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IN MEMORIAM

PROFESSOR AKIRA HIRAKAWA

KOTABO FUJIIA

Professor Akira HIRAKAWA, known widely not only in Japan but throughout the world as a respected authority in Buddhist Studies, passed away of natural causes on March 31, 2002, at the age of 87.

Born in Toyohashi City in Aichi Prefecture on January 21, 1915, Hirakawa studied as an undergraduate and then graduate student (1939-1945) at the Department of Indian Philosophy and Sanskrit Philology, Faculty of Letters, Tokyo Imperial University (now University of Tokyo), and became Research Assistant of that department in 1946. He was appointed Associate Professor of the newly established Department of Indian Philosophy at Hokkaido University in 1950. After teaching for four years in Hokkaido University, he returned to Tokyo in 1954 to become Associate Professor of Buddhist Studies at his *alma mater*. Hirakawa was granted a full professorship in 1962, a position he held until reaching the University of Tokyo's mandatory retirement age of 60 in 1975, at which time he received the title of Professor Emeritus. After his retirement he taught for 10 years (1975-1985) Buddhist Studies at Waseda University, Department of Oriental Philosophy, School of Literature. Hirakawa also served as Chairman of the Directors of the Japanese Association of Indian and Buddhist Studies for eight years (1983-1991), where he made tremendous contributions toward the advancement of the Association. In 1993 he was selected to be a member of the Japan Academy. He went on to become Chairman and Professor at the International College for Advanced Buddhist Studies (established in 1996), where in addition to his duties as the director of research and education, he was responsible for the general administration of the College. He held this position until passing away.

In a career that spanned over 60 years, Hirakawa brought to fruition vast achievements in the various fields of Indian, Chinese and Japanese

Buddhist studies. Hirakawa was extremely prolific in his publications, and his works attest to the brilliance of his accomplishments. While the list of his works is too long to enumerate here, particularly worthy of mention is the *Hirakawa Akira chosakushū* (The Collected Works of Akira Hirakawa), 17 vols. (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 1988-2000), on which he spent 12 of his later years in completing. This work actually comprises two sub-collections: *Bukkyō shisō kenkyū* (Studies in Buddhist Thought), Vols. I-VIII, and *Bukkyō no karitsu* (The Buddhist Discipline), Vols. IX-XVII. Most of the main contributions Hirakawa made to the field of Buddhist Studies are included in this collection. I should therefore wish to briefly summarize its contents below.

Of the first collection, the first two volumes, *Hō to Engi* (*Dharma and Pratīyasamutpāda*) (1988) and *Genshi Bukkyō to Abidaruma bukkyō* (Early Buddhism and Abhidharma Buddhism) (1991), examine from various angles the basic teachings of Early and Sectarian Buddhism. The second of these includes a revised Japanese version of “An Evaluation of the Sources on the Date of the Buddha”, an English paper presented at the Fourth Symposium on Buddhist Studies at Göttingen University in April 1988 (published in *The Dating of the Historical Buddha* ed. H. Bechert, Part 1, Göttingen, 1991, pp. 252-295).

Vols. III (1989) and IV (1990), *Shoki daijō bukkyō no kenkyū* (Studies in Early Mahāyāna Buddhism) I, II, are based on an earlier volume of the same name (1968) with significant additions and revisions. These two volumes further develop his revolutionary and now famous theory that Mahāyāna Buddhism developed out of groups of lay Buddhists centered around *stūpa* worship. In order to advance his theory, Hirakawa criticized both the notion that Mahāyāna sūtras do not represent the words of the Buddha and the theory that Mahāyāna developed out of the Mahāsāṃghika sect; and he sought evidence for his theory in a wide range of literary sources. The ideas and methodology presented in this work had their beginnings as early as 1954, in a paper entitled “Daijō bukkyō no kyō-danshiteki seikaku” (The Historicity of the Mahāyāna Buddhist Order). Over the course of the next few decades his theory became widely accepted in Japan, and the main points of his theory eventually gained the attention of Buddhist scholars worldwide through the publication in English of “The Rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism and Its Relationship to the

Worship of Stūpas” (1963). In recent years, however, Hirakawa’s theory has come into question, and has been met with criticism both within and outside Japan. The majority of these criticisms tend to be based on the view that Mahāyāna developed from within the traditional Buddhist sects. It must be said through that the origin of Mahāyāna Buddhism is not a settled matter. Nonetheless, Hirakawa’s theory is, as an academic achievement, worthy of praise for — at the very least — bringing the matter into question and for ushering in a new phase in the attempts to answer unresolved problems.

Although it may be what he is best known for outside of Japan, Hirakawa’s accomplishments in Mahāyāna research are by no means limited to the above mentioned theory. Of his Collected Works, the following are also representative of his immense knowledge of and contribution to the field of Mahāyāna studies: *Daijō bukkō no kyōri to kyōdan* (Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Order and Its Doctrine) (Vol. V, 1989), *Shōki daijō to hōke shisō* (Early Mahāyāna and the Philosophy of *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* Literature) (Vol. VI, 1989), *Jōdo Shisō to Daijō-kai* (Pure Land Philosophy and the Mahāyāna Morality) (Vol. VII, 1990), *Nihon bukkō to chūgoku bukkō* (Japanese and Chinese Buddhism) (Vol. VIII, 1991).

The second half of his Collected Works is a compilation of various studies dealing with the Buddhist Discipline. Vols. IX (1999) and X (2000), *Ritsuzō no kenkyū* (A Study of the *Vinaya-piṭaka*) I, II, constitute a reworking of his doctoral dissertation and first published book of the same title (1960). Based on the groundwork laid out in these two volumes, which can be considered his most monumental achievement, Hirakawa then went on to paint a historical portrait of the early Buddhist order in Vols. XI (2000) and XII (2000), *Genshi bukkō no kyōdan soshiki* (The Structure and Form of the Early Buddhist Order) I, II, which is likewise a revised and expanded version of his earlier *Genshi bukkō no kenkyū* (A Study of Early Buddhism) (1964).

The last five volumes are not based on any previous work. Vol. XIII (1998), *Bikuni-Ritsu no kenkyū* (A Study of the Precepts for Nuns) and Vols. XIV-XVII, *Nihyakugoikkai no kenkyū* (A Study of the 250 Precepts for Monks) I (1993), II (1993), III (1994), IV (1995), are all devoted to examining the articles of the *prātimokṣa* and carefully comparing

the extant versions of the various sects. With respect to both detail and sheer volume, such research had until then not been undertaken in either Japan or elsewhere, and it is unlikely to be surpassed in the foreseeable future. It would not be an overstatement to say that Hirakawa's professional career began and ended with the study of the *Vinaya-piṭaka*.

While the above is a summary of Hirakawa's publications of Vinaya studies in Japanese, amongst his international contributions in this field, we may mention the following two works published in India: *Shan-Chien-P'i-P'o-Sha: A Chinese Version by Saṅghabhadra of Samantapāsādikā*, by P.V. Bapat, in collaboration with A. Hirakawa (Poona, 1970); *Monastic Discipline for the Buddhist Nuns: An English Translation of the Chinese Text of the Mahāsāṃghika-Bhikṣuṇī-Vinaya*, by A. Hirakawa, in collaboration with Z. Ikuno and P. Groner (Patna, 1982).

In addition to the works cited above, Hirakawa produced other works in a variety of fields that deserve mention. *Kusharon sakuin* (Index to the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*), 3 vols. (1973-1978), which received the Japan Academy Award in 1980, is a work which was painstakingly compiled in collaboration with his students (S. Hirai, S. Takahashi, N. Hakamaya, and G. Yoshizu). This landmark reference work continues to be of great benefit to scholars all over the world.

Furthermore, Hirakawa edited the *Bukkyō Kan-bon daijiten* (Buddhist Chinese-Sanskrit Dictionary) (1997) which is based on the U. Wogihara and N. Tsuji's *Kanyaku-taishō bon-wa daijiten* (Sanskrit-Chinese-Japanese Dictionary) (1979), though the planning of this work originally began with a request from the late Professor John Brough. Needless to say it is a useful contribution to the study of Buddhist texts in Chinese translation.

Hirakawa also authored several general surveys, including a two volume work entitled *Indo bukkyōshi* (A History of Indian Buddhism) (1974, 1979), and *Indo-Chūgoku-Nihon bukkyō tsūshi* (A Historical Survey of Indian, Chinese, and Japanese Buddhism) (1977). The first volume of the former has been translated into English (A. Hirakawa, *A History of Indian Buddhism: From Śākyamuni to Early Mahāyāna*, translated and edited by P. Groner, University of Hawaii Press, 1990). Hirakawa, in addition to the works of primarily academic interest mentioned above, also produced more than 10 books intended for a more general readership, not to mention the numerous academic articles not included in the Collected Works.

Of these, more than a few have been translated into other languages such as Chinese and Korean.

A booklet summarizing his career and listing his work was issued by the Library of the International College for Advanced Buddhist Studies to mark the first anniversary of his death. The College is planning to put out a more thorough version of the same in March 2004, to be published in the *Journal of the International College for Advanced Buddhist Studies*, Vol. VII: *Akira Hirakawa Memorial Volume*.

It should also be said that Hirakawa was a warm-hearted man. He was kind to his students and colleagues, of a humble and friendly disposition, and was loved and respected as both a person and scholar by people all over the world. Upon completing his *Collected Works*, he remarked that “there still remain many problems, for example that of the basic needs of the Early Buddhist Order (i.e. food, clothing, and shelter), which require further consideration, and I would like to deal with them in future investigations” (preface to Vol. XII). Even in his old age, he never lost his intense passion for discovering and facing new problems, and one cannot help but be struck with wonder and admiration for such boundless dedication. Throughout his writings, when he came across a problem that was beyond the scope of the work on which he was laboring, he sometimes just identified the problem and commented that he would take it up at the next available opportunity. Unfortunately though, we may no longer look forward to such opportunities. It is left to the rest of us now to solve the problems remaining in the Buddhist Studies of Akira Hirakawa.

*ERRATA IN THE JOURNAL OF THE
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Some errors occurred in the previous issue of the Journal and should be corrected.

1. The author's name of the "*In Memoriam, Professor Akira Hirakawa*" was misspelt and should read "Kotatsu FUJITA". We should also inform our readership that the author is Professor Emeritus at Hokkaido University in Sapporo, Japan.

Other *errata* in this article:

- p. 4, l. 1: read "prolific" instead of "polific".
- p. 4, l. 8: read "kairitsu" instead of "karitsu".
- p. 5, l. 5: read "though" instead of "through".
- p. 5, l. 33: read "Bhikuni-ritsu" instead of "Bikuni-Ritsu".

The capitalization of Japanese references was also inconsistent on a few occasions.

2. The running head of the article by Colette Caillat should read "*Gleanings from a Comparative Reading*".

Our apologies for these unfortunate errors.

The Editors JIABS.

