The Buddhist Classic in Three-character Phrases

By Chan Master Chuiwan of the Ming Dynasty
Dedicated to the memory of
the Venerable Master Hsüan Hua (1918 - 1995),
the ninth Wei-Yang Chan Patriarch and founder of
the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, and to
the 50th year commemoration of his timeless teachings
coming to the West.
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吹萬禪師傳 Biography of Chan Master Chuiwan (1582 - 1639)
印光大師 By Venerable Master Yinguang (1861-1941)

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忠州三目山聚雲寺吹萬廣真禪師，一般多稱聚雲吹萬，為明末著名禪宗大師。四川宜賓人李氏子，父祖世籍婆羅門。

Chan Master Venerable Guanzhen of Gathering Clouds Monastery on Three Eyes Mountain of Zhongzhou (in Sichuan Province) is usually called Chuiwan of Juyun (Gathering Clouds Monastery). Master Chuiwan was a great Chan Master at the end of the Ming Dynasty. He was born in the Li family of Yibin city in Sichuan Province. His grandfather was descended from a line of Brahmins.

師生惟慕事佛，初登少峨峰浩山老人，後返鄉得大慧祖師錄四冊及《正法眼藏》一錄，苦參力究。遇一僧提撕有省，入的敘州朱提山參月明聯池和尚，苦修三載，終得印可。

When the Master was young, he admired and longed to serve the Buddha. He first climbed the Shao-Er Peak to pay homage to Elder Haoshan. Later he returned to his hometown and obtained a four-volume set of The Record of Patriarch Dahui and The Treasury of the Proper Dharma Eye. Based on these books, he vigorously investigated the topic of Chan. He encountered a monk who helped him to delve deeper into his investigation. Later he went to the Zhuti Mountain of Dizhou to study and investigate with Venerable Master Yueming Lianchi and arduously cultivated there for three years. He eventually obtained approval and certification from Master Lianchi.
He cremated him in accordance with tradition. A lotus fragrance pervaded the whole cremation site, afterwards white smoke rose to the pine treetops and turned into a five-color pattern. After the cremation, over three hundred pieces of sharira, three stalks of his golden collar bones, and together with his teeth, which, after cremation turned purple, were found and collected. On the southern side of the Sanmu (Three Eyes) Mountain, a pagoda was built in his honor; twelve pieces of his sharira were received and housed in the Earth Store Monastery of Fengdu City. The imperial commissioner of inspection of Sichuan, Tian Huaguo, composed a memorial essay for engraving, and attributed the Master as the fourteenth generation disciple of Great Master Dahui (1089-1163), as well as the Dharma descendant of Ding Xu of Lan-an Monastery. He left behind a legacy of ten rolls of Zheng Lu (The Orthodox Collection of Teachings) and sixty-six rolls of Guang Lu (The Extensive Collection of Teachings) of thirty-some genres. He was indeed a luminary figure of great mastery during his time of the Ming Dynasty.

His disciples, Master Huiji of the Iron Wall Mountain, Master Huizhi of the Three Eyes Mountain, the Three Patting Master Huili of the Iron Brow Mountain and others
Preface

印光大师（代 明天启时、蜀东忠州聚云寺、吹万老人释广真作）
by Venerable Master Yinguang for Elder Chuiwan (Ven. Guang Zhen) of
Gathering Clouds Monastery during the Ming Dynasty’s Tianqi Reign Period

序

人同此心，心同此理；凡圣不二，生佛一如。由迷悟之或殊，致升沉之迥别。
In each one of us there exists the same mind, with this one mind we also share the
same principle. Common folks and sages alike are not distinct from one another,
while living beings and Buddhas are one and the same: they differ in their levels
while awakening and delusion, which lead to the marked disparity in their states of
being—either transcending the world or descending into the revolving wheel of
birth and death.

大覺世尊，湣而哀之；示成正覺，轉大法輪。本一心以建立，作迷津之寶筏；
The Greatly Enlightened, World-Honored One took pity upon us and manifested
attaining Proper Enlightenment and turned the great wheel of Dharma—his
teachings, all based on the single mind, have become the precious raft for ferrying
lost souls. He wished that all beings in the future would cross over to the other shore
of the Path, hence he delivered his teachings spanning the five periods, as well as
his special transmission of the mind-seal which is apart from the regular teachings.

All of these teachings he passed on to his disciples and instructed them to circulate
on a vast scale. Therefore, patriarchs of the various schools arose in succession
to proliferate the flourishing of the schools and proclaimed the teachings—
propagating the Dharma on behalf of the Buddha.

迄今世远年深，事多义广；若非读破大藏、妙悟自心，无以测其端倪，得其
With the abiding passage of the years, the contents and meanings contained in
the teachings have broadened. Unless one has attained a thorough mastery of the
Tripitaka and wondrously awakened to one’s mind, one will sustain great difficulty
in understanding the essentials of the teachings and gaining insight from them. Thus
from time to time I have intended to compose an outline summary of Buddhism for
the edification of posterity. I thought of the Confucius scholar Wang Bohou of the
Song Dynasty, who had written the Three-Character Classic to illustrate the ethics
that are relevant to daily life, and to trace each succeeding dynasty’s achieving
peace spiraling into turmoil. The Classic enables learners to gain a peripheral
understanding before undertaking an in-depth study of the vast. Students should
begin their study at a young age and deepen their practice as adults. Conducting
their lives according to the principles, be it serving the public or the sovereignty,
they restore the innate goodness inherent in human nature.
遂仿其意，略敘如來降生成道、說法度生，列祖續佛慧命、隨機施教，及與眾德自利利他，嘉言懿行，題曰：《釋教三字經》。俾為沙彌時，誦而習之；知佛經之要義，明祖道之綱宗。及其壯而遍閱三藏、歷參五宗，妙悟自心，冥符佛意；方知山色溪聲，咸示第一義諦，鴉鳴鵲噪，共談無上心宗——非同非異、非有非空，即權即實、即俗即真。博之則盡十虛而莫容，約之則覓一字不可得；然後乘大願輪，闡揚法化。普令法界眾生，歸依一體三寶；復本來之面目，傳無盡之心燈。是在後進之發心造修焉，予日望之！

I now emulate Scholar Wang's method to pen a summary outlining the Thus-Come One’s exalted birth and accomplishing of the Way, speaking the Dharma and crossing over living beings. I also recount how each patriarch perpetuated the Buddha’s life of wisdom, their bequeathing the teachings according to each individual’s potentials, as well as how the ancient virtuous ones benefited themselves and benefited others, their noble words and lofty practices. I titled the book the *Three-character Classic of Shakya(muni)’s Teachings*, so that novices can recite and review it to understand the essentials of the Buddhist Sutras as well as the synopsis of the patriarchs’ way. When they mature, they can study extensively the *Tripitaka* and investigate each of the five schools; thus wondrously awaken to their own minds, and tacitly tally with the Buddha’s intent. At which time, they will understand that the “colors of the mountains” and the “sounds of the creeks” are all manifesting the ultimate truth, and the “crowing of crows” or the “twittering of sparrows” are all speaking the supreme mind principle, which is neither the same nor different, neither existent nor empty; yet at the same time it is provisional and actual, embracing both the conventional truth and the ultimate truth. If one is to explore it extensively, one will have to exhaust the ten dharma-realms without being able to encompass it; if one is to explore it minutely, one will attempt to seek just one character yet failing to find it. Afterwards, one can ride on one’s great wheel of vows to propagate the Dharma and proclaim the teachings, so as to lead all beings of the Dharma Realm to universally take refuge in the Triple Jewel of the one substance, restoring their original faces and forms, thus transmitting the limitless eternal lamp of the mind. This is for the sake of future students’ bringing forth the mind of study and cultivation-- which is my sincere hope and expectation.
簡介 Introduction
近巖比丘 by Bhikshu Jin Yan

宣化上人曾發願要將中文佛教經典翻譯成世界各種文字，如今我們以此《佛教三字經》的英文翻譯和中英雙語印刷來懷念上人及其教誨。

Venerable Master Hsüan Hua made a vow to translate Buddhist scriptures out of Chinese into the world's languages. Now, we dedicate this English translation and bilingual printing of The Buddhist Classic in Three-character Phrases to the remembrance of Venerable Master Hsüan Hua and his teachings.

《釋教三字經》（或稱《佛教三字經》）是明朝末年吹萬禪師的著作，他參考《三字經》的體裁而寫成這部簡潔、有韻律的佛教三字經。每一句只有三個字，每四句成一頌，再加上押韻，就很容易背誦。

Shi Jiao San Zi Jing (or Fo Jiao San Zi Jing The Buddhist Classic in Three-character Phrases) was written during the late Ming Dynasty by Chan Master Chuiwan (1582-1639). He used the style of The Three-Character Classic to compose this Buddhist classic. It is succinct and rhythmic: each sentence is only three characters long, every four sentences forms a verse, and the text follows a regular rhythmic pattern for easy memorization.

雖然《佛教三字經》的文字簡潔，但其內容豐富、含義深遠，涵蓋的主題包括：1. 法界及其特性。 2. 釋迦牟尼佛誕生、出家、降魔、成正覺、轉法輪，及入涅槃。 3. 結集三藏。 4. 佛法東傳至中國。 5. 大小乘十宗的發展。 6. 懺悔法。 7. 佛教的基本名相與理念，譬如五蘊、四聖諦、十二因緣等等。 8. 勸人在信解行證上的修學。 9. 以古德的行誼來勉勵後學。 10. 結語 —— 敘述作者的心意與教學的極致。
Despite its brevity, this Buddhist Classic is vast in contents and profound in meanings. It covers the following topics:

1. The Dharma Realm and its nature;

2. Shakyamuni Buddha’s birth, leaving home, subduing demons, awakening, turning the dharma wheel, and entering Nirvana;

3. The compilation of Buddha’s teachings into the Tripitaka;

4. Eastward propagation of Buddhism into China;

5. The development of ten schools including both Theravada and Mahayana;

6. The Dharma of repentance;

7. The fundamental terms and concepts of Buddhism, such as the five skandhas, the four noble truths, and the twelve links of dependent origination, etc;

8. Exhortation to learn and practice in the sequence of establishing faith, gaining understanding of teachings, practicing, and realizing the fruition of the Way;

9. Paradigms of lofty figures of the past of great character and learning that serve as models for future students;

10. Conclusion stating the author’s intentions and the ultimate nature of teaching.

We assume these ten-section divisions of content were made by Yang Renshan or Master Yinguang. When we obtained the source text for this translation, we found that other people had divided the work into twenty-four sections.

有人可能會質疑《佛教三字經》只講述中國佛教, 觀點狹隘; 然而這並不是我們的用意。西方的佛教還在萌芽階段, 而這本《佛教三字經》如詩歌般的容易背誦, 可作為佛學的基礎。我們更盼望將來能見到融合不同傳承的智慧與知識的佛教經典之作。

Some people may bring up the question of the text’s limited view, because it seems to be only an introduction to Chinese Buddhism. However, Western Buddhism is still in its budding period, and we feel that The Buddhist Classic in Three-character Phrases, with its song-like poetry and ease of memorization, is a worthwhile primer for Buddhism. We look forward to seeing the advent of a modern "Buddhist Classic" that integrates the knowledge and wisdom of all traditions.

另外，限於篇幅，所有的典故及註解將另行出版。我們歡迎讀者的指正，及對翻譯的建議，以便於日後的改善。

Also, due to the extraordinary size of the footnotes, commentary, and related stories, they will be published in a separate volume. We are aware that mistakes are inevitable; feedback to point out errors and comments about the translation are welcome so that we can improve our work in the future.
I. Buddhism’s Origin
1

法界生起
The Origin of the Dharma Realm
There is neither a beginning nor an ending; Neither inside nor outside; But for the purpose of establishing a name, We call it the Dharma Realm.

The Dharma Realm, In nature, is simply our Dharma Body. Because we are not awakened, It is called “Ignorance.”
空色現，情器分；三世間，從此生。

When space and form appear,
The sentient and the non-sentient begin to differ;
The Three Worlds
Thus appear.

迷則凡，悟則聖；真如體，須親證。

When confused, one is a mortal;
Once awakened, one becomes a Sage.
The essence of “Thus-ness”
You must realize by yourself.
2

証道成佛
Realizing the Way and Accomplishing Buddhahood
Who realized the Way?
Shakyamuni, the Honored One.
[Based on] his great compassionate vow,
He manifested being born.

While residing in the palace,
He sought to escape.
He departed from the Capital at night
While no one knew.

Rising from samadhi,
He came down the mountain
And sat beneath the [Bodhi] tree;
His state of mind awakened.
The gods and dragons rejoiced;
The demons were afraid.
He gazed at the star
And realized Proper Enlightenment.
3

啓教傳道
The Buddha's Teaching and Transmitting of the Way
[The Buddha] began his Great Teaching by Expounding on the *Avatamsaka.* There the splendid lotus [worlds] appeared Amid oceans of lands as many as dust particles.

Pitying ordinary unawakened beings Who could not grasp this teaching, [The Buddha] concealed its esteemed features, Then revealed lesser Dharma they could absorb.
He taught the Agama Sutras
During the Second Period [of his teaching].
Characterized by the Four Noble Truths
Which take across beings of modest capacity.

Four stages of Arhats reach their goal
And leave Samsara behind.
This is the Vaipulya Teaching,
For those who can break attachments
to the Dharma.

During the Fourth Period,
He discoursed on Prajna
To mature the Two Vehicles
And teach the Bodhisattvas.

During the Dharma Flower Assembly,
He revealed the perfect Dharma
So that Learners and Those Beyond Study
Alike were predicted to Buddhahood.
Having completed his teachings, he entered Nirvana. Between the Twin Trees he passed away, in an auspicious reclining pose.

After his body was cremated, his relics were distributed. [Later on,] King Asoka changed the earlier system.
He emptied royal treasuries
To build stupas.
He ordered spirits and ghosts
To send relics throughout Jambudvipa.

King Udayana
Was the first to make images of the Buddha
So that future generations
Could make offerings and cultivate blessings.
4

結集三藏
Compiling the Tripitaka
Mahakasyapa, the Patriarch,
Instructed Ananda
To compile all the Sutras,
Inside the rock cavern.

Sutras are the Buddha's discourses;
They constitutes the treasury of scriptures,
While Vinaya texts
Comprise the treasury of rules for the community.

The Tripitaka divides into Three Treasuries
And Twelve Categories of teachings.
When those who understood met these texts,
They could do the Buddha's work.
II. 中國佛教

Buddhism in China
佛法東傳
The Eastward Expansion of Buddhism
Emperor Ming of the Han Dynasty
Dreamed of a golden figure.
So he sent Cai Yin
To seek the Sage’s teaching.

Kāśyapa Mātanga, and Dharmaraksa
Brought the Sutras and Buddha images
And translated the first Sutra:
*The Sutra of Forty-Two Sections.*
道教徒，興惡念；請焚經，為試驗。

The adherents of Daoism
Indulged an evil intent
And made a contest
To set the Sutras on fire.

道經燬，佛經全；光熾盛，耀人天。

The Daoist scriptures were burned
While the Buddhist Sutras remained intact.
The brilliant light [emitted from the Sutras]
Shone on both humans and gods.
善男女，皆生信；求出家，期現證。

All the good men and women
Awakened faith in their hearts.
They sought to enter monastic life
And to realize the Way.

建十寺，安僧尼；三寶備，始於茲。

Then ten monasteries were built
For monks and nuns to live.
The Three Treasures were thus established
For the first time in China.

溯源流，知宗派；宗有十，分小大。

One should trace back to the start
To discern the sects and schools:
The Schools were ten in numbers,
Comprising both Theravada and Mahayana.
The Two Schools of the Theravada Tradition
The Satyasiddhi School flourished
During the Six Dynasties;
The stories were documented
In the *Records of Eminent Sanghans*.

The Abhidharma-kośa School lasted from
The Chen Dynasty to the Tang Dynasty;
After the Five Dynasties,
It gradually declined.
The Chan School
The mind-seal transmission
Characterizes the Chan school;
The Buddha held up a flower
And Mahakasyapa woke up instantly.

He gave the Dharma to Ananda
Who then became the Second Patriarch.
The Patriarchs’ stories of successive transmission
Have all been told.

The Twelfth Patriarch
Was named “Horse Whinny (Asvogosha);”
He wrote “The Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana;”
Thereafter the Mahayana prospered.
The Fourteenth Patriarch  
Was named Nagarjuna;  
He entered the Dragon Palace  
And met the *Avatamsaka Sutra*.  

The Sutra was thus given to the world  
And the Dharma-rain showered down;  
The commentaries were composed  
And sweet dew fell like rain.
The Twenty-eighth Patriarch, Venerable Bodhidharma, Traveled eastward to China To reveal the suchness of the Buddha Nature.

This wisdom beyond language, You must realize yourself. It was Hui Ke (The Able One) Who received the Mind-seal.
第四祖，名道信；知無縛，解脫竟。

The Fourth Patriarch,  
Named Dao Xin,  
Set his mind free  
And attained liberation.

五祖忍，居黃梅；東山上，道場恢。

The Fifth Patriarch Hong Ren  
Resided in Huang Mei (Yellow Plums)  
On the peak of Dong Shan (East Mountain),  
His Place of Awakening flourished.

第六祖，名惠能；傳衣缽，道大行。

The Sixth Patriarch,  
Named Hui Neng,  
Received the robe and bowl,  
And the Way greatly flourished.
After the Sixth Patriarch
Came two Chan Masters:
Master Rang of Nanyue (South Mountain),
And Master Si of Qingyuan (Green Plain Mountain).

From Master Rang,
A stallion galloped forth;
He galloped past the crowd
And spread the Chan School's fame throughout China.

From Master Si,
Came a student, nicknamed “Rock.”
His teachings were challenging;
His path hard to travel.
The Chan School grew five branches,
Each lineage different.
The Lin-Ji School
Is known for its shouts and slaps.

Recognize esoteric points clearly;
Recognize host from guest.
Tell subject from object,
Put it down or don’t.
The Cao-Dong School
Transmits the "Precious Mirror [Samadhi],"
Settles the ruler and subject,
Carries out the right commands.

The Yun-Men School
Examines students with a single glance;
Rare are the ones who can break through
The one-word gateway.

The Fa-Yan School
Clarifies the Six Characteristics;
Explaining that Chan and the Teachings
Are not two different things.
8

律宗

The Vinaya School
Having understood the Chan School,
One still needs to know about the Vinaya School.
If one holds the Five Precepts,
One will plant down stable roots.

As a Novice,
One should uphold the Ten Precepts.
As a Bhikshu,
One should uphold the Complete Precepts,

Totaling two hundred
And fifty precepts in all.
Bhikshunis, add another one hundred plus
To be complete.

The Brahma Net Sutra
Sets forth the Bodhisattva Precepts.
There are Ten Major Precepts,
Of Minor Precepts there are Forty-eight.
The Patriarch for the Vinaya School
Was named Upali.
He received the Buddha's certification
And showed how to observe the moral code purely.

One should first restrain the body
Then discipline the mind.
This way, one attains the perfect understanding
And realizes the Way profoundly.
Master Yuan Zhao of the Song Dynasty
Came after Master Dao Xuan.
Authoring numerous works on the Vinaya,
He was skillful at discerning and differentiating them.

After having learned the Vinaya,
One should study the Teachings School
To identify the True and the Expedient Teachings,
And to distinguish between the
Mahayana and Theravada.
天台宗
The Tian Tai School
During the Northern Qi Dynasty,
Lived Master Hui Wen;
He studied The Middle Way Commentary
And mastered the essence of its doctrines.

Venerable Nagarjuna was his Patriarch;
He set out the Three Contemplations:
Emptiness, Conventional Existence, and
the Middle Way.
But thereafter each returns to a unified reality.
Hui Wen transmitted the teaching to his disciple, Whose name was Hui Si of Southern Mountain; His methods of Tranquility and Insight Became the model of learning for all generations.

The Third Patriarch was Zhi Zhe (the Wise One). He proclaimed and systemized both Teachings and Practice, And differentiated between what is ultimate and expedient.
The Storehouse (of the Theravada Canon),
The Connecting, the Distinct and the Perfect --
These Four Teachings
Have circulated to the present age.

This teaching explains our Inherent Nature,
originally complete,
Encompassing both good and evil.
The One Hundred Realms
And the Three Thousand Qualities of Suchness
are included therein.

This school
Is known as the Tian Tai.
With the Dharma Flower (Lotus) Sutra
as its principal text,
It enables beings to unfold the Buddha's wisdom.
10

華嚴宗
The Avatamsaka School
The Avatamsaka Sutra
Is most honored and supreme.
It first reached China
During the Eastern Jin Dynasty.

Master Du Shun
Was Manjushri Bodhisattva’s emanation;
He expounded on the Avatamsaka Sutra
With great finesse and agility.
The Dharma was first transmitted
To Master Zhi Yan;
He wrote In Search of the Esoteric,
Which totaled ten scrolls.

Next, it was transmitted
To Master Xian Shou,
Who wrote Exploring the Esoteric,
A work of rare quality in this world.
The Commentary by Master Qing Liang
Explains the new version of the Avatamsaka Sutra;
The Sub-commentary that followed
Is vast and profound.

The Small, the Beginning,
The Ending, the Sudden,
And the Perfect --
These Five Teachings flourished.

They encompass the Four Dharma Realms,
The Ten Profound Doors,
As well as the Six Characteristics;
The meanings are foremost in depth and clarity.

Cause implies effect;
Effects include the causes.
They gather in the myriad phenomena
And all return to a unified reality.
Master Zong Mi of Gui Mountain Wrote Commentaries on  
*Perfect Enlightenment Sutra*;  
The *Great Commentary* is elaborated in great detail,  
While the *Minor Commentary* is relatively brief.

This school Is called Xian Shou (Foremost in Worthiness).  
Its teachings include both gradual cultivation  
As well as total interpenetration.
唯識宗
The Consciousness-Only School
Great Master Xuan Zang of the Tang Dynasty  
Traveled to India through the Western Regions.  
He studied the teachings of the Yogacara School  
Founded by Maitreya Bodhisattva.

He received the teachings from Śīlabhadra,  
A great Shastra Master,  
And was personally taught  
For many years.

Returning to Chang An,  
He transmitted the Dharma to Master Kui Ji,  
Who was versed in the science of reasoning,  
And the three parts of syllogisms.

He compiled *A Discourse on Mere-consciousness*  
And wrote the *Shu Commentary*.  
He refuted the false doctrines  
And championed righteousness.
There is the Direct Cognition
And Cognition through Reasoning;
Ultimately, both are validated by
Authoritative Cognition.

When the Nature of Pervasive Attachment
And the Nature of Dependence on Others
Are both cast away,
One realizes the Nature perfectly.

This school
Is also called Ci En (Kindness and Mercy).
It first discusses the marks,
Then reveals the Truth.
12

三論宗
The School of the Three Shastras
The school of the Three Śāstras
Is the earliest lineage,
Commencing with Master Kumarajiva
of the Qin Dynasty,
Who travelled to China.

The doctrine of true emptiness
Was upheld as the first and foremost;
His multitudes of disciples
Converged to study these teachings.
曰《中論》，曰《百論》，《十二門》，

《中論》, 《百論》, 《十二門》，

為三論。

為三論。

The Middle-Way Śāstra,
The Hundred-Verse Śāstra,
And the Twelve Doors Śāstra
Comprise the Three Śāstras.

Master Ji Zang of the Tang Dynasty
Exerted great effort
In writing the Commentary on the Three Śāstras,
Which spread east of China (Korea and Japan).

Dharma Master Fa Zang
Wrote a commentary on the Twelve Doors Śāstra,
Entitled the Zong Zhi Record,
Which still exists in present times.
13

密宗
The Secret School
Master Shan Wu-wei (Śubhakarasiṃha)
Arrived at Chang An;
During the Tang Dynasty, Master Yi Xing
Received his true transmission.

He wrote a commentary on
*The Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi Sutra*;
Henceforth the Secret School
Was initially established.

Master Vajrabodhi
And Master Amoghavajra
Arrived in succession
To spread the teachings widely.
The Dharma of Anointing the Crown (abhiṣeka)
Must not be transmitted casually
To someone who is not a Dharma vessel;
This way one invites blame instead of honor.

Prohibitions against this school
Began in the Ming Dynasty.
The Secret School
Was suspended by imperial mandate.
14

淨土宗
The Pure Land School
Master Hui Yuan of the Jin Dynasty
Lived on Lu Mountain;
He established the Lotus Society,
And his virtue gained a large following.

Master Tan Luan of the Kingdom of Wei
Cultivated wonderful contemplations;
He was reborn in a high grade of lotus
And showed auspicious marks.

Master Dao Chuo of the Tang Dynasty
And Master Shan Dao;
Specialized in reciting
the Buddha's name,
Claiming it to be
a wondrous Path.
此法門，三經說；大經該，小經切。

This Dharma-door
Was elaborated in three Sutras;
The large *Amitabha Sutra* was expansive,
While the small *Amitabha Sutra* was succinct.

觀經語，最驚人；許五逆，得往生。

The teaching in the *Contemplation Sutra*
Is the most extraordinary;
It allows those that commit
the Five Relentless Offenses
To attain rebirth in the Pure Land.

三藏教，所不攝；佛願力，誠難測。

The Pure-Land teaching is beyond
The scope of the *Tripitaka*
Because the vow-power of the Buddha
Is truly hard to fathom.

一稱名，眾罪滅；臨終時，佛來接。

One sound of the Buddha's name
Eradicates all offenses;
Then at the end of life,
The Buddha comes to take you [to the West].
Those with inferior, medium, and superior faculties differ in their potentials.
Yet with one recitation of the Buddha's name,
All are reborn into the West.

After being reborn,
They will not retreat.
They will meet the Buddha in person
And receive predictions.

The Pure Land School
Is really concise and direct.
It accords both with time and potentials
And is wondrous within the wonderful.
III. 佛法概論

An Introduction to the Buddhadharma
懺悔法
The Dharma of Repentance
The Ten Schools above
Have just been enumerated.
The Dharma of Repentance
Will now be investigated.

Who wrote and
Compiled the *Kindness Repentance*?
It was authored by Master Zhi Gong
Together with nine other eminent monks.

Emperor Wu of the Liang Dynasty
Was extremely sincere.
He helped save his deceased wife
From a python’s body.
Master Wu Da of the Tang Dynasty
Had a karmic obstruction from the past;
A human-faced sore
Festered on his knee.

He encountered a divine monk,
Who helped dissolve the hatred.
He applied samadhi-water
And the sore was cured.

Thereafter he wrote the Water Repentance;
This work endures to the present times.
If one practices this Dharma accordingly,
Then one receives boundless benefits.
諸法
The Many Dharmas
As a practitioner of Buddhism,
One needs to know the Dharma.
One should also be skilled at
distinguishing between
What is defiled and pure.

The eyes, ears, nose,
The tongue, body, and mind --
These are the Six Sense Faculties
And should be remembered.

Form, feeling, cognition,
Formation, and consciousness --
These Five Skandhas
In fact are all empty.
色聲香，味觸法；此六塵，亦須識。

The sights, sounds, smells,
The tastes, objects of touch, and dharmas
Are the Six Sense Objects,
And should also be understood.

前六根，與六塵，十二處，常相親。

The previous Six Sense Faculties
And the Six Sense Objects,
Make up the Twelve Places;
They mutually complement one another.
17

識的轉依和淨化
Transforming and Purifying the Consciousnesses
The *manas* (Transmitting) Consciousness
Is the seventh.

The *ālaya* (Storehouse) Consciousness
Is the eighth.

The eight kinds of consciousness
Are the kings of the mind.
When they transform into wisdom,
The nature will emit light.

The Great Perfect Mirror,
The Equal Nature,
The Wonderfully Observing,
The Accomplishing Any Undertaking --

These Four Wisdoms
Are perfected within the one mind.
With these Eight Consciousnesses turned,
The functioning of the body becomes complete.
成佛之特徴
The Characteristics of Becoming a Buddha
曰法身，曰報身，曰應身，是三身。

The Dharma Body,
The Reward Body,
And the Response Body
Constitute the Three Bodies.

自受用，他受用；一報身，說二用。

The Self Enjoyment Body,
The Body That Brings Enjoyments to Others,
These two functions just discussed
Are within the one Reward Body.

胎生身，變化身，此二種，皆應身。

The womb-born body,
And the transformation-born body,
These two are both
The Response Body.

約為三，開為五；相無定，隨機睹。

In brief, there are Three Bodies;
In detail, there are five.
Their appearances are not fixed,
Each accords with the varying conditions
of the perceiver.
有肉眼，有天眼，有慧眼，有法眼，

The Flesh Eye,
The Heavenly Eye,
The Wisdom Eye,
The Dharma Eye,

並佛眼，名五眼；見所見，皆無限。

Along with the Buddha Eye
Are called the Five Eyes.
The seeing and the seen
Are all unlimited.
正法與解脫
The Proper Dharma and Liberation
The Truths of suffering, of accumulation,
Of cessation of suffering, and
the Path to that cessation
Are the Four Noble Truths;
One should inquire into them.

From ignorance
To old age and death;
These Twelve Dependent Originations
Arise from conditions.

If one follows ignorance, one will be turned;
If one resists ignorance, one will attain cessation.
Both of these are empty in themselves
And are not different in any way.
The Perfection of Giving,
That of upholding Moral Precepts,
That of Patience,
That of Vigor,

That of Dhyana Samadhi,
And that of Prajna-wisdom --
These Six Paramitas
Will end all suffering for both self and others.

Compassion, kindness,
Joy and equanimity
Are the Four Limitless Minds;
With these four, one is called a sage.

Permanence, Joy,
True Self and Purity
Are the Four Virtues of Nirvana;
With these four, one realizes Nirvana.
六凡與四聖
The Six Worldly Beings and the Four Sagely Beings
The realm of sentient beings
Consists of the Six Mortal Beings.
The suffering of the Three Evil Paths
Must be first discussed.

Hell beings,
Hungry ghosts,
And animals,
Their suffering is measureless.
The Bodhisattvas
And the Tathagathas
Bring peace to the beings,
And see them as young children.

The Four Realms of Sages
And the Six Realms of Mortal Beings
Make up the Ten Dharma Realms;
All ten are encompassed within the One Nature.
21

器世間

The Material World
To discuss the body,
We must discuss the land in which it lives.
The land is the secondary retribution;
The body is the primary retribution.

Four continents compose a world;
Mt. Sumeru stands in the center.
The Rings of the Iron Mountains
And the Seven Gold Mountains encircle it.
為大地，風力持；水火金，不相離。

The earth comes into being
Through the supporting power of the wind wheel.
The same for the water wheel, the fire wheel, and the metal wheel,
Layer upon layer without separation.

水輪含，十方界；性流動，如何載？

The wheel of water
Pervades everywhere throughout the ten directions;
Its nature is flowing and fluid,
So how does it contain things?

業力持，得自在；風金摩，火現彩。

The wheels are supported by the power of karma,
And are able to move in their own courses.
The friction between the wind wheel and the metal wheel
Blazes forth in colorful flames.
We compare the *amala* fruit
To the Saha World;
With its round shape,
Just like a ball.

How can beings and material things,
Above and beneath the earth,
And throughout the four directions,
All be supported by the round sphere?

The *Shurangama Sutra* speaks of this esoterically;
One should remain perceptive
And not be attached.

The sun and moon
Orbit in space
Without falling,
Whose merit powers this?
有過去，有現在，有未來，三世改。

The past,
The present,
The future,
These three periods of time keep changing.

南與北，西與東，並四維，上下通。

The north, the south,
The east and the west
Make up the Four Cardinal Directions;
Above and below, they integrate with each other.

觀十方，人在中；人居地，地居空。

When observing the Ten Directions,
Humans are positioned in the center;
They dwell on the earth,
While the earth dwells in space.

數此地，至大千；凡聖居，各有緣。

From the earth
Outwards towards the Great Universe of Worlds,
We see sages and mortal beings living in each one,
According to their affinities.
The Shared Land,
The Expedient Land,
The True Reward Land,
And the Still Light Land

Are the Four Lands,
As categorized in the Tiantai Teaching.
The first two are coarse;
The last two are subtle.

The Land of Dharma Nature,
The Land of Pure Transformation,
And the Land of Defiled Transformation
Are the three lands --

As taught
In the Xian Shou School.
All these lands branch out
From the root.
娑婆界，極樂界，華藏界，及餘界。
The Saha Realm,
The Realm of Ultimate Bliss,
The Flower Store Realm,
And other realms.

界非界，非界界；重重涉，各無礙。
The realms and the non-realms,
The non-realms and the realms,
Layer upon layer integrated,
None obstruct each other.
On Exhorting Learning: The Successive Stages of Learning Buddhadharma
學佛者，首在信；信而解，解而行。

For those who learn the Buddhadharma,
Faith is first and foremost,
Followed by understanding,
And then by practice.

由解而行，至於證；識次第，辨邪正。

With understanding one practices
Until one realizes Bodhi.
One should be aware of the stages,
Discerning the correct from the incorrect.

宗說通，理事融；破我執，第一功。

One should understand both Chan and Teachings,
Fuse both principles and phenomena,
Until one breaks all attachments to ego
And accomplishes the greatest work.

四句離，百非遣；妄念消，真性顯。

One casts aside the Four Sentences
And dispels the Hundred Negations.
When one’s false thoughts are eliminated,
One’s true nature manifests.
23

古德——
先賢懿範

Ancient Virtuous Ones:
Past Worthies’ Role Models
古之人，行履篤；言不誑，心不曲。

The ancient ones
Were sincere in conduct.
Their speech devoid of deceit,
Their minds free of crookedness.

守清素，如慧開；竭盡施，不積財。

Some exemplified observing a life of poverty,
Just like Master Hui Kai.
He gave exhaustively,
Never hoarding any wealth.
Some exemplified preserving purity,
Just like Master Dao Lin.
He traveled deep into the mountains
To avoid meeting the opposite sex.

Some exemplified respecting teachers,
Just like Master Dao An.
He did hard labor as assigned,
Willingly and wholeheartedly.

His father sacrificed his life on the battlefield,
To repay his country.
Dao Pi prayed earnestly,
And the bones suddenly jumped up.
Some exemplified noble conduct,
Just like Master Dao Heng.
He entered a deep mountain
To avoid power and status.

Some exemplified evoking responses,
Just like Master Dao Sheng.
He lectured on the Sutras
And caused the rocks to nod in agreement.
Some exemplified mastering Sutras,
Just like Master Ling Bian.
He practiced to the point of sustaining injury,
And wondrous meanings emerged.

Some soared to the sky,
Just like Bhikshuni Jing Jian.
She ascended to the heavens
With a lingering silhouette.
Some exemplified divine understanding,
Just like Li Tongxuan.
His *Treatises on the Avatamsaka*
Has passed down through the ages.

Some exemplified quick wit and nimbleness,
Just like Laywoman Ling Zhao,
The daughter of Elder Pang.
Outsmarted, Pang postponed his Nirvana.

These ten exemplars of virtue
Are meant to encourage beginners.
Relying upon these teachings,
One can realize the
Proper Enlightenment.
結語

Conclusion
These three-character verses
Were spoken according to conditions.
Like the silence that follows a passing breeze,
[These lines approach their end].

It is neither spoken,
Nor not-spoken;
If one understands this,
Then that very understanding is the Truth.
Dedication of Merit

May every living being,
Our minds as one and radiant with light,
Share the fruits of peace,
With hearts of goodness, luminous and bright.
If people hear and see,
How hands and hearts can find in giving, unity.
May their minds awake,
To Great Compassion, wisdom and to joy.
May kindness find reward,
May all who sorrow leave their grief and pain;
May this boundless light,
Break the darkness of their endless night.
Because our hearts are one,
This world of pain turns into Paradise.
May all become compassionate and wise,
May all become compassionate and wise.
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