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## Authors and Editors in the Literary Traditions of Asian Buddhism

Cathy Cantwell and Robert Mayer

The papers collected here are proceedings from the conference *Authors and Editors in the Literary Traditions of Asian Buddhism*, held at Wolfson College, Oxford, September 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup>, 2013.<sup>1</sup> The conference was convened by Cathy Cantwell, Jowita Kramer, Robert Mayer, and Stefano Zacchetti.<sup>2</sup>

From the outset, we decided that we wished to allow for both substantial contributions to the topic, and short papers addressing a specific aspect. Thus, speakers were allowed to choose the length of the slot for their paper, so that the subsequent papers are not all a standard length. Publication of the proceedings in the form of this special section of this JIABS volume was arranged by our late colleague and dear friend, Professor Helmut Krasser, at the time co-editor of the JIABS. We regret that his untimely death has meant that the scintillating and extremely important paper he gave to our conference cannot now be included in these proceedings.

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<sup>1</sup> The conference was made possible by the generous financial support of the Numata Fund of Balliol College, University of Oxford, and the Oriental Studies Faculty, University of Oxford. Additional financial support enabling students to attend was generously offered by the Tise Foundation. Superb conference facilities were made available by Wolfson College, University of Oxford, and high quality video recordings of the first day were made through the kindness of Dr. Sung Hee Kim and Professor Denis Noble of *Voices from Oxford* (VOX), available for viewing here: <http://www.voices-fromoxford.org/news/literary-traditions-of-asian-buddhism/324> (last visited 23-02-2015).

<sup>2</sup> In practice, due largely to the absence of both Jowita Kramer and Robert Mayer from Oxford during the months before the conference, much of the organisation was done by Cathy Cantwell, with the help of the administrative staff at the Oriental Institute.

Intellectual inspiration for the conference arose out of a confluence of interests between the convenors. Cathy Cantwell and Robert Mayer were already engaged in an AHRC-funded research project on authorship and editorial practices within Tibetan revealed literature (*gter-ma*), to which Jonathan Silk was contributing as a consultant. Jowita Kramer was working on similar issues in relation to South Asian Sanskrit materials, and then Stefano Zacchetti further widened the scope by bringing his interests in East Asian Buddhist literatures.

Time and again in modern studies of traditional Buddhist literature, we find the unreflective use of words like ‘author.’ Such words are a natural part of our modern lexicon, and at first glance seem to be implied by Buddhist literary conventions too, for example in colophons or catalogues. Little wonder that we use them so freely. We happily say so-and-so ‘wrote’ a meditation manual, ‘composed’ a commentary, or ‘revealed’ a scripture. Yet on reflection, this is a potentially hazardous way to talk about Buddhist literature, because Buddhist notions of literary production can differ so markedly from the presuppositions of such terms in popular modern usage. We convened this conference because we felt it was high time these differences were more systematically investigated.

Anyone who has read much Buddhist literature will be familiar with one of its most salient differences to modern conventions: the ubiquitous verbatim repetition of phrases, sections, literary structures, and even entire chapters, across many different texts. Traditional Buddhist literature is often (not always!) *de facto* collectively rather than individually produced: the final product has the input of more persons than the nominal ‘author,’ often extending over considerable stretches of time. Much is also recycled, within a literary culture that tends normatively to envision contributors as *tradents* rather than innovators: in other words, the persons producing text see themselves as *passing on* existing knowledge, rather than creating new knowledge from nothing. Texts can be substantially modified by other hands in subsequent re-publications, even while still retaining their original attribution. An additional factor can be the dynamic ongoing interplay between memorised text and written text.



All this bears little resemblance to modern literary ideals, in which the author is constructed somewhat heroically as an individual creative source. Yet despite a vague general awareness of such differences, and some pioneering attempts to open up the debate,<sup>3</sup> Buddhologists have not yet systematically addressed the issue to a sufficient degree, and we still have numerous detailed studies of works traditionally attributed to famous Buddhist sources, without further investigation into what such attribution might actually entail in each individual case. We felt that the time was long overdue for a further analysis of Buddhist authorship, and some new items of vocabulary to describe it.

We invited scholars working on topics such as the concept of authorship, the nature and function of texts, intertextuality, creativity, and the role of commentaries in the process of innovation. The conference also addressed the process of editing, because the boundaries between editors and authors in these traditions, while routinely asserted, are conceptually not at all clear. At what point is one authoring a new text rather than merely editing an existing one? By looking very closely at examples of traditional editorial practice, which have so far never been explored, we hoped to understand more clearly the boundaries between it and authorship.

Jonathan Silk opened the conference with a paper (“Establishing/Interpreting/Translating: Is It Just That Easy?”) which addresses fundamental questions about the notions of ‘text,’ ‘authorship’ and the objectives of text editing. Taking Buddhist *sūtra* literature as its focus, it explores issues raised by attempts to meaningfully encounter texts, not from abstract philosophical perspectives, but in terms of practical issues encountered in processes of editing. Without, however, honest reflection on the nature of the literature and its sources, such practical considerations cannot be solidly grounded. The paper thus attempts to build a sort of bridge between abstractions and practical activity in relation, primarily, to Mahāyāna *sūtra* literature.

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<sup>3</sup> In Tibetan studies, the first systematic attempt was probably José Cabezón, 2001, “Authorship and Literary Production in Classical Buddhist Tibet,” in *Changing Minds. Contributions to the Study of Buddhism and Tibet in Honour of Jeffrey Hopkins*, ed. Guy Newland. Snow Lion, Ithaca.

Two papers deal with Tibetan tantric ritual texts. Robert Mayer's "*gTer-ston* and Tradent: Innovation and Conservation in Tibetan Treasure Revelation Literature," presents a summary of some of the findings of his and Cathy Cantwell's Oxford-based research project on authorship and innovation in *gter-ma* literature, considering their theoretical implications. The project is based upon a close reading of a range of actual *gter-ma* texts, as opposed to the already achieved biographical studies of individual *gter-stons* as persons. The paper begins by reviewing some of the widely different patterns in *gter-ma* literature that have been encountered. It goes on to show that contrary to much received opinion, (i) *gter-ma* literature leans more towards conservatism than innovation, (ii) that it is as much communally authored as individually authored, and that (iii) it has more similarities with its non-*gter-ma* counterparts than differences. In conclusion, it shows that the key to successful analysis of *gter-ma* literature, and perhaps of most tantric ritual literatures, lies in an appreciation of its multi-levelled modularity. Theoretical approaches to literary modularity are adapted from contemporary Hebraist scholarship, as Jonathan Silk first suggested, while approaches to the workings of what has been dubbed the '*gter-ston*-function' are drawn with reference to modern literary theory.

Cathy Cantwell's paper, "Different Kinds of Composition/Compilation Within the Dudjom Revelatory Tradition," provides detailed examples of different processes of sacred text production within the Dudjom Revelatory tradition, and considers what we can tell from an analysis of the textual content of an initial revelation and of presentations of its practices in later generations. Some texts are considered directly to represent the visionary teachings of the tantric buddha, Guru Rinpoche, while others comprise edited editions, or compilations which may integrate further sacred words from previous revelations by other revealers (*gter-ston*), along with 'pith instructions' on the material. In many of the final versions of the ritual texts, the distinction between original revelation and editorial intervention is not always clear, but the new versions may become the primary representation of the revealed sanctified words. The paper concludes with reflections on what can be learnt from

the kinds of textual developments witnessed in this case study, and on how typical they might be of Tibetan editorial practice.

Focusing on Sanskrit commentarial literature, Jowita Kramer's paper, "Innovation and the Role of Intertextuality in the *Pañcaskandhaka* and Related Yogācāra Works," investigates the relations between innovative elements and passages taken from older sources in Vasubandhu's *Pañcaskandhaka*, Sthiramati's *Pañcaskandhaka-vibhāṣā*, and two other commentaries. In the *Pañcaskandhaka-vibhāṣā* only a few explicitly marked quotations from other treatises are to be found, although the text contains a significant number of obvious parallels to older works, like the *Yogācārabhūmi*, the *Abhidharmasamuccaya*, or the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*. If we accept the silent reuse of older material as the usual method of Indian authors, then the question arises why in some cases the employed wording is not identical to the wording of the original but includes synonyms or different phrases. Have all these divergences been deliberately introduced by the authors to alter the meaning, or do they result from a rather loose treatment of the sources caused, for instance, by quoting from memory? The first part of Kramer's paper includes some general remarks on the functions of commentaries and the motives of their composers, and the second part presents some examples drawing on the *Pañcaskandhaka* and its three commentaries.

Three papers address the conference theme in relation to Theravāda and early Buddhist literature. Oskar von Hinüber's paper, "Building the Theravāda Commentaries: Buddhaghosa and Dhammapāla as Authors, Compilers, Redactors, Editors and Critics," takes advantage of an exceptionally fruitful opportunity offered by the Theravāda tradition to observe Indian authors at work. This is because it has a set of commentaries on the complete Tipiṭaka, and in addition, the commentators themselves communicate much about their work, their aims, their methods, and the material which they had at their disposal. It is first necessary to establish which attributed works actually were by Buddhaghosa, after which one can describe the plan he uses to build his compilation of the commentaries on the four *nikāyas* together with the *Visuddhimagga*. Examples of Buddhaghosa's literary activities are

given, as well as analysis of concepts applied in his commentaries, such as *suttanikkhepa* or *anusandhi*. The further literary developments of the slightly later commentator Dhammapāla are also investigated. Both Buddhaghosa and Dhammapāla are presented as critics of the Theravāda textual tradition, and the discussions by both commentators on the formation of the Tipiṭaka and its individual texts are quoted as examples for pre-modern literary criticism.

Lance Cousins' paper, "The Case of the *Abhidhamma Commentary*," examines the first part of the *Abhidhamma Commentary*, composed in Ceylon in the fourth or fifth century A.D. by a contemporary of Buddhaghosa. Looking at the sequence of teaching topics, it investigates how the commentary was constructed from earlier sources, and what methods of teaching were employed. Regrettably, this might be among the last papers ever written by Lance Cousins, since he passed away quite suddenly on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2015. Lance enjoyed a long and distinguished career in Buddhist studies, first at the University of Manchester, and more latterly at Oxford, where he did a great deal to revive the teaching of Pāli, and where he will be sorely missed, as an exemplary and outstanding colleague and scholar. We believed ourselves privileged to have his contribution to our conference, and since the paper had been completed and he had submitted his final version following the review process, we are also fortunate to be able to include it here in the form that he wanted.

Sarah Shaw's paper is called "In What Way is There a *Saṅghavacana*? Finding the Narrator, Author and Editor in Pāli Texts." Over the last two decades particularly, the notion of authorship has been central to scholarly textual and literary debate, from the Shakespearean, to the Homeric, to the religious. Such important discourse is however often coloured by the assumption that the validity and creative value of a given work rests upon it being composed in its entirety by a single named author at one historical moment, who is who he or she claims to be. Such considerations have undeniable implications for our understanding of early Buddhism. For performative, multi-authored texts such as the early Buddhist awakening verses, however, communicated so often within commentarial stories designed to be retold on many occasions, a more

evolutionary attitude to creative composition is perhaps sometimes needed. This paper argues that from the outset, the early Buddhist *saṅgha* seemed to want to include a sense of multiple authorship and varied narrative voice within their authoritative texts. It discusses some reasons why this must have been felt so important for the perpetuation of the tradition.

Another example from a much later Tibetan context of text emerging from a partly oral culture of transmission is Marta Sernesi's paper entitled "The *Collected Sayings* of the Master: On Authorship, Author-function, and Authority." It focuses on different genres of bKa' brgyud instructional literature, such as "instructions" (*gdams pa*, *gdams ñag*, *man ñag*), "mnemonic notes" (*zin bris*), "questions and answers" (*dri lan*), and "songs of advice" (*ñal gdams kyi mgur*). They originate as an oral act in a context of dynamic interaction between master and disciple(s), and are eventually written down and revised to be included within a wider text such as a life story (*rnam thar*), or, with a given title and colophon, arranged within multi-textual compendia. Therefore, the process leading to textual formation involves multiple agents, and may occur over an extended period of time, spanning generations. At the same time, dialogical instances and first-person speech may become a rhetorical strategy, employed to infuse the teachings with the authority of a venerated master. While continuing to compose, edit, order, implement, quote, and re-appropriate instructional texts in an inexhaustible exercise, the tradition questions itself, seeking for the words of the early masters of the bKa' brgyud lineage.

Martin Seeger's paper looks at a twentieth century case study of Buddhist writing. "The (Dis)appearance of an Author: Some Observations and Reflections on Authorship in Modern Thai Buddhism" explores conceptions of authorship in modern Theravāda Buddhism, by investigating the history of three Thai Buddhist texts, all of which have been regarded as outstanding and profound pieces of Thai Buddhist literature. These texts are: 1. *Buddhadhamma*, written by the famous scholar monk Phra Payutto (1939–); 2. *Muttodaya*, by the founder of the Thai Forest Tradition Luang Pu Man Bhuridatto (1870–1949); and 3. *Dhammānu-dhammapaṭipatti* whose authorship has been attributed to Luang

Pu Man but was, in fact, authored by the female Buddhist practitioner, Khunying Yai Damrongthammsan (1886–1944). Whereas Phra Payutto states that he tried to write *Buddhadhamma* in a way that “the book be free of the writer as well as the writer be free of the book, as much as possible,” Luang Pu Man has left hardly anything in written form and is even said to have forbidden his disciple monks to write down his homilies. For reasons that are not entirely clear at the moment, Khunying Yai, however, decided to publish her work to a large extent anonymously.

Péter-Dániel Szántó’s paper is called “Early Works and Persons Related to the So-called Jñānapāda School.” Until very recently, received wisdom has been that works of the so-called Jñānapāda school of Guhyasamāja exegesis are for the most part lost in the original Sanskrit. Fortunately, this situation has changed considerably in the last few years. More and more works from this influential school of tantric thought have emerged, including some fragments from the works of the school’s founder. The paper aims to review this material, to present some hitherto undiscovered and unstudied manuscripts (most importantly a major work from the Tucci collection), and to discuss historical information we may gain from them. It also attempts to revise the dates of Jñānapāda and propose a relative chronology of his intellectual descendants active in the ninth century. In the conclusion it presents some considerations regarding the influence of this important author and his students.

Sadly, Helmut Krasser’s important and fascinating paper, “Is Buddhist Philosophy Boring? A Look into Dharmakīrti’s Workshop,” cannot be reproduced here. He presented material mainly from Dharmakīrti’s *Hetubindu* and from his *Vādanyāya*, which shows that, contrary to the belief of modern scholars, śāstric texts in general have not been written by the authors mentioned in the colophon, but are notes taken by students during or after the oral teachings given by the *ācāryas*. Students were in fact the direct addressees of these teachings, which aimed at introducing them to rhetoric and argumentation in order to prepare them for disputations with proponents of the rival religious groups such as Mīmāṃsā, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika or Sāṅkhya.

The conclusion will be that if one accepts, e.g., the *Hetubindu* to consist of notes written by a student, then

- we have lost a pure philosophical work that is structured according to philosophical needs
- we still have Dharmakīrti's theories concerning causality, etc., but the structure of the six chapters of the *Hetubindu* follow mainly the – not always intelligent – questions of the student(s)
- we have gained a document that allows us a fascinating look into a Buddhist teaching class of the sixth century, the purpose of which seems to be an introduction into argumentation and rhetoric
- we can understand philosophical works in their social and historical context
- we now have at hand first criteria such as “the beloved of the gods” (*devānāṃ priyaḥ*), “His Honour” (*bhavat*), “His Worship” (*atrabhavat*) or “this we have explained already” (*uktam atra*) for examining other texts in terms of authorship.

Apart from Helmut Krasser, three other scholars gave conference presentations which it has not been possible to include in the proceedings due to time constraints, but we hope that they will later be published elsewhere. Matthew Kapstein spoke on “Before the Printed Tanjur: Dwags po Bkra shis rnam rgyal on Editing Ngo khro Rab 'byams pa's Commentary on the Zab mo nang don of Karma pa III Rang byung rdo rje.” Antonio Terrone's paper was entitled “Rewriting the Past to Create the Present: The Case of Dechen Osel Dorje's *History of the Early Translations*,” while Stefano Zacchetti addressed the conference on the subject of “The Life and Growth of Mahāyāna *Sūtras*: Some Remarks on the Textual History of the *Larger Prajñāpāramitā* in the Light of its Earliest Extant Commentary.”