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1 Introduction

This volume originated with the conference “Buddhism and the Dynamics of Transculturality,” which was held June 11–13, 2012, at the University of Heidelberg, within the congenial atmosphere of the *International Academic Forum Heidelberg* (IWH).¹ Davide Torri contributed an additional essay based on new fieldwork conducted in Nepal, work that became even more relevant after the country was devastated by a series of earthquakes in April and May 2015.

During the long and complex history of Buddhism, extending back in time for more than 2500 years, doctrines, practices and institutions repeatedly crossed cultural boundaries, undergoing considerable change for that very reason. The involvement of Buddhism in processes of cultural exchange and transfer has been remarked upon frequently. However, perhaps owing to the nature of the subject, which is both pervasive and seemingly subject to endless variation, scholars have tended to treat cultural exchange and its short- to long-term aftereffects descriptively, demonstrating *that* transcultural processes played a role in the history of Buddhism. But they have not necessarily probed very deeply into the *how*. A new attempt at approaching the subject seemed timely, especially considering that the more recent growth of interest in aspects of transculturality across a variety of pertinent disciplines, including art history and archaeology, history as well as anthropology, had also begun to make itself felt here and there in the field of Buddhist Studies.

The Heidelberg conference, organized within the framework of the interdisciplinary research cluster “Asia and Europe in a Global Context: The Dynamics of Transculturality,” was convened to bring together scholars of Buddhism across disciplinary boundaries for joint reflection on various topics that have emerged in connection with three critical aspects of Buddhism’s global history:

- the spread of Buddhist doctrines, practices and institutions in terms of patterns of mobility, as well as in terms of the social networks that support or prevent the establishment of Buddhism in a particular region;
- the domestication of Buddhism in new cultural environments, and the various strategies and devices utilized towards this end;

¹ Special thanks are due to Ina Buchholz and Kathrin Amend for the efficient and graceful organization and running of the conference, as well as to Markus Viehbeck, Alexander Häntzschel and Alexandra Heidle for lending various forms of support during the conference. I would also like to thank Liudmila Olalde Rico for editorial support in the final production stages of this volume, and Cynthia Peck-Kubaczek for improving the English of the introduction.

- the production of Buddhist histories that newly framed and freshly contextualized previous processes of cultural exchange, histories that were crucial to Buddhism's spread and domestication in the relevant regions.

The papers now assembled in this volume loosely follow a long trajectory: from ancient Gandhāra across medieval China and Japan, to nineteenth-century Tibet and contemporary Nepal. They are, however, not arranged in a strict chronological order of the historical periods they concern. The topics discussed under the umbrella of these three large thematic areas are as diverse as revelry scenes in Gandhāran art, Buddhist stone inscriptions in Shandong, star worship and the arts of perfect memory in medieval Japan, and conformity with Indian tradition as a standard in Tibetan Buddhist polemical literature. The essays address religious practice and discourse, visual and material culture, as well as sociopolitical issues ranging from political legitimation to the formation of ethnic identities. Most of the papers are concerned with pre-modern Asian societies and cultures, but some explore how religious and cultural knowledge produced in the past was rediscovered and re-contextualized in early modernity, this connected to processes that still reach into the present. Each essay is intended as an original contribution in its own field and disciplinary context, presenting hitherto unstudied materials and sources, while simultaneously striving to participate in a larger common conversation under the aegis of the somewhat elusive concept of transculturality.

In 1940, the Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz propagated the term “transculturation” to “express the highly varied phenomena that have come about in Cuba as a result of the extremely complex transmutations of culture that have taken place there.”² In his study of the impact of sugar and tobacco on Cuban society, Ortiz argued that the complex cultural changes on an island where new waves of migrants arrived so many times through its history could not be properly considered a form of acculturation, a “process of transition from one culture to another.” With his elaboration of *transculturation*, Ortiz placed himself in opposition to conceptions that dominated US-American anthropology at the time. Both elements – a fascination with particularly dense forms of cultural mixture effected by migration, and discontent with prevailing theories that approach cultures as homogeneous and stable systems – also characterize the theorization of *transculturality* as it intensified over the course of the 1990s, this focused on contemporary conditions of globalization. As the

² Quoted from Ortiz (1995, 98) (new edition of the first English translation from 1947; for the Spanish original see Ortiz [1940]).

German philosopher Wolfgang Welsch argued,³ cultures “de facto no longer have the insinuated form of homogeneity and separateness. They have instead assumed a new form, which is to be called *transcultural* insofar that it *passes through* classical cultural boundaries.”⁴

Welsch’s concern with moving away from conceptualizing cultures as stable and closed systems is frequently echoed in the rich literature on transcultural dynamics that has emerged since then. Elements of Welsch’s approach have, however, been called into question.⁵ Most importantly in the present context, it cannot be assumed *prima facie* that the “new” form of cultures is a hallmark of the present. Processes of cultural contact and transformation can surely be studied in all epochs, well before the formation of global capital markets and the advent of the internet, and even well before the European maritime expansion in early modernity. Building a theory with universalizing aspirations on the premise that transculturality marks a new era in human history risks begging the question, since the construction and dissolution of cultural boundaries is in itself a historical process.⁶

In keeping with the critical spirit that has characterized the elaboration of the transcultural since Ortiz – distancing from entrenched modes of thinking – and through the increase in the number of studies that expand the temporal frame into a distant past and extend the geographical sphere beyond regions under direct influence of European powers, transculturality has shifted its status as a concept. Although the term is still occasionally used more narrowly to refer to particular features of situations of dense cultural mixture thought to be especially dynamic, the critical exploration of individual disciplinary histories as well as the expansion of the range of cultural phenomena under study have made it seem more productive to conceptualize transculturality as a heuristic tool, a perspective for interrogation, or an orienting concept (rather than an analytical notion).⁷ The plurality of uses of the term that is now visible in a growing body of literature – a plurality that is to some degree also reflected in the papers in this volume – may seem disorienting. Yet, in an expansive research environment that

3 Welsch (1999) (without reference to Ortiz).

4 Welsch (1999, 197).

5 Cf. Benessaieh (2010) for an overview of relevant debates, including those on the notions of culture from which the respective positions draw.

6 For programmatic criticism of Welsch along these lines, see Juneja (2012, 2013), as well as, again, Benessaieh (2010).

7 Flüchter and Schöttli (2015) offer further a theoretical discussion that was informed by the research environment of Heidelberg research cluster, where the research for the contributions of Andreeva, Samuels, Torri and Viehbeck in the present volume was also conducted.

might be thought to effect a “transcultural turn,”⁸ it seems futile and ultimately misguided to insist on a rigid, stipulative definition.⁹

Throughout the essays on Buddhism assembled in this volume, one can detect a shared set of methodological and conceptual premises that arguably mark a programmatic difference of transcultural from “cross-cultural” or “inter-cultural” studies. On the most basic level, cultures are not seen as stable, closed and self-reproducing systems, but they are rather conceived in relational, processual, and dynamic terms. Second, the generative power of culture is placed in focus, leading to explorations of cultural elements – artifacts, practices, ideas – in terms of their meaning in a given setting, usually a particular locality during a more or less precisely circumscribed period of history. Third, such historically and geographically situated meaning is generally regarded as produced by a variety of actors that employ specific strategies, of which the papers illustrate a rich variety. The reconstruction of agency thus plays a particularly important role and guides many of the research efforts represented in this volume. Fourth, when studies with such a focus embark on tracing cultural elements further back in time and into other cultural contexts, this is undertaken with the larger goal of producing insights into the strategies found in the *current* situation. The enquiry is not guided by the question “where did X originate?” And the studies do not end with having identified such points of origin (that in the end invariably remain arbitrary). Rather, the question being asked is “what significance did local actors attribute to X, and how can insights into a transcultural history of X illuminate local strategies and meanings?” Fifth, close attention is paid to problems of labeling – especially those involved with cultural or religious belonging, and with social status – and to terms and concepts that are used to refer to religion(s) and cultural formations. In the past, concepts signaling a certain reflexivity on the part of historical Buddhist actors have occasionally been made the basis for general theories about Buddhism as a religious system as well as its approach to other religions. In particular, the final paper in this volume by Jonathan Samuels deserves to be highlighted for cautioning against such taxonomical abstraction (cf. below). Last, but not least, the critical spirit that informs transcultural studies supports self-reflective scholarly practice, self-reflection that results in a keen awareness of how prevalent modes of examining a subject might be marred not only by entrenched

⁸ Bond and Rapson (2014, 6–15).

⁹ For a more comprehensive discussion of transculturality vis-à-vis multiculturalism and interculturality, see Benessaïeh (2010).

approaches and potentially unwarranted methodological premises, but also by historical “leftovers.”¹⁰

Turning to the individual papers, the first, by Ingo Strauch, addresses a period in the early spread of Buddhism from the Indian subcontinent. Following in the footsteps of Jason Neelis’ recent exploration of networks in the Upper Indus Valley (Neelis 2011), Strauch reassesses evidence for Buddhist presence along the trade routes that connected the western parts of the Indian subcontinent with South Arabia, the Red Sea coast and regions further to the west. His focus is on a recently discovered corpus of inscriptions and drawings in the Hoq cave on the island of Socotra (Yemen) dating to the second to fourth or early fifth centuries CE. These inscriptions, individual names, dedications, and drawings of *stūpas* pose vexing problems for determining the religious affiliation and social status of those who left them on the cave’s walls. Traders and other “sub-élite” agents may have contributed a larger share to producing local forms of Buddhism than was hitherto presumed. Buddhism might indeed have been present among the Indian communities of traders that temporarily settled in these western regions, but it appears never to have left the boundaries of these communities. This would have been a prerequisite for patronage of the foreign religion by local élites and for monastic institutions to have been established, as would have been needed for a lasting Buddhist presence.

In the Upper Indus Valley / Gandhāra, and more specifically in Swat (Uḍḍiyāna), Buddhist monastic presence left a rich archaeological record, including reliefs in Hellenistic style. Based on material provided by recent Italian excavations, Anna Filigenzi examines scenes depicting wine production and consumption, the latter in connection with more or less explicit erotic gestures. These have been read as a Greek cultural import and labelled “Dionsysiac scenes,” but Filigenzi argues for a more complex interplay between the local and the foreign that amounts to a visual borrowing of foreign styles to express local cultural meaning. Combining archaeological evidence of wine consumption in the north-west of the Indian subcontinent with the textual record of early Buddhist literature, Filigenzi concludes that the consumption of wine in Swat was “a component of the normal ambit of economic and cultural life, a status quo for which the [Buddhist] monastic communities certainly

10 In a broader context, this principle often informs the articulation of more specific critiques based on the history of individual academic disciplines; see, e.g., Maran and Stockhammer (2012) for an exemplary critique of the paradigms of “diffusionism” and (German) “culture history” in archaeology, and Herren-Oesch and Ruesch (2012) for a critique of historical studies pursued in the framework of nation-states as units of investigation (in the context of a wider-ranging programmatic presentation of transcultural history).

had to make accommodations.” Accordingly, she argues for a reading of such “revelry scenes” as referring to forms of local social ritualism that can be connected with customs that are still current among the Kafirs of Hindu Kush. Juxtaposed with scenes from the Buddha’s life in adjacent frames, revelry scenes and related icons then indicate a “transversal religious culture, which is at the same time formally Buddhist and faithful to a folk religion,” intertwined not only in daily life, but also in conceptual and visual forms. Following Filigenzi’s reconstruction of a fragmentary archaeological record, one may suspect that local élites patronizing Buddhism placed their own established customs within close range of the Buddha and his Dharma, in this case making use of a foreign visual repertoire. The difficulties of providing even a seemingly innocuous description of the situation that produced the revelry scenes demonstrate the methodological challenges involved in reconstructing local agencies without introducing overly hasty assumptions grounded in what the end are purely normative conceptions. Considering the problematic nature of wine consumption in Buddhist prescriptions of lay and monastic life, one may at first feel tempted to interpret revelry scenes as concessions made by a Buddhist authority to local customs that were important to their donors. Although this is one possibility, it suggests a social division between Buddhist monastics and their lay patrons that might in the end not reflect local realities at all, since these two groups cannot generally be presumed to have been neatly divided in terms of a local and foreign cultural background, respectively. The relationship between religious norm and social realities thus becomes a crucial issue in studying transcultural settings.

Toru Funayama expands the discussion from the epigraphic and archaeological record to the realm of language and addresses the cultural strategies adopted in the translation of Buddhist texts and terms from Indian languages during various stages of the domestication of Buddhism in China. The large-scale translation of Buddhist (and other) literature impacted language and linguistic practice on various levels. As for Chinese, new characters were created, new ways of using particles were devised, and a new phraseology emerged. The resultant innovations were by no means limited to translation, but also made their way into independent compositions by Chinese authors. Here, the area of greatest concern appears to have been terminology – how to cope with novel and foreign concepts while making use of already established literary idioms.

Although transcribing Indian terms might have seemed to Chinese translators the simplest solution when literal translations could not be easily devised, it also meant that resulting terminology remained markedly foreign, and was, initially at least, unintelligible to target audiences in China. In translation studies, the method of such translations has been called “foreignizing,” resulting in translations that bring the reader closer to the world of the author, rather than

vice versa.¹¹ By contrast, the strategy of “translation by matching cultural categories” (Japanese *bunka taiō gata yakugo*), as Funayama calls it, is more “domesticating” in that it brings the author’s world – the world of Indian Buddhism – closer to the reader’s, this consisting in “the translation of an Indic term based on a traditional Chinese concept that is similar to the original Indic term, yet not literally identical.”¹² For instance, Chinese *dao*, “way,” does not literally translate Sanskrit *bodhi*, “awakening,” but one still finds *daoshu*, “way-tree,” as a translation for Sanskrit *bodhivṛkṣa*, the tree under which Buddha Śākyamuni attained awakening. Such cultural translations¹³ look for local concepts that in their function or connotation somehow match foreign notions, without any literal, word-to-word correspondence between source- and target-language. The fate of translations devised through this method was not uniform; some such terms like *wuwei* for *nirvāṇa* were eventually abolished, and translation by transcription was adopted instead. Other cases, such as *sheng* for Sanskrit *ārya*, open windows for studying intricate semantic shifts between Daoist, Confucian, Buddhist and Nestorian contexts, as well-worn terms take on new connotations, but can also be once again reduced to their pre-translation semantics. The semantic repertoire constitutes a relatively flexible cultural resource, opening a space for subsequent re-signification.

Still within a Chinese context, Lothar Ledderose presents and discusses the *Stone Hymn*, a monumental inscription at Mt. Tie on the northern outskirts of Zoucheng in Shandong Province. This inscription – 17 meters long and 14 meters tall – is one of numerous inscriptions studied in a long-term project on Buddhist stone inscriptions in Shandong province conducted by the Academy of Sciences in Heidelberg. The *Stone Hymn* is only one of three colophons to an even more monumental *sūtra* inscription. Through their size, their *sūtra* content, and their strategically chosen positioning on widely visible mountain rock surfaces, these inscriptions can generally be understood as attempts to emplace and stabilize the Buddha’s word in localities where Buddhism was contested. As stated in the *Stone Hymn*, inscribed in 579 (Northern Zhou dynasty) shortly after a persecution of Buddhism in the Shandong region, even when the end of this eon draws near with scorching winds, the engraved *sūtra* will remain; it

¹¹ For the contrast between “foreignizing” and “domesticating” translation strategies, cf. Pym (2014, 31) (drawing on Schleiermacher’s distinction between *verfremdend* and *verdeutschend*).

¹² Funayama, this volume, p. 89f. Funayama (n. 13) draws attention to the need for keeping this translation strategy separate from the technique of “matching concepts” (格義), a method for elucidating Chinese Buddhist texts using categories from Daoism or Confucianism that, moreover, was not characteristic for Chinese Buddhism, as is sometimes claimed.

¹³ See Burke (2007) for a more general account of “cultural translation.”

will never decay. Their material stability notwithstanding, the inscriptions were subject to far-reaching processes of re-signification in the course of later history, and in this respect, Ledderose's study picks up where Funayama's ended. Since the eighteenth century, epigraphers have studied inscriptions such as the *Stone Hymn* with a documentary interest, unveiling aspects of calligraphy and the historical circumstances in which such inscriptions were produced. Yet in the case of the *Stone Hymn*, they have ignored its Buddhist content as well as the large adjacent *sūtra* to which it belongs, and have not pursued the question as to why this particular text was engraved in the spatial and social setting in question. It was the inscription's calligraphic mastery, of such great importance in Chinese culture, that caught their attention.

Anna Andreeva's essay continues the theme of "emplacing" Buddhism and addresses complex sacred topographies in medieval Japan, centering on Mt. Asama 朝熊山 in the eastern part of today's Mie prefecture, which lies in close proximity to the sacred Ise shrines that are of paramount importance to the articulation of Japanese cultural identity as well as for *kami* worship. As Mark Teeuwen and Fabio Rambelli have emphasized, medieval Japanese religion was characterized by a combinatory religious paradigm epitomized in the two notions of *honji suijaku* 本地垂迹 ("foreign buddhas as original ground and local kami as their manifest trace") and *shinbutsu shūgō* 神仏習合 ("merging kami and buddhas").¹⁴ Accordingly, in her exploration of Mt. Asama's history and its place in Japan's religious culture, Andreeva takes a long view in explaining the background for an event that took place 1750, when priests from the Ise shrines intervened in the performance of the established ritual Gumonji-hō at Mt. Asama's Buddhist Kongoshōji temple. Andreeva points to networks of relationships between cultic sites in Japan, while simultaneously tracing the worship of Bodhisattva Kūzō (Sanskrit: Ākāśagarbha) and celestial bodies in rituals designed to bring about perfect memory through the transmission of Buddhism from India across Central Asia and China to Japan. Shrine-temple histories called *engi* (縁起) that hint at such connections can thus be seen as repeated attempts to inscribe cultic sites within larger frames of translocal and transcultural Buddhist memory, supporting the survival of religious sites in a competitive economy of the sacred. Andreeva's investigation into Mt. Asama illustrates how a full picture of a seemingly local historical event only emerges after tracing the various transcultural links that made it possible, with such a picture then serving to reconstruct its significance.

¹⁴ Teeuwen and Rambelli (2003).

In the Edo period (1600–1868), the myths and legends that connected Japan with the distant Indian lands, mediated through Buddhism and also perpetuated by *engi* histories such as those explored by Andreeva, were confronted by new information about the Indian subcontinent and the island of Lanka that was brought to Japan by Jesuits and the Dutch. Fabio Rambelli traces pathways of Japanese knowledge about India and Ceylon, centering on the site of Buddha Śākyamuni's life. Some in Edo Japan placed Śākyamuni on Lanka, while others thought he had lived in northern India (Māgadha) and in part believed that India was still a Buddhist country. Analyzing shifts in the Japanese imagination of the Indian lands as encounters between different sets of knowledge, Rambelli highlights how these encounters were premised on different authorities for certifying knowledge: from the historical, (Buddhist) text-based knowledge upon which Japanese conceptions of India were based, to the knowledge based on contemporary territorial access that European agents mediated to Japan.

Davide Torri takes a broader perspective of the role played by Buddhism in the production of ethnic identities among the Tibetanid communities of the Nepalese Upper Himalayas. He discusses both specific strategies of emplacement (or domestication) and the creation of shared Buddhist historical memory. With long-term historical connections to the Tibetan plateau, the remote mountain valleys in today's Nepal have often played a conspicuous role as “hidden lands” (Tibetan *sbas yul*), refuges for sheltering the Buddha-dharma in times of distress. They acquired this status through the agency of powerful Buddhist masters, most prominently Padmasambhava, who bound local divinities and spirits by oath to protect the Dharma. The “sequential subjugations” (Torri) effected by Padmasambhava, by the famous poet-mystic Mi la ras pa (ca. 1028–1111) and others are linked to conspicuous places and markings (footprints, carvings) that empower the landscape as a hidden land. Like pre- or non-Buddhist practices centering on the “gods of place” (*yul lha*), these Buddhist forms of emplacement support identities that are rooted in a locality. But in ways not unlike the Chinese stone inscriptions investigated by Ledderose and Mt. Asama as discussed by Andreeva, these sites inscribe the local in a larger, translocal (and transcultural) framework. In Helambu, the area where Torri has conducted his fieldwork and which is the focus of his essay, the travels of the Ngagchang Shakya Zangpo (Tib. *sngags 'chang shākya bzang po*; 15th/16th cent.), who opened this particular hidden land, link this remote area in the Upper Himalayas with the first Tibetan monastery of Bsam yas, as well as with the stupa of Bodhnath in Kathmandu. In these relationships, Helambu is situated at a “double periphery” (Torri) – and is where (Kathmandu) most Hyolmo live today. Issues of Buddhist “landscaping” and the role of Buddhism in supporting the fractioned identities of Tibetanid groups in the Upper Himalayas acquire heightened significance through the

recent transformation of Nepal from a Hindu monarchy into a republic supported by a conception of “ethnic federalism.” The devastation of Helambu through the earthquake of April 2015, which has accelerated outward migration even further, severely impacted the social fabric of the already dispersed Hyolmo community. Under these circumstances, it remains to be seen how increased migration will affect the locality-based identities of the Hyolmo and other Upper Himalayan communities.

The two final papers in this volume, by Markus Viehbeck and Jonathan Samuels, highlight in different ways how positions and concepts from within the Tibetan Buddhist tradition that arguably reflect partisan ideologies have guided the academic study of Buddhism, positions and concepts that were taken over as orienting models with less critical reflection than (as we know now) was necessary. David L. Snellgrove most explicitly promoted the view that Tibetan Buddhism preserves authentic Indian Buddhism in an unadulterated form, epitomized in the notion of an “Indo-Tibetan Buddhism.” Recent discussions problematize such claims to privileged access in a larger Buddhist context, but, as Viehbeck points out, there is historical precedent for this. The clearest attempt to approach the relationship between Buddhism in India and in Tibet in a more nuanced fashion, by David Seyffort Rugg, has distinguished between historically Indian and typologically “Indic” elements in Tibetan intellectual culture. Viehbeck argues that this distinction must be supplemented further by empirical studies on how the acclaimed Indian origin of particular positions manifests within Tibetan discourse and practice. For his part, he offers an exemplary study drawing on late nineteenth-century Tibetan debates on the proper interpretation of an Indian Buddhist “classic,” Śāntideva’s *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. These debates operated on the shared background of a strict binary logic that placed conformity to Indian tradition in opposition to aberration and deviation from it. Yet, the fierce controversies between ‘Ju Mi pham and his sparring partners not only show that even in the nineteenth century, Tibetan authors were still attributing greater weight to Indian textual authorities (in Tibetan translation) than to their own interpretive tradition. They also allow one to recognize how allegiance to Indian authorities was tempered by the creative application of a hermeneutic toolbox within a larger “space of negotiation” (Viehbeck). Polemical discourse on Indian Buddhist classics both confirmed their authority *and* offered opportunities for asserting Tibetan intellectual ingenuity. It may seem commendable at first to abandon the label “Indo-Tibetan Buddhism,” as it simply reproduces, in academic discourse, an ideological position from within Tibetan Buddhist historiography. But this should not distract from the importance that conformity with Indian tradition held in Tibetan discourse and practice as a standard and value – or, for that

matter, from the need to study the negotiation of conformity in a historically situated manner across different areas of cultural production.

Finally, Jonathan Samuels turns to conceptual schemes used within Buddhist traditions to locally articulate and organize relations to other religions, as well as to mark religion as a separate sphere from other social fields. The Japanese notions of *honji suijaku* and *shinbutsu shūgō*, brought into play in Andreeva's paper (cf. above), operate as such schemes. They also respond to the perceived foreignness of Buddhism and serve as tools for bringing awareness of its translocal and transcultural character into focus. Samuels discusses the contrastive opposition between the "worldly" and the "other-worldly" – in Sanskrit: *laukika* and *lokottara* – which has served a similar purpose. It is conception that is found throughout Buddhist Asia, from ancient India across Tibet all the way to medieval Japan. Since this conceptual pair was widely employed across the boundaries of vastly different societies, it seems tempting at first to treat it as part of a universal order that transcends cultural boundaries. Indeed, it does have a striking similarity to meta-linguistic categories such as the sacred and the profane, or the religious and the secular. Samuels, however, argues forcefully against approaching the worldly/other-worldly binary as a taxonomy in the first place, which would be a prerequisite for mapping it onto meta-linguistic categories, and articulates a fresh perspective for contextualizing it specifically in Tibet.

The worldly/other-worldly binary has been widely used, in Tibet and elsewhere, to arrange Buddhas, bodhisattvas and various divinities, as well as the practices devoted to them, in a hierarchical manner. While Buddhas and bodhisattvas are placed in the "other-worldly" category, local gods and spirits, as well as gods adapted from an ancient Indian religious matrix such as Indra or Brahma, are regarded as worldly. In the Tibetan context, Samuels argues, this binary has permitted the Buddhist monastic authority to assert itself in a complex religious environment: while veneration of worldly deities is not prohibited, it is relegated to a subordinate level that, precisely because of its subordination, is always in a position of potentially being placed under more explicit Buddhist control. The perhaps unusually high involvement of Buddhist monastics in "worldly" elements can thus be seen as an assertion of authority. The frequent reference to the "subjugation" of local deities by Padmasambhava and other masters, as also discussed in Torri's essay in this volume, is a case in point. In reflecting on the relationship between the "emic and the academic," Samuels can be taken as forcefully underscoring a more general point, one that also emerges from Viehbeck's paper. When examining Buddhist attitudes towards other religious practices and its intersecting relationship to other cultures, an investigation of object-linguistic and meta-linguistic categories – of

organizing categories used within religious communities and conceptual schemes employed in the academic study of religion – is not enough to avoid the risk of scientism,¹⁵ even though such investigations are necessary. Such investigations must be supplemented by close readings of these types of categories as they are used contextually, in view of historically situated rhetorical strategies and ideologies.

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15 Cf. Krech (2012, 21).

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