

# Taking Up the Challenge of Translating Buddhism: An FPMT International Translation and Editorial Conference



**FPMT Translation Services**

**Taking up the Challenge of  
Translating Buddhism**

An FPMT International Translation and Editorial Meeting

Lama Tzong Khapa Institute, Pomaia (Pisa), Italy  
**13-20 May 2011**

Open to all FPMT and FPMT-affiliated translators and interpreters of Tibetan to English, editors of translations, and representatives of other-language FPMT Translation Offices and teams.

The focus of the meeting is the development of a standard FPMT translation terminology.

For more information see  
[www.translation.iltk.org](http://www.translation.iltk.org)



**13-20 May 2011**

**Lama Tzong Khapa Institute  
Pomaia (Pisa), Italy**

## Conference Participants

### Facilitators

- Merry Colony – Director of FPMT Education Services
- Mariana Orozco – Senior Lecturer of the Department of Translation and Interpretation at the Autonomous University of Barcelona

### FPMT Translation Services

- FPMT English Translation Coordinator, Ven. Joan Nicell
- FPMT Spanish Translation Services Director, Ven. Nerea Basurto
- FPMT French Translation Services Director, Ven. Lobsang Detchen
- FPMT Italian Translation Services Director, Daniela Abbà

### Translators and Editors

English: Ven. Yangsi Rinpoche, Ven. Geshe Graham Woodhouse, Ven. Tharchin, Gavin Kilty, Philip Quarcoo, Roger Wright, Paul Hackett, Namdrol Adams, Gabi Staron, Fabrizio Pallotti, David Kittelstrom (editor), Jon Landaw (editor)

Spanish: Isabel Arocena (Director of Spanish National Office)

Italian: Aurora Maggio, Leonardo Cirulli, Annamaria De Pretis, Massimo Dusi, Ven. Daniela Brandstetter, Erica Pellati, Roberta Scandelari

French: Elea Redel, Ven. Tenzin Nguenga, Ven. Chantal Carrerot, Valerie Camplo

Mongolian: Khulan Dembereldorj

Czech: Ester Vinçotte, Markéta Bartošová

German: Christel Drescher-Hammerby

Slovanian: Danijela Stamatovi

Chinese: Ven. Sophia Su, Ven. Dechen Thubten

Representing Essential Education for all languages: Esther Garibay and Gabor Redel

### Invitees Unable to Attend

Lama Zopa Rinpoche, Geshe Thubten Sherab, Geshe Gelek, Geshe Tashi Tsering, Professor Jim Blumenthal, Ven. Steve Carlier, Ven. Fedor Stracke, Tenzin Bhuchung, Toh Sze Gee, Ven. Namdak, Jampa Gendun, Ven. Tenzin Gyurme, Leonard Zwilling, Michael Sweet, John Newman, Roger Jackson, Jose Cabezon, Hans van den Bogaert, Beth Newman, Connie Miller, Gareth Sparham, Ian Coghlan (Jampa Ingyen), Conni Kraus, Ven. George Churinoff, Sean Price, Corey Jackson, Voula Zarpani, Shinta Lee, Salim Lee, Ven. Cristiana Costa

## CONFERENCE FORMAT

Presentations were followed by ample opportunity for questions and discussion.

### Presentations

- Merry Colony – Translation in the FPMT – Past and Present
- Yangsi Rinpoche – The Future of Translation in the FPMT
- Mariana Orozco – Translation Theory and Methodology: How It Can Help Dharma Translators
- Mariana Orozco – Translation Methods and Translation Techniques
- Mariana Orozco – Using Technology: Translation Memory and Corpus Tools
- Merry Colony and Mariana Orozco – A Proposed Addition to Future Translation Training in the FPMT
- Paul Hackett – Translation Technology: Resources for Translators
- Gavin Kilty – Report on the Bir (2009) and Sarnath (2011) Translation Conferences
- Gavin Kilty – Standardization of Terminology and Translation Standards
- Joan Nicell and Ivan Zerlotti – An FPMT On-line Glossary: What, Why, and How to Use It
- David Kittelstrom – How Translators and Editors Can Make Each Others' Lives Easier
- Nerea Basurto and Lobsang Detchen – Spanish and French Translation Offices: Structures and Procedures
- Jon Landaw – Editing Lama Yeshe

### Terminology Discussions

The remainder of the sessions were dedicated to discussions of translation choices for specific terms found in Lama Tsongkhapa's *Middling Lam-rim*. These discussions consisted in very lively and at the same time harmonious debates about the meaning of the original Tibetan terms and the suitability of the various possible English translations. It soon became clear that in most cases the original Tibetan terms do not have a one-to-one equivalent in English and two, or even three, translation terms were often necessary to cover the meaning in different contexts.

## CONFERENCE OBJECTIVES

The aim of this first FPMT translation conference was very specific: to begin the process of developing a standard translation terminology to be used in the translation of texts studied and practiced in the FPMT. Hence, topics of discussion included:

- what is meant by 'standardization of terminology' in the FPMT,
- why there is the need to achieve 'standardization of terminology' in the FPMT,
- whether or not it can be realistically accomplished in the context of FPMT translations and publications,
- and, if so, what is needed to accomplish it.

Other objectives included:

- Introducing the on-line glossary database
- Identifying the LRZTT, TEC, and advisory board
- Finding a new database coordinator
- Keeping all of the meeting participants involved after the conference!

In order to accomplish these objectives:

### **Phase One**

- At this conference, begin a discussion of terms
- Create a multi-language glossary database - input existing glossaries
- Define procedures for determining FPMT ‘preferred’ translation terms
- After the conference, open the discussion to the entire LZRTT using the on-line glossary database
- TEC (Translation and Editorial Committee) decides on choice/s of terms
- Identify the preferred FPMT terms in the on-line glossary database

### **Phase Two**

Determine translation and revision priorities

- create a projects list

With the TEC decide who does what

- assign the projects

Evaluate translations for accuracy and elegance (“sweetness”)

- publish the translations

## **CONFERENCE CONCLUSIONS**

### ***A Standard FPMT Terminology is Possible***

Based on a presentation by Gavin Kilty and the discussion that followed, conference participants concluded that the standardization of terminology in FPMT publications can be realistically accomplished by means of consensus and an FPMT glossary of preferred translation terms. Standardization does not entail adhering to an inflexible rule, rather it entails the consistent use of a select number of FPMT preferred translation terms that have been chosen through a process of dialogue and rating of terms used and proposed by different translators, taking into account the various usages of the original Tibetan term and other criteria (see below). The standardization of terminology will facilitate not only the understanding of texts, but also their memorization.

In order to accomplish standardization in the FPMT an on-going discussion between teachers, translators, and editors will take place that replicates as best as possible – using the on-line glossary database and web conferencing tools – the discussion format that was developed during the conference. The procedure for developing a standard FPMT translation terminology involves:

1. For a specific Tibetan term:
  - determining the different contexts in which it is used,

- finding sample sentences for each of the different contexts in which the term is used,
  - discussing the precise meaning of the term in each of its specific contexts, using the sample sentences as well as definitions culled from authentic texts in their original Tibetan.
2. For the list of possible English translation terms contained in the on-line glossary database:
- A. The members of the LZRTT engage in:
- eliminating the translation terms that do not convey the meaning,
  - discussing via the on-line glossary database and then via web conferencing the terms that do convey the meaning,
  - rating the possible translation terms from 1 to 5 for:
    - Ease of comprehension: does the meaning get across easily
    - Prevalence: is it widely known and used
    - Etymological accuracy: literalness
    - Equivalence of meaning
    - Elegance (“sweetness”)
- B. The Translation and Editorial Committee evaluates the ratings of the LZRTT for a specific Tibetan term and determines the ‘FPMT preferred translation term/s’, in consultation with the Advisory Board when necessary.

### ***Translation Methodologies***

Prof. Mariana Orozco presented the following possible translation methods that are to be applied to the translation of a text:

- Literal translation - only useful for people who are learning the source language, in this case the source and target texts are printed side by side for easy comparison
- Philological translation – includes many footnotes, in this case the reader is interested in knowing more about the context in which the author wrote the text
- Interpretative-communicative translation (most widely used form of translation)
- Free translation (e.g. poetry translated as prose) e.g. a translation of *Bodhicharyavatara* for teenagers
- Beyond translation: adaption (includes simplification, additions, etc.)

For each genre of text, the FPMT should choose a translation method, bearing in mind the target text’s function and its audience. Based on that translation method, the translator should analyze the text and decide what options to use as translation techniques. Sutras, for example, should be translated using the philological translation method with footnotes explaining translation decisions, background, etc. Most translations of Buddhist practice and philosophical texts require interpretative-communicative translation, which can be used for many different audiences. This translation method does not change the meaning intended by the original author, but rather *conveys* the meaning intended by the original author through taking into account the different language devices and different culture of a new target audience. A literal translation is a word for word translation that uses the same devices as the source language, whereby the result is always an awkward translation, and therefore it is only useful in the context of learning the Tibetan language.

Specific types of texts (prayers, lam-rim, lo-jong, philosophy, tantric practice texts and commentaries) are in themselves meant for particular target audiences and therefore it is not necessary to translate the same text using different translation methods aimed at different target audiences.

‘Translation techniques’ occur at the level of the term, whereas ‘translation methods’ occur at the level of the text. Therefore, unlike translation methods, different translation techniques can be implemented in a single translation.

## ***Translation Tools***

### **Translation Memory and Corpus Tools**

Prof. Mariana Orozco presented the advantages and disadvantages of translation memory tools (such as Wordfast) and corpus tools. Her conclusion is that corpus tools are more suitable. Mariana suggests that the FPMT consider building our own corpus of texts using one in particular, MemoQ (Note: at the moment this is not available for Tibetan, but could potentially be devised by the MemoQ software developers). Using such a tool requires a well-trained project manager who combines language expertise with technical expertise.

### **Technology and Resources for Dharma Translators**

Paul Hackett presented the database of translated texts from the Kangyur, Tengyur, and Sungbum that he is working on as part of Robert Thurman’s Tengyur Translation Project. In addition, Paul is in the process of constructing an enormous database of Tibetan verb conjugations and uses.

### **An FPMT Translation Tool: An On-line Glossary Database**

Joan Nicell and Ivan Zerlotti presented the project to develop an on-line glossary database to enable FPMT teachers, translators, and editors to develop a standard FPMT translation terminology. The purpose of the database is to:

- bring together the glossaries of important translation terms by a wide variety of translators thereby enabling the comparison of translation terms chosen by different translators,
- provide a means to discuss these translation terms while taking into account the different genres of texts in which they are used, as well as the different contexts in which the same Tibetan word is used,
- keep a history of the discussion that takes place around each of these translation terms and the corresponding conclusions drawn, so as to avoid the same discussion taking place once again among a new generation of translators,
- allow for the assigning of a numerical rating for translation terms by members of the LRZTT that reflects the conclusions of the on-line and web conference discussions,
- enable the FPMT Translation and Editorial Committee, with the help of the Advisory Board, to delineate and record the FPMT preferred translation term/s according to genre and context,
- provide a tool that enables FPMT translators and interpreters to use a common terminology when translating texts and oral teachings, and thereby facilitate the audiences understanding of the subject,
- allow the broader public and other translators etc. access to a rich glossary of possible translation terms for one Tibetan word.

## Post-Conference Action Plans

### *Set Up the Infrastructure for Translation in the FPMT*

**FPMT Translation Services** is the branch of FPMT Education Services responsible for ensuring the quality and accuracy of textual translations from Tibetan into English. It will consist of:

1. The **Lotsawa Rinchen Zangpo Translation Team** All the English-language translators and editors present at the conference agreed to be part of the LRZTT and will be given access to the on-line glossary database.

- Action: Invite all English-language FPMT and FPMT-affiliated translators and editors to join the LRZTT and engage in the discussion of terminology using the on-line glossary database.

2. The **FPMT Translation and Editorial Committee**

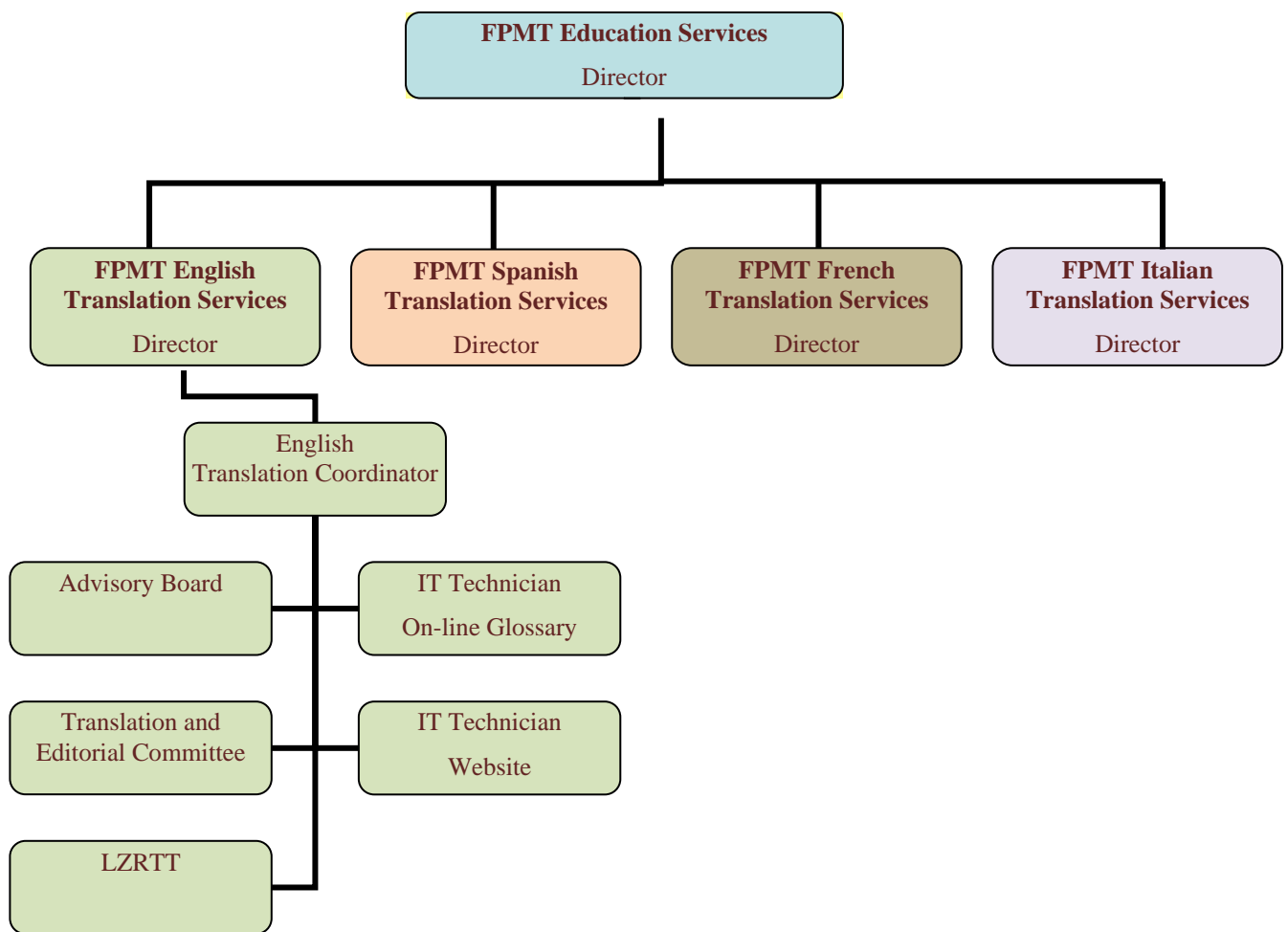
- Action: Invite experienced Dharma teachers, translators, and editors to form the Translation and Editorial Committee (TEC) which is responsible for overseeing the selection of translation terms to be included in the FPMT standard terminology and for checking the accuracy of FPMT translations.

3. An **Advisory Board**

- Action: Invite Kyabje Zopa Rinpoche, several geshe, and well-known translators to form the Advisory Board, which acts as consultants for the Translation and Editorial Committee in their work of developing an FPMT standard terminology and supervising and assessing the quality of FPMT translations.

4. The **FPMT Translation Coordinator**. Responsibilities include:

1. Administering the on-line glossary database
  2. Sending weekly terms
  3. Organizing the monthly conference calls
  4. Organizing the annual conference
  5. Replying to queries
  6. Coordinating LRZTT, TEC, and Advisory Board
  7. Overseeing the input of definitions in Tibetan and English into the on-line glossary, the development of a Translator Brief, and the creation of a Style Guide.
- Action: Subsequent to the conference, Merry Colony, director of FPMT Education Services, requested Joan Nicell to continue in this role until the end of 2011. For that same period, Merry Colony will act as temporary director of FPMT Translation Services.



### ***Continue the Terminology Discussion***

1. Send the current list of terms discussed at the conference to all participants with conclusions (including the entire list of terms considered).
2. Post 5 words, together with a context sentence (Paul Hackett), a week for all the LRZTT to discuss. Possibly include definitions.
3. Hold (and perhaps record) a monthly Webex conference call with members of the LRZTT.
4. Following the monthly call, LRZTT writes their conclusions and ratings in the database for each of the 20 terms (5 per week for 4 weeks). Ratings range from 1-5 for each of the following categories:
  - Ease of comprehension: does the meaning get across easily
  - Prevalence: is it widely known and used
  - Etymological accuracy: literalness
  - Equivalence of meaning
  - Elegance (“sweetness”): the word sounds normal, it is not too long, easy to pronounce, etc., has esthetic quality
5. TEC evaluates the ratings and decides which translation terms are best in which contexts.
6. The Advisory Board is consulted when needed and is asked to observe and approve the TEC’s decisions.



### ***Develop a Translator Brief and a Style Guide***

A translator brief will be developed by Merry Colony and Joan Nicell in consultation with Mariana Orozco.

A Style Guide will be developed by Merry Colony and Joan Nicell together with David Kittlestrom and submitted to the Translation and Editorial Committee for approval.

### ***Prepare a Priority List of Translations/Revisions***

At the moment the number one priority is Lama Tsongkhapa's *Middling Lam-rim*, which is included in the core curriculum of the FPMT Basic Program. For this reason, the terminology discussions will initially be based exclusively on the terms found in this text. Once this discussion is concluded, the translator, Philip Quarcoo, will implement the necessary changes, after which Wisdom Publications and the Translation and Editorial Committee will appoint an experienced translator to review the translation for *accuracy* and an editor to review the translation for *elegance*.

In the future a list of translation and revision priorities will be prepared by Merry Colony and Joan Nicell in consultation with the Translation and Editorial Committee.

### ***Create a Logo***

An experienced graphic artist has been asked to create a logo for the FPMT Translation Services based on recent advice given by Kyabje Zopa Rinpoche on this subject. Several prototypes will be presented to Rinpoche for his evaluation and suggestions. The plan is for the same logo to be used by all the FPMT Translation Services.

### ***Publication of FPMT Translations***

Any FPMT publication worked on by members of the LRZTT will read "Translated by the FPMT Lotsawa Rinchen Zangpo Translation Team." The actual translator's name will also be mentioned (how and where to be decided).

### ***Organize Next Year's Conference***

- June/July 2012 at IVY or ILTK
- From Friday evening to Saturday noon with a break.
- Representatives of all the different language FPMT translators/teams will be invited.
- Brief reports will be given on progress made in the various FPMT Translation Services following this year's conference.
- There will be a few presentations on such subjects as translation tools and training (eg. MemoQ).
- Terminology discussions will initially take place in the large group, after which the individual language groups will meet to discuss the specific choice of terms in their respective languages.
- Time will be allowed for individual languages to discuss national Translation Service issues and procedures.