

Foreword

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FOREWORD

The present volume of *Asiatische Studien / Études Asiatiques* contains ten papers which were presented during a panel on Indo-Tibetan Buddhism at the Congress of the International Association of Buddhist Studies held in Mexico City in October 1994. Two other contributions were subsequently added.

A few words on the term “Indo-Tibetan Buddhism” and the controversies it sometimes generates. Although for some years now there have been serious scholars who have used the term with apparent confidence, it is true that there is far from unanimity on what an Indo-Tibetan approach entails. The worst case scenario would be to see scholars institute yet another type of sectarianism in Buddhist Studies. I, for one, do not think that speaking of Indo-Tibetan Buddhism should in any way imply that Tibetans somehow had a privileged access to Indian thought and understood it better than did other traditions, such as, for example, the Chinese. Arguably, if we can legitimately speak of “Indo-Tibetan Buddhism”, however the continuity is to be conceived, we must also equally legitimately be able to speak of “Sino-Indian” or “Indo-Chinese” Buddhism(s). It would seem to me that our evaluations of Chinese or Tibetan understandings of Indian texts could only be meaningful, if at all, with regard to specific texts or very specific areas of Buddhist thought. I would have no idea as to how to go about actually tallying up a final ledger.

No doubt the difficulty in defining the term “Indo-Tibetan” comes from the extremely complex and multifaceted nature of the subject matter. An approach which takes as given that Tibetan Buddhist traditions are identical with their Indian counterparts ignores the Tibetans' own contributions and their own indigenous debates. It is probably high time that this simplistic idea of Tibet being a faithful prolongation of India ceases, for neither Indian thought nor Tibetan thought will be adequately understood on such a perspective. That said, an Indo-Tibetan approach which just simply investigates Indian developments AND Tibetan developments, may well fail to do sufficient justice to the deep links that there are. The present volume contains articles on logic and epistemology, Madhyamaka, grammar and

other subjects, with more or less emphasis on the Indian and on the Tibetan aspects. I leave it to the authors of the articles to show, in detail, how they conceive of the relationships between Indian and Tibetan traditions, and to show how these relationships can be profitably investigated from numerous perspectives – historical, philosophical and philological. Hopefully, then, the present volume is something like a proof of motion by walking.

I wish to thank the authors for their contributions and the International Association of Buddhist Studies for providing a forum for the panel. The Swiss-Asia Society and the Faculty of Letters of the University of Lausanne deserve our gratitude for defraying costs of publication. Last but not least, sincere thanks are due to Mr. Yves Ramseier and Miss Marianne Bujard for their painstaking work in the preparation of this volume.

Tom J.F. TILLEMANS