

TRANSLATION
&
TRANSMISSION

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KEYSTONE, COLORADO, USA

Plenary Session | ROOM: CASTLE PEAK | 2:00pm, October 4, 2014

Scholars, Translators, Practitioners: What is our Role in Transmission?

with Willa Miller, Alex Berzin, Larry Mermelstein, Richard Barron,
Karl Brunnhölzl, Christian Bernert



Karl Brunnhölzl

(Tsadra Foundation Fellow; Nitartha Translation Network)

Karl was originally trained, and worked, as a physician for twenty years. He took Buddhist refuge vows in 1984. From 1988 to 1998, he received his Buddhist and Tibetan language training mainly at Marpa Institute For Translators in Kathmandu, Nepal (director: Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtso Rinpoche) and also studied Tibetology, Buddhology, and Sanskrit at Hamburg University, Germany from 1987–1989 and 2000–2005. Since 1989, Karl served as a translator, interpreter, and Buddhist teacher mainly in Europe, India, and Nepal. Since 1999, he has acted as one of the main translators and teachers at Nitartha Institute (director: Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche) in the USA, Canada, and Germany. In addition, he regularly taught at Gampo Abbey's Vidyadhara Institute from 2000–2007. He is the author of several books on Buddhism, such as *The Center of the Sunlit Sky*, *Straight from the Heart*, *In Praise of Dharmadhātu*, *Gone Beyond*, *Mining For Wisdom Within Delusion*, and *The Heart Attack Sutra* (all Snow Lion Publications). In 2006, he moved to Seattle and since then works as a full-time Tibetan translator for Tsadra Foundation. He also teaches weekend seminars and Nitartha Institute courses in Nalandabodhi centers in the US, Canada, and Mexico as well as in other locations.

Karl Brunnhölzl's Presentation

1) What elements should a modern translation include? The importance of contextualisation and supplementary material.

Formal elements

- 1) TOC
- 2) abbreviations
- 3) introduction
- 4) translations
- 5) appendices
- 6) glossaries
- 7) bibliography
- 8) indices
- 9) notes
- 10) critical apparatus (critical editions; including Sanskrit/Tibetan in text/notes; etc.)

Introduction

Context of text(s) in Indian/Tibetan Buddhism: authors, history, transmission India/Tibet, schools

Traditional significance of texts within Indo-Tibetan Buddhism

Specific significance for modern audience/primary audience (relevance for scholar/practitioner)

Overview of contents of texts

Explanation of main topics/concepts of texts

Comparing different commentarial traditions on terms, texts, schools etc.

Presenting modern scholarship on the text(s), terms, contents, history

Optional: comparison w Western philosophies, psychology, cognitive science, religions, poetry

Appendices

Additional materials/explanations on major topics too large for notes

Supplementary selections from other texts/commentaries

“Root” texts

Outlines

Sanskrit/Tibetan texts

Charts

Biographies

Notes

Explanations of technical terms

Comparisons with presentations in other texts

Additional academic/traditional explanations on terms or contents

Contextualizations/explanations of problematic issues in terms of technical terms, contents, traditional debates, and differences between traditional interpretations/academia

Glossaries: Eng - Skt - Tib / Tib - Skt - Eng (or explaining terms)

Bibliography: Sanskrit editions, Tibetan texts (P and D numbers), modern works

Indices: texts, persons, places, important technical terms with subentries

2) Which academic skills are important for a qualified translator, and how important are traditional elements of transmission?

Technical-skill elements

Literal versus meaning translation? Not even agreement on what is literal or meaning

Maybe: technical precision versus message/truth value/“feel”

Need for both (dependent on genre and whether it is translation or paraphrase)

Academic

General: command of vocabulary/grammar of source/target languages from academic perspective

Specific: understanding of technical terms of genres, different use in different contexts

Knowledge of Sanskrit, Pali, Chinese (Kangyur/Tengyur: Buddhist Sanskrit mandatory; Tibetan alone can even be misleading)

Identifying citations

Clearly indicating what is added by the translator ([] or otherwise)

General studies of history, schools, authors, and contents of Indo-Tibetan Buddhist traditions

Critical apparatus: creating/working with critical editions; accessing, comparing, and documenting different editions in Tibetan, Sanskrit, Pali, Chinese; etc

Consulting the secondary literature

Presenting diversity of academic opinions and research

Consulting academic scholars (particularly specialists)

Traditional

General command of vocabulary/grammar of source/target languages from traditional perspective

Specific: technical terms of genres, use in different contexts (Mahavyutpatti, Sgra sbyor bam po gnyis pa)

Gen. study of history/schools/authors/contents/transmissions of traditions in which one translates

Having studied the text with a qualified teacher before translating

Practice texts: being a practitioner (ideally of the given practice), receiving qualified instructions

Tantra, Mahamudra, Dzogchen: receiving lung dbang khrid

Ability to consult with learned native speakers (colloquial Tibetan etc)

General: good writing skills; familiarity with Chicago Manual of Style etc.

consulting available commentaries/supplementary materials; poetical skills (if needed)