

Some reflections on an early Mahāyāna text *Hastikakṣyasūtra**

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Abstract

This paper attempts both to transliterate and translate a newly published Sanskrit fragment of the *Hastikakṣyasūtra* and compare it to its corresponding Chinese and Tibetan translations. This fragment is part of the Hoernle Collection housed in the British Library. Through a comparison of all extant titles of this text found in both the Chinese and Tibetan versions and their reconstruction in Sanskrit, this work further deciphers why some titles use the metaphor of the effort or power of an elephant. In analysing the Chinese and Tibetan versions, this paper suggests that the content and structure of this text shed some light on the early development of Mahāyāna *sūtras*.

Keywords: *Hastikakṣyasūtra*, Sanskrit fragment, Early Mahāyāna text, Dharmarakṣa, Dharmamitra, *Dhāraṇī*, Buddhist metaphor

Introduction

Hastikakṣyasūtra, commonly known in English as *The Sūtra on the Elephant's Armpit*, presents the Buddha's teaching in the form of a long *gāthā*, whose main doctrinal message promotes the fundamental idea of "intellectual receptivity to the truth that states of existence have no origination", Sanskrit *anutpattikadharmakṣānti* (BHSD, *s.v.* *anutpattika-dharma-kṣānti*). Part of the early Mahāyāna Perfection of Wisdom (*pāramitā*) literature, this text is popular in East Asian Buddhism for both the healing properties of its *dhāraṇī* and for its vegetarian dictates.

Hastikakṣyasūtra was translated into three major medieval Buddhist languages: Chinese, Khotanese and Tibetan. Fragments of this text in Chinese, Khotanese and Sanskrit have been found in Central Asia and China, at repositories in places such as Dunhuang and Khotan. It was also cited in a number of other contemporary texts, still extant in the Chinese Buddhist canon. These factors lend some credence to the assertion that this was, at one time, a crucial Mahāyāna text that circulated throughout regions of Central and East Asia, from

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Dunhuang, Khotan and Tibet to China, Korea and Japan. However, contemporary scholarship has paid little attention to the text. As Jan Nattier has remarked, some early Mahāyāna texts have been overlooked by modern scholars, yet we should revisit them because they are indispensable to improving our understanding of early Mahāyāna Buddhism (Nattier 2003: 5–6). This paper serves as a preliminary examination of this text. We will first offer a transliteration and translation of the Sanskrit fragment, which has not been published previously. This will be followed by a comparison of all available versions, which will lead to some reflections on their similarities and differences in terms of both variants in titles and the content of the text. It is hoped that this preliminary foray will draw further attention to the significance of this text.

At least two Chinese translations of this text have survived. One (listed as No. 813 in the modern Taishō canon, T. 813) was translated by Dharmarakṣa (Zhu Fahu 竺法護, 230–308) in the third century.¹ The other (T. 814) was translated by Dharmamitra (Tanmomiduo 曇摩蜜多, 356–442) in 441. It also appears in the Tibetan Buddhist canon under the title *Glañ-po'i rtsal shes-bya-ba theg-pa chen-po'i mdo*, which corresponds to the Sanskrit title *Hastikakṣya-nāma-mahāyānasūtra* (see Derge edition, No. 207, Mdo-sde (tsha) 95a7–109a5; Beijing edition, No. 873, Mdo-sna-tshogs (tsu) 99b–115b).² For this article we consulted the Beijing edition of the Tibetan text.

Some new sources in Sanskrit and Khotanese, uncovered only recently in Central Asia, have also been consulted for the study of this text. For example, in the early twentieth century, a Sanskrit fragment of the *Hastikakṣyasūtra* (listed previously as H. 150. Vii. 18 in the Hoernle collection of the British Library, but now recatalogued as Or. 15009/672) from Central Asia was identified by Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭, but he did not offer a transliteration or translation. In Chen's previous research he further identified another small fragment of this text in Khotanese translation, which is catalogued as Kh. missing fragment 3 or Godfrey 3 and can be dated to sometime between the eighth and ninth centuries (Chen 2012: 273–4).³

- 1 Besides *Xiangye*, this title also appears in many catalogues of the Chinese Buddhist canon beginning with the *Catalogue of Nie Daozhen* (*Nie Daozhen lu* 聶道真錄, third century). Nie was an assistant to Dharmarakṣa, the Tocharian translator of the Chinese version T. 813 of this text (see T. 2034: 63a4).
- 2 There is unfortunately no information about the translation in the colophon. Nevertheless, the two earliest catalogues of the Tibetan Buddhist texts, *Ldan-kar ma* and *'Phaṅ-thaṅ ma* have already listed the title of this text, which indicates that it can be dated back to the eighth or ninth century, see Lalou (1953: n. 156) and *'Phaṅ-thaṅ ma*, 13.
- 3 A Khotanese verse of this text has also been found in *Zambasta* 6.41: *hūnā māṇanda harbāsśā dharmā jśirgye harbiśśā śkaugye hajū vara sārā ttu nāste ku ni trāma daiyā kho cā'y*. “All dharmas are like a dream. All *saṃskāras* are deceptions. A wise man adopts there as the chief thing that wherein he sees no such things as magic-powers” (Emmerick 1968: 122–3). This passage corresponds to T. 813, 善施行正法, 有為悉虛無, 不復受神識, 如幻無所見 (779c18–19), T. 814, 諸法猶如夢, 諸有為無實, 慧不取牢固, 知之如幻化 (785c4–6), and Q. 873, *chos rnam rmi lam lta bu ste | 'dus byas thams cad yaṅ dag min | sgyu ma bzin du skye mthoṅ nas | mkhas pa sñin por mi 'dzin to* | (112a1–2). We would like to thank Professor Duan Qing for providing this information.

A concordance of the content

We have briefly compared three translations, two in Chinese (T. 813, T. 814) and one in Tibetan (Q. 873), and found that T. 814 and Q. 873 are the closest of all the versions in terms of vocabulary, especially technical terms. However, because of the different grammar and styles of Chinese and Tibetan, there are still various differences in detail between these three versions. In examining the content of this text, it is clear that healing power derived from the *dhāraṇī* taught by the Buddha that is embedded in this text was important to the propagation of this text. This practical spiritual technology became meaningful to adherents of Chinese Buddhism as it spread throughout northern China. The text was translated into Chinese at least twice, which strongly suggests that it was highly valued in Chinese Buddhist communities. There was one fragment of this text belonging to Dharmarakṣa's translation (T. 813) discovered in the Cave library in Dunhuang, now labelled manuscript S. 4645, and preserved in the Stein collection in the British Library. Yet among the Dunhuang manuscripts, none of the fragments are identical to the section from Dharmamitra's version, presenting instead other sections of the text.

In [Table 1](#) we list a more detailed comparison.

Through a comparison of the three translations, we find that T. 814 and the Tibetan translation share the same content and context order, with the exception of the order of section 6 in the Tibetan text.

As we know, early Buddhist texts like the Āgama/Nikāya editions present various titles for the same *sūtra* (e.g. Norman 1995: xxvii; Anālayo 2007: 15). This *sūtra* also acquired a number of different titles during its transmission and translation. Everyone who dealt with this text – compilers, editors, translators or copiers – could choose a phrase from the context and make it the title, so long as he thought it represented the core idea of the *sūtra*.

On a newly published fragment in Sanskrit

The Sanskrit fragment of the *Hastikakṣyasūtra* discussed here is now officially numbered Or. 15009/672 in the British Library. Its photograph can be accessed in the International Dunhuang Project online database (idp.bl.uk). This fragment was originally part of the Hoernle Collection. The Japanese scholar Watanabe Kaigroku (1872–1933) worked on the Sanskrit manuscripts in the Hoernle Collection. In the archive labelled “Dr Watanabe's papers”, Watanabe numbered this fragment H. 150. vii. 18 and determined that it was from the *Hastikakṣyasūtra* (Sims-Williams 2006: 69, n. 38; Chen 2012: 276). However, this fragment did not receive further study until Ursula Sims-Williams brought it to our attention.

With respect to material and format, the Sanskrit fragment is of a sheet written in Indian *pustaka* format, and on each side there are five lines extant. Both the left and right edges are damaged. The entire fragment is *c.* 16 × 8 cm with a single string hole remaining on the left side. The fragment is written in later Gupta script, which was commonly dated to around the fourth–sixth

Table 1. A comparison of the Chinese (T. 813, T. 814) and Tibetan (Q. 873) translations

| No. | Breakdown of content | T. 813 | T. 814 | Q. 873 |
|-----|--|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| 1 | The Buddha was with the great assembly of Bhikṣus and Bodhisattvas together. | 775a6–17 | 781c6–15 | 99b8– 100a7 |
| 2 | Śāriputra rose from meditation, went to the Buddha and uttered a <i>gāthā</i> on emptiness and indifference. | 775a18–c25 | 781c15– 782b7 | 100a7– 102a2 |
| 3 | Having praised Śāriputra, the Buddha gathered countless Bodhisattvas for his preaching. | 775c26– 776a8 | 782b8–16 | 102a2–8 |
| 4 | The Buddha smiled at Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī because <i>Hastikakṣyasūtra</i> ⁴ was preached in exactly the same place in the past. | 776a8–14 | 782b16–22 | 102a8–b3 |
| 5 | Ānanda asked the Buddha to preach the <i>Hastikakṣyasūtra</i> and to explain why he smiled at Mañjuśrī. | 776a14–24 | 782b22–29 | 102b3–8 |
| 6 | The Buddha said that those who could understand this <i>sūtra</i> would have the power of an elephant etc., and he hoped future Bodhisattvas would spread it immediately after his passing away. | 776a24–b4 | 782b29–c7 | 115a7–b2 |
| 7 | The Buddha demonstrated his appearance to Mañjuśrī. The latter asked the Buddha how the Bodhisattvas are able to remain in all the dharmas of virtue, demonstrate all the conducts of Bodhisattvas, teach immeasurable sentient beings and let the buddhas appear like the reflection of the moon on the [surface of] water. | 776b5–14 | 782c7–17 | 102b8– 103a5 |
| 8 | Having praised Mañjuśrī, the Buddha told him that the bodhisattvas, who have accomplished the six perfections, can remain in all the dharmas of virtue. | 776b14–28 | 782c17–28 | 103a5–b7 |
| 9 | The Buddha said, “there are again six dharmas, in which the bodhisattvas can abide”. | 776b29–c10 | 782c28– 783a6 | 103b7– 104a4 |
| 10 | In reply to Mañjuśrī’s detailed questions, the Buddha elaborated on the latter six dharmas. | 776c10– 777a15 | 783a6–b5 | 104a4– 105a7 |
| 11 | The Buddha replied to Mañjuśrī’s question of how bodhisattvas go beyond all languages and never get close to one another. ⁵ | 777a16–22 | 783b5–10 | 105a7–b2 |
| 12 | The Buddha told Mañjuśrī that once the bodhisattvas penetrate this <i>sūtra</i> , it is as if they understand emptiness and obtain <i>anutpattikadharmakṣānti</i> . | 777a23–b28 | 783b10–c18 | 105b2– 106b4 |

| | | | | |
|----|---|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| 13 | Sixty bhikṣus full of arrogance (<i>adhimāna</i>) regarded the preaching of the Buddha as heretical and left the assembly. Śāriputra prevented them from hearing the teaching of the Buddha. | 777b28–c18 | 783c18– 784a4 | 106b4– 107a2 |
| 14 | Śāriputra could not understand the act of these sixty bhikṣus or the mind of the Buddha. The Buddha told Śāriputra that viewing the Tathāgata in a concrete form is a wrong view. | 777c18– 778a11 | 784a4–23 | 107a2–b7 |
| 15 | The Buddha explained to Śāriputra why the wrong view is called the right conduct in name. | 778a11–23 | 784a23–b2 | 107b7– 108a4 |
| 16 | The Buddha told Śāriputra that one could receive no karmic reward through donations. | 778a24–c2 | 784b2–c3 | 108a4– 109a7 |
| 17 | The Buddha told Śāriputra that if one’s donation has no karmic reward, it indicates that he or she could obtain <i>aṣaṃjñāsamāpatti</i> (absorption of non-identification). | 778c2–18 | 784c3–17 | 109a7–b6 |
| 18 | The Buddha told Śāriputra if one has <i>aṣaṃjñāsamāpatti</i> , he could obtain <i>anutpattikadharmakṣānti</i> . | 778c19–27 | 784c17–24 | 109b6– 110a2 |
| 19 | In the assembly, sixty <i>adhimāna</i> bhikṣus achieved enlightenment by converting to Buddhism and learning about the Buddha’s teaching. They claimed that they were not separated from the Buddha, and the Buddha was not separated from them. | 778c27– 779a5 | 784c24– 785a2 | 110a2–6 |
| 20 | Śāriputra understood what sixty <i>adhimāna</i> Bhikṣus practised and realized that “nothing to be obtained” from the Buddha’s teaching is actually true enlightenment. | 779a5–b12 | 785a2–29 | 110a6– 111a6 |
| 21 | The Buddha explained why the teaching was called <i>anutpattikadharmakṣānti</i> and he used a <i>gāthā</i> to teach Mañjuśrī how to learn, practise, and cultivate this wisdom. | 779b12– 780c6 | 785a29– 786b22 | 111a6– 113a8 |
| 22 | The Buddha told Mañjuśrī that, if one could understand, read and spread this <i>sūtra</i> , he or she would obtain twenty virtues. | 780c7– 781a5 | 786b22–c11 | 113a8– 114a2 |
| 23 | The Buddha told Mañjuśrī that this <i>sūtra</i> could heal illness because he was the reincarnation of the Bodhisattva Vajraketu. In his life as Vajraketu he healed the illnesses of sentient beings by using the <i>dhāraṇī</i> as it was taught in this <i>sūtra</i> . | 781a6–b10 | 786c11– 787a7 | 114a2– 115a1 |
| 24 | The Buddha taught Mañjuśrī the disciplines for reciting the <i>dhāraṇī</i> in this <i>sūtra</i> . | 781b11–21 | 787a7–15 | 115a1–6 |
| 25 | The Buddha told Ānanda to teach this <i>sūtra</i> for benefitting sentient beings. | 781b21–23 | 787a15–17 | 115a6–7 |
| 26 | The Buddha praised Ānanda for his acceptance of his teaching. The assembly enjoyed the preaching of the Buddha. | 781b23–28 | 787a17–22 | 115b2–5 |

⁴According to T. 813, this *sūtra* is called *Hastyupamasūtra*.

⁵According to T. 813, the Buddha replied to Mañjuśrī’s question of how the bodhisattvas simultaneously teach sentient beings in different languages.

century CE.⁶ Thus the Sanskrit manuscript postdates Dharmarakṣa's Chinese translation but appeared at almost the same time as Dharmamitra's Chinese translation. The latter, as noted above, was finished in 441. The Khotanese and Tibetan versions were created at a later date than the two Chinese versions and this Sanskrit fragment. As we will see later, the Sanskrit fragment has a section that corresponds closely to a section in Dharmamitra's translation, which suggests that the latter was based on a Sanskrit version similar to this fragment, if not from the same text itself.

We offer below our transliteration and reconstruction of this Sanskrit fragment.

Or.15009/672

a

- 1 /// (pra)[tya]yaṃ tathāgatā rhaṃtaḥ⁷ samyaksambuddhā smitam
prādurṣkurvantī(tī) ///
- 2 ///+(ta)[d a]vocat* iha maṃjuśrī gr̥ddhrakūṭe parvate daśabhir bud(dh)a
(sahasraih) ///
- 3 ///++ .. [bh]āṣitaṃpūrvam ca · atha khalv āyusmān ā(ndandaḥ) ///
- 4 /// (tvaram)āṅarūpo utthāyāṃsanād ekāṃsam uttarāsaṃgam kṛt(vā) ///
- 5 /// [y]ena bhaga[vā]ṃs tenāṃjaliṃ praṇāmya bhagavam[ta]m etad a[v]o(cat)
///

b

- 1 /// (ha)[st](i)[ka]ccham⁸ nāma [dh]armaparyāyam deśaya sampra[k](āśa)[ya]
du(rlabham) ///
- 2 /// (dharma)[pa]ryāyam gaṃbhīraṃ bhaviṣyati : gaṃbhīrāvabhāsam [yad
bha]gavāṃ tam*⁹ ///
- 3 ///++ [s](m)i[t]am prāduṃṣkārṣīt* atha khalu bhagavān ā[yu/ha]⁹ ///
- 4 ///+(ya)thā[p]i tad viṃpaśyanā kuśalasya mīmāṃsā tena ///
- 5 /// (āyu)ṣmān ānando bhagavataḥ pratyaśrauṣīd bhagavān asyaitad avoca(t)
///

By consulting the Chinese and Tibetan versions, this section can be translated as follows:

(a1) "... the *tathāgatas*, *arhats*, *samyaksambuddhas* [do not] show [their] smile [without] reason." (a2) ... [The Buddha] said the following: "Here, Mañjuśrī, in the Gr̥ddhrakūṭa Mountain, by ten [thousand] buddhas ... (a3) spoken before". Then the Reverend Ānanda (a4) quickly rose from his seat, removed the upper garment of one shoulder, ... (a5) as he bowed before the Blessed One with palms joined together he said to the Blessed One as follows:

6 See Sander 1968: 131–4, 154.

7 It is read as *arhantaḥ*.

8 We will offer further explanation of this reconstruction below.

9 According to the context, it seems to read as *ā[yu]* and can be reconstructed as *ā[yu]ṣmantam*.

(b1) "... teach [and] explain to [us] the Dharma teaching named ... *ccha!* [It is] difficult to obtain ... (b2) The teaching will be profound [and] with profound illumination. When the Blessed One ..., (b3) showed ... smile." Then the Blessed One [said to] the Reverend One: "... (b4) Since [you have] the correct insight and differentiation, with which ... (b5) ... The Reverend Ānanda consented to the Blessed One. The Blessed One said to him in the following: "..."

The Sanskrit fragment breaks here. The following section shows that the Buddha taught how wonderful this text was and how lucky the audience would be to receive this teaching.

The corresponding section in Dharmamitra's Chinese translation reads as follows:

爾時文殊師利即從座起，正於衣服，偏袒右臂，右膝著地，合掌向佛，白佛言：‘世尊！何因何緣而微笑耶？諸佛、如來、應供、正遍知，非無緣笑。’佛告文殊師利：‘過去於此，祇闍崛山中，有十千佛，說《象腋經》。’爾時大德阿難，聞佛所說，疾從座起，正於衣服，偏袒右肩，右膝著地，合掌向佛，白佛言：‘善哉，世尊！善哉，善逝！’”

(T. 814: 782b20–24, for the corresponding section of Or. 15009/672a)

今當演說此《象腋經》，是經難聞。若如來說者，令無有疑。此深妙典，有深光明。世尊！何故觀文殊面已而微笑也？’ 爾時世尊讚阿難言：‘善哉，善哉！阿難！善慧分別。汝今阿難！諦聽，諦聽，善思念之！我今當說。’阿難從佛受教勅已。佛告阿難：‘.....’”

(T. 814: 782b25–8, for the corresponding section of Or. 15009/672b)

At that time Mañjuśrī immediately rose from his seat, adjusted his clothes, and uncovered his right shoulder. He knelt his right knee on the ground, palms joined together and said to the Buddha: “The Blessed One! For what reason are you smiling? The Buddhas, *tathāgatas*, *arhats*, *samyak-sambuddhas* do not show [their] smiles without cause or reason”. The Buddha told Mañjuśrī, “In the past in the Gṛdhrakūṭa Mountain there were ten thousand buddhas who spoke about the *Sūtra of the Armpits of Elephant*. At that time Great Virtue Ānanda heard what the Buddha said. He quickly rose from his seat, adjusted his clothes, uncovered his right shoulder, and knelt with his right knee on the ground, palms joined together and said to the Buddha: Wonderful (*sādhu*)! The Blessed One! Wonderful! Sugata! At this time you will expound upon this *Sūtra of the Armpits of Elephant*! This *sūtra* is difficult to hear. If the Tathāgata teaches this *sūtra* then all doubts will be dispelled. This profound and wondrous *sūtra* has profound brightness and illumination. Blessed One! Why did you smile after you observed the face of Mañjuśrī? At that time the Blessed One praised the words of Ānanda: Wonderful! Wonderful! Anānda, [you have] skilful understanding and differentiation. Now you Anānda, listen carefully, listen carefully. You carefully think about it. Ānanda got the teaching from the Buddha. The Buddha told Ānanda: ‘...’”

Dharmarakṣa's translation is slightly different:

文殊師利便從座起，偏袒右肩，右膝著地，叉手問佛：‘向者所笑，為何變應、如來、至真，未曾虛欣？’佛告文殊，‘今靈鷲山有萬菩薩，俱講經典，經名《喻象》。於往古昔，亦曾所論。’賢者阿難，聞佛所說，即從座起，更整衣服，長跪叉手，稽首自歸。‘善哉！世尊！愍傷眾生，令致永安。唯當領宣此《喻象經》。斯法難值，眾所希聞，願欲時說。一切諸部，皆來雲集，聽此經典。必當速得深入光明、幽奧玄妙。所以者何？如來至真，尊無雙比，三界無侶。’向者尊顏觀文殊面，應時即笑，此不虛妄，會當有意。佛言：‘善哉！善哉！阿難，汝乃觀察殊異德本。所可識者，慧不可限。阿難，諦聽善思念之，當為汝說向者笑意。’於是阿難與諸大眾受教而聽。佛告阿難：‘.....’

(T. 813: 776a12–21)

Mañjuśrī immediately rose from his seat and uncovered his right shoulder. He knelt on his right knee, palms joined together, and said to the Buddha: “In the past you smiled. Yet *Bianying*, *Tathāgataḥ*, *arhat* you do not smile without cause and reason”. The Buddha told Mañjuśrī: “Now in the *Ḡḍhrakūṭa* Mountain there are ten thousand bodhisattvas who are teaching *The Elephant Metaphor Sūtra*. It was also taught in the past. When the wise one *Ānanda* heard what the Buddha said, he immediately rose from his seat, adjusted his clothes, and knelt for a long time with his hands joined together. After some time he bowed his head and said: Wonderful! The Blessed One! You are compassionate toward sentient beings and lead them to attain everlasting tranquillity. Please release and preach this *Elephant Metaphor Sūtra*. This Dharma is difficult to hear and it has rarely been heard by the assembly. Please preach it at your will. All groups have assembled together like clouds to hear this *sūtra*. They must grasp the profundity, brightness, depth and wondrousness (of this *sūtra*). Why is that? It is because the *Tathāgata* is ultimate truth, unparalleled, honourable, and matchless in three realms. Thereupon the Blessed One observed the face of Mañjuśrī and smiled at once. This is not empty and absurd, but must have been a sign. The Buddha said: Wonderful! Wonderful!

The paragraph in Tibetan translation has almost the same wording as that in the Chinese translation T. 814, as well as that in the extant Skt. fragment. The parallel section of the Tibetan version reads as follows:

de nas ñid kyis tshe 'jam dpal g'zon nur gyur bstan las lañs te | bla gos phrag pa gcig la gzar nas pus mo g.yas pa'i lha ña sa la btsugs te | bcom ldan 'das la 'di skad ces gsol to | de b'zin g'segs pa dgra bcom pa yañ dag par rdzogs pa'i sañs rgyas rgyu dañ rkyen ma mchis par 'dzum pa mi mdzad na | bcom ldan 'das 'dzum pa mdzad pa'i rgyu gañ | rkyen gañ lags | de skad ces gsol pa dañ | bcom ldan 'das kyī 'jam dpal g'zon nur gyur pa la 'di skad ces bka' stsal to | 'jam dpal sañs rgyas khri nmams kyis bya rgod kyī phuñ po'i ri 'di la glañ po'i rtsal lta bu zes bya ba'i chos kyī rnam grañs b'sad do | de nas tshe dañ ldan pa kun

dga' po bcom ldan 'das kyis bka' stsal pa thos pa dañ | myur ba myur bar riñs pa'i tshul du | stan las lañs te | chos gos phrag pa gcig la gzar nas | pus mo g.yas pa'i lha ña sa la btsugs te | bcom ldan 'das gañ na ba de logs su thal mo sbyar ba btud nas | bcom ldan 'das la 'di skad ces gsol to | *bcom ldan 'das de yañ glañ po'i rtsal lta bu že bgyi ba'i chos kyi rnam grañs bdag la bśad na legs so* | *bde bar gśegs pa bdag la bstan na legs so* | *gañ bcom ldan 'das kyis 'jam dpal gźon nur gyur pa'i bźin la gzigas nas 'dzum pa mdzad pa'i chos kyi rnam grañs de deñ sañ thos par dkon la* | chos kyi rnam grañs de ño mtshar du 'gyur źin zab la zab par snañ ba lags so | bcom ldan 'das kyis bka' stsal pa | kun dga' bo 'di ltar khyod lhag mthoñ la mkhas źin dpyod pa legs so legs so | de bas na kun dga' bo khyod legs par śin tu ñon la yid la zuñ źig dañ ñas bśad do | bcom ldan 'das legs so žes tshe dañ ldan pa kun dga' bo bcom ldan 'das kyi ltar ñan no |

(Q. 873: 102b1–102b8)

Therefore Mañjuśrībhūta immediately rose from his seat, uncovered the upper garment of one shoulder, knelt with [his] right knee on the ground, [and] said to the Blessed One as follows: “*tathāgatas, arhats, samyaksambuddhas* do not show [their] smile without cause and reason. What is the cause, what is the reason, that the Blessed One smiled?”

The Blessed One said to Mañjuśrībhūta as follows: “Oh Mañjuśrī, in the Gr̥dhraḥkūṭa Mountain, ten thousand buddhas spoke about the so-called ‘Simile of Elephant Power’ (*glañ po'i rtsal lta bu*) teaching of Dharma.”

Then the Reverend Ānanda heard the words of the Blessed One, immediately rose from his seat, uncovered the upper garment of one shoulder, bowed before the Blessed One with palms joined together, [and] said to the Blessed One as follows: “Oh Blessed One, furthermore, it is good to tell me the so-called ‘Simile of Elephant Power’ (*Hastikakṣyopama*) Dharma teaching. Oh Sugata it is good to tell me. The Dharma teaching of Mañjuśrībhūta, that caused the Blessed One to smile, is difficult to hear. The Dharma teaching is marvellous and with profound illumination indeed.”

Then the Blessed One said: “Oh, Ānanda, since you have skilful understanding based on correct insight and differentiation, good, good! Therefore, Ānanda, listen attentively, keep it in mind! I will tell [you].” “Oh, Blessed One, good”, the Reverend Ānanda listened to the Blessed One.

There are two noteworthy discrepancies between this Tibetan version and the two Chinese versions. First, the utterance of Ānanda in the Tibetan version (in italics) differs from the Chinese versions. Here the smile of the Buddha is mentioned before the quality of this Dharma teaching. The second variance occurs where the paragraph ends at the opening phrase of the Buddha’s preaching to Ānanda. Here the Tibetan version lacks the expected phrase, *de nas bcom ldan 'das kyis tshe dañ ldan bkun dga' po la bka' stsal pa*, “then the Blessed One said to the Venerable Ānanda”. This is because the entire paragraph corresponding to section six in [Table 1](#) has been moved closer to the end of

the *sūtra* (Q. 873: 115a7–b2), after section 25, where Ānanda appears again and also begins with the same phrase.

If we now compare the Hoernle Sanskrit fragment H. 150. Vii. 18 with its corresponding section in the two Chinese and Tibetan versions, there is very little difference between the Sanskrit fragment, Dharmamitra's text, and the Tibetan version. However, Dharmarakṣa's text differs in a number of places from both the Sanskrit fragment and Dharmamitra's version. We cannot determine exactly what original version in which language was used by Dharmarakṣa or Dharmamitra for their translations. Nevertheless, it is likely that Dharmamitra's version and the Sanskrit version came from the same source text. While this is likely to be the case, Dharmamitra's translation has modified the source text to accommodate Chinese grammar and style, which is noticeable in, for example, the characteristic four-character (tetrasyllabic) Chinese phrases. Furthermore, there is another question we can ask here. If the two Chinese translations were based on different Sanskrit recensions, does this not suggest that there was more than one Sanskrit version or that some sections of the text were modified between the second century and the third or fourth century? These two texts may present an example of what Jan Nattier has suggested was a process of sutrafication found in early Mahāyāna texts (Nattier 2003: 11–14). However, the one extant Sanskrit fragment does not offer enough evidence for conclusive judgement on this.

The title and the metaphor

This section will shed new light on how the text was titled and how the two Chinese and one Tibetan recensions of the text were understood. The Chinese and Tibetan fragments all have titles, while these are no longer extant for the Khotanese fragment and perhaps the Sanskrit fragment. The Tibetan and Chinese *Hastikakṣyasūtra* fragments offer a striking number of variants in how the *sūtra* was titled and the types of phrases used for this process.

We will begin with the idea of the “armpit of an elephant”. The Chinese word, *Xiangye* 象腋, means literally “The armpit of an elephant”. This title is at first attested in the *Catalogue of Nie Daozhen* (see below), and has appeared in both Tibetan and Chinese versions. In the Chinese translation by Dharmamitra that bears this phrase as its title, it explains why this text was called *The Sūtra of Armpit of an Elephant* as follows: “The Buddha told Mañjuśrī: ‘In the past, in this Gṛdhra-kūṭa Mountain there were ten thousand Buddhas who have spoken about *The Sūtra of Armpit of an Elephant*’.” (佛告文殊師利，過去於此闍崛山中，有十千佛說象腋經，see T. 814: 782b20 ff.). However, throughout the text, there is no direct explanation as to why this text used this title, focusing on the armpit of an elephant. Since Dharmamitra's Chinese translation was very well known and popular in medieval Chinese Buddhism, the title bearing this phrase has been widely cited in Chinese Buddhist literature, such as the *Foshuo foming jing* 佛說佛名經 (T. 441, vol. 14, p. 231c) and *Ru Lengqiejing* 入楞伽經 (T. 671, vol. 16, p. 564b).

Moreover, what was probably the corresponding Sanskrit title can be determined from the opening of the Tibetan version and reconstructed in Sanskrit as the following: “In Indian language: ‘The Mahāyanasūtra named

Hastikakṣya” (*rgya gar skad du | hastikakṣyanāmamahāyānasūtra* | see (Q 873: 99b8). *Kakṣyā*¹⁰ is derived from an archaic Vedic word, *kakṣa*, which has two original meanings; one is “armpit”.¹¹ *Kakṣyā* is equivalent merely to *kākṣa*⁻¹, and within whose branch there has been a secondary meaning, “Anstrengung”, only since one of Hemacandra’s (eleventh and twelfth centuries) lexicographies, *Anekārthasaṅgraha*.¹²

In the Sanskrit fragment, there is only one *akṣara*, *ccham*, preserved. However, it is still possible to reconstruct the *sūtra* title from this single *akṣara*: *Hastikaccha*, if we consider its primitive form, *hastikakṣa*¹³ that is, the Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit form (BHSD, *s.v.* *kaccha*).¹⁴ Several centuries later *hastikaccha* had been further Sanskritized not into *-kakṣa*, but *-kakṣya*. Thus the compiler could express the meaning of the title unambiguously, namely the meaning of *kākṣa*⁻¹.

Now let us turn to the second phrase for the title, found in the Tibetan version, *glañ bo rtsal*, which means “the effort of an Elephant”, indicating its Sanskrit form **hastyākrama*¹⁵ or **hastivikrama*¹⁶. The title bearing this phrase is attested at the beginning of the Tibetan version, following its possibly original Sanskrit title: in Tibetan language, “The Mahāyānasūtra named *rtsal* of *glañ po*” (*bod skad du | glañ po’i rtsal ces bya ba theg pa chen po’i mdo* | see Q. 873: 99b8), however, *glañ bo rtsal* should not be regarded as a correct interpretation of the Sanskrit word *hastikakṣya*.¹⁷ And this phrase also appeared in a Tibetan sentence: “*bcom ldan ’das kyis ’jam dpal g’zon nur gyur pa la ’di dkad ces bka’ rtsal to | ’jam dpal saṅs rgyas khri rnam kyis bya rgod kyi phuñ po’i ri ’di la glañ po’i rtsal lta bu zas bya ba’i chos kyi rnam graṅs bśad do* |” (Q. 873: 102b2 ff.), which is parallel to the Chinese version (same as T. 814: 782b20 ff., as we have translated above). It is worth noting that *glañ po’i rtsal lta bu* can be reconstructed as **Hastikakṣyopama*, if we regard *rtsal* as a direct translation of the Skt. word *kakṣya* and *lta bu* as a meaningful clue to a Skt. origin (see below).

In the context of Q. 873 and T. 814, the effort of an elephant was definitely emphasized. The Tibetan version has the following:

10 As a noun in feminine form, otherwise as an adjective.

11 See EWAia, *s.v.* *kākṣa*⁻¹: Achselhöhle; *kākṣa*⁻²: Gebüsch, Gestrüpp.

12 See PW, *s.v.*

13 For the correspondence between Skt. *ky* and Middle Indic *cch*, see below.

14 *kaccha* is also attested in Pali, see, PTSD and CPD, *s.v.* For the meaning, viz. interpretation of this word other than “armpit”, see Alsdorf 1957: 20.

15 For *rtsal* to *ākrama*, which is attested in the Tibetan version of *Suvarṇaprabhāsottamasūtra*, see Chandra 1959–61, *s.v.* *rtal*.

16 Mvy 6478 *Śiṃha-vikramah*. For *rtsal* to *vikrama*, which is attested in the Tibetan version of *Bodhisattvāvadānakalpalatā*, see Chandra 1992–94, *s.v.* *rtal*.

17 According to Mvy, *kakṣa* corresponds to *mchan khuñ* (3971), which is a commonly accepted word for “armpit”, cf. ZHDCD, *s.v.*, while *rtsal* only occurs under group §LXV. *Saddharmanāmāni* (*Dam-pa’i chos-kyi miñ la*) we can find the expected correspondence, but exclusively our *sūtra* title again: *Hastikakṣyam*, *Glañ-po’i rtsal* (1399). The only existence of this correspondence, *kakṣya* : *rtsal*, attested in Mvy, *Ldan-karma* and *’Phañ-thañ ma* (see note 2), can reflect the early translation method in Tibet and, moreover, the source of Mvy. For the source of Mvy, cf. Pagel 2007: 153 ff.

kun dga' po sems can gañ chos kyi rnam grañs 'di la mos pa de dag glañ po'i rtsal dañ glañ po chen po'i rtsal gyis gnon par 'gyur | (Q. 873: 115a7).

Ānanda, the ones who faithfully teach this [*sūtra*] will share the same superiority as the effort of an elephant and the effort of a large elephant.

Dharmarakṣa's Chinese translation includes the following phrasing:

佛告阿難，若有眾生解此經者，如大象力，如大龍力。是諸眾生解此經者，亦復如是。(T. 814: 782b29 ff.)

The Buddha told Ānanda: If there are sentient beings who can understand this *sūtra*, they will be [endowed with] the same power (or effort) as that of a large elephant, and the same power (or effort) as that of a large (dragon) *nāga*.¹⁸

Likewise, all sentient beings who could understand this *sūtra* are also like this.

According to the sentence in these two versions, we can reconstruct the phrase, “effort of an elephant” into a Buddhist Sanskrit cliché, *hastivikrama*,¹⁹ and be convinced of its existence in the Sanskrit exemplar, which the Tibetan translator had for his translation. Since there is no trace in the content related to “the armpit of an elephant”, possibly for the translator the meaning of the *sūtra* title was not comprehensible, but this phrase, “the effort of elephant” may more accurately reflect what the translator had in mind. Therefore he accepted this kind of interpretation to decipher the puzzling title.

The third phrase in the Chinese title, *yuxiang* “喻象” (the metaphor of elephant), is worth noting. It was used for translating the Sanskrit title **Hastyupama*. Despite an abbreviation of **Hastikakṣyopama*, it probably indicates that the power of this text is equivalent to the effort of an elephant (**hastyākramopama* or **hastivikramopama*) or the stride of an elephant (**hastigatyupama*), which would have been understood as powerful and amazing. This phrase appears in the title of the text on the same occasion when the Buddha explained the title of this *sūtra* to Mañjuśrī in the early Chinese translation T. 813:

佛告文殊，今靈鷲山有萬菩薩，俱講經典，經名喻象，於往古昔亦曾所論。(T. 813: 776a12 ff., which is the equivalent to Q. 873: 115a7 ff., where the title appeared as *glañ bo rtsal*, and T. 814: 782b20 ff., where the title appeared as *xiangye* 象腋)

The Buddha told Mañjuśrī: Nowadays in the Gṛdhrakūṭa Mountain there are ten thousand Bodhisattvas, who are all preaching this *sūtra*, whose title is “the Metaphor of an Elephant”. In the past it was also preached.

18 Although *nāga* can be ambivalent and mean elephant as well, in this context, also according to the Chinese translation tradition, elephant corresponds to *hastin*, and dragon to *nāga*.

19 See Mvy 6478 *Simha-vikramaḥ* under group §CCXLV *Skad go-'dun-gyi miñ-la*.

This phrase and its content remind us of an older *sūtra* title in the *sūtra-piṭaka*, viz. in Āgama/Nikāya, *Haṭṭhipadopamasutta* (象跡喻經, Skt.: *Hastipadopamasūtra*), “The simile of an elephant footprint”. Under this title there are two Pāli *sūtras*: MN. 27 *Cūlahatṭhipadopamasutta* and MN. 28 *Mahāhatṭhipadopamasutta*, which correspond to two identical Chinese translations T. 26. 146 and T. 26. 30 象跡喻經 respectively. Although the former mentioned the analogy of a big elephant’s footprint, it seems more plausible to link our *sūtra* to the latter one, in which the analogy of the elephant’s footprint is mentioned and Śāriputra appears as the preacher of the *sūtra*. Furthermore, the main idea of this *sūtra*, the contemplation of the four elements and the dependent origination of the five aggregates, could indicate the relationship between it and our text. It is noteworthy that in the Buddhist tradition the more recently composed *sūtra* would often introduce an older *sūtra* title within the framework of an embedded legend, which claims that the Buddha had preached the older one from the Āgama/Nikāya in ancient times. In this way the authors enhanced the authority of the later text, by stating that it was intrinsically linked to the earlier one, or even the repetition of the earlier one, whose authority had been acknowledged through all kinds of Buddhist traditions.²⁰

The fourth phrase used in one of the titles of this text is *Xiangbu* “象步” (Stride of elephant), which refers to the Sanskrit term **hastigati* or **hastivikrama*. In Dharmarakṣa’s version, it says that:

佛告阿難，若有眾生信樂斯法，舉動進止如象遊步。信此法者，彼等之類如大象遊，亦如龍步。(T. 813: 776a24 ff.)

The Buddha told Ānanda: If there are sentient beings who could have faith and were fond of this teaching, [their] behaviours and movements would be like the walking around of an elephant. If those ones could have faith in this teaching, they would walk around like an elephant, and also step like a dragon (*nāga*).

Even though elephant and *nāga* are listed together, neither the effort nor the strides of *nāga* were used in the title of this text. Furthermore, in Dharmarakṣa’s version, the stride of a lion was also mentioned, as follows:

愛喜此法真諦義者，為師子步，舉動進止尊無儔匹。(T. 813: 776a26)

The ones who liked the meaning of the ultimate truth of this teaching, they could make the stride of a lion. And their behaviours and movements would be noble and unparalleled.

Another sentence in Dharmamitra’s version shows the same metaphor:

阿難，諸眾生等解此經者，如師子遊步進趣勝道。(T. 814: 782c2 ff.)

20 In the same way the *sūtra* *Maitreyavyākaraṇa* gained its authority through *Pūrvāparāntikasūtra*, which is only preserved in Chinese *Madhyāgama* (T. 26: 508c–511c and T. 44: 829b–831a). See Lévi 1932: 361–3 and Liu 2005: 12–13.

Ānanda, all sentient beings who could understand this *sūtra*, they would move like lions and attain superior enlightenment.

Interestingly the metaphor of a lion is also attested in the Tibetan version:

kun dga' po gañ chos kyi rnam grañs 'di la mos pa de dag señ ge'i 'gros dañ | khyu mchog gi 'gros su 'gro bar 'gyur ro | (Q. 873: 115a7 ff.)

Ānanda, those who could have faith in the teaching of [this] Dharma, they would walk in the stride of lion and herd chief.

At the end of the *sūtra*, the Buddha told a previous Buddha who also preached this *sūtra* that he had given different names in each version – all are related to the stride of a lion: the first is *Leshizibu* 樂師子步 (Skt. **simhagatyadhimukti*) “being fond of the stride of the lion” (T. 813: 781a12); the second is *Shiziyoubu* 師子遊步 (Skt. **simhagati*) “the walking stride of the lion” (T. 814: 786c18); and the third is a Tibetan phrase *señ ge'i stabs su 'gro ba* (Skt. **sim havikr āntagati*) “Going in the manner of a lion” (Q. 873: 114a6). These names for the previous Buddha show that “the stride of lion” was essential for demonstrating the power of a Buddha. The stride of lion also appeared in another text entitled *Rāṣṭrapāla* translated by Dharmarakṣa (Boucher 2008: 98–9).

Since *vikrama* (viz. Tib. *rtsal*) means both “effort” and “stride”, the Tibetan title *glañ bo rtsal* can also be interpreted as “Stride of an elephant”. However, it must be added that there is another variant that does not make reference to an elephant. The title of Dharmarakṣa’s Chinese translation (T. 813), entitled *Wuxiwang* 無希望 “Without desire” (Skt. **akāñkṣa*), has no demonstrable connection with the previous four phrases (titles?). Since the *sūtra* belongs to the Perfection of Wisdom literature, “without desire” indicates a state of mind that the absolute truth is transcendent, that all phenomena are unobtainable, and there is nothing to be desired. In the context of Dharmarakṣa’s translation, however, this word *xiwang* 希望 is only attested in the phrase *yu zhongyou wu xiwang* 於眾祐無希望, “having no desire for the blessing from the Buddha”, which appears three times.²¹ This phrase is concerned with one of the elements, in particular the penultimate in the causal chain, which leads to the core idea of this *sūtra*, *anutpattikadharmakṣānti* “intellectual receptivity to the truth that states of existence have no origination”, which the Buddha explained to Mañjuśrī²² and then

21 T. 813: 777b26–27, 778c2. The word attested in the places other than there does not exist in the older versions of the Chinese canon, e.g. 775b1, 不懷希望在 Taishō, against 不懷妄想 in the four older versions.

22 T. 813: 777b22 ff.: 佛言。如是。文殊師利。彼法自然。其欲得見如來至真。則為邪見。其邪見者求入正見。其正見者是為泥洹。非大德果無大功勳。其至泥洹非大德果。無功勳已則世眾祐。其世眾祐。則於眾祐無所希望。其於眾祐無希望已。即能具足虛靜之慧。已具靜慧則能速成無所從生法忍。

T. 814: 783c13 ff.: 文殊師利。是實相法欲見如來。是名邪見。如是邪見即是正行。若是正行。是中布施無有大果。亦無大報。若其施中無大果報。是世福田。若世福田。是中所施無有果報。若施無果報。是則滿足不實之智。若其滿足不實之智。是等疾得無生法忍。

(Q. 873: 106b4 ff.) *de la 'jam dpal chos thams cad kyi no bo ñid de lta bu la | gañ de b*

in more detail to Śāriputra (T. 813: 777c18–778c27; T. 814: 784a4–c24; Q. 873: 107a2–110a2). Both in Dharmamitra’s Chinese version (T. 814) and in the Tibetan version (Q. 873) this phrase can be understood as “having no ripening of the fruit of donation”, reconstructed as **dānāvīpāka* and should be recognized as the original expression in their Sanskrit exemplar. The translation of this phrase in the Tibetan version (Q. 813) is much more literary; however, it could be derived from a Sanskrit compound, **vipākāpratīkāṃkṣaṇa*, or the Tibetan phrase *re ba med* in the Tibetan sentence *rnam par smin la re ba med*.

Despite these connections there is still not sufficient evidence to explain why Dharmarakṣa’s Chinese version (T. 813) used this title. Here we suggest a new hypothesis that the second part of the best-known title, *Hastikakṣya*, *kakṣya* must have been mistaken for *kāṃkṣa* “desire”, and the first part, *hasti*, for some form of negation, like *a*, *nāsti*, etc.

Given that the exemplar Dharmarakṣa had for his translation could have been in Gāndhārī written in Kharoṣṭhī script, or in Buddhist (Hybrid) Sanskrit written in Kharoṣṭhī or Brāhmī script,²³ there are two possibilities that arise from misreading or miscopying. The first is **nāstīkāṃkṣa* (Skt.) and **nastīkakṣa* (Gāndhārī) “Nonexistence of desire” for *hastīkakṣa* in both languages.²⁴ If the exemplar was written in Brāhmī, *ha*²⁵ could be confused with *nā* through the incorrect placing of its final stroke, *ka* with *kām* through forgetting a point for *anusvāra*, however, *ha* and *nā* in our fragment, which is written in the later Gupta script and unlikely to have been read by Dharmarakṣa, can be more easily exchangeable.²⁶ If the manuscript was written in Kharoṣṭhī, all the *akṣaras* of both words are the same except for *ha* and *na*, which are hard to misread. Another possibility is the Gāndhārī **asakakṣa* (Skt.: **asakāṃkṣa*) instead of *hastīkakṣa*, since *a* and *ha* are

ḥin gśeḡs pa lta bar ’dod pa de dag ni log par lta ba’o | gañ log par lta ba de dag ni yañ dag par žugs pa’o | gañ yañ dag par žugs pa de dag la byin pa ni ’bras bu che ba ma yin | phan yon che ba ma yin no | gañ dag la byin na ’bras bu che ba ma yin | phan yon che ba ma yin pa de dag ni ’jig rten gyi sbyin gnas so | gañ ’jig rten gyi sbyin gnas yin pa de dag la sbyin pa’i rnam par smin pa med do | gañ la sbyin pa’i rnam par smin pa med pa de dag gis | ’du śes med pa yoñs su rdzogs par byas so | gañ gis ’dus śes med pa yoñs su rdzogs par byas pa de dag myur du mi skye ba’i chos la bzod pa thob par ’gyur ro |

23 As recorded in his biography and the colophons to the texts translated by him, Dharmarakṣa received both *fanben* (a transcription of Brāhmī) and *huben* (a transcription of Kharoṣṭhī), see Boucher 2000a, esp. 11, 18 ff. For the languages, from which Dharmarakṣa translated into Chinese, see Boucher 1996: 103–69; 1998: 471–506; 2001: 93–110; 2008: 101–10. Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit can be transcribed either in Brāhmī or in Kharoṣṭhī, see Boucher 1996: 103–69; 1998: 471–506; 1999: 61, n. 6 and Salomon 2002: 129; “Gāndhārī invariably appears in the Kharoṣṭhī script”, see Salomon 1999: 110 ff.

24 Both reconstructed Gāndhārī forms are suggested by Ingo Strauch in an electronic letter of 18 October 2012.

25 Here we use the Gupta script dated into the third–fourth century as an example, see Sander 1968: Tafel 10.

26 Around the time when Dharmarakṣa was translating this text, there were two types of Brāhmī script known and preserved in some manuscripts from Central Asia, namely the so-called Kuṣāṇa and Gupta (Sander 1968: Tafel 1–20). However, as Sander’s tables show, *ka* and *kā* could be often confused.

confusable,²⁷ and 𑖀 *sti* is confusable with 𑖀 *sa* due to the elision of two strokes for *-ti*.²⁸ In the third century, Buddhist texts preserved in Gāndhārī and in Kharoṣṭhī script were gradually transposed into BHS and Brāhmī script,²⁹ and miscopying and misreading must have been inevitable.³⁰

To summarize with respect to titles, we have the contemporaneous appearance of three titles: *Yuxiang* (**Hastyupma*) and *Wuxiwang* (**Nāstikāṅkṣa*, **Akāṅkṣa* or **Asakāṅkṣa*) in T. 813 and, according to the Catalogue, a *Xiangbu* (**Hastigati* or **Hastivikrama*). Then after more than a century, we have a *Xiangye* (*Hastikakṣa* or *Hastikaccha* in its BHS form, *Hastikakṣya* in its developed Skt. form) in T. 814, with its Skt. correspondence, *Hastikaccha* in the Skt. fragment and *Hastikakṣya* in the Tibetan translation. Finally, the word *Hastikakṣya* is transmitted into *Glañ-po'i rtsal* and *Glañ po'i rtsal lta bu* (**Hastikakṣyopama*) in Tibetan.

If we rely on the work of other scholars who have theorized that in Central Asia and north-west India Buddhist texts were transmitted from “a Middle Indic”, i.e. Gāndhārī, some of which are derived from central India and in a Mi. other than Gāndhārī,³¹ in the third century alongside Gāndhārī, the texts were also preserved in BHS³² until their complete Sanskritization in the fifth century,³³ then we can consider that with the exception of the title *Wuxiwang*, all the others can possibly be affiliated with a Sanskritization process from Middle Indic via Gāndhārī or BHS.³⁴ When we accept the hypothesis that our Mahāyāna *sūtra* had borrowed the authority of *Hatthipadopamasutta* from Āgama/Nikāya during its compilation, the process must start with *Yuxiang*. There was probably another title in Mi. **Hatthigaccupama* (Skt. **Hastigatyupama*, for Skt. *sta* > Mi. *ttha*, see Pischel 1900: §307, von Hinüber 2001: §229; for Skt. *ty* > Mi. *cc*, see Pischel 1900: §280, von Hinüber 2001: §247, Oberlies 2001: §16.1), whose abbreviations are *Yuxiang* (**Hastyupama*) and *Xiangbu* (**Hastigati*). This Mi. title could be written as **Hatthigacchupama* (von Hinüber 2001: §192) too, and as a compound it could have been incorrectly deciphered as **Hatthigaccha-upama* and

27 Boucher is of this opinion (2001: 103, n. 30).

28 We take the script samples from Glass (2000: Appendix B, Table 7 – Kharoṣṭhī script as written by Schoyen scribe 2); they are in the developed phase of Kharoṣṭhī script. Only the ligatur of *sti* is absorbed from the relative archaic script type (Glass 2000: Appendix B, Table 5 – Kharoṣṭhī script as written by the Khotan Dharmapada scribe), since there is no sample recorded in the first mentioned table.

29 See Salomon 2002: 128; and Strauch 2008: 111.

30 See Boucher 1996: 159–69, esp. 162 ff.; 1998: 498–503, esp. 500). For misreading or miscopying of some *akṣaras* within Brāhmī script, see Schlingloff 1964: 13.

31 See Boucher 1996: 166 ff., n. 115; 1998: 501, n. 128; 2000b: 59–61 and Salomon 1999: 11; 2002: 122–8. According to Salomon (2002: 122 ff.), within the text translated from a Mi. source, the underlying source language should be a northern/midland early Mi. dialect, whose phonetic and morphological features were apparently not very different from those of Pali.

32 See note 22.

33 See von Hinüber 1983: 30; and Hartmann 1993: 112; 2000: 428.

34 Some steps of this “process” could have taken a very long period, whilst some could have happened very quickly. We could even say that all the variations came forth simultaneously, see Salomon 2001: 248 and 2002: 132.

transmitted into Gāndhārī **Hastikakṣa[-uvamu]*³⁵ viz. BHS **Hastikaccha* [-*upama*] (for Skt. *k* > Mi. *g*, see Pischel 1900: §202, Brough 1961: 42 and §31, von Hinüber 2001: §174–6; for Skt. *kṣ* > Mi. *ccha*, see Pischel 1900: §317–22, von Hinüber 2001: §232–5, Oberlies 2001: §18.2), then further Sanskritized into **Hastikakṣya[-upama]*, again *Xiangye* (Tib. *mchan khuñ*) and the convincing reading in the Skt. fragment – *Hastikaccha*. Finally **Hastivikrama*, which literally corresponds to Tib. *Glañ-po'i rtsal*, could be an invention of the translator based on the language context.

The last question we need to address is why the two contemporaneous translators, Dharmarakṣa and Nie Daozhen, read two titles of the same *sūtra* yet no single title overlapped with the other? The first possibility is that there was a Mi. title attested in the colophon of that manuscript, which is hypothesized in the paragraph above, **Hatthigacc(h)a* and has two Skt. correspondences, **Hastigaty[upama]* and **Hastikakṣa*. Nie Daozhen absorbed both Skt. correspondences into his catalogue, while Dharmarakṣa was convinced by the possibly wrongly copied **Nāstikāṅkṣa* or **Akāṅkṣa* in the text and replaced the one in the colophon. The second possibility is that they got information on the title from different sources, namely from two or more manuscripts.

Consequently, *Hastyupamasūtra* can be regarded as an abbreviated form of not only the title of the canonical *sūtra*, *Hastipadopamasūtra*, but also the manifold appellations discussed above. Nevertheless, the *sūtra* circulated with the best-known name, *Hastikakṣya*.

Concluding remarks

We can draw some basic conclusions to sum up our discussions. First, of the five versions of this *sūtra* in four languages, the earliest Chinese version, by Dharmarakṣa, and the Sanskrit version share the same or a very similar transmission source, an earlier source text, while Dharmamitra's Chinese translation, the Tibetan and the Khotanese versions shared a later source text. The first group of texts existed no later than the third century according to the dating of T. 813, but may have disappeared no earlier than the fifth century due to the dating of the Sanskrit fragment. The second variant appeared no later than the fourth century according to the dating of T. 814, but should have existed until at least the eighth century due to the dating of the Khotanese fragment. We find that the form of the second text was more stable and had a much longer circulation period, while the first was quite short.

Second, the metaphor of the power of elephant was the focus of this *sūtra*, though the titles indicated this through different phraseology. The metaphor of the elephant symbolized both the power of this text and the power to be gained by sentient beings who could understand and spread this text.

Third, interestingly, the *Hastikakṣyasūtra* employed a long *gāthā* for retelling the story of how the Buddha taught this *sūtra* and how this *sūtra* could benefit all sentient beings. It shows a typical early form of a Mahāyāna Buddhist text.

35 In Kharoṣṭhī, owing to the graphic similarity of the two *akṣaras*, *cha* (its former transcription was *ccha*) and *kṣa*, they are interchangeable in some cases, see Brough 1961 §16; Glass 2000: 63, n. 13 and 115 ff., n. 42).

Abbreviations

- BHS = Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit
- BHSD = Franklin Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary*, vol. 2: *Dictionary*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953.
- CPD = *A Critical Pāli Dictionary*, begun by V. Trenckner, ed. D. Andersen et al., vol. I, 1924–48, vol. II (fasc. 1 ff.). Copenhagen: Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters, 1960.
- EWAia = Manfred Mayrhofer, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindoarischen*. Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1986–2001.
- Mi. = Middle Indic.
- MN = *Majjhimanikāya*. V. Trenckner and R. Chalmers (ed.), *The Majjhima-Nikāya*. London: Pali Text Society, 1888–99.
- Mvy = *Mahāvīyūtpatti*, R. Sakaki, 2 vols. Tokyo: Shingonshū Kyōto Daigaku, 1925–36.
- ’Phan-thaṅ ma = Bod ljongs rten rdzas bsāms mdzod khañ (ed.), *Bod ljongs rdzas bsāms mdzod khañ gi rtsa che’i dpe rñiñ gces bsgrigs dpe tshogs las*. Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khañ, 2003, pp. 1–67.
- PTSD = *The Pali Text Society’s Pali–English Dictionary*, ed. T. W. Rhys Davids and W. Stede. London: Pali Text Society, 1921–25.
- PW = Otto Böhtlingk and Rudolph Roth, *Sanskrit-Wörterbuch*, 7 Bde. Saint Petersburg: Buchdruckerei der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1855–75.
- Q. = (Qianlong) Peking bsTan ’gyur: *The Tibetan Tripiṭaka. Peking Edition*, ed. Daisetz T. Suzuki 鈴木大拙. Kyoto: Otani University, 1955–61.
- T. = *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō*, ed. Takakusu Junjiro 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭. Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankokai, 1924–32.
- T. 813 = *Foshuo wuxiwang jing (Sūtra Spoken by the Buddha on No Desire)*, trans. Zhu Fahu 竺法護 (Dharmarakṣa) in the third century.
- T. 814 = *Xiangye jing (Sūtra on the Armpits of Elephant)*, trans. Tanmomiduo 曇摩蜜多 (Dharmamitra) in 441.
- ZHDCD = *Zanghai Dacidian/Bod-rgya tshig-mdzod chen-mo*, ed. Zhang Yisun 张怡荪. Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khañ, 1984.

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