

# Council on Translation of Buddhist Sutras

Council on Translation of Buddhist SktrasAt Hsi Lai Temple, Los AngelesJune 5-7, 2009

Council Schedule (with links to audio):FRIDAY, JUNE 5

- Noon - Arrival of participants
- 5:45 pm - Dinner
- 7:00 pm - Welcoming Remarks by Ven. Huiji, the abbot of Hsi Lai Temple
- 7:30 pm - Address 1: "Audiences, Agendas, and Translation Policy: Learning from Chinese Buddhist Translations&rdquo; (Part 1, Part 2, and Discussion)

By Prof. Jan NattierSATURDAY, JUNE 6

- 7:00 - 8:00 am - Breakfast
- 8:30am: &ldquo;Introduction to the Sanskrit Project at University of the West&rdquo;

By Allan Huang, former president of the University of the West

- 9:00 &ndash; 10:15am &ndash; Session 1
- Roundtable 1: Translation of Indic Texts (Part 1 and Part 2): presided by Prof. Paul Harrison
- Roundtable 2: Translation of Chan Texts: presided by Prof. Robert Sharf
- 10:30:-12:00pm: Session 2: Issues in Translation (Part 1, Part 2, and Part 3)
- 12:00 - 2:00 pm - Lunch
- 2:00 - 3:00 pm &ndash; Address 2: &ldquo;Buddhist Studies in the Digital Era" (Part 1 and Part 2)

By Prof. Lew Lancaster

- 3:00 - Break
- 3:30 - 5:00 pm - Session 3: Translation Projects & Digital Tools & Discussion (Part 1, Part 2, and Part 3)

With all the participants

- 5:00 pm - Evening service (optional)
- 5:45 pm - DinnerSUNDAY, JUNE 7
- 7:00 - 8:00 am - Breakfast
- 9:00 - 10:00 am &ndash; Report from Roundtable (Part 1 and Part 2)
- 10:00 am - Open discussion session: Some Technical & Online Resources and Where Do We Go From Here? (Part 1, Part 2, and Part 3)
- 12:00 pm - Lunch
- Participants depart after lunch

Photos:

- Image 1
- Image 2
- Image 3
- Image 4
- Image 5
- Image 6
- Image 7
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The original program is posted below

This conference is focused on East Asian Buddhist texts grounded in the Sino-canon. As stated in the first announcement back in February, while the process of the translation of East Asian Buddhist canonical works into Western languages has now been ongoing for at least a century, we have recently entered into a new phase of this task. In addition to the well-known Numata BDK project, numerous smaller, more focused projects have emerged in recent years. This interest in translation is being met by a steadily increasing number of scholars equipped with the requisite linguistic skills and doctrinal/historical training for producing accurate and readable translations.

In holding this conference, we hope to address a variety of issues related to the translation of East Asian Buddhist canonical works. Some of these are long-term traditional concerns with basic translation methodologies, and such issues as the best way to render Buddhist concepts—or even basic classical Chinese concepts—into English. There is also a wide range of issues of standardization and unification of strategies for rendering Buddhist terminology, romanization, and style. We may also want to open up broader and more critical questions regarding the nature of the translation process, which is usually done by Western-trained academics, but often supported by religious organizations whose primary goal is that of spreading the Dharma.

This conference will include three formal addresses and six roundtables. The roundtables will facilitate conversations in the following general areas: 1. Current Translation Projects, 2. Translations in Early Chinese Buddhism, 3. Translation of Chan/Zen Texts, 4. Digital tools, 5. Issues in Translations (Lexicography, Authorial Voice etc.), 6. Translating for Buddhist Communities, Translating for Academia.

A limited number of accommodations at the Temple are still available. If you are interested in attending this conference, or if you are in the area or will be in the area, you are also welcome to attend single sessions, please contact Yifa or Hun Lye. At this point, we also open to graduate students to register as observers, please contact us as soon as possible. The conference is generously hosted by Hsi Lai Temple for free charge.

Sincerely,

Yifa (Woodenfish Project) yifa@uwest.edu

Hun Lye (Davison College) hulye@davison.edu

Co-organizers

#### A. Participants

The following have confirmed their attendance at this conference:

- Carl Bielefeldt (Stanford University)
- Marcus Bingenheimer (CBETA, Dharma Drum)
- Mark Blum (SUNY &ndash; Albany)
- William Bodiford (UCLA)
- Robert Buswell (UCLA)
- Victor Chiang (Buddhist Tripitaka Foundation, LA)
- Ron Epstein (Dharma Realm)
- Robert Gimello (University of Notre Dame)
- Paul Harrison (Stanford University)
- Heng Sure (Dharma Realm)
- Jamie Hubbard (Smith College)
- Jongmyung Kim (UCLA)
- Howie Lan (ECAI, UC-Berkeley)
- Lewis Lancaster (UC-Berkeley (prof. emeritus) and University of the West)
- Miriam L. Levering (University of Tennessee &ndash; Knoxville)
- Hun Lye (Davidson College)
- Dan Lusthaus (Boston)
- John McRae (Shinnyo-en Visiting Professor, Stanford; Numata BDK)
- Jan Nattier (Soka University, Japan)
- Bill Powell (UCSB)
- Gene Reeves (Tsukuba University, Japan, retired)
- Peter Romaskiewicz (Buddha Light Edition Sutra Translation Project)
- Sak Dhamapida (Chuang Yen Monastery)
- Robert Sharf (UC-Berkeley)
- Yifa (Woodenfish Project, Fo Guang Shan)
- Mariko Walter (Harvard)
- Christian Wittern (Kyoto University, Japan)

The 6 roundtable topics are:

- Current Translation Projects,
  - Translations in Early Chinese Buddhism,
  - Translation of Chan/Zen Texts,
  - Digital tools,
  - Issues in Translations (Lexicography, Authorial Voice etc.),
  - Translating for Buddhist Communities, Translating for Academia.
- C. Useful information  
A Brief Introduction to the Translation of Chinese Buddhist Sutras

It is well known that the Buddha encouraged his disciples to adopt local dialects in their missionary activities. Thus, with the sanction of the Buddha, numerous translators throughout two thousand years of history have reproduced the teachings of Buddhism in the language and idiom that best suits their audience. In this long history, one of the largest and longest sustained translation enterprises took place in China, where translation committees often received imperial sponsorship and whose ranks may have comprised hundreds of people, both monastic and lay. The prodigious efforts of these translators, transcribers, reciters, and revisers have preserved an enormous body of work which remains a valuable treasure for practitioners and academics alike.

Over the past one hundred and fifty years modern linguists, historians, and philosophers have been equally successful in producing a vast amount of translated material. Many of these texts are scattered throughout a wide variety of dissertations, journals, and monographs, some of which are very obscure, out-of-print, or simply overlooked in contemporary scholarship. One aid in this modern dilemma has been the Bibliography of Translations from the Chinese Buddhist Canon into Western Languages a web page maintained by Marcus Bingenheimer which contains a listing of translations organized by Taisho number.

Many of these new translations are being rendered in what is emerging, for better or for worse, as the lingua franca of the world, English. Beside the vast contributions of scholars working in accord with their personal research interests, there have also emerged a handful of committee-based projects that seek to produce English translations of Chinese Buddhist texts. Some of these include:

- \*\* Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research (in cooperation with the Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai (BDK), they have set out to "publish definitive English translations of the entire 100-volume Sino-Japanese Buddhist canon.")
- \*\* Woodenfish Sutra Translation Project (aims to produce high quality translations with bilingual Chinese-English publications that are free to the public)
- \*\* Zen Text Project (plans to produce a new translation of Dogen's Shobogenzo,
- \*\* Wonhyo Translation Project (intends to translate Wonhyo's entire corpus)
- \*\* Jogye Jong translation project (will take selections from the Collected Works of Korean Buddhism and translate them into modern Korean and English)
- \*\* The Buddhist Text Translation Society
- \*\* Sutra Translation Committee of the US and Canada
- \*\* Kalavinka Dharma Association

Modern scholars have benefited from the growing number of specialized tools suited for crafting a translation, many of which were not available to their medieval Chinese counterparts. Specialized Chinese-English Buddhist dictionaries, such as those compiled by Ernest J. Eitel and William E. Soothill and Lewis Hodous, have been superceded by the Digital Dictionary of Buddhism, edited by A. Charles Muller. Furthermore, various indices of particular texts and encyclopedias of broader scope have been published to further aid in lexicographic quandaries.

While the craft of translating Buddhist texts may have advanced in the wake of more rigorous linguistic and historical/doctrinal training, stylistic and methodological issues still remain an open topic of discussion. While most modern translators relegate their thoughts on difficult to translate passages or stylistic tendencies to their footnotes, a few have tackled the more general problems of Buddhist translation work (either historically in China or today in the West) in articles or in portions of books. Preliminary Bibliography on Translation Subject:

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Teiser, Stephen F. "Perspectives on Readings of the Heart Sutra: The Perfection of Wisdom and the Fear of Buddhism"; in *Ways with Words*, Pauline Yu, Peter Bol, Stephen Owen, Willard Peterson, eds., Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000, pp. 130-45.

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