Japan Academy Prize to:

Masahiro Shogaito Visiting Professor, Kyoto Sangyo University Professor Emeritus, Kyoto University

for Uighur Abhidharma Texts: A Philological Study



Outline of the work:

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, a great number of manuscript documents were discovered in Central Asia and brought to museums and university libraries in Europe. Over the course of time, it became evident that these documents were written in some twenty languages and that among them some were written in Uighur, which mostly concerned Buddhism.

From the beginning of the twentieth century, these manuscript materials were opened to serious research by scholars, and a series of philological studies have been published in the form of text-critical editions and their translations. The author of this book, Dr. Masahiro Shogaito, joined this international scholastic endeavor, and over the past forty years has published the results of his research on these Buddhist Uighur documents in general and the Abhidharma texts in particular.

Among the several Uighur Abhidharma texts whose study had been neglected due to the difficulty of their philosophical content, the author worked on the text entitled Abhidharma-kośa-bhāsya-tīkā Tattvārthā, a commentary written by Sthiramati (安慧) in the sixth century. This treatise was written to defend Vasubandhu (世親), known as the author of Abhidharma-kośa-bhāsya, against criticism by Sangabhadra (宋賢). The original Sanskrit text of Sthiramati's work has long been supposed lost. The Uighur text was not translated directly from the original Sanskrit, but rather from its Chinese translation in 1350. Yet, the Chinese translation, upon which the Uighur text was made, is not preserved in tact but only in an extremely abridged form, despite the description at its beginning stating that it is composed of some twenty-four thousands verses. A Tibetan version of Sthiramati's work is preserved; however, due to its poor condition, it is not helpful in trying to reconstruct the original. Despite such textual difficulties, the author forged ahead with his work on this Uighur text, comparing it with all the Abhidharma documents available and also with relevant Indian and Chinese Abhidharma text groups starting from Sanghabhadra's Abhidharma-nyāyānusāra-śāstra and others.

Prior to this, in the years between 1991-93 he published a book entitled "A Study on the Abhidharma-kośa-bhāṣya-tīkā Tattvārthā in Old Uighur Language" in three volumes, in which he provided a text and translation together with a facsimile edition. Though this work itself received high appraisal among specialists, soon after its publication the author obtained access to several new Uighur documents found in China and also to the text of the Uighur Abhidharma-kośa preserved in the National Museum of Stockholm. The latter, consisting of more than 2000 lines, rendered him great help by supplying a number of Uighur-Chinese equivalents of Abhidharma technical terms. Based upon these equivalents, the author invented a unique technique for ascertaining the precise translation of the Uighur Adhidharma texts, allowing him to work on a more solid foundation for translating particular phrases of the Uighur texts. Given these developments, he decided to work anew on a more complete form of the same manuscript, resulting in the monumental publication of the subject book in 2008.

The basic manuscript that author dealt with is that brought to London from Tun Huang by Aurel Stein in 1907 and now preserved in the British Library with catalog number Or.8212-75A/B. In his book, the author presents a critical

edition of Or.8212-75A, which contains 4585 lines. On the basis of the thus-established text, he translated the manuscript into Japanese with detailed philological notes numbering 300 pages (pp.165-465), which constitutes the central portion of the book.

The book comprises four chapters. The first gives a detailed survey of the text and the history of studies on it. The second contains the text and a translation of commentaries on the Abhidharmāvatāra-prakarana preserved in the Russian Science Academy in St. Petersburg and on the Abhidharma-kośa-bhāsya in the Tun Huang Collections in Berlin. Though both are preserved only in fragmentary form, they are important sources for Uighur textual studies. The third chapter constitutes the main portion of the book as mentioned above. The last chapter comprises a List of Vocabulary, which in essence is a dictionary of Buddhist technical terminologies in Uighur that will be an indispensable tool for those studying Abhidharma Buddhism and for Uighur linguists over many years to come.

The author took up the challenge of studying of Abhidharma-kośa-bhāṣya-tattvārtha-tīkā, which is considered one of the most voluminous and difficult texts, and presented its text and translation in the most reliable form that could possibly be expected at the present stage of Uighur research. What he has achieved in this book will remain as a monumental contribution to International Uighur Linguistics and Buddhist Studies.