Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajnāparamitā. MS. Sanskrit a.7 (R), Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.

READING MAHĀYĀNA SCRIPTURE • CONFERENCE 2021

9am - 6pm BST • 25 - 26th September 2021
Online / Tsuzuki Lecture Theatre, St Anne's College, Oxford

Featuring a keynote speech by Paul Harrison,
George Edwin Burnell Professor of Religious Studies, Stanford.

REGISTRATION:

FACULTY OF ORIENTAL STUDIES

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

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READING MAHĀYĀNA SCRIPTURE • CONFERENCE 2021

25 – 26th September 2021 • Programme

The Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Oxford, with generous support from Glorisun Charitable Foundation, is pleased to welcome you all to our conference 'Reading Mahāyāna Scripture' on 25-26th September 2021 at St Anne's College, Oxford. We are thankful for your patience in such unstable pandemic conditions and are grateful for your participation, whether in-person or online.

The last century of Mahāyāna Buddhism research tended to focus on origins and history, the translation of key texts, and mapping the broad field of its religious content. While these themes are by no means exhausted and much fruitful scholarship continues to this day, such background work provides a foundation upon which further studies of Mahāyāna literature can proceed. A key element of this is the ways in which the reading of such scripture has and does take place. We thus decided that the focus for the conference should be papers related to the reading of Mahāyāna *sūtra*, *śāstra* and other literature in Sanskrit, Chinese, Tibetan and any other classical and modern languages.

We are delighted that our keynote and sixteen paper presentations cover a rich range of scholarship that spans the ancient, medieval, and modern, across five different languages, and spanning most of Asia. There are papers that touch upon critical issues in contemporary scholarship, questions on the very ways in which we define key terms in the field, detailed examinations of new manuscripts, challenging perspectives on well-studied texts, studies in scriptural accessibility for modern lay audiences, practices associated with texts, examinations of the relationship between scripture and institutions, insights into how Buddhist literature has influenced secular culture, and the ways in which classical and modern commentators have gone about their task. We are particularly honoured to have Professor Paul Harrison, of Stanford University, as our keynote speaker, with the topic: 'Mahāyāna Sūtras: Reading As, Reading For, Reading Into'.

If before, during, or after the conference you have any questions or need of assistance, please do not hesitate to contact myself, the graduate student staff, or contact us via email at oubuddhism2@gmail.com. Thank you.

Matthew Orsborn
Faculty of Oriental Studies
University of Oxford

FACULTY OF ORIENTAL STUDIES

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Order of presentations

Day 1 – Saturday 25th September

Time		Presenter	Paper
09:00-09:10	Welcome		
09:15-09:45	Session 1 Chair: George FitzHerbert	Ulrike Roesler	'The Mahāyāna Scriptures in Tibet: recitation, veneration, and use'
09:45-10:00			Q & A
10:00-10:30		Rafal K. Stepien ONLINE	'On Numen in Antinomianism, or Reading Religion in Irreligion'
10:30-10:45			Q & A
10:45-11:00	Tea break		
11:00-11:30	Session 2 Chair: Gregory Adam Scott	D.E. Osto ONLINE	'Virtual Realities: A Mahāyāna Interpretation based on *The Supreme Array Scripture*'
11:30-11:45			Q & A
11:45-12:15		Nic Newton ONLINE	'Description, Visualisation, and Concatenation in the Larger *Sukhāvatīvyūhasūtra*'
12:15-12:30			Q & A
12:30-13:30	Lunch		
13:30-14:00	Session 3 Chair: Chris Jones	Reed Criddle ONLINE	'Collective oral tradition in the musical recitation of the *Medicine Buddha Sūtra*'
14:00-14:15			Q & A
14:15-14:45		David Drewes	'How Many Mahāyānas Were There?'
14:45-15:00			Q & A
15:00-15:15	Tea break		
15:15-15:45	Session 4 Chair: Charles DiSimone	Natasha Heller ONLINE	'Picturing the *Heart Sūtra*'
15:45-16:00			Q & A
16:00-16:30		Stephanie Balkwill ONLINE	'Reading the *Sūtra of the Unsullied Worthy Girl*'
16:30-16:45			Q & A
16:45-17:30	Key-note	Paul Harrison ONLINE	'Mahāyāna *Sūtra*s: Reading As, Reading For, Reading Into'
17:30-18:00	Discussion		
19:00--	Dinner		

Day 2 – Sunday 26th September

Time		Presenter	Paper
09:00-09:10	Welcome		
09:15-09:45	Session 5 Chair: Naomi Appleton	Charles DiSimone	'Identical Cousins? Insights on the Parallel Development of *Prajñāpāramitā* Families Gleaned from New Manuscript Discoveries in Greater Gandhāra'
09:45-10:00			Q & A
10:00-10:30		Gregory Adam Scott	'Reading Mahāyāna Scriptures in Modern China: The Role of Scriptural Presses, Distributors, and Buddhist Bookstores'
10:30-10:45			Q & A
10:45-11:00	Tea break		
11:00-11:30	Session 6 Chair: Alex Wynne	Yixiu Jiang	'Resolving Inconsistency? Understanding Inconsistency'
11:30-11:45			Q & A
11:45-12:15		Berthe Jansen	'The Role of Indic Mahāyāna Scriptures in Tibetan Legal Texts'
12:15-12:30			Q & A
12:30-13:30	Lunch		
13:30-14:00	Session 7 Chair: David Drewes	Thomas Newhall **ONLINE**	'Partially in Accord with the Greater Vehicle: Reading the *Four-Part Vinaya* as a Mahāyāna text in Daoxuan's Commentaries'
14:00-14:15			Q & A
14:15-14:45		Rachel Pang **ONLINE**	'Shabkar's (1781-1851) usage of the Mahāyāna *Sūtra*s in his *Emanated Scripture of Compassion*'
14:45-15:00			Q & A
15:00-15:15	Tea break		
15:15-15:45	Session 8 Chair: Berthe Jansen	Mikael Bauer **ONLINE**	'Tracing the exoteric-esoteric in pre-modern Japanese Dharma Assemblies'
15:45-16:00			Q & A
16:00-16:30		Daniel Boucher **ONLINE**	'Orality, Literacy, and the Cult of the Book Revisited'
16:30-16:45			Q & A
16:45-17:45	Roundtable: Ulrike Roesler and Matthew Orsborn		
17:45-18:00	Closing words		

Keynote speaker

Prof. Paul Harrison

George Edwin Burnell Professor of Religious Studies, Stanford University

Paul Harrison is the George Edwin Burnell Professor of Religious Studies at Stanford University. Educated in his native New Zealand and in Australia, he specializes in Buddhist literature and history, especially that of the Mahāyāna, and in the study of Buddhist manuscripts in Sanskrit, Chinese and Tibetan. He is the author of *The Samādhi of Direct Encounter with the Buddhas of the Present*, and of numerous journal articles on Buddhist sacred texts and their interpretation. He is also one of the editors of the series 'Buddhist Manuscripts in the Schøyen Collection'.

Paul's current projects include editions and translations of a number of Mahāyāna and Mainstream Buddhist *sūtra*s and *śāstra*s, including the *Vajracchedikā* (*Diamond Sūtra*), the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*, and an early Chinese *Saṃyuktāgama* anthology.

Paul serves as Co-Director of the Ho Center for Buddhist Studies at Stanford and is currently the Chair of the Department of Religious Studies.

Prof. Ulrike Roesler

Professor of Tibetan and Himalayan Studies,

Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Oxford

'The Mahāyāna Scriptures in Tibet: recitation, veneration, and use'

Unlike certain schools of Chinese Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhist schools and traditions are not centred around specific *sūtra*s, but around charismatic Buddhist teachers and their transmission lineages. Thus, it may appear as if the teachings of the lama and the commentaries produced by Tibetan scholars are to some degree overshadowing the scriptures themselves. However, the Mahāyāna *sūtra*s do play important roles in the Buddhist communities of Tibet in various ways, in particular the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature. As anthropologists of Tibet have noted, *sūtra*s are not only learned by heart, studied, and commented on by monastic scholars, but their power and blessing can also be "activated" by reading them out aloud. Moreover, in their physical manifestation as a manuscript or blockprint, they are objects of veneration and they are regarded as physically potent objects that can heal if ingested, or secure a good harvest if carried around the fields. My paper tries to trace some of these practices back into earlier periods by looking at the formative period of Tibetan Buddhism in the 11th-13th centuries. To what extent were the scriptures known and available to Tibetan readers at the time? How were they studied? What can we know about their reception and about the practices associated with the Buddhist scriptures at the time? When were the foundations laid for the ideas and practices mentioned above? Based on sources from the Kadampa tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, this paper will provide textual evidence for the knowledge and availability of Mahāyāna *sūtra*s during the *phyi dar* period (the "later diffusion" of Buddhism in Tibet) and discuss what we can know about their use by local Buddhist communities.

Dr. Rafal K. Stepien

Assistant Professor of Comparative Religion,

S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University

'On Numen in Antinomianism, or Reading Religion in Irreligion'

Understandably, scholars of Buddhist texts read and write about texts that are Buddhist. But what is the proper hermeneutical approach to take towards a text that, though identifiably 'Buddhist', nonetheless exhibits overtly non-Buddhist, even anti-Buddhist, features? More generally, what methodologies and theoretical lenses are appropriate for scholars of religion when working on 'irreligious' literatures?

This paper is a foray into such questions as they present themselves in antinomian religious poetry. Specifically, I focus on the Chinese Buddhist poet Hanshan 寒山 (d. c. 850) and the role of wine and inebriation in his work. Hanshan is typically portrayed as a dishevelled recluse – something of a Chinese *darvīsh* – whose poetry is as uncouth as its author's mountain hideaway. The profusion of Buddhist tropes in his poetry, however, attests to a thorough knowledge of and adherence to the sūtras and strictures studied and practiced in his day. Foremost among the postulates of the Tang-dynasty Chan Buddhism to which Hanshan subscribed was the notion of 'Buddha-nature' (佛性); the pure and pre-existing 'original mind' (本心) whose realization was the professed goal of Buddhist believers. And foremost among the precepts to which practitioners adhered in order to sober this (intrinsically undefiled yet perceptibly entangled) mind from worldly pollution was the avoidance of any intoxicants or mind-altering substances such as wine. On what basis, then, can our recusant poet-contemplative Hanshan deride religious regulations prohibiting wine-inebriation?

This paper forms part of a larger research project examining certain *prima facie* surprising commonalities I have identified between Buddhist and Islamic irreligious literatures. As such, I juxtapose the wine motif in Hanshan with its use by the Sufi-inclined Persian poet Ḥāfeẓ (d. c. 1389). In so doing, I seek to both challenge unquestioned assumptions among classical and contemporary reading communities as to the mutual incongruity of Buddhist and Islamic literature and thought, and contribute to the dawning awareness of extensive historical transmissions of literary motifs as well as religious doctrines. It is hoped, moreover, that this will concomitantly revise, or at least begin to question, accepted historical tropes as to the scarcity of trans-religious reading practices across Tang-Song-era Buddhist East-Asia and Abbasid-era Islamic West-Asia.

In terms of the conference call, this paper may be located as a study of Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhist poetic literature in comparative perspective, with specific attention to scholarly modes of reading and study, and the manners in which these both relate to the language and rhetoric of source texts and are received in and thereby help construct religiously identified reading communities.

Dr. D.E. Osto

Senior Lecturer in Philosophy,

Department of Philosophy, Massey University

'Virtual Realities: A Mahāyāna Interpretation based on *The Supreme Array Scripture*'

The Supreme Array Scripture (*gaṇḍavyūha-sūtra*) is an important Mahāyāna *sūtra* that recounts the story of Sudhana, a young man who sets out on a quest for omniscient buddhahood during the lifetime of the historical Buddha. This expansive narrative depicts a cosmic vision of reality wherein all physical and mental phenomena within spacetime interpenetrate and inter-reflect each other. This nonduality of intentionality and things Rupert Gethin (1998: 119) aptly calls the Buddhist "principle of *the equivalence of cosmology and psychology*." According to this principle, the various cosmological realms are understood to be the result of the intentional activities of the beings who inhabited those realms. Simply put this is the Buddhist understanding of *karma*: one's intentional activities over countless lifetimes definite the parameters of one's lifeworld. Thus, there are no free-standing objective places apart from the collective karmic conditioning of their inhabitants; in truth, all conventional reality is virtual. This principle is dramatically depicted in the opening scene of *The Supreme Array*, when Vairocana Buddha enters a meditative trance (*samādhi*) that transforms Jeta Grove into an infinitely vast jewelled space. Following an elaborate description of this vision, the narrator informs us that the disciples of the Buddha who are not bodhisattvas do not see this transformation because they lack the necessary "roots of merit" (*kuśulamūla*). This assertion is then illustrated with a number of analogies highlighting the virtual and karmic nature of conventional reality. In this paper, I argue that *The Supreme Array*'s view that all conventional experience is virtual may be applied to our current ethical thinking around the technological creation of virtual realities (VR technology), and the current "Simulation Hypnosis" that the universe we are living in is in fact an artificial simulation.

Nic Newton

PhD candidate in Sanskrit,

Asian Studies Department, University of Edinburgh

'Description, Visualisation, and Concatenation in the Larger *Sukhāvatīvyūhasūtra*'

Do syntactic patterns signify an intended transition from external recitation to a more motivated memorisation and mental recitation, and thence to full visualisation of a meditation object, or are they the ornamentation of a text for rhetorical or other communicative ends? Could they be both? In this paper I argue that the identification of concatenation and other poetic means found in the larger *Sukhāvatīvyūhasūtra*'s highly repetitious description (*varṇaka*) of the jewel-trees of Amitābha's paradise problematises understandings of this passage as a cognitive stencil for visualisation. I apply Yelle's method for the semiotic analysis of a discourse event to this example and view it as a ritual and mode of rhetorical performance. The use of this method of parsing allows the diagramming of patterns, and evidences the use of escalation, exhaustion, concatenation, and the rigorous integration and manipulation of two lists (*mātṛkā*): the seven precious materials and tree parts. The identification of concatenation (*śṛṅkhalika*) in particular allows a comparison with incidences of anadiplosis found outside Mahāyāna literature in the *Mahāsudassanasutta* and *Dīpaṃkaravastu.* It also points us to examples such as the Indriyeśvara chapter of the *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra* that have no semantic link to the larger *Sukhāvtīvyūhasūtra*'s description. Furthermore, concatenation brings to mind methods of recitation and memorisation such as the *kramapāṭha*, and is noted as an established feature of poetic technique appearing in several genres of Indian literature from the *Veda*s to Māhārāṣṭrī Jaina and Prakrit literature. The use of concatenation in Buddhist literature across examples that are seen as mere descriptions, and in those that are understood as visualisations, calls into question the purposes of the passage from the larger *Sukhāvatīvyūhasūtra*. Whilst the perspectives of the *Guan wuliangshoufo jiang* (**Amitāyurdhyānasūtra*) and *Wuliangshou jing youbotishe yuanshengjie* (**Sukhāvatīvyūhopadeśa*), make it hard to vitiate the views of scholars such as Harrison and Gethin that this passage is a template for visualisation, it seems our understanding needs to be augmented. It may be that concatenation here is simply a legacy of memorisation. It may also be that this manipulation was intended to heighten the impact of the metaphor of Amitābha as spiritual sovereign, and the deployment of literary ornament serves to further increase the praise quotient of the passage. However, it may also be that such a patterning announces a distinctive purpose for this passage, and that its images were singled out for memorisation and adornment by virtue of their established use in pragmatic contexts.

Dr. Reed Criddle

Director of Choral Activities and Associate Professor of Music,

Department of Music, Utah Valley University

'Collective oral tradition in the musical recitation of the *Medicine Buddha Sūtra*'

Every year thousands of Buddhists in the Mahāyāna tradition gather in Taiwanese temples for The Liberation Rite of Water and Land (藥師瑠璃光如來本願功德經). This weeklong ceremony is centered around a highly-structured program of nearly continuous chanting. Throughout the day there are eight shrine halls presenting independent liturgies, all chanted simultaneously. These locations are divided into two separate categories: the Inner Shrine (內壇) and the Outer Shrine (外壇). In the evening, the entire assembly combines for mass chanting. On the final day, the assembly's recitation focuses on a boat-burning ritual, metaphorically sending the dead to heaven.

From his perspective as an ethnomusicologist and choral conductor, Dr. Reed Criddle has researched the collective oral traditions integral to The Liberation Rite of Water and Land at Fo Guang Shan (佛光山) monastery in Taiwan. At the invitation of the Fo Guang Shan Institute for Humanistic Buddhism, he has recorded and transcribed chanting of The Medicine Buddha Service (藥師法會) and has produced a new English translation of its core text, *The Sutra on the Vows and Merits of the Medicine Master of Radiant Lapis Lazuli* (藥師瑠璃光如來本願功德經; Sanskrit: Bhaiṣajya-guru-vaiḍūrya-prabhā-rāja Sūtra). This paper provides a framework for the textual and musical elements inherent in the Medicine Buddha Service and contextualizes it within the overarching Water and Land Ceremony. Topics include chant leadership hierarchies; musical form, meter, rhythm, pitch, and harmony; individuality through ornamentation; and indeterminacy or impermanence through improvisation.

Dr. David Drewes

Associate Professor of Religion,

Department of Religion, University of Manitoba

'How Many Mahāyānas Were There?'

This paper examines Mahāyāna *sūtra* passages that advocate or attempt to legitimate the use of other Mahāyāna *sūtra*s, exploring ways of reading and interpreting them. It attempts to show that the authors and users of these texts regarded themselves as participants in a single movement. Arguing against the old idea that Mahāyāna emerged in different forms based in multiple, separate communities, it suggests that Mahāyāna rather emerged as a single, cohesive, primarily textual movement without any specific community basis.

Dr. Natasha Heller

Associate Professor,

Department of Religious Studies, University of Virginia

'Picturing the *Heart Sūtra*'

The *Heart Sūtra* is one of the most popular and important Mahāyāna scriptures across East Asia. Like many Mahāyāna scriptures, it is an object of devotion as well as interpretation; the scripture's brevity also facilitates its recitation and copying. However, its concision—along with lack of plot and philosophical density—would seem to make it an unlikely scripture to be illustrated or captured in images. Yet several contemporary works have attempted to do just that, including Tsai Chih Chung and Iwasaki Tsueno. These illustrated interpretations offer adult viewers or readers a visual approach to a text they likely know already.

In this paper I will examine an illustrated version of this scripture with young children as the target audience: *Picture-book Heart Sūtra* (Huiben xinjing 繪本心經) was written by Hsing Yun 星雲 (b. 1927)*,* founder of the Taiwan-based Buddhist organization Fo Guang Shan 佛光山. His explications and anecdotes are accompanied by illustrations by Giuliano Ferri, and introduce core Buddhist concepts through a multimodal scriptural commentary. Hsing Yun has lectured and published extensively on the *Heart Sūtra,* and his picture book must be contextualized within these other writings. Writing for adults, Hsing Yun makes frequent use of stories to indigenize the text within modern Chinese culture. *Picture-book Heart Sūtra,* I argue, goes further, and positions the illustrated scripture as an example of world literature for children.

Dr. Stephanie Balkwill
Assistant Professor of Buddhist Studies,
Department of Asian Languages and Cultures, UCLA

'Reading the *Sūtra of the Unsullied Worthy Girl*'

The *Sūtra of the Unsullied Worthy Girl* (T 562: *Wugou xiannü jing* 無垢賢女經) is a short Mahāyāna treatise that tells the fascinating story of a newborn female child who chooses not to transform her body into a male body along her path to Buddhahood. Hailing from a different Buddha land than ours, she is born like a Buddha in our land with the world quaking and shaking. Her miraculous birth inspires the births of countless other beings who then witness to her discussion of the female form from the perspective of the Mahāyāna. When she is asked why such a highly-advanced being as herself has retained a female form, she argues: "In the Law of the Great Vehicle there is neither male nor female!" Her story therefore finds both resonance and contrast with other stories of young, female protagonists in Mahāyāna literature, most famously the Daughter of the Dragon King from the *Lotus Sūtra*, who does change her body into a male one. Her story is also told in subsequent other Chinese translations; however, in these other texts she also changes her form just like the Daughter of the Dragon King. In reading the *Sūtra of the Unsullied Worthy Girl*, this paper will attempt to reconstruct an early medieval context for the text that suggests both popular interest in the female body in early medieval China and also reveals the instability of the problem of the female form over time.

Dr. Charles DiSimone

FWO Postdoctoral Researcher, Department of Languages and Cultures,

Ghent Centre for Buddhist Studies, Ghent University

'Identical Cousins? Insights on the Parallel Development of *Prajñāpāramitā* Families Gleaned from New Manuscript Discoveries in Greater Gandhāra'

The beginnings *Prajñāpāramitā* literature may be traced to around the turn of the first millennium of the Common Era. In the centuries that followed, a very complex and fluid oral/textual transmission developed leading to different transmissions in disparate areas and times resulting in witnesses of the various *Prajñāpāramitā* works often containing a complicated web of textual similarities and differences. Multiple families of *Prajñāpāramitā* works developed with the earliest being the *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* subfamily, which was soon followed by the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā* subfamily. The *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* is thought to have been supplanted by the development of the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā* works in Central Asia until the Pāla period. This seemingly was also the case in Greater Gandhāra where at least three manuscript witnesses are preserved of the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā* in the Gilgit manuscripts. Quite recently, a new fragmentary witness of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* has been discovered at the archeological site at the ancient city of Mes Aynak, located about 40 km from Kabul in Afghanistan. There are only three other extant early manuscript testimonies of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā*: fragments of a 1st-2nd century Gāndhārī language *Prajñāpāramitā* birch bark scroll likely recovered from the Pakistan-Afghanistan border area, fragments of a Kuṣāṇa period manuscript likely recovered around Bāmiyān, and a single fragment from an 8th-9th century manuscript in South Turkestan Gupta Brāhmī found in Xinjiang. The Mes Aynak Fragments represent the fourth discovery of an *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* predating the later Nepalese manuscript traditions and, being from the 6th-7th centuries of the Common Era, are the third oldest extant witnesses of this work. These fragments are of special note because they are the first manuscript testimony of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* ever to have been found in Greater Gandhāra in a Gilgit/Bamiyan type script. The discovery of these manuscript fragments represents an important new data point in the study of the development of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* and *Prajñāpāramitā* literature. Philological analysis of this new fragment has shown that this witness of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* often diverges from the extant witnesses from the later Nepalese transmission of the work instead sharing several textual similarities with *Mahāprajñāpāramitā* manuscript witnesses preserved from Greater Gandhāra. In this paper I will introduce this new manuscript material along with a new witness of the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā* from Greater Gandhāra and lay out an analysis of these in comparison to the other extant manuscripts, editions, translations of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* and other *Prajñāpāramitā* manuscript material from Greater Gandhāra demonstrating that the *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* and *Mahāprajñāpāramitā* subfamilies underwent a period of a parallel transmission in Greater Gandhāra where the corresponding material within *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* and *Mahāprajñāpāramitā* shared closer similarities than found within later extant manuscript traditions upon which all modern editions of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* have been made.

Dr. Gregory Adam Scott
Senior Lecturer in Chinese Culture and History,
Chinese Studies, University of Manchester

'Reading Mahāyāna Scriptures in Modern China: The Role of Scriptural Presses, Distributors, and Buddhist Bookstores'

Buddhist scriptures have been at the centre of Chinese Mahāyāna traditions since they were first brought into China and translated into Classical Chinese in the early Common Era. Since then, they have had a lively existence, being re-copied, re-translated, inscribed, reprinted, collected, commented upon, indexed, and further transmitted throughout East Asia. From the late nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century, however, the task of getting people to actually read the Buddhist scriptures gained a new urgency. The Taiping War of the 1850s and 60s had destroyed untold numbers of Buddhist texts, and as part of the post-war reconstruction, a new generation of monastic and lay printers worked to produce new editions of Mahāyāna texts and put them into the hands of as many people as possible. The textual production and distribution networks they established were joined in the 1920s and 1930s by specialist Buddhist publishers and bookstores that used cutting-edge technology to produce, distribute, and sell their texts. Without abandoning the scriptural corpus that had helped define Mahāyāna traditions for centuries, they imagined new ways of connecting readers with texts so that both critical understanding and numinous inspiration could result.

My presentation will examine how scriptural presses, scripture distributors, and Buddhist bookstores worked to promote reading and understanding Mahāyāna scriptures in modern China. These institutions and the people who managed them operated during an era of rapid technological and cultural transformation, during which various state authorities were attacking religious culture but promoting education and literacy. The textual world of these printers and publishers drew upon the centuries-old patrimony of Chinese Buddhist textual culture, but also attempted to embrace the promises and opportunities of the modern era in order to address the challenges they faced. As such it provides a window not only into how Chinese Buddhist leaders creatively adapted to changing circumstances, but also more generally how religious culture throughout modernizing East Asia introduced innovation into scriptural reading practices.

Yixiu Jiang

PhD candidate for the Open Philology project,

Leiden Institute for Area Studies, Leiden University

'Resolving Inconsistency? Understanding Inconsistency'

The textual fluidity, and possible resulting doctrinal or narrative inconsistency, are no longer new matters of concern in the study of Mahāyāna scriptures. These features present significant challenges to any attempt to edit and understand a Mahāyāna scripture that exists in more than a single source. Recent scholarship on popular sūtras with multiple available recensions has provided some excellent models to approach such fluidity and plurality. However, when it comes to lesser-known texts with limited available materials, although it is indeed these that make up a large body of the Mahāyāna scriptures, the attention paid to the methodology for resolving their fluidity and inconsistency is still insufficient. This paper attempts to address this issue by using as a case study the **Svapna-nirdeśa-sūtra* ("Teaching on Dreams," *SvN* hereafter).

The topic and resources available for the *SvN* make its inconsistency particularly evident. The *SvN* concerns bodhisattvas' dreams, which it presents as a means to diagnose their development within a ten-stage scheme (*daśabhūmi*). Based on presumptions of the ten-stage doctrine and dream interpretation, a systematic correlation between dreams, stages, and a set of bodhisattva doctrines is expected. However, the surviving resources of the text, namely, the witnesses of one Chinese (ca. 5th century) and one Tibetan translation (9th century), provide us with no justification for any overarching system. The inconsistency in the text seems unresolvable.

This leads to the acknowledgment that, when editing the text, trying to reduce the inconsistency is impossible, and any such attempt works against the organic nature of the work. A better way to deal with incoherent readings is to respect and understand them without violating the principles of textual criticism. This paper suggests two approaches towards a better understanding of the inconsistency presented in the *SvN*. First, though the textual history of the *SvN* is obscure, modelling ourselves on previous studies on the recension history and transmission process of some popular Mahāyāna sūtras, we can form hypotheses regarding the editorial process, and uncover the multiple layers of the text, layers that are themselves consistent on a smaller scale. Second, re-examining the presumed notion of doctrinal coherence is necessary. Though a coherent correspondence between the bodhisattvas' stages and the bodhisattva doctrines is absent in the *SvN*, a strong association between the stages and obstacles to further spiritual development is obvious. This alternative view also offers us some insights into some previously overlooked issues of Mahāyāna doctrines.

Dr. Berthe Jansen

Junior Professor of Tibetan Studies,

Institute for South and Central Asian Studies, Leipzig University

'The Role of Indic Mahāyāna Scriptures in Tibetan Legal Texts'

The famous Tibetan Gesar epic claims that the Dharma originated in India while law came to Tibet from China. This paper, however, looks at the Indian scriptural heritage contained within Tibetan legal works. More precisely, this paper intends to consider the role that Mahāyāna scriptures and narratives of Indic origins play in Tibetan legal texts composed between the 14th and the 18th century. While some scholars have claimed that certain Tibetan foundational legal works were heavily based upon *Arthaśāstra* materials, others downplay the impact of Indic texts upon this genre.

In this discussion, I will point out how and why certain translated Indian scriptures are used in a legal context. I will highlight some "usual suspects", such as Nagārjuna's *Ratnāvalī* and the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa Sūtra,* that justify the "secular" ruler's right to execute the law will be discussed, but also other less obvious "*sūtra*" quotations and paraphrases – only some of which are traceable to actual extant texts. I will furthermore present some of the Indian Buddhist narratives that feature in these legal works – an important one being the Jātaka story of Adarśamukha, whose legal decisions have been viewed by Tibetans to be foundational to their laws. In this context, it is also important to consider the intended audience of these legal works: Tibetan Buddhist legal practitioners who were educated, but not necessarily widely versed in the scriptures. In this way, we can assess the "afterlife" of Indic Mahāyāna works within the Tibetan legal sphere: their usage in the semi-secular context of Tibetan jurisdiction and more generally the influence of Indic literature and thought on Tibetan legal works. In this paper, I will furthermore hypothesize that the influence of *Arthaśāstra*-like materials on Tibetan law is both bigger *and* subtler than previously thought.

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'Partially in Accord with the Greater Vehicle: Reading the *Four-Part Vinaya* as a Mahāyāna text in Daoxuan's Commentaries'

This presentation will show how the Tang-dynasty Chinese scholar-monk Daoxuan 道宣 (596-667) attempted to explain that the Four-part Vinaya (*Sifen lü* 四分律), normally understood to be a non-Mahāyāna text, was "partially in accord with the greater vehicle" (*fentong dacheng* 分通大乘). In Chinese Buddhism, where the Mahāyāna was, with few exceptions, considered superior and "orthodox," the role of Buddhist monastic codes—the Vinaya—was often contested. Seen as necessary to those wanted a rule-based regulation of Buddhist monastic life, but unnecessary to those who preferred the Mahāyāna position of a principle-based morality, Daoxuan strove to resolve these discrepancies through detailed explanation and theorization about the contents of these various translated Vinaya texts. I will argue that through "strong reading"—reading that reinterprets a text despite evidence to the contrary—and through connecting his idea to other aspects of monastic practice, Daoxuan was attempting to make the *Four-part Vinaya*, in contrast to the other Vinaya texts translated into Chinese in his time, the appropriate choice for Chinese Buddhists of his day, who by-and-large saw the Mahāyāna as a superior form of Buddhism. This will not only serve to illustrate some of the hermeneutical moves used in Daoxuan's Vinaya commentaries, but also show how Daoxuan's understanding of the "essence of the precepts" (*jieti* 戒體) was also used to help warrant this reading of these texts. I will show how Daoxuan also used this reading of being "partially in accord with the great vehicle" to help give an answer to the question of whether or not the precepts and monastic status continues after death, and why receiving the precepts in a precept ceremony is important for the maintenance of the monastic vows. As a way of illustrating how Daoxuan and other Buddhists may have seen the import of the "essence of the precepts," I will argue that the "essence of the precepts" can be thought of as a kind of conscience, which is thought to help one to uphold the precepts and reinforce the moral attitude found in the rules of the Vinaya. In this sense, reading Vinaya text as Mahāyāna texts went far beyond the words on the page to connect to fundamental principles of Buddhist practice and morality.

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'Shabkar's (1781-1851) Usage of the Mahāyāna *Sūtra*s in his *Emanated Scripture of Compassion*'

The Mahāyāna scriptures are an integral part of Tibetan Buddhist ritual life. In the private sphere, the texts are worshipped as part of daily water and lamp offerings to private shrines. In collective life, the scriptures are carried around the monastery in processions during holy festivals. However, do Tibetan Buddhists read the Mahāyāna scriptures, and if so, how do they do so? In this essay, I examine how Shabkar Tsokdruk Rangdrol (1781-1851), a Tibetan Buddhist monk-yogi from eastern Tibet, incorporated Mahāyāna *sūtra*s into his treatise, the *Emanated Scripture of Compassion* (Tib. *snying rje sprul pa'i glegs bam*). Compassion, together with its counterpart wisdom, form the quintessence of the Mahāyāna: the awakening mind (Skt. *bodhicitta*).

In the *Emanated Scripture of Compassion*, Shabkar quotes from a variety of sūtras. However, quotations from sūtras comprise but a small part of the corpus of texts that Shabkar cites from. In addition to sūtras, Shabkar quotes from tantras, as well as works by Indian masters, Tibetan masters, and even folk stories and anecdotes. The fact that Shabkar relies more on later treatises than the actual sūtras themselves in elucidating the topic of bodhicitta is consistent with how both his spiritual predecessors and contemporaries (i.e. Tsongkhapa, Longchenpa, Jamgon Kongtrul, and Jamyang Zhepa) cited the Tengyur (collection of treatises) more often than the Kangyur (collection of the Buddha's speech) in comparable works. Whereas previous studies on the printing of the Kangyur and Tengyur in Tibet indicate that the printing of the Kangyur was more important than the Tengyur (Schaeffer 2009), when we examine the actual usage of the texts themselves in premodern Tibet, it reminds us that the Tengyur figures more prominently for Buddhists than the Kangyur from a hermeneutical perspective.

A unique aspect of how Shabkar cites the sūtras and other texts is how he compiles a large number of quotations that illustrate his point, with minimal to no commentary. This is highly atypical in the commentary genre. I suggest that this reflects a hermeneutic based on the Dzogchen principle of spontaneity and openness. Shabkar also mixes "high" and "low" genres in his choice of quotations; this practice seems consistent with other masters from nineteenth-century eastern Tibet such as Patrul Rinpoche who brought Buddhism out of the monastery and to the ordinary Tibetan populace.

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'Tracing the exoteric-esoteric in pre-modern Japanese Dharma Assemblies'

Historians of pre-modern Japan have often described the relation between Buddhism and state by referring to the Gates of Power (*kenmon*) theory. Developed by the Japanese historian Kuroda Toshio, this concept implies that the state was divided in three power blocs of which the temples and shrines formed one component. The conceptual framework that supported this 'kenmon' state was a synthesis of exoteric and esoteric Buddhism or 'Kenmitsu Taisei.' Although a conflation of exoteric and esoteric lineages can certainly be observed on the institutional level, just what this exo-esoteric identity encompassed on the textual, ritual and doctrinal level is much less clear. This presentation explores whether this exoteric-esoteric Buddhism can be discerned in debates (*rongi*) at the Dharma Assemblies (*hō'e*) of one of pre-modern Japan's main monastic centers, Kōfukuji. Founded at the beginning of the 8th century, this grand temple was regarded as the center of the Japanese Mind Only School (*Hossō*) and became the site of major state rituals such as the Vimalakīrti Assembly or the *Yuima'e*.

I will approach these debates in two ways. First, I will analyze the preparation period monks had to go through prior to their participation. By doing so, I will not only focus on the texts used throughout this training period, but also reflect on the way these texts are being used as part of the monk's daily ritual. In my analysis I will go through detailed manuals and commentaries used throughout the Heian period (794-1185). Second, I will turn to actual debates and analyze sessions from the Heian and Kamakura periods as preserved in the writings of the monk Sōshō (1202-1292). A detailed reading of his writings in comparison with an analysis of existing ritual manuals will allow me to assess the presence or absence of exoteric-esoteric Buddhism in the doctrinal debates the monks engaged in.

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'Orality, Literacy, and the Cult of the Book Revisited'

Gregory Schopen's now classic argument on the cult of the book as the locus of early bodhisattva groups has received considerably renewed attention in recent years. Arguments against his hypothesis have often emphasized the calls to memorization and recitation within the *sūtra*s themselves. But these critiques have usually missed the fact that these injunctions represent a series of significant shifts, signalling the emergence of new genres that go well beyond mere transcriptions of oral discourse. Mahāyāna *sūtra*s, in sharp contrast to earlier scriptures, display an awareness of themselves as texts, a self-reflexivity of themselves as objects for special attention that is one of the hallmarks of inscription. This literariness is consonant with the emergence of an aestheticized use of Sanskrit at the turn of the Common Era. My talk will attempt to reorient this discussion in light of broader contemporaneous developments inside and outside of Buddhism.