BOOK REVIEWS

THE SŪTRA OF CONTEMPLATION ON THE BUDDHA OF IMMEASURABLE LIFE AS EXPOUNDED BY ŚĀKYAMUNI BUDDHA. Edited with an introduction by Yamada Meiji. Translated by the Ryūkoku University Translation Center. Kyoto: Ryūkoku University, 1984; pp. *xl* + 169, with notes, bibliography, and indexes.

The *Fo-shuo kuan wu-liang shou-fo ching* 佛說觀無量壽佛經 (J. *Bussetsu kanmuryōjubutsu kyō*, Taishō 365; hereafter abbreviated as KMK) has had tremendous religious significance throughout Chinese Buddhism since its translation between 424 and 442, not only as a meditation text, but probably even more significantly as the locus classicus for the practice of chanting the name of Amitābha Buddha as a means of achieving rebirth in his Pure Land. Despite its initial listing in Seng-yu's catalogue among the "miscellaneous sutras by anonymous translators" and references in Ming-ts'uan's *Ta chou mu lu* and Chih-sheng's *K'ai-yuan lu* of a separate translation from the same period by Dharmamitra (356-442), scholars have generally accepted the tradition of a single translation by the monk Kālayaśas from the "western regions."

Nonetheless, despite the assurances of scholars such as Julian Pas that "the fact that the text was translated shows it was not originally written in Chinese,"[1] debate rages to this day about its true place of origin. Coincidentally, the first discussions of its possible non-Indian authorship both came in 1953, when Kasugai Shinya argued for its Central Asian origins,[2] and Tsukinowa Kenryū wrote that it was created in China as a polemic against Taoism.[3]

The most persuasive arguments to date for its Indian origin come from Hirakawa Akira,[4] centering on the term *yeh-ch'u* 業處, or *karma-sthāna*,

[1] Julian Pas, "The *Kuan-wu-liang-shou Fo-ching:* Its Origin and Literary Criticism," in *Buddhist Thought and Asian Civilization*, ed. Leslie Kawamura and Keith Scott, 1977.

[2] Kasugai Shinya, "Kanmuryōjukyō ni okeru shomondai," in *Bukkyō bunka kenkyū*, No. 3, 1953.

[3] Tsukinowa Kenryū, "Butten no shushi," in Bungaku, Tetsugaku, Shigaku-kai rengō henshū (ed.), *Kenkyū ronbunshōroku-shi* 3, p. 90 ff. Reprinted in his *Butten no hihanteki kenkyū* (Kyotō: Hyakka-en, 1971).

which appears in a crucial moment in the narrative when Queen Vaidehī prostrates herself before Śākyamuni and says, "All I desire, radiant Buddha, is that you teach me contemplation of the pure *karma-sthānas.*" In the *Visuddhi-magga* there are seven kinds of *kamma-ṭṭhānas*, totalling 40 different meditation practices, and in the *Vimutti-magga*, translated into Chinese from Pali during the Liang dynasty (502-557) under the title *Chieh-t'uo tao-lun* 解脫道論, 38 *kamma-ṭṭhānas* are mentioned, though the translation in this case is instead *hsing ch'u* 行處.[5] Briefly stated, Hirakawa argues that the *Vimutti-magga* translation containing the concept of *kamma-ṭṭhāna* proves the possibility of what may or may not be only a South Indian doctrine finding its way into the corpus of translated Buddhist materials in China, yet its appearance roughly one hundred years after the KMK precludes any borrowing by the latter in China. However, not only is this term yet to be found in any North Indian Abhidharma materials, there is also no enumeration of any such practices in the KMK as seen in the Pali texts.[6]

On the Chinese side, Hayashima Kyōshō has argued that the practices of Buddha-contemplation, image contemplation, and *aśubha-bhāvanā* 不淨觀 mentioned in the *Ch'an pi yao-fa ching* 禪秘要法經 translated by Kumārajīva (T. 613) could have been the basis of the *karma-sthana* practices discussed in the KMK.[7]

Fujita Kōtatsu is one of the leading exponents of the theory that the text is of Central Asian origin.[8] He feels the KMK must be linked with the five other "meditation" texts all translated within fifty years of each other and all which begin their Chinese titles with the character *kuan* 觀.[9] None of these have Sanskrit or Tibetan equivalents, except T. 452 where the Tibetan translation was

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[4] Hirakawa Akira, "Kangyō no seiritsu to shōjōgosho," in Waseda Daigaku Tōyōtetsugakkai (ed.), *Tōyō no shisō to shūkyō* (June 1984); and "Jōdoshisō no seiritsu," in *Kōza Daijō Bukkyō* 5, 1985.

[5] *Hsing ch'u* is rendered as *karma-sthāna* by P. V. Bapat in *Vimuttimagga and Visuddhimagga, A Comparative Study* (Poona, 1939), p. 38.

[6] However, since Wogihara's *Bonwa-daijiten* does list the term as occurring in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā* and the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, a check of the early translations of the *Aṣṭa* by Dharmapriya (T. 226), Lokakṣema (T. 224) and Chih-ch'ien (T. 225) as well as Gunavarman's translation of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* for the appearance of this term must still be made. Gunavarman's work is particularly noteworthy here because it was made at essentially the same time and place as both the KMK and the southern compilation of the *Mahāparinirvāna-sūtra*, whose influence on the KMK has already been established.

[7] Hayashima Kyōshō, "Jōdokyō no shōjōgosho-kan ni tsuite," in *Higata-hakase koki kinen ronbunshū*, 1964, p. 131 ff.

[8] Fujita Kōtatsu, *Genshi jōdo shisō no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1970), p. 116 ff.

[9] Taishō numbers 277, 409, 452, 643, 1161, and 365 (KMK).

apparently made from the Chinese. Moreover, T. 452 states in its colophon that it was compiled in Turfan. Fujita feels all six betray a Gandhāran influence, and since we cannot identify an appropriate Sanskrit antecedent for the word *kuan* in each of the titles, they reflect practices originating in Central Asia rather than India. All the translators of these texts came from Central Asia, with the exception of Buddhabhadra who came to China by the southern sea route, but was said to have studied in Central Asia. Fujita claims there is no evidence that the appearance of the term *yeh-ch'u* in the KMK is in fact representative of such practices as are found only in Pali materials.[10] To further his thesis of the KMK's Central Asian origin, Fujita has recently promised to publish this March Khotanese materials which contain discussions similar to those of the KMK, but this publication has apparently been delayed.[11] The translators of our text have denied (p. 17, n. 4) the identification of *yeh-ch'u* with the Pali *kamma-ṭṭhāna*. This point is not discussed in the introduction, but instead we are given there an outline of Fujita's arguments under the implicit assumption of the text's non-Indian origin.

The KMK borrows frequently from the translations of such texts as the *Wu-liang shou ching* (T. 360) and the *Kuan fo san-mei hai ching* (T. 643). And its well-known delineation of the nine types of beings who can be reborn in the Pure Land seems to echo a pre-existing Chinese social and bureaucratic classification.[12] However, a look at the one other translation attributed to Kālayaśas (T. 1161) reveals the same type of borrowing, so this may reflect the attitude and abilities of the translator as much as the language or authorship of his original text. Here, Kālayaśas' biography is relevant as it tells us he verbally translated these two texts to a Chinese monk, Seng-han 僧含, who then set them down in Chinese. Furthermore, the influence of sutras upon each other is quite common in Indian Buddhism (Hirakawa gives examples from the Vinaya tradition), and the reappearance of phrases from earlier translations is not at all uncommon in China, even for the self-proclaimed reformer Hsuan-tsang (e.g., Kośa translation).

However, as the Introduction to this translation has skillfully pointed out, there appears to be glaring inconsistencies within the translation styles of the KMK itself. In an earlier paper, Yamada Meiji, director of the present translation, concluded this to be the result of the KMK being a compilation of three separate texts with an epilogue added,[13] for we have Devadatta's name

[10] Fujita Kōtatsu, *Kōza Daijō Bukkyō* 5, p. 76.

[11] Fujita's *Kanmuryōjukyō kōkyū* (Kyoto: Higashi Honganji Shuppanbu, 1985), was not available when this review was written. In it Fujita harshly criticizes Hirakawa's theory.

[12] Nogami Shunjō, *Kanmuryōjukyō shikō* (Kyoto: Higashi Honganji Shuppanbu, 1973); also included in his *Chūgoku jōdokyōshiron* (1981).

written in two different ways and an apparent pattern in the shift from the usage of the translation of Amitāyus to the transliteration "A-mi-t'o." It is clear that the text is distinguishing these two forms when, after taking refuge in the Buddha of Infinite Life 無量壽佛, one is urged to chant the name of "A-mi-t'o-fo" (p. 108). Yamada further argues that the first 13 of the 16 meditations are impractical because of the scale of what is supposed to be envisaged, and in fact are only included to better support the "conclusion" of the narrative which is the practice of chanting explained in the last three contemplations. However, reading in the Introduction some of the generalizations given in support of this theory, such as those on page xxxi which say that the Buddhism that migrated from India to the northwest "possessed relatively little philosophical content" or that the life style of Central Asians was such that "any religious practice could not be complex in such a location," one is left with, if anything, more doubt about the conclusions of the Introduction. In fact, it is very common in Pure Land texts to read of dimensions beyond one's imagination, for a Buddha 60 yojanas in size (as in the *Kuan-fo sanmei hai ching*) is still an object of contemplation reaching some 500 miles high. It is hard to accept the figures found in similar texts as "perceivable" (p. xxvii) in comparison to those found in the KMK. The KMK discussion of "kotis of nayutas of Gangā river sands" clearly is not intended to be taken literally, but rather signifies a metaphor for the infinite scope of this Buddha. The difference in the sizes of Amitāyus, Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta probably reflect their significance in the Sukhāvatīvyūha myth (where we would expect the Buddha to be vastly bigger than his assistants), and the size of their cult (e.g., Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta are the same physical size, but the former's light extends much further).

This particular translation is a publication of the Ryūkoku University Translation Center, and it follows their previous format of providing the original Chinese text plus a romanized Japanese classical reading (*kaki-kudashi*) on the page facing the translation. One is grateful to have the original text nearby for reference, but the inclusion of a Japanese text in romanization speaks only to a special audience. Native Japanese speakers find their language extremely difficult to read when romanized, and as far as foreign students of the Japanese language are concerned, current language-learning theory favors eliminating the use of romanization as quickly as possible in second language acquisition. Furthermore, the manner of romanization employed here is nonstandard in that verbal stems are separated from their suffixes, producing clumsy forms like *shi te* and *se zaru ya*. But regardless of

[13] Yamada Meiji, "Kangyō-kō: Muryōjubutsu to Amidabutsu," *Ryukoku Daigaku Ronshu*, No. 408 (1976), p. 76 ff.

how one feels about romanized Japanese, since the "kambun" style of reading classical Chinese is still the dominant mode of study in Japan today, this *kaki-kudashi* is still a real educational tool. Moreover, descendants of Japanese immigrants abroad involved with Buddhist organizations are still largely dependent on the Japanese language for their religious vocabulary, though few have had the time necessary for sufficient study to achieve literacy in modern Japanese, much less the classical form of kambun. For this group the romanized text will prove meaningful. However, the authors' decision to romanize all Chinese words except proper names into Japanese only, despite its justification on page x, is inconvenient for the general Buddhist audience, particularly when known Sanskrit titles are replaced by Japanese renderings of their Chinese translations, e.g., on page 118 the *Śūraṅgamasamādhi sūtra* is referred to only as the *Shuryōgon-zammai-kyō*. There are also some mistakes in their Wade-Giles renderings of Chinese when given: for example, "Tuen-huang" for Tun-huang, and "Huei-yuan" for Hui-yuan; Tao-ch'o is romanized both in this form as well as "Tao-ch'uo" (p. xxxiii).

The translation itself is generally excellent throughout and is clearly the result of a great deal of thoughtful care. The previous translation by J. Takakusu in the Sacred Books of the East has been the most well read up until this publication, but is burdened with an archaic style ("thou shouldst") and a penchant for vocatives ("O Vaidehī") not found in the original. These may have sounded serenely classical in 1894, but are little more than an anachronistic nuisance today. We applaud the inclusion of a list of variant characters found in the Korean edition as well as the Chinese character index to important terms.

But although the English of this new translation is quite well written, there are a number of questions about format, punctuation and choice of words. The Introduction and footnotes to the translation especially need more editing. First of all, the use of italics is inconsistent. For example, on page 20, "Amidabutsu" is italicized but not "Amida." Semicolons often appear where mere commas would be more appropriate (e.g., p. xix). Furthermore, there is a disturbing use of the lower case letters "c." and "j." to tell the reader the following word is in Chinese or Japanese, which generally results in Chinese characters in the former case and their romanized Japanese pronunciation in the latter. In some instances we are given Chinese characters without such a marker, as when they appear after the topic titles at the beginning of many of the footnotes. Sanskrit words are also denoted by "skt."—why not simply "s."?—but this, too, is not consistent (e.g., p. 66, n. 3); usually they are italicized but again not in all cases. These inconsistencies are well illustrated in the notes to pages 10 and 11. Occasionally even English words are prefaced by "eng." (cf. p. 61, n. 3 where this format is not consistent even within the note).

Unless there is a need to distinguish close forms such as Sanskrit and Prakrit, these indicators are in fact unnecessary; certainly there is no need to inform the reader that Chinese characters are Chinese. Furthermore, on pages xxxiii ff., such significant personages as T'an-luan, Tao-ch'o and Shan-tao are discussed without including the characters for their names or their dates (although their dates are included in a footnote listing KMK commentators). "Rōgen" should be read "Ryōgen" (p. xxxv). Hōnen and Shinran fare even worse than their Chinese predecessors, for they have neither their Chinese characters nor their dates given anywhere in the book, although Hōnen's disciple Shōkū merits both (p. xxxvi). In the Bibliography, moreover, studies on Hōnen and Shinran are competely absent, a major omission for the audience of this text. One can only ask why the authors felt the Chiang-hsi hsing region where Lu-shan is located should be given in characters but not the name of the mountain itself (p. xxxii). When the KMK text is quoted in the Introduction, the exact location of the passage is generally not cited, yet on one page we find a new format of citations prefaced enigmatically by "s." (e.g., p. xxii). On page xx, the attempt to interpolate the phonetic evolution from Sanskrit to Chinese of the names Amitābha and Amitāyus is admirable, but fails to reflect the actual complexity of this problem. Although the works of Bailey and Brough are mentioned, the only intermediary language offered here is Gāndhārī and in the conjectured phonetic transformations given, two forms are posited without any linguistic identification or explanation between Sanskrit and Chinese.

On page 120, note 4, where the five stages of making ghee from milk are given, the last and most exalted phase, *maṇḍa* or *sarpirmaṇḍa*, is given as "the scum of the melted butter". Indeed these five are difficult to translate, but surely this last stage should not be called "scum" which is impurities that rise to the surface of a liquid, and figuratively implies something worthless. The Sanskrit word for social class is *varna*, not *varuna*, and the fourth class is called *śūdra*, not *sūdra*. The text used in this edition is from the Korean Canon (K II), but for some reason in the final colophon, the phrase *Kao-li kuo ta-tsang*, though romanized in the Japanese, is not translated into English. The inclusion of Taishō footnotes is greatly appreciated, but the recently published edition of the Fan-shan carving from the T'ang dynasty, predating the Korean text by at least three centuries, has not been referred to.[14] The note explaining the measure unit *yojana* which appears on page 56 should be placed instead on page 35, where the term first appears. In the Introduction, Chart 3 (p. xxv) is explained as a comparison of the exaggerated numbers found in both the KMK and the *Kuan-fo sanmei hai ching*, but there is in fact no information

[14] Bukkyō Daigaku (ed.), *Zendō kyōgaku no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Tōyō Bunka, 1980).

from the latter text to be found. The English translation of the seven jewels should have colons instead of semicolons after the Chinese characters (p. 123). On page 136, note 22, there should be a colon after "Petavatthu (PTS. p. 8)." On page 138, note 24, the eighth precept needs the phrase "in the" inserted between "eating" and "afternoon." On page 139, the Pali form of the three insights should be *tevijjā* (feminine).

However, these are small oversights when compared with the generally excellent level of work that went into this volume. It will undoubtedly advance Pure Land Buddhist studies internationally, and is sure to become the standard translation of the *Kuan wu-liang shou ching*.

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ECHOES FROM THE BOTTOMLESS WELL. By Frederick Franck. New York: Vintage House, 1985, pp. 145.

There are two kinds of book of which reviews seem superfluous: obviously inferior ones, and those of such distinction that one feels almost impertinent to recommend them. I feel that Frederick Franck's latest *Echoes from the Bottomless Well* belongs in the latter category. How amazing that it got published at all, this highly unconventional work that was drawn and written without any preconceived idea, least of all with publication in mind! It was simply born. It just occurred. Therefore even such epithets as "good" or even "excellent" hardly fit it. It is, however, such an exceptional phenomenon that a brief discussion of it is more than justified.

What is so extraordinary about it? That these 144 brush drawings, each one combined with a pithy text, are doubtlessly the spontaneous manifestation of a radical breakthrough in its creator's inner process. The texts are mostly Zen sayings of Hui-neng, Dōgen, Ryōkan and other masters, brief Gospel words, quotations from Eckhart, Angelius Silesius and, one suspects, of Franck himself. One can't help feeling that the artist-writer, in the 48 hours in which this uninterrupted stream of image and word precipitated itself onto the paper, was in the grip of, was perhaps the instrument of what one might call "the Great Creativity," for the well from which these image-word twins loomed up is bottomless, inexhaustible indeed.

When at the end of this 48 hour-long ordeal of implosion he found that his paper supply had run out, his task fulfilled, and he was quite understandably utterly depleted. I am reminded of Rinzai who, after having pointed at "the True Man without rank in this mass of red flesh" shouted his "Speak!