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Contents

	Foreword	1
<i>Michael Shapiro</i>	Richard Salomon: A Personal Tribute	5
<i>Mark Allon</i>	A Gāndhārī Version of the Story of the Merchants Tapussa and Bhallika	9
<i>Stefan Baums</i>	Inscribed Buddhist Tablets from Merv	21
<i>Daniel Boucher</i>	What Do We Mean by “Early” in the Study of the Early Mahāyāna—and Should We Care?	33
<i>Robert L. Brown</i>	Telling the Story in Art of the Monkey’s Gift of Honey to the Buddha	43
<i>Collett Cox</i>	What’s in a Name? School Affiliation in an Early Buddhist Gāndhārī Manuscript	53
<i>Harry Falk</i>	Making Wine in Gandhara under Buddhist Monastic Supervision	65
<i>Andrew Glass</i>	Bha	79
<i>Paul Harrison</i>	Verses by Śāntideva in the <i>Śikṣāsamuccaya</i> : A New English Translation	87
<i>Jens-Uwe Hartmann</i>	The Foolish Cat and the Clever Mouse: Another Parable from an Unknown Story Collection	105
<i>Stephanie W. Jamison</i>	An Indo-Iranian Priestly Title Lurking in the Rig Veda? An Indic Equivalent to Avestan <i>karapan</i>	111
<i>Seishi Karashima</i>	On Amitābha, Amitāyu(s), Sukhāvātī and the Amitābhavyūha	121
<i>Klaus Karttunen</i>	Gandhāra and the Greeks	131
<i>Timothy Lenz</i>	Ephemeral Dharma; Magical Hope	135
<i>Abdur Rehman</i>	A Note on the Etymology of Gandhāra	143
<i>Juhyung Rhi</i>	The <i>Garuḍa</i> and the <i>Nāgī/Nāga</i> in the Headdresses of Gandhāran Bodhisattvas: Locating Textual Parallels	147
<i>Ludo Rocher and Rosane Rocher</i>	Indian Epigraphy and the Asiatic Society: The First Fifty Years	159
<i>Gregory Schopen</i>	Regional Languages and the Law in Some Early North Indian Buddhist Monasteries and Convents	171
<i>Martin Schwartz</i>	<i>Sārtha-</i> and Other Caravan Words	179
<i>Jonathan A. Silk</i>	The Nature of the Verses of the <i>Kāśyapaparivarta</i>	181
<i>Nicholas Sims-Williams</i>	Some Bactrian Inscriptions on Silver Vessels	191
<i>Peter Skilling</i>	Prakrit Prajñāpāramitās: Northwest, South, and Center: Gleanings from Avalokitavrata and Haribhadra	199
<i>Ingo Strauch</i>	Inscribed Objects from Greater Gandhāra	209
<i>Michael Willis</i>	Avalokiteśvara of the Six Syllables: Locating the Practice of the “Great Vehicle” in the Landscape of Central India	221
	Review	
	JONGEWARD, ERRINGTON, SALOMON, AND BAUMS. <i>Gandharan Buddhist Reliquaries</i> (Jason Neelis)	231
	Books Received	237
	Abbreviations	239



On Amitābha, Amitāyu(s), Sukhāvātī and the Amitābhavyūha*

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It is now widely recognised that quite a few of early Mahāyāna Buddhist scriptures, written in (Buddhist) Sanskrit, were transmitted originally in Middle Indic and subsequently “translated” gradually into (Buddhist) Sanskrit. Such (Buddhist) Sanskrit texts are, in other words, the result of constant Sanskritization, wrong back-formations, additions and interpolations over the centuries. Chinese translations, on the other hand, particularly those which were made from the second to the sixth century C.E. and thus antedating most of the extant Sanskrit manuscripts, may provide substantial clues to the origination and development of Buddhist scriptures.¹ If we read early Chinese translations carefully in the light of Sanskrit, Tibetan and other Chinese versions, while taking into consideration the newly discovered old Gāndhārī fragments of various texts, we may be able to reconstruct earlier and more original features of early Mahāyāna Buddhist scriptures and trace their transmissions.

I. *Amitābha* (“Limitless Light”) > *Amitāyus* (“Limitless Life”)

Concerning the two names of the Buddha in the land of *Sukhāvātī*, namely *Amitābha* (“Limitless Light”) and *Amitāyus* (“Limitless Life”), I have suggested elsewhere² that *Amitābha* (“Limitless Light”; *wúliàngguāng* 無量光 in Chinese) is a more original form and that only later did it evolve gradually into *Amitāyus* (“Limitless Life”; *wúliàngshòu* 無量壽 in Chinese). In the oldest Chinese translation of the *Larger*

Sukhāvātivyūha, namely the *Dà āmítuó jīng* (大阿彌陀經, T. 12, no. 362), which was most probably translated by Zhiloujiachen 支婁迦讖 or Lokakṣema (fl. ca 170–190 C.E.),³ this Buddha is always described as possessing incomparable light⁴ but not limitless life. He even enters *parinirvāṇa* (309a15) so as to be succeeded by **Olokitasvara* (*hélóugèn* 盧樓亘 < *Avalokitasvara*⁵). Therefore, he was never seen as having “limitless life” in this earliest version.

In the present Sanskrit version of the *Larger Sukhāvātivyūha*, the form *Amitābha* occurs only in the prose,⁶ while *Amitāyu* is found only in the verses⁷—the same is true in the case of the Sanskrit fragments of the same scripture discovered in Afghanistan, which is now preserved in the Schøyen Collection.⁸ Although in the present Sanskrit manuscripts from Nepal dating from the twelfth century *Amitāyus*, the Sanskritized form of *Amitāyu*, appears seven times in the prose, most of which lack parallels in the Tibetan and (or) Chinese translations, their occurrences are therefore presumably either later interpolations or substitutions in place of *Amitābha*, which took place when *Amitāyus* became more popular than *Amitābha*.⁹

Concerning why the form *Amitāyu* occurs only in the verses, my hypothesis is as follows. When *Amitābha* or rather its Middle Indic form *Amitāha*¹⁰ was used in the verses and the ending of its nominative singular forms *Amitābho* / MI *Amitāho* needed to be shortened for metrical reasons, the name of the Buddha must have become *Amitābhu* / MI **Amitāhu*.¹¹ The Middle Indic form **Amitāhu* would have been pronounced as

**Amitā'u* or **Amidā'u* in Gāndhārī, in which the *h* is silent. The Gāndhārī forms *-ā'u* could have been interpreted also as coming from Skt. *āyus* ("life"); cf. MI *āu* < Skt. *āyus*. Hence, the form **Amitā'u* (or **Amidā'u*) could have meant both "Limitless Light" and "Limitless Life." Later, however, when the trend to Sanskritize earlier Mahāyāna Buddhist sutras—which must have contained more Middle Indic forms than the present Sanskrit versions—emerged, presumably around the beginning of the third century C.E.,¹² the form **Amitā'u* (or **Amidā'u*) in the verses was Sanskritized incorrectly as *Amitāyu* by somebody who probably thought the designation "Limitless Life" was a more appropriate epithet for this Buddha. Thus, the name *Amitāyu* / *Amitāyus* ("Limitless Life") was eventually created as a hyper-form.¹³

This hypothesized development, namely *Amitābha* > *Amitā(b)hu* > *Amitāyu* in the *Larger Sukhāvātīvyūha*, may be supported by instances of confusion among the three forms, which take place in verses 29, 30 and 32 in the *Saman-tamukha-parivarta* of the Lotus Sutra.¹⁴ At first, we shall quote the *editio princeps*, the edition by H. Kern and B. Nanjio. The verses in question SP(KN) 454.5–455.5) read as follows:

sthita dakṣiṇāvāmatas tathā vijayanta
Amitābhanāyakaṃ |
māyopama te samādhiṇā sarvaśeṭra (read
°tre) jina gandha (read *gatvā*) *pūjiṣu || 29 ||*
diśa paścima yatra sukhākarā lokadhātu
virajā Sukhāvātī |
yatra eṣa Amitābhanāyakaḥ samprati tiṣṭhati
sattvasārathiḥ || 30 ||
 . . .
so caiva Amitābhanāyakaḥ padmagarbhe
viraje manorame |
siṃhāsani saṃniṣaṇṇako Śālarājo va yathā
virājate || 32 ||

In the above-quoted edition, the form *Amitābha* occurs three times. However, readings *Amitābha*, *Amitābhu* and *Amitāyu* vary among manuscripts and the Tibetan translation of the same scripture:

SP(KN) 454.5. *Amitābha*-(*nāyaka*-) (= C5, C6, R etc.)¹⁵ (= Tib. Kanj.¹⁶ *sNang ba mtha' yas*) / L2, L3, K, Bj, N2, B etc. *Amitābhu*- / O, D2, L1, C4, N1 etc. *Amitāyu*- (= Tib. Kho. ga 45a¹⁷. *TSe mtha' yas*)

SP(KN) 455.2. *Amitābha*-(*nāyaka*-) (= K, C5, C6, R etc.) / L2, L3, Bj, N2, T8, B etc. *Amitābhu*- / O, D2, L1, C4, N1, etc. *Amitāyu*- (= Tib. Kho. ga 45b1. *TShe mtha yas pa*, Tib. Kanj. *TShe mtha' yas pa*)

SP(KN) 455.5. *Amitābha*-(*nāyaka*-) (= P1, A2 etc.) / C4. *Amitābhu*- / L2, L3, Bj, C5, C6, B etc. *tatha loka*-(*nāyaka*-) / O, D2, K, N1. *Amitāyu*- (= Tib. Kho. ga 45b2. *TSe mtha' yas pa*, Tib. Kanj. *TShe mtha' yas pa*)

The confusion among these three forms in the verses of the Lotus Sutra support the possibility that the development *Amitābha* > *Amitā(b)hu* > *Amitāyu* took place in the *Larger Sukhāvātīvyūha*.

As we have seen above, in the *Larger Sukhāvātīvyūha*, the form *Amitābha* occurs in the prose part, while *Amitāyu* is found only in the verses. Contrary to this, in the *Smaller Sukhāvātīvyūha*, which is composed *solely* in prose, the secondary and later formed name *Amitāyus* is used exclusively except in one place where the Buddha explains why he has two names:

tat kiṃ manyase Śāriputra! kena kāraṇena sa tathāgato 'mitāyur nāmōcyate? tasya khalu punaḥ Śāriputra! tathāgatasya teṣāṃ ca manuṣyāṇāṃ aparimitam āyuṣpramāṇaṃ. tena kāraṇena sa tathāgato 'mitāyur nāmōcyate. tasya ca Śāriputra! tathāgatasya daśa kalpā anuttarāṃ samyaksambodhim abhisambuddhasya. tat kiṃ manyase Śāriputra! kena kāraṇena sa tathāgato 'mitābho nāmōcyate? tasya khalu punaḥ Śāriputra! tathāgatasyābhāpratihatā sarvabuddhakṣetreṣu. tena kāraṇena sa tathāgato 'mitābho nāmōcyate. (Fujita 2011: 87.18–88.8)

"What do you think, O Śāriputra? Why is that Tathāgata called **Amitāyus**? Now, O Śāriputra, the length of that Tathāgata's life and of those men there is immeasurable. Therefore, that Tathāgata is called **Amitāyus**. And ten *kalpas* have passed, O Śāriputra, since this Tathāgata attained to unsurpassed, perfect, enlightenment. What do you think, O Śāriputra? Why is that Tathāgata called **Amitābha**? Now, O Śāriputra, the light of this Tathāgata spreads unimpeded over all the Buddha-lands. Therefore, that Tathāgata is called **Amitābha**."

Kōtatsu Fujita has assumed that this Buddha was worshipped under different names by different groups,¹⁸ and those who worshipped *Amitābha* composed the *Larger Sukhāvātīvyūha*, while those who worshipped *Amitāyus* composed the *Smaller Sukhāvātīvyūha*.¹⁹ He also maintains that these two sutras were composed almost at the same time by these two groups of worshippers of the same Buddha. This theory is, however, very arbitrary.

I presume that the name *Amitāyu* (= *Amitāyus*, “Limitless Life”), which had originally been a hyper-form in the verses, originating from *Amitābha* (“Limitless Light”), grew more and more popular as it became widely accepted as a more appropriate epithet in its own right for this Buddha and finally came to be used in prose as well. In this way, the same Buddha came to have two different names, with different meanings. However, those who worshipped this Buddha, probably knew that these two names referred to one and the same Buddha and did not think it strange, as it is common in many cultures that one god has different names or various epithets.

From the transliterations used in the *Dà āmítuó jīng*, it is evident that the underlying Indian text of this oldest Chinese translation of the *Larger Sukhāvātīvyūha* had been transmitted in Middle Indic, most probably Gāndhārī. In contrast, the *Smaller Sukhāvātīvyūha*, which appeared later than the *Larger Sukhāvātīvyūha*, seems to have been composed in (Buddhist) Sanskrit from the beginning. The composer of the *Smaller Sukhāvātīvyūha* must have known that these two names referred to one and the same Buddha, but felt more comfortable using *Amitāyus* than *Amitābha* and might have tried to explain their being the same by means of the above-quoted sentences.

My hypothesis of the development *Amitābha* > *Amitābhu* > MI. **Amitāhu* > **Amitā’u* > *Amitāyu* > *Amitāyus*²⁰ was criticised harshly by Fujita as “a solely linguistic, unacceptable assumption with disregard for the development of the ideas of the Buddha.”²¹ However, I cannot find grounds to relate the change from “(limitless) light” to “(limitless) life” to any theory on the development of the ideas of the Buddha, except for his arbitrary, a priori one meant to be used to support his own *Amitābha* / *Amitāyus* theory.²²

The original Indic form of the transliteration of this Buddha, *āmítuó* 阿彌陀 (QYS. ?â mjie⁴[mjie:⁴] dâ)²³ in Lokakṣema’s earliest Chinese transla-

tion of the *Larger Sukhāvātīvyūha*, namely the *Dà āmítuó jīng* might have been *Amitāha* or **Amidāha* (probably pronounced as **Amitā’a* or **Amidā’a*), which are Middle Indic forms of *Amitābha*.²⁴

Throughout the second oldest Chinese translation of the same scripture, namely the *Wúliàngqīngjìng Píngděngjué jīng* 無量清淨平等覺經 (T. 12, no. 361) by Zhi Qian 支謙 (fl. ca. 220–257 C.E.), which is none other than a “modified version” of the *Dà āmítuó jīng*, the Buddha’s name is changed to *wúliàngqīngjìng(fó)* 無量清淨(佛) “(Buddha) of Infinite Purity.”

Jan Nattier assumes that this name was originally a translation of the title of the text, namely *Amitābha-vyūha*.²⁵ I agree with her assumption in principle, but with some differences. As we shall see later, in the older Sanskrit manuscripts, the title of the sutra reads *Amitābha-vyūha* instead of *Sukhāvātī-vyūha*. The original title of the older Chinese translations and the Tibetan one seem to have been *Amitābha-vyūha* as well. The underlying title of the oldest Chinese translations, namely the *Dà āmítuó jīng* and the *Wúliàngqīngjìng Píngděngjué jīng*, was probably its Middle Indic form **Amitāha*-(or *Amidāha*)-*vyūha* (< *Amitābha-vyūha*). Lokakṣema transliterated the Buddha’s name as *Āmítuó* 阿彌陀 and, therefore, translated the title of the sutra as *Āmítuó jīng* 阿彌陀經—later it was altered to *Dà āmítuó jīng*.²⁶ In Mahāyāna Buddhist literature, the word *vyūha* occurs very frequently as the final component of compounds of proper names of *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas*, e.g., *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra* I § 4, *Prabhāvyūha*; I § 4, *Mahāvyūha*; I § 4, *Padmavyūha*; III § 29, *Śubhavyūha*; VI § 13, 44a3, *Ratnavyūha* etc. This might have led Zhi Qian, the probable translator of the *Wúliàngqīngjìng Píngděngjué jīng*, into misinterpreting **Amitāhavyūha* as being the Buddha’s full name. He might have thought that **Amitāha* in the original text and *Āmítuó* 阿彌陀 in Lokakṣema’s translation to be abbreviated forms of **Amitāhavyūha*. He then translated **Amitāha*, while relating it to Skt. *amita* (“limitless”), as *wúliàng* 無量. As he consistently interpreted *vyūha* incorrectly in association with MI *śuha* (< *śubha* “bright”) and translated it in a peculiar fashion as *qīngjìng* 清淨 (“pure”),²⁷ he might have translated *-vyūha* in **Amitāhavyūha* as such. Thus, he changed *āmítuó(fó)* 阿彌陀(佛) wherever it occurred in Lokakṣema’s translation to *wúliàngqīngjìng(fó)* 無量清淨(佛) without exception.

II. On the Name of *Amitābha's* land: *Sukhāvātī* / **Suhāmatī*

The *Dà āmítuó jīng* contains other noteworthy transliterations which indicate that its original language was Middle Indic, most probably Gāndhārī, e.g., *tíhéjiéluó* 提想竭羅 (QYS. diei γwâ gjēt[giāt³] lâ; **Dīvagara* < *Dīpaṃkara*; 300b21), *hélougèn* 盧²⁸樓亘 (QYS. ?âp læu sjwän; **Avalo* . . . svar < *Avalokita-svara*; 308b15, 21, 309a15) etc. *Amitābha's* Buddha-land (*Sukhāvātī*) is transliterated as *xūmótí* 須摩提 (QYS. sju muâ diei; 303b18), from which one may assume the underlying form was **Suhāmatī* or °*adī*, where the intervocalic *h* is silent, common in Gāndhārī. In the modified translation of the same text (T. 12, no. 361), Zhi Qian changed this transliteration to *xūmótí* 須摩提 (QYS. sju muâ diei; **Suhāmatī* or °*adī*; 282c29, 288c9), while transliterating anew the name of the land as *xūātí* 須阿提 (QYS. sju ?â diei; **Suhā(v)atī*, or °*adī*?; 288b25).²⁹ The latter occurs only once in a verse, which is wanting in Lokakṣema's translation.³⁰ A later Chinese translator, Nie Daozhen 聶道真 (fl. beginning of the 4th century C.E.), transliterated the name of the same land as *xūhēmótí* 須呵摩提 (QYS. sju xâ muâ diei; **Suhāmatī* or °*adī*?; T. 14, no. 483, 666c-1, 668a17) and *xūhēmóchí* 須訶摩持 (QYS. sju xâ muâ dī; **Suhāmatī* or °*adī*?; T. 24, no. 1502, 1116b3).³¹ In Khotanese, we find the word *Suhāvātā*³² for this Buddha-land.

From these facts, we can therefore presume that *Amitābha's* land had been called, at an earlier stage, **Suhāmatī* (or °*adī*) or **Suhāvātī* (or °*adī*), where the *h* is silent, but not *Sukhāvātī*. Although Zhi Qian translated it as *ānlèguó* 安樂國 "the Land of Happiness" (288c6) in one verse, we are not sure whether the name was originally meant as such or not.³³

III. On the Titles of the Chinese Translations of the *Sukhāvātīvyūha*

Though the Sanskrit version of the *Larger Sukhāvātīvyūha* is generally referred to as such in modern books, the real titles found in the Sanskrit manuscripts and the Tibetan translations vary greatly. Among the extant Sanskrit manuscripts from Nepal, two palm-leaf manuscripts

dating from the middle of the 12th century are entitled *Amitābhavyūha-parivarta Sukhāvātīvyūha*, while the remaining 36, being paper manuscripts, which were copied between the end of the 17th century and the first half of the 20th century,³⁴ are entitled *Amitābhavyūha-parivarta Sukhāvātīvyūha*, *Amitābhasya vyūha-parivarta Sukhāvātīvyūha*, *śrīAmitābhasya Sukhāvātī-vyūha nāma mahāyānasūtra*, *śrīmadAmitābhasya tathāgatasya Sukhāvātīvyūha-mahāyānasūtra*, *Amitābhasya parivarta Sukhāvātīvyūha-mahāyānasūtra*.³⁵

A relatively old manuscript of a Tibetan translation of this scripture, preserved in the manuscript collection of the Tabo monastery in the Spiti Valley, Himachal Pradesh, northern India, bears Sanskrit and Tibetan titles, namely *āryaAmitābhavyūha* (i.e., °*vyūha*) *nāma mahāyānasūtra* and 'phags pa 'Od dpag myed kyi bkod pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo'.³⁶ The Tibetan translation of this sutra in the Kanjur is found in the fifth chapter of the *Mahāratnakūṭasūtra*, under the titles 'Od dpag med kyi bkod pa'i le'u (**Amitābhavyūha-parivarta*), *de bzhin gshegs pa 'Od dpag med kyi bkod pa'i le'u* (**Amitābhasya tathāgatasya vyūha-parivarta*), 'phags pa *de bzhin gshegs pa 'Od dpag* (v.l. *dpag tu*) *med pa'i bkod pa zhes bya ba'i le'u* (**ārya-Amitābhasya tathāgatasya vyūha nāma parivarta*), *de bzhin gshegs pa 'Od dpag tu med pa'i sangs rgyas kyi zhing gi yon tan bkod pa* (**Amitābhasya tathāgatasya buddhakṣetraguṇavyūha*), *de bzhin gshegs pa 'Od dpag tu med pa'i sangs rgyas kyi zhing gi bkod pa'i le'u* (**Amitābhasya tathāgatasya buddhakṣetravyūha-parivarta*).

It should be noted that in the Tibetan translations, this sutra is not entitled *Sukhāvātīvyūha*, but is referred to as *Amitābhavyūha* or *Amitābhasya vyūha*. Also, in the Sanskrit palm-leaf manuscripts and some of the paper copies, it is entitled *Amitābhavyūha-parivarta Sukhāvātīvyūha* and *Amitābhasya vyūha-parivarta Sukhāvātīvyūha*. From these facts, I presume that this sutra originally had the title *Amitābhavyūha*, *Amitābhasya vyūha* or the like³⁷ and the name *Sukhāvātīvyūha*, which appears only in the Sanskrit manuscripts, was added later as its subtitle. Moreover, the original texts of most of the Chinese translations could have also been entitled *Amitābhavyūha* or the like. We shall now examine the titles of these translations.

III.1. Dà āmítuó jīng 大阿彌陀經 (T. 12, no. 362)³⁸

This oldest Chinese translation by Lokakṣema³⁹ is generally called *Dà āmítuó jīng* 大阿彌陀經. However, the title *Āmítuó jīng* 阿彌陀經, as some editions read, might have been the original translation of the title of the underlying text. After the appearance of the translation of the *Smaller Sukhāvātīvyūha* by Kumārajīva, which was entitled also *Āmítuó jīng* 阿彌陀經 (T. 12, no. 366), the character *dà* 大 “larger” was added to the title of no. 362 in order to differentiate it from no. 366, and thus the more familiar title *Dà āmítuó jīng* 大阿彌陀經 came into being. As stated above, from the title *Āmítuó jīng* 阿彌陀經, one may presume **Amitāha-vyūha* or **Amidāha-vyūha* (< *Amitābhavyūha*) as its underlying form. In the Koryo and Jin editions, there is a very long title at the beginning of the sutra, which reads *āmítuó sānyēsānfó sàlǒu{fó}tán guòdù réndào jīng* 阿彌陀三耶三佛薩樓{佛}檀過度人道經 (the second *fó* 佛 should be deleted according to ancient catalogues), while in the other editions and also at other places (namely, at the end of the first and the beginning of the second *juan* as well as at the end of the sutra) in the same Koryo and Jin editions, the title reads simply *Āmítuó jīng* 阿彌陀經 or the *Amitā(b)ha* sutra instead. Also, an old catalogue, namely the *Chusanzangji ji* 出三藏記集, which was compiled in the Liang Tianlan Period (502–519 C.E.), states: “*Āmítuó jīng* 阿彌陀經. Two *juans*. The title inside the book reads *āmítuó sānyēsānfó sàlǒután guòdù réndào jīng* 阿彌陀三耶三佛薩樓檀過度人道經,”⁴⁰ indicating that the long title was originally a subtitle. Moreover, in the *Púsà Shòuzhāi jīng* 菩薩受齋經, which was allegedly translated by Nie Daozhen 聶道真 (fl. beginning of the 4th century C.E.)—but is more likely a composition made in China under the influence of the *Dà āmítuó jīng* 大阿彌陀經 and others—we find the following similar expression: “I take refuge in *Āmítuó-sānyēsānfótán* 阿彌陀三耶三佛檀 in the west (and) the *bodhisattvas*, *Hélógèn* 盧樓亘 and *Móhēnàbō* 摩訶那鉢.”⁴¹ The original form of the longer title and its meaning are both enigmatic. However, I am inclined to agree with Prof. Chen Jinhua’s hypothesis that *sàlǒu{fó}tán* 薩樓{佛}檀 is a corruption of *hélógèn* 盧樓亘, which is an incomplete transliteration of *Avalokitasvara*.⁴² The character *hé* 盧 (QYS. ?ǎp), which had been

used at times in early Chinese translations as a transliteration for Indic *ap(a)*, *av(a)*, was discontinued completely in later translations, leading it to be miswritten as *gài* 蓋 or *gài* 盖. Therefore it is quite probable that this not so often used character *hé* 盧 was miswritten as *sà* 薩, as their shapes resemble each other. Also, the character *gèn* 亘, which in the first place had not been understood properly, was then hyper-formed to *tán* 檀, containing *dàn* 旦 on the right side of the character. This title, then, may mean “*Amitā(b)ha* **samyāsambuddha*⁴³ (and) *Avalokitasvara* save human beings.” This was probably *not* the original Indian title, but rather given by the translator or somebody else in a later period, summarising the content of the sutra—according to this sutra (309a14f.), after *Amitā(b)ha’s* *parinirvāṇa*, *Avalokitasvara* succeeded him as a Buddha and began to rescue (*guòdù* 過度) human beings and other various sentient beings as *Amitā(b)ha* does.

III.2. Wúliàngqīngjìng píngděngjué 經 無量清淨平等覺經 (T. 12, no. 361)

This version is quite likely a modification of the *Dà āmítuó jīng* 大阿彌陀經 undertaken by Zhi Qian. As we have already seen above, *wúliàngqīngjìng* 無量清淨 was probably Zhi Qian’s peculiar translation of **Amitāha-vyūha*. The word *píngděngjué* 平等覺 was the standard rendering of *samyaksambuddha* and so, from the Chinese title, we can reconstruct **samyaksambuddhasya Amitāhasya vyūha* as its original form. However, I assume that Zhi Qian simply added the word *píngděngjué* 平等覺, based on *sānyēsānfó* 三耶三佛 (**samyāsambuddha* < *samyaksambuddha*) in the long title of the *Dà āmítuó jīng* 大阿彌陀經.

III.3. Wúliàngshòu jīng 無量壽經 (T. 12, no. 360)

This translation is most likely the work of Buddhahadra 佛陀跋陀羅 (359–429 C.E.) and Baoyun 寶雲 and hence dating from 421 C.E. From the Chinese title, one might suppose **Amitāyur-vyūha* as its original, but I presume the underlying title of this translation is more likely to have been *Amitābha-vyūha*. The word *wúliàngshòu* 無量壽 is found in many places in this translation, where the Sanskrit version reads *Amitābha*,⁴⁴

which indicates the translators' preference of *wúliàngshòu* 無量壽 over *wúliàngguāng* 無量光. Probably, owing to this preference, the title was rendered as *Wúliàngshòu jīng* 無量壽經 instead of **Wúliàngguāng jīng* 無量光經.

III.4. *Wúliàngshòurúlái huì* 無量壽如來會
(T. 11, no. 310.5)

This translation, belonging to the Chinese *Mahāratnakūṭasūtra*, was translated between 706–713 C.E. by Bodhiruci (fl. 693–713). From this Chinese title, one may presume **Amitāyuṣaḥ tathāgatasya vyūha-parivarta* as its original title. However, just as in the case of the *Wúliàngshòu jīng* 無量壽經, the translator rendered *Amitābha* as *wúliàngshòu* 無量壽, because of its popularity in China. I believe, therefore, that the underlying title of this translation was probably **Amitābhāsyā tathāgatasya vyūha-parivarta*, which corresponds to one of the above-quoted Tibetan titles.

III.5. *Dàshèng wúliàngshòu zhuāngyán jīng*
大乘無量壽莊嚴經 (T. 12, no. 363)

This was translated in 991 C.E. by the Song-dynasty translator Faxian 法賢 or Dharmabhadra. From this Chinese title, one may infer **Amitāyuṣaḥ vyūha-mahāyānasūtra* as its original, though I presume that the underlying title of this translation was probably **Amitābhāsyā vyūha-mahāyānasūtra* as well.

Abbreviations and Symbols

Ap = M. E. Lilley, ed. Pali Text Society. *The Apadāna of the Khuddaka Nikāya*. 2 vols. London, 1925, 1927

BHSG = F. Edgerton. *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar*. New Haven, 1953

do. = ditto

MI = Middle Indic

QYS = Reconstruction of the *Qieyun* 切韻 System. In this article, *Qieyun* System forms, reconstructed by Karlgren and revised by F. K. Li, are used. The following further notational changes, made by Coblin (1994), are also adopted here: 1. °- will be written as ʔ-, 2. ě will be written as e, 3. Division III and IV *chongniu* 重紐 finals will be redundantly identified with superscripts “3” and “4”

SP(KN) = H. Kern and B. Nanjio, eds. *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*. St. Petersburg, 1908–1912

Sukh(F) = Reading of the *Larger Sukhāvātīvyūha* in Fujita 2011

Sukh(SC) = Reading of the fragments of the *Larger Sukhāvātīvyūha* possibly from the Bamiyan area in Harrison et al. 2002

T = J. Takakusu and K. Watanabe, eds. *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經. 100 vols. Tokyo, 1924–1934

Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra = Study Group on Buddhist Sanskrit Literature, ed. *Bonzōkan Taishō Yūimagyō* 梵藏漢對照『維摩經』 *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa: Translated Sanskrit Text Collated with Tibetan and Chinese Translations*. The Institute for Comprehensive Studies of Buddhism, Taisho University. Tokyo, 2004

~ = Stem of a word, e.g., *dharma-*

° = Except for letters, following or preceding the sign, the word is the same as the preceding one

$\alpha < \beta$ = The form α comes from β

Notes

* I am greatly indebted to Dr. Peter Skilling, Dr. Timothy Lenz, Ms. Liang Ye Tan and Rev. Peter Lait for carefully reading through this manuscript and making numerous valuable suggestions and corrections.

1. When a certain text was translated into Chinese more than once and such translations are extant, we are able to trace the development of that text as well. For this purpose, it is particularly of great advantage that the Chinese translations usually supply the translators' names, which can be then dated, though these may not always be correct.

2. Cf. Karashima 1997: 138; 1999a: p. 141, n. 34. Cf. also Nattier 2006: 190ff.

3. Though this is attributed to Zhi Qian, it is most probably by Lokakṣema; cf. Okayama 1980, Kagawa 1993: 17–29, Harrison 1998: 556–57 and Harrison et al. 2002: 179–81. The counter-arguments by Fujita (2007: 39ff.), who clings to its credit to Zhi Qian, following the Chinese catalogues of the Chinese Tripiṭaka, are awkward.

4. E.g., “Bodhisattva *Dharmākara*, subsequently became a *buddha*, namely **Amitāha* Buddha, who (possesses) the foremost wisdom, vigour and unparalleled light. The land, in which he lives, at present, is extremely wonderful.” (其曇摩迦菩薩至其然後，自致得作佛，名阿彌陀佛。最尊智慧勇猛，光明無比。今現在所居國土甚快善; 301a16f.).

5. **Olokitasvara* is an older form of *Avalokitasvara*, which is, in its turn, an earlier form of *Avalokiteśvara*; cf. Karashima 1999b.

6. Some relatively new paper manuscripts have, in a verse, *Amitābhāsyā* (Sukh[F] 53.6), which does not

match the metre, while an older palm-leaf manuscript reads *Amitāsyā* instead, which is a better and apparently more original reading (see Fujita 1992–1996, II 990). In other verses, *Amitaprabha*, a synonym of *Amitābha* is used: Sukh(F) 51.10 (*Amitaprabhasya*), 57.2 (*do.*).

7. Sukh(F) 50.6 (*Amitāyu*), 10 (*Amita-āyu*), 51.4 (*Amitāyu*), 8 (*Amita-āyu*), 53.8 (*Amitāyu*), 55.11 (*Amitāyu*).

8. Sukh(SC) 194.7 (prose: *Amitābha~*), 194.9 (*do.*), 195.20 (*do.*), 195.24 (*do.*), 197.10 (*do.*); 209.9 (verse: *Amitāyu*).

9. For example, the latter half of the following sentence: Sukh(F) 35.14–15. *aparimitam eva tasya bhagavata āyuspramāṇam aparyantam. tena sa tathāgato 'mitāyur ity ucyate* (“... the measure of the life span of that blessed one is unlimited. Therefore, that tathagata is called Amitayus [‘Measureless Life’]” [Gómez 1996: 83]), finds its parallel only in the Tibetan translation (cf. Kagawa 1984: 186–87). Just after this sentence, the form *Amitāyus* appears in the Sanskrit version (Sukh[F] 35.17), while its Tibetan parallel reads *'Od dpag med* (*Amitābha*) and the Chinese parallels read *āmítuó* 阿彌陀, *wúliàngqīngjīngfó* 無量清淨佛 or simply “the Buddha” (cf. Kagawa 1984: 188–89). Cf. also Fujita 1970: 307f.

10. The form *Amitāha* is attested in Pali as a variant reading for *Amitābha*, the name of a *cakkavattī*: Ap 210.2 *Amitābho* (v.l. *Amitāho*) *ti nāmena cakkavattī mahabbalo*.

11. In Middle Indic and Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit, when a short vowel is required for metrical reasons in verses, a masculine nominative singular *-aḥ* / *-o* becomes *-u* or *-a*; cf. BHSG §§ 8.20, 8.22.

12. According to Damsteegt, who investigated Hybrid Sanskrit inscriptions from Mathurā, Buddhists there had already started using Sanskritized Middle Indic to write inscriptions between the latter half of the first century and the second century and in the Kuṣāṇa period, i.e., 200–350 C.E. (He follows the theory that Kaniṣka became the king of the Kushans in 200 C.E. On the basis of Harry Falk’s research, however, Kaniṣka’s reign is now believed to have begun in 127 C.E.) Sanskrit came to be used in inscriptions. This practice of using Sanskritized language in Buddhist inscriptions spread from Mathurā to other regions. Parallel to this development, the language in Buddhist texts must have been Sanskritized gradually in this period as well (Damsteegt 1978: 264–66). On the other hand, no Sanskritization is found in the language of the northwestern inscriptions of the pre-Kushan Period (ibid.: 207–8). It is only from the age of the Kuṣāṇas that Sanskritized Buddhist inscriptions started to appear (ibid.: 221).

Recently, fragments of a Gāndhārī version of the *Aṣṭasahasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* were discovered in northern Pakistan and these are thought to date back, with an 81.1% probability based on a C14 test, to

between 47–147 C.E. (cf. Falk 2011: 20–23; Falk and Karashima 2012: 19–61; 2013: 97–169). This Gāndhārī version is therefore probably contemporary with the original text of the *Dàoxíng Bānrě jīng* 道行般若經, the oldest Chinese translation of the same scripture by Lokakṣema in 179 C.E. Actually, the transliterations, found in the latter, suggest that its original language was Gāndhārī (cf. Karashima 2013). On the other hand, there are also fragments of a Sanskrit manuscript of the same scripture, discovered in Bāmiyān and now preserved in the Schøyen Collection and elsewhere, which are written in an old Brāhmī script of the Kuṣāṇa period, supposedly dating back to the second half of the third century C.E. based on palaeographical evidence (Sander 2000: 288). Moreover, a Gāndhārī fragment from Afghanistan, now in the Schøyen Collection, shows the Sanskritization of Gāndhārī, for example, the long vowel *ā* is marked by a point beneath the characters. Also, the Sanskritic ligatures, such as *śca*, *dhya*, *jña*, *ṣtha*, are used as well. Although a C14 test gave its age between 72–245 C.E., its actual date is thought to fall towards the upper end of this range, according to its palaeographic features (Allon and Salomon 2006: 289). From these, I presume that the Sanskritization of Buddhist texts, which were originally transmitted in Middle Indic, including Gāndhārī, occurred around the beginning of the third century C.E.

13. In the earlier Chinese translations made in the Han Dynasty, neither the transcription nor the translation of *Amitāyus* (“Limitless Life”) is found (cf. Nattier 2006: 196). This fact also demonstrates that *Amitāyus* is a secondary form of *Amitābha*.

14. As these verses are wanting in the Chinese translations, they are probably later interpolations in the Sanskrit versions.

15. The abbreviations of the Sanskrit manuscripts of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra* are as follows: A2 = Ms. kept in the Asiatic Society, Calcutta, No. 4199; B = Or. 2204, Ms. kept in the British Library; Bj = Ms. formerly kept in the Library of the Cultural Palace of the Nationalities, Beijing (written in 1082 C.E.); C4, C5, C6 = Mss. kept in the Cambridge University Library, Add. No. 1683, No. 1684, No. 2197; D2 = Gilgit Ms. kept in the National Archives of India (New Delhi); K = Ms. kept in the Tōyō Bunko, Tokyo (written in 1069/70 C.E.; brought from Tibet by Rev. E. Kawaguchi); L1 = Ms. kept in the Potala Palace, Lhasa; L2, L3 = Mss. now kept in the Norbulingka, Lhasa, (written in 1065 C.E. and 1067 C.E., respectively); N1, N2 = Mss. kept in the National Archives of Nepal, Kathmandu, Nos. 4–21, Nos. 3–678, respectively; O = the so-called Kashgar manuscript, actually discovered in Khādaliq but purchased in Kashgar; P1 = Ms. kept in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, No. 138–39; R = Ms. kept in the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, London, No. 6; T8 = Ms. kept in the Library of the University of Tokyo, No. 414.

16. Tib. Kanj. = The *Dam pa'i chos padma dkar po* in the Kanjur; see Karashima 2008: 215–16.

17. Tib. Kho. = An old manuscript of a Tibetan translation of the Lotus Sutra from Khotan, now kept in the National Museum of Ethnography, Stockholm; see Karashima 2008: 215–16.

18. Fujita 2007: 287ff.

19. Fujita 2007: 4, 140, 296.

20. Cf. Nattier 2006: 190.

21. Fujita 2007: p. 247, n. 5.

22. Fujita 2007: 249ff.

23. As Nattier points out (2006: 188ff; see esp. 194–95), if the original word were *Amita*, as maintained by some scholars, Lokakṣema would have transliterated it as **āmi* 阿蜜 instead of *āmītuó* 阿彌陀 in the same way as *āyī* 阿逸 (Skt. *Ajita*) or *bōluómì* 波羅蜜 (Skt. *pāramitā*).

24. Cf. Karashima 1997: 138; 1999a: p. 141, n. 34.

25. Nattier 2007: 382ff.

26. See III.1 in this article.

27. Cf. Nattier 2007: 371ff.; Karashima 2010: 18ff.

28. The Taishō Edition reads 蓋 instead, while its basic text, the Koryō Edition (高麗藏), reads 盖. The other editions correctly read 廬.

29. *Xūātī* 須阿提 might be a scribal error for *xūhētī* *須呵題 (QYS. sju xā diei; **Suhātī*, **Suhādī*), though no extant editions or manuscripts support this reading.

30. Lokakṣema's translation completely lacks verses, although they are found in the other versions, including Zhi Qian's translation. In other words, Zhi Qian, who otherwise just copied and modified the pre-existing Lokakṣema's translation, translated the verses to fill up his modified translation.

31. For other transliterations for **Suhāmatī*, found in later Chinese translations, see Nishimura 1987: 113ff.

32. *The Book of Zambasta* §14.47 (Emmerick 1968: 218).

33. From these Middle Indic forms, we can suppose **Sudhāvātī*/**Sudhāmatī* (< *sudhā* "the beverage of the gods, nectar, ambrosia" + *vat/mat* suffix) as a possible alternative, though *sudhā* would have become **susa* in Gāndhārī.

34. Cf. Fujita 1992–1996: I vii–xii, III v–vi and Fujita 2007: 19ff.

35. Cf. Fujita 1992–1996: II 1472–73, III 484.

36. Cf. Harrison 2009: 94, § 1.3.3.5. There, *byū tha* stands instead of *byū ha* (i.e., *vyūha*), though the former must be a misprint.

37. Cf. the Sanskrit title, *ārya-Akṣobhyasya tathāgatasya byūha nāma mahāyānasūtra* and the Tibetan one 'phags pa de bzhin gshegs pa Mi 'khrugs pa'i bkod pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo' found in the Tibetan translation of the **Akṣobhyavyūha* in the Tabo Collection; see Harrison 2009: 94, § 1.3.3.6.

38. I am in the process of publishing a Japanese annotated translation of this text: Karashima 1999a–.

39. Cf. n. 3.

40. 《阿彌陀經》二卷 內題云《阿彌陀三耶三佛薩樓檀過度人道經》(T. 55, no. 2145, 6c25).

41. 歸命西方阿彌陀三耶三佛檀, 廬樓亘, 摩訶那鉢菩薩 (T. 24, no. 1502, 1116b28f.). I should like to thank Jan Nattier for drawing my attention to this reference in a personal communication.

42. Personal communication, May 2003.

43. Cf. Skt. *samyaksaṃbuddha*; Pāli *sammāsaṃbuddha*; Gāndhārī *samasabudha*.

44. Cf. Fujita 1970: 301–2.

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