



Rod Bucknell - "The notion of Pali-Chinese sutra parallels: Theoretical and practical issues."

The publication of the article, "The Four Buddhist Āgamas in Chinese" by Anesaki Masaharu (1908), drew scholarly attention to the existence, in the Chinese Tripiṭaka, of sutra collections that "correspond to" the four main Nikāyas of the Pali Tipiṭaka. Being early translations from source texts in Sanskrit and other Indic languages, these Chinese Āgamas were, Anesaki pointed out, a reminder that the Pali Sutta-piṭaka represents just one of the various branches of sectarian Buddhism. The article offered the first full table of Chinese-to-Pali sutta correspondences, and this subsequently became the model for more comprehensive tables, such as the still indispensable *Comparative Catalogue of Chinese Āgamas and Pali Nikāyas* by Akanuma (1929).

Such sutra correspondence tables identify numerous sets (usually pairs) of Pali-Chinese counterparts or parallels; and the existence of these sets of sutra parallels raises some difficult interpretative issues. An obvious possible interpretation is that the Pali sutta and its Chinese parallel(s) are divergent derivatives of a single original discourse - with attractive implications about the possibility of reconstructing the common ancestral discourse; but how viable is this interpretation? Such issues surrounding the notion of Pali-Chinese sutra parallels will be discussed in the seminar, with due attention to their practical implications for relevant research.