

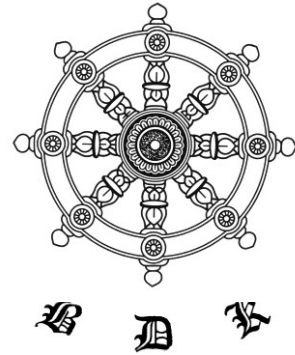
# MAHĀPIṬAKA

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

Editor: MAYEDA Sengaku



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## Publishing Schedule

### Published in 2011:

#### **1. PRINCE SHŌTOKU'S COMMENTARY ON THE ŚRĪMĀLĀDEVĪ SUTRA**

(勝鬘經義疏 *Shōmangyōgisho*, Taisho 2185)

Translated by Mark Dennis

### Forthcoming titles:

#### **1. EXPOSITORY COMMENTARY ON THE VIMALAKĪRTI SUTRA**

(維摩經義疏 *Yuimakyōgisho*, Taisho 2186)

Translated by Jamie Hubbard

#### **2. 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

(天台四教儀 *Tendaishikyōgi*, Taisho 1931)

Translated by David W. Chappell

#### **3. THE MADHYAMA ĀGAMA —THE MIDDLE LENGTH DISCOURSES—**

(中阿含經 卷一—十六 *Chūagongyō*, Taisho 26, Divisions 1-6 = fasc. 1-16)

Translated by

Bhikkhu Anālayo (Division 1)

Kin-Tung Yit (Division 2)

William Chu (Division 3)

Teng Weijen (Division 4)

Marcus Bingenheimer (Division 5)

Shi Chunyin (Division 6, fasc. 11-13)

Kuan Tse-fu (Division 6, fasc. 14-16)

#### **4. NIRVANA SUTRA Volume I**

(大般涅槃經 卷一—十 *Daihatsunehangyō*, Taisho 374, fasc. 1 - 10)

Translated by Mark L. Blum

**5. THE COLLECTION FOR THE PROPAGATION AND CLARIFICATION OF  
BUDDHISM Volumes I and II**

(弘明集 *Gumyōshū*, Taisho 2102)

Translated by Harumi Hirano Ziegler

**6. DISCOURSE TO PRINCE CANDRAPRABHA**

(月燈三昧經 *Gattōzanmaikyō*, Taisho 639)

Translated by MURAKAMI Shinkan

**7. 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

**Review:**

***Sutra on the Concentration of Sitting Meditation***

Translated by YAMABE Nobuyoshi & SUEKI Fumihiko

(BDK English Tripiṭaka Series, published in 2009)

MIYAZAKI Tenshō

JSPS Research Fellow, Toyo University

The *Zuochan sanmei jing* (*Sutra on the Concentration of Sitting Meditation*), which was compiled and translated by Kumārajīva at the beginning of the fifth century, is one of the most important manuals of Buddhist meditation, from the viewpoints of both Indian and Chinese Buddhism. By the beginning of the fifth century in China, some similar manuals of Buddhist concentration and meditation had already been translated by An Shigao, Dharmarakṣa, and others. Although some of these translations describe the Mahayana methods, they do not explain clearly how the Non-Mahayana and Mahayana methods differ from, and are related to, each other. It was in these circumstances that Kumārajīva arrived at Changan and he compiled and translated the *Sutra on the Concentration of Sitting Meditation* soon after his arrival, at the entreaty of Sengrui, as mentioned in the “Translators’ Introduction” (p. xiv). This meditation manual systematically shows the hierarchical relations between the Non-Mahayana and Mahayana methods, and also clearly emphasizes the superiority of the latter, as well as other Mahayana texts translated by Kumārajīva. Consequently, this text was widely accepted as a typical Mahayana meditation manual in China and exerted considerable influence on Chinese Buddhism, especially Buddhist practices. From the viewpoint of Indian Buddhism, its contents are assumed to reflect one aspect of the mediation or concentration practices of Northern India where Kumārajīva trained in his youth. It is noteworthy that some of the traditional (Non-Mahayana) methods in its first

fascicle are described as teachings of the masters of the Sarvāstivāda School, as previous studies have pointed out<sup>1</sup>.

As far as I am aware, Kumārajīva's text has been transcribed into literary Japanese (*kakikudashi*) twice: SATŌ Taishun's version is included in the Kokuyaku Issaikyō Series (Kyōshū-bu #4, Daitō Shuppansha, 1931) and SHIOZAKI Yukio's version is contained in the Shin Kokuyaku Daizokyō Series (Zenjo-kyoten-bu #2, Daizō Shuppan, 2006). Therefore, this English translation under review is the first complete translation into a Western language, as mentioned in the "Translators' Introduction" (p. xviii). Moreover, this translation is by two eminent scholars, Prof. YAMABE Nobuyoshi and Prof. SUEKI Fumihiko. Prof. YAMABE mainly researches meditation texts, such as the *Sūtra on the Ocean-like Samādhi (Sanmei hai jing)*<sup>2</sup>, and he studies the relations between what is written in these texts and Buddhist re-mains in Central Asia. Prof. SUEKI is a distinguished scholar specializing in East Asian Buddhist studies with a keen interest in the meditation texts<sup>3</sup>. This collaboration between two distinguished scholars in the field gives a solid foundation to the translation of this text.

Needless to say, the translated sentences are readable and accurate. In particular, even though this text includes many detailed descriptions of the meditation practices combined with metaphors, which can often be difficult to interpret, they are skillfully translated into plain English and occasionally supplemented by the addition of appropriate phrases. Additionally, this work extends our knowledge further by offering the following advantages. Firstly, as mentioned in "Notes on the Translation" (p. xix), the estimated items are assigned numbers and the section titles in the second fascicle are inserted. Secondly, the translation is carefully arranged into paragraphs, more so than in the original Chinese text. These features help us to follow the topics and discussions. Thirdly, the translation seems to reference previous studies carefully<sup>4</sup>, and remarkably points out new concrete links with other texts such as the *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom (Da zhidu lun)*, the *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya*, and some other Āgamas and Śāstras. If I have to find any weak points at all, I would merely mention that the notes are somewhat limited. But, the text may have been prepared in this way in accordance with the editorial principles common to this BDK series.

There is no doubt that this English translation makes this significant Chinese meditation manual much more accessible to Western readers. Moreover, the translation is indispensable to scholars investigating this important text in more detail and researching the field related to this text.

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<sup>1</sup> See the table in the "Translators' Introduction" (pp. xvi–xvii). Other studies on this topic can be found in the following: KODAMA Daien *et al.*, "Study on the Yogācāras and the Meditation texts (I)" (Yugashi to Zen-kyōten no kenkyū (I)), *Bulletin of Institute of Buddhist Cultural Studies*, vol. 31, pp. 115–134, Ryūkoku University, 1992.

<sup>2</sup> N. YAMABE, *The Sūtra on the Ocean-Like Samādhi of the Visualization of the Buddha: the Interfusion of the Chinese and Indian Cultures in Central Asia as Reflected in a Fifth Century Apocryphal Sūtra*, Doctoral thesis, Yale University, 1999.

<sup>3</sup> F. SUEKI, "The Sutra on Contemplation of Amitāyus: Contemplation of Buddhas and Rebirth in the

Pure Land” (Kanmuryōjūkyō: kanbutsu to ōjō), *Thought of the Pure Land Buddhism (Jōdo Bukkyō no Shisō)* #2, pp. 3–125, Kōdansha, Tokyo, 1992; F. SUEKI, “On the *Pratyutpannasamādhisūtra*” (Hanjuzanmaikyō wo megutte), *Indian Philosophy and Buddhism (Indotetsugaku to Bukkyō)*, pp. 313–332, Shunjūsha, Tokyo, 1989.

- <sup>4</sup> This point is not clearly mentioned in the translation under review; however, as an example, the references to the verse numbers of the *Saundarananda* are obviously based on MATSUNAMI Seiren’s work on the *Saundarananda (Memyō: tansei naru nanda, \*Aśvaghōṣa: Handsome Nanda, 1981)*.

## **In Memoriam:**

### **John R. McRae (1947 - 2011)**

Kenneth K. Tanaka  
Musashino University

My most vivid memories of John are of the times we were roommates at two American Academy of Religion conferences and a TV program on the topic of “Buddhist humor.”

The second time we roomed together, ISHII Seijun of Komazawa University (who since went on to become the President of that esteemed Soto Zen institution) had joined us, but there were only two beds, one king size and a roll-away. So, we chose a Japanese style “rock, paper, scissors” to determine who would get the right to choose. Well, John won, so he chose the roll-away, which meant I had to share the king-size bed with Ishii Sensei. All I can say is that, I was relieved not having to share a bed with John. And I’m sure John felt the same!

Several years ago, I produced a BDK-sponsored TV program introducing basic Buddhism that aired over a Los Angeles cable network every Sunday for an entire year. When I wanted to do a program on Buddhist humor, I thought of John right away for I had heard that he had developed more versions on the paradigmatic, “Zen and the Art of \_\_\_\_\_.” John and I shared some of the popular American Buddhist jokes, such as “Why couldn’t the Buddha vacuum clean under a sofa?” This video should soon be uploaded onto the BDK website; actually the other show, my interview with John on “American Zen Buddhism” can be seen now at the BDK website: <http://www.dharmanet.org/videobdkMSL.htm>

My memories of John are a mere sliver of the enormous human being that he was, as was attested to by many of his colleagues and students at the memorial gathering at the November meeting of the American Academy of Religion in San Francisco. They all spoke from their heart of his charisma, humor, brilliance, levity, friendship, outlandishness, leadership, . . . . The fact that over 200 of his colleagues attended this gathering was a testimony to his character and what John has meant to them.

In my role as a member of the editorial committee of the Chinese Tripiṭaka Translation Project, I played a small role in getting John to serve as the Chair of the Publication Committee of our

project. As Rev. Brian Nagata will surely mention in his eulogy, Prof. McRae proved to be a diligent and hardworking chair. Our project was enormously enhanced by his contribution.

I cannot close this “In Memory” without mentioning Prof. McRae’s accomplishments as a scholar. As is well known, he was a leading scholar in the field of Chinese Chan studies. He authored books such as, *Seeing through Zen: Encounter, Transformation, and Genealogy in Chinese Chan Buddhism* and *The Northern School and the Formation of Early Ch’an Buddhism*. These were supplemented by numerous articles that contributed to a fuller understanding of the field.

For our BDK Chinese Tripiṭaka Translation Project, Professor McRae had completed the translations of the following 5 texts:

- 1) *Questions of Mañjuśrī* (文殊師利問經 Taishō No. 468)
- 2) *The Vimalakīrti Sutra* (維摩詰所說經 Taishō No. 475)
- 3) *The Śūraṅgama Samādhi Sutra* (佛說首楞嚴三昧經 Taishō No. 642)
- 4) *Essentials of the Transmission of Mind* (黃檗山斷際禪師傳心法要 Taishō No. 2012-A)
- 5) *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* (六 大師法寶壇經 Taishō No. 2008)

There is one more text that Prof. McRae was working on together with his wife, Prof. Jan Nattier, that being the *Commentary on the Lotus Sutra* (法華義疏 Taishō No. 2187). We are hopeful that is, too, would eventually be completed bearing Prof. McRae’s name.

I wish to close with expressions of gratitude for his contributions to our translation project as well as for having touched my life in some very positive ways. We shall meet again in the Dharmatā!

## Dear Dharma Friend and Teacher

Brian Kensho Nagata  
President, Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai America

In 2006, Professor John R. McRae was appointed to the post of Chairman of the BDK English Tripiṭaka Project's Publication Committee. As Publication Committee chairman, he joined a lineage of respected Buddhologists that included the late Dr. Philip Yampolsky, the late Dr. Kenneth Inada and the late Dr. Francis H. Cook, all esteemed scholars who devoted so much time, effort and direction to this monumental project. John had the utmost respect for all of his "*sempai*" and he continued to play a very active and responsible role in this project until the last week of his life on this earth.

For me, personally, John was a dear Dharma friend, sempai and sensei. It was ONLY he would listen to all of my "*butsu-butsu*," my challenges and problems and then offer me his support, suggestions, comments and humor. I had come to depend on him as my only source of relief and will certainly miss his presence as I continue on this work. However, I am able to do so knowing that John is still supporting and guiding us. He devoted so much of his life and efforts to sharing his understanding of the Buddha-Dharma with students, friends, scholars and people from around the world. John's life's work fit exactly into the mold and mission of Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai to promote an understanding of the Buddha's teachings throughout the world.

Even after finding out about his illness, John continued to devote his time and effort to the BDK English Tripiṭaka Project. Last year, after John and Jan moved to Phoenix for his initial cancer treatment, I visited them at their cozy apartment. Having experienced previously living in cramped quarters in Asia, he ingeniously set up a makeshift office in the 3-foot wide bedroom closet so that he could continue working and communicating with people around the world. Only John could take such a harsh, serious and demanding life situation and make good out of it. Earlier this year, because he was feeling fairly well, he called for a meeting of the Publication Committee and made the trek from Thailand to Berkeley in May for what would become our final committee meeting with John. We were all amazed at his energy and determination to keep moving forward despite his life situation.

Up until the last week of his life, John and I were making preparations for him to come to San Francisco for this year's AAR conference. I was so saddened to hear from Jan of John's sudden deterioration BUT understood that our time with John was coming to an end. My good Dharma friend, our devoted Publication Committee chairman returned to the Pure Land.

And so the work of the BDK English Tripiṭaka Project will continue on and we will cherish the guidance, devotion and efforts made by John R. McRae. Thank you John sensei for being the one and only John R. McRae that this world could ever possibly know and handle! *Otsukaresamadeshita!* May your humor, wisdom and dedication to the Dharma continue to shine upon all beings. With deepest respect and *Gassho*.

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