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Keeping up with the Joneses: from William Jones to John James Jones Silk, J.A.

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創価大学
国際仏教学高等研究所
年報

平成25年度
(第17号)

Annual Report
of
The International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology
at Soka University

for the Academic Year 2013

Volume XVII

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Keeping Up With the Joneses From William Jones to John James Jones

Jonathan A. SILK

Sir William Jones has been rightly lauded as one of the founders of the scientific study of India and her religions.¹ I am honored and humbled to have been invited here this evening to offer a lecture in his name. That said, I hope it does not seem unappreciative or disrespectful if I remind you that Sir William Jones was, for all his greatness, after all not Welsh as such, although he was of Welsh descent. Indeed, although he claimed to have some knowledge of the Welsh language, he rated his fluency alongside his knowledge of Tibetan, Pāli, Phalavi, Deri, Russian, Syriac, Ethiopic, Coptic, Swedish, Dutch, and Chinese, and after, one must add, his mastery of Latin and Greek, French, Italian, Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit, and secondarily Spanish, Portuguese, German, Runik (by which he may have meant Gothic, or perhaps Old Norse), Hebrew, Bengali, Hindi and Turkish.² It is also true that as a circuit judge he worked in Wales, and his biographer Cannon speculates that he seemed to be able to exert extra effort in the land of his forebears.³ That Jones was not Welsh is surely not sufficient reason, however, even in the present venue, for a scholar of Buddhism such as myself to shy away from a detailed consideration of his legacy. Rather, we become aware of just how far we have come from his pioneering ventures when we recall that in 1786, in his Third Anniversary Discourse to the Bengal Asiatic Society, of which he was the founder, Jones considered the Buddha to be none other than Wotan.⁴ While Sir William Jones, then, surely deserves a special place in the pantheon of our illustrious scholarly forefathers, he belongs to a

¹ I remain grateful for the assistance I received from Marieke Meelen, with special reference to Welsh and to the Jones materials in Aberystwyth, and to Vincent Tournier, on the Mahāvastu, especially from the philological point of view. This paper is a lightly edited version of a lecture delivered to the Centre for the History of Religion in Asia, University of Cardiff, Wales, on 24 May 2010 as the Inaugural William Jones Lecture. I am grateful to Prof. Max Deeg and his colleagues for the honor they did me by their invitation. The delay in the publication of this lecture is due to the failure to materialize of an original plan to publish the texts of the William Jones Lectures.

² *The Works of Sir William Jones*, London: John Stockdale, 1807: II.264-265, in the note. I think the suggestion that Runick means Gothic is better than Jeremy Bernstein's speculation that it refers to Old Norse (*Physicists on Wall Street and Other Essays on Science and Society*, New York: Springer Science+Business Media, 2008, p. 74).

³ Garland H. Cannon, *Oriental Jones: A biography of Sir William Jones, 1746-1794*. Bombay: Asia Publishing House, Indian Council for Cultural Relations, 1964: 60.

⁴ Urs App, "William Jones's Ancient Theology," *Sino-Platonic Papers* 191, 2009: 42, 85. Not everything Jones said about the Buddha was quite this wild, it should be noted. App's study is an excellent review of Jones in his context.

different age—one just freeing itself, for example, from the notion of the world’s languages as descending from the three sons of Noah—and I would venture to say that, at least with respect to the study of Buddhism, there is precious little we can directly learn today from his patrimony.

The same certainly cannot be said of another Jones, the one to whom I will devote the lion’s share of my attentions. He was a real Welshman, John James Jones, better known perhaps as J. J. Jones, the translator of a relatively early Indian Buddhist text called the *Mahāvastu*.⁵ Born 12 March 1892 in New Quay, Cardiganshire, he studied in the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, between 1911-1914, graduated with an honors B.A. in Latin, and earned an M.A. for a thesis on “The native Italian element in early Roman religion.” He taught for nine years in English grammar schools, but when Latin was removed from the curriculum, he returned to the Classics department at Aberystwyth. In 1926 he was appointed Assistant Keeper in the Department of Printed Books at the National Library of Wales, promoted to Deputy Keeper in 1928, finally becoming Head of the Department in 1950, a post he held until his death on 20 February 1957, a few months before he was due to retire. His biography found on the Welsh Biography Online of the National Library of Wales, upon which I rely for this information,⁶ states that Jones had a thorough knowledge of Latin and Greek as well as French, Spanish and Italian, that he knew German, Russian, Polish and Hungarian,⁷ could read most of the Slavic, Scandinavian and, of course, Celtic languages, and that he was interested in Persian and Arabic. However, this accounting appears to be too modest. His notebooks, kept in the National Library, indicate much more.⁸ In addition to containing his notes on Japanese, they provide the following schedule for his language study (the year is not mentioned):

Vocab. 15 min.	30 min. each
Monday – Polish	Chinese, Arabic
Tuesday – Danish	Syriac, Persian
Wednesday – Norwegian	Ethiopic, Arabic
Thursday – Italian	Chinese, Persian
Friday – Spanish	Syriac, Arabic
Saturday – Dutch	Ethiopic, Persian
Sunday – Swedish	Russian, Hebrew, Hungarian (1 hour each)

It is probably needless to add, given the central topic of my discussion, namely

⁵ J[ohn] J[ames] Jones, *The Mahāvastu* (1949-1956; Reprint: London: Pali Text Society, 1973-1978).

⁶ See <http://wbo.llgc.org.uk/en/s2-JONE-JAM-1892.html>, apparently based on R. T. Jenkins, E. D. Jones and B. F. Roberts (eds.), *The Dictionary of Welsh Biography 1941-1970: Together with a supplement to the dictionary of Welsh biography down to 1940*, London: The Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, 2001: 133-134. See also his obituary by Thomas Parry, *Cylchgrawn Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru / The National Library of Wales Journal* 10 (1957-1958): 119-120.

⁷ What the site actually says is that he was familiar with Hungarian languages, but as far as I know, there is only one Hungarian language, namely Hungarian.

⁸ For a peek at these, I am indebted to M. Meelen.

Jones's work on Buddhism, that he also read Pāli and Sanskrit very well, and his notebooks additionally give evidence of his study of Vedic. In regard to this polyglottism, at least, John James Jones certainly concedes nothing to Sir William Jones.

Jones published a number of articles on various topics, but only two on Buddhism, as far as I know, both in Welsh, these addressing “The Buddha and the Problem of Evil” in 1941, and “Dharma and Logos” in 1946.⁹ His magnum opus, however, was of course his three volume English translation of the *Mahāvastu*, sometimes but probably erroneously called the *Mahāvastu-avadāna*, published in 1949, 1952, and 1956.¹⁰ This remains the only published complete Western language translation of this work, the *editio princeps* of which was published by the French scholar Émile Senart in three volumes in 1882, 1890 and 1897.¹¹ As such, and given the importance of this text, which is among other things a mine of material on Buddhist mythology and legend, it is no surprise that, while direct access to Senart's edition was of course limited to those who could read its often difficult language, Jones's translation has been constantly cited by specialists and non-specialists alike since its publication. It is therefore all the more surprising that, as far as I have been able to determine, neither upon its publication nor in the half-century since, did this translation receive even a single serious review.¹² It was his sensitivity to this neglect in its initial moment that led Sir Harold Idris Bell, a papyrologist and scholar of Welsh literature, to begin his review in the Welsh “Philosophical Studies” journal (*Efrydiau Athronyddol*) as follows:¹³

It may perhaps appear presumptuous for one who does not know a word of Sanskrit to attempt the review of a work like this. My sole excuse is that no one else was prepared to undertake the task and that I have for long been interested in Buddhism. It would be an affront to Welsh Scholarship if the *Efrydiau Athronyddol* ignored such a masterly work by a Welsh scholar.

Bell then goes on to link J. J. Jones to the tradition of Sir William Jones, and praises the translation for its many points of interest and comparison with Christian myth. He

⁹ “Buddha a phroblem y drwg,” *Efrydiau Athronyddol* 4 (1941): 45-62, and “Dharma a logos” *Efrydiau Athronyddol* 9 (1946): 3-18, respectively.

¹⁰ *Mahāvastu*. Sacred Books of the Buddhists 16, 18, 19. London: Luzac. On the title, as so much else, see the considerations in Akira Yuyama, *The Mahāvastu-Avadāna: In Old Palm-Leaf and Paper Manuscripts. I. Palm-Leaf Manuscripts*. Bibliotheca Codicum Asiaticorum 15 (Tokyo: The Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies for Unesco / The Toyo Bunko, 2001 [Actually published 2003]). The introduction to this volume presents the fullest English language treatment of the text by this author. See much earlier his “A Bibliography of the Mahāvastu-Avadāna,” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 11/1 (1968): 11-23. For comments on the title I am indebted to V. Tournier.

¹¹ Émile Charles Marie Senart, *Le Mahāvastu*, Société Asiatique, Collection d'Ouvrages Orientaux, Seconde Série (Paris: Imprimerie National, 1882–1897; Reprint Tokyo: Meicho Fukyūkai, 1977). A complete Bengali translation is noted by Yuyama, *The Mahāvastu-Avadāna*: §3.1.1, and a complete Japanese translation is now published: Hiraoka Satoshi 平岡聡, *Buddha no Ōinaru Monogatari: Bonbun Mahāvastu Zenyaku* ブツダの大いなる物語 —梵文『マハーヴァストウ』全訳. Tokyo: Daizō shuppan 大蔵出版, 2010.

¹² However, Jones himself in the Foreword to his volume II, p. ix, speaks of “more than one reviewer of the first volume of the translation,” without however offering any references.

¹³ I have seen this only in typescript, in English. The published version, in Welsh only, is ‘Adolygiad o *The Mahavastu*, cyf[ieithiad] J.J. Jones,’ in *Efrydiau Athronyddol* 14 (1951): 39-41.

concludes his appreciation as follows: “It is clear that fidelity to the original and correctness of interpretation rather than nicety of expression is Mr. Jones’s aim, but it can be said without hesitation that his style is always clear and elevated, and sometimes even beautiful.” Miss I. B. Horner, the long-time pillar of the Pali Text Society who assisted Jones in his project after the death of Caroline Augusta Foley Rhys Davids, if not also before, is quoted in an obituary of Jones to the effect that: “he has not failed to discuss a single textual, linguistic or doctrinal problem in his felicitous and revealing Introductions and footnotes.”¹⁴ More recently, this commendatory attitude has been echoed by one of the contemporary scholars to pay the most attention to this text, Akira Yuyama, who notes with regret that “representative scholars and periodical publications all over the world at that time did not take his translation seriously enough for review. It may have been more difficult for the reviewers than to translate it!” For Yuyama, “the difficulty of Jones’s task must be duly recognized. It is often a matter of regret to witness some scholars discussing only his defects.”¹⁵

Notwithstanding the great respect I have both for Jones and for Prof. Yuyama, I would stress that appreciation and criticism are not poor bedfellows. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that I believe careful, appreciative criticism to be the very sincerest form of flattery. It is in this spirit, then, that I propose to consider Jones’s work in a critical light, evaluating its quality, to be sure, but more importantly, asking what we can more generally learn from it as we ourselves strive to move forward in the study of this and other texts.

This lectureship in the Centre for the History of Religion in Asia at Cardiff University is meant, as I understand it, to provide a forum for discussions about the religious traditions of Asia, as well as the representation of Asian religions and their past and present in the western world. The Joneses, Sir William and John James, present us with an excellent opportunity to begin to think through some of the issues raised by evolving presentations of Asian religions in the West. I will restrict myself to examining this question through the lens of the latter Jones’s translation of the *Mahāvastu*, as I mentioned above. Of course, I do not forget what for textual scholars often seems to disappear from view, namely that Asia and Asian religions exist on the map as well as in the abstract sphere of thought, or on paper or palm-leaf pages. That I concentrate my remarks on an English translation of an Indian Buddhist text edited by a Frenchman does not mean that I believe that the data, the raw materials for our construction of Asian religions, resides only in such books, much less that it resides somewhere close to the Prime Meridian and the 50th parallel. In response to those who might suggest that the beating heart of religion exists on the ground, among communities of believers, I would remind such critics that the texts we study and translate are texts produced by these very communities and, at least in the case of Buddhism, repeatedly translated into foreign tongues within those very same communities.

Now then, let me begin where I just began a moment ago. Sir Harold Idris Bell wrote that “It is clear that fidelity to the original and correctness of interpretation rather than

¹⁴. See n. 6 above.

¹⁵. *The Mahāvastu-Avadāna* §4.1.1.

nicety of expression is Mr. Jones’s aim, but it can be said without hesitation that his style is always clear and elevated, and sometimes even beautiful.” Bell illustrates this latter point by quoting from Jones’s translation two verses in praise of the Buddha, the second of which reads:

Both when thou lookest out upon the world, O thou whose tread is like a Nāga’s, and when thou reachest the shore beyond death, mindful and with thy thought unsullied, then does this life-bearing earth quake.¹⁶

I suppose it a matter both of personal taste and of the age—and let us remember that Jones was born in the 19th century, in fact precisely during the years in which Senart was publishing his edition—whether one considers this sort of English beautiful. But the questions of “fidelity to the original and correctness of interpretation” are another matter. This verse I have just quoted has, of course, a context, and Jones rendered the verse immediately preceding as follows:

Men who strive in perplexity and ignorance know not the whole-hearted endeavour of him who ensues solitude and blissful concentration. Homage to thee, who art adored by devas and men.

I leave aside the correctness of this translation as a whole, and the obscurity, for me at least, of the obsolete use of ‘ensue’ as a transitive verb in the sense of ‘pursue,’ pointing out only that the topic here is perplexed and ignorant beings, which for one scholar proved very important. The verse under discussion, then, which follows immediately thereafter, reads in Senart’s edition:¹⁷

^{16.} Jones I.130. This is probably some improvement, at least stylistically, on the version of Ernst Leumann and Shindo Shiraishi, “Mahāvastu,” *Proceedings of the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Education, Yamanashi University* 3 (1962): 75-149, p. 116, reprinted in Shiraishi Shindō 白石眞道, *Shiraishi Shindō Bukkyōgaku Ronbunshū* 白石眞道・仏教学論文集 [The Collected Papers of Shiraishi Shindō]. Shiraishi Hisako 白石寿子 ed. (Sagamihara-shi, Japan: Kyōbi Shuppansha 京美出版社, 1988): 247: “Und wenn du schaust, (o du) wie ein Elefant Gehender, / und wenn du zum andern Ufer des Todes gelangt (bist), / (du) Kenntnis- und Erinnerungsreicher, mit fleckenlosem Denken, / dann zittert diese ‘(alle) Wesen Tragende’ [d.h. diese Erde].”

^{17.} In Senart I.165,7-10. The reading in manuscript Sa in Akira Yuyama, *The Mahāvastu-Avadāna*, 47a1, is: *yadā ca ālokasi nāgagāmī | yathā ca gata marañāye pāraṃgato smṛtimāṃ vimalena cetasā tadā ayaṃ bhūdadharā prakampate* ||. Vincent Tournier offers the following:

Note that the compound *matīsmṛtimāṃ* is the fruit of an emendation by Senart (who justifies himself in I.509-510). I would be myself tempted to keep the reading *pāraṃgato*, and to explore the possibility that this compound was in between two *pādas*. ... If we accept it, we can see a similarity of construction between the first two propositions : *yadā* + vb. (in the second proposition strangely a p.p.) + epithet of the Buddha in voc. (or in the second case, voc. + oblique sg. in *-āye*). There is, I think, more to it. For the sentence to make sense, these two propositions must bear a reference to events of the life of the Buddha which actually were causes of earthquakes. The second proposition (*gata marañāye pāraṃgato*) is fairly certainly a reference to his *parinirvāṇa*, and these very events are referred to in the beginning of the *Daśabhūmika-upadeśa* (Mvu I.64.8-18), the very section from which this verse is taken. The first proposition, following ... Edgerton’s understanding of the phrase, could refer, though rather vaguely, to the *dharmacakrapravartana*. In that case, however, the epithet *nāgagāmin* is not particularly meaningful, and the fact that *ālokasi* refers to the «perplexed and ignorant beings» of the preceding stanza is made difficult by the fact that the *pāda namo ’stu te*

yadā ca ālokasi nāgagāmi
yadā ca āgata maraṇāya pāraṃ |
matīsmṛtīmām vimalena cetasā
tadā ayaṃ bhūṭadharā prakampate ||

The first words, *yadā ca ālokasi*, which Jones took to mean “when thou lookest out upon the world” are understood rather by Franklin Edgerton as “when you provide illumination,” that is, illumination for those perplexed and ignorant beings mentioned in the preceding verse.¹⁸ This is based on Edgerton’s evaluation of the morphology of the verb in question. It is quite possible, however, that the whole has been misunderstood not only originally by Senart and then by Jones, but also by Edgerton. Vincent Tournier suggests an interpretation of the verse as referring principally to key events in the Buddha’s life, and while agreeing with Jones’s interpretation of the verb, in many other respects he offers a considerably different understanding. Without going into his interpretation in detail, his suggestions, which tie the two images in the verse to moments in Buddhist mythology at which the earth shook, read the verse as follows:

And when you look [upon the city of Vaiśālī, where you surrendered your life-sustaining mental processes], you who have an elephant’s gait, and when you depart, mindful and with a pure thought, you who reached the shore beyond death [at your nirvāṇa], then does [the earth] which supports beings quake.

However exactly one decides in the end to read the verse, it seems clear that Jones did not get it quite right, even that he did not think to make sense of the verse in a broader mythological and doctrinal context. I do not draw attention to this misunderstanding in Jones’s translation because it is particularly egregious, nor because it is necessarily typical. Rather, I have taken up this verse because it was singled out by a sympathetic reviewer, who openly proclaimed himself unable to evaluate the translation’s accuracy. All he had to go by was the clarity of the English. The point, therefore—or one point—is rather obvious and simple: that a translation reads well does not indicate that it is accurate.

The converse of this truism, however, in fact has something a bit more to be said for it: if a translator cannot express a text’s meaning in natural language, we may well

devamanuṣyaṇḍita closing this stanza may establish a syntactical break. I would prefer, even if it may sound speculative, to see in *ālokasi nāgagāmi* a reference to the *nāgāvalokita* of the Buddha. Since the *nāgāvalokita* is the look displayed by the Buddha on many occasions, but especially upon leaving Vaiśālī, which he does after having rejected his *āyuhśamskāras*, this would point nicely to another event of his life, going well along with the reference to the *parinirvāṇa*. In Waldschmidt’s edition of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, the *nāgāvalokita* is not the cause of the earthquake, but its antecedent. In § 20 to 22 (p. 226-233), the succession of events is: 1) the Buddha looks back on Vaiśālī ‘with the look of the elephant who turns his whole body to the right’ (*dakṣiṇena sarvakāyena nāgāvalokitena*, hence the insistence on the elephant’s gait in the *Mvu* verse); 2) Ānanda asks about the reason of such a marvelous look, to which question the Buddha answers; 3) Then (*tena samayena*), the earth quakes.

¹⁸ Franklin Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953): s.v. ālokati.

suspect that he or she may not have really understood the original. If we were to take this as a rule of thumb, I am afraid that we would be forced into the conclusion that the vast majority of presently available translations of Buddhist texts were produced by translators who lacked confidence in their own understandings. This might be going a bit too far, but perhaps not excessively so. Moreover, a so-called literal translation may be justified by all sorts of excellent reasons, such as a desire to retain the rhythms of the original, its imagery, its logical development and so on, or simply for instance as a pony for students learning a language. But a translation into English which does not sound like English is not a translation into English. My Leiden predecessor in the chair in the study of Buddhism, Tilmann Vetter, in commenting on early Chinese translations of Indian works has spoken of ‘transvocalization,’ a term I like very much, and which I find that we probably owe, as so much else, to Max Müller, who used it already in 1864 in the context of his students’ edition of the *Hitopadeśa*, apologizing for the barbarism *sit venia verbo*.¹⁹

It is, as is well known, a nasty and ungenerous sport of philologists to seek mistakes—blunders, as one rather arrogant critic liked to call them—in the translations of their predecessors and peers. While I would proudly proclaim myself a philological positivist, I also think it entirely natural that our understandings of texts should evolve over time. After all, when we compare the history of philological consideration of Buddhist literature to the tradition of study of our colleagues toiling in the fertile fields of the Bible, for example, or to those studying the Confucian Classics, we cannot help but gaze in awe at the centuries-long accumulation of reliable results upon which they perch themselves. Without in any way claiming that I am any less nasty a critic than the next fellow, then, it is emphatically not my intention here to criticize Jones for failing to achieve perfection. The question should be much less “What did he do?” than “What should we do?”

It is often repeated that Jones had the great misfortune to publish his translation just as the previously mentioned Franklin Edgerton, professor at Yale and one of the leading Sanskritists of his generation, was preparing and publishing his monumental *Grammar and Dictionary of Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit*, a pair of volumes which appeared in 1953. For Edgerton, the purest form of this so-called Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit is the language of the *Mahāvastu*, and a large proportion of his study addresses aspects of the grammar and vocabulary of this text. Edgerton’s opus appeared between the publication of the Jones’s second and third volumes, something Jones himself comments on with regret, although he was able to revise the third volume in light of Edgerton’s work.²⁰ Edgerton for his part laments that he was not able to take advantage even of the first volume of

¹⁹ Max Müller, *The First Book of the Hitopadeśa, containing the Sanskrit text, with interlinear transliteration, grammatical analysis, and English translation*. Handbooks for the Study of Sanskrit I (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, & Green, 1864): vi: “The fourth line supplies an English interlinear translation. As far as possible each Sanskrit word is here rendered by an English word, the succession of words in Sanskrit being preserved throughout in English. Any attempt at English idiom was out of the question; yet it is hoped that, by the help of the grammatical analysis, this English transvocalization (*sit venia verbo*) may be intelligible and useful to a diligent student.”

²⁰ III.xiii, n. 1.

Jones's work as much as he would have wished.²¹ This is all very gentlemanly, but it also highlights a circumstance from which, I believe, we can stand to learn something. For Edgerton's work did not appear in a vacuum, and especially his grammar was preceded by many published studies dating back at least to 1936.²² To judge by the notes accompanying his translation, Jones made very little use of previous scholarship, be it by Edgerton or by the many other scholars who had wrestled with the *Mahāvastu* before him, giants such as Hermann Oldenberg, Ernst Windisch, and so on.²³ This is no doubt due to some extent to his isolation, and he mentions in his first volume that he lacked access to most relevant sources with the exception of those published by the Pali Text Society. But there is probably something more to it. A peek at Jones's correspondence might shed some light on this.²⁴

On Dec. 4th 1934 Jones wrote in a letter, apparently to Caroline Augusta Foley Rhys Davids, then president of the Pali Text Society, that he sent her his translation “for what it is worth.” Very carefully he states: “It is for others to decide the measure of my success, but I hope it will be borne in mind that this is the first attempt at original work on the part of one who is entirely self-taught in the language. May I also say that an adverse verdict will not at all damp the enthusiasm for Buddhist studies which your kind interest has kindled in me.” He adds a P.S. “As I regard this translation as a test I have striven to be literal and made no attempt at poetic form.” These very same sentiments are repeated in the Foreword to the first volume of his translation, published fifteen years later.

On 17 December 1934 Mrs. Rhys Davids wrote back to Jones: “William Stede sent a note: ‘Translation offered by Mr. Jones: The translation is not accurate enough. The translator has not grasped the exact meaning of a good deal of what he has translated. His knowledge of grammar is insufficient, often he has missed the construction of a sentence and in many cases translated a word wrongly. It would take too long to go into detail here, but if Mr. Jones wishes, I am ready to give analysis of passages in question. The translation, as it stands, is not suitable for publication.’” Perhaps immediately upon receiving this letter, on 20 Dec. 1934, Jones wrote to Mrs. Rhys Davids: “I thank you very much for your kind encouragement which largely mitigated the severity of Dr. Stede's criticism of my translation.” And as he records, again in the Foreword to his first

²¹ Franklin Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953): xxvi: “The first volume of Jones's translation ... appeared, to my regret, too late to be much used (I received it in 1950).” In a letter of Jones to C. A. F. Rhys Davids of June 21, 1939, Jones obliquely refers to his failure to receive help even from Edgerton, writing: “I am really discouraged at not being able to secure somebody's helpful interest in my work. It is possible, however, that Prof. Edgerton's help will yet be forthcoming.” This demonstrates that Jones tried to solicit Edgerton's input. Edgerton's comment, in this respects, appears to have been somewhat disingenuous.

²² “The Prakrit underlying Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies* (University of London) 8 (1936): 501-516. Jones in fact quotes this very paper in the Foreword to his first volume (pp. x-xi), although he has its author at Harvard rather than Yale.

²³ Both of these names do however appear in the Foreword to Jones's third volume. For a now outdated bibliography, see that published by Yuyama noted above n. 10.

²⁴ I have not seen these letters, and rely on the transcripts very kindly provided by M. Meelen. It would additionally be interesting to examine the papers of Mrs. Rhys Davids, kept at Cambridge (see <http://www.ames.cam.ac.uk/faclib/archive/rhys.html#cafrd>). Box RD J/6/23 contains correspondence with William Stede between 1914 and 1941. There is no mention in this online catalogue of the name Jones as one of her correspondents.

volume, his translation was undertaken at Mrs. Rhys Davids's request.

We must notice the date of this correspondence, namely 1934, fully fifteen years before the appearance of the first volume of Jones's translation. In his Foreword, Jones thanks Mrs. Rhys Davids, William Stede, C. A. Rylands, and Prof. (not yet Sir) Harold Bailey, for their help. But Jones saves his most profound thanks for I. B. Horner, and Jones's archive contains a large number of her letters, a study of which will no doubt repay the effort to visit Aberystwyth and examine them. These scholars whom Jones thanks provided much needed support, both linguistic and moral, for Jones's great undertaking. What they do not seem to have encouraged, and we may speculate is related to the motive behind Jones's translation to begin with, is reference to secondary scholarship, and this absence is a trait that Jones shares with his mentor Ms. Horner.

I quoted Ms. Horner a few moments ago as writing of Jones that "he has not failed to discuss a single textual, linguistic or doctrinal problem in his felicitous and revealing Introductions and footnotes." With all due respect both to the enormous work Jones brought to completion and to Ms. Horner's invisible hand behind at least some of it, I beg to differ. Jones either often fails to discuss textual, linguistic or doctrinal problems, or he failed to recognize them as problems to begin with. Part of the reason for this may be that he appears to have placed a rather great amount of trust in Senart's edition. Of course, I hasten to add, without any sarcasm intended, that he had absolutely no choice; to have done otherwise would effectively have meant to abandon the project. But one does notice that he rarely takes recourse to readings treated by Senart as variants, and in this sense he trusts Senart's printed text, with all of its conjectures, too much.²⁵ Still, there are good reasons why we remain without reliable English translations or even editions of such fundamental works as the *Lalitavistara* or even the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā sūtra*, namely that the philological groundwork responsible scholars recognize to be necessary before such work could be undertaken in good faith is simply overwhelming. The Japanese scholar Hokazono Kōichi in 1994 began a reedition of the former text, earlier edited quite unsatisfactorily by Salomon Lefmann in 1902, but gave up half-way through, and no one has dared tackle the latter, the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*, since the editio princeps was published by Rājendra Lāla Mitra in 1888. At the very same moment that we recognize the difficulties of such tasks, we must think to ourselves, to radically misquote the sage Hillel: if we don't do it now, when will be the time? Who will do it?

In this respect, it is educational to call to mind one of the greatest works of modern Buddhist Studies, the French translation of Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa* published by Louis de la Vallée Poussin between 1923 and 1931.²⁶ In La Vallée Poussin's day, the Sanskrit of this text had not yet been discovered, and his translation is based, in the first place, on Xuanzang's Chinese translation, with which he compared principally the Sanskrit commentary by Yaśomitra, the *Abhidharmakośavyākhyā*, the Chinese translation by Paramārtha, the Tibetan translation of Vasubandhu's work, and the massive commentary called **Abhidharma-Mahāvibhāṣā*. One shudders to think what a nasty philological reviewer would make of such a hodge-podge today, such a conflation of

²⁵ I owe this observation to a private comment by Vincent Tournier.

²⁶ Louis de La Vallée Poussin, *L'Abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu* (Paris: Geuthner, 1923–1931; Reprint, *Mélanges chinois et bouddhiques* 16, Bruselles: Institut Belge des hautes Études Chinoises, 1971).

diverse materials in which, moreover, all too often the source is translated not into French, but into Sanskrit. It is frequently not possible to take La Vallée Poussin's translation and match it up exactly with any single one of his sources. And yet. And yet, there is no doubt that this translation, with its extensive annotations, is one of the masterpieces of modern Buddhist Studies, one of the greatest monuments to the study of Buddhist scholasticism ever produced. This does not mean that La Vallée Poussin's translation should not be redone in light of now available Sanskrit sources—it should, and it is in fact being redone, save that the most reliable translation now available is done into Japanese, which is not very accessible to most non-Japanese scholars. (I may parenthetically note that the English translation of La Vallée Poussin's French was, with the exception of the fact that references to Chinese texts were converted to the now standard Taishō edition, a step in the wrong direction.) It is a pity that Jones did not take much advantage of this summa, nor of La Vallée Poussin's many other contributions. Although, perhaps needless to say, Jones does not mention the available scholarship of which he chose *not* to avail himself, in other respects he was well aware of the limitations of his own work, and he refers once again to his mentor Mrs. Rhys Davids in avowing on the first page of his first volume that “if subsequent work on linguistic and textual criticism wrought so many changes in the text that a fresh translation would become necessary, this pioneering effort at a first translation would not be wasted.” One cannot but agree wholeheartedly, both with the humility and with the implicit call for both a new edition and a new translation, while at the same time rueing the undeniable fact that Jones made much less good use of already available work on work on linguistic and textual criticism than he might have.

Senart's edition, made at the very dawn of the scientific study of Indian Buddhist literature, is, like La Vallée Poussin's, although for quite different reasons, also a master work, truly a monument to scholarship. One cannot praise it highly enough. That it marks, however, the beginning of a scholarly enterprise, not the end, is, despite Jones's just quoted words from his Foreword, not very evident in the body of Jones's work. If he does not advert to the secondary scholarship on the *Mahāvastu*, then, to the body of work that illustrates, inter alia and in a piecemeal fashion, to be sure, how much progress can now be made, what Jones does refer to in his notes, and amply so, are Pāli sources.

As I mentioned a moment ago, in part this emphasis on Pāli to the exclusion of other materials is an artifact of the access, or rather lack of access, he had to such materials.²⁷ But I think there might be, once again, more to it. For although I. B. Horner surely had access to the fruits at least of German, French and American scholarship, the notes in her own translations almost never refer to secondary sources; when they do, these are almost always English. In Jones's case, as I am sure in Miss Horner's too, this is not due, as it is so often in English language scholarship today, to ignorance of the relevant languages. I dare say that J. J. Jones may have been able to read even more languages than the legendary J. W. de Jong, who was well known for his linguistic prowess. Why, then, the focus on Pāli? While it is hard to say here which is the chicken and which the egg, I wonder if at least part of what lies behind this choice might not be connected with several

²⁷ See vol II, p. x.

of the statements we find in Jones’s Foreword. When referring to the sources of some of the stories in the text, he wrote : “The *Mahāvagga* and the *Jātakas* are far from being the only parts of the Pali scriptures which are to be found incorporated in the *Mahāvastu*, or, we should more correctly say, which have their parallels in it.”²⁸ Moreover, in the Foreword to his second volume, Jones wrote that: “the comparative study of the *Mahāvastu*, as of other Buddhist texts, must proceed from the assumption that both Pali and Sanskrit texts preserve as a fixed core a very primitive tradition. This tradition, whether written or spoken, was originally preserved in a language closely related to, but not wholly identical with, either Pali or Buddhist Sanskrit.”²⁹ Let us remember when we read this that Jones wrote it in 1951, before the publication of Edgerton’s *Grammar and Dictionary*, although to be sure Edgerton and others had expressed similar opinions already earlier. Finally, in the Foreword to his third volume, in which he expresses his great appreciation for Edgerton’s work, he writes: “it cannot be assumed that all the Prakrit or Middle Indic dialects of the Buddha’s time have left records or traces behind them, and difficulties of vocabulary or grammatical forms may sometimes be due to our ignorance of a lost dialect to which they belonged.”³⁰ In regard, then, to the issue of the languages of the Indian Buddhist traditions, Jones got it exactly right: we simply cannot say much about what forms of language a text or parts of texts may have gone through without careful, painstaking work. And he is also right that one of the best guides, if not the best available guide, if only in terms of the comprehensiveness of the extant corpus, is texts preserved in Pāli.³¹ But this acceptance of a special status for Pāli is not the same thing as asserting, as Jones does, that the doctrinal content of Theravāda teachings is very close to that of the *Mahāvastu*.³² In any event, if we accept, along with Jones, that extant early literature represents reworkings of yet earlier but now lost materials, we must consider both the form of what we have now and its putative earlier form in order to approach a correct understanding.

The *sine qua non* for such work is careful accounting of all available sources, something which, it is somewhat distressing to say, has yet to be undertaken even for the Pāli materials themselves, for which we continue to use the pioneering but avowedly tentative editions of the Pali Text Society. Ever since the publication of Senart’s remarkable edition, however, scholars have paid considerable attention to the *Mahāvastu*, or at least to its language. How much of our image of this language is due to the published edition and how much to the true nature of the text—the unitary existence of which is itself a problematic idea—remains a much debated question. But one thing is sure: the availability of manuscripts not accessible to Senart should change our picture of this text, often considerably. This much is evident especially from the earliest known

²⁸. Vol. I, p. xiv.

²⁹. II.x.

³⁰. III.xvii.

³¹. I might mention, on a less serious note, that Jones and I share an interest in Pali, though perhaps for different reasons; *pali* is a Welsh word for *silk*, a loan from an Old French form of *paille*, according to M. Meelen.

³². As V. Tournier expresses it, in a private communication, “When Jones says (vol. I, p. xii), that: ‘apart from the special tenets of the Lokottaravādins these [*sūtras* of the *Mvu*] show hardly any variation from recognised Theravādin teaching,’ he could not be more wrong.”

manuscript of the text, published in an excellently legible facsimile in 2001 by Akira Yuyama. This source contains readings often demonstrably better than those recorded by Senart, even in his variants which, it must be said, are a far from comprehensive record of the manuscript tradition—because, again, to have attempted to prepare such an edition would have been tantamount to renouncing the realistic completion of the project, the more so since it has been usual for scholars toiling on such projects to do so alone. The necessity of taking recourse to manuscripts raises a point long discussed with central reference to the pioneering work of Edgerton, namely that he worked—as he too could not avoid doing—from printed editions. These editions were themselves the work of editors who often either did not well understand the nature of their materials, or had access only to inadequate sources, or both. Edgerton and Jones, as Senart their great forerunner, no doubt made the very best of what they had. But in many cases, standing upon their shoulders, we can now do better.

Although the approaches may differ somewhat, it may be helpful to think for a moment of the translations of Buddhist works increasingly published not by professional academics but by—what shall we call them?—enthusiastic amateurs. For in many respects, this is precisely what Jones was, self-taught in Pāli and Sanskrit as in Indology and Buddhist Studies, just as at least some of today’s enthusiastic amateurs are admirably well prepared for their tasks, although their goals may be far from those of soi-disant disinterested scholarship. The standpoint of the translator, and of the imagined audience of the translation, has manifold implications for the aimed-at result, just as does the decision *where* to publish. Questions such as just what sort of annotation is appropriate, and how much of it, can shape the entire presentation, and hence reception, of a translation. But perhaps more importantly, stepping back one pace, we should consider who is involved in the production of a translation.

Sir William Jones resided for the latter part of his short life in India and was guided, as many after him, by native informants. While there are serious questions concerning the authoritative standing of a modern pandit qua informant with respect to an ancient text, there is no question that there existed and still exist genuine Indian traditions of learning, in grammar, in law, in literature and theatre, and so on, namely in the fields of most interest to Sir William Jones. The same is true in different ways for some traditions of Pāli literature, for which there are living lineages of study in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia, although how continuous and traditional they have been is, as with the pandits, another question. Since we know that such native scholars have been involved at the very least with English scholarship on Buddhism for a very long time, we cannot help but suspect that the contributions of some of these native scholars have not always been as well acknowledged as we might think proper. For a text like the *Mahāvastu*, however, which has no surviving tradition, and hence no native informant, what can be done? Or turning this question around somewhat, and casting it *mutatis mutandis* in another contemporary context: are translations of Tibetan texts produced together with native informants—not even to mention translations of Indian texts made with the assistance of such scholars—inherently more reliable, or more traditional even—as if we really know what that might mean—than those produced by non-native scholars? Given the inherent judgmentalism in such a question, let us set it aside and ask instead: Who should, even ideally, participate in the translation of a text?

Jones's experience leads us, I think, to one answer. To abuse the expression made famous by Hillary Clinton, it takes a village to translate a text. Jones's virtual village was populated by the likes of William Stede and I. B. Horner, and his letters and Forewords show that he deeply appreciated their guidance. I believe that all work will benefit from this sort of approach. Indeed, it is clearly the experience of those now studying the earliest known Buddhist literature, the texts in Gāndhārī recently discovered in Afghanistan and environs, that two—or seven or ten—heads are infinitely better than one. Those of us who study texts are accustomed to sitting by ourselves, publishing papers under a single name, but perhaps we should in this respect think a bit more like natural scientists, and experiment with working in teams. Or, we might learn more directly from Jones, but modernize his lesson: our virtual village can now, thanks to Skype or similar technologies, extend around the globe instantaneously. I have had the delightful experience for some years now of reading texts with colleagues spread across the globe. One problem Jones faced in his isolation is that he was not able to discuss his work easily with others, although thankfully for us, he was an energetic letter writer, as I remarked above. Unless we are lucky enough to live in one of the few places in the world with a concentration of others interested in the same arcana as we are, most of us also will be deprived, most of the time, of this experience of close and sustained proximity to colleagues interested in similar things. While I don't know the first thing about John James Jones's personality, I would like to think that he would have welcomed the type of opportunities available to us now for joint work, whether those who join with us are other arm-chair bound scholars scattered in the far corners of the globe, or perchance monastics equally widely distributed, but who would nevertheless be willing to share their familiarity with the wealth of Buddhist traditions with us.

John James Jones was born nearly a century after the death of Sir William Jones, and we are here today a bit more than half a century after his own death. Much has changed even in these last fifty years, but this span, just as the gap between the two Joneses, is a mere blink of an eye when set beside the ages which have passed since the composition of the ancient Indian literatures for which we all share a passion. Sir William Jones and John James Jones both worked tirelessly to bring to a world far distant in time and place some of the wealth of ancient Indian culture. Let us learn from their examples as we strive to carry on their legacies.

Appendix

A problematic verse in the *Mahāvastu* concludes the discussion between the monk Maudgalyāyana and a god, formerly the horse Kaṅṭhaka, the noble steed who carried the future Buddha from his palace, thereafter died of grief and attained divine rebirth for his merits. The verse is printed by Senart as follows: (Mv II.195,1-2):

tasmim cittaṃ prasādetha dakṣiṇīyeṣu tādṛśaṃ |
paśyati rakṣabhūtena karmaṃ upacitaṃ śubhaṃ |

Jones (II.186) translated as follows:

Set your hearts on him who is outstanding among those deserving of offerings. Thus it is seen that a fair karma was accumulated by one who was merely a horse.

Jones offered two notes, the second of which is relevant here.³³ It concerns *rakṣabhūtena*, “by one who was merely a horse.” Here Jones wrote: “Adopting Senart’s conjecture that *rakṣabhūtena* (= by a rakṣa or rākṣasa) should be changed to *aśvabhūtena*.” Jones should have noticed, however, that *paśyati* is not passive, and thus his “is seen” is impossible: something must be wrong.

This volume of Senart’s edition was published in 1890. 22 years later, Hendrik Kern published a short paper in the *Indogermanische Forschungen* which evidently escaped Jones’s attention.³⁴ Here Kern proposed that the verse’s second line be read: *paśya tirakṣabhūtena karmaṃ upacitaṃ śubhaṃ*, suggesting that *tirakṣabhūta* is a “failed Sanskritization” of Prakrit *tiracchabhūta*, with which he compared Pāli *tiracchūna* [rather *tiracchāna*] and Sanskrit *tiryāñc*, *tiryagyona*, and so on. (V. Tournier points out that the word regularly used to refer to animals in the *Mahāvastu* is *tiracchāna*, which occurs six times. He speculates that the word *tiraccha-* is a variant of a more common *tiracchāna*, probably for metrical reasons.) Kern translated the line “Sieh! (wie) ein Tier Lohn einer guten Handlung sich erworben (eig. gesammelt) hat.” That is: “Look! (like) an animal has acquired (lit. collected) the reward of a good action.” He went on: “The variant reading in [manuscript] C is curious: *paśyantiratnacchatrabhūtena*. One needs only to drop the syllables *ma*, *tra* and the *n* of *paśyanti* and one sees the old good reading *paśya tiracchabhūtena*.” (Senart printed the variant in Roman letters as: *paśyanti ratnacchatrabhūtena karmopaücittaṃ [read°opacittaṃ] śubhaṃ*, the spacing perhaps again prejudicing the reading.)

³³ To the word *tādṛśaṃ*, which he translated “outstanding,” Jones wrote: “We should expect the locative *tādṛśe* in apposition to *tasmin*. Senart renders *tādṛśaṃ*, ‘comme moi,’ i.e. as a sort of adverbial accusative, but this would seem to leave *dakṣiṇīyeṣu* without syntactical connexion with the rest of the sentence. The accusative word may plausibly be explained as due to the distance between it and the word to which it is in apposition, the indirect object coming to be felt as a direct object.”

³⁴ H. Kern, “Deutung einer missverstandenen Stelle im Mahāvastu,” *Indogermanische Forschungen* 31 (1912/1913): 194-197.

In 2001 Akira Yuyama published photographs of the oldest known manuscript of the *Mahāvastu*. The verse in question is contained in this manuscript (Sa) as follows (176a3):³⁵

tasmim cittaṃ prasādeṭha dakṣiṇīyeṣu tādr̥ṣaṃ |
paśya tiracchabhūtena³⁶ karmopacitaṃ śubhaṃ |

Kern’s conjectures about the second half of the verse are fully confirmed by this manuscript.³⁷ The word *tiracchabhūta* appears to be attested in Pāli, although perhaps only once, in the commentary to the *Dīghanikāya*, as pointed out by *The Pali Text Society’s Pali-English Dictionary*.³⁸ It should be noted that the sense of °*bhūta* here remains unclear.

Concerning the first half of the verse, Harunaga Isaacson offers the tentative suggestion that one either read *tādr̥ṣaḥ* instead of *tādr̥ṣaṃ* or understand the latter as neuter for masculine, and at any rate take the word as a nominative. Furthermore, the two halves of the line should be seen as syntactically separate. We then arrive—with considerable hesitation—at something like the following:

You all should believe in him! Such a one is among those deserving of offerings. Look! [Even] while a [mere] animal [I] accumulated [by devotion to him such] lovely karma [which resulted in divine rebirth]!

³⁵ In MS Sb (174b6) we find: *tasmim cittaṃ prasādeṭha dakṣiṇīyeṣu tādr̥ṣaṃ | paśya tiracchabhūtena karmopacitaṃ śubhaṃ |*

³⁶ Here the akṣaras *pa śya ti* are written in small letters, the importance of which is however not entirely clear.

³⁷ His idea about the first half of the verse is, however, a bit less solid; he suggested that *tasmim* be read instead *tasmā*, which is not confirmed. He understood the half verse as follows: “Darum habe man im Geiste Wohlgefallen an solchen Verehrungswürdigen!” That is, “Therefore one takes pleasure in his mind’s eye in such beings worthy of reverence.”

³⁸ s.v. *tiraccha*. See now Margaret Cone, *A Dictionary of Pāli II* (Bristol: The Pali Text Society, 2010), s.v. *tiraccha*, in which *tiracchabhūta* is rendered ‘being across; being sideways to,’ but under *tiraccānabhūta* she offers ‘being an animal; as an animal.’