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On *Hu* and *Fan* Again: the Transmission of “Barbarian” Manuscripts to China*

In a recent contribution to this journal, YANG Jidong argued that early Chinese Buddhists typically referred to incoming Buddhist scriptures and the languages in which they were composed as *hu* 胡.¹ This label, contends YANG, carried a “strong racist sense,” a sense that has led many Western writers to translate the term as “barbarian.” It was not until the beginning of the Sui/Tang period (sixth-seventh cents.) that Buddhist bibliographers, buoyed by the improved fortunes of Buddhism, its domestication within Chinese culture, and its support from the highest levels of society, systematically replaced instances of *hu* in the canon with *fan* 梵. Such a shift, YANG argues, reflects an attempt by native exegetes to dignify Buddhism as originating from the respectable civilization of India, thereby expressing a previously lacking self-confidence in the cultural capital that Buddhism was able to command in the early medieval period.

Although a seemingly small issue, the signification of *hu* and *fan* in early Chinese Buddhist usage raises several complex and interrelated problems vis-à-vis both Indian and Chinese Buddhism. And since YANG has conflated and, in my opinion, confused these issues, I would like to readdress this problem with a different body of evidence. It is neither the case, it seems to me, that *hu* and *fan* were merely interchangeable in the early period of Chinese Buddhism nor that *hu* necessarily had “a very strong racist sense and signified something uncivilized and inherently contradictory to Chinese culture.”² On the contrary, *hu* and *fan* appear in many contexts to refer to specific kinds of Indian Buddhist texts. The importance of exposing this more technical usage lies in making available data on Indian Buddhist textual history centuries

* I would like to thank Profs. Victor H. Mair and Jan Nattier for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper. Their suggestions saved me from a number of infelicities.

1. YANG 1998.

2. YANG 1998: 167.

before our first extant manuscripts. Moreover, as the Chinese attempted to make sense of Indian scripts and languages, they revealed not so much a discomfiture with things foreign, but a deeply ingrained, more fundamental frame of reference, one constrained by the weight of the Chinese writing system. It is only in looking at the problem from both sides, the Indian and the Chinese, that we are likely to understand the early use of these terms, and in the process, the difficulties the Chinese encountered in engaging a significant linguistic other for the first time.

One of the first things a reader of the prefaces and colophons to the early Chinese Buddhist translations notices is a certain inconsistency in the way the Indian source texts are identified. To illustrate this point, let me begin with a couple of short examples from the records contained in Sengyou's early sixth-century *Chu sanzang ji ji* 出三藏記集 [A Collection of Notices on the Translation of the Tripiṭaka, hereafter CSZJJ]. The first is a record concerning one of the translations of Lokakṣema (fl. 168-189 C.E.):

The *Daoxing jing* 道行經 [*Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitāsūtra*?] in one fascicle. During the reign of Han Emperor Huan (r. 146-167), the Indian *śramaṇa* Zhu Shuofu (var. Foshuo) brought the *Hu* text (*huben* 胡本) to China. During the reign of Emperor Ling (r. 168-189), it was translated in Luoyang.³

Even such a short notice raises several questions. First, it is curious that a translation of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*, to which the translated title *Daoxing jing* is known to correspond, is described as consisting of one fascicle (*juan* 卷) immediately before the mention of another in Lokakṣema's corpus (*Bore daoxing pin* 般若道行品) in ten fascicles (var. eight fascicles). This latter translation is almost certainly the version that has come down to us (T 224).⁴ Secondly, although the relationship between Zhu Shuofu, who brought the *Hu* text to China, and Lokakṣema, who is not even mentioned here, is unstated, we know from other colophons,

3. CSZJJ (T.2145) 55: 6b.

4. One might speculate, as, for example, Edward CONZE has, that the one-fascicle *Daoxing jing* here refers to a verse summary, perhaps of only the first two chapters (41 verses) of the *Prajñāpāramitā-ratnaguṇa-saṃcayagāthā* (cf. CONZE 1973: x). These two chapters, CONZE suggests, constitute a coherent individual text, united by the recurring refrain, "the practice of wisdom, the highest perfection," hence the Chinese title *daoxing* (the practice of the Way). Some Japanese scholars have called the existence of a one-fascicle version into question, though their arguments are unconvincing (cf. HIKATA 1958: xxxvi-xxxviii).

e.g., that to their translation of the *Pratyutpannabuddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra* (T 418), that Zhu Shufo was sometimes responsible for reciting the Indic text aloud, after which Lokakṣema would orally translate his recitation (lit., *chuan yan* 傳言, “transfer the words”) for Chinese scribes (*bishou* 筆受, “who receive with the brush”).⁵ Even if these latter roles were exercised in the translation of the *Daoxing jing* as well, the relationship between Zhu Shufo’s oral recitation, Lokakṣema’s oral translation, and its transformation into a semi-literary Chinese text by the native scribes remains far from clear and suggests at the very least a rather complicated process. Let us look at another colophon from about a century later.

The following is a colophon to Dharmarakṣa’s translation of the *Chixin jing* 持心經 [*Viśeṣacintibrahmapariṣcāsūtra*]:

Chixin jing:⁶ on the tenth day of the third month of the seventh year of the *Taikang* reign period [= April 20, 286], the Dunhuang bodhisattva (*kaishi* 開士)

5. CSZJJ, 55: 48c.9-16; see also HARRISON 1990: 259-61.

6. Dharmarakṣa’s rendering of the name of the bodhisattva *Viśeṣacinti*, after whom this text is named, is unexpected. Sengrui, an eminent monk of the late fourth-early fifth century and the principal translation assistant to the great Kuchean translator Kumārajīva, wrote a preface to Kumārajīva’s translation of this *sūtra* that contains some interesting remarks concerning the title of Dharmarakṣa’s text:

The title of this *sūtra* according to the correct Indian phones (*yin* 音) is *pishisha zhenti* 毘繩沙真諦. This is the name of a bodhisattva with surpassingly marvelous thoughts, who is a brahma god in another realm. I [Sengrui] listened carefully to Kumārajīva’s translation of this name [i.e., *siyi* 思益] and, vacillating, turned it over in my mind repeatedly, but the meaning [of his translation] seems not to have captured the sense. Surely this is because he [Kumārajīva] was not fully conversant with the variations between words and their referents (*mingshi zhi bian* 名實之變) in Chinese. I have examined the significance of this term, matching its name to its purport, [and have determined that] it should be [translated as] *chiyi* 持意 (“taking hold of thought”), not as *siyi* 思益 (“[whose] thoughts are extraordinary”). It is simply because he [Kumārajīva] did not realize the meaning of ‘to hold’ (*chi* 持) and accordingly used ‘to augment’ (*yi* 益) instead. The word *yi* 益 is defined as ‘to surpass’ (*chao jue* 超絕), ‘extraordinary’ (*shuyi* 殊異), or ‘marvelously superior’ (*miaoba* 妙拔). As for *si* 思, it designates ‘advancing a task to the highest excellence’ (*jin ye gaosheng* 進業高勝), ‘to push oneself without rest’ (*zhiqiang buxi* 自強不息). The old designation, “taking hold of the mind” (*chixin* 持心), best captures its reference (CSZJJ, 55:57c.23-29).

Sengrui’s defense of the “old designation” (*jiuming* 舊名) is, of course, a preference for Dharmarakṣa’s translation of the proper name *Viśeṣacinti* (brahma) as

Dharmarakṣa expounded (*shuochu* 說出) the *brāhmī* text (*fanwen* 梵文) in Chang'an, conferring it upon [Nie] Chengyuan⁷

These two short records alert us to all manner of interesting problems. For the purposes of this paper, I would like to highlight one particular point of contrast: the original Indic text behind Lokakṣema's *Daoxing jing* translation is styled *huben* 胡本; the source manuscript of Dharmarakṣa's translation of the *Chixin jing* is called *fanwen* 梵文. Before one concludes that such a difference reflects the idiosyncratic terminology of the respective translation committees (members of which must have been responsible for our anonymous colophons), I should point out that within Dharmarakṣa's translation corpus we find some source texts designated as *hu*, others as *fan*. Indic originals identified as *hu* among the colophons to Dharmarakṣa's translations include the *Saddharmapūṇḍarikasūtra* (*hujing* 胡經), the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitāsūtra* (*huben*),⁸ the *Śūraṅgamasamādhisūtra* (*hujing*),⁹ the *Tathā-*

opposed to the rendering proposed by Kumārajīva. This preference is noteworthy for several reasons. First of all, Sengrui is wrong. Dharmarakṣa's apparent *chixin* 持心 is a non-sensical rendering of Viśeṣacintī, which has the sense of "one possessed of surpassing thoughts." For this reason GOSHIMA Kiyotaka has proposed regarding Dharmarakṣa's *chi* 持 ("to hold") as a mistake for *te* 特 ("extraordinary, distinguished") (GOSHIMA 1988: 60, note 1). If GOSHIMA is correct, Sengrui's discussion indicates that this mistake is quite old (i.e., not due to later transmission mistakes). One might also speculate that *chi* was used as a lexical variant for *te* by Dharmarakṣa and his translation committees, since there are other instances in Dharmarakṣa's corpus where he appears to use *chi* 持 to render *viśeṣa*. At *Saddharmapūṇḍarīka* 9: 66a.10 he renders the name of one of the Buddha Candrasūryapradīpa's sons, Viśeṣamati, as *chīyi* 持意. At *Suvikrāntacintidevaputraparipṛcchā* 15: 97b.8 we find: 此四事法之上是則為微妙持; the Tibetan renders this as follows: *gang-la chos bzī rgya-chen khyad-par de yod-pa*, "one who possesses the four exalted, superb [*viśeṣa*] qualities." Kumārajīva takes this bodhisattva's name as a *bahuvrīhi* compound: *siyi* 思益 "(whose) thoughts are extraordinary"; this, despite Sengrui's criticism, is clearly to be preferred to Dharmarakṣa's *chixin*.

7. CSZJJ 55: 57c.19-21.

8. The principal evidence we have concerning Dharmarakṣa's source text is contained in Dao'an's (312-385) "Preface to the Concise Commentary to the Synoptic Edition of the *Fangguang* and *Guangzan*" (CSZJJ, 55: 47c.29-48b.21). In his description of the translations by Mokṣala and Dharmarakṣa respectively, Dao'an describes Dharmarakṣa's text as *huben*. Though he may be relying here upon a notice that is no longer available to us, it is highly unlikely that Dao'an himself saw the Indic manuscript. Also, in the "Preface to the *Jianbei jing* [*Daśabhūmikāsūtra*]" (CSZJJ, 55: 62b.22-c.14), the author (in all probability

gatamahākaruṇā-nirdeśasūtra (*hujing*), and the *Lalitavistarasūtra* (*huben*). By contrast, four texts held by Dharmarakṣa are labelled as *fan*: the *Avaivartikacakrasūtra* (*fanshu* 梵書), the *Viśeṣacintibrahmapari-prcchāsūtra* (*fanwen*), the *Mañjuśrīvikurvāṇaparivartasūtra* (*fanshu*), and the *Daśabhūmikasūtra* (*fanben*?).¹⁰

It would seem then that among at least some of the early colophon writers, translation assistants, and native exegetes, *hu* and *fan* were distinguished as two different kinds of Indic texts. The underlying referent of *fan* (probably *b(r)jam in Eastern Han pronunciation¹¹) is evident; it almost certainly must be a transcription of *brāhmī*, one of the principal scripts of north India from at least the third century B.C.E. While the sense of *huben* is not as immediately obvious, the logical, indeed, the only remaining alternative is to see it as referring to *kharoṣṭhī* manuscripts. Such a supposition, however, will require additional support from independent sources.

It is, of course, neither new nor startling to suggest that Buddhist texts in *kharoṣṭhī* script were transmitted to China in the first few centuries of the common era. However, this thesis, despite being widely held, has seldom been explicitly demonstrated. John BROUGH has been one of the few scholars to address this point, attempting to show that several mistranslations of Indian proper names in a third-century translation of the *Sukhāvativyūha* can best be explained on the basis of a misreading of a

Dao'an again) discusses the circumstances of Dharmarakṣa's translation of the *Guangzan jing* [*Pañcaviṃśati*] and here again describes the Indian *sūtra* as *huben*. Stefano ZACCHETTI has recently completed an impressive thesis on Dharmarakṣa's *Guangzan jing*, including an edition, translation, and extensive annotation of the first six chapters. See ZACCHETTI 1999.

9. Information on this translation is preserved in Zhi Mindu's "Colophon to the Synoptic Edition of the *Shoulengyan jing*" (CSZJJ, 55: 49b.15-17). See also LAMOTTE 1965: 81-87.
10. The information for the source text of Dharmarakṣa's *Daśabhūmika* translation is somewhat ambiguous. The colophon at the end of the translation states that Dharmarakṣa, "holding the *brāhmī* text (*fanben* 梵本) in his hands, orally translated it himself into Chinese at the Shixi Monastery in Chang'an" (T 285, 10: 497b.18-20). However, a variant recorded from the Old Song (1104-1148) and Song (1239) editions of the canon replaces *fan* with *hu* 胡. Also, in the "Preface to the *Jianbei jing*," which can probably be attributed to Dao'an or one of his close disciples, Dharmarakṣa is reported to have held a *huben* in translating the *Daśabhūmika* into Chinese (CSZJJ, 55: 62b.5-7).
11. See COBLIN 1983: 241 (6).

kharoṣṭhī text.¹² Although there is nothing objectionable about BROUGH's conclusion, a conclusion I will attempt to buttress in this paper, it is less certain that his examples support such a position. This is especially so given his – and most scholars' – failure to appreciate the impact of the translation process in China. Moreover, assumptions about *kharoṣṭhī* manuscripts are inevitably tied to questions concerning the role of Gāndhārī Prakrit, so much so that they are generally presumed to entirely overlap.

Because the problems involved in discerning the relationship between our extant Chinese translations and their underlying Indic source texts are complex, layered, and difficult to control, I will bracket for the time being the problem of the relationship between script and language and offer instead examples of disparities between the early Chinese renderings of particular passages and the extant Sanskrit manuscripts that appear to reflect graphically-induced misreadings of a text written in *kharoṣṭhī* script.

What I would like to do then is to present two examples from Dharmarakṣa's translation of the *Saddharmapūṇḍarikasūtra*, completed in the year 286,¹³ that suggest confusions in the Chinese renderings that can not be described as free or loose interpretations of the Indic original. That is, these are cases where the early Chinese translation departs from our extant Sanskrit manuscripts as well as later Chinese translations of the same text in ways that are neither predictable nor in most cases even sensible.

In the first chapter there are several instances in which the bodhisattva Maitreya is referred to by his alternative name Ajita in both transcription (*ayi* 阿逸; Early Middle Chinese: ?*a jit*) (Dh 9:66a.17) and in translation

12. BROUGH 1965: 609-611.

13. The date as well as the circumstances of this translation are known from a colophon preserved in the CSZJJ, 55: 56c.16-24; see BOUCHER 1998: 485-89 for a translation and discussion of this interesting piece of data. Dharmarakṣa, a Yuezhi monk from Dunhuang (modern Gansu province), is the first we hear of Buddhism at this western Chinese military and mercantile outpost, where he is reported to have studied under an Indian teacher from an early age. Dharmarakṣa's translation career spanned over 40 years during the latter half of the third century and saw the production of over 150 texts into Chinese, many of which were sizeable and influential. On the life and translation career of Dharmarakṣa, see TSUKAMOTO/HURVITZ 1985: 193-230 and more recently BOUCHER 1996: 22-43.

(*moneng sheng* 莫能勝, “whom none can surpass”) (Dh 9:66b.21).¹⁴ There is, it appears, also a confusion related to this name in close proximity with this translation:

KN 18.3-6: *iti hy ajitaitena paramparodāhāreṇa candrasūryapradīpa-nāma-kānām tathāgatānām arhatām samyaksaṃbuddhānām ekanāmadheyānām ekakulagotrānām yad idaṃ bharadvāja-sagotrānām vimśatitathāgatasahasrāṇy abhūvan | tatrājita ...*

Thus, Ajita, there were successively 20,000 *tathāgatas* who had the same name and the same family – namely, Bharadvāja – as the Tathāgata, Arhat, Samyaksaṃbuddha Candrasūryapradīpa. Then, Ajita ...

Dh 65c.29-66a.1: 如是等倫八十如來皆同一號日月燈明 青紹一姓 若斯之比二萬如來 佛語莫能勝

Thus there were 80 *tathāgatas* all having the same name Candrasūryapradīpa, all inheriting the same family name. If we were to line them up, there would be 20,000 *tathāgatas*. The Buddha said to Ajita ...

We have two instances of the name Ajita in the Sanskrit passage but only one in the Chinese. Moreover, we have a rather strange state of affairs in the Chinese: Dharmarakṣa describes the number of *tathāgatas* who have successively appeared as Candrasūryapradīpa to be eighty, and then immediately following, to be twenty thousand. There is, of course, no mention of “eighty” in our Indic text. But if we suppose Dharmarakṣa to have been working from a *kharoṣṭhī* manuscript that read **ayita*, with the common Prakritic development of intervocalic *j* replaced by *y*, and, moreover, reflecting the pronunciation of the transcription occurring in close proximity, then we could speculate that he misread the *kharoṣṭhī* *ya* ढ as *śa* ढ – two of the most graphically similar *aḥṣaras* in this script – and understood *aṣṭi* (“eighty”).¹⁵ Even though Dharmarakṣa read this name correctly both in transcription and in trans-

14. For the following textual excerpts, Dh will refer to Dharmarakṣa’s translation of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra* (T 263, 9:63-134) and KN will designate the KERN-NANJIO edition of the Sanskrit text.

15. The *kharoṣṭhī* *ya* and *śa* are clearly distinct in our earliest records and only become difficult to distinguish in inscriptions of ca. first century C.E. and later; see KONOW 1929: cxxiii; RAPSON and NOBLE 1929: 308; and SALOMON 1998: 55. Cf. also FUSSMAN 1989: 465: “Dans une inscription khar[oṣṭhī] écrite rapidement ou peu soigneusement, des confusions entre *aḥṣara* de forme voisine sont possibles (t/d/r/v; a/h; y/ś, etc.)”

lation several times in nearby passages, here he not only misread the text, but produced a translation that is overtly incoherent.¹⁶

The second example from the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra* is drawn from the brilliant study of Dharmarakṣa's translation by Seishi KARASHIMA.¹⁷ In the first chapter, in an address by Maitreya requesting of Mañjuśrī an explanation for the Buddha's miraculous display of light, we find this verse:

KN 10.5-6: *ye cāpi anye sugatasya putrā anuttarām jñāna gaveṣamānāḥ /
vividhām kriyām kurviṣu sarvakālaṃ teṣāṃ pi bodhīya vadanti
varṇaṃ ||*

And those other sons of the Accomplished One, seeking highest knowledge, carry out their various tasks at all times; them also [the buddhas] commend toward enlightenment.

Dh 64b.5-8: 見佛殊異諸所¹⁸經籍或有志求無上之慧
一切世間見若干形 斯等眾類歌詠佛德

Having encountered the Buddha's extraordinary *sūtras*, there are others who are determined to seek the highest knowledge; the whole world¹⁹ sees his manifold forms and these sentient beings extol the Buddha's virtues.

There are several problems with Dharmarakṣa's rendering which seem to have inspired a rather different verse than that found in the Sanskrit text.

16. See also BOUCHER 1998: 499-500. There is another possible *ya/śa* confusion in Dharmarakṣa's translation of the Lotus. At KN 363.13 we find: *vināśadharmā* (subject to the law of decay); Dharmarakṣa renders this (9: 120c.11): 誼(v.l. 義)法科律 (righteous dharma and regulations), reflecting an apparent confusion of *vināśa* and *vinaya*. On this example see KARASHIMA 1992: 203. Another possible instance of this graphic confusion between *kharoṣṭhī ya/śa* occurs in Dharmarakṣa's *Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā* (FINOT, ed., 35.19): *apāyabhūmiṃ gatim akṣaṇeṣu daridrātāṃ nīcakulopapattim* ("[they will be subject to] an evil state, a destiny among inopportune rebirths, poverty, and rebirth in a lowly family"); Dharmarakṣa renders this (3:413c.21): 不見道住隨亂行生於貧窮卑賤家 ("not seeing the stage of enlightenment, they follow corrupt practices and are born in a poor and lowly family"). Although there are several problems with this line, it would appear that Dharmarakṣa has misconstrued *apāya-* as *apaś(y)a-* ("not seeing").

17. KARASHIMA 1992: 30.

18. On the unusual expression *zhusuo* 諸所 (= many), see KARASHIMA 1996: 206.

19. KARASHIMA (1992: 30) suggests that this rendering by Dharmarakṣa is due to an instance of metathesis, in which he, or less likely, his manuscript, read *sarvakāla(m)* as *sarva-loka(m)* with a concomitant confusion between *ā* and *o*.

Most relevant for our purposes, however, is the translation of *putrā* (“sons”) as *jingji* 經籍 (“*sūtras*”). Since no phonological development could account for such a confusion, it seems more likely that Dharmarakṣa mistook a *pu* 𑖣 in *kharoṣṭhī* script as *su* 𑖦.²⁰ Although these two signs are on the whole clearly distinguished in our extant documents and inscriptions, there are a number of texts, especially those from Niya,²¹ in which the *akṣara pa* comes close to being closed at the top, thus approximating some versions of *sa*.²²

These examples are by no means unambiguous, but they do demonstrate that Dharmarakṣa had great difficulties in reading some of his Indic manuscripts. His difficulties could have been exacerbated no doubt by manuscript corruptions and translation assistants of varying linguistic skill. We should, under the circumstances, be surprised that he got so much right. But it is what he got wrong that tells us the most about his Indic source texts, now heavily Sanskritized and obscured from our view. And what we learn from passages like those cited above is that a number of the translation infelicities within Dharmarakṣa’s translation of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtra* can best be explained as misreadings of a *kharoṣṭhī* manuscript. That the colophon to this translation describes the Indic text as *hujing* 胡經 (*Hu sūtra*) confirms the connection between the term *hu* in a limited, technical sense and the *kharoṣṭhī* script. As possible supporting evidence, BROUGH has argued that Dharmarakṣa’s translation of the *Lalitavistara* (T 186) stems from a Gāndhārī Prakrit original as evidenced by the reconstructed pronunciations of a few of the headwords to its arapacana formulary, a formulary now known to be the

20. Moreover, in a *kharoṣṭhī* manuscript we would expect long vowels to have been unmarked; thus *putrā* and *sūtra* may well have been distinguished only on the basis of the initial consonant.
21. Cf., e.g., BOYER et al. 1927, document no. 696, line 3.
22. There is an identical confusion between *putra* and *sūtra* in chap. 2 of the *Lotus*, noted by KARASHIMA (1992: 51). KN 46.3: *bhavanti ’me ceha sadā viśuddhā vyaktā śucī sūrata buddhaputrāḥ* (“These sons of the Buddha here are always pure, wise, virtuous, and compassionate.”); Dh 70b.4-5: 欲知佛道 常調清淨 仁樂聖典 實為要妙 (“Desiring to experience enlightenment, you should always be under control and pure; for you to take pleasure in the sacred scriptures is truly the essential purpose”). My translation of Dharmarakṣa’s rendering here is necessarily tentative given the problems in his apprehension of the Indic source text. For a discussion of other instances of a form of the verb $\sqrt{bhū}$ (MIA *bho(n)di*) being confused with *bodhi*, “enlightenment,” see BOUCHER 1998: 478-79.

syllabic order of Gāndhārī Prakrit in *kharoṣṭhī* script.²³ And the colophon to this translation also describes the Indic text as *huben* (胡本).

Given that there appears to be evidence of misapprehensions of *kharoṣṭhī* orthography underlying some of our early Chinese Buddhist translations, and these same texts are specifically described by the anonymous colophon writers as a *hujing* or *huben* – in marked contrast to other texts in Dharmarakṣa’s corpus – it would seem likely then that the term *hu* carried the more technical sense of *kharoṣṭhī* rather than “barbarian” in many of our early Chinese Buddhist records.²⁴ By no means are these records entirely consistent in this matter; there are some strikingly ambiguous examples.²⁵

23. BROUGH 1977; for a discussion of the *arapacana* formulary and its connection to *kharoṣṭhī* script and Gāndhārī Prakrit, see SALOMON 1990. One of the best examples offered by BROUGH to support his thesis is the use of the Chinese character *xin* 信 (“faith”) in Dharmarakṣa’s translation to represent the Indic *akṣara ṣa*, presumably the first syllable of Gāndhārī *ṣadha* (< *ṣaddhā*; Skt. *śradhdhā*), typifying the usual Gāndhārī development of *śr* > *ṣ*.

24. There is an additional piece of evidence confirming the association of *hu* with *kharoṣṭhī*, cited in RAO 1993 and kindly brought to my attention by Stefano ZACCHETTI. In a work discussing the history of the Siddham script, the ninth-century Japanese Tendai monk Annen 安然 cites an otherwise unknown passage by the famous Southern dynasties poet Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385-433) as follows:

The *Hu* and *Brāhmī* scripts are used by religious and lay alike; originally they were created by the Buddha. Therefore the scripture says: ‘Various *sāstras*, mantras, languages, and scripts are all taught by the Buddha, not by heretics. The heretics adopt them in order to be versed in writing.’ *The Hu characters are what we call kharoṣṭhī (qulou 佉樓) writing. As for the kharoṣṭhī script, the transcendent (named) Kharo(ṣṭhī) copied the Brāhmī writing in order to establish the essentials*” (T 2702, 84: 369a. 18-22).

Xie Lingyun may have been well placed to make such observations since not only did he associate widely in the Buddhist circles of his day, but he participated on translation committees with foreign monks as well, most famously contributing to the revision of the so-called “Southern recension” of the *Mahāyāna-mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* (T 375), which may be the scripture referred to above. For more details on his Buddhist activities, see MATHER 1958 and ZÜRCHER 1959: 412, note 125.

25. We have, for example, a curious set of records concerning the two earliest translations of the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*. The colophon to Mokṣala’s *Fanguang jing* 方光經 (CSZJJ, 55: 47c.10-28) describes the arrival of the Indic text in China:

The switch from *hu* to *fan* in the Sui/Tang period as discussed by YANG then may not be so much a reflection of “the key role played by Central Asia and its languages in the early stage of the eastward spread of Buddhism, which was overshadowed by India and Sanskrit during the later periods.”²⁶ Rather, if my findings above prove to be correct, it may

Formerly Zhu Shixing of Yingchuan during the Great Wei dynasty [220-265] left the household in the fifth year of the *Ganlu* reign period [= 260] to study the Way and become a *śramaṇa*. He set out west of the border and arrived in the country of Khotan. There he copied and acquired the first chapter in *brāhmī* script; the *huben* has ninety chapters and more than 600,000 words. In the third year of the Taikang reign period [= 282] he sent his disciple Fu Rutan – which in Chinese characters is Farao 法饒 – to convey this *sūtra*, a *huben*, to Luoyang. It remained there for three years after which it went to Xuchang for two years. Afterwards it reached the Shuinan Temple in Cangyuan in the vicinity of Chenliu [in modern Henan]. On the fifteenth day of the fifth month of the first year of the *Yuankang* reign period [= June 28, 291], a group of scholars assembled to discuss [the text] and make exact copies in Chinese. At that time the one who held the *huben* was the Khotanese *śramaṇa* Mokṣala (*Wuchaluo* 無叉羅); the *upāsaka* Zhu Shulan orally transferred (*kou chuan* 口傳) it [i.e. transformed Mokṣala’s recitation of the Indic text into an oral draft translation in Chinese] and Zhu Taixuan and Zhou Xuanming together took it down in writing. [It was written in] standard script (*zhengshu* 正書); it has ninety chapters, altogether consisting of 207,621 words.

Dao’an, in his “Preface to the Concise Commentary to the Synoptic Edition of the *Fangguang* and *Guangzan*” (CSZJJ, 55: 47c.29-48a.23) described the manuscript held by Mokṣala as *hu*, as he did the Indic text underlying Dharmarakṣa’s translation, the *Guangzan jing* (cf. CSZJJ, 55: 48a.9-10 and 62b.29-c.1). Since Dao’an and other Chinese exegetes generally did not see the Indic originals of the Chinese translations at their disposal, it is not surprising that we will occasionally find confused or even contradictory details passed on concerning their script or language.

26. YANG 1998: 163. YANG repeats here an argument that has been often propagated, especially by East Asian scholars, but never substantiated, namely, that Buddhist texts arriving in China in the first few centuries of the common era were sometimes, perhaps usually, composed in Central Asian languages. Ji Xianlin, for example, has suggested that certain early transcriptions reflect pronunciations derived from Bactrian (Middle Iranian) and Tokharian languages (Ji 1947 and 1990). Again, the problem is not with the evidence but with the interpretation thereof. It is indeed possible that early transcriptions of Indian proper names and Buddhist technical terms may reflect pronunciations that have clear similarities with Central Asian languages. But this is by no means an indication of texts *written* in those languages. Given the fundamentally oral/aural nature of the translation process in China, it is not at all unlikely that a foreign missionary’s

more simply be that the discontinuation of *hu* = *kharoṣṭhī* and the more systematic use of *fan* = *brāhmī* reflects the fact that the *kharoṣṭhī* script became largely obsolete by the fifth century, being superseded by *brāhmī* in north India and Central Asia.²⁷ Thus, by the Tang period (7th-10th cents.) it is likely that when Chinese Buddhists saw Indian manuscripts or dealt with foreign missionaries who worked with them, these texts were almost exclusively written in a version of *brāhmī* script. The replacement of *hu* with *fan* in the Tang then may well only suggest that medieval scholastics in China saw the term *hu* as imprecise vis-à-vis their knowledge of Indian texts and not necessarily racially charged.²⁸

The observation that colophon writers and Buddhist exegetes differentiated Indian manuscripts by script should not lead us to the conclusion that early Chinese Buddhists had clear and accurate understandings of the languages of these source texts. *Hu* and *fan* do not refer to Prakrit and Sanskrit respectively, but only – and not necessarily always – to

recitation of an Indian manuscript would have been strongly influenced by his native language. Since most of the early translators in China were not from India proper but were generally Yuezhi, Iranian, and Tokharian, it should not surprise us to find remnants of their pronunciation habits in our earliest Chinese translations.

27. There are some possible exceptions to this general rule. Still unpublished bilingual manuscripts, presumably from the northern Tarim Basin, have been reported to be written in both *kharoṣṭhī* script (in Gāndhārī Prakrit) and *brāhmī* script (in Tokharian B); see BERNHARD 1970: 56. We, of course, will have to await their publication to determine their significance. It is also possible that some of the *āgama* texts translated in China in the early fifth century were rendered from Indic originals whose language has much in common with, and is perhaps identical to, Gāndhārī Prakrit. If this is the case, as has been often supposed, then such texts may also have been written in *kharoṣṭhī* script. Such a supposition, however, has not to date been adequately supported; see the discussion in BOUCHER 1998: 473-75. A firmer opinion will have to await further research.
28. If YANG's analysis of the cultural implications of *hu* and *fan* were correct, that *hu* (= barbarian) came to be replaced by *fan* (= Indic) as Buddhism became more widely acceptable in Tang times, then we might expect that critics of Buddhism during the Tang – of which there were many – would adopt such pejorative language in lashing out against Buddhism. No critic during the late Tang was fiercer than Han Yu 韓愈. And yet, when labelling Buddhism as but a “barbarian cult” (夷狄之一法), or disparaging the Buddha as “a barbarian unfamiliar with the Chinese language” (夷狄之人與中國言語不通), he does not invoke *hu* 胡 and the presumed cultural connotations attached to it. This certainly does not prove that *hu* was not negatively charged in the Chinese literati world of the medieval period. But it does seem that the resonance of this term with “barbarian” was insufficient to inspire Buddhism's critics to invoke it for their purposes.

kharoṣṭhī and *brāhmī*.²⁹ It is clear that even very learned Chinese Buddhist scholastics did not understand the relationship between these scripts and the languages they transcribed. Let me illustrate this with one notable example. Sengyou, from whose early sixth-century bibliography I have taken some of the data presented above, discusses in detail what he perceived to be the similarities and differences between the Indic and Chinese languages. I will translate the relevant parts of his essay here:

Sengyou's "*Hu han yijing yin yi tongyi ji*" (A Record of Similarities and Differences in Pronunciation and Meaning When Translating Scriptures from Western Languages to Chinese)³⁰

Numinal concepts are without sound; we rely upon words and expressions in order to transcribe meaning. Words and expressions are without vestiges; we depend upon graphs and characters in order to depict pronunciation. Therefore, characters are "rabbit snares" for words; words are "fish traps" for concepts.³¹ When pronunciation and meaning coincide, there cannot be any bias or loss. This is why writing should be used to comprehensively order the world. Although the vestiges are tied to brush and ink (i.e., the literary arts), concepts are suited to the numinous.

In ancient times there were three progenitors of writing. The eldest was called *Fan* (= *brāhmī*); his script went toward the right. Next was *Qulou* (= *kharoṣṭhī*); his script went toward the left. The youngest was Cang Jie; his script went

29. Thus I would want to qualify somewhat LÉVI's remark made in reference to Sengyou's usage in his CSZJJ: "... on est tenté d'admettre que le terme *hou* [胡] dénote ici soit un original *prâcrit*, soit une écriture du type *kharoṣṭrī*, en contraste avec le *sanscrit* (*fan*) ou la *brāhmī* (*fan*). ... Les variations de Seng-yeou tiennent sans aucun doute à la diversité des sources où il puise; simple compilateur, il copie fidèlement des extraits sans penser à les mettre en harmonie" (LÉVI 1904: 560). LÉVI's arguments concerning *hu* = *kharoṣṭhī* are based on his broader attempt to associate the name *kharoṣṭrī* (< *kharoṣṭhī*) with the region of the western Tarim Basin (in the vicinity of but not restricted to Kashgar). This particular suggestion has not been generally accepted; cf. SALOMON 1998: 50-51.
30. CSZJJ 55: 4b-5a. This essay was previously translated in LINK 1961: 284-91. Although I have benefited greatly from some of his suggestions, there are several points of disagreement.
31. The *locus classicus* for this allusion, as Arthur WRIGHT has pointed out (WRIGHT 1954: 401, n. 1), is the *Zhuangzi*, chap. 26 (SBBY ed., j. 9, 6a). The passage, in Victor MAIR's felicitous translation, goes as follows: "A fish-trap is for catching fish; once you've caught the fish, you can forget about the trap. A rabbit-snare is for catching rabbits; once you've caught the rabbit, you can forget about the snare. Words are for catching ideas; once you've caught the idea, you can forget about the words. Where can I find a person who knows how to forget about words so I can have a few words with him?" (MAIR 1994a: 276-77).

downward.³² *Brāhmī* and *Kharoṣṭhī* lived in India; Cang Jie, scribe to the Yellow Emperor, lived in China. *Brāhmī* and *Kharoṣṭhī* took their exemplars from the *Śuddhāvāsa* heaven; Cang Jie relied upon impressions from bird tracks. The strokes of the scripts are certainly different, but in the end they convey concepts equally.

When we reverently inquire into what was taught by the formerly enlightened one (i.e., the Buddha), we find that there are 64 scripts.³³ The scribal techniques “deer wheel” and “rolling eye”³⁴ are distinguished among them. The forms of the characters such as *nāga*, *yakṣa*, and the eight classes (of supernatural beings) differ in style.³⁵ Only *brāhmī* and *kharoṣṭhī* are the superior scripts for our times. Therefore the various kingdoms in India call them the divine scripts. Despite the fact that, for copying *sūtras* from the West, the common ancestor [of the various scripts] is *brāhmī*, still the thirty-six countries [of the Western regions] frequently have variations in writing styles.³⁶ Is this not like the changing styles of the small seal script [of the Qin dynasty] and the great seal script [of the Zhou bronzes] in China? When we examine the changes in the ancient script of Cang Jie handed down over successive historical periods, we find that the ancient style changed into the great seal script, the great seal script changed into the small seal script, and the small seal script was modified to become the clerical script [of the Han]. These transformations are many indeed....

32. Cang Jie was the minister of the legendary Yellow Emperor of hoary antiquity. He is traditionally accredited with inventing Chinese writing, modelling his script on the footprints of birds and animals. See BOLTZ 1994: 130 ff.
33. As LINK points out, this is a clear reference to the 64 scripts that the Buddha had mastered as a youth according to the biographical account in chapter 10 of the *Lalitavistara*. For a list of these scripts in Sanskrit, see LEFMANN 1902: 125-126 or the more recent and comprehensive edition by HOKAZONO 1994: 526-28; the equivalent Chinese translation of Dharmarakṣa can be found in T 186, 3:498b. There are considerable divergences between the Sanskrit and Chinese lists. See LÉVI 1904: 573-79 for a comparative tabulation.
34. These are two of the 64 scripts listed in Dharmarakṣa’s translation of the *Lalitavistara*. “Deer wheel” (*lulun* 鹿輪) clearly refers to *mṛgacakra*, the thirty-second script listed in Dharmarakṣa’s list (thirty-fifth in HOKAZONO’s Sanskrit edition). “Rolling eye” (*zhuanyan* 轉眼) is the forty-ninth script listed by Dharmarakṣa but its Sanskrit equivalent is difficult to determine. It is possible that Dharmarakṣa may have been attempting to translate *nikṣepāvatālipiṃ* here, though a clear explanation for the faulty equivalence is not immediately apparent.
35. The eight classes of supernatural beings are a standard motif in Buddhist texts; each one is associated with the name of a script in chapter 10 of the *Lalitavistara*.
36. On *brāhmī* as the “common ancestor” of all Indian scripts, see SALOMON 1998: 10-14. Though Sengyou’s view may have been widely held among missionaries in China, it is likely, as SALOMON points out, that *kharoṣṭhī* in fact preceded *brāhmī* on the Indian subcontinent. Hence, “it can generally be assumed that the primary direction of influence was from Kharoṣṭhī to Brāhmī” (SALOMON 1998: 54).

When we come to Western³⁷ pronunciation, [these languages] form words, single and double, without regularity. Sometimes one syllable (*zi* 字; *akṣara*) is used to represent many concepts; sometimes several words generate but one meaning. Examining the *Mahāyāna-mahāparinirvānasūtra*, we find that it has enumerated in order the fifty *akṣaras*, completely explaining their various meanings.³⁸ The fourteen (vocalic) phonemes it calls the root of the *akṣara*.³⁹ We observe that in their uttering of phrases and discriminating of phonemes, the permutations [of pronunciation] aid one another [in distinguishing meaning]. Some are “tongue-root” sounds (i.e., velars) or “end of the lip” sounds (i.e., labials); some make distinctions with long or short [vowels]. Moreover, a Western *akṣara* (*huzi* 胡字) is a single phoneme but does not constitute a word. Additional words are necessary to complete the phrase; only then is a meaning realized.⁴⁰ When translators convey meaning, how could there not be difficulties!

Furthermore, compositions in Indic (*fan* 梵) script have half-characters (i.e., *akṣara*) and full-characters (i.e., words).⁴¹ The reason some are called half-

37. I render *hu* 胡 here as Western, following Edward SCHAFER (1963: 4-5), since Sengyou appears to use it without the technical nuance that I believe it carried in many of the colophons he records. In more generic application, *hu* could refer to Indians or Central Asians (esp. Iranians), and by Tang times, also to Arabs and others from the Mediterranean world.
38. The practice of assigning a semantic signification to each of the *akṣaras* in the Sanskrit syllabary is known from several Buddhist texts. For the version preserved in the *Mahāyāna-mahāparinirvānasūtra*, see T 375, 12:653c-655b and T 376, 12:887c-888c.
39. Sengyou would appear once again to take this line directly from the *Mahāyāna-mahāparinirvānasūtra*: T 376, 12:887c.25; cf. also T 375, 12:653c.24. The expression *shisi yin* 十四音 refers, as LINK remarks, to the string of vocalic sounds beginning the Sanskrit alphabet. Arthur WRIGHT has noted (1957: 279) that Kumārajīva’s learned assistant, Sengrui, is reported in his biography to have composed an exposition on these phonemes called the *Shisi yin xun xu* 十四音訓絞 (*Gaoseng zhuan*, T 2059, 50:367b.15-16). It is likely that Sengrui also drew upon this section of the *Mahāyāna-mahāparinirvānasūtra*.
40. Sengyou is here attempting to understand and explain – not without some difficulty and confusion – that a single graph in Indic scripts does not constitute a morpheme as individual graphs do in Chinese (though not necessarily words in the modern linguistic sense).
41. Sengyou almost certainly borrows this terminology from the *Mahāyāna-mahāparinirvānasūtra*: “The bodhisattva Kāśyapa addressed the Buddha: ‘World Honored One. Why does the Tathāgata teach the fundamentals concerning script?’ The Buddha said: ‘Noble son, I first teach *akṣaras* (*banzi* 半字), considering them to be the foundation. [They allow one] to grasp the various treatises, spells, chapters, and esoteric truths. When ordinary people (*prthagjana*) study the basics about script, they can afterwards discern [the difference between]

characters is that their meaning is not yet complete (i.e., they are only letters). Therefore, the form of the character is halved (*banpian* 半偏), as if the character “moon” (*yue* 月) in Chinese script were missing its side. The reason some are called full-characters is that with them concepts are fully expressed. Therefore, the form of the character is complete, as when the character “sun” (*ri* 日) in Chinese script fills out its shape. Therefore, half-characters poorly express meaning; one can liken them to the defilements (*kleśas*). Full-characters are good at expressing meaning; one can liken them to constancy.⁴² Furthermore, to take a half-character as the principal constituent is like the character “to say” (*yan* 言) in Chinese script; to take a full-character as the principal constituent is like the character “all” (*zhu* 諸) in Chinese script. To pair *yan* 言 with *zhe* 者 (nominalizing particle) constitutes forthwith the character *zhu* 諸. The character *zhu* unites both [elements, *yan* and *zhe*] and is thus an example of a full-character. The character *yan* standing by itself would be in the category of half-[character]. Although half-characters (*akṣaras*) are simple, they are the foundation of [morphemic] characters (i.e., words). We depend upon half-characters to form full-characters. It is like an ordinary man (*fanfu* 凡夫, *prthagjana*) at first being stuck in ignorance, afterwards attaining constancy. Therefore, we rely on characters to create meaning; one can liken this to *nirvāṇa*.

Sengyou’s analysis here of Indian languages is telling. Even while recognizing stylistic variations within and between Indian scripts, his attempt to find adequate analogies in the history of Chinese writing is strained and misleading at best. Sengyou’s greatest difficulty would seem to lie in grasping the very nature of an alpha-syllabic script: the capacity of Indian languages to use non-morphemic characters, i.e., written letters that are not in themselves words.⁴³

truth and falsehood (*shifa feifa* 是法非法)” (T 375, 12:653c.18-22); cf. T 376, 12:887c.19-24.

42. Again, Sengyou is drawing from the *Mahāyāna-mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* here: “Moreover, the meanings of the half-characters [enumerated earlier in the text] are the source of the teachings on the *kleśas*. Therefore they are called half-characters. The full-characters then are the basis for the teachings on all good things. It is like people engaged in bad actions being called ‘half people’ while those who cultivate good actions are called ‘complete people.’ Thus, all sūtra texts and treatises depend on half-characters as their basis” (T 375, 12:655a.20-24).
43. If a “word,” following BLOOMFIELD, is the smallest meaningful unit of language that can stand alone, then the vast majority of sinographs are words. But it does not follow – and this is important – that all words in classical Chinese are single sinographs. There are numerous compound expressions that we would classify as single words even though native grammarians would view the compound in terms of its discrete members. On the monosyllabic myth with regard to the Chinese language, see KENNEDY 1951 and DE FRANCIS 1984: 177-88.

Sengyou is not troubled by the foreignness of Indian scripts and languages, their so-called “barbarian” traits. But they are conceptually alien to him. It is not at all certain, for example, that he had a clear understanding of the difference between the *akṣara* (syllable) and the word (composed of multiple syllables), despite his awkward attempt. The long tradition of a single, morphosyllabic script uniting the diverse regions and languages of China would have in all likelihood impeded any sense of the independence of script and language.⁴⁴

I hope to have shown here that any simple equation of *hu* and “barbarian” is inadequate on multiple grounds. First, *hu* appears to have been used with the technical sense of *kharoṣṭhī* script in records on Indian sources texts underlying early Chinese translations. Secondly, *hu*, when referring to scripts, languages, and texts, is not used in any overtly derogatory manner – neither by the critics of Buddhism nor by Buddhist exegetes themselves. On the contrary, what we find with regard to one of the most prominent of early medieval Buddhist intellectuals is a serious attempt to fathom the nature of *Hu* languages, albeit with only partial success.

If to be barbarian is to stutter⁴⁵ and therefore to be unintelligible, to have no real language, then it is clear that at least some Chinese took

44. Chad HANSEN has astutely pointed out that a conception of the diversity of languages within China was absent largely as a result of the universality of the written medium: “Given the difference between written and spoken language, an ancient Chinese linguist would have equally good reason to individuate words by their written form. He would then say different Chinese languages simply pronounced the words differently. Prior to encountering Sanskrit or Japanese, he would have little reason for a theory of translation or interlinguistic meaning. The character itself would serve the relevant interlinguistic role” (HANSEN 1989: 79). But even after centuries of exposure to Sanskrit and Indian literature, very learned Chinese scholars perpetuated fundamental confusions about the nature of Indic languages and their alpha-syllabic scripts. Victor MAIR has recently demonstrated that the Song scholar Zheng Qiao (1104-1162), despite great acumen in philology, failed to come to grips with a phonetic-based spelling, in part because of his confused equation of script and language. See MAIR 1994b, esp. 340.
45. The very word “barbarian” is an onomatopoeic word imitating any kind of unintelligible speech. As such, it is connected with a wide range of Indo-European cognates, including Greek *barbaros* (“non-Greek”), Sanskrit *barbara* (“stammering”), and English *babble*; cf PORKORNY 1959: 91-92. In fact, for the ancient Greeks, ethnic self-identification was defined in almost entirely linguistic terms from the fifth century B.C.E.; the lumping of all non-Greek speaking peoples together was instrumental in developing a pan-Hellenic self-consciousness that served to unite otherwise separate Greek polities against a common

Buddhism and its languages as not only meaningful, but elevated, civilized, and even divinely inspired. We would do these ancient linguists a severe disservice to normalize the bitter rhetoric of the Confucian and Daoist opponents of Buddhism – those most frequently responsible for charges of barbarism. Chinese attitudes toward foreigners were never simple in any period; political and, more often, economic, interests frequently dictated the fluctuations between attraction, tolerance, and persecution of foreigners and foreign faiths. But by the Tang period, Buddhism had made deep and indelible impressions not only on the Chinese religious milieu, but on native understandings of their own literary and linguistic heritage.⁴⁶ And it was these first, tentative engagements with Indic scripts, languages, and texts that made much of this impact possible.

enemy, the Persians. See the discussion in HALL 1989, esp. 3-13 and 56-62. Something not entirely different occurred in medieval China as well. By the Tang period, literati often referred to the various – and potentially threatening – peoples of the north collectively as *Xiongnu* (not *hu*), even though many of these people were not ethnically related to these infamous nomads of Han times. *Hu*, by contrast, was typically associated with western peoples involved in the lucrative silk route trade, most notably the Sogdians.

46. One of the most profound impacts of Indian linguistics on Chinese literature was the development of the intricate tonal patterns reflected in Recent Style poetry (*jinti shi* 近體詩), as thoroughly studied by Victor MAIR and Tsu-lin MEI (1991). MAIR and MEI have convincingly argued that exposure to systems of Sanskrit metrics, particularly by the poets of the Southern dynasties in the late fifth and early sixth centuries, gave a meter-like structure to Chinese tonal patterns, giving birth to one of the most influential and widely used prosodies in the history of Chinese poetry.

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