

YAMAGUCHI SUSUMU

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With the death of Yamaguchi Susumu the world of Buddhist scholarship has lost one of the most prominent scholars of recent times. Yamaguchi began his scholarly career in the early twenties and in the course of more than fifty years he published many books and articles. His œuvre has had a decisive influence on Buddhist studies in Japan. His outstanding merit resides in the fact that early in his career he realised the deficiencies of the traditional Japanese methods of studying Indian Buddhist texts exclusively through their Chinese translations and commentaries.

In 1918 Yamaguchi completed his course of studies at the Shinshū Ōtani Daigaku, the forerunner of the Ōtani University.¹ During the three following years he studied in the Faculty of Letters of Kyōto University. Among his teachers he mentions especially Sumida Chiken, an authority on the doctrines of the Jōdo school and author of the *Jōdo genryūshō kaisetsu* (Kyōto, 1925) and Funahashi Suisai, who has written several works on the Abhidharmakośa: *Kusha tetsugaku* (Tōkyō, 1906) *Kusharon Kōgi* (Tōkyō, 1933), *Kusharon no kyōgi oyobi sono rekishi* (Kyōto, 1940). Yamaguchi's Sanskrit teacher was Sasaki Ryōsaburō (1872–1946), the editor of the *Mahāvvyutpatti* (Kyōto, 1916–1925). He learned Tibetan from Teramoto Enga (1872–1940). Very important was the influence of Sasaki Gesshō (1875–1926). At his request Yamaguchi compared the Chinese versions of Vasubandhu's *Viṃśatikā* with the Tibetan version (2). Yamaguchi also contributed an edition of the Tibetan version of the *Mahāyānasamgraha* to Sasaki's synoptic edition of the four Chinese translations (3). In 1924 Yamaguchi became associate professor at the Ōtani University, but in the beginning of 1927 he left for Paris where he remained until the autumn of 1929. Yamaguchi had been attracted to Paris by the fame of Sylvain Lévi whose recently published edition of the Sanskrit text of the *Viṃśatikā* and the *Trīṃśikā* (Paris, 1925) had been received with great interest in Japan. Yamaguchi enjoyed the friendship of many prominent French scholars and also entered into close relations with La Vallée Poussin. In his later life Yamaguchi wrote repeatedly with great affection and admiration of French scholars and Buddhist studies in France. In 1954 he published a collection of articles on Buddhist studies in France under the title *Fifty years of Buddhist studies in France* (25). In 1933 Yamaguchi

¹ For biographical information I have made use of the following sources: Nagao's preface to the volume published in honour of Yamaguchi in 1955; Yamaguchi's lecture, entitled 'Reflections on Buddhist Studies', published in his *Bukkyōgaku no hanashi*; his introduction to the two volumes of his collected articles. See Bibliography no. 1. The numbers quoted in round brackets refer to the numbers of the Bibliography.

became full professor in the Ōtani University and from 1950 to 1958 he served as president of the university. Yamaguchi's merits have been acknowledged by the many distinctions that were bestowed upon him. In 1948 he became one of the foundation members of the Japan Academy.

It is not possible to enumerate the titles of all the books and articles written by Yamaguchi.² His main publications deal with the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools of Mahāyāna Buddhism and the *Abhidharmakośa*. One of his first publications was a translation of Nāgārjuna's *Śūnyatāsaptati* (4), followed by a translation of the *Yuktiṣaṣṭikā* (5), a study of the *Vaidalya* (6), a translation of the *Vigrahavyāvartanī* which he later revised after the publication of the Sanskrit text (7), and a study of the different versions of the *kārikās* of Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakāśāstra* (8). Subsequently Yamaguchi undertook the study of the works of Āryadeva. He translated the *Akṣarasāta* (9), analysed the first eight chapters of the *Catuḥśataka* (10) and examined the authenticity of other Madhyamaka works attributed to him (11). He published also several articles on Candrakīrti's *Catuḥśatakaṭīkā*: a translation of its preface and a study and translation of the ninth chapter (12). In another article he examined the meaning of *prajñā* in Candrakīrti's *Pañcaskandhaprakaraṇa* (13). One of the major works undertaken by Yamaguchi is a complete translation of the *Prasannapadā*. Only two volumes, comprising chapters 1–11, have been published so far (14). Perhaps the fact that chapters 12–17 were translated by Wogihara (*Wogihara Unrai Bunshū*, Tōkyō, 1938, pp. 556–628) has prevented him from publishing his translation of the remaining chapters. Recently Yamaguchi published a Sanskrit-Tibetan and a Tibetan-Sanskrit index of the *Prasannapadā* (14). Yamaguchi's voluminous doctoral dissertation is a study of the fifth chapter of Bhāvaviveka's *Madhyamakahrdaya*, entitled *Yogācāratattvanīścaya*, in which Bhāvaviveka criticizes the doctrines of the Yogācāra school (15). Walleiser was the first to point out the importance of Bhāvaviveka's work (*Der ältere Vedānta*, Heidelberg, 1910) and in recent years the discovery of the Sanskrit text by Rāhula Sāṃkṛtyāyana has led to a renewed study of this text by Japanese scholars.³ According to Yamaguchi the *Madhyamaratna-pradīpa* has been wrongly attributed to Bhāvaviveka (16).

Not less important are Yamaguchi's studies on the philosophical texts of the Yogācāra school. He translated Vasubandhu's *Trisvabhāvanirdeśa* (17), his *Dharmadharmaṭāvibhaṅgavṛtti*, of which a Sanskrit fragment was published by Sylvain Lévi as an appendix to his edition of the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra* (18), and his *Viṃśatikā* together with Vinītadeva's commentary (19). In recent years Yamaguchi was very much interested in Vasubandhu's *Vyākhyāyukti* on which he

² A bibliography of his publications up to 1955 is to be found in *Yamaguchi hakase kanreki kinen: Indogaku Bukkyōgaku ronsō* (Kyoto, 1955), pp. 11–14.

³ Cf. V. V. Gokhale, 'The Vedānta-Philosophy described by Bhavya in his *Madhyamakahrdaya*', *IJ* II, 1958, pp. 165–180.

published two articles (20). When I visited him in 1973 he told me that he hoped to prepare other studies on this text with the help of a younger scholar. In 1929 Yamaguchi published a French translation of Dignāga's *Ālambanaparīkṣā* and a translation of both the text and Vinītadeva's commentary appeared in 1953 (21). One of the most difficult texts studied by Yamaguchi is Sthiramati's *Madhyāntavibhāgaṭīkā*. In 1928 Sylvain Lévi had obtained a copy of an incomplete Sanskrit manuscript in Nepal and on his return from Nepal he confided the difficult task of editing this text to Yamaguchi. Yamaguchi carefully corrected the scribal errors and translated the missing parts from the Tibetan version into Sanskrit. His edition was followed by a translation and a synoptic edition of the Tibetan and Chinese translations of Vasubandhu's *bhāṣya*, the text commented upon by Sthiramati (22). Although the Sanskrit text of the *bhāṣya* has since been discovered and meticulously edited by Nagao (Tōkyō, 1964), Yamaguchi's edition of the *ṭīkā* has preserved its value. A recent Indian edition of Maitreya's *kārikās*, Vasubandhu's *bhāṣya* and Sthiramati's *ṭīkā* is of little importance because the author has failed to take into account the Tibetan translation of the *ṭīkā*.⁴

The third field of study to which Yamaguchi has made important contributions is the literature connected with Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa*. Together with Wogihara he translated the second chapter of the *Abhidharmakośavyākhyā* and together with Funahashi Issai the third chapter of the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* and the *Abhidharmakośavyākhyā* (23). To the same Vasubandhu belongs probably also the *Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa*. Yamaguchi translated both the text and Sumataśīla's commentary (24).

The above mentioned publications, voluminous though they are, constitute only a part of Yamaguchi's œuvre. In the last thirty years Yamaguchi has published a series of small books in which he studied different aspects of Buddhist philosophy and of Buddhism in general. His *World of Emptiness* examines the religious character of the Mahāyāna texts. An enlarged edition contains also two other studies on the practice and ethics of Buddhism (26). The second part was published in an English translation by Watanabe Shōkō (28). In another small volume Yamaguchi studied the history of the *Prajñā* philosophy (27). An important text of the Jōdo school is Vasubandhu's *Sukhāvatīvyūhopadeśa* (Taishō no. 1524) which Yamaguchi examined in *Vasubandhu's Treatise on the Pure Land* (29). In collaboration with Ōchō Enichi, Andō Toshio and Funahashi Issai, Yamaguchi compiled an introduction to Buddhist studies which ought to be translated into English (30). Since his retirement from the Ōtani University Yamaguchi has delivered many lectures which have been published in several volumes. Their interest resides in the more personal tone in which he gives his opinion on Buddhism and its relation to contemporary problems.

Yamaguchi's studies of the basic texts of the philosophical schools of Mahāyāna Buddhism and of the *Abhidharmakośa* literature constitute a triumph of a strict philological method based upon a comparative study of all available versions in

⁴ Cf. my 'Notes on the second chapter of the *Madhyāntavibhāgaṭīkā*', *Central Asiatic Journal* 21 (1977).

Sanskrit, Chinese and Tibetan. Yamaguchi is undoubtedly the first Japanese scholar to have shown by his work the great importance of the Tibetan versions for the understanding of those Indian Buddhist texts of which the Sanskrit text is imperfectly transmitted or not available. In this way he has made it abundantly clear to the Japanese scholarly world that Indian Buddhism cannot be understood on the basis of Chinese translations as traditionally studied and explained in China and Japan.

Yamaguchi was not only a great scholar but also a most kind and genial person whose memory will be cherished by all those who had the privilege of coming into contact with him. May he rest in peace, *Kṛtaṃ karaṇīyam*.

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Bunshū = *Yamaguchi Susumu Bukkyōgaku bunshū*, I–II. Tōkyō, 1972–3.

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