

Cross-Cultural Transmission of Buddhist Texts

Theories and Practices of Translation

Edited by

Dorji Wangchuk



INDIAN AND TIBETAN STUDIES 5

Hamburg • 2016

Department of Indian and Tibetan Studies, Universität Hamburg

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Foreword

Issues surrounding the theories and practices of translation of Buddhist texts have been an interest for modern scholars from early on, and accordingly have been the main topic of sundry academic gatherings. In February 1990, Tibet House, based in New Delhi, organized an international seminar with the title “Buddhist Translations: Problems and Perspectives,” the proceedings of which were edited and published under the same title.* After a somewhat lengthy interval, in July 2012, the Khyentse Center for Tibetan Buddhist Textual Scholarship (KC-TBTS), Universität Hamburg, organized a three-day international symposium on “Cross-Cultural Transmission of Buddhist Texts: Theories and Practices of Translation” (July 23–25, 2012, Hamburg). This symposium has been followed by a series of international events focusing on various aspects of translation of Buddhist texts: Shortly after the Hamburg symposium, in December 2012, the K. J. Somaiya Centre for Buddhist Studies in Mumbai organized an international conference on “Cross-Cultural Transmission of Buddhist Texts: Critical Edition, Transliteration, and Translation.” A year and a half later, Prof. Dr. Klaus-Dieter Mathes and Mr. Gregory Forgues organized a one-day workshop on “Translating and Transferring Buddhist Literature: From Theory to Practice” (May 21, 2014, University of Vienna). The latter was followed by yet another related symposium, dealing with “Studies on Translation of Buddhist Sūtras: On ‘Outstanding’ Translation” (May 24, 2014), which took place within the framework of the 59th International Conference of Eastern Studies (ICES) and was organized by the Toho Gakkai and chaired by

* Doboomb Tulku, (ed.) *Buddhist Translations: Problems and Perspectives*. New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 1995.

Prof. Dr. Akira Saito (then at the University of Tokyo). Later that year, the Tsadra Foundation, in collaboration with several other foundations and institutions, organized a conference on “Translation and Transmission” (October 2–5, 2014, Keystone, Colorado), in which numerous academics, practitioners, translators, and interpreters dealing with Tibetan Buddhist texts or oral teachings (or both) participated in various capacities. Most recently, in March 2015, the Institute for Comparative Research in Human and Social Sciences and International Education and Research Laboratory Program (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences), University of Tsukuba, Japan, organized a symposium on “Philosophy across Cultures: Transmission, Translation, and Transformation of Thought” (March 5–6, 2015, Tsukuba).

I had the privilege to attend all these events and thus to experience first-hand the rapid developments in the field. It was indeed a humbling experience, which taught me not only (a) the complexity of themes relevant to theories and practices of translation, but also (b) the existence of a persistent interest on the part of various groups—be they academics from the field of Buddhist Studies or Translation Studies, translators, interpreters, or Buddhist masters and practitioners—in exploring and deepening our understanding of the challenges involved in translating and transmitting Buddhist texts and ideas.

The present volume mostly consists of scholarly contributions by participants (arranged in alphabetical order) of the above-mentioned symposium “Cross-Cultural Transmission of Buddhist Texts: Theories and Practices of Translation,” which took place in Hamburg in 2012. Each of these contributions deals, in one way or another, with issues concerning the cross-cultural transmission of Buddhist texts in general or with theories and practices of translation of Buddhist texts in the past or present in particular. I would like to take this occasion to pay homage to the late Prof. Dr. Emeritus Michael Hahn (Philipps-Universität Marburg), who over the years contributed in various ways to the translation of both Sanskrit and Tibetan texts into modern western languages. Despite his illness, he worked tirelessly to revise and finalize his contribution to the present volume, which he submitted on March 30, 2014, only about three months before his passing away on July 12. Sadly, he did not live to see this volume in print. I am thankful for having had the opportunity to be in frequent email

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correspondence with him over various issues regarding the finalization of his contribution. Michael Hahn was widely known for being particularly kind to younger colleagues, and I can confirm this with much retrospective gratitude.

It is hoped that this volume, with its rich and diverse contributions, will be of some relevance and usefulness to those interested not only in the cross-cultural transmission of Buddhist texts but also in the cross-cultural transmission of texts and ideas—or in specific theories and practices of translation—in other disciplines and fields of specialization.

I wish to take this opportunity to express my profound gratitude to all the institutions and individuals who contributed in various ways to the success of the above-mentioned symposium “Cross-Cultural Transmission of Buddhist Texts.” My thanks go to all the participants (including those who unfortunately were not able to contribute to the present volume), and also to the students and staff of the Department of Indian and Tibetan Studies, Asien-Afrika-Institut, Universität Hamburg, for their help and support in organizing the event. Special thanks are due to Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche and the Khyentse Foundation without whose vision and support the Khyentse Center would not exist and academic activities such as the symposium on the cross-cultural transmission of Buddhist texts could not take place. Last but not least, I thank the Fritz Thyssen Foundation (*Die Fritz Thyssen Stiftung für Wissenschaftsförderung*) for their generous financial support of the same event.

Dorji Wangchuk

9.9.2016, Hamburg

