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Lies, Slander and the Study of Buddhism

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Lies, Slander and the Study of Buddhism



Universiteit Leiden



Lies, Slander and the Study of Buddhism

Oratie uitgesproken door

Prof.dr. J.A. Silk

bij de aanvaarding van het ambt van hoogleraar
op het gebied van het Boeddhisme
aan de Universiteit Leiden
op dinsdag 1 april 2008



Universiteit Leiden

Honored colleagues, family, students, friends and guests,

The Pāli *Jātaka*, a collection of tales narrating the more than 500 previous lives of the Buddha, tells the story of an ascetic who had engaged in long years of extreme deprivation.¹ At a certain point, he wanders down from his abode in the Himalayas to the city of Benares, where he takes up residence as a guest of the king. Putting the ascetic, who is the future Buddha, in the care of the queen, the king leaves to deal with a border disturbance. One day, flying through the air with his supernatural powers, the ascetic comes to the queen's chamber. Encountering him suddenly, in her surprise she drops her robe. When he sees her naked, the text says, "the sexual passion dwelling within the ascetic for uncountable hundreds of thousands of millions of years sprang up like a sleeping poisonous snake in a box, erasing his meditative absorption". What happens next you may well imagine, and the two continue in a like manner day after day. This becomes well known throughout the town, and the king is informed of it, but he does not believe the story. When he returns, he asks his wife about the matter, and she tells him the truth. But still he does not believe it. He next asks the ascetic. The future Buddha then reflects that, although if he were to deny the story the king would believe him, "in this world there is no foundation like the truth. Those", he thinks, "who have forsaken the truth may sit beneath the Bodhi tree, but they will not be able to attain awakening". The text then offers a remarkable judgment:² "While one in pursuit of buddhahood may, under certain circumstances, take life, steal, engage in sexual activity, or take intoxicants, he does not tell a deceptive lie that injures anyone".

Sex and lies - all that's missing is the videotape.

I would like to spend my few moments with you today thinking about lies. In particular, I would like us to ponder a couple of questions: Is Buddhism, which is so very concerned with Truth with an upper-case T, correspondingly equally concerned with lies? And what might thinking about this question teach us about the study of Buddhism more broadly?

Let us begin at the beginning. The earliest datable reference to Buddhist literature - in fact, the very earliest reference to Buddhism at all - is found in a mid third-century BCE stone inscription of the emperor Aśoka.³ This records the emperor's commendation of seven scriptures to the Buddhist monastic community. Six are cited merely by title, but the seventh is identified as the "Instruction to Rāhula referring to lying". There has been much discussion over the identity of Aśoka's seven texts, some of which may have been lost to us, more than 2000 years later.⁴ But the identity of this seventh text is clear; its Pāli version was noticed as early as 1879,⁵ and a corresponding Chinese text identified seventeen years later.⁶ In this sermon titled "Rāhula-sūtra", the Buddha emphatically denies the authenticity of the ascetic who is not ashamed of an intentional lie. Moreover, he proclaims: "When one is not ashamed of an intentional lie, there is no evil he will not commit". The ascetic is thus enjoined to think: "I will speak no lie, not even as a joke", a sentiment repeated in later Buddhist literature.⁷ The "Rāhula-sūtra" continues by arguing that every action of body, speech and mind should be done only after reflection, after consideration of whether such an action will harm either self or others. And here we meet a fundamental Buddhist idea, namely that there are three types of action, those of body, speech and mind.

Given my topic today, I should perhaps be cautious about

making truth claims. But I do dare to say that the Buddhist analysis of action is essentially true - true in the sense that it is possible to act with one's body, with one's speech and with one's mind, and no other possibilities exist. Through this three-fold category, Buddhist philosophical - or, more cautiously put, doctrinal - literature of all periods preserves some focus on the importance of truthful speech.

So the only Buddhist text specified by more than a mere title, in the earliest reference to Buddhist literature, is a scripture concerned with lying. Of course, this need not mean that this was the most important of Aśoka's seven recommended sermons. One could equally well argue that the other six were so well-known that no further specification of their theme was necessary, and it was only the lesser-known sermon on lying that required further identification. Or it may be that the specification was meant to disambiguate *this* sermon to Rāhula from some other. It is impossible to decide the matter, and we must leave it that one among the seven earliest references to the teachings of the Buddha dealt with the avoidance of lying.

This concern with lying continues to resonate down through the ages, something that it is not possible to demonstrate today at length, but that can be outlined through a brief enumeration of several other 'firsts.'

About 400 years after the time of Aśoka appears what is commonly thought of as the first Buddhist scripture in China, the *Sūtra in Forty-two Sections*. The exact date of this text is unknown, but it existed at least in part by the year 166, as discussed by, among others, the late Leiden professor Erik Zürcher.⁸ Near the beginning of this relatively short text, a compilation of what we might term 'sermonettes,' we read the

following: "The Buddha said: 'All beings consider ten things as evil. Three concern the body, four the mouth, and three the mind. The three of the body are killing, stealing, and sexual aberrance. The four of the mouth are duplicity, slander, lying, and lewd speech. The three of the mind are envy, hatred, and delusion'"⁹ So here in the earliest Chinese Buddhism we already see evidence of an awareness of lying as one of the fundamental negative acts. This does not close our catalogue of 'firsts', however. For in 1756 appears the first published translation of a complete Buddhist scripture into a European language, a French rendering of precisely this Chinese *Sūtra in Forty-two Sections*.¹⁰

The Jātaka tale with which I began contained what I called a remarkable judgement, that one seeking to become a buddha may kill, steal, have sex, or take intoxicants, but he must never tell a harmful lie. The allusion here is to the category of the Five Precepts, through which one vows to refrain from those five actions. These are generally considered to embody the most basic Buddhist ethical stance. Fundamental Buddhist identity is paradigmatically ritually affirmed through taking refuge in the Buddha, in his teaching or *dharma*, and in his community or *saṅgha*. But vowing to undertake the Five Precepts is also considered a basic marker of Buddhist identity, and is required of anyone who declares him- or herself a Buddhist layperson.

Our listing of 'firsts' continues by noticing that a discussion of these five precepts prominently appeared in the first Western work to include a partial translation of a Buddhist text, a work published in French in Paris and in Amsterdam in 1691, reprinted in Amsterdam in 1700, 1713 and 1714.¹¹ So this Buddhist denunciation of lying as one of the fundamental

forms of improper behavior was, interestingly, known even here in the Netherlands more than 300 years ago. It was, indeed, one of the first facts to be reliably known about Buddhism in the West.

Now, while it is obvious that killing and stealing are, shall we say, anti-social, and that sexual misconduct and intoxication lead one away from spiritual cultivation, what is so bad about the fifth of the five restricted acts, lying? And in particular, is it worse than slander, another of the ten evils and, as we shall see, according to some the ultimate bad action? When the Indian scholar Vasubandhu composed his great compendium of Buddhist doctrinal systematics, the *Abhidharmakośa*, in the fourth or fifth century of our era, he had an answer.¹² In the context of the five-fold abstention expected of the lay Buddhist, Vasubandhu posed the following question: “Why is only the abstention from lying speech listed as a rule of behavior of the layman’s vows, not the abstention from slander and the rest?” His answer is most interesting: “Because”, Vasubandhu says, “if he violated all the other rules of behavior, he would necessarily lie about it”. And he goes on to say: “For whenever one has violated a rule of behavior, when questioned about it he would respond: ‘I didn’t act like that!’ thus inevitably resulting in lying speech”. The connections to earlier sources come full circle a short time later in a similar doctrinal treatise, the *Abhidharmadīpa*.¹³ Its author follows Vasubandhu’s argument closely, then goes on to quote the “Rāhula sūtra” passage I cited earlier: “When one is not ashamed of an intentional lie, there is no evil he will not commit”. For these authors, lying is a fundamental violation, not only intrinsically, but also since it serves to conceal any other transgressions.

Would it be fair, then, to say that Buddhism rejects lying as inherently harmful, or even that it condemns it categorically? Not all texts are so single-minded. A scripture, with the probably unintentionally ironic title “Chapter on the Truth-teller”, relates an episode in which the protagonist, having frankly stated to a king the faults of many others, then equally frankly expounds on the king’s own faults, most particularly that he is quick to anger. The king, not unexpectedly, quickly becomes angry, summarily sentencing the truth-speaker to death. Begging to be allowed to speak once again, he confesses his own fault, namely that he is extremely outspoken. The truth-speaker then goes on to say: “Your majesty, a wise person does not always say things exactly as they are. A wise person understands the appropriate time and place to speak. One who speaks correctly does not please or satisfy anyone, because noble people will not praise him and stupid people will hate him”.¹⁴

What is to be considered a lie is, of course, a basic problem, one much debated by moral philosophers. Among Buddhist thinkers, one relevant issue was how to account for seemingly inconsistent teachings appearing in Buddhist texts. If the Buddha indeed preached all the sermons attributed to him, as the tradition maintains, how could he say one thing in one place and another in another? Is not one of the contradictory statements a lie? The modern scholar is content to speculate that the authorship of the conflicting texts may differ, that there may be strata of authorship within a given text, and so on. But a traditional, system-internal and hermeneutically creative answer is that the Buddha employed skillful means, *upāya*, a technique whereby he suited each presentation to its audience. There is more than one way to make a truth palatable. If one tells a young child whose mother has died, “Mommy went on a long trip”, is it a lie?¹⁵ Accordingly, some

to whom the Buddha preached were, in terms of their spiritual maturity, like children, and the Buddha explained his Truth to them appropriately. This idea finds its echo in modern colloquial Japanese, in the expression 嘘も方便 (*uso mo hōben*), literally “even a lie can be a skillful means”, or more loosely, “circumstances may justify a white lie”. In this rather watered down fashion, Buddhist hermeneutics finds its way even into everyday thinking and speech.

There is a final aspect to this question of Buddhist attitudes toward lies - and implicitly, of the status of truth - I should like to mention, before moving on to consider things from a different angle. As is well known, all Indian traditions, including Buddhism, believe in the magically potent force of true speech as a virtually physical agent. Spoken truth can have the power to cause supernatural prodigies, to cause rivers to flow backwards, for instance. This is what scholars speak of as the “Act of Truth”.¹⁶ The logic behind this has little to do with truth in opposition to lies. Rather, it involves a sort of magical oath-taking, whereby the power of one’s verbal commitment is given physical force. The most common word for ‘truth’ in Sanskrit is *satya*, and this is used in most expressions of the “Act of Truth”. But alongside it and in the same sense we sometimes see another word that is likely to be familiar to you. This is *dharma*, the most usual term for the teaching of the Buddha. The teaching of the Buddha is *dharma* as Truth, since what the Buddha preaches is precisely his expression of the upper-case T “Truth” to which he awoke. The Buddha’s *dharma* is an expression of the way things are, so speech in accord with *dharma* is true speech in this fundamental sense, both ontologically and soteriologically, so to speak.

In Buddhist doctrine, therefore, the opposite of truth is

not, commonly, lies, but rather ignorance. To see the truth is to perceive the *dharma*, to see reality as it is or - to use an expression favored by my first professor of the philosophy of religion - to know the really real. The most basic focus of the Buddhist tradition is the quest to attain perfection understood, yes, certainly *also* in moral terms. But this morality flows from, and is fundamentally motivated by, a perfect appreciation of the true nature of reality. In other words, one perfects oneself in order to understand the nature of reality, and correspondingly it is only that correct understanding of the nature of reality that makes perfect behavior possible. Fundamentally, therefore, the most basic relationship is that between oneself and reality, not that between self and others. Interpersonal ethics in a Buddhist context are subordinate to self-cultivation - an element of this cultivation, to be sure, but subordinate to it.

I have spoken about some of what Indian Buddhist sources have to say about lies. And I have argued, at least implicitly, that this is a significant theme in these sources, although few modern studies of Buddhism, and even of Buddhist ethics, devote any serious attention to the topic.¹⁷ My own attention was drawn to the issue in the first place by the remarkable statement in the Jātaka story I recounted to you earlier. While a much more detailed and comprehensive investigation of the theme is obviously a desideratum, even at this stage the topic provides an opportunity to think about larger issues in the study of Buddhism. Let me explore just a few of these with you now.

I would preface what I am about to say by confessing that, in general, I have reservations about much comparative work, primarily because I think that it tends to extract objects of comparison from their organic context, thereby ending up

not really comparing at all. That said, certain kinds of comparisons *can* be helpful. On the grandest scale, if we recognize religions as fundamentally human constructs, comparative studies may be expected to help us discern common human features as they appear cross-culturally and transhistorically. From another point of view, comparisons can focus our attention on overlooked aspects of a given tradition, as it were spotlighting them from the outside. In this spirit, I have become particularly interested over the past few years in investigating how Jewish sources, particularly biblical and rabbinic sources, may allow us to deepen our appreciation of Buddhist traditions.

Jewish sources do give attention to questions of correct speech, although this attention seems often to focus more on slander and injurious speech - understood in general terms as gossip - than on lying *per se*. Biblical literature in particular contains examples of famous lies, or apparent lies, such as Abraham's claim to Abimelech that Sarah was his sister, and there is a long tradition of apologetics attached to such stories.¹⁸ But there are also more abstract considerations of the issue. Naturally, even if sometimes seemingly artificially, Jewish attitudes are always ultimately grounded, at least formally, in biblical statements. Common proof texts referring to lying and slander include Leviticus 19:11, which states:¹⁹ "You shall not dissemble and you shall not lie to one another", meaning that one should neither deny a truth, nor affirm a non-truth. The instruction in Exodus 23:1 that: "You shall not bear a false rumor" is understood by the influential medieval commentator Rashi to mean that one should not even *listen* to gossip, much less pass it on oneself, while the Talmud cites the view that "Anyone who shames his fellow in public is as if he sheds blood".²⁰ Elsewhere the Talmud stresses that gossip is worse even than

the three fundamental sins of idolatry, sexual immorality and murder. For these crimes, it says, one will receive eternal punishment in the World-to-Come,²¹ a view further developed by the great twelfth century rabbi-philosopher Maimonides.²² It is interesting that this view contrasts with the Buddhist assertion that lying is the fundamental transgression, as I mentioned earlier. This is a point worthy of further investigation, though on another occasion. The key word in such Jewish discussions is *lashon hara*, which Maimonides defines as: "Anything which, if it would be publicized, would cause the subject physical or monetary damage, or would cause him anguish or fear".²³ Importantly, this is a classification of harmful, but in fact *true*, speech; when the speech is *false*, it belongs to an even more serious category. What is one to do about this? Possible responses are both theoretical and practical. Here, I simply refer to one *ritual* response, although it has a psychological dimension as well: Three times a day, and four on the Shabbat, observant Jews pray, partially quoting Psalm 34:14: "Lord, guard my tongue from evil, my lips from speaking lies. Help me ignore those who would slander me".

Folk wisdom can convey a moral memorably, and a story sometimes attributed to the Chasidic tradition vividly illustrates the danger of gossip. Although its relevance to my theme is not direct, I cannot resist sharing it with you.²⁴ A man who was given to gossip one day realized that he was spreading rumors, and sought the rabbi's advice on how to atone for this transgression. "Is there, perhaps," he asked, "some ritual I could perform?" "Indeed," the rabbi responded, "there is such a ritual. Have you a feather pillow at home?" The man assured him that, certainly, he possessed such a pillow. "And has your home an upper floor, with a window?" Again, the man answered that yes, it did. "Go then," the rabbi said, "and take your feather

pillow, along with a knife, to the window of your upper floor, slit open the pillow, and scatter the feathers in the wind. When you have done that, come back to me.” The man assumed that this was some sort of magical ritual. He did as he was told, and having done so, returned to the rabbi. “Now,” said the rabbi, “go home and pick up every last one of the feathers, and return it to the pillow.” And just as the man was about to open his mouth to exclaim the total impossibility of this task, it hit him: there was no more way for him to return the feathers to the pillow than there was for him to retrieve the rumors and gossip he had spread.

This is a beautiful and touching story. Might it, or any of the Jewish materials to which I have referred, help us to understand Buddhism? Well, if the answer were “no”, I probably wouldn’t be up here talking about them. So that may be our first lesson: sometimes we know what must be going on simply because of context.

My presentations of both Buddhist and Jewish materials on lying and slander have been selective and necessarily superficial. My conclusions may be as well, but I would certainly like to insist in the first place that these materials demand to be taken seriously, not only religiously, but also from a scholarly standpoint. Unfortunately, however, the study of Buddhism remains something of a poor cousin in the academy. I think I know why this has been so in the past, but I admit to finding the reasons it continues hard to understand.

To ignore or underemphasize Buddhism in the study of Asia is akin to ignoring Christianity in the history of the West. As I stress to my students every term, Buddhism is the only cultural force which permits us to speak of Asia as a unity at all. And to

ignore or underemphasize Asia in a study of the world, which is to say, in any examination of human history and culture, or to treat Asia only in its relation to Europe, as colonial studies has tended to do, is to engage in the worst sort of parochialism. It follows that the study of Buddhism should be absolutely central to any study of humanity in general. Heretofore, however, it clearly has not held such a position. In part, this is a legacy of colonialism and of a cultural myopia. I shall have nothing more to say about this. But a part of the fault - though only a part - surely lies with those of us who work in this field of the Study of Buddhism. We have not done enough to consider what general lessons may be learned from careful and scientific studies. We have not thought intelligently enough about questions such as those concerning the dynamic relation between Church and State in Buddhist frameworks. We have not done our job to insure that Buddhist scripture is treated as an essential object in general reflections on sacred literature. We have not demonstrated how and why philosophical studies must take account of Buddhist philosophy - and the list goes on and on. In fact, we have not done nearly enough even to integrate ourselves and our work into broader studies of Religion, and perhaps even into Asian Studies, much less into the humanities as a whole.

Let me give you just one example of an arena in which there is much room for mutual learning. I have been reading lately in biblical and rabbinic text criticism, with something of the proverbial mixture of fascination and horror. I am fascinated by the prospect of what Buddhist scholars might learn from the centuries of research carried out on the relation between the Septuagint and its Hebrew basis, and optimistic that this might help us make more critical use of Chinese or Tibetan translations of originally Indic scriptural texts. But I am also

horrified - well, I'm exaggerating: let's say I am disappointed - to learn how contested and vexatious is the study of rabbinic text criticism in particular. I had hoped, truth be told, that many of the problems which plague the study of Buddhist literature would have already found solutions there. But interestingly, our situations seem to be rather close. Let me read you a short passage:

For many of the classics of rabbinic literature, no proper edition of their entire texts, nor even lists of their *variae lectiones*, exist. A comparison to the New Testament or to classical literature indicates how embarrassing the situation is. Instead of the sanguine possibility of various editors arguing about the correct reading, as is the case with the New Testament and many works of classical literature, scholars of rabbinics consider themselves fortunate when manuscript material has been made available, even if the citations are haphazard and the method non-critical.²⁵

Mutatis mutandis, this perfectly characterizes the situation of Buddhist Studies. In fact, I would go so far as to say that almost no Indian Buddhist scripture has yet received a truly scientific treatment. Even the most basic task of simply collecting and classifying manuscripts remains almost entirely undone. This is often dry work, unsexy and of a kind that funding agencies, demanding "relevance" above all, can find hard to understand. But without it, the rest is a mere house of cards.

And this leads me back, in a way, to truth and to lies. I believe that we are obliged as scholars - set aside now, as human beings - to tell the truth, and not to gossip. One thing this means is that, rather than criticize the work of others, if prior work is not reliable, let's quietly sit down and do it right.

While understanding in scholarship comes about through give and take, through sometimes fierce disagreement, the first requirement is to honestly confess what it is that we know, and what we don't. And this requires an acknowledgment also of the theoretical limits of our knowledge. We can be quite sure, for instance, that a great deal of Indian Buddhist literature has not survived. Moreover, most of what has survived exists only in translation, primarily, as I said earlier, in Chinese and Tibetan. Consequently, we know from the outset that when we study this literature we cannot reconstruct a complete picture of Indian Buddhism. The most we can do is take a scattered jigsaw puzzle, many of whose pieces have long been lost, and fashion some sort of coherent and, one would hope, compelling image out of what remains. The question is: How can we go about making the most of the evidence that we do have?

We must start at the beginning. If we would like to be able to understand what Buddhist authors meant, we need to know what these authors actually said. There is a word for the one and only valid approach to this task, a term mysteriously in disfavor in some quarters these days, being seen perhaps as old-fashioned, stodgy or insufficiently theoretical. This word is philology, the scientific study of texts.

I confess to you that I am a positivist. I believe that there is right and wrong, that not every reading of a text is a valid reading, that some evidence is better and some worse. I consequently insist on basing textual scholarship on sources which have been forged in the crucible of the philological furnace. Let me be less poetic. We must establish a text before we imagine we can know what its author meant. To establish a text we need to consider all sources; we need to collect and collate and compare and to judge. We cannot simply take any

printed book off our shelves - or heaven forbid, from some website! - and naively accept it as “the text”. And we must consider too what the tradition itself says about this text and its meaning. While it is not a matter of all or nothing, but rather of gradual and incremental progress, in this respect, scholars of Indian Buddhism are centuries behind critical biblical scholars. Yet, challenges are opportunities. Simply as one almost random example, I cannot help but feel some envy when I read the pages that Emanuel Tov devotes to bilingual concordances in his *Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint in Biblical Research*²⁶ since few comparable works exist for us in Buddhist Studies. But I also feel giddy with excitement, for to a very great extent, the field of the comparative study of Buddhist Sanskrit literature and its Tibetan or Chinese translations is unplowed ground. The very immaturity of our field guarantees a bountiful harvest to those who would tend it well. And this is not to mention the likelihood that our experience and results will in turn prove to be of interest and value to our colleagues in biblical studies, all the more so if we consciously think of our task also in these terms.

These opportunities present themselves in many dimensions. As I was preparing these remarks on lying in Buddhist thought, I was struck by Kant’s observation in his *Metaphysics of Morals* that “telling an untruth intentionally, even though merely frivolously, is usually called a lie, because it can also harm someone.”²⁷ While Kant goes on, for his own reasons, to offer a different definition of a lie, the similarity of what he terms the common definition to the Buddhist formulation I cited earlier is interesting. An enormous amount has been written about Kant’s views on lies, as on all else, but none of this, to my knowledge, so much as tangentially refers to Buddhist ideas. I hasten to insist that I have no wish to return to the bad old days when Buddhist

philosophical texts were read through a Kantian lens. Buddhism must be understood in the first place on Buddhist terms, and Buddhist scholars must do their part to bring Buddhist materials into wider discussions. I do not wish in this or any other context to judge what Buddhist authors have to say, neither to criticize them, nor to praise them for their anticipation of modern so-called discoveries. I only wish to have their ideas take their rightful place in the larger conversation.

And this brings me to the next point: Buddhism surely exists as much in the present as it does in the past, it changes and evolves, and we can ignore neither the past nor the present if we hope for an organic appreciation of the tradition. Contemporary Buddhists can and should be both our colleagues and our resources in our scholarly endeavors. In his own Oratie delivered here - on this very podium - over 50 years ago, the first incumbent of the chair I am now honored to occupy, Jan Willem de Jong, lamented that in the past non-Japanese scholars had not sufficiently appreciated the work of their Japanese colleagues. He went on to observe, however, what he called a “noticeable change” in this regard.²⁸ I am afraid that Prof. de Jong was being somewhat over-optimistic. To be sure, scholars of East Asian Buddhism are keenly aware of the importance of Japanese work, but even now quite few of those who focus on India, Tibet, Sri Lanka or Southeast Asia take the trouble to study the Japanese language. On the other hand, Prof. de Jong was right in observing even 50 years ago “a growing tendency” among Japanese scholars to make their work more accessible by publishing in English. Most of these scholars, moreover, are themselves Buddhist priests. Our interaction with these colleagues cannot and should not ignore this. Buddhism is an object of study from one viewpoint, simultaneously a foundation of life from another.

In this regard, it continues to puzzle me that I quite often encounter an unwillingness to acknowledge Buddhism as a religion. This is related, I think, to a refusal to take Buddhism seriously. I would be a happy man had I a nickel - that's a small denomination American coin - for every time I have been told that Buddhism is not a religion, but rather a philosophy, a way of life. This is more than a rhetorical strategy by which an interested Westerner allows himself to explore Buddhism without feeling an apostate for doing so. For it derives its validity only by denying Buddhist traditions their intrinsic identity, and Buddhists - traditional, Asian Buddhists - their autonomy. Once one denies that Buddhism is a religion, it ceases to be an integral part of anyone's life. Buddhism becomes something optional, adventitious, incidental even to the people whose lives it structures. For Westerners disaffected with religion, this may be a happy solution. But at least for the scholar, it is an impossibility, for it constitutes a refusal to acknowledge the tradition in its multiplicity and complexity, or even in its most intrinsic nature. At the same moment, why and how Buddhism, even if transformed, is gaining ground in the West is also an important topic of inquiry in its own right.

The study of Buddhism in the university will therefore involve both an appreciation for its past and for its present. It will communicate with contemporary Buddhists, and it will engage the literature of those who lived centuries and even millennia ago. The fundamental requirements for such a study include solid linguistic competences, historical and cultural awareness, unbridled curiosity and imagination, and, of course, plenty of *sitzfleisch*. It also requires an environment in which such study and research are supported and actively encouraged.

Recent circumstances prompt me to be direct. The only way to attract and - dare I say it? - to *retain* qualified staff is to acknowledge - with deeds, and not just with words - the rightful place of the study of Buddhism in any humanistic curriculum, for precisely the reasons I have outlined a few moments ago. If one wants to acknowledge the study of Buddhism as a field worthy of a Chair, as my appointment suggests is indeed the case, one cannot expect it to act merely as a handmaiden to other studies. To be sure, teaching in Buddhism can and should support wider agendas in a Faculty of Arts, in East-Asian Studies, in Religion, in Art History, and so on. But without concrete support, encouragement and appreciation of the study in its own right, it will wither and die. The promise of dynamic synergies with other fields will be possible only if the Buddhist Studies program is itself vital and vibrant.

My own main field of research is Indian Buddhism. For my research and advanced teaching to be possible, Indian Studies must prosper. Concrete support for the Chair consequently means that sufficient staff must be available to teach the languages and other skills requisite to the study of India, that students, and particularly graduate students, must be supported and funded, and that research must be enabled. To make this possible, we - staff and administrators together - will need to look beyond conventional funding models for creative means to ensure that Buddhist Studies flourish. It is precisely the unique nature of my chair in this country, the centrality of it in Leiden's research foci on Asia and World Religions, and the fact that potential strong partners abound in the Buddhist world that make me confident of the creation of an environment conducive to the flourishing of the field. I therefore look forward to leading an invigorated and invigorating program in the Study of Buddhism at Leiden

University, one in which undergraduate studies, focused graduate work and world-class research symbiotically sustain our learning, forge new alliances with colleagues near and far, and lead us toward new insights, toward an ever-deepening understanding, not only of the tradition we study, but also between those of us in the academy and those living in the world we seek to comprehend.

I would like to - I must - in the very first place thank my beloved Mother and Father. Mere words can in no way express my infinite debt to them, one which I could not repay even were I, following a Buddhist image, to carry them about on my shoulders for a hundred years. They have supported and encouraged me even, or especially, when it was unclear that there would be much reward at the end of the trek.

To my wife and partner Yoko, you've stuck by me through thick and thin - and far too much thin, I'm afraid. You've sacrificed your own career for my sake and for the sake of our sons, twice over becoming a stranger in a strange land. I cannot express sufficiently my gratitude for your love and support: 誠に有り難う.

To our boys Benjamin and Oliver. You've been very good today - you see, I wrote that in my speech because I *knew* you would be good. You guys make every day a delight. When I'm with you, I can't get any work done - and I thank you for that too. *Goed gedaan!*

Colleagues and coworkers in the Kern Institute, Professors Vetter and Griffiths, and all those in the department of Indian and Tibetan Studies, the Faculty of Arts, and beyond who worked to make my appointment possible, to welcome me and make me feel I belong, thank you. I deeply appreciate

the environment you have created, and your dedication and passion to making the study and teaching of Buddhism in Leiden a success. To the deans and former deans who have supported this position, Deans Booij, Drees and van den Doel, I thank you for your backing, guidance, and friendship. I must also certainly and emphatically mention with profound gratitude the Gonda Foundation, and the members of its board of directors, whose financial contribution insured the continuation of the chair.

A special thank you too to those whom I have met since coming to Leiden, colleagues, students and neighbors, who have helped us begin to feel at home here.

Institutions are people, and also more than people. I would like, therefore, to take this opportunity to emphasize how very essential to my work, both my research and my teaching, are the resources of the world-renowned Kern Institute Library. Its splendid holdings, and the liberal manner in which it makes them available in an open-stack system, should be models for other similar specialist libraries. Its professional and highly qualified staff makes every visit a profitable pleasure. In fact, since truth is the order of the day, I should confess that I was familiar with the Kern Institute long before I had any awareness of Leiden University as a whole. To be able to work down the hall from such a library, which I use on an almost daily basis, is indeed a privilege.

Finally, I cannot fail to remember on this occasion my revered teacher Gadjin M. Nagao, whose scholarship and humanity is always before me as a beacon, although he is no more in this world.

It is thanks to these and many, many other wonderful people that I feel as if I am indeed, though a dwarf, standing on the shoulders of giants - and that's no lie.

Ik heb gezegd

Notes

- 1 Jātaka 431 (Hārīta), edited in Michel Viggo Fausbøll, *The Jātaka, Together with Its Commentary* (London: Trübner & Co., 1877-1896): iii.496-501, translated in Edward Byles Cowell et al., *The Jātaka, or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births* (Cambridge, 1895-1907; reprint, London: The Pali Text Society, 1981): iii.295-297. I have discussed this story from a different point of view in chapter 16 of my forthcoming *Riven By Lust: Incest and Schism in Indian Buddhist Legend and Historiography* (University of Hawaii Press, 2008).
- 2 In Fausbøll's edition on p. 499, lines 5-8.
- 3 This is the so-called Calcutta-Bairāt or Bhābrā edict, discovered - or rediscovered - in 1840. For a recent bibliography (still partial, however, not only omitting all Japanese sources, but also some relevant Western materials), see Harry Falk, *Aśoka Sites and Artefacts-A Source-book with Bibliography*. Monographien zur indischen Archäologie, Kunst und Philologie 18 (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2006): 106-108. For a convenient edition and translation, see U. Schneider, "The Calcutta-Bairāt Edict of Aśoka," in L. A. Hercus et al., eds., *Indological and Buddhist Studies: Volume in Honour of Professor J. W. de Jong on his Sixtieth Birthday* (Canberra: Faculty of Asian Studies, 1982): 491-498.
- 4 For some examples, see Hirakawa Akira 平川彰, "Ashōka-ō no nanashu no kyōmei yori mita genshi kyōten no seiritushi" アシヨーカ王の七種の經名より見た原始經典の成立史 [Historical Development of Early Sūtras Seen through Seven Sūtras Mentioned in the Aśoka Edicts], *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū* 印度學佛教學研究 7/2 (1959): 279-289 (674-684); Tsukamoto Keishō 塚本啓祥, "Ashōka-ō no nanashu no hōmon ni kanren shite" アシヨーカ王の七種の法門に関連して [On the seven texts of King Aśoka], *Bukkyō Kenkyū* 佛教研究 1 (1970): 29-47; Lambert Schmithausen, "An Attempt to Estimate the Distance in Time between Aśoka and the Buddha in Terms of Doctrinal History," in Heinz Bechert, ed., *The Dating of the Historical Buddha / Die Datierung des historischen Buddha*. Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Phil-hist. Klasse 194 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992): 110-147.
- 5 By Hermann Oldenberg, *The Vinaya Piṭakani: One of the Principal Buddhist Holy Scriptures in the Pāli Language*. Vol. 1 (London: Williams and Norgate, 1879): XL n. 1. The *sutta* is *Majjhima Nikāya* 61, *Ambalatṭhikārāhulovāda-sutta*, edited by Vilhelm Trenckner in *The Majjhima-Nikāya*. Vol. 1 (London: The Pali Text Society, 1888): 414-420, translated in English by Isaline Blew Horner, *The Collection of the Middle Length Sayings (Majjhima-nikāya)*. Vol. 2 (London: The Pali Text Society, 1957): 87-90; Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, edited and revised by Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995): 523-526.
- 6 By Sylvain Lévi in "Notes sur Diverses Inscriptions de Piyaḍasi," *Journal Asiatique*, Series 9, vol 7 (1896): 475-485, "Le Lāghulovāda de l'Édit de Bhabra." The text is *Madhyamāgama* 14, T. 26 (I) 436a12-437b23 (*juan* 3).
- 7 For instance in the Mahāyāna scripture *Kāśyapa-parivarta* §4.
- 8 Erik Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China: The Spread and Adaptation of Buddhism in Early Medieval China*. Sinica Leidensia 11. 3rd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2007): 29-30. Urs App, however, brings to my attention the study of Okabe Kazuo 岡部和雄 which, building on the work of others, demonstrates that the sūtra as a whole was constructed in the 4th or 5th century from various sources. See "'Shijūnishō-kyō' no seiritsu to tenkai: kenkyūshiteki oboegaki" 『四十二章』の成立と展開 研究史のおぼえがき [The formation and development of the Sūtra in 42 Sections], *Komazawa Daigaku Bukkyōgakubu Kenkyū Kijō* 駒澤大學佛教學部研究紀要 25 (1967): 103-118.
- 9 The translation is modified from that in Robert Sharf, "The Scripture in Forty-two Sections," in Donald S. Lopez, Jr., ed., *Religions of China in Practice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996): 365.
- 10 In Christian Louis Joseph De Guignes, *Histoire générale des Huns, des Turcs, des Mogols et des autres Tartares Occidentaux. Avant et depuis J. C. Jusqu'à présent. Précédée d'une Introduction contenant des Tables Chronologiques & Historiques des Princes qui ont régné dans l'Asie. Ouvrage tiré des Livres Chinois & des Manuscrits Orientaux de la Bibliothèque du Roi. Suite des Mémoires de l'Académie Royale des inscriptions & Belles-Lettres. Tome Premier, Seconde Partie* (Paris: Desaint et Saillant, 1756): 227-233. I learned of the importance of this work from the studies of Urs App, "Schopen-

hauers Begegnung mit dem Buddhismus,” *Schopenhauer-Jahrbuch* 79 (1998): 35-56, and “How Amida Got into the Upanishads: An Orientalist’s Nightmare,” in Christian Wittern and Shi Lishan, eds., *Essays on East Asian Religion and Culture: Festschrift in honour of Nishiwaki Tsuneki on the occasion of his 65th birthday / Nishiwaki Tsuneki kyōju taikyū kinen ronshū Higashi Ajia no Shūkyō to Bunka* 西脇常記教授退休記念論集「東アジアの宗教と文化」 (Kyoto: Editorial committee for the Festschrift in honour of Nishiwaki Tsuneki, 2007): 11-33 (450-428).

- 11 Simon de La Loubère, *Description du Royaume de Siam, Où l’on voit quelles sont les opinions, les mœurs & la Religion des Siamois; avec plusieurs remarques de Physique touchant les Plantes & les Animaux du païs* (Paris: La Veuve de Jean Baptiste Coignard et Jean Baptiste Coignard; Amsterdam: Abraham Wolfgang, 1691 - reprinted: Amsterdam: Henry & la Veuve de Theodore Boon, 1700; Gerard Onder de Linden, 1713; David Mortier, 1714). In English: *A New Historical Relation of the Kingdom of Siam*, translated by A. P. Gen. R. S. S. (London: Tho. Horne, Francis Saunders and Tho. Bennet, 1693 - the modern reprint in photographic reproduction is Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1969): 1.126.
- 12 In Chapter 4 of the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*; see Prahlād Pradhān, *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam of Vasubandhu*. Tibetan Sanskrit Works 8 (Patna: K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1975): 218.9-15: *atha kasmāt mṛṣāvādād viratir evopāsakasamvaraśikṣāpadam na paśūnyādivratitḥ | ebhir eva ca tribhiḥ kāraṇaiḥ | mṛṣāvādāti-garhyatvāt saukaryād akriyāptitḥ |*
mṛṣāvādaprasaṅgāc ca sarvaśikṣāvyatikrame | (34ab)
sarvatra hi śikṣātikrame samanuyujyamānasyopasthitam idam bhavati nāham evam akārṣam iti mṛṣāvādasya prasaṅgo bhavaty ato mṛṣāvādād viratir vidhīyate |*

* Pradhān prints *ahārṣam*, which is corrected here with Funahashi Issai 舟橋一哉, *Kusharon no Gentē Kaimei Gobon* 俱舍論の原典解明 業品 (Kyoto: Hōzōkan 法藏館, 1987): 192 n. 1, who refers to Tib. *ma byas so* and Chinese 不作. Without access to the manuscript, I do not know whether *ahārṣam* is a genuine reading or a misprint in Pradhān’s edition.

- 13 Padmanabh S. Jaini, *Abhidharmadīpa with Vibhāṣāprabhāvr̥tti*. Tibetan Sanskrit Works Series 4 (Patna: Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute, 1977): 128.6-8.
- 14 *Ārya-bodhisattvagocara-upāyaviśayavikurvānanirdeśa* = *Ārya-satyakaparivarta*, sTog Kanjur 246, *mdo sde, la* 54a3-b1; Derge Kanjur 146, *mdo sde, pa* 117b7-118a4: *rgyal po chen po khyod de ltar gtum pa | de ltar kho ba | de ltar zhe sdang ba | de ltar gzu lums’ can gyi spyang sngar bdag ’di ltar yang dag pa ji lta ba bzhin du smra ba ni |’ bdag kyang ha cang ngor ro bar smra ba lags te | bdag ni de khon smra bar gyur to || rgyal po chen po mkhas pas ni dus thams cad du yang dar pa ji lta ba bzhin du’ smra bar mi bgyi’o || rgyal po chen po mkhas pas ni dus dang dus ma lags pa dang | yul dang yul ma lags pa ’tshal par bgyi’o || de ci’i slad du zhe na | rgyal po chen po yang dag par smra ba ni ’jig rten yid mi bde zhing mi dga’ bar ’gyur te | des pa rnams kyis mi bsngags shing |’ glen pa’i skye bo rnams zhe sdang bar ’gyur ba’i slad du’o || gang zhig yang dag smra bgyid cing || smra dus dus min ma ’tshal ba || de ni mkhas pas smad ’gyur na || ’jig rten gzhan lta ci zhig smos || de bas bden pa’i tshig lags kyang || blo ldan kun tu smra mi bgyi’ || bdag kyang ’dir ni ’di lta bur || bden smas rang la gnod par gyur || 1) S lum 2) D o | 3) S o du 4) S bgyid*
The Chinese translation in T. 272 (IX) 341c13-342a9 (*juan* 5) differs slightly.
- 15 I borrow this example from Michael Pye, *Skilful Means: A Concept in Mahayana Buddhism*. 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2003): 137.
- 16 There is a substantial literature on this topic. For a short example with good references, see Yusho Wakahara, “The Truth-utterance (satyavacana) in Mahāyāna Buddhism,” *Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū* 56 (2002): 58-69. On the Vedic background, see George Thompson, “On Truth-acts in Vedic,” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 41 (1998): 125-153.
- 17 Surveys of Buddhist ethics, for instance, generally offer merely a few pages in a discussion of the Five Precepts. A somewhat more detailed examination, although with an emphasis on lying about one’s spiritual attainments, is given by Sugimoto Takushū 杉本卓洲, “Mōgokai to shōnin hō” 妄語戒と上人法 [The rule against lying and the attainments of a sage], *Naritasan Bukkyō Kenkyūjo Kiyō* 成田山仏教研究所紀要 11 (Bukkyō Shisōshi Ronshū

- 仏教思想論集 I) (1988): 141-170; reprinted in *Gokai no shūhen: Indoteki sei no dainamizumu* 五戒の周辺: インド的生のダイナミズム (Kyoto: Heirakuji shoten 平楽寺書店, 1999): 217-249.
- 18 I have discussed this example in detail in “Incestuous Ancestries: On the Family Origins of Gautama Siddhārtha, Interpretations of Genesis 20.12, and the Status of Scripture in Buddhism,” *History of Religions* 47/4 (2008): 253-281.
- 19 The translation is that of Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus* 17-22. Anchor Bible 3A (New York: Doubleday, 2000): 1298; see also p. 1631.
- 20 Babylonian Talmud, Bava Metzia 58b, translated in Adin Steinsaltz, *The Talmud: The Steinsaltz Edition*. Vol. 3. Tractate Bava Metzia, Part III (New York: Random House, 1990): 226.
- 21 Babylonian Talmud, Arachin 15b.
- 22 *Mishneh Torah*, Hilchot Teshuva 3:14. For a translation, see <http://www.panix.com/~jjbaker/MadaT.html>, translation copyright Immanuel M. O’Levy, 1993.
- 23 *Mishneh Torah*, Hilchot Deiot 7:5. The translation is from <http://www.torah.org/learning/halashon/review1.html>. See also <http://www.panix.com/~jjbaker/MadaD.html>, translation copyright Immanuel M. O’Levy, 1993.
- 24 I do not know that there exists any “original source” for this tale, which I retell here based on the renditions I have seen.
- 25 Chaim Milikowsky, “The Status Quaestionis of Research in Rabbinic Literature,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 39 (1988): 206-207, the same remark repeated eleven years later in “Further on Editing Rabbinic Texts,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 90/1-2 (1999): 137.
- 26 Emanuel Tov, *The Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint in Biblical Research*. 2ND ed. Jerusalem Biblical Studies 3 (Jerusalem: Simor, 1997): 90-99.
- 27 6.239, in the note, in Mary Gregor, trans., *The Metaphysics of Morals* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 31.
- 28 “The Study of Buddhism. Problems and Perspectives,” in Perala Ratnam, ed., *Studies in Indo-Asian Art and Culture* 4, Commemoration Volume on the 72ND Birthday Anniversary of Acharya Raghuvira. Śāta-piṭaka 223 (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1975): 20, reprinted in Gregory Schopen, ed., *Buddhist Studies* (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1979): 22. This is an English version of *De Studie van het Boeddhisme. Problemen en Perspectieven* (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1956): 14.

In deze reeks verschijnen teksten van oraties en afscheidscolleges.

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