

BOOK REVIEWS

THE HOLY TEACHING OF VIMALAKIRTI: A Mahāyāna Scripture. Translated by Robert A. F. Thurman. The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976, x+166 pp.

THE TEACHING OF VIMALAKIRTI (Vimalakīrtinirdeśa). From the French translation with Introduction and Notes, *L'Enseignement de Vimalakīrti*, by Étienne Lamotte. Rendered into English by Sara Boin. London: The Pali Text Society, 1976, cxvi+335 pp.

Two English translations of the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* (hereafter Vkn) have recently appeared almost simultaneously. The Vkn does not survive in its original Sanskrit, except for some fragmentary quotations in other treatises such as the *Sūtrasamuccaya*, and is found extant only in its one Tibetan and three Chinese versions. R. A. F. Thurman has translated the Tibetan version into English for the first time, while the Lamotte French translation, published in 1962,¹ has been rendered into English by Sara Boin.

In his Introduction, various features of the Vkn are clarified by Thurman. Of interest is his comparison of the miraculous events related in the Vkn with later Tantric practices as evidenced in the *Guhyasamāja*.² The Notes and Glossaries appended at the end of the book both seem intended for use by the general reader. The three glossaries are for Sanskrit, Numerical Categories, and Technical Terms. The translation on the whole is correct and reliable. The author seems to have taken pains to study minutely the Lamotte French translation, and references are often made to the interpretation found in Lamotte's notes.

The Lamotte French translation is a work of highly disciplined scholarship. In his Introduction, various topics are taken up and discussed extensively:

¹ See review by Sakurabe Hajime in *EB* v-1 (May 1972).

² However, I cannot agree with his suggestion that Tantrism forms the background upon which the Vkn is written. While the Tantric concept is of ancient origin, it is only around the seventh century that Tantrism is actually formulated. It thus borrowed its philosophical ideas, paradoxical and mystical expressions wholly from Mahāyāna texts, such as the Vkn, and not vice versa.

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the translations of the *Vkn*, its titles, its philosophy, its sources, its date, and so on. Following the translation, there are eight subjects chosen for further detailed discussion: the Buddhakṣetra, Cittotpāda, Nairātmya, Morality, the Illness of the Buddha, Prajñā and Bodhi, Gotra, and the Sacred Meal. An Index and a Synopsis of Formulae and Stock Phrases have been appended at the end.

While the Lamotte French translation is based principally on the Tibetan version, the three Chinese versions, especially that of Hsüan-tsang, have invariably been consulted as well. When the Chinese differs from the Tibetan, the reading of the former is given in smaller type either in the text or in the footnotes. If the difference is remarkable, both the Tibetan and Chinese versions are printed side by side for the purpose of comparison. The Lamotte French translation is thus one of true scholarly character, its pages filled with invaluable information.

The Lamotte version has been totally rendered into English, with the exception of Appendice II, "Vimalakīrti en Chine" by P. Demieville that has been omitted in the English version. The Boin adaption is very faithful to the French original, even to the identical numbering of its footnotes with those of the original. The English version moreover might possibly be said to be superior to the French original in that a Foreword newly-written by Lamotte himself has been added, and certain portions, particularly in the footnotes, have been updated by the addition of more recent materials.

The Thurman and Lamotte editions are both welcomed additions, the former at points providing a translation improved over that of Lamotte's. However, neither one is entirely free from error or dubious points. I would like to take the liberty of discussing here some of these points.

Lamotte, III.16, p. 55.16, reads, "the one-way path (*ekayāna mārgaḥ*)," for which the Tibetan phrase "*bgrod paḥi lam*" usually represents "*ekāyana-mārga*", not "*ekāyana*", which is the notion celebrated in the *Saddharmapūṇḍarīka*. Thurman, p. 27.19, gives this as "the path of the single way." The *ekāyana-mārga* most probably alludes to the universal path common to and practiced by all three vehicles, hence the way of "the non-existence of self" or *anātman*, as interpreted by K'uei-chi.

Lamotte, V.20, p. 151.17-22, reads: "The power of creating difficulties for Bodhisattvas does not exist in ordinary people. No, this is not to be found (*anavakāśo 'yam*)." Lamotte seems to understand *anavakāśa* in the latter sentence to mean "having no opportunity," or "there is no possibility." The corresponding Tibetan phrase is "*go skabs ma phye bar*," which Thurman, p. 55.9-10, translates to be "unless they are granted the opportunity," or "without being freely given the chance." In the *Laṅkāvatāra*, p. 15.16, the term "*kyāvakāśa*" corresponds to the Tibetan *go skabs phye bar*, and, according to Chinese translations, means "getting (the Buddha's) permission." (See also *Laṅkāvatāra*, pp.

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14.18, 16.9, and *Mahdyānarāṭṭralaṅkāra*, XII.12). Thurman himself, four lines later, translates the same word as "without special allowance." I think the aforesaid sentence might therefore be adequately rendered: "The power of creating difficulties for Bodhisattvas without getting (their) permission does not exist in ordinary people."

Lamotte, v.20, p. 151.34-152.1, reads: "... if attacked (*lāḍita*) by a dragon-elephant, an ass is unable to resist it." This rendering is likely if we follow the Chinese versions, such as Kumārajīva's which reads: 譬如龍象蹴踏非驢所堪. But the Tibetan text reads "*dper na bal glan glan po che la brdag pa ni bon bus bzod par mi nus te,*" which may be translated: "An ass is not capable of making an attack on a dragon-elephant." This can be explained to mean that it is not an ass, but rather someone with no less the strength of a dragon-elephant, who can attack a dragon-elephant. Likewise, the one who can cause difficulties for a Bodhisattva must himself be a Bodhisattva. Thurman, p. 55.16, translates this section as, "... a donkey could not muster an attack on a wild elephant," which may be a reading preferable to that of Lamotte's.

Lamotte, VII.6, p. 186, mentions stanza 38,

*upasthānagurūn satvān paśyantīha viśāraddh,
caśā bhavanti dāsā ośa śigyaśoam upayānti ca.*

which he translates: "Here below, fearlessly they see the masters to be served; they make themselves their slaves or servants, and become their disciples." *Guru* is here understood as "master." Thurman translates in a similar fashion: "Here in the world, they fearlessly behold those who are masters to be served. . . ." However, the Tibetan version reads "*rim gro lhar byed sems can rnam/sñngs pa med pas ḥdir mthoñ na.*" I think the *guru* or *lhar byed* means "to give importance to." Thus the first half of the stanza might be read: "When those who have no fear (*viśārada*, i.e., Bodhisattvas) encounter sentient beings who give importance to (or are covetous of) being served, they (the Bodhisattvas) make themselves their slaves. . . ." It is a matter of course for Bodhisattvas to serve their masters and to become their disciples; this is not what the stanza is seeking to proclaim. Instead, in this stanza, the statement it seeks to make is that a Bodhisattva will serve even a lowly being who is covetous of being served by others, in spite of the fact he is one unworthy of such an honor.

Lamotte, IX.16, p. 215, reads, "The greatness of Śākyamuni is established (*sthāpita*)," and Thurman, p. 82, second to the last paragraph, reads, "Thus is established the greatness of the Buddha Śākyamuni!" I believe, however, that *b'zag ste* in Tibetan is *sthāpayitva* in Sanskrit, which means "putting aside." This being the case, the text, "*ḥdi ltar bcom ldan ḥdas śākya thub pa soñis rgyas kyī che ba b'zag ste/ñam ciñ dbul ba sems can dmu rgod rnam/sñngs ḥdul ba ni ño mñshar to,*" must then be rendered: "It is marvelous that the Bhagavān Śākyamuni, putting aside his greatness as a Buddha, converts the lowly, the poor and the unruly beings."

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Hsüan-tsang's "he hides his innumerable noble virtues" is none other than a different rendering of *sthāpayitvā*.

NAOAO GADJIN

PURE LAND BUDDHIST PAINTING By Jōji Okazaki. Translated and adapted by Elizabeth ten Grotenhuis. Tokyo, Kodansha, 1977. 201 pp. with 52 color plates, 166 monochrome illustrations, glossary, bibliography, and index.

As the first work in English, possibly in any European language, on the iconography of the Pure Land schools, Jōji Okazaki's book assumes a special importance for Western scholars and laymen alike. It was originally published in Japanese in the monthly series *Nihon no bijutsu* ("Arts of Japan") inaugurated by the Shibundo Publishing Company in 1966. This invaluable periodical, which was undertaken with the cooperation and editorial supervision of the Agency for Cultural Affairs and of the three National Museums of Kyoto, Nara, and Tokyo, now totals over 130 issues. Each is written in language easily comprehensible to laymen by a leading Japanese scholar in the field and presents a detailed study of a single aspect of the Japanese arts. Under the general title of "The Japanese Arts Library," this series is now being made available to an English-reading audience in translations done under the editorial supervision of John Rosenfeld of Harvard University.

Realizing the paucity of authentic information regarding the Pure Land tradition available in the West, the translators have wisely augmented their book with a special introduction to this unjustly neglected aspect of Buddhism, giving information unnecessary to Japanese readers. The section in the original Japanese on the religious portraiture of the seven Pure Land patriarchs and some of their later followers has also been incorporated into this introduction written for the English edition by Elizabeth ten Grotenhuis.

The body of this book is naturally devoted to a detailed description of the iconography of Pure Land paintings in Japan, and in its eight chapters covers its main forms, such as "*Hensō*: Visions of Paradise" (Chapter 1), Chinese as well as Japanese; "Pure Land Mandalas" (Chapter 2) in its three main types; and "*Raigō*: the Descent of Amida" (Chapter 4), this most important form in which is depicted Amida with his retinue of Bodhisattvas. Variations of these themes are taken up in the remaining chapters. A useful Glossary, Bibliography, and Index are appended.

Readers already interested in Pure Land Buddhist painting will find this work full of carefully researched information and scholarship, although the