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ligence, for example, reveals new levels of understanding of the *rDzogs chen* system. Moreover, there is much information that helps explain *rDzogs chen* in its own right, and experts in other fields of inquiry will find here useful information on epistemology, etc.

A.W. Hanson-Barber

The Sutra of Contemplation of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life. Kyoto: Ryukoku University Translation Center, 1984. XL + 169 pp., appendices.

This is a translation and a study of what is commonly referred to as the *Amitāyur-dhyāna-sūtra* or *Meditation Sutra*, a Mahāyāna devotional text. In this work the text is identified as the *KMK*, the abbreviation of the Japanese reading (*Kan-muryōju-kyō*) of the text. The *KMK*, together with the *Larger-* and *Smaller Sukhāvativyūha-sūtra*, constitute the *Triple Pure Land Sutra* in the Japanese Pure Land tradition. The *KMK* is in Chinese. There is no Sanskrit text and no Tibetan translation. This work consists of a comprehensive introduction, an annotated translation, and appendices.

The introduction identifies the *KMK* as a Buddhist devotional text of a unique kind—the chanting of the name of Buddha Amitāyus rather than bodhisattva practices to realize salvation, indicating a switch from monastic Buddhism to lay Buddhism. It speculates on the place of origin of the text (Central Asia or China) and the period of compilation (5th century) by making reference to a variety of textual sources, both classical and modern. It provides bibliographical information of the translator (Kālayāśas) and the historical circumstances surrounding the translation of the text. It also provides an excellent structural and content analysis, the basis on which it speculates on the purpose for which the text was written. Finally, the introduction describes the impact this text has had in Central Asia, China, and in particular, Japan.

The translation was initially accomplished by Meiji Yamada, an Indologist-Buddhologist, and Ronald Takemota, a Japanese-American scholar, both affiliated with Nishi Hongwanji. The translation was then reexamined meticulously and revised by the members of the Ryūkoku University Translation Center. In-

cluded were eminent scholars, such as Gadjin Nagao, as well as those whose native language is English. The translation is presented side-by-side with the original Chinese and Japanese reading. Footnotes, rather than endnotes, are provided for easy reference.

The appendices include an index to locate the sixteen forms of contemplation—the central theme of the *KMK*—in the translation; supplementary notes, which consist of an interpretation of key terms and concepts cited in the translation; a bibliography, including English and Japanese translations of the Chinese and Uigur versions of the text, classical commentarial works on this text composed in China, Korea and Japan, as well as modern critical studies (both books and essays) related to the text in English and Japanese; a comparison of key Chinese characters in the Taishō and Korean editions of the text arranged by strokes; a list of Chinese proper nouns with characters and their romanized form; and indexes to the text, first in Sanskrit and English, then in Chinese, arranged by stroke with definitions added.

In reviewing a work of this sort, a great portion of which is the translation, it is meaningless to cite one's preference of an English term over one made by another, provided that the latter does not diverge too much from the original. After all, as far as the English translation of Buddhist texts is concerned, we are still in the *ko-i* (matching concept) period. The translation provided in this work, however, has certainly contributed to standardizing Buddhist technical terms, particularly Pure Land technical terms. The Ryūkyō translation committee has made serious attempts to reconstruct, whenever possible, the Sanskrit term and interpret it within the larger context of Mahāyāna thought. Thus, the translation is free of sectarian slants. I have no major criticism of terminological translation. Further, the story of Vaiśaṅghī is rendered in readable modern English, but the sections on "contemplations" are rather stiff. Perhaps this is not the fault of the translation committee but the fault of the literary style of the text itself. This raises a technical question: should a translation excel in prose style, like Kumārajīva's translation, or excel in accuracy, like Hsüan-tsang's translation? No matter what method one follows, the fact remains that a translation is an art more than a science. The difficulties involved in the translation of Buddhist texts can be appreciated only by those who are capable of reading the texts in the original, understand the fastidious manner in which a text expresses itself, and who have had some

experience in rendering a readable translation. A competent translator needs to be a philologist, historian and philosopher, who has insights into ancient Indian religious modes of expression. The members of the translation committee meet these qualifications, as attested by the quality of translation they have produced.

I have three minor criticisms to make. First, this work consistently speaks of Amida Buddha, a method of expression commonly used by the Japanese. It would be better to say "Buddha Amida" in a translation. After all, the work refers to Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, not Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva. Second, though this work has provided various views on the origin of the *KMK* and endorses the generally accepted one, (that it was compiled or composed in either Central Asia or China), it would have been better if it had added the views of Akira Hirakawa and Kyōshō Hayashima, who claim that the contemplation (*kammaṭṭhāna*) described in this text is traceable to Pāli Buddhism. I say this because even though these two men are not Pure Land specialists, they are, nevertheless, established scholars, and their views certainly warrant attention, whether one endorses their view or not. Third, we have said that the English translation of the text is presented side-by-side with the Chinese original and the Japanese reading. I would presume that this work is designed primarily for the English-reading audience, rather than the Japanese. If this is so, I see no reason why the Japanese reading needs to be provided. Even though Japanese scholarship requires the Japanese reading of Chinese as evidence for understanding a Chinese text, the fact remains that those in the West translate Chinese directly into English, not through the medium of Japanese.

In spite of these minor criticisms, this work represents a marked improvement over other translation of the *KMK* in terms of style, accuracy of content, and interpretation. The translation was accomplished meticulously, consuming several years, I would presume, by a team of translators including Sanskritists, Sinologists, and those whose native language is English. The introduction and appendices add to the scholarly accomplishment of this work. It is the best work on the *KMK* published to date. It has my highest recommendation and should be considered one of the indispensable works by those contemplating serious studies of Pure Land thought.

Minoru Kiyota