

# **BUDDHIST AESTHETICS CONFERENCE**

NOVEMBER 9-10, 2017

STANFORD HUMANITIES CENTER  
STANFORD UNIVERSITY



**SHERRY FOWLER**

University of Kansas



**When and Where is Japanese Buddhist Art?**

**Abstract:**

As an art historian, I have been negotiating questions of whether Buddhist material should be considered art throughout my career. This talk will address aspects of my research on Japanese temples, icons, prints, and bells bearing in mind the conference theme of Buddhist aesthetics. Some Buddhist icons are considered to be so powerful they are hidden from view, while in other cases icons are displayed in Buddhist temple treasure houses that charge admission and function like museums. Buddhist prints might be treated as sacred traces of an icon, objects worthy of display, or inexpensive souvenirs. And large bronze Buddhist bells, which most Japanese temples possess, require extremely specialized skills to design and cast, yet are rarely regarded as aesthetic objects.

**Bio:**

Sherry D. Fowler is Professor of Art History at the University of Kansas. She received her PhD in Japanese Art History from UCLA. Her publications include *Murōji: Rearranging Art and History at a Japanese Buddhist Temple* (2005) and *Accounts and Images of Six Kannon in Japan* (2015). She is currently researching the relationship between Japanese prints and pilgrimage practices as well as changing perceptions of Buddhist temple bells.

**PAUL GREENE**

Penn State Brandywine



**Sounding the Body in Nepal: Soteriology and Aesthetics in a Lay Buddhist Musical Ritual**

**Abstract:**

In rituals following a death in the Kathmandu Valley, members of the Manandhar caste, a lay Buddhist caste of Newars, sound the *neku* buffalo horn. The horn is likened to a relic of the dead person through mythical and symbolic identification of the buffalo as a person's incarnation. Its sound is recognized as a helpful sound heard during previous transmigrations, when *neku* rituals also were performed. The dead person follows the sound to find advantageous rebirth, and the living find healing, peace, and religious merit. Its mystical familiarity transcends the usually inscrutable boundaries of death and rebirth, and as Manandhars contemplate it, they reconceptualize their bodies, practice non-attachment, and actualize Buddhist soteriological beliefs. Aesthetic rituals can function as more than just expressive elaborations of Buddhism's textual tenets. For Manandhars, it is precisely the "aesthetic" (musical, expressive) dimensions of the ritual which trigger spiritual contemplations. This paper is an ethnographic exegesis of the various Manandhar beliefs and experiences about life, death, and the body, revealed through their statements about the meaning and purpose of the *neku* sound. In some ways, the *neku* ritual bears similarities to Tibetan and Bhutanese *cham* traditions, and also Tibetan ritual instruments made of human bones and skulls.

**Bio:**

Paul D. Greene is an ethnomusicologist of South and Southeast Asian musical cultures, focusing on the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley and Burmese monastic Buddhism. Much of his research is situated at an interdisciplinary juncture between musicology and Buddhist studies, and he has edited two special issues of ethnomusicology journals on this juncture. His current research examines the revival and revitalization of musical and religious culture in Cambodia.

**PAUL HARRISON**  
Stanford University



### Objects of Veneration, Beauty and Desire

**Abstract:**

Using a number of manuscripts in Stanford's own collections as jumping-off points, this talk will reflect on the many different ways in which Buddhist manuscripts can be and have been approached, from the beginning of the first millennium up to the present day.

**Bio:**

Paul Harrison is the George Edwin Burnell Professor of Religious Studies at Stanford University. Prior to 2006 he taught at the Universities of Auckland and Canterbury in New Zealand. His research deals with the history of Buddhism, Mahāyāna Buddhist literature (both scriptures and commentaries), and the study of Buddhist manuscripts. His publications include *The Samādhi of Direct Encounter with the Buddhas of the Present* (Tokyo, 1990), *From Birch Bark to Digital Data* (co-edited with Jens-Uwe Hartmann, Vienna, 2014), and various editions, translations and studies of Buddhist texts in Sanskrit, Tibetan and Chinese. He is also a member of the editorial board of the series *Buddhist Manuscripts* in the Schøyen Collection.

**ALEXANDRA KALOYANIDES**  
University of North Carolina at Charlotte



### Costuming the Konbaung Kingdom

**Abstract:**

This paper examines concerns about proper dress in the Burma's Konbaung Dynasty, which lasted from 1752–1885. The Konbaung court displayed a particular interest in regimenting monastic robes and in costuming royalty. This paper examines a collection of Konbaung Buddhist chronicles (B. *thathanawin*) and related American missionary materials and British colonial records to uncover what monastic robe controversies and changing lay fashions reveal about larger concerns in Burma's last Buddhist kingdom.

**Bio:**

Alexandra Kaloyanides is Assistant Professor of Buddhism at the University of North Carolina, Charlotte. She researches Burmese religions and American religious history. Her book manuscript, "Objects of Conversion, Relics of Resistance," examines the religious contestations, conversions, and transformations during the nineteenth-century American Baptist mission to Burma. From 2015–2017, Alex was a Postdoctoral Scholar at the Ho Center for Buddhist Studies at Stanford University.

**JOHN KIESCHNICK**  
Stanford University



### Buddhist Robes in Comparative Perspective

**Abstract:**

This paper examines Buddhist robes in comparative perspective, asking the question "what, if anything, defines religious clothing?" After first reflecting on elements commonly found in religious clothing outside of Buddhism, I return to the *kasaya* to ask what comparison to other traditions reveals about Buddhist monastic clothing.

**Bio:**

John Kieschnick, The Robert H.N. Ho Family Foundation Professor of Buddhist Studies, works primarily on the cultural history of Chinese Buddhism. Author of a book on Chinese Buddhist hagiography, and another on the impact of Buddhism on Chinese material culture, he is currently working on a book on Buddhist historiography in China.

## ARAI KŌJUN

Hōgyokuin Temple, Tokorozawa city



### Rediscovery of Buddhist Chant: Shōmyō-and the Daihannya Tendoku-e

#### Abstract:

The National Theater opened in 1966 and “shōmyō” or liturgical Buddhist chanting, which has a 1200-year history, was performed for the first time in public to commemorate the special occasion. This type of Buddhist chant, which is an important form of Japanese traditional music, was rediscovered then. From the viewpoint of a singer and a researcher of shōmyō, I will discuss this rediscovery through the Daihannya Tendoku-e (the performance of a “rolling” reading of the Great Sutra on the Perfection of Wisdom).

#### Bio:

Born in 1944, Reverend Arai Kōjun completed the master course in literature with a major in ancient Indian religion at Kōyasan University. He studied Busan shōmyō of the Shingon sect under Reverend Aoki Yūkō. Reverend Arai is a researcher of shōmyō scores at the Research Institute for Japanese Music Historiography, Ueno Gakuen University and also a guest lecturer at the National Music University. He is also a member of Karyōbinga Shōmyō Ensemble (Kashōken) and the head priest of Hogyokuin temple in Tokorozawa city.

## ROBERT NELSON LINROTHE

Northwestern University

### Preceptors on Pala-Sena Period Pedestals of Eastern Indian Sculpture: Performing Pratihtha?

#### Abstract:

A small but significant number of stone sculptures on Buddhist, Brahmanical and Jaina sculptures carved between the 8th and 12th centuries feature images of Vajrācārya (in the case of Buddhist images) or other ritual specialists (such as Purohitas for Brahmanical sculptures) engaged in ritual actions. They are placed at the same level as the human donors, and I will argue they too may have suggested an association with the creation process, the last step of which is the animation of the sculpture through consecration.

#### Bio:

Rob Linrothe is Associate Professor in the Department of Art History at Northwestern University. In the academic year 2016–2017 he was on research leave in Eastern India, working on donor figures in Buddhist, Hindu and Jain sculptures. In 2008—2009 he was Scholar-in-Residence at the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles in 2008-2009. Through his field work, Prof. Linrothe has become a specialist in the Buddhist art of the Himalayas. He has concentrated on the pre-modern art of Ladakh and Zangskar (Indian Himalayas) and the contemporary revival of monastic painting in Amdo (China, northeastern cultural Tibet). Besides his essays in specialist journals and edited volumes, his most recent book is *Seeing in Stone: Pre-Buddhist Petroglyphs and Zangskar's Early Inhabitants*. Among the exhibitions he has organized and catalogs edited and written are *Collecting Paradise: Buddhist Art of Kashmir and Its Legacies* (2015) and *Holy Madness: Portraits of Tantric Siddhas* (2006).



**MICHAELA MROSS**

Stanford University



**Singing in Praise of the Buddha Patriarchs: Shōmyō kōshiki in Japanese Sōtō Zen**

**Abstract:**

Western literature on Zen Buddhism rarely mentions sounds or music and thus implicitly suggests that the life in Zen temples is rather silent. However, when visiting a Japanese Zen monastery, one in fact encounters a world rich with sounds. For example, on special occasions, clerics perform highly musical rituals, during which they sing texts with elaborate melodies. Most of these ceremonies belong to the liturgical genre of *kōshiki* 講式 (Buddhist ceremonials) and feature Japanese-style Buddhist chanting (*shōmyō* 声明). This paper explores the musical side of these rituals, while paying special attention to its aesthetics. First, I examine the performance practice of *kōshiki*. Then, I analyze how novice monks learn to perform *kōshiki*. Finally, I discuss how monks interpret the performance of *kōshiki* as part of their practice.

**Bio:**

Michaela Mross is Assistant Professor of Japanese Buddhism at Stanford University and a former Shinjō Itō Postdoctoral Fellow for Japanese Buddhism at the University of California, Berkeley. Her research interests include Zen Buddhism, Buddhist rituals, sacred music, as well as manuscript and print culture in premodern Japan. She completed her PhD in Japanese Studies at the Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich in 2014 with a thesis on *kōshiki* (Buddhist ceremonials) in the Sōtō school, after having conducted six years of full-time research in Japan. She published numerous articles on Buddhist ceremonials in English and Japanese and co-edited a special issue of the *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* on *kōshiki*. Currently, she is completing a monograph on *kōshiki* and *shōmyō* in the Sōtō school.

**DIANE E. RIGGS**

Western Michigan University



**Translating the Aesthetics of the Buddhist Robe**

**Abstract:**

Buddhist robes in ancient India marked the wearer as a follower of the Buddha. Rules distinguished this clothing from that of lay believers as well as other wandering ascetic groups. In East Asia, however, Buddhist leaders have long worn ornate robes made from brocade cloth shot through with gold wrapped threads that violate these rules. How did this transformation occur? Does it suggest a fundamental shift in the conception of the Buddha and his teaching? This paper will trace both the history and the rhetoric of this and other transformations of the Buddhist robe.

**Bio:**

Diane E. Riggs is a Faculty Specialist at Western Michigan University. She received her PhD from the Asian Languages and Cultures department at UCLA in 2010. Her dissertation, "The Cultural and Religious Significance of Japanese Buddhist Vestments" is the first full-length study of Japanese Buddhist robes that integrates textual sources with historical and contemporary material culture. Her most recent publication is about the use of gold brocade transmission robes in East Asian Zen in *Zen and Material Culture* (Oxford University Press, 2017). Earlier publications include an article about debates over the form of the Buddhist robe in Tokugawa era Sōtō Zen in *Dogen and Sōtō Zen* (Oxford University Press, 2015); and the results of her fieldwork in Japan with Sōtō Zen Buddhist robe-sewing groups in the *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*.



## The Multiple Histories of Buddhist Art in China

### Abstract:

What is Buddhist Art? How is it defined in the scholarly world? Who writes the history of Chinese Buddhist art and how do they write it? Scholars coming from different cultural backgrounds and varied disciplines have distinct views about how to write a history of Buddhist art in China. This paper examines the practice of Buddhist art history, and relates its multiplicity to the ways in which Buddhist Art as a genre or a subfield is being understood and categorized in different parts of the world. I will also describe the latest developments in technical art history and digital humanities, and consider their impact on the study of Buddhist art.

### Bio:

Hsueh-man Shen is Associate Professor: Ehrenkranz Chair in World Art at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. A specialist of the art and archaeology of medieval China, Shen was Co-Principal Investigator of a research project, funded by the Chiang Ching-Kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange from 2008 to 2011, to survey Tang-dynasty Buddhist sculptures and rock-carvings in Sichuan province. Her recent projects include an exhibition at the Getty Center, *Cave Temples of Dunhuang: Buddhist Art on China's Silk Road* (2016), for which she served as consultant and co-organizer.

## **CRISTINA SCHERRER-SCHAUB**

École Pratique des Hautes Études, and Université de Lausanne

## Writing, Representing and Performing with Beauty: On Harmony in Buddhist Textual and Cultural Traditions

### Abstract:

Aesthetic concern in the art of communicating plays a central role in ancient Indian Buddhism, and in its far and wide journey outside. The interest in the problematic becomes even more acute considering the progressive fading away if not disappearing of the «sense of beauty» from the very technically sophisticated new «highways» of communication. Focussing upon some illustrative cases, taken from Indian, Central Asian and Tibetan material, the paper will question the close relationship between «beauty» and «harmony» in religious and spiritual practices.

### Bio:

Cristina Scherrer-Schaub is emeritus Directeur d'Études at the École Pratique des hautes Études, Paris, France (Chair of History of Late Indian Buddhism), and Honorary Professor at the University of Lausanne, Switzerland (Chair E. de Boer of Tibetan and Buddhist Studies). Her interests range from the Indian school of the Mādhyamika Masters and Indian Buddhism at large, to the intellectual, cultural, political and material history of textual transmission, focussing upon the manuscripts of Central Asia and Tibet, particularly the collections of Dunhuang, Central and Western Tibet. Yearly field works in the northwestern regions of India, Central Asia, Tibet, South and South-east Asia have fruitfully accompanied her research during more than two decades. Part of her research concentrates on methodological issues, e. g. : materiality (viz. codicology, methods of datation, diplomatic analysis, etc.), interpretation of documents and inscriptions (viz. chancery practice, use of the written, juridic issues, etc.), and theoretical approaches to intellectual history.



## **PETER SKILLING**

École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris, France

### **Aesthetics of Merit, Merit of Aesthetics: Texts as Things of Beauty**

#### **Abstract:**

Buddhist texts do not say much about the aesthetics of writing, but they say a lot about the spiritual merit to be gained from writing down the Buddha's words. Manuscripts, however, speak for themselves. Things of beauty, they produce mountains of merit and are joys forever. Caityas, manuscripts, letters, images of the Tathāgata: in the broad weave of Dharma as an ideology of merit they are interchangeable. I examine what texts say about manuscript production and what the graphic corpus says about itself.

#### **Bio:**

Peter Skilling has spent most of his life in Thailand. He received a PhD with Honours (2004) and a Habilitation (2008) from l'École Pratique des Hautes Études (Sorbonne, Paris). He has been visiting professor at Harvard University (2000), Oxford University (2002), the University of California at Berkeley (2005), the University of Sydney (2009), Soka University (2009), and Savitribai Phule Pune University (2016). At present, he is a Professor of the French School of Asian Studies (EFEO) based in Bangkok. He is Special Lecturer at Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, and Honorary Associate, Department of Indian Sub-Continental Studies, University of Sydney, Australia.

He is interested in the deep history of South and Southeast Asian Buddhism as seen through archaeology, epigraphy, and literature.



## **BETH SZCZEPANSKI**

Independent Scholar, Walla Walla, Washington

### **“Country and Eastern”: Music and Buddhist-Catholic Interfaith Outreach**

#### **Abstract:**

At a Buddhist-Catholic interfaith conference just after the September 11 attacks, senior monk of the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association Reverend Heng Sure and abbot of the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas Bhikshu Heng Lyu created a new “Dedication of Merit” for use in interfaith contexts. This presentation analyzes Buddhist and Catholic versions of their new “Dedication of Merit,” and places it in the context of the development of an American Chinese Buddhist musical repertoire that Reverend Heng Sure calls “Country and Eastern Music.”

#### **Bio:**

Beth Szczepanski is an independent scholar residing in Portland, Oregon. Her research focuses on the use of instrumental music in Chinese Buddhist practices in North China and in the US.





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