THE NOBLE PATH

TREASURES OF BUDDHISM

at the Chester Beatty Library
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TREASURES OF BUDDHISM

AT THE

CHESTER BEATTY LIBRARY

AND GALLERY OF ORIENTAL ART

DUBLIN, IRELAND

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# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1 - 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Buddhism in Burma and Thailand</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burma Cat. Nos. 1 - 14 Cases A B C D</td>
<td>5 - 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand Cat. Nos. 15 - 18 Case E</td>
<td>12 - 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Buddhism in China</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China Cat. Nos. 19 - 27 Cases F G H I</td>
<td>16 - 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Buddhism in Tibet and Mongolia</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tibet Cat. Nos. 28 - 57 Cases J K L</td>
<td>21 - 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mongolia Cat. No. 58 Case L</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Buddhism in Japan</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan Cat. Nos. 59 - 79 Cases M N O P Q</td>
<td>32 - 39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India Cat. Nos. 80 - 83 Case R</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Glossary</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Suggestions for Further Reading</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Map</strong></td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Introduction

The Chester Beatty Collection of oriental manuscripts is one of the greatest ever made by a private collector. The life-long interest of Sir Alfred Chester Beatty was the collection and preservation of early texts and manuscripts of the great religions of the world. The written and painted word which was witness to differing beliefs and faiths held a continuing fascination for him.

His travels in South East Asia and the Far East introduced him to the varied schools and systems of Buddhism. Recognising the fragile and ephemeral nature of the texts and paintings on paper, cloth and palm leaf, he determined to acquire and preserve fine examples of this source of knowledge and understanding for posterity.

Buddhist material in the Chester Beatty Library reflects some of the many different cultures and peoples of Asia inspired by the Buddha and his legacy. Many, many books and treatises have been written about the origins and teachings of Buddhism. To attempt to capture its perspective in a short introduction is impossible. The following brief account simply outlines its history and philosophy.

Buddhism has been for many centuries the dominant spiritual tradition in most parts of Asia, its influence extending at one time from Afghanistan in the West to Japan in the East; from Siberia in the North to Indonesia in the South.

Buddhism goes back to a single founder — Siddhartha Gautama — the so-called ‘historical’ Buddha. He was a prince of the Sakya tribe in Nepal, and was born in the middle of the 6th century BC.

Buddhism had many agreements with other Indian religious developments of the time. It accepted rebirth, the common Indian belief that an individual life was one of a series in which each life was conditioned by the moral value of deeds performed in previous existences.

According to Buddhist tradition, Siddhartha renounced the worldly life of the court and practised six years of strenuous disciplines and meditation. Then, while sitting under the celebrated Bodhi Tree, the Tree of Enlightenment, he finally obtained the definite clarification of all his searches in the moment of ‘complete awakening’. He became the
Buddha, that is ‘The Awakened’. Shortly afterwards he went to the Deer Park near Varanasi to preach his doctrine to former fellow hermits, which he expressed in the form of the Four Noble Truths, or ‘Four Truths Ascertained by the Wise’.

The First Noble Truth stated the outstanding characteristic of the human situation – suffering. Everything in our experience is impermanent and unsatisfactory. Birth, sickness, old age and death cause suffering. Even happiness is a source of suffering, due to the fear that it will end.

The Second Noble Truth deals with the causes of suffering: desire for and clinging to what is void of ultimate reality; desire for a perceived world based on a wrong point of view; ignorance (avidya) which leads one from life to life in cyclic existence (samsara) driven by action (karma) the chain of cause and effect.

The Third Noble Truth states that suffering and frustration can be ended. It is possible to realise the true nature of things, to overcome the ignorance which perpetuates cyclic existence and to reach a state of total liberation called Nirvana. To reach Nirvana is to attain awakening or Buddhahood.

The Fourth Noble Truth is the means by which the end of suffering is achieved – the Eightfold Path. This consists of right understanding, motive, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness and concentration, resulting in insight into the true nature of existence which leads to the elimination of the causes of suffering and compulsive rebirth and the attainment of Nirvana.

The practice of Buddhism is based on what are called The Three Jewels – Buddha (the Teacher), Dharma (his teachings) and Sangha (the spiritual community).

After the Buddha’s death, Buddhism developed into a great many schools, each sharing the basic teachings but with its own particular philosophical emphasis. The two main branches of Buddhism are the traditions of Theravada and Mahayana.

In the 1st century AD the memorised doctrine which had been passed on orally for more than five hundred years, was for the first time committed to writing in the Pali language. The Pali Canon forms the basis of the Theravada School. The Mahayana School is based on the
scriptures written in Sanskrit one or two hundred years later, and presents the Buddha's teaching in a more subtle way involving concepts which parallel aspects of modern scientific thought. Some Mahayana texts were known as Tantras, hence the term Tantric Buddhism. In the case of both traditions, the respective canons are not regarded as dogma, but as an invitation and aid to personal investigation and realisation of the truth.

Both the Theravada and Mahayana share the basic teachings (the Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Path, etc). They differ in subtle points of philosophy concerning the final goal of the path, but their main distinction is in the embracing, by the Mahayana, of the Bodhisattva ideal. A Bodhisattva is a highly evolved human being on the way to becoming a Buddha, who does not seek enlightenment for himself or herself alone, but has vowed to help all other beings achieve Buddhahood before entering into Nirvana.

The Theravada established itself in Sri Lanka, Burma and Thailand, whereas the Mahayana spread to Nepal, Tibet, China and Japan, eventually becoming the more widespread of the two schools.

As Mahayana Buddhism spread across Asia, it came in contact with people of many different cultures and mentalities who interpreted the doctrine from their own particular point of view. In this way Buddhism remained a dynamic force through the centuries and developed highly sophisticated philosophies.

The spread of Buddhism also meant the diffusion of a vast amount of written and illustrated texts, carvings, friezes and images of the Buddha and symbolic deities, ritual objects, reliquaries, paintings and scrolls.

This exhibition seeks to present some of the Buddhist items from many countries in Asia collected by Sir Alfred Chester Beatty during his lifetime. Once again, we are aware of our indebtedness to him, and the great importance of the gift which, through exhibitions like this, gives us the opportunity to learn from cultures and philosophies other than our own.

Acting Librarian and Director
Buddhism in Burma and Thailand

The dominant religion in the whole of South East Asia is THERAVADA Buddhism ‘The Doctrine of the Elders’ whose culture and tradition permeate the way of life of the people. Theravada Buddhism is oriented around the monastery which is totally dependent on the goodwill of the lay people for its day to day survival. The monastery is governed by the Vinaya which encourages strict control among the members of the Order. Lay practice mainly consists of acquiring merit through supporting the Order and other good deeds, as well as following the Eightfold Path. This school holds that theirs is the authentic and original form of Buddha’s teachings since it is based on those scriptures acknowledged at the First Buddhist Council which took place immediately after the Buddha’s death.

Archaeological evidence suggests that Buddhism came to Burma as early as the 3rd century BC, and by the 7th century Chinese pilgrims reported that the Theravada School was already active. Between the 8th and 9th centuries, however, Tantric Buddhism which had been introduced from north east India had gained considerable ground.

It was not until King Anawrahta (1044-1077) unified the whole country under his rule that Theravada Buddhism became the predominant school of Burmese Buddhism, a role which it has not relinquished from that time until the present day despite the existence of a handful of outlying monasteries that still practise TANTRIC Buddhism.

Theravada Buddhism influences every aspect of Burmese life in a peculiarly Burmese form which incorporates certain pre-Buddhist beliefs and practices concerning the worship of local spirits called Nats.

The earliest evidence of Buddhism in Thailand dates back to the 6th century. At that time the area of the central plain formed the Mon Kingdom of Dvaravati. At that time the dominant school seems to have been Theravada Buddhism, but between the 8th and 15th centuries Mahayana Buddhism was preferred.

In the 14th century the Thai people began to move southwards from the province of Yunnan in south China, and at this time also monks travelled to Ceylon (Sri Lanka) returning with Theravada Buddhism which quickly gained acceptance. Just as in Burma, THERAVADA Buddhism pervades every aspect of daily life in Thailand.
1  Reclining Buddha

Burma 19th c.
Marble with gilt and coloured stones.
h. 43 length 142 cm.
Nat.Mus. L220.1

In South East Asia the figure of the recumbent Buddha is not interpreted as the Death of Buddha as would be the case in other parts of Asia, but rather as the Buddha sleeping or in meditation. Marble was a widely used medium for sculpture in Burma and came from an area near Pagan. The Buddha's robe has been gilded, and the gold band at his hair line is inset with large coloured stones.
Burmese Dry Lacquer Images of Buddha

The lacquer used in Burma is the sap of a tree native to South East Asia called *Melanhorrea usitata*. Buddha figures are constructed using a technique called Dry Lacquer which is believed to have originated in China. First, the required image is modelled in clay over a wood core which, when dry, is covered with layers of cloth that have been soaked in wet lacquer. Next, the image is covered all over with a mixture called *thayo* which consists of lacquer that has been mixed with finely sifted ashes or pulverised bone until it becomes thick and pliable. At this point the fine details such as the folds of the robe, the facial features and the hair curls are applied with a small horn shaped knife called a *than-let*.

The figure can now be dried until it is completely hard and, if required, the clay inner core can be removed by washing out with water. Next the surface of the statue is rubbed all over with a stone lubricated with sesame oil, and then it is rewashed and polished before a final coat of high grade lacquer is applied. In the final stages small fragments of coloured glass are inlaid in *thayo* as a further embellishment, followed by an application of tissue-thin squares of gold leaf.

2, 3, 4 Three Buddha Images


Dry lacquer gilded and with coloured glass insets
h. 174 w. 83 cm. (see cover)
Nat.Mus L221.32
h. 117 w. 53
Nat.Mus L222.15
h. 98 w. 46
Nat.Mus L221.29

Although these three Buddha images are all standing in a similar pose and have the same hand gestures (*mudra*) their faces are completely different though all exude a gentle friendliness. The statues were made during the Konbaung dynasty (1752-1885) using a method of dry lacquer inlaid with coloured glass. The identification of the figures is certain, since all have the essential characteristics associated with Sakyamuni Buddha which are: the large bump on top of the head of short curly hair, the long pierced ear-lobes, the three crease-marks on the neck, the monks' robes, the bare feet and the unusually long toes. In addition, each figure holds between his thumb and finger a small medicinal fruit called the myrobalan. The Buddha is recorded as having received a gift of myrobalan fruit from the god Indra after his enlightenment.

*Colour illustration on cover*
Burmese Folding Books (Parabaiks)

All the Burmese paintings in this exhibition are in the form of folding books called *parabaiks*. They are made from the joined rectangular sheets of strong fibrous paper that has been made from the inner bark of the mulberry. The paper is folded back and forward in concertina fashion to considerable lengths — some *parabaiks* extend over several metres.

The paintings are done on one side of the paper using vivid natural colours and lavish amounts of gold leaf. Each individual painting can extend over one or more folds and has the text written in black ink below. The books are read from left to right, with the narrow edge of the book to the reader. Some authorities believe that the format of the paintings, long and narrow, reflects the type of mural painting found in Buddhist temples.

5  **Life of the Buddha**

Burma 1856-1880  
Paper with coloured illustrations and mica  
(67 folds). Gold painted leather covers.  
Burmese text  
h. 40.6 w. 17.6 cm.  
CBB. 1207

This is the first of a set of volumes of *Mala lingara wuhtu* a popular Burmese prose *Life of the Buddha* composed in 1798. The text and illustrations follow the events of the Buddha’s life from his conception and birth to his renunciation of the world and his meeting with the ascetic Alara Kalama to whom the young Prince Siddhartha first went for spiritual help on leaving his father’s home.

6  **Life of the Buddha**

Burma 1830 - 1855  
Paper with coloured illustrations (50 folds).  
Cardboard covers.  
Burmese text  
h. 47 w. 18.5 cm.  
CBB. 1208A

This is the eighth in a set of volumes illustrating the *Life of the Buddha*. The illustrations start with the conversion of his two chief disciples Sariputta and Moggallana and end with the conversion of his wife Yasodhara.
Burmese Buddhist Manuscripts
Palm Leaf Books

These consist of the processed leaves of the talipot palm (*corypha umbraculifera*). Both sides of the leaf can be written on, the script either incised using an iron stylus or else applied in ink using a pen or brush. The long thin leaves are trimmed then placed one on top of the other before protective boards are added at top and bottom. Holes are pierced through the boards and leaves so that a cord can be threaded through to keep the contents of the book in order. When a book is not in use it is placed inside a chintz wrapper which is held in place with a binding tape.

7  Scriptural Text

Burma dated 1798
Palm leaf with red lacquered edges
(253 folios) between wood boards.

h. 5.5 w. 48.9cm
CBB. 1256

This is the complete text of the *Vinaya Pitaka* which sets out the Monastic Rules of Discipline governing the Theravada School of Buddhism. From the *Vinaya Pitaka* come those texts concerning ordination services, bestowal of robes and so on which make up the ordination books (*kammavaca*).

The text, which is in Burmese script, is incised in eight horizontal lines onto both surfaces of 253 palm leaves. A colophon states that the manuscript was completed on 25 April 1798, and a note inside the cover states that the book was removed from the Royal Palace at Mandalay.

8  Binding Tape

Burma (Prome) 19th c.
Red cotton
length 351 w. 2.5 cm.
CBB. 1278

The craft of weaving text into cloth is now extinct. These tapes were used for securing large palm leaf manuscripts, and the usual colours were either red with white text, blue with white, or red with yellow. This tape contains pious verses praying that the gift may help bring the coming of the Future Buddha. The donors of the gift were Maung U and his wife who lived at Padaung village.
Burmese Buddhist Manuscripts
Monks' Ordination Books (Kammavaca)

It was customary for wealthy Burmese families to commission an expensive and elaborate copy of the ordination service when one of their sons became a monk. Kammavacas consist of the order of service, regulations outlining the monastic code of discipline such as the bestowing of robes, admonitions to the newly ordained monk and so on. Much more expensive materials than palm leaf were generally used, such as silk, metal, ivory and even mother of pearl. At least one example of all these different types can be found in the Chester Beatty Collection. The individual pages of the kammavacas are intended to be read horizontally. In some of the most luxuriant examples the Pali text is written in large square Burmese script (tamarind) using a thick viscous reddish black lacquer that looks like dried blood. Although kammavacas are common in all the countries where Theravada Buddhism is practised, it is only in Burma that the production of highly elaborate and expensive examples was encouraged.

9 Monk’s Ordination Text

Burma 18/19th c.
Textile (? silk) covered in red and gold lacquer
with black lacquer text (1 folio).
h. 13.6 w. 57.2 cm.
CBB.Add.2

This kammavaca is an example of the extremely rare type made from textile which has been covered in lacquer. Some are believed to have been made from discarded monk’s robes, whilst others may be made from silk. The six lines of Pali text are flanked by small vertical decorative panels showing half-kneeling figures, their hands clasped in reverence. That this is the first folio in the text is confirmed by the Burmese character ‘ka’ written in a circle on the left of the page. Catalogue No. 9
10 Monk’s Ordination Text

Burma 19th c.
Ivory with red and gold decoration and black lacquer text (1 folio).
h. 7.5 w. 54 cm.
CBB.Add.1

The text of the kammavaca starts in the centre of the leaf and is flanked by two animal designs in red and gold. The Burmese square script is written in reddish-black lacquer on a thin sheet of ivory which, although uncommon, is not as rare as texts written on silk. Ivory is difficult to decorate because the lacquer does not adhere easily.

11 Monk’s Ordination Text

Burma 19th c.
Metal (possibly copper) decorated with red and gold lacquer and black lacquer text (1 folio).
h. 10.5 w. 52.6 cm.
CBB.Add.3

The text of this kammavaca is written on metal, possibly copper that has been decorated in red and gold lacquer. The six lines of Pali text are written in Burmese square script and are flanked by decorative panels showing kneeling figures praying.

12 Monk’s Ordination Text

Burma 18th c.
Cloth stiffened and lacquered with matte black and inlaid with mother of pearl decoration (5 folios).
h. 10 w. 54 cm.
CBB. 1248

This is a rare example of an ordination text that has been made from a discarded monastic robe that has been stiffened and then lacquered with matte black. Four short lines of square Burmese script are formed from an inlay of mother of pearl, as are the stupas which decorate each side of the folio.
13 *Scriptural Text*

Burma 19th c.
Silk lacquered in red and gold (12 folios).
Wood covers with red lacquer and gold.
H. 10 W. 54.1 cm.
CBB. 1251

This is an incomplete votive manuscript presented to an unspecified monastery by King Mindon (1853-1878) and his queen. It consists of sacred texts from the *Abhidamma Pitaka*, one of the most important texts in Burmese Buddhism. The folios are made of gold lacquered silk and the text is written in black in an archaic stone inscription character. Note the circles on each folio which indicate where the cord holes are to be pierced. The first folio of the manuscript has a short seven line text in the centre with the colophon inscription in gold on an intricately decorated red lacquer background. The remainder of the text is written in eight lines per page.

14 *Votive Text*

Burma 18/19th c.
Silver (with repairs in silver).
H. 5.7 W. 46 cm.
CBB. 1250

A single leaf made of silver, much repaired, is incised on both sides with eight horizontal lines of Burmese script. The text is from *Paticcasamuppada sutra*. This may have been made with the intention of enshrining it inside a stupa.
Thai Folding Books

In Thailand the folding book was used for both Buddhist and secular Thai texts as well as practical writings such as official documents. The books, although concertina-folded in the same way as Burmese parabaiks, show some differences. Thai folding books are made from local paper made from the inner bark of the *streblus asper* bush. Long sheets of this off-white paper were joined and folded concertina fashion, but the method of reading was different. The reader places the book with the broad edge horizontally and reads from top to bottom as he pulls each fold towards him. Not only are the folds much narrower than the Burmese type, but the text and illustration, if any, cover both sides of the paper.

15 The Ten Previous Lives of the Buddha

Thailand 18th c.
Paper with coloured illustrations
(49 folds). Red and black lacquer cover.
Cambodian script
h. 13 w. 65 cm.
CBThai.1310

In the sixth tale of the Ten Lives of the Buddha prior to his becoming Sakyamuni (*Jataka*) he is born as a serpent named Bhuridatta. Whilst coiled round a huge ant-hill where he regularly fasts, the serpent is captured by an evil hunter who then forces him to perform in public to make the hunter wealthy. Throughout all his torments Bhuridatta shows neither anger nor resentment and ultimately gains his freedom.

The purpose of the story is to illustrate the virtue of perseverance. In this illustration the hunter and his companion are shown on the right of the page, whilst on the left we see the serpent coiled round the ant-hill.

16 The Ten Previous Lives of the Buddha

Thailand 18th c.
Paper with coloured illustrations
(47 folds). Black and gold lacquer cover.
Cambodian script
h. 14 w. 65.3 cm.
CBThai.1311

The third of the ten stories of the Buddha’s previous lives (*Jataka*) exemplifies the virtue of loving kindness. In this story the Buddha lived as a young man called Sama with his blind parents. His parents lived a life of extreme asceticism in the forest and their son Sama willingly did everything for them – collecting their food,
fetching their water, bathing and comforting them. One day the gentle Sama goes to fetch water accompanied by a deer who follows him everywhere. Near the pool the King of Benares is out hunting. Mistaking Sama for a divinity able to tame animals, he shoots a poisoned arrow into Sama's side. The illustration shows the King drawing his bow and Sama falling to the ground as the terrified deer escapes. The story ends happily when the King repents of his evil deed, and the intensity of his parents' grief not only restores their sight but also brings Sama back to life.

Colour illustration plate 1

17 The Story of the Venerable Phra Malai

Thailand 18th c.
Paper with coloured illustrations (38 folds). Lacquer cover.
Cambodian script
h. 12.5 w. 69.3 cm.
CBThai.1313

The story of Phra Malai is used in Thailand as a teaching text. It tells how an extraordinary monk was able to visit both heaven and hell, returning to earth to relate what happens there. The text of the story is written down the centre of the page with illustrations on either side. On the right a humble woodcutter is shown collecting lotus buds from a lotus pool, whilst on the left the same man presents the buds to Phra Malai. The purpose of the story is to demonstrate that the making of gifts to monks will gain merit for the donor in the next life.
The Life of the Buddha
Cambodia 19/20th c.
Palm leaf decorated in gold and colours.
(2 leaves)
h. 6.0 w. 59.6 cm.
CBThai.1339

The elaborate decoration and gilding on this palm leaf manuscript suggests that it may have been commissioned for the Royal Family. The first leaf is decorated with an oval painting which shows the birth of the Buddha. Queen Maya, his mother, stands underneath a tree in the Lumbini Garden having just given birth. The child who has a halo round his head, is cradled by one of four worshipping devas who are watched by five attendants. The second leaf has an illustration of the incident of the Buddha taming the wild elephant.
Plate 1
Buddhism in China

MAHAYANA Buddhism first arrived in north China during the Later Han Dynasty (AD 25-220) via the trade routes from Central Asia, whilst Hinayana Buddhism arrived rather later to south China via the sea routes. From that time onwards, Buddhism either flourished or waned largely in accordance with the patronage of the Chinese Imperial Court. At all times it had to compete with the strength of those Confucian principles on which the whole social structure of the country was founded.

The period between the 5th and 8th centuries was one of intense religious fervour when many Buddhist works were translated from Pali and Sanskrit into Chinese. A Buddhist Order was established, and Chinese Buddhist monks travelled to India to bring back written texts for study and dissemination. By this time Mahayana Buddhism had become dominant throughout China. From this period too, emerged the first truly Chinese Buddhist schools. These are the Pure Land School founded by Huiyuan at the turn of the 5th century, and Chan (Japanese Zen) founded in the 6th century.

Between 842-845 the Imperial Court turned against Buddhism and the first great persecution took place. Numerous monasteries were destroyed or converted to other uses, and hundreds of thousands of monks and nuns were secularized. Unlike neighbouring Tibet where Buddhism permeates every aspect of its social and cultural tradition, Buddhism forms only one strand of Chinese spiritual thought, being regarded as one of its three ‘Ways of Thought’ namely Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism.
Jade Book

China 18/19th c.
Jade (nephrite) with gold painting and calligraphy
(8 folios) bound in yellow silk. Wood Box.
h. 22.7 w. 16 cm.
CBC. 1002

The condensed version of the ‘Diamond Sutra’ (Prajnaparamita) is written in gold on eight extremely thin sheets of green jade. This sutra is the most popular of Mahayanist texts and extols wisdom as the principal path to enlightenment (see also No. 20). The jade book was once the property of the Dowager Empress Cizi (died 1908) and was taken from the Summer Palace at the time of the Boxer Rebellion in 1900. The Empress Dowager was a fervent believer in Buddhism and was often referred to as ‘The Old Buddha’.

Jade Book

China dated 1723
Jade (nephrite) with gold painting and calligraphy
(53 folios) in slate box.
h. 24 w. 9 cm.
CBC. 1006

The full text of the ‘Diamond Sutra’ (Prajnaparamita) is written in gold on fifty three folios of pale green jade. At the beginning of the text are three illustrations which, when placed side by side, form a continuous line drawing of Buddha enthroned with guardians and worshippers. On the last folio there is the date 1723 and the words “engraved with heartfelt respect for my disciple the serene and wise prince to ensure his true happiness.” The prince referred to is almost certainly Qianlong who reigned 1736-1795.

Jade Book

China c. 1760
Jade (nephrite) with gold painting and calligraphy
(12 folios) edged in silk.
h. 22 w. 13.5 cm.
CBC. 1007

Each folio of this book is engraved with a portrait of one of the Sixteen Buddhist Lohans together with a short description of each of their characteristics. Although neither signed nor dated, the short text at the end of the book relates how Emperor Qianlong visited Shengyin Temple in the year 1757. During that visit he examined a famous set of paintings of the Sixteen Lohans made during the tenth century. On discovering
that the order in which the Lohans were painted did not correspond to the standard, the emperor "made the transcriptions agree with the established standard and added the order of their names at the foot of each of the slips on which he described the characteristics of the Lohans". From this information we can assume that Qianlong commissioned this blue jade book from the imperial workshop shortly after 1757 and that the names and portraits of the Sixteen Lohans are listed in the order observed in Tibet, as approved by Qianlong.

22 **The One Hundred Lohans**

China 18/19th c.
Blue paper with painting in gold and colours.
h. 40 length 356 cm.
CBC. 1147

Indigo blue paper has been used as a background for the one hundred individual Lohans 'disciples of Buddha' depicted in this long handscroll. The skin of each disciple is blocked in using gold, whilst the outline of their robes is shown in gold outline. The different patterns on their textile robes is indicated in green and red paint. In China from the 8th century onwards there were sixteen acknowledged disciples of Buddha (see No. 21) but in later years the number grew into much larger groups of one hundred and even five hundred.

Although the painting is signed by a well known artist named Ding Yunpeng and dated to the year 1427, it is more likely that it was made by a copyist during the 18th or 19th centuries.
23 **Guardian Figure**

China 18/19th c.
Wood lacquered in red and gold.
h. 1.6 m. w. 60 cm.
CBC. 1080

The guardian figure (*dharmapala*) wears a tiger skin held in place by a belt which has a snarling tiger head mask over the belly. In his right hand he holds an axe.

24 **Portrait of a Buddhist Priest**

China 18/19th c.
Silk painted in light colours formerly a hanging scroll but now framed in glass.
h. 136 w. 76 cm.
CBC. 1142

The abbot of a Buddhist monastery is shown seated in lotus position on the extra-wide hardwood chair used on ceremonial occasions. In front of the cloth-draped seat is a low wooden footstool on which he has discarded his shoes. Over his plain monk's robe the abbot wears a rich red cloak, held in position by a jade ring and gold hook on his left shoulder. He is holding a wooden sceptre which is a symbol of high rank. The identity of the sitter is unknown and the portrait is unsigned. The various signs of wealth shown in the painting were probably added by the painter as a token of respect for the sitter.

25 **Portable Shrine**

China 16/17th c.
Wood lacquered in gold.
Figure: h. 22 w. 17.5 cm.
Throne: h. 15.2 w. 23 d. 18.8 cm.
Mandorla: h. 45 w. 21.8 (including peg)
CBC. 1082

Gautama Buddha is seated in the meditation pose (*dhyanasana*) on a square shaped hollow throne. Inside the throne cavity there are coins, bags of soil, strips of gold leaf, and mantras printed in the Tibetan language. The almond shaped *mandorla* behind the figure is attached to the throne with a peg.

*Colour illustration plate 2.*
Sakyamuni Buddha

China dated 1778
Silk embroidered hanging scroll.
Overall size: h. 82 w. 57.5 cm.
Embroidery: h. 55 w. 46.3 cm.
CBC. 1064

In the year 1778 the Emperor Qianlong commissioned a set of three embroidered hanging scrolls of the Past, Present and Future Buddha. This is the second and central embroidery in the set and depicts the 'historical' Buddha (Sakyamuni Buddha). The exquisite silk embroidery is mounted on a cotton backing to which has been attached a handwritten inscription in four languages, Chinese, Mongolian, Manchu and Tibetan. The inscriptions relate that in 1778 the Qianlong Emperor decreed that a high ranking Tibetan lama should commission an embroidered scroll of Sakyamuni Buddha which would be used for ritual purposes.

Although the location of the first of the series which would have shown the Previous Buddha is unknown, the third of the three embroideries is now part of the collection of the Victoria & Albert Museum in London.

Mahakala Gonpo Shal

China dated 1518
Silk embroidered hanging scroll.
Overall size: h. 126.5 w. 103.5 cm.
Embroidery: h. 73 w. 57.5 cm.
CBC. 1069

The large central figure in this beautifully preserved sixteenth century embroidered hanging is Mahakala Gonpo Shal who sits in the position of royal ease on a double lotus throne. In his right hand there is a thigh-bone trumpet, and in his left a bowl and chopper. He also holds to his chest a long staff that is topped by a human head on a trident. In the top left corner of the embroidery is the blue figure of Akshobhya, whilst at the top right corner we see a Buddhist adept (Siddha).

Embroidered in fine gold thread across the bottom of the scroll is a badly worn Tibetan inscription followed by a Chinese inscription, part of which can be read as follows: ‘Bao An Temple, on the 24th day of the ninth month of the twelfth year of Emperor Jengde’s reign’, a date which corresponds to the year 1518.
Buddhism in Tibet and Mongolia

Buddhism was first introduced to Tibet around AD 640 but made little progress until the 18th century when the reigning King invited an Indian Buddhist master named Padmasambhava to teach. Padmasambhava introduced a variety of MAHAYANA Buddhist teachings including TANTRISM, but initial success was followed in the 9th century by a period of persecution initiated by a subsequent monarch. In the 11th and 12th centuries Tibetan Buddhism was regenerated by a number of Indian masters and their Tibetan students. Subsequently the Tibetan Mahayana, known as VAJRAYANA Buddhism, became the dominant religion of Tibet, virtually displacing the indigenous Bon faith.

Between the 8th and 14th centuries a continuous effort was applied to making the whole range of Indian Buddhist literature written in Sanskrit available for study in Tibetan monasteries. This work was carried out by Tibetan translators working with Indian and Nepali scholars. Their translations were so systematic and exact that it later proved possible to reconstruct lost Buddhist writings, originally preserved in Sanskrit, by retranslating the Tibetan texts into Sanskrit.

In the 15th century another major revival was carried out by Tsongkhapa who established the Gelugpa ‘Yellow Hat’ Order which continues to be the dominant school of Tibetan Buddhism. The older orders such as Nyingmapa and Kagyupa are sometimes referred to as ‘Red Hat’ Orders. Tantric ritual continues to play a large part in all the schools of Tibetan Buddhism and has had a profound effect on the visual arts.

By the 17th century there were over three thousand monasteries and nunneries in Tibet, with around a quarter of the population ordained as monks and nuns. By the mid-20th century there were over six thousand monasteries and nunneries in greater Tibet. Buddhist principles and beliefs permeate every aspect of daily life for religious and lay people alike.

Buddhism became established in Mongolia with the conversion of Emperor Kublai Khan (1280-1294) at a time when both Tibet and China were part of the Mongol Empire. He encouraged the building of many monasteries, but after his death interest in Buddhism waned. In the 16th century the faith was revived under the influence of Taranatha who founded the Kuren Monastery. Mongolian Buddhism today is restricted to the Gelugpa ‘Yellow Hat’ school of Buddhism.
Tibetan Buddhist Painting

Tankas

All Tibetan religious painting is done as an act of devotion. The painters work according to strict principles of colour, style and size which are handed down unchanged from master to pupil from generation to generation. Tankas are painted on sized cotton cloth which is later mounted as a hanging scroll and protected by a silk gauze veil. The artist first uses charcoal to sketch out the composition of the painting using the ruler and compass as well as diagrams of different deities which he can outline if he wishes. The proportions of all the elements of the composition must be exactly adhered to. Once the drawing is completed by over-painting the charcoal outline with red or black ink, the colours can be applied. Until recently all colours were earth, mineral or vegetable substances mixed with water, chalk and animal glue. Since each colour carries its own symbolic meaning, its use is strictly laid down in the Buddhist texts. Although the paintings were never signed, many of them are inscribed on the bottom edge. This inscription usually identifies the various deities included in the painting. It is very rare indeed that tankas are dated.

28 Bhaisajyaguru

Tibet 18th c.
Cotton cloth painted with colours (tanka).

h. 62 w. 44 cm.
CBT. 1822

The central figure is The Supreme Physician (Bhaisajyaguru) who holds a medicinal myrobalan fruit, which is his symbol, and a bowl. Around him are eight of his entourage and the goddess Tara. The three figures at the top of the painting are Tsongkhapa and his two chief disciples (see No. 29), identifying this as a painting executed for a sponsor of the Gelugpa tradition.

29 Tsongkhapa

Tibet 18/19th c.
Cotton cloth painted with colours (tanka).

h. 48 w. 36 cm.
CBT. 1817

The central figure is Tsongkhapa (1355-1417) who is flanked by his two chief disciples. All three monks are wearing the characteristic yellow hat of the Gelugpa Order he founded. At the head of the painting the figures of Tsongkhapa and Atisa are shown receiving the sacred teachings from the Buddha of Loving Kindness (Maitreya). At the foot of the painting is the White Tara (Sitatara) with The Lord of Death and the Glorious Goddesses.
30  Drubpay Wangchuk

Tibet early 18th c.
Cotton cloth painted with colours (tanka).
h. 67.8 w. 40.1 cm.
CBT. 1829

The identity of the main figure is revealed in the Tibetan inscription at the bottom of the painting. This Lama is the tenth in a series of incarnations of both Indian and Tibetan masters who eventually became known as the Panchen Lamas. The portrait near the top left of the painting is of his spiritual master. At the top right corner is Vajrapani and at the bottom right the Lord of Death, one of the guardian dharmapala figures. Paintings of this type are called Lineage Tankas.

31  Amitabha

Tibet 18th c.
Cotton cloth painted with colours (tanka).
h. 37.4 w. 26.6 cm.
CBT. 1820

The Buddha of Boundless Light (Amitabha) is shown in his paradise accompanied by his entourage of eight Bodhisattvas.

32  Sakyamuni

Tibet 18th c.
Cotton cloth painted with colours (tanka).
h. 67 w. 53 cm.
CBT. 1824

This painting shows the main events of the Buddha's life. Beginning at the top left corner we see the unborn Buddha in one of the heavens, his descent as a white elephant towards his mother's womb, his miraculous birth, his life as a prince, and the luxury of his life in his father's palace. Ascending from the bottom centre of the painting up the right side we follow the story of his renunciation of worldly pleasures, and his enlightenment whilst surrounded by his temptors. Then come his teaching, his final release into Nirvana and the enshrining of his relics.
33  **Padmasambhava**  
Tibet early 18th c.  
Cotton cloth painted with colours (*tanka*).  
h. 52 w. 38.5 cm.  
CBT. 1827

The central figure is an Indian Buddhist master named Padmasambhava, one of the principal founders of Tibetan Buddhism in the eighth century. He wears the red hat of the Nyingmapa School by whom he is regarded as a second Buddha. Above his head are the Buddha of Boundless Light (Amitabha) and the Lord of Compassion (Avalokitesvara). In the top left corner of the painting is Sakyamuni Buddha, and to the top right is the Buddha of the East (Akshobya).

34  **Bhava Viveka**  
Tibet 18th c.  
Cotton cloth painted with colours (*tanka*).  
h.67.5 w. 41 cm.  
CBT. 1830

This is a portrait of Bhava Viveka who was third in a series of incarnations of the Panchen Lamas. The inscription at the bottom of the painting reads: “Respects to the teacher Bhava Viveka who bowed at the feet of the teacher Nagarjuna and, having destroyed the heretics from the south, actually saw the face of the Secret Lord (Vajrapani) and bound to his service him with the name of the crow (Mahakala)”.

35  **Amitabha**  
Tibet 19th c.  
Cotton cloth painted with colours (*tanka*).  
h. 58.5 w. 42 cm.  
CBT. 1825

The Buddha of Boundless Light is seen in his paradise accompanied by his entourage of Bodhisattvas.

36  **Heruka**  
Tibet 18th c.  
Cotton cloth painted with colours (*tanka*).  
h. 65 w. 42.5 cm.  
CBT. 1837

Many of the wrathful representations of Buddhahood, generally called *Herukas* are portrayed in this *tanka*. In Tantric Buddhism deities symbolize the enlightened energy which makes situations powerful and creative - they may be understood as manifestations of aspects of the unconscious mind. In the centre of the painting is the Supreme Heruka and his consort, whilst the fierce deities of the four directions are shown at east, south, west and north.
Tibetan Buddhist Painting

Mandalas

The mandala is a diagram consisting of a large circle set in space, with the sense of 'centre' and 'circumference'. Inside the circle is a square which represents the 'palace' or environment of the deity and which has four gateways at the cardinal points. East is usually at the lower edge.

In the centre of the mandala is a small circle containing a representation of a symbolic figure or figures whose presence is being invoked through meditation on the mandala by a Buddhist devotee. All of the mandalas from the Chester Beatty Collection shown in this exhibition are in the form of hanging scrolls (tankas) from the Tantric School of Buddhism, so the central deity is usually shown with a female partner locked in sexual embrace. The female figure represents the 'passive' principle of wisdom, whilst the male figure represents the 'active' principle of compassion.

The mandala represents the unification of many elements into one through the experience of meditation. Seeming complexity and chaos are simplified into a pattern and a natural hierarchy.

All the colours, lines and figures contained in a mandala are made in strict conformity to a set of rules, because to paint or sculpt a mandala is to evoke a deity whose presence has to be recognized in forms that are both precise and unchanging.

37 Mandala
Tibet 16th c.
Cotton cloth painted with colours (tanka).
h. 48.7 w. 39.6 cm.
CBT. 1815

This is the oldest mandala in the collection, differing greatly in colour and style from the remainder. The dominant colours of the painting are a deep green and deep red with much use of gold. In the central circle are the figures of Hevajra and his consort Nairatmya embracing. Along the top border of the mandala is a row of Indian teachers and Tibetan lamas to illustrate the succession of teachers by which the Hevajra tradition was transmitted.

38 Mandala
Tibet early 19th c.
Cotton cloth painted with colours (tanka).
h. 55 w. 42.5 cm.
CBT. 1840

One of a set of mandalas that seems to have been painted by the same artist (see Nos.38-47). It is the circle of Vajrabhairava, a symbolic deity of the Gelugpa Order with his entourage of eighteen.
39  Mandala

Tibet early 19th c.
Cotton cloth painted with colours (tanka).
h. 55 w. 42 cm.
CBT. 1841

The mystic circle of Vajrabhairava and his female consort who are shown with their entourage of sixteen.

40  Mandala

Tibet early 19th c.
Cotton cloth painted with colours (tanka).
h. 56 w. 43 cm.
CBT. 1842

The mystic circle of Vajravarahi with her entourage of twelve.

41  Mandala

Tibet early 19th c.
Cotton cloth painted with colours (tanka).
h. 55 w. 42.5 cm.
CBT. 1843

The mystic circle of Amoghasiddhi, the ‘All Accomplishing’ Buddha whose direction is north. He is shown with his entourage of twelve.

42  Mandala

Tibet early 19th c.
Cotton cloth painted with colours (tanka).
h. 55 w. 42.5 cm.
CBT. 1844

The mystic circle of Vajravarahi and her entourage of twelve (see also No. 40).

43  Mandala

Tibet early 19th c.
Cotton cloth Painted with colours (tanka).
h. 55 w. 42.5 cm.
CBT. 1845

The mystic circle of Amitayus ‘The Buddha of Eternal Life’ and his entourage of twelve.

Colour illustration on back cover
44 Mandala

Tibet early 19th c.
Cotton cloth painted with colours (tanka).
h. 55.5 w. 42.5 cm.
CBT. 1846

The mystic circle of Mahasukha 'Great Bliss'.

45 Mandala

Tibet early 19th c.
Cotton cloth painted with colours (tanka).
h. 56 w. 42 cm.
CBT. 1847

The mystic circle of Mahamaya 'Great Illusion' as a set of five deities (see also No. 46).

46 Mandala

Tibet early 19th c.
Cotton cloth painted with colours (tanka).
h. 55.5 w. 42 cm.
CBT. 1848

The mystic circle of Mahamaya 'Great Illusion' (see also No. 45)

47 Mandala

Tibet early 19th c.
Cotton cloth painted with colours (tanka).
h. 55.6 w. 42.7 cm.
CBT. 1849

The mystic circle of Vajrapani and the eight serpent deities together with four doorkeepers.
Ritual objects used in Tibetan Buddhism fall into two main types: those which represent a deity or a deified human being, and those which are non-figurative.

The most popular medium for small figurines is metal – which can be copper, bronze, silver or brass – although clay is also used. Whether cast or beaten, the more intricate of the metal figures are produced in many separate parts which are later soldered or rivetted together. Usually the figurines of metal are painted in gold and then decorated with appropriate coloured paints as well as semi-precious stones. Some figures, when in use on ceremonial occasions, would be clothed in silk brocade cloud-collars and costumes. Before the finished image is consecrated there is a special ceremony at which the hollow interior of the figure is filled with printed prayers and other precious items before the base plate is sealed in position. The final touch is often the painting-in of the pupils of the eyes, after which the image is considered to be inhabited by the deity it represents and can from then onwards be used for ritual purposes. Identification of the image is based on the position of the hands and feet, the number of heads and limbs, the type of emblem held, the type of costume worn, the ornaments, and the body colour. Only rarely is the identity of the figure given in an incised inscription at the base of the figure. Tibetan images are almost never signed by the maker, and very seldom dated.

In addition to religious images, there are a number of non-figurative objects used in religious ceremonies which are not included in this exhibition. These would include the ritual dagger, rosary, long horn (up to 4 metres), thigh bone trumpet and similar musical instruments, the ritual bell, bowl, chopper, wheel, mirror, skull cap, bone ornaments, brocade costumes, dancing masks and so on. The three important non-figurative ritual objects from the Chester Beatty Collection shown in this exhibition are explained both in the captions and glossary. They are the vajra, the stupa and the prayer wheel.

48  Vajra

Tibet 19th c.
Brass.
length 13.7 cm.
CBT. 1886

The vajra represents the indestructible Absolute and is the most important symbol of Vajrayana Buddhism. Many of the deities seen in Tibetan paintings carry the vajra which is frequently used in rituals, especially in conjunction with the bell (ghanta).
49 **Stupa**
Tibet 18/19th c.
Brass with copper base and cover. Imitation stones.
  h. 19.2 w. 10.4 cm.
  CBT. 1880

This model *stupa* was probably used as a ritual object on a shrine. In this example the circular drum section of the *stupa* is shaped as an inverted pot in which there is a niche which once held an image. Many model stupas contain relics hidden in the square base. The spire of the stupa, with the usual thirteen sections representing the different stages of the Bodhisattva path, is crowned with the sun-moon symbol of the union of opposites and a drop tapering into space.

50 **Amitayus**
Tibet 18th c.
Bronze with gold leaf.
  h. 14.4 w. 9.1 cm.
  CBT. 1872

Amitayus the 'Buddha of Eternal Life' is shown holding the Vase of Life which contains the elixir of spiritual immortality.

51 **Gautama Buddha**
Tibet 19th c.
Bronze with gold plate
  h. 10.6 w. 7.7 cm.
  CBT. 1873

Gautama Buddha is shown sitting in meditation on a lotus leaf throne with his hands in the gesture of preaching (*dharma*chakra *mudra*). The base cover is incised with the symbol of crossed *vajras*, a common seal on such images.

52, 53 **Prayer Wheels**
Tibet 18/19th c.
Silver inlaid with turquoise length 26 cm.
  Nat.Mus. (416-1904)
  Silver length 24.7 cm.
  CBT. 1881

Prayer wheels are filled with tightly-wound strips of paper containing thousands or even billions (depending on size) of mantras. Spinning the wheel, reciting sacred formulae; concentrating and perhaps visualizing, the devotee unifies body, speech and mind in prayerful activity. Prayer wheels are always turned clockwise and vary in size from hand-held items to huge pivoting drums housed in specially constructed buildings. They are a literal manifestation of the oft repeated scriptural phrase ‘turning the wheel of the dharma’.
54 Empowerment Cards

Tibet 18/19th c.
Paper dyed black with paintings in gold and colours backed with yellow silk mounted in glass frame.
h. 10.5 w. 8 cm.
CBT. 1864

Painted cards such as this are still in use in Tibet today for special ceremonies when an initiate is empowered by his or her teacher to practise a particular system of meditation symbolized by the deity shown in the painting. The card is usually placed in or attached to a ritual vase topped with peacock feathers (see Chinese hanging scroll 26). One or more cards would be used at each ceremony. Paintings of this exceptional quality would have been handed down from one teacher to the next for use on such occasions, but not otherwise displayed. Yellow silk fabric of Chinese origin has been pasted on the back of each card and a small paper label fixed to the top right corner. In Chinese characters written on the label are the phonetic transcriptions of the name of the deity portrayed on the card, followed by a number which is also written in Chinese.

55 Divination Cards

Tibet 19th c.
Paper with painting in colours.
h. 11 w. 9 cm.
CBT. 1806

These cards were used as talismans, or for mystical and magical rites such as fortune-telling and exorcism. They are made of stiff Tibetan paper painted in an amateur fashion with a variety of figures some deities, some priests and some laymen. Others have animals or emblems as the principal subject. On the obverse of many of the cards is a number, and sometimes an inscription written in Tibetan script. There are 84 such cards in the Collection.

56 Sutra of the Seven Noble Buddhas

Tibet 18th c.
Paper with woodblock printing and paintings in colour (106 folios).
h. 8 w. 23 cm.
CBT. 1712

This is a Tibetan printed version of the Sanskrit Buddhist sutra 'The Sutra of the Seven Noble Buddhas'. There are painted illuminations on the inside of the top cover (which counts as the first folio), on the second folio, and on the inside of the bottom cover. The name
of the Tibetan donor who financed the cutting of the wooden blocks on which the book was printed is given in a separate colophon.

57  The Perfection of Wisdom

Tibet 18th c.
Black paper with gold lettering (90 folios).
Wood carved covers.
h. 12 w. 33 cm.
CBT. 1704

This is a condensed manuscript version of ‘Perfection of Wisdom’, a Buddhist text which contains various scriptures written on the themes of the Way of the Bodhisattvas and the Doctrine of Emptiness. The wooden cover of the manuscript is a good example of the intricate carving used on Tibetan book covers. Sakyamuni Buddha is in the centre of the carving, with Vajrapani on the left and Avalokitesvara on the right.

58  Sutra of the Golden Light

Mongolia 18th c.
Paper with red and black lettering
(54 folios). Wood cover.
h. 11 w. 49 cm.
CBM. 1905

The text is an abbreviated Version of Altan Gerel which is the Mongol version of the popular Mahayana text the ‘Sutra of the Golden Light’. The title page is done in red and black, and the text is flanked by coloured miniature paintings of Gautama Buddha on the left and a Bodhisattva on the right. Where Tibetan words have been used in the text, the appropriate Tibetan language script is inserted alongside.
Buddhism in Japan

MAHAYANA Buddhism was introduced to Japan from China during the period between the 6th and 9th centuries, but soon took on a flavour that is uniquely Japanese.

Its first patron was Prince Shotoku (574-622) the regent to Empress Suiko (554-628), who did his best to encourage Buddhism in the belief that it would bring to Japan much of the sophisticated civilization of East Asia, particularly writing and literature, music, new styles of architecture, painting, sculpture, garden design and other refined art forms. Initially there was a violent reaction to Buddhism by those who felt that it threatened the native Shinto religion, but the patronage of the Imperial Family and the protection of Shinto shrines meant that both religions could harmoniously co-exist.

Influenced by Chinese practice, Japanese Buddhists placed great importance on the copying out of sutras as a means of acquiring merit. Sutra copying reached its peak during the 11th and 12th centuries when artists produced huge numbers of scrolls, often using expensive materials such as dark indigo blue-dyed paper decorated with silver and gold calligraphy and paintings. There are several such scrolls in the Chester Beatty collection.

The ZEN School of Buddhism was one of the last to take root in Japan, having been introduced from China at the end of the 12th century. Zen Buddhists attach little importance to the sacredness of the scriptures or the religious iconography of Mahayana Buddhism. Instead they believe in strict self-discipline and self-reliance, absolute simplicity and complete spontaneity. These ideals, especially as revealed in Zen art forms, have had a considerable effect on Japanese cultural life. Even though Buddhist doctrine and practice are not a significant part of everyday life in Japan today, most Japanese nevertheless remain Buddhist and the principal teachings still influence their basic outlook on life even if this is at the subconscious level of their thinking and behaviour.
59 **Buddhist Sutra**

Japan mid 12th c.

Blue dyed paper with gold and silver calligraphy and painting.

h. 26 w. 285 cm.

CBJ. 206

This scroll of the *Tripitaka* (Japanese *Daizokyo*) was commissioned by Fujiwara Kiyohira during the twelfth century and donated to the Chusonji Temple at Hiraizumi. It is written on dark blue dyed paper using gold and silver for alternate lines, and the frontispiece shows the Buddha preaching to Bodhisattvas and devotees. Fujiwara Kiyohira is known to have commissioned a complete copy of the Buddhist Canon as a set of 5300 scrolls, of which this is one.

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60 **The Lotus Sutra**

Japan early 17th c.

Paper with printed text between ruled gold lines. Painted frontispiece and covers.

(8 scrolls) each with roller ends of crystal and gold.

(1) h. 28.4 w. 1042  (5) h. 28.4 w. 1069
(2) h. 28.4 w. 1182  (6) h. 28.4 w. 1054
(3) h. 28.4 w. 898   (7) h. 28.4 w. 960
(4) h. 28.4 w. 898   (8) h. 28.4 w. 853

CBJ. 122

This set of eight scrolls contains the entire Lotus Sutra (*Saddharma Pundarika*) which is usually known in Japan by its abbreviated title *Hokkekyo*. The Lotus Sutra is believed to contain the final sermon and given by the Buddha and was probably written in India during the first century A.D.

This set of scrolls was almost certainly commissioned by a wealthy courtier and presented to the temple. Although the text is printed, each scroll opens with a painting done in gold on blue paper, and the covers of each scroll are also hand-decorated with floral patterns in gold and silver.
61 Register of deaths (Jodoshu Kakocho)

Japan 17/18th c.
Blue dyed paper with calligraphy and painting in gold and colours (48 sheets) mounted in glass
h. 16.3 w. 31 cm.
CBJ. 209

This seems to have been a register of deaths in one of the Pure Land Buddhist Temples in Kyoto. There are 48 sheets of which 30 are assigned to a particular day of the month. Each sheet is illustrated with religious paintings such as the Death of Buddha, whilst others are portraits of famous parishioners of the temple.

62 View of Tofukuji Temple

Japan 17th c.
Silk painted with gold and colours.
Concertina album.
Signed Tosa Mitsutaka (1675-1710)
h. 39.7 w. 28 cm.
CBJ. 67

A concertina album with a panoramic view of the Tofukuji, a Buddhist Temple in Kyoto, painted on silk in the Tosa style. The silk and colours are well preserved and the gold used for the drifting clouds which break up the sequence of the scenes is still unusually rich.

63 The Biography of Prince Shotoku
(Shotoku Taishi Den)

Japan 17th c.
Paper with calligraphy and painting in gold and colours (5 volumes),
h. 29.2 w. 32.2 cm.
CBJ. 19

Prince Shotoku (574-622) was the enlightened statesman who founded Japanese Buddhism. Whilst acting as regent for the Empress Suiko he used his influence to promote Buddhism as a civilizing influence in Japanese government. In later years he devoted himself entirely to the spiritual life. After his death many legends grew up concerning his miraculous powers, and he was worshipped as an emanation of Avalokitesvara (Kannon). This painted album in five volumes tells the story of his historical as well as legendary life. The text is written in Chinese and Japanese characters and the illustrations are of the finest quality with much use of gold leaf.
64  **Avalokitesvara (Kannon)**

Japan late 16th c.
Silk painted with colours (hanging scroll).
h. 61.2 w. 29.2
CBJ. 216

This is a forty-armed multiple-headed Goddess of Mercy (Avalokitesvara) known in Japan as Kannon. The deity is shown standing on a lotus throne. Each hand is holding an emblem to demonstrate her merciful power, whilst above her topmost head is a portrait of Amitabha Buddha.

65  **Pagoda (Hyakumanto Dharani)**

Japan dated AD 768
Wood with traces of gesso.
h. 14 w. 10.5 cm.
CBJ. 120 (a)

This is one of a million miniature pagodas commissioned by the Empress Shotoku (718-770) as a thanksgiving following the defeat of a rebellion directed against her court which favoured Buddhism. The pagodas were made for distribution among the ten largest Buddhist temples in Japan. The title ‘One Million Pagoda Charm’ (*Hyakumanto Dharani*) derives from the fact that Empress Shotoku ordered that one printed charm be placed inside each of the miniatures. The pagodas themselves are made from Japanese cypress wood which has been turned on a lathe to a diameter of about 10.5 cm. In the top of each pagoda a small hole was drilled so as to hold the rolled-up printed charm. This hole was then plugged with a seven-tiered spire, also lathe-turned, made from cherry wood. Both pagoda and spire were separately painted with gesso and, when assembled together, had a total height of nearly 14 cm. Names and dates have been found on the base of some pagodas and spires and these are generally thought to be the names of the craftsmen who made them with the date of manufacture. The Chester Beatty pagoda is dated on the base to the year (Jingokei) Un 2nd year 5th month 20th day; a date which corresponds to the year AD 768. Over the course of a thousand years and more almost all the pagodas were lost or destroyed, the only one of the ten temples to retain some of its pagodas being Horyuji Temple at Nara. The *Hyakumanto Dharani* from the Chester Beatty Collection is known to have come from Horyuji Temple.
Printed Charm (Konpon Dharani)

Japan AD 768
Paper with block printing, probably metal.
h. 5.7 w. 53.2 cm.
CBJ. 120 (b)

Hyakumanto Dharani are certainly the oldest printed materials produced in Japan, and probably the oldest in the world (the possible exception being a single block-printed dharani discovered in 1966 in Korea which may have been printed before AD 751).

A dharani is a mystical Buddhist formula - sometimes consisting of a string of words that are meaningless in themselves - that are chanted so as to achieve a specific result. This particular dharani is from a sutra that is designed to suppress one's earthly desires. The text, originally in Sanskrit, has been phonetically transcribed into Chinese characters since this was the only known script in eighth century Japan.

Although the complete sutra contains six different dharani, only four have so far been discovered in printed form. These are named Konpon, Sorin, Jishinin and Rokudo. The Chester Beatty dharani is the type named Konpon. All four types are printed on different sized slips of paper of two different thicknesses. Three different types of paper have been identified - kokushi made from the paper mulberry plant; okokushi which is slightly coarser and more buff in colour; and omashi which is made from a variety of hemp and is of a yellowish colour.

From a technical point of view the most interesting aspect of these dharani is their method of printing. Some believe they were printed from woodblocks whilst others opt for bronze or copper plates. The strongest argument in support of the metal-plate theory (apart from the obvious durability of the medium) is the actual appearance of the printed characters. The strokes are blunt and they lack the calligraphic quality which one would expect to see in woodblock printing.

In all only 1771 copies of the printed dharani in various degrees of preservation are recorded. This means that, barring loss and destruction, between 1000 and 1500 are held in public and private collections.
66  Seven Buddhist images of the Pure Land (Tendai) School

Japan late 16th c.
Silk painted with colours (hanging scroll).
h. 59.2 w. 27.5 cm.
CBJ. 215

Two Bodhisattvas named Tenshin Bosatsu and Ryuju Bosatsu are shown with five attendant monks, namely Unnan, Zendo, Genku, Dozen and Genshin.

68  Toggle (Netsuke)

Japan 18th c.
Signed: Shumin
Boxwood with ivory.
h. 3.3 w. 4 cm.
CBJ. 182

Bodhidharma (Daruma) is seated in the posture of meditation. During a nine year long meditation his legs rotted away.

69  Toggle (Netsuke)

Japan 18/19th c.
Ivory.
h. 4.5 w. 2.5 cm.
CBJ. 187

Bodhidharma (Daruma) is standing with his hands behind his back staring upwards with huge lidless eyes. Legend says that he cut off his eyelids to avoid falling asleep during his nine year long meditation.

70  Toggle (Netsuke)

Japan 19/20th c.
Signed: Sansho (1871-1936)
Ivory.
h. 5.3 w. 3 cm.
CBJ. 185

Bodhidharma (Daruma) is seated on the ground looking upwards with arms raised above his head as he flourishes a flywhisk.

71  Toggle (Netsuke)

Japan 18th c.
Signed: Shumin
Boxwood, ivory and ebony.
h. 3.5 w. 3.5 cm.
CBJ. 181

Bodhidharma (Daruma) in the most commonly seen posture of meditation. A flower blossom on the back of his robe lifts out to reveal the attachment for the cord.
Japanese Image Shrines

Portable image shrines which contain the figure of the Buddha or other Buddhist deities have their origin in small travelling shrines used in Central Asia by Buddhist monks, pilgrims and merchants for their private devotions. One of the earliest known examples is in the form of a diptych made from schist. The diptych comes from Gandhara and is dated to the fifth century.

Japanese image shrines (zu-shi) vary greatly in shape and size. The smaller portable shrines with two doors of the type shown in this exhibition date from the 18th and 19th centuries. All are made from lacquered wood, and it is likely that many were manufactured in one workshop since close examination of the door mechanism and hinges shows significant similarities.

72 **Portable image shrine**

Japan 18/19th c.
Wood lacquered black and gold.
h. 12 w. 5.5 cm.
CBJ. 760

The Buddha of Medicine stands on a lotus throne holding a myrobalan fruit in his left hand. His right hand is held downwards with all the fingers extended in the gesture called *varada mudra* which indicates charity or gift bestowing. There is a separate gilt halo behind the Buddha's head.

73 **Portable image shrine**

Japan 18/19th c.
Wood lacquered red and gold.
h. 30 w. 20.8 cm.
CBJ. 751

This large portable shrine has a gilt exterior on its six sides, and the eight hinges and lock fittings are made of bronze. The central section of the shrine contains a large circular lotus throne in red and gold on which sits the Goddess of Mercy (Avalokitesvara) known in Japanese as Kannon. She sits with one knee drawn up and the knuckles supporting the chin. She wears a gold filigree crown with streamers and a similar necklace with coloured stones. Behind the figure is a circular halo of white edged in gold.
74 **Portable image shrine**

Japan 18/19th c.
Wood lacquered in red and gold.
h. 13.7 w. 7.6 cm.
CBJ. 755

The interior is gilded, and in the central section stands the full length figure of a guardian deity (*dharmapala*) with sword and noose.

75 **Portable image shrine**

Japan 18/19th c.
Wood lacquered in black and gold.
h. 10.5 w. 5.4 cm.
CBJ. 758

The two folding doors of the shrine are elaborately decorated in green and gold diaper pattern and have a small female devotee in low relief at the bottom of each door. On the right hand door is the Chinese character which means 'source' and on the left door is the Sanskrit character which refers to the Vairocana Buddha whose Japanese name is *Dai Nichi Nyorai*. Above this meditating Buddha is a glass relic box containing two small crystal beads.

76 **Portable image shrine**

Japan 18/19th c.
Wood lacquered in red and gold.
h. 11 w. 4.7 cm.
CBJ. 764

The standing figure in this shrine portrays the Future Buddha (Maitreya). In his left hand he holds a water bottle and in his right he carries a rosary. Above the top of the pierced gilt *mandorla* which surrounds the Buddha is a heart-shaped relic aperture which contains three beads and some pieces of wood.

77 **Portable image shrine**

Japan 18/19th c.
Wood lacquered in black and gold.
h. 7.5 w. 4.2 cm.
CBJ. 762

The figure of the Goddess of Mercy (Avalokitesvara) referred to in Japanese as Kannon stands on a three-tiered lotus throne. Behind the figure is a pierced gilt *mandorla*. On the face of each folding door is a large square swastika emblem in gold.
These two handscrolls tell the story of Zoga Shonin (917-1003) a famous but eccentric Japanese Buddhist priest of the Tendai school. The paintings are in a mixture of Tosa and Nara-e styles and were specially commissioned by a priest of the Shigaiji Temple at Tabumine where Zoga Shonin preached for over forty years.

There are altogether seventeen scenes which show his life from birth to death, plus a series of miraculous happenings which took place hundreds of years later. In several of the scenes Zoga Shonin is shown riding on an ox using a huge dried salmon as a saddle, whilst in others he is shown giving away all his clothes to the poor so that he has to walk around naked — to the consternation of the populace. Paintings of Zoga Shonin are extremely rare, the only other known example is the property of the Tanzan Shrine at Tabumine where Zoga Shonin lived.

Colour illustration plate 3

In Japan Kannon is regarded as the major attendant of the Buddha and is the most popular of all Buddhist deities. Kannon can assume either male or female form, but here is depicted as a female. The identity of the statue is confirmed by the Siddham character for “A” written in the centre of her crown. Kannon is shown sitting in the position of royal ease (lalitasana) on a large rock which is cast separately from the main figure. Normally Kannon is depicted either standing or sitting on a lotus, which may mean that the rocky platform was made at a different date from the figure. Five lines of large script have been incised on the back of the figure but it has not yet proved possible to identify this form of secret writing which is likely to be an inscription giving more information on the making of the statue.
80 Stone Carving
India c. 100 B.C.
Stone with traces of plaster.
h. 9.5 w. 35.5 cm.
Nat. Mus (L.473)

Two elephants facing from either side of a pillar at the centre.

81 Stone Carving
Gandhara c. 100 BC
Schist.
h. 24.5 w. 20 cm.
Nat. Mus (133-1937)

A section of carving from the frieze of a Buddhist temple.

Colour illustration plate 4

82 Buddha figure
India c. 1800
Silver foil over wax .
h. 14.8 w. 8.0 cm.
Nat.Mus (1569-1880)

This small statue shows the Buddha in the earth touching posture

83 Divination Table
India 19th c
Slate with gold.
d. 30 cms.
Nat.Mus (80-1937)

A divining table having a gilt imprint of the Buddha’s foot in the centre within a lobed gilt border.

Catalogue no. 83
Glossary

B = Burmese  C = Chinese  J = Japanese  M = Mongolian  P = Pali
S = Sanskrit  T = Tibetan  Th = Thai

**ABHIDHAMMA PITAKA (P)** The third division of the canon of Theravada Buddhism (also found in the Mahayana Canon) which consists of commentaries and analysis of the Buddha’s discourses. See TRIPITAKA

**AKSHOBHYA (S)** ‘The Imperturbable’. The white (sometimes blue) Buddha of the Eastern direction in the *mandala* of the Five Victors.

**ALTAN GEREL (M)** An important Mahayana sutra

**AMITABHA (S)** ‘Infinite Light’. The red Buddha of the Western direction in the *mandala* of the Five Victors.

**AMITAYUS (S)** A form of Amitabha as the ‘Buddha of Immortality’. He holds a vase containing the nectar of long life.

**AMOGASIDDHI (S)** ‘All Accomplishing’. The green Buddha of the Northern direction in the *mandala* of the Five Victors.

**ATISA (S)** An Indian scholar of profound learning who went to Tibet in 1040. He reformed the prevailing Buddhist practices and his teachings later gave rise to the Kadampa school. This no longer exists as a separate tradition, but its influence remains within the other Tibetan orders.

**AVALOKITESVARA (S)** ‘Lord of Compassion’. A Bodhisattva revered as the patron deity of Tibet. The Dalai Lamas are regarded as incarnations of him. In some Asian countries Avalokitesvara appears in female as well as male form, and in Tibet the female equivalent is Tara.

**BHAISAJYAGURU (S)** The Buddha as ‘The Supreme Physician’. Usually blue in colour he holds the medicinal plant myrobalan. The patron deity of the Tibetan system of medicine.
BODHIDHARMA (S) A deeply learned Indian teacher who came to the Chinese court in 520. He is considered to be the father of Chan (Japanese Zen) Buddhism.

BODHISATTVA (S) Lit. Bodhi ‘Enlightened’ and Sattva ‘Being’. One who having obtained or almost obtained the supreme understanding of a Buddha, nevertheless out of compassion chooses to remain in this world in order to help others reach the same level.

BON (T) Lit. ‘recitation’. The ancient pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet. Many of its practices, especially rites to counteract misfortune, were incorporated into Tibetan Buddhism. Bon survives to the present day although in a form much modified by its contact with Buddhism.

BUDDHA (S) Lit. ‘The Awakened’ (from the sleep of ignorance). Usually refers to the historical Buddha Gautama or Sakyamuni, but may be applied to any enlightened being or to the principle of Enlightenment.

DARUMA (J) The Japanese name for Bodhidharma. See BODHIDHARMA

DEVA (S) A nymph or heavenly being usually represented with hands together in an attitude of respect.

DHARANI (S) An incantation which sometimes consists of a string of words that are meaningless in themselves. These are chanted so as to achieve a particular result.

DHARMA (S) Lit. ‘to hold’. Dharma is a word with many meanings in different contexts. Its usual translation is ‘Law’ or ‘Doctrine’. In Buddhist usage it refers to the Buddha’s teachings.

DHARMACHAKRA MUDRA (S) A gesture (mudra) in which the position of the hands and fingers symbolizes the ‘wheel’ of the teachings. The act of teaching is often referred to in the scriptures as ‘turning the dharma’.

DHARMAPALA (S) A guardian or protector of the teachings.

DHYANASANA (S) Meditation posture as illustrated in seated images of the Buddha.
GHANTA (S) A bell that is often used on conjunction with the vajra in Vajrayana Buddhism. See VAJRA

GELUGPA (T) Lit. ‘The Virtuous Ones’. The dominant school of Tibetan Buddhism founded in the 14th century by Tsongkhapa. Both the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama are members of this order. On ceremonial occasions its higher ranking monks wear tall yellow bonnets which is why the Order is sometimes referred to as the ‘Yellow Hat’ school. See TSONGKHAPA

HERUKA (S) In Tantric iconography a wrathful male enlightened being. The individual Heruka are identified by their different attributes.

HEVAJRA (S) The wrathful form of Akshobhya. Hevajra is the principal deity of the Sakya School.

HINAYANA (S) Lit. the ‘Lesser Vehicle’ in contrast to the ‘Great Vehicle’. See THERAVADA

JATAKA (P) Lit. ‘Birth Tales’ of the Buddha who is believed to have had many identifiable previous births, the usual number being 547. The last ten births prior to his life as Prince Siddhartha are the most widely illustrated in paintings. The central character, whether animal or human, is always a Bodhisattva in the sense of Buddha-to-be. See BODHISATTVA

KAMMAVACA (P) A collection of extracts from the Pali Vinaya, the monastic code of discipline, principally concerned with ordination procedures. See TRIPITAKA

KANNON (J) The Japanese name for Avalokitesvara. In Japan Kannon is worshipped by women who either desire children or need protection in childbirth. See AVALOKITESVARA
LALITASANA (S) Lit. 'Relaxed Posture' with the legs arranged loosely, as though relaxing from the locked position of meditation.

LAMA (T) Lit. 'Honoured One'. This term refers to senior members of the various Tibetan Buddhist orders or to teachers living as lay people who may be especially respected or revered.

LOHAN (C) Lit. 'Worthy One'. In China from the 8th century onwards there were 16 acknowledged Lohans, including some of Buddha's principal disciples. Later the number grew into groups of 18 and even 500.

LOKAPALA (S) The four guardians of the cardinal directions, East, South, West and North. They are often depicted in temple and monastery gateways and assumed slightly different forms in different Buddhist countries.

MAHAYANA (S) Lit. The 'Great Vehicle'. It encompasses the various schools of Buddhism practised in Nepal, Tibet, Mongolia, China, Korea and Japan. See HINAYANA, THERAVADA

MAITREYA (S) The 'Future Buddha'. The Buddha whose teachings will influence a future epoch in the way that Buddha Sakyamuni's have influenced this one. Maitreya is usually depicted as though seated western-style on a chair or throne, with his hands held in the Dharmachakra mudra. See DHARMACHAKRA MUDRA

MANDALA (S) A cosmic diagram whose basic design is almost always based on a central point and the four directions. It is used for initiations, meditation and temple liturgies.

MANDORLA (S) An almond-shaped aureole associated with figures of Buddha.

MANTRA (S) Lit. 'Mind Vehicle' in the sense of something which holds one's mind on a particular course and protects it. See DHARANI

MUDRA (S) Symbolic gestures of the hands and fingers.
MYROBALAN (S) A yellow fruit *Terminalia chebula* highly regarded for its medicinal properties. It is an essential element in many religious and social rituals.

NAGARJUNA (S) A famous Indian master of the 1st century A.D. who founded the Madhyamaka School of Buddhist philosophy.

NETSUKE (J) Decorated toggles used to suspend pouches and other objects from the belt by Japanese men during the Edo period (1603-1868).

NIRVANA (S) Lit. 'Extinction' (of fundamental ignorance and therefore of compulsive rebirth). The supreme goal of Buddhism, its exact meaning is understood in a variety of ways within the different schools and traditions.

NYINGMAPA (T) Lit 'The Ancient Ones'. The oldest school of Tibetan Buddhism founded in the 8th century by Padmasambhava. On ceremonial occasions its senior monks wear tall red bonnets, which is why the school is sometimes referred to as the 'Red Hat' School. See PADMASAMBHAVA

PADMASAMBHAVA (S) Lit. 'The Lotus Born'. An Indian Buddhist master who visited Tibet in the 8th century at the invitation of the reigning King. He founded the first monastery and Buddhist university in Tibet at Samye and introduced a variety of Tantric practices. He is regarded as a second Buddha by the Nyingmapa school. See NYINGMAPA

PALI An ancient Indian language closely connected to Sanskrit that became the written and spoken language of Theravada Buddhism.

PANCHEN LAMA (T) The Panchen Lama ranks second to the Dalai Lama among the grand Lamas of the Gelugpa School of Tibetan Buddhism. His seat is the Tashilhumpo monastery at Shigatse. See GELUGPA

PARABAIK (B) A folding book consisting of joined sheets of strong paper between two outer covers. They are used both for Buddhist and secular writings and paintings in Burma, Thailand and Cambodia.
PHRA MALAI (Th) A poem or legend describing the journey of a Singhalese monk named Malai to Heaven and Hell.

PRAJNAPARAMITA (S) Lit. 'The Wisdom Gone Beyond' or 'Transcendent Wisdom'.

SAKYAMUNI (S) Lit. 'Sage of the Sakya' refers to the 'historical' Buddha Prince Siddhartha who was born into the Sakya clan.

SANGHA (S) Those who put into practice the teachings of the Buddha. In Theravada countries, the term is sometimes reserved for ordained members of the monastic communities. In the Mahayana it has a wider connotation.

SANSKRIT An ancient Indian classical language used for recording the Mahayana Buddhist Canon and other Buddhist works and commentaries.

SIDDHA (S) Lit. 'An Accomplished One'.

SIDDHAM A writing system derived from the Gupta alphabet. Large numbers of Sanskrit sutras and commentaries were written in the Siddham script.

SITATARA (S) Lit. 'White Tara'. She has eyes on her forehead, the palms of her hands and the soles of her feet, indicating her acute awareness of the sufferings of beings. See AVALOKITESVARA

STUPA (S) The chief monument of Buddhism, usually constructed of solid brick or stone around a container of relics. Smaller, portable models are usually in metal. Their form, reduced to essentials, is of a cube, sphere, cone, hemisphere and drop placed one upon another.

SUTRA (S) Lit. 'thread'. In a Buddhist context, the recorded discourses of the Buddha.

SYAMATARA (S) Lit. 'Green Tara'. She is the most popular of the 21 Taras. See AVALOKITESVARA
TANKA (T) Tibetan paintings on cloth showing Buddhas, symbolic deities and teachers. *Tankas* are hung on the walls of monasteries or private homes.

TANTRA/TANTRISM (S) A school of Buddhism which evolved from a set of Indian Buddhist writings dating to the 6th century, known as *Tantras*. Brought to Tibet by Padmasambhava and later masters, it incorporates special systems of meditation handed down individually from master to student. See VAJRAYANA

TENDAI (J) The school of Japanese Buddhism founded by Dengyo Daishi (727-822) as a synthesis of existing Buddhist teachings.

THERAVADA (P) Lit. 'Doctrine of the Elders'. The only one of eighteen early Buddhist schools to survive in strength as a distinct tradition. Most of these were categorised by later writers as the 'Hinayana' or 'Lesser Vehicle' which is not a term used by followers of the Theravada themselves. The initial division between what would later be distinguished as the Hinayana and the Mahayana occurred at the Second Buddhist Council approximately 140 years after the Buddha's death. Theravada Buddhism is found in Sri Lanka, Thailand, Burma, Cambodia and Laos. See HINAYANA

TRIPITAKA (P) Lit. 'The Three Baskets' (of the Doctrine). So called because the collections of texts would fill three large baskets, they are the scriptures of the Theravada School written in Pali in Sri Lanka during the 1st century B.C. The contents of the Tripitaka are also found in the Mahayana Canon. The three divisions, or 'baskets' are: The Rules of Monastic Discipline; The Sermons, or Discourses; The Commentaries.

TSONGKHAPA (T) A Tibetan scholar who founded the dominant Gelugpa school of Tibetan Buddhism. He was born in 1357 and died in 1419 at Ganden monastery which he founded. See GELUGPA

TOSA (J) A Japanese school of painting specializing in courtly themes from the 15th century to the end of the 19th century.
VAIROCANA (S) The blue (sometimes white) Buddha of the centre in the Mandala of the ‘Five Victors’.

VAJRA (S) The word means both ‘diamond’ and ‘thunderbolt’. A ritual sceptre which is potent with symbolism. Its basic form is of a sphere representing emptiness from which spring two sets of five prongs joined at their ends. In liturgical use, the *vajra* is held in the right hand with the bell in the left, symbolizing compassion and wisdom. see GHANTA

VAJRABHAIRAVA (S) A wrathful meditation deity of the Gelugpa School.

VAJRAPANI (S) Lit. ‘Vajra-bearer’. A wrathful deity found in all the Tibetan Buddhist traditions. He represents the enlightened energy of the Buddhas.

VAJRVARAHI (S) Lit. ‘Vajra-sow’. An important meditation deity, particularly of the Kagyu tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. Vajravarahi is usually depicted as a red, dancing figure, young and beautiful, but enraged and wearing ornaments of human bone.

VAJRAYANA (S) Lit. ‘The Vajra Vehicle (or Way)’. The type of Buddhism practised in Tibet and surrounding areas, also referred to as Tantric Buddhism. Vajrayana preserves most of the teachings of the Hinayana and Mahayana, as well as meditation methods and techniques particular to itself. See TANTRA

VARADA MUDRA (S) ‘Bestowing Gesture’ (of the hands).

VINAYA PITAKA (P) The division of the canon of Theravada Buddhism which sets out the rules of Monastic Discipline. See TRIPITAKA

ZOGA SHONIN (J) A Japanese priest of the Tendai School. After studying on Mt. Hiei, the headquarters of the school, he went to Tabumine valley where he preached and taught for forty years during the 10th century.

ZUSHI (J) A Buddhist shrine, usually portable, which contains either an image or a sutra.
Suggestions for Further Reading

For Children:
Landaw, Jonathan and Brooke, Janet *Prince Siddhartha.*
Stewart, Whitney *To the Lion Throne.*

For Adults:
Powell, Andrew *Living Buddhism.*
Khentin Tai Situ Pa *Way to Go.*
Kagyu Samlye Ling, 1986.