

LANCASTER, Lewis R., comp., in collaboration with Sung-bae PARK: *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue*. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1979, XXIII+724 pp., US\$ 50,00; £ 24,00.

Almost no tourist or scholar visiting the southeastern part of the Korean peninsula will fail to pay a visit to Haein Monastery on Mount Kaya, near Taegu, and walk the length of the stalls that contain the 81.258 printing blocks of what is conventionally called the Korean Buddhist canon. In the 1960s the monks of Haein Monastery made twelve sets of xylographs from the blocks. One of these sets was acquired by the East Asiatic Library of the University of California at Berkeley.

There, the effort of producing an aid to finding titles within the canon eventually grew into making more comprehensive descriptions of each work, the result of which is the volume under review here.

To appreciate the value of this reference work, it is necessary to understand in which sense the so-called Korean Buddhist canon can be said to be Korean. When trying to prepare the ground for an answer, the present reviewer, depending largely on Dr. Lancaster's concise, but very informative introduction to the catalogue, has to recollect a few facts concerning the spread of Buddhist writings in Korea.

The printing blocks preserved at Haein Monastery are the result of a devout effort to collect all Buddhist writing deemed to be worth the attention and to prepare them for xylographic reproduction. This set of blocks was taken to its present abode in 1399 and has been protected there by the monks from fire and destruction until the present day. This effort to collect Buddhist writings, to prepare their spread by means of printing from wooden blocks, and thereby to enhance the prestige of Buddhism in Korea only was the last of several conspicuous efforts of the same kind.

Around the year 1010 a similar undertaking was begun under king Hyōnjong (r. 1010–1031) and continued for about four decades. As a basis for the blocks, the Koreans relied on the so-called Szechwan edition (Shu-pen) of China which was completed in 983 and a copy of which arrived in Korea in 991. The famous monk Ŭich'ōn (1055–1101), a younger son of king Munjong (r. 1047–1083), supplemented the canon of the 11th century by collecting texts of China and Japan which were not included in the Chinese canon, in particular commentaries and writings by his contemporaries. All this got lost when in 1232 the Mongol invaders pillaged Puiin Monastery, near Taegu, and burnt the blocks of the canon as well as those of the supplementary catalogue by Ŭich'ōn, which were housed at that monastery. Only a few years after having experienced this devastation the Koreans launched a new effort to carve a set of printing blocks of the canon, and this is the effort that produced the blocks of Haein Monastery. Being robbed of the canon of the 11th century, the editors and carvers of the 13th century used an edition of the Buddhist canon the royal court of Koryō (918–1392) had received from the Liao (947–1125) in 1063 and to which the Koreans added elements from the older Szechwan edition.

The carving of the blocks being an achievement that in no way falls behind of what is known from China in this field, and the blocks having played a major role in the preparation of the three modern editions of the Buddhist canon that were produced in Japan between 1880 and 1934, the 80.000 blocks of Haein Monastery have been an object of proud veneration on the side of the Koreans and have been considered one of the most precious cultural treasures of the country ever since they had been brought to public attention in more recent times. One of the reasons for calling the canon a Korean one is, of course, the fact that it was engraved in Korea and by Koreans. Another is that it provides an

insight into which Buddhist texts and rules were given attention to by the Koreans of the first three centuries of our millenium. What the canon does not disclose, at least not in an easy and quick way, is peculiarities of Korean Buddhist thought and monastic life as distinguished from those of other countries. For no single text can *a priori* be said not to have been practised, and believed in, outside of Korea. Therefore, with regard to teaching and monastic life, „national“ differences can only be expected to be differences of the selection of texts and of the emphasis on some elements of the lore at the expense of others. Thus, distinction of Korean peculiarities on the basis of textual evidence requires a consideration of texts that were known in Korea, but not in other countries, and vice versa.

In the light of such considerations, one of the main achievements of this descriptive catalogue is that next to the titles of writings in Chinese characters and their Sino-Korean renderings it provides the titles of the corresponding Sanskrit and Tibetan texts, wherever possible. The lack of such additional entries may be highly informative. For among many other things, the lack of Sanskrit and Tibetan correspondances could mean that the texts in question at some time were not known in either or both of the two other centres of Buddhist faith. In other words, such lacunae may at least occasionally be taken as hints at differences between Chinese and Korean Buddhism on the one hand and the Buddhism of India and Tibet on the other. In this sense, the catalogue may be helpful in distinguishing Korean Buddhism from that of other areas inasmuch as it may help the students of Indian and Tibetan Buddhism in determining the character of the faith in their areas. Therefore, when it comes to determining regional peculiarities of Buddhism on a basis of textual evidence and in historical perspective, this catalogue may be of immense help, it deserves the attention of a much wider circle than that of students of Korean Buddhism, and it is one more strong argument against basing the study of Buddhism on Indian and Tibetan texts only.

Next to the information described above, one finds a lot more in each entry. The compiler and his assistants added references to the corresponding pages of the facsimile print made from the Haein blocks and published in 47 volumes by Tongguk University in 1976, and they added references to the pages of the translation of the canon into modern Korean. Together with Sanskrit and Tibetan titles, one finds comparative listings of bibliographical references in other catalogues. Besides, the name of the translator of a text into Chinese is provided, together with the time and the place of the translation, whenever this was possible. The volume contains five title indices, arranged for Sanskrit, Pali, Chinese, Korean, and Tibetan, two indices of translators or authors, and one index each for place names and „case“ characters, i. e., characters used to indicate the sections into which the Haein canon is subdivided. The book further contains three comparative catalogue indices as well as a bibliography and is adorned by the introduction written by Dr. Lancaster which deals with the spread of Buddhist literature written in Sanskrit and Chinese in Korea and with the complex of motives that led to the two major compilations of canons in Korea. This huge and admirable apparatus breaks the ground for countless ways of studying the background and ramifications of the Korean Buddhist canon, both with regard to time and area.

The accuracy of a work such as the one under review here will only be proven in the course of long-term usage. Since this reviewer had no motive to immediately check the accuracy of any of the data provided, he cannot tell whether the book contains mistakes that go beyond mere printing errors, which have almost naturally to be taken into account in connection with such publications. The possibility of their number being fairly great is

suggested by the fact that fairly often the usual diacritical marks have been omitted from the transliterations of Korean terms and names. Granted that this descriptive catalogue will turn out to be largely accurate, it may one day be rated as a major achievement in the field of Buddhist studies and in that of the study of Korean Buddhism in particular.

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