

## NOTES AND NEWS

### The Tripitaka Translation Project and the BDK USA

Perhaps the greatest patron of Buddhism in modern times has been the Reverend Dr. Yehan Numata (1897—1994). Born in Hiroshima, he earned a B. A. and an M. A. from the University of California at Berkeley. In 1988 he received an Honorary Doctor of Humanities degree from the University of Hawaii. Yehan Numata, though born into a temple family, became a businessman. His motive was solely to raise funds for the propagation of Buddhism. His belief was that the Buddha's teachings, which are based on wisdom and compassion, would assist in bringing about lasting peace and happiness for all humanity. Embarking on his quest, he established a precision measuring instruments manufacturing company called Mitutoyo Corporation in 1934. In 1965 profits from the enterprise enabled him to found the Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai (Society for the Promotion of Buddhism, BDK). Under his guidance, this organization has sponsored many and various activities to share the teachings of the Buddha with as many people as possible. Late in life, Yehan Numata was ordained a Buddhist priest.

BDK USA. To supervise propagational activities outside Japan, Yehan Numata insisted that each country concerned should create a local organization, and be financially and operationally responsible for all propagational activities undertaken. Toward this end, affiliates of BDK Japan were formed in countries where branches of the Mitutoyo Corporation were located. To date, offices in the United States, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, West Germany, England, Taiwan, and Singapore further Mr. Numata's vision.

In the United States, the first such organization, called Buddhist Educational Studies, Inc., was formed in 1982 in Springfield, Virginia. It published Buddhist materials and conducted educational activities. In 1986, it was superseded by the Buddha Dharma Kyokai (Society) Inc. (BDK USA) in Emerson, New Jersey. Its first President is the Reverend Kenryu Tsuji, Resident Minister at Ekoji Temple in Springfield, VA, who is also a former Bishop of the Buddhist Churches of America. The Trustees are Mr. Shigeru Yamamoto, a former Chairman of the Board, MTI Corporation of Mitutoyo U.S.; Bishop Seigen Yamaoka, the current Head of the Buddhist Churches of America; the Reverend Seishin Yamashita, President of the Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research; and Mr. Noboru Hanyu, a former President of the National Council of the Buddhist Churches of America. This organization serves as the umbrella for all of the propagational activities in the U.S.

*Pacific World.* The first issue of the *Pacific World* was published in June 1925 by Yehan Numata when he was still an undergraduate at the University of California, Berkeley. As the editor-in-chief, he published the journal on a bi-monthly basis in 1925 and 1926, and then on a monthly basis in 1927 and 1928. Articles in the early issues concerned not only Buddhism, but also other cultural subjects such as art, poetry, and education. By 1928, the articles became predominantly related to Buddhism. Included in the mailing list for the early issues were such addressees as the Cabinet members of the U.S. Government, Chambers of Commerce, political leaders, libraries, publishing houses, labor unions, and international institutions. The publication of the *Pacific World* ceased after Mr. Numata returned to Japan following completion of his studies in 1928. In 1982, the publication of the *Pacific World* was resumed, this time on an annual basis by the Institute of Buddhist Studies. Funds are provided by the BDK USA foundation. The 1992 autumn issue of the journal was distributed to 7,500 addressees throughout the world. The journal is now devoted to the dissemination of articles on general and Jodo Shinshu Buddhism for both academic and lay readers.

*The Teaching of Buddha* Another significant project undertaken by the BDK thus far has been the editing, publishing and distribution of *The Teaching of Buddha*. This small book contains the essence of the Buddhist Tradition. The book is an abridged translation of the Japanese work, *Shinyaku Bukkyo Seiten* (The New Translation of the Buddhist Scriptures). It was compiled and published by the Bukkyo Kyokai (The Buddhist Society) under the supervision of the Reverend Muan Kizu in 1925. It was believed that not only would *The Teaching of Buddha* be an authoritative introduction to Buddhism, but it could also become a daily source of inspiration and a guide for daily living. To make it understandable and available to the peoples of the world, the book has been translated and printed in 35 different languages, and nearly five million copies have been distributed free of charge in 47 countries.

*Distribution of The Teaching of Buddha.* For this function, two organizations were formed in America. The Sudatta Society was established in Hawaii in 1978. Its leadership has been in the hands of Mr. Ralph Honda, a prominent Honolulu businessman, from the very beginning. Through his diligent efforts, 300,000 copies of *The Teaching of Buddha* have been distributed to hotels, hospitals, prisons, and military units in the Hawaiian Islands. The other organization is the Society for Buddhist Understanding, established in 1978 in the City of Industry, California. The head of this group is Mr. Tomohito Katsunuma. Thus far, Mr. Katsunuma has succeeded in the distribution and placement of 350,000 copies of *The Teaching of Buddha* in hotels, libraries, temples, prisons, and the military forces on the U.S. mainland.

*Publication of Buddha Dharma.* Since the popular *The Teaching of Buddha* was a condensed version of a much longer text, the decision was made in 1982 to make available to the English reading public an unabridged edition of Muan Kizu's *The New Translation of Buddhist Scriptures*. This would provide the essence of Buddhist doctrines in considerable detail. The first edition of the complete translation, called *Buddha Dharma*, was translated by Buddhist scholars in America and published in 1984. The second edition, complete with a section on Scriptural Sources, a glossary, and an index, is now being prepared.

*Buddhist Studies Chairs.* The next major project was the endowment of Numata Chairs in Buddhist Studies at leading universities around the world. It was Yehan Numata's objective to make the teachings of Mahayana Buddhism available to the academic world on a day-to-day basis. Begun in 1984, the Numata Chairs in Buddhist Studies have been established at six institutions in the U.S.: the University of California at Berkeley, Harvard University, the University of Chicago, the University of Hawaii, Smith College, and the Institute of Buddhist Studies in Berkeley. The University of Calgary and the University of Toronto in Canada, have also been awarded Chairs. In Europe three prestigious universities, the University of London, Oxford University, and Leiden University, now have Numata Chairs. Internationally renowned scholars, mostly Japanese, have filled them. Sufficient contributions to the endowed Chairs are made annually for up to twenty years, after which time each Chair will have become self-sustaining through the accumulated funds.

*Numata Center.* The Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, located in Berkeley, CA was established in November 1984. Its dedication and opening ceremonies were well attended. Many distinguished Buddhist scholars and guests participated. Leaders of BDK Japan, Dr. George Rupp, who was then Dean of the Divinity School at Harvard, and Provost Leonard Kuhi of the University of California at Berkeley, were also present. The Numata Center's principal mission is to act as the agent of BDK Japan in the Tripitaka Translation and Publication Project. It is also responsible for the publication of the BDK English Tripitaka. In general the Numata Center assists the BDK USA and BDK Japan in the accomplishment of their respective missions. Key staff members include Dr. Nobuo Haneda and the Reverend Seishin Yamashita.

*Tripitaka Translation Project.* Perhaps the most significant undertaking by Mr. Numata and the BDK is the translation into English, and publication of the voluminous Taisho Chinese Tripitaka. It was the desire of Yehan Numata to introduce the still largely unexplored Chinese Mahayana Tripitaka throughout the English-speaking world. Thus the BDK English Tripitaka Translation Project was born. The First Series

offers 139 original Tripitaka texts. The work then began in 1982 in Tokyo. A 13-member group of leading Japanese Buddhist scholars, headed by Professor Shoyu Hanayama of the Musashino Women's College, was formed as the Tripitaka Editorial Committee. It oversees the entire project of the translation and publication. Next in December 1991, headquartered in the Numata Center, came the Publication Committee headed by Professor Emeritus Philip Yampolsky of Columbia University. It is the task of the Publication Committee to produce the finished volumes. This committee, which consists of six Buddhist scholars and editors, is dedicated to lucid and readable works that will do justice to the Buddhist Canon, and Mr. Numata's dream of seeing them in English.

### **Publication of the English Buddhist Canon Has Begun!**

The publication of the BDK English Tripitaka, well-edited and readable Buddhist texts, has been awaited by many Buddhist scholars and followers. This marks the start of the first complete English Buddhist canon. This is an unprecedented event started and sponsored by Mr. Yehan Numata, the founder of the Society for the Promotion of Buddhism (Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai). In his "Message" to the publication of the First Series of the BDK English Tripitaka, Mr. Numata says, "No one has ever attempted to translate the entire Buddhist canon into English throughout the history of Japan. It is my greatest wish to see this done and to make the translations available to the many English-speaking people who have never had the opportunity to learn about the Buddha's teachings." Approximately 10% of the Chinese Tripitaka is expected to be finished by the year 2010 A.D.

The Numata Center is now distributing the books. Concerning the Summary of the Great Vehicle, the first of the four published texts, 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 Asanga (4th century A.D.) in India. Although the original text (in Sanskrit) has been lost, four recensions in Tibetan and Chinese are extant. Of these, a Chinese translation by the Indian scholar-monk Paramartha (499-569 A.D.), has been the most highly regarded, being considered an accurate rendering of the original author's intent. It is this text which has most often been utilized in scholarly research, and it is this text

which has now been translated into English and published. 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.

In the Editorial Foreword to the English canon, Dr. Shoyu Hanayama, the chairman of the Editorial Committee, talks about the enormity and purpose of the project, "Frankly speaking, it will take perhaps one hundred years or more to accomplish the English translation of the complete Chinese and Japanese scriptures and texts, which consist of thousands of works. Nevertheless, as Mr. Numata wished, it is the sincere hope of the Committee that this project will continue unto completion, even after all its present members have passed away...the final objective of this project is not academic fulfillment but the transmission of the teaching of the Buddha to the whole world in order to create harmony and peace among mankind."

The Numata Center in Berkeley, California, has published four Tripitaka texts: *The Summary of the Great Vehicle*, *The Biographical Scripture of King Asoka*, *The Lotus Sutra*, and *The Sutra on Upasaka Precepts*. At least four volumes are expected to be published every year. These are beautifully designed hard cover books, printed on heavy stock, non-glare paper. All volumes include academic citations.

The first book is, *The Summary of the Great Vehicle by Bodhisattva Asanga translated from the Chinese of Paramartha*. It is Taisho Vol. 31, No. 1593, and translated and introduced by Professor John P. Keenan of Middlebury College. There are ten Chapters to the text, and it is fully indexed. A Glossary and Selected Bibliography are also included. Following this is the list of the texts to be released in the First Series. In total, the volume is 147 pages long. It offers an overview of Yogacara and Mahayana thought.

The second volume is *The Biographical Scripture of King Asoka translated from the Chinese of Samghapala*. Professor Li Rongxi of the Buddhist Association of China translated the text. As Taisho Vol. 50, No. 2043, it comprises eight Chapters. There are 203 pages, with an Introduction, Glossary and Index. Like Mr. Numata, King Asoka was a great benefactor of the Buddhist Teachings. Here is a book for general readers and scholars alike.

Next is the *Lotus Sutra translated from the Chinese of Kumarajiva*. Professors Kubo Tsugunari and Yuyama Akira of the International Institute for Buddhist Studies have translated Taisho Vol. 9, No. 262. In 363 pages are 28 Chapters, 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.

Venerable Shih Heng-ching of the Fa-Kuang Institute of Buddhist Studies in Taipei is the translator of *The Sutra on Upasaka Precepts translated from the Chinese of Dharmaraksa*. 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.

Now the Numata Center is offering a subscription to the entire First Series of the English Tripitaka. At least four books a year will be distributed. They will be shipped in protective boxes, international orders are welcomed. The subscription price as planned is \$70 US for three books. This price includes shipping and handling. For more information, please contact the Numata Center at the below address and telephone number.

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