

# Dazangjing (Great Treasury Scriptures)

Dàzàngjīng 大藏經

***Dazangjing* 大藏經 refers to Chinese Buddhist canon known as the Great Treasury Scriptures. The canon was expanded and modified through the ages for more than one thousand years.**

The word *Dazangjing* 大藏經 literally means “Great Treasury Scriptures” and refers to the Chinese Buddhist canon. In Chinese the word *zang* 藏 renders the Sanskrit word *pitaka* (basket), which refers to the vessel that contained the scriptures, resting on palm leaves, in the early Buddhist tradition. The Chinese word *jing* 經 renders the Sanskrit word *sūtra* (scripture). The early Buddhist canon is called “Tripitaka” in Sanskrit, which literally means “three baskets,” and comprises three categories: the *Sūtra pitaka* (*jing* 經 scriptures), the *Vinaya pitaka* (*lü* 律 monastic code), and the *Abhidharma pitaka* (*lun* 論 treatises). These texts were originally written in Sanskrit and other central Asian languages. The earliest Tripitaka was the Pāli canon, which developed out of three Buddhist councils held from the fifth to the second centuries BCE.

Although the early Tripitaka was endorsed by Buddhist councils, the Chinese canon itself was usually authorized by the imperial government. As a result, the early Tripitaka was never completely translated into Chinese. The Chinese Buddhist canon was known by a number of other terms in addition to *Dazangjing*. These terms include *Zhongjing* (Assembly of Scriptures), *yiqiejing* (All Scriptures), and *neidian* (Inner Scriptures). The earliest appearance of the term

*Dazangjing* was in a biography of Tiantai School founder Zhiyi (538–597), written in the Sui dynasty (581–618 CE) by Zhiyi’s disciple Guanding (561–632). However, as a term referring to the Chinese Buddhist canon, *Dazangjing* gained popularity only in the Song dynasty (960–1279), when a special official unit, the *dazangjingsi* 大藏經司 (Bureau of the Great Treasury Scriptures), was established to take charge of the canon’s printing and circulation.

While the early Buddhist canon consisted exclusively of the three categories mentioned earlier, the Chinese version followed the Mahayana tradition, whose flexible canon was one of its distinguishing features. Thus, the Chinese canon expanded beyond translations from the original three “baskets” to include texts written by Chinese monks and laypeople. These texts represent numerous genres, including commentaries, histories, biographies, gazetteers, travel accounts, temple records, and inscriptions.

The late Tang dynasty (618–907 CE) witnessed dramatic innovations in wood-block printing, ushering in the golden age of Chinese Buddhist scripture. In the Kaibao period (971–983 CE) of the Song dynasty the first printed edition of the Chinese Buddhist canon was completed. This edition used 130,000 wood blocks; a complete set of the pages consists of 5,048 fascicles (small or slender “installments”). In later dynasties many updated editions emerged. In the Liao dynasty (907–1125) the canon was even carved on stones, which have been preserved in the Yunjusi Temple (Cloud Dwelling Temple) at Fangshan. During Japan’s Taisho period (1912–1926) Japanese Buddhists printed the most comprehensive edition of the Chinese Buddhist canon ever produced. This critical edition *Taisho shinshu daizokyo* (usually referred to as

## Confucian Views on Suicide

*Unlike common Western views, suicide in Confucian China was often viewed as praiseworthy rather than sinful.*

On June 2, 1927, a famous professor of Qing Hua University, Wang Guowei, drowned himself in a lake of the former imperial garden in Beijing. His suicide proved extremely controversial and evoked much discussion. His colleague and famous intellectual, Liang Qichao, wrote several eulogies in his honor. In one of these eulogies Liang reminded his colleagues and students, who lived in a culture which had just entered the modern age and was under heavy western influence,

not to use western perspectives to evaluate Wang's suicide. Europeans, Liang asserted, used to regard suicide as an act of cowardice, and Christianity made it a sin. In ancient China, however, notwithstanding some petty suicides committed by common people, many eminent figures used suicide to express their counter-cultural aspirations. These were praiseworthy suicides, Liang concluded, and should by no means be rashly reproached by alien European values.

*Source:* Ping-Cheung Lo (1999). Confucian views on suicide and their implications for euthanasia. In Ruiping Fan's (Ed.). *Confucian Bioethics*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 69.

"T," *Taishozang*.) promptly became the gold standard for the scholarly world. However, in recent years the government of the People's Republic of China began an initiative to compile a new edition, which is called *Zhonghua dazangjing* 中華大藏經.

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