

Buddhakṣetrapariśodhana

A Festschrift for Paul Harrison

Edited by

Charles DiSimone and Nicholas Witkowski



BUDDHAKṢETRAPARIŚODHANA

INDICA ET TIBETICA

MONOGRAPHIEN ZU DEN SPRACHEN UND LITERATUREN
DES INDO-TIBETISCHEN KULTURRAUMES

Begründet von
Michael Hahn

Herausgegeben von
Jürgen Hanneder, Jens-Uwe Hartmann,
Konrad Klaus und Roland Steiner

Band 63

Indica et Tibetica Verlag
Marburg 2024

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Signet: Ein Mönch, durch Abhirati wandernd (Foto: Christian Luczanits)

Gedruckt mit einem Zuschuß vom Gustav-Roth-Fonds.

Bibliographische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über <http://dnb.dnb.de> abrufbar.

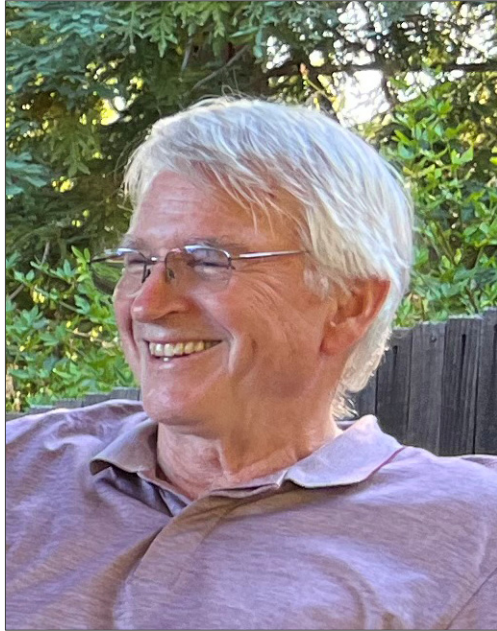
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Satz: Charles DiSimone, Nicholas Witkowski, Mitsuyo Demoto
Verlag: Indica et Tibetica Verlag, Lindenstraße 24A, 35287 Amöneburg
Druck & Bindung: Libri Plureos GmbH, Friedensallee 273, 22763 Hamburg

Auf FSC® (Lizenzcode: C105338)-zertifiziertem Papier gedruckt.

ISSN 0723-3337

ISBN 978-3-923776-70-2



Paul Harrison in his garden (July 2023)

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Preface

Dr. Paul M. Harrison, George Edwin Burnell Professor of Religious Studies at Stanford University, has devoted his entire career to the field of Buddhist Studies. What began as a deeply personal journey to understand the great texts of the Buddhist faith has—over the course of over five decades—become a powerfully influential public legacy. This volume, comprised of contributions by twenty-nine of Paul's friends, students, and colleagues is a testament to the bonds of friendship and scholarship that span the globe. From New Zealand and Australia to Asia, Europe and the Americas, Paul's network of scholarly camaraderie has come together to celebrate a life dedicated to the field of Buddhist Studies and to the preservation and study of the diverse textual and lived traditions of the Buddhist world.

This journey began with Paul's participation in a YMCA-sponsored program as one of the first high school students from New Zealand to live and study in Tokyo. Although Paul would not begin his training in Buddhist philology for some years, this immersive experience in the Japanese language, the sights and sounds of Tokyo in the late 1960's, illuminated an array of possible paths into the cultures of East Asia. Paul would go on to complete his BA and MA in Chinese at the University of Auckland. It was during his training as a doctoral student at the University of Canberra under the tutelage of the famed Dutch Indologist Jan Willem de Jong that Paul turned his attention toward South Asian Buddhisms, culminating in a critical edition of the Tibetan text of the *Pratyutpannabuddhasammukhāvasthitasamādhisūtra* (1978). After a brief stint teaching at the University of Auckland, Paul would go on to spend twenty-two years at the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, serving first as a lecturer and continuing on to professor (1983–2005). In 2007, Paul and his wife, Irene, relocated to Stanford where they worked tirelessly together to build one of the most important centers for Buddhist Studies in the world. Over the course of his career, Paul has assumed innumerable responsibilities in institutions across the globe. In particular, he has held visiting positions at Hamburg, Kyoto (Otani), Leiden, Seattle, Tokyo, Oxford, and London (SOAS).

This volume is no less a tribute to Paul's intimidatingly brilliant scholarship than it is a heart-felt appreciation of his generosity of spirit, seemingly infinite patience, and a keen wit that disarms as it charms. Paul's influence is palpable everywhere in Buddhist Studies and so the course of the discipline has been forever changed because of Paul's patient, guiding hand: from his leader-

ship in revolutionizing our understanding of the Mahāyāna to his innovative work on Buddhist textual transmissions from their Indic origins to China and beyond, from his exciting collaborations integrating philology with Buddhist art history to conscientious stewardship over the manuscripts of the Schøyen collection. Paul's many publications over the decades have set the bar for what we in Buddhist Studies can aspire to. His critical editions, translations, textual studies, as well as his daring historical and sociological work are adventurous in vision and yet meticulous in execution. In the seminar room, Paul has modeled a vision of Buddhist Studies that encourages students to dive deeply into to the culturally-specific philology of the text at hand, while refusing any methodological orthodoxy that would foreclose the scholar's deeper understanding of the world behind the text. Indeed, one might go so far as to say that it is this rare quality of resistance to prevailing orthodoxies that has provided Paul with the enviable capacity to continually clear his palate of methodological clutter and return to the text once again (and again). Paul Harrison is, himself, an institution within Buddhist Studies—a pillar that not only continues to support the entire edifice, but upon whose shoulders those of us engaged in this work feel free to build further knowing the foundation is secure.

The title of this volume deploys transformative language central to the Mahāyāna to celebrate Paul's trailblazing role in the field of Buddhist Studies. *Buddhakṣetrapariśodhana*, meaning "purification of the buddha-fields," (or "buddha-domains" as Paul would now translate it) was selected for two reasons. First, Paul's mode of reading and teaching functions as an opening up of the space of imagination for his colleagues and students alike, paving the way for a direct encounter with the world of the text. Second, Paul's innumerable administrative roles over the decades have generated institutional spaces in which scholars can gather together for these exhaustive and exhilarating encounters. Paul has remained committed to the purification of the many fields within the big tent that is Buddhist Studies. Like the buddha-fields of Amitābha, Akṣobhya, our own Gautama, and the innumerable buddhas of the past, future, and present described within Buddhist works, the domain within Buddhist Studies that Paul has cultivated is a vibrant performance space, where the drama of the text is enacted having been purified by his immaculate research the light of which has illuminated those previously dark corners of this intellectual *lokadhātu* we all find ourselves within. In Paul's Pure Lands, the performance of reading is undertaken according to the disciplined rhythms of grammar, metaphor, and the intertextual riffs across which the careful reader cascades to ever more felicitous, and even poetic, renderings of Buddhist dharma.

Paul's work has been at the very center of the scholarly movement to rethink the history of the Mahāyāna. There are few textual traditions within Buddhist Studies with origins less understood and more vexing in their interpretation than those of the Mahāyāna. Heretofore, unraveling the textual and historical threads of these traditions has been difficult because of the continuing influence of previous scholarship by some keen to promote an ideologically driven conception of this tradition so central to East Asian societies. Paul's interpretations of the Mahāyāna have radically transformed our conception of the movement. He has shown that the Mahāyāna is as visionary as it is labyrinthine, a peculiar combination that has challenged even the most seasoned Buddhologist. This is Paul's Mahāyāna, and it reflects a transformation not only in Buddhist Studies but one that can be noted across the humanities, a rethinking of religion that has taken anthropology as seriously as textual study, magic as seriously as meditation, and social positionality as seriously as metaphysics. Paul's Mahāyāna is both a product of his attentiveness to radical changes in the humanities over the past fifty years and his uncanny capacity to never succumb to the excesses of contemporary academic vogues. Throughout his career, Paul's scholarly voice has been singularly powerful in its resonant lion's roar to force both the scholarly and practitioner communities to move beyond platitudes when speaking about the Mahāyāna. In essence, Paul is a true buddhologist's buddhologist and there is no one within this discipline who has not benefitted from his purification of the field of Buddhist Studies.

This volume has been some time coming with the seeds of it being planted as far back as 2018. In that span we have seen a number of expected and quite unexpected events including a global pandemic that has touched each of the contributors and of course the world in ways that will not be fully reconciled for years to come, new jobs and their resulting relocations across continents, health issues both minor and major along with ensuing recoveries, the joyous birth of children, and the tragic passing of friends who had journeyed with us along the way in life including one who had planned to join this volume, Stefano Zacchetti, who is sorely missed. Through all of this our group of conspirators and comrades remained patiently dedicated to the plan to create this volume through thick and thin including, we should note, Adeana McNicholl, who unfortunately had to withdraw her contribution at the last moment due to intractable copyright problems. To this end we must thank each of the contributors. It is clear that all of these fine folk have a warmth in their heart for Paul where he has touched their lives positively. In turn we have been touched by each contributor and this experience has given us a valuable opportunity to

experience the gamut of the human condition spanning nadir to zenith. As the Buddha recommends to bodhisattvas within the *Prajñāpāramitā*: one should view their colleagues in the Mahāyāna as their teachers, as if they were the Buddha themselves. We have been fortunate enough to view our friends and colleagues contributing to this volume in this light and we thank them not only for their contributions but also for this enlightening experience.

The only thing we asked of the contributors was that they present a piece that Paul might find of some interest, and we hope that this guiding ambition has been achieved. The contributors are an eclectic group stationed across this Earth and arising upon it across a number of decades within this past century. Their contributions surely put this on display. We had hoped to make this volume a surprise, but unfortunately Paul found out fairly quickly, which is not at all surprising given his standing at the center of our academic discipline. Nonetheless, we did not wish to involve him in the preparation of a volume in his honor and were able to obtain various items such as the picture of Paul in 2023 provided by Kazunobu Matsuda, and inside information from Irene Lin who, naturally knowing Paul better than us all, was able to provide biographical details and kindly shared the bibliography of his work over the years that we happily include in this volume. Christian Luczanits searched his vast collection of photographs for a suitable image for the cover. We settled upon the image you see of a monk fittingly traversing the lush, forested gardens of Abhirati from the Alchi Dukhang. We must also thank Jens-Uwe Hartmann and Mitsuyo Demoto-Hahn of the Indica et Tibetica Verlag for arranging the publication of this volume. Mitsuyo worked with us with kindness and tireless vigor to produce what we hope is an attractive volume. We have no doubt that we can speak not only for ourselves but for all of our fellow contributors in saying that this volume is but a small token of our heartfelt gratitude towards Paul honoring the innumerable ways he has positively touched not only the discipline we all care for so deeply, but also the lives of every single one of us as a teacher, mentor, critic, colleague, and most of all friend, for a true friend plays all of these roles as Paul so excellently has. We can only aspire to be friends to others and to the field following the example he has set.

Ghent, October 2024

Charles DiSimone & Nicholas Witkowski