

MAHĀPIṬAKA

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EDITORIAL COMMITTEE of
the ENGLISH TRANSLATION
of the CHINESE TRIPĪṬAKA
Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai
(Society for the Promotion of Buddhism)

Editor: Kenneth K. Tanaka

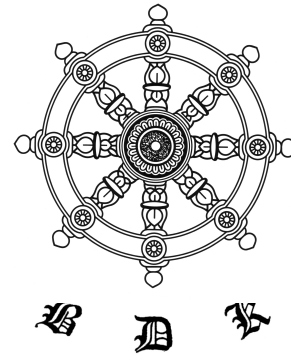


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Greetings from the New Chair of the Editorial Committee

Please allow me to express a few thoughts as the new Chair of the BDK English Tripitaka Editorial Committee.

First of all, I wish to express my appreciation to Dr. Sengaku Mayeda, who had enough confidence in me to support my appointment as the new Chair. Dr. Mayeda served for 21 years as the second Chair of this project after taking over the helm after the untimely passing of the first Chair, Dr. Shōyū Hanayama. It is truly a big pair of shoes to fill, for so much has been accomplished under Dr. Mayeda's leadership.

As of today, the translation project has completed 57% of the total of 7,185 Taisho pages that need to be translated (for Stage One). Hence, much work still lies ahead of us, inspiring us to focus even more on the remaining texts in order to approach the colossal goals established by Rev. Dr. Yehan Numata, the Founder of the Society for the Promotion of Buddhism.

Since taking this office, I have initiated a new round of translators' survey to determine the progress of the remaining texts and to respond to any questions and concerns from the translators. Unfortunately, in the past year or so, aging, illness, and death among the translators have required us to locate new translators.

We may at times feel overwhelmed by the sheer volume of our prodigious project, but I am confident that with the continual financial and institutional backing by BDK and the hard work of everyone involved (translators, reviewers, editors, and staff), we can and we will reach our goal to complete the remaining 3,088 Taisho pages in a timely manner. May I seek your continuing unstinting support.

Best wishes,



Kenneth K. Tanaka

Chair,
Editorial Committee
of the BDK English Tripitaka

Publishing Schedule

Published in 2016:

1. MAITREYA AND MAÑJUŚRĪ

THE SUTRA ON THE DESCENT OF MAITREYA BUDDHA AND HIS
ENLIGHTENMENT

(彌勒下生成佛經 *Mirokugeshōjōbutsukyō*, Taishō 454)

Translated by IIDA Shōtaro and Jane Goldstone

Introduction by SADAKATA Akira

THE SUTRA OF MAÑJUŚRĪ'S QUESTIONS

(文殊師利問經 *Monjushirimongyō*, Taishō 468)

Translated by John R. McRae

2. THE CANONICAL BOOK OF THE BUDDHA'S LENGTHY DISCOURSES

Volume II

(長阿含經 *Jō-agongyō*, Taishō 1)

Translated by Shohei Ichimura

Forthcoming titles:

1. THE COLLECTION FOR THE PROPAGATION AND CLARIFICATION OF BUDDHISM Volumes II

(弘明集 *Gumyōshū*, Taishō 2102)

Translated by Harumi Hirano Ziegler

2. THE CANONICAL BOOK OF THE BUDDHA'S LENGTHY DISCOURSES

Volume III

(長阿含經 *Jō-agongyō*, Taishō 1)

Translated by Shohei Ichimura

3. *BODHISATTVA TEXTS

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE MERITS OF THE FORMER VOWS: MASTER OF
MEDICINE, BERYL RADIANCE TATHĀGATA

(藥師琉璃光如來本願功德經 *Yakushirurikōnyorai-hongankudokukyō*, Taishō 454)

Translated by IYANAGA Nobumi

THE SUTRA OF THE GIRL CANDROTTARA

(月上女經 *Gatsujōnyokyō*, Taishō 480)

Translated by Rolf Giebel

4. THE DISCOURSE TO PRINCE CANDRAPRABHA

(月燈三昧經 *Gattōzanmaikyō*, Taishō 639)

Translated by MURAKAMI Shinkan

5. THE SUTRA OF BRAHMA'S NET

(梵網經 *Bonmōkyō*, Taishō 1484)

Translated by A. Charles Muller and Kenneth K. Tanaka

Review:

THE NIRVANA SUTRA
Volume I

Translated by Mark L. Blum
(BDK English Tripiṭaka Series, published in 2013)

HABATA Hiromi
University of Munich

The Chinese translation of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*, 大般涅槃經 by 曇無讖 (Dharmakṣema) is one of the most influential sūtras in East-Asian Buddhism. It is a valuable contribution of Mark Blum to have completed a readable English translation. When Dharmakṣema translated the text at the beginning of the fifth century, another translation by Fāxiǎn 法顯 was already in existence, which differed from Dharmakṣema's translation in numerous places. The differences between the two translations stimulated scholastic debates in fifth century China that continues to the present time, in which the Tibetan translation and Sanskrit fragments are also compared. The variety of the extant materials reflects not only the different versions of the sūtra but also the translation method of the translators.

The investigation into the Sanskrit fragments indicates that the text of the sūtra is quite peculiar and sometimes difficult to understand. It is evident that the translators faced considerable difficulty at understanding the text and made enormous endeavor to offer a readable translation to their audience. Translating a text into another language means interpreting it from its original cultural surroundings into another one. Dharmakṣema was very successful in this challenging task, and his interpretation has attracted his readers until now.

In the same way, Blum's interpretation into English was meant to facilitate the readers understanding; for example, he tried to identify several Sanskrit words on the basis of the Chinese translation, probably because some English readers would not be able to understand the terms and names in Chinese. This difficult approach has occasionally led in his translation and notes to some confusion concerning the version of the sūtra he translated. For example, "They scattered aśoka flowers over the Hiranyavatī River" (p. 20) from Dharmakṣema's 以占婆花散熙連河, in which the flower 占婆花 stands certainly for *campaka* and not for *aśoka* as occurs in the corresponding Sanskrit fragment. This kind of confusion should be revised in a future edition.

In places where the text is difficult to understand in the Chinese context, Dharmakṣema seemed to have added his notes into his translation; for example, "one person may pick up a sword to injure the Buddha and another person may take sandalwood paste to worship the Buddha, and the Buddha looks upon these two [acts] with impartiality" (p. 79–80), which probably translates the short phrase

tathāgato vāsīcandanāsamakalpa (Sanskrit fragment 17.4). Such an additional interpretation seems to be inevitable for translations in general, in the same way Blum translates, “Through their power of using expedient means, they manifested themselves in their present bodies” (p. 6) from Dharmakṣema’s 方便現身.

Dharmakṣema provided his Chinese audience with an understandable and attractive interpretation through translating freely, not word-for-word from the rather abstruse original text, and Blum has now provided his English readers with a comprehensible and attractive translation, which will surely benefit our understanding of the role of this sūtra in East Asian Buddhism.

TENDAI LOTUS TEXTS

(無量義經 *Muryōgikyō*, Taisho 276)

Translated by KUBO Tsugunari and Joseph M. Logan

(觀普賢菩薩行法經 *Kanfugenbosatsugyōbōkyō*, Taisho 277)

Translated by KUBO Tsugunari and Joseph M. Logan

(妙法蓮華經憂波提舍 *Myōhōrengekyō-upadaisha*, Taisho 1519)

Translated by Terry R. Abbott-Yamada

(天台四教儀 *Tendaishikyōgi*, Taisho 1931)

Translated by David W. Chappell & ICHISHIMA Masao

(BDK English Tripiṭaka Series, published in 2013)

Robert F. Rhodes

Professor, Otani University

Tiantai Lotus Texts contains four relatively short texts associated with either the *Lotus Sutra* or the Tiantai school.

The first two texts, *The Infinite Meanings Sutra* and *The Sutra Expounded by the Buddha on the Practice of the Way through Contemplation of the Bodhisattva All-embracing Goodness* (hereafter *Contemplation of the Bodhisattva All-embracing Goodness Sutra*), both translated by KUBO Tsugunari and Joseph M. Logan, are generally considered to be “apocryphal sutras” created in China. However, they have proved quite influential because they have traditionally been called the *Lotus Sutra*’s “opening” and “closing” sutras, respectively, preached by the Buddha just before and after the *Lotus Sutra*.

The *Lotus Sutra* states that, before he preached *The Infinite Meanings Sutra*, the Buddha expounded a scripture called “Infinite Meanings.” Although the *Lotus Sutra* says nothing more about *The Infinite Meanings Sutra*, it is most likely that this statement provided the impetus for the creation of the text translated here. This sutra proclaims that all who practice the Dharma-gate called “Infinite

Meanings”, which is equated with the teaching that all dharmas are tranquil and empty in both nature and aspect, will quickly gain supreme enlightenment. It also declares that this dharma-gate is infinite in meaning because the desires of sentient beings are infinite.

The *Contemplation of the Bodhisattva All-embracing Goodness Sutra* is a fascinating text on the method of undertaking repentance to achieve purification of the six sense-faculties and gain a vision of the Bodhisattva All Embracing Goodness or Samantabhadra. The title of this sutra is an obvious allusion to the “Chapter on the Encouragements of the Bodhisattva All-embracing Goodness”, the final chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*. The *Contemplation of the Bodhisattva All-embracing Goodness Sutra* teaches that practitioners who focus their minds on the Bodhisattva All-embracing Goodness for three weeks will gain an elaborate vision of the bodhisattva riding on a white six-tusked elephant. After the practitioners undertake repentance, the bodhisattva will pat their heads and their sense-faculties will all become completely purified. Incidentally, this repentance ritual became the basis of the Lotus Samādhi, one of the most important meditative practices of the Sino-Japanese Tiantai/Tendai school.

Due to the lack of space, I can only say just a few words about the last two translations in this volume. The third text, *The Commentary on the Lotus Sutra* attributed to Vasubandhu, has been ably translated by Terry Abbott. It is noted as the only extant Indian commentary on the *Lotus Sutra*. It is a dense but engrossing text, filled with numerous Abhidharma-like lists, and is quite unlike any of the East Asian *Lotus* commentaries.

Finally, *A Guide to the Tiantai Fourfold Teachings*, translated by ICHISHIMA Masao and David W. Chappell, has long been esteemed as the most authoritative outline to Tiantai Buddhist thought ever since it was written by the Korean monk Chegwan in the late tenth century. In this text, Chegwan explains the main points of Tiantai Buddhism using the scheme of the “five periods and eight teachings”. Although modern scholars like SEKIGUCHI Shindai have convincingly argued that this scheme does not accurately reflect the thought of Zhiyi, the founder of the Tiantai school, Chegwan’s text still remains a valuable introduction to the Tiantai doctrinal system. It may also be added that an earlier version of this translation was published in 1983. Unfortunately, the older version was extremely difficult to obtain. Hence the inclusion of this translation in this volume is extremely helpful for everyone interested in Tiantai Buddhism.

Report:

Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion

Kenneth K. Tanaka
Professor, Musashino University

I had the pleasure of attending the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion held November 18-22 in San Antonio, Texas. Held jointly with the Society of Biblical Literature, this year also drew approximately 10,000 participants.

Not having to present a paper or to serve as a respondent, I had the distinct pleasure of feeling free to attend many of the Buddhist related sessions, those sponsored by such groups as the Buddhist-Christian Studies, Buddhism in the West, and Japanese Religions. I was pleased that the panel session sponsored by the International Association of Shin Buddhist Studies (of which I currently serve as its President) was well attended and engaging. With each attendance at these meetings, I am made aware of the aging process, where I see more new, young faces taking up the places of we seniors.

I regretted that my lack of sufficient sleep stemming from the jet lag prevented me from attending some of the plenary sessions, which included a session dealing with the “Donald Trump’s stunning election victory and its impact on religion and religious institutions.” A friend who did attend the session talked about the pastors from the midwest, who lamented the dissonance between their own anti-Trump sentiments and the wide spread level of support for the new President-elect among their church members!

Finally, along with Prof. Chuck Muller (the Chair of the Publication Committee of our Translation Project), I attended the annual dinner sponsored by BDK for the representatives of the universities with Numata Professorial Chairs. We were also able to meet with Prof. George Tanabe (President of BDK America) to discuss issues related to the BDK English Tripitaka Project; we agreed that such meetings are extremely helpful for effectively moving the project forward. So, I will do my best to attend the AAR meeting next year, to be held in Boston.

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