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Early Chinese Buddhist translations

Quotations from the early translations in anthologies of the sixth century

Hubert Durt

Anthology, an old Greek term used for collections of poetical flowers, selected as the best and preserved for the enjoyment of future generations, corresponds more or less to the two Chinese encyclopedic collections of the early sixth century which will be introduced here.

The two compilations offer a selection of texts which is not based on their literary value, or on their antiquity. Sengyou 僧祐 (445–518) wished to compare complementary and sometimes contradictory tales about the life of the Buddha. We have kept what seems to be his first attempt (thirty-four chapters of very different length, twice edited): the *Shijia pu* 釋迦譜 (T. 2040).

An important characteristic of the *Shijia pu* is the importance attached to the family relations. As indicated by its title “Genealogy of Śākya (釋迦譜),” the *Shijia pu* is obviously concerned with the family relations of the Buddha: that is to say, his lineage and his relatives. Among the thirty-four chapters, fourteen chapters may be considered, already from their titles, as mainly family related: three chapters (I, II, III) deal with the ascendants of the Buddha; three chapters (VI, VII, XVIII) deal with his relatives in a broad sense; five chapters are named after his immediate relatives: father (XV), mother (XVI), aunt and stepmother (XIV and XVII), and son (XIII); three chapters are labeled after his cousins, either followers such as Anuruddha and Bhadrīka (XI), and Sundarānanda (XII), or dissidents, like Devadatta (X).

In a more ambitious work, a kind of encyclopedia of “practical” Buddhism (*exempla*, ritual, devotion), the lost *Fayuan zayuan yuanzhi ji* 法苑雜緣原治集 or *Fayuan ji*, Sengyou had devoted a section to the “Treasure (consisting of the) Buddha” (*fobao* 佛寶). In this section, there are twenty-two chapters whose content seems to have been close to at least seven of the last chapters of the *Shijia pu*. This supposition is based on the table of contents of the *Fayuan ji* which has been kept in the Sengyou’s Canonical Inventory, the *Chu sanzang jiji* 出三藏記集.¹

In the *Jinglü yixiang* 經律異相 (T. 2121, dated 516), the intention of Baochang 寶唱 (ca. 466 – ca. 518) who was a collaborator of Sengyou was different. He collected 782 extraordinary exempla (*yu* 喻) or “strange tales” (*yixiang*)² which must have come from Indian Buddhist Scriptures (*jinglü*). He grouped them under a system of more or less “anthropological” categories consisting of twelve main sections (*bu* 部) devoted to living beings.³

¹ T. 2145, j. 12, pp. 87a – 94c.

² In the text itself of the *Jinglü yixiang* (see T. 2121, j. 30, p.160a 4, quoting the Chinese version of the *Samantapāsādikā*, T. 1462, j.10, p. 743b20), the use of the term *yixiang* with the meaning of “strange story” confirms us in the choice of the translation adopted here for the title of the *Jinglü yixiang* instead of the more diffuse “Various aspects of *sūtras* and *Vinayas*.”

³ Apparently under Chinese influence, these sections mix, on the one hand, the fourfold Mahāyānic distinction (Buddha, Bodhisattva, *pratyekabuddha* and *śrāvaka*), fourfold *saṅgha* distinction (*bhikṣu*, *bhikṣuṇī*, *upāsaka*, *upāsikā*), the six classical Buddhist destinies (*gati*, i.e. *deva*, human, *asura*, animal, *preta* and hell), and, on the other hand, social or secular categories where gender distinction is strictly observed. The titles of the twelve sections (*bu* 部), added presumably by later editors, are: 1) heaven and earth (i.e. *devas*), 2) Buddhas, without mention of *pratyekabuddhas*, 3) Bodhisattvas, 4) *śrāvakas*, 5) kings, 6) eminent people (*changzhe* 長者), 7) *upāsakas* and *upāsikās*, 8) heretics and hermits/immortals (*waidao xianren* 外道仙人, including *brahmacārins* and brahmins), 9) landlords and ordinary people (*jushi shumin deng* 居士庶民等), 10) ghostly spirits (*guishen* 鬼神) including on a very limited scale *asuras* and *pretas*, 11) animals, 12) hells.

By far the largest and most important part of the compilation is devoted to the human destiny (j. 4–45), starting with a section on the Buddha (*fo bu* 佛部, j. 4–7), centered on events in his life. Baochang often used the same material as Sengyou. As observed by Ōuchi Fumio, three of the four subsections of the *Jinglü yixiang*'s section on the Buddha are based on certain chapters of the *Shijia pu*.⁴ As the scope of Baochang is much more extended than the genealogy and biography of the Buddha dealt with by Sengyou, we find episodes of the life of the Buddha in almost all the twelve *bu* of his encyclopedic anthology.

There is even a difference of material between Baochang and Sengyou in the section on the Buddha of the *Jinglü yixiang*. Among the relatives of the Śākya (the Buddha's father, mother, etc.), Baochang introduced a tale about the antecedents of the famous Chandaka and Kaṇṭhaka, the esquire and the horse of the Buddha. I will revert to this tale in the last part of this paper when dealing with the normalisation of archaisms in the anthologies.

I. The archaic translations used in T. 2040 and T. 2121

What is the interest of these two extant (and extended) works for the textual study of archaic translations?

We have to take into account, first, that both compilers, Sengyou and Baochang, were first interested principally in narrative literature (and not in doctrinal texts)⁵ and that, second, they were not “archaeologists” in the sense that they were not primarily interested in the most antique translations, but they made use of them when their narrations seemed valuable. The name of a translator is never mentioned. It seems that Sengyou and Baochang liked to be “up-to-date.”⁶ We find long quotations of texts which had just been translated at the time of the compilation of the two anthologies. Such is the case for the two extant translations (?) made by the un-

⁴ Ōuchi 1977.

⁵ Especially in the *Jinglü yixiang*, doctrinal developments have been excised from the quoted texts.

⁶ Durt 2006: 51–86.

known Danjing 曇景 at the end of the fifth century. These translations are the *Mahāmāyāsūtra/Mohemoye jing* 摩訶摩耶經 (T. 383), on the mother of the Buddha, and the “*Sūtra of the extraordinary conditionment*” (*Weicengyou yinyuan jing* 未曾有因緣經, T. 754), which is one of the most interesting documents on the legend of Rāhula, the son of the Buddha.⁷ The two translations (?) of Danjing became quite authoritative.

Among the archaic translations used by Sengyou in his research on the biography of the Buddha are translations attributed to three early translators: Kang Mengxiang 康孟詳, Zhi Qian 支謙, and Dharmarakṣa/Zhu Fahu 竺法護. They were also used by Baochang, who for his extended narrative researches, made large use of a fourth early translator, Kang Senghui 康僧會 who translated the *Liudu jijing* 六度集經 (T. 152), an archaic collection of tales connected with the six perfections (*du* 度, *pāramitā*).

1. The translator Kang Mengxiang (active 194–210) is mostly known for the “*Sūtra of the practice and original rise*” (*Xiuxing benqi jing* 修行本起經, T. 184 in 7 chapters) and the “*Middle sūtra of the original rise*” (*Zhong benqi jing* 中本起經, T. 196 in 15 chapters). He was for the first text working with Zhu Dali 竺大力, and for the second text working with Tanguo 曇果. These two *benqi jing* form one biography of the Buddha cut in two parts for unknown reasons and divided into monographical chapters. T. 184, on the birth and the youth of the Buddha, is used only for short references, as Sengyou disposed already of two main biographical sources: the “*General radiance sūtra*” (*Puyao jing* 普曜經, T. 186), a translation attributed to Dharmarakṣa which was used for the first edition (in around 502) of the fourth chapter of the *Shijia pu*, and the “*Sūtra about causes and effects*” (the abbreviated title for *Guoqu xianzai yinguo jing* 過去現在因果經, T. 189), a translation by Guṇabhadra (of the fifth century), used for its second edition (of around 515).

⁷ I have two articles in preparation on the originality of these Māyā and Rāhula narratives. This original character must have been influential in the attraction of Sengyou and Baochang to the two translations (?) of Danjing.

2. For Zhi Qian (active 220–252), we are mostly confronted with his “*Sūtra of the auspicious original rise of the prince*” [i.e. the Buddha to be] (*Taizi ruiying benqi jing* 太子瑞應本起經, T. 185, without chapter division) which can already be considered an anthology, or at least a compilation made of elements of diverse origins.

3. Among the abundant translations attributed to Dharmarakṣa (active 265–313), several works (among them the [*Upāyakauśalya*] *Jñānottarabodhisattvaparipṛcchā/Huishang pusa wen dashanquan jing* 慧上菩薩問大善權經, T. 345) are quoted for short references, but it is the influential *Puyao jing* which is the most extensively quoted, sometime erroneously.⁸ I say “influential” because Sengyou considers the antecedents of the Buddha from the standpoint of the *Lalitavistara* of which the *Puyao jing* represents an archaic and in some places more extended version. This alignment of Sengyou with a Sarvāstivādin tradition made him almost suppress the popular Sumedha tale from the *Shijia pu* account on the origins of the Buddha. Quoting a *sūtra* of different origin (the already referred to *Weicengyou yinyuan jing* 未曾有因緣經, T. 754), Sengyou has been obliged to introduce a story suppressed in his first chapters (the marriage of the Buddha’s predecessor Sumedha) in his chapter XIII on Rāhula.

4. Kang Senghui (active around 247–280) is only known for two translations, both collections of *exempla*, the “Compendium *sūtra* of the six perfections” (*Liudu jijing* 六度集經, T. 152)⁹ and the “*Sūtra* of various ancient example stories” (*Jiu zapiyu jing* 舊雜譬喻經, T. 206).¹⁰

There are still other archaic translations quoted here and there in the *Shijia pu* and the *Jinglü yixiang*. There are also many trans-

⁸ The “error” alluded to is an attribution of the source of chapter XII on Saundarananda and Bhadrīka to the *Puyao jing*. Examining Sengyou’s Catalogue (T. 2145, j. 2, p. 87c23), one can get the correct reading *Chuyao jing* 出曜經 (T. 212).

⁹ There are 25 extracts from T. 152 in T. 2121.

¹⁰ There are 8 extracts from T. 206 in T. 2121.

lations which are at the frontier of the archaic translation such as the works of Zhu Fonian 竺佛念 (active 365 – early fifth century). Zhu Fonian is well represented in the abundant extracts from the Āgamas and the Vinayas but also in his more original works, as the “*Sūtra* of the embryonic stage of the Bodhisattva” (*Pusa suotai jing* 菩薩所胎經, T. 384),¹¹ also called “Womb *sūtra*.”¹²

As could be expected, the previous collections of tales were greatly exploited in the two compilations of the early sixth century. We have already mentioned the *Liudu jijing* 六度集經 (T. 152) and the *Jiu zapiyu jing* 舊雜譬喻經 (T. 206). As we will see, the case of the anonymous translation entitled “*Sūtra* of great salvific artifice being the indebtedness toward the Buddha” (*Da fangbian fobaoen jing* 大方便佛報恩經, T. 156) deserves a special study.¹³ Among the “classical” translations, extracts from the “Great treatise on the perfection of wisdom” (*Da zhidu lun* 大智度論, T. 1509), the “*Sūtra* of the wise and the fool” (*Xianyu jing* 賢愚經, T. 202) and the “Storehouse of sundry valuables” (*Zabaozang jing* 雜寶藏經, T. 203)¹⁴ appear frequently, as well as collected tales from the Dharmapada tradition such as the *Chuyao jing* 出曜經 (T. 212). There is even, both in the *Shijia pu* and in the *Jinglü yixiang*, a quotation from an unknown source, probably lost, the *Jijing chao* 集經抄.¹⁵ As expected, there are many more references to unknown works in the *Jinglü yixiang* than in the comparatively short *Shijia pu*.

¹¹ See the episodes from T. 384 artificially bound in the Nirvāṇa Chapter (XXVII) of the *Shijia pu* T. 2040, j. 3, 73b.

¹² See the unpublished PhD thesis of Elsa Legittimo, International College for Postgraduate Buddhist Studies, Tokyo 2006.

¹³ See the section hereunder about shortenings (chapter XIV of the *Shijia pu*).

¹⁴ Translated under that title by Willemsen 1994.

¹⁵ See the chapter XXII of the *Shijia pu*.

II Characteristics of quotations from early translations

How to consider quotations from archaic texts? I see five approaches: 1) the way of shortening the quotation, 2) the kind of Buddhist terminology used, 3) the differences in transcription and translation of proper names. 4) In which measure are the quotations close to the original texts as we know them in modern editions? 5) Is it possible to detect sectarian influence?

Before investigating a few exemplary cases, I have to make a general observation on the way the quotations are introduced.

In the *Shijia pu*, under the title given to each of the 34 chapters, there is a mention of one source. Some short chapters are based only on this mentioned source. In most of the cases, this source is a reference to the first quotation. Thereafter come two or three supplementary quotations from other texts. In the longest chapters, dozens of texts are quoted. At the end (and exceptionally in the middle) of a chapter, Sengyou gives his own short comment, which alludes often to the difference of content among the quotations.¹⁶

In the *Jinglü yixiang*, the quotations are generally short. Their origin, and exceptionally a variant source, are quoted, without comment, at the end of the quotation.¹⁷

1. Shortening of quotations

Abbreviated quotations are very frequent. Looking on these reductions, I must say that on the whole I admire how accurately the meaning of a passage has been respected and how the vocabulary remained faithful to the original. Generally, the accumulated epithets and the fastidious formulas of greeting are suppressed. Often, the *gāthās* are also suppressed. These elements belong probably to the oral recitation of texts. With the anthologies, we move from

¹⁶ For the identification of the sources of the *Shijia pu*, we are helped by the annotated Japanese translation of that work by Hasuzawa 1936. See also Kanno 1996.

¹⁷ The source in the Taishō Canon of every quotation of the *Jinglü yixiang* is now very clearly listed in the book of Sakamoto 2005.

orality to silent reading. When several sources are used for the same tale, an effort has been made to avoid repetitions.

I will take as an example chapter XIV of the *Shijia pu* on the ordination of Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī. The mentioned source is the ninth chapter of T. 196, translation attributed to Kang Mongxiang. Sengyou quotes it at length but avoids mentioning the eight *guru-dharmas* of the *bhikṣuṇīs*. He shifts shortly to the “Vinaya of the Mahīśāsakas”/Wufen lü 五分律 (T. 1421) probably because these rules are a Vinaya matter and he concludes with a quotation from a collection of tales on gratitude (T. 156) in order to insist on the gratitude owed to Ānanda who has been so influential in the opening of the Saṅgha to women. In his conclusion, Sengyou points out that the fourfold community was already a tradition of the past Buddhas. For this episode, Baochang refers directly to the *Shijia pu*.¹⁸

Another example of shortening an archaic translation could be taken from chapter XIII on Rāhula. There, the quotation from the *Puyao jing* figures between a lengthy quotation from the already referred to “modern” source on Rāhula, the *Weicengyou yinyuan jing* 未曾有因緣經 (T. 754) translated by Danjing, and a quotation from the “Vinaya of the Mahīśāsakas” (T. 1421) about the rule that the parents’ agreement is compulsory for the ordination of children as novices. The story deals with the famous theme of Rāhula recognizing his father whom he had never seen. A particularity of the tale of the *Puyao jing* is that the mother of Rāhula, called Yaśodharā in the previous quotation, is here called Gopī. Such shift of name is not unusual in the anthology of Sengyou.

Telling shortly the same Rāhula story, but in much shorter terms, the *Jinglü yixiang* does not quote the *Puyao jing* but makes again use of T. 754. Other versions of the Rāhula story are taken from the *Da zhidu lun* (T. 1509) and from one of the Dharmapada-Udānavarga related collections of tales (T. 211).¹⁹

¹⁸ There are 14 quotations made directly from the *Shijia pu* in the Section on the Buddha of the *Jinglü yixiang*.

¹⁹ Translated by Willemen 1999.

2. Evolution of the Buddhist terminology

As with the shift of proper names, the changes of vocabulary for terms as important as *nirvāṇa* (*nihuan* 泥洹 and *niepan* 涅槃), *arhat* (*yingzhen* 應真 and *aluohan* 阿羅漢), etc. seem to be generally accepted. An archaic translation such as the ninth chapter of T. 196 completely integrated in the chapter XIV of the *Shijia pu* on the ordination of Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī is suffused with freshness (the description of the bride)²⁰ and of vigor of expression (the Buddha to Ānanda: *dan ru-suo-zhi bu ru wo-zhi* 但汝所知 不如我知 “What you know is not yet to be compared with what I know”).²¹ Some references to proverbs,²² or to gestures later forgotten (such as displaying one’s hair on the ground in order to let a *śramaṇa* step on it),²³ bring us back to primitive flavors reminiscent of the Sumedha tale. The quotation of this text in the *Shijia pu* is sometimes deprived of details which were too well known, such as the seven days that the future Buddha lived with his natural mother before her death.²⁴

Nevertheless, an influence of the “classical” language of the Chinese translations of the fifth century is conspicuous in our two anthologies of the early sixth centuries. Both anthologies owe much to the *Da zhidu lun* (T. 1509), translated by Kumārajīva. Although being first of all a Prajñāpāramitā commentary, the *Da zhidu lun* has also been a kind of Mahāyāna encyclopedia, especially rich in *exempla*, and a standard of the Chinese Buddhist terminology until the middle of the seventh century. It was in the Tang period that the coining of new translations and new transcriptions was attempted for certain terms by Xuanzang 玄奘 and Yijing 義淨. The *Jinglü yixiang* presents a particularity that we do not find in the *Shijia pu*. I have previously mentioned the use made by Baochang of the *Liudu jijing* (T. 152). In nine of the twenty five cases, the quotation

²⁰ T. 159, 159a11–15.

²¹ T. 159, 159a25.

²² T. 159, 158b29.

²³ T. 159, 159b1–2.

²⁴ T. 159, 158c7.

is not referred to one of the multiple titles of the *Liudu jijing*, but to unknown *sūtras* with the name of the main figure of the tale. These *sūtras* faithfully duplicate the original tale, but make use of a “normalised” terminology for some technical terms and for some proper names. They probably had a more “modern” independent existence parallel to their presence in the collection of the *Liudu jijing*.²⁵ It is thus their normalized version of the tale which figures in the *Jinglü yixiang*.

A typical example of such a normalization may be studied in the text called *Chandakasūtra* which is tale no. 14 of the seventh *juan* (on the relatives of the Buddha) in the *Jinglü yixiang*.²⁶ It is inspired by tale no. 83 (on the perfection of wisdom) of the *Liudu jijing*.²⁷ Modifications have been made in the terminology (e.g. *aluohan* 阿羅漢 for *yingzhen* 應真,²⁸ cf. supra) or in proper names: Māyā, the mother of the Buddha, is ordinarily called Shemiao 舍妙 in the *Liudu jijing* but is called Moye 摩耶 in the *Chandakasūtra* reproduced in the *Jinglü yixiang*.²⁹

3. Differences in transcriptions and translations of proper names

As already pointed out, the changes in the proper names did not seem to have mattered much. We read in the chapter XXVII (on the Parinirvāṇa) of the *Shijia pu* the name of Cunda, the last amphytrion of the Buddha, quoted under four different transcriptions. Three texts are quoted: the Mahāyānic *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, with *Chuntuo* 純陀; the *Mahāparinirvāṇa* account of the *Dīrghāgama*, with *Zhouna* 周那; an archaic *Nihuan jing* 泥洹經, with only *Chun* 淳; and the comment of Sengyou himself who coins *Chuntuo* 淳陀 as a kind of compromise between the texts of the Great and the Small Vehicle.³⁰ There are differences which derive from the

²⁵ See on this topic the observations by Pelliot 1920: 340.

²⁶ T. 2121, j. 7, 37a29–39a3.

²⁷ T. 156, j.8, 44b–46c. Translated by Chavannes 1910: 293–304.

²⁸ Compare T. 152, 45c29 and T. 2121, 38c12.

²⁹ Compare T. 152, 46a29 and T. 2121, 39a3.

³⁰ See T. 2040, j. 4, 70a15, b17, c3 and c16.

Indic language in which the translated text was originally written, but there were also – it seems to me – a few differences between the official (or pedantic) way to write a name as, e.g. Śuddhodana, and the more familiar way to write it: Jinghan 淨飯 (“Pure Rice”). I do not know how long in China a familiar expression such as Shijiawen 釋迦文 for Śākyamuni has been used, but it is clear that it appears in archaic translations that found its way to the Japanese polemical writers of the eighteenth century.

We sometimes meet difficult place names figuring in the original text but suppressed in the anthology. Such is the case for the Nasi xian 那私縣 appearing in T. 196 and omitted in T. 2040.³¹ The tale started in Kapilavastu but there is a question of changing the place for the rainy season to a place close to a river. Could Nasi 那私 be an unorthodox transcription for Vārāṇasi or for Kāśī?

4. Differences in the content of a quotation

A fundamental question is the closeness of the quotations to the original texts as we know them in modern editions. We may answer that, taking into account the shortenings (our section one), there is generally a striking similarity between the text of the Taishō and its quotation in anthologies which are also edited in the Taishō. The references given in the *Shijia pu* and the *Jinglü yixiang* generally include mentions of the *juan*. They correspond generally to the present situation. It is exceptional that the text of a quotation cannot be identified. Such cases may be worth of further research.

Nevertheless, it may be the result of uniformisation of the original text with its anthological quotation which may have taken place since the time of the first compilations of the Chinese Buddhist Canon. On the other hand, a few differences between the original text and its quotation in an anthology may be the result of a normalisation or a wish to correct some incongruities in the content of a tale, as we will see in the case of the famous Kṣāntivādin tale. This is the point that I wish to pursue here.

³¹ Compare T. 196, j. 2, 158b11, and T. 2040, j. 2, 52b11.

We have said previously that in the archaic translations belonging to the narrative genre, we have fewer problems of doctrinal terminology than in the more speculative texts.

We have seen that Sengyou and Baochang generally respected the archaic transcriptions or translations of proper names (our section three) but that some technical terms (like *nirvāṇa*, *arhat*, *cakravartin*) had often been “normalised” (our section two).

Archaic elements in tales: the eclipses of the transformation of blood into milk

One problem in which I feel particularly interested in the reading of archaic Buddhist narratives is the way of handling some fantastic hagiographic details which seem to be un-Chinese or even repellent for a Chinese mind. One such case is the transformation of blood into milk which is a miraculous phenomenon illustrating particularly the virtue of patience during the extreme suffering due to self-sacrifice. Those tales belong to the Jātaka literature, therefore their hero is a bodhisattva who will become in a distant future the Buddha Śākyamuni.

Several tales are known for this blood/milk transubstantiation. Although not popular, this theme is not ignored, as we will see, in the Indian Buddhist literature where the miracle had to be explained: milk is the symbol of motherly love. Such a love is necessary in order to condone and to wish the happiness of one’s persecutor.

The most famous example of patience cum compassion is the story of the dismemberment of the body of the ascetic Kṣāntivāda or Kṣāntivādin or Kṣānti (“Patience”) the hermit, as he is often named in Chinese: Renru xianren 忍辱仙人. He will simply be called Kṣānti hereafter. A ferocious king chopped one after the other the limbs of Kṣānti as a revenge for the attention devoted to his sermons by the ladies of his court. On this gory tale there exists an abundant bibliography.³² The other tales with which I will deal

³² Lamotte 1944–1980: I: 264–265, II: 889–890, III: 1670; Panglung 1981: 92–93.

here are less known. The miracle appears in one version of two stories of self-sacrifice. 1.) The tale of the boy Sujāti who offered his body, scrap after scrap, to feed his parents and 2.) the tale of the king Kañcanasāra whose body was pierced by one thousand holes filled with oil and put to fire as a worship offered to a brahmin in exchange of the second part of a dharmic *gāthā*. An interesting point is that in both the Kṣānti tradition and the Sujāti tradition, the persecutor is connected with Ājñāta Kauṇḍinya, the first disciple of the Buddha. The conversion from the extreme of ugliness to the extreme of holiness is typical of the Buddhist dialectics. As shown by the story of Aṅgulimāla, he who is able of the worst may be able of the best!

About the content of the tales and their hagiographic elements, we face delicate questions. As said before, many tales belonging to the Jātaka literature and kept in archaic collections have been reproduced later in anthologies under a shortened form. Is it because details had to be eliminated in order to abbreviate the tale? Or did some events disappear because they had been considered as incongruous? Incongruity meaning unpalatability with the decorum prevalent at certain ages? A comparison between archaic tales and their treatment in old anthologies (since the sixth century) or more recent anthologies (as the Japanese *Konjaku Monogatari* 今昔物語 of the early twelfth century) is often rewarding.

a. The Kṣānti legend in the Zhong benqi jing and the the Liudu jijing

The most ancient Chinese version of the tale appears in a “Life of the Buddha”³³ where references to Jātaka are not numerous: the *Zhong benqi jing* 中本起經³⁴ (“Middle *sūtra* of the original rise,” T. 196). As said earlier, with its first part, the *Xiuxing benqi jing* 修行本起經 (“*Sūtra* of the practice and original rise,” T. 184), this translation is attributed to Kang Mengxiang 康孟詳 active at the end of the second century.

³³ See Zürcher 1978.

³⁴ T. 196, shang, 148c15–149a5.

The Buddha tells his own story of the “Man of patience” (here presented as *daojin* 道人) to remind Kauṇḍinya that he had been in a previous existence the king Esheng 惡生 who dismembered Kṣānti. At the last moment the King asked his victim to be condoned. The transubstantiation blood/milk is produced as the result of a “claim to truth” (*satyavacana*) made by Kṣānti and is accompanied by the customary miracle of the restitution of the body of the hero in its former state. The same final scenario figures in the tale of the boy Sujāti, but the converted man who will become Kauṇḍinya is not the persecutor as the ferocious king, but the benevolent god Śakra of that age who had first derided the suffering boy who refused his boon to become god or king but wished to progress on the way to *bodhi*. Seeing the transubstantiation miracle, Śakra implored the boy to be the first saved by him when he will become a Buddha.

A second ancient Chinese version of the miracle is the tale no. 44 of the *Liudu jijing* 六度集經, the “Compendium of the six perfections,” translated by Kang Senghui of the third century. It is the version of T. 152 of the Kṣānti story which will be used in the anthology *Jinglü yixiang* (T. 2141). We already know that this anthology “Strange tales from Sūtra and Vinaya” makes extensive use of the archaic collection of tales exemplifying the six perfections (*pāramitā*).

The tales of the *Liudu jijing* present evidences of archaic character. Such is the case of the tale of the martyrdom of the hermit (*ṛṣi*) whose name is almost universally based on the virtue of forbearance (*kṣānti*), as is the case for “Kṣāntivāda” in the *Mahāvastu*.³⁵ In all the traditions, his body is chopped in numerous parts by an irate king, but in the *Mahāvastu*, the link between blood and milk is made explicit. Milk is bound metaphorically to the maternal feeling of the victim toward his persecutor.³⁶ Its effect is that this miracle became a hagiographical mark of the “uncorrupted” (*apraduṣṭa*).³⁷

³⁵ Senart 1897: 356–361.

³⁶ Senart 1897: 358.3 *Mātāye putras premena staneṣu ksīraṃ pravahya evaṃ* – Jones 1956: 356: “... just as a mother’s milk flows from her breasts out of love of her offspring.”

³⁷ Ibid. p. 359. 2 and 4.

In the archaic tale of the *Liudu jijing*, the gushing of the milk is compared to the love of a benevolent mother toward her baby (*you cimu zhi ai qi chizi ye* 猶慈母之哀其赤子也).³⁸ Quoted in the *Jinglü yixiang*, we read again the mention of the love of compassion (*min* 愍) compared to that of a mother thinking of her baby (*you mu zhi nian chizi* 猶母之念赤子), but there is no further mention of the milk gushing from the wounds.³⁹

May we consider this absence of the milk reference as the result of a normalisation through erasure? It could be the case, and, in the context of the Kṣānti the hermit legend, Chavannes has pointed out that the theme of the blood transformed into milk had not been universally accepted.⁴⁰ Actually, when we compare the versions of the Kṣānti tales, which are more numerous than the material used by Chavannes, we may observe that milk is mentioned not only in influential texts of the fifth century such as the popular tales collection entitled *Xianyu jing* 賢愚經 (“Sūtra of the wise and the fool”),⁴¹ or the venerable and universally used *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論 (“Great treatise on the perfection of wisdom”)⁴² again, although the *Pañcaviṃsatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* commented on by this text does not refer, in its numerous versions, to that miracle.

In another passage, commenting on the “Sadāprarudita romance” which closes several *Prajñāpāramitā* texts, the author of the *Da zhidu lun* explains that the washing of the Dharmodgata sanctuary with blood could be effected by the transformation of blood into scented water: a miracle analogous to the transformation of blood into milk that had been the case with Kṣānti the hermit.⁴³

³⁸ T. 152, j. 5, 25b21.

³⁹ T. 2121, j. 8, 40c14.

⁴⁰ Chavannes 1934: 113.

⁴¹ T. 202, j. 2, 360a17.

⁴² T. 1509, j. 14, 166c.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, j. 99, 749b13–24, See Durt 2000: 21, n. 52.

b. The Dafangbian fobaoen jing and other legends

Although the transformation of blood into milk seems to be a characteristic element of the legend of Kṣānti the hermit, there is a “*sūtra*,” actually a collection of tales, the *Dafangbian fobaoen jing* 大方便佛報恩經 (“*Sūtra* of great salvific artifice being the indebtedness toward the Buddha,” T. 156) whose unknown translation has been attributed to the late Han period, where, in two tales, the same transformation is mentioned.⁴⁴ As mentioned above, these two tales are the dismemberment of the boy Sujāti and the worship of king Kañcanasāra through an embrasement of his body. This last tale is representative of a hagiographic motive showing an exchange between a devotee’s body and the last part of a *gāthā* possessed by a malevolent figure.

These two tales which have in the T. 156 narrative a mention of the transubstantiation blood/milk are known without milk mention in several other versions. In these two tales, we have to take into account that the change of blood into milk became a kind of curse, used in *satyavacana*. In both stories of self-sacrifice,⁴⁵ the victim claims that the blood of his wounds should become milk or white as milk if his purity of intention should be fallacious. The result is that his tortured body recovers its pristine state. The *Dafangbian fobaoen jing*, which collects these two tales with a mention of the transformation miracle, has been abundantly quoted in the *Jinglü yixiang*.⁴⁶ It is thus earlier than the sixth century. The *Dafangbian fobaoen jing* seems to be a rather eclectic collection of tales which, strangely, have not been included in the compendium of Chavannes⁴⁷ nor in the comparative list of Jātaka tales made by Higata.⁴⁸ In this eclectic collection, we do not find the well-known

⁴⁴ Milk is mentioned in T. 156, j. 1, 129c26 and T. 156, j. 2, 135a13.

⁴⁵ See Durt 2000: 13.

⁴⁶ Correspondences: T. 156, j. 1, 129c26 = T. 2141, j. 31, 164b26, and T. 156, j. 2, 135a13 = T. 2141, 24, 132b20.

⁴⁷ Chavannes 1910: I–VIII. See De Jong in the reprint of Chavannes 1962, and De Jong 1965: 240–242.

⁴⁸ Higata 1954.

legend of Kṣānti the hermit, but a different legend of the self-sacrifice of a prince named Kṣānti.⁴⁹

About the possible archaic character of a part of the *Dafangbian fobaoen jing*, I may now only say that some of these tales present archaic translations (e.g. *nihuan* 泥洹) and other tales more modern translations (e.g. *niepan* 涅槃). The archaic elements may have led to the attribution of the whole *sūtra* to the late Han period. As this text deserves a minute analysis, we cannot deduce from the two passages referred to above any conclusion about the antiquity (or eventually the geographical origin) of the miracle of the transformation of blood into milk.

c. Later occurrences of the theme of blood and milk in the Kṣānti legend

We find again mention of milk in the *Chuyao jing* 出曜經, a collection of tales translated by Zhu Fonian 竺佛念 of the late fourth century⁵⁰ and in the *Candragarbhasūtra* (*Yuezang wen* 月藏文)⁵¹ translated by the translator Narendrayaśas of the late sixth century. We still find a mention, in relation with Kauṇḍinya, of the miraculous transubstantiation in a famous commentary on the Lotus *sūtra* by Zhiyi 智顓 (538–596).⁵² In Sanskrit, besides the already quoted *Mahāvastu*'s explicit passage, it seems that we may refer only to the implicit mention that the blood of Kṣāntivādin was transformed: *tasya tad rudhiram parāvṛtam*, without indication of milk, that is found in the *Mūlasarvāstivādinaya*.⁵³

The detail of the transubstantiation blood/milk seems to be absent from the late tradition. Xuanzang 玄奘 had the occasion of dealing with the story of Kṣānti in his translation of the *Abhidhar-*

⁴⁹ T. 156, j. 3, 137c–138c.

⁵⁰ T. 212, j. 23, 730b13.

⁵¹ T. 397 (15), j. 50, 330b8.

⁵² T. 1718, *Miaofa lianhua jing wenju* 妙法蓮華經文句, j. 5 shang, 61a23.

⁵³ Gnoli, Venkatacharya 1978: 10.11.

makośavibhāṣā,⁵⁴ and in his travelogue, the *Xiyu ji* 西域記,⁵⁵ but does not mention the miracle. The *Vibhāṣā* tale of Kṣānti became the source quoted in a new encyclopedia, more doctrinal and more ambitious than the *Jinglü yixiang*, the late seventh century's *Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠林.⁵⁶ It is in the Korean hagiographical literature that we find a revival of the miracle. According to the Chronicles of Silla quoted in the “Memoirs of the three [Korean] kingdoms” (*Samguk yusa* 三国遺事, T. 2039), compiled by Ilyon 一然 (1206–1289), the martyrdom of the hero Ichadon 異次頓, with milk gushing from his severed head, helped the introduction of Buddhism in the Kingdom of Silla.⁵⁷

As I centered this paper on the ancient data collected in the encyclopedic anthologies of the early sixth century, I may conclude this short inquiry on the vicissitudes of what seems to have been an archaic hagiographic element in considering that at least the faithfulness of the *Jinglü yixiang* to a more ancient model was conditional. Baochang admitted the maternal love of the tortured Kṣānti, but did not go as far as reproducing the tale of the miraculous transformation of blood into milk. More generally, it has to be said that this kind of transubstantiation is not limited to the Buddhist tradition. It has probably Indian origins but it can also be found in the hagiography of Islamic or Christian martyrs, as shown by the legend of Saint Catharina of Alexandria in the *Legenda Aurea*.

5. Sectarian influences

Sectarian differences are rather inconspicuous in narrative texts. We know that Sengyou belonged to the Mahāyāna, the denomination prevalent in China since the first centuries of the introduction of Buddhism in China. We know through his works, of which much is lost, that he belonged to the Sarvāstivādin erudite tradition. He was a Master of Vinaya. We may observe that when there is a con-

⁵⁴ T. 1545, j. 182, 915 ab.

⁵⁵ T. 2087, j. 3, 882b25–26.

⁵⁶ T. 2122, j. 83, 896ab.

⁵⁷ T. 2039, j. 3, 987c9.

cern for Vinaya rules in a *sūtra*, Sengyou prefers to refer directly to a Vinaya text. His choice of Vinaya texts is eclectic: Sarvāstivādin/Shisong lü 十誦律 (T. 1435), Mahīśāsaka/Wufen lü 五分律 (T. 1421), and Dharmaguptaka/Sifen lü 四分律 (T. 1428). The Vinaya of the Mahāsāṅghika (T. 1425) seems less conspicuous. All these Vinaya translations are not very ancient. They were only one century old when our anthologies were compiled. Both Sengyou and Baochang made use of the recently translated (488–489) commentary of the Pāli Vinaya, the *Samantapāsādikā*, but Baochang's extensive use of the Vinaya of the Mahāsāṅghika (21 quotations) has to be pointed out. His turbulent life⁵⁸ does not seem to have been particularly centered on Vinayic orientations.

In conclusion, anthologies are a mirror of the objects of interest of their age, especially in our case for religious matters. An anthology like the *Shijia pu* made Buddhism familiar to a number of readers. It has to be considered in the encyclopedic current of the early sixth century, but we may add that the *Shijia pu* generated many successors, from the *Jinglü yixiang* to the later illustrated lives of the Buddha accompanied with a reduced explanatory text always including a mention of its canonical origin. Reading anthologies has the merit of showing us a Chinese tradition both highly conservative and very “lively.” To many texts the anthologies have given a diffusion, and sometimes a protection, that they would not have enjoyed if they had been kept only inside the bulky books where they had originally been written down.

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⁵⁸ See De Rauw 2005.

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