

Preface: Marek Mejor

Marek Adam Mejor was born on 1 October 1950 in Warsaw. He first discovered an interest in Indology while still in high school, when he met the Polish scholar Leon Cyboran (1928–1977), who was an uncle of his classmate. He used to visit Dr. Cyboran regularly and listen to his talks on India, Sanskrit, yoga, philosophy, and other topics. Later on, he attended some of Dr. Cyboran's lectures conducted at the Section of Indology at the University of Warsaw.

In 1970, Marek Mejor took up Oriental studies at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the University of Warsaw (specialisation: Indian Philology). Initially, he focused mainly on classical Indian philosophy and the study of Sanskrit. During his studies, he developed a deeper interest in Buddhist literature. As a book enthusiast, he used to spend long hours in the Institute's libraries, searching for books on various topics related to his studies. In the library of the Section of Mongolian Studies, he came across the collection of books once belonging to Professor Władysław Kotwicz (1872–1944), an eminent Polish linguist and Orientalist, specialist in Mongolian languages. Among the many books in the collection, M. Mejor found some written in Tibetan, which fascinated him. He then started learning Tibetan grammar and the basics of Mongolian with Professor Stanisław Godziński, Polish Tibetologist and Mongolist, which continued for several years.

The turning point in Marek Mejor's early academic life was the trip to Lausanne in 1974 at the invitation of Professor Constantin Régamey (1907–1982), a world-renowned Orientalist, specialist in Indology, Buddhism and Tibetology. With 10 dollars in his pocket, M. Mejor hitchhiked to Switzerland, where for three months he stayed at Professor Régamey's apartment, listening to his lectures and talks, while at the same time working a part-time job in order to be able to cover minor daily expenses. He was utterly impressed by Professor Régamey's talent and knowledge, as well as by the vivid academic environment in the West, which at that time was in stark contrast to the stagnated life and grim reality in Poland.

Professor Régamey was one of the reviewers of Marek Mejor's MA thesis "Some problems of Buddhist philosophy on the basis of Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa*" ("Niektóre problemy filozofii buddyjskiej na podstawie traktatu *Abhidharmakośa* Wasubandhu", supervisor: Dr. Maria Krzysztof Byrski), defended with distinction at the University of Warsaw in 1977. Since the Institute of the Oriental Studies did not run a PhD programme at that time, M. Mejor had to formally enrol in a doctoral course at the Institute of Roman Studies. Due to formal requirements, Professor Stanisław Kałużyński (1925–2007) became his first supervisor and after a year, Professor Maria Krzysztof Byrski, the then head of the Section of Indology at the Institute of Oriental Studies, took over.

In 1979, as a PhD candidate, Marek Mejor participated in two international conferences – the 4th World Sanskrit Conference in Weimar (paper: "Some remarks on the *pratītyasamutpāda*", published in 1986 in *Sanskrit and World Culture: Proceedings of the Fourth World Sanskrit Conference of the International Association of Sanskrit Studies, Weimar, May 23–30, 1979*, ed. Wolfgang Morgenroth, Akademie Verlag, Berlin) and the 2nd Csoma de Kőrös Symposium in Csopak, Hungary (paper: "The first description of Tibet in Polish from 1628", published in 1980 in *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, vol. 34, fasc. 1–3), which highly influenced his interests and further scholarly formation.

In 1980, still a PhD candidate, Marek Mejor received a six-week scholarship to Budapest, which at that time was one of the leading centres of Tibetan Studies in Europe. He spent long hours at the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, making notes and copying fragments of important books which at that time were unavailable in Poland. While still in Budapest, M. Mejor obtained a six-month Michael Coulson Junior Research Fellowship at the Wolfson College in Oxford, where he stayed in 1981–1982. He studied under the supervision of Professor Richard Gombrich, one of the most prominent Sanskritologists and Buddhologists, and Professor Bimal Krishna Matilal, a great authority on Sanskrit and Indian philosophy.

On 13 December 1981, while still in Oxford, Marek Mejor learned that martial law had been imposed in Poland. The following months were extremely stressful. The country became cut off from the rest of Europe. M. Mejor secretly exchanged letters and information with his family and colleagues who stayed in the country. After his return to Poland in 1982, he faced major financial difficulties, as he was not able to get a job, partially due to the difficult political situation in the country. Luckily, Professor Stanisław Kałużyński, Vice-Rector of the University of Warsaw at that time, was able to help M. Mejor find employment at the Institute of Oriental Studies. Thus began his longtime scholarly affiliation with the University of Warsaw. From 1982 until his retirement in 2020, Marek Mejor conducted seminars and lectures for students of Indology and Mongolian and

Tibetan Studies, covering a wide range of subjects related to Indian, Tibetan, and Buddhist studies. During those years, he trained numerous students – including the editors of the present volume – and supervised and reviewed a whole range of MA, PhD, and habilitation theses.

In 1980, at the age of only 30, M. Mejor published his first book, entitled *Buddyzm (Buddhism)*, which gained great popularity among those interested in the subject. The enlarged and revised edition of the book was published in 2001 under the title *Buddyzm. Zarys historii buddyzmu w Indiach (Buddhism. An Outline of the History of Buddhism in India)*.

For many years Marek Mejor was doing his research under the supervision of Professor Janusz Chmielewski (1916–1998), an eminent Sinologist, logician and linguist, who also had Buddhological competences. M. Mejor attended Professor Chmielewski's seminars conducted on the subject of *reductio ad absurdum*, among other topics, as well as the reading of Nāgārjuna's *Vigrahavyāvartani* in Sanskrit, Tibetan and Chinese. Professor Chmielewski's erudition and profound knowledge, as well as his vast philological competences, impressed and influenced M. Mejor from the very beginning. After Professor Chmielewski's retirement, they used to regularly meet at his Warsaw apartment, engaging in conversations on various topics. Professor Chmielewski was appointed one of the reviewers of M. Mejor's doctoral thesis.

In 1984, Marek Mejor presented at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the University of Warsaw his doctoral dissertation entitled “The *Abhidharmakośa* of Vasubandhu and Its Commentaries Preserved in the Tanjur, with Special Reference to the Problem of the *pratīyasamutpāda*” (supervisor: Professor Maria Krzysztof Byrski, University of Warsaw; reviewers: Professors Janusz Chmielewski, University of Warsaw, Lambert Schmithausen, University of Hamburg, Ernst Steinkellner, University of Vienna). The thesis was later published in the prestigious series “Alt- und Neu-Indische Studien” (Institut für Kultur und Geschichte Indiens and Tibets an der Universität Hamburg, Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart 1991).

In the same year, M. Mejor went to Oxford again, this time as a recipient of a three-month Spalding Research Grant, to join the postdoctoral seminar conducted by Professor Bimal Krishna Matilal (“Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇavārttika* II with Devendrabuddhi's commentary from the Tanjur”). This stay was emotionally challenging for him, as he once more witnessed and fully realised the contrast between the freedom and prosperity in the West and the difficulties and obstacles he had to deal with in his own country. In 1996, M. Mejor was to return to Oxford, as a research fellow at Keble College within the so-called “Oxford Scheme”. He is a member of the Oxford Alumni Society.

In 1987, on the recommendation of Professor Ernst Steinkellner, M. Mejor successfully applied for the Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung scholarship. In

February 1988 he left for Germany, where he studied at the Institut für Kultur und Geschichte Indiens und Tibets at the University of Hamburg, under the supervision of great authorities: Professors Lambert Schmithausen, Albrecht Wezler, and David Seyfort Ruegg. The time spent in Hamburg, the unlimited access to a vast collection of books, and the contact with eminent scholars and talented, energetic students from around the world, which still stood in strong contrast to the gloomy and pessimistic reality in Poland, was another experience that influenced M. Mejor's scholarly interests and academic work.

In 1989, after the defeat of the communist system and the triumph of the 'Solidarity' movement in Poland, M. Mejor returned to Warsaw. The same year, recommended by Professor Lambert Schmithausen, he was offered a prestigious fellowship in Japan. He received an invitation letter from Professor Akira Yuyama himself – one of the most eminent Japanese scholars in the field of Indology and Buddhist studies of the time. Subsequently, in the period from October 1990 to May 1992, M. Mejor stayed as a research fellow at the International Institute for Buddhist Studies in Tokyo – one of the world's leading centres for Buddhist studies at that time. He regularly participated in seminars and lectures, where he had a chance to meet and consult with many outstanding Japanese scholars: Professors Minoru Hara, Jikido Takasaki, Akira Hirakawa, among others. He himself also conducted two seminars, entitled "Critical survey on the *pratītyasamutpāda* in the Abhidharma literature". The stay in Japan was extremely important for Marek Mejor's academic formation, as he had the opportunity to come into contact with the living tradition of Buddhism and get to know the most prominent Japanese Indologists and Buddhologists. While still in Japan, he published a book entitled *Kṣemendra's Bodhisattvāvadānakalpalatā. Studies and Materials* ('Studia Philologica Buddhica, Monograph Series', vol. 8, International Institute for Buddhist Studies, Tokyo 1992), which later became the basis for his habilitation at the Faculty of Modern Languages at the University of Warsaw in 1996 (reviewers: Professors Maria Krzysztof Byrski, Janusz Chmielewski, Hanna Wałkowska). At his habilitation colloquium on May 28, 1996, M. Mejor gave a lecture entitled "Buddhist Doctrine of Dependent Origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*) – Buddha's Original Concept or Later Development?" ("Buddyjska doktryna o powstawaniu w zależności [*pratītyasamutpāda*] – oryginalna koncepcja samego Buddy czy późniejszy jej rozwój?").

In 1994, M. Mejor and his colleagues from the Section of Indology at the Institute of Oriental Studies established a journal entitled *Studia Indologiczne* (*Journal of Indological Studies*; since 2008 published by the Research Centre of Buddhist Studies). Since that time he has been editor-in-chief of the Journal, 24 volumes of which have been published thus far. Marek Mejor is also the head editor of the monograph series "Studia Buddhica", published by the Research Centre of

Buddhist Studies at the Faculty of Oriental Studies. In the same year (1994), he was appointed Head of the Section of Indology at the Institute of Oriental Studies. Two years later, he became Head of the Department of South Asia.

In 1998, as part of the “Distinguished Visitors’ program” established by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, M. Mejer went to India and delivered there the following four lectures: “Buddhist studies in Poland: tradition and perspectives” (Department of Buddhist Studies, Delhi University), “Aspects of Abhidharma” (Faculty of Arts, Banaras Hindu University), “Vasubandhu’s *Abhidharmakośa* and the commentaries preserved in the Tanjur” (Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Sarnath), and “Doctrine of selflessness in Buddhism” (Tibet House, Delhi).

In 1999, Marek Mejer was appointed Associate Professor at the University of Warsaw and, at the same time, at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, where he established, and became the head of (1999–2014), the Research Centre of South Asia.

In 2000, at the invitation of Professor Minoru Hara, the then director of the International Institute for Buddhist Studies in Tokyo, M. Mejer spent three months at the Institute, giving lectures to students and reading with them the *Abhidharmakośa* in Sanskrit and Chinese.

By the decision of the President of the Republic of Poland of June 12, 2002, Marek Mejer was awarded the academic title of Professor of Humanities. Since November 22, 2008, he has been holding the position of a Full Professor at the University of Warsaw.

In 2008, after 13 years of strenuous efforts, M. Mejer succeeded in establishing within the Faculty of Oriental Studies (previously: Institute of Oriental Studies) the Research Centre of Buddhist Studies (Pracownia Studiów nad Buddyzmem), an interdisciplinary unit created for the purpose of conducting academic research, promoting publishing in the field of Buddhist studies, and supporting and co-ordinating projects aimed at the advancement of Buddhist studies in Poland. In the period from 2008 to 2021, he was the head of the Centre, where he conducted lectures and seminars in the field of Buddhist philology.

From 2003 to 2012, Marek Mejer served as the president of the Polish Oriental Society.

In 2007–2009, M. Mejer coordinated the project entitled “The lost Berlin fragment of Wanli Kanjur in the Jagiellonian Library? Assessment of the authenticity of Tibetan books from the Pander Collection in Poland”. The research undertaken by his team proved that the Jagiellonian Library is in the possession of 28 volumes of the Wanli Kanjur, 22 volumes of the supplement to that Kanjur, and 10 other volumes, possibly from the later Kanjur editions of the Beijing line from the Late Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) and the Early Qing Dynasty (1644–1912)

(vols. 29–37 and vol. 58). Preliminary results of the research conducted on those highly valuable materials were presented in the volume entitled *A Preliminary Report on the Wanli Kanjur Kept in the Jagiellonian Library, Kraków*, published in 2010 in the series “*Studia Buddhica*”, vol. 1, by the Research Centre of Buddhist Studies at the University of Warsaw.

From 2007 to 2020, M. Mejor was the chairman of the Committee of Oriental Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

It would be an oversight not to mention Marek Mejor’s organisational efforts. In his many years of scholarly activity he has co-organised several international conferences and seminars held in Poland. The most notable ones include: “Aspects of Buddhism”, International Seminar on Buddhist Studies, University of Warsaw, 1994; “The World of Tibetan Culture”, University of Warsaw, 1997; “On the Understanding of Other Cultures. The International Conference on Sanskrit and Related Studies to Commemorate the Centenary of the Birth of Stanisław Schayer (1899–1941)”, University of Warsaw, 1999; “Revival of Buddhism in Mongolia after 1990”, University of Warsaw, 1999; “Aspects of Jainism”, University of Warsaw, 2000; “Argument and Reason in Indian Logic”, Kazimierz Dolny, 2001; “Logic and Belief in Indian Philosophy”, Białowieża, 2006.

Marek Mejor has delivered numerous lectures worldwide, at the invitation of outstanding universities and institutes, such as (to mention only a few) Hiroshima University: “Buddhist studies in Poland: past and present” (1991), University of Tokyo: “Observations on Kṣemendra’s poem *Bodhisattvāvadānakalpalatā*” (1992), Institut für Tibetologie und Buddhismuskunde, Vienna: “Buddhist doctrine of dependent origination – Buddha’s original concept or later development?” (1996), International College of Advanced Buddhist Studies, Tokyo: “Some observations on the date of the *Yuktidīpikā*” (2000), Waseda University: “A notion of the negative particle *nañ* (according to Vasubandhu’s *Pratītyasamutpāda-vyākhyā*)” (2000), Indology Seminar and Central Asian Seminar, Bonn University: “Sanskrit studies in Poland: past and present” (2001), Institute of Asian and African Studies, Helsinki University (3 lectures): “Vasubandhu’s *Abhidharmakośa* in the context of Indian philosophy”, “Poetry and Religion. A glimpse on Kṣemendra’s poetical elaboration of Buddhism (*Bodhisattvāvadānakalpalatā*, *Daśāvatāracarita*)”, “Buddhist doctrine of dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*): from the Buddha’s ultimate insight to divination pattern” (2002), Ulan Bator State University: “Vasubandhu’s *Abhidharmakośa* and the commentaries in the Tanjur” (2004), Central University of Buddhist Studies, Leh: “Vasubandhu’s ‘Treasury of Higher Doctrine’ (*Abhidharmakośa*) – its significance in the Buddhist world and its impact on Buddhist Studies” (2016), Marburg Universität: “‘Sammlung Pander’ and the Wanli Kanjur from 1606 kept at the Jagiellonian Library in Kraków” (2017),

Academia Polacca di Roma: “Orientalia Italo-Polona” (2019), and Oriental Institute, Oxford: “Some observations on the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*” (2020).

In 2015, M. Mejor took part in an international conference “Acharya Bodhidharma and Efflorescence of Zen Culture in East Asia” in New Delhi, organised by the Buddhist Cultural Foundation and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations. After the conference, the World Fellowship of Buddhist Culture & Bodhidharma Association was established, whose vice-presidency was appointed to Marek Mejor.

Since January 2020, M. Mejor has been a Corresponding Member of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

Since October 2021, he has been holding the position of Professor Emeritus at the Research Centre of Buddhist Studies of the Faculty of Oriental Studies at the University of Warsaw.

The research interests of Marek Mejor are focused on the history of Buddhist doctrine, Indian philosophy, Sanskrit literature (classical and Buddhist), Pali Buddhist literature, and Sanskrit literature translated into Tibetan. Moreover, he is interested in the history of Polish Indology, on which he has written several articles. He has also published the collected papers of Professor Stanisław Schayer – an eminent Polish Buddhologist, founder of the Oriental Institute at the University of Warsaw and the so-called “Warsaw School of Buddhology” – as well as selected works of other outstanding Polish Indologists and Buddhologists: Andrzej Gawroński, Constantin Régamey, Arnold Kunst, among others. His recent scholarly activities include also research on the Nepalese manuscripts of Buddhist Sanskrit texts, particularly their preservation and transmission in the Kathmandu Valley.

Katarzyna Marciniak
Warsaw, 02.11.2022