

History of Buddhist Text Translation Society (BTTS)

佛經翻譯委員會的歷史

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How did BTTS start?

BTTS started at the Buddhist Lecture Hall. It was roughly 1970 when we started officially after the five of us [the first five Americans to become monastics under Venerable Master Hsuan Hua] came back from taking precepts in Taiwan.

Venerable Master Hua [hereafter “the Master”] had us set up as if we were going to work. Every day we would come into the monastery and spend the day doing monastic things like a few ceremonies but mostly translating. And it was the Master’s wish that we translate together at the beginning. He also composed the Eight Rules for Translators. He probably wrote out other policies pertaining to BTTS at that time as well. So we had guidance as we began to work. There were just the five of us - all Caucasian Americans.

We started with the Sixth Patriarch Sutra. But it was not easy because we all had our own opinions. We all had our own reasons why this word was better than that word to translate some Chinese phrase

佛經翻譯委員會的誕生

佛經翻譯委員會誕生於佛教講堂。當時大約是1970年，我們五個人（上人座下首批出家的五名美國人）從台灣受戒回來後，佛經翻譯委員會正式成立。

上人（以下稱「師父」）讓我們像上班一樣地工作。我們每天到廟上做一些出家人的事，比如佛殿的功課，但是大部份時間花在翻譯上。剛開始的時候，師父希望我們能夠一起翻譯，同時也制訂了委員會的「譯經八項基本守則」，可能還制訂了其它相關的原則。因此，譯經工作一開始，我們就有這些守則作為指導。那時候只有我們五個人——全都是美國白人。

我們都能提出自己的見解來論證為什麼這個詞比那個詞更合適。所以當時就出現一種不滿情緒。那時候師父會用各種各樣的方法來鼓勵我們——他給我們講鳩摩羅什法師和上千出家人併坐共同譯經的故事——即使當時有那麼多人，也沒有發生爭執；當每個人同意三次以後，翻譯就定稿了。

但對我們來說還是困難。我記得

or character. So, there was discontent at the table. The Master would do all kinds of things to encourage us during that time - he'd tell us stories about the Great Master Kumarajiva and his thousands of monks and how they would sit down together to translate - and even with so many people there would be no disagreements. Decisions were made final when everyone agreed three times.

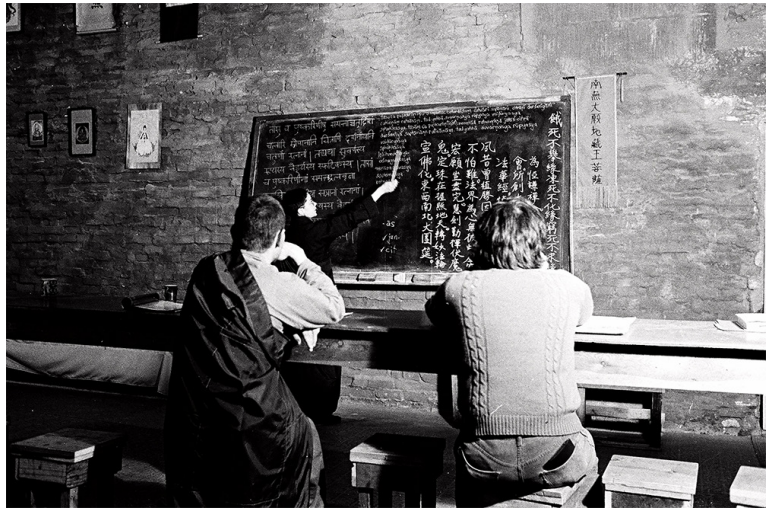
Still we had difficulty. So I remember one day we came in and we got more and more rowdy with each of us having our own ideas. Suddenly a portrait of Master Hsu Yun on the wall came crashing down in the middle of our argument and the glass broke. The Master came out to talk to us because he could hear us arguing, and he cried - or at least there were tears running down his face. He said "Okay, we can't do it as a group, we'll do it separately. We'll each have our own Sutra." So translations became sequential instead of simultaneous. He set up the four Committees, which exist to this day in BTTS.

After that, the Master would assign us or approve our choice of which Sutra we were to translate - and we would do the initial translation: the first of the four BTTS committees. After I finished my translation, I'd give it to someone (or the Master would assign someone) to review the English translation with the original Chinese: the second of the four BTTS committees. After that person finished the review, my translation would then go on to an English editor: the third of the four BTTS committees. Finally, the translation would go to the certifier— who at that time was always the Master: the fourth of the four BTTS committees. So we began to have a process by which figured out how we would work together without sitting in the same room trying to make immediate decisions.

There have been lots of changes in BTTS since the mid- 1900's. Up to that time, for almost 20 years we whose first language was English had been translating and developing our ears, using a process by which we would listen to the audio tapes of spoken Chinese of the classical text and modern commentary. We would listen to the Master's reading of the Chinese text and his modern Chinese commentary and just type what we heard him say. One day, the Master said "Now we have a lot of Chinese people coming. Let them first listen to the tapes and transcribe, edit, and certify my lectures in Chinese. Then the English department can then begin translating that."

And then another change came over the years, which is a return to what the Master tried to teach us in the beginning — to work together simultaneously. Now, translation committees have formed and translators are sitting down together to do simultaneous translation — as the Master had first suggested we do. They seem to be able to work so they can make their decisions together.

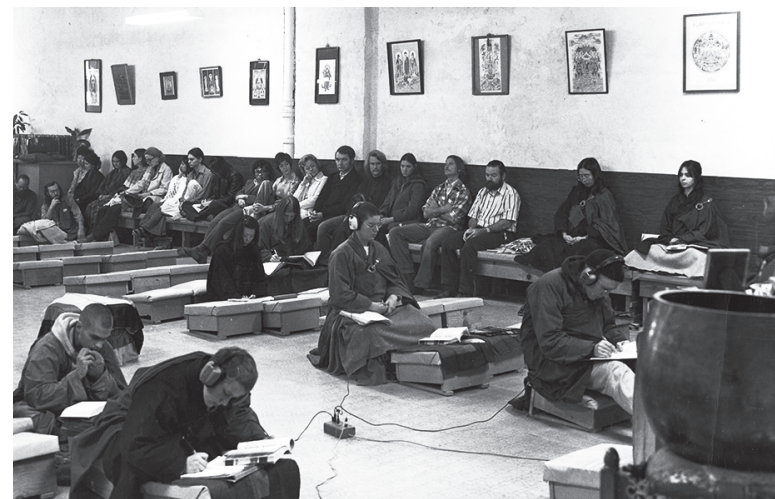
That began about 15 years ago with the *Shurangama Sutra*, happened again with the new edition of *Shurangama*, and there are now several on-



有一天大家在討論，因為每個人都有自己的想法，結果越吵越厲害。正當我們爭吵時，突然，牆上一幅虛雲老和尚的畫像掉了下來，玻璃都摔碎了。師父聽到我們在爭吵就出來跟我們說話，然後他哭了—至少有眼淚從他臉上滑落。他說：「好吧，既然不能一起做，就分開做吧！你們各自翻譯自己的。」於是，翻譯工作變成依次進行，而不是同時進行。師父當年設立的委員會四個部門，至今依然保持運作。

從那個時候開始，師父會分配給我們各自要翻譯的經典，或者我們自己先選，再請師父批准，然後我們就各自著手初譯。初譯，就是委員會四個部門中的第一個。當我自己的翻譯做完以後，就交給另一個人（或者師父指定一個人），由其對照中文原文來校對英文的翻譯。校譯，就是四個部門中的第二個。當校對完之後，稿子就會交給一位英文編輯。編審，就是四個部門中的第三個。最後，譯稿就會送交給印證者—那時候都是由師父來印證。印證，就是四個部門中的第四個。於是，佛經翻譯的一套工作流程，儼然成型。我們不再需要同坐一室，立即作出決定，卻依然能一起合作。

從九十年代中期至今，佛經翻譯委員會已發生了很多變化。在那之前，大概有二十年的時間裏，我們以英文為母語的人，聽著文言文的經文和白話文淺釋的錄音帶，一邊翻譯，一邊鍛鍊我們的中文聽力。我們聽師父用中文唸的經文，接著他的白話講解，然後把聽到的打字出來。有一天師父說：「現在



going translation committees working on the *Avatamsaka* and other Sutra texts. These groups of people are sitting down and working out translations together. I think the Master would be happy to know that the system he introduced early on is now working.

What are some of the unique qualities about BTTS?

In the last 150 years in the West here, Buddhism has come in, but most of what's published are primarily books "about" Buddhism. The books people write, and the talks they give are modern interpretations of Buddhism. Very little that is published is Buddhism, meaning books that feature classical Buddhist texts and commentaries that follow the oral tradition—such as the Master's commentary or other commentaries from a high Sanghans that have stood the test of time.

BTTS does that. But as yet these classical texts are not as popular as the books "about" Buddhism. But I'm not worried about that because I think that it's a gradual process. For the last 40 years, a lot of people had become interested in Buddhism or read about it and they are starting to wonder what it is – in other words, let's get back to the basics. What did the Buddha say? And at that point, people will begin to see how valuable the content of BTTS publications is.

BTTS can be trusted in terms of accuracy. Of course none of us are perfect, but because we have four Committees - I believe that when something is published by BTTS, we can at least say, and people can know, that several qualified individuals have worked on the translations, and that the changes and suggestions for improvement offered by people on the four committee were heeded and incorporated when appropriate in order to improve the translations. ❀

這裏來了很多中國人，讓他們先聽錄音帶，謄寫、編輯、核實我講的中文，然後再由英文部來翻譯。」

這些年出現的另一個變化是，我們又回到了師父最初試著教給我們的方法——我們又開始一起翻譯了。現在翻譯委員會的四大部門已經形成，譯經工作者聚在一起翻譯，就像師父剛開始建議我們的那樣。目前看來，他們都能互相合作並且共同作出決定。

這個變化，大概是從十五年前翻譯《楞嚴經》開始。不久前出版的《楞嚴經》新譯也是這麼做的，而且現在有好幾個翻譯小組分別著手《華嚴經》和其它經典的翻譯。翻譯組的成員們坐在一起來翻譯，我想師父會很高興看到早期他教的方法現在落實了。

佛經翻譯委員會的特色

在過去的一百五十年間，佛法雖然傳入了西方，但是大部份的出版物是「關於」佛教。這些人寫的書、辦的講座，只是對佛教的現代詮釋；幾乎沒有佛法的書籍，也就是原汁原味的佛教經典及白話的經典淺釋——例如師父講述的淺釋，或者其他經過時間淬鍊的祖師大德淺釋。

而佛經翻譯委員會就是在做這個工作。目前這些經典還不像那些「關於」佛教的書籍那麼受歡迎，但對此我並不擔心，我認為這是一個循序漸進的過程。近四十年來，已經有很多人開始對佛教感興趣，或者開始閱讀關於佛教的書。他們開始思考，佛教到底是什麼——換句話說，想追本窮源。佛陀到底說了什麼？到那時，人們就會開始認識佛經翻譯委員會的出版品有多麼的珍貴。

佛經翻譯委員會所翻譯的作品，其準確度是值得信賴的。當然，我們都不是完美的，但是委員會有四個部門——我相信，至少我們可以說，並且人們也會認識到，佛經翻譯委員會的出版品是由符合資格的人員所翻譯的，同時經過四個部門的集體審訂，彙集每個適切妥當的修改與建議，目的就是為了能呈現最優質的譯文版本。 ❀