

## Obituary

*Richard Gombrich*

In our editorial to the previous issue (May 2020) we published a rather brief obituary for Prof. Stefano Zacchetti (1968-2020), who died suddenly on 29 April, and we promised to give more details of his academic career in this issue. His old friend Prof. Francesca Tarocco has kindly given us permission to reprint an obituary which she originally wrote for the *Bulletin of the European Association of Chinese Studies*, and has been reprinted on the website [glorisunglobalnetwork.org/in-memori-am-stefano-zacchetti/](http://glorisunglobalnetwork.org/in-memori-am-stefano-zacchetti/); she also drew my attention to the list of his academic publications on the internet at <http://aisc-org.it/stefano-zacchetti-publications-list>. We are grateful to her for her help.

Professor Stefano Zacchetti, who died on 29 April 2020 at the age of 52, was one of the world's most distinguished scholars and teachers in the field of Buddhist Studies. His untimely death has shocked all of us who knew him and were fortunate enough to be his friends and colleagues. An intellectual of the highest order whose boundless energy and thoroughness showed in each and every one of his published papers and monographs in both English and Italian, he was also an exceptionally charming and generous man, a loving father, and a steadfast and loyal friend. As I sit down to write this tribute to the Yehan Numata Professor of Buddhist Studies and fellow of Balliol College, Oxford, I do it in the full knowledge that he would quite possibly have been embarrassed by it. He was a humble person. His attitude toward life was urbane, vivacious and light-hearted.

Stefano's was a life well lived. He spent part of his youth in the beautiful Italian town of Stresa on Lake Maggiore. Perhaps because of this, he remained keenly aware of his natural surroundings and loved walking in the mountains. At the *liceo classico* of Novara, he received an early philological training in

Latin and ancient Greek. He also studied music and played the viola well; he loved to immerse himself in the study of the sonatas of Tartini and Scarlatti. Far from being contemptuous of the academic rigours imposed on his youth, he was incredibly grateful to all those who taught him, including the Catholic priests of the Collegio Rosmini founded by the noted philosopher and theologian Antonio Rosmini. “Once a *rosminiano*, always a *rosminiano*” – he told me with his characteristic ironic smile when we first met at Sichuan University in 1992. For all his erudition, Stefano was a witty and convivial man who never took himself too seriously. He loved to tell funny stories, which he crowned with infectious laughter. He spent two happy and productive years in Chengdu, where he met his life partner, Yang Kan. They married before moving back to Italy, and then to Japan. Stefano absolutely adored their two children, Giulio and Livio. Their lives were cosmopolitan and multilingual, full of laughter, books, and long walks in their beloved alpine region of Cansiglio in Northern Italy.

Stefano’s life work was dedicated to the study of early Chinese Buddhist translations (2nd-5th centuries CE) and Mahāyāna sūtra and commentarial literature in Sanskrit and Chinese. As a young man, he was already committed to the highest standards of scholarship. His outstanding *tesi di laurea* (undergraduate dissertation) was a comparative study of all the Chinese versions of the Diamond Sutra from the Han to the Tang periods, running to almost 400 pages. Written with clarity and insightfulness in the beautiful prose that characterised all of Stefano’s writings, it included a masterful account of the textual history of a Mahāyāna scripture.

His penetrating and authoritative analysis of the language of the early Chinese translations of Buddhist texts is undoubtedly one of his major contributions to the field and one of the topics that preoccupied him for the remainder of his life. Of the intertwined worlds of translation and exegesis, he wrote in the Preface to his thesis: “For translation was always, for Chinese Buddhists, also exegesis, a lively knowledge-making process... not just an ἔργον but also, and mostly, an ἐνέργεια”. This sentence strikes me as almost autobiographical.

Contemplating the ever-increasing demands imposed on our time and that of our students, I find it remarkable that Stefano always knew that he should take his time: he spent years working assiduously on each of his publications. In his youth, he looked for congenial surroundings to pursue his studies and sought out scholars who could teach him Sanskrit and Classical Chinese, as well as Buddhist philology, including Giuliano Boccali, Maurizio Scarpari, Tillman Vetter and Erik Zürcher. How precisely to combine a deep knowledge of

Buddhist Sanskrit and literary Chinese to study the obscure and stubborn idiom of the early Chinese translation of Buddhist scriptures is something he strove to understand all his life. We should all be grateful for the commanding results of his endeavours. Recently, he had revisited some of his early efforts in the article “Mind the Hermeneutical Gap: A Terminological Issue in Kumārajīva’s Version of the Diamond Sutra” in *Proceedings from the Symposium “Chinese Buddhist Studies in the Past, Present and Future”*, Foguang daxue fojiao yanjiu zhongxin 佛光大學佛教研究中心, 2015. This illuminating essay he dedicated to “the memory of my teacher Tillman Vetter”, whose photograph sat by Stefano’s desk in Oxford.

Stefano was known among his friends as an avid pipe smoker, a pipe collector and a bibliophile. He started building up his own personal library in his early 20s. He found Antonello da Messina’s painting of “St. Jerome in his Study” particularly poignant and for years kept a copy of it by his desk. In Venice, he had had access to a remarkable collection of books on India and East Asia, which were kept in stunning if unlikely surroundings at the Fondazione Giorgio Cini on San Giorgio Maggiore Island. He loved to cross the waters to consult the *Taishō Tripitaka* in the rooms of the collections of “Venezia e l’Oriente”, a memory he joyfully shared with others whose intellectual trajectories in Buddhist Studies, Chinese Studies and Japanese Studies had begun in the same rooms.

Stefano delighted in linguistic and philological challenges. Because he never forgot that the texts he painstakingly studied were created from human experience and imagination, he remained somewhat sceptical of theory pursued for its own sake: thoroughness and clarity grounded his work. He was convinced that the study of early Chinese translations of Buddhist scriptures represented a rich and largely untouched source for the study of the history of medieval Chinese. In particular, he was long interested in the relation between text and commentary, which, in contrast to prevailing views, he saw as an interactive two-way street. His ideas on philology, the value of early Chinese materials and the history of texts were most powerfully argued in one of his major works, a study of the prolific translator *Dharmarakṣa’s earliest version of the Larger Prajñāpāramitā and its surviving parallel Sanskrit tradition: In Praise of the Light: A Critical Synoptic Edition with an Annotated Translation of Chapters 1-3 of Dharmarakṣa’s Guang zan jing 光讚經, Being the Earliest Chinese Translation of the Larger Prajñāpāramitā*, Bibliotheca Philologica et Philosophica Buddhica VIII (Tokyo: The International Research Institute for

Advanced Buddhology, 2005 [The pdf version is freely accessible online: [http://iriab.soka.ac.jp/orc/Publications/BPPB/index\\_BPPB.html](http://iriab.soka.ac.jp/orc/Publications/BPPB/index_BPPB.html)]. This monograph, a substantially modified version of his doctoral dissertation (originally written in Italian), which he had submitted to Ca' Foscari University in Venice in 1999, is a formidable scholarly effort and an invaluable resource for many scholars. It is no exaggeration to say that even its introductory section on the lineages of Chinese Buddhist canons, which serves as a background to the actual study, is authoritative.

In an academic career that took him from Venice to Chengdu, Leiden and Tokyo, back to Venice, and finally to Oxford, Stefano held forth on Buddhology, the possibilities of translation, the history of philology, lexicography, textual hermeneutics, and Sinology. He is also the author of two beautifully crafted translations of Buddhist texts: *Storie delle sei perfezioni. Racconti scelti dal Liu du ji jing* [Selected tales from the Liu du ji jing T 152], Venezia: Marsilio, 2013, and *Fazang – Il Trattato del leone d'oro*, Esedra Editrice, Padova 2000 [Critical edition and annotated Translation of Fazang's 法藏 *Treatise on the Golden Lion* 金師子章], with an introductory essay].

From 2001 to 2005, Stefano was an associate professor at the International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology at Soka University in Tokyo, where he spent many happy years working in close contact with colleagues and friends who were very dear to him, including Akira Yuyuama, Seishi Karashima and Jan Nattier. His first child, Giulio, was born in Japan. When the family decided to return to Italy, Stefano became a tenured lecturer at the Department of Asian and North African Studies at the University of Venice, where he fondly enjoyed the friendship of many of his colleagues, with many of whom he also actively collaborated. During his time in Italy, he published two major articles; “A ‘New’ Early Chinese Buddhist Commentary: The Nature of the *Da anban shouyi jing* 大安般守意經 T 602 Reconsidered”, in *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 1–2, 2008 (2010) pp. 421–484 and “Defining An Shigao's 安世高 Translation Corpus: The State of the Art in Relevant Research”, in: Shen Weirong 沈衛榮 (ed.), *Historical and Philological Studies of China's Western Regions* (西域历史语言研究集刊), No. 3, 2010, pp. 249-270.

In 2011, Stefano held a visiting professorship in Buddhist Studies at UC Berkeley and in 2012, he took up the position of Numata Chair of Buddhist Studies at the University of Oxford, a move that helped strengthen the Asian Studies faculty of both Balliol College and the university. His experience

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of a variety of environments no doubt made his shift to Oxford all the more successful. While there, he kept up his international activities and was a frequent visitor to China, where he was regularly invited to teach in intensive Buddhist Studies training programmes and summer schools. This he did with considerable panache. He was a popular and inspiring teacher who often achieved impressive results from his undergraduate and postgraduate pupils.

Stefano relished the major intellectual challenge of breaking new ground in his multifaceted field and was also, equally, generous in acknowledging his peers' contributions to his work. His closest colleagues and teachers were also his best friends. He loved reading and translating Buddhist texts together with other scholars in Europe, Japan, Taiwan and the United States and worked tirelessly to set up and convene online and offline gatherings. In his college life at Balliol, he enjoyed the civilized and cosmopolitan atmosphere, in which he could, for instance, discuss Italian literature, in Italian, with the college fellows. The opportunities for conviviality and good conversation were a perfect match for his character. At the time of his passing Stefano was putting the finishing touches to a book titled *The Da zhidu lun 大智度論* (\**Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa*) and the *History of the Larger Prajñāpāramitā: Patterns of Textual Variation in Mahāyāna Sūtra Literature* (Forthcoming from Hamburg Buddhist Studies).

We will miss you terribly Stefano, *caro amico*.

## Publications.

### Monograph:

1. *Storie delle sei perfezioni. Racconti scelti dal Liu du ji jing* [Selected tales from the Liu du ji jing T 152]. Venezia: Marsilio, 2013.
2. *In Praise of the Light: A Critical Synoptic Edition with an Annotated Translation of Chapters 1-3 of Dharmarakṣas Guang zan jing 光讚經, Being the Earliest Chinese Translation of the Larger Prajñāpāramitā*, The International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology — Soka University (Bibliotheca Philologica et Philosophica Buddhica VIII), Tokyo 2005. [The pdf version is freely accessible online: [http://iriab.soka.ac.jp/orc/Publications/BPPB/index\\_BPPB.html](http://iriab.soka.ac.jp/orc/Publications/BPPB/index_BPPB.html)].
3. *Fazang — Il Trattato del leone doro*, Esedra Editrice, Padova 2000 [Critical edition and annotated Translation of Fazangs 法藏 *Treatise on the Golden Lion* 金師子章), with an introductory essay]

### Article:

4. “An Shigao”. in *Brill Encyclopedia of Buddhism*. Vol.2. Ed. Jonathan Silk. Leiden: Brill, 2019. pp.630-641.
5. “Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra”. in *Brill Encyclopedia of Buddhism*. Vol.1. Ed. Jonathan Silk. Leiden: Brill, 2015. pp.171-209.
6. “Zhongjing mulu 眾經目錄 — the Catalog of all Canonical Scriptures”. in *Buddhist Stone Sutras in China: Sichuan Province [Volume 3 Wofoyuan Section C]*. Eds. Claudia Wenzel and Sunhua. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz. 2016. pp.65-96.
7. “Mind the Hermeneutical Gap: A Terminological Issue in Kumārajīvas Version of the Diamond Sutra”. in Proceedings from the Symposium “*Chinese Buddhist Studies in the Past, Present and Future*”. Foguang daxue fojiao yanjiu zhongxin 佛光大學佛教研究中心. 2015. pp.157-193.

8. “Notions and Visions of the Canon in Early Chinese Buddhism”. In *Spreading Buddha’s Word in East Asia: The Formation and Transformation of the Chinese Buddhist Canon*. Eds. Jiang Wu and Lucille Chia. New York: Columbia University Press, 2015. pp.81-108.
9. “Review of Marcus Bingenheimer. *Studies in Āgama Literature- With Special Reference to the Shorter Chinese Saṃyuktāgama*”. *Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies*, Vol.7, 2014. pp.252-274.
10. “La costruzione pretransitiva nelle traduzioni buddhiste di epoca Han” [The disposal construction in Han Buddhist translations]. In *La centralità ritrovata. Atti del XII Convegno dell’Associazione Italiana Studi Cinesi (AISC), Cagliari, 17-18 settembre 2009*. Edited by Francesca Congiu, Barbara Onnis, Cristina Pinna, 281-291. AIPSA Edizioni: Cagliari, 2012.
11. “What can we learn from variant readings? New light on the history of the Jin Canon 金藏 from the textual study of the *Guang zan jing* 光讚經”, in *The First International Conference of Tripitaka Studies (2010 Foxue yanjiu lunwen ji: diyi jie guoji fojiao dazangjing xueshu yantaohui* 二〇一〇佛學研究論文集: 第一屆國際佛教大藏經學術研討會), Gaoxiong: Foguangshan wenjiao jijinhui 佛光山文教基金會, 2011. pp. 307-323.
12. “Some remarks on the Authorship and Chronology of the *Yin chi ru jing zhu* T 1694: The Second Phase in the Development of Chinese Buddhist Exegetical Literature”, in Giacomella Orofino and Silvio Vita (eds.), *Buddhist Asia 2. Papers from the Second Conference of Buddhist Studies Held in Naples in June 2004*, (Università di Napoli “L’Orientale”. Centro di Studi sul Buddhismo), Italian School of East Asian Studies, Kyoto, pp. 141-198.
13. “A New Early Chinese Buddhist Commentary: The Nature of the *Da anban shouyi jing* 大安般守意經 T 602 Reconsidered”, in *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 1-2, 2008 (2010) pp. 421-484.

14. “Defining An Shigaos 安世高 Translation Corpus: The State of the Art in Relevant Research”, in: Shen Weirong 沈衛榮 (ed.), *Historical and Philological Studies of China's Western Regions* (西域历史语言研究集刊), No. 3, 2010, pp. 249-270.
15. “Il Canone buddhista cinese” [The Chinese Buddhist canon], in Alberto Melloni (ed.), *Dizionario del Sapere Storico Religioso del Novecento*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2010. pp. 212-229.
16. “Il Buddhismo cinese dalle origini al 581” [Chinese Buddhism from the origins to 581 CE], in Mario Sabattini e Maurizio Scarpari (eds.), *La Cina vol. 2 – Letà imperiale dai Tre Regni ai Qing*, Einaudi, Torino 2010, pp. 429-490.
17. “Fondamentalmente pura è la mente: la concezione del pensiero luminoso nelle fonti buddhiste cinesi del periodo arcaico” [On the notion of luminous mind in early Chinese sources], in Emanuela Magno (ed.), *Mente e coscienza tra India e Cina*, Società Editrice Fiorentina, Firenze 200. pp. 131-147.
18. “Il Buddhismo cinese tra Han Posteriori e Tang (II-X sec. d.C.)” [Chinese Buddhism between Later Han and Tang dynasties], in Sabrina Rastelli (ed.), *Cina: alla corte degli imperatori. Capolavori mai visti dalla tradizione Han alleleganza Tang*, Skira editore, Milano 2008. pp. 61-65.
19. “Inventing a New Idiom: Some Aspects of the Language of the *Yin chi ru jing* 陰持入經 T 603 Translated by An Shigao”, *Annual Report of The International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhism at Soka University for the Academic Year 2006 10*, 2007. pp. 395-416.
20. “Breve storia dell’assoluto: una nota sull’uso del termine *juedui / zettai* nel canone buddhista cinese” [A short history of the absolute: a note on the term *juedui / zettai* in the Chinese Buddhist canon], *Rivista di filosofia interculturale*, anno 11, n. 6, novembre 2006. pp. 55-65.
21. “Alcune osservazioni sul canone buddhista cinese nella fase della trasmissione manoscritta” [Some remarks on the Chinese Buddhist canon during the phase of manuscript



- transmission], in: Giuliano Boccali and Maurizio Scarpari (eds.), *Scritture e codici nelle culture dell'Asia: Giappone, Cina, Tibet, India. Prospettive di studio*, Cafoscarina, Venezia 2006. pp. 161-182.
22. “Note lessicografiche sulle traduzioni buddhiste cinesi del periodo antico” [Lexicographical notes on early Chinese Buddhist translations], in: Maurizio Scarpari and Tiziana Lippiello (eds.), *Caro Maestro ...: Scritti in onore di Lionello Lanciotti per l'ottantesimo compleanno*, Cafoscarina, Venezia 2005. pp. 1261-1270.
23. Brief Communication: An Additional Note on the Terms 念 and dai 待 in the Kongō-ji Manuscript Text of An Shigao's *Shier men jing*”, *Annual Report of The International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology at Soka University for the Academic Year 2004* 8, 2005. pp. 395-396.
24. “The Scripture on the Twelve Gates Preached by the Buddha” (an annotated translation of the *Fo shuo shier men jing*, Kongō-ji Ms A, ll. 283-365), in: Ochiai Toshinori 落合俊典 (ed.), *金剛寺一切經の基礎的研究と新出仏典の研究*, Research Report, Tokyo, 2004. pp. 231-240.
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26. “Teaching Buddhism in Han China: A Study of the *Ahan koujie shier yinyuan jing* T 1508 Attributed to An Shigao”, *Annual Report of The International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology at Soka University for the Academic Year 2003*, n. 7, 2004. pp. 197-224.
27. “An Shigaos texts Preserved in the Newly Discovered Kongō-ji Manuscript and Their Significance for the Study of Early Chinese Buddhism”, *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū* 印度學仏教學研究 52, 2 (2004), pp. 57-60.

28. “The Rediscovery of Three Early Buddhist Scriptures on Meditation: A Preliminary Analysis of the *Fo shuo shier men jing*, the *Fo shuo jie shier men jing* Translated by An Shigao and Their Commentary Preserved in the Newly Found Kongōji Manuscript”, *Annual Report of The International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology at Soka University for the Academic Year 2002*, n. 6, 2003, pp. 251-299. = “*Sanbu zaoqi chanding fojiao jingdian de chongxin faxian- xin faxian Jingangsi An Shigao yi Foshuo shi’ermen jing, Foshuo jie shi’ermen jing yiji zhushi de chubu yanjiu*” 三部早期禪定佛教經典的重新發現——新發現金剛寺安世高譯《佛說十二門經》《佛說解十二門經》以及注釋的初步研究, Ji Yun 紀贇 (tr.), in: Hong Xiuping 洪修平 (ed.), *Studies of Buddhist Culture* (佛教文化研究), Vol.6, Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 2018. pp.102-181.
29. “Il Capitolo 25 dal *Zhong lun*: Esaminare il nirvāṇa” [An Annotated Translation of Chapter 25 from the *Zhong lun* T 1564], *Annali di Ca Foscari* XLI, 3, 2002 (Serie Orientale 33). pp. 151-173.
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32. “Some remarks on the *Peṭaka* Passages in the *Da zhidu lun* and their Relation to the Pali *Peṭakopadesa*”, *Annual Report of The International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology at Soka University for the Academic Year 2001*, n. 5, 2002. pp.67-85.

33. “Identificazione e autorappresentazione: archetipi scritturali delle fonti sulle traduzioni buddhiste cinesi” [Identification and Self-representation: Scriptural Archetypes in the Sources on Chinese Buddhist Translations], in: Alfredo Cadonna and Franco Gatti (eds.), *Cina: miti e realtà* (Proceedings of the 6th National Meeting of the Italian Association of Chinese Studies, Venezia 21-23 May 1998), Cafoscarina, Venezia 2001. pp. 489-503.
34. “Un problema di critica testuale nel *Foshuo zhuan falun jing* (T 109) attribuito ad An Shigao” [A Problem of Textual Criticism in the *Foshuo zhuan falun jing* T 109 attributed to An Shigao], *Annali di Ca' Foscari*, XXXVI, 3 (serie orientale 28), 1997. pp. 381-395.
35. “Il *Chu sanzang ji ji* di Sengyou come fonte per lo studio delle traduzioni buddhiste cinesi: lo sviluppo della tecnica di traduzione dal II al V secolo d.C.” [Sengyou's *Chu sanzang ji ji* as a Source for the Study of Chinese Buddhist Translations: The Development of Translation Technique from II to V century CE], *Annali di Ca Foscari*, anno XXXV, 3 (serie orientale 27), 1996. pp. 347-374.
36. “Dharmagupta's unfinished translation of the *Diamond-cleaver Vajracchedikā-Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*”, *Toung Pao* LXXXII 1996. pp. 137-152.

**Editing:**

37. *Mahāyāna Text: Prajñāpāramitā Texts*. Eds. Seishi Karashima, Youngjin Lee, Jundo Nagashima, Fumio Shoji, Kenta Suzuki, Ye Shaoyong and Stefano Zacchetti. New Delhi: The National Archives of India; Tokyo: The International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology, Soka University, 2016.
38. “Perfection of Wisdom.” In *Oxford Bibliographies in Buddhism*. Ed. Richard Payne. New York: Oxford University Press. [Last Modified: 22 April 2013] DOI: 10.1093/obo/9780195393521-0153

39. Section on Buddhism (with contributions by Stefano Zacchetti, John R. McRae, and Francesca Tarocco) in the volume *La Cina vol. 2 – L'età imperiale dai Tre Regni ai Qing*, edited by Mario Sabattini e Maurizio Scarpari, Einaudi, Torino 2010.

**Forthcoming:**

**Monograph:**

40. *The Da zhidu lun* 大智度論 (\**Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa*)  
And the History of the *Larger Prajñāpāramitā: Patterns of Textual Variation in Mahāyāna Sūtra Literature* (Hamburg Buddhist Studies). Forthcoming.