Conventions

The pinyin system of romanization (without the tonal marks) is used to render Chinese terms; the modified Hepburn system is used for Japanese terms and the International Alphabet of Sanskrit Transliteration (IAST) is used for Sanskrit terms. Spelling differences in quoted book titles or citations go back to differences in the authors’ romanization styles and inconsistencies in their use of diacritical marks.

Chinese and Japanese names are written in line with the East Asian convention of writing the family name followed by the given name. The only exception to this occurs where an author with a Chinese or Japanese name published in a European language. In this case, the European convention of writing the family name last is followed, and the name is used as it appears in the publication in question, meaning usually without diacritical marks. The Japanese convention of using only the personal name of a famous personality is followed here as well. For example, I refer to Manase Dōsan as “Dōsan”, his personal name, instead of Manase. It was customary for members of the elite to change their names or use several names simultaneously in the course of their lives. Sometimes, the reading of the character or characters making up their names differed too. Some men and women were only known by the palace or temple where they lived, or their title. I use only the most known and recognizable names. Other conventions regarding Japanese were adapted from the 2018 Monumenta Nipponica style guide.

Terms and names that form part of the American English lexicon such as sutra (for Sanskrit sūtra), shogun (for Japanese shōgun) or mantra (for Sanskrit mantra) only appear in transliteration when they are part of a non-English compound or title that is not part of the lexicon, for example Vimalakīrti-sūtra.

Titles of Buddhist texts are often long, and short versions have been well established in academic writing about Buddhism. I use the full title when a source is first mentioned, and thereafter use the short title, for example Lotus Sutra.

Medical terms translated from the Chinese are introduced and then used with capital letters to mark them as technical terms, for example “five agents” appears as “Five Agents.” The key terms ki and qi for 氣 (気) remain untranslated as they have complex histories and meanings. I preferred the use of traditional Chinese characters in this book, depending on the context, but in modern titles the characters appear as the publishers used them so they may appear in simplified form. Characters are only inserted after the first mention of a term or name. An index at the end of the book serves as a reference for all relevant terms and names.

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A few words about the Japanese writing system as it differs considerably from European writing systems: Texts in Buddhism and medicine, but also other fields, were written using Chinese ideographic characters and two syllabic scripts called *katakana* and *hiragana*. The *kana* syllabaries derive either from parts of Chinese characters or from cursive-style Chinese characters. The syllabaries were (and are to this day) used to phonetically render how Japanese thought the Chinese characters were pronounced and how Japanese said in their language what was coded in the text. This way of rendering text and reading it functions similarly to a translation. The texts explored in this book are often in a combination of Chinese characters, *kana* and additional marks that helped Japanese read. Interestingly, Buddhist texts, for example, were usually not translated from Chinese into Japanese in the premodern period although it would have been possible, so the writing (and reading) system described above – challenging to those who are used to a single phonetic alphabet – remained dominant well into the early modern period.

To pronounce romanized Japanese, articulate the vowels like in Italian and elongate the vowels marked with macrons, for example ă is pronounced as the first vowel in “father,” not like the first vowel in “rubber.” Consonants are pronounced similarly to in English but double consonants, for example in “Hokke-ji,” are said with a glottal stop.

Chinese rendered in the pinyin system of romanization reflects the phonology of standard Chinese and is pronounced according to the following guidelines: The consonant b is pronounced like an English p but unaspirated as in “spy.” The consonant p is aspirated as in “pie.” Similarly, d is unaspirated as in “sty” and t aspirated as in “tie;” g as in “sky” and k as in “key.” The consonant z should be pronounced as ts like in “cats” but softer. Further particulars are:

c like ts in “cats” but aspirated;
x like sh but softer;
j like ch but unaspirated and softer;
q like ch but aspirated and softer;
sh like sh but articulated with a retroflex;
zh like ch as in “chat” but unaspirated and articulated with a retroflex;
ch like ch as in “chat” but aspirated and articulated with a retroflex.

The vowel sounds romanized as i, u, ü, e, a and combinations such as ia, ua, uo, etc. vary according to their phonetic environment. For example, disregarding the tones, qi is pronounced with an articulated i as in “cheese” but the zi in *wujing* zi is pronounced like a soft ts without any “i” sound.
The pronunciation of romanized Sanskrit has the following particulars: Elongated vowels are marked with a macron but the diphthongs e, ai, o and au are always long; r with a diacritical mark (not r) belongs to the vowels and is pronounced similarly to ri as in “rim.” Consonants are articulated more or less as in English but note: n̄ like ng as in “lung,” c like ch as in “child,” n̄i makes the n into a nasal sound and s̄ like sh as in “ship.” A similar sound is s̄ but here it is articulated with a retroflex. Other retroflexes are t̄ and d̄. Note also the h̄, pronounced clearly like an h as in “house.” The m̄ replaces either a nasal sound or is pronounced as an m, such as in Ratnasambhava. Aspirated consonants have an h̄ added, for example dh̄ as in Dharma or Buddha.

The stress of the often long Sanskrit words roughly follow three rules: Stress is on the first long syllable counting from the end of the word; syllables with a long vowel or a short vowel before two consonants are considered long; the final syllable of a word is never stressed even if it is a long syllable. Examples are: mandala, Avalokitesvara, dhāraṇī, Śākyamuni, Vairocana.

All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.
