An Introduction to the Thai Poem "Lilit Phra Law" (The Story of King Law)
ROBERT J. BICKNER
254 pp.

One of the favorite pastimes of linguists is unmasking the little fraudulent canons of language use promulgated by grammarians, old maid school teachers, or others who would seek to impose their view of what is proper on unsuspecting minds. The ultimate weapon in this crusade against prescriptive tyranny is linguistic description. A linguist teaching English would not restrict the use of "shall" to the first person since there is no evidence that the word is used in this way. A linguist teaching French would eliminate most inflectional declensions since so many are pronounced the same, for example, -er, -et, -é, -ée. In the case of Bickner's work, it is the prescribed patterns of Thai poetic versification which begin to dissemble beneath the force of descriptive onslaught.

But Bickner's analysis of the Phra Lo poem far exceeds the tenets of synchronic description, for in the decipherment of classical poetic form, only a knowledge of comparative and historical Tai linguistics can explain the numerous irregularities or even the regular patterns prescribed in the Thai poetic grammars or Chanthalak. And to this highly specialized discipline is added Bickner's thorough study of the text in all of its many printed and samui khlooi manuscripts. The final product is a rare blend of historical linguistic and literary expertise.

The early Ayutthaya period poem of Lilit Phra Lo dates perhaps from the 16th century; but this dating is problematic, however, because no manuscripts earlier than the 19th century have survived. It may even be, Bickner notes, the oldest poetic work in the Thai language, although the Ooykaan Chee Nam, or "Water Oath," is usually accorded this distinction. The term Lilit refers to a style of composition which combines khloog and raay verse forms with rhymes linking the stanzas. The poem is not well known to non-Thai speakers and, as Bickner points out, even advanced foreign students of Thai would have great difficulty reading Phra Lo due to the antiquity of the language. The extended synopsis provided at the beginning of the book, complete with many sample translated passages, is excellent.

The rules of Thai versification are contained in the chanthalak section of the Lak Phaasaa Thay or "Principles of the Thai Language," the earliest text of which is thought to have been written in the 17th century, known as the Cindaamanii. In this work and in its countless modern adaptations, the rules for composition of the khloog and raay poetic forms are prescribed along with exemplary stanzas from works of Thai literature. (We are not told whether Phra Lo is cited in the earliest extant Cindaamanii.) A recurring theme of these grammars is the notion that older literary works did not follow the rules as faithfully as the modern ones, and it is this brand of literary criticism to which Bickner reacts most strongly.

The Thai verse forms of khloog and raay are a complex interaction of carefully defined syllable type, syllable number, interjected syllables (kham szoy), hemistiches, lines, stanzas, vocalic rhyme, and tone placement, in addition to the non-prescribed use of other poetic devices such as alliteration and internal rhyme (raay is less complex than khloog, and only in its "refined" form, known as raay suphaap, is tone placement indicated). An example of khloog sii suphaap structure is given below, where "O" indicates a syllable, 1 = may ?eek or first tone mark, and 2 = may thoo, and lines indicate which syllables must rhyme.

Here there are several points of interest when the structure is examined in a comparative and historical linguistic frame. The first is that as regards tone placement, it is not individual tones, but rather historical tone categories which are indicated. Thus, depending on the consonant class of the modern standard language, may ?eek could refer to either a low tone or a falling tone, and may thoo could be either a falling tone or a high tone. Note that in the case of the falling tone, may ?eek and may thoo are the same. Bickner concludes that the only way to make sense of the tone placement rules is to assume they evolved at a time when the language had only three tones on "live" syllables (those ending in sonorants, as opposed to "dead" syllables which end with final stops), known to students of comparative Tai as A, B, and C. In the modern writing system, A tones occur on syllables with no tone mark, B on syllables with may ?eek, and C on syllables with may thoo. These original three tones each split into two or more in the various Tai dialects following a sound change which devoiced initial consonants, resulting in the high and low class consonant series in Thai orthography.

All of this means, as Bickner demonstrates in the discussion of rhyme, that according to the modern rules of poetry tone is not a part of rhyme, whereas to the creators of Phra Lo rhyme consisted of an agreement of vowel, final consonant, and tone.
Because of the ambiguity between tone and tone class, as well as a lack of linguistic background on the part of Thai literary scholars, a concept of "incorrectness" of tone developed in Thai poetics, known as ?ek thoot and thoo thoot. Bickner shows convincingly (and repeatedly) that no such concept need exist. For example, วิ่น 'to wait' is spelled with the first tone mark in modern Thai but placed in positions requiring the second tone mark and spelled วิ่น. In fact, in all Thai languages except Thai, the word occurs with a tone equivalent to วิ่น /tha C1/. In this case as in many others, it is modern Thai spelling which is aberrant, not the authors of Phra Lo.

Another important aspect of the poetic structures under study is that "dead" syllables (those with Proto-Tai tone D) may substitute for syllables requiring the first tone (those spelled with แก้ or Proto-Tai tone B). Bickner notes that in Phra Lo dead syllables with long vowels (DL) are most frequently used in these positions, with fewer instances of dead syllables with short vowels (DS). Perhaps it should also have been brought out with respect to this substitution that the coalescence of B and D (L) tones occurs not only in Thai, but is a trait found widely distributed in all branches of Tai. It has indeed led linguists to speculate about the possibility that B tones developed from an original syllable final /-h/ or /-s/ which was lost (cf., for example, Gedney 1978) which had a phonetic effect similar to final stop. The corresponding C tone is associated with final creaky voice in the Central and Southwestern Tai languages and may have evolved from syllables with final glottal stop /-ʔ/. Gedney therefore suggests the possibility of reconstructing a Proto-Tai aspirated tone (B), and a glottalized tone (C), that is, tones characterized by phonation types rather than segmental phonemes. And in fact the B tone in the recently discovered Mèn language is characterized by final breathiness (Chamberlain 1991).

In terms of the B tone in Thai poetry, it is functionally quite distinct from A and C in not being subject to compulsory rhyme. This may be seen in Bickner's revised structural design for khloog sii suphaap stanzas in Phra Lo given below, presented in terms of Proto-Tai tone categories:

$$\begin{align*}
O & O B C A (O O) \\
O & B O O A B C \\
O & O B O A O B (O O) \\
O & B O O C B C O A
\end{align*}$$

The three-position rhyme is an A tone rhyme (a fact not noted in the prescriptive grammars), and the two position rhyme is a C tone rhyme. But there is no corresponding B tone rhyme. Another curious feature mentioned by Bickner is that syllables with final nasals /-m, -n, -ŋ/ are also substituted for B tone in a significant number of cases although there is no mention of vowel length in these cases. Perhaps, if phonation is the critical feature, it may have been more audible on syllables of this type, especially with short vowels where the nasals may be more drawn out. In any event, by contrast to the other two, it is as if B tone syllables were of a different phonological order altogether.

Looking at all of the Tai dialects ever recorded, we find B commonly coalescing with D; sometimes coalescing with C, as in Central Thai; sometimes coalescing with A, mostly in Southern Thai. In Lao and in Southern Thai C coalesces with DL. But nowhere do we find A coalescing with C.

We might speculate, again citing Gedney (1978), that since the relative number of syllables in Tai languages with B tone is greater than those with D tone (dead syllables), the original poetic device called for a dead syllable, and B tone was in fact the substitute for D. This might account for its not being included in the rhyme scheme like A and C.

This leads to another delicate point. If it is the phonation types that were distinguished rather than the pitch contour, the tone splits which came later would be incidental, since in the case of C tone, creakiness is present in all syllables regardless of initial consonant type. Thus, there are rhymes for A (normal) and C (creaky). But B syllables are not so neat and do not rhyme well. Support for this comes from Lao where B and DL do not coalesce as they do in Siamese, but where in oral poetry I have observed that the same rule of substitution still applies. In other words, it is not possible to say with certainty that the devoicing sound change had not yet occurred at the time of the composing of Phra Lo.

An idea of Bickner's that is very intriguing and holds great potential for further study is the analogy drawn between poetic form and traditional Thai music. From reading his detailed description of auditory effects it seems that the first half of the khloog sii stanza ends with an unambiguous but unresolved succession of $\ldots A_r / BC_r /$ with no optional intersecting syllables allowed (where $X_r = \text{rhymed, and } /= \text{breath group end in the modern sung form}$) which is mimicked in the stanza's final phonological array of $\ldots C_r / BC / OA /$, or often $\ldots C_r / BC / OA /$, the final OA / functioning as the resolution of line two.

In fact, the final syllables of khloog 2, khloog 3, and raay suphaap stanzas are identical to khloog 4, and Bickner sees them all as variations of a common structure, not differentiated except in the prescriptive grammars. He also sees them as inherently Thai/Tai forms, not borrowed from Indic sources. There is great promise here for two lines of investigation: comparisons of Thai (Siamese) forms with poetry of other Tai groups, and the resemblance of these to indigenous Thai/Tai musical patterns.

To conclude, Bickner's work is a landmark, and for the study of Thai literature its implications are far reaching. A complete rethinking of poetic form is called for before all else. This cannot, however, be done in Thailand until the discipline of comparative and historical Tai is more fully established and made accessible to students of Thai literature. At the present time the interests of those students is still primarily focused on Indic and Khmer origins.
while studies of other Tai literatures are almost non-existent (except for a little which has been done on Lao). What is originally Tai in Thai literature is still to be determined, but Bickner's work has provided the framework and the methodology for such studies to commence.

With respect to Phra Lo, this book, as Bickner says in the title, is only the introduction. The few seductive glimpses we are afforded in the sample passages leaves the reader longing for more. We look forward to a critical edition and to Bickner's translation of Phra Lo in its entirety and to the additional stimulating analytical insights with which we will surely be presented.

REFERENCES


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Translating a literary work from one language into another is a demanding and intricate task, for what is being transposed are not mere inventories of technical terms such as dominate the discourse of scientific journals; rather, in literature one must construct a unified whole out of words whose significations and associated emotive responses are multiple. And this lexical aggregate in its entirety must also be affectively equal to that of the original. To achieve this in poetry is even more complex given the added constraints of formal structure and rhythmic significance. As a result, few Southeast Asian literary works, especially poetry, are translated into English or other Western languages, and hence remain beyond the ken of students of form and genre or of comparative literature generally. For this reason Wajuppa Tossa's elegant contribution of Phadaeng Nang Ai to our impoverished gallery is to be gratefully welcomed by patrons who otherwise might never experience this fascinating work.

To the translator's credit, the criticisms which I am able to offer here are petty, concerned more with the analytical periphery surrounding the work than with the translation itself. And if the introductory material is lacking, to that extent exactly the artistic merit of the literary work, I feel, has benefitted.

Academic translation frequently focuses too heavily and inartistically on religious or historical content at the expense of form and aesthetic effect. In Phadaeng Nang Ai this tendency has to a large extent been reversed and aesthetic concerns are given greater consideration. This having been said, there are some problems in the analytical material which should be addressed.

Perhaps the most important issue for discussion is that of the place of Phadaeng Nang Ai in Isan literature. It is an issue that is immediately problematic for several reasons. First of all, unlike most other works of literature in the Northeast of Thailand, Phadaeng Nang Ai has no strong corresponding tradition in Laos. Second, given an indigenous origin, it is logical to assume that it was borrowed from an Austroasiatic source, but if so, what was it? Third, if these assumptions are correct, as a piece of Isan literature, it cannot have predated the arrival in the Northeast of the Lao speakers, that is, not earlier than the 16th or 17th century A.D.

Another factor which might have been given further attention by Dr. Wajuppa is that the two most often cited printed versions of the text, the Phra Ariyamuwat text of Srinakarinwirot University at Mahasarakham, which she has used for the translation, and the Dr. Preecha Pitthong edition printed in Ubon, appear to be independent compositions, not based on a common textual tradition. And although it was never her purpose to provide a critical edition, some indication of the degree of variation found in the manuscripts would be helpful in interpreting the poem.

All of these matters have important implications for the analysis of the subject matter. Essentially it suggests that the Buddhist elements and the historical information contained in the poem, to which much space is devoted in the introduction, are recent innovations. Etiological interpretations relating to the origin of the rocket festival would likewise be unwarranted since the pre-Buddhist rocket festival is found over a much wider range than Phadaeng Nang Ai and is obviously much older. When these elements are stripped away we are left, I believe, with a Mon-Khmer myth which has yet to be adequately comprehended.

In its most primitive form, devoid of its more recently acquired material, the myth might go something like this: An intruding group [the Tais] wish to take up residence in aboriginal territory. A contest is held to determine who shall rule with the aboriginal princess as the prize. The intruders win, usually because of some trickery [or as in Phadaeng Nang Ai the contest is inconclusive] but because the aborigines control the spirits of the land, as opposed to apotropaic spirits which may be brought from the outside] disaster [usually drought] ensues. A sacrifice is offered to appease the spirits [in this case Phangkhi in the guise of an albino squirrel] and the burnt flesh [cooked — a symbol of civilization] is poisonous to the aborigines, forcing water to appear and the aborigines to sink under-
water [the domain of water which they continue to control]. The princess remains, [consumed but] unwed [uncivilized], and the contest between aborigine and intruder ends in a stalemate, that is, in the kind of symbiotic relationship found between Tai and AA so frequently even today.

A Phu Thay myth from Khao Vong in Kalasin Province which describes the relationship between the AA So and the Phu Thay comes closest to this prototype, and I believe it may indeed be one of the antecedents of Phadaeng Nang Ai — minus the Lao trappings. Here, an original Phu Thay ancestor named Khamdaeng, one of seven brothers, arrives in a land inhabited only by the So. They fight, but inconclusively, so a contest is arranged; the winner will marry the So king’s daughter and rule the land; the loser must leave. The contest consists of shooting a crossbow arrow at the face of a cliff [Pha] and whichever arrow sticks in the cliff wins. The So have an enormous crossbow which takes many men to fire, but it fails to penetrate the cliff. The Phu Thay, however, are clever. They use a small bow, but put sticky resin [khi suut] on the tip of the arrow so that when it hits the face of the cliff it stays. They win and the So depart. However a drought plagues the land for many months, and finally the Phu Thay are forced to invite the So to return and live in the same territory since only they can control the rain. I strongly suspect, in fact, that this may be the etymology of the Phadaeng’s name. /phaa/ means ‘cliff and /daeng/ is ‘red,’ two elements which are found in the Phu Thay myth, /khram) daeng/, the ancestor, and the cliff /phaa/.

More than this we cannot say at the present time since we do not have the necessary mythological material available for comparative analysis. It would be useful, for instance, to have So myths, as well as others from the many Tai groups in the Northeast, accessible for this purpose. If these were available, something along the lines of the Lévi-Strauss style analysis in “The Raw and the Cooked” might be feasible.

Phadaeng Nang Ai is therefore of greater importance to Northeastern culture in the domains of mythology and folklore than in that of literature. The association with the rocket festival probably came about due to the drought motif of the myth. Traditionally, of course, this festival had nothing to do with Buddhism but happens to coincide with the Buddhist Visakha Bucha ceremony at the beginning of the rainy season. The poem should not be considered an historical source despite its mention of Nong Sae since these and related notions of Lao history are not datable from other historical texts and are no longer widely accepted; in any case they are merely recently added trappings to the myth. Likewise, Khom and Khuner are not necessarily synonymous, although it has become conventional in Thailand to think this. The history included in the poem is thus from a separate tradition, added, no doubt, because the original composer sensed the protohistorical nature of the myth and its attempt to define the Tai-AA relationship. This aspect of the poem is addressed in the introduction but in accordance with the more traditional practice of reifying the myth into history. The considerable space in the work devoted to explaining Isan place names may likewise be attributed to the influence of the protohistorical content of the original myth.

As a piece of literature it is unique in its local conception but its composition is relatively recent; the language is not archaic and the use of the term epic as suggested by Dr. Wajuppa when she attempts to compare it to Beowulf and the Odyssey, is dubious. The enigmatic term folk-epic is never defined. (To my mind, there is only one true epic in all of mainland Southeast Asia and that is the Lao poem of Thao Hung or Cheuang.) The genre of Phadaeng Nang Ai is, I feel, more correctly interpreted as a “roman en vers,” based upon a particular class of myths which explain the spiritual relationship between intruder and indigene, the original poets having attempted, consciously or unconsciously, to recast it into one of the many Jataka-type poems thereby imbuing it heavily with karmic significance.

The description of the poetic form of the original Lao text is some what confusing and we might wish that more detail had been included. The versification is labeled khlooy saam but some things are not clear; for example, which syllables are required to have specific tone categories. (There is actually an error here in that the tone marks may ?eek and may tho are treated as if they are individual tones, “two out of the six,” when in fact they represent ancient tone categories. Thus, may tho is used for two distinct tones which contrast, for example in /naa C1/ ‘face,’ vs. /naa C4/ ‘mother’s younger sibling,’ —th and ʔn. In the Isan Lao dialects may ?eek frequently represents a single tone, although this is not true in Roi­et, for example, nor in Phu Thay. Also, we are told that this same form is used for other famous Lao classics such as Sinsay but in this case the form is con­sidered to consist of four line stanzas, rather than two lines as the Phadaeng Nang Ai type is purported to have. (In fact, stanzas are not separated in the translation or in the published text.)

All of this is, however, a very arcane critique, one which pertains only to the introductory material and not to the translation itself, which should be judged on its own artistic merit. This is obviously where Dr. Wajuppa’s energy and talent are focused, for in the English rendition the reader is skillfully transported into the Isan universe, its geography, its lore, and its bestiary. We are introduced to a vivid poetic imagi­nation where axes may be forged of diamond, bath water is scented with sandalwood oil, and betel is chewed in halls of gold where hunchback maids­ens arrive bearing gifts. Nagas do battle over porcupine flesh and later cause the earth to swallow the Khom’s city and all its people. There are also good explanatory notes to accompany the text for the less familiar imagery.

The translation succeeds as a work of art in itself while at the same time remaining entirely faithful to the lexi­con and the poetic flavor of the original. It is highly recommended for those who want to experience the Isan folk character, and should be required reading for those who work in the Northeast and need to understand the
people with whom they are working. Dr. Wajuppa is to be congratulated for a fine translation — what we hope is the first of many more to come.

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NOTES

1 There are in fact several copies listed in an inventory of manuscripts done recently in Laos, two in Vat Phra Keo in Vientiane, one in Savannakhet and one in Champasak (see Khampeng Ketavong (editor), Sammana bay laan thu pathet khung khi niti, 1988 Social Science Institute, Vientiane.) I suspect, however, given the locations, that these may have originated in the Northeast of Thailand. Unfortunately, the Vientiane manuscripts are reported as missing (p. 151) so the comparative evidence may have been lost.

2 A similar myth from Renu Nakkon, Nakfon Phanom is recorded by Srisuda Euankhriinth, Wannakam phin baan phu thay, tambol reenuu, ca' wat nakkon phonom, 2520, M.A. Thesis, Srinakarinwiroit University, Mahasarakam. But in this version the names have been changed and much material has been reworked in an effort to make myth into history. The archery contest, however, remains the same.

The English Factory in Japan
TONY FARRINGTON

Two thick, elegantly printed volumes have just come out to shed new light, or rather the most original light, on the activities of the Hirado Factory. This is to date the most comprehensive effort to document this famous British trading post in Japan whose existence lasted for only about ten years (1613-1623) but which constitutes a basic chapter in the history of British-Japanese trade relations in the era of the legendary William Adams.

The aim of the writer, Tony Farrington, is to collect and present the whole number of available records, trying in such a way to retrace the history and observe the Factory "from within." The strategy is brilliantly conceived:

After a very short Introduction the documents — 436 or rather 437 items in all — are classified into four basic group sources:

a. Correspondence (which is by far the richest)

b. Ships' journals

c. Accounts
d. Diaries

The reader can thus follow in the minutest detail the reports and exchanges between the factors in Japan and their superiors in London, communications between various other stations, the efforts, successes and failures of an expanding trade to China or Southeast Asia — with numerous references to Ayudhya, Pattani, Bangkok, etc. — even the "dry" enumeration of bills and accounts which after all and despite their monotony constituted the backbone of the very existence and justification of the Factory.

Amazingly one could find here analogies with Siam: The "low priority" given then by the British to Japan — as former British Ambassador to Tokyo Hugh Cortazzi rightly points out in his Foreword — which led to the closure of the Hirado post in 1623, reappeared in a parallel way a few decades later in the case of Siam where again the British chose to diminish their presence and finally to withdraw. In Japan at the time the outstanding personality was William Adams, as in Siam was "the Greek," Constantine Phaulkon.

The point to be underlined is that all the above is presented before our eyes in the original form, not as excerpts, with the language peculiarities of the times and of the traders' vocabulary, without the burden of distracting external comments — unless necessary. The feeling is that everything is genuine, original, emerging from an oblivion of 350 years exactly as it was said, sent and reported, except of course for the original manuscript form. Detailed tables, glossaries, indexes, biographical and bibliographical notes help to trace immediately any given letter, report, entry, etc. and to place its origins and its proper background. It must be mentioned that it is to the credit of the author, who holds the crucial post of Deputy Director of the India Office Library and Records at the British Library, that, apart from tracing the records, he conceived of so many elaborate and systematic ways to approach such varied material which by its nature does not call for a continuous reading but rather constitutes a gold mine for reference purposes. Speed in identifying a source or certain passage, person, place, etc. is of essential importance and the overall structure of the volumes is designed only to facilitate the reader. A most stable and sound foundation is thus provided for anyone interested in that period.

Naturally final answers may not be drawn from this impressive documentary structure as the records "only give one side of the picture." The lighting comes indeed from the European — and mostly British — angle and much less from the Japanese.

Some questions nevertheless are bound to arise, not pertaining to the records as such but to their presentation or exploitation: Who is the main target of the author? The specialist on Japan, perhaps in a stricter sense the specialist in British-Japanese intercourse during the 17th Century? Or the enlightened reader with a general interest in Japan and Japanese history?

If the answer is affirmative for the first case, then we may consider not only that the labour of Mr. Farrington represents a perfect success but that it is also — and will remain in the future — a most valuable scientific contribution for research on the 17th century in Japan. The tool for study of this particular chapter of the Hirado Factory will be offered to researchers with all the original wealth that it enshrines as a valuable "dictionary of data."

But if the second hypothesis is correct, without retracting an iota of praise already formulated for the main part of the work, I would personally feel and venture to submit that an
eventual second edition might somehow be expanded or even an additional publication attempted. First, the introduction should be of a more general character, a little more lengthy perhaps to place Hirado firmly on the map and without the occasional direct quotations from the works which cause a certain slight discontinuity in the present introduction.

And second, at the end of the main corpus of original materials there should be a concluding chapter with broader evaluations, interpretations, and synthetic remarks as to what the corpus in reality contains to enlighten the reader about the deeper human feelings, values, aspirations, achievements or shortcomings of these adventurers. A more vivid picture, that is, of the general psychology of what comes out from forgotten sources or those unknown till today regarding the new world they came in touch with, "a world elsewhere," if we borrow from Prof. Derek Mazzarella's title of his own broader but related study on encounters in Japan in the 16th and 17th centuries.

There was real life at Hirado during these ten years of the Factory. There was the monumental figure of Ieyasu's protégé, William Adams, the legendary "hatamoto," the equivalent in a way in Japan of the ambiguous Vichayan, Constantine Phaulkon, in Thailand a few decades later. There were quarrels and suspicions against him, jealousies and so many other related feelings concerning men of action who had to compete far away from their native shores. There were also the Japanese and their reactions to foreigners. And then there were the Dutch and rivalries with them as everywhere else. All this is reflected of course in the corpus but it would be fascinating to see an overview of what happened and why on the basis of the original material.

It could be counterargued that this is beyond the scope of the compilation as it has already been undertaken by others; for instance, the detailed study of Hirado by Prof. Mazzarella, especially in his long chapter "Living and Surviving in Hirado." That I have to admit, but it nevertheless seems to me that Mr. Farrington is drawing from a far broader area of records so that he could also legitimately attempt a reconstruction of life through his own interpretation and use of additional materials. It is gratifying indeed that as the writer himself points out, 97 out of the 436 documents "have never before been published and a further 76 have been known solely in abbreviated or extract versions..." All those interested in the period are grateful for this new mine of information but they would also welcome a more analytical approach, a "study" besides the "dictionary."

Anyway, this, I would admit, is just a wish since Mr. Farrington set out to undertake primarily a compilation of rare if not totally unknown records, and that he has done brilliantly.

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NOTES
1. Hugh Cortazzi: In the Foreword to Farrington's work.
3. Farrington: op. cit., p. 16.

The Samādhi of Direct Encounter with the Buddhas of the Present, an Annotated English Translation of the Tibetan Version of the Pratyutpanna-Buddha-Sammukhāvasthita-Samādhī-Sūtra with Several Appendices Relating to the History of the Text, Studia Philologica Buddhica Monograph Series V.

PAUL HARRISON
xxviii + 346 pages.

The Mahāyāna is vast, complex, and diverse. Its literature—the product of more than a millennium of development over a wide geographical area, preserved today in Sanskrit, Tibetan, Chinese, and several Central Asian languages—is vast, complex, and diverse. In order to understand the Mahāyāna, we must understand its literature, and for this we need reliable studies and translations.

The work under review, both a study and translation of the Pratyutpanna-Buddha-Sammukhāvasthita-Samādhī-Sūtra,1 is therefore a welcome contribution. But for a single folio recovered from the sands of Khotan in Central Asia, the Praś is lost in the original Indic; it is preserved, however, in one Tibetan and four Chinese translations. The first Chinese translation of C. E. 179 belongs to the early period of the translation of Indian Buddhist texts into the very different tongue and ideograms of the Middle Country; Harrison's translation is based on his own romanized edition of the Tibetan translation,2 which dates to circa C. E. 800, in comparison with the Chinese versions.

The Praś bears the hallmarks of Mahāyāna sūtra literature: a vast assembly, a cosmic perspective, and diverse miracles. When the curtain opens, multitudes of arhats, bodhisattvas, and deities throng to the presence of the Buddha, to the point that the skies of the universe become "so crowded with highly exalted [deities] that one could not even have found enough room to insert the point of a staff"[11]. Bhadrapāla, a householder bodhisattva, then asks the Buddha about samādhi (concentration, meditation) in 146 terms [Chapter 1]. The Buddha's answer describes, in 154 ways, the samādhi which is the subject of the sūtra—the "Direct Encounter with the Buddhas of the Present" [Chapter 2]. Chapter 13 gives a prediction of the future fate of the samādhi; Bhadrapāla, the bodhisattva, the monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen all vow to be reborn in future in order to propagate the Praś. In Chapter 16, Bhadrapāla invites the Buddha and the entire assembly to dine at his house on the morrow; by the power of the Buddha, his house becomes so spacious that all can be seated comfortably. Chapter 23 on rejoicing in the samādhi, and Chapter 26, the last, in which the Buddha entrusts "this treasure of the supreme Dharma" to the assembly, are
also common elements of Mahāyāna sūtra literature.

The PraS is eclectc in that it aims at all "four assemblies"—monks [Ch. 9], nuns [Ch. 10], laymen [Ch. 11], and laywomen [Ch. 12]. These chapters describe the high moral standards required of each group. The sūtra is quite free of the polemic against the "Hinayāna" found in some Mahāyāna texts; it even recommends that a bodhisattva see all dharmas as do Buddhhas, pratīyakabuddhas, and arhats [18F].

Much of the PraS is not "original" (originality being a concept quite foreign to the sūtra genre): it draws on a stock of phraseology, similes, and doctrinal material common in part to Buddhist sūtra literature in general, in part to Mahāyāna sūtra literature. The phraseology is adopted or adapted from literature of both the Śrāvakayāna (the introductory [1A] and closing [26EF] formulas; the formula for asking permission to question the Buddha [1J]; the "one dhāma" formula [2C]; the "four dhāmas" formula [4A, etc.]; the formula on the smile of the Buddha [13J]; the formula on the invitation of the Buddha and the monks to a meal and of the preparation and offering of the meal [16A foll.]; the jātaka formula, etc.) and of the Mahāyāna [2A]. The comparison of the aggregates to murderers, the sense bases to poisonous snakes [2H] has a parallel in the Pali Sānāvantamāka (SN IV 174.22), and was also popular in Mahāyāna sūtras such as the Vimalakīrtinirdesā (Lamotte's translation p. 136, and n. 28) and the Suvannabhadra-sūtra (ch. 6, vv. 4-5). Sometimes counterparts to whole paragraphs occur in other texts. Harrison points out several such parallels in the notes: the Ratnacandra-paripṛcchā [6.11], the Kāśyapaparivarta [9.1], and the Pratīyakṣaparivarta [15.11, 18.2]. In addition, the PraS contains two verses common to other Mahāyāna sūtras: one [ch. 3, v. 4] to the Lankāvatārā-sūtra, a second [ch. 8, v. 1] to the Samādhīhāra-sūtra. Also well known in Buddhist literature are the ten powers (dāsabhāla) and four assurances (maitrādhyojana) of a Buddha and the eighteen exclusive (āvēñika) Buddha dharmas, the subject of Chapters 20, 21, and 22 respectively. Here the prose follows the old formulas closely; only the concluding verses are (probably) unique to the PraS.

The prose exposition shows a preference for presenting dharmas in groups of four, a characteristic shared with the Kāśyapaparivarta, the Bhadracāravagyakara, the Ratnāśūtra, and other early Mahāyāna sūtras.

The PraS unites two important themes of Mahāyāna practice and thought. The first, which gives its name to the sūtra, is the samādhi. This, as noted by Harrison, is a development of the ancient practice of the "collection of the Buddha" (buddhānusmrī, buddhānussati). Details of the practice are given in Chapter 3. Harrison points out that the reference to the visualisation of Amitāyus occurs in the oldest Chinese translation, that done by Lokakṣema in C. E. 179, and that this is the earliest datable literary reference to that Buddha.

One of the results of the samādhi is that the practitioner sees Buddhhas, and hears the dharma from them; and on engaging into the samādhi the bodhisattvas expound at length to others those dharmas, just as they have heard, retained, and mastered them [3C; see also 14I]. Such passages most probably explain the origin of some of the "inspired" sūtra literature, not only of the Mahāyāna, but also of the Śrāvakayāna.

Thus the main practice of the PraS is the collection and visualisation of the Buddha, with a strict and lofty code of ethics as basis. This is conjoined with a second theme, that of emptiness (svaññatā, suññatā). The practice of the samādhi is subjected to a philosophical interpretation similar to that of the Sūtras on the Perfection of Wisdom (Prajñāpāramitā): the samādhi and the resultant vision of the Buddhhas, and indeed all phenomena, are like a dream, empty and without substance. A basis for this realization is the consolidation of the four applications of mindfulness (samyutapasthāna, satiapattāna) [15J, 18B-F].

Apart from the ethical code, the samādhi itself, and the philosophical passages, two main concerns run through the sūtra: a concern to establish its authenticity, and a concern for its preservation.

The concern for authenticity first appears in Chapter 6. For some of the key phrases, the editors of the PraS utilized a source close to the Pali Anāgata-bhaya-sutta (AN III 106-108). In this text, one of several such suttas, the Buddha speaks of five "future perils, not yet arisen, which will come to be in future". The fourth of these concerns monks "who have not cultivated their bodies; who have not cultivated morality; who have not cultivated their minds; who have not cultivated wisdom" (abhāvāvatābāhāvatābāhāvatātābāhāvapatiñītā; "when suttas taught by the Tathāgata, profound and of deep significance, transcending the world, dealing with emptiness are expounded, they will not want to listen; they will not lend an ear or take interest, and will not think to retain or fulfill such teachings" (na sussusissanti na sotam odahissanti na aññacittāna upaññhapassanti, na ca te dhamma uggahetabbāna pariyupannabbāna mahānissanti). Instead, they will be interested in "suttas composed by poets—poetry beautifully worded and beautifully phrased—that belongs to outsiders, that is spoken by disciples" (suttantā kaviñcā kāveyagā citākkharā citāyugaññanā bāhīrakā sūkhaññatā)."

Similarly, Chapter 6 of the PraS refers to "beings who do not wish to hear this samādhi, and who will reject this samādhi" [6B]. It speaks of future monks and bodhisattvas "who have not cultivated their bodies; who have not cultivated their minds; who have not cultivated morality; who have not cultivated wisdom" and who are, among other things, "frightened by the exposition of emptiness". When the PraS is being expounded, they "will not give ear to it or listen to it, will not have faith in it, nor accept, master, keep, or read it" [6D]. They will deride and denounce it, saying, "sūtras like this are fabrications, they are poetic inventions; they were not spoken by the Buddha" [6E], or the PraS is "something which was not spoken by the Buddha, which is a poetic invention of their own fabrication, a conglomerate of words and syllables uttered merely in conversation" [6H].

While it is clear that the two texts drew from a common source, they applied the passage to ultimately opposing ends. An orthodox Theravadin would interpret the first type of sutta as the
Buddhacarana enshrined in his own, the Pali, canon, and the second type of sutta as the “fabrications” of the Mahayana (and of other Shravaka schools). In the PraS the situation is reversed: it is a Mahayana sutra, the PraS itself, that is authentic, and any suggestion that it is not is simply the false imputation of the ignorant.

Among the literary devices of authentication widely employed in Buddhist literature (including not only sutras but also the regional state and temple chronicles [vansas] throughout the wide Buddhist world) are the jataka—an account of a past life of one or more of the characters, related to present events—and the vyakarana, a prediction given by a Buddha of the future Buddhahood of one or more members of his audience. Chapter 15 of the PraS gives a jataka of the past Buddha Dipankara, explaining how he predicted the future awakening as Sakyamuni [15A-15F]; in Chapter 17 the Buddha states out the wide Buddhist world) are the temple chronicles [pras], whose characters, related to present events, are the antithetical of the past Buddha Dipankara, who then predicted his future awakening as Sakyamuni [17A, 17B1-3, etc.]. These devices connect the PraS with the Buddhas of the past, present, and future, and thereby establish its authenticity: as the sutra the PraS is praised by the Buddhas of the three times.

Coupled with this concern for legitimacy is the concern that the sutra be preserved. The PraS repeatedly extols the merits accrued by those who “take up, master, keep, read, copy, expound, and cultivate this samadhi” [7B, 7C, etc.]. While it is quite common for a Mahayana sutra to recommend its own preservation, often in the final chapter, the PraS seems particularly obsessed with the matter, since the theme runs throughout the entire work. The exhortations have been successful, since the PraS is now alive and well in the English tongue.

Harrison’s introduction gives a survey of textual sources (I), a lucid exposition of the contents and historical significance of the PraS (II) and of its structure (III), and a note on the principles of translation (IV). His unabbreviated translation succeeds admirably in giving an interesting and readable rendering of the long, complex, and often repetitive sentences typical of the literature. Thorny points, differences between the Tibetan and various Chinese translations, and parallel Sanskrit terms or passages are discussed in the footnotes. Solidly based as it is on the study of all available sources, the translation attains a rare degree of accuracy. One small error occurs in the “ten epigraphs” of the (or a) Buddha [3F, 15A, 17A, etc.]. One of these is anuttarahapurushad-myasraththi (Pali anuttaro purisasam-masrathi)9 “supreme leader of men to be trained”. Harrison, presumably following a common but misleading punctuation of the Tibetan translation of this phrase,10 divides the epithet into two, as “the Leader of All Men Capable of Conversion, the Supreme One”.

Otherwise, I reluctantly raise a quibble about Harrison’s consistent use of “apperception” for sanjñā (Tibetan ‘du shes, Pali sati–ātānā) — reluctantly because a week-long seminar on the translation of this term in all its contexts would more likely end in blows than consensus. I agree that “apperception” is an acceptable rendition of sanjñā in some cases, such as the “aggregate of apperception” (sanjñā–skanda–ha). In other cases I feel that “notion”, “idea”, or “concept” would be more appropriate. These include “the notion of a teacher” (sāstry–sanjñā), of frequent occurrence in the PraS and other Mahayana sutras, along with “the notion of existents” (bhāvo–sanjñā) and “the notion of a sentient being” (sattva–sanjñā).

Several passages about which the translator expresses uncertainty, signalled by a [?], may be clarified by reference to Pali, Sanskrit, and other Tibetan parallels.11

Text

Pali

Sanāgī–sutta, DN 33, vol. III, p. 238.25, the fifth of five cetasava vinibandha:12

Sanskrit

Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya, Bhaisajyavastu (passage parallel to SN IV 180):13

Sanskrit

Asaṅga, Śrīvaṅgabhuṣaṁ:14

The recurrence of the phrase in different contexts shows that it is an ancient formula expressing the Buddhist rejection of the application of spiritual practices towards a good rebirth and the pleasures of the heavens, as practised by some Brahmanical ascetics. For the Buddhists, to practise morality or to perform austerities with a view to a heavenly rebirth is a “mental block” (DN, MN, AN V); a condition of being “kidnapped by non-humans (i.e. gods)” (amanussaggaho SN, amanussaggrāha, Bhaisajyavastu); and a “wrong aspiration” (mātrāpaṛīñhita, Asaṅga). Thus Harrison’s translation is quite correct, and the [?] may be deleted.
The phrase means the same in the present context: the Buddha entrusts the PraS to the assembly, admonishing its members to preserve, cultivate, and realise it, and "not become the last of the line [of transmission of the PraS]".

**PraS p. 298:**

Harrison's tentative reconstruction of a fragmentary line of Sanskrit verse, [śhāpetaṁ kaṁ][m]eṇa [puṛa]ṇukṛṣṇa is supported by the Lalitaivistara (prose) sūtra, which, in the phraseology of the (Mūla-) Saṅvātiyādīsī, reads dhautastāmaṇapātātām, rendered into Tibetan as phyag (gnyis) bcabs te lhung bzed gyu bar.21 This confirms that the Sanskrit equivalent of gyu ba is here apa-ni, and that the expression should indeed mean "put away" or "put aside", but it does not resolve the problem of the origin of the Tibetan term.

[26C], PraS p. 204: "so that you are not the last person [to do so]"

Text: de ci nas kyang skyes bu tha ma par ma gyur par bya'o //

In his Upāyikā-ākāra, the Abhidhamma-kosa, the Mahāyāna Buddhist schools cites a passage from the "Mahādeva-sūtra, twelfth of the Rājasuyukta".22 King Mahādeva, when the first white hair appears on his head, turns his kingdom over to his son and goes to lead the holy life (brahma-caryā) as a "royal sage" (rājapṝṣi). He admonishes the prince to rule righteously, and, when he in turn sees his first white hair, to follow his father's example and become a royal sage, concluding with the statement, skyes bu tha chad dang / skyes bu tha mar ma gyur cig.23 The corresponding passage in the Pali counterpart, the Mahādeva-sūtra of the Majjhima-nikāya (MN II 75.28), reads mā kho me tvān antima purpo asati. The statement means "do not be the last person" in the sense of "do not become the last of the line": the prince should follow his father's example. This is clear from the Pali, which states that after King Mahādeva came 84,000 kings who in succession maintained the lineage: the last "royal sage" was King Nimi, whose son broke the tradition and so became the last of the line (so tesan antima purpo asati, MN II 82.18). At the end of the sutta (83.5), the Buddha admonishes Ānanda not to become "the last of the line" in the transmission of his teaching, in this case the noble eightfold path.

The phrase means the same in the present context: the Buddha entrusts the PraS to the assembly, admonishing its members to preserve, cultivate, and realise it, and "not become the last of the line [of transmission of the PraS]".

The work ends with three appendices. Appendix A deals with the textual history of the PraS in China. Appendix B gives a new edition of the Khotanese Sanskrit fragment, accompanied by an English translation of the fragment and of the corresponding sections of two of the Chinese translations. This section gives a clear and detailed picture of the complexities of textual transmission, since the reader can compare four versions of each passage: the Sanskrit, two Chinese translations, and the Tibetan as found in the main translation. Appendix C lists some corrections to Harrison's earlier edition of the Tibetan text of the PraS. This is followed by a Sanskrit-English-Tibetan glossary-cum-index, and a thorough bibliography. The latter includes studies in Japanese.

Appendix B, along with the notes that accompany the translation, raises interesting questions about the transmission of Mahāyāna sūtras. The San-
skrit, the Tibetan, and the two Chinese translations usually express the same idea, but their phraseology is different. While in some cases the difference may result from a wrong or free translation, in other cases it can only result from differences in the recensions employed: thus we can postulate at least four different recensions of the PraS. As noted by Harrison, a "linear approach" to textual transmission cannot solve the problem, which exists not only for the PraS but for almost all Mahāyāna sūtras found in more than one edition. While the Śrāvakā schools maintained their identity through their Vinaya lineage, and held periodic "councils" (saṅgīti) to establish and revise their canons, such was not the case with the Mahāyāna, which had no geographical centre or central authority. Who, then, decided to undertake the revision of a Mahāyāna sūtra, and under what authority: the sponsorship of a king, of a layman, or the recommendation of a great master (ācārya)? In some cases the revision may have had a regional basis—a text in a regional Prakrit being rendered into another regional Prakrit, or more probably Sanskrit, or a stylistic basis—the updating of the language to conform with current usage and style. It is likely that the style and phraseology were influenced by that of the Vinaya lineage to which the monastery or scholars belonged; thus a Mahāyāna sūtra that shows a preference for (Mūla-)Sarvāstivādin phraseology need not have originated within that school, but only have undergone revision within a (Mūla-) Sarvāstivādin milieu. What principles or methodology were employed by the editors, and who approved the final edition? Where were the revisions done, and were they then copied and sent elsewhere? Perhaps these questions will be answered by further research. At any rate, it is clear that a Mahāyāna sūtra did not exist in a single, "authorized version", and that revisions were done independently at different times and places (and, no doubt, occasionally conflated): a copy made at Nalanda would be different from one made at a monastery in Vallabhi or in Kashmir, and a copy made at either place a century or two later would again be different.

All told, Harrison's translation of the PraS is a monumental work, worthy of study not only as a well translated Mahāyāna sūtra, but also for the light it throws on the complexities of textual transmission.

PETER SKILLING
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ENDNOTES

1 Hereafter abbreviated as PraS. References in square brackets are to the chapters (e.g. [Ch. 1]) or divisions of Harrison's text and translation (e.g. [2H]), or chapter and note of the translation (e.g. [2.13]). References to Pali texts are to the editions of the Pali Text Society (PTS), London, with standard abbreviations. "P" refers to the Peking edition of the Tibetan Tripitaka.


3 Cf. MN III 15.20, etc.

4 Cf. AN I 43.17, etc.

5 Cf. AN II 2.16, etc.


16 P. L. Vaidya, Aṣṭādaśa-sūtra (Buddhist Sanskrit Texts, no. 19), Mithila 1958, p. 102.32.

17 Waldschmidt, loc. cit.


19 P 5537, sens tsam, vi, 69a6.


21 Waldschmidt, op. cit., sections 6.9, 12.5, and 26.17 (the Tibetan of the last example is different).

22 P 5565, vol. 118, mūn pa'i bstan bcos, tu, 86a8.

23 Tu 87b1.

24 P. L. Vaidya, Lalita-vistara (Buddhist Sanskrit Texts, no. 1), Darbhanga, 1958, p. 318.5.

25 AN IV 150.10, V 342.3.