TRIPITAKA SHAN-WU-WEI'S NAME

A Chinese Translation from Prākrit *)

BY

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The first great master of esoteric Buddhism in China was Shanwu-wei 善無畏 ("Absolutely Fearless"). He arrived in Ch'ang-an, the T'ang capital, in 716 A.D. 1). With the help of the Chinese master I-hsing - 行 he translated the representative caryāṭantra text, the Vairocanaabhisambodhīśūtra 2), in 724 A.D. 3). I-hsing himself wrote a commentary on this text, largely based on the teaching of his master 4).

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For a year-to-year account of what happened in T'ang China, see Chang Tsun-liu 張遠騏’s historical table of dates and events, in Fan Wen-lan 范文瀾 T'ang-tai Fochiao 唐代佛教, Peking 1979, pp. 116-292.

2) T. Vol. 18, no 848 Ta P'i-lu-che-na Ch'eng-fo Shen-pien Chia-ch'ih Ching 大毗盧遮那成佛神變加持經. As for the Sanskrit title: Mahāvairocana-abhisambodhīśūtra - viṣṇuvītā - adhiṣṭhāna - vaipulyāṣūṭrendra, according to Iwamoto Yutaka 岩本裕, Mikkyō Kyōten 密教経典 (= Bukkyō Seitensen 佛教聖典選 Vol. 7), Tōkyō 1975, p. 31; Mahāvairocana (abhisambodhīhitiṣṭhānavaiśūṣṭra) sūtra, according to the Fascicules annexe du Hōdōgirin, Tōkyō 1978, p. 78; Mahāvairocanaabhisambodhīhitiṣṭhānavaiśūṣṭra-dharmapāryāya according to Tsuda Shin’ichi, “A Critical Tantrism”, in Memoirs of the Tōyō Bunko XXXVI (1978) p. 179.


3) Iwamoto Yutaka, Mikkyō Kyōten, p. 31.

4) T. Vol. 39 no 1796 Ta P'i-lu-che-na Ch'eng-fo Ching Su 大毗盧遮那成佛經疏.
The relation between the Chinese name, Shan-wu-wei, and what is usually considered to be its Indian equivalent, Šubhakara (simha), has puzzled more than one scholar.

Chou Yi-liang says: "There is no way to derive such a meaning as 善無畏 (Shan-wu-wei) ... from either Šubhakara or Šubhakara-simha ... It seems to me that Shan-wu-wei is simply another name which has no relation with the Sanskrit name Šubhakara ... Six stages of "Fearlessness" ... in a bodhisattva's spiritual progress are described in the P'î-lu-che-na Ching ... The first abhaya among them is su-abhaya ... Šubhakara might have adopted this word as his Chinese name ..." 8).

Teramoto Enga suggests that Shan-wu-wei might be a Chinese transliteration of the Tibetan translation of Šubhakara, bZaṅ Byed 6).

The names used in the texts which are translated by Shan-wu-wei, are: 輸波 (婆) 嗌羅 7), Shu-p'o-chia-lo, or rather 8iu-b'uh-ka-la 8).

The Wu-wei San-tsang Ch' an-yao 無畏三藏要 explains that Shan-wu-wei is the T'ang rendering of Shu-p'o-chia-lo 9). Shu-p'o-chia-lo is a possible phonetic rendering of the word Šubhāgala. However, the name Shan-wu-wei is used most frequently 10).

Tsan-ning's 賛寧 Sung Kao-seng Chuan 宋高僧傳, completed in 988 A.D. 11), gives the following explanation: "His Indian (梵) name was 成婆嚲羅僧詞 Shu-p'o-chieh-lo-sēng-ho. The Chinese says: 淨 (pure) 師子 (lion) Ching-shih-tzu. A translation of the meaning (of Shu-p'o-chieh-lo) is Shan-wu-wei (Absolutely Fearless). They also say 輸波嚲羅 Shu-p'o-chia-lo. This name means Wu-wei (Fearless), which is another translation of the meaning" 12). Tsan-

7) T. Vol. 18, n° 850, 893, 895; Vol. 20 n° 1158.
8) For this "Ancient Chinese" pronunciation (i.e. in Ch'ang-an around 600 A.D.): See Karlgren B., Grammata Serica Recensae, Stockholm 1964, s.v.
9) T. Vol. 18, n° 917, p. 942 c 1.
10) T. Vol. 18, n° 848, 851, 877, 894, 905, 906, 907; Vol. 19, n° (938), 973, (974 B and C), 1028 B; Vol. 20, n° 1068, 1078, 1079, 1141, 1145; Vol. 21, n° 1239, 1270 1286.