

BOOK REVIEWS

BDK English Tripiṭaka 13-I, *The Lotus Sutra*, translated from the Chinese of Kumārajīva (Taishō, Volume 9, Number 262), by Kubo Tsugunari and Yuyama Akira (1993), pp. xii + 354, with glossary, bibliography, index. ISBN 0 9625618 0 0

BDK English Tripiṭaka 45-II, *The Sutra on Upāsaka Precepts*, translated from the Chinese of Dharmarakṣa (Taishō, Volume 24, Number 1488), by Bhikṣuṇī Shih Heng-ching (1994), pp. xii + 216, with glossary, bibliography, index. ISBN 0 9625618 5 1

BDK English Tripiṭaka 76-II, *The Biographical Scripture of King Aśoka*, translated from the Chinese of Saṃghapāla (Taishō, Volume 50, Number 2043), by Li Rongxi (1993), pp. xii + 194, with glossary, index. ISBN 0 9625618 4 3

BDK English Tripiṭaka 46-III, *The Summary of the Great Vehicle by Bodhisattva Asaṅga*, translated from the Chinese of Paramārtha (Taishō, Volume 31, Number 1593), by John P. Keenan (1992), pp. x + 138, with glossary, bibliography, index. ISBN 0 9625618 6 X

THE FOUR VOLUMES all contain a Message on the Publication of the English Tripiṭaka by Mr. Numata Nehan, an Editorial Foreword by Prof. Hanayama Shōyū and a Publisher's Foreword by Prof. Philip Yampolsky. According to the Editorial Foreword the Committee has selected one hundred thirty-nine scriptures and texts for a First Series of Translations as a first step towards a complete translation of the Taishō edition of the Chinese Buddhist canon into the English language. Yampolsky writes that the translations have been made in order to make available to Western readers the major works of the Chinese and Japanese Buddhist canon. Very little is said in his foreword about the principles adopted for the translations apart from the remark that no attempt will be made to standardize the English translations of Buddhist technical terms. It is only by consulting the translations that one can obtain an insight into the guidelines which seem to have been followed by the translators. All translations contain a brief introduction by the translator of at most four pages. All

four volumes also comprise a glossary and an index and, with the exception of *The Biographical Scripture of King Aśoka*, a selected bibliography. Page and column numbers of the Taishō edition are indicated in the left-hand margin. The translations are not provided with any notes.

The publication committee seems to have decided that for the Western reader more detailed introductions and notes are superfluous. One cannot but regret this decision. Very few Western readers possess the background knowledge necessary to understand fully Buddhist texts without the help provided by a good introduction and notes. Even a specialist in Buddhism would welcome assistance in this respect for there will probably be very few scholars who are equally familiar with Mahāyāna sūtras, Vinaya literature, the legend of Aśoka and the Yogācāra school. One regrets above all that this occasion has not been used to make known to the Western reader some of the results of Japanese scholarship. To mention only a few examples. The study of the formation of the *Lotus Sūtra* has been revolutionized by Fuse Kōgaku's *Hokekyō seiritsushi* 法華經成立史 (Tokyo, 1934). It would have been very instructive for the Western reader to learn about his theories and the discussions which have followed his work up to the present. The bibliography in *The Sutra on Upāsaka Precepts* mentions four publications in English (of which three relate to Hīnayāna Buddhism) and one in Chinese. No mention is made of Ōno Hōdō's *Daijō kaikyō no kenkyū* 大乘戒經の研究 (Tokyo, 1954). An annotated translation of the few pages devoted by Ōno to T. 1488 (pp. 206–210) would have been very welcome. The introduction of *The Biographical Scripture of King Aśoka* mentions the A-yu-wang-zhuan (T. 2042) but not that there is a complete translation of this text by Jean Przyluski (*La légende de l'empereur Aśoka*, Paris, 1923). According to the translator the name of the Chinese translator is Saṃghapāla, a reconstruction found in Nanjio's catalogue, but which is more than doubtful as indicated by Przyluski (p. XI).

The introductions, brief as they are, contain some interesting indications of very useful information which could have been provided in notes. For instance, the introduction of *The Lotus Sutra* points out that in a number of cases Kumārajīva's version agrees rather with the readings of the Central Asian Sanskrit recension than with those of other recensions. It would have been easy to point out these points of agreement in notes to the translation. The introduction of *The Summary of the Great Vehicle* remarks that Paramārtha did add passages to Asaṅga's text not found in any of the other translations. However, these passages are not indicated in the translation, and the reader is unable to find out what has been added by Paramārtha unless he compares his translation with the other ones. Very little has been written on Paramārtha in Western languages and the reader is not much helped by a reference to Diana Paul's *Philosophy of Mind in Sixth-Century China: Paramārtha's "Evolution*

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of Consciousness" (Stanford, 1984), a very unsatisfactory publication (cf. *The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, vol. 9, no. 1, 1986, pp. 129–135).

Although there are no notes, the glossaries will be of some help to the reader. However, the words and names explained in the glossary are not marked in the text with an asterisk so that the reader does not know whether he will find an explanation in the glossary or not. For instance, on p. 21 of *The Sutra on Upāsaka Precepts* one finds three proper names: Udraka Rāmaputra, Devadatta and Śāriputra. The last two are explained in the glossary but not the first. A reader who needs an explanation of the last two names would certainly also not know the name of Udraka Rāmaputra.

Kumārajīva's version of the *Lotus Sūtra* has been rendered several times into English but this new translation by Kubo and Yuyama is nevertheless very welcome. One of the most recent translations was published by Leon Hurvitz in 1976 (cf. *The Eastern Buddhist* X, 2, 1977, pp. 169–174). Hurvitz tended to translate separately each character even when two characters form a compound and express a single concept. For instance, in the beginning of chapter six (p. 20c5) Hurvitz translates: "The territories of his realm shall be well adorned, having no filth or evil, no tiles or pebbles, no thorns or thistles, no excrement or other impurities." Kubo and Yuyama render this phrase as follows: "His world will be adorned and there will be no dirt, shards, thorns, excrement or other impurities" (p. 113). One could quote many more examples of this kind. It is very instructive to compare both translations. In some instances, Hurvitz's translation is to be preferred. In chapter vii (p. 22b20) Kubo and Yuyama translate: "he (the Buddha) tried to obtain the highest complete enlightenment." Hurvitz has: "just as he was about to (垂) gain anuttarasamyaksambodhi." The well known expression, "The conductor of men" (調征丈夫), is rendered by Kubo and Yuyama as "the Hand on the Reins of Humanity" (p. 20c3) whereas Hurvitz has "a Regulator of men of stature." In 21a7 and 21a12 Kubo and Yuyama translate both 疑惧 and 憂惧 by "doubt." Hurvitz renders these expressions more correctly by "doubt and fear" and "cares and fear." There are instances in which both translations are not entirely correct. For instance, in chapter 9 (p. 30b4) Kubo and Yuyama have "sincere, mild and receptive" (柔軟寂然清淨), Hurvitz "pliant, quietly calm." Why not translate these three expressions by "gentle, peaceful and pure"? The translation by Kubo and Yuyama seems here and there a bit more free than that of Hurvitz who mostly follows closely the Chinese text. In many cases it is difficult to decide which translation is preferable and one can only advise a

scrupulous reader to consult both translations.

It is interesting to see that there are many English translations of Kumārajīva's version but only one French and one English translation of the Sanskrit text. Both were published in the nineteenth century and a new translation is an urgent desideratum. Kubo and Yuyama would render a great service if they would undertake this task for which they are eminently qualified. In their bibliography they list the translations by Burnouf and Kern. One must correct in the subtitle of Burnouf's translation "une commentaire" into "un commentaire" and "vingt et une mémoires" into "vingt et un mémoires." On the title-page of Kern's translation his name is written H. Kern. His full name is not Jan Hendrik Kern but Johan Hendrik Caspar Kern.

The Sutra on Upāsaka Precepts has never been translated into English or any other Western language. Bhikṣuṇī Shih Heng-ching's translation makes available to the Western reader an important text on the bodhisattva practice of lay Buddhists. The translator does not seem to know Sanskrit. The text does not mention a god called Śuddhavasudeva (p. 1037a16) but a Śuddhāvāsa god (淨居天). At the end of chapter i the text mentions the Four Heavenly Kings up to the Akaniṣṭha gods (p. 1035b15). The translation has "the Four Heavenly Kings, and also kings in the Akaniṣṭha and other heavens." In the beginning of chapter iii the text says: "Therefore the Tathāgata is called the omniscient one" (是故如來名一切智) and not "Therefore the Tathāgata is the one with all wisdom" (p. 1036a7). A disturbing misprint on p. 13 of the translation is "affiliation" for "affliction." In the same chapter the text says that "he sees that the beings of undetermined nature (無定有性) transmigrate in the five states of being" and not that "sentient beings transmigrate indefinitely in the five cycles of existence" (p. 1036a28). In chapter XIII the translation reads: "to take in bad disciples . . . leads to the hell of unremitting suffering (avīci)" (p. 1046b12). However, the text has: "to take in bad disciples . . . causes many beings to commit the five ānantarya (sins)." By committing these sins one falls into the Avīci hell but this ought to have been explained in a note.

It is a pity that the translator of *The Biographical Scripture of King Aśoka* also does not seem to know Sanskrit because the Chinese text is very close to the Sanskrit text in the *Divyāvadāna*. The Sanskrit reconstructions in the translation are not acceptable. The text mentions a house of *lo-k'o* (落可) which according to the translator renders *lakuca* (p. 135a1). One must certainly read

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lo-ch'a (落叉). Sanskrit *lākṣā* (cf. p. 133b7). An invention of the translator is also the *kuṭaru-navaka* (new tent) (p. 156a29–b1). The reconstruction of the *dhāraṇī* (p. 163c12–13): *tāvataḥ yāvantaḥ evambhavantāḥ bhavantaḥ bhaviṣyati* and the translation, “Such as it is now, may it be so in the future,” are both unacceptable. Also strange is the reconstruction of the name Nākula for *lu-ch'iu-na* (陸求那), cf. p. 163a7. The stories of Upagupta's disciples are called *yin-yüan* (因緣), Sanskrit *avadāna*. The translator renders this with “cause.”

The translation is not free from mistakes. For instance, the text says that the Buddha “knows the entire world,” not that he is “becoming omniscient in the world” (p. 139b4). The Chinese text translates Sanskrit *kṛtsnam jagad buddham* (*Divyāvadāna*, Cambridge, 1886, p. 397). In chapter III the translation reads: “There were in the assembly three hundred thousand arhats, twice as many learners, and innumerable zealous ordinary people, in whom the king had double faith” (p. 141b8–10). One must put a full stop after ordinary people. The king redoubled his faith (in the doctrine of the Bhagavat, not in the three hundred thousand arhats, etc.). In the same chapter the text says: “O most excellent one, you are able to receive the doctrine of the one who possesses the ten powers” (p. 143a18), not “The supreme Dharma, the ten powers You are qualified to possess.” Cf. Sanskrit *pratipadyatām tvayā daśabaladharaśāsanam udāreṇa* (*Divyāvadāna*, p. 425). In another verse Aśoka says: “By your supernatural powers, you look down upon me for having produced lustful desires” (p. 143b8), not “By your supernormal powers, You have lifted me from lustful desire.” The Sanskrit text differs somewhat: *ṛddhyā khalv avabhartsitāḥ paramayā śrigarvitās te vayam* (*Divyāvadāna*, p. 426). The translation of this text could have been much better if the translator had consulted the Sanskrit text and Przyluski's book.

The Summary of the Great Vehicle is a highly technical text and probably completely incomprehensible for the general reader. Even a specialist will probably not be able to understand it without having recourse to the works of Lamotte and Nagao. Keenan must have derived much help from their translations. Moreover, in the case of Paramārtha, the study of his vocabulary has been made much easier by the second volume of the *Index to the Abhidharma-kośabhāṣya* (Tokyo, 1977). In spite of these aids to translation, Keenan's work is less useful than it could have been. Already on the first page (p. 11) one is surprised to find a bodhisattva Mahāyānasupraviṇṭa (misprint for Mahāyānasupraviṣṭa). Keenan must have found this in Aramaki's reconstruction of the Sanskrit text in Nagao's translation. However, if he had consulted

the translations by Lamotte and Nagao, he would have seen that Mahāyāna-supraviṣṭa is not a proper noun. Nagao translates: "a bodhisattva who has obtained deep understanding in Mahāyāna," Lamotte "*le Bodhisattva nommé Spécialiste du Grand Véhicule*." Moreover, Keenan has not seen that both translations and Sanskrit *Mahāyānasupraviṣṭa* are based upon the Tibetan text and Hsüan-tsang's translation but that Paramārtha has a slightly different translation as pointed out by Lamotte (p. 1, n. 1): "*le Bodhisattva Mahāsattva spécialiste dans les textes (pada) et la teneur (artha) du Grand Véhicule*."

Both Lamotte and Nagao provide many Sanskrit equivalents which are greatly helpful. Keenan rarely adds a Sanskrit equivalent between parentheses and some of his renderings make it very difficult to understand the meaning of technical terms. For instance, on p. 18 the mind is described as "Being clouded and yet morally undefined." Lamotte has "*souillé et non-défini (nivṛta-avyākṛta)*" (p. 22). The literal meaning of *nivṛta* is "covered." Both the Chinese and Tibetan (*bsgribs*) translations render it by "covered." Lamotte's "*souillé*" is an interpretation which is justified by the fact that *nivṛta* and *kliṣṭa* (defiled) are said to be synonyms (cf. *Kośabhāṣya*, p. 275.8-9). Nagao renders *nivṛta* by "making obstruction (to satori)," a rather free interpretation which he explains in detail in note 2 (p. 106).

Sometimes Keenan has completely failed to grasp the meaning of a passage. II.34 mentions thirty-two qualities of the bodhisattva. However, Keenan, probably following Lamotte's translation, enumerates only sixteen qualities without any explanation (see Nagao's long note, pp. 431-432). This enumeration is followed in Paramārtha's translation by the following passage: "One must know that these phrases explain the above mentioned first phrase, i.e. 'their intention to benefit and gladden all beings.' One must know that with regard to the phrase 'intention to benefit and gladden' there are another sixteen phrases which explain the activities shown (in the first phrase). The sixteen activities are 1., etc." (p. 122b3-7). Keenan translates: "The above phrases have been taught [in the scriptures]. The interpretation through later [commentaries] means that 'their intention to benefit and gladden sentient beings' is elucidated through sixteen descriptions of bodhisattva practice, which are (1) etc." (p. 60, lines 3-7). One must admire Keenan's courage for having undertaken a translation of such a difficult text. However, the result is far from being satisfactory.

It is not always easy to translate Chinese Buddhist texts. In the case of Tibetan translations there are a great number of Tibetan-Sanskrit dictionaries and glossaries. Moreover, the terminology of the Tibetan translations is rather

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homogeneous with the exception of a few translations which have not been revised. There is a much greater variety of style and terminology in the Chinese translations and the number of Chinese-Sanskrit glossaries is very limited. It would be useful to have glossaries of the translations of the major translators. For some translators, there are good indexes such as for Paramārtha and Hsüan-tsang in the Chinese-Sanskrit index of the *Abhidharmaśāstra*. For Kumārajīva we have the Sanskrit-Tibetan-Chinese index of the *Lotus Sūtra* published by the Reiyukai (1985–1993). It is to be hoped that this will be followed by a Chinese-Sanskrit index. However, even a great number of indexes and glossaries will not solve all problems for the translator. The Chinese translations are often much more free than the Tibetan translations. Moreover, they are written in the classical Chinese of the first millennium of our era and although they represent a great mass of material for the study of classical Chinese in this period, sinologists have not paid much attention to them. Almost all translations of Chinese Buddhist texts have been made by specialists in Buddhism who are not always equally versed in classical Chinese. Scholars such as Paul Demiéville who was at the same time an eminent sinologist and a specialist in Buddhism are extremely rare. It would therefore certainly be advisable for translators to ask the help of sinologists.

Translations of the texts of the Chinese Tripiṭaka are extremely welcome because they make available to the Western reader many interesting and important texts. It would be in the interest of this worthwhile enterprise that the translations are as good and as useful as possible. One has the impression that the translations published so far have not been sufficiently checked by competent scholars who could easily have picked up the mistakes and wrong translations listed above. It is to be hoped that the translation committee will seriously reconsider the guidelines for future translations which, one hopes, will include fuller introductions and the necessary notes. Moreover, each translation ought to be read carefully by two or three competent scholars before being sent to press. A few minor points are the following. There is no uniformity in the transliteration of Chinese. One finds both the *pinyin* and the Wade-Giles transliterations. It ought to be easy to decide upon one or the other system. No information is given on the translators. A few lines would be welcome. In the hope that some account will be taken of these critical remarks which are meant to be a positive contribution to the translation of the Chinese Tripiṭaka we are very much looking forward to the future volumes in this series.

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