

## Report on Translation and Transmission Conference

Sponsored by the Tsadra Foundation

May 31-June 3, 2017

University of Colorado, Boulder

Conference website: <http://conference-wp.tsadra.org/>

Digital Conference Program: <https://indd.adobe.com/view/58494f95-fa36-48a2-a8ea-6bab159a9360>

By Namdrol Miranda Adams

June 6, 2017

### Logistics

---

- Where: University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado
- Who: About 300-400 Translators, Scholars, Teachers, Students, Buddhist Practitioners, About 90% Western and 10% Asian
- What (from the conference website): *The purpose of this conference series is to provide an international forum for sustained dialogue and the sharing of ideas and experiences, as well as for collective reflection on the larger cultural and societal dimensions of the transmission of Tibetan Buddhism to the contemporary sphere. This conference is not a showcase for any single project or institution but an opportunity for all to gather in an open and collegial spirit.*

### Recap of Keynote Addresses

---

#### Keynote Addresses:

1. Susan Bassnett: What Authority Can a Translation Claim?
  - a. My simplified takeaway: Translation in this time is really important, and seeks a balance between respect for the authority of the original and communication with the modern audience
2. Jan Nattier: The Proto-History of Buddhist Translation
  - a. My simplified takeaway: We are at the very beginning of the transmission of this body of knowledge into our Western culture, and even attempts that fall short of 'perfection' will be really impactful
3. Jose Cabezon: Translation for the Sake of Self and Other
  - a. My simplified takeaway: Translation of the texts (especially in groups, in classrooms) is pedagogy, and a very important, powerful, and significant way of learning

\*These three points also represent my main takeaways from the conference, and I think are extremely applicable to the development of Maitripa College in the following ways:

1. At Maitripa, we should be guided in all that we do by the careful balance between respect for the authority of the original and communication with the modern audience
2. Overall, we should remember that we are at the very beginning of the transmission of this body of knowledge into our Western culture, and

- even attempts that fall short of ‘perfection’ will really impactful, so we should relax sometimes and just rejoice that we are doing our best!
3. Our institutional commitment to the translation of texts (while sometimes seeming impractical) has incredible potential, and we can continue to think of innovative ways to use our resources in this area as a powerful pedagogy

#### Other Main Important Takeaways (in Addition to the Three Above)

---

1. The division between “scholars” and “practitioners” in this world seems to be almost completely gone, although a spectrum certainly remains; this was commented on multiple times by many at this event, and most people approaching the work of ‘translation’ or ‘transmission’ are doing so with both an articulated love for and desire to share the Dharma and an understanding that it is a lived and living tradition that is to be practiced
2. There is a great respect for and lively discussion around the “ways of knowing” of the Asian holders of the tradition and continued interest in coming to terms with such concepts as oral transmission, blessing, and merit
3. There is a growing awareness that the cultural conventions of Tibet and other cradles of “native” Buddhists do not need to be reproduced in our own culture and a greater understanding of what those elements are, as well as a strong interest in more conversation and work on issues such as ethnic diversity, gender and lgbtq issues, and socio-economic factors in Buddhist practice and study
4. Maitripa College is well-loved and has a good reputation among this peer group

There is more, including some exciting opportunities for Maitripa to think about moving forward, so feel free to email me or call if you would like to chat! Jose Cabezon and Roger Jackson were also there, and I’m sure took away much more sophisticated perspectives that I did, so follow up with them if you get a chance too!