

Some Problems of the *Kuan-wu-liang-shou-ching*

Fumihiko Sueki

I. The Text of the *Kuan-ching*

Although the *Kuan-wu-liang-shou-ching* 觀無量壽經 [*Kuan-ching*] is one of the main sūtras of the Pure Land tradition of Buddhism in China and Japan, neither an original Sanskrit version of the text, nor a Tibetan translation is to be found. As for the Chinese translation, only one is known to have been done, that which is said to have been translated by Kālayaśas or Chiang-liang-yeh-sha 曇良耶舍, a monk who came from Central Asia to South China in the beginning of the Yüan-chia 元嘉 era (A. D. 424-453)¹⁾. Apart from this single Chinese version, two fragments of the Uigur *Kuan-ching* survive, but they themselves are thought to have been translated from Chinese²⁾. For this reason, it is most important to investigate the various editions and manuscripts of the Chinese *Kuan-ching* extant today. The editions and manuscripts that I have had the chance to consult are as follows :

1. Korean edition [K], used as the base text of the *Taisho Tipiṭaka* 365, Vol. 12, pp. 340-346. The original text was also reprinted recently.
2. Old Sung edition [S₁], belonging to the Library of the Imperial Household Agency, Tokyo.
3. New Sung edition [S₂].
4. Chi-sha edition [S₃], a private edition circulated toward the end of the Sung dynasty. I have consulted a microfiche edition of this text belonging to Tokyo University.
5. Yüan edition [Y].
6. Ming edition [M].

S₂, Y, M are found in the footnotes of the *Taisho Tipiṭaka*. I have not seen their original editions.

7. Kamakura edition belonging to the Gotō Museum in Tokyo [G].
8. Popular edition [P], used in the Jōdo Sect and the Jōdo Shin Sect in Japan.

It is included in the *Jōdo-shū-zensho*, Vol. 1, pp. 37-51, and the *Shinshū-shōgyō-zensho*, Vol. 1, pp. 48-66.

9. Mss. discovered from Tung-huang [TMs]. There are altogether 39 Mss., 21 Mss. belonging to the British Museum and 18 Mss. belonging to the Peking Library³⁾. I have consulted the works on microfilm and in photographic copies belonging to Tokyo University.
10. Ms. written by Myōhen in 1192, belonging to the Gotō Museum in Tokyo [MM]. Myōhen 明遍 (1142-1224) was a priest of the Shingon Sect, who studied Pure Land Buddhism under Genkū (Hōnen).
11. Ms. written by Shinran with experts from several commentaries [SM], belonging to Nishi Honganji. A photo-reproduction of this Ms. is contained in the *Shinran-shōnin-shinseki-shūsei*, Vol. 7, pp. 1-64.

Now I would like to present some examples how the text is emended through the comparison of these editions and manuscripts.

1. According to K and S₁, after each of the 16 meditations, Bhagavān says "If you practise the meditation in this way, it is called the true meditation. If you do it in other ways, it is called the wrong meditation (作如是觀者名為正觀, 若他觀者名為邪觀)". Other editions and Mss. have this passage only after the third, sixth, seventh, ninth and tenth meditations. Probably the latter is the original form and the former is a revised one.
2. When ministers Candrababha and Jivaka remonstrate with Ajātaśatru against killing his mother, they say, "不宜住此," according to S₃, G, P, MM, SM and TMs⁴⁾. This may be interpreted in two ways, either "We should not remain here," or "You should not remain here." But according to K, S₁, S₂, Y and M, the ministers say, "我等不宜復住於此," which means, "We should no longer remain here"; there is no ambiguity. I think the former is older and the latter is a revised reading.
3. After the second meditation, it is said "唯除睡時, 恒憶此事," according to S₃, M, G, P and SM, that means, "Only excepting the time of sleeping, you should always keep this in your mind."⁵⁾ But according to K, S₁, S₂, Y, MM and TMs, "睡" is changed to "食 (eating)". This would suggest that the latter is the original form⁶⁾.

II. The Formation of the *Kuan-ching*

According to the recent studies, it is very doubtful that the *Kuan-ching* was formed in India. Some think it originated in Central Asia⁷⁾ and some think it was formed in China⁸⁾. I would like to suggest two points, one in support of the former opinion, the other for the latter.

1. When queen Vaidehī, the heroin of the sūtra, brings food secretly to her husband in prison, the method she devises is “Mixing ghee and honey with wheat flour, she dabbed it on her body and filled her ornaments with the juice of grapes (以酥蜜和麩用塗其身, 諸瓔珞中盛葡萄漿)⁹⁾”. A similar expression is found in the *Wei-sheng-yuan-ching* 未生冤經¹⁰⁾ but an even closer one appears in the *Saṅghabhedavastu* [*Sbh*] of the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvastivādin. According to the Chinese translation of *Sbh* by I-ching, “Mixing ghee and honey with wheat flour, she dabbed it on her body and filled the holes of her foot ornaments with water (以酥蜜和麩塗身而以脚釧孔中盛水)¹¹⁾”. The Sanskrit text of *Sbh* has the same meaning¹²⁾. Probably the author of the *Kuan-ching* knew the expression of *Sbh* and adopted it transforming the latter half. But *Sbh* was translated into Chinese more than two hundred years later than the *Kuan-ching*. Therefore the author of the *Kuan-ching* would have known the story before it was translated into Chinese.

2. On the other hand, it is also possible that the *Kuan-ching* was influenced by Chinese thought. I would especially like to single out the section of the text concerning the nine grades (九品) of the type of persons who will be reborn in Sukhāvātī¹³⁾. In Indian Buddhist literature, division of human beings into nine grades according to their virtues has no precedent. Of course, in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* the kleśāḥ of each bhūmi are divided into nine, from mṛdu-mṛdu (下下) to adhimātra-adhimātra (上上)¹⁴⁾. But it is not a classification of human beings. On the contrary, division of human beings into nine grades according to their virtues was popular in China. “A table of famous persons in ancient and modern times (古今人表)” contained in the *Han-shu* 漢書 is well known. In that table, many persons from the mythical age to the ruin of Ch'in 秦 are classified into nine grades, where the highest of the highest (上上) are the saints (聖人), and the lowest of the lowest (下下) are the ignorant persons

《愚人》). Later, since the time of the Wei 魏 dynasty, the system of the Chiu-p'in-chung-cheng 九品中正 was adopted. It was a system of appointment of officials on the basis of nine grades. The *Kuan-ching* which purports to have been translated by Kalayaśas may have some connection with these ways of thinking.

Taking these facts into consideration, any conclusions concerning the formation of the *Kuan-ching* remain tentative, although it is conceivable that the text was formed somewhere in Chinese Turkistan under the influence of Chinese thought, maybe in Chinese language from the beginning.

- 1) *Kao-seng-chuan* 高僧伝 (*Taisho* 2059, Vol. 50, p. 343a).
- 2) K. Kudara, "Kanmuryōjukyō—Uigur-go-yaku danpen shūtei", *Bukkyōgaku-kenkyū*, No. 35 (1979), pp. 35-56. P. Zieme, "A new fragment of the Uigur *Guanwulia-ngshoujing*", *Bukkyōbunka-kenkyūjo-kiyō*, No. 20 (1982), pp. 20-29.
- 3) Besides these Mss. of the *Kuan-ching*, I have found a new fragment of a commentary of the *Kuan-ching* (宮43). Apparently this is a fragment of the same commentary as the *Wu-liang-shou-kuang-ching-i-chi* 無量壽觀經義記 (S. 327, *Taisho* 2760) and the *Wu-liang-shou-kuang-ching-tsuan-shu* 無量壽觀經續述 belonging to the Ryūkoku University, but a different section from them. Cf. *Saiki-bunka-kenkyū*, Vol. 1, (1958), pp. 88-108.
- 4) Cf. *Taisho* 365, Vol. 12, p. 341a.
- 5) Cf. *Taisho* 365, Vol. 12, p. 342a.
- 6) Shan-tao 善導, however, adopts the former in his commentary on the *Kuan-ching* (*Taisho* 1753, Vol. 37, p. 263c).
- 7) S. Kasugai, "Kanmuryōjukyō no shomondai", *Bukkyō-bunka-kenkyū*, No. 3 (1953), pp. 37-50. H. Nakamura, *Jōdo-sanbu-kyō*, Vol. 2, Tokyo (1964), p. 207. K. Fujita, *Genshi jōdo shisō no kenkyū*, Tokyo (1972), pp. 116-136.
- 8) S. Suzuki, *Kihon-daijō Jōdo-Bukkyō*, Tokyo (1978 reprinted), pp. 103-105. K. Tsukinowa, *Butten no hihanteki kenkyū*, Kyoto (1971), pp. 144-168. M. Yamada, "Kangyō-kō", *Ryūkoku-daigaku-ronshū*, No. 408 (1976), pp. 76-95.
- 9) *Taisho* 356, Vol. 12, p. 341a.
- 10) *Taisho* 507, Vol. 14, p. 775a. 11) *Taisho* 1450, Vol. 24, p. 189c.
- 12) R. Gnoli (ed.), *The Gilgit Manuscript of the Saṅghabhedavastu*, Part 2, Roma (1978), p. 156, ll. 10-11.
- 13) *Taisho* 365, Vol. 12, pp. 344c-346a.
- 14) P. Pradhan (ed.), *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya of Vasubandhu*, Patna (1967), p. 355. Chinese translation, *Taisho* 1558, Vol. 29, p. 123a.

(Lecturer, The Eastern Institute)