Program and Abstracts

# Merits of the Book:
# Buddhist Manuscript Traditions Across Asia

**The Martin Marty Center for the Advanced Study of Religion
University of Chicago Divinity School
and The Franke Institute for the Humanities
February 26-28, 2015**

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26**

**Swift Hall**

4:30    Welcome: Prof. Margaret Mitchell, Dean of the Divinity School

        Keynote Address: Prof. Richard Salomon, University of Washington

6:00    Reception

**FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 27**

**Franke Institute, Regenstein Library**

9:00    Welcome: Matthew Kapstein

9:15    I. Material and Social Origins

        Chair: Prof. Paul Copp, EALC

        Presenters: Dr. Agnieszka Helman-Ważny, Prof. Stephen F. Teiser

10:45   Coffee

11:15   II.  Manuscript Production in 8th-9th century Tibet and Japan

        Chair: Helen Findley, Ph.D. candidate, EALC

        Presenters: Prof. Brandon Dotson, Prof. Bryan Lowe

**12:45 Lunch**

2:00    III. Text and Image

        Chair: Dr. Katherine Tsiang, Center for the Art of East Asia

        Presenters: Prof. Jinah Kim, Prof. Vesna Wallace

3:30

4:00    IV. New Technologies in Manuscript Studies

        Chair: Matthew Kapstein

        Presenters: Prof. Gregory Heyworth, Mr. Jeffrey Wallman

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28**

**Franke Institute, Regenstein Library**

9:30    V. Tibetan Manuscript Studies

        Chair: Davey Tomlinson, Ph.D. candidate, Philosophy of Religions

        Presenters: Dr. Sam van Schaik, Dr. Stacey Van Vleet, Dr. Michael Sheehy

11:30   Conclusion

# Keynote

RICHARD SALOMON

**University of Washington**

**In Praise of Error:**
**What can we learn from mistakes and inconsistencies**
**in Buddhist manuscripts?**

In the course of many years of study of Buddhist manuscripts, particularly of early Gandhāran manuscripts, I have often been struck by cases where problematic words or syllables have been corrected or rewritten, often in places which had already been recognized as problematic cruxes in related texts. All too often, in cases where we might have expected manuscripts much earlier than any previously known to solve these textual difficulties, they only add to the confusion. It thus becomes clear that such problems are deeply imbedded in the early phases of Buddhist tradition, so that the search for simple answers may not only be fruitless, but actually misguided. In some such cases, at least—for example in the old controversy of *pratyeka-buddha* "solitary Buddha" vs. *pratyaya-buddha* "Buddha-by-a-cause" —we should perhaps be thinking in terms of intentional ambiguities and double meanings, rather than of "right" and "wrong" solutions.

In other cases, the problems may be real, but insoluble. For example, inconsistencies in the forms of the names of the Buddhas and other personal names, or certain peculiarities in the Greek translations of the Aśokan edicts, reflect problems which seem to go back to the original sources, as far as they can be traced.

These and similar patterns show that the ancient scribes were sometimes as bewildered as we are about the "correct" or "original" forms of problematic words and names. The positive outcome of this may be the development of a less rigid approach to this sort of philological problem, which, instead of focusing on fruitless arguments over unanswered questions, will concentrate more on the causes, character, and significance of the problems themselves.

# Presentations

BRANDON DOTSON

University of Munich

## The Production of *Sūtras* for the Tibetan Emperor, Dunhuang, 820s to 840s

From the 820s to the 840s copies of four Buddhist texts were commissioned as a gift for the Tibetan emperor. These were the largest of the *Perfection of Wisdom sūtras* in Tibetan (*Śatasāhasrika-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*; abbreviated *SP*) and Chinese (*Mahā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*; abbreviated *MP*), and the *Aparimitāyur-nāma mahāyāna-sūtra* (abbreviated *Ap*) in Tibetan and Chinese. Dunhuang's scores of scribes and editors were tasked with producing 8 copies of the *SP*, 3 of the *MP*, and thousands of copies of the *Ap*. The thousands of discarded leaves and panels of *SP* and *MP*, and the thousands of rolls of Chinese and Tibetan *Ap* constitute one of the largest single groups of documents deposited in Cave 17 in Dunhuang, and make up the better part of most archival collections of Dunhuang manuscripts. Looking at this massive body of *sūtras* as a whole, it is apparent that editorial standards differed from one of these four texts to another. Besides the differing norms between Chinese and Tibetan editing conventions, there were major differences in the methods for editing the Tibetan *SP* versus those for editing the Tibetan *Ap*. The thousands of leaves of the former that have come down to us are almost all discards. Many bear the evidence of editorial rejection, and some include jottings and scrawls in their margins. Among the thousands of rolls of the Tibetan *Ap*, by contrast, we find only a few discards, and next to no jottings in colophons, margins, or on the rolls' blank versos. In the main text, however, we often find the red ink of the editors correcting spelling and punctuation, something that would not have been permitted on the clean, final copies of the *SP*. Comparing these differing editorial norms, and attending to editorial notes and to marginal jottings, it becomes apparent when, and under what circumstances, editors corrected, rejected, and replaced the leaves and panels of these documents. Besides offering insight into editorial practice, the marginal jottings also provide a window into the social history of these scribes in ninth-century Dunhuang.

AGNIESZKA HELMAN-WAŻNY

**University of Hamburg and University of Arizona**

## Mapping the Early Technology of Paper in Central Asia: Comparative Study of the Silk Road Manuscripts

This study explores the early history and technology of paper in Central Asia during the first millennium AD based on studies of collections found in the beginning of the 20th century. The objects studied are Chinese, Tibetan, Uighur, Manichaean, Tokharian and Sogdian manuscripts drawn from the Stein Collection in the British Library in London; the Turfan collection in the Berlin Brandenburg Academy of Sciences (BBAW) and the Berlin State Library (BSL); the Pelliot collection in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris; and the Oldenburg collection in the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts in St. Petersburg.

The examined manuscripts contain the earliest surviving examples on paper and illustrate both artistic expression and  scribal practice. Despite their importance, their material characteristics have not yet been studied. By using the systematic technological and microscopic study of paper combined with codicological and textual information, my research has aimed to explore the possibilities of dating these materials, finding their places of origin, and recovering the histories of their regional production and usage.

GREGORY HEYWORTH

**University of Mississippi**

### All Manuscripts are Palimpsests: Spectral Imaging and the Hidden Text

Since the Archimedes Palimpsest, multispectral imaging has required us to consider manuscripts, not merely obviously damaged ones, in a new light. As the title of this talk suggests, the material and scribal history of manuscripts, their errors, changes of mind, faded marginalia, material provenance, passages that by device or mishap have succumbed to the passage of time, can, with varying degrees of success, be recovered virtually using spectral imaging technologies. The theoretical shifts in our understanding of pre-modern textuality caused by this technology, however, cannot be fully appraised until humanists understand how it works, and what precisely its capabilities, risks and limits are. The purpose of this talk, then, is to demonstrate the state-of-the-art in multispectral imaging and X-ray fluorescence as tools for the study and virtual recovery of manuscripts with examples drawn from recent projects including the Martellus Map, the Vercelli Book, a Shakespeare First Folio and the oldest translation of the Gospels into Latin.

JINAH KIM

Harvard University

## Sacred Space of a Manuscript: Design strategies and codicological features in medieval Indic manuscripts

The early history of the art of the book in India owes much to the Buddhist practice of commissioning beautifully crafted books for religious merits. Once the idea of embellishing and illustrating text folios with paintings was introduced at the turn of the first millennium, initially in Buddhist context, makers and patrons of painted manuscripts experimented with various design strategies and codicological features, most of which emphasized a manuscript's material quality as a three-dimensional, portable sacred object. By the mid-twelfth century, some Buddhist manuscript makers in eastern India and Nepal began to materialize the concept of a manuscript as a temple in a visually engaging manner. I demonstrate that my analogy of a book as a temple was a consciously chosen design strategy and locate this artistic practice in the larger historical context by drawing comparisons with the design strategies of manuscripts of other Indic religious traditions as well as those seen in temple architecture. I also take its ramifications beyond the artistic practice and consider it to be the theoretical framework behind the practice of painted manuscript making in medieval India.

BRYAN LOWE

Vanderbilt University

## Writing Societies:
## Local Organizations and Manuscript Production in Ancient Japanese Buddhism

Transcribing scripture was an inherently social endeavor. In addition to networks of scribes, proofreaders, assemblers, and the broader economies that supported all sutra copying projects, patronage itself often occurred through collective organizations. This paper explores the relationship between writing and society in eighth-century Japan through the study of colophons to sutra manuscripts produced by fellowships that pooled their resources to sponsor pious projects. I argue that sutra transcription structured communities in a variety of ways by reinforcing traditional social structures, supporting new state institutions, and introducing novel conceptions of community based on Buddhist ideals outlined in canonical texts. To borrow the metaphors of the practice, in some cases, the brush strokes in colophons transcribed existing power arrangements, perhaps reinforcing the importance of a powerful regional lineage group through display and institutional configurations related to writing. In others, they inscribed new notions of community and friendship, visually demonstrating freshly formed bonds and commitments to collective

practice. In short, sutra copying was at once an act of transcription and inscription—it reinforced social organizations through reproduction and enabled new configurations to appear for the first time.

MICHAEL SHEEHY

Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center (TBRC)

## Methods and Pathways in the Study of Digital Tibetan Manuscripts

The digital book is changing how we encounter and structure knowledge. We are confronted with the reality that the normative Tibetan book is no longer merely a material cultural object, but is abstracted into new dimensions. As the Tibetan book is digitized, how are the ways in which we handle, assess and read Tibetan xylographs and manuscripts being transformed? Considering the boundaries of the digital book, as well as potentials for extensible models of it, this paper discusses current modes of representing and accessing Tibetan manuscripts in a digital library environment. With attention to concerns particularly related to the study of digitized Tibetan manuscripts, we consider a descriptive metadata schema customized to capture aesthetic, codicological and paleographic information, and how layers of data abstraction can be connected in order to enhance our knowledge about the book and book culture in Tibet. Observations will be based on a preliminarily survey of the provenance and period of manuscripts in the TBRC Library.

STEPHEN F. TEISER

Princeton University

## The Conditioned Genesis of the Dunhuang Manuscripts

From the time the manuscripts from Dunhuang were first discovered until now, some of the best scholarship has focused on the reasons for the sealing of the library cave, Mogao Cave 17. As is well known, two major reasons have been proposed for the depositing of the manuscripts in the cave and its subsequent sealing-up in the early eleventh century. The "sacred waste" theory, followed by Stein, Fujieda, Fang, and others, proposes that the texts, wrappers, and paintings in the cave had outlived their usefulness in religious and social life but were too sacred or rare to be simply burned or disposed of. Hence, batches of manuscripts from several temple libraries were collected and preserved. Another theory, most recently reformulated by Rong, is that the manuscripts were consciously placed into the cave in order to "avoid disaster," in this case the rumored invasion of the Karakhanids. Some scholars have hypothesized other possible disasters that motivated the preservation of the manuscripts, including invasion by the Tanguts and the decline of the Dharma.

These important theories have guided research and generated important scholarship. But they have also led us to ignore some of the other important aspects of Buddhist manuscript culture. In particular, in assuming that the entire body of manuscripts from Dunhuang constitutes a library or single corpus, these theories obscure the multiple origins of the manuscripts and the diverse range of religious and social institutions in which the texts were produced. Instead of focusing on the "end" or the "death" of the manuscripts, my paper considers how the "birth" and "life" of the manuscripts can provide invaluable information about Buddhist religious practice and the institutions of literacy in medieval China.

My paper reviews several batches of Chinese-language manuscripts, emphasizing the very different circumstances in which they were produced. I ask such questions as: Who wrote the texts? Who paid to have the manuscripts copied, and why? Who copied the manuscripts? In what circumstances and social institutions were manuscripts copied? Where were the manuscripts kept? Who used them? Who owned them? Who saw them? Who read them, and how were they read: in public or in private, silently or aloud? By reflecting on the origins or production of Buddhist manuscripts at Dunhuang, I hope to suggest questions that may be worth asking about Buddhist manuscript cultures elsewhere.

SAM VAN SCHAIK

**British Library**


**Identifying scribal hands in Tibetan manuscripts**


In 2007, Jacob Dalton and I published an article presenting a new paleographic approach to the Tibetan manuscripts from Dunhuang. By adapting the techniques of forensic handwriting analysis to the Tibetan alphabet, we attempted to identify groups of manuscripts written in the same hand. In the article, the technique was illustrated by application to the works of a single scribe. Since then, we have continued to apply this method of handwriting analysis to identify further scribal hands. This paper presents aspects of this recent work, showing how identifying the works of a single scribe can offer insights into the practice of Buddhism at Dunhuang.

STACEY VAN VLEET

**University of California, Berkeley**

## Medical Culture and Manuscript Culture in Tibetan Knowledge Networks

From the moxibustion diagrams found at Dunhuang to the Tibetan antelope doodled in B.H. Hodgson's nineteenth-century copybook, both medical culture and manuscript culture have long been at the center of Tibetan knowledge exchanges. This presentation considers what Tibetan medical manuscripts' material features have to tell us about the historical processes of innovation and transmission in medical knowledge. I examine examples from various genres, including medical treatises and commentaries, specialized instructional texts (*man ngag, nyams yig*, etc.), *materia medica* (*'khrungs dpe*), Tibetan and multilingual glossaries, body charts (*lus thig*), and texts of divination and astral learning, as well as ritual manuals, medical histories (*khog 'bubs,* etc.), and the monastic guidelines of medical colleges (*sman pa grwa tshang gi bca' yig*). Considering how these different types of manuscripts hay have been used, and their relationship to each other, opens a window into the social and institutional contexts through which medical knowledge traveled.

VESNA A. WALLACE

**University of California, Santa Barbara**

## Illuminating Power of Orthography and Illustration in Mongolian Buddhist Manuscripts

Mongolian Buddhist manuscripts written in the Classical Mongolian script come to us primarily in two major formats: in the *dpe cha* (Mong. *sudar*) format and in the form of a notebook. The orthography of Mongolian Buddhist manuscripts can help us identified the ethnic origin of the author or scribe of a given manuscript, his educational background and primary specialization. Illustrated manuscripts, which are almost invariably written in the format of a *sudar*, can be classified into four general categories in terms of their subject matter: astrological, medical, and ritual texts written for specialists, and popular, didactic texts written for a broader audience. This presentation addresses both, the orthography and illustrations of the selected manuscripts; and special attention is given to the so far unstudied manuscript of the *Molon Toyini Sudar*, which contains one of several Mongolian versions of the story of Maudgalyāyana's journey to hell in order to rescue his mother. Attention will be given to various features of the manuscript and to the interplay between the text and images.

JEFFREY WALLMAN

Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center (TBRC)

## The Archivist's Dilemma:  And the Opportunity for Tibetan Manuscript Archives

This presentation will introduce the Archivist's Dilemma in the context of Tibetan manuscript archives.  In defining the atomic unit (resource) of the archive and the appropriate schema (resource description) that governs how the units are described, the archivist is presented with a host of challenges to secure preservation and access. Both scale and the archivist's intent inform the architecture and dissemination platform.  The presentation will provide an overview of existing metadata schemas in the context of digital archives, outlining the purpose and utility of each, and show how a rich set of scholar-driven metadata schemes can be employed to capture the bibliographic diversity of Tibetan manuscript collections, and at the same time, ensure preservation and access.  We will also explore how data feeds, resource identifiers and shared registries can add to the richness of how archives can be connected.