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## Medicine in the Chinese Buddhist Canon Selected Translations

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### Abstract

The excerpts below were selected to introduce a number of disparate genres and types of discourses about healing, illness, and cure that are embedded within the Chinese Buddhist canon. They include an excerpt from a monastic disciplinary code concerning the storage of medicines, a scripture with a story of an encounter between a bodhisattva and a famous physician, a liturgy dedicated to a major healing deity, an author's advice to doctors from a Buddhist perspective, and a devotional verse that plays on medical metaphors. Taken together, they indicate some of the diversity of perspectives and approaches of Buddhist materials and suggest the potential importance of often-overlooked Buddhist materials for the study of Asian medicine.

## Keywords

Buddhism – religion – healing – medicine – Tripitaka

It is well known that the transmission of Buddhism to China in the early medieval period involved the translation of many ideas and practices related to Indian medicine.<sup>1</sup> Often referred to as “Buddhist medicine” (*fojiao yixue* 佛教醫學 or *foyi* 佛醫) by modern scholars and Buddhists in East Asia, this body of foreign knowledge about disease, healing, and the maintenance of health enjoyed a fair amount of popularity and social capital among Chinese elites from the sixth to the ninth century. A number of Chinese physicians (including most notably Sun Simiao 孫思邈, 581–682 CE) engaged with Buddhist ideas in the writings produced during this period. While medical authors in the subsequent eras tended to be less interested than their early medieval counterparts in Indian models, devotees continued to think about Buddhism as offering effective resources to deal with illness and health throughout the remainder of Chinese history.<sup>2</sup> As other societies in East Asia owed their Buddhist inheritance largely to Chinese intermediation, Chinese translations of Indian medicine became influential in Korea, Vietnam, and especially Japan, where they were robustly debated and clinically implemented into the modern period.<sup>3</sup>

When Chinese and other East Asian thinkers have turned to the Buddhist tradition in search of answers to medical questions, they have found not one monolithic viewpoint, but rather a wide range of writings on the subject with a diversity of opinions and perspectives. The excerpts below were selected to introduce a number of disparate genres and types of discourses about healing, illness, and cure that are embedded within the Chinese Buddhist corpus. The short translations below include an excerpt from a monastic disciplinary code concerning the storage of medicines, a scripture with a story of an encounter between a bodhisattva and a famous physician, a liturgy dedicated to a major healing deity, a Buddhist author’s advice to doctors from a Buddhist perspective, and a devotional verse that plays on medical metaphors. The majority of the excerpts below are drawn from the *Taishō-Era Revised Tripiṭaka* (*Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經), the standard edition utilized by most

1 The history of these exchanges is analyzed in detail in Despeux 2010; Chen 2013; Salguero 2014, among others.

2 On the decline of Buddhist medicine in late medieval China, see Salguero 2014, 141–45.

3 On the pan-Asian spread of medical ideas alongside Buddhism in the first millennium CE, see Salguero 2015b. Specifically on Japan, see Goble 2011; Kleine and Triplett 2012. For the modern period, see Josephson 2010.

Buddhist studies scholars working on East Asia, although the last one comes from a different collection, the *Supplemental Tripitaka* (*Zokuzōkyō* 續藏經).<sup>4</sup> They include both texts translated from Indian languages as well as those written originally in Chinese, and include both authoritative scriptural materials and commentaries written by Chinese monastics. Taken together, they indicate some of the diversity of perspectives and approaches of Buddhist materials and suggest the potential importance of often-overlooked Buddhist materials for the study of Asian medicine.

**An Explanation of the Rules on Medicine Excerpted from the  
*Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya* (*Mohesengqilū* 摩訶僧祇律, T. 1425)<sup>5</sup>  
Translated and introduced by Robban Toleno**

The *Mohesengqilū* 摩訶僧祇律 is a Chinese translation of the *Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya*, a set of codes with detailed standards of discipline for Buddhist monks and nuns. The Chinese monk Faxian 法顯 (337–422 CE) acquired a copy of these monastic codes in Pāṭaliputra, India, during his epic journey to South Asia. He brought this copy back to China, where he translated it between 416 and 418 with the help of Buddhahadra 佛陀跋陀羅, a foreign monk who arrived in Chang'an between 406 and 408.<sup>6</sup> These monastic codes originated during an early schism and represent the positions approved by the *Mahāsāṃghika*, or “Great Assembly,” the majority of practitioners who voted to uphold this particular interpretation of the Buddhist teachings, in opposition to a conservative faction referred to as the *Sthaviras*, or “Elders.”<sup>7</sup> The *Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya* is important for being the only extant and complete *Vinaya* text that is not associated with a Buddhist school of the *Sthavira* faction and thus gives us a unique window into the rules related to medicine that

4 These short excerpts are meant to complement the lengthier sources recently published by the coauthors of the current article (and other collaborators) in an anthology of premodern texts on Buddhism and medicine; see Salguero 2017. Demiéville 1985 is a useful starting point for accessing primary sources in Chinese, but see the critique of this resource in Salguero 2015a, 51–55.

5 The excerpt occurs in the tenth fascicle. T. 1425, 22: 316c14–317a16. I follow punctuation provided by the Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association (CBETA) at <http://www.cbeta.org/index.htm>; accessed November 2016.

6 Heirman 2007, 174, 176–77.

7 Harvey 2013, 415–16; Buswell and Lopez 2014, 199, 507. For additional notes on the origins and Chinese appropriation of this text, see Hirakawa 1960, 137–42.

presumably affected the majority of the Indian Buddhist monastics.<sup>8</sup> The Chinese text comprises forty fascicles (*juan* 卷), the first twenty-two of which constitute the main rules of discipline (*prātimokṣa*) for Buddhist monks.<sup>9</sup> The passages translated below occur in a list of moderate offenses entailing confiscation of items and atonement.<sup>10</sup> These rules pertain to the use of money and material resources such as robes, beds, bowls, foods, and medicines. The entire section is not included, just the part most pertinent to medicine. The first paragraph presents the rule, and the remainder is a commentary upon it for purposes of clarification.

The Buddha said to the monks, “Having gathered together all [you] who rely on the residents of Vārāṇasī [to beg a livelihood], I set forth precepts for all monks in order to obtain the ten benefits.<sup>11</sup> Even those who have already heard should listen again. Regarding the medicines that are fitting for a sick monk to take—ghee, vegetable oil, honey, cane sugar, raw butter, animal fat—a sick monk is allowed to store and take these for seven days. If after seven days the remainder is not thrown out and is consumed, this is a transgression requiring forfeiture of the items and confession of the act.”

Monks, it is as described above:

Medicines permitted in illness are ghee, vegetable oil, honey, cane sugar, raw butter, and animal fat, as described above under the precept against stealing.<sup>12</sup>

As for “illnesses,” there are 404 [in total]: 101 wind illnesses (*fengbing* 風病; Skt. *vāta doṣa*), 101 fire illnesses (*huobing* 火病; Skt. *pitta doṣa*), 101 water illnesses (*shuibing* 水病; Skt. *śleṣman doṣa*), and 101 mixed illnesses

8 Clarke 2015, 64.

9 The rules of discipline specific to nuns are presented separately in fascicles 36–40.

10 The Sanskrit term for this penalty has a number of variations across texts: *naiḥsargika-pāyantikā*, *naiḥsargika-pācattika*, *niḥsargika-pācattika*, etc. See Hirakawa 1982, 191–92.

11 The ten benefits express different ways in which the sangha is to be kept orderly, conducive to the purification practices of its members, and in good standing with society. See *ibid.*, 114–15.

12 This list of permitted medicines does not appear as such in the discussion of the precept against stealing, but it is repeated elsewhere, such as in the language of the *upasampada* ordination of nuns, in which the candidate is asked if she can accept a life of using only cow urine as medicine. Replying that she can, she is then told that she may also have as additional medicines the food items in this list. See *ibid.*, 67.

(*zabing* 雜病; Skt. *sannipāta doṣa*). Treat wind illnesses through use of vegetable oil and animal fat. Treat heat illnesses (*rebing* 熱病) using ghee. Treat water illnesses using honey. Treat mixed illnesses by exhaustively [combining] the above three types of medicine.

As for “seven days,” this is the numerical limit. Storing [medicines] for a complete seven days [means] one has received them and takes them for seven days. Taking them after the seven-day [period] is a transgression requiring forfeiture.

“Transgressions requiring forfeiture” [means] the medicine should be given up to the sangha and [the transgression] atoned for through confession. If one does not give up [the items] and confess, this is a transgression of the Vinaya. Faults requiring expiation are as described earlier [i.e., in the text above, but not in this translated excerpt].

**“Bestowing the Means of Healing” from the *Mahāyāna Sūtra on the Lotus of Compassion* (*Dasheng beifentuoli jing* 大乘悲分陀利經, T. 158)  
Translated and introduced by William J. Giddings**

The *Mahāyāna Sūtra on the Lotus of Compassion* belongs to the “group of previous lives” (*benyuan bu* 本緣部) texts found in the *Taishō Tripiṭaka*.<sup>13</sup> Spanning some thirty chapters in eight fascicles, this Chinese translation was produced by an unnamed translator during the Western Jin dynasty (265–316 CE). The various chapters of the text focus on describing how the Buddha gained access to complete and supreme Buddhahood by passing through a variety of essential preparatory stages. Over and over again in these stories, the bodhisattva is the greatest of heroes, entering a troubled world in search of the ultimate boon, which is to benefit all those entrapped and beguiled in lives riddled with fear and tragedy. Such texts often embrace elements that may not initially be considered part of the path to awakening but that are adapted and turned toward reaching the Buddhist goal of realizing more awakened and compassionate societies.

The abridged translation that follows describes how the bodhisattva *Sūryamālagandha*<sup>14</sup> seeks to bring the benefits of medicine to all. The protagonist is born a Brahmin with privileged access to Vedic learning, yet the reader is left to infer that this knowledge has limitations. Rites and charms have effect, but they simply ameliorate the symptoms of disease. Only the practice of the

13 The section translated is found at T. 158, 3: 283a–b.

14 A provisional reconstruction from the Chinese *Rimanxiang* 日鬘香.

right therapeutic, in the form of the mindfulness of breathing (*ānapāna-smṛti*), brings about a compassionate society that is both stable and prosperous. This episode tells of how Sūryamālagandha approaches the great physician Vaidya Caraka (Bituo Zheluoja 鞞陀遮羅迦), most famous for compiling one of the principal Āyurvedic classics, as he sits high upon a mountain teaching an assembly of different beings. The bodhisattva “shines wisdom” upon the group, to great effect. However, since disease still remains in the world, the great doctor teaches how to overcome suffering through the right use of medicaments and mantras. This text thus emphasizes an appreciation for the complementary roles of spiritual practice and worldly medicine in healing humanity’s ailments.

During those 50,000 human rebirths, because of my original aspiration, I [i.e., the Buddha] was born in Jambudvīpa as a Brahmin whose name was Sūryamālagandha, someone who knew and could recite the four Vedas.<sup>15</sup> At that time, living creatures could always be seen to have four types of extreme behavior: namely, those of finding pleasure in hatred, being full of resentment, enjoying conflict, and being argumentative. So, I set myself the goal of teaching a method for all those living creatures that would explain the dark and gloomy side of hatred and how to dissipate it, a method whereby the basic causes and conditions that give rise to such things would burn out completely. So, I entered into the practice of the mindfulness of breathing (*ānapāna-smṛti*), heeded its revelations, and aroused a mind bent upon achieving unsurpassable, full, and complete awakening....<sup>16</sup>

I then considered thus: “If I am unable to alleviate the ills that trouble all living creatures, then I will not have realized unsurpassable, full, and complete awakening. As I am still incapable of removing those ties that bind living creatures to such illnesses, what means must I adopt in order to alleviate the maladies of all living creatures?” I then began to think:

15 The principal four are the *R̥gveda*, the *Yajurveda*, the *Sāmaveda*, and the *Atharvaveda*. This list does not include *Ayurveda*, which deals with medical practice.

16 “A mind bent upon achieving unsurpassable, full, and complete awakening” (*anoduoluo sanmiao sanputi xin* 阿耨多羅三藐三菩提心; Skt. *anuttarā-samyak-sambodhi-citta*). The aspiration is not merely to find personal release from *saṃsāra* but to become a “wheel-turning” Buddha in the manner of Śākyamuni Buddha himself. Following this sentence, several lines related to Sūryamālagandha’s accumulation of powers and the goals of eliminating the ill effects of desires have been omitted.

“I will find a way to lead Śakra<sup>17</sup> and Brahmā, the protectors of the world, and all other *devas*, *nāgas*, *yakṣas*, and *ṛṣis*<sup>18</sup> toward working for the benefit of living creatures, by creating medicaments everywhere!”

By means of magical ability, I then went and gave instruction to Śakra and Brahmā, the protectors of the world, and all other *devas*, *nāgas*, *yakṣas*, and *ṛṣis*. I went to a mountain called Yukapilapādi.<sup>19</sup> There was a gathering at its summit and, next to a boulder, was the place where Vaidya Caraka, the great physician, was teaching.<sup>20</sup> He was explaining the effects of wind, fire, and water and the ways in which all serious illnesses occur and how to cause the numberless accumulations of those maladies that plague living creatures to burn out completely.

As I stood there among them, I made these vows: “I will now shine wisdom upon innumerable masses of living creatures. I will lead them toward the three vehicles<sup>21</sup> and block their entrance into those gates, which would take them toward evil destinies.<sup>22</sup> I will guide them, whereby they will enter upon the heavenly path and become rid of all disease and illness.” And so it was that innumerable masses of living creatures created wisdom and entered into peace and tranquility. Because of the rewards of wholesome karmic roots, this wish of mine became fulfilled.

This is the only method to block the gate to the evil destinies, so that innumerable masses of living creatures can enter the heavenly path. But, because there was still illness and disease, a group of *devas*, *ṛṣis*,

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- 17 Śakra is also known as Indra. Buddhist narratives may also use the more elaborate “Śakra, Lord of the Devas” (Śakro Devānām Indraḥ).
- 18 Unlike the *devas*, who are divine aerial beings, the *nāgas*, *yakṣas*, and *ṛṣis* dwell upon the earth. These three categories of beings are able to do good in the world: *nāgas*, chimeric snakelike creatures, are said to inhabit the waters and are keepers of wisdom and knowledge; *yakṣas* are usually spirits of the ground, trees, and the hearth; and *ṛṣis* are the human bearers of important divine truths.
- 19 Yijialuobodi 億迦毘羅鉢帝. The reconstruction of this place-name is speculative.
- 20 The depiction here, and of course the reference to Vaidya Caraka, suggest strong parallels to the description of the transmission of Ayurveda as given in the opening chapters of the *Caraka Saṃhitā*. See Sharma 2014, 111, for a translation.
- 21 *Sansheng* 三乘 are the “three vehicles” on the path to awakening: (1) listening in order to follow the advice and guidance of others, (2) becoming awakened for the benefit of oneself, and (3) seeking complete awakening for the benefit of all others.
- 22 *E’qu* 惡趣 are the least desirable realms of rebirth, in which it is said that the path to awakening cannot be obtained, because of the power of negative emotions or the inability to discern the underlying nature of appearances.

*yakṣas*, and *nāgas*, for the benefit of other living creatures, had joined the gathering of medics on the mountaintop with Vaidya Caraka, who then taught them about the various remedies of balancing vitality through the use of medicaments. Everywhere throughout the Buddha-realm of Mohamāyā<sup>23</sup> these good men went forth and brought living creatures onto the divine path.

And so it was that because of this gathering of *devas*, *nāgas*, *yakṣas*, and *ṛṣis* for the sake of all living creatures, Vaidya Caraka gave instructions on the various sorts of mantras, whereby the living creatures in the Buddha-realm of Mohamaya, along with other Buddha-realms equal in number to all the sand grains of the Ganges throughout all the ten directions<sup>24</sup> of space and also passing through the period of the five degenerations,<sup>25</sup> could then begin to follow the path of the goodly man that leads toward the three vehicles and to living contented upon a heavenly path—a path manifested through the application of various sorts of mantras in order to remove the morass of maladies encountered in life.

Good Sons! I had then realized it, my ultimate wish! In that place, the Buddha-realm of Mohamaya, everywhere throughout the ten directions, everyone was following the path of the goodly man....<sup>26</sup>

**“Liturgy for the Repentance Fast of the Master of Medicines” from  
the *Expanded Collection on the Propagation and Clarification*  
[of the *Buddhist Teachings*] (*Guang hongming ji* 廣弘明集, T. 2103)  
Translated and introduced by Joshua Capitanio**

This short text comprises a liturgy to be chanted during the performance of a repentance fast (*zhaichan* 齋懺) dedicated to the Master of Medicines Tathāgata (Yaoshi rulai 藥師如來; Skt. Bhaiṣajyaguru). The prayer is attributed

23 Literally meaning “twilight-gloom,” *mengmei* 矇昧 is typically interpreted as the inability of the mind to clearly perceive its own nature. The term is used here as a proper noun.

24 The four cardinal and four ordinal directions, plus the zenith and nadir.

25 Buddhist cosmology speaks of a multiverse coming into existence, maturing, and growing old before coming to an end. The period referred to here is one in which beings are undergoing miseries caused by the advanced age of the world they inhabit. For a comparative study of Buddhist cosmology, see Sadakata 2004.

26 A few final sentences that reiterate the beneficial practices of the “goodly man” have been omitted.

to Emperor Wen 文帝 (r. 559–66 CE) of the Chen 陳 dynasty (557–89 CE) and is included within a noted seventh-century collection.<sup>27</sup> A repentance fast combines two important forms of medieval Chinese Buddhist ritual: fasting (*zhai* 齋) and repentance (*chan* 懺).<sup>28</sup> Repentance does not figure heavily in this liturgical text,<sup>29</sup> but the fasting ritual was very important in practices associated with the Master of Medicines. The *Scripture of Consecration for Eliminating Faults and Transgressions and Attaining Liberation for the Living and the Dead* (*Foshuo guanding bachu guozui shengsi dedu jing* 佛說灌頂拔除過罪生死得度經, included in the twelfth fascicle of the *Scripture of Consecration* [*Foshuo guanding jing* 佛說灌頂經, T. 1331]),<sup>30</sup> which describes the ritual that forms the basis for this liturgy, enjoins its readers to uphold vegetarian fasts for seven days to obtain the fulfillment of their wishes from the Master of Medicines.<sup>31</sup> It particularly recommends that sick people should “invite an assembly of monks to single-mindedly perform a precept fast<sup>32</sup> for seven days and seven nights, receiving and upholding the eight prohibitions and engaging in religious practice throughout the six time periods, reciting this scripture forty-nine times, diligently lighting seven-tiered lamps and hanging five-colored divine life-prolonging banners.”<sup>33</sup> Many of these specific ritual elements are mentioned within the “Liturgy for the Repentance Fast of the Master of Medicines”:<sup>34</sup>

27 *Guang hongming ji* 廣弘明集, T. 2103, 52: 33b13–334c6.

28 On Buddhist fasting rituals in early medieval China, see Hureau 2010, 1213–27; on repentance rituals, see Kuo 1994.

29 Kuo Li-ying (1994, 112–13) has pointed out that it is not uncommon to see texts produced during this period that refer to repentance in their titles but that lack any specific confession within the text itself.

30 On this text, see Birnbaum 1989, 55–57. On the *Scripture of Consecration*, see Strickmann 1990.

31 T. 133, 21: 534a4–11.

32 *Zhajie* 齋戒 is a type of fast in which practitioners uphold the eight precepts (*bajie* 八戒) for a set period of time; see Muller 2016, s.v. 八戒.

33 T. 1331, 21: 535b8–11.

34 As Kuo Li-ying (1994, 160–61) has pointed out, based on the date of composition of this text, which is prior to the completion (in the seventh and eighth centuries) of many of the more well-known translations of the various scriptures associated with the Master of Medicines, the ritual that is referenced within the liturgy must be that found within the fifth-century *Foshuo guanding jing* 佛說灌頂經, T. 1331, 21: 532b8–536b5.

Humbly, we acknowledge that the various compounded things [i.e., everything in the world of phenomena] are impermanent; they all are phenomena that bind. The myriad existent things are not as they seem; they all constitute the root of suffering. [Like] blazing flames or images in a mirror, we know their changes to be unceasing; [like] scattered straw or burning grass, we see the swiftness of their production and cessation. Swept by the winds of karma, we enter into the sea of suffering; driven forth by the obstacles of karmic retribution, we undergo birth in the dark realms. Coming and going throughout the triple world, we never encounter a place of rest; cycling among the five destinies, we never find even a moment of respite.

The Master of Medicines Tathāgata, has made a great vow to guide the myriad creatures and to save and protect all sentient beings. He channels the hundred streams of the various existent things back to the ocean of Dharma<sup>35</sup> with its single taste and is also capable of using them to irrigate the plants and trees. Following worldly customs, he causes [beings] to attain peace and joy and renders them fearless. Should [adverse circumstances] arrive—such as the eight difficulties,<sup>36</sup> the nine perversities,<sup>37</sup> the five impurities,<sup>38</sup> the three calamities,<sup>39</sup> water and fire, thieves and brigands, plagues and epidemics, famine and starvation, enemies, creditors, [violations of] the royal law, [offenses against] government authorities, the myriad types of oppressive circumstances, the many varieties of murderous methods—in all such situations, he is capable of transforming misfortune into fortune and of turning peril into peace. Moreover, for those who seek fortune and eminence, await nobility and status, [desire to] lengthen their life spans, and [wish for] an abundance of heirs—all the great desires of the populace and the necessities of worldly people—there are none that [he will not cause] to be spontaneously fulfilled in accordance with people’s hearts and in response to their concerns.

35 Reading the variant 法海 “ocean of Dharma” in place of 法流, “flow of Dharma.”

36 The eight difficulties are various circumstances of birth that hinder an individual from studying and practicing the Buddhist teachings; see Muller 2016, s.v. 八難.

37 Nine “perverse” situations that occurred during the lifetime of the Buddha Śākyamuni; see *ibid.*, s.v. 九惱.

38 Five types of impurity that become prominent when the aeon is in decline; see *ibid.*, s.v. 五濁.

39 Three types of disasters that appear in the world; see *ibid.*, s.v. 三災.

Therefore, we know that the buddhas' applications of skillful means are beyond conception, while [we] disciples lack methods for guiding [others] and are unable to manage our duties;<sup>40</sup> only by depending on the root vows of the Master of Medicines can we bring sentient beings to fulfillment. Now, reverently following the teachings of the scripture, we have gathered a certain number of monks in a certain place on a certain day for the repentance fast of the Master of Medicines. Presently the great assembly, with the utmost intention, pays reverent homage to our root teacher, the Tathāgata Śākyamuni, and pays homage to the Master of Medicines Tathāgata. His compassion extends broadly without deviating, and his root vows do not abandon worldly beings. He raises the clouds of the four universals<sup>41</sup> and sends down the rain of the six perfections,<sup>42</sup> quenching the flames of birth and death and removing the arrows of affliction.<sup>43</sup> May all world-systems within the ten directions be brightly illuminated like the wheel-lamps.<sup>44</sup> May the seven hundred ghosts and spirits arrive in response once the cords are knotted.<sup>45</sup> May obstacles be burned along with the incense, and may calamities no longer appear. May our life spans be prolonged by the banners,<sup>46</sup> and may we gradually approach longevity. May we roam in the great depths of the nature of phenomena and enter into the unparalleled correct enlightenment. May we completely fulfill our practice and vows, just like the Master of Medicines Tathāgata.

40 Reading the variant 又 for 又.

41 Four qualities that the buddhas extend universally to all beings; see *ibid.*, s.v. 四等. These are also known as the “four immeasurable states of mind” (*si wuliang xin* 四無量心).

42 Six practices that must be perfected in order to attain Buddhahood; see *ibid.*, s.v. 六度.

43 Afflictive emotions (*fannao* 煩惱) are often metaphorically likened to arrows in Buddhist literature.

44 The ritual text specifies that the celebrants should construct “seven-tiered lamps with seven lamps on each tier, the lamps [arranged] like the wheel of a cart.” T. 1331, 21: 535b13–14. See Birnbaum 1989, 87.

45 The ritual text describes twelve divine kings (*shenwang* 神王) who oversee a retinue of seven thousand ghosts and spirits (note that this text mentions only seven hundred); these kings promise to assist the Master of Medicines in delivering beings from sickness and calamity, stating, “If there is a person who has a severe illness or encounters dangerous hardships, then on that day they should take five-colored cords and knot them into their name. When their wish has been fulfilled, they should untie the knots.” T. 1331, 21: 536a21–23. See Birnbaum 1989, 87.

46 The ritual text describes the construction of “five-colored divine life-prolonging banners ... forty-nine feet long ... made from five-colored silk.” T. 1331, 21: 535b11–20.

Excerpt from “Advice to Various Professions” from the *Expanded Pure Land Writings by the Master from Longshu* (Longshu *zengguang jingtu wen* 龍舒增廣淨土文, T. 1970, 47: 270b02–26)  
Translated and introduced by Marcus Bingenheimer

The *Expanded Pure Land Writings by the Master from Longshu* is a good example of how a twelfth-century Confucian scholar official expressed his beliefs in Pure Land Buddhism. The text is a compendium of Pure Land thought and practice in twelve chapters, of which only the first ten were written by Wang Rixiu 王日休 (1105–73 CE). It was first published in 1160, and the translation below was done from the *Taishō* canon edition, which is based on a 1482 reprint. The translated passage is from chapter 6, in which the author instructs people from all walks of life in how to attain a better rebirth. Wang Rixiu emphasizes the egalitarian aspect of Pure Land soteriology and addresses himself to scholars and doctors, to female servants and midwives, to monks and meditators, as well as to fishers and butchers. The *Expanded Pure Land Writings by the Master from Longshu* remained popular in later centuries and was often cited.<sup>47</sup>

Advice to doctors: Doctors should think, “The pain in someone else’s body is not different from mine. Whoever comes calling [me to see a patient], I have to go quickly without delay. If someone stops to ask for medicine, I shall readily provide it, without asking whether someone is noble or lowborn, without distinguishing between rich and poor.”

[A doctor] should focus his mind on helping others and on building good relationships with others, thereby increasing his merit, which will result in good fortune in the netherworld. If one takes advantage of others’ misfortune, with the intention set on [increasing one’s] wealth, instead of acting out of benevolence, one will encounter great calamities in the netherworld.

In our township there was a good doctor called Zhang Yanming. Everyone would come to ask him for treatment—Buddhist and Daoist monks, unemployed scholars, soldiers, officials, and all the poor. He never asked for money; in fact, to some he even gave money or food. Whenever people called him to a patient, he went out, even if it was a very poor person. If a wealthy person brought money and asked for medicine, he would not ask how much money there was but gave them more

47 There is a German translation in Hackmann 1924.

than enough medicine. When he expected that the illness would soon be cured, he never thought of making people come back to buy more medicine. If a sickness was critical and persistent, and he knew there was no cure, he would still administer good medicine, to comfort the patient, but he would not take money for the treatment.

I lived in that place for a long time and knew this man well. He never mentioned money in connection with medicine. Such a man can indeed be called the best among doctors. One day a fire broke out in the city and ranged widely; in the smoke and blaze only his dwelling was spared. One year there was a terrible cattle epidemic, and only his stock was not diminished. This was all due to divine help. His son studied and came out first in the district exams. He had two or three grandsons, who were strong and handsome. Thus was his good fortune bestowed by Heaven.

If he had diligently applied himself to earn wealth but forgone these many other [blessings], his gain would never have offset his loss. Should his colleagues not learn from him? If one would always be as diligent in creating merit toward [a rebirth] in the Pure Land, one could certainly be reborn there in the first rank.

If one [as a doctor] tells sick persons about the Pure Land, they will easily come to believe in it and can be brought to take the great vows. They will firmly follow the vows, to broaden the [Pure Land] tradition, to redeem themselves from the punishment for past misdeeds, and to recover from their illness.

If their allotted life spans should come to an end, the power of these vows will cause them to be reborn in the Pure Land. If [a doctor] thus converts people, not only will he be reborn there in the first rank, but in this world too will he be respected and earn boundless merit, which will be passed on to his sons and grandsons.

Excerpt from “The Good Physician” from *Transmitting the Compassion of the Pure Lands* (*Jingtu cheng'en ji* 淨土承恩集, X. 62)  
Translated and introduced by William J. Giddings

The short excerpt that follows is taken from an anthology of writings by Miaoneng 妙能. Consisting of forty-five pieces of aphoristic writings, the compilation as a whole expresses the writer's earnest wish that readers will become more compassionate in their dealings with all others. This piece of writing, number 21 in the anthology and only partially translated here, returns

to the vital Buddhist metaphors of the Buddha as healer and to the Dharma as the great curative.

Unlike the previous excerpt, which literally is addressed to doctors and literally discusses medical practice, this text's usage of medicine is entirely metaphorical. The malaise or sufferings portrayed are not necessarily infectious diseases as such but, rather, dissatisfaction. The text speaks of doubts and the means of overcoming them, of forbearance and the need for the individual to accept his or her present condition, and of the removal of fears and anxieties through trust in Amitābha Buddha. Amitābha, the Buddha of Infinite Light, presides over the western Pure Land of Sukhāvati (called simply "the West" in the translation below), where the faithful go after death. Playing upon notions associated with Chinese medicine, the text says that the five organs (五內 *wunei*) are "ablaze" (燒 *shao*) in those who are unawakened. Once confidence in Amitābha is restored, however, anxieties evaporate in the warmth of joyfulness, and then compassion arises in which there is no longer the perception of some concrete division between oneself and others.

A good physician saves from the sufferings  
 arising from past foolishness and attachment.  
 The Great Teacher of the West has said to the faithful:  
 have feelings of inexhaustible compassion,  
 be sincere in saving [others] from suffering with any means suitable.  
 So, sit close by to the right  
 and, when awoken by the light,  
 recall forthwith Zhiyi Dashi's Discussion of the Ten Doubts.<sup>48</sup>  
 Combine calming and insight meditation (*śamatha-vipaśyanā*) and the  
 knowledge<sup>49</sup> of forbearance.  
 For those yet unawakened, the five organs burn away inside,  
 fearful and anxious, their tears quickly flow.  
 Think carefully about this:  
 there is sorrow and there is joy.  
 Sadness leads to sorrow, as the bad habits of men are difficult to  
 remove, yet

48 *The Discussion of the Ten Doubts about the Pure Lands (Jingtu shi yi lun 淨土十疑論*; T. 1961, 47: 77b–81b). Its author, Zhiyi 智顓 (538–97 CE), is the founder of the Tiantai school.

49 The passage literally reads *zhīwén* 之文, which could be rendered as "the writings on." This implies not just the literary form but the ideas embodied within the text itself.

from time to time there appears  
 joyfulness leading to happiness, which a man with a realized teacher can  
 achieve.  
 So, quickly take this to heart!  
 Create the conditions. Say the four-line verse.  
 Do not punish yourself!  
 Offer lamps, burn nine sticks of incense, and  
 offer these to Amitābha Buddha.  
 Keep this in mind and never forget.

### About the Authors

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