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SAUTRÄNTIKA AND THE HṚDAYA TREATISES

BART DESSEIN

0. Introduction

P’u-kuang’s Chü-she Lun Chi, a 7th century commentary on Vasubandhu’s Abhidharmakośa, contains a passage on the origin of the Sautrāntikas, in which also the philosophical position of Vasubandhu’s Abhidharmakośa and of a section of Dharmatrāta’s *Saṃyuktābhidharmahṛdaya are explained.1 In this passage, P’u-kuang states that the Sautrāntika tradition goes back to Kumāralāta and that these Sautrāntikas issued from the Sarvāstivādins (or, alternatively, that they owe their origin to the concept of the three time periods2). P’u-kuang further claims that the Abhidharmakośa and the section of the *Saṃyuktābhidharmahṛdaya that contains the set of four alternatives (catuskoti) on the three forms of obstruction (āvarana) agree with the philosophical position of the Sautrāntikas. As the section of the Chinese *Saṃyuktābhidharmahṛdaya under scrutiny here3 disagrees with “the Sanskrit version,” this, still according to P’u-kuang, implies that the Chinese translator made a mistake here.4

This *Saṃyuktābhidharmahṛdaya is one of three Hṛdaya treatises contained in the Taishō edition of the Tripitaka, i.e., in its translation by Saṃghavarman, titled Tsa A-p’i-t’an Hsin Lun (T. 1552). The other two Hṛdaya works are Saṃghadeva’s translation of Dharmāraṇya’s *Abhidharmahṛdaya, titled A-p’i-t’an Hsin Lun (T. 1550), and the A-p’i-t’an Hsin...
Lun Ching (T. 1551), the translation of Upaśānta’s *Abhidharmahṛdaya by Narendraśatas. These three Hṛdaya treatises led to the compilation of the Abhidharmakośa by Vasubhandhu. Two Chinese translations of this work are included in the Taishō edition: one by Paramārtha (500-569), titled A-p’i-ta-mo Chü-she Shih Lun (T. 1559), and one by Hsüan-tsang, titled A-p’i-ta-mo Chü-she Lun (T. 1558).

The authors of the above works are all from the same geographical region. Judging from P’u-kuang’s Chü-she Lun Chi, Dharmaśreṣṭhin (= Dharmaśrī) was a Tocharian from Bactria. Upaśānta refers to the Kāśmīri masters repeatedly and disagrees with them. This implies that he most likely did not belong to this group. In the Ta T’ang Hsi-yü Chi, Dharmatrāta is said to have written his work in Gandhāra, more precisely in the neighborhood of Puṣkarāvṛti. Vasubandhu was from Puruṣapura in Gandhāra. This explains the tradition that says that Vasubandhu was invited to send his stanzas (kārīkā) to Kaśmīra. Commentating on Gandhāra, Stefan Anacker (1984: 12) views the above works as belonging to the same geographical line of Sarvāstivāda philosophy, and he claims that “this birthplace of the Sarvāstivāda masters Dharmaśrī and the Bhadanta Dharmatrāta, kept up its old tradition of scholastic Buddhist learning.”

As for textual format, the treatises enumerated above form a separate group within Sarvāstivāda literature. They are composed of verses with an accompanying prose auto-commentary. In this respect, they resemble the Abhidharmasaṅgītiparyāyapādaśāstra (T.1536) and the Abhidharmadhartmaskhandhapādaśāstra (T.1537), the earliest works of what became known as the Sarvāstivāda Śatpādābhidharma. The two latter works were translated by Hsüan-tsang’s translation team.

6 T. 1551: 841c17, 855a28, 855c27.
7 T. 2087: 881a17-19.
8 T. 2049: 188a10-11. See also Takaku (1904: 269); Hirakawa (1973: iii).
9 T. 2049: 190b11. See also Takaku (1904: 287); Anacker (1984: 15).
10 See Willemen, Dessein, Cox (1998: 174). Dharmmajoti (1995: 20) remarks that the use of ’simile of proof’ (avadāna) to explain stanzas started in the western region, particularly Gandhāra, which had become the center of missionary activities of the Dārśāntika masters. See also note # 33.
11 On these two works, see Willemen, Dessein, Cox (1998: 177-189).
1. The Hṛdaya works as a set of Sarvāstivāda works

There is textual evidence that, indeed, the Hṛdaya works form a series. In the introduction to Sāṃghavarman’s translation of the *Sānyuktābhidharmahṛdaya, we read:

When explaining the meaning of Dharmāśreṣṭhin’s *Abhidharmahṛdaya, different instructors have been unequal as to conciseness. Dharmāśreṣṭhin’s [own] explanation is the most concise [one]. Upaśānta has an explanation of 8,000 stanzas in length.¹²

As the total number of stanzas contained in Upaśānta’s work amounts to 249, as opposed to the 250 of Dharmāśreṣṭhin’s work, Sāṃghavarman here undoubtedly refers to the prose auto-commentary, Upaśānta’s work consisting of six volumes, and Dharmāśreṣṭhin’s of four. In Seng-yu’s Ch’u San-tsong Chi Chi too, we find evidence that Dharmatrāta’s work is related to Dharmāśreṣṭhin’s *Abhidharmahṛdaya. One passage supporting a connection between the two texts is contained in the Tsa A-p’i-t’an Hsin Hsiū, an anonymous introduction to Guṇavarman’s Chinese translation of the *Sānyuktābhidharmahṛdaya. Guṇavarman’s translation is the third translation that was made of the text, Sāṃghavarman’s version being the fourth.¹³ The passage concerned reads as follows:

After a hundred years had passed since the parinirvāṇa of the Tathāgata, there was the venerable Dharmāśreṣṭhin. From the collection of scriptures proclaimed by the Buddha, he selected the essentials (shih-yao 事 要) amounting to 250 stanzas. He called [this work] *Abhidharmahṛdaya. Later, there was the venerable Dharmatrāta. When he took over what had been composed, he regarded the essence of the words as incomplete and the meaning as having shortages. He thereupon also selected from the scriptures and made 350 stanzas more. He completed what was lacking, and called [this work] *Sānyuktābhidharmahṛdaya.¹⁴

¹² T. 1552: 869c18-19.
¹³ The first translation of the *Sānyuktābhidharmahṛdaya mentioned in Chih-sheng’s K’ai-yüan Shih-chiao Lu is the work of Samghadeva. This translation has to be dated between AD 385 and 397. However, it is not unlikely that this translation actually is a translation of Dharmāśreṣṭhin’s work. See Dessein (1999, vol. 2: 25, note # 360). A second translation mentioned in Chih-sheng’s catalogue is the work of Fa-hsien and Buddhabhadra. This translation is to be dated ca. AD 418. The third translation was started by Īśvara and completed by Gunavarman. It is to be dated ca. AD 426. Sāṃghavarman’s translation is dated AD 434. See Dessein (1999, vol. 1: lxvii-lxxxii); T. 2154: 648a8-9 and 649b23-c7; and T. 2157: 954b18-29 and 985c20-986a3.
A second passage in the Ch’u San-tsang Chi Chi is found in Chiao-ching’s preface to Samghavarman’s translation of the *Saṃyuktābhidharmaḥdaya, dated AD 435.\textsuperscript{15} Here we read:

Later, after the parinirvāṇa of the Tathāgata, in the time of the Ch’in and the Han, there was the venerable Dharmaśreṣṭhin. He made the work [titled] \textit{Abhidharmaḥdaya}. It totals 250 stanzas that form ten chapters. Later, having come to the time of the heyday of the Chin, there further was the venerable Dharmaṭāta. He added 350 stanzas to form eleven chapters, and called [this work] \textit{Saṃyuktābhidharmaḥdaya}.\textsuperscript{16}

That Dharmaṭāta sees his work merely as an expansion of Dharmaśreṣṭhin’s is stated in the preface to his work as follows:

I pay homage to the venerable Dharmaśreṣṭhin: I humbly accept what he has said. I, Dharmaṭāta, explain what has not yet been explained by him;\textsuperscript{17} as well as in the work itself, where we read:

Deliberating with little wisdom on what the honored Dharmaśreṣṭhin has said, I now compile chapters and sentences to comment on and complete the doctrine as it has been transmitted. It is not because of wishing for pride and seeking for glory. He has said the same.\textsuperscript{18}

In the above passages from the Ch’u San-tsang Chi Chi, two opinions on Dharmaśreṣṭhin’s dates appear: one hundred years after the demise of the Buddha, and in the time of the Ch’in and the Han. In P’u-kuang’s Chü-she Lun Chi, we find the following formulation:

In the five hundred years following the Buddha’s parinirvāṇa, the philosopher Dharmaśreṣṭhin, a Tocharian from the land of the Oxus,\textsuperscript{19} composed the *Abhidharmaḥdaya. [In this work,] it is explained that [when afflictions (kleśa)] ‘arise’ successively [to certain factors (dharma), these factors] are impure (sāsrava).\textsuperscript{20} Six hundred years [after the Buddha’s parinirvāna], Dharmaṭāta changed [the phrase “to arise successively”] into “to increase

\textsuperscript{15} See Lin (1949: 341).
\textsuperscript{16} T. 2145: 74b23-26.
\textsuperscript{17} T. 1552: 869c22-23.
\textsuperscript{18} T. 1552: 963c8-10.
\textsuperscript{19} T. 1821: 11c13 reads 網 蠟: most likely Vakṣu (cf. Soothill and Hodous, 1987: 449). Vakṣu has been identified with the Oxus River (Edgerton, 1985: 466-467; Monier-Williams, 1990: 911).
\textsuperscript{20} See T. 1550: 809b10-12.
successively,” because the meaning of “arising” is erroneous, since although impurities [may] arise in succession to the truth of cessation (nīrodhasatya) and that of the path (mārgasatya), [these factors] are not said to be impure.21

Since this [last opinion] is not erroneous, the master of this treatise follows this explanation.22

As is the case in the passage of the Chū-she Lun Chi referred to in the beginning of this article, this passage too connects Vasubandhu with Dharmatrāta. This passage further corroborates the version of Chiao-ching’s preface concerning the dates of Dharmaśreśthīn, placing this author between the beginning of the common era and the 3rd century AD. Moreover, placing Dharmaśreśthīn as far back in time as “one hundred years after the Buddha’s parinirvāna”23 is highly unlikely, as one hundred years after the Buddha’s demise, Abhidharma literature cannot have reached that degree of development yet.24 Providing more exact dates for the author of the *Abhidharmahṛdaya remains a highly difficult task. The biography of Dharmakāla in the Kao Seng Chuan informs us that when Dharmakāla was twenty-five years of age, he entered a Buddhist monastery where he saw Dharmaśreśthīn’s Abhidharma.25 The same biography informs us that Dharmakāla arrived in Lo-yang in the Chia-p’ing era (AD 249-254).26 It is not clear how much time elapsed between his acquaintance with Dharmaśreśthīn’s work and his arrival in Lo-yang. However, as in the first half of the 3rd century AD the *Abhidharmahṛdaya was already spread among the monasteries of India, it is not unlikely that the work is anterior to the 3rd century AD. Upāṣānta must have lived later than the compilation of the *Mahāvibhāṣā. More precisely, he most likely lived one generation prior to Dharmatrāta,27 author of the *Saṃyuktābhidharmahṛdaya, who lived in the beginning of the

22 T. 1821: 11c12-16. The same information is found in Fa-pao’s commentary on the Abhidharmakośa, T. 1822: 469a28-b3. For the Abhidharmakośa opinion, see T. 1558: 1c6-10.
23 T. 2145: 74b5.
25 T. 2059: 324c19-20. The same information is found in the Li-tai San-pao Chi, T. 2034: 56b12-13. See also Shih (1968: 18).
26 T. 2059: 324c27-28. The same information is found in the Li-tai San-pao Chi, T. 2034: 56b20. See also Shih (1968: 18).
4th century AD. As Dharmatrāta is dated approximately one hundred years after Dharmaśreṣṭhin in the above quotation from the *Chü-she Lun Chi, this would place Dharmaśreṣṭhin around the beginning of the 3rd century AD. This implies that the three *Hṛdaya works were written in the time span of about one hundred years.

Much controversy exists on the dates of Vasubandhu, generally accepted to be a Sautrāntika philosopher who, in his *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya, criticized the Vaibhāšika doctrinal viewpoint. The earliest proposed date of “around 316 AD” would make Vasubandhu a contemporary of the author of the *Samyuktābhidharmahṛdaya. The textual format of the *Abhidharmakośa, as well as the philosophical position of its author, however, force us to date Vasubandhu later than Dharmatrāta. It has been shown that Vasubandhu’s *Abhidharmakośa is a rewriting of Dharmatrāta’s work. The fact that the three *Hṛdaya works themselves, as well as the Chinese tradition as included in the Buddhist catalogues of translations, see the three texts as closely related and the fact that a comparison of Dharmatrāta’s work with Dharmaśreṣṭhin’s and with Upaśānta’s *Abhidharmahṛdaya shows that the *Samyuktābhidharmahṛdaya was influenced by the Vaibhāśikas, seem to suggest that Vasubandhu wanted to accomplish two aims in one text: perfecting the structure of the *Hṛdaya works, and criticizing the Vaibhāśika influence in these works. As the commentators of Vasubandhu’s work, having started their argument by mentioning Kumāralaṭa, explain that Vasubandhu took the development of philosophical ideas into account when composing his treatise, and as they seem to suggest that at least parts of the original version of Dharmatrāta’s work agreed with the *Abhidharmakośa, it appears that, in the Chinese tradition, the *Hṛdaya works were seen as a series, ending with Vasubandhu’s *Abhidharmakośa. Also geographically, these works form a unit.

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29 Kimura (1974: 223) situates Dharmaśreṣṭhin around 200 AD. Yamada (1959: 113) states that the *Abhidharmahṛdaya was written simultaneously with the *Mahāvibhāṣā. This date is contradicted by the fact that Dharmaśreṣṭhin is referred to in the *Ch’u Yü Ching. See also note # 34, # 35, # 37, and # 39.
Now that we know that the above four texts (T. 1550, T. 1551, T. 1552 and T. 1558/T. 1559) form a series, we can investigate the nature of these texts. Hui-yüan’s introduction to the Chinese translation of Dharmaśreṣṭhīn’s work in the *Ch’u San-tsang Chi Chi calls the *Abhidharmahṛdaya the “Essential stanzas (gāthā) of the Tripiṭaka,” (san-tsang chih yao-sung 三藏之要頌). This meaning is parallel to the meaning of hṛdaya, and is reminiscent of the passages quoted above on the compilation of the *Abhidharmahṛdaya: “He selected the essentials,” and of the *Saṃyukta-bhiddharmahṛdaya: “He selected from the scriptures and made 350 stanzas more.” It may be very noteworthy that Dharmaśreṣṭhīn is quoted in the Chinese translation (4th century AD) of Bhadanta Dhammarāta’s *Ch’u Yao Ching: “Therefore, the venerable Dharmaśreṣṭhīn (T’an-mo-shih-li 奚摩世利) said the following stanzas: […].”

33 T. 2145: 72c1. 要頌 is the standard Chinese translation of ‘Udāna.’ Rockhill (1975: vii) explains “udāna” as follows: “[…] the word udāna must […] be understood […] something nearly approaching ‘gāthā,’ verse, or stanza.” On the same page, note # 2, he continues: “It would be perfectly admissible to call this work ‘a sūtra,’ using, however, that word in its habitual sense of ‘series of aphorisms.’” He further remarks (op. cit.: viii), “It appears to me that the founder of Buddhism must have attached great importance to these verses […] As a natural consequence of the importance attributed to these verses, it appeared desirable to the first successors of the Buddha to collect in separate works all such utterances of the Master as might prove especially instructive, and as best answering the purposes of their school.” See also Dhammajoti (1995: 8).

34 In the introduction to the *Ch’u Yao Ching, T. 212: 609b27-29, we read that Dhammarāta compiled the work by collecting 1,000 stanzas and forming 33 chapters. The work was called Dharmapada. Together with their commentary, this work is said to have been called *Udāna. Dhammajoti (1995: 17) further remarks that “No other extant source confirms the assertion that the stanza portions alone of this Sarvāstivāda version, without the commentary, was called a Dharmapada; though it does seem that when stanzas from this version were quoted by other schools, they are mentioned as being from the ‘Dharmapada.’” See also T. 1545: 1b18-20. It may be reiterated here that the Chinese version of the *Ch’u Yao Ching also dates from the end of the 4th century. See also in this regard Dhammajoti (1995: 17-18). See also note # 10. According to Nakamura, “The Udānavarga composed by the Sarvāstivādins seems to be a collation of the Pali Dhammapada and the Udāna with some verses from the Saṅgātā-vagga of the Saṃyutta-nikāya and from the Suttanipāta in Pali. There is a legend that the Udānavarga was compiled by Dhammarāta, a contemporary of king Kaniska. The Ch’u-yao-ching (30 vols.) and the Fa-chi-yao-sung-ching (4 vols.) are considered to be Chinese translations of this text, which corresponds to the Dhammapada of other sects. Legend has it that the Ch’u-yao-ching translated into Chinese by Buddhāśrīnī, was composed by Dhammarāta who lived about 300 years after the death of the Buddha. This is earlier than the Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā of Buddhaghosa,” (1980: 42-43).

is further referred to in the following passage of the *Ch’u Yao Ching*:

“Those who reflect on [the calamities] of the body, explain things as in the scriptural texts. The venerable Dharmaśreṣṭhīn (T’an-mo-shih-li) also said this.”

This Bhadanta Dhammatrāta of the *Ch’u Yao Ching* is generally accepted to be a Dārśāntika, and is also referred to in the *Śaṃyuktabhidharmahrdaya*, i.e., as the “Dhammatrāta of former times.”

Judging from the above, the purpose of the *Abhidharmahrdaya* was similar to the purpose of the *Aṣṭagrantha / Jñānaprasthāna*: summarizing the doctrine. It has been proven that the *Jñānaprasthāna* is more recent than Dharmaśreṣṭhīn’s *Abhidharmahrdaya*. As we know that the *Jñānaprasthāna* served as basis for the *Mahāvibhāṣā* of the Vaibhāṣika Sarvāstivādins, the *Abhidharmahrdaya* appears to be a summary digest of non-Vaibhāṣika Sarvāstivāda.

2. The origin of the Dārśāntika-Sautrāntikas

Above, Dharmaśreṣṭhīn has been connected with the Dārśāntika Dhammatrāta, author of the *Ch’u Yao Ching*, a work similar in purpose to the *Abhidharmahrdaya*. We hence need to investigate who these Dārśāntika-Sautrāntikas are. The Samayabhedoparacanacakra places their origin in the beginning of the fourth century after the Buddha’s parinirvāṇa. Hsüan-tsang’s Chinese translation of this text, *I-pu Tsung Lun Lun* (T. 2031), calls them *Ching-liang Pu*. The text further states that they are also called “Śaṃkrāntivādin” (*Shuo-chuan Pu*), and that

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38 See Lin (1949: 322 ff.).
39 T. 1552: 946b15. Lin (1949: 351) dates this Dārśāntika Dhammatrāta around the 2nd century BC. This approximately agrees with the traditional date given by P’u-kuang, T. 1821: 11a7-8: “Dhammatrāta […] was born three hundred years after the Buddha’s Nirvāṇa.” See also Dhammajoti (1995: 19).
42 T. 2031: 15b18-19.
they claim to have Ānanda (Ch’ing-hsi 慶喜) as their teacher. This is confirmed in the Ch’eng Wei-shih Lun Shu-chi, where K’uei-chi (632-682) says that a master called Pūrṇa developed especially the Abhidharma and Vinaya, and that this invoked a reaction of some monks who took Ānanda as their patron and followed only the sūtras. In the I-pu-tsung Lun Lun Shu-chi, the same K’uei-chi comments on the origin of the Sautrāntikas. He states the following:

These masters only rely on the scriptural texts as true measure (cheng-liang 正量); they do not depend on the Vinaya and on the Abhidharma. In everything they claim, they depend on the scriptural texts as proof. This is why they are called “Sautrāntika”-masters (Ching Pu Shih 經部師). They also obtained the name “Sautrāntika” (Ching-liang Pu 經量部) because they follow what was established. They are also called “Sāṃkrāntivāda” (Shuo-chuan Pu 說轉部). These masters acknowledge the existence of seeds (bīja). [They say that] there is only one seed that, in its course, evolves from the present (pratyutpanna) to reach a later period of time. Therefore it is said that, when evolving, a later [period of time] is reached. It should be known that formerly they were called “Sāṃkrāntivāda” (Shuo-tu Pu 說度部). However, when Gautama’s words were edited, the honored Ānanda especially emphasized the collection of scriptural texts. It is precisely because [the Sautrāntikas] take the scriptural texts as norm that they claim that Ānanda is their teacher and that their present name was formed [because] they follow what was established. They are full of sympathy for an emphasis on the Abhidharma, and do not neglect an emphasis on the Vinaya, but since they do not depend on the Abhidharma and on the Vinaya, they now only accept Ānanda as their teacher.

Paramārtha, who made the first translation of the Abhidharmakośa, also made a translation of the Samayabhedoparacananacakra. This text, titled Shih-pa Pu Lun (T.2032), also places their origin in the fourth century. The text further says that they obtained their name ‘Sāṃkrāntivāda’ (Seng-chia-lan-to 僧迦蘭多) from their master Dharmottara (Yü-to-lo 鬱多羅), and that they are also called Hsiu-to-lo-lun Pu

44 T. 1830: 274a8 ff. See also K’uei-chi (I-pu-tsung Lun Lun Shu-chi: 22a2-3); Bareau (1955: 155); Bechert (1985: 44).
45 K’uei-chi (I-pu-tsung Lun Lun Shu-chi: 22a2-8). I will return to this in my discussion of the explanation of the three time periods. See also note # 88.
46 See Masuda (1920: 1) and Demiéville (1925: 48, note # 1).
47 T. 2032: 18b4-5. See also Bareau (1954: 238, note # 1).
When we interpret this in the light of the above quoted passage from the *I-pu-tsung Lun Lun Shu-chi*, it appears that Dharmottara is credited with the seed-theory. Paramārtha’s translation of the *Samayabhedoparacanacakra*, titled *Pu Chih I Lun* (T. 2033), calls them *Tu Pu* 度部 or, alternatively, *Shuo-ching Pu* 說經部. As is evident from the *I-pu-tsung Lun Lun Shu-chi*, the first of the latter two names is a translation of “Saṃkrāntivāda.” Also the *Mañjuśrīpariprcchāsūtra* places the origin of the Sautrāntikas in the fourth century after the Buddha’s *parinirvāṇa*. According to the *Śāriputrapariprcchāsūtra*, finally, the Sautrāntikas only recognized the authority of the *sūtra* literature. This latter opinion is corroborated in the Chinese names *Ching-liang Pu* 經量部, *Hsiu-to-lo-lun Pu* 修多羅論部, and *Shuo-ching Pu* 說經部. The second of these three names, further, is a combination of *sūtra* and *śāstra*.

Must we conclude from all this that the history of the Sautrāntikas goes back to a master Dharmottara who lived around the fourth century after the Buddha’s *parinirvāṇa*, and that his followers took Ānanda – the one who, according to tradition, heard the *sūtras* from the mouth of the Buddha – as their example? Must we further assume that this Dharmottara summarized the doctrine in stanzas that were selected from the *sūtras*? Theoretically speaking, this is not impossible. It is undoubtedly true that the development of Abhidharma literature is related to the schismatic development of Buddhist sects, and that this kind of literature has, at a certain moment in its history, served to express the own sectarian viewpoints

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48 T. 2032: 18b5.
49 T. 1821: 11c12. It must be recalled here that “Dharmottara” is also found as an interpretation of 法勝, i.e., Dharmaśreṣṭhin, author of the *Abhidharmahṛdaya* (T. 1550) in *Fa-pao Tsung-mu-lu* 1: 696a20-22. For “uttara,” Wogihara (1974: 243) gives 勝 as a possible translation. However, a date for Dharmottara of the fourth century after the Buddha’s *parinirvāṇa* does not correspond to the different alternatives given for the lifetime of Dharmaśreṣṭhin in the Chinese catalogues.
50 T. 2033: 20b18-20.
53 T. 2032: 18b4-5.
55 T. 2031: 15b19-20; T. 1830: 274a8 ff.
in defense against the opinions of other sects. However, it is highly unlikely that the Abhidharma literature arose precisely as such an instrument of philosophical discussion. It is far more plausible that the early Abhidharma works were non-sectarian. This implies that, at a later date, texts may have been claimed by one school or another. Sometimes, as has been the case for the Vaibhāṣikas, a school was called after a text or set of texts. It can be recalled here that also the first reference to the Sārvāstivāda Śatpādābhidharma as a “set” of texts dates from after the publication of the Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa (translated AD 402-405). It would thus not be unlikely that the Hṛdaya treatises were also only at a later date (i.e. from the time of Dharmatrāta – 4th century AD – onwards) presented as embodying a separate lineage, leading to the “Sautrāntika” Abhidharmakośa. This may explain why – at least in the Chinese tradition – the Hṛdaya works were seen as “summaries” of the doctrine as it had been proclaimed by the Buddha. This may also explain why the introduction to Guṇavarmā’s translation of the *Saṃyuktābhidharmahrdaya places Dharmārṣethin “one hundred years after the Buddha’s parinirvāṇa,” and, analogously, why Ānanda is claimed to be the founder of the Sautrāntikas. It may also be reiterated here that the Sārvāstivāda tradition places the synod of Vaiśālī, the synod that is related to the first schism in the Buddhist community, in 110 AB. With this, the Chinese tradition places the origin of the Hṛdaya works (Dharmārṣethin) in the beginning of Sārvāstivāda history.

Must we further assume that these Sautrāntikas, named after the sūtra literature, had “saṃkrāntivāda” as one of their major doctrinal points?

3. The Sautrāntika theory of ‘resisting’ (pratīgha)

For any investigation into the doctrines and the doctrinal affiliation of Abhidharma schools, we are lucky to possess such a major work as the

58 See T. 1821: 35c4-14 and T. 1822: 496a9-17.
59 Cf. T. 1821: 35c6-7: “Because they took the sūtras as norm, they are called Saurāntika.”
*Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāstra (T. 1545). In this work, many Abhidharma schools and masters are mentioned, and various doctrinal standpoints are attributed to different schools or teachers. The *Mahāvibhāṣā contains only two references to the Ching Pu Shih 经部师, “the masters of the school that holds to the sūtras.” The first of these is an indirect reference: “Some say that this is what the Sautrāntikas (Ching Pu 經部) claim. The Sautrāntikas also, in order to refute such assertions of the Vibhajyavādins as [mentioned] above, say the following […]”62 In the second reference, the Sautrāntikas are contradicted.63 It has been remarked by Louis de La Vallée Poussin that the portions attributed to the Sautrāntikas in Vasubandhu’s Abhidharmakośa are attributed to the Dārṣṭāntikas in the *Mahāvibhāṣā.64 The *Mahāvibhāṣā in total contains 86 references to these Dārṣṭāntikas. Keeping in mind the fact that the *Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāstra is a sectarian (Vaibhāṣika) work, we can observe that the term Dārṣṭāntika appears to be a pejorative term, used in contempt by an opponent, while the term Sautrāntika holds a positive connotation.65 This is affirmed by the fact that the *Mahāvibhāṣā repeatedly reproaches the Dārṣṭāntikas for relying on the sūtras.66 The fact that the vibhāṣā compendia were compiled in a period of sectarian self-consciousness,67 and that the term “Sautrāntika” appears later than the term “Dārṣṭāntika” further sustains our assumption that a Sautrāntika self-consciousness arose in a period posterior to the compilation of the *Mahāvibhāṣā, more precisely, around the 4th to 5th century AD.68

Fa-pao, in his Chü-she Lun Shu, states the following regarding the origin of the Sautrāntikas:

62 T. 1545: 8b6-7.
63 T. 1545: 189b3.
66 T. 1545: 283a23-24; 309a12; 680b28; 760a29-b1.
68 We can further recall here that in the *Mahāvibhāṣā, the term Dārṣṭāntika is translated as 警誨者. It seems highly unlikely that when Hsüan-tsang translated Dārṣṭāntika as 警誨者, he was unaware that 警誨 is also used as translation of “avadāna,” one of the twelve constituent parts of the word of the Buddha. See also Lamotte (1967: 160, 176) and Dhammajoti (1995: 20).
Kumāralāta, in Chinese Hao-t’ung, is the founder (Tsū-shih 祖師) of the Sautrāntikas. In this school, he composed the Drṣṭāntapāṇkti and other works. In these works, there is this stanza that makes clear that they do not agree with the Sarvāstivādins concerning [the notion of] “resisting” (sapratigha).69

There is no scholarly agreement on the dates of Kumāralāta, opinion varying from 100 years after the Buddha’s parinirvāṇa70 to the 4th century AD.71 According to tradition, this Kumāralāta, who is also referred to as ‘Bhadanta’ in Upāsānta’s A-p’i-t’an Hsin Lun Ching,72 was the teacher of Harivarman73 and Śrīlāta.74 Śrīlāta was the direct teacher of Vasubandhu.75 Precisely the fact that Fa-pao, who claims that Vasubandhu agrees with the Sautrāntikas,76 was a disciple of Hsüan-tsang who translated the Abhidharmakoṣas may be the reason why Fa-pao claims that Kumāralāta, a native of Gandhāra, is the founder of the Sautrāntikas, and that Śrīlāta was a Sautrāntika.77

The passage of the A-p’i-t’an Hsin Lun Ching referred to above, deals with the notion of “resisting” (pratigha). It runs as follows:

As Bhadanta Kumāralāta said: “That which, at the moment an idea (manas) is about to arise, is resisting, should be known as ‘resisting’ (sapratigha). In the contrary case, it is unresisting (apratigha).”78

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70 Cf. T. 1830: 274a8-14: “One hundred years after the Buddha’s parinirvāṇa, in the country *Takaśaśilā (相又羅羅), there was Kumāralāta […] As he was compared with the sun, he was named “the master of comparison” (Dārṣṭāntika). Or he was named Dārṣṭāntika because he had composed the Drṣṭāntapāṇkti. […] Because [they depended] on the lineage (gotra) of the section of sūtras, the Sautrāntikas took this as the name of their school. At that moment, there were no Sautrāntikas yet, since the Sautrāntikas appeared 400 years after the Buddha’s parinirvāṇa.” See also Hahn (1985: 255-256). On the relation between the «Dārṣṭāntapāṇkti» and the term “Dārṣṭāntika,” see Przyluski (1940: 247).
71 T. 2145: 78c3-4: “[…] nine hundred years after the Buddha’s parinirvāṇa.” See also Katō (1980: 197; 1989: 37 ff.).
73 Cf. T. 1545: 78c9-10; T. 1852: 3c11-14.
74 See Katō (1989: 59 ff.).
76 T. 1822: 496a16-17.
The idea of “resisting” was first formulated in the Prakaraṇapāda, where ten elements (dhātu) – five faculties (indriya) and five objects (viṣaya) – are said to be resisting. In Dharmaśreṣṭhin’s work, the idea of the Prakaraṇapāda is adopted. The *Mahāvibhāṣā is the first Sarvāstivāda work that differentiates three forms of “resisting”: “resisting by way of being an obstruction” (āvaranapratīghāta): the quality that enables a body to obstruct the arising of another body; “resisting of the object” (viṣayapratīghāta): the object of a faculty (viṣaya) that strikes its respective faculty; and “resisting of the supporting object” (ālambanapratīghāta): the striking of the mind and mental states by their proper object (svālambana). These three forms are also mentioned in Upaśānta’s *Abhidharmaṁrhdaya. The passage goes as follows:

There are three forms of “resisting”: “resisting by way of being an obstruction” (āvaranapratīghāta), “resisting of the object” (viṣayapratīghāta), and “resisting of the supporting object” (ālambanapratīghāta). “Resisting by way of being an obstruction” is [as in the case of] one’s hands: the left and the right hand are opposed to each other. “Resisting of the object” is that a faculty (indriya) and its object (viṣaya) are opposed to each other. “Resisting of the supporting object” is [the relation between] mental consciousness (manovijñāna) and all factors (sarvadharma). Of these, only “resisting by way of being an obstruction” [can be] accepted. Because of mutual obstruction, something is said to be “resisting.” All these ten elements are mutually obstructing. When it is not so, it is impossible for [consciousness] to arise. As Bhadanta Kumāralāta said, “That which, at the moment an idea (manas) is about to arise, is resisting, should be known as ‘resisting’ (sapratīgha). In the contrary case, it is unresisting (apratīgha).”

It thus is clear that Upaśānta here refers to Kumāralāta to deny the Vaibhāṣika development of the notion of ‘resistance’ as we find it in the

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79 T. 1542: 756c9-10, 762c9-10.
80 T. 1542: 762c5-10: “Of the eighteen elements (dhātu) […] one is visible (sanidarśana) and seventeen are invisible (anidarśana). How many are resisting? Ten are resisting (sapratīgha) and eight are unresisting (apratīgha)”; T. 1550: 809c19-22: “Of the [eighteen] elements, one is visible (sanidarśana) […] It should be known that seventeen are invisible (anidarśana). Ten are then said to be resisting (sapratīgha). The ten elements that are resisting are the eye (cakṣus) and matter (rūpa), the ear (śrōtra) and sound (śabda), the nose (ghrāṇa) and smell (gandha), the tongue (jihvā) and taste (rasa), and the body (kāya) and the tangible (spraṣṭāvyā)”.
81 T. 1545: 391a8-c20.
82 On the interpretation of in this passage, see Willemen (1975: 202, note # 11).
83 T. 1551: 835b22-29.
The *Saṃyuktābhidharmahṛdaya also mentions the three forms of “resisting.” Here, the Kāraṇaprajñapti is referred to to justify the second of the three aforementioned forms, i.e., the form that deals with the five faculties and their respective objects. This is the form of “resisting” that was mentioned in the Prakaraṇapāda. Vasubandhu too, in the Abhidharmakośa, differentiates three forms of “resisting.” In line with Upaśānta, he refers to Kumāralāta for a correct interpretation, i.e. a denial of the existence of the second and third form of “resisting” listed in the *Mahāvibhāṣā. It is on this issue that P'u-kuang comments with the passage referred to in the beginning of this article. The passage runs as follows:

Kumāralāta, in Chinese Hao-t'ung, is the founder of the Sautrāntikas. In this school, he has composed the Drṣṭāntapaṅkī [...] and other works. Originally, the Sautrāntikas followed the Sarvāstivādins and issued from them. Because

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84 See T. 1538: 523c24-524a9. Notice that the *Saṃyuktābhidharmahṛdaya (T. 1552: 875a26) calls this work Prajñaptisūtra.

85 T. 1552: 875a16-b12.

86 T. 1558: 7a13-b23.

87 See also Katō (1980: 207), who further claims: “Cela nous amène à conclure que la kārikā de Kumāralāta fut composée après la création des deux derniers sapratīgha dans la Mahāvibhāṣā, c’est-à-dire que le Bhadanta Kumāralāta est postérieur à la Mahāvibhāṣā.” For a complete analysis and discussion of the passage, see Katō (1980: 203-207). See also de La Vallée Poussin (1971, vol. 1: 52).

88 Katō (1980: 199) translates this passage as: “Les Sautrāntika viennent des Sarvāstivādins.” As only the variant reading of the version of this text written in Tennin 天仁 2 (AD 1109) and preserved in Tōdaiji 東大寺 and of the version published in Genroku 元禄 15 (AD 1702) read 說一切有部 instead of 說一切有, another possible translation of this passage would be: “The origin of the Sautrāntikas derives from the explanation of [the notion that] everything exists.” This interpretation makes sense in the light of the discussion that follows on the explanation of the three time periods.
they [only] take the sūtras as norm, they are called Sautrāntika. Those who take what is proven (yuktas) as norm, are called the Sarvāstivādins. When, in this stanza, “obstruction” (āvaraṇa) is mentioned, the idea is that it is so that because something is hindered by something else, it does not succeed in arising.⁸⁹ When properly taking the specific object (svaviṣaya) as supporting object (ālambana), what is then said to be obstructing? It is as when visual consciousness (cakṣurvidjñāna) wants to arise regarding matter (rūpa) as object (viṣaya), its arising would be hindered by such other things as sound (śabda). When it would be obstructed by other things, it should be known it is “resisting” (sapratīgha); when properly taking matter as supporting object, it is said to be “unresisting” (apratīgha).⁹⁰ On this point, not all schools agree. The master of this treatise agrees with the Sautrāntikas. Therefore, it is said that this [explanation] can be allowed. The phrasing of the set of four alternatives (caṭuṣkoti) of the *Saṃyuktābhīdharmaḥdaya⁹¹ corresponds with the Sautrāntikas.⁹² [Since] this does not agree with the Sanskrit version, the translator must be wrong. As there is an explanation by an old virtuous [master],⁹³ it is the case that this stanza does not agree with the Sarvāstivāda [viewpoint].⁹⁴

The idea forwarded by P’u-kuang here seems to be the following. In the early Abhidharma literature, “resistance” was explained to be the

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⁸⁹ Judging from the further philosophical elaboration of this issue in terms of “appropriatedness” (upātta), this “something else” is likely to refer to the object (viṣaya) of another faculty (indriya). See below.

⁹⁰ This contradicts the second (and by expansion also the third) form of “resisting” differentiated in the *Mahāvibhāṣā. The argument is based on the interpretation of the word “resisting”.

⁹¹ T. 1552: 875b5-10: “Four alternatives should be mentioned. Sometimes, resisting of the object is not resisting by way of being an obstruction: the seven elements of awareness (sapta cittadhātavaḥ) and what is associated with awarenesses (cittasaṃprayuktas) of the element of factors (dharmaḥtā). Sometimes, resisting by way of being an obstruction is not resisting of the object: five outward elements. Sometimes, there are both resisting of the object and resisting by way of being an obstruction: five inward elements. Sometimes, there are neither resisting of the object nor resisting by way of being an obstruction: matter that is included in the factor sense-field, that what is unconditioned (asamskṛta), and formations dissociated from awarenesses (cittaviprayuktasmāskṛta).” See also Dessein (1999, vol. 1: 46). See also note # 4.

⁹² This item is not discussed in Dharmaśreṣṭhin’s *Abhidharmaḥdaya.

⁹³ The Chinese 有 占 德 釋 (T. 1821: 35c13-14) most likely refers to ‘Kumāralāta,’ as the quoted passage is preceded by 此中大德至此是所許者 (T. 1821: 35c4-5). Also in Fapao’s Chū-she Lun Shu, T. 1822: 496a9 we read: 中大德至此是所許. In the Abhidharma-kosa, Kumāralāta is referred to as 大德 (操摩難多) in the passage concerned (T. 1558: 7b11).

⁹⁴ T. 1821: 35c4-14. See also T. 1822: 496a9-17.
relation between a faculty and its respective object. In the course of philosophical development, three forms of ‘resistance’ came to be distinguished: “resisting by way of being an obstruction,” “resisting of the object,” and “resisting of the supporting object.” Of these, “resisting of the object” corresponds to the interpretation of ‘resisting’ presented in early Abhidharma literature. Therefore, Vasubandhu as well as Dharmatrāta explain this form by referring to the Kāraṇaprajñāpāti, and Vasubandhu further relates the Kāraṇaprajñāpāti to Kumāralāta. That they do not refer to the Prakaraṇapāda may be explained by the fact that the latter work had, in the course of time, been claimed by the Vaibhāsikas as one of the Śatpāḍabhidharma works. By expansion, the same reasoning can be applied to “resisting of the supporting object,” the specific case of mental consciousness (manovijñāna). ‘Resisting by way of being an obstruction’ is then explained as “something else” that hinders the arising of a specific form of consciousness. In that specific case, this other thing is “resisting” in the sense of “obstruction” (āvarana); in the contrary case, this other thing is “unresisting,” in the sense of “no obstruction.” As stated above, the explanation of P’u-kuang further suggests that (1) the Sautrāntikas issued from the Sarvāstivādins; that (2) Vasubandhu agrees with the Sautrāntikas; and that (3) Dharmatrāta too should, at least on this issue, be considered as agreeing with Vasubandhu’s Sautrāntika viewpoint.

4. The arising of perceptual consciousness (vijñāna)

Related to the above subject, is the problem of the arising of perceptual consciousness (vijñāna). In the śūtra literature, perceptual consciousness is said to arise in dependence upon a sense organ (indriya) and its respective object (viṣaya):

What arises because of the eye (cakṣus) and matter (rūpa) is visual consciousness (cakṣurviṣṇāna). The combination of [these] three things, makes feeling (vedanā), conceptual identification (saṃjñā), and reasoning (cintā) arise.95

One interpretation of the idea expressed in this passage, is that perceptual consciousness (viz. visual consciousness) needs two conditions to

arise: a faculty (indriya) and an object (viṣaya). These two in the first moment condition the arising of perceptual consciousness in the subsequent moment. The combination of this faculty (viz. the eye), its object (viz. matter), and the form of perceptual consciousness (viz. visual consciousness) of this second moment in its turn leads to thought concomitants (caitasika) in the third and following moments. In this formulation, a cause-effect relationship, whereby causes (hetu) exist prior to their effects (phala), is understood. The Abhidharmakośabhāṣya and the Sphutārthā Abhidharmakośavyākhyā attribute this interpretation to the Dārśāntika-Sautrantikas. P’u-kuang and Fa-pao attribute this idea to the Sautrantikas. Samghabhadra attributes it to the Dārśāntika-Sautrantika master Śrīlāta.

The earliest definitions of perceptual consciousness in Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma literature are provided in the Dharmaskandha and Saṃgītiparīyāya. These definitions are in line with the definitions we read in the Sūtra literature. The Dharmaskandha defines visual consciousness as follows:

Visual consciousness (cakṣurvijñāna) arises because of the eye (cakṣus) and matter (rūpa). Because of the combination of [these] three, contact (sparśa) arises. Among these, the eye is the dominant [sense organ]. Matter is what is taken as object (ālambana). Contact of the eye (caksuṣaṃsparśa) is the cause (hetu) [for visual consciousness]. [The form of consciousness that] is produced because of contact of the eye, belongs to the class of contact of the eye. All feeling of matter of which visual consciousness is conscious, belongs to feeling. This is what is understood as feeling arisen through contact of the eye.

96 See also Cox (1988: 41).
97 AKB: 145.5 ff; AKV: 306.27 ff. See also Kajiyama (1977: 117).
98 T. 1821: 176c4-6; T. 1822: 608a15-16. This idea is seen as contradicting the Vai-bhāṣika opinion (T. 1821), alternatively the Sarvāstivāda opinion (T. 1822), according to which simultaneity of cause and effect is also possible. On the Dārśāntika model of perception, see Cox (1988: 38-43).
100 On the dating of the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma works, see Willemen, Dessein, Cox (1998: 166-176).
101 T. 1537: 501b9-14. The definition provided in the Saṃgītiparīyāya, T. 1536: 429a15-18 (‘‘What is caused by the eye (cakus) and matter (rūpa) is visual consciousness
The first treatment of this subject in the *Hṛdaya* treatises is found in Upāśānta’s *A-p’i-t’an Hsin Lun Ching*, i.e., in connection with a discussion of how many elements are appropriated (*upātta*) and how many are unappropriated (*anupātta*). The latter discussion is also found in Dharmārṣṭāhin’s work. Here, matter (*rūpa*) that comprises faculties (*indriya*) and matter that is not separated from these faculties are explained to be appropriated when thoughts (*citta*) and thought concomitants (*caitasika*) dwell within this matter and, hence, proceed in it. This implies that the eye (*cākṣus*), ear (*śrōtra*), nose (*ghṛṇa*), tongue (*jihvā*), and body (*kāya*) are appropriated when they are present, because at this time, thoughts and thought concomitants dwell in them. When past or future, they are unappropriated.\(^{102}\) Upāśānta adopts this passage and applies the idea of appropriatedness to the forms of consciousness, claiming that “the five inward elements are appropriated when they are present, [and that,] sometimes, a form of consciousness (*vijñāna*) that is present [remains] idle, whereby [the five inward elements] are still said to be appropriated.”\(^{103}\)

In the *Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāstra*, the argument of the “idle” form of consciousness is included in a discussion on the exact locus of vision.\(^{104}\) Five alternatives for this are given. The opinion attributed to the Venerable Dharmārṣṭāta is that vision is located in visual consciousness. The idea that it is wisdom associated with consciousness of the eye that sees is attributed to Ghoṣaka. The Dārśāntikas are said to adhere to the opinion that it is a combination that sees matter.\(^{105}\) The Vātśūputṛīyas are credited with the idea that it is one eye that sees matter. These four

\(^{(cākṣur)vijñāna}$. In this case, the eye is the dominant [sense organ] and matter is the object (*ālambana*). Discernment regarding matter where the eye is conscious of, extreme discernment, the discernment that it is ‘matter,’ this is called ‘visual consciousness.’”) appears as a summary of the definition in the *Dharmaskandha*. On the problem of dating the *Dharmasangraha* vis-à-vis the *Sāṃgītāparīya*, see Willemen, Dessein, Cox (1998: 172). See also Stache-Rosen (1968, vol. 1: 160). The definitions in the *Dhātukāya* (T. 1540: 615c4-7) and in the *Prakaranapāda* (T. 1542: 701a3-5) are parallel to the one in the *Sāṃgītāparīya*.

\(^{102}\) T. 1550: 810a24-b1. See also Willemen (1975: 9-10); Armelin (1978: 58-59).

\(^{103}\) T. 1551: 836a26-27.

\(^{104}\) T. 1545: 61c7-24.

\(^{105}\) It should be remarked that Katō (1989: 23-24) notes that the “combination” mentioned here, is different from the “combination” identified as Sautrāntika in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (AKB: 31.12). From what follows, it appears that the “combination” attributed to the Dārśāntikas in the *Mahāvibhāṣā* is understood as a combination of a faculty with a form of consciousness related to another faculty. See also notes \# 97-99.
alternatives are denied, and the compilers of the *Mahāvibhāṣā claim that only a fifth alternative, viz., the two eyes see matter, is the correct idea. To the objection that if, indeed, it is the two eyes that see matter, matter should also be seen when these eyes are combined with another form of perceptual consciousness, the compilers of the *Mahāvibhāṣā argument that there are two kinds of eyes: eyes that are combined with their specific form of perceptual consciousness, and eyes that are combined with an idle form of perceptual consciousness. It is when combined with their specific form of perceptual consciousness that they see, not when together with an idle form of perceptual consciousness. This, in fact, is the explanation alluded to in Upāṣānta’s work, and discussed elaborately in Dharmatāta’s work under the topic of “homogeneity.”

As stated, the *Mahāvibhāṣā denies the possibility that it is a combination (sāmagrī) that sees matter. This opinion is attributed to the Dārśāntikas. The *Mahāvibhāṣā arguments that “vision as a combination” is erroneous because, in that case, “there should always be vision of matter, because there is no moment in which there is no combination.” In the light of the argument given in the *Mahāvibhāṣā in favor of the eyes as locus of vision, i.e., the idea that it is only when combined with their specific form of perceptual consciousness that the eyes see, not when combined with an idle form of perceptual consciousness, one possibility would be that the compilers of the *Mahāvibhāṣā claim that the Dārśāntika argument is that the eyes would see matter, even when they are combined with a form of perceptual consciousness other than visual consciousness. This interpretation of “combination” differs from the idea of a “combination” acknowledged as Sautrāntika. Another possible interpretation would be that the Dārśāntikas refused to designate an isolated factor as having prominent causal capability in perception. A “combination” would thus have to be understood as that perceptual consciousness is a stream of experience, i.e., a stream of cause and effect. This

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106 T. 1545: 61c10-11. The fact that another opinion is attributed to the Dārśāntika Bhadanta Dharmatāta is evidence that the names of teachers in the *Mahāvibhāṣā may only have been given for the sake of tradition. This then makes conclusions based solely on these names highly conjecturable.

107 T. 1545: 61c17.

interpretation is likely to be closer to the idea suggested in the early Sūtra literature and in the early Sarvāstivāda treatises.

As stated above, it is evident from Dharmaśreṣṭhīn’s and Upaśānta’s works that the eye (cakṣus), ear (śrotṛa), nose (ghrāṇa), tongue (jīhvā), and body (kāya) are thought to be appropriated when they are present, because thoughts and thought concomitants dwell in them then. When past or future, they are unappropriated. This explains why Śrīlāta is credited with the idea that past and future are known through deduction, and it also explains why the Dārṣṭāntikas accept that “nonexistent [objects] also are able to serve as object-fields that produce cognition.”

Dharmatrāta’s *Sāmyuktaḥābhidharmaḥdaya also contains a section on the locus of vision. In this work, the passage analogous with the above-mentioned section of Dharmaśreṣṭhīn’s and Upaśānta’s work is followed by the following question:

What sees? Is it the eye that sees? Is it visual consciousness that sees? Is it wisdom associated with visual consciousness that sees? Is it a combination that sees?

After claiming that all above proposed possibilities are erroneous, Dharmatrāta formulates the answer that “the eye sees matter when it is homogeneous (sabhāga).” This position explains why the first alternative quoted above (vision of the eye) is denied: homogeneity is a necessary condition for a faculty to operate. Dharmatrāta’s argument can be summarized as follows: each faculty has to be homogeneous (sabhāga) that one cannot sharply distinguish the activity of the object from that of the perceptual consciousness that is said to apprehend it; instead, one must view perception as a causal process.” See also Cox (1988: 76-77, note # 41 and # 45). The latter interpretation is likely to be closer to the opinion in the early Sūtra literature.

109 T. 1550: 810a24-b1. See also Willemen (1975: 9-10); Armelin (1978: 58-59). For the Sarvāstivādins, this does not apply to mental consciousness, as this form of consciousness is not restricted to the present moment only but can apprehend factors of any of the three time periods. See Cox (1988: 35-38). See also T. 1545: 390b10-c16.


111 T. 1562: 876b12-13. See also Dessein (1999, vol. 1: 55 ff.). The same discussion is also found in the Pañcavastukavibhāṣā, see Imanishi (1969: 24-26).

112 T. 1552: 876b14.

113 T. 1552: 876b20.
with its specific form of consciousness in order to be able to function. In this case, the perceptual activity itself lies within the faculty, but discernment belongs to the domain of consciousness.115 Applied to visual consciousness, this means that the eye can only function when it is linked to (is homogeneous with) visual consciousness. In this case, the visual activity is situated in the eyes. Although the eyes are linked to visual consciousness, this does not imply that consciousness takes over the function of the eyes (i.e. seeing), or that the eyes and consciousness attain a combined function. This interpretation is also in line with the above suggested idea that perceptual consciousness is a stream of experience.

In the period of Sautrāntika self-awareness, Vasubandhu, in his Abhidharma-kosā, follows Dharmatrāta’s explanation: “The eyes see matter when it is homogeneous.”116 Vasubandhu gives the following quotation from the Sūtra literature: “The brahmāṇa should know that the eye is like the gate through which matter is seen. Therefore it should be known that visual consciousness depends on the gate that is the eyes to see.”117 This quotation is paraphrased in the *Samyuktābhidharmahṛdaya: “Oh brahmaṇas, the eye is a gate because it sees matter.”118 The Abhidharma-kosā concludes with the Sautrāntika position: “All masters of the Sautrāntika say that the above is a senseless discussion. Visual consciousness arises because of the eye and matter. Here, there is no act of seeing; there are only causes and fruitions, no function. For the sake of ordinary discourse, it is said that the eyes see and that consciousness discerns. The wise one does not adhere to this saying. As the World-honored one has said, one should not adhere to popular sayings, one should not take serious the expressions of common use.”119 The statement that visual consciousness arises because of the eye and matter, with no act of seeing, indeed points to the fact that, according to Vasubandhu, it is impossible to designate an isolated factor as having prominent causal capability in perception.

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117 AKB: 30.23; T. 1558: 11a15-16.
119 T. 1558: 11b1-6.
5. The three time periods (trikāla)

The facts that the Dārśāntika interpretation of the arising of perceptual consciousness involves different time periods and that, according to Vasubandhu, “there are only causes and fruitions, no function,” relates this topic to the interpretation of the existence of the time periods themselves.

One of the five theses that Vasumitra enumerates as fundamental for the Sautrāntikas in the Samayabhедoparacanacakra is as follows:

All aggregates transmigrate (saṃkrāmanti) from a previous existence to a later existence. This is why they are called Saṃkrāntivāda.120

The opinion that all aggregates transmigrate from a previous to a later existence is, in fact, not peculiarly Sautrāntika. It probably is the most fundamental doctrine of the Sarvāstivādins in general.121 Within Sarvāstivāda, however, there are different explanations for this passing of the aggregates through the periods of time. The *Mahāvibhāṣā contains a famous passage on this issue:

There are four great Sarvāstivāda masters, each of whom established the difference of existence in the three time periods (trikāla) in a different way. The Venerable Dharmatrāta said that there is difference in mode (bhāvanyathātva). The Venerable Ghoṣaka said that there is difference in characteristic marks (lakṣaṇānīyathātva). The Venerable Vasumitra said that there is difference in state (avasthānīyathātva). The Venerable Buddhadeva said that there is mutual difference (anyonyathātva).

Those who say that there is difference in mode claim that when the factors proceed through time, it is their mode (bhāva) that is different, but not their substance (dravya). It is just as when a golden vessel is broken and other objects are made of it, the form (saṃsthāna) is different, but not the color (vārṇa). It further is just as when milk changes to koumiss, the power of its taste is abandoned, but not the color. In this way, when factors reach the


121 See also note # 88.
present from the future, although they leave the mode of the future and attain the mode of the present, it is not their substance that is obtained or left. When they further reach the past from the present, they leave the mode of the present and attain the mode of the past, but it is not the substance of these factors that is obtained or left.

Those who say that there is difference in characteristic marks claim that when the factors proceed through time, their characteristic marks are different but not their substance. All factors in time have the characteristic marks of the three periods of time. They are combined with one kind of characteristic marks but are not free from the two other kinds of characteristic marks. It is just as when a man is afflicted by one woman, he cannot be called free from affliction regarding other women. In this way, when factors abide in the past, they are properly combined with the characteristic marks of the past, but it cannot be claimed that they are free from the characteristic marks of the other two periods of time. When abiding in the future, they are properly combined with the characteristic marks of the future, but it cannot be claimed that they are free from the characteristic marks of the other two periods of time. When abiding in the future, they are properly combined with the characteristic marks of the future, but it cannot be claimed that they are free from the characteristic marks of the other two time periods.

Those who say that there is a difference in state claim that when all factors proceed through time, it is their state that is different, but not their substance. Just as when a counter is placed in the units [column], it is one; when placed in the tens [column], it is ten; when placed in the hundreds [column], it is one hundred. Although the respective positions are different, the substance of the counter does not change. In this way, factors proceed through the positions of the three time periods. Although they attain three time periods, their substance does not change. The establishing of the time periods by these masters is not in disorder. They depend on activity (kāri-ṭra) to establish the difference of the three time periods, and say that when a conditioned (saṃskṛta) factor does not yet have activity, it is said to be of the future time, when properly having activity, it is said to be of the present time, and when its activity has already disappeared, it is said to be of a past period of time.

Those who say that there is mutual difference claim that when factors proceed through time, their name differs depending on what comes before and after, just as a woman is called “daughter” depending on the mother and is called “mother” depending on the daughter. Although their substance is not different, they are called “daughter” or “mother” depending on what is different. In this way, it is the case that factors are “past” when depending on what comes later, are “future” when depending on what is before, and “present” when depending on both. The establishment of the periods of time by these masters is in disorder [...]

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Establishing the three time periods by claiming that there is difference in characteristic marks is also disorderly […] Those who claim that there is difference in mode also are unreasonable […] Only the third establishment of the periods of time is good.122

The question that is raised in this passage is the following: when things are really existing in the three time periods, what is it then that differentiates them as being past, present, or future? According to Erich Frauwallner, who has made an extensive study of this issue, the first of the above opinions, the theory attributed to Dharmatrāta, is the oldest one.123 It differs from the other three opinions, as it is the only theory that implies a changing mode (bhāva). The reason this theory is rejected is that mode cannot exist free from specific nature (svabhāva), i.e., free from substance (dravya). The Vaibhāṣika argument against this theory is as follows:

What can the mode (bhāva) of something be, free from its specific nature (svabhāva)? […] When a conditioned factor (samskṛta dharma) reaches the present from the future, its previous mode has to be extinguished. When [a conditioned factor] reaches the past from the present, its later mode has to arise. How can the past be [characterized by] arising and the future be [characterized by] extinguishing?124

The argument here is as follows: when something is future, it by definition has not yet arisen. When it is claimed that something changes mode when becoming present, this implies that its future mode has to be extinguished, without ever having arisen. As the specific nature of this thing has never existed as future yet, it can hence have no effect on the present. This implies that the present mode has to exist free from its previous (i.e. future) specific nature. A change in mode would thus imply a change in substance. This is impossible. The same is true for the present mode with respect to the past mode.

As the idea of a changing substance was not acceptable, other explanations that derive the difference of things in the three time periods from external conditions were sought. The first of these alternative explanations is attributed to Ghoṣaka. According to this theory, objects always possess

124 T. 1545: 396b18-22.
the characteristic marks of the three time periods, whereby they are combined with one of them without being disconnected from the other two. This theory was refuted because the three time periods would become one.125 The fourth theory was unacceptable because past, present, and future are also applicable to the past, present, and future themselves, i.e., there is earlier and later in the past, also, and this theory would – as with Ghoṣaka’s theory – imply that the difference between the three time periods was lost.126 The third theory, the one attributed to Vasumitra, claims that the passing of things through time is like the placing of a counter in the units, tens, or hundreds columns. This theory solves the problem of a changing mode and substance: objects of which the mode is not changing in itself are placed in another state (avasthā). This solution appears to be the most logical solution to the problem invoked by the first option. It is this theory that is accepted by Vasubandhu as “the most correct one” in his Abhidharmakoṣa.127

It is most remarkable that in the *Mahāvibhāṣā, this theory of Vasumitra that does not accept a change in substance, is explained with the concept of “activity” (kārita). Vasumitra is credited with the following explanation: “When a conditioned factor does not yet have activity, it is said to be of the future time; when properly having activity, it is said to be of the present time; and when its activity has already disappeared, it is said to be of a past period of time.”128 The claim is that it is the activity of the future time that is extinguished to become the activity of the present, and that it is the activity of the present that is extinguished to become the activity of the past. Such a theory, in fact, accepts a change in mode (bhāva). This means that in the explanation of the third theory, the mistake of the first theory is reintroduced. How is this possible? As already remarked by Erich Frauwallner, this passage on the three periods of time is anterior to the compilation of the *Mahāvibhāṣā, and merely serves as a “doxographical appendix.”129 It is this that must have made it possible for the theory of “difference in state” to become linked to the explanation

125 See Frauwallner (1973: 101).
126 See Frauwallner (1973: 102).
128 T. 1545: 396b7-8; T. 1546: 295c21-22; T. 1547: 466b22-247.
129 Frauwallner (1973: 100).
of the theory of “activity,” both theories being attributed to a certain Vasumitra.\textsuperscript{130}

As the theory of “activity” implies that something is past, present, or future depending on its functioning, one in fact accepts that the concept of time is inherent in the thing itself, and the whole concept of “time” loses importance. This precisely is the standpoint of the Vaibhāṣikas in the following passage of the *Mahāvibhāṣā:

There are three kinds of factors: past, future, and present factors. Question: “Why this discussion?” Answer: “In order to stop other schools and to manifest the correct principles. Some adhere to [the theory] that time (kāla) and conditioned factors (saṁskāra) are different, such as the Dārśāntikas and the Vibhajyavādins. They say that the substance of time is permanent and that the substance of the conditioned factors is not permanent. The conditioned factors pass through the periods of time (adhvān) like a fruit in a utensil. It is taken from this utensil and transferred into another utensil. They are also like people who leave this abode and enter another abode. The same is true for conditioned factors. They enter the present period of time from the future period of time, and they enter the past period of time from the present period of time. [This issue is raised] in order to stop this idea and to show that time and conditioned factors do not have a different substance. Time is [none other than] the conditioned factors, and the conditioned factors are [none other than] time.”\textsuperscript{131}

The statements, “the conditioned factors pass through the periods of time like a fruit in a utensil” and “like people who leave this abode and enter another abode,” parallel the statement that factors that proceed through time are “like when a counter is placed in the units [column], it is one; when placed in the tens [column], it is ten; when placed in the hundreds [column], it is one hundred.” This connects the theory of Vasumitra to the opinion that is attributed to the Dārśāntikas in the above section of the *Mahāvibhāṣā and explains why Vasubandhu claims that this theory is the most correct one. It is remarkable that while this theory of

\textsuperscript{130} See Frauwallner (1973: 104). Frauwallner (1973: 105) concludes that it can only be that a Vasumitra, master of the theory of the fruits was thought to be the same person as a Vasumitra, master of the theory of “activity.” See also Kajiyama (1977: 122); Cox (1995: 139-145).

\textsuperscript{131} T. 1545: 393a9-17. See also T. 1546: 293c20-26. T. 1547 does not contain this passage. An abridged version of this passage can be found in T. 1545: 700a26-b2. See also T. 1545: 696b24-29 and Frauwallner (1973: 104).
Vasumitra does not accept a change in substance, the Dārṣṭāntikas are, in this passage, reproached for claiming that “the substance of the conditioned factors is not permanent.” This, in fact, is the position of the first theory. As the *Mahāvibhāṣā accepts the theory of “activity,” it is not to be excluded that the Dārṣṭāntikas at first adhered to the theory that is attributed to the Venerable Dharmatrāta. When the problems this theory invoked were acknowledged, they changed their opinion in line with Vasumitra’s theory.

The discussion on the explanation of the existence of the three time periods is also taken up in the *Saṃyuktābhidharmahṛdaya in the chapter “Investigations,” which is not contained in Dharmaśreṣṭhin’s work. This work, too, agrees with the third theory. As Dharmatrāta wrote his *Saṃyuktābhidharmahṛdaya in the 4th century AD, i.e. later than the *Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāstra, this implies that here, too, this passage may only have been included as a “doxographical appendix.” We should further remark that in the *Saṃyuktābhidharmahṛdaya, the theory of “difference in mode” (bhāvānyathātva), claiming that things change mode without change in substance when they proceed through the periods of time, is attributed not to a particular Sarvāstivāda master, but to the Chuan-pien Sa-p’o-to 轉變薩婆多 (the “Sarvāstivādins of Change”).

K’uei-chi’s statement in the passage from the I-pu-tsung Lun Lun Shuchí, quoted above, “These masters acknowledge the existence of seeds (bīja). [They say that] there is only one seed that, in its course, evolves from the present (pratyutpanna) to reach a later period of time,” possibly should be interpreted in the light of Vasumitra’s theory. It is also not to be excluded that Vasumitra, in his Samayabhedoparacanacakra, refers to this viewpoint in the theory he attributes to the Sautrāntikas, quoted in the beginning of this section.

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According to the Abhidharmakośa (T. 1558: 104c20-21), this opinion is to be refuted along with the Sāmkhya theory. See de La Vallée Poussin (1971, vol. 4: 54-55, note # 3).

133 K’uei-chi (I-pu-tsung Lun Lun Shu-chí: 22a4-5). Regarding this, see Jaini (1959); de La Vallée Poussin (1936-1937: 131); Cox (1992: 80).

134 See also San-lun Hsüan I Chien Yu Chi T. 2300: 466b25-28, where it is formulated thus: “They hold to it that there are seeds (bīja) in the present that are continued and reach a later existence.”
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