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Dharmarakṣa and the Transmission of Buddhism to China

When we consider the entire history of Chinese Buddhist translation activity, there can be little doubt that Dharmarakṣa rightly takes his place among a handful of great names, including at the very least Kumārajīva, Paramārtha, and Xuanzang 玄奘. This status can be claimed in regard to both his output and his influence. Dharmarakṣa clearly ranks as one of the most prolific translators; by reliable count, he and his teams were responsible for 154 translations over a forty-year period, many of which are as sophisticated as they are sizeable. Moreover, his translations enjoyed considerable prestige. By all accounts his translation of the *Lotus Sūtra* was an immediate success, and it would be impossible to understand the emergence of fourth-century Chinese exegesis of *śūnyatā* (emptiness) thought without his translation of the *Perfection of Wisdom in 25,000 Lines*.

But my goal here is to locate Dharmarakṣa in the context of the broader transmission of Buddhism from India to China, particularly as the first Buddhist for whom we have evidence at Dunhuang, a site that may not have long known this Indian religion in his day. By starting with the evidence provided by his biography and the preserved colophons to his translations, we can piece together a partial history of his travels and translation activity from Dunhuang to north central China in the late-third century. In addition, these records give us some sense of who assisted and collaborated with him in his translation work, and this evidence may enable us to gain a better understanding of the nature of the earliest Buddhist presence along the important trade routes through the Tarim Basin.

I WOULD like to thank my colleagues Ding Xiang Warner of Cornell University and Valerie Hansen of Yale University for their careful reading of this paper and their valuable suggestions. In this article, the use of asterisks in transliterations indicates a reconstruction, usually based on Tibetan translations; the question mark indicates that there is no known correspondence and the transliteration is much less certain.

THE BIOGRAPHY OF DHARMAKṢA

What we know of Dharmarakṣa's life is derived largely from the early-sixth-century biography that is preserved in Sengyou's (445?–518) *Chu sanzang ji ji* 出三藏記集 (*Compilation of Notices on the Rendering of the Tripitaka*).¹ This biography, “Zhu Fahu zhuan” 竺法護傳 (“Biography of Dharmarakṣa”), was shortly thereafter incorporated – large sections of it verbatim – into Huijiao's (497–554) *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳 (*Biographies of Eminent Monks*).² The biographies must be our starting point for examining the life of this Buddhist translator from Dunhuang. What follows is an annotated translation of the version preserved in *Chu sanzang ji ji* with the disparities and additions of the *Gaoseng zhuan* version noted where appropriate.³ Throughout the translation I make critical remarks concerning the data presented by the sixth-century bibliophiles, and I augment their portrait with additional data from other sources.⁴ This allows me to pursue at more length a few issues related to Dharmarakṣa's life, translation career, and relations with Central Asian collaborators.

Zhu Fahu zhuan 竺法護傳 [*The Biography of Dharmarakṣa*]

Dharmarakṣa (Zhu Fahu 竺法護).⁵ His ancestors were Yuezhi

¹ *T* 2145, vol. 55, pp. 97c–98b.

² *T* 2059, vol. 50, pp. 326c–27a. There have been a number of studies concerning the sources of these collectanea as well as the relationship between them. See Arthur F. Wright, “Biography and Hagiography: Hui-chiao's *Lives of Eminent Monks*,” in *Silver Jubilee Volume of the Zinbun-kagaku-kenkyūsho* (Kyoto: 1954), especially pp. 421–22 on *GSZ* as a source for *GSZ*; Arthur E. Link, “Remarks on Shih Seng-yu's *Ch'u San-tsang chi-chi* as a Source for Hui-chiao's *Kao-seng chuan* as Evidenced in Two Versions of the Biography of Tao-an,” *Oriens* 10 (1957), pp. 292–95; and the translation of and commentary on these sources by Leon Hurvitz and Arthur Link contained in Hirai Shun'ei 平井俊榮, “*Kōsōden no chūshakuteki kenkyū*” 高僧傳の注釈的研究 (I), *Komazawa daigaku Bukkyōbu kenkyū kiyō* 駒沢大学仏教部研究紀要 49 (1991), pp. (1)–(15), especially the bibliography of studies pp. (6)–(7), n. 1. I would like to thank Victor Mair for not only bringing the series of articles by Hirai to my attention, but for kindly photocopying them and sending them to me from Japan.

³ I have benefited from the previous translations of Dharmarakṣa's *CSZ* biog. in Tsukamoto Zenryū, *A History of Early Chinese Buddhism: From Its Introduction to the Death of Hui-yüan*, trans. Leon Hurvitz (Tokyo: Kodansha International Ltd., 1985) 1, pp. 544–46, and Lai Man Mai, “Dharmarakṣa and His Work: The Impact of Central Asian Buddhist Thought in Translating Buddhist Texts in the Third to Fourth Century,” Ph.D. diss. (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1994), pp. 338–50, as well as the translation of the *GSZ* biog. in Robert Shih, *Biographies des moines éminents (Kao Seng Tchouan) de Houei-Kiao* (Louvain: Université de Louvain, Institut Orientaliste, 1968), pp. 33–37, and in Hirai, “*Kōsōden no chūshakuteki kenkyū*” 高僧傳の注釈的研究 (IV), *Komazawa daigaku Bukkyōbu ronshū* 駒沢大学仏教部論集 25 (1994), pp. (11)–(25). Nevertheless there are a number of places where I have disagreed with a given interpretation; I have noted such instances where significant.

⁴ Further scholarly discussion of Dharmarakṣa's biography can be found in Okabe Kazuo 岡部和雄, “Jikuhōgo den' saikōsei no koromi, Jikuhōgo yakkyō kenkyū no kiso no tame ni” 竺法護伝再構成の試み, 竺法護訳経研究の基礎のために, *Bukkyō shigaku* 仏教史学 12.2 (1965), pp. 67–87, and Kawano Satoshi 河野訓, “Jikuhōgo den ni tsuite” 竺法護伝について, *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 印学仏教学研究 37.2 (1989), pp. 85–88.

⁵ *GSZ* reads *Zhu tanmoluocha* 竺曇摩羅利. This transcription of Dharmarakṣa's monastic

月支.⁶ For generations they lived in Dunhuang commandery.⁷ When he was eight years old he left the household.⁸ He served the foreign *śramaṇa* Gaozuo 高座,⁹ taking him as his teacher. He

name also occurs in the colophon to Dharmarakṣa's translation of the *Suvikrāntacintidevaputra-pariprechā-sūtra* (CSZJJ, vol. 55, p. 48B.24), which also describes Dharmarakṣa as an Indian bodhisattva. Clearly his ethnicon, derived from that of his teacher at Dunhuang, is the source of that confusion. For a translation and discussion of this colophon, see Daniel Boucher, *Bodhisattvas of the Forest and the Formation of the Mahāyāna: A Study and Translation of the Rāṣṭrapālapariprechā-sūtra*, Studies in the Buddhist Traditions (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, forthcoming), chap. 5, and Antonello Palumbo, "Dharmarakṣa and Kaṅṅaka: White Horse Monasteries in Early Medieval China," in Giovanni Verardi and Silvio Vita, eds., *Buddhist Asia 1, Papers from the First Conference of Buddhist Studies Held in Naples in May 2001* (Kyoto: Italian School of East Asian Studies, 2003), pp. 186–99. Palumbo deals at great length with the seeming inconsistencies between this record and other notices concerning Dharmarakṣa's translation work, though these inconsistencies do not necessarily call the authenticity of this record into question in my opinion.

⁶ *GSZ* adds, "his original family name was the clan name *zhi* 支," i.e., he had the [Yue]zhi ethnicon. The ethnic identity and linguistic affiliation of the Yuezhi is one of the most vexed subjects in Central Asian history. Despite decades of studies drawing upon Greco-Roman, Chinese, Tibetan, and Central Asian sources, there has yet to be a consensus on even some of the most fundamental issues. Much of the problem lies in the great difficulty – and probable impossibility – of pinpointing the identity of the Yuezhi *before* their expulsion by the Xiongnu out of Gansu in the second century BC. Maenchen-Helfen is almost certainly correct in suggesting that the ethnicon Yuezhi in Chinese sources ceased as a sociological-ethnic term after the migration of the Great Yuezhi to the west (Otto Maenchen-Helfen, "The Yüeh-chih Problem Re-examined," *JASOS* 65 [1945], pp. 71–81). From that point, this designation represented a composite people: one group (the *Da yuezhi* 大月支) settled in the western Tarim Basin and eventually conquered Bactria, where they adopted an Iranian language and culture; others (the *Xiao yuezhi* 小月支) remained in the Nanshan region (in modern Gansu) among the Qiang tribes and probably spoke a Tokharian language. While there is no definitive evidence linking Dharmarakṣa to either group, the greater probability lies, I suspect, in his having belonged to the *Xiao yuezhi*, who may well have been related to, if not identical with, the indigenous inhabitants of the nearby Shan-shan kingdom. On the Yuezhi as discerned from Chinese sources, see Erik Zürcher, "The Yüeh-chih and Kaniska in the Chinese Sources," in A. L. Basham, ed., *Papers on the Date of Kaniska* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), pp. 346–90, and more generally Enoki Kazuo, G. A. Koshelenko, and Z. Haidary, "The Yüeh-chih and Their Migrations," in János Harmatta, B. N. Puri, and G. F. Etemadi, eds., *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, vol. 2, *The Development of Sedentary and Nomadic Civilizations: 700 B.C. to A.D. 250* (Paris: UNESCO, 1994), pp. 171–89.

⁷ Dunhuang was established as a military colony already in the second century BCE as a base for Chinese campaigns in the Western Regions, particularly against Dayuan 大宛 (Ferghana). It soon after became a mercantile hub, the point at which the northern and southern silk routes converged before continuing eastward through the Hexi corridor to the metropolitan centers of north China. For a discussion of the geographical and political nature of Dunhuang during the Western Jin, see Satō Chisui 佐藤智水, "Saishin jidai" 西晋時代, in Enoki Kazuo 榎一雄, *Tonkō no rekishi* 敦煌の歴史 (Tokyo: Daitō Shuppansha, 1980), pp. 41–46.

⁸ *Chujia* 出家 (Skt. *pravrajita*); some scholars regularly translate this Chinese expression as "became a monk," but obviously that is impossible here. Clearly this statement indicates that Dharmarakṣa became a novice (*śrāmaṇera*) at age eight and would have been fully ordained only upon reaching the appropriate age, usually said to be twenty.

⁹ The Song, Yuan, and Ming edns., as well as *GSZ*, read *Zhu Gaozuo* 竺高座, suggesting that Dharmarakṣa's teacher was either of Indian descent or was a Central Asian or Chinese monk who was himself ordained by an Indian master. Contra Erich Zürcher (*The Buddhist Conquest of China: The Spread and Adaptation of Buddhism in Early Medieval China* [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1959; rpt. 1972], p. 65), I see no reason not to take this as a proper monastic name,

[Dharmarakṣa] recited scriptures [to the extent of] ten thousand words a day; with a single glance he could [understand what he read]. By nature he was genuine and virtuous; his conduct was dedicated and assiduous. Firm in determination and fond of study, he sought teachers over a myriad of tricents (*li* 里). This is how he became broadly read in the six classics and widely versed in the sayings of the hundred schools.¹⁰ Although the world is caught up in praise and blame, Dharmarakṣa never had recourse to mere appearance and reputation.¹¹

At that time, during the era of Jin emperor Wu 武 (265–290), monasteries, temples, illustrations, and images were admired in the capital (Luoyang), yet the profound *vaipulya* (Mahāyāna) *sūtras* were confined to the Western regions.¹² Dharmarakṣa accordingly sighed in despair, frustrated,¹³ and set his mind upon disseminating the Great Way (the Mahāyāna). Accompanying his teacher to the Western regions, they wandered through diverse countries. The different languages of these foreign countries numbered thirty-six,¹⁴ and the scripts were similarly numerous. Dharmarakṣa widely studied them all; he was well versed in interpreting them.¹⁵

especially given the fact that it is preceded by the ethnicon *zhu* 竺.

¹⁰ In place of *shelie baijia zhi yan* 涉獵百家之言, *GSZ* reads *youxin qi ji* 遊心七籍, “surveyed (lit. ‘set his mind to wander through’) the seven treatises.” Shih, *Biographies*, p. 34, n. 122, suggests that *qi ji* 七籍 refers to the *qi lueh* 七略 (“The Seven Summaries”), also known as the *qi lueh bielü* 七略別錄 (“Another Catalogue of the Seven Summaries”), which was based on a catalogue by Liu Xiang 劉向 (77–6 BC) but composed by his son. This catalogue listed and digested books concerning bibliography, the six arts, the philosophers, poetry, warfare, numerology, and occult sciences. Hirai, “*Kōsōden*,” p. (20), n. 8, explains the seven treatises as the seven classics (*Shijing*, *Shujing*, *Liji*, *Yueji*, *Yijing*, *Chunqiu*, and *Lunyu*) in light of a reference in the biography of Zhang Chun 張純 in *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984) 65. Given the immediately preceding reference to the six classics, this explanation strikes me as less unlikely. For want of a better suggestion, Shih’s explanation seems preferable.

¹¹ In place of *yu shi ting* 於視聽, *GSZ* has *bao* 抱, “[without recourse] to harboring them.”

¹² *GSZ* describes the *vaipulya sūtras* as “confined to beyond the Pamirs (*cong wai* 蔥外),” a mountain range in southwest Xinjiang forming the western border of the Tarim Basin.

¹³ The biographer’s use of the expression *fa fen* 發憤 (“express frustration”) may have been intended to echo Sima Qian’s potent usage in *Shiji*. See Stephen W. Durrant, *The Cloudy Mirror: Tension and Conflict in the Writings of Sima Qian* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), pp. 13–15. I am indebted to my colleague Ding Xiang Warner for this reference.

¹⁴ The countries in the Western regions traditionally numbered thirty-six from at least Han times; see A. F. P. Hulswé and M. A. N. Loewe, *China in Central Asia; The Early Stage: 125 B.C.–A.D. 23. An Annotated Translation of Chapters 61 and 96 of the History of the Former Han Dynasty* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979), p. 71 and n. 2. This number cannot be taken literally. It only suggests that Dharmarakṣa was at home in the languages necessary for his travels in Central Asia. It is another question entirely as to whether he actually found texts in Central Asian languages during his travels.

¹⁵ I read *guxun* 詁訓 (“to explain or gloss [the classics]”) with the Song, Yuan, and Ming variant and *GSZ*. Note that this allusion to classical philological acumen by Dharmarakṣa’s

There were no phonemes, meanings, or graphs that he did not understand in detail. Having thus obtained numerous Western texts (*huben* 胡本),¹⁶ he returned to China. He transmitted and translated texts along the route from Dunhuang to Chang'an and copied them down into Chinese.¹⁷ The texts he obtained included *sūtras* of the Great and Small Vehicles, such as the *Bhadrakalpika*, *Tathāgatamahākaruṇānirdeśa*, *Saddharmapuṇḍarika*, *Lalitavistara*, and so on.¹⁸ Altogether there were 149 titles.¹⁹ His tireless endeavor was solely the task of broadly circulating [these texts]. Throughout his whole life he translated and copied [scriptures], toiling without any mention of weariness. The means by which the Dharma was disseminated throughout China was through the efforts of Dharmarakṣa.

At the end of the reign of emperor Wu of the Jin, Dharmarakṣa dwelled in seclusion deep in the mountains. In the midst of the mountains there was a pure river valley where he always took his bath and rinsed his mouth. Afterwards someone collecting firewood polluted and treated disdainfully the banks [of the river].²⁰

biographers supports Wright's contention that these biographers were actively engaged in an attempt to portray eminent Buddhist clerics in terms that would have appealed to sixth-century Chinese literati (Wright, "Biography and Hagiography," p. 387). Such statements cannot, of course, be taken as solid evidence for Dharmarakṣa's actual skills.

¹⁶ Instead of *huben*, *GSZ* reads *fanjing* 梵經, "Indic (lit. *brāhmī*) *sūtras*." On the distinction between *hu* and *fan* in these kinds of textual notices, see Daniel Boucher, "On *Hu* and *Fan* Again: The Transmission of 'Barbarian' Manuscripts to China," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 23.1 (2000), pp. 7–28. In that article I argued that *hu* may often have denoted *kharoṣṭhī*, one of the two scripts used to write Indic manuscripts in the first half of the first millennium. I render the term *hu* here as "Western," since Sengyou may use it here without the technical nuance that I believe it carried in many of the colophons he records.

¹⁷ I have treated the likelihood of such claims for Dharmarakṣa's skills in literary Chinese elsewhere; see Daniel Boucher, "Buddhist Translation Procedures in Third-Century China: A Study of Dharmarakṣa and His Translation Idiom," Ph.D. diss. (U. of Pennsylvania, 1996), pp. 62–169; "Gāndhārī and the Early Chinese Buddhist Translations Reconsidered: The Case of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtra*," *JAS* 118.4 (1998), pp. 471–506; and *Bodhisattvas of the Forest*, chap. 6.

¹⁸ The texts mentioned in *GSZ* are *Bhadrakalpika* (reading *xianque* 賢卻 with Song, Old Song, Yuan, and Ming variants, which is a wrong reading for *jie* 劫), *Saddharmapuṇḍarika*, and the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*.

¹⁹ As Shih (*Biographies*, p. 34, n. 126) mentions, we should almost certainly understand this number as representing those texts Dharmarakṣa translated rather than merely procured. I should also note that the number of translations attributed to Dharmarakṣa here differs from the number given by Sengyou in his own list in the *CSZJJ* (55, p. 9B.28), 154, and from the actual number listed there, 159, five of which Sengyou reports were not known to Dao'an in his catalogue of 374. The *GSZ* attributes 165 texts to Dharmarakṣa. Later catalogues expand this number greatly.

²⁰ *CSZJJ* reads here *hui man qi ze, shui* ... 穢慢其側水... *GSZ* reads instead *hui qi shuize* 穢其水側 "polluted the banks of that river."

The river suddenly dried up.²¹ Dharmarakṣa then wandered about, lamenting:²² “If the water is forever dried up, there truly will not be enough for my needs. I must certainly move away immediately.” As soon as he finished speaking, a spring flowed forth²³ and filled the river valley. Responses to his unfathomable sincerity were all of this kind.²⁴

Later he established a monastery outside of the Azure Gate in Chang’an where he zealously practiced the Way.²⁵ For this reason his virtuous influence radiated in the four [directions] and his reputation spread far and wide.²⁶ His monastic disciples numbered in the thousands; all came to honor and serve him.²⁷

At that time there was a *śrāmaṇera* named Zhu Fasheng 竺法乘.²⁸ At eight years of age he was [already] wise, relying upon Dharmarakṣa as his teacher. In Guanzhong 關中²⁹ there was a man from a prominent family who wanted to receive the great Dharma and test Dharmarakṣa’s moral virtue (*daode* 道德). He went to Dharmarakṣa under the pretense of explaining that he immediately needed 200,000 in cash.³⁰ Before Dharmarakṣa could re-

²¹ Read *zao* 燥 with Yuan and Ming editions. As Shih (*Biographies*, p. 35, n. 127) suggests, this account probably intends to indicate that this man urinated in the stream where Dharmarakṣa took his bath. As a supernatural response to his intrinsic purity and virtue, the stream dried up to protect Dharmarakṣa from defilement.

²² *GSZ* adds before the following discourse: 人之無德 遂使清泉輟流, “another’s lack of virtue consequently makes the pure spring cease to flow.”

²³ *GSZ* reads *yong* 涌, “to gush,” instead of *liuchu* 流出.

²⁴ *GSZ* adds the following interpolation from a eulogy (*zan* 贊) by Zhi Dun (314–366), a Buddhist intellectual who was thoroughly at home in the *xuanxue* and *qingtan* circles of the Eastern Jin dynasty (biog. in *GSZ* 50, pp. 348B–49C): “Therefore Zhi Dun, in making a eulogy on a statue, said: ‘The Venerable Hu was calm and tranquil; his virtue in the Way was deep and exquisite. Softly intoning [scriptures?] in the deep ravine, he rinsed his mouth with water from the dried up spring. How distant is the Venerable Hu now! Selected by heaven, [his virtue] was broad and deep. After he washed his feet in the flowing sands [of the Central Asian desert], he understood how to extract the mysterious principles.’”

²⁵ This is almost certainly the same monastery, Baima si, that was the site of his first recorded translation, the *Suvikrāntacinti-devaputra-paripṛcchā*; see *CSZJJ*, vol. 55, p. 48B.22–26. Note, however, that the colophon to this translation describes Baima si as *inside* the Azure Gate. See Palumbo, “Dharmarakṣa and Kaṅṭhaka,” pp. 186–90, on this disparity in the sources.

²⁶ Here *GSZ* reads instead: 德化遐布 聲蓋四遠, “his virtue transformed far and wide; his reputation spread in the four distances.”

²⁷ *GSZ* reads 咸所宗事, “he was honored and served by them all.”

²⁸ Zhu Fasheng was one of Dharmarakṣa’s most dedicated disciples at Dunhuang; he established a monastery at Dunhuang while Dharmarakṣa traveled to Chang’an and Luoyang for his translation work. See biog. at *GSZ*, 50, pp. 347B–C, and the discussion in Tsukamoto, *History of Early Chinese Buddhism*, pp. 229–30.

²⁹ Guanzhong, “Inside the Pass,” a region in modern Shanxi province, north of Chang’an.

³⁰ Although this incident smacks of a pious, apocryphal interpolation, Zürcher (*Buddhist Conquest*, pp. 68–69) rightly notes that it is significant that Dharmarakṣa’s biographer had no

ply, [Fa]sheng, then thirteen years old and serving at his teacher's side, said to the visitor: "the Master (*heshang* 和上; Skt.: *upādhyāya*) has considered [your request] and will grant it to you. The visitor left. [Fa]sheng said: "When I look at this man's mien,³¹ [I see that] he does not truly seek money. [His request] is solely to observe what the Master's moral virtue is like." Dharmarakṣa said, "I too take [his request] as such. The next day this visitor led over one hundred people of his clan to Dharmarakṣa and petitioned to receive the five precepts (*pañcaśīla*). He thoroughly apologized for his scheme to seek money. Thereafter gentry and commoners in the four directions heard about his fame and flocked to him. He propagated and fostered the Buddha's influence for over twenty years.³²

Later, when emperor Hui 惠 (r. 290–306) made a westward imperial tour to Chang'an,³³ Guanzhong was desolate³⁴ and the populace was dispersed. Dharmarakṣa and his disciples retreated from this region to the east, reaching Kun Pond 昆池,³⁵

qualms about a monk possessing large sums of money. While the story may tell us nothing of fact about Dharmarakṣa himself, it speaks volumes about the assumptions of prominent Buddhist clerics of the sixth century.

³¹ *Shense* 神色 is difficult to capture in English, although I think "mien" effectively conveys the sense that it is the man's outer bearing that reveals his inner mental state. Hurvitz's "emotional expression" (Tsukamoto, *History of Early Chinese Buddhism*, p. 545) strikes me as off the mark. This expression is clearly drawn from the long Chinese tradition of physiognomy, which assumed that one's inner states of mind were manifested in one's bodily and especially facial expression.

³² This entire section concerning Zhu Fasheng and the visitor seeking money (*CSZJJ*, vol. 55, pp. 98A.10–18) is omitted from the *GSZ* biography.

³³ Emperor Hui fled from Luoyang to Chang'an in 304 when the city came under attack. The Xiongnu and Xianbei tribes subsequently attacked Chang'an in 306; the emperor returned to a ravaged Luoyang and the region remained in chaos for the rest of his reign. See Rafe de Crespigny, "The Three Kingdoms and Western Jin: A History of China in the 3rd Century AD, II, *East Asian History* 1.2 (1991), p. 159; and Hirai, "*Kōsōden* (IV)," p. 23, n. 26. *GSZ* reads 及晉惠西奔, "When [Emperor] Hui of the Jin fled west..."

³⁴ Instead of *CSZJJ*'s *xiaotiao* 蕭條, *GSZ* reads *raoluan* 擾亂, "chaotic."

³⁵ *Kunchi* is the name of an artificial lake southwest of Chang'an in modern Shanxi province, dug at the order of Emperor Wu of the Western Han, so named for its likeness to a lake near Kunming. The Song, Yuan, and Ming recensions read *mianchi* 澗池, as does the text of the *GSZ*. *Mianchi* is a lake in modern Henan province, west of Yiyang 宜陽 district near ancient Luoyang. If Dharmarakṣa and his disciples headed east from Guanzhong, they could have reached the vicinity of Luoyang rather than a place to the west of Chang'an. Tang Yongtong has taken issue with this report, suggesting that it would have been highly unlikely if not impossible for Dharmarakṣa to have fled eastward toward Luoyang, presumably from Chang'an, during a period of intense turmoil and warfare. He thinks it more likely that Dharmarakṣa headed toward Liangzhou and probably died in or near Dunhuang; see Tang Yongtong 湯用彤, *Han Wei liang Jin Nanbeichao Fojaoshi* 漢魏兩晉南北朝佛敎史 (Changsha: Shangwu Yinshu guan, 1938; rpt. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), pp. 113–14. A more convincing explanation of the disparity among the sources can now be found in Palumbo, "Dharmarakṣa and

where Dharmarakṣa fell ill and died. He was seventy-eight years old.³⁶

Subsequently, when Sun Xinggong 孫興公 composed the *Treatise on Worthies of the Way*,³⁷ he compared seven monks from India with the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove, pairing Dharmarakṣa with Shan Juyuan 山巨源.³⁸ His treatise states:³⁹ “Because the Venerable Hu [Dharmarakṣa] lived virtuously, he was revered among men. When Juyuan rose to a prominent position, he discussed the Way [at court]. The deportment and virtue of these two masters was extraordinary; they could be companions of the same stripe.” He [Dharmarakṣa] was lauded by future generations in this way.

When Dharmarakṣa first obtained the *Chao riming jing* 超日明經 from the Western Regions, the *kharoṣṭhī* text (*huben* 胡本) was translated, but it was prolix and repetitious. At that time the *upāsaka* Nie Chengyuan 聶承遠⁴⁰ corrected the details and rectified the

Kaṇṭhaka,” pp. 197–98. Palumbo demonstrates that the designation Kun Pond “applied to the stretch of the Kunming canal to the east of Chang’an and more particularly outside the Blue Gate of the old city wall,” which would place it in the vicinity of Baima si, a monastery Dharmarakṣa is known to have worked in and perhaps died at.

³⁶ Although the length of Dharmarakṣa’s life is made clear, we have no means to pinpoint his birth and death dates. Most scholars have supposed that he died shortly after his last recorded translation (*Puyao jing* 普曜經) of 308, and have accordingly taken his dates to be ca. 233–ca. 310, although there are a few unresolved and probably unresolvable problems. See the discussion in Okabe, “Jikuhōgo den,” pp. 73–75.

³⁷ Sun Chuo 孫綽, courtesy name Xinggong 興公 (311?–368?), was a famous man of letters during the Eastern Jin dynasty who frequently wrote eulogies of eminent monks; biog. at *Jinshu* 晉書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974) 56. His *Daoxian lun* 道賢論, no longer extant, is quoted five times by name in *GSZ* and was written as a Buddhist response to Dai Kui’s 戴逵 *Zhulin qixian lun* 竹林七賢論 [*Treatise on the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove*] (*GSZ*, vol. 50, p. 326c). In it he regularly compares prominent Buddhist monks to well-known *qingtan* adepts; see Wright, “Biography and Hagiography,” p. 428, n. 6.

³⁸ Shan Tao 山濤 (205–283), courtesy name Juyuan 巨源, was a famous *qingtan* adept who held official posts under Jin emperor Wu; biog. *Jinshu* 43. On these eccentric literati figures, see Donald Holzman, “Les sept sages de la forêt des bambous et la société de leur temps,” *TP* 44 (1956), pp. 317–46; for a list of the seven monks, the corresponding sages of the Bamboo Grove, and Sun Chuo’s notion of their linked trait, see Hirai, “*Kōsōden* (IV),” pp. (23)–(24), n. 30.

³⁹ Hurvitz and Link (in Hirai, “*Kōsōden* [IV],” p. [16]) seem to take *lun yun* 論云 in *GSZ* as indicating one of Huijiao’s own critical estimates of the significance of a given point or passage in a biography or group of biographies; on this device, see Wright, “Biography and Hagiography,” pp. 390–91. However, *CSZJ* makes the referent explicit: *qi lun yun* 其論云, “his [i.e. Sun Chuo’s] *Treatise [on Worthies of the Way]* says...”

⁴⁰ Nie Chengyuan was by all accounts Dharmarakṣa’s closest disciple. He is mentioned in a number of colophons to Dharmarakṣa’s translations, including the earliest, the *Suwikrānta-cintidevaputra-paripṛcchā*, translated in 267 AD and continues to be mentioned in colophons over the next twenty-five years as a member of Dharmarakṣa’s translation teams. Suzuki Hiromi has discussed the possible influence of Nie Chengyuan’s scribal duties upon translation vocabulary choices in Dharmarakṣa’s corpus (Suzuki Hiromi 鈴木裕美, “Koyaku kyōten ni okeru yakugo ni tsuite, Jikuhōgo yakushutsu kyōten o chūshin to shite” 古訳経典における訳語

prose and verse sections, reducing it to two fascicles. The *sūtra* that is transmitted today is this [revised] one. Chengyuan was wise and experienced, talented and principled – devout in the work of the Dharma. When the Venerable Hu [Dharmarakṣa] rendered *sūtras*, he [Nie Chengyuan] would frequently examine and correct them.⁴¹

Between the reigns of [emperors] Hui and Huai 懷 (307–311), there was a *śramaṇa* Faju 法炬.⁴² It is not known whence he came. He translated *Loutan jing* 樓炭經 (**Lokasthāna-sūtra*).⁴³ [Fa]ju and the *śramaṇa* Fali 法立 together translated two *sūtras*: *Fajuyu* 法句喻 (*Dharmapada*) and *Futian* 福田 (*Sūtra on the Fields of Merit*). Fali also sought and obtained Western texts and separately translated over a hundred verses, but he did not manage to copy them before he met with illness and died. Shortly afterwards, when the turmoil and chaos of the Yongjia reign period (307–311) broke out, [his translated texts] became scattered and lost; they are not extant.⁴⁴

について、竺法護訳出經典お中心として、*Indogaku Bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 43.2 [1995], p. 724), and I have elsewhere suggested a considerable influence from scribes such as Nie Chengyuan in the reception of Dharmarakṣa's recitation and glossing of Indic texts; see Boucher, "Gāndhārī," esp. pp. 496–98. Nie Chengyuan's son, Nie Daozhen, also participated as a scribal assistant on at least three translations, including one, the *Tathāgata-mahākaraṇā-nirdeśa sūtra*, with his father in 291 (*CSZJJ*, vol. 55, p. 63B.13–18).

⁴¹ This section on Nie Chengyuan (*CSZJJ*, vol. 55, p. 98A.23–27) is slightly different in order and wording in *GSZ*. I render the *GSZ* passage as follows: "At that time there was an *upāsaka* Nie Chengyuan. He was wise and talented, of firm determination in exerting himself for the dharma. When the Venerable Hu [Dharmarakṣa] rendered *sūtras*, he [Nie Chengyuan] would frequently examine and correct the phrasing (*wenju* 文句). When the *Chao riming jing* was first translated, it was prolix and full of superfluities. Chengyuan abridged and corrected the prose and verse sections (read *wenjie* 文偈 with variant); today it circulates in two fascicles. His detailed modifications were all of this kind."

⁴² I suspect that this is the same person as Bo Faju 帛法巨, who is recorded to have served as a scribe (*bishou* 筆受) on Dharmarakṣa's translation of the *Lalitavistara* in 308; see *CSZJJ*, vol. 55, p. 48C.1.

⁴³ Sengyō attributes the translation of *Loutan jing* to Dharmarakṣa in his list of his translations (*CSZJJ*, vol. 55, p. 8C.20).

⁴⁴ This subordinate biographical information on Faju and Fali (*CSZJJ*, vol. 55, p. 98A.27–B.2) is included in *GSZ*, but in the biography of Weizhinan 維祇難 (50, p. 326B.28–C.1) instead of in that of Dharmarakṣa. On the inclusion of such appendices to major biographies, see Wright, "Biography and Hagiography," p. 390. In its place the *GSZ* biography of Dharmarakṣa has the following:

Chengyuan had a son, Daozhen 道真, who was also versed in Indic (*fan* 梵) studies. These two gentlemen, father and son, compared expressions [in Dharmarakṣa's draft rendering?], making them elegant and fitting without adding to the ancient [text]. In addition there were Zhu Fashou 竺法首, Chen Shilun 陳士倫, Sun Bohu 孫伯虎, Yu Shiya 虞世雅, etc., all of whom received Dharmarakṣa's instruction, held the brush [i.e., served as scribes], and collated [the translations] in detail. The Venerable [Dao]an said, "As for the texts rendered by Dharmarakṣa, if one examines the main points and fundamentals obtained from the hands of this venerable one, they are certainly correct. Although in general his translated *sūtras* are neither eloquent

DHARMARAKṢA'S TRAVELS AND TRANSLATION ACTIVITY

In order to document in more detail the course of Dharmarakṣa's migrations between Dunhuang and the capital as well as the specific periods of his most intense translation work, I will coordinate the list of his translation corpus provided by Sengyou's catalogue *Chu sanzang ji ji* (written ca. 515),⁴⁵ taken together with the preserved colophons that provide information on the dates and locations at which some texts were translated.⁴⁶ The restriction of this survey to Sengyou's catalogue is intended to apply a strict criterion for establishing the most likely parameters of Dharmarakṣa's corpus.⁴⁷ Later bibliographers, as is well known, greatly expanded the attributions to the early translators, sometimes to account for the many anonymous works then extant, and other times to legitimate apocryphal compositions produced in China.⁴⁸ Thus the corpus of Dharmarakṣa was inflated to 165 texts already by the time

nor subtle, neither smooth nor clear, they are intelligible and unassuming. [His translations] are particularly good at [expressing the doctrine of] non-production (*wusheng* 無生; *anutpada*). They rely upon wisdom, not polish. They are simple and therefore close to the [original] text." He [Dharmarakṣa] is praised like this. Dharmarakṣa's clan] lived for generations at Dunhuang; his instruction in the Way was widely spread (read *xia* 洽 with variant). People at that time all called him the Dunhuang *bodhisattva*.

⁴⁵ *T* 2145, vol. 55, pp. 7B-9C.

⁴⁶ I have produced a complete list of Dharmarakṣa's translation oeuvre, together with additional bibliographic information in Boucher, "Buddhist Translation Procedures," pp. 259-91. In *ibid.*, chap. 2, I have translated all of the preserved colophons and discussed in detail their implications for understanding the translation process itself.

⁴⁷ Erik Zürcher, "A New Look at the Earliest Chinese Buddhist Texts," in Koichi Shinohara and Gregory Schopen, eds., *From Benares to Beijing: Essays on Buddhism and Chinese Religion in Honour of Prof. Jan Yün-hua* (Oakville, Ontario: Mosaic Press, 1991), pp. 278-79, applies the even more stringent criterion of limiting the corpus of the translators of the second through fourth centuries to those works known from Dao'an's now lost catalogue of 374, titled *Zongli zhongjing mulu* 綜理眾經目錄, which is cited at length as Sengyou's principal authority for the Han, Three Kingdoms, and Jin period translations; see also Kyoko Tokuno, "The Evaluation of Indigenous Scriptures in Chinese Buddhist Bibliographical Catalogues," in Robert E. Buswell, Jr., ed., *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha* (Honolulu: U. Hawai P., 1990), pp. 33-35, on Dao'an's catalogue. It is important to remember, as Zürcher himself rightly points out, that prudent as Dao'an was for his time, many of his attributions were based on earlier catalogues that were lost by the time of Sengyou, or upon stylistic considerations that would not hold up to modern scholarly scrutiny. Moreover, it is also clear from Dao'an's own reports that he knew of many texts to which he had no access, especially those preserved in Liangzhou; see Sengyou's *Xinji angong liangtu yijing lu* 新集安公涼土異經錄, *CSZJ*, vol. 55, pp. 18c-19b. Many more than the 59 titles listed here – some having clear resemblances in name to those in Dharmarakṣa's corpus – must have existed beyond Dao'an's reach. Thus we have to leave open the possibility, indeed the likelihood, that some of Dao'an's attributions are mistaken and some of his omissions are appropriately filled by Sengyou on the basis of other catalogues. In point of fact, however, there are only five texts noted by Sengyou as translated by Dharmarakṣa that are not known to Dao'an, and some of these latter attributions are indeed questionable on stylistic grounds.

⁴⁸ On the Chinese Buddhist bibliographies and their criteria for attribution, see Tokuno, "Evaluation of Indigenous Scriptures." See also Antonino Forte, "The Relativity of the Concept

of Huijiao's *Gaoseng zhuan* biography of Dharmarakṣa in the early-sixth century, then to as many as 210 in Fei Zhangfang's 費長房 *Lidai sanbao ji* 歷代三寶紀 of 597, only to be edited down to 175 by Zhisheng 智昇, in his *Kaiyuan shijiao lu* 開元釋教錄 in 730.⁴⁹

Chronological List of Translations

Below is a list in chronological order of only those texts for which we have dates of their translation; I have included the sites of translation when known. Such a list will allow us to chart the ebbs and flows of Dharmarakṣa's activity, which can then be integrated with other data about his life and the history of the period during which he worked.⁵⁰

267

December 21 (266)–late January/early February:⁵¹ *Xuzhen tianzi jing*
須真天子經 [*Suvikrāntacintideva-putra-paripṛcchā-sūtra*] at the White
Horse Monastery in Chang'an⁵²

of Orthodoxy in Chinese Buddhism: Chih-sheng's Indictment of Shih-li and the Proscription of the *Dharma Mirror Sūtra*," in Buswell, ed., *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*, pp. 239–49, for a good example of the relativity of the categories "orthodox" and "apocryphal" and the political implications of such designations by cataloguers.

⁴⁹ Attributions to Dharmarakṣa by later cataloguers have already been thoroughly studied by Japanese scholars. See, e.g., Tokiwa Daijō 常盤大定, *Gokan yori Sōsei ni itaru yakkyō sōroku* 後漢より宋齊に至る訳経総録 (Tokyo: Tōhō Bunka Gakuin, 1938; rpt. Kokusho kangyō, 1973), pp. 602–72; Ui Hakuju 宇井伯寿, *Shaku Dōan kenkyū* 釈道安研究 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1956), pp. 188–94; and Okabe Kazuo, "Jikuhōgo no yakkyō ni tsuite" 竺法護の訳経について, *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 11.1 (1963), pp. 148–49, and idem: "Kyōroku no hikaku kara mita Jikuhōgo no yakkyō busū" 経録の比較から見た竺法護の訳経部数, *Sōtōshū kenkyū kiyō* 曹洞宗研究紀要 4 (1972), pp. 114–16; "Yakkyōshi kenkyū josetsu (2): genzōkyōchū no Jikuhōgo yaku no saikentō" 訳経史研究序説(二) 現蔵経中の竺法護訳の再検討, *Sōtōshū kenkyū kiyō* 5 (1973), pp. (16)–(27); and "Yakkyōshi kenkyū josetsu (3)," *ibid.* 6 (1974), pp. (3)–(13).

⁵⁰ See also Kawano Satoshi, "Jikuhōgo no kyōten yakushutsu nentō saikō" 竺法護の経典訳出年等再考, *Bukkyō bunka* 仏教文化 22 (1989), pp. 50–54, where he notes the translation dates provided by the later – but certainly less reliable – catalogues as well.

⁵¹ The colophon dates the completion to the thirtieth day of the twelfth lunar month (Tai-shi 2). This is problematic, as pointed out by Palumbo ("Dharmarakṣa and Kaṅṭhaka," p. 188) since that month had only 29 days. If 30 is a mistake for 13, then the date would be equivalent to January 25, 267. Zhisheng's *Kaiyuan shijiao lu* (T 2154, p. 494c), does in fact place the completion of this translation on the 13th day, but in the year Taishi 3. Obviously this constitutes an emendation for which we have no clear justification (see Palumbo, pp. 190–91, n. 66). It is possible, as I suggest below, that the colophon composers may not always have been fully current with calendrical changes as they recorded the dates of these works. Given the problems, we can only provisionally date the completion of the translation to late-January or early-February of 267.

⁵² Tokiwa, *Gokan yori Sōsei ni itaru*, p. 611, assumes that this record is mistaken, having confused some monastery in Chang'an with the famous Baima si of Luoyang. I have difficulty, however, in finding anything approaching an explanation in Tokiwa's discussion. I see no reason why a monastery in Chang'an could not have been named after the famous translation center of Han Buddhism, especially if it too served as a regular site for Dharmarakṣa's trans-

- October 15: *Biqiuni jie jing* 比丘尼誠經 [*Bhikṣuṇī-prātimokṣa?*]
October 26: *Sanpin huiguo jing* 三品悔過經 [*Triskandhaka?*] 269
September 6: *Fangdeng nihuan jing* 方等泥洹經 [*Caturdāraśasamādhī-sūtra*]
270
October 31: *Deguang taizi jing* 德光太子經 [*Rāṣṭrapālapariṣcchā-sūtra*]
November: *Baozang jing* 寶藏經 [*Ratnakāraṇḍakavyūha-sūtra*]
271
February 23: *Wenshushili wuti huiguo jing* 文殊師利五體悔過經
November 4: *Chiren pusa jing* 持人菩薩經 [**Jagatiṃdharapariṣcchā-sūtra*]⁵³
273
March 6: *Yanwang jing* 鴈王經
284
March 26: *Xiuxing jing* 修行經 [*Yogācārabhūmi-sūtra*] at Dunhuang
November 8: *Aweiyuezhizhe jing* 阿惟越致遮經 [*Avaivartikacakra-sūtra*] at Dunhuang
285
August 4: *Dashanquan jing* 大善權經 [*Upāyakaśalyajñānottarabodhisattva-pariṣcchā-sūtra*]
August 25: *Hailongwang jing* 海龍王經 [*Sāgaranāgarājapariṣcchā-sūtra*]
286
April 20: *Chixin jing* 持心經 [*Viśeṣacintibrahmapariṣcchā-sūtra*] at Chang'an
September 15–October 6: *Zhengfahua jing* 正法華經 [*Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra*] at Chang'an (?)
November 27: *Guangzan jing* 光讚經 [*Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*] at Chang'an (?)
287
January 28: *Puchao jing* 普超經 [*Ajātaśatrukaukṛtyavinodanā-sūtra*]
February 10: *Pumen jing* 普門經 [*Samantamukhaparivarta-sūtra*]
May 26: *Baonü jing* 寶女經 [*Mahāyānopadeśa-sūtra*]
288
November 18: *Miji jing* 密跡經 [*Tathāgatācintiyaguhyanirdeśa-sūtra*]
289
May 14: *Wenshushili jinglü jing* 文殊師利淨律經 [*Paramārthasamvṛti-satyānirdeśa-sūtra*] at the White Horse Monastery in Luoyang

lation work. On the existence of a Baima si in Chang'an, and perhaps, even its priority to the famous center at Luoyang, see now Palumbo, "Dharmarakṣa and Kaṅthaka," pp. 186–99.

⁵³ I owe the suggestion of this Indic equivalence to Jan Nattier, *A Few Good Men: The Bodhisattva Path According to the Inquiry of Ugra (Ugraparīcchā-sūtra)*, Studies in the Buddhist Traditions (Honolulu: U. Hawai P., 2003), p. 220, n. 76.

- December 30: *Li gou shinü jing* 離垢施女經 [*Vimaladattāparipṛcchā-sūtra*]
 December 30: *Moni jing* 魔逆經 [*Mañjuśrīvikurvānparivarta-sūtra*] at the
 White Horse Monastery in Luoyang
- 290
 March 4: *Famojin jing* 法沒盡經 [*Dharmanirodha-sūtra* ?]
 September 5: *Baoji jing* 寶結經 [*Ratnacūḍāparipṛcchā-sūtra*]
 November 3: Lecture on *Zhengfahua jing* at Eastern Ox Monastery in
 Luoyang
 End of year: *Jigudu mingde jing* 給孤獨明德經
- 291
 May 23: *Yongfuding jing* 勇伏定經 [*Śuraṃgamasamādhi-sūtra*]
 May 27: *Dushipin jing* 度世品經 [*Lokātyayaparivarta-sūtra* ?]
 August 18–October 3: *Da'ai jing* 大哀經 [*Tathāgatamahākaraṇānirdeśa-*
sūtra]
 No month/day: *Mawang jing* 馬王經
 No month/day: *Puyi jing* 普義經
- 292
 January 31: *Rulai xingxian jing* 如來興顯經 [*Tathāgatottpattisambhava-*
nirdeśa-sūtra]
 February 16 (?): *Yaoji jing* 要集經 [*Buddhasaṃgīti-sūtra*]
- 295
 January 27: *Shengfayin jing* 聖法印經 [*Acaladharmamudrā-sūtra* ?] at Jiu-
 quan 酒泉
- 297
 December 21: *Jianbei yiqiezhī jing* 漸備一切智經 [*Daśabhūmika-sūtra*] at
 the Shixi 市西 Monastery in Chang'an
- 300
 August 22: *Xianjie jing* 賢劫經 [*Bhadrakalpika-sūtra*] in Luoyang (?)
- 302
 May 25: *Wugaiyi jie shixing jing* 五蓋疑結失行經
 November 9: *Pusa shizhu jing* 菩薩十住經 [*Daśabhūmika-sūtra* ?]
- 303
 January 27: *Loutan jing* 樓炭經 [*Lokasthāna-sūtra* ?]
 May 11: *Shunquan fangbian jing* 順權方便經 [*Strīvīartavyākaraṇa-sūtra*]
 June 2: *Wubai dizi benqi jing* 五百弟子本起經 [*Anavatapta-gāthā*]
 June 7: *Fo wei pusa wu meng jing* 佛爲菩薩五夢經
 June 12: *Ruhan sanmei jing* 如幻三昧經 [*Susthitamatiparipṛcchā-sūtra*]
 June 18: *Mile benyuan jing* 彌勒本願經 [**Maitreyaparipṛcchā-sūtra*]
 June 21: *Shelifu huiguo jing* 舍利弗悔過經
 August 29: *Baotai jing* 胞胎經 [*Garbhavikrāntinirdeśa-sūtra* ?]
 December 28: *Shidi jing* 十地經 [*Daśabhūmika-sūtra* ?]

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April 9: *Yanjingding jing* 嚴淨定經

April 22 (?): *Guke jing* 賈客經

June 5 (?): *Gengchu asheshiwang jing* 更出阿闍世王經 [a retranslation of the *Ajātaśatrukaukṛtyavinodanā?*]

September 29 (?): *Mie shifang ming jing* 滅十方冥經 [*Daśandigandhakāra-vidvamsana-sūtra*]

Tai'an 3, first month, eighteenth day:⁵⁴ *Motianwang jing* 摩天王經 [*Mahādevārāja-sūtra*]

Tai'an 3, second month, first day: *Zhaoming sanmei jing* 照明三昧經

Tai'an 3, second month, seventh day: *Suoyu zhi huan jing* 所欲致患經

305

March 7: *Ren suoconglai jing* 人所從來經

March 10: *Shidengzang jing* 十等藏經

March 13: *Yanwang wubai yan ju jing* 鴈王五百鴈俱經

March 18: *Fieju jing* 誠具經

March 22: *Fuedaosu jing* 決道俗經

March 31: *Mengshi jing* 猛施經

April 11: *Chengyu jing* 城喻經 [*Nagaropama-sūtra* ?]

306

March 8: *Piyu sanbaishou jing* 譬喻三百首經

307

April 23 (?): *Wujibao jing* 無極寶經

308

Fifth month: *Puyao jing* 普耀經 [*Lalitavistarasūtra*] at the Tianshui 天水 Monastery

Twelfth month, first day: *Achamo jing* 阿差末經 [*Akṣayamatīnirdeśa-sūtra*] (?)⁵⁵

The above list shows that Dharmarakṣa began his translation career in Chang'an shortly after the founding of the Jin dynasty.⁵⁶ Between 266 and 273 he translated at least nine texts. From March of 273 to March of 284 we hear nothing about his activities. Various scholars have speculated as to how he used this time: mountain seclusion, as perhaps suggested by his biographer, mastering the Chinese language,

⁵⁴ No year corresponding to the third year of the Tai'an reign period is listed in my sources. The Yong'an reign period begins in the first month of 304, but an intercalary month is added after Taian 2 (=January 24–February 21, 304) which could be the source of the confusion here. There was a rapid succession of reign period title changes in 304; it may be that these changes were not always known to colophon writers as they were instituted.

⁵⁵ This appears to be a duplication of the same text named *Wujinyi jing* 無盡意經 recorded earlier in Sengyou's list; Dao'an's catalogue omits the version by the former title.

⁵⁶ On the founding and early history of the Jin dynasty, see de Crespigny, "Three Kingdoms and Western Jin."

acquiring new texts from Central Asia, or accessing translations completed under the Wu kingdom in the south, which was incorporated into the Jin empire in the year 280.⁵⁷ It is entirely possible, however, that many of his other translations for which no date is preserved were translated during this period of seeming inactivity.

After this eleven-year period of silence, our records show Dharmarakṣa to be active and on the move for the remainder of his career, translating texts not only between Dunhuang and Chang'an, as his biography states, but as far east as the capital at Luoyang as well. Two texts are recorded to have been translated at Dunhuang in the year 284. Between November of 284 and the spring of 286, he transferred his translation activities to Chang'an again, where he rendered at least four large texts in less than a year: *Viśeṣacintibrahmapariṣcchā-sūtra*, *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra*,⁵⁸ *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*,⁵⁹ and *Ajātaśatrukaukṛtyavinodanā-sūtra*. In the spring of 289 Dharmarakṣa translated the *Paramārthasamvṛtisatyānirdeśa-sūtra* at the famous White Horse Monastery in Luoyang, the farthest east he is recorded to have traveled.⁶⁰ It appears that Dharmarakṣa spent at least two years in Luoyang. His evangelical work there included a lecture to a large assembly at the Eastern Ox Monastery on the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra*, which he had translated, presumably in Chang'an, four years prior.

Although there are no notices concerning the location of his next translation until the year 295, it is likely that Dharmarakṣa returned to Chang'an early in 291. His translation of the *Śūraṃgamasamādhi-sūtra* during that year was assisted by Nie Chengyuan, his principal associ-

⁵⁷ See Kawano, "Jikuhōgo den ni tsuite," pp. 87–88, on the supposition – unsupported in itself – that Dharmarakṣa may have acquired translations by Zhi Qian during this "blank period."

⁵⁸ See Karashima Seishi (辛島静志), *The Textual Study of the Chinese Versions of the Saddharma-puṇḍarīkasūtra in Light of the Sanskrit and Tibetan Versions* (Tokyo: The Sankibo Press, 1992), for a brilliant study of Dharmarakṣa's translation of the Lotus Sūtra in comparison with all known Sanskrit texts and the Tibetan translation.

⁵⁹ Stefano Zacchetti has recently published an impressive study and heavily annotated translation of the first three chapters of Dharmarakṣa's translation of *Guang zan jing*; see *In Praise of the Light: A Critical Synoptic Edition with an Annotated Translation of Chapters 1–3 of Dharmarakṣa's Guang zan jing* 光贊經, *Being the Earliest Chinese Translation of the Larger Prajñāpāramitā*, Bibliotheca Philologica et Philosophica Buddhica 8 (Tokyo: The International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology, Soka University, 2005).

⁶⁰ Henri Maspero ("Communautés et moines bouddhistes chinois au II^e et III^e siècles," *BEFEO* 10 [1910], p. 223, n. 2) argued that reports of Dharmarakṣa having traveled to Luoyang were in error, stemming from a confusion with an earlier Dharmarakṣa reported in the colophon to Lokakṣema's translation of the *Pratyutpannasamādhi-sūtra*. He subsequently revised this position, recognizing that the error was almost certainly in the earlier reference to Dharmarakṣa, whose name was out of place in that colophon; see Maspero, "Les origines de la communauté bouddhiste de Lo-yang," *JA* 225 (1934), p. 94, n. 4.

ate there, and according to our records, Nie Chengyuan is not known to have worked outside of Chang'an.⁶¹ The translation committees for the *Tathāgatamahākaruṇānirdeśa-sūtra*, rendered later that same year, and for the *Buddhasaṃgīti-sūtra*, rendered early in 292, also included Nie Chengyuan, suggesting that Dharmarakṣa may well have remained in Chang'an throughout this period. In 295 he moved west along the Hexi corridor to Jiuquan commandery, but returned to Chang'an in 297 to translate the *Daśabhūmika-sūtra*. It is also during this time that the famous "Disturbances of the Eight Princes" occurred, in which members of the Jin ruling family (the Sima 司馬 clan) vied with one another and with the increasingly prominent Jia 賈 family for power at court and for regional military control, resulting in extensive bloodshed in and around the capital.⁶² This crisis quickly destabilized the empire and opened the door to subsequent raids by northern Xiongnu 匈奴 and Xianbei 鮮卑 tribes. It is probably not mere coincidence that Dharmarakṣa seems to have left Luoyang by early 291, and there is no clear record of his having returned there again.

After this time, our records become more uncertain. We have a vague mention in the colophon to the *Bhadrakalpika-sūtra* that after Dharmarakṣa orally rendered his translation into Chinese, one Zhu Fayou 竺法友 brought it from Luoyang. Does this mean that the Indian text was translated in Luoyang or just that a copy of it circulated from there? We cannot be certain, and as I mentioned above, Luoyang may have been a difficult place to work at this time. Furthermore, we have two different translation dates for this text: Yongkang 1, seventh month, twenty-first day (= August 22, 300) and Yuankang 1, seventh month, twenty-first day (= September 1, 291).⁶³ We might be inclined to favor the latter date if indeed this *sūtra* was rendered in Luoyang, since we know that Dharmarakṣa was residing there at that time. But we also know that he was in the midst of working on the *Tathāgatamahākaruṇānirdeśa-sūtra* from August 18 to October 3, 291, making it highly unlikely that he could also have translated the large *Bhadrakalpika-sūtra* at the same time.

From 303 to 305 there appears to be a rash of rapidly completed short texts. However, there are several reasons why we might be sus-

⁶¹ See Dao'an's remarks concerning the translation site of *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*: "Thus when he [Dharmarakṣa] issued the *sūtra*, the participants [in the translation process] were said to include Nie Chengyuan as scribe, Bo Yuanxin, and the *śramaṇa* Fadu. They are all Chang'an residents. For this reason I assume that [to be the place of translation] (*CSZJJ*, vol. 55, p. 62B.27-29).

⁶² See de Crespigny, "Three Kingdoms and Western Jin," pp. 152-57.

⁶³ Cf. *CSZJJ*, vol. 55, pp. 7B.13 and 48C.3.

picious of these records. First, it was precisely during this period that northern China was in a desperate state of political and social turmoil. The Xiongnu and Xianbei had forced the emperor to flee the capital in 304, ravaging Luoyang before turning westward to attack Chang'an in 306.⁶⁴ Although this by no means proves that Dharmarakṣa could not have found safe haven in which to continue his translation work, conditions would certainly have been far from ideal. Secondly, some of our records of these translations are in doubt. For example, the *Shelifu huiguo jing* that is currently extant is attributed to An Shigao but almost certainly postdates both him and Dharmarakṣa. If this is the same text referred to by Sengyou, it is a mistaken attribution. Also, the dates of all of the texts translated in 304 except *Yanjingding jing* are uncertain: they refer either to dates that are not known to exist from our calendrical sources (e.g., the third year of the Tai'an 太安 reign period) or to dates that are ambiguous.⁶⁵

After 305 there are only four texts recorded to have been translated by Dharmarakṣa, two of which were not known to Dao'an's catalogue of 374 and are therefore also in some doubt.⁶⁶ The last reliable record of Dharmarakṣa's translation activity is his rendering of the *Lalitavistara* in 308 at the Tianshui Monastery. We do not know where this monastery was located. Some scholars have assumed that Tianshui refers to the commandery in Liangzhou 涼州 en route to Dunhuang,⁶⁷ but there is no obvious reason to think that it could not merely be the proper name of a monastery, unrelated to this location. If Dharmarakṣa fled east from Guanzhong in ca. 306 as his biography states, it would be difficult – though perhaps not impossible – to explain how he could have been at Tianshui in 308. If it were the case, however, that this monastery was located in the Hexi corridor, then this supposition might shed light on Dharmarakṣa's final resting place. As mentioned above, Tang Yongtong objected to the biographer's report that Dharmarakṣa fled east to

⁶⁴ Conditions in north China at this time were dire in the extreme. At least 300,000 dead have been counted in the historical sources during the armed strife ushering in the collapse of the Western Jin; see Charles Holcombe, "Re-imagining China: The Chinese Identity Crisis at the Start of the Southern Dynasties Period," *JAOS* 115.1 (1995), p. 1, n. 2.

⁶⁵ For example, *Guke jing* is dated to the third month of Jianwu 1, and the retranslated *Asheshiwang jing* is recorded as translated during the fourth month of that same year. However, the Jianwu reign-name was only inaugurated in the seventh month of 304. There is also another Jianwu reign period in 317, but that is several years later than Dharmarakṣa is believed to have lived. Thus, either these dates were applied by compilers who did not recognize the calendrical changes that were instituted over time, or else they are in error.

⁶⁶ On the issue of Dao'an's catalogue, its reliability, and its relationship to Sengyou's list, see n. 47 above.

⁶⁷ Tokiwa, *Gokan yori Sōsei ni itaru*, p. 611; Okabe, "Jikuhōgo den, p. 75; and more recently Mai, "Dharmarakṣa and His Work," pp. 66–67.

the area of Luoyang (Mian Pond) at the end of his life, precisely at the time when conditions there would have been the most tumultuous. If Dharmarakṣa's last translations were in fact carried out in Liangzhou – at, for example, Tianshui – then he could very well have fled east as the biography claims, but perhaps only as far as Kun Pond, as read in the *Chu sanzang ji ji* account, which was either southwest of Chang'an, or as Palumbo has suggested, part of the Kunming canal to the east of the city and therefore not in the midst of the worst chaos.⁶⁸ This must remain, however, little more than speculation.

TRANSLATION COLLABORATORS
FROM INDIA AND CENTRAL ASIA

Dharmarakṣa's travels to Central Asia and relations with Central Asians, though not as well documented as his excursions in China, are no less important for understanding his role in brokering the influx of Buddhist texts into China in the late third century. We know, for instance, that Dharmarakṣa was assisted and patronized by a diverse array of Central Asians and Indians, both lay and monastic. A survey of his known assistants and associates and their various roles would include the following:⁶⁹

Kucheans

Bo Faju 帛法巨; *śramaṇa*; scribe (*bishou* 筆受) for *Lalitavistara-sūtra*

Bo Yuanxin 帛元信; householder; translation intermediary (*chuan-yanzhe* 傳言者) for *Suvikrāntacintidevaputra-pariṣṛcchā-sūtra*; collated *Saddharmapundarīka-sūtra*; task unknown (*Daśabhūmika-sūtra*)

Marquis Meizi 美子侯; Kuchean assistant envoy (*Quci fushi* 龜茲副使): brought *brāhmī* text of *Avaiartikacakra-sūtra* to Dunhuang

Parthians

An Wenhui 安文惠; translation intermediary for *Suvikrāntacintidevaputra-pariṣṛcchā-sūtra*

*Sogdians*⁷⁰

Kang Nalü 康那律; *bhikṣu*; copied Dharmarakṣa's translation of the

⁶⁸ See n. 35, above.

⁶⁹ A foreign ethnicon does not necessarily indicate an ethnically foreign person. Chinese monks ordained under foreign teachers generally adopted their teacher's ethnicon from the mid-third century until about the time of Dao'an, who advocated the universal "shi 釋" (*śākya*), suggesting that all monks should trace their lineage to the Buddha. While I include those with foreign ethnicons in my survey of Central Asians here, it should be borne in mind that some of these individuals could have been Chinese.

⁷⁰ The ethnicon *kang* 康 is generally taken to represent Sogdian, but Wolfram Eberhard has suggested that there is some reason to believe that early use of this ethnicon may have

Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra at Luoyang and questioned him on it
Kang Shu 康殊; *śramaṇa*; scribe for *Lalitavistara-sūtra*

Khotanese

Zhi Duoluo 祇多羅; *śramaṇa*; brought text of *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā
Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* to Dharmarakṣa

*Gandhāran/Kashmirī*⁷¹

Zhu Houzheng 竺候征; scholar (*wenshi* 文士); brought text of
Yōgācārabhūmi-sūtra to Dunhuang; co-translated with Dharmarakṣa
Anonymous; Kashmiri *śramaṇa* who brought text of *Bhadrakalpika-sūtra*
to Dharmarakṣa

Indians

Zhu Li 竺力; collated translation of *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra*
Zhu Fayou 竺法友; brought text of *Bhadrakalpika-sūtra* from Luoyang
Zhu Fashou 竺法首; *śramaṇa*; scribe for *Buddhasaṃgīti-sūtra*,
**Acaladharmamudrā-sūtra*, and **Sarvavaiṣṭyavidyāsiddhi-sūtra*
Zhu Decheng 竺德成; patron of *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra*
Zhu Wensheng 竺文盛; patron of *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra*⁷²

Yuezhi

Fabao 法寶; scribe for *Yōgācārabhūmi-sūtra*
Zhi Jin 支晉; patron of *Yōgācārabhūmi-sūtra*
Zhi Jinbao 支晉寶; patron of *Yōgācārabhūmi-sūtra*

Western Regions (?)

Ji Zhi 寂志; man from Western Regions who brought an incomplete
text (? possibly in memory) of the *Paramārtha-saṃvṛtisatyānirdeśa-
sūtra* to Luoyang where Dharmarakṣa rendered it into Chinese

designated two different clans: one native to Kangguo (present-day Samarkand) and another, the old Kangju, who were native to Gansu before being forced to emigrate to Transoxiana; these latter may have been Yuezhi (Eberhard, “The Origin of the Commoners in Ancient Tunhuang,” *Sinologica* 4.3 [1955], p. 150). More recently, see also the impressive history of Sogdian merchants in Étienne de La Vaissière, *Histoire des marchands sogdiens* (Paris: Collège de France, Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises, 2002), esp. pp. 29–33 and 83–85, on sources – secular and Buddhist – in Chinese vis-à-vis the question of the Kangju.

⁷¹ It has been shown that the early Chinese use of the designation Jībin 罽賓 referred to a region that incorporated much of Gandhāra and adjacent areas of northwest India and not just Kaśmir; see Kuwayama Shoshin (桑山正進), “Literary Evidence for Dating the Colossi in Bāmiyān,” in G. Gnoli and L. Lanciotti, eds., *Orientalia Iosephi Tucci Memoriae Dicata* (Rome: Istituto Italiano Per Il Medio Ed Estremo Oriente, 1987), pp. 708–12, and Enomoto Fumio (榎本文雄), “Note on Kashmir as Referred to in Chinese Literature: Ji-bin,” in Yasuke Ikari, ed., *A Study of the Nīlamata: Aspects of Hinduism in Ancient Kashmir* (Kyoto: Institute for Research in Humanities, Kyoto University, 1994), pp. 357–65.

⁷² With regard to Zhu Decheng and Zhu Wensheng who “took pleasure in encouraging and assisting the work on the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra*,” Hurvitz states: “These two Chi-

Even should some of these individuals with foreign ethnicons prove to be native Chinese monastics who had adopted the title of their teacher, the range of places of origin among those who are clearly from the West indicates the truly international character of Dharmarakṣa's translation committees. And it is noteworthy that the international make-up of his cohorts extends not just to his associates at Dunhuang, but, more often, to his committees at Chang'an and Luoyang, certainly among the most cosmopolitan cities in the world at this time.⁷³

If Dharmarakṣa did travel to the Western Regions during his so-called "blank period" (ca. 273–284), then he did so at a time when relations between Central Asia and China were at a standstill. This period, specifically from 270 to about 280, saw a number of minor rebellions in Liangzhou initiated by northern peoples, and there appears to be evidence that the central government temporarily lost control over official appointments in Dunhuang.⁷⁴ There is no record of tribute missions to court between 270 and 283, after which time the king of Shan-shan 鄯善 sent his son(s) as "hostage."⁷⁵ If contact between Central Asian kingdoms and China was significantly interrupted during this period, it may explain why Dharmarakṣa went to the Western Regions with his teacher in search of texts: none were being trafficked along the usual channels.

Of course, we cannot be certain as to where exactly Dharmarakṣa would have traveled in Central Asia. It would, however, be reasonable to speculate that he is likely to have had some – perhaps considerable – contact with oasis towns within the kingdom of Shan-shan: Loulan 樓蘭 (Kroraina), the closest to Dunhuang on the eastern reaches of the Silk Route,

nese lay brethren with the surname Chu must have been very devout indeed, since, although still laymen, they had left the secular community, an act symbolized by abandoning their clan name and taking instead the name Chu, which, as indicated above, is short for 'T'ien-chu,' i.e., India" (in Tsukamoto, *History of Early Chinese Buddhism*, p. 486, n. ad). Hurvitz's speculation is dubious for two reasons. First, despite the Chinese-looking personal names, it is not impossible that they were both naturalized Indians living in China. Secondly, if they were Chinese, it is likely that they were monks, given that they had adopted the ethnicon of a foreign master, perhaps even Dharmarakṣa himself. Among the assistants on Dharmarakṣa's committees with the ethnicon *zhu*, only Zhu Li and Zhu Fashou are clearly of Indian descent; Zhu Houzheng is from Jibin.

⁷³ At the turn of the fourth century, a junior official named Jiang Tong 江統 estimated that half of the over one million inhabitants of Chang'an were non-Chinese peoples, primarily of the Rong and Di tribes. A translation of the relevant section of his *Xi rong lun* 西戎論 ("Essay on the Western Barbarians") can be found in Rafe de Crespigny, *Northern Frontier: The Policies and Strategy of the Later Han Empire*, Faculty of Asian Studies Monographs, New Series 4 (Canberra: Australian National University, 1984), pp. 170–72.

⁷⁴ See Michael Loewe, "Chinese Relations with Central Asia, 260–290," *BSOAS* 32 (1969), p. 96, and Pan Yihong, "Early Chinese Settlement Policies towards the Nomads," *AM* 3d ser. 5.2 (1992), p. 56.

⁷⁵ Loewe, "Chinese Relations with Central Asia," p. 97.

and cities along the southern route, including Niya (Cadh'ota), Endere, Miran, and Calmadāna.⁷⁶ Chinese documents found at Loulan as well as references to Chinese merchants in the contemporaneous *kharoṣṭhī* texts indicate that commerce between China and Shan-shan was extensive.⁷⁷ And we know that there was a flourishing Buddhist community there by the mid-third century.⁷⁸ Moreover, despite the slight evidence, there is some reason to believe that Dharmarakṣa could have found Mahāyāna texts – the objects of his search – in Shan-shan.⁷⁹ In Niya *kharoṣṭhī* document no. 390, a local administrator (*cozbo*) named Śamasena is said to have “set forth in the Mahāyāna” (*mahāyāna-saṃprastitāsa*).⁸⁰ More recently, Richard Salomon has edited an additional epigraphical record from Endere which records the Mahāyāna affiliation of an individual described with a series of royal epithets.⁸¹ This king, whom Salomon

⁷⁶ On the geographical extent of the Shan-shan kingdom, see Enoki Kazuo 榎一雄, “The Location of the Capital of Lou-lan and the Date of Kharoṣṭhī Inscriptions,” *MTB* 22 (1963), pp. 125–71, and John Brough, “Comments on Third-Century Shan-Shan and the History of Buddhism,” *BSOAS* 28 (1965), pp. 591–93.

⁷⁷ On the Chinese documents from Loulan from the Jin period, see Henri Maspero, *Les documents chinois de la troisième expédition de Sir Aurel Stein en Asie Centrale* (London: The British Museum, 1953), pp. 52–81; on Chinese commercial activity in the region, see Christopher Atwood, “Life in Third-fourth Century Cadh'ota: A Survey of Information Gathered from the Prakrit Documents Found North of Minfeng (Niyā),” *CAJ* 35 (1991), pp. 190–92.

⁷⁸ The dating of the *kharoṣṭhī* documents found at Niya and Loulan has been a point of contention among scholars since their discovery. Both the internal evidence of the documents themselves and confirmation from dated Chinese texts discovered at Loulan point to a range for these texts of ca. 230–ca. 330 AD; see Brough, “Comments on Third-Century Shan-Shan,” esp. pp. 599–605, and the important qualifications to his use of the Chinese evidence in Loewe, “Chinese Relations with Central Asia.” On the Buddhist activities of this community recorded in these documents, see Atwood, “Life in Third-Fourth Century Cadh'ota,” esp. pp. 173–75, and more recently, Ichikawa Yoshifumi 市川良文, “Niya iseki o meguru shomondai, toku ni Chadōta ni okeru Bukkyōsō no jittai o chūshin to shite” ニヤ遺跡をめぐる諸問題, 特にチハト一タにおける仏教僧の実態を中心として, *Bukkyō shigaku kenkyū* 仏教史学研究 42.1 (1999), pp. 1–37, and Valerie Hansen, “Religious Life in a Silk Road Community: Niya During the Third and Fourth Centuries,” in John Lagerway, ed., *Religion and Chinese Society. Volume I: Ancient and Medieval China* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press and Paris: Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient, 2004), pp. 279–315.

⁷⁹ It is curious that Dharmarakṣa's biographers state that during the reign of Jin emperor Wu (265–290), Mahāyāna texts “were confined to the Western Regions,” provoking Dharmarakṣa's lamentation. During his earliest period of translation activity (266–273), before his purported journey to the Western regions, Dharmarakṣa and his teams translated at least six texts clearly of Mahāyāna provenance. It also is not the case that his translation activity after 284 was restricted to Mahāyāna *sūtras*, although this period did indeed see the rendering of a number of large Mahāyāna texts. This is another instance in which a hagiographer's comment demands caution, since the relationship between the vehicles may well have been a more pressing matter for a sixth-century Buddhist intellectual than it might have been for a Yuezhi monk on the fringes of both the Indian and Chinese Buddhist worlds.

⁸⁰ A. M. Boyer, E. J. Rapson, and E. Senart, eds., *Kharoṣṭhī Inscriptions Discovered by Sir Aurel Stein in Chinese Turkestan: Part I* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1920), p. 140.

⁸¹ Richard Salomon, “A Stone Inscription in Central Asian Gāndhāri from Endere (Xinjiang),” *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* NS 13 (1999), pp. 1–13.

hypothesizes could have been the prominent Amgoka of the mid- to late-third century, which is to say, contemporaneous with Dharmarakṣa, is also said to have “set forth in the Mahāyāna” (*mahāyāna-saṃprastida*). Both records are incomplete, and it is possible that neither this king’s nor the *cozbo* Śāmasena’s inclinations were representative of the Buddhist community at large. Nevertheless, these references do at least suggest the strong possibility of a Mahāyāna presence in Shan-shan, including the likelihood of royal patronage. With the exception of Khotan, this is atypical of Central Asian Buddhism until much later. The textual and art historical remains from the vast majority of Buddhist sites in the Tarim Basin show an overwhelmingly Mainstream – particularly Sarvāstivādin – Buddhist affiliation. This fact has some interesting implications for our understanding of the transmission of Buddhism to China in the earliest period.

BUDDHISM IN THE TARIM BASIN

The problem of Buddhism in the Tarim Basin has been taken up again recently in a brilliant paper by Erik Zürcher.⁸² In re-examining the transmission of Buddhism to China during the first few centuries of the Common Era, Zürcher asks a poignant, and in retrospect, obvious set of questions: if Buddhism spread eastward by means of the usual process of contact diffusion as commonly assumed, wouldn’t we expect to find it firmly entrenched along the trade routes in the Tarim Basin before its first appearance in China? Why, then, are none of the earliest missionaries reported to have originated from these sites, especially in the easternmost territories closest to China? The earliest missionaries are overwhelmingly from west of the Tarim Basin: Yuezhi, Parthians, and Sogdians. It is not until the mid-third century that the list regularly includes Kuchean and Khotanese, not to mention Dharmarakṣa, a native of Dunhuang. There is in fact no evidence – on the basis of the available archeological and literary data – that Buddhism existed, let alone flourished, anywhere in modern Xinjiang prior to the mid-third century AD.⁸³ Since Buddhism is known to have penetrated China by the mid-first century at the latest, this gap of two centuries calls for an explanation.

⁸² Erik Zürcher, “Han Buddhism and the Western Regions,” in W. L. Idema and E. Zürcher, *Thought and Law in Qin and Han China: Studies Dedicated to Anthony Hulsewé on the Occasion of His Eightieth Birthday* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990), pp. 158–82.

⁸³ It goes without saying that this position turns on the matter of available data. Subsequent archeological digs – an urgent desideratum in Xinjiang – could throw more light on the earliest phase of this cross-cultural interaction. Nevertheless, unless a find on the magnitude of

Zürcher noticed that a remarkable population explosion occurred at oasis kingdoms in the Tarim Basin between the demographic reports contained in *Hanshu* (ca. first century BC) and *Hou Hanshu* (ca. early second century AD).⁸⁴ In several cases city-state populations grew by a factor of four or five, and at some sites, by much more. Such a population upsurge in premodern times could only have been possible through a significant increase in agricultural production, which, if Zürcher is correct, may have been made possible by the expansion of Chinese military-agricultural colonies (*tuntian* 屯田) in the region during the intervening years. Once these oasis towns developed sufficient agricultural surplus, they could attract and support a parasitic monastic community on a permanent basis. The economic prerequisites for such establishments do not appear to have been met before the mid-third century.

Even should new excavations in Xinjiang push the beginnings of Buddhism in the region back a century or more, such data would still not change the fact that Buddhism in China – our principal concern here – did not receive its earliest impetus from missionaries of the Tarim Basin. In this regard it is instructive to remember that the biography of Dharmarakṣa, who is reported to have been born at Dunhuang in ca. 233, is our earliest surviving mention of Buddhism from this oasis town on the periphery of the Chinese empire and at the juncture of the northern and southern trade routes. The absence of any mention of Buddhism at this strategic outpost prior to Dharmarakṣa is, if anything, more conspicuous.

Thus we are in the situation of explaining why Central Asians figure prominently on early Chinese translation committees when Buddhism does not appear to have figured prominently in their homelands. Two clarifications are in order. First, there is absolutely no evidence to suggest that any of Dharmarakṣa's translations derived from anything other than Indian sources – whether in Sanskrit, Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit, or Prakrit, be they in *brāhmī* or *kharoṣṭhī* script. These texts are essentially Indian Buddhist documents filtered through a Chinese prism.⁸⁵

another Dunhuang turns up extensive and convincingly datable materials from the first two centuries of the Common Era, there is no clear reason to believe that our extant data is unrepresentative.

⁸⁴ Zürcher, “Han Buddhism,” pp. 176–79.

⁸⁵ I have suggested elsewhere (Boucher, “Gāndhārī,” p. 489) the possibility that Dharmarakṣa's translations could have been affected by pronunciation habits from his native language, either Tokharian or Iranian. But this is quite different from proposing that texts *written* in Central Asian languages served as the basis of these translations, or that these texts were composed in Central Asia. Neither supposition has been convincingly demonstrated for this early period. See also Boucher, “On *Hu* and *Fan* Again,” pp. 17–18, n. 26.

Central Asia has long been the dumping ground for texts of dubious origins, those whose pedigree could not be confidently traced to an Indian source and for which a Chinese apocryphal origin seemed unnecessary. Secondly, it is not clear what could be meant by Central Asian Buddhism in the mid- to late-third century. Buddhist texts in Central Asian languages are not known prior to the fifth or sixth century.⁸⁶

We are left then with the impression that these so-called missionaries may have come to China precisely *because* they found little support for their religious persuasion in their native lands. And this may also explain why early Chinese translations are predominantly of Mahāyāna orientation.

Gregory Schopen has noted that the epigraphical record of Indian Buddhism during the first half of the first millennium indicates that Mainstream monastic institutions were deeply imbedded within their socio-economic milieu.⁸⁷ Donative inscriptions demonstrate time and again that the Mainstream orders were the recipients of regular and often extensive patronage from prominent lay, even royal, families. The record also indicates that with only one clear exception, Mahāyāna fraternities nowhere show up as recipients of patronage prior to the fourth or fifth century, precisely the same time when Mahāyāna influences appear conspicuously in the art historical record as well, as, for example, in the cave complexes at Ajañṭā.⁸⁸ This is precisely what we might expect if the Mahāyāna in India and Indianized regions was in fact what its literature frequently suggests: a fringe, often despised, sectarian movement unable to garner much in the way of public prestige and support.⁸⁹

It may not be an accident, then, that the majority of early missionaries to China are affiliated with the Mahāyāna if in fact China held

⁸⁶ Jan Nattier, "Church Language and Vernacular Language in Central Asian Buddhism," *Numen* 37.2 (1990), pp. 195–219.

⁸⁷ See the following articles by Schopen: "Two Problems in the History of Indian Buddhism: The Layman/Monk Distinction and the Doctrines of the Transference of Merit," *Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik* 10 (1985), pp. 9–47; "Monastic Law Meets the Real World: A Monk's Continuing Right to Inherit Family Property in Classical India," *History of Religions* 35.2 (1995), pp. 101–23; and "The Lay Ownership of Monasteries and the Role of the Monk in Mūlasarvāstivādin Monasteries," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 19.1 (1996), pp. 81–126.

⁸⁸ See Shizutani Masao (静谷正雄), "Mahāyāna Inscriptions in the Gupta Period," *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 19 (1962), pp. (358)–(355); Gregory Schopen, "Mahāyāna in Indian Inscriptions," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 21 (1979), pp. 1–19; and Schopen, "The Inscription on the Kuṣān Image of Amitābha and the Character of the Early Mahāyāna in India," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 10.2 (1987), pp. 99–134.

⁸⁹ See Boucher, *Bodhisattvas of the Forest and the Formation of the Mahāyāna*, esp. chap. 4, for a fleshing out of the sociology of the early Mahāyāna in India.

out the prospect of a religious and economic haven many found lacking in India and the Tarim Basin. When the Mahāyāna does begin to appear on the scene in Indian Buddhist inscriptions, roughly around the fourth or fifth century, the Mainstream schools increasingly cease to be found epigraphically as recipients of substantial patronage. And, as if to confirm this hypothesis, the first large compendia of Mainstream *āgama* and *vinaya* texts were translated in China at about the same time, suggesting the possibility of a reversal of fortunes between these groups at the start of the Indian Gupta period.⁹⁰

If this supposition is even partially correct, there is much about the motivations of the first translators in China that has quite probably been misunderstood. Indeed, many no doubt were moved by a desire to propagate the Dharma. But it may also be true that those who arrived in the first few centuries may have been as much refugees as missionaries. This, of course, has a number of implications for the character of early Chinese Buddhism as well, in particular for our understanding of what conditions made Buddhism in China possible. But it also reminds us that the very conditions which opened the door to this foreign religion in China were still very much in formation in the Tarim Basin when Dharmarakṣa appeared on the scene in the third century.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
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| CSZJJ | <i>Chu sanzang ji ji</i> 出三藏記集 |
| GSZ | <i>Gaoseng zhuan</i> 高僧傳 |

⁹⁰ Schopen has discussed the marginality of the early Mahāyāna in India vis-à-vis the earlier appearance of Mahāyāna texts in Chinese translation; see his “The Mahāyāna and the Middle Period in Indian Buddhism: Through a Chinese Looking-glass, *Eastern Buddhist* ns 32.2 (2000), pp. 1–25. I do not, however, agree with his low estimation of the value of the Chinese sources.