

## **A Program to Translate the Chinese Taisho Tripitaka into English and Other Western Languages**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Mahayana sutras and other sacred texts have often been taken from the Taisho Tripitaka that is composed of over 9000 fascicles organized into 2372 sutras. These sutras were translated over 12 centuries from Sanskrit into Chinese. Until now, however, only a few sutras have been translated into English and other Western languages.

For the last several years, Tuệ Quang Foundation has been engaged in the development of a computer-based translation system to expedite the translation of the Taisho Tripitaka (over 70 million Chinese characters) into Vietnamese and popular Western languages such as English and French.

This paper will describe the translation software that includes advanced algorithms in artificial intelligence (AI) and machine translation. We have completed a draft translation of all 2373 sutras that occupy over 1.4 gigabyte of MS Word files. These files are readily edited by Buddhist scholars and expert translators. Based on the experience of the on-going Vietnamese translation, we propose a systematic and efficient program to translate the Taisho Tripitaka into English and French. With our unique software, the translation will be completed in a few years instead of decades or centuries with manual method. We are ready to cooperate with collaborators and sponsors to complete the translation program. Sample translated sutras and additional information are available from our website [http://www.daitangvietnam.com/index\\_en.htm](http://www.daitangvietnam.com/index_en.htm). We believe that the development of a complete Tripitaka, in English and other languages, will be a great contribution to not only Buddhism but also to the culture of the world. It will make Dharma teachings and a good exposition to the Asian culture available to millions in the West and other countries.

During the last several decades, there is a growing interest in the West in Buddhism, especially the Mahayana teachings and Chinese Buddhism. Mahayana sutras and other sacred texts have often been taken from the Chinese Tripitaka. The Taisho Tripitaka is composed of 2372 sutras, vinayas (precepts) and sastras (commentaries) that have been organized into 56 volumes (volumes 1-55 and 85). Until now, however, only a few sutras of the Chinese Tripitaka have been translated into English by various groups, including the Buddhist Text Translation Society (Burlingame, CA), the Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai (Tokyo, Japan) and the Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research (Berkeley, CA).

The development of a complete Tripitaka, in English and other languages, will be a great contribution to not only Buddhism but also to the culture of several countries in the world. It will make Dharma teachings and a good exposition to the Asian culture available to millions in the West and other countries. In this paper, we propose a systematic and efficient program to translate the Taisho Tripitaka into English and other Western languages such as French.

#### **A. Computer Translation**

Due to the large number of Buddhist texts, the Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai through its Numata Center in Berkeley, CA has estimated that its translation program will take over a century to complete an English version of the Taisho Tripitaka. Therefore, members of Tue Quang Wisdom Light Foundation have spent considerable efforts during the last several years in researching various computer-based techniques for translating them. **An advantage of computer translation is that the translation may have errors but it is always complete, because the computer translates word by word.** Unlike humans, the computer never misses a word. Through our research efforts, we have developed a software package for translating Buddhist texts. The software uses the latest advances in linguistics, computer translation and artificial intelligence. It uses several Chinese-

Vietnamese, Chinese-English, and Chinese-Sanskrit dictionaries, including the Digital Dictionary of Buddhism of Prof. AC Muller, the Ding Fubao dictionary and the Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms of W.E. Soothill and L. Hodous) . We have also spent considerable efforts in editing and supplementing these dictionaries with other specialized Buddhist dictionaries. A paper describing our translation software, “*Computer Translation of the Chinese Taisho Tripitaka*”, is available from our website <http://www.DaiTangVietNam.com>. Our website also provides sample translations (in Vietnamese, English and French) of popular sutras such as the Amitabha Sutra and the Diamond Sutra. Appendix A shows the translation of a portion of the Diamond Sutra. As shown in Appendix A, our translations have the unique feature of showing both the original Chinese and translated texts. With this unique feature, the accuracy of the translation can be easily verified and necessary corrections can also be easily made. Please visit our website <http://www.DaiTangVietNam.com> for more details.

## **B. On-going Development of Vietnamese Tripitaka**

Although Buddhism has been propagating in Vietnam for over 2000 years, a complete Tripitaka in Vietnamese is not yet available. Moreover, only a few Vietnamese can read and write Chinese characters. Yet there are still too many sutras that have not been translated. The **Tuệ Quang Wisdom Light Foundation Inc.** has been concerned about this issue for the last several years. We recently have access to the original texts of the Chinese Tripitaka from the Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association (CBETA) and we are committed to translate them into Vietnamese and other languages such as English and French.

**Our unique computer program has allowed us to translate the entire Tripitaka quickly with a reasonable accuracy. It reduces the time required for translation from decades or centuries if done manually to a few short years!**

Encouraged by these results, we have formed a Program for the Development of a Vietnamese Tripitaka that is divided into five stages:

1. Develop computerized techniques to transcribe and translate the Chinese Tripitaka into Vietnamese,
2. Transcribe the Chinese Tripitaka by computer,
3. Translate into Vietnamese by computer,
4. Edit and review by the Masters, and
5. Publish through conventional printing and electronic means.

At the present time, we have completed the draft translation (Stage 3 of Program) of all sacred texts in the Taisho Tripitaka (**over 70 million words in 9035 fascicles/files**). **All 2372 sutras in the Tripitaka have been translated by computer in 28 hours.** The translated files are compatible with Microsoft Word and they occupy about 1.4 gigabyte (GB). Please read through the sample translations of the Amitabha Sutra (阿彌陀經 – A Mi Duo Jing), Medicine Buddha Sutra (藥師經 – Yao Shi Jing) and the Diamond Sutra (金剛經 – Jin Gang Jing) that are available from our website <http://www.DaiTangVietnam.com> *These short sutras have been translated in less than 10 seconds. Larger sutras such as 華嚴經 – Hua Yen Jing - Avatamsaka Sutra (80 fascicles) in 11 minutes, 大智度論 – Da Zhi Du Lun - Great Prajnaparamita Sastra (100 fascicles) in 17 minutes and 大般若波羅蜜多經 – Da Po Ruo Po Luo Mi Jing - Great Prajna Sutra (600 fascicles) in 50 minutes.*

We have contacted several Masters and experts, both overseas and at various Buddhist Institutes in Việt Nam, to organize a systematic and coordinated program to edit, review and approve the translated files. The editing and review of these files (Stage 4 of Program) have already begun. At the present time, we have three editing groups in Vietnam. Each Taisho volume will be completed in about six months by a group of 5-7 editors and at a cost of about \$5,000 USD. Thus, the whole program will only require a relatively modest budget of about \$300,000 USD for completing the Vietnamese translation of all 56 Taisho volumes. With three existing groups, we expect the program to be completed in about 10 years. With more editing groups and financial resources, the program will be completed sooner.

### **C. Proposed Development of English Tripitaka**

Based on our experience with the development of a Vietnamese Tripitaka, we would like to propose the following 5-stage program:

1. Refine the Tuệ Quang's translation software by implementing the latest advances in Chinese-English statistical machine translation (SMT) including context, word order and lexical analysis. The refined software will be applied to popular sutras such as the Diamond Sutra, the Vimilakirti Sutra, the Medicine Buddha Sutra, the Lotus Sutra and the Sixth Patriarch's Platform Sutra;
2. Apply the software to translate the Chinese Tripitaka. With the improved software in Step 1, the accuracy of the translated texts will be increased;
3. Edit the translated texts. Due to the large number of texts (9035), it will be necessary to enlist several editors from the United States, Taiwan and China. We can also use other editing groups in India and Vietnam. All these editors, both paid and non-paid, will have the minimum educational requirements of college-level English and basic Buddhism. They can be drawn from various Buddhist institutes, universities as well as volunteers from Buddhist temples and Dharma practicing groups;
4. Review and approve by the Masters, and
5. Publish through conventional printing and electronic means (CD/DVD).

### **D. Proposed Cost and Schedule Estimates**

As shown above, the Vietnamese translation program is expected to be completed in about 10 years with a budget of \$300,000 USD. These estimates are based on three editing groups currently working in Vietnam. Based on our experience in the on-going Vietnamese translation program, we estimate that the English translation program will require a budget of about \$600,000 USD. This budget is twice the budget for the Vietnamese program, since higher costs are expected in the USA, China, Taiwan and India. The time expected to complete the translation program will also be about 10 years.

With our unique computer translation software, the time required for translating the Tripitaka will be reduced from decades or even centuries if done manually to a few years. The **Tuệ Quang Wisdom Light Foundation Inc.** hopes for the development of a complete English Tripitaka in the near future. Following its development, we hope to distribute it widely and through modern electronic means such as the Internet and CD/DVD.

The development of a complete Tripitaka, in English and other languages, will be a great contribution to not only Buddhism but also to the culture of several countries in the world. It will make Dharma teachings and a good exposition to the Chinese culture available to millions in the West and other countries. This great endeavor can only succeed with: first, the blessings from all Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and Heaven Dharma Protectors, and second, the active participation and contributions of all Masters and Buddhists, monastic and lay disciples, throughout the world. We hope to receive guidance, support, assistance, cooperation and contributions from all individuals and organizations.

## E. REFERENCES

1. Buddhist Text Translation Society, accessed from website of the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association website <http://drba.org>
2. Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association (CBETA) from website <http://www.cbeta.org>
3. "Tripitaka in English by The Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai", available from website <http://www.worltrade.com/religion/buddhism/budtripitakaR.htm>
4. Tuệ Quang Wisdom Light Foundation, website [http://daitangvietnam.com/index\\_en.htm](http://daitangvietnam.com/index_en.htm)
5. Computer Translation of the Chinese Taisho Tripitaka. Available at <http://daitangvietnam.com/ComputerTranslationoftheChineseTripitaka.pdf>
6. Diamond Sutra translated by Tuệ Quang Wisdom Light Foundation. Available at [http://daitangvietnam.com/TQtranslate\\_DiamondSutra.pdf](http://daitangvietnam.com/TQtranslate_DiamondSutra.pdf)

## APPENDIX A

### Sample Translation of the Diamond Sutra

# Taisho Tripitaka Vol. 8, No. 235 金剛般若波羅蜜經

# CBETA Chinese Electronic Tripitaka V1.13 (UTF-8) Normalized Version, Release Date:  
2004/11/14

金剛般若波羅蜜經

Kim Cương Bát Nhã Ba La Mật Kinh

Kinh Kim Cương Bát Nhã Ba La Mật

Diamond Prajna Paramita (Perfect Wisdom) Sutra

Sutra du Diamant Prajna Paramita (Sagesse Parfaite)

姚秦天竺三藏鳩摩羅什譯

Diêu Tần Thiên Trúc Tam Tạng Cưu Ma La Thập dịch

Diêu Tần Thiên Trúc Tam Tạng Cưu Ma La Thập dịch

Translated by Indian Tripitaka Master Kumarajiva in the Dao Qin Dynasty

Traduit par Maître de Tripitaka Indien Kumārajīva dans la dynastie de Dao Qin

如是我聞。一時佛在舍衛國祇樹給孤獨園。

Như thị ngã văn 。 Nhất thời Phật tại Xá vệ quốc Kì-Thọ Cấp-Cô-Độc viên 。

Tôi nghe như vậy 。

Một thuở nọ, Đức Phật ở nước Xá vệ, trong vườn Kì-Thọ của Ông Cấp-Cô-Độc 。

Thus have I heard 。

Once Buddha resided in the country of Śrāvastī, at the Jeta (Victory) Grove of Anathapindika (Provider to the Orphans and the Solitaires) 。

Ainsi ai-je entendu 。

Une fois Bouddha résidait au pays de Śrāvastī, dans le Jardin de Jeta (Victoire) d'Anathapindika (Pourvoyeur des Orphelins et des Solitaires) 。

與大比丘眾千二百五十人俱。

dữ đại bỉ khâu chúng thiên nhị bách ngũ thập nhân câu 。

với đại chúng gồm một ngàn hai trăm năm mươi vị Tỳ kheo 。

with a grand assembly of one thousand two hundred fifty Bhiksus (monks) 。

avec une grande assemblée d'une mille deux cent cinquante Bhiksus (moines)。

爾時世尊食時著衣持鉢入舍衛大城乞食。

Nhĩ thời Thế tôn thực thời trước y trì bát nhập Xá-Vệ đại thành khát thực 。

Lúc bấy giờ, gần đến giờ ăn, Đức Thế Tôn đắp y cầm bát, vào thành lớn Xá-Vệ khát thực。

At that time, near meal time, World-Honored One put on a robe, held his alm bowl and entered the great city of Shravasti to beg for alms 。

A ce temps là, près de l'heure de repas, Honoré du Monde mit une robe, prit son bol et entra la grande ville de Shravasti pour mendier des aumônes 。

於其城中次第乞已。還至本處飯食訖。

Ư kỳ thành trung thứ đệ khát dĩ 。

Trong thành đó, sau khi khát thực tuần tự từng nhà, Đức Phật trở về tịnh xá. Dùng cơm xong,

In that city, after begging successively from door to door, he returned to his retreat. When he finished eating,

Dans cette ville, après mendiant successivement de porte en porte, il revint à sa retraite . Quand il avait fini manger,

收衣鉢洗足已敷座而坐。時長老須菩提在大眾中。

thu y bát tẩy túc dĩ phu tọa nhi tọa 。

Thời Trưởng Lão Tu Bồ Đề tại Đại chúng trung 。

cất y bát, rửa chân, trải tọa cụ và ngồi xuống 。

Bấy giờ, Trưởng Lão Tu Bồ Đề (Thiện Hiện), ở trong Đại chúng, he put away his robe and his alm bowl, washed his feet, spread a seating mat and sat down 。

il déposa sa robe et son bol d'aumônes, se lava les pieds, étendait un tapis d'assise et s'assit 。 En ce temps là, Vénérable Subhūti (Bonne Apparition), dans l'assemblée,

即從座起偏袒右肩右膝著地。

tức từng toạ khởi thiên đản hữu kiên hữu tất trước địa 。

từ chỗ ngồi đứng dậy, trịch áo vai phải, quỳ gối phải sát đất,

rose from his seat, uncovered his right shoulder, knelt on the right knee to the ground,

se leva de son siège, exposa son épaule droit, posa son genou droit à terre。

合掌恭敬而白佛言。希有世尊。如來善護念諸菩薩。

hợp chưởng cung kính nhi bạch Phật ngôn 。

Hi hữu Thế tôn 。

Như-Lai thiện hộ niệm chư Bồ Tát 。

cung kính chấp tay và bạch cùng Đức Phật rằng: Hi hữu thay Đức Thế Tôn, Đức Như-Lai hay khéo nâng đỡ các Bồ Tát,

and, with his palms joined together, respectfully said to Buddha: It's extraordinary, World-honored One, the Thus-Come-One (Tathagata) is well supportive of all Bodhisattvas,

et, avec ses paumes jointes, respectueusement dit au Bouddha : C'est extraordinaire, Honoré du Monde, l'Ainsi-Venu est bien supportif de tous les Bodhisattvas,

善付囑諸菩薩。世尊。善男子善女人。

thiện phó chúc chư Bồ Tát 。

Thế tôn 。

Thiện nam tử Thiện nữ nhân 。

hay khéo giao phó cho các Bồ Tát 。

Bạch Thế Tôn, khi Thiện nam Thiện nữ

and entrusting so well all Bodhisattvas 。

World-honored One, if good men and good women

et a bonne confiance envers tous les Bodhisattvas 。

Honoré du Monde, si les Bons Hommes et Bonnes Femmes

發阿耨多羅三藐三菩提心。

phát a nậu đa la tam miệu tam Bồ Đề tâm 。

phát tâm Vô Thượng Chánh Đẳng Chánh Giác

engender the mind of supreme and perfect enlightenment 。

engendrent l'esprit d'éveil suprême et parfait,

應云何住云何降伏其心。佛言。善哉善哉。須菩提。如汝所說。

ưng vân hà trụ vân hà hàng phục kỳ tâm 。 Phật ngôn 。 Thiện tai Thiện tai 。 Tu Bồ Đề  
。 như nhữ sở thuyết 。

thì phải trú ở tâm ấy như thế nào, và phải sửa tâm mình như thế nào? Đức Phật dạy: Lành  
thay! Lành thay! Này Tu Bồ Đề , như Ông nói ,

how should they abide there and how should they subdue their mind ? 。 Buddha said:  
Excellent! Excellent ! Subhūti, just as you say,

comment doivent-ils s'y résider et comment doivent-ils soumettre leur esprit ? 。 Bouddha  
répondit : Excellent! Excellent! Subhūti, comme tu l'as dit,

如來善護念諸菩薩。善付囑諸菩薩。

Như-Lai thiện hộ niệm chư Bồ Tát 。 thiện phó chúc chư Bồ Tát 。

Như-Lai hay khéo bảo hộ và nhớ nghĩ các Bồ Tát, hay khéo giao phó các Bồ Tát 。

The Thus-Come-One (Tathagata) always protects and is well mindful of all Bodhisattvas  
and is well entrusting all Bodhisattvas 。

L'Ainsi-Venu protège toujours et est bien attentif de tous les Bodhisattvas et a bonne  
confiance de tous les Bodhisattvas 。

汝今諦聽。當為汝說。善男子善女人。

nhữ kim đế thính 。 đương vì nhữ thuyết 。 Thiện nam tử Thiện nữ nhân 。

Hãy nghe kỹ ! Ta sẽ vì Ông mà dạy cho hàng Thiện nam Thiện nữ,

Listen carefully! Because of you, I will instruct how good men and good women,

Ecoute attentivement ! à cause de toi, j'enseignerai comment les bons hommes et bonnes  
femmes,

發阿耨多羅三藐三菩提心。

phát a nậu đa la tam miệu tam Bồ Đề tâm 。

phát tâm Vô Thượng Chánh Đẳng Chánh Giác

when they engender the mind of supreme and perfect enlightenment,

quand ils engendrent l'esprit d'Éveil suprême et parfait,

應如是住如是降伏其心。唯然世尊。願樂欲聞。

ưng như thị trụ như thị hàng phục kỳ tâm 。 Duy nhiên Thế tôn 。 nguyện lạc dục văn 。  
được ở tâm ấy và sửa chữa tâm mình. Dạ phải, Đức Thế Tôn, con vui mừng xin muốn  
nghe.

will be able to abide there and subdue their mind 。 Yes, World-honored One, I would  
joyfully want to listen.

seront capable de s'y résider et maîtriser leur esprit. Oui, Honoré du Monde, je vous  
écouterai avec joie .

佛告須菩提。

Phật cáo Tu Bồ Đề 。

Đức Phật bảo Ngài Tu Bồ Đề :

Buddha said to Subhūti:

Bouddha dit à Subhūti :

諸菩薩摩訶薩應如是降伏其心。所有一切眾生之類。

Chư Bồ Tát Ma-Ha tát ưng như thị hàng phục kỳ tâm 。 sở hữu nhất thiết chúng sanh chi  
loại 。

Các Đại Bồ Tát phải sửa chữa tâm mình như thế này. Tất cả chúng sinh,

All Great Bodhisattvas should subdue their mind as follows 。 All sentient beings

Tous les Grands Bodhisattvas doivent maîtriser leur esprit comme suit 。 Tous les êtres  
sensibles

若卵生若胎生若濕生若化生。若有色若無色。若有想若無想。

nhược noãn sanh nhược thai sanh nhược thấp sanh nhược hóa sanh 。 nhược hữu sắc  
nhược vô sắc 。 nhược hữu tưởng nhược vô tưởng 。

dù sanh từ trứng, từ bào thai, từ ẩm thấp , từ biến hóa , có hình sắc hay không hình sắc,  
có tư tưởng hay không tư tưởng,

whether egg-born, womb-born, wetness-born, or born of transformation; whether with form or no form; whether with thought or no thought 。

nés des oeufs ou des matrices, nés de l'humidité ou de transformation, avec forme ou sans forme, avec pensée ou sans pensée 。

若非有想非無想。

nhược phi hữu tưởng phi vô tưởng 。

hoặc chẳng có tư tưởng chẳng không có tư tưởng ,

or whether neither with thought nor without thought,

ou avec ni pensée ni non-pensée 。

我皆令入無餘涅槃而滅度之。如是滅度無量無數無邊眾生。

ngã giai lệnh nhập Vô-Dư Niết-Bàn nhi diệt độ chi 。

như thị diệt độ vô lượng vô số vô biên chúng sanh 。

Ta đều khiến tất cả được nhập Niết-Bàn hoàn toàn mà được diệt độ. Dù diệt độ vô lượng vô số vô biên chúng sinh,

I will lead all to enter the No-Residual (complete) Nirvana to be liberated. Though I have liberated an infinite, countless and boundless number of sentient beings,

Je mènerai tous à entrer au Nirvana sans résidu (complet) pour être libérés 。

Quoique j'ai libéré un nombre infini, innombrable et sans limites d'êtres sensibles,

實無眾生得滅度者。何以故。須菩提。

thật vô chúng sanh đắc diệt độ giả 。

hà dĩ cố 。

Tu Bồ Đề 。

mà thật ra không có chúng sinh nào được diệt độ cả . Vì sao? Này Tu Bồ Đề!

in reality not one sentient is getting liberated 。

Why? Subhūti !

dans la réalité aucun être sensible n'a été libéré 。

Pourquoi? Subhūti !

若菩薩有我相人相眾生相壽者相。即非菩薩。

nhược Bồ Tát hữu ngã tướng nhân tướng chúng sanh tướng thọ giả tướng 。

tức phi Bồ Tát 。

Nếu Bồ Tát nào vẫn còn có tướng ngã, nhân, chúng sinh, thọ giả, thì chẳng phải là Bồ Tát

◦

If a Bodhisattva still has the images of a self, the images of a person, the images of sentient beings or the images of a life span, then he is not a Bodhisattva 。

Si un Bodhisattva a encore des images d'un soi, des images d'une personne, des images des êtres sensibles or des images d'une durée de vie, alors il n'est pas un Bodhisattva 。

**NOTE:** A complete translation of the Diamond Sutra is available at Tuệ Quang Wisdom Light Foundation website [http://daitangvietnam.com/TQtranslate\\_DiamondSutra.pdf](http://daitangvietnam.com/TQtranslate_DiamondSutra.pdf)