreign Affair* album (Capitol Records, 1989). Finally, I was able to interview elder members of the community who regaled me with tales of their childhood exploits with Turner herself: "Now, ya see, back then she wasn't no 'Tina Turner' you understand. That girl was a Bullock *through and through!* You hear me?"

It should be noted that Tina Turner is only one of the many artists to come out of

Haywood County. In fact, standing next to the Tina Turner Museum (housed in the original Flagg Grove School, which she attended; located at the West Tennessee Delta Heritage Center) is the childhood home of another legendary artist: blues great Sleepy John Estes. I spent much productive research time in the records room of the Elma Ross Public Library and at the West Tennessee Delta Heritage Center.

In Nashville, I primarily spent time at the Tennessee State Library and Archives. There, I found many census schedules pertinent to my research. One of the most significant was an educational census that lists Turner's birthdate as November 26, 1940 (the standard year given for her birth is 1939, but there are discrepancies. I even found a document that stated 1938)! I also took advantage of the many historical music museums that pepper Nashville's downtown center. Finally, I met with a colleague at Vanderbilt University with whom I discussed plans for a joint book project.

I would like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to those of the Brownsville Arts Council and the West Tennessee Delta Heritage Center who gave me crucial access to their time and their archival material, and who provided logistical support for my visit. I would also like to thank HCBSS Executive Director Irene Lin and Stephanie Lee for their support in arranging funding. Finally, I owe much gratitude to my advisor Paul Harrison and to Kathryn Gin Lum. I aim to repay my debt of gratitude to all by writing a solid book.



Nutbush, Tennessee

## Oriane Lavolé

Last summer, after a year of pandemic-induced remote learning, I had the pleasure of opening up my horizons anew by attending two summer schools, one remote and one in person, thanks to the gracious support of The Ho Center for Buddhist Studies. In June, I attended the Mind and Life Institute's Summer Research Intensive on the mind, the human-Earth relationship, and climate change. This one-week program combined contemplative practice, presentations, and discussions that brought together indigenous, spiritual, activist, and scientific knowledge to address the environmental crisis from a holistic perspective. Each day offered a balanced program of grounding mindfulness practices, faculty presentations, panels, and group discussions. Both the faculty and participants were incredibly diverse in terms of backgrounds and perspectives, and the impeccable organizing and moderating by the Mind and Life Institute made for a very enriching learning

experience, both in terms of content and pedagogy.

Some of the highlights of the program included Christiana Figueres's keynote address, "The Case for Stubborn Optimism." In her talk, Figueres candidly shared with us how she thought the Paris Climate Accord negotiations that she had directed owed their success in large part to her own understanding and practice of Buddhism. Another impressive faculty was young Indigenous leader Lyla June, who talked about the spiritual dimensions of her work in indigenous regenerative practices for climate youth movements. The intervention of other scientists and researchers was also inspiring in that it showed the range of approaches that are being developed to address climate change and the human suffering that results from it. Moreover, the Institute arranged for small groups to convene at the end of each day to share their thoughts and experiences of the day's events, and my group has kept in touch to exchange



Oriane Lavolé in Paris

resources and references that have further guided my research into Tibetan Buddhist understandings of the environment. Thus, this research intensive was not only intellectually enlightening and spiritually uplifting, but it also succeeded in creating community despite its online format.

The second program I attended was the Institute of Speculative and Critical Inquiry's Cosmic Alternatives II summer school. This was a more strictly academic program with ten days of intensive reading, presentations, and discussions on the possibility of alternate ontologies and different ways of inhabiting the world and relating to nature. The faculty consisted of Peter Skafish, Martin Savransky, Emanuele Coccia, and Eduardo Kohn, giving the program a strong philosophical anthropology bend. The students came from diverse academic and personal backgrounds, and we applied our reflections and discussions to various topics and issues. It was a new experience for me to be the only scholar coming from a Religious Studies background, and I found it to be particularly enriching to engage with scholars who had such intellectual curiosity and open-mindedness that they were eager to put their own work in dialogue with the Buddhist Studies perspective that I offered.

As with the Mind and Life group, this cohort of students has also kept in touch and regularly exchanges resources. We are also setting up a monthly reading group to continue reading political and philosophical anthropology concerning environmental issues.



Institute of Speculative and Critical Inquiry's Cosmic Alternatives II summer school in Portugal

## CAMPUS AND ALUMNI NEWS



Xingyi Wang at Stanford

### AWARDS

**Recipient of the 2021–22 Best Undergraduate Paper in Buddhist Studies:** Xingyi Wang. Her paper is titled, “An Analysis of the Philosophical Coherence Between ‘Neither A, Nor Non-A’ in the *Diamond Sūtra* and ‘因是’ in the *Zhuangzi*.” Xingyi is a rising junior majoring in Philosophy. She is from Nanjing, China, and is interested in classical Chinese philosophy and Buddhist philosophy.

**Recipients of the HCBSS Academic Year Language Study Grants:** Julia Hirsch (Tibetan); Elaine Lai (Tibetan); Oriane Lavolé (Sanskrit)

**Recipient of the HCBSS Summer Language Study Grant:** Oriane Lavolé

**Recipients of the HCBSS Research Grants:** Nancy Chu (Spring 2022, Taiwan); Ralph H. Craig III (Summer 2021, Tennessee); Simona Lazzzerini (Spring 2022, Japan)

**Recipients of the HCBSS Conference Participation Grants:** Ralph H. Craig III (AAR); Julia Hirsch (IATS); Oriane Lavolé (Mind and Life Institute; Speculative and Critical Inquiry’s Cosmic Alternatives II)

**Recipient of the HCBSS ASSU Student Group Grant:** Stanford Zen Society (2021–22)

### ARTICLES

Graduate student **Nancy Chu** published the article “Watch: Algorithm-driven Buddhist Art Debuts at Stanford University” in *Lion’s Roar*.

Graduate student **Ralph H. Craig III** published an article in *Lion’s Roar*, “What Stories Do We Allow Ourselves to Hear?” He also published a book review of *Translating Buddhism: Historical and Contextual Perspectives* on AAR’s Reading Religion website.

Graduate student **Julia Hirsch** published a film review of the documentary *Dark Red Forest* in *Tricycle*: “Cold Hard Truth.”



Nancy Chu in Taiwan



Julia Cross

**Julia Cross** will join Buddhist Studies as the 2022–24 Postdoctoral Fellow at the HCBSS in September 2022. Julia is a historian of medieval Japan, specializing in religion, death, and the body. Drawing on Buddhist manuscripts and art, her research examines how people in medieval Japan attributed religious and social significance to the body, specifically the sacred dead.

Julia’s book project, *Relics in Medieval Japan: A Study of Texts and Material Culture*, examines the syncretic nature of relic worship in thirteenth through fifteenth-century Japan. During this period, relics that had previously been under the control of powerful males in the court began to magically appear at nunneries, peripheral temples, and shrines. In her manuscript project, Julia argues that this redistribution of relics helped to create a differently gendered religious geography by linking given landscapes and peoples to this world of real and imagined relics. This change can be read through extant visual and textual culture from

this period. To such an end, Julia’s research incorporates analysis of chronicles, records, diaries, literary narratives, religious theory, as well as national treasures from museums across Japan.

Her second project, *The Mummies of Tōhoku*, continues with this exploration of the sacred body and death as read through texts and objects. Focusing on mummification practices in seventeenth through nineteenth-century Japan, it questions the common assumption in Japanese scholarship that mummification was an anomaly only practiced by peripheral members of society. Julia’s research shows that mummification practices were not novel to this period and that they can be traced back to older practices of mountain asceticism.

Julia’s research has been supported by various fellowships including the Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Program in Buddhist Studies, the Fulbright Research Fellowship, and the Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship (FLAS).

Graduate student **Simona Lazzerini** published a book review of Michael D. Nichols’s *Malleable Māra: Transformations of a Buddhist Symbol of Evil* on H-Buddhism.

Our 2020–2023 postdoctoral fellow, **Trent Walker** and Chenxing Han published an article, “The Many Faces of Cultural Appropriation” in *Lion’s Roar*.

## NEW APPOINTMENTS

**Julia Cross** will join Buddhist Studies as the 2022–24 Postdoctoral Fellow at the HCBSS in September 2022.

**Jaakko Takkinen** joins the Buddhist Studies team as the Communications Specialist in August 2022.

**Trent Walker’s** Postdoctoral Fellowship has been extended for another year, 2022–23.

## ALUMNI NEWS

Alumnus **Rafal Felbur** will take up a teaching and research position at Heidelberg University in the Fall of 2022.

Alumnus **Nicholas Witkowski** has been appointed as Assistant Professor at the University of San Diego in the Fall of 2022.

**Jaakko Takkinen** joins the Buddhist Studies team as our Communications Specialist. Jaakko worked in publishing, media, and communications before receiving his PhD in Buddhist Studies from the University of California, Santa Barbara. His dissertation research focused on the intersection of Tibetan medicine (Sowa Rigpa) and Tibetan Buddhist religious practices, particularly in the training of contemporary Sowa Rigpa practitioners. Prior to coming to Stanford, Jaakko taught at UC Santa Barbara and Georgia State University. Jaakko’s unique experience and background in both communications and Buddhist Studies puts him in an ideal position to lead our communication efforts.

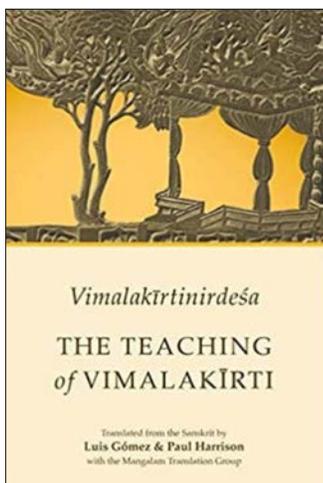


Jaakko Takkinen

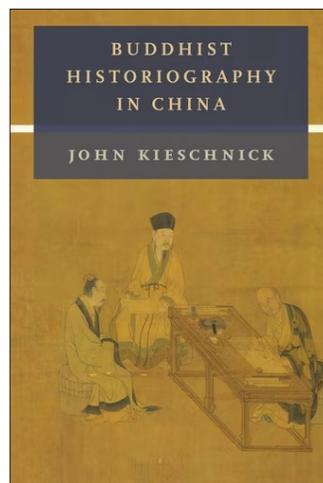


Left to right: Sangyop Lee, Simona Lazzerini and Trent Walker in Seoul, Korea

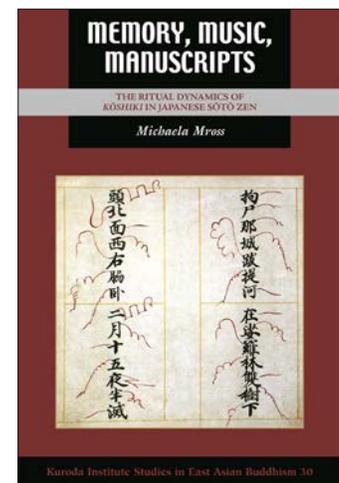
## PUBLICATIONS:



**Luis Gómez** and **Paul Harrison’s** new book, *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa – The Teaching of Vimalakīrti: An English Translation of the Sanskrit Text Found in the Potala Palace, Lhasa*, was published in February 2022.



**John Kieschnick’s** new book, *Buddhist Historiography in China* was published in July 2022.



**Michael Mross’s** new book, *Memory, Music, Manuscripts: The Ritual Dynamics of Kōshiki in Japanese Sōtō Zen* was published in July 2022.

## **THE HCBSS TEAM**

**Paul Harrison**  
Co-Director

**John Kieschnick**  
Co-Director

**Irene H. Lin**  
Executive Director

**Jaakko Takkinen**  
Communications Specialist

**Stephanie Lee**  
Finance Associate

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

450 Jane Stanford Way  
Bldg. 70-71E, Main Quad  
Stanford, CA 94305-2165

[buddhiststudies.stanford.edu](http://buddhiststudies.stanford.edu)