

# PACIFIC WORLD

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Special Issue:  
Fiftieth Anniversary of the Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai



## Editor's Preface

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This special issue of *Pacific World: Journal of the Institute of Buddhist Studies* celebrates the fiftieth anniversary of the Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai. Established in 1965 by the late Rev. Dr. Yehan Numata, the society continues today under the guiding stewardship of his son Rev. Dr. Toshihide Numata. Dedicated to promoting the understanding of Buddhism globally, BDK's history is marked by an incredible array of accomplishments toward that end. These extend from its early project, *The Teaching of Buddha*, to translating and publishing the Buddhist canon, and the establishment of academic programs at sixteen schools and universities in the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Austria, and Germany. Originally, *Pacific World* was the name of a publication initiated by Yehan Numata in 1925 during the time that he was a student at the University of California, Berkeley. It continues to serve the goal of promoting "spiritual culture throughout all humanity."

Celebrating the BDK's fiftieth anniversary, this issue of *Pacific World* is devoted to one of the very most important texts of the Pure Land tradition, Tanluan's commentary on the Pure Land Discourse attributed to Vasubandhu.

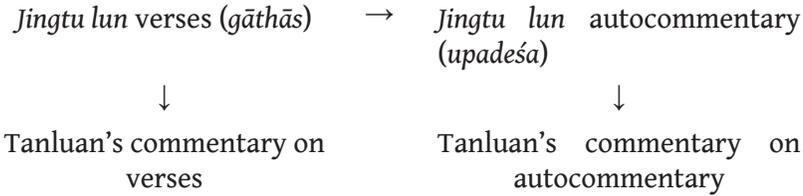
### TANLUAN AND THE JINGTULUN ZHU

The status of both Vasubandhu (Jpn. Seshin, 世親; fl. fourth century) and Tanluan (Jpn. Donran, 曇鸞; 476–542) as two of the seven masters in the Pure Land lineage stretching from Amitābha to Hōnen as established by Shinran is based on the *Jingtu lun zhu*. The *Jingtu lun*<sup>1</sup> (*Jōdō ron* 淨土論; T. 1524, full title: 無量壽經優婆提舍願生偈) is attributed to Vasubandhu and said to have been translated by Bodhiruci. It is the text that is taken as evidence of Vasubandhu's commitment to the Pure Land teachings. The *Jingtu lun zhu* (淨土論註; T. 1819, full title: 無

量壽經優婆提舍願生偈註) is Tanluan's commentary or discourse on the *Jingtu lun*.

#### STRUCTURE: A TEXT IN FOUR PARTS

The text published here is an English translation of Tanluan's *Jingtulun zhu*, a commentary on the *Jingtu lun*. The *Jingtu lun* is itself a text in two parts, a set of verses (*gāthā*) and an autocommentary (*upadeśa*) on those verses. Tanluan follows that structure, and consequently there are four parts to consider, that is, the verses and autocommentary attributed to Vasubandhu, and Tanluan's commentary on each of those two parts. Diagrammatically:



The arrows indicate the derivation of the four parts. Both the autocommentary and Tanluan comment on the verses, and Tanluan comments on the autocommentary.

This layering of commentary on top of commentary means that there is a great deal of repetition—something mentioned in the verses is commented on in the autocommentary, also commented on by Tanluan directly, and then Tanluan comments on the autocommentary. In personal conversations with the late Roger Corless (1938–2007), he expressed frustration at what he considered to be the absence of general appreciation for the beauty of Tanluan's thought. He attributed that to the complex and repetitive character of Tanluan's work.

Corless wrote his dissertation on Tanluan at University of Wisconsin, Madison in 1973. This was titled "T'an-luan's Commentary on the Pure Land Discourse" and included a translation of the *Jingtu lun zhu*. In order to make Tanluan more accessible to the ordinary reader Corless sought to revise his dissertation translation so as to reduce the complexity and eliminate the redundancy.

Over the last decade or more of his life, Corless attempted to "cut and paste" his translation of Tanluan's commentary, reorganizing and revising the text so as to be able to present the reader with a smooth and coherent discussion of the meaning and symbolism of the Pure

Land as understood by Tanluan. That he never completed this task, despite the loving attention he paid to the work, suggests to me that it was not just an interminable task, but that it was also an impossible task. The version we were left with upon Corless's death was no more accessible for the imagined "ordinary reader" that Corless hoped to reach than was the original translation found in his dissertation.

We have, therefore, chosen to retain the order of Tanluan's original. This required reorganizing a great deal of the revised version Corless had created. In addition to reorganizing the text, he sought to streamline the text by eliminating sections that he considered redundant.<sup>2</sup> These two steps together with the third step of updating the translation produced the manuscript with which Dr. Kameyama and I began. Here we can refer to that manuscript as the Corless "edition" of Tanluan's commentary.

#### THE CORLESS "EDITION" OF TANLUAN

As mentioned above Corless had worked repeatedly to restructure the text in accord with his own ideas of concision and clarity. He had, for example, a research appointment at Nanzan Institute for a year, during which time he worked on this project. After retiring, he came to live in the San Francisco Bay Area and was a regular visitor to IBS. Because of the importance of Tanluan for Shin Buddhism, we provided a research assistant—Rev. Richard Tennes—who worked with Corless until his death. In exchange, Corless agreed to our publication of the work.<sup>3</sup> That was the text, which is perhaps better referred to as an edition, rather than as a translation, with which we began the project culminating in the version you now hold.

Despite the years of effort, the project of restructuring the text was itself unfinished when Corless died. Rev. Tennes provided us with the various chapters of the manuscript as it was at that time. Understanding that Corless's own wishes had been to make Tanluan's Pure Land thought more widely available, and knowing that it would not be possible for us to do so in the form that he had imagined, it became clear that the first thing needed was to reorganize the sections of the revised translation of the Corless edition back to its original order. Christina Yanko worked on this task; however, because of her own educational career—completing her MA studies and moving on to doctoral work—the task of reorganization was itself left incomplete as well. Despite this, Ms. Yanko's efforts gave us an invaluable headstart,

in that she had done much to return the work to its original order, and at least as importantly had annotated the text with the section numbers from Inagaki's translation.

#### WEDNESDAYS WITH KAMEYAMA

Over the course of the two years that Dr. Takahiko Kameyama of Ryukoku University was a postdoctoral fellow at the IBS (Japanese academic years 2013–2014 and 2014–2015), he and I met most Wednesday afternoons for anywhere from an hour and a half to sometimes two and a half hours to edit and revise the Corless “edition” of Tanluan’s commentary. Between those meetings Kameyama did a great deal of additional work. The order was restored and sections added on the basis of the translation found in Corless’s dissertation, and by consulting the Inagaki translation. Kameyama retranslated many of the sections, as well as correcting many instances of misrenderings of the Chinese. He also identified and provided new translations of sections where Corless had left out material from the dissertation translation. Because of the extent of Kameyama’s contribution to the present work, we are here identifying it as the “Kameyama–Corless translation.” My own contributions were largely limited to attempting to create more felicitous readings of the often obscure, misleading, or convoluted wording of the Corless edition. In the course of this work Kameyama learned a fair amount about the differences between British English of some half century ago, when Corless wrote his dissertation, and contemporary American English.

#### THE ISSUE AT HAND

In addition to the Kameyama–Corless translation, we include here reprints of three additional essays. For the reader’s reference we include David Matsumoto’s translation and study of the Vasubandhu text as such. We have not, however, attempted to make the terminology of this translation consistent with that of the *Jingtu lun zhu* as translated here. While there would be some advantages to doing so, we believe that there is also a benefit to the reader to be able to see a different approach to translating the text at the foundation of Tanluan’s commentary. We also reprint here Corless’s own essay, “The Enduring Significance of T’an-luan,” from an earlier issue of this journal. That issue was devoted to Tanluan, and there are several additional essays from that issue available at the *Pacific World* website. Tanluan claims that the *Jingtu lun*

is a commentary on the *Larger Pure Land Sutra*. The relation between the *Jingtu lun* and the *Larger Pure Land Sutra* is examined in detail—and problematized—in another accompanying essay reprinted here, “The Five Contemplative Gates.” On the basis of that study it would seem that Tanluan’s claim has led to centuries of misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the text attributed to Vasubandhu. The privileging of a doctrinal interpretation has apparently contributed to an inability to see the text of the *Jingtu lun* for what it is, a *sādhana* written in *gāthā* form—doubtless for ease of memorization—with an accompanying autocommentary that gives further details regarding the visualization practice. Looking for doctrine, one doesn’t see practice.

We sincerely hope that by making this translation available publicly, we are able to fulfill Corless’s desire to see Tanluan more widely recognized as an important figure in the history of Buddhist thought. At the same time, we also hope to contribute to a better understanding of the breadth and depth of the Pure Land tradition.

#### NOTES

1. The title is sometimes “backtranslated” into Sanskrit as *Sukhāvativyūhōpadeśa*. This is a reconstructed title however, as there are neither Sanskrit nor Tibetan translations. For this reason we will refer to the text here by its Chinese name.
2. In passing we will mention two other ways in which Corless had revised Tanluan’s text, both of which have been removed.

First, he highlighted words and phrases in Tanluan’s commentary in such a fashion as to recreate the words and phrases of the *Jingtu lun*. In trying to make sense of this, the editor concluded that Corless was treating Tanluan’s commentary as if it had been done in the Tibetan style of a “commentary of annotations” (Tib. *mchan ‘grel*, མཚན་འགྲེལ་), a commentarial style also referred to by Bu ston as a “word commentary” (Tib. *tshig ‘grel*, ཚིག་གྲེལ་). “These are commentaries in which the words of a basic text are printed either with small circles under them or in a larger size than the surrounding text, that surrounding text being an expansion on the words and/or syllables of the basic text” (Joe Bransford Wilson, “Tibetan Commentaries on Indian *Śāstras*,” in *Tibetan Literature: Studies in Genre*, ed. José Ignacio Cabezón and Roger R. Jackson [Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 1996], 134). There being, however, neither any reason to believe that Tanluan himself was following a commentarial model frequently employed in Tibet, nor any rationale provided by Corless for his own system of highlighting certain words and phrases, the editor determined that the emphases in the Corless edition should not be reproduced here. The study of commentarial styles is highly complex, and I would like to express my appreciation to Alexander Mayer (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign)

for his thoughts on this matter (personal communication, by email, 2 June 2015). My thanks also to Wendi Adamek, who noted that the style of commentary employed by Tanluan in this work, “embedding the source text in short sections followed by commentary, is seen in the Han if not earlier” (personal communication, by email, 8 June 2015). She also noted that the commentarial style of the *Rebirth Treatise* makes particular sense for an originally oral commentary in which sections of the source text are read first and then commented upon.

Second, in creating his edition, Corless had added accent marks to the *gāthās*, believing that these sections were chanted. While the *gāthās* are verses, we believe that the ease of recitation that this form facilitated was a mnemonic device created to assist the practitioner of the *sādhana*. The way that Corless marked the text, however, is that of plainsong, a style of chanting from the medieval period of Western Christendom, and which had a revival in 1950s Britain. Given the place and time, we may speculate that Corless had been exposed to the style in such a fashion that it held a religiously positive valence for him. Corless may have felt that translating the *gāthās* into English required a Western religious style of notation. While the *gāthās* may have been chanted, in somewhat the same fashion that Dōgen’s *Fukan zazengi* (a set of meditation instructions) are chanted in some Sōtō Zen monasteries, such chanting would not have followed Western styles of prosody. Additionally, since neither the *Jingtu lun* nor the *Jingtu lun zhu* themselves include chanting notation, these notations were also removed.

3. We also wish to express our appreciation to Paul Swanson of Nanzan Institute who agreed to forego any claim of privilege regarding the text based on Corless’s appointment there. In addition we would like to thank Robert Sharf for permission to reprint “The Five Contemplative Gates” from James H. Foad, Michael Solomon, and Richard K. Payne, eds., *The Pure Land Tradition: History and Development*, a title in the Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series of the University of California, Berkeley.