सत्यमेव जयते

Consulate General of India
Hong Kong & Macau SARs

prajñā

Compendium of the Papers Presented during the 3-part seminar series on ***Sanskrit and Buddhist Studies***

January – March 2024

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भारत का प्रधान कौंसलावास
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MESSAGE FROM CONSUL GENERAL

The Buddhist religious philosophy made its way from India along trade routes to East and South-east Asia around 2500 years ago. It has had a significant impact on the cultural, social and spiritual lives of the people of this region. In the 20th century, it also spread westwards. It is now one of the largest religions in the world with an estimated 6.5% of global population professing Buddhism.

Buddhism was founded by Siddhartha Gautama (in 6th and 5th centuries BCE), a Prince who upon discovering human suffering was so moved that he gave up his worldly possessions and embarked upon a journey of spiritual exploration that led him to the attainment of enlightenment or 'nirvana'.

Buddhist studies form an important cultural link between India and countries in East and South-east Asia. As a majority of Buddhist scriptures were originally written in Sanskrit language, the study of Sanskrit to grasp the true meaning of the texts, as intended by the author, is critical.

We are fortunate that a number of Centres of study and Universities in Hong Kong are dedicated to Sanskrit and Buddhist studies. This compendium is the result of collaboration of the Consulate General of India in Hong Kong with Dr. Patricia Sauthoff, Assistant Professor, Department of History, Hong Kong Baptist University; Dr. Amrita Nanda, Honorary Lecturer, Center of Buddhist Studies, the University of Hong Kong and Dr. Bill M. Mak, Fellow, Jao Tsung-I Petite Ecole, the University of Hong Kong who presented papers on the subjects in a three-part seminar series titled 'Prajna' meaning 'wisdom' or understanding the true nature of phenomenon. The seminar series brought together the scholars, academicians and researchers with the broader Indian and local community in Hong Kong, thereby raising awareness about the resources available in the city for the pursuit of these ancient, yet relevant subjects for the better understanding of the true nature of existence and an appreciation for the cultural and spiritual ties that connect peoples spread across continents.

Satwant Khanalia

(Satwant Khanalia)

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Indological Studies in Hong Kong and China — Past and Present

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1 Preamble

There are no other civilisations in our world that have a continuous culture and history like China and India. By continuous culture and history I mean the understanding of the cultural and historical sources that define the core identities of the Chinese and Indian peoples and societies. Chinese classics such as the *Analects* and the *Dao De Jing* composed thousands of years ago are still read in their original Chinese language by all Chinese people from school children to adults here in China and Hong Kong, and are considered by many ethical and spiritual beacons for the Chinese people. Similarly, the Vedas, the Sanskrit classics, and epics such as the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyana* are dear to the hearts of many Indians, and are recited just like they were thousands of years ago. All the more extraordinary is that the two civilisational giants were neighbours. Despite separation by the Himalayas, the two civilisations had continuous contact and exchange for over two millennia that were almost entirely peaceful and amicable, an exceptional historical fact that is often overlooked by historians of global history.

Today, if one asks the school children or even an educated adult from China and India what they know about the other country, few could describe accurately the other's history, let alone the extraordinary legacy of intellectual and cultural exchange between the two civilisations. It appears to me that there is an urgent need for the promotion of both general knowledge, as well as more advanced research on Sino-Indian history and relation, a field that has still much room for growth, given the increasingly important roles China and India play in global affairs.[1] I thank therefore Consul General Satwant Khanalia here in Hong Kong for giving me the opportunity to share with you this talk, with the hope that greater friendship may be fostered and the message of mutual understanding of the two peoples may be spread far and wide.

2 Indological studies in China

Although ethnically and linguistically distinct from each other, China and India both shared an ancient history that is distinguished by brilliant cultural advancement and pre-modern scientific development. Many of these cultural and technological innovations in the field of mathematics, astronomy, civil engineering, medicine, linguistics, and so on, may be considered fairly, if not the most advanced in the world for millennia before the scientific revolution took place in Western Europe in the seventeenth century.[2] It is not surprising therefore that some of the most brilliant minds of the two societies found inspiration from each other. Here in China, we are in the unequivocally fortunate position to have an abundance of records preserved from a variety of sources, from imperial records to religious documents, records numbering to the thousands, that shed light on this long course of historical exchange for the past two millennia. In India, on the other hand, textual sources are scarce in comparison. There was no continuous tradition of historical records in India and textual sources, oral or written, were largely the monopoly of the Brahmins, preserved in the

[1] See Sen, 'China–India Studies: Emergence, Development, and State of the Field', *The Journal of Asian Studies* (2021), for an updated and informed discussion.

[2] For a comprehensive survey of the history of science in China including an outstanding survey of technological innovations, readers may still find Joseph Needham et al.'s *Science and Civilisation in China* (1954–), in seven volumes with a total of over twenty sub-volumes, an excellent place to start. A highly readable introduction to Chinese scientific innovation in English is Robert Temple's *The genius of China* (1986). A comparable survey of Indian cultural and scientific achievement by Indian scholars is the monographic series *History of Science, Philosophy and Culture in Indian Civilization*, edited by D.P. Chattopadhyaya (1995–) in over twenty volumes.

Sanskrit language with limited accessibility even within India. As a result, records on such legacy of exchange between the two civilisation giants readily available to us is fairly limited. Such observation, however, is not to undermine the strength and influence of Indian cultural and their cultural outputs; quite the contrary, India had strong and widespread influences to its neighbour across Eurasia often in ways that China did not.[3] Thanks to the effort of our Indian and international colleagues, and rapid advance in digital humanities, a large body of epigraphical materials, archaeological findings, and undeciphered manuscripts in both Sanskrit and other local languages, hitherto inaccessible before the age of the internet, are now gradually made available to scholars worldwide. In this paper, my focus will naturally be on the Chinese side, bearing in mind that there is much to be discovered from the Indian sources as well, and that such asymmetry of Chinese and Indian sources may to some extent be remediated by examining sources other than the received Sanskrit texts.

2.1 Indian studies within traditional Buddhist studies

The Chinese's understanding of India is inextricably linked to the spread of Buddhism from India to China and the latter's enthusiasm in accepting the religion, and by extension, fascination and appreciation of the Indian culture in general. The inception of Buddhism in China is often linked to Emperor Ming of the Eastern Han dynasty (25 CE -220 CE), who was said to have dreamt of a golden figure named Buddha in 67 CE. The emperor then sent his envoys to India in search of sacred teaching and later purportedly constructed the first Buddhist temple, the White Horse Temple in Luoyang 洛陽. It was in this templae that foreign monks were hosted to translate Indic Buddhist texts into Chinese with the help of the new Chinese converts. Scholars nowadays are inclined to believe that the Buddhist exchange took place much earlier, possibly some centuries before the Common Era. Some of the earliest Chinese Buddhist establishments have been identified in the frontier region in the northwest and the coastal region in the southeast connected to India through the overland and maritime Silk Roads respectively. The historical Buddha, Gautama Siddhārtha, or the Śākyamuni, was largely a contemporary of Confucius, both hailed from the so-called axial age in the fifth century BCE.

Buddhism in China and its role in spreading Indian culture in East Asia

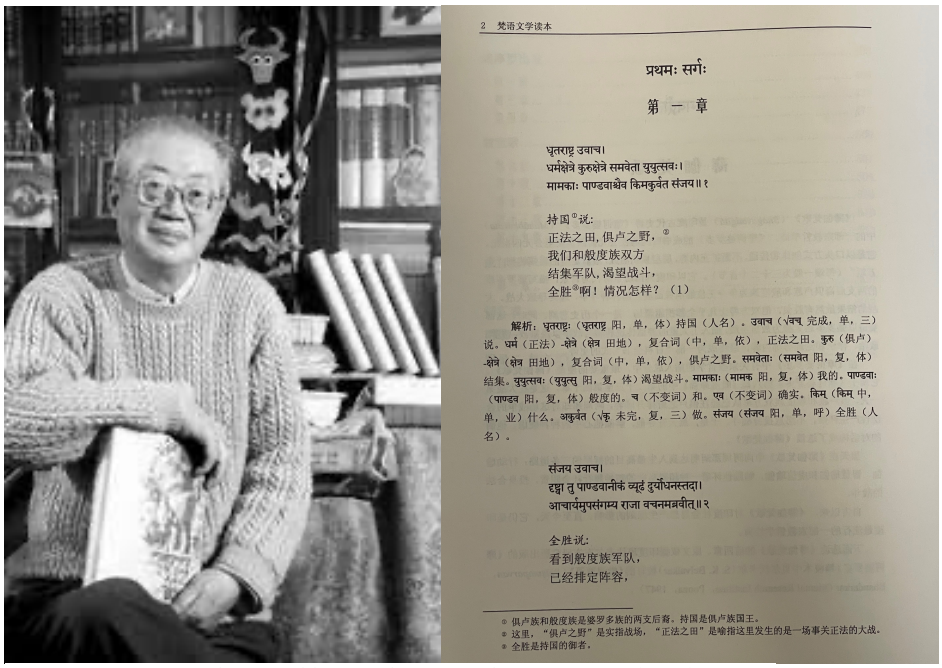
As the oldest known universalist religion, Buddhism spread from India to its neighbours through trade network of the Silk Roads. By the fourth and fifth century CE, Buddhism was so well established in China that it was practically a Chinese religion. It had a monastic community made of Chinese monks and nuns, a large body of local lay followers, an impressive collection of Buddhist scriptures translated from Indic languages into classical Chinese, and a large network of Buddhist temples and institution supported by local patrons and sometimes even emperors. The Buddhist transformation of China throughout the first millennium CE was aptly depicted and analysed in Erik Zürcher's *The Buddhist Conquest of China* (1959). China, however, was not a passive recipient of a foreign religion. By the second half of the first millennium, distinct forms of Chinese Buddhism exemplified by Pure Land Buddhism and Chan Buddhism emerged.[4] Not only China became a major force in the

[3] On Sanskrit as a "cosmopolitan" language spreading across "Southern Asia" from around the fourth century on, see Pollock, *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men* (2006).

[4] The more common term Zen is the Japanese equivalent to the Chinese Chan 禪, ultimately from the Sanskrit word for contemplation or meditation, *dhyana* (cp. Pāli, *jhāna*).

preservation and promotion of this Indian religion, it was a major centre of knowledge production, generating its own formulation of Buddhist and non-Buddhist "Indian knowledge" that are in some cases obscure or even unknown in India — from Buddhist cosmography and geography to Sanskrit orthography and calligraphy.[5]

Today the Buddhist materials translated from the Indic sources into Chinese far exceed those extant in India. According to one estimate, there are forty million Chinese characters of South Asian materials extant, much of it is preserved in the thirty-two volumes of the Taishō Tripiṭaka.[6] Such bewildering amount of Chinese materials translated from Indian sources far exceed those of any other corpus in any language, including those from later Chinese and non-Chinese sources all combined. This rich body of materials was the result of one of the largest translation projects ever undertaken by humankind, from the first century CE until the eleventh century, lasting over a millennium. Professor Huang Baosheng 黃寶生 (1942–2023), an eminent Chinese Indologist who was awarded the Padma Shri by the Government of India in 2015 for his contribution to the complete Chinese translation of the *Mahābhārata*, described this large body as a time-capsule and a treasure trove for scholars to unravel for decades or even centuries to come.[7] He dedicated the last two decades of his life to the comparative study of Sanskrit Buddhist texts and their Chinese translations.[8]


2 梵语文学读本

प्रथमः सर्गः

第 一 章

धृतराष्ट्र उवाच।
धर्मक्षेत्रे कुरुक्षेत्रे समवेता युयुत्सवः।
मामकाः पाण्डवाश्चैव किमकुर्वत संजय॥१

持国[①]说:
正法之田, 俱卢之野, [②]
我们和般度族双方
结集军队, 渴望战斗,
全胜[③]啊! 情况怎样? (1)

解析: धृतराष्ट्रः (धृतराष्ट्र 阳, 单, 体) 持国 (人名)。उवाच (√वच् 完成, 单, 三) 说。धर्म (正法) -क्षेत्रे (क्षेत्र 田地), 复合词 (中, 单, 依), 正法之田。कुरु (俱卢) -क्षेत्रे (क्षेत्र 田地), 复合词 (中, 单, 依), 俱卢之野。समवेताः (समवेत 阳, 复, 体) 结集。युयुत्सवः (युयुत्सु 阳, 复, 体) 渴望战斗。मामकाः (मामक 阳, 复, 体) 我的。पाण्डवाः (पाण्डव 阳, 复, 体) 般度的。च (不变词) 和。एव (不变词) 确实。किम् (किम् 中, 单, 业) 什么。अकुर्वत (√कृ 未完, 复, 三) 做。संजय (संजय 阳, 单, 呼) 全胜 (人名)。

संजय उवाच।
दृष्ट्वा तु पाण्डवानीकं व्यूढं दुर्योधनस्तदा।
आचार्यमुपसंगम्य राजा वचनमब्रवीत्॥२

全胜说:
看到般度族军队,
已经排定阵容,

① 俱卢族和般度族是婆罗多族的两支后裔。持国是俱卢族国王。
② 这里, "俱卢之野" 是实指战场, "正法之田" 是喻指这里发生的是一场事关正法的大战。
③ 全胜是持国的御者。

Figure 1 Huang Baosheng and his Reader in Sanskrit Literature (2010)

[5] Recently, I met Dr. Zhou Guangrong 周廣榮, from the Chinese Academy of Social Science in Beijing, who is now conducting a systematic exploration of the idea of *fanxue* 梵學 or "Brahma study" in China historically. According to Dr. Zhou, *fanxue* is not only an academic pursuit of knowledge; it has also an ethical and spiritual dimension.

[6] See Demiéville, in *Choix d'études Bouddhiques* (1973), p. 158. See remarks by Barrett, in "The Early Modern Origins of Chinese Indology," p. 102, fn. 4.

[7] A comprehensive survey of the Chinese Buddhist Canon may be found in Bagchi, *Le Canon bouddhique en Chine* (two vols., 1926, 1938).

[8] https://www.buddhistdoor.org/mingkok/梵語巴利語專家黃寶生老師專訪（上）/

For millions of Chinese Buddhists, the Buddhist texts translated into Chinese are revered as sacred scripture, recited and copied daily. Within this corpus lies also an abundance of cultural information on ancient India, reaching as far back as the Vedic period at least a millennia before the Common Era. Thus by the first millennium CE, we already find Chinese references to the Sāvitṛ Mantra (known more commonly as the Gāyatrī Mantra, considered sacred by many Hindus today), the description of Vedas, Āyurvedic medical recipes, astronomical formulation from *Vedāṅgajyotiṣa*, notes on Sanskrit lexicons and grammar, and so on. One could imagine the amount of exchange that went unrecorded. Such exchange was undertaken by educated Indians and Chinese. There were also Persians, Central Asians, Southeast Asians, Koreans, and Japanese, who were also influenced by Indian and Chinese cultures to different extents. The Tang Period (618–907 CE) was an exceptionally cosmopolitan period of Chinese history where there was a large settlements of Indians and other foreigners in major cities such as Chang'an 長安 (now Xi'an 西安) and Guangzhou 廣州, thanks to the thriving trade network exemplified by the Silk Roads. There were not only Indian Buddhists, but also Jains and Brahmins who settled in China.

Among the most notable Brahmin clan who settled in Chang'an since the seventh century were the Gautamas, who occupied important positions in Tang court as royal astronomers for four generations. Gautama Siddhārtha, a Sino-Indian astronomer of the eighth century, composed the *Nine Seizers Canon* in 718 CE, which contains some of the most advanced Indian mathematics and mathematical astronomy at that time, with techniques such as use of numerals including a "dot" as zero, trigonometry for spherical astronomy, concept of lunar nodes, and varying angular diameter of Sun and Moon. Lengthy astral treatises such as the *Gārgīyajyotiṣa* were translated into Chinese as early as the sixth century.

While Indian and Central Asian monks played an important role as mediators of Indian knowledge in China, Chinese themselves actively sought Indian knowledge as well. In the second half of the third century CE, Zhu Shixing 朱士行, an ordained Chinese monk travelled to Khotan to seek Buddhist knowledge, is widely considered the first to herald a tradition of Chinese pilgrims travelling to the "West". Among the most important itinerant Chinese monks are Faxian 法顯, Xuanzang 玄奘, and Yijing 義淨, who all travelled to India to bring back not only Buddhist scripture in the form of palm-leave manuscripts, but also detailed records of various aspects of India and the Indian society at that time. The travelogues of three monks: *Foguo ji* 佛國記 (Records of the Buddhist kingdom), *Da Tang xiyu ji* 大唐西域記 (The Great Tang Records of the Western Region), and *Nanhai jigui neifa zhuan* 南海寄歸內法傳 (Records of Buddhist practices sent home from the Southern Sea), remain to date indispensable historical records for our understanding of ancient and medieval India. The engagement between the learned Chinese and advanced Indian learning came to a high point during the Tang Dynasty in the eighth century. Japanese monks such as Kūkai 空海 came to Chang'an to learn from the Indian and Chinese masters to bring back to Japan not only practices and Sino-Indian texts of the Esoteric Buddhism, but also knowledge of Sanskrit and Indian linguistics. The latter led to the development of the Japanese writing system using the syllabic *kana*-s 假名, inspired by the *akṣara* alphabet system and the organization of sounds based on phonetic principles as defined by the Vedic *śikṣā* texts.

By the twelfth century, Chinese interest in Indian studies waned for a number of reasons. The translation of the Buddhist canon had nearly reached completion. While new texts, especially the esoteric ones connected with tantra, were still produced sporadically, Chinese Buddhists were content with the canonised corpus of Chinese Buddhist translations. Translated texts in Chinese such as those by Kumārajīva, e.g., Diamond Sutra (*Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā*), Lotus Sutra (*Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*), Flower Ornament Sutra (*Buddhāvataṃsaka*), etc., have gained status within the Chinese learned society similar to the

Confucian classics. There was no longer a serious demand among the Chinese Buddhists for original Chinese-Sanskrit translation. Following the continual trend of Sinification and growing popularity of Chan and Pure Land Buddhism, the role of Indian learning declined during the following centuries of the Song and Ming periods — generally considered the introspective periods in Chinese history. Knowledge of India in China during the second millennia was often relegated to the study of foreign ethnicities or foreign affairs in the imperial academy. Recitation of Buddhist Sanskrit mantra, still widely practised by Chinese Buddhists even today, became ritualised with little concern over their correctness in pronunciation or meaning. Another reason for the decline is the disappearance of the Indian communities in Chinese society; the Indian migrants in Tang China have intermarried with the locals and became nativized. The community of learned Indians altogether disappeared and Sanskrit learning in China during the Yuan, Ming, Qing periods were propagated by Tibetan lamas. However, there are evidences that some Indians did remain and there has been a small but constant influx of Indian immigrants in China due to the close trade relation between the two civilisations. Among the most remarkable examples are the thriving Tamil enclaves in Quanzhou up to the thirteenth century during the Mongol period.[9]

2.2 Nineteenth-century Indian studies in East Asia

Indian studies in nineteenth-century China took a number of interesting and surprising turns. Some of these changes were driven by internal factors within China, while others are the results of outside influences from as close as Japan, and as far as Europe. They took place in connection with imperialism, globalisation, and a rapidly changing world order. As far as internal factors are concerned, particularly noteworthy is the rising interest among Chinese scholars in an indigenous form of philological research. Scholars following the so-called Qian-Jia School 乾嘉學派 focused on sources and raised many text-critical questions, often with broad interests in different branches of linguistics. Timothy Barrett argues that the Chinese interest in Sino-Indian contact based on textual sources are evident as early as in the works of Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1764–1849). In his essay entitled *Ta xing shuo* 塔性說, Ruan examined the Indian origin of the Chinese pagoda by tracing the foreign origin of the Chinese word *ta* 塔 in relation to the Sanskrit word *stupa*.[10] Similar scholarly interest and intercultural awareness may be noted in works of Wei Yuan 魏源 (1794–1856) and Gong Zizhen 龔自珍 (1792–1841), whose attention to Indian matters are in many ways connected to their devout Buddhist faith.[11]

Indian studies in China took a major leap in the late nineteenth-century when Chinese Buddhists came into contact with Sanskrit and Indological studies of the Europeans. Unlike the traditional Chinese Siddham scholarship, which focused on script, orthography, and phonetics, concerns which are characteristically "Chinese", European Indology rapidly evolved thanks to important discoveries in comparative philology and historical linguistics. The latter drew from the experience and the resources from a long tradition of classical scholarship in Greek and Latin languages and literature. Among the early Chinese figures who gained such awareness and promoted Indian studies with an emphasis on Sanskrit and

[9] See Coomaraswamy, "Hindu Sculptures at Zayton"; Guy, "Tamil merchant guilds and the Quanzhou trade".

[10] In *Yanjing shi ji* 揅經室集 3.2a–4a (*Sibu congkan* edition). See discussion in Barrett, "The Modern Origin of Chinese Indology," p. 95.

[11] Barrett, "The Modern Origin of Chinese Indology," p. 95 ff.

Sanskrit literature was the Buddhist scholar and reformist Yang Wenhui 楊文會 (1837–1911). Coming from a background of traditional Confucian and Chinese Buddhist learning, Yang visited England in the 1870s and became acquainted with European culture and the rapidly developing fields of Sanskrit studies and Indology. While in England, he met another important Japanese Buddhist scholar, Nanjō Bunyū 南条文雄, who was passionate in Indian learning and later a pioneer in Buddhological and Indological studies in Japan. In 1908, Yang established the Jetavana Hermitage (祇洹精舍 *qiyuan jingshe*) in Nanjing 南京, where he invited the poet-monk Su Manshu 蘇曼殊 (1884–1918) to teach Sanskrit. Unfortunately, the scholarly activities in China during the late nineteenth century was severely disrupted due to foreign invasion and civil strife, and would slowly resume only during the Republic period (1912–1949).

Meanwhile, the Japanese academic world underwent some dramatic transformation, turning Japan into the steward of East Asian scholarship. As far as Indian and Buddhist studies are concerned, Japan had the advantage of having preserved older materials and tradition from Tang China between the seventh and ninth centuries.[12] Some of the oldest Buddhist palm-leave manuscripts in Sanskrit are kept in Japan, including for example, the 7th-century *Hṛdaya Prajñāpāramitā / Uṣṇīṣavijayadhāraṇī* palm-leave from the Hōryūji Temple 法隆寺, now in the Tokyo National Museum. Traditional East-Asian Sanskrit learning, in particular, the study of orthography and Indian phonetics (known as *shittan* 悉曇, from Skt. Siddham), and other specialized knowledge associated with Esoteric Buddhism are preserved in Japanese Buddhist monasteries and temples. In China, the study of Siddham inspired Chinese scholars to develop phonetic and tonal analysis of the Chinese language in a discipline known as *yinyunxue* 音韻學 since the fifth century CE. As described earlier, Japanese did also the same later with the invention of the Japanese syllabary and phonetic study on the Japanese language by Japanese scholars. As for other Indian knowledge such as Indian astrology and astronomy, they are not only well preserved within the Buddhist temples, but had also widespread influence in Japanese society, as evident the use of Greco-Indian planetary weekdays even today (*nichiyōbi* 日曜日, Day of Sun for Sunday, *ādityavāra*; *getsuyōbi* 月曜日, Day of Moon for Tuesday, *somavāra*, etc).[13] During the Meiji period, Buddhist scholars such as Nanjō Bunyū and others set the trend and standard of modern Indological and Buddhological studies in Japan, which are maintained to a very high standard to date. Already in the late nineteenth century, Japanese scholars engaged in Indological studies independent from Buddhist studies, establishing connection with international scholars to conduct collaborative research in a rich array of sub-fields of classical Indological studies, including Pāṇinian linguistics, Vedas, epics, poetics, history, and literature. Up until recently, Chinese scholars were largely dependent on works of Japanese scholars as far as frontier Indological research is concerned. The 14th World Sanskrit Conference was held at Kyoto University in 2009, and Japan Association of Indian and Buddhist Studies have over 2,400 members, with annual meetings having an attendance of over six hundreds. These attest to the extraordinary academic strength of Japan in the realm of Indological studies.

[12] Much of the Indian materials preserved in Japan had been compiled and published by the late Lokesh Chandra in the Śata-Piṭaka Series

[13] Michio Yano, *Esoteric Buddhist Astrology* (trans. B. Mak).

2.3 Twentieth-century Indologists in China

Figure 2 Portrait of "Professor of Sanskrit" von Staël-Holstein. (Source: Wikimedia Commons)

Indian studies in China gradually emerged with its own characteristics during the early twentieth century with the establishment of major universities such as Peking University and Tsinghua University in Beijing, where Sanskrit was taught. Among the legacies from the traditional nineteenth-century scholarship is the general philological and linguistic interest, as well as a broad awareness and appreciation of the cultural importance of Buddhism and India within Chinese culture. Unlike earlier Chinese scholars or their Japanese counterparts who are themselves devout Buddhists, many Chinese Indologists are completely secular in terms of both their general outlook and academic interests. When the People's Republic of China was established in 1949, considerable attention and government support were given to Indian studies, as both an established tradition as a diplomatic means to foster understanding and friendship between India and China. In other Chinese-speaking societies, Indian studies follow different pathways. For example, Indian studies in Taiwan remain largely subsumed under Buddhist studies, which were supported by the resourceful Buddhist communities. Among the notable universities in Taiwan are Huafan University 華梵大學,[14] Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies 中華佛學研究所, and Fo Guang University 佛光大學, where Sanskrit and courses on various Indological subjects are taught.

Indian studies in Hong Kong follow some trends noted in the Mainland and Taiwan. On the other hand, it developed also in its own way due to the unique geopolitical positioning of metropolis and special opportunities therein not found elsewhere.

Alexander von Staël-Holstein 鋼和泰 (1877–1836)[15]

The first scholar to bring serious Sanskrit learning back into China after a long hiatus of nearly a millennium was the Estonian scholar Alexander von Staël-Holstein. In 1916 he left St. Petersburg for Asia and stayed in Peking to pursue his interest in Buddhist philology and history, in particular that of Kanishka. When the notable scholar Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培 was appointed the President of Peking University in 1917, five years after the new Republic of China was formed, one of his main goals is to bring to the institute some of most reputed scholars of his days. In the following year, Charles Eliot, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Hong Kong and a scholar of Hinduism and Buddhism, wrote to the Chinese scholar Hu Shih 胡適 to recommend von Staël-Holstein to be recruited as a lecturer in Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Indian religions at the National Peking University (now Peking University).[16] The Orientalist von Staël-Holstein was invited to become the Professor of Sanskrit in 1921, among other notable foreign invitees such as John Dewey and Bertrand Russell.

[14] Literally, Sino- (*hua*) Indian (*fan*) university. The Indian influence is evident as seen by the logo of the institute featuring the lion capital of the Ashokan pillar. See below on its founder Ven. Hiu Wan.

[15] Elisseeff, Serge. "Stael-Holstein's Contribution to Asiatic Studies."

[16] Hu Shih would later call this the greatest contribution of the University of Hong Kong to the academic world in China.

Among his many achievements during his sojourn in Beijing was his work on the reconstruction of Middle Chinese phonetics through Sanskrit transliteration in Chinese in 1923, and the trilingual synoptic edition of the Kāśyapaparivarta of the *Ratnakūṭa*, which he edited with six recensions in Sanskrit, Chinese, and Tibetan. The work was eventually published by the Commercial Press in Shanghai in 1926. Von Staël-Holstein heralded such comparative, philological approach towards the analyses of the multilingual Buddhist canon, which would become established as the standard among Buddhological scholars worldwide. Chinese scholars in Buddhist texts such as Lü Cheng 呂澂 (1986–1989), Lin Liguang 林藜光 (1902–1945), and Chen Yinke (see below) in many ways were inspired by this method and carried on this tradition to produce some of the most astonishing scholarship in the twentieth century.

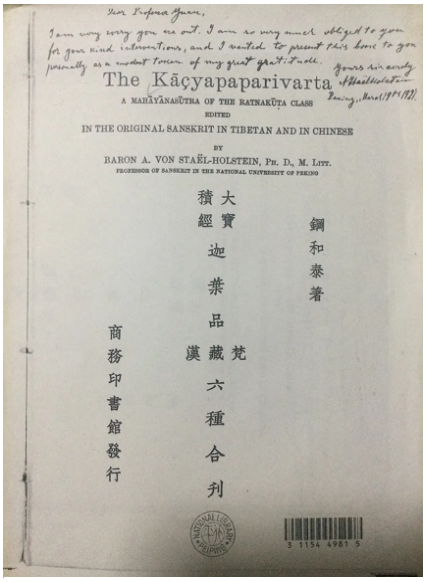

The Kāçyapaparivarta
A MAHĀYĀNASŪTRA OF THE RATNAKŪṬA CLASS
EDITED
IN THE ORIGINAL SANSKRIT IN TIBETAN AND IN CHINESE
BY
BARON A. VON STAËL-HOLSTEIN, PH. D., M. LITT.
PROFESSOR OF SANSKRIT IN THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF PEKING
大寶積經迦葉品 梵藏漢六種合刊
鋼和泰著
商務印書館發行

Figure 3 The Kāśyapaparivarta published by von Staël-Holstein (1926)

Prabodh Chandra Bagchi (1898–1956)

Bagchi was a notable Sino-Indologist with important ties with both international and Chinese scholars. After he joined Calcutta University as an Indian scholar well trained in Sanskrit and Indian history, he had the opportunity to travel to Indo-China and Japan to work with eminent French Orientalists such as Sylvain Lévi, Louis Finot, and Henri Maspero, eventually becoming proficient in Chinese and Tibetan. Among his most important contribution is his complete survey of the Chinese Buddhist Canon written in French in 1927, *Le Canon Bouddhique en Chine*. In 1945, he was Director of Research Studies of Visva-Bharati University at Shantiniketan and became a leading Indian scholar in Sinology. The year before, he published highly acclaimed *India and China: A thousand years of cultural relations*, where he covered a topic of immense scope, as well as illustrating how China and India learned from each other thanks to the "cultural ambassadors", with the lesser known fact on the Indian borrowing from China of material culture — peaches, pears, vermilion, porcelain, silk, and tea.[17] For two years, Bagchi was a Chair Professor at the Peiping National University (now Peking University), a professorship created by the Indian government to promote Sino-Indian scholarship and cultural ties. Bagchi was particular crucial in introducing both traditional and contemporary Indological scholarship from India to the Chinese scholars, often as an alternative or important complement to European Indological scholarship. An international conference was held in Beijing in 2008 to commemorate the 110th birth anniversary of both Bagchi and Tan Yunshan 譚雲山 (1898–1983), for their important contribution to Sino-Indian studies and relation.

[17] The non-material influence from China to India remains a challenging subject to be explored due to the scarce materials from the Indian side. Some scholars have pointed to the Taoist influences evident in esoteric or Tantric materials in Sanskrit. Recently, Dr. Chitra of Bengaluru raised to my attention some parallel concepts between the *Dao de jing* and the *Thirukkural*, and the references to Chinese places in the verses of Siddhar Bhogar. All the materials remain to be scrutinised.

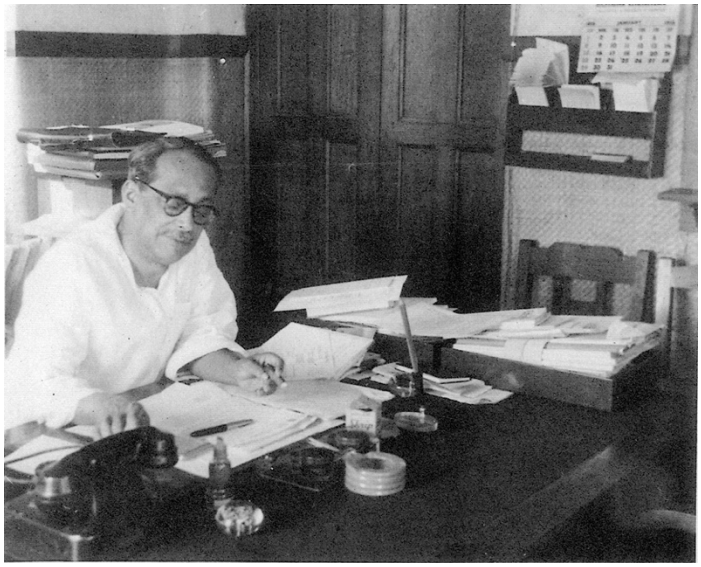


Figure 4 Bagchi in his office at Visva Bharati (Wikimedia Commons)

Chen Yinke 陳寅恪 (1890–1969)

Figure 5 Chen Yinke c. 1948 (Source: Wikimedia Commons)

Chen Yinke (or Tschen Yinkoh) is a highly celebrated polyglot scholar, one of the best known twentieth-century historians and linguists in China. Of Hakka ancestry, Chen had a traditional classical Chinese education before studying overseas in Japan, Europe, and US for decades. Among the twenty-plus languages he learned were Pali and Sanskrit, which he learned from the Harvard Professor Charles Lanman, author of the "Sanskrit Reader" popularly used in universities even today. After spending two years at Harvard, Chen continued his study of Sanskrit with the German Orientalist and Indologist Heinrich Lüder at the Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität (later Humboldt University of Berlin) before returning to China.

Chen's family, personal life and career suffered greatly during the Japanese invasion of China during the 1930s. In 1939, he was offered a professorship in Chinese history by Oxford University. While traveling en route to the UK in 1940 he was forced to stay in Hong Kong due to the military escalation of the invading Japanese. In 1941, Xu Dishan (see below), who was then the Head of the Chinese Department of the University of Hong Kong invited Chen to become a visiting professor. Thus following Eliots and Xu, Chen became the third professor at the university to possess the knowledge of Sanskrit. This tradition would be followed by another Chinese scholar, the much beloved Professor Jao Tsung-I.

During the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong, the Japanese authority tried to recruit Chen to serve the interests of the newly found "Greater East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere" 大東亜共栄圏. Chen declined and later fled to Mainland China, never succeeded in reaching the UK to take up the professorship at Oxford. Chen later taught at the Lingnan University (later Zhongshan University) in Guangzhou, where he died during the Cultural Revolution.

Chen was among the first Chinese scholars who taught Sanskrit in China using the modern Western method, following his own academic training overseas. Although Indology was never the focus of Chen, his solid training in traditional Chinese scholarship together with his ability to access sources in original languages including Sanskrit made many of his

works important references in various fields of Oriental studies even today. In the 1930s, he taught Sanskrit to students at the Yenching University in Beijing using the Max Muller's edition of the *Vajraccehdikāprajñāpāramitā* (Diamond Sutra 金剛經). He was able to apply his knowledge of Sanskrit and Indian literature in a number of his studies, including his research in the Indian elements in the Chinese novel *Xiyouji* 西遊記 ("Journey to the West") and the Chinese medical doctor Hua Tuo 華佗. Chen was known also for his theory that the Chinese understanding of the four tones of the Chinese language was a result of contact with the Indian theory of "three Vedic accents". Chen's theory was later refuted by Jao Tsung-I, who believed that Chinese phonetics was inspired not by Vedic recitations, but by the studies of Buddhist phonetics and orthography, known to the Chinese as Siddham 悉曇.

Ji Xianlin 季羨林 (1911–2009)

Ji Xianlin is undoubtedly the best-known Indologist and a much revered scholar in China. Having received his doctoral training at the University of Göttingen under scholars such as Ernst Waldschmidt and Emil Sieg, Ji became the first professionally trained Indologist, who works with ancient texts in Sanskrit, Pali, and Tocharian. In 1946, at the recommendation from Chen Yinke, he joined Peking University and founded the Department of Oriental Languages and Literature at Peking University, together with another important Indologist Jin Kemu 金克木 (1912–2000). During the Cultural Revolution, Ji suffered some serious setback but managed to complete the Chinese translation of the *Rāmāyana* under dire condition. Subsequently, Ji broadened his Indological and cultural interests to become a prolific scholar in many fields beyond his original specialization in Indian philology, most notably in historical Sino-Indian relation, including a monograph on the intercultural history of sugar. Ji was remembered as a mentor of many students at Peking University, which remains to date the centre of Sanskrit learning in China.

Figure 6 Ji Xianlin in his 90s on the campus of Peking University

Other contemporary scholars

A few generations of scholars specialising in different areas of Indian studies have emerged thanks to the overall intellectual receptivity towards Indian culture and government support of programs and courses in Indian languages, history, and culture. While doctoral program in Indology is offered only in few public universities such as Peking University, Fudan University, and Sichuan University, Sanskrit courses are offered in at least a dozen institutes, including private Buddhist colleges. Among the most important Indological project made by the Chinese scholars in the recent years was the complete Chinese translation of the *Mahābhārata* by Huang Baosheng 黃寶生 (1942–2023) and others. Huang was a student of Ji, and produced also an impressive collection of modern Chinese translation of important Sanskrit texts, both Buddhist and non-Buddhist. Comparative studies and the collation of Buddhist texts from different sources follow the standard established by von Staël-Holstein, and is followed by a team of students at the Chinese Academy of Social Science (CASS). A number of younger scholars at Peking University such as Ye Shaoyong, Saerji, and Luo Hong

became specialists of Buddhist Sanskrit manuscripts and have deciphered Sanskrit manuscripts preserved in Tibet. Other foreign-trained Chinese scholars with different specialities in Indology also emerged in recent years.

3 Indological studies in Hong Kong

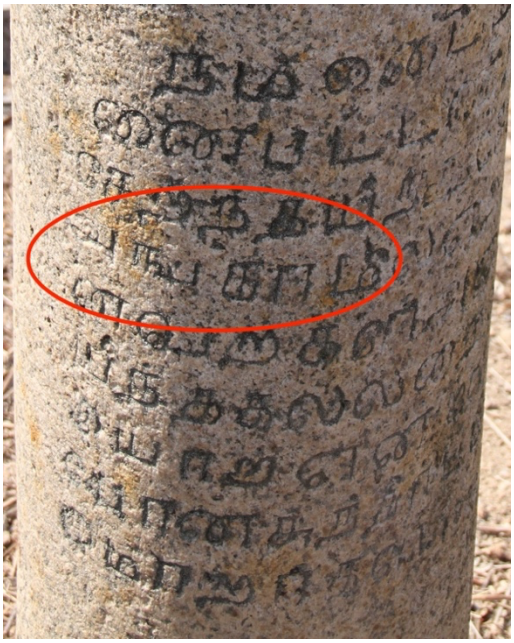


Figure 7 A 19th-century inscription in Tamil on the Soonderam memorial pillar, with the name for Hong Kong: aṅkām[-il] அங்காம் *(circled in red). Hindu Cemetery, Happy Valley, Hong Kong.* (Photo by author)

Although Hong Kong is neither a political nor a cultural centre of China, its unique geopolitics and colonial history provided some unique factors which enabled Indian studies to thrive. Firstly, Hong Kong is connected to the mainland China since the Eastern Han Period (25–220 CE). It is also situated at the one of maritime gateways of China, with close ties to Guangzhou, one of the two important international ports together with Quanzhou 泉州, with enclaves of foreigners due to the prosperous maritime trade. The garrison of port of Tuen Mun 屯門 was officially established in 736 CE for the purpose of immigration control and for maintaining coastal security. Activities of foreigners from Southeast Asia and India in the region left some records and traces, in particular those in connection with Buddhist missionaries. The monk Pui To 杯渡, said to be Indian origin by some, is believed to have settled near Tuen Mun and Yuen Long in early fifth-century CE and had founded a monastery, which is now the Tsing Shan Monastery at the foot of Castle Peak near Tuen Mun. In the following centuries, some of the well-known Indian monks who have spent time in Guangzhou, for example, Guṇabhadra 求那跋陀羅, Bodhidharma 菩提達摩 (fl. 5th–6th century CE), and Vinītaruci (毘尼多流支, ?–594 CE) may have likely transited through Hong Kong in their travel. Although archaeological evidences of Indian settlements in Guangdong region are yet to be discovered, those from Quanzhou 泉州, such as the thirteenth-century Hindu Temple and the Tamil inscriptions suggested that similar settlements in Guangzhou or even Tuen Mun are not inconceivable. By the sixteenth century, an increasing of Indian workers and traders arrived in China with the British and other Europeans with colonial ambition. Parsi community was established in Guangzhou by the mid-18th century. After Hong Kong became a British colony in 1842 and subsequently become part of the Commonwealth, Indians from various parts of British India including Sikhs, Muslims, and Hindus, settled in Hong Kong. The oldest extant epigraphical record in an Indian language is a tombstone in Tamil dated 1873, now in the Hindu Cemetery in Happy Valley on the Hong Kong Island (Fig. 7).[18] Throughout the colonial history of Hong Kong and even after the Handover in 1997, Indians and other South Asians make up a significant non-Chinese demographics in Hong Kong, and some became prominent members of the local society.

In 1907 H.N. Mody, a visionary Parsi merchant in Hong Kong, in response to Governor Lugard's proposal to establish a university in the British colony, offered to

[18] Mak, ‘The Hindu Temple in Hong Kong’.

contribute HK$100,000 and an additional endowment fund of HK$30,000 provided that the government could match the fund. The idea of a university was previously mooted. The government was reluctant and Mody threatened that he would withdraw his offer in six months if the Government could not come to a decision. Eventually, other generous donors followed, with Butterfield and Swire offering £40,000 and the Viceroy of Canton HK$200,000. In 1909 the Government Sub-Committee accepted officially Mody's offer and Mody promised to complete the erection work and hand over the buildings to the Governor by the end of 1911. Today the University of Hong Kong is one of the leading universities in Asia and the World.

The Neo-classical building for the School of Chinese at the University of Hong Kong was built in 1930 and was closely associated with two Chinese eminent scholars who were known for their research in Indian literature and their knowledge of Sanskrit: Hsü Ti-shan 許地山 (1893-1941) and Jao Tsung-I 饒宗頤 (1917-2018). The school was established largely through the effort of Governor Cecil Clementi 金文泰, who studied classics at Oxford with a Boden Scholarship in Sanskrit in 1897. The building now houses the Jao Tsung-I Petite Ecole.

Charles Eliot (1862–1931)

One of the major works on Indian religions in the early twentieth century, the three-volume "Hinduism and Buddhism" (1921) by Sir Charles Eliot (1862–1931), was in fact written partly in Hong Kong when the remarkable British scholar-diplomat was the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Hong Kong (1912-18). Eliot was said to be conversant in 27 languages, including Sanskrit and Pali which he learned when he was a student at Oxford. He was made a fellow of the Trinity College at the age of 22. Beside his ability to synthesise a vast body of knowledge on Hinduism and Buddhism and their practices in different parts of the world, Eliot was noted for his insight to treat Buddhism as part of Hinduism and to consider Hinduism an indigenous Dravidian religion stimulated by outside influences. The Eliot Hall at the University of Hong Kong was named after him. Eliot was well connected to the Orientalists and the scholarly world in his time. It was in fact Eliot who first recommended to Hu Shih the appointment of von Staël-Holstein as the Professor of Sanskrit at Peking University.

Figure 8 Eliot in Hong Kong.
(source: Wikimedia Commons)

Xu Dishan 許地山 (1893–1941)

Xu Dishan (also as Hsü Ti-shan) of Cantonese ancestry was an early twentieth-century writer, whose works are well known to Chinese even today. He was among the first Chinese to introduce Indian literature and works of Tagore to the Chinese public. In his teenage years he learned Sanskrit from a monk in Burma. Later he continued his study of comparative religion and Sanskrit in US (Columbia University), UK (Oxford), and Benares (BHU) before returning to Peking in 1926. At that time, there was a circle of eminent Chinese scholars learning Sanskrit from von Staël-Holstein in Peking. In 1930 Hsü planned to start a Sanskrit class at the Yenching University but did not succeed. In the same year he published the first book in Chinese on the history of Indian Literature. Beside the translation of works of Tagore, he translated also folk stories from Bengal and Indian elements permeated throughout his own creative works in Chinese. In 1935, Hsü was made the head of the Department of Chinese at the University of Hong Kong upon the recommendation of Hu

Shih. Among the many classes he offered at the University of Hong Kong was Sanskrit. Hsü planned to produce a Sanskrit-Chinese dictionary but died prematurely in 1941 at the age of 47, and was buried in the Pokfulam Cemetery.

Xu was among the handful of early Chinese admirers of Tagore and translators of his works, together with Zheng Zhentuo (Cheng Chen-toa)鄭振鐸. Xu intended to translate the *Gitanjali* 吉檀迦利 and suggested Zhengto translated *The Crescent Moon*. Xu never completed his translation before his untimely death in 1941 in Hong Kong. Zheng, on the other hand, published not only his translation of *The Crescent Moon* (1913), but also *Stray Birds* (1916), both of which became bestsellers. The *Gitanjali* was later translated by another famous writer Bingxin 冰心 in 1955. In 2015, Feng Tang 馮唐, a mainland Chinese novelist previously based in Hong Kong, published a new translation of *Stray Birds*. The publication, criticised by some for its "vulgarity", scandalised the public so much that the publisher had to withdraw it from the shelves in mainland China. In 2019, the "uncensored" book was republished in Hong Kong - making Tagore into the local news of Hong Kong.[19]

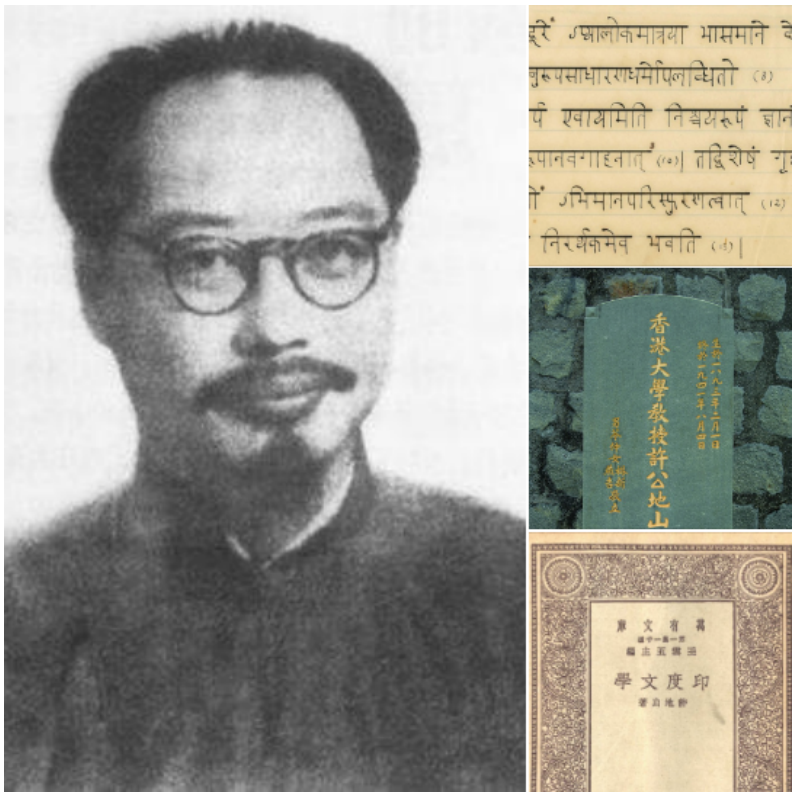


Figure 9 Clockwise from left: Xu Dishan (source: Wikimedia Commons)*, work in Sanskrit (top right, courtesy of Jao Tsung-I Petite Ecole, HKU), tomb in Pokfulam, Introduction to Indian literature in Chinese.*

Jao Tsung-I 饒宗頤 (1917–2018)

Among the best known and certainly one of the most beloved scholars amongst the Chinese in Hong Kong is Professor Jao Tsung-I (Rao Zongyi 饒宗頤, 1917-2018), who was known for his erudition in Chinese classics as well an accomplished calligrapher and brush-painting artist, in the Chinese literati tradition that has largely vanished in the twentieth century. Professor Jao is a world-renowned scholar in the fields of Buddhism, traditional Sanskrit learning in China, Sino-Indian history, and a dozen other fields in Sinology.

[19] "Author Feng Tang attacks decision to pull book from shelves", *Global Times*, 2016-2-4.

In 1963, while he was Professor of Chinese at the University of Hong Kong, Jao received funding from the Harvard-Yenching Institute to spend a year at the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Insitute in Pune, India. Before his trip to India, he learned Sanskrit from V.V. Paranjpe, the Indian diplomat who studied Chinese at Peking University. While in Pune, Jao learned Pāṇini grammar and the Ṛgveda from V.V. Paranjpe's father, Professor Vasudev Gopal Paranjpe (1887–1976). During his sojourn in India, he completed his monograph titled "The Four Liquid Vowels ṚṜḶḸ of Sanskrit and their influences on Chinese literature," later published in the *The Adyar Library Bulletin*, Vol. 31-32. During those months, he travelled widely in India, Sri Lanka, and other Buddhist countries in Southeast Asia. His travel was the subject-matters of his poems, anthologised later in the *Foguoji* 佛國集, published in 1967.

Jao's fascination with India and Indian culture in general is manifested not only in his voluminous scholarly work, but also in his ink-brush art, a number of which were inspired by his visit to various places in India and Southeast Asia. Jao's Chinese calligraphy works had gained prominence during the past two decades as they are seen on buildings in Hong Kong. Among his best-known work is his calligraphy of the Chinese translation of the Sanskrit Heart Sutra (*Prajñāpāramitāhṛdayam*) inscribed on 38 giant wood columns at the "Wisdom Path" in Ngong Ping, not far from the Big Buddha on Lantau Island.

Figure 10 Jao and Parnajpe (Courtesy of Jao Tsung-I Petite Ecole, HKU)

Other Hong Kong scholars in Indian studies

A number of important scholarly works on Indian culture are connected to Hong Kong, as in the case of Xu Fancheng (Hu Hsu), a Chinese scholar who spent considerable time in India and translated a number of Hindu classics into Chinese, the Hong Kong Buddhist and artist Yau Yan Shan, Indologist Wu Baihui who translated a variety of Sanskrit works including excerpts from the *Ṛgveda*, and the Buddhist scholar Ng Yu-Kwan, who taught Sanskrit locally and published Sanskrit textbook in Chinese.

While the University of Hong Kong, as well as later other universities, remain an important venue for local research related to India, just as elsewhere in China, the interest and propagation of Indian learning falls mainly in the hands of the local Buddhists. Despite the general decline of interest in Sanskrit learning since the tenth century after the high point in the centuries before, the teaching and learning of the Sanskrit language enjoyed a surprising revival in the early twentieth century, where Esoteric Buddhism from the Sino-Japanese lineage spread in the Guangdong and Fujian regions. Unlike its Chinese counterparts where Buddhist practices have been thoroughly sinicized, esoteric practices such as recitation of mantra and application of ritual objects retain Indian and Sanskrit elements. The Japanese Buddhists, in particular those of the Esoteric School took on the task of preserving the knowledge of Siddham (Chinese scholarship on Sanskrit orthography and phonetics

Siddham) while it was lost in China since the Song period. Siddham studies continued to thrive in Japan as calligraphy with *bonji* (Sanskrit letters) is widely used for Buddhist funerary practices and has even become an art form in Japan. Guangzhou monk Wenshujiedi 文殊揭諦 (*Mañjugate) was an enthusiast of Siddham learning in the 1920s. In 1935, with the sponsorship of a vegetarian restaurant in Causeway Bay, he published in Hong Kong the Siddham textbook *Xitan fanwen qimeng* 悉曇梵文啟蒙. Sanskrit calligraphy has been taught at the Hong Kong Mantra School for Lay Buddhists 香港佛教真言宗居士林, a private Buddhist temple in Tai Hang founded in 1926 following the practices of the Japanese Esoteric School.

Figure 11 Siddham calligraphy class at the Hong Kong Mantra School of Lay Buddhists, 2023
(Photo from author)

Xu Fancheng (1909-2000), or Hu Hsu (from Xu Hu 徐琥) as he was more commonly known to his Indian friends, was a Chinese scholar who lived in India for decades. He was known for his association with the Aurobindo Ashram and his Chinese translations of the Hindu scriptures, including the *Bhagavad Gītā* and fifty *Upaniṣad*-s. In the 1930s, Hu Hsu studied arts and art history in Germany and was a friend of the Chinese writer Lu Xun 魯迅. He left China in 1945 and became a lecturer at Tagore's Visva Bharati in Shantiniketan, where the Hong Kong artist Yau Yan Shan also taught. In 1951, Hu Hsu arrived at Aurobindo Ashram near Pondicherry where he later spent nearly three decades. Although Sri Aurobindo passed away just a year ago, Hu Hsu was inspired to continue his scholarly works, study of Sanskrit, and his personal spiritual development with the support of the "Mother", Mira Alfassa (1878-1973), collaborator of Sri Aurobindo and founder of the ashram. In order to facilitate the publication of Hu Hsu's translated works, the Mother purchased Chinese print types from Hong Kong and recruited also a print specialist from Hong Kong. In 1957, Hu Hsu published in Hong Kong his Chinese translation of the *Bhagavad Gītā* 薄伽梵歌, the first Chinese translation from its Sanskrit original. His friend You Yan Shan, who just became a nun (Ven. Hiu Wan 曉雲), brought a copy from India to Hong Kong as a gift to the neo-Confucian scholar Tang Chun-i 唐君毅 (1909-1978), who praised the translation highly. Hu Hsu was a highly prolific writer and was a rare scholar who was conversant in Chinese, Indian, and Western classics.

In 1978, Hu Hsu left India for Hong Kong and returned to China until his death at the age of 91. In his later years, he wrote a number of books in English promoting Chinese culture among the Indians as well as the world at large. Many of his paintings, books, and

unpublished manuscripts are currently kept in the Aurobindo Ashram Archive as well as the Academy of Social Science In Beijing.[20]

Hu Hsu was among a very few twentieth-century Chinese scholars who studied Hinduism, and in particular, Vedānta philosophy serious. Prior to Hu Hsu, the eminent Chinese scholar Zhang Taiyan 章太炎, a student of Yang Wenhui, had the vision to promote

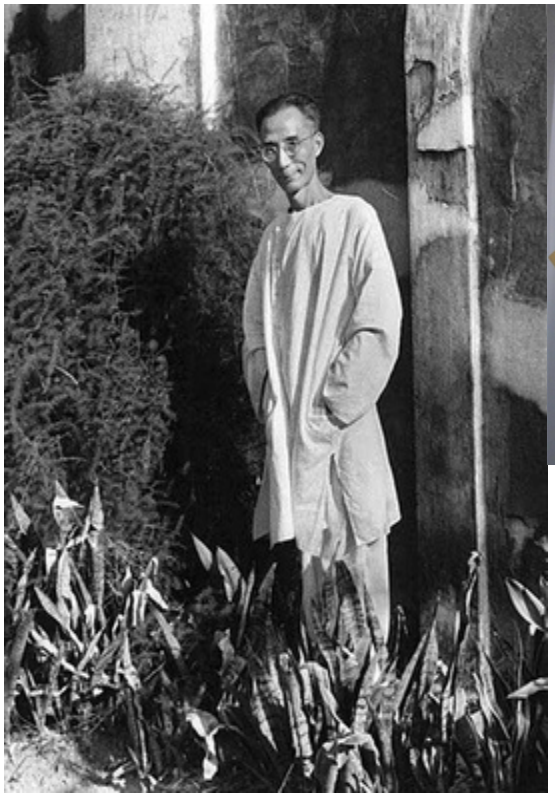


Figure 12 Hu Hsu in India (Source: Wikimedia Commons); Hsu's Chinese translation of the Bhagavad Gītā (www.cssn.cn)

Indian and Sanskrit learning and Vedānta philosophy within the learned society in modern China, against the tendency of undermining non-Buddhist religious literature and philosophical systems from India by the conservative Chinese Buddhists. Hu Hsu brought Zhang's vision to fruition and may be considered one of the most underrated Chinese Indologists and scholars of the twentieth century.

Yau Yan Shan 游雲山

Yau Yan Shan, or Yau Wan-san (1912-2004), also known as Venerable Hiu Wan 曉雲 in her later years, was a renowned artist and educator who was known for her dedication to promote Indian culture and art among the Chinese. She was a graduate of St. Paul's Secondary School and had her first art exhibition in Central at the age of 23. In 1948, together with her close friend Hu Hsu, they visited India for four years. During this time, Yau was a visiting lecturer at the Tagore University and her arts were exhibited in Calcutta, New Delhi, and Bombay. In 1951, she returned to Hong Kong and taught art at the Buddhist nunnery Tung Lin Kok Yuen. She was a tireless promotor of Buddhism and Indian arts. Among her books is one titled *Indian Arts* 印度藝術 (1955), in which the author presented to the Chinese readers not only an outline of the history of Indian art, but also an account of her visit to various parts of India

[20] https://auroville.org/page/remembering-hu-hsu

and her exchange with many Indian artists and spiritual figures including Aurobindo. Yau was a fervent admirer of Tagore and found great inspiration at the Shantiniketan where she spent some years as a visiting lecturer at the Kala Bhavana, with a studio at the Cheena Bhavana. Her artworks were widely exhibited in India, though now little known in Hong Kong. A copy of her book was presented by the author to Professor F. S. Drake 林仰山, who was then both Head of the Department of Chinese at the University of Hong Kong and the Dean of The Faculty of Arts. While at the zenith of her fame both locally and internationally, she became a Buddhist nun at the age of 47, under the tutelage of the monk Tan Hsu 倓虛, and donned the monastic garb living in Ngong Ping, Lantau Island, as Venerable Hiu Wan. Far from becoming a recluse, Ven. Hiu Wan continued to dedicate herself to education and charity, founding a number of associations and schools. In 1966, she left Hong Kong for Taiwan to continue her works in Buddhist education. Among her greatest accomplishments was the founding of the Huafan University in Taipei in 1990. The word 華梵 Huafan means Chinese and Brahmā, the latter referring to India.

Wu Baihui 巫白慧

Among the less-known Indologists from Hong Kong is Wu Baihui 巫白慧 (1919-2014). In 1937, the 18 years old Cantonese met the Buddhist Master Taixu 太虛 who came to Hong Kong to deliver sermons and later recommended him to continue his studies in India. Wu became a novice monk and in 1940, just a year before Hong Kong was invaded by Japan, left Hong Kong for Burma with another monk Fafang 法舫. They eventually arrived at Tagore's Visva-Bharati University in Shantiniketan, where Wu studied Sanskrit and Indian philosophy. Wu, who later left the monastic order and returned to laity, spent ten years in India studying various subjects from the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* to Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī* under various Indian teachers including P.C. Bagchi and P.V. Bapat. Among his Chinese teachers was also Tan Yunshan, founder of Shantiniketan's Cheena Bhavana. After he completed his studies at the Visva-Bharati and Poona University, he returned to China in 1952 and worked at Peking University as a lecturer in Hindi and the Commercial Press as an editor. He later joined the Academy of Social Science to become the director of the "Institute of Philosophy Studies".

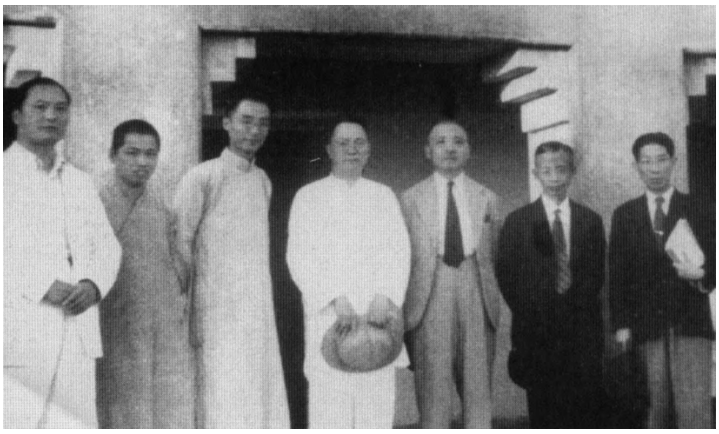


Figure 13 Wu, Hu Hsu, Tan Yunshan (from second left to right), and other Chinese scholars at the Shantiniketan, 1946. (Source: Wikimedia Commons)

Wu wrote on a wide range of topics from the *Ṛgveda* and the *Upanishads* to Indian philosophy and Indian social history. His works on Buddhism is unique among those by other Chinese scholars for comparative approach utilizing non-Buddhist, Brahmanical sources. Like another mainland Chinese Indologist Jin Kemu 金克木, Wu's work has a Marxist dialectical framework which characterised academic works of that period. Among the

Chinese scholars, his interest and ability to work with the *Ṛgveda* and traditional Indian grammar are only matched by Jao Tsung-I. In 1992, Wu was conferred India's "Presidential Award".

Since Wu left Hong Kong in his youth, he visited Hong Kong only a number of times to give lectures and participated in conferences. An anthology of his works was published in 2010 by the Chinese Academy of Social Science.

Figure 14 Wu's Chinese translation of the Ṛgveda (excerpts), published in 2010

Ng Yu-Kwan 吳汝鈞

Native of Hong Kong and scholar in Chinese Buddhist philosophy. After completing his B.A. and M.A. at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, concentrating on Chinese Buddhist philosophy especially Vijñaptimātra or "Consciousness-only" philosophy, he continued his training in languages including Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Japanese in Japan and Germany, before completing his doctoral studies in Canada at McMaster University under the supervision of the Buddhist scholar Jan Yün-hua 冉雲華 in 1990. His PhD thesis titled “Chih-I and Mādhyamika”, part of which was written in Hong Kong, examines how Indian Mādhyamika philosophy influenced the development of Chinese Buddhism both textually and theoretically. Ng was associated with the

Among the contributions of Ng in the field of Indian studies was his tireless promotion of the Sanskrit language in Hong Kong. Ng first learnt Sanskrit as a research student in Japan in 1974. In 1984, Ng published a Sanskrit textbook in Chinese based largely on older textbooks by Hart and Iwamoto, and Whitney's *Sanskrit Grammar*. The textbook was serialised for self-learning from 1983 to 1985 in the Hong Kong Buddhist magazine *Neiming* 內明. During the 80s and the 90s, Ng taught Sanskrit also in a number of institutions, first at the Baptist University of Hong Kong with which he was affiliated, the Chi Lin Nunnery, and later the research institute Academica Sinica in Taiwan.

4 Indological studies in Hong Kong and China

Given the long history of Indological research in mainland China, teaching and academic research on a variety of India-related topics, both classical and contemporary, have a strong

foundation in China. Undergraduate and postgraduate courses in Sanskrit and other Indian languages, as well as courses on Indian literature and history are offered in major institutions such as Peking University, Peking Foreign Language University, Renmin University, Chinese Academy of Social Science, Fudan University, Sichuan University, and Sun Yat-sen University, as well as other universities and private institutes such as many Buddhist colleges across China.[21]

Despite the unique opportunities Hong Kong may afford to Indological studies and the close ties Hong Kong has with India, no program of Sanskrit or Indian studies has so far been established in any one of twelve universities in the city. For much of the latter half of the twentieth century, Sanskrit has been taught sporadically in the University Hong Kong, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Baptist University, and the Chi Lin Nunnery. Since the establishment of the Centre of Buddhist Studies (CBS) at the University of Hong Kong in 2002, Sanskrit and Pali classes has been offered more regularly at both undergraduate and post-graduate levels. Professor Ven. Kākkāpalliye Anuruddha (1929–2013) from Sri Lanka was the pioneer in training local Chinese scholars in Pali and Theravāda Buddhist texts. A group of researchers who studied under Professor Anuruddha continue to translate the Pali Canon into Chinese with the support of Chi Lin Nunnery. Professor Anuruddha was the author of *Dictionary of Pali Idioms*, published by Chi Lin Nunnery. Professor K.L. Dhammajoti from Malaysia taught Buddhist Sanskrit for nearly twenty years at the CBS of the University of Hong Kong and later at the Buddha-Dharma Centre of Hong Kong which he founded in 2012. Professor Dhammajoti is a prolific author in both English and Chinese, including a textbook on Buddhist Sanskrit, published here in Hong Kong.

Figure 15 Inauguration of the Centre of Buddhist Studies at the University of Hong Kong, 2002 (Source: http://buddhism.hku.hk)

[21] Starting from 2023, the author has also started teaching Sanskrit and a course on "Indian science through Sanskrit texts" at the University of Science and Technology of China in Hefei 合肥.

5 Conclusion

From a global perspective, the cultural ties between China and India have been both remarkably long and surprisingly deep. The early Chinese engagement with India since two millennia ago was largely mediated by Buddhism and its adherents in both cultures. This engagement gradually broadened to other cultural and academic domains, supported by an ever widening network, commercial and migratory, overland and maritime, that spans across practically the entire Asia. Indological scholarship in China, too, gradually grew out of its Buddhist model in the late Ming and Qing periods, and was further stimulated by advanced research in Japan and Europe. Unlike their international counterparts, where Indological studies remain often an arcane field in academia, the Chinese scholarly community and even the general population in China are highly receptive to Indian culture and Indological research. Indological scholars in China are often sympathetic and willing to work with Indian scholars in the spirit of friendship and mutual respect, covering a broad range of topics including history, religions, literature, science and technology, both past and present. Furthermore, the wealth of historical Chinese records on different aspects India, from geography to linguistics and ethnography, will remain valuable resources for the study of India and Chinese scholars have dedicated themselves to their preservation and research for Indian and other international scholars. Due to the diplomatic ties between China and India, Chinese academic works on India and vice versa have been supported by the government and some of the remarkable achievements in the twentieth century such as the complete Chinese translation of the *Mahābhārata* are the fruits of this positive development.

Although government support on Indological research is so far completely absent in Hong Kong, the unique resources available in the city create a setting for advanced Indological research not found anywhere else. During the colonial period, Hong Kong played an important role as a regional, cross-cultural hub of not only commerce, but also knowledge and scholarship. The political turmoil in the twentieth century brought a large number of Chinese scholars to Hong Kong. Many have not only taken refuge in the British colony, but also sowed the seeds of scholarship, and in our case, teaching of Sanskrit and their Buddhological and Indological research. From the Western side, British and other European scholars, such as Eliot, also took advantage of Hong Kong to develop their transcultural scholarship due to Hong Kong's bilingual and multicultural setting. Subsequently, thanks to Hong Kong's liberal environment and the high concentration of universities and academic institutes, scholars such as Jao Tsung-I could access resources from not only mainland China and Europe, but also India. In this regard, the local Indian community in Hong Kong, which has both a long history and is of significant size, should not be overlooked. From Mody's contribution to the founding of the University of Hong Kong to the Paranjpes' friendship with Jao and the academic works by Indian scholars in Hong Kong, it appears all these rich and unique resources from Hong Kong are sufficient to compensate for the lack of official support for Indological research in Hong Kong. However, the lack of institutional support does have some significant drawback as Hong Kong lost some of the important talents such as Wu Baiwei (Indologist and translator of the Vedas), You Yan Shan (artist and educator), and Ng Yu-Kwan (Buddhist scholar and Sanskrit instructor), who moved to Mainland China and Taiwan to pursue their research and educational career. Their Indological scholarship could have taken a different turn to reach a wider audience in possibly a global scale if they had decided to stay in Hong Kong instead.

Looking ahead, drawing from the strengths and resources available in Hong Kong and its strong ties with the Indian communities both local and abroad, more could be done to promote deeper mutual understanding and admiration between China and India. Advanced learning in Sanskrit and studies of Indian classics may be further promoted among the local

Chinese to broaden the global perspective of the public, with a worldview that is not just limited to the simplistic East-West formulation. Further archival research would ensure the stories of friendship and the scholarly insights of generations of Chinese and Indian will remain in the memory of the people of both cultures. These may be achieved through the establishment of an independent department of Indian or South Asian Studies in one of the dozen universities in the city, or through the establishment of independent research or cultural centres, with both government and non-government support.

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