

2019 International Conference on Buddhist Canons

Report by Yi-hsun Huang

The Center for Buddhist Studies at Fo Guang University and the Fo Guang Shan Institute of Humanistic Buddhism (Taiwan) held an “International Conference on Buddhist Canons,” August 9–11, 2019. After the keynote speech by Professor Lewis Lancaster, a total of sixteen scholars presented papers on the Indian, Chinese, and Tibetan canons. Papers were presented in either English or Chinese. Eleven of the papers rely on one (or two) of the following methodologies: studying the compilation history of a given canon, doing a comparative analysis of parallel texts from multiple canons, studying texts that are not yet included in any canons, and examining the relationship between religious practice and the structure of a Buddhist canon. The remaining five papers report on current projects in various countries aiming to make the Chinese canon more accessible and more deeply understood, through translation, editing, and the creation of digital tools.

This conference has shown that scholars continue to produce interesting and important research on Buddhist texts. Ordinary Buddhists, especially in Asia, have also demonstrated interest in the Buddhist canon not only by financially supporting canon-related projects, but also through their personal use of such projects, whether they are digital or print-based. As more work is done on Buddhist canons, we will gain a better understanding of the various Buddhist traditions and their interrelations.

Keynote Speech by Lewis Lancaster (Professor Emeritus, University of California, Berkeley, US), “Exploration of Buddhist Texts: Traditional Methods in a Digital World”

This talk contextualized the current state of digital tools for Buddhist studies and offered insights about how to proceed in the future. In the earliest stages

of digital projects, the goal was simply to input enough data to be useful. Then concordances could be generated. Now, digital tools such as search engines are increasingly able to identify meaning through artificial intelligence. Scholars should embrace such tools and maintain a critical attitude about the results. At the same time, digital tools should have the functionality to assist with the tasks of textual scholars, such as critical textual comparisons. In the future, digital tools will influence the methods that scholars use not only to uncover the historical complexities of a given Buddhist canon, but also to discover the interconnections among Buddhist canons of different languages. It is hoped that new digital technologies can inspire new methods of research and a revival of textual studies.

1. Kin-tung Yit 越建東 (National Sun Yat-sen University, Taiwan), “Introduction to Abhidhamma literature”

This paper introduces Abhidhamma literature not familiar to Chinese scholars. The author classifies Abhidhamma literature into seven categories: 1. Abhidhamma-piṭaka, containing *Dhammasaṅgaṇi*, *Vibhaṅga*, *Dhātukathā*, *Puggalapaññatti*, *Kathā-vatthu*, *Yamaka* and *Paṭṭhāna*; 2. *aṭṭhakathā*, commentaries to the texts in the first category; 3. *ṭīkā*, sub-commentaries to the texts in the second category; 4. handbooks or manuals for the Abhidhamma-piṭaka; 5. commentaries to *ṭīkā*, *porāṇa-ṭīkā* and *navatīkā*; 7. other texts related to Abhidhamma-piṭaka. There are also new Abhidhamma commentarial works composed in this tradition by monastic authors in southeast Asia. This paper emphasizes the abundance of Abhidhamma literature. The author also encourages the use of Abhidhamma literature in the fields of psychology and philosophy.

2. Liu Guo-Wei 劉國威 (National Palace Museum, Taiwan), “A Study of the Tibetan Versions of the Āryamañjuśrīnāmasaṅgīti”

The *Āryamañjuśrīnāmasaṅgīti* is a short text with 167 verses in the *anuṣṭubh* style. The main purpose of its compilation is to expound the ultimate truth and the provisional teachings of Mañjuśrījñānasattva in order to help practitioners to attain the path and wisdom of the bodhisattva. In addition to the Sanskrit version, there are also Tibetan and Chinese translations. Moreover, it was translated into Tangut, Uyghur, Mongolian and Manchu from Tibetan. Modern scholars have carried out studies on this text by collating its Sanskrit and Tibetan versions. An English translation has also been made. This paper introduces commentaries

by Indian Buddhist masters to this text in the Tengyur, Tibetan translations in different Kanggyurs, manuscripts (*bris ma*) and other Tibetan translations that are not included in the Tibetan canons.

3. Sueyling Tsai 蔡穗玲 (Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Germany), “The Stone Buddhist Sculptures and Sutras at Wofu Yuan, Anyue, Sichuan”

A significant number of stone Buddhist icons and carved sutras are found at Wofu Yuan 臥佛院 in a small valley in Anyue 安岳, Sichuan. Beginning in the 8th century in the Tang dynasty, Buddhist sculptures and sutras were carved into rock. The author surveys the content which includes icons, and passages from the following categories: *Nirvāṇa sūtra*, *Lotus sūtra*, *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras*, *dhāraṇīs*, texts relating to the Buddha, texts relating to the Saṅgha, to lay Buddhism, and rituals. There is a strong emphasis on practice and ritual, including a carved sutra catalogue which Stefano Zacchetti argues was used as an object of worship. The author cites Richard Salomon’s distinction between comprehensive canons and practical canons.¹ The former represents an ideal collection, while the latter is a specific collection of texts actually used for practice and ritual. The author argues that the Sichuan inscriptions represent the latter, a practical or ritual canon.

4. Jiang Wu 吳疆 (University of Arizona, US), “The Carving of the Kaibao Canon in Tenth-century Chengdu”

In Kaibao 開寶 4 (971), Emperor Taizu 太祖 of the Song dynasty ordered the engraving of a set of printing blocks for the Chinese Buddhist canon. The Kaibao canon 開寶藏 or the Shu edition 蜀版 is a significant milestone in the history of Chinese Buddhism. However, not only do its content and history of production need to be scrutinized against existing canons such as the Goryeo 高麗 and Zhaocheng 趙城 canons, more importantly, the Kaibao canon has to be situated in the rise of printing culture in the ninth and tenth centuries as new studies have suggested. This paper focuses on the history of the Kaibao canon’s carving and printing in Chengdu. For the first time, the author proposes the hypothesis that

¹ Richard Salomon, “An Unwieldy Canon: Observations on Some Distinctive Features of Canon Formation in Buddhism,” in *Kanonisierung und Kanonbildung in der asiatischen Religionsgeschichte* (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2011), pp. 179–180.

the Kaibao canon was carved in Chengdu under the supervision of a monastic institution, most likely, Jingzhong Monastery 淨眾寺, where a sutra printing agency was located. In sum, the author intends to situate the canon in the wider printing culture of the Song and provide a new account of how the use of printing gave birth to the first printed canon. It is possible that after the blocks were carved by individual workshops, the blocks were amassed to a famous temple in Chengdu such as Jingzhong before its transport to Kaifeng 開封.

5. Yoo Boo-Hyun 柳富鉉 (Daejin University, Korea), “The Structure of the Kaibao Canon, Jin Zhaocheng Canon, the First Edition of the Goryeo Canon, and the Second Edition of the Goryeo Canon”

The Jin Zhaocheng canon 金趙城藏, the first edition 初雕 of the Goryeo Canon 高麗藏, and the second edition of the Goryeo canon are all considered to be reprints of the Kaibao canon. However, the details of how the Kaibao Canon was reprinted have not been well researched. By using the information from the *Yuzhi mizang quang* 御製秘藏詮 and *Guang hongming ji* 廣弘明集, the author argues that there are in fact three versions of the Kaibao canon: the original version of the Kaibao canon, the first edition of the Kaibao canon, and the second edition of the Kaibao canon. The Jin Zhaocheng canon is the reprint of the second edition of the Kaibao canon while the first edition of the Goryeo canon and the second edition of the Goryeo canon are the reprints of the original version of the Kaibao canon and the first edition of Kaibao canon. Thus, when scholars do research collating different versions of texts from the Jin Zhaocheng canon, the first edition of the Goryeo Canon, and the second edition of the Goryeo Canon, they should pay careful attention to which base version they are using in order to have a complete understanding of its textual background.

6. Wan Chin-chuan 萬金川 and Shi Jueguan 釋覺冠 (Fo Guang University, Taiwan), “A Study of Ji shamen buying baisu dengshi 集沙門不應拜俗等事—Analysis of its Variant Readings and Different Versions”

The text entitled *Ji shamen buying baisu dengshi* 集沙門不應拜俗等事 (Śramaṇas shall not bow to lay people and related matters) is three fascicles long and found in the Jin Canon 金藏 found at Guangsheng Si 廣勝寺. This paper collates the different versions of this text found in other Buddhist canons in

order to clarify their relations through variant readings. The author has carefully collated all the information about variant readings from the footnotes of the Taishō canon 大正藏 and Zonghua canon 中華大藏經. These variant readings not only show the omissions in previous canons, but also their mistakes. This paper assesses the accuracy of these variant readings.

7. Lin Hsin-yi 林欣儀 (Fo Guang University, Taiwan), “A Study of Foshuo changshou miezui huzhutongzi jing 佛說長壽滅罪護諸童子經: The Relationship Between the the Dali Congshu 大理叢書 and Canonical Versions”

The *Foshuo changshou miezui huzhutongzi jing* 佛說長壽滅罪護諸童子經 (The sutra of long life, elimination of sins, and protection for children) is found in the first volume of the Zokuzōkyō canon 續藏經. It consists of three parts, dealing mainly with the topics of abortion and how women can protect their infants. According to the Zokuzōkyō version, this sutra was translated by Buddhapāli 佛陀波利 and arrived in China in 676. However, based on information in Buddhist catalogues, Buddhapāli could not have been the translator. In the beginning of 20th century, a corpus of Buddhist texts was discovered at the Fazang Si 法藏寺, Dali, Yunnan. There is also a version of this sutra in this corpus which provides helpful information for the compilation date of the Dali version. It was probably carved and printed in the first half of 13th century before being transmitted to Dali.

8. Long Darui 龍達瑞 (University of the West, US), “Colophons in the Yongle Northern Canon”

The making of the Yongle Northern canon 永樂北藏 began in 1419 (Yongle 17), and was finished twenty-one years later. Since the Yongle Northern canon was printed with wooden blocks, the contents of various reprints are the same. However, the colophons of the different printings vary because of different donors, publication locations (Buddhist monasteries), and times. The colophons of the Yongle Northern canon held at Princeton University and the Liaoning 遼寧 Province Public Library provide precious information about the locations of Buddhist monasteries where they were originally stored. The colophons of the Yongle Northern canon in the Chongqing Library provide precious information about Chinese Buddhism in the Republican era. Thus, the colophons in the Yongle Northern canon contain important information that scholars should not ignore in their research.

9. Ven. Dingyuan 定源法師 (Shanghai Normal University, China), “A Study of the *Mingseng zhuan chao* 名僧傳抄”

The compilation of the *Zokuzōkyō* canon began in 1905 and was completed in 1912. Since its publication, it has become an important collection of source material for Buddhist studies. However, important issues remain unresolved—which versions were used for the *Zokuzōkyō* canon’s base texts, and how they were chosen. By using the *Mingseng zhuan chao* 名僧傳抄 (Z 2B:7 or X77, no. 1523), an important collection of biographical material for the study of Chinese Buddhism, this paper tries to determine which text was used as the base text by the *Zokuzōkyō* canon. After collating these two texts, the author finds that there are discrepancies, mistakes and omissions between these two texts. Thus, based on the case of the *Mingseng zhuan chao*, the author suggests that while using texts from the *Zokuzōkyō* canon, scholars should pay attention to their base texts and do collation work before their research.

10. Yi-hsun Huang 黃繹勳 (Fo Guang University, Taiwan), “Rare Books by Ming Chan Master Hanyue 漢月 held at the Shanghai Library and Xiyuan Si”

In 2016, the Center for Buddhist Studies at Fo Guang University started a research project entitled “Texts and Studies on East Asian Buddhism from the 16th to 19th Centuries.” Through this project, the Center has found 250 rare Buddhist texts not included in the *Jiaxing* 嘉興 or other canons. Among the Center’s collection of rare Buddhist Books from the Ming and Qing, there are six rare books by Ming Chan Master Hanyue 漢月 (1573–1635) originally held at the Shanghai Library and Xiyuan si 西園寺 in Suzhou. They are: 1. *Yumishen ti jiyin zunzhe zhezhenzhuan* 於密滲提寂音尊者智證傳 (Hanyue’s Guiding Words on the *Zhizheng Zhuang*); 2. *Yumishen chanbing ji* 於密滲禪病偈 (Hanyue’s verses on meditation sickness); 3. *Yumishen canchanji* 於密滲參禪偈 (Hanyue’s verses on Chan practice); 4. *Haiyu sanfeng yumi zangheshang pushuo* 海虞三峰於密藏和尚普說 (Hanyue’s talks at Sanfeng si); 5. *He yinzenzi quanxiuji* 和隱真子勸修偈 (Hanyue’s verses on advocating practice); 6. *Yumishen songyuan sanzunsu zuogongfu yinyuan xiezheng zhu* 於密滲宋元三尊宿做工夫因緣邪正註 (Hanyue’s commentary on three elders’ practices). These rare books are all important sources for future studies of Hanyue’s thought and practice with regard to Chan, Pure Land and discipline. It is the Center’s goal to continue research on recently discovered rare books from the Ming and Qing dynasties in order to complete the puzzle of the history of Chinese Buddhism.

11. Ven. Fachuang 法幢法師 (Fo Guang University, Taiwan), “A Study of Chan Master Shuokui’s Recorded Sayings”

There are three versions of *Chan Master Shuokui’s Recorded Sayings* (*Shuokui chanshi yulu* 碩揆禪師語錄). One version is found in the Jingshan canon and the other two versions are found in the National Library of China in Beijing. These three versions of the recorded sayings of Shuokui (1628–1697) were published and circulated in both manuscript and woodblock print forms. A study of Shuokui’s recorded sayings will help us to understand the print culture in Buddhist monasteries and their economic development in the Ming and Qing dynasties. In addition, Shuokui’s talks, exchanges with his disciples, letters and writings in his recorded sayings also provide important material for scholars to study Chan Buddhism in early modern China.

12. Kenneth K. Tanaka (Musashino University, Japan), “The Dream and Work of the English Tripitaka Translation Project”

This is a report introducing the BDK English Tripitaka project. In China, the translations of Buddhist texts were often carried out as a national project supported and funded by emperors and political leaders. This project, on the other hand, began as a dream and a commitment of one individual. In January 1982, Dr. Yehan Numata (1897–1994), the founder of Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai (Society for the Promotion of Buddhism or BDK), initiated the monumental task of translating the entire Taishō edition of the Chinese Tripitaka canon into English. Soon after Mr. Numata initiated this translation project, a special preparatory committee was organized in April 1982. After holding planning meetings on a monthly basis, the committee selected 139 texts to be translated in the First Series. These texts are comprised of 70 Indian works, 35 Chinese works and 34 Japanese works. As of today, the project has completed about 65 percent of the 7,185 Taishō pages of the works in the First Series, and continues to work with scholars to bring this stage to completion.

13. Ven. Manji 滿紀法師 (Fo Guang Buddhist Canon, Taiwan), “Introduction to the Structure of Fo Guang Buddhist Canon 佛光大藏經”

The compilation of the Fo Guang Buddhist canon started in 1977, initiated by Master Hsing Yun’s dream of publishing a Buddhist Canon that is easily

understandable by ordinary people. Master Hsing Yun used sixteen divisions for the canon: Agama 阿含, Prajnaparamita 般若, Chan 禪, Pure Land 淨土, Lotus 法華, Avatamsaka 華嚴, Yogacara 唯識, Guhya 祕密, Sravaka 聲聞, Vinaya 律, Jataka 本緣, Biography 史傳, Images and Sculptures 圖像, Ritual 儀誌, Literature and Arts 藝文, and Miscellaneous 雜藏. The Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Canon Editorial Committee has also adopted a method called “*yishu lishu* 以疏隸書,” clarifying the text by using its commentaries in order to understand the later development of the text in history. It is Master Hsing Yun’s hope that the Fo Guang Buddhist canon can play a helpful role in the development of humanistic Buddhism.

14. Kiyonori Nagasaki (International Institute for Digital Humanities, University of Tokyo, Japan), “Toward an Ecosystem for Digital Research Environment for Buddhist Studies”

Just as Buddhist studies has relied on the academic print media ecosystem of authors, publishers, readers, and libraries, Buddhist studies also has also become a part of the new ecosystem of digital humanities. Further, as digital tools are developed that handle Buddhism’s multi-cultural, multi-lingual, and multi-regional scope, they are certain to expand existing boundaries of digital humanities. The online SAT project provides a digital text version of the Taishō Buddhist canon that is freely accessible online. Although the inputting of texts has been completed, the project continues to move forward by adding interoperability with external digital resources, such as the Digital Dictionary of Buddhism and the BDK English translations of Taisho texts. Further, SAT continues to add new functionality within its own system, such as linking textual content with portions of images of texts, using international standards.

15. Jen-Jou Hung 洪振洲 (Dharma Drum College of Humanities and Social Science, Taiwan), “Using Information Linking to Develop Smart Digital Tools for Research in Buddhist Studies”

The Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association’s (CBETA) digitization of the Taishō edition of the Chinese Buddhist canon, begun in the 1980s, has provided an important tool for scholars of Chinese Buddhism which allows them to carry out research in ways not previously possible. In 2013, the digital team at the Dharma Drum Institute of Liberal Arts began work on a new project, the CBETA

Research Platform. This combines a concordance with authority information about the dates, authors, and translators of texts to provide new dimensions of information to search results. For example, users can sort results by time or by translator in order to see when and with whom a term originated. It will also include a tool for internal structural analysis of texts. In addition, the team has just created DEDU, an online tool allowing users to line up different versions of the same text, whether by different translators or in different languages, for easy comparative analysis. Any work done by the user can be saved online and accessed later.

16. Ven. Xianchao 賢超法師 (Longquan Si 龍泉寺, China), “The Chinese Buddhist Canon from the Perspective of Artificial Intelligence”

Longquan monastery in Beijing is working on several digital tools for the handling of Chinese Buddhist texts. Optical character recognition identifies the characters and structure of printed pages. It utilizes deep learning and can also be used to find input errors that exist in contemporary editions such as the Taishō when provided with images of the source text. Deep learning is also used in other tools, such as an automated punctuator for Chinese texts (<http://gj.cool/>), and information extraction tools that can be applied in the areas of machine translation and automated answering of questions posed by humans regarding the text.