THE CHINESE CATALOGUES
OF BUDDHIST SCRIPTURES

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A handy English equivalent for the type of scholarship developed in China termed *mu-lu-hsüeh* (目録学) does not exist. As this discipline includes aspects of both bibliography (compiling catalogues) and philology (examination of the texts themselves to determine authenticity, unusual features, etc.) the meaning is perhaps best rendered in English by the phrase “the discipline of investigating and cataloguing written documents.” Among the many factors that contributed to the development of this unique discipline, we must first cite the enormous and extremely varied body of literature which existed from ancient times in China. As time passed and this literature became even more voluminous, the need to discriminate between systems of thought and various schools represented therein inevitably arose. With regard to the Buddhist scriptures, due to the essentially ahistorical nature of their introduction and translation, there was also the need to investigate their origins. Of course, another major reason for the development of this area of scholarship was the tendency of the Chinese to emphasize concrete, historical, and specific phenomena and events. For these and other reasons the discipline of compiling catalogues was born. Thus, in one sense, to be acquainted with this field of scholarship means to be acquainted with every type of Chinese literature as well as understanding the depth and breadth of the Chinese scholastic traditions.

This tradition had its beginning toward the end of the Former Han dynasty (206 B.C.-6 A.D.). Thus, there were already a number of catalogues which had been compiled when Buddhism was transmitted.
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The Chinese catalogues of Buddhist scriptures were compiled in China, Korea, and Japan during the Later Han period (25-220 A.D.) and it was into the midst of this tradition that Buddhism was transmitted. Thus, when the Buddhist scriptures began to be translated, catalogues of the sutras and commentaries (ching-lu, 楞錄) began to appear rapidly at the hands of translators and the Buddhist clergy.

This endeavor to catalogue the scriptures was unique to China, and there was never much interest in such a discipline in India. Not only with respect to Buddhism, but also with regard to literary works composed in India, there is no extant example of a catalogue similar to those compiled by the Chinese, while the navāṅga-sāsana and the doḍasāṅga-sāsana were classifications by literary form, doctrines, or ideas rather than a catalogue of each of the extant written documents in 9 or 12 different sections. The same is true of the tripitaka: rather than three collections of actual written works, it is an abstract grouping according to the contents and is not the same as the catalogues compiled by the Chinese.

As mentioned before, it was not long after the period of the introduction of Buddhism to China that catalogues of the scriptures were compiled. This was truly an epoch-making event in the history of Buddhism, for without doubt these catalogues are an important key in solving the problems of when and in what way the Buddhist scriptures were formed in India and Central Asia. A thorough research of these catalogues forms the base for the study of the Chinese translation of the Buddhist scriptures, which in turn became an invaluable aid to the general study of the development of Buddhism literature and its study itself.

All of the different catalogues compiled in China, Korea, and Japan have been collected in the volume 55 of the Taishō Shinshū Daiōkyō. The ones related to the development of the discipline will be discussed here are the fourteen catalogues from number 2145 (Ch’u-san-tsang-chi-chi) to 2158 (Hsü-chên-yuan-shih-chiao-mu), and T. 49, 2034 (Li-tai-san-pao-chi), a total of fifteen sutra-catalogues, all of which were compiled in China by the time of the T’ang dynasty. In addition to these catalogues, there are many others which were compiled in China and are very important for the study of Buddhist literature.

2. Chung-ching-mu-lu (崇經目録), 7 chuan. Compiled by Fa-ching, et al. (法謙) in 593. Also known as the Fa-ching-lu and Sui-chi-chuan-lu. T. 55. 2146.
5. Ta-t’ang-nei-tien-lu (大唐內典錄), 10 chuan. Compiled by Tao-hsüan (道宣) in 664. Also known as the Nei-tien-lu and Tao-hsüan-lu. T. 55. 2149.
7. Chung-ching-mu-lu (崇經目録) also known as the Ta-t’ang-ta-ching-ai-si-i-ch’ieh-ching-lun-mu (大唐大絃愛寺一切經論目) and Chung-t’ai-lu, 5 chuan. Compiled by Chung-t’ai (靜齊) in 666. T. 55. 2148.
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In addition to these catalogues, there were others which existed in the Sui dynasty but were lost and are no longer extant, such as the *Chung-ching-pieh-lu* (崇經別録), the *Liang-shih-chung-ching-mu-lu* (梁世崇經目録), and the *Chi-liang-shih-chung-ching-mu-lu* (齊世崇經目録), known also as the *Fa-shang-lu* (法上録). Recently, however, it has been ascertained that a section of the *Chung-ching-pieh-lu* is included in the Pelliot collection of the Tun-huang manuscripts and we are now able to gain a glimpse of what these earlier catalogues must have been like. Again, the *Li-tai-san-pao-chi* lists twenty-four other catalogues which had already been lost by the Sui dynasty. Among these is the famous *Tao-an* catalogue. If the entries of the *Li-tai-san-pao-chi* are to be trusted, more than 30 catalogues had been compiled before the Sui dynasty. Most of these, however, had been lost by the beginning of the Sui period and today only the *Ch'u-san-tsang-chi-tsu* remains.

There are many different types of catalogues. There were catalogues of individual's libraries, translators' catalogues of the sutras which they had translated, catalogues of notes compiled as a result of a scholar's research, catalogues of a temple's collection of sutras, and complete catalogues of all known Buddhist texts. Dividing the catalogues by their internal arrangement, there are chronological catalogues which divide the texts by the period in which they were translated and the person who translated them, catalogues which place the most importance on such classifications as Mahāyāna-Hinayāna or sūtra, vinaya and śāstra, and composite catalogues which combine both of these types. Among the above-mentioned extant catalogues, the *Ch'u-san-tsang-chi-tsu*, *Li-tai-san-pao-chi*, and *Ku-chin-ting-t'u-chi* are chronological catalogues, the *Chung-ching-mu-lu* (the ones compiled in 593, 602, and 666) and *Ta-chou-k'ang-ting-chung-ching-mu-lu* arrange the texts according to their contents (Mahāyāna-Hinayāna, etc.), and the *Ta-t'ang-nei-tien-lu*, *K'ai-yüan-shih-chiao-lu*, and *Ch'en-yüan-hsin-ting-shih-chiao-mu-lu* are composite catalogues.

One catalogue that is no longer extant but very important is the *Tao-an-lu* (道安錄), compiled in 374. Though we know that there existed a number of catalogues before the *Tao-an-lu* (such as memos of translators,) we don't know what kind of structure or format they had. We can, however, nearly restore the original appearance of the *Tao-an-lu* from the *Ch'u-san-tsang-chi-tsu* of Seng-yu, who in many ways considered his own catalogue to be merely a continuation of Tao-an's catalogue. In this way, we can see that the *Tao-an-lu* was an excellent catalogue, accurately written and highly reliable. Seng-yu (like Tao-an, Seng-yu was a vinaya master) took the *Tao-an-lu* as a model and expanded it to include newly translated sutras, etc. As the oldest extant catalogue, the *Ch'u-san-tsang-chi-tsu* possesses enormous value. Though the entries are not 100 percent accurate, there are extremely few errors, and, more often than not, even the mistakes appear to be a result of over-meticulousness rather than sloppiness or ignorance. That is, Seng-yu apparently considered it better to record all of the texts with which he came into contact or were recorded in other catalogues under different names rather than take a chance of missing a text, and this resulted in many double entries of the same text under different names.

After the North and the South had been unified under the Sui
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dynasty, there was a need for a standardized catalogue which could become the base from which to begin collecting all of the sutras and sastras which were scattered throughout the North and the South. Therefore, at Imperial order and based on the various catalogues which had been compiled and were still extant at that time (that is, based on records rather than on an actual examination of the texts), within a two month period a seven chuan catalogue was compiled. This catalogue is the *Chung-ching-mu-lu*, compiled in 593. From the time the texts are arranged by their contents, such as Mahāyāna-Hinayāna, sūtra, vinaya, sāstra, etc. This catalogue is well organized and in its classification system there are many new ideas and methods, but, as it is based on records rather than actual examination of the texts, there is no distinction made between works which were extant and those already lost.

Four years later, in 597, Fei-ch'ang-fang finished the *Li-tai-san-pao-chi*. Before the actual catalogue, Fei-ch'ang-fang attached a three chuan chronology of Buddhist history. This catalogue is organized somewhat differently than most other catalogues, and it is because more importance was attached to the historical chronology than to the catalogue that it was included in the history section of the *Taishō* (vol. 49) rather than with all of the other catalogues (in vol. 55). The *Li-tai-san-pao-chi* was compiled at Imperial decree, but there are many problems, both in the historical section and in the catalogue itself. In particular, there are many unreliable entries regarding the sutras translated in earlier periods. Because Fei-ch'ang-fang harbored extreme hostility toward Taoism, he wanted to show the superiority of Buddhism in contrast to Taoism, and thus he did not care if he twisted historical facts. In order to exaggerate the antiquity of Buddhism and its sources he arbitrarily assigned translators and dates to most of the texts which had previously been considered unknown. If these fabricated entries had been limited to just the *Li-tai-san-pao-chi* it would not have been much of a problem, but when they were transcribed into the *Ku-chin-i-ching-t'u-chi* thay came to be regarded as authoritative, and thus we can see the influence of the *Li-tai-san-pao-chi* in the chronological catalogue of the *Ta-i-t'ang-nei-tien-lu*, *Ta-chou-k' an-ting-chung-ching-mu-lu*, *K'ai-yüan-shih-chiao-lu*, the *Nanjio* catalogue and even the *Taishō*.

The *Chung-ching-mu-lu* compiled in 602, the catalogue of extant sutras in the *Ta-i-t'ang-nei-tien-lu*, and *Chung-ching-mu-lu* of 666 were all based on sutras which had been collected by various temples, using the *Chung-ching-mu-lu* of 593 as their model. They are thus catalogues of actually existing collections of texts (現藏入藏目錄). The *Chung-ching-mu-lu* of 602 was compiled by Yen-tsung at Imperial order, based on the library of Hsi-shan-szu (興善寺); and while Tao-hsüan took the *Chung-ching-mu-lu* as the model for the catalogue of extant sutras of the *Ta-i-t'ang-nei-tien-lu*, it is based on the library of the Hsi-ming-szu (西明寺) in Chang-an, and the *Chung-ching-mu-lu* of 666 was compiled when the Ta-ching-ai-szu's (大敬愛寺) library was copied at Imperial order. In addition to being catalogues of actually existing collections, another reason that these catalogues all have immense value is that although they were compiled after the *Li-tai-san-pao-chi*, they show none of its influence and their records can be more or less trusted.

Next we have the *Ta-chou-k' an-ting-chung-ching-mu-lu*, compiled by Ming-ch'üan and others at the order of Empress Wu. This was an attempt to make a 'standardized' catalogue like the *Chung-ching-mu-lu* of 593, only on a much larger scale. To this end they attempted to reconcile the differences and contradictions of the catalogues of the *Chung-ching-mu-lu* tradition and the chronological catalogues of the *Li-tai-san-pao-chi* tradition. Unfortunately, this venture in an extremely inaccurate catalogue which only magnified the confusion of the *Li-tai-san-pao-chi*.

Thirty-five years later, in 730, Chih-shêng of the Hsi-ch'ung-fu-szu published the *K'ai-yüan-shih-chiao-lu*. As far as possible, Chih-sheng attempted to rectify the various defects and mistakes of the previous catalogues, and he compiled an extremely comprehensive catalogue which is nearly perfect in terms of form and structure. Every type of record necessary for a catalogue is included in the *K'ai-yüan-shih-chiao-lu*, and in terms of its form it is flawless. Further, the contradictions and confusion stemming from the *Li-tai-san-pao-chi* were to a considerable degree corrected. However, as it was compiled
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privately, Chih-sheng could not completely go against what was recorded in the Imperially ordered catalogues. Due to this kind of compromise, although it is extremely thorough in form and structure, there remain some problems associated with the actual entries themselves. Nonetheless, as this catalogue perfected the form of the catalogue, its structure was continued unchanged by Yuan-chao’s Chên-yuan-hsin-ting-shih-chiao-mu-lu and other later catalogues.

We must also ask what kind of place did these catalogues occupy in comparison to the general Chinese catalogues and how can we view the contributions they made to the development of this discipline? According to Liang-ch’i-ch’ao (梁啓超; 1873–1929), Buddhist catalogues, when compared to other types of catalogues compiled in China, possess the following characteristics:

1) The development of the sense of history is outstanding. That is, the source of a translation, the biography of the translator, etc. are all minutely recorded.

2) The Buddhist catalogues are very rigorous with regard to the authenticity of a text. Apocryphal texts are closely inquired into and put into separate catalogues.

3) The comparative research is superior. That is, if there were different translations of a given text, the differences and similarities, strong points and weak points, etc. were all recorded in detail. Also, in the case of extracts or summaries of a text which circulated separately from the main text, the main text which they were based on is also recorded.

4) There was a great effort made to investigate missing texts, as well as recording the title of a lost work. The period in which it was lost and any other known details were recorded.

5) In addition to utilizing a great many different categories, their classification schema were extremely meticulous. As well as such categories as Mahāyāna-Hinayāna, sūtra, vinaya and śāstra etc., texts were also classified by single-translation/multiple-translation, number of chuan, etc. Within any one catalogue, a number of classification schemes were employed and all sorts of methods were used to make it easier to look up items within the catalogue.

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The K’ai-yuan-shih-chiao-lu is a typical example of a catalogue which possesses the many unique characteristics pointed out by Liang-ch’i-ch’ao. He concludes that in comparison to such catalogues as the Chu-san-tsang-chi-tsi, the Li-tai-san-pao-chi, or the Ta-l’ang-nei-tien-lu, other Chinese catalogues such as the Chi-lüeh (七略) of Liu-hsin (劉歆), the Han-shu-yun-wen-chih (漢書藝文志) of Pan-ku (班固), the Chung-ching-pu (中經傳) of Hsün-hsü (荀勖) or the Chi-lüeh (七錄) of Yüan-hsiao-hsü (阮孝緒) are simplistic and undeveloped.

Liang-ch’i-ch’ao was no doubt a bit extreme in his criticism. In particular, as his opinions were based on the formal organization of the catalogues, for the most part he did not deal with the actual contents of the catalogues, which is, of course, another very important aspect. For example, from his viewpoint, the K’ai-yuan-shih-chiao-lu becomes a particularly ideal catalogue. However, as we have seen, even this catalogue has its problems, and although it goes far to rectify the errors of the previous catalogues, from the point of view of its content, it cannot really be called an ideal catalogue.

However, regarding the development of the historical sense, Liang’s observations are substantially in agreement with the opinions of other modern scholars. Professor Naitō Ryū, with the benefit of recent research, has stated that it was just this sense of history which the Buddhist catalogues had developed and which came to direct the course of later catalogues which cause them to stand out in contrast to the general catalogues.

As for the four catalogues cited by Liang, they are all very famous and represent the earliest catalogue tradition. First, the Chi-lüeh of Liu-hsin (50 B.C.–23 A.D.), together with his father Liu-hsiang’s Pien-lüeh (別錄) form the origins of the tradition of catalogue compilation. Although neither of them survive today in their original form, they are preserved through quotes. The seven sections referred to in the title are: 1) Chi-lüeh (輯略; General Introduction), 2) Lu-yin-lüeh (六藝略; Six Arts), 3) Chu-tzu-lüeh (諸子略; Philosophers), 4) Shih-fu-lüeh (賦賦略; Poetry), 5) Ping-shu-lüeh (兵書略; Military Writings), 6) Shu-shu-lüeh (術數略; Magical Formulas), and 7) Fang-chi-lüeh (方技略; Medicine). Pan-ku (班固; 32–92 A.D.), based on the Chi-lüeh, published
the Han-shu-yin-wen-chih. Some 300 years after the Chi-lueh, Hsünn-hsiü (7-289) published the Chung-ching-pu in four divisions: Classics, History, Philosophy, and Literature. This four-fold division was continued by the Sui-shu-ching-chi-chih (隋書經籍志) and became the standard for later bibliographic classification. However, the seven-fold classification scheme did not entirely die out, and although the contents of the seven sections are different from the Chi-lueh, the Chi-lu of Yüan-hsiao-hsiü (479-536) continued the seven-fold classification scheme.

As noted by Liang, in comparison to the catalogues compiled by the Buddhists, these other Chinese catalogues inevitably seem simplistic and undeveloped. One reason, no doubt, is that, whereas these catalogues cover the whole of Chinese arts and sciences, the Buddhist catalogues are limited to one specialized area of study.

A final consideration of this survey of Chinese catalogues is what kind of treatment the Buddhist scriptures receive in the general catalogues; to what extent and under what classification were they catalogued? Though this is a slightly different area than that subsumed under the research of the Buddhist catalogues, Professor Naito, R. has recently published an article entitled “Buddhist Texts in Chinese Catalogues” which provides an answer to this question, and so I will set out some general views following Naito’s research. For those who wish further details, please consult Naito’s article.

In the general catalogues, Buddhist literature is called Fu-shu (仏書; Buddhist writings). Shi-shu (史書; the writings of Śakayamuni), or Fu-ching (仏經; Buddhist scriptures). They initially appeared in the catalogues of the North-South dynasties, and among these they were first catalogued in the four-division type of catalogue mentioned before, such as the Chung-ching-pu (中經簿) or the Pi-ko-szu-pu-mu-lu (秘閣四部目録). The cataloguer Wang-chien (王儉) of Sung-ch'i (宋齊) continued the seven-fold division and published the Chi-chi-chih (七志) to which the Buddhist and Taoist writings were appended as two separate catalogues. It is with these catalogues that the Buddhist scriptures were first given a definite place in the general Chinese catalogues. Although it is not perfectly clear in what form they were catalogued, it is generally believed that at the end of the entries the translator’s biography was attached, which in turn influenced Seng-yu to attach the biographies to the entries in his Chi-sun-tsoang-chi-tsi. The previously mentioned Chi-lu of Yüan-hsiao-hsiü had the catalogue of the Buddhist scriptures as the first section of the supplement and the Taoist writings as the second section. Though they were placed in the supplement, nonetheless they were included within the seven sections. In this work, the Buddhist writings are divided into five sections: ŝila, dhyāna, prațñā, apocryphal works, and śāstra. Although there is a total of 2410 works in 5400 chuan listed, this is somewhat problematic as there is a great distance between this number and number given in the Pao-ch'ang-lu (宝唱錄) of the same period.

We have already noted that the Sui-shu-ching-chi-chih was divided into four categories, Classics, History, Philosophy, and Literature. To this was appended the Buddhist and Taoist writings as a supplement, divided into the following eleven sections: 1) Mahāyāna Sūtras, 2) Hinayāna Sūtras, 3) Miscellaneous Sūtras, 4) Miscellaneous Apocryphal Sūtras, 5) Mahāyāna-Vinaya, 6) Hinayāna Vinaya, 7) Miscellaneous Vinaya, 8) Mahāyāna Šāstra, 9) Hinayāna Šāstra, 10) Miscellaneous Šāstra, and 11) Biographies. Unfortunately, under each of the headings we only have the total number of chuan listed but not the individual titles of the works. However, there is a new method of classification employed in this catalogue by which the Buddhist writings were divided into those compiled in India and those compiled in China and then treated separately. That is, the translated Tripitika and its commentaries, following the precedent of Yüan’s Chi-lu, were added outside of the four divisions as ‘Buddhist teaching’ but the documents, historical materials and discourses written by the Chinese were included in the four sections under the appropriate division. Before long, this developed into the tendency to include only those Buddhist works compiled by Chinese in the catalogues.

The religious policy of the T'ang court favoring Taoism over Buddhism is reflected in the Chiu-t'ang-shu-ching-chi-chih (旧唐書經籍志) in which Buddhist works are simply appended to Taoist writings. In the Hsin-t'ang-shu-yin-wen-chih (新唐書經文志) a small amount of commentaries and other Buddhist-related works are included, and the
number of Buddhist works compiled in China totals ninety-nine authors in 1336 chuan. However, the practice of simply appending them to the Taoist writings remained unchanged. In the middle of the eleventh century the Chung-wen-tsung-mu (崇文總目) was compiled, in which the Buddhist works are called ‘writings of Šakayamuni’ and positioned independently in the philosophy section. One-hundred thirty-six items in 725 chuan are included. In the middle of the twelfth century the famous cataloguer Cheng-chiao (程超) compiled the Tung-chih-yun-wen-lueh (通志藝文略), and he positioned the Buddhist works as the third philosophy section. These were then divided into ten sections: 1) ch’uan-chi (傳記); 2) t’a-szu (塔寺); 3) lun-i (論義); 4) ch’uan-shu (詮述); 5) chang-ch’ao (章敘); 6) i-lü (義律); 7) mu-lu (目錄); 8) yin-i (音義); 9) sung-tsan (頌贊); 10) yü-lu (語錄). Though there are mistakes in this catalogue, it was nonetheless a great accomplishment, as in this period the Buddhist catalogues included very few native Chinese works and even these were simply listed with no organization or classification. In the Wan-li period (万歷) of the Ming dynasty there appeared, for the first time, a tendency to refer to the Buddhist catalogues. Among the catalogues that exhibit this tendency and deserve our attention are the Kuo-shih-ching-chih-chih (國史經籍志) and the Tan-sheng-t’ang-tsang-shu-mu (通 Parallel 藥目). The Yuêh-tsang-chih-chih (鈞藏 緯), compiled by Chih-hsi (智旭) in the middle of the seventeenth century, lists all of the Chinese Buddhist writings and represents a new concept among the general catalogues. In the Szü-k’u-ch’üan-shu (四庫全書) the Buddhist writings are put at the end of the philosophy category, but, because they only include those works which had historical or geographical value, the extant works that are simply named total no more than twelve items in 117 chuan, while those that are number only thirteen items in 312 chuan.

Thus, we can see that in the general Chinese catalogues Buddhism, as a foreign and heterodox teaching, was consistently overshadowed by Confucian tradition. One result of this situation was that the scholarly merit of the Buddhist catalogues were never recognized within the general catalogues.