Konrad Meisig (Ed.)

Translating Buddhist Chinese
Problems and Prospects

Harrassowitz Verlag

East Asia Intercultural Studies

Interkulturelle Ostasienstudien 3
East Asia Intercultural Studies
Interkulturelle Ostasienstudien

Edited by/Herausgegeben von
Konrad Meisig

2010
Harrassowitz Verlag · Wiesbaden
Translating Buddhist Chinese
Problems and Prospects
Edited by Konrad Meisig

2010
Harrassowitz Verlag · Wiesbaden
Preface

Competent research on the early history of the Buddhist canon can no longer afford to neglect the Chinese tradition which stands more often than not independent from the Indic sources. The comparison of these Chinese parallels with their Indian counterparts is an indispensable, if not the only possible way to reliably reconstruct the beginnings of Buddhist religion and literature.

On 4th–5th July 2008, the Institute of Indology and the Study and Research Unit Buddhist Chinese (‘Arbeitsgruppe Buddhistisches Chinesisch’) of the Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz organized an international workshop on Translating Buddhist Chinese: Problems and Prospects. Having invited international experts, the workshop focused on central aspects of Chinese Buddhist philology, linguistics, history of redactions, and history of literature, in order to assert today’s state of research, its pressing problems, and promising prospects.


The present volume presents the papers of the workshop, expanded by a few additional contributions, among others an English translation (being the result of our joint efforts in January 2009) of Kang Senghui’s Chinese rendering of the Sudhanāvadāna. This translation is part of the research project Sudhanāvadāna: Chinese and Khotanese Versions, in Comparison with Sanskrit and Tibetan Texts under the direction of PD Dr. habil. Almuth Degener, Institute of Indology Mainz, sponsored by the German Research Council (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, DFG).

For publication the articles have been arranged alphabetically.

The workshop was generously financed by the Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz.

Mainz, April 2010

Konrad Meisig
Collaborative Edition and Translation Projects in the Era of Digital Text

Marcus Bingenheimer

Abstract

This paper explores two main issues: The role of repetition, considered in context of the media of transmission, and the role of collaboration in translation projects of scale. The perspective is that of digital text, a relatively recent development, which nevertheless stands to change many of the practices currently associated with the production, translation and preservation of texts.

The first section starts with an illustration of how the presentation of a text influences the research questions asked. In the second section, we try to clarify the role of the medium by looking at how the phenomenon of repetition in Buddhist texts has fared. In the third section we outline the history of collaboration in translation projects, while in section four we present a case study to illustrate how information technology helps with a collaborative project in the modern era. Section five summarizes the findings and asserts the novelty of digital text.

1. Presenting Translations

Consider the following translations of a short sutra from the Shorter Chinese Saṃyukta Agama (T. 100).

如是我聞一時 Thus have I heard: Once the Thus have I heard one time, the 佛陀 was staying at the country of She-wei, in the at the Jeta Grove in the Anā-Qi-shu park of the Giver to those in need.

如是聞一時 Thus have I heard: At that time a deity approached one time a deva came to the enlightened One, radiant, Buddha, majestic and dazzling shining, awe-inspiring, of great in his brilliance, impressive in
Another scholarly move, motivated by the Pāli terms in the second English translation, might be to see if there is an Indian original or parallel that would allow us to verify these terms. Here the reader would be disappointed. To our knowledge there is no Pāli parallel for this particular sutra.

Presentation and translation-style suggest particular questions. Our questions are, not wholly, but certainly in part, inspired by what we see.

Imagine now that these texts are part of a database. The presentation of the text is mediated through an interface that the user can manipulate in certain ways, but is nevertheless always limited – the interface might for example allow a maximum of two texts to be viewed at the same time. This would make it difficult to assess the merits of the two English versions against the Chinese. On the other hand the interface might provide us with additional information on individual terms. Hovering over the word gāthā we would learn when the word was first translated as 傾, be shown a list of synonyms, or perhaps the interface might tell us if the term – in this context – appears in any Sanskrit fragments.

The broader questions here concern how database interfaces should be designed to facilitate research, and whether researchers are able to ask new questions and succeed with projects that were impossible before. Are digital tools more than simply a library in the computer which merely saves time spent looking things up? Or are there academically relevant questions that we have not yet learned to ask, because we neither had the tools nor the training to pose them? More specifically, this paper discusses how in the case of Buddhist literature the medium of transmission has influenced certain stylistic features of the text itself. From there we will discuss the role of collaboration in Buddhist translation and will demonstrate the application of digital tools to the translation process in a case study.

2. Repetition and Presentation

Translations are created by making choices, and good translations stick to the choices made throughout a text. All translators have experienced first hand how difficult it often is to follow through with one’s choices. Over time our impression of the text changes, and with it our preferred renderings for particular terms. Sometimes we find a better translation in the work of another scholar, and often it is difficult to remember how we rendered a certain word or phrase last week or year. Some of us keep glossaries of our preferred renderings, others consistently refer back to previously translated passages to see if meanings chosen then are still possible in the new context.

One of the most obvious stylistic features of the texts we have gathered to discuss – early Buddhist texts in Chinese translation – is that they contain an exceptional amount of repetitive material, especially stock-phrases. On the one hand these make it easier for us to navigate the texts, while on the other hand they oblige us to find a uniform translation for these aides mémoire of the early reciters. At times a scribe or translator might do away with the repetitions and substitute them
with a shorthand, resulting in the peyala, the naithi 乃字, found prominently in Agama literature. For many others this is an anathema for religious or scholarly reasons. This question regarding the economy of repetitions belongs to the central concern of this paper, i.e. how translations of Buddhist texts might look in the age of digital information. It is therefore useful to recapitulate some of the recent developments in Buddhist texts in relation to the medium by which these texts were transmitted.

At the stage of oral transmission the repetitions and stock-phrases were important devices to aid the successful memorization of large amounts of text. In sutra literature, mnemonic doggerels - uddhana - were inserted after groups of shorter sutras to split them into units in order to make sure no sutra was lost and the order of the unit was preserved. Another device employed by the early reciters (probably without being fully conscious of the fact) was the proliferation of similar word elements according the stylistic principle of waxing syllables. Still another artifact of the oral period found in some Abhidhammic texts is the presence of what L. Cousins calls mnemonic registers - lists of apparent synonyms that link sūtra passages with discussions in the exegetical literature.

All these useful devices - stock-phrases, uddhana, rhythmicization, and hidden links - were challenged when the transmission of the texts entered another phase. The introduction of writing gradually replaced the need to memorize large parts of the canon and freed the minds of scholar-monks for the pursuit of other pastimes - the writing of commentaries, for instance. As long as manuscripts were rare and literacy limited to a few learned members of the clergy, the mnemonic aids were still useful. In the long run, however, the wish to preserve every detail of the texts stylistics was to be dealt with:

The third [way in which the translation differs from the original]: The sūtras from the Western regions are long-winded. When recited they dangle along, not caring if they repeat themselves three or four times. Here we have to cut. This is the third deviation [that is made] from the original.

While some translators felt entitled to cut or add to the text for stylistic reasons, others translated more literally. Some translators, to the delight of today's textual scholars, translated every single bit of the original. There is a Turfan manuscript of what must have been the Pāli original of the Shorter Chinese Samyukta Āgama (T. 100), for instance, that did include the uddhāna for the text. These uddhāna were duly translated into Chinese and have helped to reconstruct the original order of a text that is presented in complete disarray in the Taishō edition. In the complete translation of the Samyukta Āgama (T. 99), however, only five uddhāna have remained, the others were probably lost when the order of the Samyukta Āgama was confused sometime between its translation (435-443) and 597 CE when it was first mentioned in a catalog. At one point it was decided to do away with what was obviously not part of the original text and had lost its raison d'être with the advent of writing.

As time went on, printing freed the textual transmission of the scribal, if not the stylistic, prejudice against repetition. Reduplication being at its heart, the printing process can multiply identical and longwinded passages easily - at least until the paper runs out. With printing the mnemonic aids finally became relics, fossils in the structure of the texts that a different audience now read with different expectations and habits. This produced a tension: the gatekeepers of tradition, out of anti-quarian or religious motivation, tend to conserve texts as closely as possible to their respective originals. However, by doing so they lose traction with their audience, in classical diction. Neither could the mnemonic registers employed in some Abhidhammic texts work in translation, because the terminology involved would have differed between translations.

Chinese translators reflected on these problems early on. Shi Daoan 释道安 (313-385) famously identified “Five ways in which the translation differs from the original” 勿使本末 昇頌不。 and “Three difficulties in translation (san bu yì 三不易)”. One of the problems was in how far the repetitiveness of the Indian Buddhist texts stylistics was to be dealt with:

The third [way in which the translation differs from the original]: The sūtras from the Western regions are long-winded. When recited they dangle along, not caring if they repeat themselves three or four times. Here we have to cut.

This is the third deviation [that is made] from the original.

While some translators felt entitled to cut or add to the text for stylistic reasons, others translated more literally. Some translators, to the delight of today’s textual scholars, translated every single bit of the original. There is a Turfan manuscript of what must have been the Pāli original of the Shorter Chinese Samyukta Āgama (T. 100), for instance, that did include the uddhāna for the text. These uddhāna were duly translated into Chinese and have helped to reconstruct the original order of a text that is presented in complete disarray in the Taishō edition. In the complete translation of the Samyukta Āgama (T. 99), however, only five uddhāna have remained, the others were probably lost when the order of the Samyukta Āgama was confused sometime between its translation (435-443) and 597 CE when it was first mentioned in a catalog. At one point it was decided to do away with what was obviously not part of the original text and had lost its raison d'être with the advent of writing.

As time went on, printing freed the textual transmission of the scribal, if not the stylistic, prejudice against repetition. Reduplication being at its heart, the printing process can multiply identical and longwinded passages easily - at least until the paper runs out. With printing the mnemonic aids finally became relics, fossils in the structure of the texts that a different audience now read with different expectations and habits. This produced a tension: the gatekeepers of tradition, out of anti-quarian or religious motivation, tend to conserve texts as closely as possible to their respective originals. However, by doing so they lose traction with their audience, in classical diction. Neither could the mnemonic registers employed in some Abhidhammic texts work in translation, because the terminology involved would have differed between translations.

Chinese translators reflected on these problems early on. Shi Daoan 释道安 (313-385) famously identified “Five ways in which the translation differs from the original” 勿使本末 昇頌不。 and “Three difficulties in translation (san bu yì 三不易)”. One of the problems was in how far the repetitiveness of the Indian Buddhist texts stylistics was to be dealt with:

The third [way in which the translation differs from the original]: The sūtras from the Western regions are long-winded. When recited they dangle along, not caring if they repeat themselves three or four times. Here we have to cut.

This is the third deviation [that is made] from the original.

While some translators felt entitled to cut or add to the text for stylistic reasons, others translated more literally. Some translators, to the delight of today’s textual scholars, translated every single bit of the original. There is a Turfan manuscript of what must have been the Pāli original of the Shorter Chinese Samyukta Āgama (T. 100), for instance, that did include the uddhāna for the text. These uddhāna were duly translated into Chinese and have helped to reconstruct the original order of a text that is presented in complete disarray in the Taishō edition. In the complete translation of the Samyukta Āgama (T. 99), however, only five uddhāna have remained, the others were probably lost when the order of the Samyukta Āgama was confused sometime between its translation (435-443) and 597 CE when it was first mentioned in a catalog. At one point it was decided to do away with what was obviously not part of the original text and had lost its raison d'être with the advent of writing.

As time went on, printing freed the textual transmission of the scribal, if not the stylistic, prejudice against repetition. Reduplication being at its heart, the printing process can multiply identical and longwinded passages easily - at least until the paper runs out. With printing the mnemonic aids finally became relics, fossils in the structure of the texts that a different audience now read with different expectations and habits. This produced a tension: the gatekeepers of tradition, out of anti-quarian or religious motivation, tend to conserve texts as closely as possible to their respective originals. However, by doing so they lose traction with their audience, in classical diction. Neither could the mnemonic registers employed in some Abhidhammic texts work in translation, because the terminology involved would have differed between translations.
which is increasingly literate, raised on different genres and whose reading habits change constantly.

Only five decades ago text started to be represented in electronic, digital fashion with the help of increasingly sophisticated machines. This difference in the representation of textual information has affected the way we communicate. The wider consequences of digital textuality for society and its sub-systems are impossible to predict, but in order to develop new tools for working with texts one needs to make reasonable assumptions. What features of the textual tradition fall away when text migrates from print into digital text, what others will arise instead? We assume that the pace will follow the jian 燕, it will vanish as an object in use and become a metrical unit. As text begins to be produced digitally, other means will have to be devised to refer to a passage in a text. Full text search is useful, but considering that the fluidity of texts will increase, we will need devices that combine a guarantee of data integrity with a time stamp. We need this to be sure that the source that pointed us to e.g. 如夢幻泡影  was working on a dataset equivalent to the one we are using in our search. In order to construct and reconstruct references and citations it must be possible to verify the identity of datasets. Tools that establish data integrity by performing various forms of checksums and cyclic redundancy checks will be part of our workbench like the ruler used to be. To future generations of textual scholars, “data integrity” and “fixity” will be as natural concepts as “edition year” is to us.

The consequences of the digital medium will not only be felt on the textual level itself. As always a change of medium impacts on the economy of production and distribution of texts, as well as on language itself. In the following section, we will turn our attention to how translations of Buddhist scriptures have been produced in the past and what possibilities arise today as a result of the advent of digital text.

3. Collaboration now and then

3.1. Translation workshops in Chinese history

The largest translation projects in human history took place in China and Tibet, where independently and largely in ignorance of each other, the available corpus of Indian Buddhist scriptures in Sanskrit and its derivatives was rendered into Chinese and Tibetan. The Tibetan approach was the more organized, and included committee work, generally accepted principles on how to render Sanskrit grammatically, and early on, from the 9th century, a widely used glossary – the “The Great Work Made by Many Lotsawas and Pandits that Brings Comprehension of Particulars” to pa'yi byed rigs byed chen mo, commonly referred to as the Mahābhyutpattī.

In Chinese scriptures were translated much more haphazardly. Though a lot of research has been done, we do not know much about the pre-Sui translators, and for more than 200 of the earliest sutras – those marked as shiyi 失譯 in the first cata-

logs – we have no information at all about who translated them. Moreover, it has become clear that a large number of the traditional attributions are wrong. Philological research by Jan Nattier and others suggests that more than half of the translations attributed to Zhu Qian 文謙 (active 222-253), for instance, are incorrect.11

What we do know is that most translations were produced by teams, not individuals. Groups of monks and lay-people worked together in translation workshops (yichang 譯場) usually with support from the local ruler. 12 These translation workshops served also as scholastic centers and attracted a large numbers of students, most of whom were not directly involved in translation. Those monks involved in the translation work often held lectures for the others. The Chu sanzang jiji cites several sources that speak of large audiences that gathered in the centers that formed around a workshop.13

Sometimes Indian and Central Asian monks led the translation teams; at other times the work was supervised by a Chinese monk. The workflow in the translation workshops was quite sophisticated. Usually one group of people was in charge of ensuring the correctness of the original, whilst another did the actual translating; a third group edited the style of the translation (runwen 諸文). The organization of the larger translation workshops such as those led by Kumārajiva and Xuanzang is fairly well known and has been described in various studies.14 Although the set-up and the position titles vary, it is clear that all workshops divided the labor in such a way that each participant could concentrate on one particular aspect of the work. Although the catalogs usually mention only one or two names, most translations were done by a team.

Translation workshops were active in China from at least the late third century.15 A hiatus between 810 and 980 was ended when emperor Taizong 太宗 (r. 976-998) again established a large translation workshop – the Yijingüan 經經院.16 After six successful and productive decades the Bureau came under pressure. The Xiangshan yelu 楊山野錄 (as paraphrased in the Shishi jigutue 詩氏稽古略) 17
reports that during the years 1042-1043\textsuperscript{18} court officials moved to abolish the Bureau:

The Grand Master for Closing Court of the Translation Bureau, the Acting Official for the Honglu, Master Guangan Weijing 佐綸 saw that some highly placed officials (zhizheng 頜政\textsuperscript{19}) wanted to stop funding the Translation Bureau. Before that happened he himself made a petition to abolish it. The emperor said: "How could I dare to abolish what my three sage predecessors have continued? Moreover the literature of which this tribute consists is all written in scripts from the Western Regions, no one but those [working] in the Honglu can understand them." Not long after, the Vice Censor-in-Chief Kong Daozui [sic] indeed asked to abolish the Translation Bureau. The emperor showed him the decree given to Weijing, and Daozui's suggestion was halted.\textsuperscript{20}

Weijing was one of the last Chinese monks of the medieval era who had mastered Sanskrit. He was the nephew of Li Yu 孫震 (937-978), the last ruler of the Southern Tang Dynasty (935-975), and had succeeded the Indian monk Shihu 施護 as leader of the translation workshop. There was no reason for him to want the Bureau abolished. As suggested above he made his request in order to stave off attacks by another faction, gambling that he himself would be refused out of respect for his (implicit) wishes. At the time the request was made, Weijing was a senior official: he was assigned to the Translation Bureau in 983 as one of 50 boys,\textsuperscript{21} and must have been over sixty years old when he made the "request". However, Weijing's maneuver gained the Translation Bureau only a short lease on life. It was abolished in the late 11th century, probably around 1082\textsuperscript{22}, the exact date and circumstances are unclear. With this a nine hundred year-old tradition of collaborative translation of Buddhist scriptures into Chinese came to an end.

In the 12th century the production of Buddhist texts in India was stopped through the devastation wrought by the Muslim invaders\textsuperscript{23} and with it ended the transmission of Buddhism from India to China and Tibet. Until the 19th century, when Western scholars started to translate Buddhist scriptures into European languages, translation was of relatively little concern in the Buddhist world. In China as well as in Tibet, Buddhism had been assimilated and although the connection to India was always acknowledged, there was little motivation to produce new trans-

\textsuperscript{18} The Feng tongli 峳懐通記 records this event for 1041.
\textsuperscript{19} Vid. Hacker (sub voc. No.939) "Executive Official".
\textsuperscript{20} 語林類纂大字點校版 語林類纂大字點校版 語林類纂大字點校版 語林類纂大字點校版 語林類纂大字點校版
\textsuperscript{21} One of the key dates is the sack and the destruction of Nalanda by the general Muhammad Khilji in 1193.
3.2 The monadic scholar-translator of the 19th and 20th century

The translations into Buddhist Chinese that are considered the most exact and consistent are the results of teamwork. In the current academic environment quite the opposite is true. For the last two centuries translations from Buddhist texts have followed a different paradigm: that of the highly erudite polyglot surrounded by his library. The icon of this paradigm was Jerome in his study. Jerome translated the Bible from Hebrew and Greek into Latin in Bethlehem during the early fifth century, around the same time that Kumarājīva presided over a large crowd at the Xīyou Yuan near Chang’an. Though Jerome was a prolific correspondent, his image — that he himself modeled on Origen — is that of the solitary, frugal, even ascetic scholar. In the well-known painting by Messina, the etching by Dürer and many other Renaissance works Jerome is depicted in cardinal robes. The anachronistic transformation from scholar-translator to prince of the church was part of the self-promotion of Humanist scholars during the 15th and 16th century. Montaigne in his library tower (never that mind he was mayor of Bordeaux and deeply involved in politics; Erasmus of Rotterdam, who wrote the first non-hagiographical account of Jerome; Machiavelli, conversing with the ancients in his writing room; all these political scientists); Erasmus of Rotterdam, who wrote the first non-hagiographical account of Jerome; Machiavelli, conversing with the ancients in his writing room: all these scholars consciously adopted the image of the solitary book-loving scholar and were enshrined as such in the memory of posterity.

Another dimension that was obviously missing when the Asian texts became a field of study for European academics was that of politics. The mixture of personal and political interest that made Tang Gaozong support Xuanzang, and the Qianlong emperor order the creation of the Manchu canon, became a thing of the past. Though it impacted funding it made dealing with these texts much safer, since translating religious texts could at times have highly unpleasant consequences. In 379 Shi Daoan lost his freedom when he was captured by the general Fu Jian (符堅), and while Jerome was feted as the patron saint of translators for translating the bible into Latin, William Tyndale was strangled and burnt at the stake in 1536 after translating the bible into English. There were good reasons to steer clear of politics and it was in the interest of academia to assert that their studies were neither politically nor religiously motivated. The image of the single, harmless scholar in his library was helpful to this. For these reasons, in marked contrast to the busy Middle Ages where research in natural sciences takes place, scholarship in the humanities is usually pursued alone.

In the field of Buddhist Studies the two largest academic translations from Buddhist Chinese are Louis de La Vallée Poussin’s translation of Vasubandhu’s Abhidhamakośabhāṣya and Étienne Lamotte’s translation of Nāgārjuna’s (or rather Kumārajīva’s) Dāzhidu lun 大智度論 (sūr. Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra). La Vallée Poussin (1869-1938) and Lamotte (1903-1983) had a lot in common. Both were Belgians, had mastered all canonical Buddhist languages (Pāli, Sanskrit, Tibetan and Chinese), and both taught mainly Greek and Latin — La Vallée Poussin in Ghent, Lamotte in Louvain.

In many ways they both epitomized the paradigm of academic scholarship in the humanities. Their translations were scholarly in the formal sense of the use of apparatus, the application of philological rigor and the determination to extrapolate the Sanskrit “original” from their Chinese and Tibetan sources. Neither La Vallée Poussin nor Lamotte were religiously motivated (the latter was a Jesuit priest), or if they were, they kept their secret well. They did not see their editions, translations, monographs and numerous articles as a service to European Buddhism, which in their days hardly existed. Although they helped colleagues in various ways and made ample use of the networks of their


29 La Vallée Poussin (1923-31), Lamotte (1944-1980).
It will come to be regarded as an eccentric phenomenon in the history of knowledge. The pendulum is swinging back.

3.3 The return of collaboration

teams in medieval China, was not general practice among alone. Collaboration, the discussion of single words and sentences with others, division of labor within the translation process; all this, in contrast to the translator to make the texts of the still the exception rather than the rule. The ladies and gentlemen who worked hard the other languages, such as authoritative status, though sometimes with the result that excellent translations in and took care of publication. Both the editions and the translations achieved authoritative status, though sometimes with the result that excellent translations in other languages, such as German, are now largely forgotten. However, even though the PTS fostered cooperation, collaboration on translation or edition projects was still the exception rather than the rule. The ladies and gentlemen who worked hard to make the texts of the Pāli tradition available in English, did so (in the main) alone. Collaboration, the discussion of single words and sentences with others, division of labor within the translation process; all this, in contrast to the translator teams in medieval China, was not general practice among 19th and 20th scholars-translators.

3.3 The return of collaboration

The pendulum is swinging back. It is possible that the “single scholar” paradigm will come to be regarded as an eccentric phenomenon in the history of knowledge. It used to be obvious that a text was not the child of a single mind and that during time, they did not in general collaborate on any of their books.30 La Vallée Poussin and Lamotte are the authors of their translations to a much higher degree than Kumārajiva and Xuanzang, whose translations went through many hands and minds until finding their final form.

One counterbalance to the image of the monadic scholar were the learned societies, such as the Royal Society of London or the Leopoldina. Learned societies were founded by the scientists themselves in most European states during the 17th century. These highly successful institutions served as proto-clearing-houses for information, where peer groups both assessed the research of individual members and helped to exhibit the results.31 As non-profit institutions these learned societies have today comparatively little power compared with the large grant-giving bodies, universities and publishers with whom they compete for academic influence. The model of scholarly cooperation typified by the learned societies is important for our context, however, because it underpins the most successful series of Buddhist translations in the 20th century: those done under the auspices of the Pāli Text Society.

The many reliable translations of Buddhist texts published by the Pāli Text Society have a special place in the history of Buddhist translation. Founded in 1881, the PTS facilitated cooperation between members, coordinated translation efforts and took care of publication. Both the editions and the translations achieved authoritative status, though sometimes with the result that excellent translations in other languages, such as German, are now largely forgotten. However, even though the PTS fostered cooperation, collaboration on translation or edition projects was still the exception rather than the rule. The ladies and gentlemen who worked hard to make the texts of the Pāli tradition available in English, did so (in the main) alone. Collaboration, the discussion of single words and sentences with others, division of labor within the translation process; all this, in contrast to the translator teams in medieval China, was not general practice among 19th and 20th scholars-translators.

30 La Vallée Poussin collaborated in his very first translation with Godefroy de Bloisay, and once again later with Cecil Bendall on a series of articles on the Bodhisattvabhumi: A bibliography of his œuvre from 1892 until 1934 counts 196 items, including recensions (Hanayama (1961), 593 ff.).

31 The Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur in Mainz, for instance, though founded comparatively late in 1949, has made possible many humanities research projects which could not have been realized within the usual short to mid-term funding periods. The most recent foundation (2004) of an academy in Germany is the Akademie der Wissenschaften in Hamburg.

its transmission many others become stakeholders in the form and content of the text. During the Renaissance, the image of the monadic scholar-genius was formed and this was the basis for the way the humanities were organized in academia. Academia had mechanisms for cooperation, but in the humanities it was not generally felt that collaboration was desirable. Next to the self-perception of the scholars as individualists, collaboration was simply unpractical. When Soothill and Hodous collaborated on their Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms, “the manuscript crossed the Atlantic”32 four times. Now that advances in information technology have made new forms of scholarly communication possible, collaboration between scholars that live on different continents has become much easier.

In the plenary address to the XIIIth Conference of the International Association of Buddhist Studies held in Bangkok Paul Harrison mentioned the return of cooperation:

It thus seems appropriate, for example, that the Chinese translations of Buddhist texts, which were produced by teams, should now be studied, edited and translated by teams. [...] I expect we will see more such international co-operation, and expect too that increasingly it will bring the Samgha and academia closer together in collaborative undertakings.33

Harrison’s conjecture about the modus operandum of Buddhist Studies scholarship is timely and optimistic and in the case study described below we see an example of exactly the team effort he anticipated. Earlier in the same essay Harrison expresses his dissatisfaction with current developments in higher education. Among other things he cites “sinking government funding, rising costs, burgeoning administrative superstructures, rampant managerialism, the growth of an all-pervasive accounting mentality” and “increasingly intrusive surveillance” as systemic problems for scholarship within the university framework today.

The changes in academia alluded to by Harrison had been predicted by Martin Heidegger some fifty years earlier. In a prescient essay titled “Die Zeit des Weltbildes” in which he contemplates modernity and the role of technology, Heidegger foresaw the drive to model reality, which lies at the heart of applied computing. As an academic it was natural for him to wonder about the fate of the humanities in an age where “science as research” happens “when and only when truth has been transformed into the certainty of representation.”

He arrives at the following conclusion:

The scholar vanishes. He is succeeded by the research man who is engaged in research projects. These, rather than the cultivating of erudition, tend to his work its atmosphere of incivility. The research man no longer needs a library at home. Moreover, he is constantly on the move. He negotiates at meetings and collects information at congresses. [...] The research worker

necessarily presses forward of himself into the sphere characteristic of the technology in the essential sense. Only in this way is he capable of acting effectively, and only thus, after the manner of his age, is he real. Alongside him the increasingly thin and empty Romanticism of scholarship and the university will still be able to persist for some time in a few places.

In this doubly subversive statement Heidegger, Janus-faced, looks both towards past and future and maintains a fine balance between optimism and pessimism regarding technology. According to him, modern science is characterized by the “objectification of whatever is” through the projection of knowledge on a “ground plan (Grundriss).” The emphasis on representation fits in well with the central concern of information technology, i.e., modeling. By modeling face-to-face communication or letter writing IT has made day-by-day collaboration across long distances possible. On the other hand it also provides new tools to aid the “rampant managerialism” and the “increasing surveillance and record-gathering” evoked by Harrison above. The Betrieb, the relentless activity that Heidegger sees as a fundamental to modern science, has been unfolding rather more quickly and on a much greater scale since the general impact of IT has made itself felt in the humanities. I am inclined to follow Heidegger here:

More and more the methodology adapts itself to the possibilities of procedure opened up through itself. This having-to-adapt itself to its own results as the ways and means of an advancing methodology is the essence of research’s character as ongoing activity. And it is that character that is the intrinsic basis for the necessity of the institutional nature of research.

What Heidegger could not have foreseen is that the development of information technology, albeit based on modeling and objectification, has also broadened the communicative range of individual researchers beyond their institutions. As research institutions try to strengthen their control over the activities of the researchers, the “research men” become more independent.

For good or ill, IT is a catalyst for the coalescence of scholars into research teams. The interconnectedness, in principle, also empowers the single, monadic scholar by allowing unprecedented access to larger datasets. However, this gain is offset by the growing complexity of data-sources and their increasingly interdisciplinary nature. Traditionally, humanities scholars are trained to work with written text. How can a scholar of Buddhist make use of a GIS detailing certain aspects of

Collaborative Edition and Translation Projects in the Era of Digital Text

Chinese history? Will she be trained to use the database and interface in an efficient way, know its contents, assess its reliability, be able to tweak the interface? Or will she rely on others for this and confine herself to asking the right questions? Can she ask the right questions without knowing about the quality of and the possibilities offered by the data source?

Assuming that our data-sources will continue to proliferate both in form and in content and our average life expectancy will stay more or less the same, will the digitalization of scholarship simply be more efficient because of the possibilities offered by the data source?

Assuming therefore we do indeed enter or reenter an era where cooperation is held in greater esteem, what does that mean for translation? First of all, it makes large-scale translations possible again.

There are specific problems facing translation projects however, which work against this: Currently academia in the humanities rewards primarily monographs, followed by articles published with publishers that have an established peer-review process. Compared to the natural sciences, collaborative projects are rare and multi-author publications generate less academic credit. Moreover, translations, dictionaries, scholarly editions and reference works are considered less valuable, less “original” than monographs and articles. The preference given to topical studies over the development of academic infrastructure is often informed by a definition of “original” research that does not include the kind of research effort that contributes to the foundations of future scholarship. This is especially the case in Chinese Studies. While annotated translations from Pali and Tibetan still command considerable prestige within their respective fields, translations from the Chinese Buddhist canon are not, in general, encouraged and even important translations need a large introductory part to be publishable. It is hard to imagine that translations like that of La Vallée Poussin or Lamotte would find a publisher among the university presses in the U.S. today.

Another feature of contemporary academia not conducive to large-scale translation projects, or indeed any long-term academic project, is the current “publish or perish” ideology. The pressure to “deliver” publications at short intervals makes it difficult, especially for younger scholars, to work on larger projects, such as long-term translations or the development of dictionaries.

34 In the essay The Question concerning Technology (Die Frage nach der Technik) Heidegger defines the essence of technology as “Enframing” or “Enframing” (Gestell). He says: “Enframing means that way of revealing which holds sway in the essence of modern technology and which itself is nothing technological.” This specific way of revealing is characterized by ordering all that exists in the mode of “standing-reserve” (Bestand), where all things in nature including other humans are considered as potential assets for production and consumption.


37 Two recent publications containing excellent translations of Chinese Buddhist texts are Sharf (2001) and Adamek (2007). Neither mention the fact that they are presenting a translation in the title.

38 It is no coincidence that most long-term projects are supported by learned societies rather than universities or national funding agencies. Only scholarship that is independent and self-reliant can afford to plan long term. The Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, for instance, coordinates more than 20 long-term projects. Among these the continuing work on the Dictionary of German started by the brothers Grimm (since 1960), the inscriptions of the Edfu temple (since 1986), and an encyclopedia of Märchener, German Folk-tales (since 1980).
For all of these reasons it is not attractive for a scholar to embark on a long translation project alone, and collaboration is the obvious response. Through collaboration it should in theory be possible to match the vast amounts of translation done by the teams of Kumārajīva or Xuangang in a fairly short time. Since scholars do not have the luxury of being able to work together in the same location for an extended period of time, collaboration will be mediated by information technology.

4. Case study: The collaborative translation of the Madhyama Āgama

In sections one and two we discussed some issues concerning how the realization of texts within a certain medium influences the hermeneutic and stylistic possibilities, and in section three we looked at contrasting paradigms concerning the workflow of translating Buddhist texts. In this section I would like to draw these two strands together with a case study.

In November 2005 the Numata Foundation – or Bukkyō Derō Kyōkai (教仏道協会) – approached me about the translation of Chinese Madhyama Āgama, the Zhong hua jing (中華經). I responded that due to other duties I was unable to tackle the translation by myself, but would try to assemble a team and coordinate the collaboration between the team members. The Numata Foundation agreed and soon a number of people expressed interest in participating in the project. Owing to the influence of the writings of the scholar monk Yinshun 見世音 (1906-2005), interest in the Chinese Āgamas among Taiwanese academic is high. Moreover, the president of Dharma Drum Buddhist College, Venerable Huimin 晖敏, gave his full support to the project, and many colleagues from Taiwan and abroad agreed to participate in the translation. It became clear that although many scholars were interested in the text, no one had the time to tackle the text alone.

Soon, in spite of my initial doubts and reservations, a team of ten expert scholars was ready to start working. Especially the readiness of Roderick Bucknell and Venerable Analayo to serve as coeditors was a great boost to the project. Obviously the time for an English translation of the Madhyama Āgama had come.

The text of T. 26 is 60 fascicles long. When completed this translation will be the longest Chinese Buddhist text translated into a Western language so far. Since Vaggas are translated by different scholars, the challenge is how to ensure that the final result achieves a certain degree of consistency in wording and style. Concerning style, we decided that under current circumstances the best solution was to ask an expert, experienced native speaker to level out obvious stylistic idiosyncrasies. Obviously syntax and register of the final result, however, will still show that different people translated different Vaggas. I do not believe this is a problem. As I have tried to illustrate in section one above there is never only one single correct translation of a text and from an aesthetic point of view a translation welded together from different styles is at least worth a try. Terminology, however, is a different matter. It is important that key terms are rendered in a uniform way throughout the whole text, because the semantic coherence of the work would be compromised if philosophical terms were translated differently from Vagga to Vagga. To be sure, there are situations were a term in the original has to be rendered differently in the target language, but semantic polyvalence aside, one meaning should match one translation.

Which translation? Because there is no uniform way of rendering Buddhist terms in English we decided early on that it would be convenient to follow the translations of Bhikkhu Bodhi. In his translations of the Majjhima Nikāya and the Sanyutta Nikāya, Bhikkhu Bodhi offers a well-balanced and informed translation into modern English. Both translations have a glossary, which we were able to use as reference. However, even Bhikkhu Bodhi has changed a number of key terms between his MN and SN translations, and at times we had reason to make our own choices.

We decided to construct a glossary that, in contrast to that of Bhikkhu Bodhi, is based on term-frequency. The advantage is that if we are able to offer translations for the 500 most frequent terms in T. 26, we would be able to ensure a high degree of consistency. As dictionary we decided to use the index file developed by Urs App, Christian Wittmer and Charles Muller.

Parsing the text with the dictionary data and sorting by frequency yields a list of the most frequent terms. Once the frequency list was established, we had to agree how to translate the most common five hundred words, which is this case are all those words which appear more than 24 times in the text. We did so after consulting Bodhi's glossaries, the Digital Dictionary of Buddhism (DBB), whose headwords were provided by Charles Muller and our own judgment about the usage of the Chinese terms in the particular context of T. 26. We found that although the DBB headwords were only rarely completely inappropriate, it was often necessary to offer more precise translations. For example we render anāpā, aparicchā, anicchā, anābraj, anālaya, anālay sankhā as Bodhi does. We felt that we should not extend ourselves too far beyond the Chinese and try to translate our extrapolations, especially in cases where the Chinese term is unambiguous.

Once a glossary is agreed on, it can be used to offer the translators new, helpful views of the text. Early on it was possible to send out simple HTML files to each translator in which the words from the glossary were color-coded and the recommended translation appeared as a pop-up tool-tip. This enabled the translator to check the glossary quickly whilst translating.

The largest translation to date is probably Lamotte (1944-1980), who translated 53 of the 100 fascicles of the Dādharma jin 無上妙法 (into French).
In a project involving several independent translators, adherence to a glossary is bound to be inconsistent. It falls to the editors to make sure that the glossary is realized, and here too IT can help. To build a tool that compares paragraphs of the translation according to a user-defined dictionary is not trivial, but well within the scope of a trained programmer. Fortunately the IT department at Dharma Drum Buddhist College was ready to assist us with that task, and Dr. Jen-Hou Hong developed the TransHelp program for this purpose. TransHelp allows its users to check all relevant terms have been translated in the recommended way.

The source code for TransHelp is open and freely available and we plan to develop it further to assist with other Buddhist translations.

In addition to assuring conformity to a common glossary, the editorial process must include checking for accuracy and style. Sometimes the line between these is blurred. We have seen in section 1 above that multiple correct translations are possible. The correctness of any given translation is undetermined in the sense that the number of possible correct translations is unknown. To choose between correct translations is therefore an art, which cannot be reduced to a formula. There is a limit to this art however, because obviously there are translations which are simply wrong. Every translator has noticed these — cringingly in one's own work, amusedly in that of others. Our workflow therefore includes a stage where the translations are checked for correctness. Close comparison with Pali versions of the sutra text often provides helpful clues for resolving difficult passages, although it is desirable to adhere as closely as possible to the Chinese and not work from a mixed Pali-Chinese original.

A third and final step is devoted to stylistic improvements. As we all know from our own writing practice, there is almost no limit to the improvements that can be made to the stylistic and rhetoric aspects of terminology and syntax. Even though one stage of the workflow is dedicated to unifying the translation terminology, this covers only a small part of the vocabulary. The rest, as well as syntax and register, needs further editing by an experienced native-English scholar.

Here a diagram of the workflow:
In the current era, where copyright legislation has been commandeered by commercial interests and media companies and publishers are allowed to own culture to an astonishing degree, copyright law has become one of the main obstacles to the dissemination and production of culture as well as academic knowledge itself. For collaborative projects in academia this means that the issue deserves our careful attention. Clear legal agreements as to the rights management for each contribution must be found, and, wherever possible, the results of communal efforts should be made freely available to make it possible for others to further develop our findings. 44

5. The future of collaboratively translated text

Where does this leave us? Obviously increased collaboration will not be simply a return of the old, although the workflow of the T. 26 project does bear a certain resemblance to that of the translation workshops of medieval China. Again the work is divided in distinct stages, and again the translation is motivated by religious not academic concerns. Digital tools aside, the difference between then and now is less one of the mode of production but rather concerns the fixity of the text produced. Once written down, translations in medieval China and Tibet changed only a little over the centuries. In contrast to that it is doubtful that our translations will outlast the 21st century without being substantially changed or superseded.

The odds are that the days of the definitive translation as we know it and were trained to rely on it are over. After the “death of the author” – a slogan coined from the title of Roland Barthes’ essay in Aspen (1967) – the death of the authoritative edition or translation is clearly recognizable for those working with digital text. One collaborator once thanked me for editing his part of the translation and reminded me that as general editor my name “would be attached to the project ... into posterity!” This is but a nice dream. Assuming the IT revolution continues as it has for the last 20 years, the chances that in a hundred years from now anybody will look at our translations as we produced them are exceedingly slim. Perhaps our names will survive in some log-file, but the texts themselves will have evolved, been changed and – hopefully – improved on. Only people with antiquarian interests, or perhaps those who will prefer our – by then – quaint and old-fashioned early 21st-century English, might ask their machine to reconstruct “our” version.

As textuality recaptures some of the fluidity it had in the oral era, authorship is again a precarious concept. As we today use our religious scriptures in ignorance of the authors’ identities, so people will come to consider the translations in which we participated as given – products of generations of anonymous translators. Only legal constraints and a strict interpretation and enforcement of the current copyright

44 I usually avoid participating in projects that result in copyrighted material, but felt the translation of T. 26 was worth an exception and guessed that the texts would end up to be freely distributed eventually. This assumption turned out to be correct. Since 2008 the Numata Foundation makes its translations available online.
regime can guarantee that cultural products will continue to count as the intellectual property of individuals. The impetus for this enforcement has to be economic interest, which is often not the decisive issue when it comes to translating Buddhist texts.

The reemergence of greater fluidity, however, is not a regression to the days of oral transmission. The promise for scholars is that, at least in theory, every previous state of the text can be reconstructed, and that new and interesting ways to interact with texts will appear.

Bibliography


1: Konrad Meisig (Hg.)
Chinesische Religion und Philosophie
Konfuzianismus – Mohismus – Daoismus – Buddhismus
Grundlagen und Einblicke
2005. VIII. 188 Seiten, 1 Abb., gb
ISBN 978-3-447-05203-0
€ 48,– (D) / sFr 83,–


2: Yasuo Aizumi, Köichi Kasamatsu, Konrad Meisig (Hg.)
Interkulturalität
Aktuelle Entwicklungstendenzen in Literatur, Sprache und Gesellschaft
2006. XII. 219 Seiten, 56 Abb., gb
ISBN 978-3-447-05290-0
€ 48,– (D) / sFr 83,–

Aus dem Inhalt (20 Beiträge):
W. Bisang, The Perspective of Intercultural Contact and Some of Its Consequences
Neue Formen des Zusammenlebens – Wandel der Lebensformen im Zusammenleben der Völker und Kulturen
Y. Aizumi, Wandel der Familienform: Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft
K. Ono, On the Laws for Consumer Protection in Japan
E. Sekikawa, Die Möglichkeit des Zusammenlebens von Juden und Deutschen bei Martin Buber
Europäische Asienklisthees und asiatische Europaklisthees – Exotismen und ihre Überwindung
N. Adachi, Über die Verschiedenheit der Weltanschauungen in Japan und Europa am Beispiel der Grammatik: Aproti und Aposteriori in der Sprachforschung
On the 4th and 5th of July 2008, the Institute of Indology and the Study and Research Unit Buddhist Chinese ('Arbeitsgruppe Buddhistisches Chinesisch') of the Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz held an international workshop on “Translating Buddhist Chinese: Problems and Prospects.” With attendees and experts from all over the world, the workshop focused on central aspects of Chinese Buddhist philology, linguistics, history of redactions, and history of literature, in order to discuss today's state of research, its pressing problems, and promising prospects. The volume edited by Konrad Meisig presents the papers of the workshop with contributions by Bhikkhu Analayo, Marcus Bingenheimer, Roderick S. Bucknell, CHOONG Munkeat, LI Wei, Konrad Meisig, Marion Meisig, Bhikkhu Pasadika and Karl-Heinz Pohl.