

## Editorial

*Alexander Wynne*

The world of Pali studies has recently lost a number of elder statesmen: L. S. Cousins, Steven Collins, Ole Pind, K. R. Norman and Peter Masefield. The current issue of JOCBS could be regarded as a memorial to this generation of Buddhist scholars. Most contributions deal with the Pali tradition, and there are posthumous articles by Ole Pind and Peter Masefield, as well as a review of Steven Collins' final book, *Wisdom as a Way of Life*. All of these pieces exemplify K. R. Norman's claim that 'Everything that has not been done needs to be done. Everything that has been done needs to be done again.'

The first of two articles by Peter Masefield is an edition and translation of the *Asokaparinibbānakathā*, in collaboration with Jacqueline Filliozat. Because the post-canonical Pali literature of mainland Southeast Asia has been so little studied, this article serves as an example of an area which for the most part has yet to be tackled. Many more of Peter Masefield's works on this genre of Pali literature will appear in future issues of JOCBS. Peter Masefield's other contribution in this issue, in collaboration with Nicolas Revire, revisits the Buddha's last meal. This article shows that what has already been done needs doing again, and also demonstrates the utility of studying the Pali commentarial literature in conjunction with previously unknown South East Asian sources, textual and art-historical.

Dan Zigmond's article on computational approaches to the language of the Pali canon opens up a new avenue in the study of the Pali canon, one of the many things yet to be done. So too does Juo-Hsüeh Shih's study of the term *nissāraṇīya/nissaraṇīya* in the Pali Bhikkhunī Vinaya. Although it is now almost 150 years since the founding of the Pali Text Society, it might appear surprising that new discoveries about the Pali Vinaya can still be made. But the study of the Pali canon is really still in its infancy; most studies need to be done again.

The article by Ole Pind, on so-called ‘Māgadhisms’ in the Pali canon, is a striking example of this. This paper continues a recent debate in JOCBS on the language of early Buddhism, following the articles of Karpik (JOCBS 16), Levman (JOCBS 17) and the editorial of JOCBS 17. In agreement with Karpik, Pind argues that so-called ‘Māgadhisms’ in the Pali canon, such as *bhikkhave*, are in fact a regular feature of Pali, and need not be regarded as a remnant of an earlier linguistic stratum. As Pind puts it, ‘it is necessary to study the language of the Tipitaka as a language *sui generis* and not as a random patchwork of borrowings from other linguistic environments’. While not necessarily agreeing with Karpik (and Gombrich)<sup>1</sup> that Pali *was* the language of the Buddha, Pind’s argument offers support for that view. In this case, redoing what has already been done means rethinking all our previous assumptions about Pali.

Not all scholars agree with Norman’s point that everything which has been done ought to be done again. Some, such as Steven Collins, seem to have believed that certain areas of study should be shut down. In *Wisdom as a Way of Life*, Justin McDaniel comments (p.lii) that ‘While Gombrich, like many other scholars of Steve’s generation, believed that scholars could and should use limited textual evidence to help speculate on and reconstruct the ideas, practices, and even daily lives of early Buddhists (loosely 500 BCE to 1200 CE), Steve found this project increasingly useless and even intellectually dangerous.’

This comment is most peculiar and quite misleading. If the early Buddhist period includes evidence as late as 1200 CE, it is hard to see how scholars of early Buddhism could speculate on the ‘daily lives’ of early Buddhists, starting with the Buddha and his disciples in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. The Pali canonical sources, of course, are not nearly as recent as the 12<sup>th</sup> century AD; but although they are considerably older than this, they are not precise enough to reveal details about ‘daily lives’. Nevertheless, our ancient sources are a vital window into the past and as the articles in this issue of JOCBS show, they can be used to expand our knowledge of early Buddhism. Norman’s adage that ‘everything that has been done needs to be done again’ keeps the door to new discoveries open; the view that the study of early Buddhism is ‘useless’ and ‘dangerous’ slams it firmly shut. There is no question which is the better option for Buddhist studies.

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Gombrich, *Buddhism and Pali* (Oxford: Mud Pie, 2018), p.72ff.