

漢·竺法蘭尊者

Venerable Gobharana¹ of the Han Dynasty

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尊者。中天竺人。能誦論數萬章。爲天竺學者之師。時蔡愔至彼國。師與摩騰共契遊化。遂相隨而來。會彼學者留礙。師乃間行而至。

既達洛陽。與騰同止。少時便善漢言。即翻譯十地斷結。佛本生。法海藏。佛本行。四十二章五部經。

寇亂移都。四部失本。唯四十二章經存焉。昔漢武穿昆明池得黑灰。問東方朔。朔曰。不知。可問西域胡人。

及師至。衆以問之。師曰。世界終盡。劫火洞然。此灰是也。後卒於洛陽。年六十餘。

The Venerable One was born in Central India. He could recite tens of thousands of chapters of shastras from memory and was the master of many students of Dharma throughout India. When Cai Yin² reached India, Master Gobharana was traveling and spreading the teaching together with Venerable Kashyapa Matanga. Thereafter, the two decided to accompany Cai Yin back to China. However, at that time Master Gobharana's students attempted to hinder him in order to prevent him from leaving, so he had to depart secretly.

He finally arrived at Luoyang and dwelt there with Venerable Kashyapa Matanga. Venerable Gobharana learned Chinese quickly and translated a number of Sutras, including *Cutting off Fetters in the Ten Grounds Sutra*, *the Sūtra of the Buddha's Life*, *the Sūtra of the Dharma Sea Treasury*, *the Sūtra of the Buddha's Deeds*, and *the Sūtra in Forty-Two Sections*.

Later, when the land was plagued by bandits and civil disorder, the capital city was relocated and four of these works were lost; the only work that remains is *the Sūtra in Forty-Two Sections*. In earlier times, when the Emperor Wu of Han (156-87 B.C.E.) was having Kunming Lake [in the capital of Chang-an] excavated, the workmen uncovered a large quantity of black ashes. These were shown to the learned Dongfang Shuo who was reputed to know everything. He admitted that he did not know what they were, but suggested that the emperor consult with foreigners from the Western Regions (mostly Xinjiang and parts of Central Asia).

When Venerable Gobharana arrived, he was asked by many about the ashes and replied that they were the remains of the blazing fire at the end of the eon that brought about the destruction of the world.

When Venerable Gobharana passed away at Luoyang, he was more than sixty years old.

【上人講解】³

漢明帝作夢，夢見佛之後，在永平七年的時候，這一年的歲次是甲子，皇帝就命令蔡愔和秦景、王遵三人，帶著十八個人到印度去求佛法。在中印度就遇到迦葉摩騰和竺法蘭兩位尊者，他們就和蔡愔、秦景、王遵回到中國來，這時候是永平十年了。因為他們來的時候以白馬馱經，所以漢明帝就造一座白馬寺，他們回來的這一年叫丁卯。

漢朝時，佛法就傳到中國了，這是佛教在中國最初的一個開始。可是當時中國盛行的是道教，佛教傳到中國，道教有一些道士就生了妒忌心，對皇帝說：「佛教是假的，是外國的宗教，不是中國的，所以不應該令它在中國流傳，要把佛教趕出去！若不把佛教趕出去，就要來比較一下。」

怎麼樣比較呢？「把佛所說的經典和道教所說的經典放在一起，用火燒。誰的經典若燒了，誰就是假的；誰的經典若燒不了，就是真的。」

☞待續

Commentary³:

Emperor Ming of Han (28-75 CE) had a dream in which he saw a golden figure. After he had this dream, in the seventh year of the Yongping reign, the cyclical year of Jiazi, he commanded three courtiers—Cai Yin, Qin Jing, and Wang Zun—to take an eighteen-person delegation to India to seek the Buddhadharma. In Central India they met Masters Kashyapa-Matanga and Gobharana. The two then traveled to China with the three courtiers, arriving at Luoyang in the tenth year of the Yongping reign, during the year of Dingmao. They came on a white horse carrying their sutras, and thus Emperor Ming of the Han Dynasty built a temple which he named White Horse Monastery.

The Buddhadharma was only beginning in China during the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.E.—220 C.E.) whereas Taoism was the prevailing religion. When Buddhism came to China, the Taoist masters became jealous. They were granted an audience with the emperor and told him, “Buddhism is a false faith. It is a foreign religion; it’s not Chinese. Therefore, you should not permit it to spread through China. You should abolish Buddhism!” they urged. “If you will not abolish it, then you should at least hold a contest.”

What were the rules of the contest? The Taoists suggested that the emperor put the Buddha’s sutras together in a pile with the Taoists’ texts and then set fire to them [all]. Whichever books burned belonged to the false religion, and the texts that survived the flames would be recognized as the true ones.

☞To be continued

¹ Gobharana (Ch. 竺法蘭 zhú fǎ lán). 竺法蘭 has been translated differently by different sources as Gobharana, Dharmaratna, and Dharmarakṣa. Among the three names, Dharmarakṣa is actually the name of another monk 竺法護(zhú fǎ hù).

¹ 竺法蘭尊者的法號，不同的版本有不同的翻譯：Gobharana、Dharmaratna、和 Dharmarakṣa。其中，Dharmarakṣa實為竺法護之名。

² Cai Yin was a member of the delegation sent by Emperor Ming (28-75 C.E.) of the Eastern Han to inquire about Buddhism.

² 蔡愔是東漢明帝（西元28-75年）派往天竺求佛請法的使者之一。

³ The commentary is excerpted from Venerable Master Hua’s lectures on *The Sūtra in the Forty-Two Sections* at Gold Mountain Monastery in San Francisco, California, in 1974.

³ 這段上人講解摘自宣公上人1974年於加州三藩市金山寺講解《四十二章經》的開示。