

THE MISSING TRANSLATOR:  
A STUDY OF THE BIOGRAPHIES  
OF THE MONK BAOYUN 寶雲 (376?-449)

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ABSTRACT · This study examines the biography of the monk Baoyun 寶雲 (376?-449) and lists all the titles of the translation projects in which Baoyun was involved. By comparing the information provided by different Buddhist catalogues, several discrepancies between the information on Baoyun provided by Buddhist bibliographer Sengyou 僧祐 (445-518) and by later accounts became evident. This study contextualizes the life of Baoyun in a broader historical perspective and presents the life of a monk who was a companion of Faxian 法顯 (336?-422) in his famous journey to the west, fluent in Indic languages, and a proficient translator.

KEYWORDS · Baoyun, Medieval China, Buddhist translation, Buddhacarita, Buddhist Canon.

1. METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE

THE primary aim of this study is to investigate different accounts of the life of the monk and translator Baoyun 寶雲 (376?-449) as collected in the Chinese Buddhist Canon,<sup>1</sup> and to analyze the information about his translations. This study will show that while in Sengyou's catalogue Baoyun is incidentally mentioned as taking part in many translation projects and praised for his knowledge of Indic languages, later biographic accounts and catalogues do not provide recognition of Baoyun's many contributions. This study will focus on these discrepancies and explain the possible reasons that led to a marginalization of Baoyun's role as translator.

The Buddhist bibliographer Sengyou 僧祐 (445-518) attributed to Baoyun the authorship of the Chinese translation of Āsvaghoṣa's masterpiece, the *Buddhacarita*, known in China as *Fo suoxing zan* 佛所行讚 (Huang Baosheng 2015 and Ōminami 2002: 148-153). This text is nowadays catalogued as T192 in the Taishō edition of the Chinese Buddhist Canon, and erroneously attributed to Dharmakṣema/Tan Wuchen 曇無讖 (Chen Jinhua 2009: xiv-xvi).

The main source for this study is Baoyun's life account as presented in the biographical section of Sengyou's (445-518) catalogue, the *Chu sanzang jiji* 出三藏記集 (T2145), henceforth ChSZJJ (Chen Jinhua 2005a and Nattier 2008: 9-12). From the biographical section of the same catalogue, it is also opportune to analyze the life accounts of Baoyun's collaborators which incidentally provide relevant information on Baoyun. Sengyou's catalogue also collects several prefaces to translations pursued with the collaboration of Baoyun.

The information provided by Sengyou will be compared to the account on the life of Baoyun presented in the *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳 (T2059), henceforth GSZh, a collection

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<sup>1</sup> Textual references from the Taishō are quoted from CBETA, "CBETA Online Reader" (<http://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/>), last accessed 26 April 2020.