

## Preface

On December 18, 2015 Per K. Sørensen is celebrating his 65th birthday. It is our great pleasure and honour to present a felicitation volume on the occasion of this event, bringing together contributions from numerous colleagues who in the past and the present were in close scholarly exchange with the honouree. The *Tabula Gratulatoria* supplements the number of colleagues who feel connected to this illuminating scholar and teacher. However, this list – we are certain – will continue to rise in the years to come, for the jubilarian's productivity and scientific outreach are unbroken. That's saying something about someone who is just as notorious for his energy, commitment and working speed, as at the same time for the high mastery of the Tibetology discipline in a rather unusual breadth.

His well-known enormous erudition in different genres of Tibetan literature (from medieval historiographical and religious texts to the many variants of oral literature, but also in philosophical literature and its Sanskrit basic texts) provides testimony of Sørensen's wide-ranging interests, something that is combined with his endeavour of following a rather holistic approach in his work. The inspirations emanating from Sørensen's workshop relate on the one hand to his teaching career as a professor of Central Asian Studies at the University of Leipzig (since 1995), on the other hand to the rich academic contacts that he maintains – the latter combined with a principal curiosity and openness for methodological additions to his own works, as it is expressed not least by his collaborations with representatives of anthropological, archaeological, art historical and other not merely text-oriented fields of Tibetan Studies.

But mostly it is he himself, who is contacted, either by colleagues who ask for assistance in the field of textual studies, where Sørensen, as we know, always proves a generous supporter, or from the part of academic institutions. Within the subject of Tibetan Studies there is probably hardly anyone who authored more expert assessments or *Gutachten* for research projects than Per Sørensen, by which means he not insignificantly also helped to shape the academic world of this discipline. His over 50 reviews (including book reviews) and numerous prefaces and introductory notes to book publications are impressive evidence of his demand awareness in this area.

"I am Danish", is an often heard saying by Per, with which he also likes to accentuate with a wink his for many people astonishing if not irritating manners that rather prefer bluntness and directness instead of diplomatic caution. But actually there are only few colleagues, who know more details about the person Per Sørensen, or about his origins and the career as a Tibetologist. How did one from the working class environment of Copenhagen come to this (at that time still) exotic subject of Tibetology? We thought, we will let him tell himself about that and about his other biographical stations, the specifics of his research interests as well as his general assessment of the discipline in regard to its possible future developments.

The respective interview was conducted at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin (Institute for Advanced Study, Berlin, short Wiko) on the 6th of June in 2015, where Sørensen on several occasions stayed as a guest researcher in the framework of a Tibet Focus Group conducted by the

2014/15 Wiko Fellows Tsering Gyalpo, Guntram Hazod and Shen Weirong. In the case given, Per was in Berlin to attend a scientific presentation by Tsering Gyalpo at Wiko – the long-time Tibetan colleague, who tragically died a few weeks later. Tsering Gyalpo is also one of the contributors in this volume, whose paper in Tibetan we supplemented by some adjustments after his passing, such as an English abstract, some corrections and the captions for the photographs related to this contribution.

The Interview is followed by two appreciating essays (Anne Buchardi and Yonten Dargye) related to Per Sørensen's longstanding (Denmark supported) research project in Bhutan, and by the listing of the honouree's major publications. The main part of the book with 33 essays on a whole covers fairly wide-ranging historical and topical niches, simply in due line with Per's broad fields of interests. Yet, we refrained from a thematic division of this collective volume, and the essays simply follow the alphabetical order. We wish to thank the authors for their contributions and also for the good cooperation in connection with the editing procedure. Jan Seifert (Leipzig) thankfully took care of the image editing and the textual design. Likewise, our sincerely thanks go to Erland Kolding Nielsen, director of the Royal Library of Denmark, and the Austrian Academy of Sciences' Institute for Social Anthropology, Vienna, for the financial support in printing the present volume.

Finally, we hope that this volume will find its joyous acceptance by Per Sørensen in the form as it was intended, namely as the Festschrift for an exceptional leading representative of the Tibetan Studies community, and for a most inspiring and also generous colleague, and for a friend.

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