

Buddhist Research versus Historical Imagination

— A Brief Comment on Kevin Lu's

“How Did Mahayana Buddhism Reform Savaka Sutta?: On Mahayana's
Hermeneutical Strategies by Two Kinds of Buddhist Paradigms
of *Aṅgulimāla Sutta*” Based on *The Agama Sutras*

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Abstract

It is a fact that Buddha Sakyamuni appeared in history and founded Buddhism. However, very few people know the historical meaning of this fact; even the Buddhist researchers of the academia are ignorant about it. The Buddhist researchers discuss Buddhism from the different aspects of history, literature, art, etc. Nevertheless, if one cannot start from the Buddhist doctrine with the method of actual realization, he will be unable to have a solid view on the history and literature of Buddhism.

Based on the historical meanings given by the basic facts of Buddhist history, this article discusses Kevin Lu's many wrong claims about Buddhist history and literature in his paper. For example, Lu claims that “Sravaka Buddhism,” which represents Buddha Sakyamuni's initial teachings, is the “old Buddhism” and “Mahayana Buddhism,” which appeared after Sectarian Buddhism, is the “new Buddhism.” This claim does not conform to the historical fact and reveals that Lu does not understand the historical meaning of Buddha Sakyamuni becoming a Buddha. The fact that Buddha Sakyamuni became a Buddha exactly represents Mahayana Buddhism by itself; Buddha Sakyamuni is the most important and real representative of Mahayana Buddhism. When Buddha Sakyamuni became a Buddha, Mahayana Buddhism was founded at the same time. Therefore, Buddhism neither has the difference of new and old nor exists the historical imagination on “Sravaka Buddhism,” “old Buddhism,” “new Buddhism,” “Sravaka model” or paradigm shift.

Lu's standard of categorization on sutras, based on his historical imagination too, is full of

inconsistency of logic and conflicts with each other. In order to manifest that the real Buddhist research should not fall into the historical imagination, this article makes comments on a few selected topics in Lu's paper as follows: 1. New and old Buddhism, 2. Commensurability and Incommensurability, 3. Definition of categorization, 4. Hidden documental evidence, 5. Fearing Buddhist doctrine, 6. Analyzing Buddhism based on Christian hermeneutics, 7. Misunderstanding the Gestalt paradigm, 8. Biological mimicry.

Lu's several kinds of wrong claims exactly represent the fact that the Buddhist research of the academia is lack of the understanding on the historical meaning about Buddha Sakyamuni's appearance in the history; they bring up several discourses but ignoring the historical meaning of Buddha Sakyamuni's existence. Consequently, the most important thing for the Buddhist researchers of the academia is to understand Buddha Sakyamuni correctly if they want to have a precise interpretation on the Buddhist history and literature. Based on several historical facts, this article brings up their historical meanings to identify the difference between the real Buddhist research and the historical imagination.

Keywords: Mahayana being not the Buddha's teachings, incommensurability, Sravaka model, Mahayana model, Gestalt paradigm, biological mimicry, new Buddhism, old Buddhism, religious caste system, Aṅgulimāla