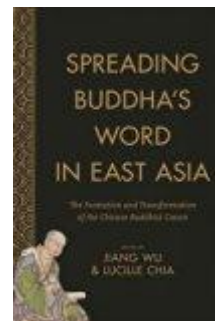


**Jiang Wu, Lucille Chia, eds.** *Spreading Buddha's Word in East Asia: The Formation and Transformation of the Chinese Buddhist Canon*. Sheng Yen Series in Chinese Buddhist Studies. New York: Columbia University Press, 2015. 405 pp. \$75.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-231-17160-1.



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This volume is a significant contribution within the Sheng Yen Series in Chinese Buddhist Studies. Authors focus on the publication of the Sinitic Buddhist canon, and they bring together textual and social histories to examine not only the difficulties in compiling, editing, and publishing these texts but also the motivations for doing so. Among monographs examining canonical texts (notably those by Lewis Lancaster, Gregory Schopen, and Albert Welter), this collection shines for it redraws the boundaries of how the canon is studied. Rather than limiting the analysis to a particular geographical locale, this volume takes a transnational approach. Further, authors push scholarship by broadening how the texts are analyzed, thus providing future works a model of analysis embedded in fluidity. Contributors detail imperial, monastic, and lay actors who sponsored fundraising and production activities necessary for constructing these texts. Incorporating an array of disciplines, they focus on social histories of the *Kaibao Canon* 開寶藏, *Qisha Canon* 磧砂藏, *Goryeo Canon* 高麗藏, and *Taishō Canon* 大正藏.

After a preface by Lancaster and an introduction by the editors, the volume includes nine chapters divided into four sections: part 1, “Overview”; part 2, “The Formative Period”; part 3, “The Advent of Printing”; and part 4, “The Canon beyond China.” Two appendices provide a useful survey of the printed editions of the Chinese Buddhist canon as well as an update of the CBETA (Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association) Electronic Tripitaka. In each of the nine chapters, authors emphasize canonical intersections with politics and technology, thus advancing studies of Chinese Buddhism as well as discussions of canonization. The canon was an object of devotional writing for earning merit, and an object of veneration. It was also a mechanism for emperors to gain cultural capital and international allegiances and for monastics to enhance prestige of their monasteries. Additionally, the mechanics for producing the canon required the collaboration of diverse actors, including donors, printers, editors, commercial distributors, and state supporters. Nine chapters thoroughly detail these activities, drawing the

reader into rich cultural contexts surrounding Sin-  
itic canonization.

Chapter 1, “The Chinese Buddhist Canon through the Ages: Essential Categories and Critical Issues in the Study of a Textual Tradition” by Jiang Wu, familiarizes the reader with the Chinese Buddhist canon—its origin, historical development, structure, materiality, and critical issues for studying it. In discussion of the Chinese Buddhist canon’s origin, Wu highlights the intrigue of the Mahayana Canon for Chinese Buddhists. While Indic Buddhist culture was orally based, the Chinese imagined the Buddhist canon as a set of written texts. From the first to the fifth centuries, the Chinese collected all available Buddhist sources and drew on Confucian modes of cataloging practice for formulating nondenominational/nonsectarian compilations. Wu introduces the various forms of the Chinese Buddhist canon—manuscript editions, the stone canon, and the printed editions, as well as significant emperors and Buddhist scholars who sponsored the publication of canon editions—in order to acquaint the reader with persons and topics taken up in later chapters. Wu points out that the Chinese canon is unique in terms of the medium of its production and reproduction (for example, the use of woodblock printing and binding technologies), its combination of material and physical elements (including its typographical features and formats), its layout and numbering system (a post-845 CE method based on the one thousand characters [*qianziwen zhihao fa* 千字文帙號法]), and storage techniques (including wheel storage [*lunzang* 輪藏] and revolving wheel storage [*zhuanlunzang* 轉輪藏]). While Buddhist studies scholars (and religious studies scholars more broadly) are acquainted with studies of a religious canon, the Buddhist canon challenges familiar notions within the field, and it is this conversation in Wu’s chapter that is quite pertinent. He notes that we not only lack a single definition of the Chinese Buddhist canon, the term “Chinese Buddhist canon” itself is misleading. Various editions exist, and misconceptions of the

canon’s openness must be clarified. While the canon went through an open phase for many centuries, the Chinese canon “became based on a core body of texts stipulated by monk Zhisheng’s *Kaiyuan Catalog*” (p. 36). Premodern canons in East Asia used this core of translated texts for later canon compilation, and thus they may be viewed as extensions, transformations, or even reductions of this catalog. This provides a useful introduction for the next chapter in which Wu presents the “Cult of the Canon.”

In the second chapter, “From the ‘Cult of the Book’ to the ‘Cult of the Canon’: A Neglected Tradition in Chinese Buddhism,” Wu contextualizes the “Cult of the Canon” movement within the “Cult of the Book,” a Mahayana Buddhist devotion to written texts. He includes activities of creation, distribution, and maintenance within his description of the “Cult of the Canon.” Devotion, sponsorship, and the creation of the canon occurred within commoner (clergy and laity) and imperial contexts. Royal families, Wu notes, generally supported the canon, because not only did it hold wisdom regarding truths of the universe as well as moral instructions but, they believed, it also would bring blessings to their nation. Rulers thought it would bring well-being for deceased and living family members, thus initiating personal devotion. Piety occurred in multiple ways in sacred texts, and Wu points out that believers would use “one title, or one fascicle, or even one booklet as the object of worship for a period of one year” (p. 51). Further, the canon’s physicality as a sacred object was of utmost importance, thus storage inventions developed, and of particular interest to readers is Wu’s discussion of the revolving repository. Mentioned in his previous chapter, and further explicated in this one, Wu details the revolving repository that reached popularity in the Song dynasty. The revolving repository allowed practitioners to “read” the enclosed sutra (such as the *Kaibao* or *Puning Canon* 普寧藏) via circumambulation, thus creating a shortcut to gaining the meritorious benefits of reading. It is Wu’s contention that the re-

volving repository developed into a separate cult, aided by legends and stories of its numinous nature. Wu points out that other shortcut readings of the canon were also aimed at eliminating disasters while illuminating the mind. Rather than reciting and copying the entire canon, one could recite and copy just the catalog but receive equal benefit. These activities during the Song contributed to the canon's elevation as a sacred object, and Wu further explains that Chan Buddhists were among those who fervently acquired the canon, built revolving repositories, and promoted canonical reading for benefit.

Chapter 3, Stefano Zacchetti's "Notions and Visions of the Canon in Early Chinese Buddhism," opens part 2 of the volume, "The Formative Period." This study points out the Chinese canon's distinctiveness as both inclusive and conservative. The author focuses on the mid-second to the late fourth century CE to untangle the social histories that shaped the canon's features. Zacchetti uses the term "inclusive" to refer to the canon's textual trans-sectarianism and "conservative" to point out that the canon preserved translations, even when new ones occurred, thus compiling a multiplicity of translations. Zacchetti's elucidation of this is pertinent to religious studies scholars, since he contends that there is no parallel of this phenomenon among other religious traditions. To him, this fact tells us much about Chinese Buddhists themselves, for they did not seek to eliminate history from their texts but rather "saw the historical dimension inherent in the transmission of the canon" (p. 84). Zacchetti provides an analysis of the canon as it was shaped by interactions with diverse practices, ideas, and traditions. Recognizing that there are few sources from the second and third centuries CE, he relies on early statements about the canon (from the Han to the time of Dao'an). While he recognizes that the most important text for studying the early canon is Senyou's (僧祐) *Collection of Records on the Translation of the Tripitaka* (*Chu sanzang ji ji* 出三藏記集), he focuses on analyzing interchanges between

translations and commentaries—a focus that provides the reader with examples of creative visions (including that of the category of *vaipulya*) that influenced the canon's adaption.

In "Fei Changfang's Records of the Three Treasures throughout the Successive Dynasties and Its Role in the Formation of the Chinese Buddhist Canon," chapter 4, Tanya Storch pays attention to the *Lidai sanbao ji* 歷代三寶記 (published around 597). It is a significant text of analysis for this volume, for it classifies Buddhist texts according to their supporting imperial ruler. Fei viewed the ruler as having authority to determine which texts were canonized, and in Fei's re-visioning of the canon, many previously condemned texts were included. Following Wu's chapters on the importance of imperial support and veneration of the canon as a sacred object, as well as Zacchetti's chapter regarding the importance of secondary texts, Storch's study emerges as a pertinent case study on Fei's influential catalog from the Sui dynasty. She examines Fei's history of Buddhist bibliography and argues that its significance comes from its inclusion of other catalogs from the era. Further, the author demonstrates that Fei not only established the Buddhist bibliographic tradition—creating a pattern of record keeping for Tang dynasty scholars (including Daoxuan and Zhisheng to follow)—but also began a Confucian-inspired Buddhist textual criticism tradition. Embedded in his project was the view that the dynastic ruler held authority over text inclusion. Storch argues that Fei established a means for representing the Tripitaka that both elevated its social and cultural prestige and offered a shortened version for practitioners. This canon registry (*ruzang mu* 入藏目) included only texts used by Chinese practitioners, beginning a trend of reducing the canon to its most essential parts.

Chapter 5, "The Birth of the First Printed Canon: The Kaibao Edition and Its Impact" by Wu, Lucille Chia, and Chen Zhichao, opens part 3, "The Advent of Printing." The authors of this chapter

present a textual and historical analysis of the *Kaibao Canon* that notably also examines Chinese print culture from the ninth to the tenth centuries. Much of this historical investigation reveals the role that Song imperial powers played in creating new policies regarding Buddhism, but the authors also demonstrate the role that the *Kaibao Canon* played in influencing political procedure. They convincingly argue that the Song imperial drive for establishing political authority prompted official interest in the *Kaibao Canon*. Song emperors emphasized *wen* 文 (literary/civil) and thus sponsored publishing projects. Individual rulers, such as Taizong, were patrons of literary projects to pointedly “spread civilization throughout the empire” (p. 149). Taizong’s strategy of establishing himself as an “emperor of letters” by supporting Buddhist projects is especially highlighted in this chapter (p. 150). Such a recognition of the sociopolitical contexts in which Buddhist literary projects become mechanisms for imperial control help the reader understand the diverse ways in which texts like the *Kaibao Canon* were used during the Song. Patronage helped publishing locales like Chengdu in Sichuan, for example, emerge as commercial centers. The authors also interrogate the amount of supervision the state had and assess whether or not the *Kaibao Canon* printing project in Chengdu (a project initiated by the Song government) had any relationship to local manuscript traditions. Such questions remain unanswered but open up promising avenues for future research. The picture that emerges from this chapter is that the Song state’s patronage of the canon production process allowed the arduous task to be completed, and the history of the state’s management over the collection is one of transferring control to local temples. The authors point out, however, that this state enterprise does not indicate a concern over the canonicity of Buddhist texts but rather an interest in: establishing a Song state that supported Buddhism; mobilizing the *Kaibao Canon* for diplomatic relations; and imagining Buddhist texts as a cultural and literary

connecting point between current Song and historical dynasties—creating a “present past” (my terminology).

Chapter 6, “The Life and Afterlife of Qisha Canon,” Chia turns the discussion away from imperial patronage of Buddhist canonization projects and examines the monasteries, individuals, and groups that influenced compilation and publication of the Buddhist canon. The author divides the discussion into inquiries of the *Qisha Canon* in the Song, Yuan, and Ming periods. Throughout, she asks who the actors who commissioned productions of the *entire* canon rather than printing individual sutras were. Chia shows that compared to the Yuan, the Southern Song had fewer large-scale (private and official) donors, and work on the *Qisha Canon* paused. Another reason for this hiatus, she argues, was that lay Buddhist donors were involved in the *Puning Canon* project. With a break in production from 1273 to 1296, the *Qisha Canon* took over a hundred years to complete compared to the *Kaibao Canon*’s eleven years and the *Puning Canon*’s fourteen years. During the Yuan, economic growth around Suzhou, local and regional government official support in continuing the *Qisha Canon* project, and the promotion of esoteric Buddhism by non-Han clerics all contributed to the compilation and block carving of the *Qisha Canon*. Around 1306, the pace of its production increased, pointedly because of the efforts of Guan Zhuba, register of monks in Songjiang Prefecture. Chia points out that in comparing the production of *Qisha Canon* to that of the *Puning Canon*, we see that both were supported by Buddhist movements involving lay practitioners and both were initiated by private groups. Significant aspects of social history, however, influenced the creation of these texts, including the mobilization of skilled labor needed for printing (copyists, illustrators, and engravers); access to resources for printing; and necessity of print shops located within commercial networks in order to connect printers with markets, Buddhist temples, and government offices. Production of an entire canon

was thus quite a challenging task and required the coordinated interaction of these various actors. Chia contends that Buddhist lay movements printed the entire *Qisha Canon* during the Yuan for the purposes of merit making, building up a monastery's importance, fostering international relations, and reprinting. During the Ming, print shops continued to play an active role in disseminating the *Qisha Canon*, and the text further gained prestige as the archetype for the *Hongwu Southern Canon*. It was an act of fate, Chia concludes, that allowed the *Qisha Canon* to overtake the *Puning Canon* in significance: although the *Puning Canon* was destroyed in a fire, the *Qisha Canon* survived into the Ming.

In chapter 7, "Managing the Dharma Treasure: Collation, Carving, Printing, and Distribution of the Canon in Late Imperial China," Darui Long discusses the management of printing the Buddhist canon by the imperial court, monks, and lay practitioners. Relying on the *Qingjing tiaoli* 請經條例 (Rules for requesting a Buddhist canon) and the *Kezang yuanqi* 刻藏緣起 (The [account of the] origin of production of the Buddhist canon), he describes the collation process by emperors, including Emperor Chengzu (r. 1403-24), Yongzeng (r. 1723-35), and Qianlong (r. 1745-96) before discussing private collations. This chapter echoes chapter 5 in its account of the political powers intertwined in the production of the Buddhist canon. What it adds is the story of the proofreading performed by emperors in which they ordered monks to delete parts of the scripture, asserting not only their political power but also their religious authority. Chapter 7 further showcases technological advancements related to the collation of the *Jiaxing Canon* 嘉興藏, including the beginnings of string-bound editions. This change, which began by the mid-Ming, served to reduce costs but required fundraising efforts, new rules for proofreading, and a gathering of labor to undertake the task. By comparing the carving, printing, and distribution of the private *Jiaxing Canon* to

the *Yongle Southern Canon* 永樂南藏, Long details the rules, regulations, and instructions that maintained high standards of production and ensured customer satisfaction. His chapter significantly enhances this volume by looking at the production of an edition of the Buddhist canon from the perspective of Chinese monks, and he underscores the great concern Buddhists had regarding the preservation of quality when reproducing Buddhist literature.

Chapters 8 and 9 complete the fourth part of this volume, "The Canon beyond China." In "Better Than the Original: The Creation of Goryeo Canon and the Formation of Giyang Bulgyo," Wu and Ron Dziwenka situate the Buddhist canon within the context of ritual performances in the court during the Goryeo era. While in China, the canon was used to spread the teachings of the Buddha and to gain blessings; in Korea, carving of the canon had an additional purpose—to repel disasters. The Buddhist canon fused into court rituals influenced by astrology and divination, and in the process the canon gained a talismanic element. Carving the canon, along with military plans, became a strategy for warding off invasions. "Rituals of exorcism" were prevalent in Goryeo culture (p. 275), and the Buddhist canon was incorporated into these types of indigenous practices, notably becoming a device for government rituals resisting catastrophes.

In chapter 9, "Taishō Canon: Devotion, Scholarship, and Nationalism in the Creation of the Modern Buddhist Canon in Japan," Greg Wilkinson provides an account of the *Taishō Canon*'s creation, the purposes of its production, and the influence it has had on modern Buddhist scholarship. The chapter, compared to the previous ones, is the most transnational in scope. In his discussion of the Meiji's influence on the construction of the *Taishō Canon*, Wilkinson examines interactions between Buddhist priests and European scholars to stress the importance of advancing Buddhist intellectualism after the religious perse-

cutions of the early Meiji period. Along with evangelism, canonical research and publishing were emphasized, and the *Taishō Canon*'s creation followed several earlier publishing projects, including the reduced print edition. Wilkinson contends that the *Taishō Canon* project followed a trajectory of asserting Japanese Buddhism's intellectual rigor and that its rhetoric (as well as its dedication ceremony) expresses Japanese nationalism. The canonical project was a means for priests and scholars to advance Japan's Buddhology throughout Asia and in the West, and they upheld the belief that the canon would provide defense for the nation. Wilkinson points out this similarity between Korean and Japanese history, and here again, the reader encounters an interesting dialog between religious and political spheres of society.

Overall this volume provides a rich history of the Chinese Buddhist canon and showcases recent advancement in scholarship regarding the canon. Chapters are topical in nature, inviting the reader into conversations regarding the ways in which canonical production intersected with politics, international relations, religious practice, socio-economics, science, and literary culture. Its strength lies not only in its narration of the historical context in which the canon was produced but also in its breath of texts and social histories. Authors stress the importance of devotional activities related to the Buddhist canon, while also emphasizing the complex processes of producing a canon—processes involving state sponsorship as well as material, human, and financial resources. Furthermore, they investigate not only who commissioned the creation of the Buddhist canon but also for what reasons. The only lacuna of this work is a concluding chapter that traces the similarities of canon construction and publication, as well as its use, from a transnational point of view. The varieties of topics covered in this volume are welcome. However, an ending analysis that examines the studies en masse would have further enhanced this volume's redrawing of scholastic boundaries.

This work opens the door for future research that pays attention to how the Chinese Buddhist canon influenced Buddhist communities across East Asia. Further, within a broader context of Buddhist studies, the volume importantly encourages scholars to continue fusing together multiple disciplines, thus further pushing the frontiers of examination. Chinese, Buddhist, and Asian studies scholars will find this collection useful in its construction of social history rich in both textual examination and cultural articulation. Taken together, the chapters present a mosaic of reasons for which the canon was collated, enhancing our understanding not only of Chinese Buddhist history but also of discussions centered on canonical discourse.

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