

The Transmission Discourse of *Qixinlun*

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Abstract

This paper studies the transmission discourse (rather than the transmission itself) of a 6th-century Buddhist treatise entitled the *Awakening of Faith in Mahāyāna*, or *Qixinlun* in its popular Chinese abbreviation.

While the study of a transmission looks at its historical facts, the study of a transmission discourse looks, instead, at the perceptions of such a transmission, perceptions that are continued, elaborated and systematically formulated in the hands of interpreters. The transmission of *Qixinlun* has been extensively and almost exhaustively studied since the famous debate over the authenticity of the treatise in the last century, but the transmission discourse of the treatise has remained virtually neglected. Such a study, however, is equally important, for, to Buddhist believers (or, perhaps, to all human beings), what is perceived is what matters and, in that sense, the perceptions are in themselves facts, and our understanding of *Qixinlun* would not be complete without such “facts” of its transmission. This paper is thus designed to treat this unexplored subject, and, with the basic framework of writing, translation and interpretation, seeks to present what the *Qixinlun* tradition perceives to be the transmission of the

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treatise.

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The Transmission Discourse of *Qixinlun*¹

This paper studies the transmission discourse of an influential Buddhist treatise from the 6th-century, entitled *Dasheng Qixinlun* 大乘起信論, or the *Awakening of Faith in Mahāyāna* (*Qixinlun* henceforth in its popular Chinese abbreviation). By “discourse” I emphasize that this paper studies the perceptions, rather than the historical facts, of this transmission. The study of the historical facts about the transmission has already been more than thorough and exhaustive,² but the study of its perceptions has remained virtually neglected.³ Such

¹ In consistence with my other research projects, citations of primary sources from the *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經, the most widely used text collection today in East Asian Buddhism, are identified in conformity with the conventions employed in its electronic version, i.e., the Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association (CBETA). Thus, the first line of Fazang’s commentary on *Qixinlun*, for example, is identified as T44n1846p240c19 (slightly modified from the original T44n1846p0240c19[00]), i.e., *Taishō* volume number 44, serial number 1846, page 240, line 19 of the lower (i.e., c) section (as opposed to the upper [a] and middle [b] sections of that page). Another collection of Buddhist texts, *Xuzangjing* 續藏經, is identified below in a similar format, except that the “T” is replaced with “X”, indicating the change of the collection. All English translations, unless otherwise indicated, are mine.

² The famous debate over the authenticity of the treatise among the *Qixinlun* scholars in the early 20th century and the continued studies along the line have already amply answered the question about the historical transmission of *Qixinlun* within the limit of available materials. For representative works, see Mochizuki Shinkō’s 望月信亨 *Daijō kishin ron no kenkyū* 大乘起信論の研究 (Kyōto, 1922), Liang Qichao’s 梁啟超 *Dasheng qixin lun kaozheng* 大乘起信論考證 (Shanghai, 1923), Paul Demieville’s “Sur l’authenticité du Ta Tch’ing K’I Sin Louen”, in *Bulletin de la Maison Faranco-Japonaise*. 2.2 (1929): 1-78, Kashiwagi Hirowō’s 柏木弘雄. *Daijōkishinron no kenkyū: Daijōkishinron no seiritsu ni kansuru shitsuryōron teki kenkyū* 大乘起信論の研究：大乘起信論の成立に關する資料論的研究 (Tōkyō: shunjūsha, 1980), and Hirakawa Akira’s 平川彰 *Nyorai zō to Daijōkishinron* 如来藏と大乘起信論 (Tōkyō: shunjūsha, 1990).

³ with, perhaps, the only exception of Stuart Young’s 2008 dissertation, “Conceiving

a study, however, is equally if not more important, for, to Buddhist believers (or, perhaps, to all human beings), what is perceived is what matters and, in that sense, the perceptions are in themselves the historical facts (though perhaps to a different audience), and our understanding of *Qixinlun* would not be complete without such “historical facts” of its transmission.

By “transmission discourse” I mean the general perceptions in the *Qixinlun* tradition in regard to the writing, translation and exegetical interpretation of the treatise.⁴ Writing is apparently an obvious topic when it comes to the transmission of a text, for without writing there would not have been a transmission; the issue of translation is equally essential in the sense that the treatise, traditionally identified as an India work, is influential only in what is believed to be its Chinese translation; and, finally, exegetical interpretation constitutes an inevitable subject to the study of this transmission, for the very idea of “transmission” itself implies the continuous work of scriptural commentators.

the Indian Buddhist patriarchs in China,” of which the fourth chapter discusses the hagiographical “conceiving” of Aśvaghōṣa as the author of the treatise. This, however, only constitutes a small part of the transmission discourse of the treatise. My own dissertation, entitled “Through the Lens of Interpreters: The *Awakening of Faith in Mahāyāna* in Its Classical Re-presentations”, while focused on the commentarial “re-presentation” of the treatise, has nothing to do with the construction of a “transmission discourse” of the treatise.

⁴ The word “writing” is perhaps not the best choice, for the most popularly used Chinese term in this circumstance, “*zao*” 造 (compose), is somehow non-committal regarding the specific ways of such composition. Used to denote this non-committal “*zao*”, “writing” is thus chosen primarily for the sake of convenience.

With such a basic framework, this study seeks to present what the *Qixinlun* tradition⁵ perceives to be the transmission of the treatise. This presentation, however, is not meant to be an exact replica of the discourse, for, subjective by nature (as perceptions) and open-ended as a consequence, the transmission discourse of *Qixinlun* never assumes a definite form and, in that sense, resists such a replication. The discourse presented below thus only outlines some of the most salient points in the general perceptions regarding the writing, translation and interpretation of *Qixinlun*.⁶

Traditionally considered an Indian text that was translated twice into Chinese in the 6th and the 8th centuries, *Qixinlun* exists in two Chinese versions, attributed respectively to Paramārtha (真諦 499-569) and Śikṣānanda (實叉難陀 652–710).⁷ The attention of the transmission discourse is focused, however, on the Paramārtha translation – it is the text widely used in the *Qixinlun* tradition, and it has received the almost exclusive attention in history. For that reason, the transmission discourse presented here – in its three parts of writing, translation and interpretation – is primarily the transmission discourse of the Paramārtha version of *Qixinlun*. The Śikṣānanda translation, with only one commentary,⁸ has never really made it to

⁵ By “*Qixinlun* tradition”, I mean generally the continued practice of reading, studying and interpretation of the treatise.

⁶ While all necessarily refer to “perceptions”, the titles below, of the sections and the subsections, however, will not carry the word “perception” or its equivalents in order to avoid unnecessary redundancy.

⁷ These two texts will thus be referred to below as the “Paramārtha translation” and “Śikṣānanda translation”, respectively.

⁸ namely, *Dasheng qixin lun liewang shu* 大乘起信論裂網疏, by Ouyi Zhixu 滿益智旭 (1599-1655), T44n1850.

the mainstream of this discourse – the few notes about its transmission are thus summarized at the end as a supplement to the three major sections.

A. Writing – Its Necessity, Aśvaghōṣa, and the Synoptic Nature of *Qixinlun*

The perceptions of the *Qixinlun* transmission in terms of its writing are focused, primarily, on the necessity of writing. Since the essence of *Qixinlun* must necessarily have already been taught by the Buddha himself in *sūtras* – all wisdom, of course, comes only from the Buddha – why then is it necessary to repeat it in a more inferior form of a treatise (*lun* 論) and through the more inferior hands of man? Such a question, in turn, naturally brings attention to Aśvaghōṣa (Ma-ming 馬鳴), the reputed author of the treatise, for necessity implies motivation, and motivation is about how the author was motivated to have composed the treatise. The necessity further necessitates the synoptic nature of *Qixinlun* as an indispensable topic, for such a nature – that the treatise summarizes the essence of Buddhist wisdom – qualifies the writing of the treatise to be a necessity. In short, the writing of the treatise is represented in the general perceptions in terms of its necessity, Aśvaghōṣa the reputed author, and the synoptic nature of the treatise.

1. The Necessity of Writing: Heresy, Delusion & Compassion

The question of necessity is carefully addressed in the *Qixinlun* itself. The reason to repeat the Buddha's teaching, the author argues,

consists of two related factors, namely, the time of teaching and the corresponding spiritual capacity of its audience. The audience at the Buddha's time, well taught (the Buddha being the teacher) and well equipped (with superior capacity), would comprehend the teaching easily, whereas the audience after the Buddha's time, without a good teacher and uneven in their spiritual capacity, is in a quite difficult situation⁹ – some of them, the more unfortunate ones, do not have the power to comprehend the *sūtras* by themselves, not even through the assistance of the extensive expositions, and will thus have to rely on texts that are short and concise (such as *Qixinlun*) in summarizing the vast repertoire of the Buddha Dharma – hence the necessity of the repeating and, thus, the writing:

Naturally there were some who looked upon the wordiness of extensive discourses as troublesome, and who sought after what was comprehensive, terse, and yet contained much meaning, and then were able to understand it. Thus, this discourse is designed to embrace, in a general way, the limitless meaning of the vast and profound teaching of the Tathāgata. This discourse, therefore, should be preached.¹⁰

自有眾生復以廣論文多為煩，心樂總持少文而攝多義能取解者，如是此論，為欲總攝如來廣大深法無邊義故，應說此論。

⁹ For a full and original discussion of the reasons to “repeat”, as a result of the differences in “time” and “capacity”, see the *Qixinlun* section between T32n1666p575c7-c17.

¹⁰ T32n1666p575c14-c17, trans. by Yoshito Hakeda, in his *The Awakening of Faith in Mahayana* (New York, 1967), p. 34.

In short, the less favorable time and much inferior capacity, faced by the audience of *Qixinlun*, necessitate the writing of the treatise, concise in presentation but comprehensive in content, as a way to accommodate the needs of such an audience.

Derived from and largely drawing on this basic model of time and capacity, the *Qixinlun* tradition develops its own answer – i.e., creating its own composing factors of the answer – to the question of necessity. The absence of the Buddha (i.e., the ultimate teacher), implied in the factor of time, allows heresy to arise; the inferior capacity on the part of the audience in the absence of this ultimate teacher must necessarily lead to delusion; and the passing mention of motivation (“is designed to”) in the *Qixinlun* itself is highlighted and emphatically re-presented as the compassion of the author, who is assigned the respectful title of “Bodhisattva” – a great being who is necessarily compassionate – in the *Qixinlun* tradition. In short, in the place of time and capacity, the *Qixinlun* tradition focuses its attention on the heretical nature of the non-Buddhist teachings at the time of its writing, the delusion as the consequence of adhering to such heresy, and the compassion as the author’s motivation to write.

Such a formulaic answer to the question of necessity is clearly illustrated in the preface to the Paramārtha translation:

Thus, six hundred years after the Tathāgata entered into parinirvāṇa, various (unorthodox) schools flourished, with evils and heretics vying with each other for ascendancy, incessantly slandering the true Dharma of the Buddha ...

Thus taking pity on sentient beings for their prolonged delusion, Aśvaghōṣa composed this treatise ...¹¹

故於如來滅後六百餘年，諸道亂興，魔邪競扇，於佛正法，毀謗不停…馬鳴…愍物長迷，故作斯論…。

Heresies are apparently rampant, with the flourishing of various unorthodox schools; as a result, the sentient beings are trapped in their “prolonged delusion”; and motivated by compassion (i.e., “taking pity”) for the deluded beings, the author composed the treatise with the obvious intent to save the sentient beings from their delusion.

A similar example is found in the *Qixinlun* commentary by Wonhyo 元曉 (617-686),¹² one of the most influential scholar-monks in Korean Buddhism:

Bodhisattva Aśvaghōṣa, with his unconditioned great compassion, took pity on those (sentient beings), whose ocean of mind, swayed by the deluding wind of ignorance, was disturbed and became easily unsettled, and whose originally enlightened true nature, deep in its long dreams, remained difficult to awaken – thus, with the power of his undifferentiated wisdom, (the Bodhisattva) produced this treatise to expound (again) the profound teaching of the Tathāgata (as already taught in his) *sūtras*.¹³

所以馬鳴菩薩，無緣大悲：傷彼無明妄風，動心海而易

¹¹ T32n1666p575a9-a12; for its source, see the *Mahāmāyā Sūtra* 摩訶摩耶經 at T12n383p1013c06.

¹² namely, *Qixinlun shu* 起信論疏, T44n1844.

¹³ T44n1844p202b6-b8.

漂；愍此本覺真性，睡長夢而難悟。於是同體智力，堪造此論，贊述如來深經奧義。

The sentient beings are beset by the “deluding wind of Ignorance” (i.e., heresy); as a result, their “ocean of mind” is “swayed”, “disturbed” and “unsettled” – i.e., their “originally enlightened true nature” “remained difficult to awaken” from “its long dreams” (i.e., delusion); and motivated by his “great compassion”, which is “unconditioned”, the Bodhisattva Aśvaghōṣa undertook the task of producing this treatise.

Still another example, the Fazang commentary, while apparently relying on the original model of time and capacity, is also quite conscious in its adoption of the framework of “heresy, delusion and compassion”:

Nevertheless, when the Tathāgata was still in the world, the (spiritual) capacity (of the sentient beings) was superior and (their minds were thus) easily tamed, for as soon as (they) received the words from the World-honored One, (their insight immediately) agrees with (the truth revealed in these words). After the passing away of the Great Master, however, mistaken views and attachments flourished, some on the path of the heretics, and some following the way of the Hīnayānas ... Thereupon appeared a Great Being, whose name is Aśvaghōṣa. Lamenting such degeneration of the (Buddhist) teaching, and grieving over the fallen state (of the sentient beings) ... (the Great Being) composed an extensive

treatise at the time ...Lengthy in writing and, (thus) abstruse in purport, (it is) not what (those) shallow intellect can understand. (The Great Being) took pity on those deluded ones of the Declining Age, and then composed this treatise (i.e., *Qixinlun*), which is rich in meaning, but brief in words. 但以如來在世，根熟易調，一稟尊言，無不懸契。大師沒後，異執紛綸，或趣邪途，或奔小徑。…爰有大士，厥號馬鳴，慨此頹綱，悼斯淪溺。…造廣論於當時，…既文多義邈，非淺識所闕。悲末葉之迷倫，又造斯論，可謂義豐文約 …。¹⁴

The contrast of “still in the world” and “after the passing away”, its resultant contrast of superior “capacity” and the “fallen state”, and still another contrast between “rich in meaning, but brief in words” and “lengthy in writing and, thus, abstruse in purport” – all these remind us of the *Qixinlun* model of time and capacity as a method of explaining the necessity of writing. In the same time, however, Fazang also subscribes to the new formula – the contrast of times highlights the necessity of teaching, for the “mistaken views and attachments” (i.e., heresy) flourished, the sentient beings are in a “fallen state” (i.e., delusions) at a time of the “degeneration of Buddhist teaching”, and the author “took pity” on the sentient beings (i.e., compassion), composing this treatise for the sake of their salvation!

This interpretative model – heresy, delusion and compassion – remains conspicuous in the exegetical tradition of *Qixinlun*,

¹⁴ T44n1846p240c28-p241a10.

apparently treated as standard in the understanding of the necessity of writing. The model even finds its way into modern commentaries of the treatise, with, of course, necessary modifications in the use of terminology to suit its modern audience:

With the change of atmosphere in the Buddhist world, the increasingly developed society can no longer be satisfied with the teachings of the Hīnayāna. Under such circumstances, the enlightened Great Being Aśvaghōṣa appeared in the world as the champion for the revival of the Mahāyāna teachings – thus the bleak and barren world was able to bask again in the (warmth of) the spring sunlight amidst the cherry, peach and plum blossoms.¹⁵

教界氣運變革，漸次發達起來的社會，對於小乘教理不能滿足了。在這時候，大乘教義復興的先覺者大士馬鳴出世，使落葉蕭條的天地，得再薰沐櫻桃梅李的春光。

The “teachings of Hīnayāna”, to those claiming to be the “Mahāyāna”, constitute the “heresy”; the “bleak and barren world” is a symbolic expression of the “delusion” as the consequence of such heresy; and, while not explicitly mentioned, “compassion” is clearly implied in the presentation of Aśvaghōṣa’s work that allowed the “bleak and barren world” to be able to “bask again in the (warmth of) the spring sunlight amidst the cherry, peach and plum blossoms”.

¹⁵ *Kanwa ryōyaku daijōkishinron shinshaku* 漢和兩譯大乘起信論新釋, Yusugi Ryōei 湯次了榮, in its Chinese translation by Feng Zikai 豐子愷.

2. Aśvaghōṣa: Time of Appearance and Qualifications as Author

The attention to Aśvaghōṣa, the reputed author, is generally expressed in the discussions about the time in which he appeared in East Asian Buddhism, and his qualifications as the author of *Qixinlun*.

There are several different theories in the *Qixinlun* tradition about the timing of Aśvaghōṣa's appearance in history. The preface to the Śikṣānanda translation believes that it was about 500 years after the Buddha departed the world,¹⁶ while the preface to the Paramārtha translation and the Fazang commentary both give the number of 600. The Huiyuan commentary¹⁷ does not have a specific number, but it argues that Aśvaghōṣa emerged to challenge the heretical views and the imperfect teachings, flourishing respectively 700 and 890 years after the demise of the Buddha¹⁸ – thus allowing us to guess at an approximate date. Another commentary, entitled *Shi mo-he-yan lun* 釋摩訶衍論,¹⁹ summarizes various theories, and the times they propose range from 100, 300, 600 to 800 years after the Buddha.²⁰

Of all these theories, that of 600 years seems to have remained the standard answer to the question of timing in the *Qixinlun* tradition. It is based on a conversation in the *Mahāmāyā Sūtra* between

¹⁶ T32n1667p583b26.

¹⁷ i.e., *Dasheng Qixinlun yishu* 大乘起信論義疏, T44n1843, by Huiyuan 慧遠 (523-592).

¹⁸ T44n1843p175c15-p176a7.

¹⁹ T32n1668, attributed to Nāgārjuna (150-250), and its Chinese translation attributed to Vṛddhimata 筏提摩多 (fl. 4th or 5th century).

²⁰ T32n1668p594b3-p594c19.

Mahāmāyā, the mother of the Buddha Śākyamuni, and Ānanda, a chief disciple of the Buddha, upon the passing away of the World-honored One. Mahāmāyā asks Ānanda what the Buddha had predicted for the transmission of the True Dharma after he had departed the world, and how things could be remedied if they go wrong. In his reply, Ānanda gives a long list of situations, and the time 600 years after the Buddha is described as follows:

600 years after (the Buddha), there appeared 96 unorthodox schools, from which heretical views arose one after another, designed to bring destruction to the Buddha Dharma. There appeared (at the time) a *Bhikṣu* named Aśvaghōṣa, who, skillful in expounding the essentials of Dharma, defeated and subdued all these unorthodox schools.²¹ 六百歲已，九十六種諸外道等，邪見競興，破滅佛法。有一比丘，名曰馬鳴，善說法要，降伏一切諸外道輩。

As an earlier text, the *sūtra* obviously could not have made any reference to *Qixinlun*, but all the topics in this conversation – the passing away of the Buddha, the declining of the Buddha Dharma, the arising of heretics and their heretical views, and the appearance of Aśvaghōṣa as a response to such a dire situation – fit so well with the issue about the necessity of writing as discussed in the preceding section, whether in the formula of “time and capacity”, or in the formula of “heresy, delusion and compassion”, that such a conversation (together with its theory of 600 years) could be readily

²¹ T12n383p1013c6-c8.

incorporated into the discourse about the origination of *Qixinlun*. In fact, the adoption of this theory by both the Paramārtha translation (i.e., the standard version of the text), and by the Fazang commentary (i.e., its definitive commentary), further consolidates the position of such a theory – hence its almost unanimous acceptance among the *Qixinlun* commentaries, such as, in addition to these two texts,²² those by Zixuan 子璿 (965-1038),²³ Taehyeon 太賢 (fl. 753),²⁴ Deqing 德清 (1546-1623),²⁵ Zhenjie 真界,²⁶ Tongrun 通潤²⁷ and Yuanying 圓瑛 (1878-1953),²⁸ to name just a few.

The qualifications of Aśvagoṣa as the author of the treatise are represented, specifically, as a compassion that motivates him to educate, through the writing of this treatise, those deeply mired in delusion, and a competence, in the form of either his insights into the Buddhist truth or his skills as a teacher of such truth, that qualifies him for this task. The preface to the Paramārtha translation, for example, emphasizes both:

There was at the time a highly esteemed monk, named Aśvagoṣa, (whose wisdom) resonates perfectly with the Mahāyāna (truth), having exhausted the nature of existence, and whose great compassion, thoroughly internalized,

²² T32n1666p575a9-a16, & T44n1846p246a9-a12.

²³ *Qixinlunshu* buxiaoji 起信論疏筆削記, T44n1848p297a11-a13.

²⁴ *Dasheng Qixinlun neiyi luetanji* 大乘起信論內義略探記, T44n1849p409c11-c14.

²⁵ *Dasheng Qixinlun zhijie* 大乘起信論直解, X45n766p485c18-c23.

²⁶ *Dasheng Qixinlun zuanzhu* 大乘起信論纂註, X45n762p336c21- p337a1.

²⁷ *Dasheng Qixinlun xushu* 大乘起信論續疏, X45n764p402c9-c14.

²⁸ *Dasheng qixin lun jiangyi* 大乘起信論講義.

manifests itself in response to every appropriate circumstance – thus, taking pity on sentient beings deeply mired in delusion, Aśvaghōṣa composed this treatise

時有一高德沙門，名曰馬鳴，深契大乘，窮盡法性，大悲內融，隨機應現，愍物長迷，故作斯論。²⁹

Wonhyo, however, looks primarily at the compassion of the author:

Bodhisattva Aśvaghōṣa, with his unconditioned great compassion, took pity on those (sentient beings), whose ocean of mind, swayed by the deluding wind of ignorance, was disturbed and became easily unsettled, and whose originally enlightened true nature, deep in its long dreams, remained difficult to awaken – thus, with the power of his undifferentiated wisdom, (the Bodhisattva) produced this treatise to expound (again) the profound teaching of the Tathāgata (as already taught in his) sūtras.³⁰

所以馬鳴菩薩，無緣大悲：傷彼無明妄風，動心海而易漂；愍此本覺真性，睡長夢而難悟。於是同體智力，堪造此論，贊述如來深經奧義。

whereas the preface to the Śikṣānanda translation pays its attention to the competence:

Skillful in expounding the essentials of Dharma, (he) broadly awakened those trapped in the fords of delusion.³¹

²⁹ T32n1666p575a11-a12.

³⁰ T44n1844p202b6-b8.

³¹ T32n1667p583b29.

善說法要，大啟迷津。

This competence is elaborated upon in the theory of Six *Aśvaghōṣas* in the *Shi moheyan lun*.³² Drawing on six different scriptural sources, the theory presents six different versions of *Aśvaghōṣa*, depicting him as expounding the Dharma on behalf of the Buddha – he, in these 6 sources, is empowered by the Buddha to benefit the sentient beings, preaches the essentials of the Dharma to suppress the heretics, destructs the heretics, protects the Dharma, and, in the form of a *Nāga* king, debates about the Dharma with the Buddha.³³

The theory most often resorted to in the presentation of *Aśvaghōṣa* as a competent teacher and thus a qualified author of *Qixinlun* is often found in the reading of his name. Literally translated as the “neighing of horses”, the name “*Aśvaghōṣa*” (“Ma-ming” 馬鳴 in Chinese) is sometimes used to connect metaphorically the “neighing” to the spread of Dharma. This connection theory has an elaborate version in the *Shi moheyan lun*, where the spread of Dharma is, according to its author, is made possible by the singing of a thousand birds, which, in its turn, is facilitated by the neighing of a thousand horses.

In the past world there was a great king, whose name is Rinda, (and at his time) there were a thousand white birds, which all have beautiful voices. If these birds sing, it means that the great king is virtuous, and if they do not sing,

³² T32n1668.

³³ T32n1668p594b2-595a6.

it means that the great king is not virtuous. These birds, however, only sing when they see white horses, and do not sing when they do not see (white horses). At that time, the great king looked for white horses everywhere, but (all his effort) was to no avail. He thus said the following words: ‘If any member of the non-Buddhist community is able to make these birds sing, (I will then) ban Buddhism and honor solely (that non-Buddhist school), and if any follower of Buddhism is able to make these birds sing, (I will then) ban non-Buddhist teachings and honor solely (Buddhism).’ Upon hearing the pledge, the Bodhisattva, with his miraculous power, made a thousand white horses to appear, which made the thousand white birds sing. (As a result of this feat), the true teaching (of the Buddha) prospered and is passed on uninterruptedly – for that reason, the world honors him, calling him the ‘Neighing of Horses’ (i.e., *Aśvagoṣa*).³⁴

過去世中有一大王，名曰輪陀。有千白鳥，皆悉好聲。若鳥出聲，大王增德；若不出聲，大王損德。如是諸鳥，若見白馬，即出其聲；若不見時，常不出聲。爾時大王遍求白馬，終日不得，作如是言：若外道眾，此鳥鳴者，都破佛教獨尊獨信；若佛弟子，此鳥鳴者，都破外道教，獨尊獨信。爾時菩薩用神通力，現千白馬，鳴千白鳥，紹隆正法，令不斷絕。是故世尊，名曰馬鳴。

In short, the neighing of horses causes the singing of birds, and the singing of birds causes the flourishing of the Buddha Dharma – in

³⁴ T32n1668p594c27-p595a6.

other words, the neighing of horses is ultimately responsible for the flourishing of Dharma. Such a causal relationship becomes more simplified and thus more explicit and straightforward, when, for example, Fazang omits the link of birds in this relationship and thus connects the neighing of horses immediately to the spread of Dharma:

‘Composed by Aśvaghōṣa’: The name of ‘Aśvaghōṣa’, according to various biographies, has in short three explanations. First, this name was given because, at the time when the Bodhisattva was first born, (nearby) horses were so elated (by this auspicious news) that they all gave out prolonged cries;³⁵ second, this name was given because, upon hearing the *Qin*-zither skillfully played by the Bodhisattva to expound the Dharma, the horses all neighed, (deeply affected by the teaching); third, this name was given because the Bodhisattva’s eloquent expounding of Dharma (touched) the horses so much that they neighed for seven days, shedding tears, and (too agitated) to eat.

馬鳴菩薩造：馬鳴之名，依諸傳記，略有三釋。一以此菩薩初生之時，感動諸馬悲鳴不息故，立此名也；二此菩薩善能撫琴，以宣法音，諸馬聞已，咸悉悲鳴，故立此名；

³⁵ The term “*bei-ming*” 悲鳴, literally translated as “sad cries”, should perhaps be understood not as “sad” cries, but as the shrieking and high-pitched voice in the neighing of horses. The likely perception of sadness is perhaps resulted from the combination of the expressions “*bei-ming*”, “shedding tears” 垂淚, and the inability (of the horses) to eat – the latter two (and thus the first, by natural extension) are caused, as the passage shows, clearly because the audience of Aśvaghōṣa (i.e., the horses) were choked up with emotions upon hearing the wonderful and unheard of teaching.

三此菩薩善能說法，能令諸馬悲鳴垂淚不食七日，因此為名也。³⁶

The new version not only simplifies the old version, but also modifies the direction of the causality. Whereas, in the old version, the neighing of horses causes the spread of Dharma through royal sponsorship, in the new version, the neighing of horses is caused by the spread of Dharma as symbolized in the person of Aśvaghōṣa. This new version, different in form from the old, but consistent with it in the highlighting of the association between the neighing of horses and the spread of Dharma, has apparently gained much greater currency in the *Qixinlun* tradition. If we look at the narration of Aśvaghōṣa by Deqing about a thousand years after Fazang:

Regarding ‘Aśvaghōṣa’: The Bodhisattva was so named because, at the time of his birth, (the auspicious news) moved the horses such that they gave out prolonged cries, and because, upon hearing the Bodhisattva’s expounding of the Dharma, the horses also cried.³⁷

馬鳴者，以此菩薩初生之時，感群馬悲鳴，故以為名。及說法時，諸馬聞之，亦皆悲鳴。

we will see that, despite abbreviating the three explanations to two, Deqing is essentially repeating Fazang – i.e., this new version has become formulaic and, in that sense, standardized in the presentation of Aśvaghōṣa as the author of *Qixinlun*.

³⁶ T44n1846p245c25-p246a1.

³⁷ X45n766p485c19-c20.

3. The Synoptic Nature of *Qixinlun*

Like the question of necessity, the synoptic nature of *Qixinlun* has already been touched upon in the treatise itself, which claims that the treatise is designed to

embrace, in a general way, the limitless meaning of the vast and profound teaching of the Tathāgata³⁸

總攝如來廣大深法無邊義

or, more specifically, as commensurate with the capacity of its audience, to

contain much meaning in few words.³⁹

少文而攝多義

This synoptic nature – described in the treatise either as “all-embracing” (*zongshe* 總攝) or as “containing much meaning in few words” (*shaowen duoyi* 少文多義) – is mentioned to qualify the treatise to be a necessity. Only when the treatise “embraces” or contains the “much” and “limitless meaning” of the Buddha Dharma does it deserve to be considered a necessity. In other words, this synoptic nature contributes to and, thus, constitutes a secondary argument in the discourse about the necessity of writing. The writing of *Qixinlun* is necessary primarily because of the factors of time and capacity (or heresy, delusion and compassion), but this necessity becomes possible only when *Qixinlun* is a synopsis of “the vast and

³⁸ T32n1666p575c16, trans. Hakeda.

³⁹ T32n1666p575c15, trans. Hakeda.

profound teaching of the Tathāgata”.

This secondary argument, however, was separated from the necessity discourse and given independence in the interpretative tradition of *Qixinlun*. *Qixinlun*'s claim to truth, i.e., its self-proclaimed synoptic nature, must necessarily be an essential topic in the *Qixinlun* tradition after all, particularly if the necessity of its writing is insisted upon. Thus, in the preface to his commentary, Wonhyo singles out the “all-embracingness” of *Qixinlun*, emphatically reiterating its assertion of a synoptic nature:

Hence, Bodhisattva Aśvaghōṣa ... composed this treatise to explain the profound teachings of the Tathāgata's scriptures, hoping that the students (of the treatise) can, in this one text, exhaustively discover the purport (of all scriptures) in the Tripiṭaka. ... These texts (just mentioned) are the essence of all scriptures. Summarizing them all in one text – isn't that this treatise alone? It is for this reason the treatise says, below, that ‘Thus, this discourse is designed to embrace, in a general way, the limitless meaning of the vast and profound teaching of the Tathāgata’.⁴⁰

所以馬鳴菩薩…堪造此論，贊述如來深經奧義，欲使為學者，暫開一軸，遍探三藏之旨。…凡此等輩中眾典之肝心，一以貫之者，其唯此論乎？故下文言：為欲總攝如來廣大深法無邊義故，應說此論。

Such assertion of the synoptic nature is more than just rhetorical, for

⁴⁰ T44n1844p202b6-b18.

Wonhyo has, further, carefully explained how exactly the treatise embraces, “in a general way, the limitless meaning of the vast and profound teaching of the Tathāgata”:

Although (the scope of its) discourse is broad, (its content) can be succinctly summarized: (The treatise) elaborates upon the one mind from two (different) perspectives, capturing the essence (discussed) extensively in the 180 topics (raised by the Bodhisattva Mahāmati 大慧) on the top of Mt. Mālaya,⁴¹ and (thus) shows (the simultaneity of both) the purity of (that) mind and its defiled manifestations, incorporating the ultimate purport of the fifteen (chapters) taught at Ayodhyā.⁴² As for the teaching of one flavor in the Śāla Forest,⁴³ the truth of non-duality on the Vulture Peak,⁴⁴ the ultimate accomplishment of the Three Bodies (of Buddha) as expounded in the *Sūtra of the Golden Drum*⁴⁵ and the *Mahāyānābhisamaya Sūtra*, the profoundly efficacious practice at four stages as taught in the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* and the *Bodhisattvas' Diadem Primary Activities Sutra*, the supreme path of vast emptiness (as revealed) in the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra* and the *Mahāsaṃnipāta Sūtra*, and the subtle and secret gate of mystery (as formulated in) the *Sūrya-garbha Sūtra* and the *Candra-garbha Sūtra* – these

⁴¹ i.e., *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* 楞伽經.

⁴² i.e., *Śrīmālā Sūtra* 勝鬘經.

⁴³ i.e., *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* 涅槃經.

⁴⁴ i.e., *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra* 法華經.

⁴⁵ i.e., *Jingu jing* 金鼓經, better known as “*Suvarṇa-prabhāsa Sūtra*” 金光明經.

texts are the essence of all scriptures! Summarizing them all in one text – isn't that this treatise alone?⁴⁶

所述雖廣，可略而言。開二門於一心，總括摩羅百八之廣誥；示性淨於相染，普綜踰闔十五之幽致。至如鵠林一味之宗，鷲山無二之趣，金鼓同性三身之極果，華嚴瓔珞四階之深因，大品大集曠蕩之至道，日藏月藏微密之玄門，凡此等輩中眾典之肝心，一以貫之者，其唯此論乎！⁴⁷

To highlight this “limitlessness” in the status of *Qixinlun* as the summary of all essential Buddhist teachings, Wonhyo names a list of 12 sutras influential in East Asian Buddhism – not, apparently, as the content of this all-embracing “limitlessness”, but only as its samples!

The preface to the Śikṣānanda translation chooses the other characterization of *Qixinlun*'s synoptic nature, i.e., it “contains much meaning in few words”, in its effort to reassert the *Qixinlun* claim of a synoptic status:

In its exposition (of the Buddhist teachings, this treatise) uncovers the priceless treasure and expounds (the Dharma) of the most superior vehicle. It presents these teachings, as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, as summarized in (the theory about) the ‘square-inch’ (*fang cun*’, i.e., the mind),⁴⁸ and reveals the secret treasure-stores of all

⁴⁶ For the identification of these sources, see Zixuan at T44n1848p325a23-b4, Zhenjie at X45n762p338c12-c20, and Xufa 續法 at X45n768p586b7-b16 (*Dasheng qixinlun bixueji huiyue* 大乘起信論疏筆削記會閱).

⁴⁷ T44n1844p202b10-b16.

⁴⁸ This refers to the *Qixinlun* theory about the “one (undifferentiated) mind”, as repeated in its parallel in the next sentence.

Buddhas as ultimately derived from the one-mind ... Terse and yet containing much meaning, relying on names and yet resonating with the ultimate principle ... (the treatise is the portal through which) one reverts the process of delusion and returns to the ultimate.⁴⁹

其為論也，示無價寶，詮最上乘。演恒沙之法門，惟在方寸；開諸佛之祕藏，本自一心。… 少文而攝多義，假名而會深旨。… 返迷歸極，莫不由之。

The Buddhist teachings “as numerous as the sands of the Ganges” and the “secrete treasure-stores of all Buddhas” refer, apparently, to the “much meaning”; and the “one mind”, also labeled metaphorically as the “square-inch” one, refers to the *Qixinlun* thesis about the undifferentiated mind that is at once both the absolute and its manifestations – it is one among numerous Buddhist theories, hence constituting only “few words” (as opposed to numerous words of those numerous theories). In other words, the preface reiterates the synoptic nature of *Qixinlun* through the elaboration of its own expression of “much meaning in few words”.

This belief in the synoptic nature is always somehow reverberated in the *Qixinlun* tradition. In his effort to argue that *Qixinlun* is equally authoritative even though it was not authored by the Buddha himself, Fazang adopts the theory of “pre-approval” (“*xuanxu*” 懸許), arguing that the composition of *Qixinlun* was approved by the Buddha long before the actual writing itself:

⁴⁹ T32n1667p583c2-c6.

The Tathāgata preaches his Dharma in three ways – he either preaches by himself, or empowers someone else to do the preaching, or pre-approves (what someone else) will preach (in a future time as equally authoritative). This treatise falls into the category of ‘Pre-approved’ texts.⁵⁰

如來說法有其三種：一佛自說，二加他說，三懸許說。此論即當懸許說也。

This theory of pre-approval has two points to make. For one, it connects the author to the Buddha so that, even though the author did not live in the same time as the Buddha, he is still legitimized as a representative of the Buddha in the preaching of Dharma; for the other, which is more relevant here, this pre-approval allows room for the belief in the synoptic nature of *Qixinlun* – that Aśvaghōṣa is approved or authorized in advance by the Buddha is another way of saying that he teaches what the Buddha had taught and, in that sense, constitutes a synopsis of the Buddha’s words.

The echoing of this belief in the synoptic nature of *Qixinlun* could, in its East Asian context, also take on an indigenous flavor. Introducing the treatise, the Śikṣānanda translation weaves, imperceptibly, or perhaps unconsciously, the Chinese understanding that sage mediates the heavenly truth to people into its presentation of *Qixinlun* as a faithful reproduction of the Buddha’s teaching – i.e., as its synopsis:

Sounds resonate with each other if alike, and (people gather

⁵⁰ T44n1846p242a5-a6.

together) if their principles correspond. For that reason, the Dharma-Sage (i.e., Buddha) relies on the Dharma-Son in the expounding of his teaching, and the Uncrowned King (i.e., Confucius) depends on his Plain-dressed Officials (i.e., Confucian scholars) to hand down the norms (of humanity). Virtues do not dwell alone, and sages never fail to be echoed (in their calls).⁵¹

夫聲同則應，道合自鄰。是以法雄命宗，賴宣揚乎法子；
素王垂範，假傳述乎素臣。蓋德必不孤，聖無虛應矣。

The preface presents two parallel cases of such “mediation” – the Buddhist and the Confucian – so that the Confucian case is used analogically to illustrate the Buddhist case. Slightly different from the basic “mediation” theory, each case of the mediation in the preface is two-fold, with the mediator sage further mediated by another mediator. Thus the Confucian Uncrowned King is further mediated by his Plain-dressed Officials, and in the same way the Buddhist Dharma-Sage is further mediated by his Dharma-Son, an explicit statement that this Dharma-Son, i.e., the author of *Qixinlun*, transmits the Buddha’s teaching and, in that sense, this treatise is a synopsis of the divine truth.

This belief in the synoptic nature is also uniquely echoed in the assertion that *Qixinlun* is a simplified reproduction of the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, an assertion that narrows down and specifies the claim of “all-embracingness” – it reproduces and thus constitutes the synopsis of

⁵¹ T32n1667p583b23-b25.

the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* (rather than all *sūtras*):

On the basis of the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, (Aśvaghōṣa) composed the one-volume *Awakening of Faith*. It is brief in words, but leaves not one single meaning (of the scripture) untreated.⁵²

依楞伽經造出起信論一卷也，雖文略少，義無不盡。

While with an obviously different scope, the synoptic nature in this case is presented, consciously, in consistence with one of the two general characterization of such a nature: the second half of the statement – “it is brief in words, but leaves not one single meaning (of the scripture) untreated.” – is an obvious echo of the *Qixinlun* statement that the treatise “contains much meaning in few words”.

B. Translation – The Role of Paramārtha as the Translator of *Qixinlun*

The perception of the *Qixinlun* transmission in terms of its translation is focused primarily on the role of Paramārtha as the translator of *Qixinlun*.⁵³ The Paramārtha biography by Daoxuan 道宣 (596-667),⁵⁴ the basis for most later discussions about the translator,⁵⁵

⁵² T44n1843p176a8-a9.

⁵³ For the perceptions about the role of Śikṣānanda in the translation of *Qixinlun*, see Section D: “Notes on the Śikṣānanda Translation”.

⁵⁴ in his *Xu gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳, between T50n2060p429-p431a6. For a more comprehensive discussion of Paramārtha’s personal information, see Diana Paul, “The Life and Times of Paramārtha”, in her *Philosophy of Mind in Sixth-Century China*, 11-37 (particularly its section “Paramārtha”, 22-37); also see the “Appendix A: Chronology of Paramārtha’s Life” in the same book, 171-74.

⁵⁵ While it provides the basis for later discussions of the translator, it in itself is influenced by the *Lidai sanbao ji* 歷代三寶紀.

presents him as an eminent translator of Buddhist texts – but not as the translator of *Qixinlun*. It is only at the hands of *Qixinlun* scholars, who purposefully re-presented the Daoxuan materials, that Paramārtha takes on the role of *Qixinlun* translator. Such re-presentation looks at four aspects of Paramārtha in that capacity, including his personal information, his qualifications as a translator of a sacred text, his travels as a missionary translator, and the translation project believed to have produced the Chinese version of *Qixinlun*.

1. Personal Information: Names & Places

There are perhaps two versions of Paramārtha's personal information in the *Qixinlun* tradition. The Daoxuan version provides the basic content in its brief but concise manner:

(Named) 'Kulanāntha', meaning '(he who is) depended on by family' in the language of Chen (China), or 'Paramārtha', translated as 'supreme truth' (in Chinese) – both are Sanskrit names – (the translator) was originally a native of Ujjayanī in the West India.⁵⁶

拘那羅陀，陳言親依；或云波羅末陀，譯云真諦。並梵文之名字也，本西天竺優禪尼國人焉。

Personal name, Dharma name,⁵⁷ and the place of origin – this seems to have constituted the most widely used format in the introduction of Paramārtha. Fazang simply lifted this account into his *Qixinlun*

⁵⁶ T50n2060p429c6-c8.

⁵⁷ According to Diana Paul, "Kulanāntha" is the translator's personal name, and the more well-known "Paramārtha", his religious name – see Paul, *Philosophy of Mind*, p. 22.

commentary, with only very minor and thus negligible modifications:

(Named) ‘Paramārtha’, meaning ‘supreme truth’ here (in the Tang China), or ‘Kulanāntha’, meaning ‘(he who is) depended upon by family’, the monk was originally a native of Ujjayanī in the West India.⁵⁸

沙門波羅末陀，此云真諦；亦云狗那羅陀；此曰親依。西印度優禪尼國人。

The preface to the Śikṣānanda translation apparently also copies the Daoxuan account, though only in an abridged version, leaving out the personal name of the translator and the place of origin in the West India:

The first translation (was attributed to) the Tripiṭaka master from the West India, named ‘Paramārtha’, which means ‘supreme truth’ here (in China).⁵⁹

初本即西印度三藏法師波羅末陀，此云真諦。

The Daoxuan version is modified in two important details in a second version, an example of which is found in the preface to the Paramārtha translation:

Formerly, Emperor Wu of the Liang (China) sent envoys to the Kingdom of Magadha in central India in search of (Buddhist) scriptures and Dharma masters. (There the envoys) met a Tripiṭaka master, whose name is ‘Kulanāntha’,

⁵⁸ T44n1846p246a16-a17.

⁵⁹ T32n1667p583c8.

or ‘Zhendi’ (in its Chinese) translation ... Then the king of that country ordered, in response to (the request of the Chinese envoys), that (Paramārtha) be dispatched on (the China mission). Having begged repeatedly, to no avail, to decline (the Chinese request), the Dhama Master boarded the ship, attended by Gautama and many others, and carrying a rosewood statue of the Buddha, came to pay tribute (to the imperial court of the Liang China).⁶⁰

前梁武皇帝遣聘中天竺摩伽陀國取經，并諸法師，遇值三藏拘蘭難陀，譯名真諦。…時彼國王應即移遣，法師苦辭不免，便就汎舟，與瞿曇及多侍，并送蘇合佛像來朝。

This is an interesting alternative to the Daoxuan account. The names of the translator apparently mismatch the Chinese translations with their Sanskrit originals – i.e., “Kulanāntha” the personal name is mistaken for the Sanskrit version of the “Zhendi” the Dharma name, which should be “Paramārtha” – and, instead of a birthplace, the preface mentions the place where the Chinese envoys were believed to have found the master.

These two versions seem to have constituted the primary content of the standard account of Paramārtha’s personal information. While the Daoxuan account remains the general consensus, the second version, though less influential, also manages to find its way into the *Qixinlun* tradition – in fact, the two versions sometimes simply coalesce into a single theory. Thus, while it is not unusual to see both

⁶⁰ T32n1666p575a17-a22.

accounts adopted individually – the Daoxuan version by Cihang 慈航 (1893-1954), for example,

(His name is) ‘Paramārtha’ in Sanskrit, and ‘Zhendi’ in Chinese, and he is a native of Ujjayanī in the West India.⁶¹

梵語是波羅末陀，華言真諦；他是西印度優禪尼國的人。

or, for another example, the version in the Paramārtha translation by Yusugi Ryōei

The transmission of *Qixinlun* into China, through translation, occurred twice: The first was in the ninth month in the third year of the Chengsheng (Era, during the reign of) Emperor Yuan of the Liang (China). The translation was dictated by the Indian monk Gunarata,⁶² i.e., the Tripiṭaka Master Paramārtha, and transcribed by Zhikai. It is (generally) called the ‘old translation’.

起信論傳譯入中國，前後有二次。一次是梁元帝承聖三年九月，印度僧拘那羅陀即真諦三藏的譯述，由智愷筆錄，稱之為舊譯。

– there is also an effort to reconcile their difference by integrating the two into the same account:

Then the king of Magadha ordered the dispatch of Kulanāntha, ‘Zhendi’ in its (Chinese) translation, a monk from the West Indian kingdom of Ujjayanī.⁶³

⁶¹ in his *Dasheng qixin lun jianghua* 大乘起信論講話。

⁶² i.e., another form of the “Kulanāntha”.

⁶³ in Xufa’s “Qixinlun shuji huiyue yuanqi” 起信論疏記會閱緣起，

時摩竭提國王，移送西印優禪尼國沙門拘蘭難陀，譯名真諦。

With apparently no knowledge of Sanskrit, either, Xufa repeats the name mismatch in the preface to the Paramārtha translation, but he is apparently also quite thoughtful when it comes to the matter of place – he includes both places in his account by clearly differentiating their respective roles: i.e., Ujjayanī as Paramārtha’s birthplace, and Magadha as the starting point of his career as a missionary translator to China – a thing often obscured when these two accounts are treated as mutually exclusive.

2. The Qualifications of a Translator

In his presentation of Paramārtha as an eminent translator of Buddhist texts, Daoxuan identifies four qualifications that befit such a task, including impeccable morals, sense of detachment, scriptural erudition and unusual abilities:

His virtues are resplendent, hence his manner calm and composed, and he is extraordinarily graceful, remaining always content and carefree; of the vast body of (the Buddhist) literature, he is unfamiliar with none, and in arts and unusual abilities, he is especially well trained.⁶⁴

景行澄明，器宇清肅，風神爽拔，悠然自遠。
群藏廣部，罔不厝懷；藝術異能，偏素諳練。

X45n767p518a4-a5.

⁶⁴ T50n2060p429c8-c10.

Of these four, scriptural erudition is an obvious expectation of a translator of scriptures. While not explicitly explained, morality is treated as a necessary condition, perhaps because of the nature of the texts to be translated. They are, if not the words of Buddha, at least as good as the words of Buddha – i.e., teachings that, apart from their truthfulness, must necessarily be moral in purport – thus to translate them, one must be morally sound him/herself in the first place. That truthfulness of scriptures necessitates the sense of detachment on the part of the translator – only when one is disengaged from the entanglements of the world, both materialistic and conceptual, can one have any hope of really fathoming the depth of truth. The unusual abilities, resulted from religious training, should serve to reinforce such moral and spiritual prowess – Daoxuan has never explicitly made that connection, although a brief account of such unusual abilities later in the biography does invite speculation in this direction:

Paramārtha then spread out his sitting mat on the water and sat cross-legged on it, as if he were riding a boat. He floated over the waters to the shore. When he climbed ashore to greet (Ouyang Ho), the sitting mat was not wet, and he spread it out as usual (to sit on). Other times he would use a lotus leaf as a boat to ride across. There are many examples of such marvels (pertaining to Paramārtha).⁶⁵

諦乃鋪舒坐具在於水上，加坐其內，如乘舟焉，浮波達岸。既登接對，而坐具不濕，依常敷置。有時或以荷葉，擲水乘之而度。如斯神異，其例甚眾。

⁶⁵ T50n2060p430a23-a27, trans. Paul, *Philosophy of Mind*, p. 34.

When Daoxuan emphasizes that Paramārtha is “especially well trained” in arts and unusual abilities, reports of such miracles were, one would assume, apparently in his mind.

This basic model of four qualifications, presenting Paramārtha generally as a Buddhist translator, was taken over by the *Qixinlun* tradition to present him specifically as the translator of the treatise. *Qixinlun* scholars either copy the Daoxuan presentation verbatim, such as in the works of Fazang⁶⁶ and Jingmai 靖邁 (fl. 7th century),⁶⁷ or reproduce it with varying degrees of modification – thus, Yuanying revises the wording and simplifies the content by, for example, deleting the “unusual abilities”,

His character is noble, his spirit magnanimous, his manner extraordinarily graceful, and his scriptural erudition, broad and extensive – he is especially more insightful (in his understanding of the texts in) the Mahāyāna.⁶⁸

性天高朗，氣宇澄明，風神超拔，博覽群藏；而於大乘，偏洞深遠。

and the preface to the Paramārtha translation reformulates the Daoxuan presentation, borrowing only its perhaps the most essential information:

That person (i.e., Paramārtha) was, ever since his childhood, extensively and exhaustively well read in (Buddhist)

⁶⁶ T44n1846p246a17-a19.

⁶⁷ in his *Gujin yijing tuji* 古今譯經圖紀, T55n2151p364c9-c10.

⁶⁸ in his *Dasheng qixinlun jiangyi* 大乘起信論講義.

scriptures, and was especially more insightful (in his understanding of the texts in) the Mahāyāna.⁶⁹

其人少小博採，備覽諸經，然於大乘，偏洞深遠。

It borrows from Daoxuan the idea of scriptural erudition, and applies the expression of “especially” (*pian* 偏), originally used on “unusual abilities”, to such erudition, narrowing it down to the erudition of Mahāyāna scriptures.

The implicit role of the unusual abilities in the translation of sacred texts is brought, perhaps consciously, to the fore in some *Qixinlun* commentaries. While Daoxuan places such an account somewhat innocently – i.e., without an obvious and perceptible purpose – amid a long list of other details in Paramārtha’s life, Fazang uses that account to conclude his much shorter biography, a biography that all revolves around the role of Paramārtha as the translator of *Qixinlun*.⁷⁰ Here the intent to associate the “unusual abilities” with the competence in translation becomes much more obvious.⁷¹ In his biographies for famous Buddhist translators, Jingmai expands the Fazang biography (with additional titles of translations attributed to Paramārtha), but repeats the Fazang structure, i.e., his concluding the biography with the aforementioned account of Paramārtha’s unusual abilities – apparently, Jingmai subscribes to Fazang’s perception

⁶⁹ T32n1666p575a19-a20.

⁷⁰ T44n1846p246a15-b8.

⁷¹ Fazang himself is often depicted in such a light – for an extensive and in-depth discussion of Fazang in such an aspect, see Jinhua Chen, “Fazang (643-712), the Holy Man”, *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 28 (2005): 11-84.

of the association between unusual abilities and the competence of translation!⁷²

The borrowing from Daoxuan, in its varying degrees of modification, is, understandably, based on the verifiability of the association between the four qualifications and the competence in translation. The more obvious the association, the more easily a qualification is retained in the *Qixinlun* tradition. Thus, while scriptural erudition remains the most obvious topic in the narration of Paramārtha as a translator, the other three tend to be easily removed from the discourse when, for example, conciseness becomes a necessity. In fact, the subject of unusual abilities, perhaps the least convincing qualification, is sometimes taken out of the fourfold basic model and used, instead, in the depiction of Paramārtha, not as a Buddhist monk whose miraculous power contributes at least partly to the feat of translation, but just simply as a Buddhist monk who is known to possess such power. Thus the hagiography of Paramārtha, written for children, dwells exclusively on such “unusual abilities”:

Riding a lotus leaf, Paramārtha crossed (the river) on its waves.⁷³

諦乘荷葉，相渡波瀾。

The “unusual abilities” itself is the point here – as long as the idea that being Buddhist can be thus powerful gets across to the audience, who are the future of Buddhism, the task is then accomplished – and

⁷² T55n2151p364c7-p365a11.

⁷³ in *Shishi mengqiu* 釋氏蒙求, by Lincao 靈操, at X87n1623p242c1.

its association with the Paramārtha's competence as a translator no longer matters. As much as this may be case, however, this emphatic reiteration of Paramārtha's "unusual abilities" still somehow reminds us of the erstwhile highlighting of the association between the "unusual abilities" and the qualification as a translator, a surviving vestige of a more comprehensive depiction of an almost deified translator of sacred scriptures.

3. The China Mission: Circumstances & Itinerary

The presentation of Paramārtha's China mission by Daoxuan consists primarily of a long and detailed itinerary that lists the times, places, events and, of course, the translation projects completed during Paramārtha's stay in China. This itinerary is preceded by a brief account of the circumstances that brought Paramārtha to China, which is focused, among a few technical details, primarily on the determination of Paramārtha as a missionary. In the *Qixinlun* tradition, such an account of circumstances is turned into an implicit praise of the translator's character and expertise, and the itinerary, chronological and thus somewhat unfocused, is reorganized and simplified, with its attention directed to the role of Paramārtha as the translator of *Qixinlun* alone, rather than that of many texts.

The account of the circumstances, in addition to the technical details leading to the mission, dwells rather emphatically on the determination of Paramārtha as a missionary translator. He is depicted as an undaunted missionary in his earlier career

Undeterred by all adversity, he had undertaken long and

arduous journeys, and, in his travels to these (foreign) lands, he would present himself (to the local people with his preaching of the Buddha's words) whenever circumstances became appropriate.

遠涉艱關，無憚夷險；歷遊諸國；隨機利見。...⁷⁴

and is apparently seen as both ready and well prepared for the China mission:

With (such a thought) long entertained in mind, he readily accepted the mission.

既素蓄在心，渙然聞命。⁷⁵

While this praise of determination is not only obvious, but also expected of, in a biography eulogizing him as a missionary translator, it becomes somewhat confusing when Daoxuan mentions Paramārtha's hesitation in complying with the royal call to go to China – so hesitant that it takes some pressure for him to accept the mission

Pressed (*qu* 屈)⁷⁶ by the court (of Funan 扶南),⁷⁷ Paramārtha respectfully answered the call of the (Chinese) emperor (i.e., to go on the China mission), bringing along both *sūtras* and

⁷⁴ T50n2060p429c11.

⁷⁵ T50n2060p429c17.

⁷⁶ T50n2060p429c16; Paul translates “*qu*” 屈 as “yield” – i.e., the court of Funan yielded to the demand of the Liang China (Paul, 23) – but neither this quote from the Daoxuan biography, nor the *Lidai sanbaoji* 歷代三寶紀 (T49n2034p106a8), explicitly and clearly supports such reading, and the subsequent exegetical reading, discussed shortly below, further suggests that this “*qu*” should be the “pressure” on Paramārtha by the court of Funan.

⁷⁷ i.e., modern day Cambodia.

śāstras.

彼國乃屈真諦，并齎經論，恭膺帝旨。

Such an emphasis on Paramārtha's hesitation to accept the China mission apparently does not fit very well in a biography that portrays him as a determined and one of the most eminent Buddhist translators in Chinese history, but what exactly is intended, or how it may be misunderstood, is not clear – while the word “pressing” (*qu* 屈) is conspicuous, the author has not offered any explanation for the inconsistency it creates in this context!

Whatever is intended in the Daoxuan account, however, this emphasis on the “pressure” seems to have caught the attention of the *Qixinlun* scholars, and these scholars have made an obvious attempt at its clarification (to their liking, of course). Thus we find the Paramārtha translation elaborating the simple act of “pressing” (*qu* 屈) into a much more complex process of a forced compliance:

Then the king of that country ordered, in response to (the request of the Chinese envoy), that (Paramārtha) be dispatched on (the China mission). Having repeatedly, but in vain, begged to be excused, the Dhama Master (eventually) boarded the ship, attended by Gautama and many others, and carrying a rosewood statue of the Buddha, came to pay tribute to the imperial court (of the Liang China).⁷⁸

時彼國王應即移遣，法師苦辭不免，便就汎舟，與瞿曇及多侍從，并送蘇合佛像來朝。

⁷⁸ T32n1666p575a20-a22.

The emphasis on such resistance to the call from the court, despite the eventual compliance, is perhaps meaningful, for such open display of disinterestedness in the will of the powerful is what characterizes the ideal of virtuous person in Chinese culture (hence a praise of Paramārtha's character), and such disinterestedness, together with the apparent royal insistence, further constitutes an implicit recognition of Paramārtha's worth as the irreplaceable candidate for this important mission (hence a praise of Paramārtha's competence). In other words, morality and competence exist, as already witnessed previously, in a causal relationship in the Chinese perceptions, from the influence of which the *Qixinlun* commentators, being Chinese themselves, seem simply unable to escape – hence the meaningful, though not straightforward, reformulation of “pressing”! In fact, this manipulation of “pressing” into “having repeatedly, but in vain, begged to be excused”, if indeed thus intended, is perhaps a more explicit presentation of something already implied in Daoxuan's repeated emphasis on Paramārtha's popularity among his Chinese colleagues and followers. Below are a few such examples:

...(he) decided to sail to Laṅkāśukha (i.e., Malaysia). Monks and Laity earnestly begged him to promise to stay.⁷⁹

遂欲汎舶往楞伽修國，道俗虔請，結誓留之。

Again, packed to a big ship, (Paramārtha) was preparing to return to his (native) country in the West, but his students and followers thronged after (him) in great multitude, unwilling

⁷⁹ T50n2060p430a5, trans. Paul, 31.

to leave, (while beseeching him to stay).⁸⁰

更裝大舶欲返西國，學徒追逐，相續留連。

On hearing what had happened, (Chih-k'ai) hurried to him (Paramārtha). Monks and laity ran after one another into the countryside (toward the mountains). The governor (Ouyang Ho) also dispatched envoys and guardsmen to restrain him. He (the governor) personally prostrated himself (in front of Paramārtha). Only after being detained for three days did (Paramārtha) finally cancel his original plan.⁸¹

聞告馳往，道俗奔赴，相繼山川；刺史又遣使人，伺衛防遏，躬自稽顙。致留三日，方紓本情。

In other words, Daxuan's depiction of such enthusiastic admiration for the master prepares for the emphatic re-reading by commentators of the "pressing" into the "having repeatedly, but in vain, begged to be excused"! He is apparently well loved by his Chinese followers and hosts, both as a respectable person, and as an erudite translator.

This re-reading – from a focus on determination of the translator to suggestions on his character and expertise – apparently does not exclude the theme of determination on the part of Paramārtha. Fazang, for example, reverses Daoxuan's lament over the adversity that Paramārtha encounters:

⁸⁰ T50n2060p430a13.

⁸¹ The "original plan" is to put an end to his earthly life as a way to facilitate his rebirth (he would believe) in the Pure Land (T50n2060p430b1-b3) – trans. by Paul, 34 ; the last sentence "fang yu ben qing" 方紓本情 was mistakenly translated as "return to his normal state".

He conducted translation wherever he went, amidst a hurried and unsettled life.

並隨方翻譯，栖遑靡託。⁸²

and turns it into a praise of the translator's religious enthusiasm in the effort to accomplish a sacred task:

As much as in an unsettled (life, Paramārtha) had never interrupted his work in translation.⁸³

雖復栖遑，譯業無輟。

The purpose is apparently just to highlight such a quality.

Paramartha's itinerary in China recorded by Daoxuan follows closely a very unsettled life in an age of political turmoil, with its main character forced to move from time to time, and from place to place. Such a record is detailed, chronological and in that sense without an obvious focus – as easily seen below in a list of clearly identified times and places of Paramārtha's China itinerary:

546, 1st year, Era of Datong 大同, Nanhai 南海 (Canton)

548, 2nd year, Era of Taiqing 太清, Nanjing, the capital

550, 4th year, Era of Taiqing, Fuchun 富春

552, 3rd year, Era of Tianbao 天保, back to Nanjing

552, 1st year, Era of Chengsheng 承聖, Zhengguan Temple 正觀寺 in Nanjing

554, 3rd year, Era of Chengsheng, Shixing 始興

⁸² T50n2060p430a1-a2.

⁸³ T44n1846p246a29.

558, 2nd year, Era of Yongting, Yuzhang 豫章

563, 4th year, Era of Tianjia 天嘉, Zhizhi Temple 制旨寺 in
Guangzhou

Such a long and unfocused itinerary gives a Paramārtha as a translator of many texts, rather than one text – his wandering at different times and at different places itself already implies a diversity of his translations, which is fully illustrated in the titles that accompany the time and places given above.⁸⁴

In an obvious effort to redirect the focus from a translator of many texts to the translator of primarily the one text called *Qixinlun*, Fazang's account of Paramārtha's travels reorganizes Daoxuan's chronological account into two major sections, with a substantial first part completely devoted to the translation of *Qixinlun*, and a supplemental second part wrapping up the remaining information as the general background of Paramārtha's career as a translator. The first part goes as follows:

In the second year of the Taiqing during the reign of Emperor Wu of the Liang (China) – i.e., the year of Wu-chen (or the fifth of the sexagenary cycle) – Paramārtha had an audience with the emperor at the Hall of Baoyun, who decreed the translation of (Buddhist) scriptures. Starting thus from the second year of the Taiqing and concluding in the third year

⁸⁴ For greater details of this itinerary, especially about Paramārtha's various translations in the course of this travel, see the Daoxuan biography, or the Paramārtha chronology presented by Diana Paul in her "Appendix A: Chronology of Paramārtha's Life", 171-74.

of the Chengsheng – i.e., the year of Jia-xu (or, the eleventh of the sexagenary cycle), in the Temples of Zhengguan and others, (Paramārtha) translated a total of 11 works in 20 fascicles, including the *Suvarṇa-prabhāsa-sūtra*, *Maitreya-vyākaraṇa-sūtra*, *the Awakening of Faith in Mahāyāna*, etc. This treatise was translated on the 10th day of the 9th month in that year, at the Jianxing Temple in Hengzhou, together with such elite of the capital as Huixian, Zhikai, Tanzhen, Huimin, etc., as well as Lord Xiao, Bo (being his personal name), the Grand Guardian and the Generalissimo (authorized to bear ceremonially the imperial) Golden-Battleaxe. (During the translation), the *śramaṇa* Zhikai served as the scribe, and Upaśūnya translated the words (in Sanskrit into Chinese). They also translated a thematic analysis of the treatise in 20 fascicles.⁸⁵

以梁武帝泰清二年歲次戊辰，見帝於寶雲殿，帝敕譯經。即以太清二年，訖承聖三年，歲次甲戌，於正觀寺等，譯金光明經、彌勒下生經、大乘起信論等，總一十一部，合二十卷。此論乃是其年九月十日，與京邑英賢慧顯、智愷、曇振、慧旻等，并黃鉞大將軍大保蕭公勃等，於衡州建興寺所譯；沙門智愷筆授，月婆首那等譯語。并翻論旨玄文二十卷。

Here, Fazang carefully builds a list of events that are or can be associated with the translation of *Qixinlun*, including Paramārtha's

⁸⁵ T44n1846p246a20-a28; English translation in consultation with Dirck Vorenkamp, *An English Translation of Fa-tsang's Commentary on the Awakening of Faith* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2004), p. 58.

arrival in China as a translator, his audience with Emperor Wu, which marks the imperial sponsorship of his translation projects, his subsequent translation of Buddhist scriptures, of which *Qixinlun* is one, and from which *Qixinlun* is singled out for a more detailed introduction of the time and place of the translation, of his translation team, and of the supplementary project to the translation of *Qixinlun*. The second part goes as follows:

When Hou Jing started his rebellion, (he) fled (successively) to Yuzhang, Shixing and Nankang, but, as much as in an unsettled (life, Paramārtha) had never interrupted his work in translation! (After much tribulation in China), Paramārtha set sail for the west (India), but the karmic wind revealed his fate, for driven by the wind, (his ship) floated back to Guangzhou. Ouyang Wei, the Duke of Mu and the Regional Governor of Guangzhou, invited him to stay at the Zhizhi Temple and translate sutras and sastras. Beginning from the first year of the Yongding Era of the Chen, i.e., the year of Bing-zi (the thirteenth of the sexagenary cycle, i.e., 557), and concluding in the first year of the Taijian Era, i.e., the year of Ji-chou (the twenty-sixth of the sexagenary cycle, i.e., 569),⁸⁶ he further translated the *Fo-a-pi-tan-jing*, its sastra, *Abhidharma-kośa*, and *Mahāyāna-saṃgraha*. In all, during both the Chen and the Liang dynasties, (he) translated, at imperial requests, forty four sutras and sastras in (a total of) 141 rolls.

⁸⁶ T44n1846p246a28-b5.

屬侯景作亂，乃適豫章、始興、南康等。雖復栖遑，譯業無輟。即汎舶西歸，業風賦命，還飄廣州，屬廣州刺史穆國公歐陽頎延住制止寺，請譯經論。自陳永定元年，歲次丙子，至訖泰建元年己丑歲，更譯佛阿毘曇經論、及俱舍攝論等。總陳梁二代，敕譯經論，四十四部，一百四十一卷。

Following the careful account above, Fazang quickly goes over the highlights of Paramārtha's translation career in China, which was summarized on the basis of Daoxuan and was thus presented in an organized and also brief manner. This second section presents Paramārtha as a prolific and, in that sense, an apparently seasoned translator, a fact that would qualify him for the translation of *Qixinlun*. In the meantime, this fact is pushed back (through the brevity of its presentation) to background so that the translation of the one text *Qixinlun* can stand out as the main theme of this account.

4. The *Qixinlun* Project: Time, Place and the Translation Team

While the Daoxuan biography does not have anything to say about the translation of *Qixinlun* – it does not see *Qixinlun* as a Paramārtha translation – it does provide a basis for the presentation of the *Qixinlun* project: It allows room for the identification of the time and place of the project, and supplies the necessary material for *Qixinlun* scholars to create a team of assistants for Paramārtha.

In his discussion of Paramārtha's translation activities, Daoxuan mentions a number of well-known titles along with the places and

times of their translation. According to him, Paramārtha translated,

- a. between 548-552, the *Treatise on the Seventeen Bodhisattva Stages* 十七地論 in Fuchun 富春；
- b. in 552, the *Suvarṇa-prabhāsa-sūtra* 金光明經 at the Zhengguan Temple 正觀寺 in Nanjing 金陵；
- c. between 560-561, the *Mahāyāna-saṃgraha* 攝大乘論 in Nanyue 南越；
- d. starting from 562, the *Arthavighuṣṭa Sūtra* 廣義法門經 and the *Treatise on Consciousness-only* 唯識論。

Daoxuan further details Paramārtha's activities between 554 and 558:

In the second month of the third year during the period of Chengsheng (i.e., 554), Paramārtha returned to Yuzhang, and again moved to Xinwu and Shixing. After that, following the Grand Guardian Xiao, he crossed the mountain ranges (to the south) and reached Nankang – (in the course of this travel), he conducted translation wherever he went, amidst a hurried and unsettled life. In the seventh month of the second year during (the Era of) Yongding of the Chen (i.e., 558), (Paramārtha again) returned to Yuzhang.⁸⁷

三年二月，還返豫章；又往新吳始興；後隋蕭太保，度嶺至于南康，並隨方翻譯，栖遑靡託。逮陳武永定二年七月，還返豫章。

It is against such a background that the preface to the Paramārtha

⁸⁷ T50n2060p429c29-p430a3.

version locates the translation of *Qixinlun*, temporally, somewhere between 554-555⁸⁸ and, geographically, at the Jianxing Temple 建興寺 in Shixing County 始興郡, Hengzhou Prefecture 衡州. The temporal location is made possible because no titles are reported for the period between 554 and 558 – we only know that “he conducted translation wherever he went”, but not what he translated during this period – thus allowing one of those unnamed translations to be *Qixinlun*. This temporal location further allows the geographical location at the Shixing County – Paramārtha traveled to Shixing after “the second month of the third year” (554), a time just identified for the translation of *Qixinlun*.

As a general practice in his biographical writings for translators, Daoxuan almost always mentions a team of assistants to the chief translator. Thus, in his Paramārtha biography, we find the translator working with over twenty monks, including a “Zen Master Yuan” 願禪師, in the translation of the *Suvarṇa-prabhāsa Sūtra*,⁸⁹ and with a group of monks headed by a Huikai 慧愷 in the translation of the *Arthavighuṣṭa Sūtra and the Treatise on the Consciousness-only*.⁹⁰ Sometimes these assistants are labeled, somehow formulaically, as the “*ying-xiu*” 英秀 (i.e., “elites”) in the Buddhological circle of the time and the place, apparently to exalt the status of Paramārtha as a translator by exalting a staff under his supervision – thus, in the

⁸⁸ According to the preface, the *Qixinlun* project started in the third year of the Chengsheng Era (i.e., 554), and took two years to complete (T32n1666p575a26 & p575b2).

⁸⁹ T50n2060p429c28-c29.

⁹⁰ T50n2060p430a19-a20.

translation of the *Treatise on the Seventeen Stages*, Paramārtha is said to have recruited a staff of more twenty “*ying-xiu*” scholar-monks led by Baoqiong 寶瓊.⁹¹

Apparently modeled after such a practice, the preface to the Paramārtha version of *Qixinlun* also presents a team of translators, and also labels them as the “elites” (“*ying-xian*”, a modified formulation of the same concept) of the time and the place:

(The translation was assisted by) such ‘*ying-xian*’ of the capital city as Huixian, Zhishao, Zhikai, Tanzhen and Huimin.⁹²

京邑英賢慧顯、智韶、智愷、曇振、慧旻。

Such a list, with both the names and the label, remains standard in the *Qixinlun* tradition, with only some omission or abbreviation, thus in Fazang we find:

...together with such ‘*ying-xian*’ of the capital city as Huixian, Zhikai, Tanzhen Huimin, etc.⁹³

與京邑英賢慧顯、智愷、曇振、慧旻等。

and the Zixuan version says:

...together with such ‘*ying-xian*’ of the capital city as Huixian, Zhikai, etc.⁹⁴

與京邑英賢惠顯、智愷等。

⁹¹ T50n2060p0429c24.

⁹² T32n1666p575a24.

⁹³ T44n1846p246a25.

⁹⁴ T44n1848p314c17.

This list, however, only names the members of the translation team, but does not have information about the specific roles of these members. The task, neglected in Daoxuan, is accomplished in the preface to the Paramārtha translation, which makes two specific identifications:

(The project was completed), with Upaśūnya of India as the (oral) translator and Zhikai as the scribe.⁹⁵

傳語人天竺國月支首那等；執筆人智愷等。

Such identification borrows its materials from the Daoxuan biography. There, neither Upaśūnya nor Zhikai is assigned such a task, but the former appears in the biography as a contemporary translator of Paramārtha, and the latter, attributed the preface to the Paramārtha version of *Qixinlun*, appears in the Daoxuan biography as an important and a very close disciple of the translator. In other words, these two names are seen as somehow associated with either Paramārtha, the supposed translator, or simply with the translation itself – it is thus not impossible for someone, in the effort to identify the Paramārtha of Daoxuan as the translator of *Qixinlun*, to take a step further and make such specific assignments to these two persons. Such identification apparently made it to the *Qixinlun* tradition as a common understanding, a thing amply illustrated in its repeated appearance in the works of such commentators as Fazang,⁹⁶ Tongrun

⁹⁵ T32n1666p575b01-b02

⁹⁶ T44n1846p246a27.

通潤,⁹⁷ Zhengyuan 正遠⁹⁸ and Yuanying 圓瑛.⁹⁹ The preface to the Śikṣānanda translation simply identifies Zhikai as a chief collaborator of the translation:

Also participating in the translation is Zhikai, the monk from Yangzhou.¹⁰⁰

共揚州沙門智愷所譯。

This identification, though not specific as to how Zhikai participated, quite obviously echoes the claim that he served as the scribe during the translation.

C. Interpretation – The “*Shu-ji*” Lineage and the “Three Great Commentaries”

The perception of the *Qixinlun* transmission in terms of exegetical interpretation is formulated primarily as two influential theories. The first delineates a “*Shu-ji*” 疏記 lineage, i.e., an exegetical tradition of *Qixinlun* that centers on the core texts of the “*shu*” 疏 commentary by Fazang¹⁰¹ and the “*ji*” 記 commentary by

⁹⁷ in his *Dasheng qixinlun xushu* 大乘起信論續疏, X45n764p403a7-a8.

⁹⁸ in his *Dasheng qixinlun jieyao* 大乘起信論捷要, X45n763p367c13.

⁹⁹ in his *Dasheng qixinlun jiangyi* 大乘起信論講義.

¹⁰⁰ T32n1667p583c10.

¹⁰¹ The Fazang commentary is known today as an “*yiji*” 義記 (i.e., *Dasheng Qixinlun yiji* 大乘起信論義記), although his contemporary Yan Chaoyin 閻朝隱 (?-713; T50n2054p280b25-b26), his Silla Korean biographer Ch'oe Ch'iwŏn 崔致遠 (857-?; T50n2054p283a14), and the Goryeo Korean scholar monk Ui'ch'on 義天 (1055-1101; T55n2184p1175a12) label it a “*shu*” 疏. There is so far no scholarly discussion defining and distinguishing between the two, i.e., if they are different genres at all, or if they are different technical terms in Buddhist exegesis coined in different contexts. Mochizuki Shinkō (p. 228) and Ono Gemmyō 小野玄妙 (*Bussho kaisetsu daijiten* 佛書解說大辭典, no. 7, p.286) both see the two terms

Zixuan (965-1038),¹⁰² while the second identifies the commentaries by Huiyuan, Wonhyo and Fazang as the “Three Great Commentaries” (*sandashu* 三大疏) of the treatise.¹⁰³ As a corollary of the first theory, the *Shu-ji* lineage seems to have become, at a certain point, somehow interchangeable with a Huayan 華嚴 lineage – a sinified Buddhist tradition arising from the study of the *Huayan jing* 華嚴經, or the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* – reflecting an obvious tendency to identify the doctrinal essence of *Qixinlun* with that of the *Huayan jing*. Both theories, however, whether or not they make good sense, seem to have been inspired, ultimately, by the same fact that the Fazang commentary is generally treated as the definitive work in the understanding and interpretation of *Qixinlun*.

1. The “*Shu-ji*” Lineage

While the Chinese Buddhist exegetes started to study and teach the *Qixinlun* almost as soon as the treatise appeared in the 6th century, the attention to such exegesis began at a much later time. The first extant record of such attention is the Zixuan (965-1038) account of the Zongmi 宗密 (780-841) redaction of *Qixinlun*’s definitive commentary by Fazang:

as interchangeable. Yusugi Ryōei, however, seems to think that “*yiji*” is Fazang’s original work, whereas “*shu*” (or “*zhu-shu*”) refers to its revision by Zongmi (see below section 1: the “*Shu-ji*” Lineage) – and that this revision was so widely circulated that it, at a certain point, became treated as the Fazang commentary itself, hence the “*shu*” in “*shu-ji*”.

¹⁰² i.e., *Qixinlun bixue ji* 起信論疏筆削記, T44n1848.

¹⁰³ i.e., respectively, *Dasheng qixin lun yishu* 大乘起信論義疏, *Qixin lun shu* 起信論疏, and *Dasheng qixin lun yiji* 大乘起信論義記.

(Zongmi) realized that, the treatise and its (Fazang) commentary being circulated separately, (*Qixinlun*) scholars could not view (the two texts) simultaneously. Since (they) are in mutual absence, it is difficult to make progress in the study (of the treatise). (Having seen this situation, Zongmi) added the text of the commentary to the treatise. Thus, the (lines of the) treatise are followed by (explanations from) the commentary and preceded by (the remarks about) its outline, and, as a result, the meaning of the treatise is elucidated and its organization is delineated. What a gift to scholars in their study of the text!¹⁰⁴

先以論疏二本別行，致其學者不能周覽。既成互闕，功進難前。今列疏文以就於論，既論下有疏，論上有科，文義昭然，章段備矣。學者披釋，得不荷其優賜乎？

Zixuan mentions another work in the same account, by the scholar monk Chuan'ao 傳奧 (fl. 9th century) of the Shibi Temple 石壁寺,¹⁰⁵ as continuing the *Qixinlun* exegesis by Fazang and Zongmi:

The writing of this (i.e., Zixuan's) commentary is based on (the one by) Shibi (i.e., Chuan'ao). Overly compassionate (about the inability of the sentient beings to understand the Buddhist truth), Shibi makes excessive use of words (for the elucidation of such truth) – whenever explaining a point, he always first raises a question, then answers it using

¹⁰⁴ T44n1848p298a24-a27.

¹⁰⁵ For a discussion of Chuan'ao regarding his life and work, see Shi Zhixue 釋智學, “Shibi Chuan'ao: Gaoseng zhuan buxu zhiyi” 石壁傳奧：高僧補敘之一 in *Zhengguan zazhi* 正觀雜誌 39 (2006): 85-143.

(the Fazang) commentary, and finally discusses it more extensively (in his own words).¹⁰⁶

此文之作本乎石壁。石壁慈甚，蔓於章句：凡伸一義，皆先問發，次舉疏答，後方委釋。

What is alleged as the “excessive use of words” refers to the way in which Chuan’ao takes the work of Fazang and Zongmi farther afield, a way expressed in the form of question, old answer (by Fazang), and new answer (his own “more extensive” discussion). Motivated by “over compassion” for those who could not understand the Buddhist teaching easily, such exposition is methodic and elaborate, but, in the same time, its “excessive use of words” could also pose a problem which this method is designed to solve. Thus, Zixuan proposes to reduce such “excesses” in his own commentary:

Now, taking up this text (by Chuan’ao, I) write down and save those (expositions) that are essential and appropriate, and cut and (thus) leave out those that are redundant and impertinent. With such saving and removing, (the revision by this new commentary is designed to) produce the right amount (of exposition), so that later scholars no longer waste their energy unnecessarily, and the light of their wisdom shall thus shine through the darkness (of delusion).

今就其文取要當者筆而存之，其繁緩者削以去之。仍加添改，取其得中，俾後學者不虛勞神，智照無昧也。¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ T44n1848p297a4-a5.

¹⁰⁷ T44n1848p297a7-a8.

While it doesn't seem to be Zixuan's conscious intention to delineate an exegetical lineage for *Qixinlun*, these remarks do allow people to see a sustained tradition of exegesis, started by Fazang and continuously revised by Zongmi, Chuan'ao and, of course, Zixuan himself. The perception of such continuity seems to be well corroborated in the well-known Buddhist catalogue by the Korean monk Uicheon (1055–1101), who thus annotates his recording of some of these commentaries:¹⁰⁸

a 'shu' (commentary) in 3 fascicles, expounded by Fazang ...;
 a 'shu' (commentary) in 4 fascicles (or in 3 or 2 fascicles, with the Fazang commentary inserted between the lines of the text by Zongmi);
 a 'ji' (commentary) that accompanies the 'shu', expounded by Chuan'ao

疏三卷，法藏述...；疏四卷（或三卷，或二卷，宗密將藏疏注於論文之下）；隨疏記六卷，傳奧述。¹⁰⁹

The connection between these commentaries is clearly inferable, with Fazang revised by Zongmi, who is in turn further revised by Chuan'ao – hence the continuity of a tradition.

The formulation of such an exegetical lineage is based, apparently, on the perception that the Fazang commentary is the definitive commentary of *Qixinlun*, for those other commentaries in this lineage are, in one way or another, revisions of a root commentary

¹⁰⁸ *Sinp'yon chejong kyojang ch'ongnok* 新編諸宗教藏總錄, by Ui'chon 義天 (1055-1101), T55n2184.

¹⁰⁹ T55n2184p1175a12-a15.

by Fazang – Zongmi takes the *Qixinlun* text apart and fits the Fazang exposition to the right places in the text, Chuan’ao elaborates the Zongmi revision, and Zixuan streamlines the Chuan’ao elaboration!

Such a tradition is simplified, eventually, to include only the definitive commentary by Fazang, i.e., “*Shu*”, and its last commentary by Zixuan,¹¹⁰ i.e., “*Ji*” – hence the label of “*Shu-ji*” lineage. The *Shu* of Fazang is an obvious choice, and the excellence of the “*Ji*” is often highlighted to fit it to the company of the *Shu*. Xufa, for example, concludes his discussion about the development of this exegetical tradition with an explicit praise of the “last-ness” of the *Ji* commentary

Master Changshui (i.e., Zixuan), again drawing upon the sūtras and the śāstras, applied reduction and addition a second time in order that (the new commentary, in terms of the complexity of its exposition) attains the golden mean, without being amiss in either excesses or simplicity.¹¹¹

長水大師，重考經論，再加損益。蓋取中庸，則無有繁簡之失也。

By both “reduction” from and “addition” to the existing exegesis, the “*Ji*” reaches the state of the “golden mean”, no longer “amiss in either excesses or simplicity” – in other words, it is the only text that is qualified to be placed on a par with the *Shu* of Fazang and, together

¹¹⁰ “last” in the sense that the lineage of Fazang, Zongmi, Chuan’ao and Zixuan seems to be generally considered as a closed or completed exegetical tradition, even though below in Xufa’s account, we will see an obvious (though not necessarily successful) attempt to reopen this tradition

¹¹¹ in his *Qixinlun shuji huiyue: yuanqi* 起信論疏記會闕：緣起，X45n767p518a18-a19.

with it, makes the official label of this exegetical tradition.

The “*Shu-ji*” lineage seems to have since remained the authorities in the understanding of *Qixinlun*. The Ming commentator Deqing reveals his indebtedness to these two works, even though he is somewhat critical of Fazang’s structural analysis:

The primary commentary by Fazang is meticulous and thorough, but its textual organization is somewhat obscuring (due to its complexity), for that reason (this commentary) aims at simplicity and avoids intricate discussions while, sometimes, resorting to the interpretation in the ‘*ji*’ (i.e., the *Zixuan* commentary).¹¹²

賢首本疏精詳，但科段少隔，故刪繁從略，間會記義。

and Zhenjie finds it important to summarize the essentials of these two works as his way of commenting on *Qixinlun*:

To name (this commentary) a ‘*zuan-zhu*’ means that it ‘*zuan*’ (gathers and combines) the fundamental teachings of the ‘*shu*’ and ‘*ji*’ in order to ‘*zhu*’ (explain) this treatise.¹¹³

言纂註者，謂纂集疏記要義以釋此論也。

This status of authority is further reinforced when the scholarly and intellectual preparation of the two commentators is emphatically highlighted:

It was only after they had exhausted all the scriptures in the

¹¹² X45n765p444b6.

¹¹³ X45n762p336c12-c20.

Great Treasure collection, immersing therein for several years, that Master Fazang of Taiyuan and Master Zixuan of Changshui were able to complete the ‘*shu*’ and the ‘*ji*’.¹¹⁴

昔太原藏師，長水璿師，盡閱大藏群典，潛神數載，始成疏記。

Such emphasis on their extensive learning and indefatigable efforts is an indirect way of praising the quality of these two works and, in doing that, to justify the treatment of these two works as the two major landmarks in the exegetical tradition of *Qixinlun*.

The theorization of the *Shu-ji* lineage culminates in a *Qing* commentary by *Xufa* 續法 (1641-1728), entitled *Qixinlun shuji huiyue* 起信論疏記會閱 (*The Collated Commentaries of Qixinlun: the Shu and the Ji*)¹¹⁵ – the title itself indicates this emphasis on the *Shu* and *Ji* commentaries as the representatives of this exegetical tradition of *Qixinlun*. The commentary gives a long and impressive list of names supposedly responsible for the successful transmission of the *Qixinlun* teaching:

The Tathāgata preached on the Buddha-nature in his scriptures ...; based thereupon, the Bodhisattva (i.e., Aśvaghōṣa) composed the treatise ...; Master Xianshou (i.e., Fazang) ... in his turn reflected (i.e., wrote a commentary) upon the treatise ...; Master Guishan (i.e., Zongmi) gathered (from the commentary) its essentials for those of mediocre

¹¹⁴ X45n763p367c1.

¹¹⁵ X45n768.

and inferior spiritual capacity and added them to the treatise; Master Shibi (i.e., Chuan'ao), in view of this simplified and thus obscure exegesis, collected (information) from (various) sources to give a more in-depth exposition of the commentary; Master Changshui celebrated the treatise and the commentary, but reflected carefully on the interpretation (i.e., the commentary) – he simplified where it is too intricate ... and elaborated upon where it is too brief ... thus naming (his commentary) the '*bi-xue*' ('elaborating' and 'abbreviating') ...; however, since the *Shu* and the *Ji* have not yet been integrated, being circulated separately, Mr. Dai took pity on those who were late and thus having difficulty in making progress, and requested (me) to reorganize and combine (the two texts); the Deluded One (Xufa referring to himself) sympathizes the hard work of those worthies before him, and, venturing to trace the train of their profound thoughts, (combines the *shu* and the *ji*)...¹¹⁶

如來稱性說經...，菩薩依經造論；...我賢首大師...再思茲論；...圭山大師，為中下之根，更搜精要，直錄於論；石壁法師，因簡奧之註，採集部函，詳解其疏；長水大師，...慶斯論疏，猶豫釋文：...詳者略其詳，...略者詳其略，...命名筆削...；然又疏記別行，未曾總帙，復齋先生，憫後進之難通，重請分會，不慧念前賢之心苦，敢逆雅懷...。

As the focus of the Xufa commentary, the *Shu* and the *Ji* are thus

¹¹⁶ X45n768p546a5-c7.

perceived to represent an uninterrupted transmission of the Buddhist truth as summarized succinctly in *Qixinlun*, a transmission that starts with the Buddha himself, continues through its author (Aśvaghōṣa) and its most well-known commentators (i.e., Fazang, Zongmi, Chuan'ao and Zixuan), and remains open for new interpretations, such as those by Dai Fuzhai and Xufa himself.

This truth, transmitted through *Qixinlun*, is apparently perceived to be the same truth transmitted through the *Huayan jin*, even though it may be formulated in different ways, i.e., the simultaneous identity between the absolute and the phenomena (i.e., “*yixin ermen*” 一心二門) in *Qixinlun* on the one hand, and the infinite interpenetration (i.e., “*wujin yuanrong*” 無盡圓融) in *Huayan jing* on the other hand. Thus, at a certain point in the *Qixinlun* tradition, brief accounts of a *Huayan* lineage were beginning to be inserted into *Qixinlun* commentaries, identifying, perhaps unconsciously, the doctrinal essence of these two traditions.

Deqing, for example, introduces his *Qixinlun* commentary with a summary of the central thesis of the Huayan doctrine¹¹⁷ as the teaching of its seven patriarchs, thus implying the presence of a Huayan lineage.¹¹⁸ The point thus implied is in fact explicit – What is transmitted by these 7 patriarchs is exactly what is taught here in the *Qixinlun*, and this point becomes even more explicit when Aśvaghōṣa,

¹¹⁷ i.e., “Huayanzong fajieyuanqi gangyao” 華嚴宗法界緣起綱要 (“The *Huayan* Doctrine of the Dependent Arising from Dharmadhātu: an Outline”) in his commentary entitled *Dasheng qixinlun zhijie* 大乘起信論直解 (X45n766).

¹¹⁸ i.e., Aśvaghōṣa 馬鳴, Nāgārjuna 龍樹, Fashun 法順, Zhiyan 智儼, Fazang 法藏, Chengguan 澄觀, Zongmi 宗密.

the reputed author of *Qixinlun*, appears as the first of these 7 patriarchs and thus the founder of the Huayan tradition.¹¹⁹ The author of the *Qixinlun* begins, in that capacity, the Huayan tradition, thus the lineage of one tradition is just another name of the other tradition!

Xufa also introduces his *Qixinlun* commentary with emphatic reference to the Huayan tradition. While he mentions only five Huayan patriarchs, he gives their biographies, rather than just summarizes the Huayan teaching to imply the presence of a lineage of patriarchs, and the point intended in highlighting the patriarchs is, if not more, at least equally explicit:

(The next chapter is about) the five patriarchs: Since (the teachings of these five patriarchs represent) the doctrinal essence of the school, (it is thus necessary to), at this early stage, to provide a collective summary (of their deeds and thoughts) – hence this Chapter 3.¹²⁰

五祖，一家所宗，先命輯略，當第三。

That is, the central teaching of the Huayan patriarchs is exactly what is taught in the *Qixinlun*. As if to further consolidate this connection between the two traditions, Xufa supplements the biographies of the five Huayan patriarchs with biographies of Aśvaghōṣa and Zixuan, respectively the reputed author and one of the major commentators of *Qixinlun*:

¹¹⁹ i.e., “The seven patriarchs of the Huayan School – Aśvaghōṣa as the first patriarch” 華嚴七祖，以馬鳴為初祖。(X45n766p484c5).

¹²⁰ X45n767p516c8-c9.

The 2 biographies of the author and the commentator, (respectively), are subsequently presented as a supplement as Chapter 4.¹²¹

論主記主二錄，後重補載，當第四。

Such supplement clearly indicates the fact that Xufa sees the teachers of *Qixinlun* are working in exactly the same field as the teachers of the *Huayan jing*.

2. The “Three Great Commentaries”

The second theory, that of the “Three Great Commentaries”, did not occur to the *Qixinlun* scholars until a very late time, the *Shuji* lineage dominating the exegetical discourse of the treatise for the bulk of its history. The earliest and, perhaps, also the only reference to such a theory is from the late 17th-century, made in a short preface to a newly published Wonhyo commentary by Kakugen 覺眼, a scholar-monk of the Genroku 元祿 Japan (1688-1703):

There have been three commentaries since ancient times in the exposition of the *Awakening of Faith in Mahāyāna*, (i.e., *Qixinlun*), (authored) respectively by Fazang, Huiyuan, and Wonhyo, whom the tradition calls the ‘three masters of the primary treatise’ (i.e., *Qixinlun*).¹²²

釋於大乘起信論之疏，振古凡有三品：曰法藏，曰慧遠，曰元曉，世謂之本論三師。

¹²¹ X45n767p516c9.

¹²² T44n1844p202a5-a6.

Other than “since ancient times”, a formulaic expression of antiquity, which may suggest remotely some sense of authority, this short preface has not given any explanation why these three texts constitute the three “great”, i.e., authoritative, commentaries of the “primary treatise”. In part, it perhaps does not need explanation. The inclusion of the Fazang commentary is self-evident, given the general perception of its definitive status, as already amply demonstrated in the *Shuji* theory, and the inclusion of the Wonhyo commentary seems quite natural, too, itself being the matrix of the Fazang commentary, and its inclusion made in its own introduction. Also in part, perhaps, there is simply no explanation, for the inclusion of the Huiyuan commentary, crude and seldom referred to in the *Qixinlun* tradition, is very difficult to justify.¹²³ What is dependably explanatory to Kakugen about this “greatness” is, thus, only the definitive status of the Fazang commentary, and this dependability not only can lend itself to the Wonhyo commentary, its matrix text, but also somehow allows Kakugen to enclose Huiyuan into this sphere of “greatness”. As represented in the Kakugen preface, Fazang leads the team of the three “great” commentators even though he is the latest among the three – a gesture quite suggestive of how, to Kakugen at least, the inclusion of Fazang determines and thus legitimates the inclusion of the other two.

After Kakugen, there was no further reference to the “Three Great Commentaries” until the advent of the modern Buddhology, when such a theory became, abruptly, almost a universal truth to

¹²³ See a brief discussion of the quality of the Huiyuan commentary by Mochizuki Shinkō, in his *Daijō kishin ron no kenkyū*, pp. 213-23.

Buddhist scholars, taken for granted whenever it comes to the topic about the exegetical tradition of the treatise. This label appears in the best Buddhological scholarship. Mochizuki Shinkō, for example, says:

Of these (commentaries), the three works by Huiyuan, Wonhyo and Fazang are labeled as the ‘Three Great Commentaries’ since the ancient times and are, thus, relied on (for study) by (*Qixinlun*) scholars.¹²⁴

and Ono Genmyō (1883-1939) makes the completely same statement in the entry on the Fazang commentary in his famous dictionary:

This text, and the commentaries by Huiyuan and Wonhyo, are called collectively the ‘Three Commentaries’ of *Qixinlun*.¹²⁵

Such perception easily pervades even the remotest corner in the conceptual world of *Qixinlun*, thus the Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia, most loved by general readers but unanimously despised by the academics, shares exactly the same view about the role of these three commentaries (in its Chinese version of the *Qixinlun* entry):

There are numerous commentaries to this treatise in history, among which the *Qixinlun yishu* by Huiyuan of the Sui (China), the *Qixinlun shu* by Wonhyo of the Silla (Korea) and the *Qixinlun yiji* by Fazang of the Tang (China) are the most important – the three collectively called the ‘Three Commentaries of *Qixinlun*’!

¹²⁴ Mochizuki, p. 201.

¹²⁵ Ono, *Bussho kaisetsu daijiten*, no. 7, p.286.

對本書的注疏，歷代甚多，其中以隋代慧遠的《起信論義疏》、新羅元曉的《起信論疏》、唐代賢首法藏的《起信論義記》最為重要，三書合稱為《起信論三疏》。

The Wikipedia in English seems to try to steer away from the stereotype of the “Three Great Commentaries” when it adds Zongmi to the exegetical tradition of *Qixinlun*:

Although often omitted from lists of canonical Buddhist texts, the *Awakening of Faith* strongly influenced subsequent Mahayana doctrine. Commentaries include those by Jingying Huiyuan 淨影慧遠, Wonhyo 元曉, Fazang 法藏 and Zongmi 宗密, as well as others no longer extant.

but, as easily seen here, such an attempt is quite feeble, and the hold of the “Three Great Commentaries” in the author’s mind is firm!

In the sense that none of these remarks has offered any explanation for such a perception, it would not be completely unfair to say that this unanimous modern acceptance of the theory is only an unqualified repetition of the Kakugen proposition. Even its language, such as the previously mentioned expression of “from ancient times”,¹²⁶ is conveniently and quite frequently lifted to many of these modern reproductions, though such a plagiarism is apparently not without a purpose: The borrowing of “from the ancient times” seems to be used, consciously or unconsciously, as the only reassurance of the validity of the theory, as is the case in the Kakugen preface itself

¹²⁶ See, for examples, Mochizuki, p. 201 and Kashiwagi, p. 30.

– they readily embrace the idea, but, without even the minimum evidence, they were forced to resign that task to their colleagues “from the ancient times”.

D. Notes on the Śikṣānanda Translation

While the transmission discourse of *Qixinlun* is primarily that of the Paramārtha translation, the Śikṣānanda version has attracted its due attention, as modest as it may be. Such attention apparently could not be directed to its writing, for the Śikṣānanda version is supposedly just another translation of the same work. The few notes it has received are primarily about its translation and interpretation, and, due to its substantially much lower level of attention, these notes are few and without the kind of diversity that characterizes transmission discourse based on the Paramārtha translation.

The Śikṣānanda version has a simple but standard theory on the translation of *Qixinlun*. It was first presented in the preface to this translation, where it touches upon almost everything one would expect in the discussion of a translation, including the occasion, the translator (and his major assistants), the time, the place and the circumstances of the translation:

This version (of *Qixinlun*) was translated at the same time with the translation of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* at the Foshouji Temple, in... , by the Khotanese Tripiṭaka master Śikṣānanda, (who collaborated with) Hongjing and Fazang, the scholar-monks of Jingzhou and the Chongfu Temple, respectively – Śikṣānanda brought a (new) Sanskrit text,

and an old version was (later) found in the Ci'en Pagoda (located in) the West Capital. Serving as the scribe, the monk Fuli elaborated (the new translation) into two fascicles, (as opposed to the one fascicle of the old translation). It differs from the old translation quite regularly due both to the different understandings of the translators, and also to the difference in these two Sanskrit texts.¹²⁷

此本即于闐國三藏法師實叉難陀，齋梵文至此，又於西京慈恩塔內，獲舊梵本，與義學沙門荊州弘景、崇福法藏等…於授記寺，與花嚴經相次而譯，沙門復禮筆受，開為兩卷。然與舊翻時有出沒，蓋譯者之意，又梵文非一也。

It is standard also because such a theory has remained virtually unchanged in the long tradition of *Qixinlun* studies, except in the cases of abridgement, apparently because this translation is the less noticed version. All modern commentaries, should they have space enough for this translation, simply repeat such information as they were presented in the preface.

This standard theory, based on the Śikṣānanda version, eventually coalesced into its equivalent account of the Paramārtha version. The two accounts merged into a very formulaic passage, each in its respective abridgement, though neither showing any trace of original research for its information. Deqing thus writes about the two translations:

This treatise has two versions. One was translated by

¹²⁷ T32n1667p583c11-c16.

Paramārtha, or Zhendi here (in China), a monk of Ujjayanī in the West India, in the third year of the Chengsheng Era during the reign of the Emperor Yuan of the Liang at the Jianxing Temple in Hengzhou. The translation (project) resulted in a text of 1 fascicle in 24 pieces of paper. The other was translated by the Khotanese monk Śikṣānanda, or Xixue here (in China), during the reign of Zetian in the Great Zhou at the Foshouji Temple in the East Capital (i.e., Luoyang). The translation (project) resulted in a text of 2 fascicles, (but) also in 24 pieces paper.¹²⁸

論有二譯：一西印土優禪尼國沙門波羅末陀，此云真諦，梁元帝承聖三年，於衡州建興寺，譯成一卷，二十四紙；一于闐國沙門實叉難陀，此云喜學，大周則天時，於東都佛授記寺，譯成兩卷，亦二十四紙。

The attention to the issue of exegetical interpretation is expressed, primarily, as an effort to clarify a question resulted from the dual role of Fazang in the *Qixinlun* tradition. He authored the definitive commentary of the treatise, as we have already well known, and, in the same time, is generally believed to have participated in the translation as one of Śikṣānanda's major assistants. Why then, people naturally will ask, did Fazang not select the new translation for his exegetical project?

This question itself may not be a valid question! *Qixinlun* is, perhaps, not originally foreign (to the Chinese) in the first place, and

¹²⁸ X45n766p486a1-a5.

that would render the entire discussion of its translation completely meaningless. Thus, in addition to the fact that there is no other evidence of his participation than the aforementioned preface, it is highly likely that the identification of Fazang as a major translation assistant is a retrospective attribution made possible by his authorship as the definitive commentary of the treatise. Be that as it may, however, this question is valid to the *Qixinlun* tradition, and the tradition apparently has felt the duty to clear up this obvious quandary. Zixuan, for example, notes the problem, and offers Fazang's modesty as a possible solution:

The reason (Fazang) composed a commentary on the former translation (i.e., the Liang version) is because, (having undertaken the task of) verifying the meaning (of translation) for the latter (i.e., the Tang) version, the commentator (i.e., Fazang), for fear of being accused of favoritism, interpreted the other text.¹²⁹

解前譯者，以後譯之本是疏主證義，恐涉情黨，故解他本。

Apparently seen as making good sense, such a solution is accepted in the *Qixinlun* tradition as a standard answer, thus we see Xufa repeating Zixuan in his own commentary:

For fear of (being accused of) favoritism – i.e., because he himself had worked in the translation center of the Tang version – the National Teacher Xianshou (i.e., Fazang)

¹²⁹ T44n1848p314c28-c29.

picked the Liang version for his exegetical enterprise: he composed a commentary in 3 fascicles, and a supplementary commentary in one fascicle.¹³⁰

賢首國師，於二譯中，因唐譯是同在譯場，恐涉情黨，特解梁本。疏成三卷，別記一卷。

To Ouyi Zhixu, perhaps the only commentator of the Śikṣānanda translation, the question regarding the interpretation of *Qixinlun* is thus about his preference for the new version of the treatise. While explicit in rating the Śikṣānanda version higher than the Paramārtha version in terms of the quality of translation, Zhixu carefully deflects the responsibility of making the decision to someone no one can ever blame:

This *Awakening of Faith in Mahāyāna* exists in two versions in the Tripiṭaka, translated, respectively, by Paramārtha of the Liang, and Śikṣānanda of the Tang. Comparing the two translations in reading, (I found that) the Tang version more lucid and coherent. However, since the Liang version has been widely circulated all along, I was hesitant in making a decision of my own (about which of the two translations to choose). I then drew lots before the Buddha, consigning the decision to him, and the result was that it is better to produce an exegesis on the Tang version. Thus, offering my dim (spiritual) light, I am venturing here to clear away the delusions in the two traditions¹³¹ – hence the title “*Liewang*

¹³⁰ X45n767p518a15-a17.

¹³¹ i.e., the teachings of the Consciousness-only and the *Qixinlun* – for Zhixu’s explanation of the “delusions” in these two schools, see T44n1850p422c26-

shu” (the commentary that tears apart the net of delusions).¹³²
 此大乘起信論，藏有二本：一是梁真諦譯，一是唐實叉難陀譯。二譯對閱，唐本更為文顯義順。但舊既流通梁本，私心弗敢自專，敬以鬪決於佛，拈得宜解唐本。遂殫一隙微明，剖盡兩宗迷執，名之為裂網疏云。

Conclusion

This paper seeks to reproduce, as said in the introduction, the perceptions rather than the historical facts of the *Qixinlun* transmission, and this reproduction is organized around the basic framework of writing, translation and interpretation. Since these perceptions are subjective by nature and open-ended as a consequence, this attempt at the transmission discourse of *Qixinlun* can thus yield only an approximate picture:

To the East Asian Buddhists, *Qixinlun* is a text that has its origin in India, an essential insurance of its spiritual worthiness, and, as an evidence, it was authored by an Indian sage (i.e., a “Bodhisattva”, in a more technical appellation) called Aśvaghōṣa, the foreignness of whose name and, more importantly, the obscurity of whose real identity (as shown in the 6 Aśvaghōṣas of the *Shi moheyan lun*) reinforce this essential insurance. The more distant the origin, the more likely it is the words of Buddha! The author Aśvaghōṣa is so named, i.e., “neighing of horses”, because his birth announces the advent of the Buddha’s teaching, an auspicious news that moved the

p423a5.

¹³² in his *Dasheng qixinlun liewangshu* 大乘起信論裂網疏 at T44n1850p423a6-a10.

neighboring horses to neigh incessantly – a further testimony to the spiritual worthiness of the text.

This text is indispensable, for it was composed in response to a serious religious crisis: the Buddha is long gone (he entered *parinirvāṇa* 500, 600 or 700 years ago), the heretical views were rampant, and the sentient beings were left without a teacher and spiritual guide. Due to their weak spiritual capacity, the sentient beings were thus in dire need of an easy and quick access (through, for example, a text that “was comprehensive, terse and yet contained much meaning”) to what the Buddha had taught before his departure. *Qixinlun* satisfies such a need, for, although it is “terse”, it “embraced, in a general way, the limitless meaning of the vast and profound teaching of the Tathāgata”.

The East Asian Buddhists are fortunate, for they found in Paramārtha an able and devoted translator of this sacred text. A native of the West India kingdom of Ujjayanī, Paramārtha is not only knowledgeable and well-versed in Buddhist texts (i.e., he was, “ever since his childhood, extensively and exhaustively well read in scriptures”), but also determined as a missionary of Buddhist teachings (i.e., as much as in an unsettled life, Paramārtha “had never interrupted his work in translation”). He is apparently one of the most eminent and thus the desired figures in his field, either for his erudition, or for his spiritual achievements. It takes the earnest request from a king for him to accept the China mission (from which he “repeatedly, but in vain, begged to be excused”), and humble entreaties (they “earnestly begged him”) from his many Chinese hosts for him to stay; also, he always has

an elite team of translators (i.e., “ying-xiu”) as his assistants, including such well-known Buddhist scholars as Zhikai and Upaśūnya.

The *Qixinlun* tradition sees the Fazang commentary as the most authoritative exegesis of the treatise, for it inspires and influences a long history of *Qixinlun* study, a history characterized by a *Shu-ji* lineage as its core. From the Huayan association of this core, some scholars have even made an attempt at a Huayan lineage, though not very successfully. What impresses the modern *Qixinlun* students as its most important exegetical lineage is, of course, the famous “Three Great Commentaries” by, respectively, Huiyan, Wonhyo and Fazang.

Such perceptions about the transmission of the treatise may not necessarily be accepted by all in the Buddhist tradition, thus the discourse has never had a completely settled form, remaining constantly in evolution, a fact clearly illustrated in Xufa’s attempt to integrate himself and a Mr. Dai into the *Shu-ji* lineage. They, however, managed to stay in the center of the discourse, familiar in varying degrees to most students of the treatise – such perceptions, in other words, have combined to present what many in the *Qixinlun* tradition would believe to be the real history of its transmission.

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《起信論》傳承說

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摘要

本文旨在探討《起信論》之傳承說，而非其傳承自身。傳承之研究，在於揭示傳承之歷史真相，而傳承說之研究，則在於考察信仰者對於傳承之認知，非關歷史真相也。不過，對傳承之認知，在信仰者眼中，即是歷史真相，故此認知有延續、集結與優化之必然，並能漸而形成體系，構成所謂之傳承說。《起信》傳承之研究，在上世紀中日學界關於其真偽之大討論中已臻極致，而其傳承說之研究卻從未有人涉及。然則此說之基本結構為何？這一結構承載何等之基本內容？這些內容又如何產生、演變與發展？種種圍繞《起信論》傳承認知之問題，在《起信》研究中，尚屬空白。本文之作，即試圖回答這些問題，以期填補這一空白。文章將從《起信論》之創作、翻譯及解釋三個方面著手，依據《起信論》之古今注疏、僧傳、經錄等各種原始資料，來試圖勾勒出《起信》傳統在其發展中對《起信論》之傳承所形成的大致認知。

關鍵字：起信論、傳承、創作、翻譯、解釋

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