

A Report on the Third Buddhist Studies Symposium at University of Toronto August 17–21, 2017.

This was the third Buddhist Studies symposium. Previous symposia were held at University of British Columbia in July 2015 and at Stanford University in September 2016. This event was held in conjunction with the meeting in Toronto of the International Association of Buddhist Studies, August 20–25, 2017.

The symposium was sponsored by the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) with support from the Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation. Ten Dissertation Fellows and three Postdoctoral Fellows were present. The mentors at the workshop included scholars who had served on the selection committee—James A. Benn (McMaster University), Janet Gyatso (Harvard University), Ute Hüsken (Heidelberg University), Birgit Kellner (Austrian Academy of Sciences), Donald S. Lopez (University of Michigan), Juhung Rhi (Seoul National University), Stephen “Buzzy” Teiser (Princeton University)—as well as Vincent Tournier (School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London), Christoph Emmrich and Frances Garrett from University of Toronto. Also attending were Ted Lipman, CEO of the Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation and from ACLS Steven Wheatley (Vice-President), Andrzej Tymowski (Director of International Programs) and Elisabeta Pop (Coordinator of International Programs). The program for the symposium can be found [here](#).

The core of the symposium was a workshop in which, through presentations of work-in-progress, the Fellows and mentors explored the potential synergies in the Fellows’ projects and their implications for the developing field of Buddhist studies worldwide. There were six sessions in the workshop, each moderated by a senior scholar. The presentations by two or three Fellows in each session were followed by comments from one of the mentors. According with a practice adopted at the previous symposia, the sessions were organized deliberately in a way that would break down any disciplinary or other boundaries of space, time, or tradition. Within each session, presenters, commentators, and moderators shared no common ground in terms of regional or temporal expertise, research language, or scholarly method. The intention behind this strategy is to focus on the potential contribution of each project to the field of Buddhist Studies as a whole. We have found that this format encourages all participants to generate questions and comments that move beyond their own areas of specialist training.

Each Fellow was allotted ten minutes within their own session to talk about their research (more detailed written research reports were distributed to all participants ahead of time). The Fellows were asked to respond to two issues:

1. What were one or two key problems encountered—practical, intellectual, or in the organization of the written work? How were these problems addressed? Are some aspects still not fully resolved?
2. How does the project help us understand the condition of Buddhist studies today? What is its potential contribution to the field?

Below, we present reports on each of the presentations made by the Fellows. The reports were written by other Fellows, each reporting on a presentation in their own session, thus (again) avoiding overlaps in research interests or training and maximizing opportunities for

interdisciplinary reflection. The rapporteurs were asked to comment on three aspects of the discussion.

1. Substance of the project: What did your colleague say about the project in the ten-minute presentation?

2. Discussion: What were the reactions to your colleague's project? Clarifications? Amplifications?

3. Implications: How did your engagement with your colleague's project make you think differently about your own work? About the field of Buddhist studies?

The reports have been lightly edited for style. They follow the order of the sessions in the workshop.

Reports on the Presentations

Sangseraima Ujeed (University of Oxford): *Mapping the Lineages of Tibetan Buddhism: A Study of the "Thob yig gsal ba'i me long" (The Clear Mirror of the Records of Teachings Received) of the Monk Scholar Za-ya Pandita Blo-bzang 'phrin-las, 1642–1715*

Report by Charlie Carstens

1. Substance of the project:

Sangseraima Ujeed's dissertation explores 17th-century Mongolian Buddhism through the study of a biographical work entitled "Thob yig gsal ba'i me long" (i.e., *The Clear Mirror of the Records of Teachings Received*). She aims to understand how this text played a critical role in the formation of Buddhist communities and traditions in Mongolia as well as served as a conduit for the transmission of Buddhism from Tibet.

2. Discussion:

Sangseraima's project stimulated active conversation about a wide range of issues. Since this research is textual and is concentrated on a specific text, a series of questions was posed about textual genre and audience. She explained that this text is somewhat difficult to place within a specific genre. It is clearly a form of biography; however, it also exhibits features attributed to other textual genres. For example, Sangseraima suggests that the Buddhist figures featured in this work are somewhat overshadowed by, or secondary to, explication of Tantric and monastic practices.

Regarding the text's audience, she casts this work as part of an effort to establish Tibetan Buddhism in Mongolia or to create a form of Mongolian Buddhism inspired by Tibetan Buddhism. In other words, this text is understood as an important instrument for achieving the formation of a Mongolian Buddhist identity. The text is therefore said to address the yet-to-be-realized community of Mongolian Buddhist monastics.

Sangseraima's biggest challenges were related to matters of context. On the one hand, she is still in the process of discerning the historic context of this text, a domain of research that is largely underdeveloped. On the other hand, this project has not yet been firmly located within a particular scholarly conversation about Tibetan Buddhism or within Buddhist Studies more broadly. She continues to seek out the "best worst-argument" against which she imagines her work as a response.

3. Implications:

Sangseraima's project is useful to my work because of her distinct approach to issues and challenges that we hold in common. For instance, we are both engaged in textual studies that represent historical persons and therefore face the challenge of knowing how to read texts of a biographical nature. Whereas my approach draws attention to the practice of representation itself, Sangseraima proposes that we think about biography as the general structure through which other materials are introduced. She expresses the role of biography through several metaphors such as a "backbone" that serves to support the flesh of Buddhist ideas/practices. By treating biography as scaffolding for something else, Sangseraima has encouraged me to reconsider whether the objective of the text was to represent persons.

Another commonality between our projects is our struggle with historical context. We are both wrestling with texts from historic periods and places about which we know very little. Recognizing our limited understanding of Mongolian history, Sangseraima reconstructed a potential historic context through reference to the circumstances of Tibet at that time. While there are certainly significant differences between the two regions and forms of Buddhism, visions of Tibet might serve as a starting point for imagining what Mongolia might have been like. This comparative move might also be productive for me whereby I might envision 18th century Burma by looking at other areas of the Theravāda Buddhist world that we better understand.

One final benefit of Sangseraima's project is her attention to the ways in which texts support the formation of community. Prior to learning about her project, I conceptualized my textual materials in terms of the hierarchical relationships they engender between readers and the primary object of representation (i.e., the king). Sangseraima helped me think more deeply about the communal effects that occur horizontally, namely among the various readers who similarly see themselves connected to the king.

Charles Carstens (Harvard University): *Mapping Power: Ordering the Cosmos through the Coronation Ceremonies of Konbaung Burma*

Report by Sangseraima Ujeed

1. Substance of the project:

Charlie's research topic for his PhD aims to study Burmese Buddhist ritual texts that attend to the subject of coronation rituals. For his presentation at symposium, he focused on a particular text by Ñāṇābhivaṃsa known as the *Rājādhirāja Vilāsinī*, which is a Burmese ritual text. The text and its contents were not examined for their historical accuracy nor their value for defining kingship. Rather, the focus of the talk was on the functionality of Burmese ritual texts and what is meant to be accomplished through them.

The project investigates the historical processes through which these rituals are textualised as well as how the ritual events are memorialized. The texts employed for this project

are approached as literary objects, taking into account factors such as how they are designed, what they might accomplish, the textual practices that they deploy such as theorization or representation, and consequently, how these texts are located in Buddhist and Burmese history. This involves imagining the necessary conditions that make possible the production of such texts as well as the potential ways that these texts changed 18th-century Burma.

The main argument was that the text cannot effectively legitimate the king through display of his favourable or idealized representation because this text consistently undermines, obscures, and even conceals the figure of the king. Instead, the text configures a different political relationship between the king and his subjects presenting a network of collaborative hierarchical relationships that are differentiated on the basis of the varying capacities of perception. An example for this was the story of the white elephant. In this narrative, the elephant is the object of veneration and those in the vicinity of the elephant is bestowed authority due to their proximity to the object of power. When approached as a metaphor for authority, it demonstrates the relationship between power and those close to power.

In the context of scholarship, this project is situated within a broader scholarly discussion about texts and their relevance to power by addressing the historical explanation of legitimation. Drawing from existing discourses on the relationship between text and power such as Weber, his talk generally outlined a number of limitations of the existing theories and considers their relevance when specifically applied to the case of Burmese ritual texts such as the *Rājādhirāja Vilāsinī*.

2. Discussion:

As Burmese literature is predominantly governed by British colonial narratives, some obstacles were encountered in the process of discussing “genre” when attempting to place these ritual texts within the context of Burmese literature. A possible solution was located in the “context” of these texts which means the reconstruction of an alternative local “historical context” to the British colonial version.

3. Implications:

Considering the possible contribution of this project to the wider field of Buddhist studies, it can offer new ways of understanding relations between text and power other than legitimation. It could also have valuable contributions for the study of Buddhist kingship, historiography, commentarial practices, and violence in South East Asian Buddhist societies.

The response of the audience was varied and highly engaging. The main questions which arose were:

- How does ethnocentrism come into play?
- What is the relevance of these texts for Burmese identity?
- Do these texts have the capacity to teach perception?
- How can “legitimation” be defined and how can existing theories be applied?

The speaker handled the questions with scholarly professionalism and appropriate evidence from his research. Though impossible to discuss all of them thoroughly, here follows a summary.

The narratives in these ritual texts are presented to promote difference and diversity but in an attempt to bring groups together rather than to separate them. These differences are promoted through performance of drama and the styles of their costumes and attires. Although monasticism and Pali literature are the point of entry into these texts, the texts and their contents

relate to secular power and its perception. Although the actual figure of the king is absent from the narratives, like *Jatāka* narratives in which Bodhisattvas are surrounded by objects which symbolise the presence of a great being, royal power is implied through objects of power such as the white elephant. In terms of legitimisation, these ideas do not go against existing theories nor can existing theories be simply adopted. Legitimation has to be taken as part of a larger narrative made up of symbols of power, kingship in terms of the Cakravartin model, and representation of these in a practical ritual setting.

The commentator, Professor James Benn summarised the session drawing attention to topics for consideration for both speakers such as how authors talk about “power”, what the requirements are for scholars and practitioners to read texts, how people read texts, how texts and their contents are disseminated into the larger world, who the audiences were meant to be, the problem genre and how ethnocentrism can umbrella legitimisation, power, authority and kingship.

I personally found Charlie’s talk and his project highly thought provoking. Although some of his main angles did not immediately relate to my own work, many of the ideas translated across in unexpected ways. His discussion of how power is situated in objects and metaphors rather than historical individuals was interesting concept that I can explore in the context of the Tibetan Buddhist world. For example, in Tibet, individuals are seen to hold power throughout history because they identify themselves or others identify them with Bodhisattvas or miracles relating them to something transcendental during their lifetimes, or in historical hindsight.

The topic of genre and the difficulty of discussing genre when approaching Buddhist literature was another topic which interests both of us. The problem for Charlie was British colonial influence on Burma’s historical narratives which distorts the local context. For me, it is how to discuss Tibetan Buddhist literary works using western genre categories. However, we both need to look for means to identify and discuss the historical context in order to be able to contextualise the contents of our texts. In doing so, ideas such as historical, religious and political bias of the author as well as our own biases as individuals cannot be ignored. Therefore, thinking about how to read the text and present our understanding of it in a way that is as concise as possible is something that can never be completely resolved, just as we as individuals are never totally free from our biases. Despite there being no real solution for the time being, we can only hope that awareness of this problem alone can already go a long way.

Another more general interest we have in common is the consideration of the religious together with the secular ruling elite. His discussion of text audiences for his ritual texts reminded me that I also need to increase my consideration of the text audience and its reception throughout the “life history” of the text in order to understand its contents and relevance to the Tibetan Buddhist world since its creation.

Jeffrey Kotyk (Leiden University): *Buddhist Astrology and Astral Magic in the Tang Dynasty*

Report by Alexander Hsu

1. Substance of the project:

Jeffrey Kotyk presented his dissertation project in terms of the development of astrology and astral magic practiced by Buddhists in high medieval China, especially as described by the

corpora of translated scriptures conserved in transmitted canons. Kotyk traced astral names, systems, concepts, and practices from their locations entextualized in Chinese scriptures back to Western civilizational spheres including Vedic India, Hellenistic Indo-Greece, and especially Sasanian Iran; as well as forward to developments in astrology and astral magic as conceived by various Japanese esoteric Buddhist lineages, some of which continue these astral practices to this day. In a short five minutes, we learned that the origins, religious backgrounds, or names of several astral bodies, gods, and astral magicians familiar to Sino-Buddhologists were not what we had assumed they had been: the translators of astral knowledge were actually Nestorian; the fierce “Tejaprabhā” was revealed to have been named by a modern Japanese Buddhologist; and the god portrayed in several illustrated esoteric texts who was assumed to be Indian was really an Iranian Kronos. Kotyk situated his work in conversation with other Buddhologists who have shown that actually existing Buddhists often flouted the written monastic proscriptions of the *vinaya*, which prohibit, among other activities, (excessively) learning astrology or employing astral magic. He also suggested the creation of a subfield called “Buddhist astrology” under the umbrella of Buddhist Studies, analogous to how historians of science and magic working in other parts of the world have embraced “Christian,” “Islamic,” or “Judaic astrology” as separate areas of investigation. Finally, he wanted to emphasize that his own discoveries about the ultimate origins of Chinese Buddhist astrology in Iran could inspire others to re-evaluate the sources of other elements of Chinese Buddhism that have been naively accepted as exclusively either Chinese or Indian.

2. Discussion:

Q&A centered around exploring contexts for Kotyk’s project, on the one hand more narrowly specifying the social history of the texts he analyzed (they were guild-bound, court-directed, and not likely the target of institutional critique); and on the other hand broadening the project’s appeal to less philological fields (history of literature; sociology of knowledge).

Dr. Gyatso connected our two projects through a few different themes: our protagonists’ accretion and economizing of mass data, and their agency in “innovating” or “plagiarizing” elements from various sources. She suggested parallels between Kotyk’s project and her recent project on Tibetan medicine, which can be read as an extended meditation on what is specifically Buddhist (or non-Buddhist) about an ostensibly “scientific” field of knowledge (or, under what conditions medicine may be thought to be Buddhist or not Buddhist). She encouraged us both to think about whether and how Buddhism is distinct from other traditions or fields of knowledge.

3. Implications:

Kotyk’s project forced me to consider anew what I was naively taking to be either “Chinese” or “foreign” in my own materials—typically Buddhist *leishu* are thought to repackage Indian contents in Chinese form, but these cultural oppositions may not have been uniformly salient to their makers and readers. It is exciting to see scholars in Buddhist Studies engage with the history of science in recent projects—I hope history of information management is next!

Alexander Hsu (University of Chicago): *Practices of Scriptural Economy: Compiling and Copying a Seventh Century Chinese Buddhist Anthology*

Report by Jeffrey Kotyk

1. Substance of the project:

Alex is presently researching an important seventh-century Chinese Buddhist text, titled *Grove of Pearls from the Garden of Dharma* (Ch. *Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠林), authored by a monk Daoshi 道世 (596–683 CE), which is an anthology of Buddhist texts meant to provide readers with a reliable digestion of the contemporary Chinese canon. One primary concern is that the text in question approaches an enormous diversity and volume of scriptures. Alex draws a parallel between the methodology employed to compile this work and modern scholarship, in that we often must make critical judgments in what is important and worth attention. He has encountered two problems to date. First, the volume of his own research has led him to write about and study several prefaces from similar anthologies. Second, he has faced the question of identifying which parts of the text at hand he should translate and discuss in his study. Nevertheless, it is clear that Buddhist anthologies reveal a process of choosing and reproducing important texts that might be conceived of as promoting a kind of “cultural literacy”.

2. Discussion:

Davey Tomlinson brought up for discussion the difference between “author” and “compiler”, and suggested that the act of compiling itself might constitute a spiritual practice. Dagmar Schwerk pointed out the struggle and tension for authenticity in the canonical productions, asking who authorizes a compiler to do his work, and thus highlighting the need to consider religious and even secular authority in the present research. Further questions concerning this immediate wider popular context were asked by Sangseraima Ujeed. Alex noted that this genre of anthologies was connected to lay preaching.

Juhyung Rhi inquired about the prominence of these texts in history: was the text in question important compared to others? Do we take it too seriously as modern scholars? Alex stated that the text’s reception in history is difficult to determine, although we can gauge this to some extent through Dunhuang citations. Janet Gyatso summarized by mentioning the fact that this project deals with a “massive set of data” and the challenge is to bring it all together within the context of canon formation versus manageability of data.

3. Implications:

Alex’s project underscores a challenge that many in Buddhist Studies face: having to analyze enormous volumes of data and, moreover, make sense of it within a historical context that might prove nebulous. Investigating what compilers left out is equally as fruitful as examining what they included, but the problem is determining what and, more importantly, why certain things were excluded. The anthology under study is concerned with presenting digested canonical literature, which leads to a concern in my own research: specifically, why did Buddhist compilers in China include some astrological texts, but exclude others? This brings to mind the need to consider contemporary social contexts, yet exclusion might merely indicate unavailability or ignorance of specific texts.

Sophia Van Zyle Warshall (University of California, Berkeley): *Translating the Buddha: Indonesian Reliquaries and the Vimala Uṣṇīṣa Dhāraṇī*

Report by Kwi Jeong Lee

1. Substance of the project:

This project explores the social dimensions surrounding the *stupika*, miniature Buddhist reliquaries inscribed with mantras or other texts. These small portable objects dated to the eighth to tenth centuries have been found all over the Indonesian islands. By building the database of *stupika*, this project aims to trace how these objects and the concepts about them moved, how people who produced and used these objects traveled, and how the ideas about the *stupika* flew with those movements of people and the objects. Through these multi-layered movements, the project looks at the interplay between local and trans-local and the dynamic process in which localization created cosmopolitan culture.

Conducting this research, Warshall tries to shed light on the complexity of human interaction in the past without superimposing onto her historical case the anachronistic perspectives that such theoretical concepts may inherently carry. To avoid this potential risk, she looks at larger social contexts in which material objects were produced, as in *Islam Translated* by Ronit Ricci, and the aspects of material culture which suggest the fluidity of human interaction and identity, as in *Objects of Translation* by Finbarr Flood. In particular, she seeks to understand how social hierarchy worked into the practice of making and using *stupika*. In general, she aims to elucidate social contexts of people in classical Indonesia through the lens of Buddhism.

2. Discussion:

Reflecting the growing interest in material culture of Buddhism, the discussion centered on two themes. One is the tension between texts and materiality; the other is the agency of the material object. Discussants asked questions: how to address and resolve the tension or interplay between written texts on the *stupika* and its material features? How to explain the ritual of *stupika* burials?

What is the performative role of the object? What methodologies to apply to associate the production and circulation of a particular material object and the culture around it with larger social contexts? How to relate the Indonesian case of practice with the other cultural and linguistic regions in the Buddhist sphere.

New analytical perspectives were also proposed. While this project explores the movement of the object serving for specific ritual purposes, it might be helpful to look at it from the reverse side, such as placement instead of movement or the production of *stupika* as an artistic endeavor.

The concluding comments (Dr. Vincent Tournier) helped the project to find its place in Buddhist studies by suggesting Buddhist scriptures as supplementing evidence to material data.

3. Implications:

Both of our projects explore the material dimension in Buddhist practice. While Warshall's project directly deals with material evidence, mine examines discourse about a material object. I am convinced that strong empirical groundwork such as hers could produce a more effective explanatory framework. Her project helped me reflect on my methodologies and

potential contributions to Buddhist studies.

Kwi Jeong Lee (Princeton University): *Remaking the Image: Discourses of Buddhist Icon Worship in Medieval China, ca. 300–850 CE*

Report by Sophia Warshall

1. Substance of the project:

Kwi Jeong Lee offers an important contribution to our understanding of the history of Buddhism and the larger religious landscape of China during the fourth to seventh centuries through an investigation of polemic debates over Buddhist icon worship. By analyzing the arguments put forward by Buddhist intellectuals supporting the use of icon worship and the parallel arguments against such practices issued by non-Buddhist thinkers, Lee identifies and explores the issues salient at the time.

Specifically, this dissertation focuses on discussion surrounded three key questions, (a) was the Buddha, or the Buddha as represented in image, a figure worthy of worship, (b) why would Buddhist groups have supported the production and use Buddha images in worship, and (c) how did these debates grow into a rhetoric of viewing these icons as tools in teaching of Buddhism.

In order to answer these questions, Lee focused upon close readings of medieval Chinese texts written by both Buddhists and non-Buddhists debating the role of Buddhist icon worship. The frequency with which such critiques and debates are found suggests that icon worship was identified by intellectuals of other traditions as an easy opening through which to target Buddhism. This tension forced Buddhist intellectuals to therefore produce careful explanations of their use of icons in worship.

Although image worship is not often the main focus of these polemic texts, the explanations of icon usage produced within this context of debate became important to later scholars who chose to include them in compilations, contributing significantly to subsequent understanding and implementation of icons. As such, while Lee does not focus upon the historical realities of icon worship during the fourth to seventh centuries, this project sheds light on the historiographic narrative that informed subsequent perceptions and implementations of that ritual genre. Further, this process of unpacking the production of knowledge within the Chinese Buddhist context contributes significantly to our understanding of how Buddhist identity was formed, both internally and in concert with the larger social landscape of the time.

2. Discussion:

In discussion, one of the key methodological choices made by Lee was emphasized. Rather than utilizing labels such as Confucian in the identification of various polemic texts, Lee chose to denote sources as simply Buddhist/pro-Buddhist or non-Buddhist/anti-Buddhist. This choice was made in part in response to the challenges of identifying specific group allegiances of various authors and actors. Given the focus (a) upon Buddhism, and (b) upon issues of religious discourse rather than historical particularities, this choice allows Lee to focus productively upon topics relevant to her fundamental argument. In response to Lee's request for feedback on this choice, Fellow participants were supportive of this approach, seeing it as reasonable and productive.

3. Implications:

Other topics discussed focused upon the relation between my project and Lee's project. We both interrogate the place of ritual objects in Buddhist history of approximately the same time period. While I approach the question with the material objects as my point of entry, Lee starts with the textual discussions present surrounding the use of such objects. Further, while I focus on the movement of ideas, Lee focuses upon the presence of ideas once arrived or present in a space. Lee's project encourages me to see Buddhist objects and texts in concert with non-Buddhist materials, as well as to query extant sources from maritime Southeast Asia in terms of their connections with religious thought and material culture as found in East Asia.

Even more specifically, the theme of debate proposes a productive window on to the material landscape of the era. Lee's focus on the local context offers an important model for my own work, reminding me to delve deeply into each region as its own context. With both projects, we are further reminded of the need to consider who is moving where, what is staying, and who holds agency in the physical and intellectual movements of this era of Buddhist history.

Davey K. Tomlinson (University of Chicago): *A Tantric Critique of Intentionality: Buddhahood and the Nature of Consciousness in Late Indian Buddhist Philosophy*

Report by Dagmar Schwerk

1. Substance of the Project:

A recurring theme in Davey's presentation was the question of how we should understand and perceive in the study of philosophy of religion the relation between philosophy and religion, and how, in particular, the study of philosophy of Buddhist religion fruitfully contributes to the study of philosophy of mind in general. This was vividly demonstrated on basis of Davey's research project that deals with a debate about the nature of consciousness between two early eleventh-century Indian Buddhist philosophers at the University of Vikramaśīla in India, Ratnākaraśānti and Jñānaśrīmitra. Davey carved out in his depiction of the two philosophers' arguments that the debate between them clearly demonstrates how religious and soteriological beliefs influenced their resulting divergent positions in their philosophy of mind. Davey concluded that this influence is not to be considered as a simple path-dependency in the form of one particular idea of Buddhahood leading to another particular philosophical view, but that their respective philosophical views were developed and later defended through working out step-by-step different presuppositions and intuitions about Buddhahood. Furthermore, he addressed the problem of directionality in Ratnākaraśānti's thinking: what is primary, Tantra or philosophical works, because philosophical arguments are used in his tantric commentaries and Tantras are cited in his philosophical works? After having concluded that buddhological assumptions stand behind the philosophical positions of the two thinkers, Davey indicated that, for example, Ratnākaraśānti's view could serve as a very interesting starting point for contemporary debates in the field of philosophy of mind.

2. Discussion:

Would the respective Indian Buddhist philosophers, Ratnākaraśānti and Jñānaśrīmitra, and the two Buddhist masters from the 'Brug-pa-bka'-brgyud school in Bhutan, the Sixty-ninth rJe-mkhan-po dGe-'dun-rin-chen (1926–1997) and the Ninth rJe-mkhan-po Shākya-rinchen (1710–1759) be capable of debating with each other? Davey and I assumed that they might have

been capable of holding a fruitful philosophical debate about their respective agendas leaving aside the language barrier and differing vocabularies of Buddhist technical terms. The common ground and concern of a discussion could have been in such hypothetical meeting the clarification of how soteriology, hermeneutics and philosophy should correctly be related to each other. Davey also pointed out that Ratnākaraśānti, in particular, was famous in Tibet as one of the eighty-four Mahāsiddhas, and despite the fact that he is often represented as a scholar who did not practice hard enough, employed in his works a remarkable amount of thoughts about the unity of tantric and sūtric paths, which would have very well resounded with these eighteenth- to twentieth-century Bhutanese Mahāmudrā authors.

3. Implications:

It was pointed out in the discussion that, in general, both research projects commute between two poles: a punctual and rational reconstruction of arguments in a philosophical debate and a multileveled “life-and-work” study that tries to map lineages, influences and connections in time and space. Although, at first hand our research projects seemed to be temporally and spatially very distant, in the course of the discussion we discovered a variety of common theoretical and methodological topics, such as of how to deal with “life-in-thought” (as coined by Christoph Emmrich) in the analysis and evaluation of philosophical arguments and debates, and how to trace and understand crucial personal interactions “outside-of-text,” which take place between the participants of philosophical debates.

Participating in the workshop enabled me to look beyond the horizon of my own research project and approach, and the respective academic community I have been educated in so far; and to open up for complementary and alternative ways and methods through the constructive and personal exchange of the Fellows and erudite scholars from all fields of Buddhist studies.

Dagmar Schwerk (University of Hamburg): *A Timely Message from the Cave: The Mahāmudrā Doctrine and Intellectual Agenda of dGe-bshes dGe-'dun-rin-chen (1926-1997), the Sixty-Ninth rJe-mkhan-po of Bhutan*

Report by Davey K. Tomlinson

1. Substance of the project:

Dagmar highlighted two principal contributions of her work in her presentation: first, her aim to fill out our understanding of the reception history of Mahāmudrā in an understudied place and time: Bhutan in the 18th–20th centuries; second, her aim to make available the life and work of one of the most important and outstanding scholars of 20th-century Bhutan, rJe-dGe-'dun-rinchen.

The work that was her focus—rJe-dGe-'dun-rin-chen's commentary, the *Timely Messenger*, on rJe-Shākya-rin-chen's 18th-century *Pointed Spear of a Siddha*—seems to have been an especially good choice given these aims. Given rJe-dGe-'dun-rin-chen's late historical moment and his extreme erudition, this work provides a fascinating perspective on the reception history of Mahāmudrā, detailing different controversies concerning gradual or instantaneous enlightenment, Buddha-nature theory, and so on, and taking a stance on these issues. In the process of working through her difficult source material, Dagmar also created a ‘historical mindmap’ of the Mahāmudrā controversy within the Tibetan intellectual scene by tracing rJedGe-'dun-rin-chen's influences and interlocutors. Finally, by studying rJe-dGe-'dun-rin-

chen's biography, written by one of his direct disciples in a difficult rDzong-kha influenced Tibetan, she contextualized his thought in his life.

2. Discussion:

A number of interesting problems for both me and Dagmar came up in discussion. Birgit Kellner highlighted a tension between history/biography on the one hand and doctrine/philosophy on the other, which ran through the whole discussion: Dagmar's work, she suggested, seemed more concerned with learning about the life-and-thought (or the life in thought, as Christoph Emmrich later suggested) of rJe-dGe-'dun-rin-chen, whereas my work on Ratnākaraśānti and Jñānaśrīmitra seemed concerned with 'rational reconstruction' rather than history. Janet Gyatso pressed us both on what she suggested might be a common political suspicion of contentless forms of meditation—and she pressed me on why I should think that a certain conception of buddhahood is at the center of Ratnākaraśānti's view on consciousness rather than the other way around (more on that in a minute). Dagmar was asked about the ethnographic side of her work as well: how did her field work in Bhutan shape and change her project? To what extent are the debates she's considering still alive today?

3. Implications:

The discussion that arose around the juxtaposition between my work and Dagmar's, highlighted by Birgit's question, has been in my mind since—especially regarding Janet's question to me. Birgit suggested that I am not concerned with biography in my reading of Ratnākaraśānti and Jñānaśrīmitra, which is true to an extent: there is just not a lot we know for sure about their lives. In this respect, I could not do the sort of work Dagmar is doing with rJe-dGe-'dun-rin-chen. Still, when considering why I think a particular intuition about buddhahood drives Ratnākaraśānti's view of consciousness, rather than vice-versa (as per Janet's question), I find that my sense of who Ratnākaraśānti was—his life in thought (or in writing perhaps)—does influence my thinking. Of course, my acquaintance with Ratnākaraśānti is only via his written works; still, it seems to me that some sense of authorial voice comes through, a personality that leads me to think, 'Of course buddhahood is primary for him in a way it might not be for Jñānaśrīmitra!' So Ratnākaraśānti's biography per se doesn't influence my reading, but something about who Ratnākaraśānti was, or who he makes himself out to be in his writing, does. I'm still thinking about how best to express this, and whether and how it might be admissible as evidence when constructing a systematic view of a philosopher's work.

William McGrath (University of Virginia): *The Buddhist Narration of Medicine: The Drangti Corpus in Tibetan Medical and Religious History*

Report by Kyle Bond

1. Substance of the project:

Dr. Bill McGrath gave a presentation on his dissertation *Buddhism and Medicine in Tibet: Origins, Ethics, and Tradition*, which traces the history of the emergence of Sakya Medical House in fourteenth-century and argues that the Drangti family played a critical role in the systematizing and centralizing of Tibetan medical traditions. It also explores more broadly the intersections of Buddhism and medicine in the history of Tibet.

Dr. McGrath's oral presentation about this project began with the question of what makes Tibetan medicine "Buddhist." Quoting Nathan Sivin, McGrath raised the problem that "we should not assume that rice was Taoist simply because Taoists ate it." McGrath used this point to clarify his argument that Tibetan medicine should not be considered "Buddhist" simply because Tibetan Buddhists utilized it. Finally, McGrath used theoretical and historical perspectives to describe the roles of "tradition" and "institution" in the formation of Tibetan Buddhist medicine.

2. Discussion:

In response to questions about what is at stake in raising the issue of "Buddhist medicine" in Tibet, Dr. McGrath clarified his early points, arguing that Tibetan medicine can be considered "Buddhist" in cases where Tibetans provided medical texts and practices with narratives about their Buddhist origins. In other words, Tibetan medicine becomes "Buddhist" with the "Buddhist narration of medicine." That is to say, Tibetan medicine becomes "Buddhist" when medical practitioners make the claim that a given medicine or practice was originally taught by the Buddha. In addition, medical knowledge becomes "Buddhist" when practitioners make the claim for Buddhist transmission, arguing that certain medical texts and practices were handed down to the Tibetans from the time of the Buddha as the traditions of lineages of Buddhist masters and disciples. Finally, Tibetan medicine can be considered "Buddhist" when the instructions for medical practice were understood in Buddhist terms and performed with Buddhist methods such as in the case pulse diagnosis, which was in some cases interpreted as a form of *prasenā* divination.

3. Implications:

After engaging with Dr. McGrath's work and reflecting on my overall experience at the workshop, I have come to realize that my research must reach a wide and diverse audience. I must speak to issues not only relevant to the academic study of Buddhism in Japan, but also to the broader Buddhist world. The problem becomes how to do it. It was stressed at the workshop and the IABS conference that philology remains the foundation of Buddhist studies. Though we work may work with different writing systems, languages, and kinds of sources, I realized this diversity is not a barrier but a gate. I realized I must use my particular material as a gateway to the larger field. More specifically, at the workshop, I learned to always consider the big questions such as, "what is at stake in this project for Buddhist studies as a whole?" Or, "what makes this particular religious tradition 'Buddhist'?" Upon reflection, I realized that the purpose of this kind of practice was not to find some final and universal solution, but to ask and pursue the right kind of question, which itself becomes a form of knowledge and vehicle for discovery. Thanks to this "skillful means" built into the workshop's design, I am now equipped with big questions, which will drive my research forward and hopefully result in a contribution to the wider field of Buddhist studies.

Kyle Bond (Princeton University): *Asceticism, Visions, and Dreams in Early Medieval Japan*

Report by William A. McGrath

1. Substance of the project:

When presenting his project in Toronto, *Asceticism, Visions, and Dreams in Early*

Medieval Japan, Kyle organized his ideas according to a model that he borrowed from Professor Teiser: what is the “best bad idea” that our work helps address? For Kyle’s project, which primarily concerns the ascetic practices that were performed in medieval Japanese society (10th – 14th c.) in order to promote dreams and other visionary experiences, the “best bad idea” that he critiqued is the notion that ascetics were totally removed from and critical of lay society in Japan. On the contrary, as Kyle’s findings show, it was not only the Buddhist clergy that would engage in ascetic and visionary practices, but the laity as well. As described in a diary from the tenth century, for example, an aristocratic woman fell asleep in the main hall of a shrine and received oneiric instructions for a pilgrimage route on which she later traveled. As this vignette illustrates, practices involving periods of “incubation” in a shrine or temple were performed by both clergy and laity, both men and women, even as early as the tenth century in Japan. As his project unfolds, Kyle also indicated that he will focus on the Buddhist lineages that derive from these visionary practices, as well as the transmission and reproduction of sacred images at cultic sites.

2. Discussion:

During the discussion of our presentations in Toronto, several participants asked questions regarding the topic of labeling and terminology. In Kyle’s project, for example, participants wanted to know what, exactly, should be considered “ascetic”—who is using this label and why? Is it an etic distinction, or were there discussions of asceticism in primary literature? Other terms that elicited similar comments from the participants were “incubation,” or “shrine incubation,” and the term “practice,” more generally conceived. Does the term “practice” merely refer to the performance of ritual instructions? Or does it refer to the development of one’s own capacities for visions, dreams, and other related phenomena? The discussion was an excellent reminder of the importance, complexity, and potential ambiguity of language, along with suggestions for potentially achieving more precision in its use.

3. Implications:

Kyle’s project, like my own, is concerned not only with the instructional literature of medieval Buddhist societies, but also with questions of how these practices were performed and transmitted over time. The discussions of labeling and diction summarized above were also directly related to my own presentation, and the juxtaposition of two projects both using the word “practice,” for example, in starkly different fashions left me with much to consider: What do I mean when I say practice? Are there other meanings that I am ignoring as a result of my choices? How might these terms be understood by my audience and readers? A similar conversation revolving around the label of “Buddhism,” for our projects as well as those of others, also resulted in fruitful questions regarding the very purview of Buddhist studies itself. In my future engagement with Buddhist Studies, I shall strive to remember these conversations, and continue thinking: For whom are these practices, texts, or traditions considered Buddhist, and why?

Marion Dapsance (in residence at Columbia University): *Alexandra David-Néel as a Buddhist Saint, Intellectual, and Missionary: A French Woman’s Influence on Modern Buddhism*

Report by D. Mitra Barua

1. Substance of the project:

Marion Dapsance started off explaining how her current postdoctoral work on Alexandra David-Néel (1868–1969) was an extension of her doctoral work on modern Buddhism. She explores the history of “Modern Buddhism” through the biography of David-Néel, one of the early users of the term itself. Dapsance briefly introduced David-Néel as an interesting character with different interests and diverse roles: an anarchist, a socialist, a novelist, a playwright, a journalist, a freemason, a theosophist and a Buddhist spiritual master. Dapsance humorously presented these multiple identities of David-Néel and emphasized that they have made it difficult in creating a coherent picture of David-Néel.

After reading and analyzing many works written by David-Néel and others on her, Dapsance observed that a few characteristics describe who David-Néel was. Accordingly, Dapsance defines David-Néel as a materialist, anarchist and individualist. With these characteristics, David-Néel represented what Dapsance called “Parisian Buddhism.” The highlight of her presentation was when Dapsance defined David-Néel’s Parisian Buddhism as “political Buddhism,” as David-Néel and her contemporaries who were attracted to Buddhism looked for alternative doctrinal worldviews to replace Catholicism. To define modern Buddhism as a political endeavor itself is a new perspective. It debunks the widespread conception among many modern Buddhists that Buddhism is an “apolitical” religion.

2. Discussion:

The audience at the workshop seemed to enjoy Dapsance’s presentation. The post-presentation questions suggest that David-Néel remains a lesser-known figure in the context of Buddhist studies and among Buddhist scholars. Similar to workshop Fellows, senior Buddhist scholars at the workshop also enquired more details about David-Néel, particularly the ways in which David-Néel got into Buddhism under whose influence and what socio-cultural context. Dapsance answered the questions with confidence. The live Q-A session underscored the scholarly contribution that Dapsance work is going to make to contemporary Buddhist studies.

3. Implications:

I found Dapsance’s work relevant to my research on modern Buddhist reformation in Bengal in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She explores and examines modern Buddhism through a biography rather than abstract concepts and historical events. Although I too discuss a few individuals in my work, Dapsance’s work suggests that I can use more biographical contents to get across my points effectively. For example, one of the major themes in my analysis and discussion of Buddhism in Bengal is the role of transnational connections in reviving Buddhist knowledge, practices and institutions in Bengal. To illustrate that I am going to discuss a monastic leader (Pagyalok Mahasthavir), a lay Buddhist scholar (Beni Madhav Barua) and a female meditation teacher (Dipa Ma) who went out of Chittagong to Ceylon, London and Burma respectively to revive Buddhism in Bengal. Moreover, Dapsance’s work highlights the practical (opposed to textual) Buddhism in Buddhist studies. Biographical studies illustrate the dialogical practice-practitioner relationship that mutually configures both sides involved. Buddhist concepts and practices transform Buddhist practitioners. Buddhists, in turn, reconfigure and define what Buddhism is. Focusing on David-Néel, Dapsance illustrates the dynamic Buddhism-Buddhist relationship.

Juan Wu (Tsinghua University): *Royals across Religious Boundaries: A Comparative Study of Stories of Shared Royal Personages in Indian Buddhism and Jainism.*

Report by Marion Dapsance

1. Substance of the project:

Juan Wu's work aims at shedding light on the possible common origins of Buddhism and Jainism. In order to do so, she compares stories belonging to both traditions. Those stories share the same kinds of royal characters, among which King Srenika Bimbisara of Magadha, King Udayana of Vitabhaya, King Pradyota of Avanti, and the Mauryan king Candragupta. Other characters are the members of these royal families. These kings and their families are considered Buddhist by the Buddhists and Jaina by the Jainas. Hence the questions: do Jainism and Buddhism share the same narrative heritage? And, if that is the case, what does that tell us about the origins of both Buddhism and Jainism? Among Juan Wu's discoveries are 1) the fact that the Buddhist versions of Ajātaśatru's stories insist on the exemplary role of one the character, whereas the Jaina version does not, 2) the fact that the Buddhist version first depicted a violent king, his benevolent character having been added only progressively, 3) the fact that only the Buddhist texts insist on the final salvation of the king. It thus seems that the Buddhists gave more importance to the possibility for sinners to be saved than the Jainas.

2. Discussion:

I found that the discussions that went on at the Symposium about this particular topic and others were sometimes too technical and therefore difficult for me to follow. This is probably because of my lack of knowledge on most of those topics. I guess the main difficulty for such a meeting comes from the heterogeneity of the Fellows' backgrounds— an issue that was dealt with at the Conference (“Bridging the Gaps...”). From what I understood, most questions and comments asked for clarification. The set of questions I found most interesting had to do with the notion of salvation. What can we deduce from the two different perspectives on Ajātaśatru /Kunika's destiny? What does that tell us on the Buddhist and Jaina conceptions of karma, dharma, and salvation?

3. Implications:

Thinking about Juan Wu's project did not change the way I look at my own research, since our topics are completely different, but it really spurred my desire to learn more about the history of Buddhism, especially Indian Buddhism.

Deba Mitra Barua (Rice University): *Buddhism in Two Bengals from 1757 to 1988: Theravada Buddhism as a Minority Religion and Its Transnational Connections*

Report by Juan Wu

1. Substance of the project:

Dr. Barua began his presentation by clarifying that his research explores the history of Buddhism in Bengal from 1666 to 1947 (i.e., during the Mughal and British colonial eras), particularly focusing on Bengali Buddhists with historical ties to Chittagong, the most southeast

region of Bengal. The sources he utilized include not only Mughal and colonial records, but also indigenous productions such as oral narratives, works of Bengali intellectuals, and periodicals published in Bengal and circulated within local communities. He observed that the Theravada reformation led by the Arakanese in the mid-19th century was a watershed in modern history of Buddhism in Bengal, especially because it ended the Chittagong Buddhists' sense of isolation by connecting them with other Buddhists living under the British colonial rule. While forging connections with Buddhists from colonial Burma and Ceylon, the Chittagong Buddhists started to form a distinct Buddhist identity based on their oral histories. They claimed to have descended from a group of Buddhists who had migrated from Magadha, via Assam, to Chittagong. Instead of focusing on its questionable historical basis, Barua considered this claim to be a historical strategy used by Bengali Buddhists since the late 19th century, which enabled them to engage in transnational Buddhist discourses related to India's Buddhist past. Regarding the continuing presence of Buddhism in Chittagong beyond medieval times, Barua explained that Chittagong's status as a political and cultural frontier is a significant contributing factor for the continuation of Buddhism in this region. He further pointed out that during the late 19th and early 20th centuries the Buddhists of Chittagong migrated both westward to India and southeast-ward to Burma, which resulted in the current spread of Bengali Buddhist communities across the borders of three nations (India, Bangladesh and Myanmar). This legacy of Bengali Buddhist revivalists of Chittagong distinguishes them from their Sinhalese and Burmese counterparts of the same historical period.

2. Discussion:

Barua's presentation elicited a number of interesting questions from the audience. For instance, he was asked to elaborate on whether or how the interreligious contacts among Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims in Chittagong may have influenced Bengali Buddhists of that region to construct or reinforce their identity, and how his research as a whole contributes to the scholarly discourse concerning Buddhist modernity and modernization. Moreover, questions were also raised about whether it would be helpful to look at the history of Buddhism in Bengal more broadly by considering not only the modern Bengali Buddhist revival, but the pre-modern Buddhist tradition in Bengal as well.

3. Implications:

My research deals with Buddhist traditions of pre-modern South Asia, particularly focusing on narrative literature. As a scholar working exclusively on ancient Buddhist texts, I used to doubt whether it is really necessary for a philologist to learn about Buddhist practices or practitioners in the modern world. Nowadays scholars concerned with ancient Buddhism and those concerned with modern Buddhism do not seem to communicate much; rather, they tend to work within their own camps.

Through engaging with Dr. Barua's project on the living Buddhist tradition at Chittagong, I learned about how Bengali Buddhists' perception (or labelling) of themselves as the descendants of extinct medieval Indian Buddhists had contributed to their distinct role within the wider Buddhist reformation in colonial South and Southeast Asia. The case of Bengali Buddhists in and beyond Chittagong made me more convinced that the pre-modern/modern divide perpetuated by contemporary academia has its own limitations, and that in fact sometimes it would be indispensable for us to adopt a holistic view of the history of Buddhism if we want to understand the present in relation to the past and vice versa.

Afterword

Implications for the field of Buddhist Studies

In this workshop we saw a considerable diversity of projects and a broad range of methodologies. The Ho Fellows showed considerable intellectual courage in moving out of their own areas of expertise in order to learn from each other's work and work collaboratively to advance the field. There are encouraging signs of future collaborations in both research and teaching.

Many of the themes that arose in this workshop were picked up and discussed at more length in a public roundtable discussion on "Bridging Divides in Buddhist Studies," held on the evening of the first full day of the IABS meeting. In the workshop itself, participants focused with particular enthusiasm on the question of what was at stake in their own projects for the field of Buddhist Studies as a whole. As a number of the reports above explicitly mention, one effective leverage point involved identifying the "best bad/worst idea" in existing scholarship that the project would supersede. Thus, participants were able to isolate particular places in which their own research would advance the field and to propose new analytical frameworks.

The discussion returned to a number of issues over the workshop: the question of genre in Buddhist literature and as analytical category; the relation of text to audience, and text to power; whether and how Buddhism is distinct from other traditions or fields of knowledge. In terms of methodology, the participants confronted the practical challenges of dealing with massive texts or data sets. How can dissertation projects hope to contain, for example, bodies of literature that would take decades to read?

In this workshop, as at previous Fellows' workshops, participants noted the fundamental importance of philology to the Buddhist Studies project while also celebrating the wide range of disciplines—from anthropology to art history—that are part of the field. To judge from this symposium there may be fewer divides to bridge in the future of Buddhist Studies.