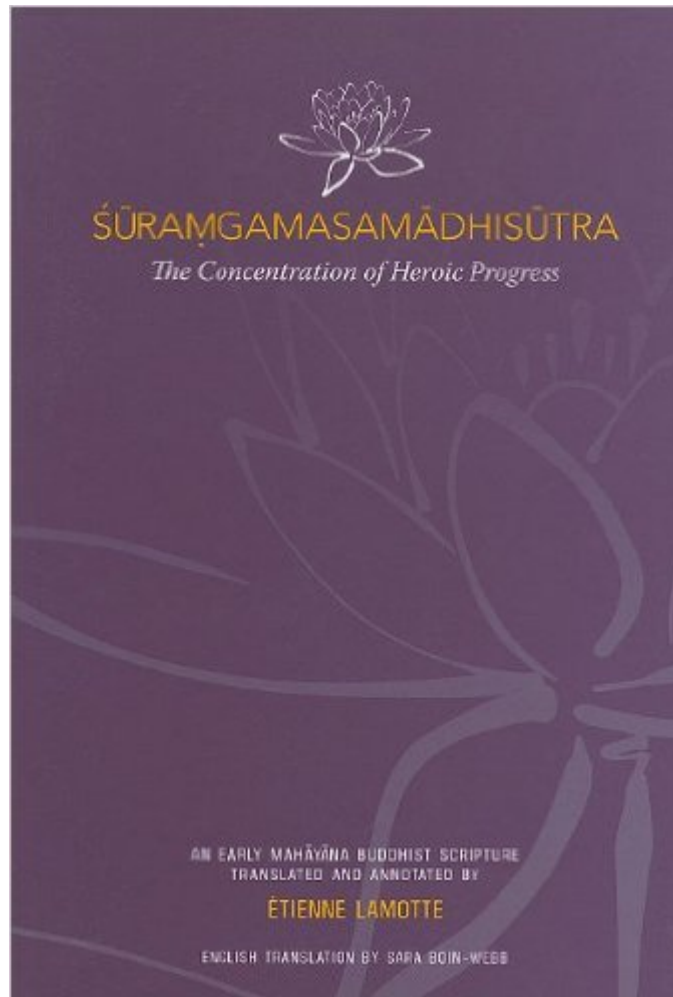


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Suramgamasamadhisutra: The Concentration Of Heroic Progress



Synopsis

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Customer Reviews

An excellent scholarly translation of the Suramgama-samadhi sutra, an early Mahayana sutra. This is the English translation of the original French book by Étienne Lamotte (1903-1983) that appeared in 1965. As with Lamotte's other translations and studies, it offers a treasure trove for the scholar of early Mahayana Buddhism. For the non-scholarly, practicing Buddhist, the same wealth of information can sometimes detract from the main message of the original texts, and it may be necessary to skip the front matter and footnotes, and go straight to the sutra itself, pages 107-241 in the English version. Although one can easily skip over the parentheses-enclosed Sanskrit originals for the translations of a multitude of Buddhist technical terms and phrases, in quite a few cases, Lamotte simply leaves the term untranslated, providing the transliterated Sanskrit version instead of a translation. Except for words like Buddha, Bagavat, Dharma, that have been incorporated into English, these are italicised and not set off by parentheses. Some of these transliterations qua translations—*dhāraṇas*, *samādhi*, *anuttarasamyaksaṃbodhi*, *buddhakṣetras*, *kalpa*, *dhyānas*, *samāpattis*, *pāramitās*, *prajñāpāramitā*, *Bhagavat*, etc.—may be familiar to well-read devotees, but many will not be. Fortunately, The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism has recently arrived on the scene and will provide English translations and helpful and accurate explanations of most, if not all, of them.

Although the extra step of having to look up these words is extremely beneficial to a student, it makes access to the original text more difficult for the not-so-scholarly Buddhist whose main aim is to read, or recite, or memorize or meditate on the sutra or parts of the sutra. In short, Lamotte's translation is intended for scholars and scholars-to-be. By contrast, when I lay open a soft and pliable volume of the Chinese Buddhist collection (Tripitika), the sutra title, a table of contents of chapter names, followed by a single line containing the dynastic period within which the translator lived, his country of origin, and his name, with or without a title, constitutes the entirety of the metadata. This may be followed by one or more ancient prefaces. From that point onward one is face to face with the sutra and the sutra alone, unencumbered by scholarly apparatus with one exception: in some editions, there may be, at the end of each roll, a short flourish of terse equivalences showing the pronunciation and/or the meaning of a handful of obscure Chinese characters, easily skipped. In short, this is a translation that will appeal to hard-core Buddhists and Buddhists-to-be, whether they are scholars or not. Unfortunately, it takes a lifetime to learn how to read these texts, and translations by western scholars help, especially from the pen of Étienne Lamotte, for me, one of top three or four western scholars of Buddhism in the 20th century.

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