



# AABBS

**Australasian Association of Buddhist Studies**

**2007 Conference**

**Buddhist Studies: Australasian Contributions**

**University of Western Sydney**  
Centre for Cultural Research and  
School of Humanities and Languages

Building EA, Parramatta Campus  
3rd & 4th December

[www.buddhiststudies.org.au](http://www.buddhiststudies.org.au)



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## **Buddhist Studies: Australasian Contributions**

There is a general awareness that in recent years there has been a rapid, almost exponential, increase in Buddhist Studies throughout the scholarly world. What is perhaps not so well known is how much work is being done in Buddhist Studies in universities in the Australasian region. Some of us became aware of this when a seminar series on Buddhist topics was initiated about three years ago at the University of Western Sydney. We were amazed at how many academics attended and how many were doing research in some aspect of Buddhism.

It was noteworthy that none of the academics coming to the seminars were affiliated with a department of Buddhist Studies, but were working in a wide range of disciplines and in comparative isolation, sometimes unaware that there were others, even in their own universities, who shared an interest in the study of Buddhism.

By organizing this conference, the Executive Committee of the AABS seeks to provide a forum where scholars in Buddhist studies from the Australasian region will have an opportunity to familiarize themselves with researches of their colleagues.

We are particularly pleased to see a strong representation of post graduates at this year's conference, and a program that confirms the rich diversity of studies of Buddhism in the region.



## **AABS Executive and Conference Organization**

### **AABS Executive**

#### **President**

Adjunct Professor Adrian Snodgrass - University of Western Sydney

#### **Vice President**

Dr Mark Allon - University of Sydney

#### **Secretary**

Drasko Mitrikeski - University of Sydney

#### **Treasurer**

Dr Judith Snodgrass - University of Western Sydney

#### **Executive Committee Members**

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Dr John Jorgenson - Griffith University

Dr Peter Oldmeadow - University of Sydney

Dr Douglas Osto - Massey University

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#### **Liaison Officer**

Dr Pankaj Mohan - University of Sydney

#### **Student Representative**

Andrew McGarrity - University of Sydney

#### **Technology Officer**

Ian McCrabb - University of Sydney

### **Conference Organizing Committee**

Dr Judith Snodgrass

Drasko Mitrikeski

Ian McCrabb

### **Conference Assistants**

Danielle Clarke

Anne Nguyen



## **Registration and Conference Information**

The Conference events will take place in **Building EA** on the Parramatta campus of the University of Western Sydney.

### **Registration desk**

The Registration Desk is situated outside Lecture theatre 3 in Building EA (refer map following). This desk will be open from 8.00 am Monday and 8.30am Tuesday.

### **Refreshment and Meals**

Morning, afternoon tea and lunch are provided for all registrants. All meals offer vegetarian and non-vegetarian options.

### **Conference Dinner**

The Conference Dinner will be held on Monday 3rd from 7.30 pm. Venue to be confirmed.

### **Receipts**

Receipts will be sent to registrants after the conference.



## **University of Western Sydney**

The UWS Parramatta Campus was established in the 1800s as a female orphan school. The Rydalmere campus has long served the populace of Western Sydney.

An historical site with contemporary features, the Rydalmere campus was opened in 1998 and has proved one of the more coveted campuses for students from the inner city and western Sydney as it is by far the closest campus to Sydney metropolitan and inner city suburbs as well as located closer to amenities and employment areas.

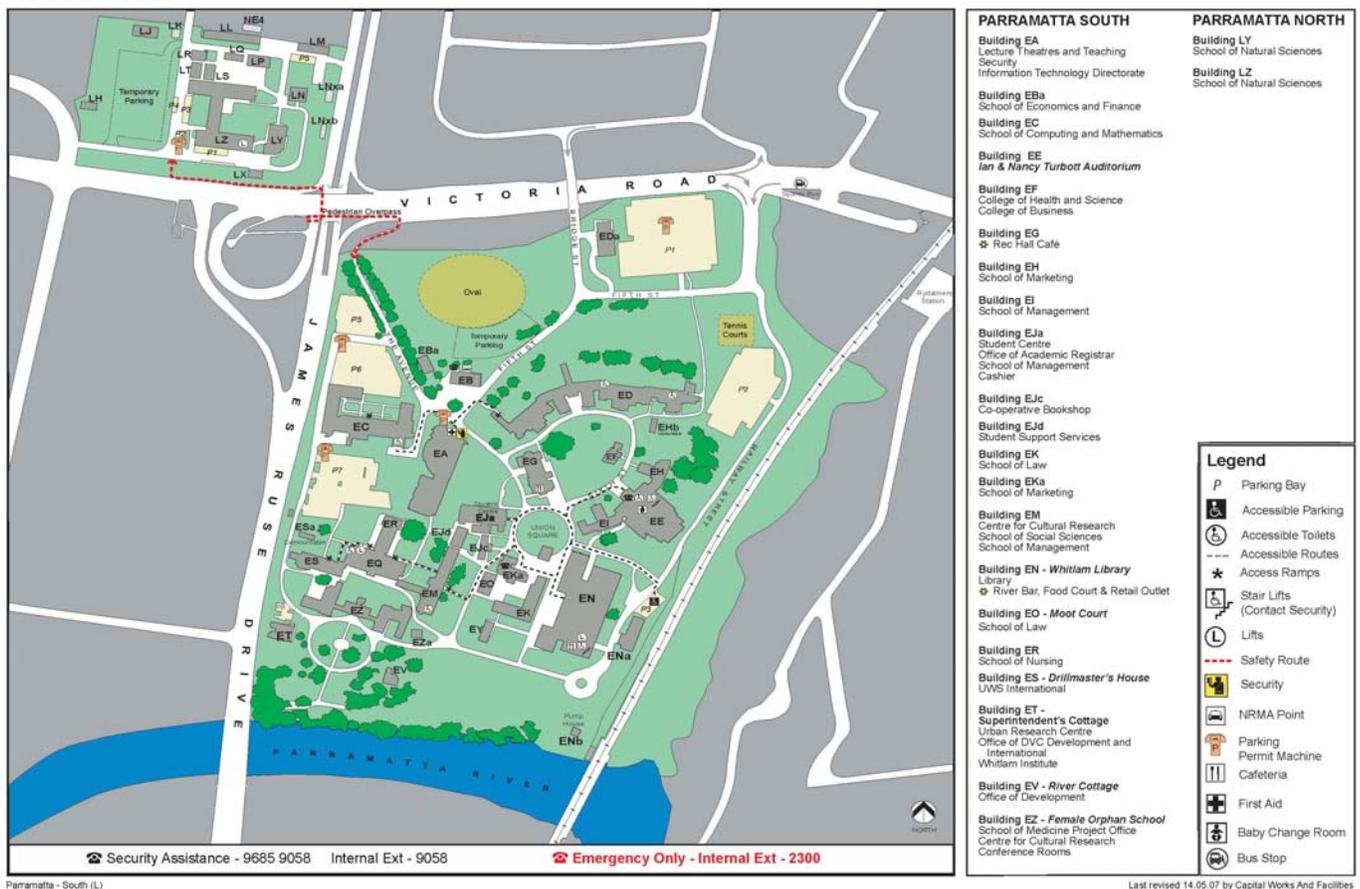
A key feature of UWS Parramatta campus is the Female Orphan School. Constructed only 25 years after the First Fleet arrived in Australia this building was at the time a huge investment in the well being of orphaned children.

The foundation stone of the Female Orphan School was laid by Governor Macquarie on 24th September 1813. It was the first purpose-built charitable institution in Australia, and is Australia's oldest three-storey masonry building. Construction was supervised by the Reverend Samuel Marsden between 1813 and 1818.

# UWS – Parramatta Campus

## Getting to Parramatta Campus

Parramatta campus is in Rydalmere between Ryde and Parramatta in western Sydney. To reach the campus from the Sydney Central Business District (CBD) or airport typically takes around 40 minutes by car. Note that traffic conditions and the time of day you are travelling may have an impact on travel time.



## Travelling By Car

From Sydney CBD, take the M4 Western Motorway and take the exit at the James Ruse Drive interchange. Note that the M4 is a tollway. Turn right onto James Ruse Drive. Take the Victoria Road exit and turn right at the traffic lights. Turn right again from Victoria Road to enter the campus. On-campus parking is available, and a valid daily or annual parking permit must be displayed at all times.

## Travelling By Train

Take the Carlingford line to Rydalmere railway station, which is next to the campus. Information about the Sydney rail system and timetables are available from the Cityrail website. Alternately take a train to Parramatta station and a bus from there. This avoids waiting time.

## Travelling By Bus

Sydney Bus Routes 520, 523 and 524 operate between Parramatta railway station and the campus. For more information and timetables, please see the Sydney Buses website.



## Conference Schedule

<b>Monday</b>		
8.00-9.00	Registration	Coffee/tea and light refreshments will be available
9.00-9.30	Opening	Conference Chair - Dr Peter Oldmeadow Address by Director of CCR, UWS - Professor David Rowe Welcome Address President of AABS - Professor Adrian Snodgrass Postgraduate Awards
9.30-11.00	Session 1	Professor Adrian Snodgrass Dr Doug Osto
11.00-11.30	Morning Tea	Coffee/tea and light refreshments will be available
11.30-1.00	Session 2	Dr John Jorgenson Rafal Stepien Dr Judith Snodgrass
1.00-2.00	Lunch	Vegetarian lunch will be available
2.00-4.00	Session 3	Dr Mark Allon Michael Radich Chanida Jantrasrisalai Dr Peter Friedlander
4.00-4.30	Afternoon Tea	Coffee/tea and light refreshments will be available
4.30-6.00	Session 4	Drasko Mitrikeski Barbara Nelson Sonam Thakchoe
7.00 -	Conference Dinner	
<b>Tuesday</b>		
9.00-10.30	Session 5	David Templeman Ruth Gamble Diana Cousens
10.30-11.00	Morning Tea	Coffee/tea and light refreshments will be available
11.00-1.00	Session 6	Hugh Kemp Sally McAra Ruth Fitzpatrick Chris Barker
1.00-2.00	Lunch	Vegetarian lunch will be available
2.00-3.30	Session 7	Dr Peter Oldmeadow Andrew McGarrity John Wu
3.30-4.00	Afternoon Tea	Coffee/tea and light refreshments will be available
4.00-6.00	Session 4	Dr Brendon Stewart Stephen Malloch Martin Kovan Glenys Eddy



## Notes for Presenters

### Instructions for Presenters

Speakers should ensure that their equipment needs are met before the start of the session in which their paper appears. Time taken to set up and troubleshoot technical problems during your session cannot be allowed to erode your presentation time. Each presenter has 30 minutes, which includes 5-10 minutes for questions. Papers should therefore be approx. 20 minutes long (25 minutes at maximum). Participants who wish to move about during sessions may do so during question time but please be considerate of presenters and recognise that conversations immediately outside the conference room may disturb those inside.

Keynote Addresses will run 45 minutes; there will be 15 minutes allocated after each Keynote Address for questions.

### Equipment provided

The room is fully equipped with computer and audio visual facilities, including data projection, and overhead camera. The system is compatible with both PC and Macintosh) Please liaise with conference staff BEFORE your panel commences to familiarize yourself with the system. The simplest, quickest and most reliable way to use a Powerpoint presentation is to have it mounted on the desktop in advance. If you could provide a file before the conference we will do this for you. Assistance will be available.

### Advice for Session Chairpersons

Please keep strictly to the time limits of each session. Each conference session should be structured as follows:

0-20 minutes in: first paper.

20-30 minutes in: first paper questions

30-50 minutes in: second paper.

50-60 minutes in: questions for second paper.

60-80 minutes in: third paper.

80-90 minutes in: questions for third paper.

When the speaker has approached the 20 minute mark a warning bell should be rung. At 25 minutes two bells should be rung. At the 28 minute mark, if the speaker has not stopped, it is the responsibility of the chair to stop the speaker allowing a few minutes to allow the next speaker to prepare.

Regrettably at previous conferences this timetable has been disrupted by presenters stopping to adjust the technology needed for their presentations. It is the responsibility of the presenter to ensure that their PowerPoint presentations are operational before they start their session. Under no circumstances should sessions be disrupted because of problems with technology.



## Presenters

### Dr Mark Allon

#### **A Gāndhārī version of the story of the merchants Tapussa and Bhallika and of the gods giving the Buddha his first alms bowl**

The closely connected accounts of the merchants Tapussa and Bhallika and of the gods giving the Buddha his first alms bowl have many interesting features. The merchants are the first to give the Buddha a meal after his enlightenment and are his first lay converts, while the Buddha compresses the four alms bowls the gods of the four directions give him into one, thereby ensuring that each god gains merit. The story also has a connection with relic worship: in some versions of the story the Buddha gives the merchants his hair and nail-parings to honour, while this alms bowl became an object of veneration in Gāndhāra. Further, the story was clearly a popular one, since it was a common subject of artistic representation, particularly in the art of Gāndhāra.

In this paper I will discuss a new Gāndhārī version of the story and its relationship to versions preserved in other languages, focusing on some of the more interesting features of the story.

#### **Biography**

Dr Mark Allon is Lecturer in South Asian Buddhist Studies within the Department of Indian Subcontinental Studies at the University of Sydney. Having completed a Diploma of Arts at the City Art Institute (now College of Fine Arts), Sydney, he then took Buddhist Studies degrees at the Australian National University and University of Cambridge. He has held research and teaching positions at the University of London and University of Washington, Seattle. His specialized interest is in early Buddhist literature and he is currently working on several collections of recently discovered Buddhist manuscripts from Afghanistan and Pakistan (ancient Gāndhāra).

### Assoc Professor Chris Barker

#### **Men, Buddhism and the Emotional Discontents of Western Modernity**

Late-Modernity involves a loss of personal meaningfulness leading to rising levels of depression and addiction. This paper explores the emotional life stories of a group of western men whose experiences have led them to embrace a globalized Buddhism for answers. Buddhism offers men emotional self-awareness, mindfulness, self-discipline, community, increased calmness of mind and a sense of self-worth. In that context the discourses of Buddhism provide a narrative of hope and a transformed masculinity. There is now a growing body of western scientific evidence that meditation and mindfulness have positive psychotherapeutic value.

Issues of emotion and spirituality are explored through the a range of men's stories including David an emotionally balanced former Buddhist Monk, Frank once a disturbed psychiatric patient, Trevor once a "biker" now a Buddhist, Charles whose meditation practices were prompted by his depression and Jon and Steve whose normal unhappiness is eased by their spiritual practices.

#### **Biography**

Chris Barker is Associate Professor of Cultural Studies at the University of Wollongong, NSW, Australia. Chris has been a teacher and researcher with in a number of schools and universities in both England and Australia. He is the author of seven books, the most recent of which is *The Hearts of Men* (2007, UNSW press) that are linked together by an interest in culture, meaning and communication. At present he is exploring questions of emotion and spirituality in contemporary life. He practices within the Lotus Buds Sangha (Sydney) in the tradition of Vietnamese Zen teacher Thich Naht Hanh.



## **Diana Cousens**

### **The Reflection of the Buddha in the World**

Over the past two and a half years I have been writing and researching a PhD thesis on the subject of self arising sacred objects. The thesis takes as its focus a white marble image of Avalokiteshvara at Triloknath in a valley of Lahul in the Western Himalayas.

Self arising sacred objects are referred to as *rangjung* in Tibetan Buddhism. These are images of deities in the rock or possibly a range of other things that seem to appear by themselves. Of course, according to Buddhist logic, nothing appears by itself, but the causes for these images of deities, etc., are not mundane. Therefore a study of *rangjung* images enables an exploration of Buddhist concepts of the permeability of this ordinary world to a divine world, inhabited by bodhisattvas with powers of intercession.

In this paper I will contrast the ideas of the power and origins of the Avalokiteshvara image at Triloknath described by pilgrims with the ideas that are used to justify the concept of *rangjung* within Tibetan philosophy as articulated by Tibetan lamas.

### **Biography**

Di Cousens lived in India for most of the 1980s before returning to Australia to commence academic studies at La Trobe University in 1989. In India she spent three years learning South Indian classical music, Carnatic Sangeetam, and stayed in sacred sites all over the country. She completed an MA in Tibetan History at La Trobe in 1996 and is currently completing a PhD in Religious Studies at the Monash Asia Institute, Monash University. She is active in the Buddhist community in Melbourne and was the editor of the extremely popular booklet, *Buddhist Care for the Dying*, which was distributed by the Multicultural Commission of Victoria.

## **Glenys Eddy**

### **Concentration versus Insight: New Embodiments of an Old Relationship**

The paper will explore the relationship between the two practices in two very different Western Buddhist settings: the Theravadin Blue Mountains Insight Meditation Centre and the Mahayana Vajrayana Institute.

Interview data obtained from practitioners at both centres will be examined in order to show how the two practices are both attributed meaning and used for personal transformation. This information will be evaluated in the light of the dominant existential concerns of the practitioners themselves, in order to understand the nature of the relationship between the two practices in the context of contemporary Western spirituality.

### **Biography**

Glenys Eddy has recently completed her PhD thesis with the Department of Studies in Religion at the University of Sydney. Her research combines her interests in several areas: religious experience and conversion, meditation practice, and Western Buddhism. She has conducted research with two local Western Buddhist centres, the Blue Mountains Insight Meditation Centre, and Vajrayana Institute. She also has interests in Tai Chi, Western Esotericism, early Western Art music, and in community radio.



## Ruth Fitzpatrick

### Transforming Tara; Meanings in Motion

Transforming Tara explores what Green Tara, a female Tibetan Buddhist deity means to a group of Australian women practicing Tibetan Buddhism. Representations of the feminine have an enormous impact upon shaping women's self-perceptions. This research offers an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the appeal that Buddhist female religious symbols have for Western women, as well as the personal and social implications of deity practices. As such, the paper contributes further knowledge to the relatively little dedicated sociological research and analysis that has been conducted on the appeal of Buddhism for Australian individuals.

The results are based on focus groups I conducted with female Tibetan Buddhist practitioners in Australia. The research revealed that Tara's femaleness, her diverse, multiple aspects and her compassionate activity in the world were of greatest significance to the women interviewed. As a female embodying multiple and apparently conflicting traits, Tara gave permission to the women to adopt attributes that lie outside the more unilateral prescriptions of their own cultural (religious) symbols. There was evidence to suggest that this facilitated a degree of personal transformation that also affected social relations in progressive ways. The degree to which such effects can be considered to be a form of social activism or Engaged Buddhism is explored. The paper concludes that the integration of personal and social change constitutes a significant appeal of Green Tara specifically and Tibetan Buddhism generally.

### Biography

Ruth Fitzpatrick completed a Bachelor of Social Science majoring in Peace and Humanitarian Studies in 2006. She completed her Honours Thesis, a sociological study of Green Tara in Australia, at the University of Western Sydney in 2007. Her research interests include Vajrayana Buddhism, Engaged Buddhism, women in Buddhism and Buddhist meditation.

## Dr Peter Friedlander

### Dhammapada

The earliest English language translations from the Pali Buddhist text the *Dhammapada* were published in 1840 by Daniel Gogerly in the journal called the *'The Friend'* in Colombo. Since that time the *Dhammapada* has become probably one of the most frequently translated religious texts in the world, there have been over eighty different translations into English and it has been translated into most of the world's major languages. In a separate paper I have examined the history of *Dhammapada* translations in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In this paper I will consider the Gogerly's translation and its impact on the seminal 19<sup>th</sup> century translations by Max Muller of the *Dhammapada*.

### Biography

Peter Friedlander studied Hindi in Varanasi between 1977 and 1982 and then studied at London University before completing a PhD on *The life and works of Sant Raidas* (Manohar, 1991). From 1991 to 1996 he did research on the history of Hindi literature which was published as *A Descriptive Catalogue of Hindi manuscripts in the library of the Wellcome Institute* (Wellcome Institute, 1996). Since 1996 he has taught Hindi and Buddhist Studies at La Trobe University. Recent publications include, *The Songs of Daya Bhai* (Delhi, 2005) and a chapter on Buddhism and Politics in a volume on *The Politics of Religion* (London, 2006).



## Ruth Gamble

### Being There: Place and Space in the 3rd Kamapa's Travelling Songs

This presentation will explore the relationship between place/object (Tib. *yul*; Skt. *viṣaya*), perceiver/ subject (Tib. *yul can*; Skt. *viṣayin*) and space (Tib. *chos dbying*; Skt. *dharmata*) in the songs of the 3rd Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje (1284 - 1339). His songs are *mgur* (*doha* in Northern Indian languages). According to tradition, these songs were sung spontaneously in response to their setting, without the singer classifying and ordering his or her environment. In this way, it was thought, "the play of space" - the interaction between the place and the mind perceiving it - would be reflected in the song. Unlike the tradition of philosophical and textual analysis that they accompanied to Tibet, these songs were not commentaries on Indian texts, but attempts to "sing emptiness" in a new setting. This combination makes them interesting from two perspectives. Firstly, in that their authors' response is supposed to be unmediated, they tend to focus on the minutiae of everyday life. And secondly, as they relate to their environment in totality, rather than objectifying certain phenomena within it, they highlight the artificial distinction created through the translation of the term *yul* / *viṣaya* as both "subject" and "place", offering a new perspective to the subject/ object distinction in Buddhist thought.

### Biography

Ruth Gamble is a doctoral candidate with the Faculty of Asian Studies at the Australian National University. She is researching the *mgur* (or Songs of Experience) tradition of Tibetan literature. Prior to this research she worked as an interpreter for several Tibetan Buddhist teachers.

## Chanida Jantrasrisalai

### Dhammakāya in the Pali Canon

In the long history of academic research regarding the term *dhammakāya*, the term has been connected exclusively with the Buddha, while its import to Buddhist nobles of other types has been neglected. Previous studies refer to a number of Pali passages in order to trace the early origin of the conception of the Buddha's bodies. However, it may be observed that most of the Pali passages being referred to do not really contain the word '*dhammakāya*' but only the word '*dhamma*.' Thus, to refer to those passages means to confuse the term '*dhammakāya*' with '*dhamma*.' Besides, some other Pali references to *dhammakāya* have never been mentioned. The present paper documents all the references to *dhammakāya* that are to be found in the Pali canon. It demonstrates that the term *dhammakāya* as present in those passages, including the *Aggañña-sutta* which is claimed by some scholars to be the sole Pali reference to *dhammakāya*, does not carry the same connotation as previously interpreted in the academic mainstream. Indeed, the term *dhammakāya* is significant to Buddhist nobles of all types. Thus, the paper argues that to relate the term with the Buddha exclusively, as has often been performed within the academic arena, is misleading.

### Biography

Miss Chanida Jantrasrisalai was born in Nakhon Phanom province, in the northeast of Thailand. She finished her bachelor degree of Pharmacy at the Mahidol University in 1988. While working as a QA Pharmacist, she participated in the beginning level of the royal examination of Dhamma Study in Thailand. In 1992, when she was a junior voluntary staff member of the Dhammakaya Foundation, she completed the advanced level of the Dhamma Study and started her Pali study. She acquired the 9<sup>th</sup> (the highest) level of the royal examination of Pali Study in 2000, after she has experienced a variety of religious works, mainly as a mentor for meditation classes and for the personnel training programmes and as either a teacher or tutor for Pali or Dhamma Study. In 2003, she started her study in the department of Studies in Religion, the University of Sydney, Australia. She submitted her Ph.D. thesis, entitled '*Early Buddhist Dhammakaya: Its Philosophical and Soteriological Significance*,' at the end of August 2007.



## Dr John Jorgenson

### The Commentary on the Lankāvatāra Sūtra by Kokan Shiren (1278-1346)

The Zen Buddhist commentarial literature has been almost entirely ignored by scholars in favour of Zen poetry and essays. Yet even that poetry and art has been widely misunderstood, as revealed in recent studies by Professors Yoshizawa Katsuhiko and Kageki Hideo. Furthermore, the only work by Kokan Shiren, a leading Zen figure of his day that has attracted much attention is his *Genkō shakusho* of 1320, a history that attempted to place Zen in the prime place in Japanese Buddhism. The third type of Zen literature that has been translated and possibly analysed is the *kōan* collection, but again these collections are meant to trigger enlightenment and generally provide no doctrinal content, being largely impenetrable witty dialogues. The commentarial tradition, on the other hand, was one that Zen had in common with other forms of East Asian Buddhism and is still being used and updated, for the commentaries were a prime means for expressing new philosophical and religious concerns, despite being ostensibly explanations of works from the past.

Kokan Shiren was abbot at various times of some of the most important Zen monasteries in Kyoto and was regarded as a major scholar and writer of Chinese. He was also the foremost polemicist for Zen of his day, yet he has largely been overlooked by modern scholarship, with the exception of linguists who have focussed narrowly on the phonology revealed in his *Shūbun inryaku* of 1306. This rhyme dictionary, in one form or another, was still being used into the nineteenth century.

To overcome some of these oversights this paper will analyse Shiren's 1325 *Butsugo shinron*, a commentary on the *Lankāvatāra Sūtra*. This sutra had played a formative role in early Chan/Zen, only to have been supplanted by the *Diamond* and other sutras, although it did see a revival among some Song dynasty Chan monks, and in the late Ming dynasty. Shiren thus had few predecessors in Chan as commentators on this sutra; Shanyue in 1209, Chengshou (1195-1200) and Yang Yanguo in 1131. The only major extant commentary by a Buddhist scholastic was that by Fazang (643-712), a founder of the Huayan School. As the *Butsugo shinron* is a very long commentary totalling eighteen fascicles, Shiren likely had a strong motivation to write on this sutra rather than the more popular *Diamond* or *Heart* sutras. This search for intent is the first topic of the paper.

The *Butsugo shinron* itself attracted a commentarial discussion (not an interlinear commentary) by Chitetsu in 1676 in his *Butsugo shinron kuketsu* and it was used by the Sōtō Zen monk Yōson (d. 1703) in his *Ryōgakyō ronshosetchū* of 1687. Again, sometime after having thoroughly studied Shiren's text in 1692, Mujaku Dōchū (1653-1744) wrote a *Butsugo shinron kōshō* or evidential glosses in 731 folios (unpublished manuscript). Even the renowned scholar of tathāgatagarbha, Takasaki Jikido, in his 1979 translation of the *Lankāvatāra Sūtra* adopted Shiren's breaks in the Chinese text. Clearly, Shiren's commentary was valuable. Shiren drew upon Fazang for some of his commentarial categories, but his commentary displays a distinctive and possibly unique three-layered approach. In his commentary, Shiren clearly separates the ordinary or mundane level of explanation (glosses on names and terms), the status or structural level that dealt with questioners and exponents, and the insightful level, which is divided into five forms of wisdom. This latter is the most innovative part, and is purported to be at the stage of the Buddha's realisation and responses to beings. Shiren claimed this part as superior to other commentaries. This is the second topic of the paper.

This paper then will examine this commentary for its historical role in the interpretation of the *Lankāvatāra* from a Zen perspective while comparing it with earlier commentaries.

### Biography

John Jorgensen, Senior Lecturer in Japanese Studies, Griffith University. MA and PhD (1990) from ANU on aspects of Ch'an Buddhism. Have written on Ch'an Buddhism, Korean Buddhism and recently on Japanese Zen.



Recent publications: entries in *Encyclopedia of Monasticism*, ed. William M. Johnston, Fitzroy Dearborn: Chicago, 2000; *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, ed. Robert E. Buswell, Jr, Macmillan Reference, 2004; 'Representing Wonch'uk' in Benjamin Penny, ed, *Religion and Biography in China and Tibet*, Curzon Press: Richmond, 2002, pp. 74-131; 'Korea as a Source for the Regeneration of Chinese Buddhism,' in Robert E. Buswell, Jr, ed., *Currents and Countercurrents: Korean Influences on the East Asian Buddhist Traditions*, University of Hawaii Press: Honolulu, 2005, pp. 73-152; *Inventing Hui-neng: Hagiography and Biography in Early Ch'an*, vol. 68 *Sinica Leidensia*, Brill: Leiden, Boston, 2005; *The Essential Passages Directly Pointing at the Essence of the Mind by Reverend Baegun (1299-1375)*, translated by John Jorgensen and Eun-su Cho, Jogye Order Publishing: Seoul, 2005. Currently working on ARC Grant, 'Mujaku Dochu and the Linguistic Turn in Tokugawa Zen Buddhist Scholarship.' Other interests: Korean and Japanese new religious movements, heart transplant and brain death in Japan, Tokugawa Japan and Indian Studies, and the social history of early Ch'an.

## Hugh Kemp

### **How the Dharma Landed: Towards an Understanding of how Buddhism arrived in New Zealand**

In this paper, I describe how Buddhism arrived in New Zealand, and offer a preliminary discussion about its emerging contours. I propose that the 1970s was a watershed decade, effectively delineating an early period (pre-1970s) and a contemporary period (post-1970s). I demonstrate that in the contemporary period a "two Buddhisms" model - "convert" and "ethnic" (Prebish; 1979, 1993) - helps frame an understanding of the emerging contours of Buddhism in New Zealand. I argue that in the contemporary period the fuel for the ongoing arrival, dissemination and growth of both "convert" and "ethnic" Buddhism in New Zealand is a continuing interplay of import and export dynamics: as Buddhism is "demanded", so it continues to be fetched or sent. Furthermore, while the two strands remain distinct, there are ambiguities, and it may be wiser to conclude, following Numrich (1996:64), that the Buddhism of "Asian immigrants" and the Buddhism of "New Zealand converts" is a more appropriate descriptor for the foreseeable future.

### **Biography**

Hugh Kemp is a PhD candidate at Victoria University of Wellington. His MTh (ACT) was in the religio-political history of the Mongols, particularly the interface of Christianity and Buddhism during the imperial era (1206-1368). His ongoing research interests are in the sociology of religion: his PhD topic is exploring why New Zealanders embrace Buddhism. Hugh grew up in India, and has also lived and worked in Mongolia.

## Martin Kovan

### **The Buddha's Second Renunciation: doubt, groundlessness and autonomy in contemporary Western Buddhism**

In the life-myth of Sakyamuni Buddha, the yet-to-be-enlightened Siddhartha Gautama enters into a second great renunciation when he leaves his Hindu teachers and yogi colleagues after six years of forest austerities and practice with them, for an absolute solitude without the validation or religious succour of an authority, a rishi, a father figure. This archetypal moment in the myth of the Buddha's enlightenment can be seen as both a compelling metaphor of and analogue to a major trend in recent Western Buddhist culture.



This paper seeks to identify the nature and philosophical-ethical bases of such a trend toward self-legitimation in Western Buddhist practise, grounded on the work of senior contemporary Buddhist (or 'post-Buddhist') thinkers, teachers and writers Stephen Batchelor, Alan Clements, and Professor David Loy. In different ways all propose a considered rethinking of doubt or a functionally dynamic 'groundlessness', as essential to authentic self-determination in Buddhist practise. To what degree such doubt becomes oppositional to the intentions of the buddhadharma remains paradoxical, yet, they claim, integrable to the true aims of its path. This enquiry explores, from a Buddhist as well as Western existential perspective, how such claims meaningfully maintain a fidelity to the essential aims of Buddhist practice, or transform them as a direct response to their new conditions in the West.

### **Biography**

After completing B.A. in philosophy (Sydney Uni. 1999), worked and studied in India, pursuing Tibetan Buddhist Gelugpa training. In 2002 undertook M.A. English studies in the interface between philosophical buddhadharma, language-theory and mythopoetics on the invitation of U.S. Buddhist poet Gary Snyder at UC Davis. After some 5 years travelling and living in the U.S., Europe and India, with residence in Paris and London, always working in the Western-Tibetan Buddhist context (including the 2002 Graz Kalachakra), commenced in 2007 MPhil. in Buddhist Studies at UQ. As a writer of fiction and non-fiction, interested in the nexus between the post-religious (and post-secular) dharmic 'view' (of Buddhist sunyata, as well as Hindu Advaitic nonduality), redemptive social-archetypal emergences, literary forms and the contemporary transmission of transrationality in new linguistic and cultural modes and practises.

## **Sally Mcara**

### **Buddhifying the landscape**

Holy objects such as relics, statues and sacred texts play an important part in the migration of Tibetan Buddhism into new places. However, as with human migrants, the new cultural contexts into which they journey are not always receptive; the new cultural context and its value systems are inevitably different from those in which such relics were originally circulated, providing opportunities for misunderstanding and mistranslation.

The Great Stupa of Universal Compassion is currently being built near Bendigo in Victoria and is promoted as "the largest stupa in the Western world." It is one of several ambitious structures being planned or built by an international organisation called the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT). Because stupas are typically built in prominent places and designed to stand out, these Buddhist monuments have the effect of marking their builders' presence in and occupation of a place. Thus stupas, like other monumental-scale Buddhist objects, "buddhify" the land, that is, they create a visible Buddhist presence in a previously non-Buddhist place.

In this paper I investigate the Great Stupa as an important agent of the buddhification of Australia and explore why, despite the fact that the stupa is an unfamiliar architectural form in this rural setting, the project has met little opposition. I suggest that the success in winning support and avoiding opposition is in large part because of the social capital of those promoting the project and the positive public image that Buddhism has in Western societies today.

### **Biography**

Sally McAra is a PhD candidate in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Auckland. Her research is on the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition and their monumental stupa project near Bendigo in Victoria. She is the author of the book *"Land of Beautiful Vision: Making a Buddhist Sacred Place in New Zealand"* (2007, University of Hawai'i Press). Both works explore the role of material culture and place in the contemporary cross-cultural translation of Buddhism.



## Dr Stephen Malloch

### Infancy, Buddhism and Relating

Infants and their caregivers seek contingent, affectionate, companionable interactions with each other (Trevarthen, 2001). Within this intersubjective space, mind states are transmitted over an “emotionally regulated intersubjective frontier” through rhythms of expressive body gestures (Trevarthen et al, 2006). Trevarthen has called this process ‘synrhythmia.’ Synrhythmia manifests through the ‘communicative musicality’ of the exchanges – through their pulse, quality and narrative (Malloch, 1999). This communicative musicality carries ‘vitality contours’ (“feeling flow patterns”) of meaning, leading to ‘affect attunement’ (Stern, 1985; 2000) between the communicating partners.

The dynamics of the caregiver-infant relationship illustrates the mutual dependence of relating. Our understanding of mutual dependence can be furthered through consideration of the Buddhist teachings on the Brahmaviharas (love, compassion, joy and equanimity), anatman (‘non-self’ – the practice of seeing the ‘interbeing’ of all things) and anitya (‘impermanence’ – the practice of seeing that all things change). Considering the caregiver-infant relationship in the light of these teachings, we can gain a deeper understanding of it and all relationships.

Further, that words are unnecessary for meaning to be mutually conveyed in the caregiver-infant relationship points to understanding available to us that is not constrained by language. For example, in person-centred psychotherapy, it is the ‘personhood’ of the therapist, expressed through empathy, congruence and unconditional positive regard (similar characteristics to the Brahmaviharas), in relationship to the ‘personhood’ of the client, that is the ‘engine’ of therapy.

Still further, the importance of understanding outside of language is seen intrasubjectively in the process of ‘dialogue’ with one’s own “felt meaning” – the implicit dynamic body sense we have about a situation (Gendlin, 1982) that communicates through our own internal ‘vitality contours’.

Through considering mutual dependence and understanding not constrained by language in the caregiver-infant relationship, we can move towards an appreciation of the ‘suchness’ (tathata) of relating.

### Biography

Dr Stephen Malloch is Adjunct Fellow at MARCS Auditory Laboratories, University of Western Sydney, and works in private practice as a counsellor, work/life coach and teacher of Buddhism and meditation. His academic research has focused on caregiver-infant interactions and music therapy, and out of this he has developed the model of communicative musicality as a way of understanding the dynamics of non-verbal communication. He is co-editor of a book on communicative musicality to be published by Oxford University Press next year, and is currently developing a practical framework to demonstrate and nurture the connection between living from “soul” and successful business and organisational practices.

## Andrew McGarrity

### Emptiness and Voidness

The *Lankāvatāra Sūtra* presents a sevenfold typology of emptiness, but makes a specific point of contrasting the emptiness of characteristics (*lakṣanaśūnyatā*) with relative emptiness (*īteretaśūnyatā*), the latter being classified as the “most inferior of all emptinesses”. Following the pioneering work of Gadjin Nagao, most attention has been paid to relative emptiness in isolation. It has been traced back to the Pāli *Cūḷasuññatasutta*, and has also been considered in terms the Yogācāra three nature theory, the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine, the controversy over sudden and gradual enlightenment and the later *rang stong vs gzhan stong* (‘self- vs other- emptiness’) controversy in Tibet.



This has been most notably due to the recurrence of the controversy over what is 'left over' in the wake of the emptiness-critique and the potential reification of a basis, or locus, which is empty. Relative emptiness has not, however, been considered in terms of the emptiness of characteristics. This paper will examine how Candrakīrti and Kamalaśīla follow the *Lankāvatāra Sūtra* in playing relative emptiness off against the emptiness of characteristics, the latter being found to be amenable to the Buddha's omniscient perception of the emptiness all things, while the former is incompatible with it. This paper will consider how the 'lower' conception of emptiness in terms of relativity is envisaged in terms of the reification of characteristics (*lakṣana*) such that it is placed in direct opposition with the emptiness of characteristics, as well tracing the terminological delineation of relative emptiness in terms of 'voidness' rather than 'emptiness' or that which is 'devoid' (*vivikta*) or 'isolated' (*rahita*) rather than 'empty' (*śūnya*). It will be shown that emptiness cannot simply be reduced to a state of relativity and that Buddhist thinkers have been acutely aware of some of the potential shortcomings of doing so.

### Biography

Andrew McGarrity has been a tutor and associate lecturer in Indian Sub-continental Studies at the University of Sydney as well as being a Numata Research Fellow at Ryukoku University in Kyoto. His research and teaching areas are in Buddhism and Indian Philosophy and Sanskrit and Tibetan language study. As well as a general interest in hermeneutics and issues of meaning and authenticity in Tradition and Modernity, his specific focus is upon the early and later Indian Madhyamaka and Yogacara schools of Buddhism and their transmission and interpretation in Tibet, as well as Buddhist and non-Buddhist Indian logic and the history of ideas.

## Drasko Mitrikeski

### On *puṇyapariṇāmanā* in Nāgārjuna's works

An interesting but not much discussed feature in Nāgārjuna's works is the presence of dedicatory verse (*puṇyapariṇāmanā*) in some works and absence in others. For example, *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, *Śūnyatāsaptati*, *Vigrahavyāvartanī* and *Ratnāvalī* do not dedicate merit. However, all four hymns of the *Catuḥstava* – *Nirauḥpamyā*, *Lokāṭīta*, *Acintya* and *Paramārtha* – do end with such verses. Yet, one cannot conclude that the issue is related to the genre, that is, that the dialectical works, due to their topic, do not end with dedicatory verse, while hymns do. The *Yuktiṣaṣṭikā*, classified as dialectical work, does end with the dedicatory verse. On the other hand, *Cittavajrastava* and *Dharmadhātustava*, hymns not part of the *Catuḥstava* but attributed to Nāgārjuna and arguably authentic, do not. The question arising from this peculiarity is: Is there a particular criterion by which Nāgārjuna considers some of his works to have generated merit so that he, as practicing bodhisattva, can transfer it? If the answer is affirmative, then, finding it can tell us a lot about the purpose/use of some texts as well as about Nāgārjuna's religious practices. Given that Nāgārjuna is one of the earliest datable Mahāyāna authors of whom number of works survived, the answer may give us information about some principles and practices in the formative period of the movement, at least about the limited area of activity.

After examining the available evidence, this paper determines the factors deciding whether a work can end with the dedication of merit or not. In addition, the paper proposes a hypothesis for reconstructing the social, religious and doctrinal circumstances under which Nāgārjuna would end a particular work with or without the dedicatory verse.

### Biography

Drasko Mitrikeski is a PhD candidate in the Department of Indian Sub-continental Studies at the University of Sydney. His research is on the early Madhyamaka school in India. His latest publications include: *Nāgārjuna's Epistemology and Soteriology*, Skopje: Tabernakul, 2004, *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, Skopje: Tabernakul, 2005.



## Barbara Nelson

### Finding the path in Śāntideva

Śāntideva's two texts, the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* and the *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, outline the practices of a bodhisattva, but do they outline a path? The Mahāyāna path begins with the thought of awakening (*bodhicitta*) and ends with perfect awakening (*saṃyaksambodhi*). Between these two, the bodhisattva engages in many practices, including the virtues (*pāramitā*), and progresses through stages (*bhūmi*). Did Śāntideva follow any earlier model of the bodhisattva path? Attempting to answer this question uncovers the lack of coherence in depictions of the path in Indian Mahāyāna literature. This paper looks at some aspects of the bodhisattva path in Śāntideva's texts.

### Biography

Barbara Nelson completed her PhD in 2004 at the University of Sydney. She is currently working as a research assistant in the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, ANU, where she runs the South Asia Seminar Series and keeps up to date with modern Indian history and politics.

## Dr Peter Oldmeadow

### Approaches to dualism in Indian Madhyamaka and Yogācāra

This paper is concerned with how dualism is approached and criticised in the Indian Madhyamaka and Yogācāra philosophical systems (*siddhānta*). All Buddhist schools agree that we are mistaken about ourselves and also about the world. We believe that we and "things" exist in the world with an enduring identity when, in fact, they are impermanent and without essence or identity (*anātma*). In the language of Mahāyāna Buddhism both "things" and "ourselves" are not separate substantive existents but are empty (*śūnya*). This emptiness can be understood more ontologically in terms of "what is" or more phenomenologically in terms of the way "things appear." The respective approaches are reflected in a different approach to the question of dualism. Madhyamaka with its more ontological approach concentrates its enquiry and critique on what it understands as the false dualism between absolute and phenomena while Yogācāra approaches the issue more phenomenologically in terms of the false appearance of things in subject-object duality. This paper explores some of the implications of these approaches for how the systems understand ultimate reality and their consequences in relation to disagreements between them.

### Biography

Peter Oldmeadow is Chair of the Department of Indian Subcontinental Studies at the University of Sydney and lectures in Sanskrit and Classical Indian and Buddhist Thought. His principal interests are in Mahayana thought and comparative philosophy.

## Dr Douglas Osto

### Money, Merchant-Bankers And The Mahāyāna

In this paper I investigate the ideological connections between wealth, merchant-bankers and the development and spread of Mahāyāna Buddhism in Asia. The primary source materials for this study are the Pāli *suttas* and Mahāyāna *sūtras* in Sanskrit, Tibetan and Chinese such as the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, *Avataṃsaka*, *Daśabhūmika*, *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*, *Samdhinirmocana*, *Laṅkāvatāra*, *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā*, *Bhaiṣajyaguru*, *Sukhāvatīvyūha sūtras*, as well as a number of lesser known Mahāyāna scriptures. I begin by demonstrating the long-standing connection between Indian Buddhism and merchant-bankers (*śreṣṭhin*) from the earliest period. Then I discuss certain innovations that took place in Mahāyāna Buddhism, which combine traditional Buddhist notions of merit to a new ontological position based on the ideas of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) and mind-only (*vijñāna-mātra*).



I argue that in Mahāyāna Buddhism we witness the ideological connection between wealth, particular in the form of the ‘seven-treasures’ (*saptaratna*), and a higher order of reality. According to several Mahāyāna sources, the bodhisattva achieves access to this higher order reality through merit and wisdom, leading ultimately to the attainment of unlimited mobility to countless jewelled worlds. Not coincidentally the ‘seven treasures’ found in these worlds happen to be the primary luxury goods that merchants transported along the Silk Road from India to China during the spread of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Also the prominence role of merchant-banker characters in numerous Mahāyāna sources suggests that these texts were composed with this social class in mind as a target audience. I conclude with the suggestion that the spread and development of Mahāyāna Buddhism throughout Asia owes much to its ideological associations connecting spiritual development to merit, money, merchants and bejewelled paradises that appealed to the wealthy merchant-bankers responsible for international trade between India and China from approximately the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> centuries CE.

### Biography

Doug Osto spent the first nineteen years of his life in the woods of Redding, Connecticut, USA; where, since his teen years, he developed a keen interest in Asian religions and philosophies. After completing a BA in Religious Studies from Grinnell College in Grinnell, Iowa (1991), he studied Buddhist philosophy, ethics and Pāli language at Peradeniya University while on a Fulbright Scholarship to Sri Lanka. Continuing his studies of Buddhism and Asian languages in the United States, Doug completed a Master of Theological Studies degree from Harvard University (1995) and a MA in Asian Languages and Literature from the University of Washington, Seattle (1999). Upon finishing his PhD in the Study of Religions from SOAS, University of London, he was awarded a Teaching Fellowship at SOAS for the 2004-05 academic year. Currently, Doug is a lecturer in the Religious Studies Programme at Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand. His primary research interests are Indian Māhāyāna Buddhism, Māhāyāna sūtras (particularly the *Gaṇḍavyūha*), narrative studies and gender theory.

## Professor Adrian Snodgrass

### Emptiness and Paradox: Did Nāgārjuna Have the Last Word, or the Last Laugh?

In his *Mūlamadhyamikārikā* Nāgārjuna proves by logic that logic is illogical, and therefore empty. Therefore all arguments are empty, including Nāgārjuna’s own arguments proving that all arguments are empty. This self-emptying proof means that if Nāgārjuna is speaking the truth, then there remains nothing further to be said—the rest is silence (or Silence). If Nāgārjuna is to be taken seriously, everything written or spoken after Nāgārjuna is ‘under erasure’. It seems that even Nāgārjuna himself thought this sounded a bit rich, especially since he had several other books yet to be written, so he came up with a logic to restore some logicality to logic: the doctrine of the two truths. This re-establishes a quasi-legitimacy for logic, but at the same time (if taken logically) effectively deconstructs his earlier deconstruction. Nāgārjuna’s arguments turn in ever-decreasing circles until they come to nothing, like a vortex disappearing into its own centre of emptiness.

This paper gropingly fumbles in the darkness of self-contradiction and nothingness in order to try to understand what Nāgārjuna is trying to get me to understand, or not. It tries to imagine the unimaginable by way of images: the Uroboros, Hegel’s *Aufhebung* and the Toe-sucking Tathāgata, Novalis’s ‘hovering’ (*Schweben*), the Middle Truth of the T’ien T’ai, and some other notions of last resort.

### Biography

Adrian Snodgrass is Adjunct Professor in the Centre for Cultural Studies at the University of Western Sydney and Research Associate with the Faculty of Architecture at The University of Sydney.



## Dr Judith Snodgrass

### Naturalising Empire: The Lumbini Festival and Pan-Asian Buddhist Brotherhood

This paper considers how concepts of empire and of Japan's position as leader of Asia were naturalized in the mid 1920s through the transformation, mass public performance and celebration of Hanamatsuri, the Buddha's birthday, and through the Young East, a journal written in English—the shared heritage of colonial Asia for distribution throughout the Buddhist world. Hanamatsuri, previously observed at neighbourhood temples, became a 3 day long public spectacle that took over the city spaces of Tokyo. Radio broadcast specially written hymns and stories. A parade of thousands walked across the city from Asakusa to Hibiya park. Airplanes flew over and blessed the city with a rain of millions of lotus petals. Renamed the 'Lumbini Festival', it linked familiar Japanese practice with the Indian continent, the birthplace of the historical Buddha, Sakyamuni, and with the practices of Buddhists throughout Asia. The Lumbini festival was a performance of Japanese Buddhist modernity which expressed and naturalized Japan's position as leader of Buddhist Asia.

### Biography

Judith Snodgrass is Senior lecturer in Japanese History at the University of Western Sydney. Her research areas include the formation of Western knowledge of Buddhism, Asian Buddhist modernity, and Buddhism in Australia. Her book, *Presenting Japanese Buddhism to the West: Orientalism, Occidentalism and the Columbian Exhibition*, was published by University of North Carolina Press, 2003.

## Rafal Stepian

### The Imagery of Emptiness in the Poetry of Wang Wei

For several miles, entering cloudy peaks.  
Ancient trees, paths without people;  
Deep in the mountains, where is the bell?

Empty mountains, white clouds, a voice or bell in the forest, water running or falling: it is in imagery such as this, and in poetry as pithy and enigmatic as that above, that Wang Wei (699-761) elucidates Buddhist concepts without recourse to discursive argument. A government official in the Tang dynasty, Wang Wei was also a scholar, painter, and perhaps above all a devout Chan Buddhist and poet who is sometimes referred to in China as 'the Buddha of the Poets.' This paper will explore the ways in which the imagery at work within his poetry expresses Buddhist notions of emptiness (Skt. *śūnyatā*, Ch. *kong*) as the ultimate reality underlying the visible world, in line with the Mahayana universalization of the earlier notion of no-self.

The role of related notions such as non-duality, impermanence and dependent origination will also be examined. The Chan emphasis on a transmission outside of explicit teachings led Wang Wei, it will be argued, to eschew the exposition of doctrine in favour of a poetry which, in its simplicity and silence, embodies the very absence of the poet himself.

### Biography

Following a BA in Philosophy and English at the University of Western Australia, Rafal Stepian studied Italian literature at the University of Bologna. His interest in mystical poetry then led him to take up the study of Persian literature at the University of Esfahan, Iran, following which he was employed as a Persian interpreter for the International Committee of the Red Cross in Afghanistan. He is now in his final year of a 2nd BA, in Chinese, at the University of Oxford, and plans to begin a PhD in which to undertake a comparative study of apophatic discourse in the Islamic and Buddhist traditions.



## **Dr Brendon Stewart**

### **Teaching Buddhism and analytical psychology**

Analytical psychology has developed following the work of Carl Jung. His thinking and research into Buddhism has been very important in bringing to the attention of many people, not only those in the western hemisphere, the significance of Eastern psychological insights into the human condition. But Jung eventually has an ambivalent relationship with Buddhist ideas as I think can be acknowledged in his conversation in 1958 at his home in Kusnacht with the Zen philosopher Shin'ichi Hisamatsu. "What you say" referring to Hisamatsu's comment that the 'true self' has neither form nor substance, "is possible, but I can't know if that's really the case. I can, of course, make assertions (...) but, fundamentally, I don't know" (Molino (edit.), 1998, p.46). And yet in this conversation Jung also says that he considered the "goal in psychotherapy" to be "exactly the same as in Buddhism" (Molino (edit.), 1998, p.45). "Action comes from right thinking, and (...) there is no improving of the world that does not begin with the individual himself" (Lopez (edit.), 1995, p.225

Can Buddhism capture the imagination of a (European) materialist mind set? I have tried to teach the idea that Buddhism fits comfortably with a particular take on modernist, secular humanism. This includes a symbiotic reading of evolution, a materialist universe, a universe without design or intention but imbued with laws and physicality, that the human mind is biological in origin and cultural in expression, that life is booked ended biologically (birth and death) and that these biological processes cannot be altered supernaturally, that the experience of living is fundamentally not stressful (although it can be psychologically disorientating) and that our obligation for the privilege of having this experience is to honour life's well being. The 8 fold path suggests this in that the paramitas are about wise living in the first instances and only esoteric in the last few.

### **Biography**

At the University of Western Sydney Dr. Brendon Stewart teaches in the masters program in Analytical Psychology. The teaching unit Buddhist Practice and Analytical Psychology explores the relationship between Buddhism, an ancient religious practice and analytical psychology, a 20th century psychological theory.

## **David Templeman**

### **Previous Lives and Present Lives: The Spiritual Life of 16-17th cent. Tibetan Hierarch**

Taranatha (1575-1634) knew exactly who he had been in his previous incarnations and who he was going to be in future births. In his incarnation as Taranatha he was placed in a difficult position, caught between his need for a reflective life and the vicissitudes of his gradual involvement in Tibetan realpolitik.

I examine Taranatha's life from his previously untranslated Autobiographies and propose that the sum of his past lives, his visionary experiences of his future and a certain degree of discomfort in the real world helped him to reorient his vision of himself into something approaching that of a "virtual" Indian. The degree to which he was able to exist as an independent person in the maelstrom of Civil War Tibet depended to a marked degree on this developed ability to both re-create himself successfully and to view the political events he became involved in through the reducing lens of Buddhist teaching.



### **Biography**

I have been interested in the works of Taranatha for over 35 years since I first came across his works while teaching in a Tibetan refugee camp in the late 1960s. I have published several books of translations of his major historical texts as well as many articles on him.

My main interest in Taranatha at present is in his vision of himself as detailed in his large Autobiography and his Secret Autobiography, both of which I have translated as part of my PhD thesis. I am particularly focussed on the process by which he 'cornered the market' in becoming known as the pre-eminent Indian specialist in Tibet of the late 16th-early 17th cent. Following this line of approach to a holy being's life I am at present examining how that process of becoming reputed as a specialist in one Buddhist field or other has become a defining feature of many other lamas who seek to be in some manner, unique.

## **Dr Sonam Thakchoe**

### **Status of Conventional Truth in Tsong khapa's Mādhyamika Philosophy**

This paper examines how and why conventional truth is, in Tsong khapa's view, false and deceptive yet indeed truth that stands shoulder to shoulder with ultimate truth. The first part of the paper establishes the complementary nature of the two truths by responding to the question: 'Why is conventional truth 'truth' at all?' The discussion in the second part examines the uses of conventional discourse within the Mādhyamika philosophical framework—partly by discussing Tsong khapa's response to the question: 'Why is conventional truth 'false' and 'deceptive'? and partly by considering his views on the application of the worldly convention within the Prāsāṅgika Mādhyamika system.

### **Biography**

Dr Sonam Thakchoe is a former student of the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies (CIHTS), Sarnath, Varanasi, India. There he acquired his Shastri and Acharya degrees after nine-intensive years of training in the History of Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Philosophy. He obtained his PhD in 2002 from the University of Tasmania. Currently he teaches there as a tenured lecturer in Asian philosophy. He is the coordinator of the Tasmanian Buddhist Studies in India Exchange Program (TBSIEP) which takes a group of 15 Australian students every year to India for one month intensive study program at CIHTS. He is also the coordinator of Asian and Comparative Philosophy Program. He also teaches Vipassana-styled meditations and leads study groups in various Buddhist Centers.

## **John Wu**

### **Ontological Difference and the “Other-Empty”-“Self-Empty” Controversy in Tibetan Buddhism**

The orthodoxy and the prevailing might of the Gelugpas in Tibetan Buddhism are on the doctrinal level founded upon the alleged resolution to the two radically opposed views on emptiness and essence. Tsongkhapa (1357-1419), whom the Gelugpas established retrospectively as their founder, was reputed to have achieved, in his voluminous writings, the pinnacle of Prāsāṅgika Madhyamika thought in the Buddhist world. Tsongkhapa's achievements were to a major extent made possible by the perceived victory won by him over rival Buddhist traditions of his time. A significant opponent that Tsongkhapa wrote passionately against was Dolpopa Sherab Gyaltzen (1292-1362), the founder of the Jonangpas who promoted the idea of *shentong*: absolute truth is empty of relative truths, but is itself not empty, hence “other-empty”. In other words, the dialectics of negation that characterises the Madhyamaka method has its limit before the absolute, and in this way Dolpopa gave a whole new understanding of *tathagatagarbha* as an affirmative essence.



Tsongkhapa attempted to refute this “essentialist” position by arguing that the very notion of “other-emptiness” was problematic and upheld *rangtong* or “self-emptiness”, for which any notion of essence implies its own negation, which is emptiness, or *sunyata*. In his conclusive response to the Jonang school in *Four Interwoven Annotations*, Tsongkhapa uses the analogy that if someone is distressed by the presence of a snake in the east, then contemplating the presence of a tree in the west is not going to relieve the distress. The two phenomena are unrelated to each other. Likewise, Dolpopa’s discourse on *shengtong* does not touch on the concerns of any genuine Madhyamika, and is hence utterly heterodox. With the political ascendancy of the Gelugpas under the 17<sup>th</sup>-century reign of the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617-1682), this doctrinal “heterodoxy” was an excuse they used to eliminate the Jonangpas as a viable tradition in Tibetan Buddhism. Yet in this deadly encounter between *shengtong* and *rangtong* lies a blindness on Tsongkhapa’s part to the subtle meaning of being contained in Dolpopa’s philosophy, which is what the German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) calls the ontological difference between being (*Sein*) and beings (*Seiende*). A snake and a tree are both *beings*, *particular* in essence and cannot possibly express the *wholeness* in the meaning of being. The doctrine of *shengtong* is therefore an example of the affirmation of the meaning of being in the Buddhist *understanding of being*. Yet the philosophical reinstatement of the ontological truth of *shengtong* embodies a hermeneutic threat to the orthodoxy of the Gelugpas, which, if politicised, is no small matter at all.

#### **Biography**

John Wu is a PhD graduand from the Department of Indian Studies, University of Sydney, expected to graduate in mid-December 2007. His thesis is on Heidegger, paganism and Tibetan Dzogchen. He has a continued interest in Heideggerian readings of Tibetan philosophy. As a PhD student John was actively involved in the promotion of Tibetan human rights at the University of Sydney and the University of New South Wales.