

The Tōyō Bunko is generously engaging in a project to digitize and make available high quality photographs of the manuscript Kanjur in its possession, sometimes referred to as the Tōyō Bunko, Tokyo or Kawaguchi Kanjur. As the first portion of this project, thanks to collaboration with the Open Philology project, an ERC-funded effort based at Leiden University (project 741884), the Tōyō Bunko has digitized the six volumes of the *Mahāratnakūṭa* collection, called conventionally in Tibetan the *Dkon brtsegs* (Kontsek).

The *Mahāratnakūṭa* collection of 49 sūtras itself, as a collection, appears to be a creation of early 8th c. China, the result of a project headed up by the monk Bodhiruci. This grouping, titled in Chinese *Da baoji jing* 大寶積經 (Jpn. *Daihōshakukyō*, alternately read *Daihōshakkyō*), in its turn in later centuries motivated and inspired Tibetan scholars. When they organized their own canonical collections in what ultimately became vast Kanjurs (*bka' 'gyur*) of more than 100 volumes, they created a sub-section of six volumes which they called, formally and fully, *'Phags pa dkon mchog brtsegs pa chen po'i chos kyi nram grangs*, **Ārya-Mahāratnakūṭa-dharmaparyāya*, abbreviated for obvious reasons most commonly to *Dkon brtsegs*, that is, *Ratnakūṭa*. This long and complex process of the creation of Kanjurs is still insufficiently understood.

There is no consensus yet about the organizing principles which guided placement of texts into this *Mahāratnakūṭa* collection in the first place. Bodhiruci, or the team he headed, included already existing translations, newly translated a number of texts for the first time, and retranslated a number of texts which already existed in Chinese. Research on the logic and process of compilation of the collection is ongoing. In contrast to this Chinese situation, in principle in Tibet only a single translation of a given scripture is preserved, although there are a number of interesting exceptions to this general rule, several of them found within this very *Dkon brtsegs* collection. What is more, although the order of texts in Chinese appears without variance in different editions of canonical collections, the same is not necessarily true in Tibetan Kanjurs, a circumstance which requires investigation.

What seems slightly more clear than the logic of its contents or compilation is the manner in which this Chinese collection, which was presented to the Chinese throne in 713, in later centuries guided Tibetan efforts to organize their canon. In fact, an interesting detail about the *Dkon brtsegs* collection is that, of the 49 texts included, fully six of them, and possibly a seventh, were translated not from Sanskrit, as was the norm in Tibet, but rather from Chinese. In addition, there exist in whole or partially at least four *Ratnakūṭa* texts which are found in the *Dkon brtsegs* translated from Sanskrit, but which also were translated, perhaps earlier, from Chinese into Tibetan, though these alternate translations were not included in the Kanjur but are known so far only from randomly preserved manuscripts found in the caves of Dunhuang, located at the eastern terminus of the so-called Silk Road in what is now the Chinese province of Gansu. The fact that a number of *Ratnakūṭa* works were translated from Chinese very strongly suggests that the Tibetan scholars who compiled the *Dkon brtsegs* collection were aware of its existence as a unit, and being unable

in several cases to locate either preexisting Tibetan translations from Sanskrit, or Sanskrit source texts, retranslated, as it were, these missing sūtras from Chinese, in order to have in Tibetan a complete set of the 49 texts of the collection. In the cases in which we have sūtras in the now known Kanjurs translated from Sanskrit, along with alternative versions translated from Chinese, it is a plausible hypothesis that the latter were felt as no longer needed when they could be replaced with translations made from Indic sources, but indeed this hypothesis remains speculative.

What is not speculative is that the overall conception of the *Ratnakūṭa* as a collection was a borrowing. This retention of the Chinese classification, for which, again, there is no evidence of any Indian antecedent, of course offers additional evidence of Tibetan debts to Chinese models of Buddhism, something which, while underplayed by later Tibetan traditions, is glaringly evident in the historical record, starting with the Bsam yas debates at the very earliest period of Buddhism in Tibet, in which both Chinese and Indian forms of Buddhism manifest their presence in the heartland of Tibet, in the Yarlung valley.

While the case with the *Ratnakūṭa* is clear, it remains unclarified how far the larger overall organization of the Tibetan canonical collections might owe further debts to Chinese models. In some ways, elements of this organization are obviously not Chinese, such as the Tibetan treatment of canonical Tantric literature. However, it is very educational to notice that in the highly influential catalogue of Zhisheng 智昇 (669-740), the *Kaiyuan shijiao lu* 開元釋教錄 of 730, we find, among others, the following basic textual divisions, which in fact fundamentally shaped the organization of Chinese canonical collections (*Yiqie jing* 一切經 [Jpn *Issaikyō*], *Dazang jing* 大藏經 [Jpn *Daizōkyō*]):

Prajñāpāramitā

Ratnakūṭa

Mahāsaṃnipāta

Buddhāvataṃsaka

(*Mahāpari*)*nirvāṇa*

Various sūtras (broken down into subcategories, which are not relevant here)

Kanjurs, on the other hand, are generally organized as follows (note that the order can differ; the ordering here is that of the Derge edition):

I. *Dul ba* (*Vinaya*)

II. Sher phyin (*Prajñāpāramitā*)

100,000 line; 25,000 line; 18,000 line; 10,000 line; 8,000 line; Miscellaneous

III. *Phal chen* (*Buddhāvataṃsaka*)

IV. *Dkon brtsegs* (*Ratnakūṭa*)

V. *Mdo sde* (*Sūtras*)

VI. *Rgyud* (*Tantra*)

Chinese collections are fundamentally organized in two divisions, namely Mahāyāna (Dasheng 大乘) and Hīnayāna (Xiaosheng 小乘). The basic Tibetan model which separates the Word of the Buddha (*Bka' gyur*, Kanjur) from the texts of later teachers (*Bstan gyur*, Tanjur) is fundamentally different. Vinaya texts, which for Tibetans are part of the Kanjur, are treated by the Chinese as a part of the “Hīnayāna” collection, of which there is no counterpart in the Tibetan corpora. (The Tibetan Kanjur likewise contains very little material corresponding to the Āgama sūtras, and so on.) While the many Kanjur traditions do show differences among themselves, they generally agree, while differing from the Chinese putative model in terms of organization. Differences include their usual separation of the category of *Prajñāpāramitā* into (usually six) subcategories, and the absence of any *Mahāsāmnipāta* section. Furthermore, they include a separate section of Tantras, translations of which, when they exist in Chinese, on the whole were translated later than the 730 date of the highly influential *Kaiyuan shijiao lu*. These never formed a separate section of Chinese canonical corpora (until the 20th century Taishō canon, created in Japan on avowedly non-traditional scholarly ideas of the organization of Buddhist literature). Despite these essential differences, and leaving aside details, the overall *structural* relation between certain aspects of the two canonical collections in Tibetan and Chinese is clear. And leaving aside the details and the broader picture, focusing on the topic of interest here, it is evident that the existence of a *Dkon brtsegs* section in the Tibetan Kanjur was transparently influenced by the Chinese model.

It is a well-known fact that Tibetan Buddhism, in stark contrast to East Asian Buddhism, overall pays little attention to sūtras. While of course Tibetans consider the Buddha’s teachings fundamental and basic, in fact neither lay persons nor monastics access these teachings directly from the sermons tradition transmitted in the sūtra literature. This seems in fact to have been the case even with the very greatest of Tibetan scholars, such as Tsong kha pa, whose scripture citations have been demonstrated to have been in almost all cases cited second hand. That is, while there are certainly exceptions and no doubt any number of Tibetans did read sūtras, even erudite scholars regularly limited themselves to citing quotations which they found in the works of other, Indian or indeed Tibetan, scholars, whose treatises they studied, or they referred to citations which they encountered in compendia, such as the famous *Śikṣāsamuccaya* of Śāntideva. It could probably be demonstrated that the vast majority of scripture citations in the works of almost all Tibetan scholars are cited at second hand, meaning that the author did not refer to the original source himself. This stands in sharp contrast to the scripture-oriented traditions of East Asia.

Rather than study the basic works of Indian authors themselves, whether the Buddha or Indian masters such as Nāgārjuna, Candrakīrti, Vasubandhu or the like, Tibetan monastic education is based on a complex

series of sequentially refined and digested summaries of scholastic reorganizations of these teachings. In contrast, when scriptures themselves are used, it is most likely to be not for their contents, that is, not for what they say, but rather in an apotropaic fashion, for instance as amulets, or in the context, for instance, of recitations, in which no attention is given to the meaning of what one is reciting. What is more, given the nature of the Classical Tibetan “translationese” in which the sūtras are written, there are few Tibetans today who can even understand sūtras directly, and in the past the situation was likely to have been even more extreme, since literacy was not widespread outside of monastic environments, and limited even within them.

Given this apparent lack of interest in sūtras, why would Tibetans copy Kanjurs, producing lovely sets such as what we now know as the Tōyō Bunko Manuscript Kanjur? The short answer is that such productions produce merit. The texts most commonly, when complete, are wrapped volume by volume in lovely silk coverings, and placed into large bookshelves, there to adorn the inner walls of a temple, and in practice rarely removed from those bookshelves. When they are removed, it is generally not to be read but for ritual circumambulation, or mass recitation, in a fascinating process during which the entire Kanjur may be read out loud, but multiple volumes then are read out simultaneously. This is not reading for understanding but because the words are themselves sacred and empowered. Similarly, volumes may be touched onto the heads of the faithful.

No disparagement is intended of the devotion shown to such works to express that it is a matter of great satisfaction that now, thanks to the initiatives of the Tōyō Bunko, the Manuscript Kanjur held in their collection is being made available digitally, so that it no longer only an ornament on a shelf, but has become available to scholars who wish to read and study its contents. (It is a separate question what it means to remove works from their original homes and store them in museums, but in the case of the Tokyo Manuscript Kanjur, it was presented as a gift to Kawaguchi by the Dalai Lama, and therefore is certainly not the result of any sort of colonial appropriation, for example, as was the case with the London Kanjur.)

While the actual contents of the *Dkon brtsegs* collection are not, and historically have not been, of much interest to Tibetans, this is not at all the case for modern scholars. Having been kept safe on the shelves of the Tōyō Bunko library, the Tokyo Manuscript Kanjur has been used by some few scholars in the past, who were able to study it in situ, or through photographs. Now it will be freely available even to those who are unable to travel to Tokyo to consult it. And this is important not only broadly for Tibetan Studies, but in the case of the *Dkon brtsegs* now published, it is important because the texts contained in this collection include some of the most interesting and important of Mahāyāna sūtras.

The *Dkon brtsegs* section’s 49 sūtras are of interest not only to those who study the transmission of such canonical collections within Tibet, but also to those who seek to understand the texts themselves, perhaps in the context of studying Indian Buddhism, or as Tibetan counterparts of the scriptures which were widely studied in East Asia. From the perspective of wider Buddhist Studies, the collection contains some extremely important texts, including a few for studies of which the Tōyō Bunko texts have already been

used:

#5: The so-called Larger *Sukhāvativyūha*, the Pure Land sūtra. In fact, this sūtra is now missing from the Tōyō Bunko set, having evidently been borrowed in preparation for the edition of the Tibetan text of this sūtra published in December, 1931, in the volume *Bonzōkanei Gappeki Jōdo Sanbukyō: Zōwa Taiyaku Muryōjūkyō*.¹ Readings of this Kanjur are cited in the critical notes, and thus there is no doubt that the Kanjur did contain this section until 1931, but whoever borrowed it appears not to have returned the folios to the library.

#6: *Akṣobhyatathāgatasyavyūha*: Made use of in the edition compiled by Satō Naomi 佐藤直実.²

#12: *Bodhisattvapiṭaka*

#18: *Rāṣṭrapālapariṣcchā*

#19: *Ugrapariṣcchā*

#25: *Adhyāśayasamcodana*

#43: *Kāśyapaparivarta*

#44: *Ratnarāśi*: Made use of by J.A. Silk in his edition.³

#46: *Saptaśatikā nāma prajñāpāramitā*

#48: *Śrīmālādevīsīmhanāda*

One of the facts that becomes apparent even from the drastically shortened list of the contents of the collection is its very miscellaneous nature. If we wanted, with the broadest possible brush, to sketch the areas of content, we could say that there are two Pure Land or Pure Land-related texts, one dedicated to the cult of Amitābha, the other to Akṣobhya, there are a number of texts focused on the correct doctrine and practice of the Mahāyāna bodhisattva, there is a Perfection of Wisdom text, and another whose central theme is the Tathāgatagarbha. This diversity leads to the possible hypothesis that the Mahāratnakūṭa collection may have been conceived of as a sort of “mini canon,” almost selecting one or two texts from a number of classes or categories of texts. Given that the compilation process, which reached its finality with the presentation of the entire collection to the emperor in 713, began during the reign of the empress Wu Zetian 武則天 (624–705), during her Zhou 周 dynasty (690–705), it is not impossible that the collection as a whole is to be related ideologically to the many and varied efforts she made to solidify the foundations

1. Ogiwara Unrai et al. 荻原雲来. *Bonzō waei gappeki Jōdosanbukyō* 梵藏和英合璧浄土三部経. Tokyo: Daitōshuppansha 大東出版社, 1931.

2. Zōkanyaku *Ashukubukkōkyō* Hikaku Kenkyū 藏漢訳『阿闍佉国経』比較研究. PhD dissertation, Kyoto University, 2003.

3. “The Origins and Early History of the Mahāratnakūṭa Tradition of Mahāyāna Buddhism, With a Study of the *Ratnarāśisūtra* and Related Materials.” PhD dissertation, The University of Michigan, 1994.

of her reign in Buddhism. Surely put this way the picture is too simple, but there are reasons to hope that future research will clarify this picture.

Much remains to be learned of the *Mahāratnakūṭa* collection, and its study will no doubt teach us much about not only Indian Buddhism but the ways that those Indian traditions made their way to China and to Tibet.