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(Society for the Promotion of Buddhism)

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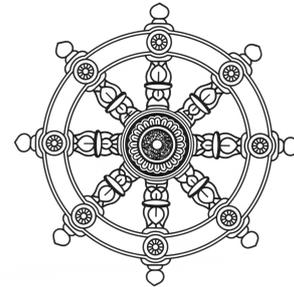


Table of Contents

Publishing Schedule	
Forthcoming titles	1
Review:	
<i>Shingon Texts</i>	
Translated by Rolf W. Giebel & Dale A. Todaro	
NOGUCHI Keiya	2-4
Report:	
Recent Activities at the French Institute of Eastern Studies (<i>École Française d'Extrême-Orient</i>)	
Frédéric Girard	4-6
Report:	
A Report on the Annual Meeting of the Nihon (Japan) Buddhist Research Association (日本佛教學會)	
Kenneth K. Tanaka	6-7
Announcement:	
Committee Members	8

Publishing Schedule

Forthcoming titles:

1. THE COLLECTION FOR THE PROPAGATION AND CLARIFICATION OF BUDDHISM

Volumes 1 and 2

(弘明集 *Gumyōshū*, Taisho 2102)

Translated by Harumi Hirano Ziegler

2. DISCOURSE TO PRINCE CANDRAPRABHA

(月燈三昧經 *Gattōzanmaikyō*, Taisho 639)

Translated by MURAKAMI Shinkan

3. THE ALL PLEASING: A COMMENTARY ON THE RULES OF DISCIPLINE

(善見律毘婆沙 *Zenkenritsubibasha*, Taisho 1462)

Translated by MORI Sodō and ENDŌ Toshiichi

4. TENDAI LOTUS SCRIPTURES

(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

5. EXPOSITORY COMMENTARY ON THE VIMALAKĪRTI SUTRA

(維摩經義疏 *Yuimakyō-gisho*, Taisho 2186)

Translated by Jamie Hubbard

Review:

Shingon Texts

Translated by Rolf W. Giebel & Dale A. Todaro
(BDK English Tripiṭaka Series, published in 2004)

NOGUCHI Keiya
Taisho University

Japanese *Mikkyō*, especially *Shingon* Buddhism, seems less well known outside Japan, even though there are many followers in Japan. Kūkai (774–835, a.k.a. Kōbō Daishi) transmitted the orthodox tradition of *Mikkyō* from China to Japan in the beginning of Heian period, i.e. the beginning of the 9th century C.E. and founded a Buddhist School called *Shingonshū* on the basis of *Mikkyō* doctrine. He has had a great influence not only on Japanese Buddhism but also on Japanese culture in general and is still nowadays one of the most popular Buddhist priests in Japan. However, it seems that his importance and popularity have not yet been generally recognized outside Japan, especially in Europe and America.

The low interest in Kūkai and *Shingon* Buddhism in Western countries is obviously reflected in the dearth of academic achievements in Western languages. TOGANO Shōzui, who introduced the state of overseas studies of *Mikkyō*, maintained that there were only a few overseas studies about *Mikkyō* in Japan, i.e. Buddhist Tantrism in the Far East, worthy of consultation¹). He mentioned Yoshito Hakeda's *Kūkai: Major Works* (Columbia University Press, New York 1972)²) as the only reliable resource among Western language studies on the life, idea, and works of Kūkai. Even after more than thirty years from TOGANO's article, the numbers of academic achievements about *Shingon* Buddhism in Western languages are still limited. Only two books by Hendrik van der Veere about *Shingon* priest Kakuban (1095–1143, a.k.a. Kōgyō Daishi) of the late Heian period deserve attention so far³).

The main reason for the few academic achievements about *Shingon* Buddhism probably has to do with the difficulties of translating Kūkai's works into Western languages⁴). All Kūkai's works are written in classical Chinese and include many citations from the various sources. Further, his prose style is highly literate, and his poetry freely adopts rhetoric of classical Chinese. In order to understand Kūkai's works, readers are required to have not only knowledge of Buddhism but also a broad understanding of Chinese literature. It is to be noted, furthermore, that there are several significant technical terms especially based upon Kūkai's ideas in *Shingon* Buddhism. In order to elucidate the technical terms as such, one should not only read the texts carefully but also receive secret teachings and training orally from his/her masters concerning the system of practical rituals as an initiated *Shingon* priest. Because of this procedure, *Shingon* schools are called *Mikkyō* (Secret Teaching) in Japan and apparently less studied by overseas scholars compared to other Japanese Buddhist schools, e.g. Zen, Jōdo, etc.

Having made every endeavor to overcome the difficulties mentioned above, the translators

present an admirable work contained in *Shingon Texts*. The English translation of four main works of Kūkai and two major works of Kakuban will undoubtedly play an important role in introducing the philosophy of *Shingon* Buddhism outside Japan. In this brief review, I would like to comment on the words “Mikkyō” and “sokushinjōbutsu,” the most basic and representative key terms for *Shingon* Buddhism.

First of all, the word “Mikkyō” literally means “Secret Teaching.” Since the publication of Benoytosh Bhattacharya’s *An Introduction to Buddhist Esoterism* in 1932, the word “Buddhist Esoterism” or “Esoteric Buddhism” has become a standard rendering of “Mikkyō” and is employed in *Shingon texts* as well. However, these renderings are originally intended to express the idea in historical and religious contexts of Indian Buddhism. I think that there is room to carefully examine whether “Esoteric Buddhism” is the most proper rendering in the Japanese context. Incidentally, “Tantric Buddhism” or “Buddhist Tantrism” has been used to indicate Buddhist movements in India. However, the word “Tantrism” has the connotation of a religious aspect of Hinduism, and thereby I think that the employment of this word should be restricted within traditional Indian cultural context. In this sense, “Tantric Buddhism” is not perfectly fit for “Mikkyō” in the context of Japanese *Shingon* Buddhism.

From the viewpoint of *Shingon* Buddhism, on the other hand, the word “Secret Buddhism” as a simple rendering of “Mikkyō” is not appropriate at all, for it does not express Kūkai’s fundamental idea. Kūkai explains at the end of his *Benkenmitsunikyōron (On the Differences between the Exoteric and Esoteric Teachings)*, “Thus [the meanings of] the term “secret” are multilayered and innumerable. What is called “secret” here is the Dharma body’s own ultimate and uttermost sphere [of being], and it is to this that the esoteric treasury corresponds.”⁵⁾ What Kūkai intended to express by “Mikkyō” includes not only “secret” or “hidden” but also the teaching of the Dharma body’s own ultimate and uttermost sphere.

In order for *Shingon* Buddhism to be better known among the English-speaking readership, it will be essential to carefully consider the new English renderings of “Mikkyō” and “Shingon-shū.”

Second, “sokushinjōbutsu” is not only the main theme of Kūkai’s *Sokushinjōbutsugi (The Meaning of Becoming a Buddha in This Very Body)* but also the ultimate religious goal of *Shingon* Buddhism. According to the doctrine of the Mahayana Buddhism, one is required to perform practices of enormously long duration called “in three eons” in order to become a Buddha. Within Indian texts belonging to Esoteric Buddhism, moreover, we find parallel phrases to “sokushinjōbutsu.” For instance, the *Amoghapāśa-kalparāja* reads as follows: *santīhaiva janmani buddhātmabhāvo ve[di]tavyaḥ* (Ms.79b3. “It is to be known that one can have a body of the Buddha in this very lifetime.”) This expression implies a temporal shortcut. “Sokushinjōbutsu” expounded by Kūkai, however, is not a temporal shortcut but has a characteristic of an ontological basis on which one can transform a normal body into a Buddha. According to Kūkai’s interpretation, “sokushinjōbutsu” is realized not “in this very lifetime” but “in this very body,” as is translated by Mr. Giebel properly. In *The Meaning of Becoming a Buddha in This Very Body*, moreover, he translated ingeniously the

Sokushinjōbutsuju, the initial eight line verses expressing Kūkai’s subtle and significant idea by freely using rhetoric⁶.

Concerning the rendering of “jōbutsu” in “sokushinjōbutsu,” however, I wonder whether “becoming a Buddha” is the proper rendering. The parallel phrases in the Indian texts are translated as, “to realize the perfect Enlightenment (*samyaksambodhi*),” “to attain Buddhahood (*buddhatva*),” “to attain to perfection (*siddhi*),” etc⁷. In comparison to these usages, there might be room to further investigate the kind of renderings that is more appropriate to Kūkai’s philosophical theory.

Studies of Tantrism in India and Tibet have in recent years made great progress centered in Europe. It is my sincere wish that *Shingon texts* would also become the basis for enhanced level of research on Japanese *Mikkyō* outside Japan.

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- 1) TOGANOO Shōzui, “Gaikokujin no mikkyōkenkyū (*Studies of Mikkyō by Foreigners),” in *Gendai mikkyō kōza* (**Modern Lectures of Mikkyō*) vol. 8, Daitō Shuppansha, Tokyo 1976, p.69.
 - 2) Rolf W. Giebel, a translator of Kūkai’s works in *Shingon Texts*, does not evaluate Hakeda’s abridged English translations from academic point of views. See R. Giebel, “Translator’s Comments: Shingon Texts, Reflection on Translating Kūkai,” *Mahāpīṭaka Newsletter New Series* no. 10, pp.5-6.
 - 3) Hendrik van der Veere, *Kakuban Shōnin: the life and works of Kōgyō Daishi*, Nombro, Tokyo 1998.; *A Study into the Thought of Kōgyō Daishi Kakuban: with a Translation of his Gorin Kuji Myō Himiushaku*, Japonica Neerlandica: monographs of the Netherlands Association for Japanese Studies vol. 7, Hotei Pub., Leiden 2000.
 - 4) See also Rolf W. Giebel, *ibid.*
 - 5) *Shingon Texts*, p.61.
 - 6) *Shingon Texts*, pp.67-68.
 - 7) See NOGUCHI Keiya, “Expression to Sokushin-Jōbutsu (to attain perfect enlightenment in one’s present body) in Sanskrit Texts,” *The Comprehensive Studies of Shingi-Shingon Traditions*, Daizō Shuppan, Tokyo 2002, pp.1244-1240.

Report:

Recent Activities at the French Institute of Eastern Studies (*École Française d’Extrême-Orient*)

Frédéric Girard

Director of Researches, French Institute of Oriental Studies

The French Institute of Eastern Studies (*École Française d’Extrême-Orient*, EFEO) has a long tradition of Buddhist Studies, particularly in the philological field, with Noël Péri, Paul Mus, Paul Demiéville, and the *Hōbōgirin* project. The project was conducted after Second World War by Jacques May, André Bareau, Jacques Gernet, Hubert Durt, Antonino Forte, Anna Seidel, Robert Duquenne, Kuo Liying, Iyanaga Nobumi and myself who have spent a valuable part of their time to this enterprise.

A Mahāyāna Studies Team has been created, which was directed by Hubert Durt and myself for some years. It has been transformed into a Buddhism Studies Team centered on South-East Asia, Chinese and Japanese Buddhist studies. It has no common research themes — the former apocryphal project had some editorial completion — and is centered on individual research projects. For example, Kuo works on Tantric Chinese medieval texts, and Duquenne and Iyanaga mostly on medieval Japanese *Shintō* and Tantric associated texts. I am involved in Japanese Buddhist studies centered on philosophical doctrines, historiography with related sources as iconography, from the epoch of Shōtoku Taishi to the modern times. A special emphasis is placed on the medieval innovations by personalities such as Dōgen through his Chinese spiritual pilgrimage (the *Hōkyōki*) and his posterior works (*Shōbōgenzō*, *Eiheikōroku*), Myōe and the Esoteric teachings based on Kūkai or Kakuban, the historiographical literature of Gyōnen or Kokan Shiren, the poetries of the *Gozan bungaku* (Five Mountains literature) in connection with Confucianism, and the Buddhist post-Christian predication especially on Zen sectors represented by such people as Suzuki Shōsan, Takuan, Bankei, Sessō, and Asai Ryōi.

Within the framework of this team, and in the editorial project of thematic bilingual journal, *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie*, published by the Japanese Centers of French Institute (at Kyōto and Tōkyō), it is intended to manage a volume on the « Metaphors in Buddhism » directed by myself. I have collected studies on the subject which may be augmented by further contributions.

The researchers on this team belong to others Buddhist studies researches projects, such as the one directed by Prof. Cristina Scherrer-Schaub (University of Lausanne and EPHE). They also teach in seminaries in Japan, as Iyanaga or myself, or in France, mostly at the *École Pratique des Hautes Études* (EPHE), at the Philological and Historiographical Section, myself in a seminary titled “Philology of Buddhist Texts in Japan,” or for some others at the Science of religions Section. They participate in conferences common to the two sections, in annual series, which play an important role for Buddhist Studies, for there is no Buddhist studies Chair in France.

Last year, we were involved in conferences related to “History and Doctrines of Buddhism,” with the following subjects: Buddhist Monuments in India (M. Kapstein); Iranian Buddhism (Et. de la Vaissière), Pāli and languages of Ancient Buddhism (N. Balbir), Buddhism in Kucha and Turfan (G. Pinault), Buddhist literature in Cambodia (O. de Bernon), Buddhism in China (S. Hureau), History of Tibetan Buddhism (M. Kapstein), the link between Buddhists and bon pos (Ch. Ramble), Buddhism in Japan (J. -N. Robert), the Dasheng qixinlun (Fr. Girard), Buddhist Canons (P. Skilling), and the renovation of Vietnamese Buddhism at the beginning of the 20th Century (P. Bourdeaux).

With the scientific collaboration of fourteen scholars, I am completing a synthetic and collective work on the *Kegon* (Flower Ornament) doctrines, considered as a visual tradition, from its very origin, in its Chinese specific developments on the analysis of the mind. This is in connection with others schools as Chan in the Chinese surrounding provinces and in Qitan. A special emphasis is placed on Japanese adaptation of *Kegon* ideas, both with the Pure Land doctrines and the Esoteric interpretations through the central figure of Kūkai. Kūkai inherited *Kegon* conceptions of a

Vairocana's focused Buddhist pantheon that developed through the Chinese Empress Wu Zitian and the Japanese Emperor Shōmu and his wife Kōmyō. He proceeded to re-evaluate the Original Buddha Mahāvairocana, who is an esoteric form of the exoteric Vairocana as it appears in the *Tōji Maṇḍala* which is an extension of Tōdaiji's maṇḍalic figures.

The number of researchers and the material means of studies in France are very limited. Concerning Buddhist studies at our French Institute, however, the perspectives are rather good due to the originality of the personalities involved.

Report:

**A Report on the Annual Meeting of
the Nihon (Japan) Buddhist Research Association
(日本佛教學會)**

Kenneth K. Tanaka
Musashino University

This “venerable” association held its annual meeting on September 15 and 16 at Otani University in Kyoto. Having begun in 1928, this was its 80th meeting. The theme for this year was “What is Scripture? : the Meaning of Buddha's Teachings,” which served as the common topic for all the papers. The same topic will again serve as the conference theme next year at Hokkaido University to be held August 30 – 31, 2011.

Based on my estimate, there were close to 200 delegates mostly from the 31 member Buddhist colleges. The membership in this association is not based on individuals but by institution, making it quite unique in this regard.

The format of this year's meeting showed a significant departure from past meetings on two points. First, concurrent sessions were abandoned in favor of one session, and secondly, a commentator was assigned to each of the seven sessions.

There were two or three papers for each session for a total of twenty papers. The presentation covered the gamut of Buddhist doctrinal areas from *Āgama* sutras, Abhidharma, *Yogācārabhūmi*, to *Shinran*'s writings.

To provide a glimpse into the conference, allow me to list one representative paper from each of the seven sessions:

- 1) “Meaning of Śākyamuni's Teachings in Shinran's Thought” by TAMAKI Kōji, Ryukoku University
- 2) “The Two Level Structure of Upāya” by IKEGAMI Yōsei, Minobusan University

- 3) “Scripture in *Yogācārabhūmi-śāstra*,” by HIROSAWA Takayuki, Taisho University
- 4) “An Interpretation Concerning the Appropriateness of Scripture within Abhidharma Texts,” by TOBITA Yasuhiro, Waseda University
- 5) “The Meaning of ‘Buddha’s Teachings’ in Chinese and Japanese Buddhism,” by FUJII Kyōkō, Hokkaido University
- 6) “Buddha’s Teachings in the Doctrine of Jishu School,” by NAGASAWA Masayuki, Kyoto Seizan College
- 7) “Sermons’ Propagational Intent and the Last Words: as Basis for Rendering Meaning to Buddha’s Teachings,” by MUROJI Yoshihito

From a personal perspective, it was for me the first time to attend this conference, which, to my mild surprise, was attended by most of the major Buddhist scholars from Japan. This reflected, in my view, the high regard and respect that many of the Buddhist scholars have for this academic association.

At Session One, which centered on Shinran’s works, Mr. TAMAKI (see above) and the other two panelists stressed, as expected, the importance of the role that the Pure Land sutras played in Shinran’s thought. During the question and answer period, I asked them about the role that the teacher (Hōnen) played for Shinran in comparison to the role of scripture. As expected the panelists all indicated that the role of the teacher was, indeed, large, but, in my view, they did not elaborate as I would have liked on the degree of importance vis-à-vis the scripture.

Unfortunately, given the limited time allotted for questions, I deferred to others in the audience to ask their questions, but if I had more time I would have pointed out that for Shinran his faith in Hōnen as a person was a more decisive factor in Shinran’s decision to rely on the Pure Land scripture than his direct reliance without a teacher. Without Hōnen, there probably would not have been the same degree of reliance on the Pure Land scripture.

I make this observation, in part, on my understanding of the Japanese cultural predilection to highly and unconditionally honor one’s teacher, particularly in a religious context. It is my plan to pursue this topic in my own current research on the nature of faith or *shinjin* in Shin Pure Land Buddhist thought.

Announcement:

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