

Abstracts

LINNART MÄLL. **Tibetan translations of the Mahāyāna sūtras and their role in world culture**

There were presumably a great number of Mahāyāna sūtras — hundreds, if not thousands. Only a few dozens have survived to this day in their original form in Sanskrit or Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit. The majority of these have now been published with critical analysis, for instance the series *Buddhist Sanskrit Texts*.

Since the beginning of the 1st millennium, the Mahāyāna sūtras have been translated into Chinese in several waves, and somewhat later into other languages, for instance Uighur or Ancient Turkish. The different Chinese translations of the sūtras that have been done in different eras inevitably raise the idea that the original developed gradually, although that can also be explained by the possibility that the sūtras reached China in incomplete form at earlier times.

A unit that is comparable to the Chinese body of texts began to arise about a thousand years ago in Tibet. This was systematised and edited by Bu-ston in the 14th century, and has appeared in several publications up to the present day.

In modern time, a few attempts have been made to restore the original Sanskrit texts of some Mahāyāna sūtras on the basis of their Tibetan translations. The best-known among these works is the *Vimalakīrtinideśa-sūtra*, published in Sarnath in 1981. However, this restoration differs significantly from the original Sanskrit text that Japanese scholars discovered in the library of the Potala Palace and published in 2004. This clearly casts doubt over the expediency of restoring the Sanskrit texts on the basis of Tibetan translations.

As conclusion, the author argues that these issues do not in any way cast doubt upon the role of the Tibetan translations of the Mahāyāna sūtras in the modern investigation of these texts. In the absence of originals, these are most likely the best source with which to familiarise oneself with them. Neither can one doubt the role of these translations in the growth and development of Tibetan culture.

**Duration of life of the Tathāgata (*tathāgata-āyus-pramāṇa-parivartaḥ*):
15th chapter of the Lotus Sutra**

The Lotus Sutra (*saddharmapuṇḍarīka sūtra*) is one of the most influential texts in Mahāyāna Buddhism. The main topics of this sūtra are the conception of one vehicle (*ekayāna*) and the duration of Buddha's lifespan (*āyuspramāṇa*). These two messages are connected to each other with the teaching of skilful means (*upāyakauśalya*).

The 15th chapter is entirely devoted to explanation of Buddha's life. In the previous chapter innumerable bodhisattvas appeared whom Buddha taught. How was this possible during the forty years of Buddha's activity? Buddha says that he had achieved awakening extremely long time ago already, and he will continue to appear into this world to teach living beings.

The reason for not telling it before has been the immature state of mind of living beings. Thus, using the skilful means, he said before that he only achieved buddhahood in this life. Actually, this happened countless eons ago. Buddha describes himself now as a bodhisattva who helps others despite the possibility of reaching the final *nirvāṇa*. Thus, Buddha's life itself is a means to teach people. Even other Buddhas are created by him for the same purpose. He can also manifest himself in different ways to teach beings, or his teaching can come through others — these are all only skilful means.

The reason for using different means comes from different usage of terms (*saṃjñā*). As people understand terms differently, there must also be different ways to show them the way for awakening.

**MÄRT LÄÄNEMETS. Individual, universal and transcendental humanism
in Buddhism**

In contemporary writings about Buddhism, one occasionally encounters expressions such as 'Buddhist humanism' or 'humanistic Buddhism', yet very rarely in a specific substantial or explanatory meaning in which those concepts would be precisely defined. These are mostly limited to mere parallels, noting that philosophical Buddhism shares certain common features with Western humanism, such as rationality, analytical mind, the denial of God, etc. The expression 'humanistic Buddhism' is also sometimes used to refer to socially engaged Buddhism, which is connected with the contemporary Chinese/Taiwanese Buddhist movement of *renjian fojiao*, 'Buddhism among people'.

In this article, the author makes an attempt to outline a general framework for the interpretation of the concept of 'Buddhist humanism' that is based on the original views of Buddhism itself, and not on mere parallels. In his interpretation of the very term 'humanism', which was actually introduced only as recently as in the 19th century, he develops the broader meaning of this concept including also earlier periods of cultural history of mankind presented mainly in the works by Nicolaus

Konrad and Linnart Mäll. The author states that the teachings of Buddha have been mainly anthropocentric from the very beginning, and this anthropocentrism is a recurring trait in all branches and tenets of Buddhism, and has been expressed at both philosophical and mythological levels.

As the main arguments, the three aspects of Buddhist humanism — individual, universal and transcendental — are described in connection with the three levels of the Buddhist doctrine of emancipation. Arhat is the personal type of the first, Bodhisattva of the second, and Buddha of the third.

As conclusion, the author argues that the deeper awareness and implementation of the doctrines of emancipation emphasised in Buddhism in the context of modern humanism could be of great benefit at our civilisation's present level of spiritual evolution, where the individual and the individual's rights are clearly overemphasised, whereas the individual's responsibility towards humankind, the evolution of life on earth and the universe has received insufficient attention. The integration of Buddhism and modern humanism with the body of scientific knowledge could thus give a new direction to the evolution of humankind.

LEHO RUBIS. On interpretation of early Buddhist art and causes for transition to anthropomorphic images

The article attempts to answer two questions related to the development of Indian Buddhist art. The first one concerns the problems of interpreting the early (5th – 1st century B.C.) Buddhist, so-called non-iconic art, revolving around the reasons for the absence of the image of Buddha during that period — a question that has puzzled European art historians for the last hundred years. The second part of the article, substantially linked to the first question, seeks an answer to the question why during the first centuries A.D. anthropomorphic images of Buddha started to be created.

It can be claimed on the basis of the examples provided in the article that the reason for the absence of Buddha's image in the early Buddhist culture lies neither in restrictions nor ideas arising from the teaching nor in the reaction against creating such images (the latter was the interpretation of researchers influenced by the history of Christianity). Buddhist culture as part of the Indian art culture more likely followed the practice of depicting auspicious symbols, mythological beings, etc. Gradually, early Buddhist art evolved into a more self-conscious art culture with clearly distinguished Buddhist symbols, and with the stupa becoming one of the central cult objects. The development of auspicious symbols into particular Buddhist symbols could affect, along with the oral tradition, also the development of Buddha's life history. All that created premises for the generation of the anthropomorphic image of Buddha.

No definite answer can be given to the question why at one moment a need emerged for creating anthropomorphic images of Buddha. Stupas as cult objects

existed already before as well as several other symbols. The fact that the first Hinduist, Jainist and Buddhist sculptures, depicting central religious persons, were created in one and the same region during one and the same period leads to the assumption that it was a general orientation in Indian art, for which appropriate explanations were found in the Buddhist tradition. It can be said on the basis of sources provided above that first anthropomorphic images of Buddha and bodhisattva, created primarily for the purpose gathering merit and dedication, acted first as the objects of veneration and the visual remembrance of the qualities of the Enlightened One, and possibly also as a support in visualisation exercises, which helped the one performing the exercise achieve deeper levels of consciousness.

MAIT TALTS. On the common path of the first Estonian Buddhist monk Brother Vahindra and his disciple Friedrich V. Lustig

The “self-proclaimed” Buddhist monk of Estonian origin Brother Vahindra (1883–1962; alias Karl Tõnisson, Karl Tennisson, Karlis A. M. Tennisons) and his disciple Friedrich V. Lustig (1912–1989; Buddhist name Ashin Ananda) who was born in Narva, Estonia, were in fact the first Buddhist clerics in Estonia. Despite the fact that different views exist on their activities and significance, no one can actually deny their role in the history of Buddhism in Estonia and Latvia. On the one hand Vahindra was quite a ‘modern’ thinker in the sense that from time to time he tried to incorporate fashionable ideas of his time (like Leo Tolstoy’s views, Neopaganist and even Futurist-like ideas) into his personal views. Sometime around 1910–1911 he suddenly became a Buddhist monk, although his book published in the 1920s still contained some ideas alien to Buddhism. However, his aspiration to create a Buddhist congregation (*Sangha*) in Estonia and Latvia was quite unsuccessful.

As the matter of fact, Friedrich V. Lustig became his only true follower, but a devout follower ready to serve his guru until his death. Vahindra and Lustig met in 1930 in Narva. Together they left the Baltics later in the very same year and lived about a year in different parts of France. On New Year’s Eve of 1932 they settled down in Bangkok, Thailand. For some reason they begun to show certain disinclination towards the Thai authorities, which was the main reason why they were expelled and send to the neighbouring Burma in 1949. Learning from their previous experience the time they spent in Burma (now Myanmar) can be characterized as adaptation to the conditions. They gave up political activism and tried to return to authentic Buddhism. After the death of Brother Vahindra in 1962, Friedrich V. Lustig converted even from Mahayana Buddhism to Theravada to be more like a local monk. He also became a well-known poet and translator of his contemporary and classical Burmese poetry.

Science of success (*Arthaśāstra*)

The *Arthaśāstra* is the oldest extant text on one of the primary life aims in Ancient Indian society, that is *artha*, which literally means “aim” but actually ‘wealth’ and ‘success’. *Arthaśāstra* is a text about state politics, a manual for the ruler. *Arthaśāstra* consists of 15 books, 180 parts and 6000 verses. It is mostly written in prose intertwined by occasional verses.

Dates assigned to the text vary immensely. Allegedly it was written by Kautilya or Cānākya Viśnugupta, a prime minister of the first emperor of Maurya dynasty, Candragupta Maurya (320–299/293 BC). However, as the text makes no mention of a specific dynasty, it is now generally concluded that the text was compiled during the Epic Age (i.e. between 4th–3rd century BC and 3rd–4th century AD), and the authorship should not be attributed to one person.

The selection translated here gives an overview of the ancient secret service, different types of spies and their duties. The emphasis placed on this topic testifies to its importance in the statecraft of Ancient India. A proper king should hire spies from every layer of society — from court musicians to farmers and travelling monks. The hierarchy is very complicated and, according to the text, the spies were often disguised. Faithful spies were awarded generously; the less successful ones and traitors caught by the spies were executed. The spy system played a significant role in establishing and maintaining the defence of the state and the authority of the king.

PEETER ESPAK. The beginning of theology of war in the Middle East

It is hard to determine a certain period in history since when we can speak about the terms “holy war” or “theology of war”. Major military conflicts certainly took place in the 4th millennium BC already and before the invention of the cuneiform script between 3300–3000 BC in the Ancient Near East. It is reasonable to believe that the archaic city gods were considered to be “fertility gods” or “gods of vegetation” providing their subjects with their daily livelihood. They were probably not understood as mighty warlords as Enlil or Ningirsu in later Sumerian royal inscriptions and myths. When analysing the first available longer Sumerian royal inscriptions from the period of King Ur-Nanše (*ca* 2520) of the state of Lagaš, it is noticeable that warfare is described to have taken place between the “men of Lagaš” and their enemies who are described as the “men of Ur and Umma” (Urn. 6b). No divine force or god is ever mentioned ordering the war or helping the king and his army to achieve their objectives. The next preserved Sumerian royal inscriptions describing the war between the states of Lagaš and Umma come from the period of rule of King Eanatum (*ca* 2470), grandson of Ur-Nanše. Eanatum’s inscriptions clearly express that all the military campaigns started by the king are undertaken following divine orders from the gods. Eanatum acts as the messenger of the gods or simply follows an order from the higher powers to restore the divine justice (Ean. 1). It seems that a certain concept of warfare as a theological issue

has evolved in the royal ideology of the state of Lagaš, which was not present only some decades earlier. The inscriptions of King Eanatum can be considered to be the first recorded evidence about the “holy war” or “theology of war” in human history.

ANU PÕLDSAM. About war and peace in the Hebrew Bible

The article gives a brief overview about the concepts of war and peace in the Hebrew Bible against the historical background of the Israelites and their ideas about God’s role in making war and peace. It is the meaning of the term “peace”, though less prevalent in number than “war”, that underwent major modification and that also shapes the face of modern Judaism. The most crucial change away from the concept of fighting for peace appears in the post-exilic period, when *shalom* is understood as something that is not achieved neither by might nor by power but by Lord’s spirit (Zechariah 4: 6).

TARMO KULMAR. Some observations on gods and humans in Inca religion

The article studies the relationship between gods and humans in Inca religion. The source material is principal written records, primarily, the texts of 16th–17th-century chronicles — the works of Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, Pedro de Cieza de León, Felipe Huamán Poma de Ayala, Francisco de Ávila and Juan de Betanzos. Methodologically, the treatment starts with gods and continues with humans as members of society. Finally, comparisons and conclusions are presented.

First, the primal context of the Inca religion appears to be animatistic and animistic, and the evolution scheme of the polytheistic pantheon seems to be similar to that of other ancient religions. Second, it is probable that, according to the religious ideology of the Incas, the hierarchical world of humans was essentially an analogue of the divine world and a creation of the gods. Third, it may be reasonably assumed that man was created to serve gods, as was the case in ancient Mesopotamian religions, for instance. Fourth, it is fairly evident again that the official Inca religion was used to provide an ideological justification for the role of the individual in society, which is characteristic of the early totalitarian state.

ÜLO VALK, SWAMINATHAN LOURDUSAMY. Experience narratives about village deities of Tamil Nadu: Periphery of Hinduism or the core of an unknown religion?

The article is based on fieldwork carried out in the villages of Northern Tamil Nadu in 2006, and it explores religious folklore in its social context. Narratives about the birth of deities and about primordial events establish the world order on a cosmic scale. Legends about the interaction between gods and humans are set in mundane reality of historical time, providing models for religious and social behaviour. One of the main functions of legends is to link social reality with the supernatural sphere and to affirm the active participation of deities in the everyday life of

villages. The main authorities who control traditional beliefs and stories relating to village deities are the temple priests (*pujari*) who do not need to be Brahmins but may belong to the lowest castes. The article also discusses the problems of defining Hinduism as a unified religion centred on Brahmanic traditions and Holy Scriptures in Sanskrit. It shows that the vernacular religion of the villages does not follow the models described by Monier Monier-Williams and other authors who have presented the view of Hinduism as a uniform religious tradition.

The article is an extended version of “Village Deities of Tamil Nadu in Myths and Legends: The Narrated Experience” published in *Asian Folklore Studies*, Vol. 66, no 12, 2007, pp 179–199.

(<http://nirc.nanzan-u.ac.jp/publications/afs/pdf/a1601.pdf>)

ERKI LIND. An Early Modern missionary’s image of Hindus in South India

In the Early Modern era, the missionaries were the main source for gathering information about the newly discovered parts of the world. This paper concentrates on the texts of one of such pioneers in oriental studies, Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg (1682–1719). Being sent to India in 1706, he was one of the first protestant missionaries. Ziegenbalg soon became an expert in both spoken and written Tamil and spent a lot of his time studying the customs and religion of South India. Although some of his most important indological works remained unpublished until the 20th century, he had a major role to play, delivering information about the Indian subcontinent to Germany and also to many other European countries in the 18th century.

For a missionary, studying another religion inevitably contains an inner conflict, as to understand the other requires keeping an open mind towards it. On the one hand, Ziegenbalg was open-minded towards the Tamil people and their culture. On the other hand, being a missionary, he could not tolerate Hinduism as a religion. This ambiguity is characteristic of the image of Tamils in his writings: he represented the Tamils as heathens and idolaters but nevertheless as a civilized nation whose philosophy and literature he held in high esteem.

To analyze his complex image of the Tamils, it must be divided into different aspects. While most Europeans of the Early Modern era saw Indians as well as other Asians, Africans or Amerindians simply as heathens, Ziegenbalg’s views on the Tamil people, their culture and religion are distinct from each other. This made it possible for him to respect Tamil culture and yet to convert Hindus at the same time. But most importantly he viewed the Indians as people no different from the Europeans, which enabled him to combine his missionary work with that of an ethnologist, and thus he became one of the few to give a balanced report of any non-European land in the Early Modern times.