

INVOKING THE BUDDHA:
THE POWER OF BUDDHAVACANA IN *SŪTRA* AND *DHĀRAṇĪ*

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The question of authority in Buddhist *sūtra* and *dhāraṇī* literature is complex. The 'word of the Buddha' (*buddhavacana*) is defined in commentaries and in *śāstras*. The definitions are flexible and amount more to guidelines than to mandatory rulings; nor was there ultimately any central body to adjudicate questions of authenticity and canonicity.

The paper focuses on the internal dynamics of selected Indian texts in their Sanskrit versions and Tibetan translations - *dhāraṇīs* and Mahāyāna *sūtras* - as well as 'apocryphal' Pali *parittas* and *suttas* from Southeast Asia. These multilayered texts belong to a domain of intertextuality and multi-referentiality that evolved over centuries in diverse socio-geographical environments. Is there any common ground? What, if any, literary or narrative devices do the texts studied share? In many cases they invoke or cite *buddhavacana* to assert their own authenticity in a process that might be called self-legitimization or auto-canonization. How does this relate to modern scholarship's imaginings of authenticity and canonicity?