



# The Fo-Sho-Hing-Tsan-King: A Life of Buddha

*Samuel Beal*

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INTRODUCTION.

HAVING been asked by the Editor of 'the Sacred Books of the East' to contribute to the series a volume from the Buddhist literature of China, I undertook, with some distrust, to translate from that language the Phû-yau-king, which is the second version of the Lalita Vistara, known in China, and dated A.D. 308.

After some months of rather disappointing work I found the text so corrupt and imperfect, and the style of the composition so inflated, that I gave up my task, having completed the translation of six chapters (kiouen) of the text, out of eight.

The editor being still desirous to have one book at least from the Chinese Tripitaka in his collection of translations (and more especially a translation of some Life of Buddha, the date of which could be fixed), kindly renewed his request, and proposed that the Fo-sho-hing-tsan-king, which professed to be a translation of Asvaghosha's Buddhakarita, made by an Indian priest called Dharmaraksha (or Dharmâkshara), about the year 420 A.D., should be substituted for the work first selected.

This is the work here translated. The difficulties have been many, and the result can only be regarded as tentative. The text itself, and I have had only one Chinese text to work on, is in many places corrupt, and the style of the composition, especially in the metaphysical portions of it, is abstruse and technical. The original Sanskrit, I am told, differs considerably from the Chinese translation, and except in the restoration of proper names, in which the editor of these books has most readily helped me, the assistance derived from it has been very little. I offer the

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result of my work, therefore, with some mistrust, and yet with this confidence, that due allowance will be made for imperfections in the preparation of a first translation of a text comprising nearly 10,000 lines of poetry, printed in the original without stops or notes of any sort, and in a difficult style of Chinese composition.

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