

Medieval Shingon Buddhist Monks' Acceptance of the Esoteric Buddhist Scriptures Translated in the Song Dynasty: An Analysis of Gōhō's Acceptance of the Newly Translated Esoteric Sutras

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1. Introduction

The tradition of the translation of Buddhist scriptures in China gradually weakened from the eighth to ninth centuries during which the power and authority of the Tang dynasty rapidly declined, and seemed to completely cease once until the middle of the ninth century. According to Zanning 贊寧, an eminent Buddhist historian in the Song dynasty, no Buddhist texts were translated into Chinese during the latter half of the ninth century and early tenth century. Thus, no translation activities were organized for one hundred and sixty years after the translation of the *Dasheng bengsheng xindi guan jing* 大乘本生心地觀經 by Prajñā (Chi. Bore 般若) in the Yuanhe 元和 era (806–820).¹⁾

However, the tradition of translation was revived one and a half centuries later, from around the tenth to early eleventh centuries, by the powerful rulers of those days. According to the historical documents such as the *Xu zizhi tongjian changbian* 續資治通鑑長編 or *Fozu tongji* 佛祖統紀, Taizu 太祖, Taizong 太宗, and Zhenzong 真宗, early emperors of the Northern Song, established the “Institute for the Translation of the Sutras” (Chi. Yijing yuan 訳経院) in the capital, accumulated numerous Sanskrit texts, and enthusiastically encouraged their Chinese translation. At that time, monks such as Dharmadeva (Chi. Fatian 法天), Devaśāntika (Chi. Tianxizai 天息災), and Dānapāla (Chi. Shihu 施護) resided in the Institute in order to engage in these hard works. They accomplished the translation of two hundred and sixty-three Buddhist texts in five hundred and seventy-three fascicles until the middle of the eleventh century.²⁾ As Takeuchi Kōzen 武内孝善 points out, around forty-seven percent of them, namely, one hundred and twenty-three texts, are those concerning Esoteric Buddhism. It is also noteworthy that they include the first complete Chinese translation of the significant

Esoteric scriptures such as the *Guhyasamājatantra*, *Hevajratantra*, *Liqu jing* 理趣經, and *Sarvatathāgatattvasaṃgrahasūtra* (*Jingangding jing* 金剛頂經, hereafter *STTS*).³

As described in previous works, enormous and a wide variety of Esoteric Buddhist scriptures, some of which had not yet circulated throughout the East Asian region, were newly translated into Chinese from the tenth to early eleventh century. These Esoteric scriptures, ranged from relatively simple collections of *dhāraṇī* to highly systematized manuals of Esoteric rituals (Chi. *yigui*, Jpn. *giki* 儀軌), seemed to be investigated by Buddhist monks of China, Korea, and Japan. The main subject of this paper is their adaptation in Japan. I will particularly discuss how Shingon Buddhist monks accepted the scriptures during the fourteenth century.

With respect to Japanese acceptance of the Esoteric Buddhist scriptures translated in the Song dynasty, Chiba Tadashi 千葉正 examines the texts written by Gōhō 杲宝, an influential Shingon Buddhist monk from the late Kamakura to early Muromachi period, and reveals the fact that, in his *Hizōyōmon shū* 秘藏要文集, Gōhō quotes from the *Yiqie mimi zuishang mingyi dajiaowang yigui* 一切秘密最上名義大教王儀軌 translated by Dānapāla in order to develop the discussion about the doctrinal discourse “afflictions are thus *bodhi*” (*bonnō soku bodai* 煩惱即菩提).⁴

In this paper, I follow such Chiba’s method, and discuss the aforementioned issue mainly through examining Gōhō’s quotations and interpretations of the newly translated scriptures. Specifically, I will examine the *Dainichikyōsho ennōshō* 大日經疏演奧鈔 (hereafter *Ennōshō*), a voluminous commentary on the *Dari jing shu* 大日經疏 written by Gōhō, and point out the following facts. In this commentary, Gōhō investigates the descriptions in the *STTS* in thirty fascicles translated by Dānapāla, and attempts to solve a significant problem concerning the Shingon Buddhist doctrine, which is called “that which is unanswered from the past” (*korai no miketsu* 古來未決).

2. Gōhō and the *Ennōshō*

Gōhō is a Shingon scholar-monk who was active mainly in Tōji 東寺 from the early to middle of the fourteenth century. According to his biographies, Gōhō first received the training of the Shingon Buddhist doctrine and practices in the temples such as Tōji, Daigoji 醍醐寺, Ninnaji 仁和寺, and Isshinnin 一心院 on Kōyasan 高野山. After receiving the “*abhiṣeka* of the dharma transmission” (*denbō kanjō* 伝法灌頂) at Kajūji 勸

修寺 in 1346, he returned to Tōji, and successively held various important posts there for around sixteen years.

In 1359, Gōhō constructed Kanchiin 観智院 sub-temple within Tōji in order to further develop the study of the Shingon doctrine and practices at this temple. In Kanchiin, he wrote a wide variety of texts, and also put significant efforts into the training of younger monks. Genpō 賢宝, who proofread and edited the *Ennōshō* after Gōhō's death, was one of such monks. In the *Honchō kōsōden* 本朝高僧伝, such Gōhō's attainments are compared to those of Raiyu 頼瑜 and Yūkai 宥快, eminent Shingon scholar-monks who were active respectively during the Kamakura and Muromachi period, on Negorosan 根来山 and Kōyasan.⁵⁾

As mentioned above, the *Ennōshō* is the commentary on the *Dari jing shu* in twenty fascicles. In the text, Gōhō particularly attempts to annotate the section that Shingon Buddhist monks call the “secret commentary” (*oku no sho* 奥疏), in which the procedures of various Esoteric rituals introduced in the *Dari jing* 大日経 are fully discussed. When did Gōhō write this *Ennōshō*? Though, in the text, there are no clear descriptions which answer this question, he seemed to finish writing it in 1356, three years before the construction of Kanchiin. According to the postscript, Gōhō conferred the *Ennōshō* upon aforementioned Genpō in this year.⁶⁾ After that, Genpō continued to proofread and edit the text until 1398.

In addition, according to its preface added by Ryūkō 隆光 in 1712, Gōhō wrote the *Ennōshō* based on the oral teachings of his teacher Raihō 頼宝. In his preface to the *Ennōshō*, Ryūkō writes the following passage.

The *ācārya* Gōhō of Tōji, who worried about its loss and omission, recorded every oral teaching transmitted from his teacher Raihō, and always possessed it as the guiding principle (*kikyō* 龜鏡). Then, he widely quoted the descriptions in the sutras, discourses, and commentaries of both Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism as the evidence, fully developed the secret of the Esoteric teaching, and titled it *Ennōshō*.⁷⁾

If so, with respect to each discourse in the *Ennōshō*, we may have to determine whether it is Raihō's oral teaching or Gōhō's addition before examining it. Concerning that which I will discuss in the next chapter, we are able to find the almost same discourse in the *Sanjikkān kyōōgyōmon shidai* 三十卷教王経文次第, the commentary on the *STTS* in thirty fascicles written by Gōhō.⁸⁾ Thus, it is considered to be Gōhō's addition.

3. The *STTS* in the *Ennōshō*

In the *Ennōshō*, Gōhō refers to the *STTS* in thirty fascicles five times: in each section, he also quotes and interprets the actual descriptions in the sutra, and attempts to answer various doctrinal and practical problems remaining in the *Dari jing shu*. In the thirty-second fascicle of the text, Gōhō quotes and interprets the descriptions in the ninth fascicle of the *STTS*, and attempts to solve one of these problems, a question concerning the eminent mythological narrative of the origin of the *STTS*. In more detail, he attempts to determine which Esoteric deities were actually concerned with the defeat of the god Maheśvara (Jpn. Makeishura 摩醯首羅) in accordance with Mahāvairocana Buddha's (Jpn. Dainichi nyorai 大日如来) instruction.

According to the *STTS* and *Jingangding jing yuqie shibahui zhigui* 金剛頂經瑜伽十八会指帰, even after Mahāvairocana Buddha unfolded the Diamond realm mandala (Jpn. Kongōkai mandara 金剛界曼荼羅) and performed the *abhiṣeka* for the bodhisattvas, there still remained some Indian gods who did not worship him. Mahāvairocana asked Vajra-sattva (Jpn. Kongō satta 金剛薩埵) to convert these stubborn gods to Buddhism, whose representative was Maheśvara. Vajra-sattva revealed his fierce manifestation, Trailoka-vijaya (Jpn. Gōzanze myōō 降三世明王), and conquered and proselytized them successively.⁹⁾

On the other hand, with regard to the same narrative, the *Dari jing yishi* 大日經義釈, a revision of the *Dari jing shu*, states as follows: according to the “*Yuga kongōchōgyō*” 瑜伽金剛頂經, Acaranātha (Jpn. Fudō myōō 不動明王) appeared and defeated Maheśvara.¹⁰⁾ In other words, the *STTS* and *Dari jing yishi* respectively transmit different views concerning the deity who defeated Maheśvara in the story. In his *Sasa gimon* 些些疑問, Enchin 円珍 regards such difference as a significant problem, and says that “I do not know which views are correct. I hope that someone willingly gives me the answer.”¹¹⁾ In the *Ennōshō*, Gōhō also calls this difference “that which is unanswered from the past” and attempts to solve it through examining the descriptions in the *STTS*.

Now, I examine this issue. In the ninth fascicle of the *STTS* in thirty fascicles translated by Dānapāla, there is the detailed description of Trailoka-vijaya's defeat of Maheśvara. . . . [According to it,] Then, Vajra-sattva, a king of great anger, manifested the image of Acaranātha from his own mind. Mahāvairocana Buddha also manifested the image of Acaranātha from the sole of his foot, and they conquered that god.¹²⁾

First of all, based on the ninth fascicle of the *STTS*, Gōhō affirms that both Trailoka-vijaya and Acaranātha engaged in the defeat of Maheśvara. Soon after the above sentences, he quotes the descriptions in the *STTS*, according to which both Trailoka-vijaya and Mahāvairocana manifested the fierce images of Vajra-anucara (Jpn. Shūkongō anokusara 執金剛阿耨左囉) respectively from the mind and the sole of the foot, and such manifested images conquered and forced Maheśvara to sit down in front of them.¹³⁾ Gōhō interprets these descriptions and states as follows: “This Vajra-anucara is interpreted as Acaranātha. Thus, the ‘chapter of Trailoka-vijaya’ (of the *STTS*) also says that Vajra-sattva (= Trailoka-vijaya) manifested the image of Acaranātha, and conquered Maheśvara. Thus, there are no differences.”¹⁴⁾

4. Conclusion

In this paper, I followed Chiba’s method, and discussed the acceptance of the Esoteric Buddhist scriptures translated in the Song dynasty in Japan through examining the medieval Shingon scholar-monk Gōhō’s quotations and interpretations of them. As I described above, in the *Ennōshō*, Gōhō employs the descriptions in the *STTS* translated by Dānapāla in order to solve the doctrinal problem called “that which is unanswered from the past.” As Chiba suggests, Gōhō seems to have highly evaluated such newly translated Esoteric scriptures, and received great influence from them.

How did the Buddhist texts translated in the Song dynasty circulate in Chinese society from the tenth century? What impact did they have on Chinese Buddhism of those days? Concerning these questions, scholars such as Jan Yün-hua and Tansen Sen answer that they had little influence. On the other hand, the texts seemed to have positive impact in Japan since the Kamakura period. In accordance with these results, we may have to reconsider their significance in East Asian Buddhist traditions.

Notes

- 1) See Sen, “The Revival and Failure of Buddhist Translations during the Song Dynasty,” 31.
- 2) See Takeuchi, “Sōdai hon’yaku kyōten no tokushoku ni tsuite,” 27–35.
- 3) See Takeuchi, “Sōdai hon’yaku kyōten no tokushoku ni tsuite,” 34–36.
- 4) See Chiba, “Gōhō ni okeru Sōdai mikkyō no juyō ni tsuite,” 143.
- 5) See *Shingonshū zensho* 真言宗全書, vol. 43 (1977; repr., Kōya-chō, Wakayama: Kōyasan Daigaku Shuppanbu, 2004), 342–343.

- 6) See T no. 2216, 59: 569b.
- 7) T no. 2216, 59: 1b.
- 8) See T no. 2226, 61: 379b.
- 9) See Endō, *Zoku Kongōchōgyō nyūmon*, 63–118.
- 10) See X no. 438, 23: 377c–378a.
- 11) See *Dainihon Bukkyō zensho* 大日本仏教全書, vol. 27 (Tokyo: Meicho Fukyūkai, 1978), 1042a.
- 12) T no. 2216, 59: 342c–343a.
- 13) See T no. 882, 18: 372a.
- 14) T no. 2216, 59: 343a. According to Endō, this “anucara” is interpreted as the “servant.” See Endō, *Zoku Kongōchōgyō nyūmon*, 78 and 82.

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