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Review

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Carl Bielefeldt and Lewis Lancaster *T'an Ching (Platform Scripture)*

The *T'an ching*,<sup>a</sup> or *Platform Sutra*, has been a volume of immense popularity among the Ch'an Buddhists of East Asia for many centuries. Purported to be the teaching of the Sixth Patriarch of the Southern School of Ch'an, it has achieved the highest status possible for a Buddhist text by being awarded the title of *ching*<sup>b</sup> (*sūtra*), which places it on equal ground with the words attributed directly to the Buddha. In the latter half of the T'ang dynasty, when the various schools of Chinese Buddhism began to be amalgamated and absorbed into one another, the importance of Ch'an increased; and as it became the dominant school in China, the *T'an ching* rose to the prominent position it has continued to hold right up to the present day. In the West as well, partly because of the writings of D. T. Suzuki and the international impact of Japanese culture, Ch'an and Zen have become extremely popular; and it is not surprising, therefore, to find the *T'an ching* ranking as one of the best known of all Buddhist texts. Because of its significance for Asia as well as for the West, the book has received much attention from both researchers and translators. The following comments will attempt to provide a summary of the work that has been done on the text by surveying some of the major textual and historical scholarship and evaluation the various English translations.

For the past 500 years the *T'an ching*, known and studied in China, has been a version of the text included in the Ming dynasty edition of the Buddhist canon (1440).<sup>1</sup> This version represents the work of a Yüan dynasty monk named Tsung-pao<sup>c</sup>, who produced a new edition of the text in 1291 on the basis of three different manuscripts.<sup>2</sup> In 1900 another version of the text was discovered in the famous Buddhist cave library at Tun-huang<sup>d</sup>. The exact date of this manuscript is unknown but it is considered by scholars to be a work of the last years of the T'ang dynasty.<sup>3</sup> Thus, it is the earliest extant copy of the *T'an ching*, dating back perhaps to within a century-and-a-half of the death of the Sixth Patriarch (713). Naturally, the discovery of this ancient text created great excitement in the scholarly world, and precipitated a thorough reevaluation of the history of the work.

The *Tun-huang* manuscript, however, is by no means a perfect copy: it contains a number of obvious corruptions of various sorts. Consequently, the text cannot be read without considerable editing. Fortunately, two other early copies related to the *Tun-huang* manuscript were discovered in Japan in the 1930s. One is known as the *Kōshōji* text<sup>e</sup>, a Northern Sung printed copy probably derived ultimately from an edition, no longer extant, done in 967. The other, known as the *Daijōji* text<sup>f</sup>, is a handwritten manuscript traditionally attributed to the Japanese Sōtō Zen patriarch Dōgen<sup>g</sup> (1200–1253). The exact historical relationship between these two is not clear; in general, however, they are quite similar and appear to represent a textual tradition not too different from the

*Tun-huang* text. Hence, they are of great value in determining the reading of the *Tun-huang* manuscript.<sup>4</sup>

A comparison of the text discovered at *Tun-huang* with the version published in the Ming canon reveals the extent to which the *T'an ching* changed over the course of more than four centuries. The Ming canon edition is almost twice the length of the earlier work; adding much new material and omitting certain sections, it also considerably rearranges the order of the content, and in general refines and elaborates the text. These changes do not necessarily originate in the Ming canon text itself; some can be traced to earlier versions. Moreover, the possibility remains open that there were other versions of the *T'an ching* in circulation even at the time when the *Tun-huang* text was copied. This means that the precise historical relationship between the earliest and latest versions of the work now known to us cannot be determined exactly. Still, the discovery of the other early texts such as the *Kōshōji* and *Daijōji* has made it clear that the Ming canon edition represents the final stage in a long and gradual process of textual development.<sup>5</sup>

Despite their many differences, the *Tun-huang* and Ming canon versions do not seriously conflict in basic doctrinal content. Yet certain of the differences are significant in that they reflect changing attitudes toward the text and its message. For example, the *Tun-huang* version devotes considerable space to emphasizing the correct transmission of the *T'an ching*. In these sections (38, 47, 55–57) a description of the compiler Fa-hai<sup>h</sup> and his lineage is recorded, and the transmission of the text itself is said to verify the transmission of the *dharma*. These sections have been entirely dropped from the Ming canon edition, suggesting that the status of the text changed, over the years, from that of an esoteric document to be handed down from master to disciple as a sign of initiation into the true understanding of the doctrine, to that of a popular religious treatise available to all the interested.

The *Tun-huang* text also emphasizes the importance of the “Formless Precepts.” The title itself refers to these precepts, and the structure of the *Tun-huang* version is clearly organized around the ceremony in which they are given. The text (sections 20–23) not only outlines this ceremony but includes instructions for those who participate in it. The word “platform,” (*t'an*<sup>i</sup>), by which the text is known, probably refers to the ordination platform (*chieh-t'an*<sup>j</sup>) especially constructed for this ceremony.<sup>6</sup> Little is known of the details of such rituals, but they appear to have been an important element in the T'ang dynasty religious life. Some scholars have felt that the Formless Precepts of the *Tan ching* represent a major innovation in the interpretation of the ritual, and that the teaching of this new interpretation was a primary concern of the original work.<sup>7</sup>

The Ming canon edition, while retaining a somewhat different version of the ritual, drops all reference to the Formless Precepts in the title and reorganizes the text in such a way that the centrality of the ceremony is obscured. The section dealing with the Formless Precepts (Chapter VI) is placed at the end of

the main body of the text. The teaching of the *prajñāpāramitā* and the following question-and-answer period (I and II), which in the *Tun-huang* versions represented the final stage of the ceremony, intended for those who had taken the Formless Precepts, is shifted to the beginning of the sermon. In this way, the Ming canon edition emphasizes the sermon and relegates the ritual to a secondary position, suggesting that the early ritual features of the *T'an ching* were later overshadowed, and that the text came to be valued more for its teachings of wisdom and mediation than for the Formless Precepts.

Whatever the interpretation of the specific textual changes which occurred in the historical development of the *T'an ching*, the existence of this developing textual tradition is of considerable interest for the study of Buddhist texts. Few of the major texts of Chinese Buddhism have been subject to the same kind of development.<sup>8</sup> Although there do exist widely differing versions for many works, these are the result of different translations from Sanskrit texts, many of which were themselves in the process of development. Once put into Chinese, however, a given translation has been handed down with remarkable fidelity. Consequently, the number and variety of ancient texts of the *T'an ching* offer the scholar a rare opportunity to witness the historical growth of a Chinese Buddhist text.

The fact that the *T'an ching* existed in a variety of versions has inevitably raised the question of the nature of the original text. Certain features of the *Tun-huang* text suggest that this version may represent a composite put together from several sources. The text purports to transmit a sermon delivered by Hui-neng<sup>k</sup> and recorded by his disciple Fa-hai. This sermon, however, and the ceremony which it accompanies constitute less than half of the total text (sections 1, 12–37); the remainder is devoted to Hui-neng's biography (2–11), to interviews with various monks and laymen and to warnings about the transmission of the *sūtra* itself (38–57). Many scholars, analyzing these various sections of the *Tun-huang* text, have felt that the sermon section probably represents the original nucleus, to which the other material was later affixed.<sup>9</sup> But there is serious doubt among scholars as to whether this sermon actually records the teaching of Hui-neng.

In the cave library at Tun-huang where the *T'an ching* was discovered there were also a number of texts<sup>10</sup> recording the sayings of Hui-neng's disciple Shen-hui<sup>1</sup>. A comparison of these with the *T'an ching* reveals similarities too close to be accidental.<sup>11</sup> It is possible, of course, that as a disciple Shen-hui had before him a copy of the *T'an ching*, but nowhere in his recorded sayings does he mention it. Other sections of the *sūtra* indicate that the text was strongly influenced by Shen-hui or his school. Section 49, for example, seems clearly to predict the date of Shen-hui's famous attack on the Northern School of Ch'an. Moreover, the earliest reliable reference to the *T'an ching*, an inscription by Wei Ch'u-hou<sup>m</sup> (d. 828) contains a passage which, though its exact interpretation is the subject of dispute, definitely indicates that Shen-hui's school

played an important role in the early development of the work.<sup>12</sup> From such evidence scholars agree that the *Tun-huang* version including the core sermon must be considered in part, at least, the work of Shen-hui's school.

There is little question that the *T'an ching* existed in some form prior to the version discovered at Tun-huang. A great deal of scholarly work has been done in an attempt to determine the nature and authorship of the earliest form of the text. Three major theories have been advanced on this issue. The first, advocated by the reknown Japanese scholar Ui Hakuju, has been in general supported by the late D. T. Suzuki and many other scholars in Japan.<sup>13</sup> Ui held that the earliest *T'an ching* was made up of Hui-neng's sermon, including the biographical sections, as recorded by his disciple Fa-hai. To this was added material from the latter half of the Sixth Patriarch's life, probably by Fa-hai himself. Subsequently, the book fell into the hands of the Shen-hui school, was reworked, and a text similar to the *Tun-huang* versions resulted.

In an attempt to reconstruct the probable form of the original text, Ui tried to eliminate those sections he felt had been added.<sup>14</sup> In doing this he removed, for example, all of the material dealing with the transmission of the *sūtra*; more importantly, he also excluded all references to the struggle between the Northern and Southern schools of Ch'an, attributing them all to Shen-hui's tradition. Such sectarian disputes, Ui felt, represented later battles within Ch'an which had no place in the original *T'an ching*. In this way he eliminated some forty percent of the text, including such important sections as the famous poem exchange with Shen-hsiu<sup>n</sup> (sections 4–8), the criticism of the Northern school's teaching regarding meditation (in section 14), the attack on gradual enlightenment (16), and the definition of the Threefold Training (40–41).

A second theory on the original text was advanced by the famous Chinese scholar Hu Shih, and is favored today in Japan by, among others, the Ch'an historian Sekiguchi Shindai.<sup>15</sup> Hu Shih, who devoted much of his career to the study of Shen-hui, came to the conclusion that it was he who had almost single-handedly created the Southern school of Ch'an. Similarities, therefore, between Shen-hui's teachings and those of the *T'an ching* could easily be explained: there was no original Hui-neng sermon and no original Fa-hai text; rather, the entire *T'an ching* was the creation of Shen-hui himself, or as Hu Shih later thought, of Shen-hui's disciples. Though the *Tun-huang* text is not the earliest form of the work, this earliest form taught, as does the *Tun-huang* version, the doctrine of the Southern school of Shen-hui, and was intended from the outset to be a refutation of the Northern tradition of Shen-hsiu.

The most recent, and in some ways the boldest, theory has been proposed by Yanagida Seizan of Hanazono University.<sup>16</sup> Yanagida agrees with Ui that there was an original text independent of Shen-hui's school; but he also concurs with Hu Shih that Hui-neng never taught the *T'an ching*. He points out that a careful comparison of the *Tun-huang* text with the sayings of Shen-hui reveals that, while much of it is identical, certain doctrinal conflicts are evident. For

example, Shen-hui taught a tradition of thirteen Ch'an patriarchs,<sup>17</sup> whereas the *T'an ching* (section 51) gives a list of seven Buddhas and thirty-three patriarchs. Again, Shen-hui's sayings<sup>18</sup> contain a definition of the threefold training which the *T'an ching* (section 41) specifically rejects as the doctrine of the Northern school.

Yanagida argues that such discrepancies are explained only by the influence of a tradition separate from Hui-neng and from Shen-hui's Southern school, but at the same time opposed to Northern Ch'an. The answer to this problem may lie, he suggests, in the Niu-t'ou<sup>o</sup> or "Oxhead" school. It was this school, he claims, which must have taught the patriarch list appearing in the *Tun-huang* text; and it was this school which emphasized the Formless Precepts and the doctrine of the threefold training found in the *T'an ching*. He goes on to suggest that the attribution of the *T'an ching* to Fa-hai may originally have been a reference, not to a disciple of Hui-neng, but to Ho-lin Fa-hai<sup>p</sup>, a disciple of Hsüan-su<sup>q</sup> (668–752), the Sixth Patriarch of the Niu-t'ou school.<sup>19</sup>

On the basis of such arguments Yanagida constructs the following theory: the earliest version of the *T'an ching* probably taught the Formless Precepts and the doctrine of the *prajñā-samādhi*, as well as the thirty-three patriarchs, all of which can be traced to the Niu-t'ou school.<sup>20</sup> Sometime around the death of Shen-hui (762) the work was taken up by his school and attributed to Hui-neng. Hence, Fa-hai was made Hui-neng's disciple, and the biography of the Sixth Patriarch of the Southern school was added, along with the material from Shen-hui's teachings. The *Tun-huang* version was, then, the result of a process of assimilation and borrowing, attaining its final form sometime during the last two decades of the eighth century.

At present there is no way of determining which of these theories is correct, but they are of considerable interest because of their differing interpretations of the background of the *T'an ching*. It was Hu Shih who first introduced the teachings of Shen-hui to modern scholarship and revealed the extent of his role in the establishment of the Southern tradition. Under the impact of this revelation the early history of Ch'an Buddhism has been rewritten, with Shen-hui at the very center as the true founder of the school of sudden enlightenment and the creator of the legend of the Sixth Patriarch. Hui-neng himself has slipped into the background, becoming a barely perceptible figure about whom virtually nothing is known, either of his life or his teachings.

Hu Shih saw in Shen-hui a great revolutionary teacher and a major figure in the development of Chinese Buddhism<sup>21</sup>; Ui Hakuju, on the other hand, saw him to be a petty politician, who had used the name of the Sixth Patriarch to destroy his enemies. Ui acknowledged Shen-hui's importance as the major factor in the rise of the Southern school, but he accused Shen-hui of having achieved that importance by slandering his Northern opponents and distorting Hui-neng's position. Shen-hui's attack on the Northern school Ui felt to be justified neither historically nor doctrinally: it was purely a political power

play. Writing in prewar Japan, Ui was particularly critical of the way in which Shen-hui, who had once studied under the Northern master Shen-hsiu, had subsequently turned on his former teacher and fellow disciples in the North. This was treachery; and the early demise of Shen-hui's Ho-tse' school was the karmic consequence.<sup>22</sup>

Yanagida's appraisal of Shen-hui is somewhat different, for he sees him as but one feature in the complex landscape of eighth-century Buddhism, and his teaching as but one stage in the development of T'ang dynasty Ch'an toward its full expression in Ma-tsu<sup>s</sup> and his Hung-chou' school. Shen-hui was a revolutionary figure, but like so many revolutionaries his understanding ultimately belonged to the system he attacked. Alongside him there were others, in the Niu-t'ou tradition and elsewhere, who were also in rebellion, and whose teachings played at least as important a role as his own in the growing and changing Ch'an movement.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, there is a sense in which the Shen-hui tradition seems to be repeating in twentieth-century scholarship its original meteoric rise to prominence and subsequent rapid decline. More important, however, is the fact that this continuing scholarly reevaluation of Shen-hui and of the *T'an ching* represents only one aspect of a larger process of "demythologization" of Ch'an history. Textual discoveries, particularly those at Tun-huang, have provided a great deal of early material with which to check and reassess the traditional Ch'an histories. The scientific approach to the evaluation of such materials has provided a method for analyzing and tracing the development of the Ch'an movement. This has meant that the thousand-year-old tradition of the Bodhidharma school—a tradition which took centuries to build—has suddenly crumbled.<sup>24</sup> At the same time, and as a direct result, there have appeared a great many important new questions on the history of Ch'an, all of which bear directly on the *T'an ching*. What was, for example, the real teaching of the so-called Northern school, and in what sense can it be said to have advocated gradual enlightenment? What was the relationship between the various schools of eighth century Buddhism—Ho-tse, Niu-t'ou, Pao-t'ang<sup>u</sup>, Hung-chou, and others—all of which claimed descent from Bodhidharma? What was the relationship between these schools and the major doctrinal schools such as T'ien-t'ai<sup>v</sup>, Hua-yen<sup>w</sup>, and San-lun<sup>x</sup>? All these questions and more have been discovered in the debris of the Ch'an legend and have become the subject of scholarly research and debate.

The historian's destruction of the legendary raises more than just questions of history; it also raises the sort of philosophical problems not unfamiliar to modern Christians. Buddhist doctrine, of course, does not rest on an historical message; and to that extent it is undamaged by any attack on its traditional view of history. Yet, it is a fact that the Ch'an and Zen schools, in particular, have placed great emphasis throughout their history, on the importance of the actual transmission of the *dharma* from Śākyamuni through Bodhidharma to



the present living teacher. In the Zen monasteries of Japan this lineage of transmission is still recited daily. The historian's research raises the question of how that transmission is now to be understood; or, put more broadly, it raises the question of the meaning of history for Buddhism.

Yet the historian too might be asked to explain his understanding of history. After the legends have been exposed and a factual account of Ch'an presented, what sort of Ch'an is it? Does this Ch'an of history have relevance for an understanding of the essential Ch'an teaching? This question was once put forcefully to Hu Shih by D. T. Suzuki in the pages of this journal.<sup>25</sup> To Hu Shih, Ch'an was a Chinese philosophical school to be understood in terms of intellectual history; to D. T. Suzuki, the essential nature of Ch'an was an inner experience, and as such could never be discovered in the bare facts of history. We do not have to agree with either party in this dispute; but the question remains: What was the point of the Ch'an myths and legends? Why were they created, and what did they intend to teach?

Modern research on Ch'an Buddhism has been going on in China and Japan for half a century or more, yet it remains a fact that very little of this work has found its way into Western scholarship, and still less into ordinary educated discourse. A similar situation prevails, of course, not only for Ch'an but for Far Eastern Buddhism in general: it is particularly striking, however, in the case of Ch'an, which has enjoyed widespread popularity and has inspired a steady flow of literature, not all of it bad. Despite their considerable number, the works on Ch'an and Zen presently available to the English reader give, with very few exceptions, almost no indication of the recent scholarly advances in the field. For better or for worse, the Western view of Ch'an and Zen remains largely mythological; and this state of affairs is reflected in most of the translations of the *T'an ching* available in English.

The pioneer translation was made in 1930 by Wong Mou-lam from the Ming canon edition.<sup>26</sup> This version was later incorporated into Dwight Goddard's anthology, *A Buddhist Bible* (1932).<sup>27</sup> For three decades this was the translation known and read by Westerners; and it became a key document among the small following attracted to Zen Buddhism in the 1930s, and particularly among the larger post-World War II groups which took up the practice of the religion. Although the new and exciting textual discoveries were published and discussed in Japan prior to the war, there was a long delay before this material filtered into Western publications, caused in part by the tragic consequences of the war and the long period of recovery. Indeed, it was not until 1960 that Wing-tsit Chan brought out a translation of the *Tun-huang* edition, using the *Kōshōji* print to make editorial changes in the text.<sup>28</sup> D. T. Suzuki in the same year published a partial translation in his *Manual of Zen Buddhism*,<sup>29</sup> based on his edition of the *Tun-huang* in which he also relied heavily on the readings of the ancient Japanese manuscripts. This was the beginning of a revival of interest in the *T'an ching*, and two years later Charles Luk produced a new translation



of the Ming canon edition in *Ch'an and Zen Teaching*.<sup>30</sup> In 1964 Paul and George Fung retranslated the Ming canon edition.<sup>31</sup> Yampolsky capped this renewed interest of the 1960s with a scholarly study and retranslation of the *Tun-huang* text (1967).<sup>32</sup> Added to this list of publications has been yet another translation by Heng Yin of the Ming canon edition, including an interesting commentary by the contemporary Ch'an master Hsüan Hua (1971).<sup>33</sup>

Two general statements might be made about these English translations of the *T'an ching*. First, it is apparent from a perusal of these works that their general level of scholarship and application of scholarly skills is by no means on a par with works of scholars such as Ui, Hu Shih, and Yanagida—Yampolsky's translation being the major exception to this statement. Consequently, for the reader of the translations there is little available to correct the distortions of legend and tradition. Second, though certain of the translations are clearly more worthy of our attention than others, taken as a whole they present a fascinating spectrum of the translator's art. A major religious document such as the *T'an ching*, central to a spiritual tradition and popular throughout the entire culture, naturally attracts the attention of the translators. It is not surprising, therefore, nor is it inappropriate, that we should have a considerable number and variety of English versions of the *T'an ching*. Yet it should be noted that, while translation from the Chinese inevitably involves much interpretation, the *T'an ching* does not present the kinds of problems that one faces in such classical philosophical works as the *Tao-te ching*, or in many other Ch'an writings. Compared to such texts the style of the *T'an ching* is remarkably clear and straightforward. Consequently, differences in translation here tend to depend more on the translator's attitudes toward, and abilities in, their art rather than on serious differences in their interpretation of the content of the text.

In part, the style of translation in these volumes depends on the purposes for which they have been made. Wong, Luk, and Heng Yin are apologists for the teaching and for the traditional interpretations; therefore, they undertake the task of translation out of a desire to make the ideas and doctrines available to the general reader. Yampolsky, on the other hand, falls into the category of translators whose interest is purely scholarly, and whose work is intended to provide a study based on the philological and historical evidence. Wing-tsit Chan may be called a cultural "informant" in that he has spent a long and productive career engaged in the introduction of the classical culture of China to the West. D. T. Suzuki, in his English publications, belongs in part to this "informant" classification, but since there is no real separation in his writings between his Japanese heritage and his Buddhism, he functions both as a cultural "informant" and an apologist for the ideas. For translators such as Wong, Luk, Chan, and Suzuki, all educated in and knowledgeable of the tradition about which they write, one can sense a freedom in translation style which, on the one hand, provides the reader with a smooth and flowing text,

but on the other, has the danger of departing from the original so as to distort its meaning. At times this freedom of style represents an unacknowledged reliance on the traditional commentaries, and the translation of a term may be the commentary's remark rather than a literal equivalent for the text.

In Wong, we often find this kind of gloss in the text. For example, where he gives the expression, "You should know the merit for studying this sutra . . ." (p. 29) the Chinese has no character for "studying" and this addition has, in fact, changed the meaning of the sentence. Another example of this sort of translation, as well as of Wong's free use of poetic license can be seen in the lines from a verse:

A Master of the Buddhist Canon as well as  
the teaching of the Dhyana School  
May be likened unto the blazing sun sitting  
high in his Meridian Tower (p. 33).

The first line seems to be from a commentary and has no direct resemblance to the Chinese text. In the second line the translator has added the colorful adjective "blazing," and made the mundane word, "space," into "Meridian Tower," while the locative indicator has become "sitting high." When Luk deals with this same stanza he translates it more literally as:

Real Knowledge of the Teaching and of the Mind  
is like the sun in space (pp. 36–37).

Wong's version may be an attempt at poetry, but it is his own poem and no longer expresses the form or style of the original Chinese. This freedom of style includes abbreviation as well as elaboration. A line which Luk gives as:

He who is awakened to the Dharma (of the mind)  
without a thought, thoroughly knows all Dharmas (p. 36)

becomes in Wong's translation:

Those who understand this way of "thoughtlessness"  
will know everything (p. 32).

Christmas Humphries in his preface to the 1953 edition remarks that Wong has made use of "somewhat quaint phraseology," (p. 5) and this can be noted in one sentence which also holds a key to his principle of translation:

But if you do not interpret my words literally,  
you may perhaps learn a wee bit of the meaning  
of Nirvana (p. 74).

Luk's translation is in many ways an improvement over the earlier one by Wong. He is a translator who is not generally given support by the academic community and his work is attacked for being too free in interpretation and for containing glaring errors. These censures are partly deserved, for there are

places where one finds careless errors, even of grammar. A phrase he translates “All Sumeru mounts,” (p. 31) can only be “Sumeru and all the mountains.” His choice of equivalents is also sometimes unfortunate and misleading, as in the line, “does not contain a single dharma” (p. 31). Here he has used “contain” for the character *te* thereby obscuring an important Mahāyāna doctrine. The equivalent generally used is “attain,” and this attainment or nonattainment of *dharma*s is a key point discussed in detail in the *prajñāpāramitā*.<sup>34</sup> These small criticisms, when taken one by one, may seem pedantic; however, when the number of questionable passages mounts over the entire work, the translation cannot be accepted without serious qualifications.

D. T. Suzuki, another of these free translators, has aimed his work at a popular audience and uses no footnotes or other obvious scholarly apparatus. When we compare this translation of the *Tun-huang* text with Yampolsky or Chan we get the following results:

Suzuki: “You are equal to the Buddha” (p. 83).

Yampolsky: “Your Dharma body will be the same as the Buddha’s” (p. 148).

Suzuki: “If there were not people in the world” (p. 86).

Yampolsky: “If we were without this wisdom” (p. 151).

Suzuki: “All sutras and writings are said to have their existence because of the people of the world” (p. 86).

Yampolsky: “All sutras exist because they are spoken by man” (p. 151).

Suzuki: “All objects without exception are of Self-nature” (p. 82).

Chan: “All dharmas are nothing but the self-nature” (p. 71).

These differences do not imply that Suzuki has mistranslated the passages, but they are an indication of the importance of the edition work he has done. In these examples, Suzuki has relied on the *Kōshōji* and *Daijōji* texts, and the result is a translation closer in some ways to these documents than to the original *Tun-huang* manuscript.

The most negative aspect of Suzuki’s short selection is his treatment of section 48, where a segment of the *Tun-huang* text is omitted without a single indication of this fact (p. 87). The result of such discoveries is a growing mistrust of the translation and a constant doubt as to whether it is a faithful or even adequate picture of the original.

Suzuki shares with the other free translators a tendency to employ equivalents for the Buddhist technical terms that are not in general use. In his version, *fa*<sup>z</sup> (usually *dharmas*) has become “objects” (p. 82), and *hsing*<sup>aa</sup> (usually “practice”) is rendered “live” (p. 83). Whatever merit such translations may have in a given context, they tend to hide the fact that the terms in the *T’an ching* are to be found, for the most part, in general Buddhist usage, and therefore to produce a translation which artificially separates the text from the mainstream

of Buddhist published works. The vocabulary and concepts of this Ch'an text belong to the tradition of Mahāyāna Buddhism; and this is an important feature of the work, which should not be lost in translation. Only when Ch'an texts are treated as Buddhist documents will we begin to see Ch'an thought as a part of, rather than an aberration of, basic Mahāyāna doctrine.

Despite these objections to Suzuki's translation it must be pointed out that he is one of the most successful writers in the field, and his work has proved by its popularity and influence the importance it holds and undoubtedly will continue to hold in Buddhist studies. It is interesting to note that Suzuki's work in English is in many ways very different from his Japanese publications, in which he has established himself as a leading scholar, producing editions of Sanskrit and Chinese texts, making indices and studies not intended for a popular audience. Thus, his image in Japan is not the one he has chosen to show to the English reader.

In contrast to these free-style translators, we have the example of a Westerner, Heng Yin (her *dharma* name) who is caught in an over literal interpretation of the Chinese. This literalness results in awkward phrasing and often fails to make the meaning clear for the English reader. Thus we find the sentence, "Just then suddenly return; obtain the original mind" (p. 133), which in English syntax implies an imperative. Luk reads this as, "Instantly the Bhiksus obtained a clear understanding and regained their fundamental minds" (p. 35). Richard Robinson has translated the same passage in the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* as, "Immediately they wholly regained their original thought."<sup>35</sup>

This type of translation style employed by Heng Yin results in some unfortunate compounds which carry little meaning for the reader: "Nature Dharma Door" (p. 145), "responding function" (p. 164), "still extinction" (p. 272), and "dust fatigue" (p. 196). Translation must be more than a mere matching of equivalents between the original and target language: it must employ the artistry of combining accuracy with a pleasing style; and it must above all communicate to the reader the meaning of the original.

The two most important translations are both of the *Tun-huang* text, those by Chan and Yampolsky: they are the most accurate of the translations, and provide us with a complete version of the text as well as annotations and study. Their approach to the same material is very different, and this gives some insight into the way in which a translator by his choice of terms and his exercise of editorial license can give the material a totally new impact. Consider some of the following comparisons:

Chan: "Calmness in which one realizes that all dharmas are the same" (p. 47).<sup>36</sup>  
Yampolsky: "The *samādhi* of oneness" (p. 136).

Chan: "That is the meaning of taking absence-of character as the substance" (p. 51).

Yampolsky: "Therefore, non-form is made the substance" (p. 138).

Chan: "The transfiguration of the assembly depicted in the *Scripture about the Buddha entering into Lanka*"<sup>37</sup> (p. 33).

Yampolsky: "Pictures of stories from the *Lankāvatāra-sūtra*" (p. 129).

Chan: "Give the discipline that frees one from the attachment to differentiated characters" (p. 57).

Yampolsky: "Transmitted the precepts of formlessness" (p. 141).

In these examples Yampolsky's handling of the text is more literal than Chan's; but of more importance, it is often truer in style and meaning to the original Chinese. There are, however, a few places where one might choose Chan's translation over Yampolsky:

Chan: "He wishes to transmit the robe and the Law to someone" (p. 39).<sup>38</sup>

Yampolsky: "If they wanted to inherit the robe and Dharma" (p. 131).

or where one can question Yampolsky's editing as in his line "purifying our mind" (p. 128).<sup>39</sup>

The positions taken by Luk, Chan, and Yampolsky with regard to the nature of the *T'an ching* clearly represent three stages in the development of scholarship on the text. Luk ignores all of the recent research of scholars and chooses to translate the Ming canon edition because the *Tun-huang* is shorter and, he concludes, "therefore incomplete." In this assumption he is following the traditional Chinese solution to the problem of variation in length and content between different versions of the same text. As missionaries came into China over the centuries bringing with them everexpanding versions of the *Mahāyāna sūtras*, these larger and more elaborate forms of the text were received with pleasure,<sup>40</sup> for it was assumed that the longer version of a *sūtra* was the complete and therefore earlier one, while the shorter was thought to be a later abbreviation and hence of less value.<sup>41</sup> Thus, Luk's assertion is in line with a well-established tradition in China.

Chan's preliminary remarks to his translation represent an advance over the uncritical approach of Luk, for while he provides a description of the well-known legend of the development of Ch'an, he admits to his discussion the research of his fellow countryman Hu Shih, which clearly accepts the fact that the text has undergone changes over the centuries. Willing to go this far, Chan chooses to translate the *Tun-huang* edition in order to make available the form of the *T'an ching* that is closer to the teaching of Hui-neng. While he has rejected the identification of the Ming canon edition with the original text, he still holds uncritically to the idea that the *T'an ching* records the words of Hui-neng (p. 23).

Yampolsky, following the lead of Hu Shih and the recent Japanese scholar-

ship, gives space to the new and more radical approach of questioning whether Hui-neng has a central place in the *T'an ching* or whether he has any role in it at all. It is this last approach which promises to have far-reaching implications for Buddhist studies as well as for religious studies in general.

If we can assume that the many translations of the *T'an ching* represent trends in the style of translation, then we are moving in the direction of a more literal equation of the English with the original. This in turn has meant a greater use of borrowed words as technical terms; so that in Yampolsky's volume we find such Sanskrit words as *Dharma* (p. 129), *prajñā* (p. 149), *bodhi* (p. 131), *sūtra* (p. 149), *nirmānakāya* (p. 142). Also the titles of literary works, so carefully translated by earlier writers are left in their transliterated forms, as for example, *Ching-ming ching*<sup>ab</sup> (p. 136) and *Lankāvatāra Sūtra* (p. 130). This suggests that there is now more sophistication among readers and a greater willingness to handle foreign words and names.

For those who read the volumes under consideration one disappointment may come from the lack of evaluation and analysis of the content and message of the *T'an ching*. True, Heng Yin gives the exegesis of Hsüan Hua, but none of the translators provides an overview of the thought or an attempt at comparison and analysis. Yampolsky does devote one chapter to the content, but it is by far his weakest section and does not make the same scholarly impact as do his other chapters on the historical aspects of the text.

A review of the studies and translations of the *T'an ching* reveals that, while we have made considerable progress on the text itself, there remains much work to be done in understanding the sources for, and position of, the text in early Ch'an history. In translations, although there is still no entirely adequate English version of the Ming canon edition, we now have in Yampolsky's work a careful, generally accurate translation of the *Tun-huang* which takes into account the full range of modern scholarship on the subject. The scholarship itself, while it has not—and undoubtedly cannot—solve all the mysteries surrounding the *T'an ching*, has revealed much about the circumstances in which the text was created and developed. Yet these revelations, as with most additions to knowledge, have raised as many questions as they have answered. And it is probably on these questions, rather than on the *T'an ching* itself, that scholarly work is now most needed. Further real progress in the study of the text can be expected only when we have a broader and more detailed understanding of the Ch'an movement as a whole.

In general, serious scholarship on Ch'an has tended to lag behind the work done on most of the other major schools of Indian and Chinese Buddhism.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, Japanese scholars in particular have produced important studies on Ch'an and Zen; and this material ought to be made much more widely known in the West. One immediate need, therefore, is for translations of the major secondary materials already available in Japanese. Along with this, we must begin to have scholarly translations and studies of many other important

Ch'an documents, most of which remain almost completely unknown in the West. This kind of work is well under way in Japan,<sup>43</sup> and the Western translator can surely profit greatly from the modern Japanese translations.

In addition to translations there is a very real need for a general history of the Ch'an school. Heinrich Dumoulin's work,<sup>44</sup> the only Western attempt at such a history, is so limited and so far out-of-date that it represents more of a hindrance than an aid to the understanding of the subject. What is needed is a work of the sort that Yampolsky has begun in his introduction to the *T'an ching*, a detailed and careful study based on both the primary sources and the results of Japanese scholarship. Once this has been done we can begin to bring the Ch'an and Zen tradition into proper perspective, and to undertake serious study of its teaching. This study should correct many of our present notions of the uniqueness of Ch'an doctrine, and reveal its true place in the broader tradition of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

## NOTES

1. *Liu-tsu ta-shih fa-pao t'an ching*<sup>ac</sup>, T. 2008. Full bibliographic references for this and the other editions of the *T'an ching* can be found in Philip Yampolsky, *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), p. 191 (hereafter cited as *The Platform Sutra*).

2. See Tung-pao's postface, quoted in Ui Hakuju, *Zenshū shi kenkyū*<sup>ad</sup>, II (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1941), p. 2.

3. *Nan-tsung tun-chiao tsui-shang ta-ch'eng mo-ho-pan-jo po-lo-mi ching: Liu-tsu Hui-neng ta-shih yū Shao-chou Ta-fan ssu shih-fa t'an ching*<sup>ae</sup>, T. 2007. On the date of the manuscript, see *ibid.*, p. 67; and Yampolsky, *The Platform Sutra*, p. 90.

4. The *Taishō daizōkyō*<sup>af</sup> edition contains many errors. A more satisfactory edition was published by D. T. Suzuki and Kuda Rentaro in *Tonkō shutsudo Rokuso dankyō*<sup>ag</sup> (Tokyo, 1934). This edition's division of the text into 57 sections has been followed by most scholars, and will be used here in referring to the *T'un-huang* text. For other editions, see Ui, *Zenshū shi kenkyū*, pp. 117–171; and Yampolsky, *The Platform Sutra*, pp. 212 ff.

5. For a discussion and comparison of the various texts, see Ui, *Zenshū shi kenkyū*, pp. 1–74.

6. See *ibid.*, pp. 101–02.

7. See D. T. Suzuki, *Zen shisō shi kenkyū*<sup>ah</sup>, II (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1951) p. 317. Yanagida Seizan has particularly emphasized this point. See "Daijō toshite no Rokuso dankyō<sup>ai</sup>," *IBK*, XXIII (1/64), pp. 65–77; and *Shoki zenshū shisho no kenkyū*<sup>aj</sup> (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1967), p. 148 ff., p. 254 ff (hereafter cited as "Daijō kaikyō toshite...").

8. The scarcity of variant readings in the footnotes of the *Taishō* is one simple indicator of how few textual differences exist for most works.

9. See, for example, Ui, *Zenshū shi kenkyū*, p. 103; Suzuki, *Zen shisō shi kenkyū*, p. 315.

10. The major texts can be found in Hu Shih, *Shen-hui ho-shang i-chi*<sup>ak</sup> (rev. and enlarged ed.; Taipei: Hu Shih Chi-nien Kuan, 1970). For a bibliographic discussion of Shen-hui's works and their translations, see Yampolsky, *The Platform Sutra*, pp. 24–25, n. 67.

11. For some examples of these similarities, see Hu Shih, pp. 77 ff.

12. *Hsing-fu ssu nei tao-ch'ang kung-feng ta-te Ta-i ch'an-shih pei-ming*<sup>al</sup>, quoted in Ui, *Zenshū shi kenkyū*, p. 111.

13. See Ui, *Zenshū shi kenkyū*, pp. 100–14; Suzuki, *Zen shisō shi kenkyū*, pp. 310–319.

14. Ui, *Zenshū shi kenkyū*, pp. 74–100.



15. Hu Shih, *Shen-hui ho-shang i-chi*, pp. 73–90; Sekiguchi Shindai, *Zenshū shisō shi*<sup>am</sup> (Tokyo: Sankibō Busshorin, 1964), pp. 153–166.
16. Op. cit., pp. 148–212, 253–78.
17. *Shen-hui yü-lu*<sup>an</sup> (fragment 3), in Hu Shih, *Shen-hui ho-shang i-chi*, p. 179.
18. *Nan-yang ho-shang tun-chiao chieh-t'ò ch'an-men chih-liao-hsing t'an yü*<sup>ao</sup>, in Hu Shih, *shen-hui ho-shang i-chi*, pp. 228–29.
19. Yanagida, “Daijō kaikyō toshite . . .,” p. 189.
20. Ibid., p. 253.
21. Hu Shih, *Shen-hui ho-shang i-chi*, p. 90.
22. See Ue, *Zenshū shi kenkyū*, I (1939), pp. 210–29.
23. See Yanagida, “Daijō Kaikyō toshite . . .,” p. 125. Also see his treatment of Shen-hui in Yanagida and Umehara Takeshi, *Mu no tankyū: Chūgoku zen*, in *Bukkyō no shisō*<sup>ap</sup>, VII (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1969), pp. 115–144.
24. Yampolsky's discussion (pp. 1–57) of the early history of Ch'an offers probably the best summary in English of the historian's view of Ch'an.
25. See “Zen: A Reply to Hu Shih,” III, 1 (4/53), pp. 25–46.
26. *The Sutra of Hui Neng* (4th ed.), in *The Diamond Sutra and the Sutra of Hui Neng* (Berkeley: Shambala Publications, 1969), pp. 76–114.
27. *Sutra Spoken by the Sixth Patriarch*, in op. cit. (Thetford, Vt.: Goddard, 1938), pp. 497–558. Also published in *Bilingual Buddhist Series: Sutras and Scriptures*, Vol. I (Taipei: Buddhist Cultural Series, 1962).
28. *The Platform Scripture* (New York: St. John's University Press, 1961).
29. (New York: Grove Press, 1960), pp. 82–89.
30. Series Three (Berkeley: Shambala Publications, 1973), pp. 19–102.
31. *The Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch on the Pristine Orthodox Dharma* (San Francisco: Buddha's Universal Church, 1964). This translation has not been included in the evaluations.
32. Yampolsky, *The Platform Sutra*, pp. 123–183.
33. *The Sixth Patriarch's Dharma Jewel Platform Sutra and Commentary by Tripitaka Master Hsüan Hua* (San Francisco: Sino-American Buddhist Association, 1971).
34. See Richard Robinson, *The Buddhist Religion* (Belmont, Ca.: Dickenson Publishing Co., 1970), p. 38; also T. Stcherbatsky, *The Cultural Conception of Buddhism* (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1923), for a general discussion of this doctrine.
35. R. Robinson, “The *Sūtra* of Vimalakīrti's Preaching” (manuscript), p. 25.
36. Chan's translation is based on a commentorial statement and not on the characters in this phrase. His translation of “calmness” for *samādhi* is very weak and destroys the thrust of the argument.
37. This is taken from Wong's translation and represents an interpretation of the characters which Yampolsky's footnote 25 (p. 129) explains.
38. This seems to be the import of the sentence, with the Patriarch as the subject.
39. The use of the original character *ch'eng*<sup>aq</sup> “to present for inspection,” fits the meaning of the sentence and is used in the following paragraph 6, so that the the editorial change is questionable, even with the reading of the *Kōshōji*.
40. See Tao An's<sup>ar</sup> thoughts on this in T. 2145–52 b and c, where he attacks what he considers to be abbreviation.
41. For the significance of this to Japanese scholars, see R. Hikata, *Suvikrānta-vikrāmi-paripṛcchā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (Fukuoka, 1958), p. xxiv.
42. This is certainly true for the difficult and complex history of the school after the T'ang dynasty, about which far too little is known.
43. See, for example, the find annotated translations in the series, *Zen no goroku*<sup>as</sup>, now being published by Chikuma Shobō.
44. *A History of Zen Buddhism* (New York: Random House, 1963).

- <sup>a</sup> 壇經
- <sup>b</sup> 經
- <sup>c</sup> 宗寶
- <sup>d</sup> 敦煌
- <sup>e</sup> 興聖寺本
- <sup>f</sup> 大乘寺本
- <sup>g</sup> 道元
- <sup>h</sup> 法海
- <sup>i</sup> 壇
- <sup>j</sup> 戒壇
- <sup>k</sup> 慧能
- <sup>l</sup> 神會
- <sup>m</sup> 韋處厚
- <sup>n</sup> 神秀
- <sup>o</sup> 牛頭
- <sup>p</sup> 鶴林法海
- <sup>q</sup> 玄素
- <sup>r</sup> 荷澤
- <sup>s</sup> 馬祖
- <sup>t</sup> 洪州
- <sup>u</sup> 保唐
- <sup>v</sup> 天台
- <sup>w</sup> 華嚴
- <sup>x</sup> 三論
- <sup>y</sup> 得
- <sup>z</sup> 法
- <sup>aa</sup> 行
- <sup>ab</sup> 淨名經
- <sup>ac</sup> 六祖大師法寶壇經
- <sup>ad</sup> 宇井伯壽，禪宗史研究
- <sup>ae</sup> 南宗頓教最上大乘摩訶般若波羅密經六祖慧能大師於韶州大梵寺施法壇經
- <sup>af</sup> 大正大藏經
- <sup>ag</sup> 鈴木大拙：公田連太郎、敦煌出土六祖壇經
- <sup>ah</sup> 禪思想史研究
- <sup>ai</sup> 柳田聖山、大乘戒經としての六祖壇經
- <sup>aj</sup> 初期禪宗史書の研究
- <sup>ak</sup> 胡適、神會和尚遺集
- <sup>al</sup> 興福寺內道場供奉大得大義禪師碑銘
- <sup>am</sup> 關口眞大、禪宗思想史
- <sup>an</sup> 神會語錄
- <sup>ao</sup> 南陽和上頓教解脫禪門直了性壇語
- <sup>ap</sup> 柳田聖山、梅原猛、無の探求、中國禪（仏教の思想）
- <sup>aq</sup> 呈
- <sup>ar</sup> 道安
- <sup>as</sup> 禪の語錄