

NOTES AND NEWS

The BDK English Tripiṭaka Series

This article is the second in a series about the translation of the Chinese Buddhist Cannon. The first appeared in the 1993 *Pacific World*.

Mr. Yehan Numata, a Japanese industrialist and philanthropist established the Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai. The BDK (Society for the Promotion of Buddhism) has undertaken many projects to offer and spread the teachings of the Buddha. One of the most significant efforts is the translation of the Taishō canon into English. "Taishō" refers to the *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* (Newly Revised Tripiṭaka Inaugurated in the Taishō Era), which was published from 1924 to 1934. This consists of one hundred volumes, in which as many as 3,360 scriptures in both Chinese and Japanese are included. This edition is acknowledged to be the most complete Tripiṭaka (Scriptures) of the Northern tradition of Buddhism ever published. Under Mr. Numata's leadership in July of 1982 the translation committee of the English Tripiṭaka was officially convened.

A publication committee was established at the Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research in Berkeley, California, to see the BDK English Tripiṭaka Series into print. This committee performs the duties of copyediting, formatting, proofreading, indexing, consulting with the translators on questionable passages, and so on—the routine duties of any publishing house. On the committee are specialists in Sanskrit, Chinese, and Japanese, who will attempt to ensure that fidelity to the texts is maintained. For the convenience of scholars who may wish to turn to the original texts, Taishō page and column numbers are provided in the left-hand margins of each volume.

About the BDK English Translation Project, University of California at Berkeley Chancellor Chang-Lin Tien wrote in 1994:

The creation of the translation project has certainly been one of the most impressive projects ever undertaken in the field of Asian religious literature.

Dr. Lewis Lancaster of the Department of East Asian Languages and Literature at Univ. of California at Berkeley, leader of the Group in Buddhist Studies, praises the Project in this way:

The project to translate the Chinese Buddhist canon into English ranks as one of the most important events in the transmission of Buddhist material. The Numata Translation Center's massive plan for providing English versions of important Buddhist texts will give us a new and valuable source for the study of the religion. The availability of such a variety of texts will allow people at all levels of training and interest to read and understand more about the Buddhist tradition. Cross cultural study will be enhanced by the publication of the many translations of works, that have been previously only available to the Chinese reader.

The Numata Center is now distributing these books. Six titles in five books have been published, and another four are expected soon. Descriptions, information, and quotations from the books follow.

The Summary of the Great Vehicle

The Summary of the Great Vehicle by Bodhisattva Asaṅga translated from the Chinese of Paramārtha, translated by Prof. John P. Keenan of Middlebury College is the first to be available. 147 pages long, it is fully indexed, with a Glossary and Selected Bibliography.

Concerning *The Summary of the Great Vehicle*, Dr. Hajime Nakamura, a professor emeritus of Tokyo University and eminent Buddhist scholar, says:

The first-ever English translation of *The Summary of the Great Vehicle* has now been published. The work is a good compendium of the basic tenets of Buddhism, written by Asaṅga (4th century A.D.) in India. The original work has been faithfully translated, yet the book is in easily readable form. The selection of words shows how difficult the translation must have been.

The volume is also receiving praise from American scholars. Many important universities and libraries are subscribing to the BDK Series. Among the American community Drs. Alfred Bloom and Lewis Lancaster

have praised the work. In his review of *The Summary* in the 1993 *Pacific World*, Dr. Alfred Bloom notes:

The present volume (*Taishō* 31, No. 1593) by Asaṅga (ca. 310-390) is a significant addition to the study of Buddhism by making available in English a very important text of the Yogācāra school. This stream of teaching, together with the Mādhyamika teaching of Nāgārjuna, provided the foundation for the philosophical and epistemological development of the Mahāyāna tradition and its practices.

This translation is competent and clear. The introduction, glossary, and bibliography are helpful for those who may engage in deeper study. A careful reading of the text and reflection will permit the reader to catch the major thesis of the work and to appreciate its value as a summary of the Great Vehicle.

Like all volumes in the Series, *The Summary* begins with an essay by the translator. Professor Keenan's Introduction gives a clean overview, and helps the reader to understand the text. He mentions the history of the scripture, and its place amongst other works of its kind.

The Summary presents the classic argument for the basic Yogācāra themes on conscious interiority, attempting to reinterpret within this context the general Mahayana teachings of emptiness and dependent co-arising. The entire Yogācāra endeavor, it would appear, is aimed at evolving a critical understanding of consciousness that would ground the Prajñāparamitā (and Mādhyamika) insistence on emptiness within a critically understood notion of the structure and functioning of conscious interiority. It then proceeds to explain the etiology of imaginative illusion, sketch its reversal by offering an explanation of the nature of conversion, champion the recovered insight into dependent co-arising in terms of the converted other-dependent pattern of consciousness, and thus allow for a valid, if limited, role for language-formed, conventional discourse, both commonsense and theoretical. (pg. 1)

The Summary of the Great Vehicle is valuable for its treatment of the nature of mind and consciousness. It is concerned with the relationship between the subject and object, and the perpetuation of karma. The examination of consciousness and co-dependent co-origination is critical to Buddhist epistemology and soteriology. The Trikaya is also fundamental to Mahāyāna thought and practice, which is based largely on the bodhisattva ideal, and continues today.

The Biographical Scripture of King Aśoka

The second book to be published in the BDK English Tripiṭaka Series is *The Biographical Scripture of King Aśoka Translated from the Chinese of Saṃghapāla*. Here is Taishō vol. 50, no. 2043 translated by Professor Li Rongxi of the Buddhist Association of China in Beijing. The book is 203 pages long, with an Introduction, Glossary, and Index. There are eight chapters, under the following table of contents:

Chapter I	The Causes of His Birth
II	The Causes of Seeing Upagupta
III	The Causes of Making Offerings to the Bodhi Tree The Causes of Vitaśoka
IV	The Causes of Kuṇāla
V	The Causes of Offering Half an Āmra Fruit to the Sangha
VI	The Causes of the Buddha's Prediction Concerning Upagupta
VII	The Causes of the Transmission of the Dharma-piṭaka by the Five Disciples of the Buddha The Causes of Kāśyapa; The Causes of Ānanda; The Causes of Madhyāntika; The Causes of Upagupta; The Causes of Śāṅkavāsin's Attainment of the Way
VIII	The Causes of Upagupta's Disciples; The Causes of the Son of a Tigress; The Causes of Gorasa; The Causes of a Southern Indian; The Causes of a Northern Indian; The Causes of Devarakṣita; The Causes of the Brahman with the View That the Ego Is Real; The Causes of Sleepiness; The Causes of the Provisor; The Causes of the Artisan; The Causes of Food and Drink; The Causes of Contentment with Few Desires; The Causes of the Rākṣasas; The Causes of the Tree; The Causes of a Miser; The Causes of the Ghost; The Causes of Being Bitten by Vermin; The Causes of Contemplation on a Skeleton; The Causes of Avarice; The Causes of a Bamboo Brush; The Causes of Parental Sentiment; The Causes of the River; The Causes of a Whim in Meditation; The Causes of the Cowherds; The Causes of the Transformed Person; The Causes of Taking No Delight in the Dwelling Place; The Causes of a Monk's Pewter Staff; The Causes of Sudarśana; The Causes of the Fief for a Monastery; The Causes of Dhītika.

King Aśoka is one of the most famous and valuable persons in the history of the Buddhist tradition. His faith and deeds continue to be upheld as models for the Buddhist community. Dr. Li explains:

Besides recounting the major events in the life of King Aśoka, this work devotes half of its space to stories concerning the six patriarchs who succeeded the Buddha in transmitting the Dharma: Mahākāśyapa, Ānanda, Madhyāntika, Śāṇakavāsin, Upagupta, and Dhīrtika. It also includes some other stories for the elucidation of the Dharma.

As Dr. Li states, there are two subjects together in this one volume. The first concerns Aśoka, and the second the early Saṅgha and its development. On the second point alone, this is a valuable text. Few sources give details about the growth of the Buddhist movement in its earliest days. Here is a resource, and a view into those beginnings. Because the Scripture of King Aśoka is a dramatic narrative, it is fascinating reading. Once opened, the book is nearly impossible to put down. This is a volume to be studied, and also enjoyed by everyone.

The second section of the work speaks about the monks who carried the teaching of the Buddha after his Parinirvāṇa. This is also in narrative form, and exciting. The Tathāgata gives a prediction about a different Buddha to come in the future.

Thus in total, *The Biographical Scripture of King Aśoka* is an important contribution to the English language resources in Buddhist Studies. Certainly King Aśoka, his actions and times deserve study. This is also an excellent source on the development of the Saṅgha, and the transmission of the Dharma. Any scholar or interested reader should be glad to have this book.

The Lotus Sutra

The Lotus Sutra is the third offering in the BDK English Tripiṭaka Translation Series. Professors Kubo Tsugunari and Yuyama Akira of the International Institute for Buddhist Studies in Tokyo Japan have produced *The Lotus Sutra translated from the Chinese of Kumārajīva* Taishō Vol. 9, No. 262. is in 363 pages, 28 chapters, with a Sanskrit Glossary, a Selected Bibliography, and an Index. This is a new and authoritative translation, applying the latest scholarship to one of the most important works in history. They introduce the text in the following way:

In translating the Chinese text into English we used the Kasuga Edition of the *Lotus Sutra* as a basic text rather than the Taishō Edition. With very few exceptions the readings in these two editions are almost exactly the same in meaning, and the differences are too slight to have any significant effect on the translation. We have tried to make our translation as readable as possible without straying from the original meaning.

Within the Buddhist canon, the *Lotus Sutra* is one text which should be read as a whole. We recommend reading the text from the beginning and continuing chapter by chapter so that this magnificent drama can be fully grasped as it unfolds. In this sense, Chapter I can be seen as a dramatic prelude; while the well-known parables which emerge during the course of the sutra serve to clarify and enliven the entire narrative. (pp. 1-2)

The chapter headings are nearly as well known as the sūtra itself:

Chapter I	Introduction
II	Skillful Means
III	Parable
IV	Willing Acceptance
V	Herbs
VI	Prediction
VII	Apparitional City
VIII	The Five Hundred Disciples Receive Their Predictions
IX	The Predictions for Those Who Still Have More to Learn and Those Who Do Not
X	The Expounder of the Dharma
XI	The Appearance of a Jeweled Stupa
XII	Devadatta
XIII	Perseverance
XIV	Ease in Practice
XV	Bodhisattvas Emerging from the Earth
XVI	The Life-span of the Tathāgata
XVII	Description of Merits
XVIII	The Merits of Joyful Acceptance
XIX	The Benefits Obtained by an Expounder of the Dharma
XX	Bodhisattva Sadāparibhūta
XXI	Transcendent Powers of the Tathāgata
XXII	The Entrustment
XXIII	Ancient Accounts of the Bodhisattva Bhaiṣajyarāja
XXIV	Bodhisattva Gadgadasvara

- XXV The Gateway to Every Direction
[Manifested by the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara]
- XXVI The Dhāraṇī
- XXVII Ancient Accounts of the King Śubhavyūha
- XXVIII Encouragement of the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra

Upāya is central to the bodhisattva way. Without a firm grasp of skillful means the bodhisattva risks defilement, and ordinary sentient beings continue transmigration in saṃsāra. Understanding this is crucial to further spiritual progress, and academic study. Without question, *The Lotus Sutra* is one of the most important works in world history. It has been used as a religious textbook, reading primer, moral guide, and means of salvation. Entire schools have grown around this sūtra, and it continues to be popular and normative. This is the newest and most modern scholarship available. No Buddhist library or informed reader should be without *The Lotus Sutra*.

The Sutra on Upāsaka Precepts

Venerable Shih Heng-ching of the Fa-Kuang Institute of Buddhist Studies in Taipei is the translator of *The Sutra on Upāsaka Precepts translated from the Chinese of Dharmarakṣa*. The book is 225 pages long, with 28 chapters, Glossary, Selected Bibliography, and Index. This is a significant text, as it gives the canonical guidelines for lay followers of the Buddha. Ven. Shih's Introduction is an excellent overview of the work:

The chapter "On Taking Precepts" is the pivot of the *Upāsakaśīla-sūtra*. It explains how a lay Buddhist should conduct himself with respect to six groups of people represented by the six directions. This chapter enumerates six major and twenty-eight minor precepts that are different from the other two main categories of bodhisattva precepts. The Yogācāra tradition has four major and forty-three minor bodhisattva precepts, and the Brahmajāla tradition has ten major and forty-eight minor bodhisattva precepts. Although all three categories of bodhisattva precepts are for bodhisattvas to observe, the six major and twenty-eight minor precepts in this sūtra are mainly for the lay bodhisattva, whereas precepts of the other two traditions are for ordained bodhisattvas. There are twenty-eight chapters in this sūtra. The key points of each chapter can be summarized as follows:

Chapter I: On the Assembly. In response to Sujāta's question, the Buddha points out that in contrast to non-Buddhists' worship

of the six directions in order to procure wealth, Buddhists venerate another six directions—parents, teachers, spouse, friends, subordinates, and *śramanas*—in order to practice the six *pāramitās* (perfections). This is the crux of the sutra.

Chapter II: On Arousing the Aspiration for Enlightenment.

Chapter III: On Compassion. This chapter explains that compassion derived from the observation of the suffering and anguish of sentient beings is the root of the aspiration for enlightenment.

Chapter IV: On Liberation. The cultivation of compassion is said to be the root of liberation.

Chapter V: On Three Kinds of Enlightenment. In this chapter, the three kinds of enlightenment, that of the *śrāvaka*, the *pratyekabuddha*, and the Buddha, are explained using the analogy of the crossing of a river by a rabbit, a horse, and an elephant.

Chapter VI: On Cultivating the Thirty-two Marks. This chapter enumerates the thirty-two marks of the Buddha and explains the sequence by which each mark is cultivated and attained.

Chapter VII: On Making Vows. This chapter emphasizes the importance of vows as the foundation of bodhisattva practice and names those vows that a bodhisattva should make in order to fortify his resolve for enlightenment.

Chapter VIII: On the Meaning of "Bodhisattva." This chapter distinguishes a true bodhisattva from a bodhisattva in name only.

Chapter IX: On the Firm Determination of a True Bodhisattva.

Chapter X: On Benefitting Oneself and Others. This chapter states the eight kinds of wisdom and sixteen qualities with which a bodhisattva should be equipped in order to benefit himself and others.

Chapter XI: On the Adornment of Oneself and Others. This chapter sets forth the eight ways of cultivation with which one adorns oneself and others.

Chapter XII: On Two Adornments. The two adornments of blessing and wisdom achieved through the practice of the six *pāramitās* are elucidated in this chapter.

Chapter XIII: On Drawing In. This chapter explains how to teach ordained and lay Buddhist followers.

Chapter XIV: On Taking Precepts. This chapter expounds the rites of taking the *upāsaka* precepts and enumerates and expounds the six major and twenty-eight minor precepts.

Chapter XV: On the Purification of Precepts. Various ways to purify the precepts are explained in this chapter.

Chapter XVI: On Eliminating Evils.

Chapter XVII: On Making Offerings to the Three Treasures.

Chapter XVIII: On the Six Perfections. This chapter elucidates the meaning and details the practice of the six *pāramitās* of giving, morality, endurance, vigor, meditation, and wisdom.

Chapter XIX: On Miscellaneous Subjects. This chapter explains the categories, merits, and fruitions of the practice of giving.

Chapter XX: On the Three Pure Refuges. The meaning and meritorious virtues of the Three Refuges are explained in this chapter.

Chapter XXI: On the Eight Precepts. This chapter relates the blessings and virtues of taking the eight precepts.

Chapter XXII: On the Five Precepts. This chapter explains the difference between the worldly precepts and the ultimate precepts.

Chapters XXIII to XXVIII: These chapters reiterate the practice of the perfections of morality, endurance, vigor, meditation, and wisdom. (pp. 1-4)

As Venerable Shih has stated, these are the canonical precepts. Anyone interested in the development of the Buddhist movement, or the history and doctrine of Buddhism in China, needs to know this material.

The Essentials of the Eight Traditions
The Candle of the Latter Dharma

The late Dr. Leo Pruden has translated the *Hasshū-kōyō* as *The Essentials of the Eight Traditions* by Gyōnen. It is bound together with Prof. Robert Rhodes' translation of *The Candle of the Latter Dharma* by Saichō. They comprise 181 pages, with indexes, glossaries, and introductions.

The Table of Contents of the *Eight Traditions* gives a clear picture of the structure and content of the work:

Translator's Introduction	
Preface	
Chapter I	The Kusha Tradition
II	The Jōjitsu Tradition
III	The Ritsu Tradition
IV	The Hossō Tradition
V	The Sanron Tradition
VI	The Tendai Tradition
VII	The Kegon Tradition
VIII	The Shingon Tradition

IX The Zen and Jōdo Traditions
 Glossary
 A List of the Texts Mentioned in the Work
 Index

The *Hasshū-kōyō* itself is a dialectic which describes and clarifies the doctrines and practices of the eight schools. The master is questioned on various points regarding each tradition. Dr. Pruden begins his introduction:

The *Hasshū-kōyō* was composed on 1268 (Bun'ei 5) by the scholar-monk Gyōnen (1240-1321), one of the most eminent scholars of his time. (pg. 1)

The translator goes on to discuss the historicity and other extant versions of the text. The *Preface* by Gyōnen gives a wonderful encapsulation of the Buddhist Tradition, and the transmission of the teachings to Japan. Gyōnen relates the beginning of Buddhist practice in Japan:

In the case of Japan in the eleventh month of the sixth year of the reign of the thirteenth Japanese sovereign, the Emperor Kimmei, which year corresponded to the eighth year of Ta-t'ung of the Liang Dynasty (A. D. 545), a *kinoto-ushi* year, the king of Paekche, Song-myōng wang, presented [to the Japanese court] one gold and one alloy image of the Buddha Śākyamuni, along with its pennants and banners, and some volumes of the Buddhist canon. The emperor was overjoyed at this, and when he saw them he worshipped them. (pg. 15)

Having said this, and completing his introduction, the master begins to answer questions specific to each of the Eight Traditions. This text is a standard in any study of the Japanese branch of the Buddhist Tradition.

Robert Rhodes' translation of the *Mappō-tōmyō-ki* is concise and easy to read. In his Introduction, Prof. Rhodes writes:

The Candle of the Latter Dharma (Mappō-tōmyō-ki) is a short but influential Japanese Buddhist text attributed to Saichō (Dengyō Daishi, 767-822), the founder of the Tendai (Chinese T'ien-t'ai) in Japan. This work argues that the true Buddhist of the age of the Latter Dharma is the nominal monk who does not keep the precepts—that is to say, a monk who shaves his hair and wears the Buddhist robes and maintains the outward appearance of a monk

but ignores the Buddhist precepts and acts in a manner that seems to go against the basic rules of monastic life. The argument set forth in this work must have been extremely persuasive to many Buddhists of that age. Although not all who came into contact with this work agreed with its thesis, the question it posed about the proper conduct of a monk living in the period of the Latter Dharma forced them to reflect seriously on what it meant to be a true Buddhist practitioner. Thus there is no question that it strongly influenced the Buddhists of this crucial period of Japanese history. (Introduction)

Also in dialectic style, the *Mappō-tomyō-ki* is a perfect companion to *The Sutra on Upāsaka Precepts*. Both texts take up the vital question, "In this world, at this time, how to be a Buddhist?" Indeed, this issue is central to all who follow the Buddha, devotee and non-Buddhist alike.

These first five books give a superb overview and beginning to the Buddhist tradition, and especially Mahāyāna. In many ways, the books can be seen as sequential in their conceptual development. Beginning with *The Summary of the Great Vehicle*, the epistemological foundations of the Mahāyāna are built by Asaṅga. Many key elements of the Mahāyāna are presented, to be amplified by later followers and scholars. *King Asoka* gives us both sacred history, and a legendary example. With him, the growth of the saṅgha and the Buddhist movement gave rise to the lay followers. *The Upāsaka Precepts* address that very condition, and the tension between lay and monastic practice. As the Mahāyāna and the saṅgha grew, so did the role of the bodhisattva. This runs through all the texts, and is brought to a pinnacle in *The Lotus Sutra*. The concerns of real-life, everyday practice are the subject of *The Essentials of the Eight Traditions*, and *The Candle of the Latter Dharma*.

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The 1994 volume of *Pacific World*
is dedicated to the memory of

Ann Yoshiko Imada

June 7, 1925 - January 31, 1995

Program clerk
at the
Institute of Buddhist Studies
from
January, 1991
to
January, 1995

With deep gratitude for
her warmth, kindness,
humor, and the joy she
brought into our lives.