

Asuka SANGO
Princeton University

Replicating Imperial Authority in Buddhist Ritual

Abstract

The relationship between faith and knowledge has attracted considerable scholarly attention in religious studies. In the field of anthropological studies of religions, the question of whether participants in rituals necessarily understand why they do what they do has often been answered in the negative. In the field of the history of Japanese religions, recent scholarship has challenged the oft-repeated claim that the *Sūtra of the Golden Light* (*Jinguang ming zuisheng wang jing*, T. 665) provided the state with a Buddhist ideological foundation. Such scholarship has questioned whether the emperor and the courtiers understood or even sought knowledge of the sūtra. In this fashion, recent scholarly attempts to subvert the asymmetrical dichotomy of ideation vs. practice have often tried to refocus attention on the heretofore neglected practical side by deemphasizing beliefs and knowledge. This paper does not attempt to re-elevate knowledge; rather, it illustrates the importance of doctrinal knowledge in its relationship to ritual practice. This paper deals with Buddhist debates and lectures on the *Sūtra of the Golden Light* in the Heian period (794-1191). These debates and lectures were elements of a court-sponsored Buddhist rite called the *misaie*. Some time after the establishment of the *misaie*, which originally consisted of lecture and repentance sections, a debate section was added. Still later, the lecture component of the *misaie* evolved into a distinct rite; further, Kūkai's (774-835) appeal to the imperial court resulted in the addition of an esoteric ritual section, the rite of Latter-Seven-Day to this ritual complex. Throughout the history of the *misaie*, practices pertaining to knowledge, lecture and debate, remained central, while new ritual practices were integrated into and developed out of the *misaie*. The distinct combinatory logic, that guided the transformation of the *misaie*, prioritized neither the ideational nor the practical. Rather, those who participated in development and performance of the *misaie*—monks, emperor, and courtiers—seem to have held the one in tension with the other.

Biography

Asuka SANGO is currently a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Religion at Princeton University. She received her MA in East Asian Religions from the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign in 2002. Her specialization is Japanese Buddhism with a specific reference to the performance and sponsorship of various Buddhist rituals in the premodern Japan. Her dissertation investigates the ways in which Buddhist rituals such as esoteric rites and doctrinal debates facilitated the desire for knowledge, power and prestige on the part of both sponsors and ritual participants during the Heian period (794-1185).

Naoko GUNJI
University of Pittsburgh

Evoking and Appeasing Spirits: Art and Ritual at Emperor Antoku's Temple

Abstract

My paper will examine the art and rites of the imperial temple Amidaji in Yamaguchi prefecture. Amidaji was established as a mortuary temple for the eight-year-old emperor Antoku and the Taira clansmen, who, defeated in the final battle of the Genpei war, jumped to their deaths in the cold sea off the coast of Akama in 1185. Since Antoku and the Taira drowned themselves, according to Buddhist beliefs their spirits were denied access even to hell and possessed the potential to become malicious ghosts who threatened the living and the nation. Layers of pacification rituals were thus conducted to appease these ghosts and assist them in attaining salvation in the Western Paradise. These rituals were carried out all over Japan; yet, Amidaji, constructed in front of the very site of the battle and where Antoku's body is interred, assumed major responsibility for the placatory rituals.

Despite its important role, Amidaji was completely destroyed during the Meiji persecutions against Buddhism, and a Shintō shrine was constructed in its place in 1870. Among the few surviving artworks of this special temple are the sliding door paintings titled *Illustrated Story of Emperor Antoku* and the portraits of Antoku and the Taira. Because Amidaji no longer exists, the prime function of these works, namely as ritual artifacts in placatory rites, is almost forgotten today. I will investigate these artifacts through their critical reconstruction of the essential contexts and reveal their compelling role as mortuary art to pacify the souls of Antoku and the Taira.

Biography

Naoko GUNJI is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of History of Art and Architecture at the University of Pittsburgh. She received her MA in Western Art History from University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in 2001. Her interest is mainly in medieval Japanese art, especially the multi-faceted functions of art in historical, political, religious, social, and cultural contexts. Her dissertation examines the mortuary art, architecture, and rites of the imperial temple Amidaji in Shimonoseki city in Yamaguchi prefecture. She attempts to recover meanings of art and architecture through the reconstruction of the contexts in which they were actually used.

Joshua CAPITANIO
University of Pennsylvania

On 'Bodhidharma's Method of Embryonic Breathing'

Abstract

As the figure of Bodhidharma became more and more important to the growing Chan school towards the end of the Tang dynasty, the legends of his life and death became more and more fantastic. By the early Song dynasty, stories detailing Bodhidharma's unusually long life and resurrection, in which the Indian monk is portrayed in much the same way as a Chinese immortal (*xian*), are common in Chan hagiographies. Around the same time, a text or set of texts purportedly detailing a method of "embryonic breathing" (*taixi*) passed down from Bodhidharma was in circulation. In addition to having been included in the early 11th century Daoist collectanea *Yunji qiqian*, this text is well-attested in various late-Tang and Song bibliographies. This paper examines the history and contents of this text, and argues that its existence is a direct result of the re-casting of Bodhidharma as a kind of immortal in late-Tang Chan hagiography.

Biography

Joshua CAPITANIO got his B.A. in Chinese at UCLA, and is currently studying for his Ph.D. at the University of Pennsylvania. His area of interest is medieval Chinese religion, and he is currently researching the influence of Buddhist thought on Daoist scriptural traditions.

Amanda GOODMAN
University of California, Berkeley
Why did Bodhidharma ascend the Vajradhātu?
Some Thoughts on the “Chapter on Entrusting the Dharma Repository”
(Fu fazang pin 付法藏品) from the Tanfa yize 壇法儀則 (P3913)

Abstract

Scattered throughout the Dunhuang manuscript collections are seven versions of an obscure text bearing the lengthy title *Jingangjun jing jingangding yiqie rulai shenmiao bimi jingangjie dasanmeiye xiuxing sishierzhong tanfa jing zuoyong weiyi faze, Dapiluzhenafu jingang xindi famen mifa jietanfa yize* 金剛峻經金剛頂一切如來深妙祕密金剛界大三昧耶修行四十二種壇法經作用威儀法則, 大毘盧遮那佛金剛心地法門秘法戒壇法儀則, or *Tanfa yize* 壇法儀則 for short. Based on both its contents and ascribed authorship, modern scholars have classified the Tanfa yize as a work of the Chinese Esoteric school. This is perhaps not surprising, given that thirty-four of its thirty-five chapters contain prescriptions for invoking deities, constructing mandalas, reciting dhāraṇīs, and so on — all the things one would expect to find in a Tantric text. The thirty-fifth chapter, or the “Chapter on Entrusting the Dharma Repository” (*Fu fazang pin* 付法藏品) evades easy classification. That chapter contains six sections, including Section One that describes the transmission of the text itself. What is striking about the list of patriarchs found there is that it is virtually identical to the lists found in the *Platform Sutra* and the *Baolin zhuan*, two texts associated with the early Chan school. The presence of a “Chan” lineage in an “Esoteric” text has been interpreted as a conflation of the two traditions. In my paper I will address several of the problems raised by this unusual text, including the relationship between “lineage” and “school,” “school” and “teaching,” as well as the status of Esoteric Buddhism in the late Tang.

Biography

Amanda GOODMAN’s main area of research is medieval Chinese Buddhism (Tang-Song), with a special emphasis in esoteric Buddhism. After completing a B.A. in Chinese and Comparative Literature at Indiana University, she earned a Master’s degree in Buddhist Studies at the University of Michigan. She is currently a Ph.D. candidate in the Group in Buddhist Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. Her dissertation is based on a translation of several manuscript versions of a single Dunhuang text attributed to Amoghavajra (C. Bukong), often referred to by the abbreviated title *Tanfa yize* (see Pelliot ms. 3913). She is particularly interested in the Chinese appropriation of esoteric rituals, and at present she is working to identify the various rites described in her dissertation text. More generally she is interested in the relationship between the early Chan and esoteric schools, including any possible connection to Tibet, as well as the issue of spiritual lineages in China.

Ryan WARD
University of Tokyo

On the ‘Modernist’ Crisis in Higashi Honganji

Abstract

The study of the doctrinal and institutional modernization of post-Meiji Buddhism has, not surprisingly, focused on what can loosely be referred to as “modernists.” Such a heuristically convenient focus, however, tends to illuminate only one side of a highly complicated picture. Through examining the problem of heresy (/ianjin mondai/) in the Otani branch (Higashi Honganji) of the Jodo Shin school during the Meiji, Taisho, and early Showa era, I will argue that scholars must also consider the “anti-modern” or “conservative” side of the equation. Like their “modernist” counterparts, “anti-modernists” were also products of the very “modernity” in which they reacted against. I begin by defining the Tokugawa origins and development of the specific notion of and system for persecuting heretics found in the Jodo Shin school(s) and offer a critical introduction to current views on this phenomenon by Jodo Shin scholars. I then examine how these notions of heresy were deployed after the Meiji reformation by so-called “traditional” or “conservative” (/dento kyogakusha/) scholars of the Otani seminary (/Takakura Gakuryo/) and its anti-modernist cabal (/Kanren-kai/) against the charismatic Kiyozawa Manshi, his burgeoning reformation movement (/Shirakawa-to/), and his young disciples (Inoue Hochu, Akegarasu Haya, Ando Shuichi, Soga Ryojin, Kaneko Daiei, etc.). Through examining the charges of heresy leveled against the “modernists,” I will show how this conflict was not only about the validity of specific “modernist” doctrinal interpretations concerning the Pure Land and Amida Nyorai, but was also a debate about the broader political question of who had the right to interpret doctrine and speak on the side of orthodoxy in a world in which the traditional seminary and its scholasticism was rapidly being encroached upon by the idea(l) of the Western university and its academic methods.

Biography

Ryan WARD is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Tokyo. He has also studied in the Department of Indian Philosophy and Buddhist Studies at the University of Tokyo and at the Rinzai-affiliated Hanazono University (Kyoto). His current research focuses on the problem of heresy and changes in the understanding of the Pure Land in the Jodo Shinshu during the late Tokugawa and early modern periods.

Shannon HICKEY
Duke University

Two Buddhisms, Three Buddhisms, and Racism

Abstract

Over the past three decades, observers of American Buddhism have created a variety of typologies to describe different categories of Buddhists in the United States. For example, one oft-cited taxonomy describes American Buddhists as “elite” (meditation-oriented converts), “ethnic” (Asian immigrants), or “evangelical” (Soka Gakkai). The various taxonomies use different criteria to define their categories. Some focus on styles of practice, while others use degrees of institutional stability, ethnicity, modes of transmission to the U.S., and/or religious identity. Each taxonomy reveals some features of American Buddhism while obscuring others. Most blur important distinctions between processes of institutional development, styles of practice, and questions of religious identity. None accounts adequately for hybridity or for long-term changes within categories. This paper will examine various typologies, discuss some of the racial dynamics that underlie them, and propose different ways of conceptualizing the diverse forms of Buddhism in the U.S. In particular, it will argue that “ethnic” Buddhism is an inappropriate category.

Biography

Wakoh Shannon HICKEY is a Ph.D. student in the Religion and Modernity program at Duke University. Her academic interests include American religious history, Buddhism in the United States, and relationships between religion and health. Her dissertation will explore interactions among Swedenborgianism, Theosophy, New Thought, and Buddhism from the mid-19th century onward, and their relationship to contemporary uses of “mindfulness” as a therapeutic technique in medical settings. She holds an MA and M.Div. from Pacific School of Religion, a member school of the Graduate Theological Union. She is ordained as a priest of Soto-shu, and her Master's research examined issues of religious leadership and clerical training in American convert Zen communities. She earned a BA in political science at U.C. Berkeley. For fun, she flies stunt kites and engages in a subversive, often goofy spiritual practice called InterPlay.

Cameron David WARNER
Harvard University

The ‘Real’ Buddha: The Legendary Prehistory of the Jo Bo Śākamuni Statue

Abstract

The Jo bo Śākamuni is a statue of the Buddha Śākamuni housed in the Ra sa ‘phrul snang tsug lag khang in Lhasa, Tibet. Tibetan legend holds that a Chinese princess, Wencheng Gongzhu (628-680/2), brought the statue to Tibet from China in the seventh century (Warner 2001, 2004). From at least the eleventh century onwards, the cult of the statue developed into an important religio-political nexus. Thus far, Tibetologists have ignored the history of the statue, and the development of its cult. This paper is concerned with the legendary prehistory of the Jo bo Śākamuni. In the earliest account of the statue, The Vase-shaped Pillar Testament (Bka’ chems ka khol ma), a Srong btsan sgam po (c. 569-649) qua Avalokiteśvara relates a genesis narrative for the Jo bo which is similar to the narrative famous “Udayāna image.” “Udayāna images” were popular pilgrimage goals throughout Indian Buddhism. There were a number of statues with this moniker in China from at least the fourth century onwards (Soper 1959; Carter 1990; Sharf 2001). The “Udayāna image” also makes its way to Japan as the Seiryōji icon (Henderson and Hurvitz 1956; Groner 2001), and its cosmic significance was heralded by an Inner Mongolian in the Qing Dynasty (Berger 2003). Bridging the North-South divide, a variation of this narrative is also very popular in Northern Thailand. In this paper, I explore the meaning and implications of this genealogy for the Jo bo Śākamuni statue. I will translate passages from The Vase-shaped Pillar Testament, theorize how the Jo bo Śākamuni statue got this particular biography, and reflect upon the lessons Buddhologists can learn from the prevalence of the “Udayāna image” throughout Buddhist Asia. My paper asks what does the pervasive popularity of this creation story tell us about Buddhist material culture in the Tibetan assimilation of Buddhism? And is the gulf between Theravāda and Mahāyāna Buddhism overblown?

Biography

Cameron David WARNER is doctoral candidate in the Sanskrit and Indian Studies Department, Harvard University. His broad interests in Tibetan and Himalayan Religions include material culture, myth, intellectual history, and lived religion. These interests intersect in his current research on the development of the cult of the Jo bo Śākamuni statue in Lhasa, Tibet, for which he has presented papers at the International Association of Tibetan Studies Seminar at Oxford University, and the American Academy of Religion Conference at San Antonio, Texas. Cameron is a graduate of Swarthmore College, and Harvard Divinity School; he has also studied at Tibet University and Kathmandu University.

Elena PAKHOUTOVA
University of Virginia

Commonality of Convention vs. Influence: Questions in Reading the Murals of Cave 3 at Yulin

Abstract

Being fortunate to visit the site of Yulin caves in Anxi, China this summer, I was intrigued by the artistic program of one particular cave. Yulin cave 3 dated to the period of the Western Xia prominence in the area (960-1278 C.E.) exhibits artists' familiarity with the Eastern Indian traditions in paintings. The structural and artistic arrangement of the cave, coherent in its iconographic program, parallels the layouts of the Buddhist temples in Western Himalaya and Central Tibet. Especially interesting is the central mural of the cave depicting the Eight Great Events of the Buddha's life. An almost exact copy of it is the Tibetan cloth painting of the 11th-12th century. Iconographic formula and style of both paintings bear direct reference to the pilgrimage places in India, relic mounds (stūpa) built at the sites to commemorate the events. The paintings are also closely related to the portable objects such as votive stūpas, stele and plaques found in India and in areas as diverse as Burma, Tibet, and Central Asia during the 10th to the 13th centuries. Reproduction of these various images outside of India not only points to the commonality of practice, the pilgrimage to India, but also poses questions of the "appropriation" of this theme outside of India. I will address these issues in the context of the artistic, socio-political and religious developments in India and across the borders at the time. Consideration will be given to the issues of patronage, representation of sacred space and territorial identity.

Biography

Elena PAKHOUTOVA is a graduate student at the Department of Art History at the University of Virginia. Her academic interests are in Tibetan and Central Asian Buddhist art, especially in the early medieval period, and intercultural exchanges along the Himalayan - Central Asian trade routes. She has a background in Tibetan Buddhist studies; she spent considerable time in India studying in Tibetan Buddhist Institutions, translating, and apprenticing with Tibetan and Bhutanese sculptors. Her approach to Tibetan art history is interdisciplinary as she attempts to investigate interrelationships between Buddhist religious and artistic traditions within historical and socio-political contexts. Her BSGSC paper is an example of such inquires into intercultural, artistic and religious conventions. It is a work in progress, a part of preliminary research on her dissertation project about representations of the Eight Events of the Buddha's Life and their monuments in Tibet.

Nancy LIN
University of California, Berkeley

Unsettling Narratives: The Avadāna Paintings of Situ Paṅchen

Abstract

This paper demonstrates how visual images contest standard narrative strategies in the avadāna paintings of the Tibetan polymath Situ Paṅchen Chökyi Jungne (1700-1774). His thangka paintings are based on Kemendra's eleventh-century avadāna collection titled *The Wish-Granting Vine of Bodhisattva Stories* (Skt. *Bodhisattvāvadānakālpatā*, Tb. byang chub sems dpa'i dpag bsam gyi 'khri shing). This collection of 108 previous-life accounts became a prominent motif in Tibetan poetry, prose and painting from the late thirteenth century, and was marked by an ornate aesthetic (Skt. *alaṅkāra*, Tb. *rgyan*) that favored elaborate description and allusive imagery. I argue that Situ Paṅchen radically departs from mainstream written and visual approaches to representing the *Wish-Granting Vine*. By playing with the conventions of space, temporality, and reference, he destabilizes the viewer's expectations of what a proper Buddhist narrative is allowed to do. In light of Situ Paṅchen's work, I reconsider scholarly interpretations of jātakas and avadānas as devices for entertainment, moral edification or merit making. My paper relies on art historical analysis of Buddhist narrative painting in Tibet, translation and literary analysis of the *Wish-Granting Vine*, and placement of Situ Paṅchen's work in its sociopolitical contexts.

Biography

Nancy LIN is a second-year student in the Berkeley Buddhist Studies graduate program. Previously she did graduate work in Tibetan studies at Columbia University, completing a Master's thesis on Dondrup Gyal's twentieth-century adaptation of the Ramayana (2003). Her current interests are in medieval Buddhist narratives of Nepal and Tibet, along with the related topics of literary and artistic production; reception and lineage; jātika and avadāna genres; poetics, narratology and aesthetic theory; Tibetan responses to Indic culture; and the dynamics of reworking tradition. She spent the previous summer at the Tibet University language program in Lhasa, and this summer she plans to do textual and art historical research on avadāna collections in the Kathmandu Valley.

Amod LELE
Harvard University

Emotion without attachment? The literary form of the Bodhicaryāvatāra

Abstract

As far back as 1893 (see Barth), Western observers have admired the literary beauty of Śāntideva's Bodhicaryāvatāra, and yet the several studies existing on the text have said relatively little about its literary style. I intend to examine the significance of the Bodhicaryāvatāra's style using Martha Nussbaum's (1990) influential statement of the relationship between philosophical content and literary form. The Bodhicaryāvatāra, I will argue, confirms Nussbaum's general conclusion that one's choice of literary style makes implicit philosophical claims, which will harmonize with any explicit claims made in a well crafted work. In making such implicit claims, however, the Bodhicaryāvatāra's style also disconfirms a more specific hypothesis of Nussbaum's. For her, strong emotion results from attachment to worldly goods and particular individuals; therefore, a well crafted text which disagrees with such attachment will adopt a style, such as Spinoza's geometric proofs, that avoids evoking strong emotion in its readers. By contrast, while the Bodhicaryāvatāra frequently disparages attachment, its imagery powerfully evokes a wide range of vivid mental states ranging from fear and disgust to wonder and pity. Why? Śāntideva's understanding of bodhisattvas' progress requires that they first cultivate mental states that are later discarded; in addition, I will argue, the Bodhicaryāvatāra's understanding of mental states is more complex than Nussbaum's literary understanding of emotion allows for. I will suggest that her later work (Nussbaum 2001) offers a fuller understanding of the Bodhicaryāvatāra's mental world than her earlier work, but that her concepts there remain significantly different from Śāntideva's.

Biography

Amod LELE is a Ph.D. candidate in the Study of Religion at Harvard University, concentrating on South Asia. His dissertation will examine the role played by mental cultivation in the ethics of Santideva, including a comparative dimension of its relevance to contemporary questions in religious ethics. He chaired last year's roundtable discussion on constructive Buddhist studies. His broader academic interests include cross-cultural ethics and questions of constructive methodology in the study of religion.

Sinéad KEHOE
Princeton University

An Introduction to Two Pure Land Images at the Temple Chion-in

Abstract

This paper introduces the iconography of two paintings in the possession of Chion-in temple in Kyoto, Japan. It situates the paintings within the artistic corpus of Japan's Pure Land School of Buddhism, and more generally within that of medieval Japanese Buddhism. Each painting contains a representation of a Pure Land School patriarch as well as a visual hagiography of the patriarch represented, and can be demonstrated to have been produced in the same style. The paintings may be designated as a set not only based upon these features, but also due to their allusion to a narrative episode from the hagiography of Hōnen-bō Genkū (1133-1212). The compositions are thus presented as incorporating three types of painting used to promote a fabricated lineage for the Pure Land School founded by Hōnen. These are the patriarch portrait (*soshi-e*), the face-to-face (*taimen*) portrait, and the visual or illustrated hagiography (*kōsōden-e/ soshiden-e*). Permutations of these three types of painting were employed by many Buddhist organizations active in Japan's medieval period to legitimize lineages, instruct followers in religious principles or historical events of religious import, and commemorate the death dates of religious patriarchs. The paper argues that the paintings, while comprehensible to those familiar with the visual vocabulary of Buddhism in medieval Japan, constitute an unusual and possibly unique synthesis of compositional strategies. Finally, the paper speculates on the function of the paintings, with a focus upon whether their experimental nature can be construed as implying the existence of a corresponding deviation from ritual norms.

Biography

Sinéad KEHOE is a doctoral candidate in the Program in Japanese Art, Department of Art and Archaeology at Princeton University, advised by Professor Yoshiaki Shimizu. Her dissertation is tentatively titled *Imaging an Independent Pure Land*, which focuses on painting associated with the followers of Hōnen-bō Genkū (1133-1212) and the establishment of a visual identity for the Pure Land school. She earned a BA in East Asian Studies from Yale College in 1995, and qualified for her MA at Princeton in 2001. She was affiliated with Tohoku University from 2002 to 2004, where she was advised by Professors Ariga Yoshitaka and Nagaoka Ryūsaku.

Cuong MAI
Indiana University, Bloomington

Identity without Lineage: How Cult Specialists Invented the Pure Land Path as a Religious Vocation

Abstract

Scholars no longer accept the historical accuracy of describing Chinese Pure Land Buddhism as an independent institutional entity or sectarian lineage of successive patriarchs. The flourishing of Pure Land practice and thought during the Sui and Tang dynasties was a momentary instance of heightened devotionism. Pure Land devotionism would get reabsorbed into mainstream lay and monastic Chinese Buddhist culture, never able to maintain a sustained independent identity, practice, or social presence. Recently, Robert Sharf and Ng Zhiru have highlighted how Pure Land thought and practices were diffused across sectarian lines, sometimes merging with Dizang devotionism or appearing as a generalized “aspiration.” Thus, current scholarship holds that Pure Land Buddhism in China has always been diffused and mainstream, that it never successfully developed into a self-consciously independent social movement. Yet, deconstructing Pure Land “school,” “patriarchate,” and “movement” in itself does not yield a better understanding of the meanings, social structures, and practices of the Amitabha cult in medieval China. Against the current scholarly trend, in this presentation I examine Sui-Tang scholastic commentaries and treatises, focusing on how elite monks justified spiritual regimens exclusively focused on Amitabha Buddha to frame Pure Land as a unique tradition within Mahāyāna Buddhism. In fact, such discourses effectively invented a self-consciously independent Pure Land “tradition” without employing the rhetoric of “lineage.” The creation of devotional practices, the anthologizing of hagiographies of those deemed to have gained rebirth in the Pure Land upon death, claims of the Western Paradise’s superiority over Maitreya’s Tushita Heaven—these further served to mark off the identity of those who chose to exclusively specialize in the Amitabha cult.

Biography

Cuong MAI is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Religious Studies at Indiana University Bloomington. He is currently working on a dissertation on Sui-Tang Pure Land practices and ideology, focusing on Amitabha cultic activity and self-cultivation techniques as seen in Longmen epigraphy, Dunhuang colophons, stele inscriptions, hagiography, mortuary texts, and scholastic treatises. His research also includes a study and translation of Jiakai's "Pure Land Treatise" (*Jingtu lun*, T.1963, 7th century CE).

Keri COLE
University of California, Berkeley

The *Caṇḍamahāroṣāṇa Tantra* and the Aesthetic Theories of Abhinavagupta: An Exploration

Abstract

Reading tantric texts is an exercise in patience and uncertainty. The texts seem purposefully confusing and mysterious, overtly and unabashedly unattainable. To complicate matters further, images of the erotic and the disgusting permeate the pages of many tantras, distracting the reader from any more transcendent import with their racy audacity. However, there are tools for viewing these texts that may enable the reader to take seriously the larger messages of tantric ritual texts without becoming mired in their transgressive recommendations. This paper proposes that the aesthetic theories espoused in the philosophy of eleventh-century Kashmiri thinker Abhinavagupta provide the reader of tantra with an interpretative method that aids in the understanding of tantric ritual texts. In addition, by looking at the striking congruences between tantric ritual texts and aesthetic theory—especially insofar as each represents a psychological, emotional technology—illuminates conversations in the larger intellectual milieu of eleventh- and twelfth-century India in which tantric authors are participating. Specifically, the *Caṇḍamahāroṣāṇa Tantra* (CT) will be examined and the ways in which it utilizes, expands, reorders, and appropriates the extant Indian theories of aesthetics will be explored. The ends to which these techniques and theories are employed and what significance such employment may have for tantra as an intellectual tradition will be sought out. Thus, one of the orienting horizons of this paper will be to consider seriously tantra's mutual imbrication with the intellectual milieu of its time, while not precluding its antinomian, antisocial character as a possibility or as an aspect of its nature. Moreover, I hope to establish the nameless thinkers that emerge from tantric ritual texts as members of a multifaceted intellectual community. As members of that community, they need not simply appropriate or borrow from extant traditions, but they may also change, rearticulate—and perhaps contribute to—they in meaningful ways. Postulating the interrelatedness of tantric ideas and extant Indian intellectual traditions allows tantra to begin to claim its significance as one of those traditions, rather than remaining exclusively within the walls of a renegade, antinomian movement or within the confines of an equally brittle, imagined reality.

Biography

Keri COLE received a B.A. in Philosophy and Asian Studies from Furman University in 2002 and a Masters in Theological Studies from Harvard Divinity School in 2004. Currently, she is working toward her Ph.D. in the South and Southeast Asian Studies program at the UC Berkeley. Her primary interest is the relationship of ritual texts and practice with aesthetic theories in South Asian Buddhism.

Pascale HUGON
University of Lausanne

Continuity and Rupture in the Development of Tibetan Epistemology

Abstract

The writings on Buddhist epistemology of the Indian philosopher Dharmakīrti (ca. 600-660) gave rise to significant developments and divergent interpretations by Tibetan thinkers. Among them, Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (1182-1251), *alias* Sa skya Paṇḍita, is renowned for a highly polemical work on epistemology entitled *The Treasure of Reasoning* (Tshad ma rigs pa'i gter) which aims at establishing the true intention of the fundamental texts, taking up a systematic critique of the interpretations of his Tibetan predecessors, in particular those of Phya pa Chos kyi seng ge (1109-1169) and his followers. The recent re-discovery of several texts by these earlier authors has called for a reconsideration of the status ascribed to the *Treasure of Reasoning*. My analysis shows that beyond its polemical object, the composition of the *Treasure of Reasoning* reveals Sa skya Paṇḍita's large debt to his Tibetan predecessors, who must henceforth be considered not only as opponents holding deviant views, but also, to a certain extent, as models and sources of inspiration. As for the compositions of Phya pa and his epigones, they display a constant evolution from one author to the next that remains visible in the stratification of the argumentation. Considering these early texts in their own rights, I argue that controversial standpoints do not necessarily result from an imperfect knowledge of Dharmakīrti's oeuvre. I also question widely-held assumptions on Phya pa's system and on his influence on later compositions, namely the *bsdus grwa* literature.

Biography

Pascale HUGON obtained her degree (licence ès Lettres) at the University of Lausanne in 1998. After two years of study and research in Japan (University of Kyoto) in the field of Buddhist logic and epistemology, she has been working as an assistant in the Section of Oriental Languages and Cultures at the University of Lausanne, and is in charge of the introductory class of Tibetan language. She has a special interest for the theories of the Indian Buddhist logicians, as well as for their interpretation and development by Tibetan thinkers between the 11th and the 13th century. She is currently preparing a doctoral thesis on Sa skya Paṇḍita's Rigs gter, under the direction of Professor Tom Tillemans, and is working on the edition of recently re-discovered manuscripts of early Tibetan epistemological texts.