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Time and Liberation in Three-Treatise Master Jizang's Mādhyamika Thought



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Abhidharmikas—Focusing on His Analysis of Time

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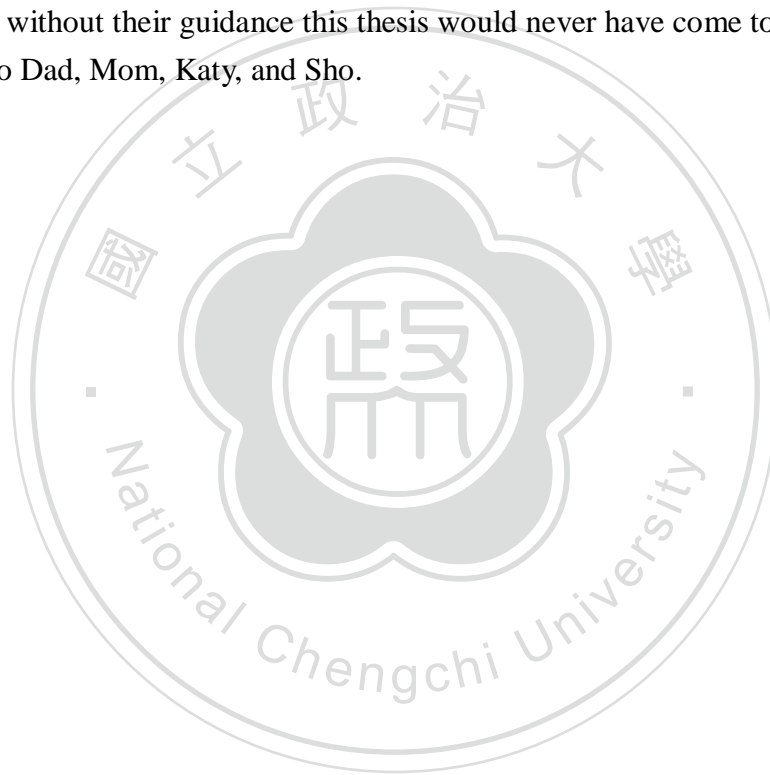
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Much love to Dad, Mom, Katy, and Sho.



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Time and Liberation in Three-Treatise Master Jízàng's Mādhyamika Thought

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Abstract

In this thesis, I hope to make a small contribution to the study of Chinese Buddhism. The preliminary discussion in the first and second chapters takes the form of a historiographical overview of some concepts that developed within the Three-Treatise tradition of Chinese Buddhism between the 5th and 6th centuries. This serves to illuminate the intellectual practices of this unique tradition of thought, which has been largely underrepresented in Western-language studies of Buddhism. In the subsequent chapter, I will clarify the exposition of these ideas within Master Jízàng's commentary on the *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikās* 《中論》, the *Zhōngguānlùn-shū* 《中觀論疏》 (completed in 608 C.E.). The examination of this work and its immediate contexts promises to shed light upon the development of Mādhyamika thought in East Asia, especially with regards to the basic exegetical strategies of the Three Treatise tradition.

The third and fourth chapters elucidates Jízàng's interpretation and commentary upon two seminal chapters within Nāgārjuna's *Zhōnglùn*, the "Contemplation of the Three Characteristics" 〈觀三相品〉 and the "Contemplation of Time" 〈觀時品〉. The content of these two chapters reflect the doctrinal and philosophical diversity of the intellectual terrain in early 7th-century China. Jízàng's analysis in these chapters unfolds into a systematic refutation of the "false doctrines" of the Indian Ābhidharmika sects, which, in turn, illuminate the divergent intellectual currents of Jízàng's milieu, as well as revealing the encyclopedic breadth of Jízàng's *Zhōngguānlùn-shū* as well as other monumental commentarial works of the period. The examination of Jízàng's refutation of the Sarvāstivādins in the fourth chapter – an as of yet unexplored facet of his considerable corpus – serves to enlarge our current comprehension of both Chinese intellectual culture during this critical juncture in Chinese history, and to enrich our understanding of the variegated exegetical and philosophical approaches of the great thinkers of 6th- and 7th-century China.

The issues of time and transformation in Jízàng's Mādhyamika thought implicate contending theoretical models deriving from Indian Buddhist doctrine, which are, in

turn subjected to Jizàng's trenchant analysis along the lines of his reading of Nāgārjuna's and Āryadeva's philosophical works. It might be noted, as no explicit "refutation" of rival Buddhist or non-Buddhist traditions is offered in Nāgārjuna's verses themselves, the exploration of this aspect of the Chinese commentarial tradition reveals an aspect of Mādhyamika analysis that has remained opaque in a field of study dominated by the reading of the South Asian and Tibetan canons.

Although defined within traditional East Asian historiography as a "school" of Chinese Buddhism stemming from the East Asian "appropriation" of the Indian *śāstra* tradition, the characteristically Mādhyamika approach of Jizàng's work extends to the interpretation of the Mahāyāna sutras, "indigenous" Chinese philosophical currents, and even "apocryphal" Chinese Buddhist compositions. This intertextual dynamic, encompassing both *śāstra* and *sūtra* traditions, as well as indigenous Xuánxué and East Asian commentarial modes, coalesces in Jizàng's seminal work, the *Zhōngguānlùn-shū*. It is the project of this thesis to offer a useful point of reference from which to examine some of the intellectual factors underlying the development of Mādhyamika Buddhist hermeneutics in this critical period.

Introduction –the Past and Present of East Asian Mādhyamika Thought

The Mādhyamika teaching of emptiness – of *śūnyatā* – stands out as one of the doctrinal cornerstones of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Nāgārjuna's insight into the emptiness of conditioned arising 「緣起性空」 serves as one of the basic catechisms of the Mahāyāna Buddhist traditions.

But what does the teaching of *śūnyatā* offer for our understanding of the issues of temporality and transformation? Is ceaseless change an inescapable "fact", or is there an immutable, "permanent" reality beyond impermanence? Are the fluctuations of time and the transformation of entities that this engenders, merely illusions which veil a broader, immutable Reality? Is time purely of illusive, delusory character, or does time also serve a positive role in Nāgārjuna's thought? Furthermore, what might this constructive function of time be in the context of Buddhist praxis?

These basic questions concerning the philosophical import of Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikās*《中論》have continuously generated contenting readings of this seminal treatise, and have contributed to a well as a growing body of commentarial literature. In recent years scholars such as Jay Garfield and Jan Westerhoff have fruitfully probed the commentarial tradition associated with Nāgārjuna in the South Asian and Tibetan canons. And yet, what contributions or useful points of reference might the East Asian tradition of Mādhyamika thought

offer for this broader discourse?

The issues of time and transformation unfold in the Mahāyāna scriptures in the Chinese canon, whose verses often eulogize the Buddhas of the three times 三世諸佛. In embracing a cosmological worldview encompassing a multitude of Buddha-s and Bodhisattvas, the root texts of the East Asian canon, such as the *Lotus Sūtra*, develop an inter-referential approach to the Buddha's many avatars and manifestations throughout the past, present, and future. As taught by the *Lotus*, the critical reflection into the nature of the Buddha's past manifestations reveal them to be mere apparitions, specters of the Buddha's previous actions and past lives, and yet all pointing towards the eventual prospect of the Buddha's final and perfect awakening. Likewise, the final enlightenment of the Buddha harkens back to his past actions and identities. Each of the scenarios and parables of the *Lotus* is interwoven into the larger narrative of transformation. The reflective awareness into the broader dynamic of the Buddha's transformation, implicates all sentient beings, whom, as the *Lotus* proclaims, in turn receive the assurance (*vyākaraṇa* 授記) of their eventual becoming a Buddha. Such vatic announcements are part and parcel of the "prophetic" genre of the later chapters of the *Lotus Sūtra* such as the "Chapter on Peaceful Practices" 〈安樂行品〉. In accordance with the *Sūtra*'s teaching, the "Dharma-body" (*dharmakāya* 法身) of the Buddha, universally pervades the three times 三世.

It is the potentiality for critical reflection into the issue of temporality -- inherent within the *Lotus* and the Mahāyāna sūtra-s -- that informs the Chinese Buddhists' critical appropriation and interpretation of the *śāstra* tradition. Indeed, the Sūtra texts -- such as Kumārājīva's translation of the *Lotus* -- afforded Master Jizang 嘉祥吉藏大師 (549-623 C.E.) and other renowned Buddhist scholiasts with a framework for critical reflection into the overwhelming, and seemingly contradictory teachings of the *śāstra* literature. On the other hand, it is the very ambiguity of the *Lotus* and other sūtras, that offered a fertile ground for fruitful probing into the often terse and opaque passages of the *śāstra*-s. The examination of the contents of the *śāstra*-commentaries of the 6th and 7th centuries, thus reveals a mutual enhancement between sūtras and *śāstra*-s, each of which serves to augment the other as a source of doctrinal authority and to validate its philosophical and religious claims.

And yet, this pervasive context of inter-referentiality that underlies the act/production of exegesis by the Chinese Masters on the *śāstra* literature, such as MMK, is too often overlooked. Indeed, the consideration of the Chinese commentarial tradition in its history sheds light upon a multi-faceted hermeneutical model, informed by both intra-textual and inter-textual dynamics. Amidst the many received layers of

śāstra interpretation, which elements are appropriated from the *sūtra* literature, which rejected, as well the understanding of any specific element of the text, are all informed by overlapping synchronic contexts. Likewise, the examination of the *Zhōnglùn* and its interpretation in history, likewise, implicates a diachronic context of gradual transmission and shifting intellectual trends vis-à-vis the emergence of new texts through time. Such is the relationship, for instance, between successive Chinese translations of the the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, on the question of whether or not the *icchantika* 一闍提 possess the inherent seed of enlightenment.

Rather than an appeal to any particular *sūtra* text as an inviolable source of doctrinal authority, in matters of interpretation, the Chinese Buddhist masters of the 6th and 7th centuries instead pursued a mutually complementary engagement of the *śāstra-s* and the received *sūtra* literature:¹As fascicle 5 of the *Treatise on the Profundities of the Mahāyāna* 《大乘玄論》 reads:

The Śāstra-Master [i.e. Nāgārjuna] receives the teaching of the Two Truths and thus gives rise to the two cognitions [of *upāya* 權 and *prājñā* 實]. Truth (*satya* 諦) and cognition are non-dual, for truth serves to form cognition, thus both [truth and cognition] are known as “truths.” The Buddha employs the two cognitions to speak in reference to the Two Truths. Truth and cognition are non-dual, for cognition serves to form truth, thus both [truth and cognition] are known as “cognitions.” Thus, the Śāstra-Master employs the Two Truths as the way of discourse, and the two cognitions as the object of discourse...

The Śāstra-Master [Nāgārjuna] employs the Two Truths as a corrective, and the two cognitions as ancillary [to the Two Truths]. Thus, the *Sūtra-s* take wisdom as their capability, and the Two Truths as their object. The *śāstra-s* take the truth as their capability, and wisdom as their object. Thus, the capability of the *sūtra-s* serves as the object of the *śāstra-s* and the capability of the *śāstra-s* serves as the object of the *sūtra-s*; the object of the *sūtra-s* serves as the capability of the *śāstra-s* and the object of the *śāstra-s* serves as the capability of the *sūtra-s*. It is moreover so that the ancillary features of the *sūtra-s* provide the corrective for the *śāstras* and that the corrective for the *sūtra-s* furnishes the ancillary elements of the *śāstra-s*.”

This ancillary element is not really an ancillary aspect, thus it is neither the capability nor object, neither ancillary nor central, neither *sūtra* nor *śāstra*, neither the teacher (i.e., the Buddha) nor disciple. In being neither the capability nor the object it is both the capability and the object; in being neither the ancillary nor central aspect it is both ancillary and central; being neither *sūtra* nor *śāstra* is is both *sūtra* and *śāstra*; being

¹ T45, no. 1853, p. 73, c04-7.

neither disciple nor teacher it is both teacher and disciple. Thus the karmic conditions of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, teachers and disciples emerge as mutually complementary, and together this is called the “Middle Way” 『論主稟二諦，教發生二智。諦、智不二。以諦成智，故通受諦名。佛以二智說於二諦。諦、智不二，以智成諦，故通受智名。故論主以二諦為能論，以二智為所論.....論主以二諦為正，二智為傍。故經以智為能，以諦為所。故論以諦為能，以智為所。是則經能為論所，論能為經所。經所為論能，論所為經能；亦是經傍為論正，論傍為經正，經正為論傍。此傍則非傍，故非能非所，非傍非正，不經不論，不師不弟；非能非所而能所，非傍正而傍正，不經論而經論，不師不弟而師弟，是佛菩薩經論師弟因緣相成，並得名中也。』²

The edifice of Jizang's analysis of the Buddhist teachings is his notion of Two Truths, and their relation to the “two cognitions” 二智 (or “two wisdoms” 二慧) of *upāya* 權 and *prajñā* 實. The dynamic between these concepts serves to link and to reconcile the varied and often multivalent teachings of the *sūtras* and *śāstras*. In accordance with this hermeneutical framework, the *sūtras* take the Buddha's enlightened cognition (*prajñā*) and as their point of departure, which in turn may be used to explicate the “truth” (*satya* 諦) of the *śāstra*-s as its object. Likewise, the Two Truths provide the point of departure for the *śāstra*-s, which serves to elucidate the insights of the Mahāyāna *sūtras*.

The mutually complimentary relationship between *sūtra*-s and *śāstra*-s extends to the relationship between Buddha, the teacher, and his disciples. And Jizang concludes that what is primary, namely the Buddha's gnosis (*jñāna* 智) is secondary for disciples, what is primary for disciples, truth (*satya*), is secondary for Buddha; the *sūtras* and *śāstras* are likewise.

Given the basic capability of the *śāstra* text as a “corrective” 正 to the sometimes inconsistent teachings of the various *sūtra*-s, it is for good reason that Jizàng selects Nāgārjuna's *Zhōnglùn* as the doctrinal cornerstone of his exegetical system. This notion of the *śāstra* text as “skillful” means to reveal the fundamental teachings of the Buddha, is critical to Jizàng's reinvisioning of the Mahāyāna Two Truths as expedient “verbal teachings” 教諦. And yet, eventually, there is no hard-and-fast distinction between either *śāstra* or *sūtra*, for the Middle Way elides over the gap between primary and secondary, capability and object. Jizang describes this understanding of mutual independence as the revelation of the Truth of the Middle. Thus, for Jizang, the “hermeneutic circle” between *sūtra*-s and *śāstra*-s does

² T45, no. 1853, p. 73, c03.

not lead to a critical impasse, but rather reveals the conciliatory potential of both *sūtra-s* and *śāstra-s* to illuminate each other.

Thus, to the Chinese scholiasts such as Jízàng, the *Zhōnglùn* furnished a platform for religious engagement into the diversity of the Buddhist teachings. Furthermore, given its status as a text steeped in the Indian tradition of argumentation and debate, the *Zhōnglùn* further helped to formulate Chinese thinkers' critiques of rival textual traditions, and with reference to this root text, bolstered the rhetorical effectiveness of their polemics by appealing to the authority of the Bodhisattva Nāgārjuna.

There is the sense in Jízàng's work that the *Zhōnglùn* text itself serves as the "comprehensive discourse" 通論³ that subsumes the other two Mādhyamaka treatises in Chinese translation, the *Śata-śāstra* 《百論》 and the *Twelve Gates Treatise* 《十二門論》. Naturally, these two *śāstra-s* may perhaps be best viewed as in themselves "commentaries," or as broader explanations of the *Zhōnglùn* and its philosophical ramifications by Nāgārjuna and his Mādhyamika successor, the Bodhisattva Āryadeva 提婆菩薩.

The period of the Southern-Dynasties through the Suí and early-Táng witnessed an efflorescence of Mādhyamika studies. The large body of commentarial literature that emerged from the eristical intellectual terrain of this period, centered around the interpretation of Nāgārjuna's *Middle Stanzas* and its ramifications to such core doctrines as the Two Truths and the Buddha-nature.

In this paper I focus on Master Jízàng's 嘉祥吉藏大師 (549-623 C.E.) monumental contribution to Mādhyamika studies, the *Commentary on the Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā* (*Zhōngguānlùn shū*) 《中觀論疏》 (completed in 608 C.E.). This understudied commentary provides a point of reference from which to investigate the intellectual underpinnings of the Three Treatise (*Sānlùn*) tradition of Chinese Buddhist exegesis. Through study of the *Zhōngguānlùn shū*, I seek to address certain theoretical implications of Jízàng's interpretation of Kumārajīva's 鳩摩羅什 (343-413 C.E.) Chinese translation of the Bodhisattva Nāgārjuna's 龍樹菩薩 famous *śāstra*.

Although recognized as the founder of a East Asian Buddhist lineage purportedly based upon an Indian predecessor, Jízàng diverged from his Indian contemporaries Candrakīrti 月稱 (ca. 600-650 C.E.) and Bhavaviveka 清辯 (ca. 500-578 C.E.) in his interpretation of the *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikās* (MMK). Given the authoritative status of the MMK as the fountainhead of the Mādhyamika doctrine, a closer look at Jízàng's commentary works promises to shed light upon the cross-cultural currents of

³ Fascicle 5 of the *Discourse on the Profundities of the Māhāyana* reads 《大乘玄論·卷五》：“The *Zhōnglùn* gains its name from the teaching of the principle, thus comprehensively discoursing on the Three Treatises.” 『《中論》從「教理」為稱，通論三論。』 (T45, no. 1853, p. 71, a17)

intellectual and religious exchange that coalesce in the great scholastic traditions of medieval China.

Jízàng's commentary offers a vantage point from which to explore the diverse and variegated intellectual interactions between Indian and Chinese Buddhists in the early 7th century. The contents of Jízàng's considerable corpus pose important questions for the study of Buddhist doctrinal history. What conclusions can we draw as to Jízàng's understanding of Abhidharma thought, based upon his selection and usage of the literature available in Chinese translation at the time? How did Jízàng's reading of the Sarvāstivāda tradition both reflect upon and inform his exegesis on the MMK? Although Jízàng was cognizant of Nāgārjuna's implicit criticisms of the *Ābhidharmika-s* in the MMK, Jízàng seems to have been wholly unaware of the Northern-Wèi period Chinese translation of the *Vigrahavyāvartanī* 《迴諍論》, the cornerstone of Nāgārjuna's critique of *Ābhidharmika* epistemology (including their theories of *pramāṇa*). And yet, Jízàng's commentary on the *Zhōnglùn* preserves a wealth of information concerning Indian philosophical debates and offers an exceedingly detailed and trenchant critique of the Sarvāstivādin theory that "real factors exist throughout the three periods of time" 三世實有. The ardently "anti-realist" cast of Jízàng's argument would rest well with even the most doctrinaire of Indian Mādhyamika-s. Given that, following Jízàng, the complex "realist" ontology of the Sarvāstivādins was largely discredited within the "mainstream" traditions of Chinese Buddhism, the examination of Jízàng's arguments against the Sarvāstivādins goes far to reveal the some of the main historical factors underlying the emergence of the Mādhyamaka philosophy to its place of primacy within the early Sinitic Buddhist systems. Jízàng's oeuvre is thus of indisputable historical importance in its potential to shed light upon the contours of this development. The broad currency of Jízàng's Mādhyamika interpretations in later Buddhist circles is attested to by the 8th-century sub-commentary by the early Heian-period scholiast Anchō 安澄 (763-814), the *Chūron-soki* 《中論疏記》.

The dynamic interplay between exegesis and eisegesis, epistemology and soteriology, lies at the heart of the East Asian tradition of Mādhyamaka thought. Given the intimate relationship between epistemology and theories of religious praxis in this period of Chinese scholastic literature, an accurate understanding of Jízàng's *Zhōngguānlùn shū* is critical to our understanding of the development of Buddhist doctrine across diverse linguistic and cultural contexts.

In this thesis, I shall first address the relevant historiographical perspectives on the Buddhist learning of the Southern Dynasties, and shall continue to examine the

textual sources for Jízàng's commentary in order to clarify the intellectual contexts from which his work emerged. The reassessment of Jízàng's corpus is crucial to understanding a rich tradition of critical reflection into the *Zhōnglùn* that left a lasting mark on the transmission and development of Mādhyamika Buddhism across Korea and Japan.

Jízàng's considerable corpus offers a point of reference from which to explore the development of the Chinese Mādhyamika teaching and its ramifications for the Buddhist conception of temporality and transformation. The philosophical issue of time and the hermeneutical concerns that it implicates, reflect upon both a diachronic and a synchronic context (that is, the act of exegesis at the level of the composition of the text).

If we assume that the broader historical dialectics contribute to the unfolding of the philosophical dialectics, then the investigation of the historical trends serves to inform and illuminate the understanding of the philosophical issues at stake. *Pace* Hans-Georg Gadamer, to "understand" means to understand differently. It can be realized only in oneself; it is achieved neither through mindless adherence to textual authority, nor willful misrepresentation, neither through exegetical objectivity nor eisegetical subjectivity. On the face of it, differences between Jízàng and Nāgārjuna must be acknowledged, and yet it is critical to examine the factors underlying such differences. In this sense, the study of Jízàng's Mādhyamika interpretations may help us apprehend the transformation of Buddhist exegetical endeavor and the shifting of role of the interpreter through history.

Buddhist doctrines such as theory of the Two Truths 二諦 embody the potentiality to philosophical dialectics inherent within the Buddhist teachings, and thus provided a platform for such thinkers as Jízàng to investigate Nāgārjuna's thought. As Jízàng points out, the Two Truths are at best expedient teachings, operating at the level of provisionality and meant to refer back to the ineffable Middle Way. At the point when the Ultimate Truth is granted determinate as a "principle" it becomes the subtle object of attachment. It is due to the constant danger of reifying the Two Truths as a unitary "principle" 理, that Jízàng articulates the Two Truths as a verbal teaching 約教, rather than as a determinate "principle" 約理.⁴

This tension between contending models of the Two Truths reveals certain underlying hermeneutical concerns. Critical to Jízàng's didactic stance is his conception of the Two Truths as verbal teachings which, according to the Chinese

⁴ Whalen Lai has drawn our attention to this important distinction between Jízàng's interpretation of the Two Truths and that of the Buddhist Masters at the powerful Kāishàn monastery 開善寺 – see Prof. Lai's article, "Once More on the Two Truths: What Does Chi-tsang Mean by the Two Truths as 'Yüeh-chiao 約教?'" *Religious Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (Dec. 1983), pp. 505-521.

Mahāyāna view, serve as didactic tools or expedient means guiding all sentient beings to eventual emancipation. This notion is inherent in Nagārjuna's verses which state that "The various Buddhas speak the dharma on behalf of sentient beings in accordance with the Two Truths" 「諸佛依二諦；為眾生說法」.⁵

The Buddhist teaching itself, undergoes a transformation in time – diachronically -- although it is the "sudden" revelation of the unreal and ultimately illusory nature of the Conventional that marks the synchronic climax of this religious progression. This transformation from concealed to un-concealed, from gradual cultivation to sudden realization, traces the soteriological evolution of the Three Vehicles prior to their ultimate convergence into the Unitary Vehicle of the *ekayāna* 一乘, as in the famous metaphor from the *Lotus*.

The large body of literature that emerged from these cultural developments yields a variety of perspectives from which to explore the radical changes in religion and philosophy during the Southern Dynasties (ca. 420-589) and Suí periods (581-631). These overlapping intellectual contexts and cultural interactions, yield a vast body of literature, including *sūtra* and *śāstra* commentaries, as well as individual philosophical works and discourses. Although it is difficult to ignore the broad cultural ramifications of these intellectual transformations, in this paper I shall explore the issues germane to the transmission and interpretation of the *Zhōnglùn* within the textual communities of the 6th and 7th centuries.

Of course, any discussion of early Mādhyamika thought in China cannot avoid addressing Richard Robinson's monumental contribution to the field -- *Early Mādhyamika in India and China*.⁶ The central issue that Robinson addresses in this work is how the appropriation or "borrowing" of linguistic, rhetorical, and logical aspects of Indian Mādhyamika texts shaped the development of the Mādhyamika system of thought in East Asia during the 5th and 6th centuries. Robinson thus engages the broader topical issue of the "transmission" of thought across diverse linguistic and cultural contexts. While casting a keen analytical eye at the "selective" application and appropriation of terminology by the Chinese thinkers, he views Mādhyamika thought as an essentially coherent and continuous development spanning the geographical regions of "India" and "China."

In the following passage, Richard Robinson illuminates some of the

⁵ *Dàshèng xuánlùn* 《大乘玄論·卷一》：“The Two Truths are solely the gates of the verbal teaching, and do not pertain to the ontological truth.” 『二諦唯是教門，不關境理。』 T45, no. 1853, p. 15, a17.

⁶ Richard H. Robinson, *Early Mādhyamika in India and China*, (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1978).

methodological presuppositions underlying his 1978 study:

My system is an abstraction from the Mādhyamika systems which in turn describe the views of their Hīnayāna, Tīrthika, and Chinese opponents, which systems in turn refer to the world. Some of the texts to be described refer to the views of Other Buddhists or non-Buddhists which in term refer to the realm of facts. Thus a description of such a Mādhyamika text is a system about a system about systems of reality. There is a series of ranks in which the present exposition is abstraction from its domain of reference rather than a property of it. No matter how homologous system and meta-system may be, they are not the same system, and the distinct ranks but not be confused. Before two texts are compared, each is analyzed and its systems described. Since the questions asked above refer to whole systems rather than to single components, they would not be answered by piecemeal comparisons. So one-system descriptions are prior to multi-system comparisons. In comparison, a further rank of description is introduced, having as its domain of reference the previously established descriptions of the terms of the comparison. The number of terms compared is immaterial to the method however much it may affect the practicality of the procedure.⁷

Given that the relevant questions implicate whole systems of thought rather than single components, it is critical to situate each work within its broader linguistic, rhetorical, and philosophical contexts. Thus, Robinson proposes the Chinese source should be first situated within its immediate linguistic context – with reference to contemporary Chinese exegetical perspectives -- and then analyzed as how it fits into the meta-system. First each text by one writer must be examined as a primary object, then the broader systems of thought are correlated and a unitary system emerges.

In light of the “comparative” approach attempted by Richard Robinson in his work on *Early Mādhyamika in India and China*, I believe that it may be instructive to add a few remarks on the question of “Sinification” in relation to the early transmission of Mādhyamika thought in East Asia. This is a topical issue of relevance to this thesis.

In recent years Professor Robert Sharf has questioned the relevance of the notion of “Sinification” in discussing the interpretation of Buddhist texts in East Asia. Sharf describes that transmission of Buddhism in medieval China was in the Chinese encountering an already “Sinified” tradition, wholly mediated through the Chinese language (given that very few Chinese monks could actually read Sanskrit texts). He thus denies that there was any real dialogue between China and India as “discrete

⁷ Robinson (1978), pp. 18-9

cultural traditions.”⁸ Sharf’s thesis here rests upon a strong notion of linguistic relativism, in arguing that the Chinese Buddhists were never unable to comprehend or access the Indian contexts of the Buddhist works through the Chinese translations.⁹

This thesis focuses on the commentarial and exegetical contexts of the Chinese appropriation of Indian Mādhyamika texts. Nevertheless, for our purposes here, the accurate reconstruction of the terminology of Indian Buddhist texts in Chinese translation is critical to the contextualization of Jizàng’s works. It is likely that Jizàng did not have mastery of Sanskrit and read the Buddhist *sūtras* and *śāstras* only through Chinese translation, but that does not mean that he did not comprehend the terminology of such Buddhist texts. Here I disagree with Sharf’s extreme notion of linguistic relativism in its application to works of the Chinese Buddhist Masters such as Jizàng, which emerge from a pluralistic context of Buddhist philosophy and incorporate various currents of Indian philosophical thought into their works.

Chapter 1: The Chinese Mādhyamikas -- Lineage and Authority in the Three Treatise “School”

Although recognized as one of the early Sinitic “schools”宗 of the Suí and early Táng periods, the intellectual practices of the Three-Treatise lineage and the status of the *Middle Stanzas* (*Zhōnglùn*) within this tradition remain largely opaque and understudied topics.

Traditional East Asian historiography conceives of the so-called “Three Treatise school” as an exegetical tradition which revolved around three seminal Mādhyamika Treatises: that is, the *Zhōnglùn* along with the *Sata-śāstra* 《百論》 (*Treatise in One-Hundred Verses*), attributed to Nāgārjuna’s disciple, Āryadeva 提婆, and the

⁸ “I have argued that it is historically and hermeneutically misleading to conceive of the Sinification of Buddhism in terms of a dialogue between two discrete cultural traditions. On the one hand, ‘dialogue’ is an inappropriate metaphor for a conversation that was, in many respects, one-sided.” Robert Sharf, *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism – A Reading of the Treasure Store Treatise*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), p. 21.

⁹ Sharf (2002), p. 18: “Given the fragmentary nature of this encounter, the alterity of Indian Buddhism would have gone largely unrecognized by Chinese Buddhists. Besides, as philosophers of cultural incommensurability have noted, the ‘other’ is only recognized as such to the extent that it can be transcribed into a meaningful and thus to some extent familiar idiom. Like ships passing in the night, seminal features of Indian Buddhist thought simply failed to capture the attention, or at least the imagination, of the Chinese. Even in the so-called golden age of the T’ang, the primary concerns of Buddhist exegetes...lay in areas that had intellectual antecedents in pre-Buddhist China.”

Twelve Gate Treatise 《十二門論》, traditionally attributed to Nāgārjuna. As Jízàng's *Profound Meaning of the Three Treatises* 《三論玄義》 reads:

Five-hundred years following the Buddha's final nirvāṇa there were five-hundred sects who lacked the knowledge of the Buddha's intent as the path to liberation (mokṣa). Thus, while remaining attached to the various dharma-s as possessing determinite characteristics, in hearing of the teaching of emptiness it was as if drawing a sword to split their hearts. Due to the fact that the aberrant sects had lost the original intent of the Buddha's teachings, Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva created *śāstra*-s to destroy such delusions.

『佛滅度後五百歲後，有五百部，不知佛意為解脫，故執諸法有決定相，聞畢竟空如刀傷心。龍樹、提婆為諸部異執失佛教意，故造論破迷也。』¹⁰

In his *Profound Meaning of the Three Treatises*, Jízàng articulates the polemical import of the *śāstra* tradition, envisioned by the Bodhisattvas Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva in order to guard against the “aberrant sects” that had emerged in the benighted age following the final nirvāṇa of the Buddha. The “refutation of the false views and manifestation of the true teaching” 破邪顯正 -- an engaged and confrontational ethos – thus lies at the very heart of Jízàng's analysis of the Buddhist teachings.

Jízàng's “refutations” implicates non-Buddhist (*tīrthikas* 外道) schools such as the Sāṃkhyans 數人, Vaiśeṣika-s 衛世師, Ābhidharmikas 毗曇, as well as proponents of the *Tattvasiddhi-Śāstra* 《成實論》, which Jízàng vehemently criticized as a “Hināyānist” 小乘 work. For Jízàng, the thorough refutation of “mistaken views” 邪見 is critical to the correct articulation of the Mādhyamika stance. As TAKAKUSU Junjiro 高楠順次郎 states, the bipolar aspects of “refutation” and “manifestation” might be best viewed as a unified heuristic aimed at facilitating a religious development towards the “Right Contemplation” 正觀 that is unfathomable, even “inapprehensible” 無所得: “The refutation itself of a wrong view ought to be, at the same time, the elucidation of a right view. That is to say, refutation is identical with elucidation, for there is nothing to be acquired.”¹¹

For Jízàng, the refutation of myopic or deluded views is synonymous with the elucidation of the correct view. Given the rhetorical import of Jízàng's exegetical project, Nāgārjuna's critique of the Ābhidharmikas, yet implicit in the *kārikas* themselves, is drawn into an ardently polemical stance in Jízàng's writings on Mādhyamika thought:

¹⁰ *Sānlùn xuányì*, T45, no. 1852, p. 10, a19-22.

¹¹ Junjirō Takakusu, *The Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy*, (Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1978), p. 104.

The Ābhidharmika-s are attached to the existence of a fixed nature (*svabhāva*) and deluded as to provisional existence (*saṃvṛṭi-sat*), thus they lose sight of the truth of the provisional (*saṃvṛṭi-satya*).¹² They are further unaware that provisional existence is precisely as it is and devoid of real existence [from the perspective of the Ultimate], thus they further lose sight of the unitary True Void 『毘曇執定性之有迷於假有，故失世諦；亦不知假有宛然而無所有，復失一真空。』¹³

In Jizàng's *Profound Meaning of the Three Treatises*, the emergence of the Ābhidharmika 毘曇 sects is traced back with the Buddha's disciple, Śāriputra 舍利弗.¹⁴ In their reliance upon the notion of an abiding "self-nature" (*svabhāva* 自性) of dharma-s, the Ābhidharmika-s lose sight of Ultimate Voidness 真空. The Three Treatises were thus envisioned by Jizàng as the source of the true doctrine of the Ultimate Truth, and thus served as an antidote to the myopic views of the Ābhidharmikas:

As for the *Twelve Gates Treatise*, the *Treatise in One-Hundred Verses*, these gain their name from the teaching of the principle. The *Middle Stanzas* (*Zhōnglùn*) gains its name from the principle of the verbal teaching; its discourse penetrates the Three Treatises, which are all capable of disclosing the Middle [way]. And yet, as the Three Treatises all serve to abandon the views of discontinuity and eternity and to manifest the correct contemplation of the Middle, might they not all be described as the teachings of the Middle?

『若是《十二門》、《百論》，此是「理教」為名。《中論》從教理為稱，通論三論，皆得顯「中」。然者，三論同離斷・常，俱顯正觀，豈不俱得名「中」耶？』¹⁵

The above passage uses the metonymy of Zhōng – the Zhōng of the *Zhōnglùn* –

¹² *Zhōngguānlùnshū*: “The five-hundred Ābhidharmika sects are attached to the notion of a determinate nature which exists, thus they fall into the [mistaken view] of the existence of the self-nature (*svabhāva*)” 『五百部等執定性有，即世諦墮性有，故成偏邪。』 (T42, no. 1824, p. 22, b14(07))

¹³ *Sānlùn xuányì* 《三論玄義》 T45, no. 1852, p. 6, a18.

¹⁴ *Dàshèng xuánlùn* 《大乘玄論》, T45, no. 1853, p. 71, a14

¹⁵ *Dàshèng xuánlùn* 《大乘玄論・卷五》, fascicle 5, T45, no. 1853, p. 71a17-9.

to illuminate this text's status as the verbal teaching *qua* principle 教理. This emphasis on the *Zhōnglùn* as the “source teaching”宗, *par excellence*, goes hand in hand with the apotheosis of Kumārajīva as the direct conduit for the transmission of the Mādhyamika teaching to the Middle Realm *via* the Western Regions.

As for the Source Teaching of Mādhyamika, one might look no further than the *Zhōnglùn* 《中論》. Kumārajīva's 鳩摩羅什 translation of the *Middle Stanzas* in 406 C.E. was an event met with much anticipation at the capital of Cháng-ān, as attested to by Sēngruì's 僧叡 preface.¹⁶ Of course, Sēngruì tells us that Kumārajīva was aided in his task by three-thousand disciples.¹⁷

Kumārajīva's translation was transmitted together with a verse-by-verse commentary by Piṅgala 青目. Who is this elusive “Blue Eyed Brahmin” 青目梵志?¹⁸ When did he live and was his commentary composed? These recondite questions cast a large shadow over the study of the received text in the East Asian canon.

In any case, in his commentarial works, Jízàng enumerates “six faults” in Piṅgala's commentary, citing Master Tányǐng's 影師 criticisms that “Piṅgala was strong in grasping analogies yet weak in searching for the appropriate words.” 『蓋是青目勇於取類、劣於尋文。』¹⁹

The apotheosis of Kumārajīva's Chinese disciple, Sēngruì 僧叡 – often addressed by Jízàng as “Master Ruì 睿公”, is rooted in Jízàng's recognition of Sēngruì as having received his master's mantle due to his prowess in the study of the Mādhyamika texts. As the preface to Jízàng's commentary on the *Zhōnglùn* 〈中觀論疏序〉 records:

When Kumārajīva arrived at Cháng-ān, many seized upon this opportunity to ask to study his craft. His disciples were three-thousand, although only eight were to enter his lecture room, with Sēngruì as the leader. Kumārajīva's records read: “**in my dotage it was Dàoróng and Sēngruì, in my youth it was Dàoshēng and Sēngzhào.**” Kumārajīva would sigh and proclaim: “**in the transmission of my craft, I have entrusted Dàoróng, Tányǐng, and Sēngruì!**” The translation of the

¹⁶ Hirai Shunei 平井俊榮, “Sanron kyōgaku seiritsu-shi no sho montai -- Nansei Chirin Chūron-so ni tsuite” 〈三論教学成立史上の諸問題 –南齊・智琳《中論疏》について〉, *Journal of the Faculty of Buddhism of the Komazawa University* 23.3 (1965), p. 143.

¹⁷ ZGLS, T42, no. 1824, p. 1, a10.

¹⁸ Bocking, Brian, *Nāgārjuna in China: A Translation of the Middle Treatise*, (New York: Edwin Mellen, 1995), pp. 395-405.

¹⁹ ZGLS, T42, no. 1824, p. 5, a18.

Tattvasiddhi-śāstra having been completed, Kumārajīva ordered upon Sēngruì to speak, then saying to Dàoróng: “**within these debates in the śāstra there are seven refutations of the Ābhidharmika-s, all implicit in the subtle areas of the text, you need not refer back to me, for [Sēngruì] is a great talent.**” Dàoróng replied: “**the intellectual capacities of Sēngruì are multifaceted, he does not necessarily need to consult [the teacher.]**” Thus, in analyzing the text continuously, they heartily praised the myriad achievements [of Sēngruì].

仕至長安，因從請業。門徒三千，入室唯八，睿為首領。文云：『老則融、睿；少則生、肇。』仕歎曰：『傳吾業者，寄在道融、曇影、僧睿乎！』仕翻《成實論》竟，命睿講之，謂道融曰：『此諍論中，有七處破阿毘曇，在言小隱，能不問：「我可謂英才」？』融曰：『其人思力有分，未必諮稟。』遂剖折無遺，眾益嗟重。²⁰

As the above preface records, Tányǐng 曇影 and Sēngruì 僧睿 were adept in the study of both the Mādhyamaka texts as well as the *Tattvasiddhi-śāstra* 《成實論》, having been instrumental in the preparation of that text's translation.²¹ As Jízàng notes, through the study of the Mādhyamaka works, this early cohort of disciples were cognizant of certain veiled criticisms of the Ābhidharmikas, implicit within the text of the *Tattvasiddhi*.²²

Given his reknown as a master of both the Mādhyamika treatises and the *Tattvasiddhi*, access to the full content of Tányǐng's commentary would shed light upon the development of Chinese Buddhist exegesis during this elusive period. Unfortunately, Tányǐng's works are no longer extant.²³ Jizàng cites Tányǐng's “commentary” 疏 in the preface to the ZGLS as a source of exegetical authority -- there are extended citations of this work in Jízàng's various treatises and commentaries.²⁴ As the *Subtle Meaning of the Three Treatises* (*Sānlùn xuányì*) reads:

The preface to Tányǐng's commentary on the *Zhōnglùn* reads: “**although there is no principle that this śāstra does not exhaust and no verbal teaching that it does not**

²⁰ ZGLS, T42, no. 1824, p.1., a10-15.

²¹ Hirai Shunei 平井俊榮, “Sanron kyōgaku seiritsu-shi no sho mondai -- Nansei Chirin Chūron-so ni tsuite” 〈三論教学成立史上の諸問題 -南齊・智琳《中論疏》について〉, pp. 153-4.

²² ZGLS, T42, no. 1824, p.5, a15.

²³ Hirai Shunei, “Sanron kyōgaku seiritsu-shi no sho mondai,” p. 156; 153-8.

²⁴ ZGLS, fascicle 9, T42, no. 1824, p. 133, c09-11.

complete, in encompassing its seminal credo, it reconciles the Two Truths.” Now, I return to expounding the old interpretation, in accordance with which we are cognizant of the Two Truths as the Source Teaching 宗.

『曇影《中論序》云：『此論雖無理不窮，無言不盡。統其要歸，會通二諦。』今還述舊釋，故知二諦為宗也。』²⁵

Clearly, Jízàng viewed Tányǐng’s commentary as a source for the correct interpretation and deployment of the Two Truths doctrine. The correlation of the Two Truths with the “source teaching”宗 is a *topos* that Jízàng would invoke continually in his philosophical treatises and commentaries.

As clarified in the above discussion on lineage and authority in the study of the Three Treatises, Jízàng’s commentaries on the *Zhōnglùn* emerge from the overlapping contexts of inherited debates and doctrinal controversies. In the following section, I will clarify the various streams of thought that shaped the hermeneutical models of *śāstra* interpretation that informed Jízàng’s philosophical and exegetical writings.

Professor Robert Gimello has drawn a sobering assessment as to the historical fate of such *Śāstra*-based lineages as the so-called “Three-Treatise tradition”三論宗. Professor Gimello cites “an increasing concentration on the predigested doctrines of the *śāstra*, as opposed to the *sūtra* literature, tended to force Chinese minds into Indian molds.”²⁶

Japanese Buddhist historians since YŪKI Reimon 結城令聞 have characterized the late 6th and 7th centuries by the emergence of a “SuíTáng New Buddhism,”隨唐新佛教 which is described as a return to the *sūtra* literature, in favor of the *śāstra* and established commentarial traditions. Yet, how does Jízàng’s corpus fit into this picture? When set against the backdrop of such historical trends, the so-called Three-Treatise tradition seems to exactly represent a counterexample against such a trend, on account of its status as a religious movement staking its identity firmly with the *śāstra* tradition.

However, when viewed in light of the mutually complementary relationship between the *sūtra*-s and *śāstra*-s, it is the desire to comprehend the *sūtra* literature that underlies the appropriation and interpretation of the *śāstra*-s; any intellectual movement to “return to the *sūtra*-s” involves a necessary re-examination and reinvisioning of hermeneutical modes rooted in the received *śāstra*-s. This broader inter-textual dynamic involved in the emergence of the “*sūtra*-based” traditions that have become known as the “Tiāntái tradition” and “Huáyán tradition,” remains an

²⁵ ZGLS, T45, no. 1852, p. 11, c03-5.

²⁶ Gimello (1976), p. 143.

understudied aspect of the Chinese Buddhist traditions of the Táng period, especially in light of their intellectual debt from the Buddhist learning of the 5th and 6th centuries.

Currents and Countercurrents

The consideration of the Three Treatises in East Asian history reveals the fact that the central Mādhyamika treatises from whence the Three Treatise “school” 宗 derives its name, might, for all intensive purposes, be more accurately described as school of “four treatises” 四論.²⁷ Indeed, while traditional East Asian historiography usually refers to a “Three Treatise Lineage,” these the three root texts were in fact studied in conjunction with *Dàzhìdù-lùn*, Nagārjuna’s monumental commentary on the *Larger Prajñāparāmita Sūtra* 《大品》.

An examination of the historical record from the 5th-century reveals a rich and fruitful period of study and critical engagement with the *Zhōnglùn*. At the forefront of this intellectual milieu was Zhìlín 智琳 (409-487), whose commentary – the *Zhōnglùn-shū* 《中論疏》 -- is unfortunately no longer extant.²⁸ HIRAI Shunei 平井俊榮 has reconstructed certain passages from this important work – the *Zhōnglùn-shū* -- on the basis of Anchō’s sub-commentary to Jizàng’s ZGLS.

Although originally hailing from Gāochāng 高昌 (Karakhojo) near Turkestan, Zhìlín moved to the Eastern-Jìn capital of Jiànkāng 建康 following the warfare in the North. The tradition of Sānlùn studies that Zhìlín initiated, characterized by an intense focus upon the theory of the Two Truths, is what Jizàng refers to as the “Old Doctrine” 舊說. The 8th-century Tiāntái patriarch, Jīngxī Zhànrán 荆溪湛然 (711-782), identified this Jiànkāng era as harkening in the “Southern Tradition” 南宗 of Sānlùn.

In his groundbreaking research into the Three-Treatise tradition, Hirai Shunei cites the *Tōiki dentō mokuroku* 《東域傳燈目錄》,²⁹ which mentions 10 separate commentaries on the *Zhōnglùn* composed from the period of the Southern-Qí Suí up to the early Táng Dynasty.³⁰

²⁷ Traditional East Asian Buddhist historiography recognizes a “Four-Treatise school,” the northern counterpart to Jizàng’s Mādhyamika school.

²⁸ Hirai Shunei (1965), “Sanron kyōgaku seiritsu-shi no sho mondai,” pp. 143-161.

²⁹ *Tōiki dentō mokuroku* 《東域傳燈目錄》, compiled by Eichō of Kōfuku-ji Temple 興福寺沙門永超, T55, no. 2183, p. 1159.

³⁰ Hirai Shunei (1965), p. 154.

1. Jízàng 吉藏, *Zhōngguān lùnshū* 《中觀論疏》: ten fascicles
2. Jízàng 吉藏, *Zhōnglùn lüèshū* 《中論略疏》: one fascicle
3. Jízàng 吉藏, *Zhōnglùn xuán* 《中論玄》: one fascicle
4. Yuánkāng 元康, *Zhōnglùn-shū* 《中論疏》: six fascicles
5. Xīnghuāng Fǎlǎng 興皇法朗師, *Zhōnglùn-xuán* 《中論玄》: one fascicle
6. Master Zhìlín 智琳法師, *Zhōnglùn-shū* 《中論疏》: five fascicles
7. Tányǐng 曇影, *Zhōnglùn-shū* 《中論疏》: two fascicles
8. Master Shuò 碩法師, *Zhōnglùn-shū* 《中論疏》: sixteen fascicles.
9. Unattributed, *Zhōnglùn zhǐguī* 《中論旨歸》: one fascicle
10. Yuánkāng 元康, *Zhōnglùn sānshí liùménmén shì* 《中論三十六門門勢》: one fascicle

However, the *Sānlùn zōngzhāng-shū* 《三論宗章疏》 only mentions four commentaries:

1. Jízàng 吉藏, *Zhōngguān lùnshū* 《中觀論疏》: ten fascicles
2. Jízàng 吉藏, *Zhōnglùn xuán* 《中論玄》: one fascicle
3. Xīnghuáng Fǎlǎng 興皇法朗, *Zhōnglùn xuán* 《中論玄》: one fascicle
4. Yuánkāng 元康, *Zhōnglùn shū* 《中論疏》: six fascicles³¹

The above catalogues of *Sānlùn* works reveal the fruits of a vigorous period of study on the *Zhōnglùn* that persisted throughout the Southern Dynasties. During this politically fractured era, Mt. Shè 攝山 served as a comparatively stable center for Buddhist learning, especially for the tradition exegesis upon the *Zhōnglùn*. It was at Mt. Shè where the masters of the Two Truths Doctrine resided and taught, including such luminaries as Master Sēngquán 僧詮, Sēnglǎng 僧朗, and Fǎlǎng 法朗 (507–581). These figures emerged from a fractious backdrop characterized by intense debate on such topics as the Two Truths. These fruitful discussions on the *Prājñāpāramita* literature and its relation to the predominant concerns of Xuánxué thought persisted throughout the period of the Southern Dynasties and into the 7th century, eventually culminating in Jízàng's commentary on the *Zhōnglùn*.³² Of course, outside of the confines of the cloister, such topics were debated amidst Eminent Monks and literati in the Qīngtán 清談 coterie of the South, at that point home to many émigrés seeking escape from the upheavals and warfare in the North.

³¹ T55, no. 2179, p. 1137, c12-15; Hirai Shunei (1965), p. 157.

³² Hirai Shunei (1965), p. 161.

Traditional Buddhist historiography has seen Sēngquán and Sēnglǎng together as heralding in a transition between the “Old Doctrine” 舊說 and the “New Doctrine” 新說 of Sānlùn studies. In his sub-commentary on Zhìyǐ's *Profound Meaning of the Lotus (Fǎhuá xuányì shìqiān)* 《法華玄義釋籤》, Zhànrán records:

From the Liú-Sòng Dynasty onward, the Three Treatises were mutually handed down [from teacher to student]. Although there were many masters of the Three Treatises, they all followed the teachings of Kumārajīva. However, with the drifting by of the years and generations, the texts and commentaries were scattered and lost. From the period of the Southern-Qí dynasty onwards, the profound philosophical heritage 玄綱 [of the Sānlùn teaching] was utterly exhausted – the propagation of the *Tattvasiddhi-śāstra* flourished in Jiāngnán, while in the Héběi region (north of the Yangzi), they granted exclusive preference to the Abhidharma teachings. At that time, Master Fǎlǎng of Kōryō and arrived in the region south of the Yangzi (Jiāngnán) and at the court of arrived at the court of Qí Emperor Wǔ (reign: 482-493). He denounced the *Tattvasiddhi* masters, among whom there was no opponent [to retort him] and whose tongues were tied. From that point on, Master Fǎlǎng himself propagated the teachings of the Three Treatises. During the reign of Liáng Emperor Wú, he mandated 勅 for ten persons and Quán of Śamatha-vipaśyanā Temple to engage in the study of the Three Treatises. For nine of them it was merely a puerile game, but only Quán of Śamatha-vipaśyanā Temple had scholarly achievement. Among Master Quán's pupils, only four entered his lecture room. At the time people said: “**Master Xīnghuáng and Fǎlǎng roost in hermitage which pleases Huìbù 慧布. While heading the task to apprehend the words of the Zhìbiàn 智辯 excelled in meditation 禪, while Huìyǒng for the letters and passages.**”³³ Clearly, the Southern Lineage 南宗 initially propagated the *Tattvasiddhi-śāstra*, while only subsequently valorizing the Three Treatises. 『自宋朝已來，三論相承。其師非一，並稟羅什。但年代淹久，文疏零落。至齊朝已來，玄綱殆絕；江南盛弘《成實》，河北偏尚毘曇。於時、高麗朗公至齊建武，來至江南。難《成實》師結舌無對。因茲朗公自弘三論。至梁武帝，勅十人、止觀詮等令學三論。九人但為兒戲，唯止觀詮習學成就。詮有學士，四人入室。時人語曰：『興皇、伏、虎、朗栖霞得意布。長干領語，辯禪眾，文章

³³ Huìyǒng 慧勇, Huìbù 慧布, Zhìbiàn 智辯, and Fǎlǎng 法朗 form the so-called “Four Friends” 四友, the four renowned disciples of Sēngquán -- see Lǚ Chéng 呂澂, *Zhōngguó Fó xué sīxiǎng gàilùn* 《中國佛學思想概論》(Táipéi: Tiānhuá chūbǎn shìyè gǔfèn yǒuxiàn gōngsī 天華出版事業股份有限公司, 1982), p. 148-9.

勇。』故知南宗初弘、《成實》，後尚三論。』³⁴

HIRAI Shunei 平井俊榮 envisions of the Mt. Shè period as an efflorescence of Mādhyamika studies, and of the mountain itself as a nexus for the early development of Tiāntái in the South where Mādhyamika studies first merged 先容 with nascent meditation traditions, such as Ox-Head Chán 牛頭禪. Traditional East Asian historiography views the Mt. Shè period 攝山三論 as a watershed of Three Treatise studies during the Southern Dynasties, which witnessed the emergence of a newly engaged strain of Sānlùn though under the heading of the “New Doctrine” 新說.

Master Sēnglǎng, in particular, is heralded as an innovator of *Zhōnglùn* exegesis and is often cited in Jízàng’s works. Jízàng speaks of Sēnglǎng as an assertive proponent of the Third Truth Doctrine 三諦論, as in the denouement to Jízàng’s famous tract, the *Subtle Meaning of the Three Treatises*.³⁵ As Sēnglǎng’s most accomplished disciple, Sēngquán was natural successor to inherit his teacher’s mantle.³⁶脈絡

Xinghuáng Fǎlǎng 興皇法朗 (a.k.a. Master Fǎlǎng 大朗法師 [507-558]), holds the distinction of serving as Jízàng’s teacher, under whom he took the tonsure at the tender age of seven.³⁷ Fǎlǎng clearly exerted an indelible influence upon Jízàng’s early education and intellectual growth. Indeed, Jízàng inherited his direct spiritual and intellectual predecessors -- Sēnglǎng and Fǎlǎng -- concerns with the polemical ethos of “refuting false views and manifesting the true teaching” (*pòxié xiǎnzhèng* 破邪顯正)³⁸ -- a confrontational stance that reaches an apogee of rhetorical vehemence of in Jízàng’s works -- was inherited from his direct spiritual and intellectual predecessors, Sēnglǎng and Fǎlǎng.

“Refuting False Views and Manifesting the True Teaching” 破邪顯正

Here one might pose the question -- who is the envisioned target of the polemics

³⁴ *Fāhuá xuányì shìqīān*, T33, n1717, p. 951, a19-28.

³⁵ T45, no. 1852, p. 14, c21-22.

³⁶ For an analysis of Sēngquán’s biographies, see Yonemori Shunsuke 米森俊輔, “Shikan Sōsen no kenkyū”〈止觀寺僧詮の研究〉, *Bukkyō gaku kenkyū*《佛教學研究》,(Kyōtō: Ryūkoku daigaku Bukkyō gakkai 龍谷大學佛教學會), Vol. 60/61 (05), pp. 44-73.

³⁷ ZGLS, T42, no. 1824, p. 29, c05.

³⁸ This rhetorical framework evokes a more than passing resemblance to the *Sarvāstivāda* (*Vaibhāṣika*) framework of *purvapakṣa* 論破 (refutation) and *siddhanta* 極成.

of these Southern Sānlùn Masters: Sēngquán, Fǎlǎng, and Jízàng?

The so-called “Ābhidharmikas” 毘曇 figure heavily in the works of the great 6th- and 7th-century Buddhist Masters, most notably the record of Tiāntái Master Zhìyǐ. Here the Pītán are represented as proponents of a deluded attachment to the Buddhist doctrine as “apprehensible” 有所得, while lacking access to the complete revelation of the Mahāyāna which is unfathomable, even “inapprehensible” 無所得. But who are the so-called Pītán? Do they correspond to active textual communities at the time of Jízàng, or are they merely “straw-men”, imagined opponents serving largely serving as a rhetorical foils?

The examination of Jízàng's corpus reveals that the “Pītán tradition” 「毘曇宗」³⁹ was associated with the study of the Vaibhāṣika tradition of Sārvāstivāda thought, especially the *Āpītán pīpōshālùn* 《阿毘曇毗婆沙論》 (*Abhidharma-vibhāṣā-śāstra*), translated by the Indian Master Buddhavarman in the North.⁴⁰

The consideration of the textual record from the South reveals that the study of the Abhidharma in this region similarly centered around the Sarvāstivādan tradition of exegesis, specifically the *Āpūánxīn-lùn* 《阿毘曇心論》 (*Abhidharmahrdaya*), translated by Gautama Saṃghadeva 瞿曇僧伽提婆 and Lúshān Huìyuán 廬山慧遠 (334–416)⁴¹ in 391 on Mt. Lǔ 廬山 (in modern-day Jiāngxī province),⁴² and the *Záāpītánxīn-lùn* 《雜阿毘曇心論》 translated by Saṃghavarman 僧伽跋摩 in 434.

Insofar as Modern Asian scholars speak of a Chinese Mādhyamika “school,” it should be fair to speak of a Chinese Ābhidharmika “school” 毘曇宗, based upon study of the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma.⁴³

By that same token, might we even point to a Chinese Dārṣāntika “school,”

³⁹ *Zhōngguānlùn-shū*, “The Contemplation of *Saṃskāra-s*” 〈觀行品〉, T42, no. 1824, p. 106, c23.

⁴⁰ The *Āpītán pīpōshālùn*; 60 fasc. T 1546 no. 28; by Kātyāyanīputra 迦多衍尼子; translated into Chinese in 437 by Buddhavarman of the Northern-Liáng Dynasty 北涼·天竺沙門浮陀跋摩, Daotai 道泰 et al. As Jízàng reports in his *Sānlùnxuányì*: “‘*Vibhāṣā*’ means ‘broad explanation.’ This text was translated into Chinese during the Western Liáng-period, originally comprising 100 fascicles. Later, it was incinerated by roving troops, and now only 60 fascicles remain. [This text] explains the *Jñāna-prasthāna-śāstra* 『毘婆沙』者，此云廣解。於西涼州譯出，凡有百卷。值兵火燒之，唯六十卷現在。止解三《韃度》也。』 T45, no. 1852, p. 2, b29-c1.

⁴¹ See Huìyuán's preface -- *Chūsānzàng jìjì* (T55, no. 2145, p. 72, c01-29).

⁴² *Chūsānzàng jìjì*, T55, no. 2145, p. 10, c12; see Whalen Lai, “Tao-sheng's Theory of Sudden Enlightenment Re-examined,” *Sudden and Gradual* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987), pp. 174-8.

⁴³ ZGLS, T42, no. 1824, p. 106, c23.

based upon the study of the *Tattvasiddhi-sāstra* 《成實論》?⁴⁴ MIZUNO Kōgen 水野宏元 identifies this text as an exposition of a Dārṣāntika critique of certain Sarvāstivādin doctrinal positions.⁴⁵

Despite the ardent polemics of Jízàng, the textual record from the Southern Dynasties would tell us that the *Tattvasiddhi* was in fact regarded by many at the time as a Mahāyāna treatise.⁴⁶ For instance, the Liáng-period monk Sēngyòu's 僧祐 *Collected Notes on the Tripitaka* 《出三藏記集》 preserves the 5th-century layman Zhōuyǒng's 周顥⁴⁷ "Prefatory Notes to the *Tattvasiddhi-sāstra* (抄成實論序), which states: "The *Tattvasiddhi-sāstra* is an esoteric method which subsumes the Three Vehicles (of the *śrāvaka*-, *pratekyabuddha*-, and *Bodhisattva-yāna*.) 『《成實論》者，總三乘之祕數。』"⁴⁸

Indeed, as during the time of Sēngquán, while the study of the *Tattvasiddhi* flourished in the South, the study of the three Mādhyamika treatises was not fairing so well. Jízàng's critiques of the *Tattvasiddhi* masters 成實師 as "crypto-Hināyanists" is thus best viewed against the fractious backdrop of intense competition for intellectual prestige and imperial patronage that characterized 6th-century Jiāngnán.

The charismatic monk Zhìzàng 智藏 was at the forefront of the study of the *Tattvasiddhi*, and garnered considerable institutional clout as the abbot of the powerful Kāishàn monastery 開善寺.⁴⁹ The various positions falling under the

⁴⁴ Hirai Shunei (1965) cites Miyamoto Shōson's 宮本正尊 appraisal of the *Chéngshì-lùn*, p. 145:

"Although the *Tattvasiddhi* is critical, it has come to preserve the analytical tendencies of the analysis of the characteristics of *dharmā*-s and *citta*-s from the standpoint of the Ābhidharmika Masters within the system of the Dārṣāntikas, Sarvāstivādans, Sautrāntikas, and Vabhāṣikas" "成實は批判的であるが、譬喩者有部經部系統の阿毘達磨師、毘婆師として法相心相の分析的傾向を保存しておったこと" The *Sānlùn xuányì* reads: "The Sautrāntika doctrines are largely the same as those of the *Tattvasiddhi-sāstra* 『經部之義多同《成實》。』" T45, no. 1852, p. 3, c01.

⁴⁵ Mizuno Kōgen 水野宏元. 1930. "Hiyūshi to Jōjitsu-ron" (譬喩師と成實論), *Komazawa Daigaku Bukkyō Gakkai nenhō* 《駒沢大学仏教学会年報》 vol. 1, pp. 134-156.

⁴⁶ Tāng Yǒngtōng 湯用彤 lists no less than twelve commentaries on the *Tattvasiddhi* composed during the period of the Southern Dynasties. Unfortunately, none are extant. Hàn Wèi liǎng Jīn Nánběicháo Fójiaoshǐ 《漢魏兩晉南北朝佛教史》, (Taipei: Táiwān shāngwù chūbǎnshè, 1991.) pp. 728-730.

⁴⁷ Although Whalen Lai describes Zhōuyǒng as having "fired the first volley" against the Chéngshì masters along the lines of a Mādhyamika critique, it is clear from such passages that Zhōuyǒng's affiliation vis-à-vis the *Tattvasiddhi* was much more nuanced and problematic than it may seem from the outset. For the analysis of the ostensible content of Zhōuyǒng's treatise – the *Sānzōnglùn* 《三宗論》 -- on the basis of its fragmentary citations in various Buddhist and secular sources from the Southern Dynasties period, see Whalen W. Lai, "Further Developments of the Two Truths Theory in China: The 'Ch'eng-shih-lun' tradition and Chou Yung's 'San-tsung-lun,'" *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Apr., 1980), pp. 139-161

⁴⁸ *Collected Notes on the Tripitaka (Chūsānzàng jìjì)*, T55, no. 2145, p. 78, b03.

⁴⁹ Monteiro Joaquim, "Jōjitsu-ronshi no shisō ni tsuite – Kaizenji Chizō no shisō wo chūshin ni" (成

heading of the “meaning of the Kāishàn Masters 開善義 are extensively discussed and refuted in Jizang’s commentary on the *Zhōnglùn*.

Turning to the text in question itself, the *Tattvasiddhi-sāstra* is commonly acknowledged as paralleling the Mādhyamika conception of the Two Truths, although while attempting to reconcile a notion of the Ultimate Truth to a nuanced ontology comprised of various dharma-s, each corresponding to the various aspects of conventional existence. The factors existent at the provisional level, furnish a descriptive phenomenology which traces the development of mundane consciousness into meditative awareness (*buddhi* 覺觀) which is the “Mind of Dharma” 法心. Later passages in the *sāstra* outline the basis for the analysis of “analogical knowledge” 比智知.⁵⁰ This awareness (*buddhi*) measures and analyzes 思惟籌量 the objects of cognition.

The *Tattvasiddhi* advocates the stance -- echoing that of the Sautrāntikas -- that disavows the “real-existence” of past and future factors 二世無義. The text describes the vision of the illusive nature of past and future factors as the mind corresponding to the insight into provisional existence 假名心. However, through progressive levels of religious development, this “expedient teaching” of emptiness is overcome, revealing the insight into the substantive nature of certain “real factors” 實有法.⁵¹ As “The Chapter on Sagely Practices” 〈聖行品〉 reads: “The practitioner does not behold sentient beings themselves amidst the multitudinous karmic conditions of sentient beings, thus he gives rise to the Mind of Emptiness, and beholds emptiness (*śūnyatā*). Furthermore, amidst the constant cessation of the five *skandha*-s, [the practitioner] does not behold the essential-nature (*svabhāva*?) of material factors (*rūpa*), sensations (*vedanā*), mental activity (*saṃjñā*), conditioned activity (*saṃskāras*) or consciousness (*vijñāna*). 『行者，於眾生因緣中，不見眾生，故即生「空心」，然後見「空」。又於五陰滅中，不見色體性·受·想·行·識體性。』⁵²

実論師の思想について--開善寺智蔵の思想を中心に〉 *Annual of studies of Buddhism, Graduate School of Komazawa University* 《駒沢大学大学院仏教学研究會》32.7 (1999), pp. 67-81.

⁵⁰ Jingyǐng Huiyuán 淨影慧遠 cites the *Tattvasiddhi* extensively as a source for the notion of *pratyakṣa* 現量 in his *Compendium of the Māhāyana* 《大乘義章》.

⁵¹ “The Mind which apprehends the five *Skandha*-s as ‘real factors’ is called the “Dharma Mind.” In righteously cultivating the cognition (*jñāna*) of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) which apprehends the Five *Skandha*-s as empty, the Mind of Dharma is extinguished.” 『「有實五陰心」名為「法心」，善修空智見「五陰空」，「法心」則「滅」。』 *Chéngshí-lùn*, T32, no. 1646, p. 332, c09-10.

⁵² “Chapter 192 on Sagely Practices” 〈聖行品·第一百九十二〉, *Chéngshí-lùn*, T32, no. 1646, p. 365, c21-27.

According to the *Tattvasiddhi*, from the perspective of “the mind of emptiness” 空心, there are actually no “real factors” to be spoken of. As the final chapters of the text describe, it is only through the “cessation of the mind of emptiness” 滅空心 that the adept relinquishes such subtle attachments in order to facilitate final emancipation. Thus, from the standpoint of the Ultimate Truth, even the “mind of emptiness” represents a provisional teaching:

The Buddha proclaims in the sūtra-s: **“Just as with the conglomeration of the wheel and axle, we thus speak of the ‘chariot.’ With the conglomeration of the various *skandhas* we thus speak of the ‘person’ (pudgala).”** Furthermore, just as the Buddha told the many *bhikṣu*-s: **“the many dharma-s are impermanent, characterized by suffering, empty, and devoid of a ‘self.’ From the multitude of conditions which generates them they are devoid of an absolute nature, by this token they only have nominal designations, associated recollections (*anusmṛti*), and ephemeral causal efficacy (*kāritra* 用) [limited to the current moment]. Accordingly there are the various designations generated by the five *skandha*-s, such as ‘sentient being,’ ‘person,’ ‘*deva*,’ and so on.”** This sūtra excludes ‘real factors,’ thus speaking of the mere existence of nominal designations. Furthermore, the Buddha spoke of the two truths of the Ultimate and Conventional. As for the Ultimate he spoke of material factors such as dharma-s, *nirvāṇa*, and so forth. As for the conventional he spoke of mere provisionality (*prajñāpti*) and not of existent substances 自體.

『經中佛說：『如輪軸和合，故名為「車」；諸陰和合，故名為「人」。』又如佛語諸比丘，諸法無常、苦、空、無我。從眾緣生無「決定性」；但有名字、但有憶念、但有用故。因此「五陰」生種種名，謂：眾生·人·天等。此經中遮「實有法」，故言但有「名」。又佛說二諦真諦·俗諦；真諦謂：色等法、及泥洹；俗諦謂：但「假名」，無有「自體」。』⁵³

One critical innovation unto the classical Ābhidharmika system, introduced by Harivarman, is the fundamentally “provisional existence” (*prajñāpti-sat* 假名有) of all mental (*citta-caitastika-s* 心心數法) and material factors (*rūpāni* 色法).⁵⁴ The “Substance” (*dravya* 實體) of individual dharma-s may only be referenced with respect to the preliminary levels of cultivation – the insights provided by more advanced levels of the path reveals this to be an illusory conception, based upon the mundane consciousness of deluded sentient beings. The ancient Buddhist rubric of the

⁵³ *Chéngshí-lùn*, fascicle 11, T32, no. 1646, p. 327, a16-22.

⁵⁴ *Chéngshí-lùn*, T32, no. 1646, p. 250, a09.

Four Noble Truths serves to frame a graduated religious development from mundane levels of consciousness to rarified states of insight. In this manner, Harivarman attempts to reconcile the insight of emptiness with a multi-faceted Abhidharmic analysis of provisional factors and their specific functions within the Buddhist path.

The *Tattvasiddhi* master Zhìzàng 智藏⁵⁵ of the rival Kāishàn monastery 開善寺 is noted by Jizang for propounding the doctrine of *sanjia* 三假 or 'three kinds of nominal existence' (*prajñapti[sat]* 假名有), namely the provisional status of (1) provisional existence arising from causes 因成假; (2) (temporal) continuity 相續假; and (3) provisional existence arising from mutual dependence 相待假. Zhìzàng's tripartite scheme might be summarized as such:

- (1) Provisional existence as arising from causes 因成假. This is likened to the four subtle elements which form the root of a tree, or the five skandha-s which form the chimerical Self (*pudgala*).⁵⁶
- (2) Provisional existence arising as a temporal series 相續假. This is described as the temporal continuity that links previous and subsequent moments of thought 念. The *Tattvasiddhi*-masters of the Kaishan Temple describe the Middle Path *qua* Temporal Series as 相續中道 as the aspect of the conventional truth that is neither eternal 不常 nor discontinuous 不斷.
- (3) Provisional existence of Interdependence 相待假 – likened to the interdependence of the dyadic pairs “Long and Short” 長短, “Ruler and Subject” 君臣, and “Father and Son” 父子⁵⁷

The fragments of Zhizang's commentary from Anchō's Chūron-soki trace his hallmark doctrine of the three forms of provisional existence, which accounts for the provisional existence of the temporal series 相續假, factors arising from causes, and interdependent or relational status of entities. Zhizang likens *saṃvṛṭtisatya* and *paramārthasatya* to “provisional existence” and “emptiness.” The three forms of provisional existence correspond to the backdrop ontology of the Conventional Truth, which he emphasizes as the the Conventional Truth in its sustaining, constructive aspect of provisionality.

⁵⁵ Zhìzàng was the author of a lost commentary on the *Tattvasiddhi* entitled the *Chéngshūlùn dàyìjì* 《成實論大義記》. This work is now known only through fragments cited in works by later authors such as in the Early Heian-period scholiast Anchō's 安證 *Chūron soki* 《中論疏記》.

⁵⁶ 「因成假，以四微成柱，五陰成人」 (T45, no. 1853, p. 18, b12).

⁵⁷ *Dàshèng xuánlùn*, T45, no. 1853, p. 26, a03.

And yet, the Ultimate Truth inevitably points back to emptiness. By virtue of these bifurcated levels of discourse, the Truth of the Ultimate (*paramārtha-satya*), on behalf of its soteriological priority, serves to unveil the emptiness of provisional reality, and accordingly refers back to the “Ultimate” reality of emptiness (*paramārtha-sat* 真實有). This “trap door” allows the proponents of *Tattvasiddhi* to offer a nuanced and sophisticated taxonomy of dharma-s – as in the traditional Ābhidharmika manner of analysis – and yet, at the same time, to account for the universality of emptiness. It is thus not surprising that 6th-century thinkers such as Zhìzàng would be drawn to the teaching of the *Tattvasiddhi* as a reflection of the core Māhāyana doctrine of *śūnyatā*.

It is perhaps due to this contending model of *śūnyatā*, that Jízàng would perceive of the *Tattvasiddhi-sāstra* as a palpable threat to the Mādhyamika doctrine, an attractive though ultimately misleading approach to the Buddhist teaching. Of course, Jízàng’s fourfold dialectics 四重二諦 evinces a more than passing resemblance to Harivarman’s interpretation of the Two Truth doctrine, each rooted in the venerable teaching of the Fourfold Noble Truths. However, Jizang faults the *Tattvasiddhi* Masters for their simplistic misreading of the two truths as indicating graduated realms of existence. It is this misinterpretation that Jizang demolishes in his incessant dialectics on the fourfold Two Truths.

However, regardless of certain salient philosophical affinities, Harivarman’s reliance upon a notion of “real dharma-s” 實法 – even at the provisional level – is anathema to Jízàng, who appeals to Nāgārjuna as the source of doctrinal authority. As Nāgārjuna proclaims: “It is in accordance with emptiness that all *dharmas* may enter into being” 『以有空義故，一切法得成』.⁵⁸ For Nāgārjuna, it is only through systematic “emptying” of the inherent self-nature (*svabhāva* 自性) of *dharmas* that Buddhist adept may realize the Ultimate Truth of *śūnyatā*.⁵⁹ The apophatic approach that this entails at the level of conventional existence leaves little room for a constructive ontology or taxonomy of dharma-s, such as presented in the *Tattvasiddhi*. For East Asian Mādhyamikas such as Jízàng, reliance upon a notion of “substantive” mental or material factors – even at the provisional level -- represents a subtle form of attachment to an inherent, abiding nature (*svabhāva*), and is thus antithetical to the Mādhyamika doctrine of *śūnyatā*.⁶⁰ Jízàng cautions against the subtle attachment to the Two Truths as determinate polarities of “being” 有 and “non-being,” and the

⁵⁸ T30, no. 1564, p. 033, a22.

⁵⁹ Jízàng contrasts this mereological approach attempted by Harivarman as “cutting off dharma-s to reveal emptiness” 折法明空.

⁶⁰ In the classification systems (*pànjiào*) of Tiāntái Zhīyī and Jīngyīng Huīyuán, the *Tattvasiddhi* is referred to as the “tradition of the provisional teaching” 假名宗.

misleading reading of *satya* 諦 as Being or *sat*.

In the section above I have briefly sketched out the textual sources for Jízàng's interpretation of the *Zhōnglùn*, and their roots in Jízàng's education and formative years of scriptural study. According to his conception of the Mādhyamika teaching, Jízàng articulates Two Truths theory as a didactical stance. The didactic import of Jízàng's Two Truth is directed against what he envisions as the “deluded” theories of the Ābhidharmikas and “Hīnāyanists,” such as the *Tattvasiddhi*-Masters.

Although his unrelenting approach to the dialectics of the *catuṣkoti* clearly developed from his reading of Nāgārjuna, Jízàng's thought was indelibly shaped by the works of the Chinese Mādhyamika masters that preceded him – most notably the 5th-century thinker Sēngzhào 僧肇 (384-414). In the following discussion, I will explore the relevant philosophical perspectives on the issue of time and transformation that the works of these Mādhyamika predecessors bring to the fore.

Chapter 2 -- The Mādhyamika Analysis of Time

Modern Sinophone scholars such as Tāng Yòngtōng 湯用彤 (1893-1964), trace much of the content of Jízàng's thought to the lively intellectual milieu in the South, shaped by the tradition of “Dark Studies” 玄學. Indeed, Jízàng's works evince a continuous preoccupation with notions of “essence” 體 and “function” 用, “movement” 動 and “stillness” 靜, drawing from a philosophical vocabulary deriving from such Wèi and Jìn-period thinkers as Wáng-Bì 王弼 (226-249).

In light of the intellectual affinities between Sēngzhào and Jízàng, the analysis of Jízàng's Chinese predecessor shall hopefully better clarify the context in which the later contending models of the Two Truths arose during the later Southern Dynasties. These diverse intellectual currents coalesce in the Mādhyamika thought of Jízàng.

Sēngzhào and the Early Chinese Mādhyamikas

Although the authoritativeness of his works is attested to in the historical record, Sēngzhào 僧肇 (384-414) is traditionally seen as a “patriarch” of sorts in the Three-Treatise lineage and was often cited as a source of authority in Jízàng's writings; Jízàng addresses him honorifically as “Master Zhào” 肇公 .

It is not my business here to fully engage the doctrinal debates and conflicts of

interpretation that these famous treatises have generated throughout the history of Chinese Buddhism. However, in the following section I shall briefly address the relevant issues of temporality and transformation that the discourse “Things do not Move” 《物不遷論》 brings to light.

Modern Asian scholars associate “Things Do Not Move” with a Xuánxué discourse which centered around the interpretation of such as concepts as “stillness” and “motion,” “essence,” and “function.” The vocabulary of Sēngzhào’s treatises clearly derives from the Xuánxué trends of the Six Dynasties, although this terminology is further reinvisioned in light of the insights offered by the *Prāṅṅāpāramita* literature.

And yet, in his discourses, Sēngzhào relies heavily upon the *Zhōnglùn* and the early *Prāṅṅāpāramita* translations such as Mokṣala’s 無羅叉 *Fàngguāng bōrějīng* 《放光般若經》. The insights offered by the *Zhōnglùn* and *Prāṅṅāpāramita* literature posed broad ramifications for the analysis of time and transformation. Indeed, it is the simultaneous study of both textual traditions -- as further re-interpreted through the lens of Nāgārjuna’s commentary on the Greater *Prāṅṅāpāramita-sūtra* (*Dàzhìdùlùn*) 《大智度論》 -- that guided the trajectory of the later Mādhyamika authors.

Things Do Not Move

Sēngzhào is cognizant of the soteriological impact of the Mādhyamika teaching as a means to deconstruct and to reveal the illusive nature of Conventional existence. Reading from Nāgārjuna’s “Contemplation of Movement” (觀去來品) in the *Zhōnglùn*, Sēngzhào argues from the perspective of the Ultimate, there is “no movement” to be spoken of. Indeed, from this perspective, “Movement and Stillness have never been different” 動靜未始異.⁶¹ In a recent and insightful article, Professor Hans-Rudolf Kantor traces such statements as to a “Daoist rhetoric of ambiguity.”⁶² Sēngzhào invokes the Xuánxué terminology to express a conception of ambiguous and ambivalent nature of linguistic constructs, a notion for which he looks to both to the Chinese Xuánxué tradition and the teachings of Nāgārjuna. Kantor writes: “Seng Zhao’s ambiguous rhetoric and linguistic strategy used to unfold and realize the meaning of emptiness performs a ‘change of aspects.’ The full understanding of the continuity of existing things performs a change of aspects *via* the mutual converging

⁶¹ “Things Do Not Move” (Wù bùqiān lùn), T45, no. 1858, p. 151, a14.

⁶² Hans Rudolf Kantor, “‘Right Words are Like the Reverse’—The Daoist Rhetoric and the Linguistic Strategy in Early Chinese Buddhism”, *Asian Philosophy*, 20.3 (2010).

between 'stillness' and 'motion.' The clarification of the ontological status of nonreality and emptiness of things requires a change of aspects consisting of the mutual converging of 'existence' and 'non-existence.' Sēngzhào's ambiguous rhetoric fulfills such a change of aspects, deconstructing the clinging onto linguistic reifications. This realizes the meaning of emptiness as a detachment from/on the level of linguistic expression but inevitably defies the conventional habits in our language. The indispensable linguistic strategy is called 'right words are like the reverse.'"

Nāgārjuna elucidates upon the inconsistency of our concept of time as composed of lacking discrete, durative intervals. And yet, apart from the constant flux of entities in time 相續, there is no "time" (*kāla* 時) to be spoken of. The formulation "bùcháng yì búduàn" 不常亦不斷 from the opening verses of the MMK, emphasizes Nāgārjuna's expression of the impermanence, yet uninterrupted continuity of time.

Sēngzhào was cognizant of Nāgārjuna's insights in composing his discourse on "Things do not Move." Sēngzhào uses the dyadic framework of "movement" and "stillness" to unfold the bipolar analysis of time in terms of "continuity" and "impermanence." As Sēngzhào argues in his treatise "Things Do Not Move," when viewing a thing from its particular place in time, the thing seems to "remain in place eternally" 常存. However, when observing the same thing from the perspective of "motion," it fades into and is indistinguishable from the stream of transformation. From the standpoint of stillness, dharmas appear to abide eternally, as if "immutable" 不遷.⁶³ And yet, from the standpoint of motion, particular dharmas we may only apprehend vis-à-vis the broader stream or continuum of causes and effects (*saṃtana* 相續). There is an inconsistency in our apprehension of time between the standpoints of "stillness" and that of "motion." This approach unfolds what Kantor calls the "change of aspects" in revealing the inconsistency of the notion of continuity.

It is perhaps on account of the fecund ambiguity of Sēngzhào's treatises that his discourse on "Things Do Not Move" has engendered contending readings throughout the history of Chinese Buddhism. In particular, Sēngzhào's ambiguous statement, "the nature things respectively abides in one period of time" 物各性住於一世, has generated debate in the commentarial literature. As is often the case with this author, Sēngzhào uses the graph, xìng 性, or "nature" in its ambiguous sense. To later commentators, the notion of an "abiding" essence would invoke an uncomfortable similarity with a Sarvāstivādin notion of the *svabhāva* or self-nature 自性 of dharmas

⁶³ "When speaking of the Ultimate we speak of 'immutability'; when guiding the mundane persons we speak of 'movement.'"『談真有不遷之稱；導俗有流動之說。』"Wù bùqiān lùn," T45, no. 1858, p. 15, c03

that persists throughout the three period of times.

In the 9th-century, the Huáyán Master Qīngliáng Chéngguān 清涼澄觀 (737-838) would find fault with Sēngzhào supposed reliance upon the notion of an “immutable” nature 不遷之性:⁶⁴ “If simply applying the meaning of ‘**the nature of each thing abiding in time**’ towards the characteristics of the Ultimate Truth, is that not to contradict the doctrine of the emptiness of self-natures in proclaiming that ‘**there is nothing that moves (from the standpoint of the Ultimate Truth)?**’” 『若但用於物各性住為真諦相，寧非性空無可遷也？』⁶⁵

In other words, Chéngguān faults Sēngzhào for confusing the respective marks of the Ultimate and Conventional. References to the Mark of the Ultimate Truth 真諦之相 as pertaining to an “immutable nature,” contravene the Ultimate status of the *paramārtha-satya*, and may only refer back to mundane experience. The Ultimate is ineffable 不可思議, thus any provisional means to describe it, being linguistic in character, belongs to the realm of the Conventional Truth only.⁶⁶

Sēngzhào’s statement: “The whirling cyclone while toppling the marchmount peak is constantly still; the Yangzi and the Yellow River while surging do not flow.” 「旋嵐偃嶽而常靜，江河競注而不流」⁶⁷ is often cited as a *locus classicus* for his theory of the “Immutability of Things”物不遷. However, the continuous debate surrounding Sēngzhào’s *Treatises* is testament to this author’s capability to yield multiple readings and contenting interpretations. For instance, as the 17th-century Chán Master Hānshān 憨山大師 writes in his commentary on “Things Do Not Move”:

When I was young I read Sēngzhào’s *Treatises*, but I harbored doubts for many years about the previous four meanings of the “immutability of things.” When traveling with Chán Master Miào on a frosty winter day near Púběn (in Modern-day Shānxī province), I was annotating the text up to this passage when I felt suddenly awakened and joyous with rapture without end. I got up to make obeisance to the Buddha image, but there was no bowing up and down, then opening the curtain for a view. The wind

⁶⁴ See Jiāng Cànténg 江燦騰, *Wǎnmíng Fójiào cōnglín gǎigé yú Fóxué zhēngbiàn zhī yánjiū – yì Hānshān Déqīng de géshēngyá wéi zhōngxīn* 《晚明佛教叢林改革與佛學爭辯之研究 – 以憨山德清的革生涯為中心》，(Táipēi: Xīnwénfēng chūbǎnshè 新文豐出版社, 1990) ; also Qiū Mǐnjié 邱敏捷, *Zhàolùn yánjiū de fūyǎn yú fāzhǎn* 《肇論研究的衍進與開展》，(Kāoxióng 高雄: Fùwén chūbǎnshè 復文出版社, 2003) .

⁶⁵ Qīngliáng Chéngguān 清涼澄觀, *Dàfāng guǎngfó huáyánjīng suīshū yǎnyì-chāo* 《大方廣佛華嚴經隨疏演義鈔》，(T36, no. 1736, p. 239, c01) .

⁶⁶ Chéngguān writes: “it is only in accordance with the Conventional Truth that things are immutable” 約俗諦為不遷耳 (T36, no. 1736, p. 239, b29).

⁶⁷ “Wù bùqiān lùn,” T45, no. 1858, p. 151, b08.

bellowed suddenly through the trees in the courtyard's garden, the falling leaves were as if floating in the air, although each leaf was not moving. Oh how I had faith in Sēngzhào's phrase that **“the vortex topples the marchmont peak though it is constantly still.”** Climbing up to the latrine to take a piss, as if frozen, I could not see the flowing image of the urine. I sighed: “How true! The rivers and streams vie to merge together, yet do not flow” Thus I recalled my previous doubts about the **“permanent abiding of worldly forms”** (from the *Lotus Sūtra*),⁶⁸ which vanished as if carried away by flood waters.

予少讀此論，竊以前四不遷義。懷疑有年。因同妙師結冬蒲阪，⁶⁹重刻此論，校讀至此，恍然有悟，欣躍無極。因起坐禮佛，則身無起倒，揭簾出視，忽風吹庭樹，落葉飛空，則見葉葉不動。信乎旋嵐偃嶽而常靜也，及登廁去溺，則不見流相。歎曰：誠哉！江河競注而不流也。於是回觀昔日《法華》『世間相常住』之疑，泮然冰釋矣。⁷⁰

In his commentary, the *Zhàolùn lüè zhù* 《肇論略注》, Master Hānshān advocates a Chán-Buddhist “subitist” interpretation of Sēngzhào's work. As he commentates: “Sēngzhào was awakened to the True Mark (of the Ultimate), and grasped a sudden vision of the immutable reality within the temporal flow of generation and extinguishing *dharmas*” 「論主深悟實相，即在生滅遷流法中，頓見不遷之實」。⁷¹

Sēngzhào emphasizes the illusive and inconsistent nature of our apprehension of time on one hand, and yet in his treatises he further turns to the analysis of time's constructive role within the soteriology of the Buddhist Path. For Sēngzhào, the deconstruction of the illusive character of time may be described as identical to the revelation of the Ultimate Truth within the realm of the Conventional.⁷²

Jízàng's statements such as the “Mutual Identification of the Two Truths” 二諦相即 are prefigured in many aspects by Sēngzhào's discussions surrounding the mutual identification of Function and Essence. In this manner, Sēngzhào's thought cast a detectable stamp on the later Mādhyamika writings of Jízàng and the Sānlùn authors.

⁶⁸ Kumarāṅga's translation of the *Lotus Sūtra*, “Prefatory Chapter” 《妙法蓮華經·序品第一》 reads: “This dharma abides in its respective place; the marks of worldly phenomena abide eternally” 「是法住法位，世間相常住。」 (T09, no. 262, p. 9, b10).

⁶⁹ Located in present day Shānxī Province near Xīpūzhōu in Yǒngjì commandery 山西省永濟縣西蒲州.

⁷⁰ *Zhàolùn lüè zhù* 《肇論略注》, (X54, no. 873, p. 335, b05-12).

⁷¹ *Zhàolùn lüè zhù* 《肇論略注》, (X54, no. 873, p. 334, a06-07).

⁷² Hans-Rudolf Kantor, 'Right Words are Like the Reverse'—The Daoist Rhetoric and the Linguistic Strategy in Early Chinese Buddhism', *Asian Philosophy*, 20.3 (2010), p. 300.

The *Zhōnglùn* and the Doctrine of Fourfold Negation

The *locus classicus* for the doctrine of four-cornered negation 八不, which Jízàng applies as a *catuṣkoti* 四句, is the opening verse of Nāgārjuna’s MMK: “Neither emerging nor passing into non-existence; neither permanent nor discontinuous” 「不生亦不滅；不常亦不斷」.

In recent years, Professor Jan Westerhoff has explored the various interpretations that Nāgārjuna’s chapter “The Contemplation of Time” (*Kālapāriṅśa*) 〈觀時品〉-- the most terse of the *kārika-s* at only 6-gāthas 偈 -- has generated.⁷³ As discussed above, Sēngzhào explored this extensively *topos* in his discourses in borrowing from the doctrine of fourfold dialectic, the *catuṣkoti*.

The first 4 verses of the chapter on “The Contemplation of Time” address the question of the existential dependence of the three periods of time 三世相待. In the second *gātha*, Nāgārjuna thus rules out the existential interdependence between the three periods of time:⁷⁴

If the present and future were to exist already in the past period of time
Then the future and present would then have existed already in the past period of time.
若因過去時 有未來現在
未來及現在 應在過去時

If the present and future were dependent on the past, then the present and future would already have existed in the past. In this manner, you would have to posit an infinite hierarchy of times in order to support a notion of existential dependence between the three time periods. Otherwise, according to the commentator Piṅgala, such a conception would lead to the inevitable difficulty of “effects (*phala*) already latent/inherent within the cause (*hetu*). 「因中有果」.”

Nāgārjuna further rules out existential interdependence between entities in the three period of times. One analogy that Āryadeva invokes in the *Śata-śāstra* is that of the “pot” and the “clay” comprising its parts.⁷⁵ If we claim a pot to be an entity

⁷³ Jan Westerhoff, *Nāgārjuna’s Madhyamaka: A Philosophical Introduction*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 123-5.

⁷⁴ Piṅgala describes this aspect of Nāgārjuna’s argument as the refutation of “the casual reliance between the Three Times” 三世因待.

⁷⁵ The Hundred Treatise 《百論》 reads: “there is no pot apart from the clay -- the clay itself serves as the pot” 『離泥更無有瓶，泥即為瓶。』 T30, no. 1569, p. 172, c18.

dependent on its parts, both the pot and its constituent parts must exist. Otherwise, as Professor Westerhoff points out, “we would have a case of a dependence relation with only one term, since of the *relata* failed to exist.”⁷⁶

Nāgārjuna states that the same correlative relation between “upper,” “middle,” and “lower” 上中下 and “unity” and “difference” 一異, should be dispensed with, along the same lines of his refutation of the three periods of time.

As a denouement to the final verse of his “Analysis of Time” (*kāla*) Nāgārjuna adds the enigmatic statement, “apart from things, how can there be time (*kāla*)?” 「離物何有時」。In his translation of the MMK, Kumārajīva invokes the rich ambiguities of the graph 物 to render the Sanskrit *bhāvana*, as a character rich in connotations in its meanings of both real and illusory “things.”

As Piṅgala states in his commentary on the final verse of the chapter, the “Marks of Time” 時相 are unfathomable 不可得. Time is continuous, although it is impossible to identify durative elements of “time” (*kāla*), such as the Ābhidharmic *kṣaṇa*. There is no “time” apart from conditioned entities, thus it is impossible to envision of time apart from the broader stream of causes and conditions 相續:

Seeking its existence throughout the three periods of time, the temporal series cannot be found.

If is it not-existent within the three periods of time, then what temporal series exists?

三世中求有，相續不可得。

若三世中無，何有有相續？⁷⁷

In such statements as the above, Nāgārjuna demonstrates the absurdity of conceiving the three times as isolate entities (*svabhāva*). Where is the abiding substance to be found amidst the ineluctable flow of time? Likewise, how may we conceive of the three times outside of the broader context of the temporal flux (*saṃtāna* 相續)? The question of phenomenal things (*wù*), which subsist in time, cannot be thought as “abiding” 住 in any single period of time. And yet, without “things”, there is no “time” 時 to speak of. As Jizàng states in his commentary on

⁷⁶ Westerhoff (2009), p. 125.

⁷⁷ *Zhōngguānlùn*, “Chapter 21 on the Contemplation of Formation and Dissolution” 《中觀論·觀成壞品第二十》，(T30, no. 1564, p. 29, b16). See Master Yinshùn's 印順法師 gloss on this verse, *Zhōngguān lùnsòng jiǎngjì* 《中觀論頌講記》，p. 398.

Nāgārjuna's sixth verse: "there is time due to phenomenal things, phenomenal things thus comprise the essence of time."⁷⁸

To the Chinese Mādhyamika authors such as Jízàng, this insight reveals the illusiveness of the *ekstasis*, which fades incessantly into the temporal flow. The present moment fades into the past, and yet, the past and future are unfathomable apart from the three *ekstases*. "Apart from transformation (*bhāvana* 物), where is time (*kāla* 時) to be found?" 「離物何有時？」

Nāgārjuna emphasizes the soteriological impact of the "emptying" of *svabhāva-s* 自性 or inherent natures of entities in the three times. To Chinese Mādhyamika thinkers such as Jízàng, Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva offer the "antidote" 對法 to alleviate the *Ābhidharmika* mindset based upon the *svabhāva-s*. In his analysis of conditioned factors and time, Nāgārjuna seeks to counteract the tendency by the *Abhidharma* scholiasts to hypostatize dharma-s as "real factors" 實法, as such entities are always effaced by the Ultimate. This apophatic approach entails the refutation of a notion of time (*kāla*) as composed of durative elements, such as a self-nature or discrete "moments" (*kṣaṇa*).

To borrow from the late Richard Robinson's felicitous phrasing: "Nāgārjuna holds consistently to one sense for each term – that of a *svabhāva*, while Sēngzhào switches back and forth between the two senses of his terms. It is not that Nāgārjuna was only interested in refuting things while Sēngzhào was trying to prove 'positive' propositions, but rather that Nāgārjuna maintained a consistent and single point of view, while Sēngzhào films the same scene with two different cameras."⁷⁹

For Sēngzhào, the revelation of the Ultimate Truth involves the examination of the realm of conventional phenomena from both the perspective of their constant "motion," as well as immutable "stillness." This bipolar analysis of phenomena in terms of their dual features of "impermanence" 不常 and "continuity" 不斷, "stillness" and "motion," initiated a pattern that would steer the direction of Chinese Mādhyamika analysis in the later centuries.

Jízàng's Commentary on the *Zhōnglùn* (*Zhōngguānlùn-shū*)

In any attempt to address the intellectual development of the Chinese Mādhyamika tradition, we must eventually take into account the doctrinal and philosophical controversies that preoccupied such thinkers as Jízàng. These controversies stem from doctrinal debates between *Ābhidharmika* thinkers -- such as

⁷⁸ 『因物有時，則物為時體。』 ZGLS, T42, no. 1824. p. 131, c26. `

⁷⁹ Robinson (1967), p. 150.

those associated with the Sautrāntika and Sarvāstivāda traditions -- concerning the analysis and taxonomy of dharma-s (*dharma-pravicaya* 擇法), and the associated theories of time and temporality. How does Jízàng envision of Nāgārjuna's *kārikas* as a vehicle for philosophical discussion and polemical engagement with rival Ābhidharmika traditions regarding the question of time (*kāla* 時)?

But first off, we briefly turn to the organization and structure of Jízàng's commentary. The following discussion shall clarify Jízàng's approach to the "root text" of the *Zhōnglùn*.

The Chapter Divisions 科判 of the *Zhōngguānlùn-shū*

Jízàng adheres to a system of threefold chapter division 三段分科 in composing his *Zhōngguānlùn-shū*:⁸⁰

1. "Explication of Terminology" 釋名: Chapters 1 through 25
2. "Unfolding of the Teaching" 開會, corresponding to chapters 26 and 27 (excluding the final verses of the chapter)
3. penultimate and final verses of Nāgārjuna's "Contemplation of Mistaken Views" 〈觀邪見品〉

This specific method of threefold chapter division 分科 derives from the Mt. Shè Master Sēngláng 僧朗.⁸¹ However, Jízàng attributes a similar tripartite division to the 5th- and 6th-century Three Treatise masters in the North, who developed this method of meticulous chapter division 科章 in contrast to the early commentator Tányīng, whom Jízàng describes as having rather been engaged in "direct commentary" 直解釋 on the text.⁸² In his commentary to Nāgārjuna's verses on the

⁸⁰ SATŌ Seijun 佐藤成順, "Kichizō ni okeru Būten kaishaku-hō no tokushitsu," 〈吉藏における仏典解法の特質〉, *Chūgoku Bukkyō shisō-shi no kenkyū* 《中国仏教思想史の研究》, (Tōkyō: Sanki-bō bussho-rin 山喜房佛書林, 1985), pp. 87-95.

⁸¹ Satō Seijun (1985), p. 86

⁸² The *Commentary on the Zhōnglùn*, "Contemplation of Causality" 《中觀論疏·觀因緣品》 reads: "There are in total two types of exponents of this *sāstra*: firstly, those who engage in the direct exegesis on the text; secondly, those who engage in the teaching method involving the division of chapters. Just as Tányīng's commentary clarifies: **"This *sāstra* is comprised of four fascicles and 27 chapters. In apprehending its great source teaching of refuting the sickness of the views of discontinuity and**

“Contemplation of Conditioned Arising” 〈觀因緣品〉, Jízàng reports:

Since the time of the masters at Mt. Shěng there has been the received method of dividing the 27 chapters of the *Zhōnglùn* into three sections: the first 25 chapters refute the delusions of the Māhāyāna and further clarify the Māhāyāna contemplations. The second section contains two chapters (“The Contemplation of Twelffold Conditioned Arising” 〈觀十二因緣品〉 and the “Contemplation of Mistaken Views” 〈觀邪見品〉), which refute the Hināyāna delusions and distinguish between the Hināyāna contemplations. The third section (including the penultimate and final verses) further clarifies the Mahāyāna contemplations and eulogizes the refuge in the Buddha. 『自攝嶺相承分二十七品以為三段：初二十五品破大乘迷失明大乘觀行；次有兩品，破小乘迷執辨小乘觀行。第三重明大乘觀行，推功歸佛。』⁸³

Where does Nāgārjuna’s “Analysis of Time” (*Kālapāriṣa*) fall into this scheme? It falls squarely into the “Explanation of Terminology,” along with the first 25 chapters.

In the following chapter, we shall first turn to chapter 7 on the “Contemplation of the Three Marks” 〈觀三相品〉. The subsequent section will address Jízàng’s exegesis on the “Contemplation of the Three Marks,” which further elucidates his analysis of the question of the time in the MMK.

“Analysis of the Three Characteristics” 〈觀三相品〉

It is worth noting that here that Kumārajīva’s translation of the Chapter heading differs from that of the classical Sanskrit, which describes the “Examination of

eternalism, [we recognize] the *śāstra* as expounding the Two Truths and the Middle Path. Thus, in accordance with this Middle Path we give rise to the True Contemplation.” Secondly, the Northern Three Treatise Masters clarify: “this *śāstra* is comprised of four fascicles which may broadly be clarified as three sections: the first comprises the first four verses (*gāthā-s*), which propound and discuss the great source teaching. The second section starts from the refutation of the four *pratyaya-s* and continues until the “Examination of Views”, refuting delusions while manifesting the Source Teaching. The third section, comprising the last verse eulogizes taking refuge in the Buddha.” 『講論者凡有二種：一者、直解釋；二者、科章門。如曇影制疏明：『此論文有四卷；品二十七。領其大宗為破眾生斷·常之病，申二諦·中道。令因此中道發生正觀也。』二者、北立三論師明：此論文有四卷。大明三章：初有四偈，標論大宗。第二、從破「四緣」，以下竟〈邪見品〉，破執顯宗。第三、最後一偈推功歸佛。』 T42, no. 1824, p. 7, c2-7.

⁸³ ZGLS, T42, no. 1824, p. 7, c24-28.

Formations.” (*saṃskṛta parīkṣā*). Kumārajīva frequently uses the graph xiàng 相 to render the Sanskrit terminology, “*lakṣaṇa*”

In any case, the “Contemplation of the Three Marks” 〈觀三相品〉 entails a detailed refutation of the Ābhidharmika conception of the three characteristics of “generation”生, “abiding”住, and “senescence”滅.

In the Ābhidharmika taxonomical context, “time” is envisioned as an outgrowth of the “*dharma*-s disjoined from mental [and material] factors” (*citta-viprayukta-saṃskāra-dharmas-s* 心不相應行法). This oft-disputed category of *dharma*-s includes the so-called “conditioned characteristics” (*saṃskṛta lakṣaṇa*) such as “the characteristic of generation”生相, that of “abidance”住相, and “senescence”滅相.

Debates between Sautrāntika and Sarvāstivādin thinkers, such as those unfolding between such luminaries as Vasubandhu and Saṃghabhadra, centered around the issue of the *saṃskṛta-lakṣaṇa-s* 有為相 and their respective inclusion/exclusion from the category of the *citta-viprayukta-saṃskāra-dharma-s*.

Suffice it to say that Sarvāstivādin theorists regarded the *saṃskṛta-lakṣaṇa-s* “Real Factors”實法.⁸⁴ According to the Sarvāstivādin conception, these factors pertain to a *svabhāva* 自性 or “self-nature.” Interestingly, the Chinese terminology zìxìng 自性, was also used to describe the Sāṃkhyā theory of *prakṛti*. As Jízàng commentates in his *Zhōngguānlùnshū* 《中觀論疏》:

The Non-Buddhist sects (Tīrthikas) remain attached to the theory that *prakṛti* has the capacity to give rise to the sentient beings. When sentient beings pass away they return to their self-nature (i.e. *prakṛti*). Self-nature is thus the nature of mundane existence 世性. Thus the many genera of sentient beings return to be reborn in the various heavenly realms. 外道計自性能生眾生，眾生若滅還歸自性。自性即是世性，此是從眾生種類，還生眾生。⁸⁵

The refutation of the Sarvāstivāda theory of the “real existence of past, present, and future factors” is critical to Nāgārjuna’s philosophical project. Although there is no explicit reference to this doctrine, or to the Sarvāstivādins specifically, in Nāgārjuna verses, this is a line of critique that is drawn into an explicit position in the

⁸⁴ Collett Cox, *Disputed Dharmas*, “Four-Conditioned Marks,” pp. 133-158.

⁸⁵ ZGLS, T42, no. 1824, p. 36, a10-11.

Chinese commentarial tradition on the *Zhōnglùn*.

At the heart of Jízàng's analysis of Nāgārjuna's verses, and his polemical stance vis-à-vis the Sarvāstivādins, is his aversion to describing "time" (*kāla*) as composed of dharma-s pertaining to the past, present, and future periods.

For Nāgārjuna, to posit discrete factors that serve the function of leading factors from states of non-being into being, leads to a conception of time as composed of infinite hierarchy of entities, all corresponding to "past," "present," and "future" moments. The factor corresponding to the current moment of "abidance" must have existed in the past moments, thus there must have been previous factors generating the factors corresponding to the past moment, *mutatis mutandis*.

Jízàng is cognizant of the difficulties that the Sarvāstivādins face in resolving the problem of the existence of factors throughout the three periods of time. Jízàng thus describes time as devoid of substance, although he states, paradoxically, that without substance, the nature of time is inapprehensible 時相不可得: "in the absence of substance there is no time [to be spoken of]." 『無體則無時』⁸⁶

Jízàng's analysis of time revolves around the ontological status of "substance" 體.⁸⁷ Jízàng's invocation of *tī* here is ambiguous, insofar as in the lexical context of his usage it draws from the sense of both "essence" and "substance." The fecund ambiguity of *tī* draws from this broad semantic field, although in this case it applies directly to Jízàng's critique of the substantialist ontology of the Ābidharmikas. Jízàng further applies this polemical anti-substantialist stance to the proponents of the *Tattvasiddhi-śāstra* 成實師, whom Jízàng vehemently denounces as "Hināyānists."

The *locus classicus* for the *Tattvasiddhi-śāstra*'s analysis of time is the "Chapter 22 on the Non-existence of Past and Future Factors" 〈二世無品第二十二〉. Here Harivarman reveals a close allegiance with the Sautrāntika view that factors in the past and future may not be described as existing in any substantive way 實有. Even as for present factors, we may only speak of a sort of provisional existence 假有 – a sort of "trap door" to avoid falling into the Sarvāstivādin view which leads to the conception of the continuously abiding nature of dharma-s throughout the three periods of time.

The refutation of the classical Sarvāstivādin theory of the existence of factors throughout the three periods of time, is part and parcel of the critical ethos of the Chinese Mādhyāmika-s. It should be noted, however, that such polemics remain

⁸⁶ ZGLS, T42, no. 1824, p. 132, a03.

⁸⁷ For an examination of the Abhidharmic concept of *dravya*, and its interpolation by Chinese translators in terms of the Sinitic concept of *tī* 體, see KOGA Hidekiko 古賀英彦, "Ūbu no taiyō-ron to samusukāra no gainen" 〈有部の体用論と行の概念〉, *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 《印度学仏教学研究》, Vol. 33 (1968), pp. 130-131.

implicit in Nāgārjuna's *kārikas* as veiled critiques of various doctrinal points associated with the Sarvāstivādins.

Jizang articulates these lines of attack as a polemical stance which implicates the various non-Buddhist and "Hīnayāna" sects:

Question: now in clarifying the meaning of the three characteristics of generation, abiding, and extinction as ungraspable amidst the coalescence and dispersion of entities, why do the Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna scriptures speak of both the coalescence and dispersion of entities?

Answer: long ago, when Kumārajīva had not yet crossed the pass [into China], there were no upright adepts who were able to access the True Buddhist Law. Having crossed the passes, the adept individuals and teachings having arrived in China, the superb individuals gathered together like clouds at one time. Dharma Master Huìyuán of Mt. Kuāng didn't come, but he dispatched an emissary to inquire of Kumārajīva the meaning of the coalescence and dispersion of the three conditioned factors (*saṃskṛta-lakṣaṇa*). Kumārajīva said in response: **"the Buddha directly spoke of the internal marks of the impermanence of the body – birth, death, old age, sickness, death; thoughts continue ceaselessly, externally mundane things wither and yellow, their decline and impermanent existence – all this was but to discourage the arising of the "view of permanence" among the people, and to induce them to disregard worldly things and to cultivate the Buddhist path. In fact the Buddha did not speak of synchronous 一時 or diachronic 異時 causation; the theories of synchronous and diachronic causation pertain to the meanings introduced by Kātyāyana."**

How may we behold the answer by means of a refuted doctrine? Now, I further refute this and say: *The Sūtra of Innumerable Meanings (Amitārtha-sūtra)* clarifies the doctrine of the four characteristics thrice: firstly, the scripture speaks directly of the four characteristics; secondly, it clarifies the doctrine of non-abidance between incessant moments of thought; thirdly, it clarifies the doctrine of "generation", "abiding", "change", and "extinction" in accordance with time (*kāla*).

The *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa sūtra* reads: **"birth, old age, sickness, and death in accordance with time, this is what the Buddha spoke as 'the four characteristics occurring simultaneously' 一時."**

Question: Why do we say that Kumārajīva's phrase is not the Word of the Buddha (*Buddhavacana*)? Response: the Buddhist scriptures clarify the doctrine of "generation, abiding and extinction in accordance with time," the texts never establish the "synchronous arising of the four characteristics," a [doctrine] which merely serves to

refute the theory that sentient beings maintain an eternal mind 常心 and nothing more. For that is, if sentient beings were to hear that even one thought-moment might temporarily abide, this would constitute the permanence of that one thought-moment, and thus there is attachment to the eternal mind which is inexhaustible 常心不盡.

Now we clarify thus: it you say that there is not a single thought moment that abides, then you are attached to the Mind which is exhaustible 常心盡.⁸⁸ Thus we clarify the generation and extinction of factors in accordance with time 即時. After all, the Buddha's meaning was "that if there is no permanence, then how may there be impermanence"? Now in inducing the enlightenment which recognizes neither impermanence nor non-impermanence,⁸⁹ then both views (of permanence and impermanence) cease for posterity. The clarification of "not abiding even in one moment of thought" is precisely to explain the meaning of non-rebirth 無生. According to the *Zhōnglùn*, if there is one thought-moment that abides, then there are illusory things 物. If there is not even one thought-moment that abides, then there are no things, as there are no things, then illusory things are of the utmost voidness.⁹⁰

『問：今聚·散門求「三相」不得。佛大、小乘經為說聚為說散。答昔羅什未度。未有正人之與正法。羅什至關人法既來，諸方勝人，一時雲聚。匡山遠法師不來，遣使問羅什「三相聚·散」等義。羅什答云：『佛直說內身，生、老、病、死、念念不住，外物萎黃，彫落亦非恒有，令人不起「常見」、厭世、修道耳。實不說一時、異時；異時、一時此是旃延等意。』』

云何將「所破義」來見問耶？今更責此言：『《無量義經》三重明「四相」：初、直說「四相」；次、明念念不住；次、明：「即時生·住·異·滅」。

《淨名》亦云：『即時生、老、病、死。』此是佛說「四相一時」。

云何羅什言非佛說？答：佛經明：「即時生·住·滅」者，亦不立「四相一時並起」，但為破眾生保「常心」耳。眾生若聞一念暫住，即一念之常，即計「常心不盡」。今明：無一念住，即計「常心盡」。是故明：即時生·滅耳。佛意既明：無有「常」，寧有「無常」耶？即令悟「非常、非無常」，二見永息也。又既明「無一念住」，即是說「無生義」。夫《論》有一念住，即有物。既無一念住，即無物；無物即畢竟空。』⁹¹

⁸⁸ Piṅgala's commentary on the MMK reads: "amidst the various dharma-s flowing day and night, thought-moments continuously fade into the past, like water flowing without end: this is what we call 'exhaustion' 盡." 『諸法日夜中，念·念常滅盡過去，如水流不住，是則名「盡」。』 ZL, T30, no. 1564, p. 28, a21.

⁸⁹ The negation of the third alternative – "neither permanent nor impermanent" [~ (A 常 v B 無常)].

⁹⁰ Piṅgala's commentary on the *Zhōnglùn*, "Contemplation of Causes and Conditions" reads: "moreover, as the Buddha proclaimed: 'all conditioned factors (*samskr̥ta dharma-s*) pass into non-existence with each passing moment of thought, there is no moment of thought that abides even instantaneously." 『又佛說：『一切有為法念·念滅，無一念時住。』 (T30, no. 1564, p. 3, a24).

⁹¹ ZGLS, T42, no. 1824, p. 78, c20-09.

The above *excursus* centers upon Jizàng's refutation of the extreme views of "nihilism" 斷見 and "eternalism" 常見. Jizàng's critique of these "aberrant" theories implicates a group of clustered doctrinal issues.

The ontological status of "dharma-s disjoined from mental [and material] factors" (*citta-viprayukta-saṃskāra-dharmas-s* 心不相應行法) is a perennial question for the Sarvāstivādin thinkers, and continuously generated debate between textual factions. Furthermore, the ontological status of Dharma-s throughout the three times engendered heated debates between the proponents of the Sautrāntika and Sārvāstivāda theories of Abhidharma taxonomy under the rubric of "the analysis of dharmas" (*dharma-pravicaya* 擇法)⁹².

Jizàng recognizes the multivalency of the Mahāyāna scriptures concerning the question of the four *saṃskṛta-lakṣaṇa-s* -- or only three, as discussed in Nāgārjuna's MMK and the *Treatise of Twelve Gates*.⁹³ Indeed, the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa sūtra* speaks of the four marks 四相 of birth, old age, sickness, and death.

Jizàng interprets the Sarvāstivādins as advocating three marks, which correspond to the "factors that are neither mind nor matter" 非色非心法.⁹⁴ Of course, Jizàng's reading glosses over a certain dissonance in the Sarvāstivādin Abhidharma surrounding the status of the "Mark of Transformation" 異相 (*bhinna-lakṣaṇa*).⁹⁵

⁹² Collette Cox writes: "Though early Sarvāstivādin Abhidharma lists of dissociated factors include the category of conditioned characteristics of conditioned factors, there is some variation in their number. For example, the majority of early and later Sārvāstivādin Abhidharma texts acknowledge four such conditioned characteristics: birth (*jāti* 生相), continuance (*stithi* 住相), senescence (*jarā* 滅相) and desinence (*aniyatā* 無常相). However, other Abhidharma texts, including certain Sārvāstivādin Abhidharma texts, acknowledge only three, for example, the *Āryavasumitrabodhisattvasaṅgītaśāstra*, the earlier translation or recension of the *Jñānaprasthāna* – the *Abhidharmāṣṭaskandhaśāstra* -- and the *Vibhāṣāśāstra* all omit continuance. Indeed, the question of the number of characteristics as three or four remains a live issue for later Abhidharma interpreters, particularly in view of the fact that the sūtra passage cited as scriptural authority in support of the existence of the conditioned characteristics also mentions only three characteristics. In these later interpretations also, the primary problem is presented by the characteristic of continuance, which would appear to contradict the restricted definition of a moment and thereby, the Buddhist principle of impermanence." *Disputed Dharmas: Early Buddhist Theories on Existence*, (Tōkyō: International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 1995), p. 147.

⁹³ *Bāilùn*, T30, no. 1568, p. 162, c15.

⁹⁴ Jizàng commentates: 'apart from the substance of dharmas there are no three marks, thus the substance of dharma-s coheres in the threefold conglomeration; the three marks are merely among the 'factors that are neither mind nor matter,' and pertain to the *saṃskāra-skandha*.' 『薩婆多云：離法體外別有三相，故法體通於三聚，而三相但是非色非心，屬行陰攝。』 T42, no. 1824, p. 77, a28-29.

⁹⁵ *Āpītánlùn*: "Each conditioned factor universally possess the four marks of birth, abiding, transformation, and senescence. The change of state (*avasthā*?) within the mundane realm thus leads to generation. The change in transformation (*bhāva*) having completed, there is abidance. The causal

Of course, this is an issue left unresolved in the MMK itself, for Nāgārjuna's verses speak of the "three characteristics" 三相, while Ābhidharmika traditions such as the Sārvāstivādins often propound a taxonomy including four *saṃskṛta-lakṣaṇa-s*. The *Śata-śāstra* illuminates upon the Three Characteristics of generation (*jāti* 生相), abiding (*stithi* 住相) and the mark of senescence/destruction 壞相 (*vyāya-lakṣaṇa*).

In any case, from the Mādhyamaka line of analysis, the negation of the three *saṃskṛta lakṣaṇa-s* as "real factors disjoined from mind and matter" is a line of critique elaborated in Nāgārjuna's Twelve Gate Treatise 《十二門論》 in the eleventh chapter on the 'Contemplation of the Three Times' 〈觀三時門〉 and the Fourth Chapter on the "Contemplation of *Twelve Gate Treatise* 《十二門論·觀相門第四》, which further elucidates Nāgārjuna's position regarding three *saṃskṛta-lakṣaṇa-s* 有為相. Although this problem of the *saṃskṛta-lakṣaṇa-s* clusters together a series of doctrinal controversies and inherited debates, Jizang uses this specific issue of the as a platform from which critically assess the various stances of the received *śāstra-s*, and to further question the authority of Kumarajīva as the inviolable exponent of Mādhyamika orthodoxy in China.

As a source for his critique of the Sarvāstivādins, Jizang continuously cites Saṅghadeva's 僧伽跋摩 translation of the *Abhidhama-hṛdaya-śāstra* 《雜阿毘曇心論》. This particular text proposes arguments for the real existence of dharma-s in the three periods of time 三世實有. As Saṅghadeva's translation reads:

The theory of the real existence of factors throughout the three times (*sarvāstitva*) was established the Sarvāstivādins. Why? Answer: while perceiving the past and future from the standpoint of the present there is thus a positing 施設 [of existent factors in the past and future]. If there were no existent factors in the past or the future, then there would be no manifestation [of those factors] in the present moment. If there were no existent factors in the present, then there would be no conditioned factors [in the past and future]. By this token, factors exist throughout the three periods of time -- you may not say that this is false! 『有三世薩婆多。此薩婆多所立。問：何故？答：現在世者，觀過去·未來故施設；若無過去·未來者，則無現在世。現在世無者，亦無「有為法」；是

efficacy [related to the factor of abidance having declined, there is transformation; with the ceasing of the transformation there is senescence. These three marks are called the "factors disjoined from mind and matter" 『一切有為法各·各有四相，生·住·異·壞。世中起，故生；已起自事立，故住；已住勢衰，故異；已異滅，故壞。此相說「心不相應行」。』 T28, no. 1550, p. 811, b18-20.

※Verse 4 of the "Analysis of Combination" 〈成壞品〉 from the *Zhōnglùn* reads: "Not only can no difference be found in the dharma-s that are seen and the rest can any difference in characteristics be found; But all existent dharma-s are without different characteristics"

非但見等法 異相不可得
所有一切法 皆亦無異相

故有三世，莫言有咎。』⁹⁶

The Sarvāstivādin theory of time is synonymous with their ontology based on “substances” (*dravya-s* 實體). The substance of these real entities is rooted in their real existence from the Ultimate standpoint (*paramārtha-sat*), and accordingly subsists throughout the three periods of time.⁹⁷

Paramārtha's 真諦 translation of the *Abhidharma-kośa-bhāṣya* 《阿毘達磨俱舍釋論》, outlays Vasubandhu's critique of the existence of real things 實有物 in the past and future periods of time. As to the claim that factors pertain to “substances” 實體 which exist from the Ultimate standpoint (*paramārtha-sat*), Vasubandhu opines in that *dravya-s* in the past and future are non-existent. The casual efficacy (*kāritra* 力) of factors only exists in the present moment. Their causal efficacy spent, such factors fade into non-existence.

At this juncture, I believe that it may be useful to draw upon Jizàng's commentary on the 1st verse of the “Contemplation of the Three Marks” 〈觀三相品〉, which reveals a nuanced interpretation and refutation of the various theories of time expounded by Buddhist and non-Buddhist traditions, each extensively documented in the ZGLS.

The refutations of the Śāstra-Master Nāgārjuna are meant to expound the verbal doctrine of “non-abiding thoughts” in order to induce understanding of the Mahāyāna Buddhist scriptures amongst the various Ābhidharmika sects 諸部. The refutation of “coalescence of factors” is precisely the refutation of the Sarvāstivāda theory, which requires the mutual support of the three characteristics (*saṃskṛta-lakṣaṇa*) for the generation of conditioned factors. The refutation of “dispersion” is the refutation of the Dārṣṭāntika theory of “the establishment of the three characteristics (*saṃskṛta-lakṣaṇa*) within three moments (*kṣaṇa-s*). This verse further refutes the Ābhidharmika stance. The Ābhidharmikas have two theories: the first regards the substance (*dravya*) as remaining the same throughout time, while the functional activity (*kāritra*) differs between previous and subsequent moments. The theory of difference in functional activity (*kāritra*) between previous and subsequent moments is “dispersion”; the essence (*svabhāva*) remaining the same through time is “coalescence.”

The second theory [pertaining to the Ābhidharmikas] is that of the essence and

⁹⁶ T28, no. 1552, p. 963, b4-7.

⁹⁷ The third chapter of this thesis shall explore in greater depth the arguments for this theory presented in the Sarvāstivādin works translated into Chinese from the 5th-7th centuries.

functional activity remaining the same throughout time, but it is merely that at the time of the generation of functional activity, the functional activity of the factor of generation (*jāti* 生相) is strong, and the functional activity of the other factors is weak.

Thus the verse also refutes this theory. The Sāmkhyans have that “future self-natures are existent, that they exist in their current mode of being, although their existence from the past remains opaquely latent.” The *Tattvasiddhi-sāstra* reads: “**although the substances of the periods of time coming and going (i.e. past and future) are non-existent (*abhāva*), they pertain to the meaning “then [currently] existing factors.”⁹⁸ Present [factors] are only existing in the present and pertain to the meaning of “future non-existent factors” 當無義。⁹⁹**

『又論主破，即是申「一念不住」之言，令諸部解佛經意也。破「聚」，正破「薩婆多義」，以「有為」必「三相」扶共起故也。破散、破譬喻部「三剎那立三相義」也。又此一偈並破毘曇。毘曇師二說：一、云：「體」同時，用前後，用前後是「散」。「體」同時是「聚」；二、云：「體用同時」。但當生用時，「生用」即強，餘相用弱耳。故此偈具破之也。數人「未來性有；現在事有；過去冥伏有。《成論》云：『去來體是無而有曾當義；現在是現有，¹⁰⁰而有當無義也。』』¹⁰¹

In the above passage, Jizāng forefronts Sarvāstivāda/Sautrāntika debates on the nature of “causal efficacy” (*kāritra*) and its duration in time. This approach is invoked in the critique of the Ābhidharmic traditions of the Sautrāntikas and Sarvāstivādans, which rely upon the notion of *kārita* or causal efficacy 作用¹⁰² to distinguish the presently active dharma from innumerable dharma-s of the past and future, which

⁹⁸ Here Jizāng articulates a critique on the Sautrāntika doctrine of factors as only existing in the present moment: “**Karma pertaining to current factors fades into the past, although without developing the [future karmic] result (*phala*) , [these factors] abide eternally in the present.**” This is in fact the same as the Sarvāstivādin doctrine of “eternal abiding” (*nitya*). The subsequent fruit give rise to the karmic result, then [the fruit] again fades into the past – this is the same as the Mahāsāṃghika nihilistic doctrine. Moreover, the *Tattvasiddhi*-masters and the Masters of the Zhuāngyán Temple state that “**karmic factors fade into the past as their substance (*dravya*?) is non-existent, and thus due to the meaning of then currently existing factors having then attained fruition.**” 『「現在業」謝「過去」；未得果時，常在。此同薩婆多「常義」，後果起此業，復謝滅無：同僧祇斷義。次《成實》師、莊嚴云：『業謝過去體是無，而有曾有義故得果。』 T42, no. 1824, p. 118a24-25.

⁹⁹ This statement seems to be pointing towards the Sautrāntika position that only present factors actually exist. Present factors may only be described as existing within the present “moment” (*kṣaṇa*).

¹⁰⁰ ZGLS: “The text of the *Tattvasiddhi-sāstra* states: the three conditioned factors all existent in the present. If the factor should pass away, then the two conditioned factors (of generation and abidance) reside in the present, and the conditioned characteristic of senescence resides in the future 『《成論文》云：三有為法悉在現在。若應滅者即二相在現，而滅在未來。』 T42, no. 1824, p. 86, c16-17.

¹⁰¹ T42, no. 1824, p.79, a13(10)–b26.

¹⁰² Paramārtha renders *kāritra* through the character lì 力, while Xuánzàng often translates the term with the compound zuòyòng 作用.

exist throughout the three periods of time.¹⁰³ The Mādhyamika goes so far to state that there are no real “essences” or latent factors in any of the three periods of time. Even to posit an evanescent entity pertaining to momentary causal efficacy would contravene the emptiness of conventional phenomena and of all temporal entities.

Chapter 3: On Three-Treatise Master Jizang's Refutation of *Sarvāstiva*

In clarifying the touchstone doctrine of the Sarvāstivādins – the theory of *Sarvāstiva*¹⁰⁴ -- Jizang draws upon Buddhavarman's 浮陀跋摩 translation of the *Vibhāṣa Śāstra* 《阿毘曇毘婆沙論》 (hereafter, simply VS)¹⁰⁵:

The *Vibhāṣa Śāstra* reads: **In order to refute the other theories we thus clarify: the dharma-s themselves are time, when the dharma-s are impermanent their time is impermanent.**¹⁰⁶ This is to determine that time is posited as a provisional existent (*prajñapti*) in accordance with the dharma-s; without dharma-s there is no distinct time. Although there is no distinct essence pertaining to the three periods of time, the dharma-s existing within time are certainly not inexistent.” 『《婆沙》云：「為止此，說明：法即是時，法無常時即無常。」辨：因「法」假名「時」；離「法」無別「時」。「三世」之時，雖無「別體」，而時中之法，則決定不無。」』¹⁰⁷

Jizang's summary of the *Sarvāstiva* doctrine harkens back to the basic distinction between provisional factors and real existents. For classical Sarvāstivādin theorists, the provisional factors are contingent upon the real existents 假必依實. Provisional factors, by definition, are established from the standpoint of the conventional truth 世俗諦, and may not be described as “real existents” 實法 from the Ultimate standpoint. There a basic dependence between *prajñapti* and real existents, and, by extension,

¹⁰³ For Vasubhandu's criticisms of the *Sarvstivā* 一切有 theory, see Collett Cox, *Disputed Dharmas: Early Buddhist Theories on Existence*, (Tōkyō: The International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 1995), pp. 148-150.

¹⁰⁴“All (Skt.: sarva) [dharmas] exist (Skt. asti) in the three times: fuure, present, and.past.”

¹⁰⁵ This was originally a 100-fascicle translation, although only 60 fascicles of the translation survive – see *Gāosēngzhuàn*, T50, no. 2059, p. 339, a24-28.

¹⁰⁶ This phrase as cited does not appear in the Northern-Liáng 北涼 translation of the *Vibhāṣa Śāstra* 《阿毘曇毘婆沙論》, although it perhaps pertains to the content of the later folios which were lost?

¹⁰⁷ ZGLS, T42, no. 1824, p. 130, c09-12.

between the Conventional and Ultimate Truth. Time (*kāla*) is inextricable from its components – the various dharma-s – which are ultimately real 勝義有, although as a secondary structure rooted in these real factors, time might only be described as a provisional existent 假名有. This provisional existence stands in contrast to “space” (*akāśā* 虛空), which, by definition as a “real factor” – represents a sort of irreducible component of reality.

This basic stance which derives from the ancient Vaibhāṣika thinkers is further revealed in the basic arguments for the theory of *sarvāstivā* presented in the old Chinese translation of the VS:

If there were no existent past and future [factors], then there would be no established or un-established factors: just like the “second head,” the “third arm,” or the “thirteenth entrance” (beyond the twelve entrances), there would be no established nor un-established factors. If there were no past and future [factors], then there would be no established nor un-established factors. As there are existent established and un-established factors, we thus know that the past and the future pertain to real characteristics.

『若無過去未來者，則無成就不成就。如第二頭·第三手·第¹⁰⁸十三入。無有成就·不成就者。若無過去·未來，則無成就·不成就。若有成就·不成就，則知必有過去·未來是「實有相」。」¹⁰⁹

The existence of the provisional factors is predicated on the existence of real factors. Just as in the case of the absurd formulations such as the “second head” or the “third arm,” we may only speak of such absurdities with relation to their “real” components, such as “head” or “arm,” etc.

Jízàng associates a similar viewpoint with the Sāmkhyans 數人, who, like the Sarvāstivādins, apprehend the provisional status of “time,” and yet are not cognizant of the correlative dependency between time and entities.¹¹⁰ “Time” and “factors” trace a reciprocal relationship than applies both ways, a fact that the Sāmkhyans

¹⁰⁸ The Míng-dynasty 明藏本 edition listed by the Taishō editors has the additional three characters “The Six Skandha” 第六陰.

¹⁰⁹ Fascicle 40, T28, no. 1546, p. 294, a01-06.

¹¹⁰ *Zhōngguānlùnshū*, “Contemplation of Movement” 《中觀論疏·觀去來品》: “Although the Sāmkhyans are aware that time (*kāla*) is posited as a provisional existent in accordance with the dharma-s, and that there is no distinct time apart from the dharma-s, they are unaware that the dharma-s are likewise posited as provisional existents in accordance with time, and that [apart from temporality] there are no distinct dharma-s.” 『數論雖知因法假名時，無有別時，未知因時假名「法」，無有別法』 T42, no. 1824, p. 55, c24; see *Bǎilùnshū*, T42, no. 1827, p. 297, a08.

remain unaware of.

At this point, it may be instructive to draw from a passage from the Buddhavarman's translation of the *Vibhāṣa Śāstra* which illuminates upon the relationship between provisionally-established and real factors.

Moreover, if there were no past and future, then there would be no present. Why? Because the present is posited 施設 on account of the past and future. If the [factors within] the three temporal periods did not exist, then there would be no conditioned factors (*saṃskṛta-dharma-s*). Why? Because the unconditioned factors (*asaṃskṛta-dharma-s*) are posited on account of the conditioned factors. If there were no conditioned factors nor unconditioned factors, then all dharma-s would not exist. If all dharma-s did not exist, then there would be no liberation and no deliverance from suffering. In order to induce people to not give rise to this fallacy (i.e. the denial of real factors in the past and future), we thus speak of past and future [factors] as pertaining to real characteristics.

『復次：若無過去・未來者，則無現在。所以者何？以有過去・未來，故施設現在。若無三世，則無「有為法」。若無「有為法」，亦無「無為法」。所以者何？以有「有為」，故則施設「無為」。若無「有為」・「無為法」，則無一切法。若無一切法，則無解脫・出離。欲令無如是過，故說過去・未來是實有相。』¹¹¹

For the Vaibhāṣikas, the problem of “time” cannot be viewed apart from the broader framework of the analysis and taxonomy of dharma-s (*dharma-pravicaya* 擇法). There is no individual/discrete factor which comprises “time;” thus time might be thought of as arising as a provisional distinction. Provisional factors are contingent upon real existents「假必依實」. This is parallel to the correlative relationship between conditioned and unconditioned factors. As Jizàng opines in: “apart from the dharma-s there is no independent ‘time’” 離法無別時。¹¹² Of course, the early Sarvāstivādin theorists would classify “space” (*akāśa* 虛空) as a real factor, albeit “unconditioned,” and yet, “time” does not qualify as an discrete factor. Piṅgala's explores the status of the *asaṃskṛta dharmas-s* in his commentary on the “Contemplation of the Three Marks” reads:

¹¹¹ *Āpītan pīpōshālūn*, T28, no. 1546, p. 294, a27-b03.

¹¹² ZGLS, T42, no. 1824, p. 55, c19.

All conditioned factors (*saṃskṛta dharmas-s*) fade away with each passing moment of thought, thus there are no dharma-s that do not pass away into non-existence. Without conditioned factors, there would be no definitive unconditioned factors. Unconditioned factors solely pertain to a nominal designation, thus we say that there are no such thing as “immutable dharma-s.”

『一切有為法念念滅，故無不滅法。離「有為」，無有決定「無為法」。「無為法」但有名字，是故說不滅法終無有是事。』¹¹³

Piṅgala views the unconditioned factors as merely nominal entities, while not corresponding to real substances 法體. The conception of *asaṃskṛta dharmas* 無為法 as sort of atemporal entities (i.e. “space,” etc.) is anathema to Nāgārjuna’s teaching on the emptiness of conditioned-arising. Piṅgala engages a phenomenological reading of *asaṃskṛta dharmas* as pertaining to successive moments of thought 念. Given that “real factors” 實法, as defined by the Vaibhāṣika-s, subsist for only a single moment, how might you identify any factors as immune to senescence 不滅法? Piṅgala’s query bespeaks an inconsistency in the Abhidharmika taxonomy of dharmas, divided amongst conditioned and unconditioned factors, of which only unconditioned factors are said to be “eternal,” while all other factors persist though only a single moment 剎那滅. Unconditioned dharma-s are “strong” and thus do not require causes or conditions.¹¹⁴ Their status might well be described as “atemporal” insofar as their activity is independent of causes and conditions, existing well beyond normal temporal flux. Piṅgala interprets this “atemporal” status of unconditioned factors as a complete lack of activity or causal efficacy.

Unconditioned factors are bereft of self-nature. Due to the cessation of activity 滅有為 they are called “unconditioned.” Indeed this is why we speak of “neither arising nor ceasing” as the mark of the unconditioned. Moreover, they have no self-characteristics (*svalakṣaṇa/salllakṣaṇa*), thus they are non-existent dharma-s and lack the capability to serve as the marks of dharma-s. Just as a hare’s horns or a tortoise’s hair, they cannot serve as the marks of dharma-s. 『無為法無性故，因滅有為名「無為」。是故說不生·不滅，名「無為相」，更無自相；是故無法，不能為法作相。如兔角·龜毛等，不能為法作相。』¹¹⁵

¹¹³ T30, no. 1564, p. 11, a25-26.

¹¹⁴The *Āpītan pipóshālūn* (VS) reads: “The self-nature (*svabhāva*) of *saṃskṛta dharmas* is weak and they are thus maintained by causes and conditions. The self nature of *asaṃskṛta dharmas* is strong and they thus do not require causes and conditions. Just as a weak man requires other’s assistance to stand, while a strong man does not require any assistance.” 『有為法性羸劣須因緣，無為法性猛健不須因緣。如人羸劣依他而住；如人猛健不依他住。』 T28, no. 1546, p. 86, b30-c1

¹¹⁵ T30, no. 1564, p. 9, a22-24.

The ontological status of unconditioned factors, as well as the question of their causal efficacy remain issues that loom large over the Mādhyamika commentarial tradition, especially in its critical interpretation of Sarvāstivādin thought, and represent issues that Jizang would engage in depth in his *Commentary on the Zhōnglùn*.

The Existence of Real Factors throughout the Three Periods of Time

In the traditional Vaibhāṣika content, time is spoken of in the “reversed” sequence of the future, present, and past. Factors emerge from the future, gradually migrating through the present and past. As Jizang commentates:

The Sarvāstivādins within the Buddhist tradition propose the theory that the three times have real existence, thus the original nature of effects (*phala*) reside in the future period of time. The future converges into the present, which from the present fades into the past. The three times exist eternally, thus we speak of the “view of permanence.” 『佛法內薩婆多明：「三世」有，即是「本果性」在「未來」。從「未來」至「現在」，從「現在」謝「過去」，「三世」常有，故名為「常」。』¹¹⁶

The continuous existence of *svabhāva* throughout the three times is the touchstone of the doctrine of *sarvāstivāda*. Jizang thus opines in regarding the Sarvāstivādin conception of the self-nature 性 of dharma-s.

The Hināyānists remain attached to the theory that in possessing a determinate self-nature, future factors emerge, arising from the future into the present: this is what they call “generation,” as well as “the real nature.” 『小乘之人，執「未來定有性生」，從於未來，起來現在，故名為「生」，亦是「性實」。』¹¹⁷

Jizang's *Commentary on the Twelve Gates Treatise* 《十二門論疏》 further explores the question of the *svabhāva* and its duration in time:

¹¹⁶ *Zhōngguānlùn-shū*, “Contemplation of Causes and Conditions” 《中觀論疏·觀因緣品》, (T42, no. 1824, p. 24, a1-3) .

¹¹⁷ T42, no. 1824, p. 23, a13-14.

The Sarvāstivādins state that the factors pertaining to self-nature (*svabhāva*) exist in the future, although arise [in the present] through assuming the provisional aspect of conditions. Just as wood possesses the inherent nature of fire, although only in assuming the provisional aspect of the condition does it generate/transform into the fire. 『薩婆多云：未來有「自性法」，假「緣」即生。如木有火性，假「緣」成於事火。』¹¹⁸

The conascent arising of the *saṃskṛta lakṣaṇa*-s is critical to the Sarvāstivādin analysis of the synchronous causation, which includes of the “9 factors” 「九法」 comprising the dharma itself 本法, along with the “four fundamental aspects” 四本相¹¹⁹ of generation 生, abiding 住, change 異, and senescence 滅, as well as the four derivative aspects 四隨相 of the arising of generation (*jātijāti* 生生), abiding of abiding (*sthitithiti* 住住), the changing of change (*anityatānityatā* 異異), and the cessation of senescence (*jārajāra* 滅滅). These form the so-called “nine factors” 九法, which arise synchronously within a single *kṣaṇa*, and thus serve to lead the fundamental factor to the manifestation of its causal efficacy. Once its specific causal efficacy or *kāritra*/function 用 is expended, the function of change assumes priority, the of the characteristic of abiding desists due to the characteristic of change, which is in turn followed by the characteristic of senescence thus causing the factor to fade into the past.¹²⁰

Of course, in accordance with the classical Sarvāstivādin doctrine, this is a synchronous process. And yet, as Jízàng notes, how might the characteristic of senescence be said to follow or tail those of the other four characteristics, if this entire

¹¹⁸ *Shièr ménlùn shū* 《十二門論疏》, T42, no. 1825, p. 183, a02.

¹¹⁹ Jízàng refers to this aspect as the “greater characteristics” 大相 and the four derivative aspects of birth and rebirth, abiding of abiding, etc., as the “lesser characteristics” 小相: This greater characteristic of generation is itself generated by the derivative or characteristics, thus assuming the name of the “[greater] characteristic of generation” 為小生生之故是生相 (T42, no. 1824, p. 80, b01). In his exegesis, Jizang alternates between two models of causation – that including 6 *saṃskṛta lakṣaṇa*-s, and that including only 8 *saṃskṛta lakṣaṇa*-s. Jizang defines the “lesser” and “greater characteristics” with relation to the limited model of only 6 *saṃskṛta lakṣaṇa*-s: “The lesser aspect of generation 小生 is solely capable of generating the greater aspect, thus is goes by the name of “the arising of generation. The greater aspect of generation does not only generate the lesser aspect, but also may give rise to the six factors (i.e. generation, the arising of generation, abidance, the abiding of abidance, senescence, and the extinction of senescence) 『生但能生大生故名生生，大生非止生小生，能生六法。』ZGLS, T42, no. 1824, p. 80, b22.

¹²⁰ The four fundamental charactersitics and four derivative charactersitics differ in terms of their causal function. While the four fundamental charactersitics exert their invidual causal function towards the other eight factors, the four derivative charactersitics only exert function towards the specific fundamental factor that they engender 四本四隨於八於一功能別. See Xuánzàng’s translation of the *Abidharmakośabhaṣya*, fascicle 5 (T29, no. 1558, p. 27, b13).

process unfolds within a single period of time 四相一時? ¹²¹Given that all real factors are said to exist throughout the three periods of time, why do the eight *saṃskṛta-lakṣaṇa-s* emerge as conascent with that of the individual factor they adhere to?

In his commentary on Nāgārjuna's chapter on the "Contemplation of the Three Conditioned Marks"〈觀三相品〉, Jizàng illuminates two theories as to the unfolding of the nine factors and the eight *saṃskṛta-lakṣaṇa-s* described by the Sarvāstivādins :

There are two doctrines as to the eight conditioned characteristics: the first is that the essence [of the conditioned characteristics] arises simultaneously, but their function only applies previously and subsequently; the second doctrine is that the essence and function of the characteristics arise conascently. As the greater characteristic of generation gives rise to the lesser characteristic of generation, it is such that the essence and function arise conascently. 『又八相有二義：一者、「體同時、用前後」；二、「體用俱同時」。若「大生」生「三大相」、及「三小相」、即體同時、用前後。若「大生」生「小生」、即體用俱同時。』¹²²

¹²¹Hirakawa Akira 平川彰 explains: "Moreover, it is such that when the single dharma is generated, the four characteristics of generation, abidance, change, and senescence are simultaneously generated. That is, in accordance with the characteristic of generation, the fundamental dharma along with the characteristics of abidance, change, and senescence are so generated. However, given that, as such, it is the case that there is nothing specifically that gives rise to the characteristic of generation, the Sarvāstivādins further posit the four derivative characteristics 四隨相. Namely, there are the four derivative characteristics of the "arising of generation," "the abiding of abidance," the "changing of change," and the "cessation of senescence," which are such that they arise synchronously with the original dharma. Thus, the characteristic of generation yields the other eight factors 八法, and in accordance with the "arising of generation" is itself generated. Following this, the characteristic of abidance causes the other eight factors to abide, and the characteristic of abidance itself is caused to abide by the "abiding of abidance." In this manner the nine factors are said to arise simultaneously. However, as the of the factors comprising our material body and mind are numerous, given that each factor is said to be conjoined with the four fundamental characteristics and the four derivative characteristics, the numerical quantity of those factors must be vast." 『従って、一法が生きずるとき、生、住、異、滅の四相も同時に生ずるわけである。即ち本法と住、異、滅の三相とは生相によって生ぜしめられるわけである。しかしそれでは生相を生ぜしめるものがないことになるので、有部は別に四隨相を立てる。即ち生生、住住、異異、滅滅の四隨相があり、本法と同時生ずることになる。そして生相は他の八法を生じ、自らは生生によって生ぜしめられるという。つぎに住相は他の八法を住せしめ、自らは住住によって住せしめられるという。このようにして九法が同時に俱起するという。しかし一刹那のわれわれの肉体や心を形成する法は多数であるから、その一一の法に四相、四隨相が付随しているとしたら、その数は莫大になるわけである。』 Hirakawa Akira 平川彰, "Bukkyō Abidaruma ni okeru jikanron"〈原始仏教・アビダルムにおける時間論〉, *Kōza Bukkyō shisō – Sonzairon Jikanron*《講座仏教思想「存在論・時間論」》, Vol. 1, (Tōkyō 東京: Risō-sha 理想社, 1974), p 202.

¹²² *Zhōngguānlùn-shū*, T42, no. 1824, p. 80, c2-4.

Jízàng's analysis of the sequential arising of factors reduces the issue to the question of *tǐ* 體 and *yòng* 用. What is the relationship between the “function” and “substance” of the conditioned characteristics? The second viewpoint mentioned purports to account for the conascent arising of the function and substance of the various factors, without the correlation of the *samskr̥ta-lakṣaṇa-s* to temporally extended phenomena. And yet, in the case of “generation,” does the greater characteristic of generation 大生 give rise to the lesser characteristics 小相, or *vice versa*? If both sets of characteristics are said to emerge in one moment, their “substance” and “function” would coincide.

It is worth noting that in his exegesis on Nāgārjuna's chapter on the “Contemplation of the Three Characteristics” 〈觀三相品〉, Jízàng discussion alternates between two models of causation: the first which describes 8 *samskr̥ta lakṣaṇa-s* the second that accounts for only 6 factors, thus eliding over the factor of “change” 異相 () and its associated “derivative characteristic” 隨相 of the “changing of change” 異異 (*anyathānyathika*).

In his analysis of the *samskr̥ta lakṣaṇa-s*, Jizang alternates freely between the “threefold” 三相 and “fourfold” 四相 sequence of *samskr̥ta lakṣaṇa-s*. Jizang seeks to reveal the intractable issues inherent in either notion. As he describes the Sarvāstivādin model of eight *samskr̥ta lakṣaṇa-s* as synchronously arising:

The greater aspect of generation gives rise to the substance of the factor; the nature of abiding, change, and senescence exists as inherent within the substance of the factor. The factor having arisen in turn gives rise to the three greater characteristics (i.e. generation, abiding, and senescence). The three greater characteristics further possess the nature of abiding, change, and senescence, which much be matched 相 to the three characteristics (i.e. generation, abiding, and senescence). The three lesser characteristics (arising of generation, abiding of abidance, and the cessation of senescence must further match with the three greater characteristics. The three greater characteristics having arisen, the lesser characteristics emerge – thus, the nine factors arise conascently in one period of time. 『大生生法體，而法體中有住·異·滅性。法體既起，「三大相」即起。三大相復有住·異·滅性，須「三相」相之；三小復須三大相相之。大相既起小復起，故一時「九法」共起。』

In terms of the fourfold model, each characteristic contains the inherent nature of the three other characteristics. For instance, the nature of “abiding,” “change,” and “senescence” is inherent within the characteristic of “generation.” Each factor is described in its likeness to the three other factors (whose nature is inherent within it).

And yet, each factor's specific function within the synchronous process is distinct from that of the others. That is, the function of each factor is manifested sequentially with relation to the other 7 factors, and yet, for the Sarvāstivādins, the entire sequence unfolds within a single period of time 一時. But, if we admit such a sequence, are we not also admitting the distinctions of “prior and subsequent” within a single moment? As Jízàng commentates in his analysis of the “Contemplation of Causes and Fruits” 〈觀因果品〉 from the *Zhōnglùn*.

Time is posited in accordance with the dharma-s. If the nine factors mutually arise, then they should accord to nine separate periods of time. If you say that [the 9 factors] “mutually arise within one period of time,” then by that token they “**mutually pertain to a single dharma.**”

『因法假名時，若九法共起，則有九時。若言『共一時』，亦應『共一法』。』¹²³

If you speak of “momentary” 剎那滅 dharmas, then by definition they abide for exactly one moment. The operation of nine individual factors would require nine moments to reach its completion.¹²⁴

In short, regardless of their inclusion of seven or nine factors, three or four conditioned characteristics, Jízàng argues that these models of causation are unable to be accounted for coherently. The notion of synchronous causation within “one moment” has continuously puzzled commentators. How do you account for the apparent sequence in the operation of the conditioned characteristics?¹²⁵ For Jízàng, the incongruous inclusion of synchronic and diachronic features reveals certain intractable issues with the Sarvāstivādin theory of synchronous causation.

Jízàng's rejection of the conditioned characteristics as real existents follows

¹²³ *Zhōngguānlùnshū*, “Contemplation of Causes and Fruits” 《中觀論疏·觀因果品》, T42, no. 1824, p. 133, c02-3.

¹²⁴ See Piṅgala's commentary: T30, no. 1564, p. 29, b13

¹²⁵ Professor Alexander von Rospatt writes: “The Sarvāstivādins did not give up their doctrine of the *samskr̥ta lakṣaṇa-s* when they came to view all conditioned entities as momentary. This was impossible because the four *samskr̥ta lakṣaṇa-s* had become the indispensable corollary of each conditioned entity, once they had been hypostatized to causally efficient factors which account for the origination, duration, decay and annihilation of these entities. Thus the Sarvāstivādins had to carry on attributing the *samskr̥ta lakṣaṇa-s* to discrete conditioned entities even after the duration of these entities had been reduced to a bare moment. This meant that the operation of the four *samskr̥ta lakṣaṇa-s* which really requires a certain stretch of time had to be squeezed into a moment once the momentariness of all conditioned entities was espoused.” *The Buddhist Doctrine of Momentariness*, (Hamburg: Franz Steiner Verlag Stuttgart, 1995), p. 48

Nāgārjuna in its basic focus. As Nāgārjuna states in his verses, the characteristics of origination, abiding, and senescence are inexplicable like *māya*, or the Gandharva castle:

Like illusion, like a dream, like a Gandharva castle.

The arising, abiding, and cessation of which we speak

Have characteristics such as these.

如幻亦如夢 如乾闥婆城
所說生住滅 其相亦如是¹²⁶

In the following section I shall explore the theories of temporality corresponding to the four great Sarvāstivādin ācāryas: Dharmatrāta 達磨多羅, Ghoṣaka 瞿沙人, Vasumitra 和須密, and Buddhadeva 佛陀人. This corresponds to the “canonical” presentation in fascicle 40 of Buddhavarman’s translation of the MVS, upon which Jízàng relies upon as a primary source for Vaibhāṣika thought.

Here I may add a brief note on the question of the order of presentation in the *Zhōngguānlùnshū*, which traces the canonical presentation in the MVS. Does this merely reflect concerns of editorial convenience by the compilers of the MVS, or does it actually correspond to the chronological development of the *sarvāstivā* theory? Erich Frauwallner argues that Dharmatrāta’s represents the oldest theory and thus comes first in the *Vibhāṣa Śāstra*’s presentation.¹²⁷ K.L. Dhammajoti also concedes this sequence as reflecting the historical development of the doctrine: “as regards the above four theories, Professor Erich Frauwallner believes that their order of presentation represents the actual chronological order of the development of the theories of *sarvāstivāda*, each subsequent one attempting to avoid the mistakes in the earlier explanation.”¹²⁸

Dharmatrāta 達磨多羅

Following his discussion of Ghoṣaka in his exegesis on the “Contemplation of Time” in the *Zhōnglùn*, Jízàng proceeds to elaborate upon Dharmatrāta’s 達磨多羅

¹²⁶ T30, n1564, p. 12, a23-24.

¹²⁷ Erich Frauwallner, *Studies in Abhidharma Literature and the Origins of the Buddhist Philosophical Systems*, trans. Sophie Francis Kidd, (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1995), p. 192.

¹²⁸ Bhikkhu K.L. Dhammajoti, *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma*, (Hong Kong: Centre of Buddhist Studies at the University of Hong Kong, p. 149.

theory of time. Indeed, Jízàng attributes the redaction and compilation of the 4-fascicle Vaibhāṣika tract – the *Abhidharma-hṛdaya-sāstra* 《阿毘曇心論》 -- to Dharmatrāta, whom was later known as “Fǎjiù” 法救 in Xuánzàng’s 8th-century translation of the MVS in 200 fascicles.

In any case, following the canonical discussion in the VS, Jízàng characterizes Dharmatrāta’s viewpoint by his reliance upon the concept of change in the “mode of existence” (*bhāva* 事) to distinguish between the shifting status of the factors’ existence throughout the three periods of time. Accordingly, Jízàng summarizes Dharmatrāta’s theory of time as that which clarifies the “transformation of the factor’s mode of existence throughout the three periods of time” 「三世事異」.

It is merely the unitary dharma that persist through the three periods of time: the unitary dharma is existent, although its mode of existence is different. 『只「一法」為「三世」：「一法」是有，而「事」為異。』¹²⁹

For Dharmatrāta, as the “wandering” dharma traverses time, it undergoes changes in its mode of existence. Time thus serves as the shifting, though continuous ground for the peregrinations of the dharma. This notion of time as a constantly shifting terrain is thus distinct from the Dārṣṭantika view which assumes “time” as an eternal, “immutable” ground. Dharmatrāta describes the single dharma courses through the three periods of time, although shifting through different modes of existence. And yet, throughout these migrations, the dharma retains its inherent “substance” which remains unchanged despite the shifting temporal state or *bhāva*:

Thus, the period of time when the gold has been fashioned into the vessel is called ‘the future’ and the period of time when the vessel is currently being fashioned is called ‘the present,’ although the substance of the gold is continuously existent. 『如金未作器，名「未來」，正作器為「現在」，而「金體」是有也。』¹³⁰

In accordance with Dharmatrāta’s analogy, although there are the designations of “present” and “future” – corresponding to the period of time when the vessel is “currently” being fashioned, and the period when the vessel will have been fashioned – the actual “substance” of its material remains constant.¹³¹

¹²⁹ ZGLS, T42, no. 1824, p. 130, c16-17.

¹³⁰ ZGLS, T42, no. 1824, p. 130, c17-18.

¹³¹ Dharmatrāta’s theory was critiqued as bearing a likeness to the Sāṃkhyan doctrine of transformation (*pariṇāma* 轉變) -- see Collett Cox (1995), p. 140.

As Paramārtha's translation of the *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya* 《阿毘達磨俱舍釋論》 (trans. 567) reads:

The Worthy Bhadanta Dharmatrāta distinguishes between the transformations in the mode of existence (*bhāva*), thus positing/establishing the three temporal periods. He says: “when dharma-s course through time, it is merely their mode of existence that changes, while their substance (*dravya*) does not change.” 『大德達磨多羅，分別「有」異，故安立三世。彼說「若法行於世，唯「有」有異，非「物類」異。」』¹³²

Here I supplement Jízàng's somewhat laconic account with Anchō's sub-commentary which cites the old translation of the MVS:

Those who propound the theory of the difference in the mode of existence (*bhāva*) say that **“while the dharma is coursing through time, its mode of being changes, although its substance does not change.”** Just as in the case of gold or copper vessels having been broken apart and reconstructed, although its visible form may have changed, the matter composing [the vessel] is identical. Or, just as when milk ferments into cheese, although its odor is different, its material composition is identical. Thus by the same token, future dharma-s arrive upon the present period of time, although the future dharma-s are abandoned/abnegated, their substance remains intact. When factors pertaining to the present arrive upon the past period of time, while those dharma-s pertaining to the present period of time are abandoned, their substance remains intact [within the present moment].

『說事異者，言「法行世時，事異體不異」。譬如金銀器破已更作。雖形有異，其色不異。亦如乳成酪時，香味雖異，其「色」不異。如是「未來法」至「現在時」，雖捨「未來法」，不捨其「體」。現在法至過去時，雖捨現在法，不捨其體也。』

¹³³

Although the dharma “casts off” 捨 its previous mode of existence in the future when arriving upon the present, there is no change in its substance or essential nature (*svabhāva*). As in the case of the gold vessel, each time a new “entity” is fashioned, it yet adheres to the selfsame piece of gold which is further involved in the process of transformation through the three periods of time, and yet whose essential matter remains the same throughout this process of temporal change.

¹³² T29, no. 1559, p. 258, a01; see Chen Shixian's (2008) gloss, p. 25.

¹³³ T2255, no. 65, p. 202c07-c11. See *Āpītān pīpōshā lùn*, fascicle 40, T28, no. 1546, p. 295, c09-13.

Ghoṣaka 瞿沙人

The Vaibhāṣika master 瞿沙人 (Ghoṣaka)¹³⁴ is known for advocating the theory of the “difference of lakṣaṇa” (*lakṣaṇānyathātva* 相異) to explain temporal phenomena. As Jízàng reports, based upon the canonical account of the MVS:

Each period of time corresponds to two periods [i.e. the previous and subsequent periods of time]. Just as when a man wears a tricolor garment of azure, white, and black, the single color [of azure] is the central aspect, while the other two colors [white and black] are the embellishments.

『一世兼有二也。如一人著青、白、黑三色衣，一色為正、二色為傍。』¹³⁵

That is, each moment or *kṣaṇa* would pertain to the adjacent previous and subsequent moments. It is for this reason that Jízàng characterizes Ghoṣaka as advocating the doctrine of the nine temporal phases 九世義, with each of the three period of time corresponding to current moment as well as immediately previous and subsequent moments.

However, as Jízàng argues, Ghoṣaka's theory leaves little recourse to avoid such a vicious regress. The *lakṣaṇa*-s pertaining to the current moment must be inherent in the past, thus the characteristics associated with the previous moment must reside in the moment previous to that, *mutatis mutandis*. Each dharma pertains to three discrete characteristics which adhere to the dharma as it courses through the three periods of time. If each period of time is conditioned by the *saṃskṛta lakṣaṇa*-s pertaining to the previous periods, then you would seemingly require an infinite hierarchy of times to explain this process of continuous conditioning from time immemorial.

The VS thus elucidates upon Ghoṣaka's doctrine based upon the “difference of *lakṣaṇa*”:

The proponent of difference in characteristic says that when dharma-s revolve in time, they change on account of characteristics, and there is no change in substance (*dravya*).

Dharmas in each of the temporal periods possesses three characteristics; when a single

¹³⁴ “Worthy Bhadānta Ghoṣaka” 尊者瞿沙 in the old MVS; 尊者妙音 in Xuánzàng's translation of the MVS.

¹³⁵ ZGLS, T42, no. 1824, p. 130, c13-14.

characteristic is currently conjoined, the other two characteristics not severed 非離. Just as when a man is attached to a particular woman, he is yet not unattached to the alluring form of other women. Thus, when the various dharma-s abide in the past period of time, they are conjoined with the characteristic pertaining to the past, although they are not said to be “severed” from the other two characteristics [pertaining to the present and future]. When the dharma abides in the future period of time, it is currently conjoined with the characteristic pertaining to the future, although it is not said to be “severed” from the other two characteristics of [of the past and present]. When the dharma abides in the present period of time, it is currently conjoined with the characteristic pertaining to the present, although it is not said to be “severed” from the other two characteristics [pertaining to the future and past].

『說「相異」者，彼謂『諸法於世轉時，由相有異，非體有異。』——世法有三世相；一相正合；二相非離。如人正染一女色時，於餘女色，不名「離染」。如是諸法住過去世時，正與過去相合；於餘二世相，不名為「離」。住未來世時，正與未來相合，於餘二世相，不名為「離」。住現在世時，正與現在相合。於餘二世相不名為離。』¹³⁶

Each factor in abiding in the present, is simultaneously conjoined with its “characteristic of abiding” 住相; and yet, it is not said to be “severed” 離 from the other three characteristics.

Vasumitra 和須密

The third theory enumerated in Jizàng’s commentary to the “Contemplation of Time” is that propounded by Vasumitra, whose view Jizàng thus summarizes:

The third theory is of the difference of time, which corresponds to Vasumitra. Just as if a single factor pertains to three temporal periods; just as in [the different actions of] receiving, sending off or currently looking at [the same factor] and thus serve to differentiate the three temporal periods. Just as if today were the present moment, then looking at today from the perspective of yesterday it represents the “future.” If looking upon today from the perspective of the following day (i.e. tomorrow), then today is “the past.” If regarding the present as current, then one regards the future as previous and the past as subsequent. When regarding the past as current, then one regards the future and

¹³⁶ *Dà pípōshālùn*, T27, no. 1545, p. 396, a24-b1. Buddhavarman’s translation reads: 『說相異者言：法行世時，過去法，有過去相。非不有未來現在，未來法有未來相，非不有過去現在相，現法有現在相。非不有過去未來相。如人愛一女色，於餘女色，非不有愛。』 *Āpītān pípōshā lùn*, fascicle 40, T28, no. 1546, p. 295, c03-16.

present as previous. When regarding the future as current, then one regards the present and past as subsequently arising. 『第三時異，即和須蜜。如法有三世，迎·送·正望不同為三世。如今日為現在，昨日望今日為「未來」；明日望為「過去」。正現在，曾未來當過去。正過去，曾未來、曾現在。正未來，當現在·當過去。』¹³⁷

Jizàng's summary makes reference to the “reverse” temporal sequence commonly advocated by the Vaibhāṣika thinkers, which traces the migration of dharma-s through the “future,” “present,” and “past”. Anchō's sub-commentary supplements this interpretation, describing the course of “causal efficacy” (*kāritra* 作用) from its latency in the future, to manifestation in the present moment, and dissipation into non-existence in the past:

The third theory corresponds to Vasumitra who relies upon the notion of “causal efficacy” (*kāritra* 作用) to establish the difference between the state (*avastā*) [of factors]. He says: “as for the causal efficacy of the various dharma-s, the state of the [causal efficacy] not yet having come into existence is the ‘future,’ the stage of the existence of causal efficacy serves as the ‘present,’ and the stage of the causal efficacy having passed away is the ‘past.’ It is not that the substance (*dravya*) [of the factor] differs [throughout time].” 『此第三世友說，以就「作用」，位有差別，謂：『諸法作用，未有為「未來」，有作用時，為「現在」；作用已滅，為「過去」。非體有殊。』

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As Anchō's commentary elucidates, Vasumitra's theory of time rests upon the difference between the “state” (*avasthā*)¹³⁹ of factors 位有差別. The movement of factors through times traces their change of state along a temporal series.

The account in the VS and in the East Asian commentators centers on the relationship between the “state” of the factor (*avasthā*) 位, its “substance” (*dravya*) 體 and inherent self-nature (*svabhāva*). Along these lines, what is the relationship between *avasthā* 位 and *kāla* 時? Vasumitra's doctrine purports to explain the continued existence of the factor's *svabhāva* while accounting for the changing temporal orientation of the factor:

¹³⁷ T42, no. 1824, p. 130, c19-22.

¹³⁸ T2255, no. 65, p. 202, c20-21.

¹³⁹ Rendered by Xuánzàng as qǐ 起 or wèi 位 – see Dhammajoti, *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma*, pp. 150-1.

Those who speak of the difference of time (*kāla*) say: “when the dharma is coursing through the stages of time (*adhvānaḥ*), due to the change of time periods, the dharma arises with respect to different names; it is not that its substance changes. Just as in calculating with the counting rod, the initial position corresponds to the “ones digit,” a single rotation corresponds to the “tens digit,” and a further rotation corresponds to the “hundreds digit.” In arriving on the sum of ten million, there is a single counting rod. Through the rotation of the rod there emerge various names. The dharma is just like this. Thus those who speak of the difference of temporal stages (*adhvānaḥ*) are said to be without error, as they speak in relation to the causal activity of the factor, which further corresponds to the three periods of time. If the dharma does not yet have causal efficacy, it is called “the future.” The elapsing of the causal efficacy is called “the present,” while the passing away of the causal efficacy is called “the past.”

『說時異者言：『法行世時，以時異，故生於異名，非其體異。』譬如算籌：初下名「一」，一轉名「十」，復轉名「百」。如是至千萬，算籌是一。轉其處故，有種種名。』彼亦如是。如是說「世」者，名「不嬈亂」，說以所作故，便有三世。若法未有所作，名「未來」。已作名「現在」；所作已滅，名「過去」。』¹⁴⁰

As excerpted above, the canonical Vaibhāṣika account describes Vasumitra’s theory as being free from error. Frauwallner writes: “For according to the doctrine which was already held by the Sarvāstivāda at the that time, which sees in all things a chain of consecutive moments, there is also successiveness in the past and in the future, and thus there must also be a present and a future in the past, as well as a past and a present in the future. Thus, it was Vasumitra’s doctrine which eventually prevailed.”¹⁴¹

Jizang’s critique unfolds upon the lines of his inquiry into the sequential relationship between the *saṃskṛta-lakṣaṇa-s*. If the change in *lakṣaṇa* is initiated by some sort of causal efficacy, and the four *lakṣaṇa-s* subsist in a single moment, how might we account for the arising of the causal efficacy vis-à-vis that of the *svabhāva* of the original dharma 本法?

Regarding the relationship between the *avasthā* and the essential nature or *svabhāva* of factors, fascicle 17 of Xuánzàng’s translation of the *Mahāvibhāṣāśāstra* 《阿毘達磨大毘婆沙論》 reads:

Because the *avasthā* (of the fruit [phala]) coheres into the *kāritra* (zuòyòng) it is

¹⁴⁰ *Āpītan pīpōshālūn*, fascicle 40 《阿毘曇毘婆沙論·卷第四十》, T28, no. 1546, p. 295, c18-22.

¹⁴¹ Frauwallner (1995), p. 189.

different from the essential nature (of a fruit). The *avasthā* and the essential nature are neither identical nor disjoined; whereas the essential nature exists at all times, its *avasthā* does not. 『以和合作用位果非體果。位與體非即·非離；體雖恒有而位「非恒」。』¹⁴²

According to the above description, the *svabhāva* correlates to an “eternal” 恒 existence throughout the three periods of time. Unlike the causal efficacy of conditioned factors, which is evanescent 剎那滅, the *svabhāva* subsists continuously 法體恆有. Real factors are defined by their adherence to a *svabhāva*, and yet their distinctive function elapses after a single moment.

According to Vasumitra's theory, which makes recourse to the theory of *kāritra* to distinguish between different periods of time, how does the *kāritra* or causal efficacy come into being? The generation and elapsing of *kāritra* clearly requires time in which to operate. Furthermore, there seems to be a sequential relationship between the generation of the *samskr̥ta lakṣaṇa-s* and the exertion of their distinctive functions, and yet, would the admission of a diachronic sequence then not contradict the definition of “one moment”? The issue of how the apparent sequence of the conditioned characteristics is reconciled to the doctrine of synchronous causation has continuously puzzled commentators.

Buddhadeva 佛陀人

The following Sarvāstivāda theoretician mentioned in Jizàng's commentary is Buddhadeva. Anchō transliterates his name as Fótuó típō 佛陀提婆, as according to the old Chinese translation of the MVS,¹⁴³ although he is known as Juétiān 覺天 in Xuánzàng's translation of the MVS.¹⁴⁴

Buddhadeva's theory of time perhaps might best be seen as an means to account for the eternal existence of the *svabhāva*, while attempting to avoid the potentially infinite regress of time periods that the previous three theories fall prey to.

¹⁴² T27, no. 1545, p. 87, b23-24; Sanskrit reconstruction from Dhammajoti (2007), p. 167.

¹⁴³ *Chūron-soki*, T2255, no. 65, p. 202b24

¹⁴⁴ Professor Robert E. Buswell, Jr. “Buddhadeva: Materials Towards and Assessment of his Philosophy,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 25 (1997), p. 568. Paul Williams, “Buddhadeva and Temporality,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 25 (1997), pp. 279-294.

According to Jizàng's commentary, which draws from the old translation of the VS, Buddhadeva stance can be summarized as “the constant changing of the three times”(anyonyathāva 三世異異).¹⁴⁵

If the single *kṣaṇa* serves as the present moment, the remaining nine *kṣaṇa*-s serve as the future, and there is no past. If the second *kṣaṇa* serves as the present moment, then the previous *kṣaṇa* is the past, and the remaining eight *kṣaṇa*-s serve as the future. Thus, the tenth *kṣaṇa* serves as the present, the ninth as the past, and there is no moment pertaining to the future. Now I say: “this runs havoc with the three times!” 『如一剎那為「現在」，餘九為「未來」，未有「過去」。第二剎那為「現在」，第一為「過去」，八為「未來」。如是，第十為「現在」，九為「過去」，無「未來時」。今謂：為大亂三世。』¹⁴⁶

Anchō further commentates:

[For Buddhadeva,] one period of time actually pertains to three periods of time. For instance, the past pertains to three periods of time such that the moments immediately previous and subsequent to the past are called “past” and “future.” This very moment within the past is called “past.” The present and future moments are likewise. 『一世則有三世，過去世有三世；過去世前·後剎那，名過去·未來。過去世中剎那名「過去」。現在·未來世亦如是。』¹⁴⁷

Anchō's commentary fleshes out this reading with a passage from the MVS:

Those who speak of difference in transformation, speak of the opposition between dharma-s, *samskāras* and time (*adhvan*). Due to the previous and subsequent factors, in their arising [such factors] assume different names. Just as a single woman is both referred to as a daughter and as a mother; from the perspective of her mother, she is called “daughter,” from the perspective of her daughter, she is called “mother.” Thus, while dharmas course through time, in their previous and subsequent arisings they undergo differences in transformation. 『說「異異」者，言「法·行·世峙」。以前·後，故生異名。猶如一女，亦名為「女」、亦名為「母」。以其有母，故名「女」。以其有女，故名「母」。如是法行世時，以前後生於異。』¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ Classical Sanskrit reconstruction from Williams (1997), p. 284.

¹⁴⁶ ZGLS, T42, no. 1824, p. 130, c25-27.

¹⁴⁷ *Chūron soki*, T2255, no. 65, p. 203, a09-10.

¹⁴⁸ *Chūron soki*, T2255, no. 65, p. 203, a05-07.

The dharma assumes different designations as “prior to,” “simultaneous with,” and “subsequent to,” in relation to the surrounding factors -- just as a single woman can be referred to as either a mother or daughter, depending on the perspectives of her mother (“prior to”) or daughter (“subsequent to”).

In a 1977 article, Paul Williams illuminates Buddhadeva's conception of temporality with reference to J.M.E. McTaggart's well-known distinction between A-Series and B-series models of time. In short, the A-series represents events in terms of their changing temporal status from future (A), present (B), and past (C). The B-series, on the other hand, represents events in terms of their relationship to each other in terms of ‘prior to’ (X), ‘simultaneous with’ (Y), and ‘after/subsequent’ (Z).

Williams characterizes Buddhadeva as a B-series explanation: for Buddhadeva, when one event is before another it always precedes it, regardless of the shifting status of events in terms of the past, present, and future moments. This sequential relation between events maintains, despite the constantly-shifting flow of the A-series. For Buddhadeva, each factor pertains to three temporally-discriminated statuses in relation to the surrounding factors.

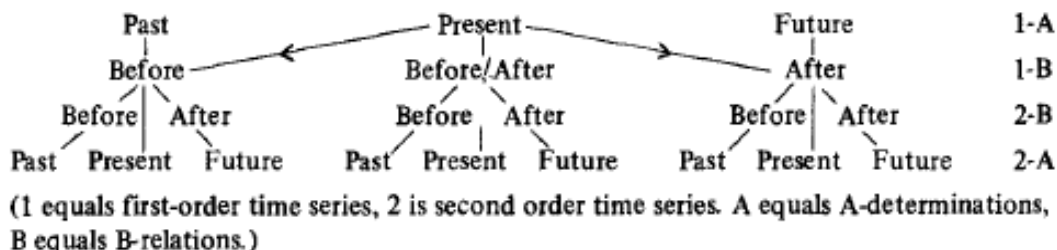
Although Buddhadeva is clearly applying a B-series model in this case, Williams argues that he yet resorts to a notion of spatiality deriving from the A-series model. Williams writes: “and this brings us to what is in fact the primary flaw in Buddhadeva's treatment of the present time – that he is using the terminology of B-relations while still containing in his mind the model supplied by an understanding of the A-series in ms terms of spatiality, that is, that the present time is somehow between past and future in the same way that the four inch marks between the three and five inch marks on a ruler. This is clearly not the case, since ‘between’ is a relative term that takes as its points of reference the two independently established positions on either side, whereas ‘before’ and ‘after’ as B-relations are before and after something, which must itself be the independently established point.”¹⁴⁹

Jizang critiques Buddhadeva's theory of time as “the three periods of time operate as 10 moments, which are indeterminate 三世為十剎那無定, exploiting a supposed inconsistency to refute Buddhadeva's argument. Anchō draws from this critique by demonstrating the confusion when the B-series and A-series are correlated. In short, each period of time within the A-series of “future,” “present,” and “past” is demarcated by the immediately adjacent moments. Each moment within the A-series thus matches up with three moments. There is a present and a future inherent in the

¹⁴⁹ Williams (1997), p. 287.

past, and a past and present in the future.

Williams illustrates the argument against Buddhadeva, presented within the MVS, through the following diagram:¹⁵⁰



The above diagram depicts the coexistence in any one period of time of the two determinations of A-Series and B-series. Simultaneous contradistinctions between the 3 periods of time maintain in the case of relational sequence of the first- and second-order B series, although the second order A-series yields a potentially infinite regress.

Buddhadeva's basic point seems to be that while the A, B, C status of any particular event changes throughout time, its X,Y,X relations maintain. And yet, the East Asian commentators Jízàng and Anchō read Buddhadeva as misconstruing the distinction between the relational and spatial model. That is, to present the B-series relational model in terms of "past," "present," and "future" confuses the issue by seeming to indicate spatial contradistinctions between events. Jízàng and Anchō exploit this inconsistency in Buddhadeva's argument as presented in the VS. As Paul Williams writes: "the conception of a spatial structure of time lies at the very root of the Sarvāstivādin difficulty over the real existence of past and future events, since to think of the present in terms of an analogy with the spatial position 'between' is to think that the two terms on either side must have existential reference in the same way that to be between necessitates the existence of those elements which the entity is said to occur between."¹⁵¹

The old MVS offers the following critique of Buddhadeva's doctrine:

The factor thus operates in time, as its generation differs between previous and subsequent perspectives -- it is not that its specific period of time or substance changes. Thus those who propose such a theory are said to be at fault. Why? Because each period of time thus would thus pertain to three periods of time; for instance, the past contains three periods of time. The two moments immediately preceding and subsequent to the past are called the "past" and the "future," while the moment pertaining to that past

¹⁵⁰ Williams (1997), p. 289.

¹⁵¹ Williams (1997), p. 288.

period of time is called the “past.” The same goes for the present and future periods of time. 『如是法行世時，以前後生於異，非時異、體異。如是說者，則名燒亂。所以者何？一世則有三世，過去世有三世。過去前後二剎那，名過去·未來·過去中剎那，名「過去」。現在·未來世亦如是。』¹⁵²

Again, the Vaibhāṣika account further confuses Buddhadeva's usage of the B-series by applying the spatial designations of “past,” “present,” and “future.” As Williams concludes his 1977 article: “to know that Buddhadeva's theory is an example of a B-series explanation is to explain why it is that his theory seems to be of a completely different sort from those of the other three Sarvāstivādin masters. Their theories, which rely on explaining change of temporal determinations in terms of spatial model combined with a metaphysical theory, confused even more in the case of Ghoṣaka by a misleading analogy, completely miss the point as explanations of events in time simply because the changes in characteristics (Dharmatrāta) or operation of *kāritra* (Vasumitra) require time in which to operate and thus give rise to a completely vicious infinite regress. Buddhadeva's theory is logico-linguistic, nor metaphysical in that sense, and this suffices to place in on a completely different level of philosophical subtlety from the views of the others.”¹⁵³

Dārṣṭantikas 譬喻部

The discussion of the Dārṣṭantikas within Jizàng's commentary centers around their notion of “eternal time”:¹⁵⁴

The Dārṣṭantikas and others proclaim that there is a distinct substance of time: although the factors pertain to the material and mental aspects, time is neither a material nor mental factor. 『如譬喻部等謂：別有時體，「法」是「色心」；時非「色心」¹⁵⁵。』

¹⁵² T28, no. 1546, p. 295, c26-29.

¹⁵³ Williams (1977), pp. 290-1.

¹⁵⁴ Dhammajoti (2007), p. 145.

¹⁵⁵ Jizàng writes: “according to the doctrine of the Sarvāstivādins there are said to be three types of factors: first, material factors; secondly, mental factors; and thirdly, those factors which are neither material nor mental.” 就薩婆多義明法有三種。一者色法。二者心法。三者非色非心法。T42, no. 1824, p. 76, c26-28.

The Dārṣāntikas say: there is a distinct substance of time, which is neither material nor mental. This substance is eternal, although the factors are impermanent. This factor operates within time, just as a person moves from room to room, or a thing moves from vessel to vessel. 『譬喻部云：別有時體，非色非心。體是常，而法是無常。但法於是時中行，如人從房至房，如物從器至器。』¹⁵⁷

Does the Dārṣāntika theory entail a hypostization of time as an “eternal,” metaphysical ground? Indeed, the old translation of the MVS offers such an interpretation of the Dārṣāntika doctrine:

Just as the Dārṣāntikas¹⁵⁸ proclaim: **“the stages (advānaḥ) of time are eternal, although conditioning factors (saṃskāraḥ) are impermanent. When the conditioning factors operate in time, they are like things moving from one vessel to another, or just like many people moving from one house to another house. The various conditioning factors are like this.”** In order to refute the proponents of this theory we thus clarify: “conditioning factors are themselves time; time is in itself the conditioning factors.”

『如譬喻者，作如是說：『世是常，行是無常。行行世時，如物從器至器，猶如多人，從一舍至一舍。諸行行世，亦復如是。』為止如是說者意，亦明：『行即是世，世即是行。』』¹⁵⁹

While the Dārṣāntikas speak of activity (vyāpāraḥ)¹⁶⁰ as impermanent, time itself becomes a permanent entity. *Advānaḥ* 世體 is an individual entity in its own

¹⁵⁶ *Zhōngguān lùnshū* 《中觀論疏·觀去來品》，T42, no. 1824, p. 56, a23(03).

¹⁵⁷ ZGLS, T42, no. 1824, p. 130, c7-8.

¹⁵⁸ Xuánzàng’s translation of the MVS mentions that this theory also pertains to that held by the *Vibhajyavādins* 分別論師 – see *Āpidámó dàpípóshālùn*, fascicle 76. 《阿毘達磨大毘婆沙論·卷第七十六》：『如譬喻者·分別論師，彼作是說：『世體是常，行體無常；行行世時，如器中果，從此器出轉入彼器。亦如多人從此舍，出轉入彼舍，諸行亦爾。從未來世，入現在世；從現在世，入過去世。』為止彼意顯「世」與「行體」無差別，謂：「世」即「行」，「行」即是「世」。』。See Dhammajoti’s analysis of this passage from the MVS, *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma*, p. 146.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁹ T28, no. 1546, p. 293, c22-25.

¹⁶⁰ Frauwallner (1995), p. 206.

right which is independent from *samskāras*.¹⁶¹ Frauwallner thus describes the Dārṣṭantika theory as distinct from the orthodox Vaibhāṣika doctrine in entailing the hypostization of “time” to an entity: “we can thus say that in the question of the past and future, the doctrine of the Dārṣṭantika was initially wholly based on the Sarvāstivāda, and that at first, they only differed from the orthodox school in the assumption of time (*kālaḥ*) as an entity in its own right. It was only gradually that greater differences began to develop. But that this happened slowly and that an open break was avoided for a long time is evident from the fact that until quite a late date it was emphasized that the existence of past and future was not denied but that a simple claim was made for an existence in another form.”¹⁶²

Chapter 4: Jizàng's Analysis of Time

Within the above discussion, we have clarified the lines of Jizàng's critique of the Ābhidharmika doctrines regarding time, rooted in Jizàng's ardent Mādhyamika stance. Jizàng's anti-substantialist position emerges from his reading of the Mādhyamika commentarial tradition initiated by Piṅgala. Nāgārjuna does not mention the Sarvāstivādins by name in his verses, although this represents a line of argument drawn into a polemical stance in Piṅgala's commentary, directed against various doctrinal points synonymous with the Sarvāstivādins.

In the “Analysis of Becoming and Dissolution,” 〈觀成壞品〉 Nāgārjuna sets his sights on the target ontology rooted in the doctrine of momentariness (*kṣaṇabhāṅga*). Nāgārjuna concludes that if we cannot resolve the issue of conventional phenomena by dividing them into a series of momentarily arising, constantly ceasing entities. As Piṅgala 青目 commentates: “Real substances are inapprehensible” 『實事不可得。』¹⁶³ The opposite entities 相違法 of becoming 成 and dissolution 壞, coming and going, birth and death are linked within a mutually dependent relationship. Each of these factors is inextricably enmeshed within the larger stream of causes and conditions, and cannot be envisioned apart from the stream of transformation unfolding through time. As Nāgārjuna states in the last verse of the chapter: “If it is not to be found within the three times, what temporal continuity exists?” 『若三世中無，何有有相

¹⁶¹ *Āpidámó dàpípóshālùn*, fascicle 135, T27, no. 1545, p. 700, a26.

¹⁶² Frauwallner (1995), p. 208.

¹⁶³ T30, no. 1564, p. 28, a29(05).

續？』 Combination and dissolution are not said to occupy some sort of transtemporal existence, and are in fact inapprehensible when separated from the broader context of transformation. The conception of time that the Sarvāstivādins propose, to Jízàng, is rooted in their conception of the various “real existents”實有法 which course through time, as if immune to senescence.

Of course, even in the Sarvāstivādin context, dharma-s are in a direct sense dependent upon causes and conditions which engender such factors and serve to facilitate their operation through the three periods of time. Thus the Sarvāstivādins were led to develop models of causation based upon the 6 *hetus* 六因 and the four *pratyaya*-s 四緣. Jízàng is aware of this context, and turns to the refutation of these theories in his commentary on the “Contemplation of Causality”〈觀因緣品〉.

The refutation of these hallmark Sarvāstivādin doctrines goes hand in hand with the polemics directed against the “Abhidharma Tradition”毘曇宗 which is characterized as a textual faction that values “the teaching of causes and conditions”因緣宗 over the teaching of *śūnyatā*.¹⁶⁴

In stating that factors possess an individual essence, there is no need to posit supporting conditions or causes. Thus, [this line of argument] does away with causes and conditions, thus doing away with emptiness. In doing away with emptiness, you do away with the Two Truths and the Middle Path. 『汝見法有「自體」，則不須假「緣」、藉「因」，故破「因緣」。破「因緣」，則破「空」。破「空」，則破「二諦」、及「中道」。』

As Jízàng states, to posit an immutable “essence” adhering to factors, renders any supporting conditions or causes as irrelevant. And yet, the nihilistic view of denying causes and conditions would yield a vicious regress which parasitically eliminates the prospect of Buddhist cultivation *via* the *mārga*. Emptiness is precisely the emptiness of causes and conditions; without causes and conditions there is no prospect for the realization of emptiness.

Jízàng lambasts the *Tattvasiddhi* masters for simplistically describing the goal of the Buddhist practice as a “annihilation”斷滅 of attachments, with no account of the “unconditioned” wisdom of the Buddha. Thus Jízàng envisions of the “discernment of non-arising”無生觀 as an underlying soteriological goal of Buddhist practice. This viewpoint this serves to validates the mundane realm, while demonstrating the

¹⁶⁴ *Zhōngguānlùn-shū*, “Contemplation of Causes and Fruits,”《中觀論疏·因緣品第一》reads: “Just as the Old Dīlūn Masters discussed the meanings of the four traditions, speaking of the Ābhidharmikas as the ‘Tradition of Causes and Conditions,’ the *Tattvasiddhi* Masters as the ‘Tradition of Provisional Teaching,’ the teaching of the *Prājñāpāramita* as that of the ‘Unreal Emptiness,’ and of the teaching of the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* as the ‘True Source Teaching,’ 『如舊地論師等辨四宗義：謂毘曇云是「因緣宗」；《成實》為「假名宗」；波若教等為「不真宗」。涅槃教等名為「真宗」。』 T42, n1824, p. 7, b5-06.

capability for the transformation of mundane phenomena into “unconditioned” awareness.

Among the disputants there are two models of the three times: the first is based upon the real factors, while the second is based upon the provisional existents which undergo transformation throughout the three times, passing from the past into the present, and migrating from the present into the future. If there were no arising *via* the four conditions (*pratyaya*-s), then what coming and going would there be throughout the three times? Thus, we use the example of coming and going to establish the meaning of “arising.” Now, the refutation of “coming and going” serves to establish the discernment of non-arising. There are two discernments: the first being the discernment which is limited to conventional phenomena 約於事觀. The discernment of phenomena is to observe coming and going, stillness and motion with ones very eyes and to thus elucidate the complete non-existence [of such phenomena]. The second discernment is the discernment of principle which is to observe directly the of the non-arising of the four conditions as object. 『論人有二種三世：一、實法三世；二、假名轉變三世。從過去來現在，現在轉作未來。若無四緣之生，寧有三世來去？故舉去來以成「生義」。今破去來為成「無生觀」也。有二種觀：一、約於事觀。事觀者，觀即目所見動·靜、去·來，明無所有。二、理觀者，直觀「四緣」無有生義。』

In the above passage, Jízàng sets out a bipolar pattern of contemplative praxis consisting of the “discernment of principle” and the “discernment of phenomena.” The discernment of phenomena (*shiguān* 事觀) entails the contemplation of “stillness” and “motion;” while the discernment of principle reveals the insight into non-rebirth. Jizang’s bifurcation of the discernments accounts for a provisional awareness into the realm of phenomena. This discernment validates the realm of phenomenal flux as the very basis for Buddhist praxis and contemplation, and yet always points towards the prospect of the adept’s realization of the ultimately chimerical nature of phenomenality. The so-called “refutation of time” 破時 is yet, at the same time, the validation of time as a useful fiction.

Jízàng’s apophatic approach extends to the vast swath of Buddhist doctrinal topics. His apophatic pronouncements caution against the uncritical acceptance of false views. And yet, an abject denial of the instrumental role of causes and conditions would rule out the prospect for progressive religious development along the Buddhist path. Nāgārjuna’s teaching accounts for the constructive developments of religious evolution which rests upon the basis of causes and conditions. Causes and conditions

provide coherence and explicability, as well as a basis for religious development and cultivation, as Nāgārjuna discusses in his “Contemplation of the Four Noble Truths” (觀四諦品).¹⁶⁵

Although presented as a “refutation of time,” in his analysis of the *Zhōnglùn*, Jízàng turns to the soteriological issue of the Buddha’s omniscience (*sarvājñāna* 一切智) which penetrates universally throughout the three times. For it is this pervasive awareness into past, present and future dharmas that characterizes the Buddha’s gnosis (*jñāna* 智): “The ten kalpas are but one moment; this is particular to the capabilities of the Buddha’s *jñāna*.” 『十劫為一念，此是佛智力爾。』¹⁶⁶ Although Jízàng interpretations are marked by their unrelenting approach to Mādhyamika apophasis, Jízàng does not merely pursue a parasitical refutation of “time” without allowing for the possibility of “atemporal” awareness, as in the case of the Buddha’s omniscience.

From the perspective of the history of Buddhist doctrine, Jízàng’s *Sānlùn* commentaries provide a valuable point of reference for exploring the early appropriation of *Vaiśiṣṭika* thought within China during the 7th century. My aims in this chapter have been place Jízàng’s refutation of *sarvāstīva* in its proper historical perspective. This entails counterbalancing Jízàng’s critiques with the source material that he drew upon and appropriated in composing his commentary on the *Zhōnglùn*.

In light of the content of his exegesis on Nāgārjuna’s “Contemplation of Time,” it is clear that Jízàng largely adheres to the canonical refutations in the *Vibhāṣa-sāstra*, although he supplements this view with the philosophical approach he reads from Nāgārjuna’s *Zhōnglùn*. Jízàng further draws from the various critiques advanced by Piṅgala in his commentary, while extending and augmenting these arguments into an aggressive polemical stance directed against the “false views” propounded by the Ābhidharmikas.

The Mādhyamika analysis of time, as reinvisioned by Jízàng through the lense of the *Zhōnglùn*, entails the “emptying” of the *svābhava*-s, a move that for Jízàng is imbued with profound soteriological significance. Jízàng employs the notion of the Two Truths as skillful means to refute the “ontological” interpretation of the Two

¹⁶⁵ Piṅgala’s commentary on Nāgārjuna’s “Contemplation of the Four Noble Truths” reads: “If there were no arising and no ceasing there would be no four truths, and if there were no four truths, there would be no cognizance of suffering, cutting-off of accumulation, realization of cessation or cultivation of the Way. Without cognizance of suffering, cutting-off of accumulation, realization of cessation and cultivation of the Way there would not be the four *śramana*-fruits.” 『若無生無滅則無四諦。四諦無故，則無見苦·斷·集·證滅修道。見苦斷·集·證滅修道無故，則無四沙門果。四沙門果無故。』. T30, no. 1564, p. 32., 28-29.

¹⁶⁶ ZGLS, T42, no. 1824, p. 131, c19.

Truths as indicating graduated states of being, as in the Sarvāstivādin notion of “conventional existents” (*saṃvṛṭi-sat* 世俗有) and “real existents” (*paramārtha-sat* 勝義有). Jizàng perceives this misreading of the Two Truths as distinct “truth realms” 境界 in the *Tattvasiddhi-śāstra*'s progressivist conception of emptiness, in which each “real factor” 實法 composing conventional existence is gradually revealed to be a provisional entity 假名有, an illusion obstructing the adept's view of the universal void or *sūnyatā*. And yet, Jizàng's conception of “time” as “pure conventionality” does not render it as a sterile non-substantiality, but yet serves a constructive soteriological role as the foundation for the verbal teaching of expedient means.

You cannot proclaim that the three periods of time exist, but may merely refer to them as a provisional designation. Originally existent, now non-existent; originally non-existent and now existent, these distinctions penetrate saṃsāra and nirvāna and are all ultimately nullified. When realizing the nature of provisionality, we speak of existence and non-existence, ultimately there is neither existence nor non-existence, thus we say that there is no such locus of original existence nor non-existence amidst conditioned factors.

『三世皆不得言有，但今假名說故。本有今無；本無今有，通生死涅槃，皆是有無。若悟假名，論有、論無至竟，終是無有無無。故言三世有法，無有是處。』¹⁶⁷

There is no stable locus amidst conditioned arising, which you may neither describe as “existence” nor “non-existence;” the “Three Periods of Time” are pure provisionality. This is the fundamental purport of the teaching of provisional being 施設有 or what the Sarvāstivādins call existence arising from conditions 因緣有.

The *Tattvasiddhi* Masters emphasize the constructive role of provisional existence, as provisionality arising of causes, and as a temporal series. Jizàng thus faults the Abhidharmikas for their overemphasis on the ontological backdrop of the Conventional Truth. Just like the medicine which cures the invalid, but transforms into poison if ingested by the healthy person, there is a soteric potentiality but moral ambivalence in the notion of provisional being.

Jizàng singles out the *Tattvasiddhi* “correspondence theory” of the Two Truths in his polemical tracts, namely, the concept that the Two Truths actually refer to what is “really out there.” He identifies this with the Ābhidharmika notion of *prajñāpti-sat*. In

¹⁶⁷ *Dàshèng xuánlùn*, fascicle 3 《大乘玄論·卷三》, T45, no. 1853, p. 40a, 13(01).

this manner, Jizang demolishes the mistreading of *satya* as “truth-realms” or graduated modes of existence (*sat*). For the Mādhyamika Jizang, the explication of the “meaning of emptiness” leads to the contradiction that “emptiness” nullifies what it signifies. This is the constructive role of emptiness and which Jizang expresses as “true emptiness” 真空, as from the *Dàzhìdù-lùn*, where it is synonymous the emptiness of emptiness, or the the emptiness of the entity signified by “empty.” Is it this “sustaining” or “supportive” function of emptiness that is indicated by the explication of the meaning of emptiness, what the *Vimālakīrti Nirdeśa sūtra* calls the “Non-abiding root” of emptiness, from the basis of which all factors are established” 「從無住本，立一切法」.

The Doctrine of the Third Truth and the Problem of Temporality

Following the above discussion of the philosophical import of Jizang’s interpretation of the “Contemplation of Time” from the *Zhōnglùn*, I believe that it may be instructive to return to the issue of the Two Truths and its relation to the issues at hand. As is well established, the “Contemplation of the Four Noble Truths”〈觀四諦品〉 from the *Zhōnglùn*, represents a crucial source for the East Asian Buddhist doctrine of the Third Truth 第三諦, as expounded by the Buddhist masters of the 6th and 7th centuries. The eighteenth verse of this chapter, known by East Asian commentators as the “verse on the three affirmatives”〈三是偈〉, serves as a *locus classicus* for this theory¹⁶⁸: “All dharma-s arising from causes and conditions/ I say are identical to Emptiness./ It is also a mere Provisional Name./ It is precisely what I call the meaning of the Middle Way.”『因緣所生法，我說即是空，亦是為假名，亦是中道義。』¹⁶⁹

Kumārajīva’s Chinese translation of Nāgārjuna’s *gāthas* is famously ambiguous. Is Nāgārjuna simply saying that “Emptiness” is a provisional name, and that this acknowledgement is an instance of the venerable doctrine of the Middle Way? This conception is somewhat different from Jizang’s interpretation, who wants to read this verse as proclaiming that all conditioned dharmas are at once empty, provisionally established, and pertaining to the Middle Way. In the East Asian commentarial

¹⁶⁸ For more detailed consideration of Jizang’s interpretation of this verse, see Shì Rújiè 釋如戒 “Jizang sāndi-shuōchūtàn – yǐ Zhōngguānlùnshū duì “Guān sìdì pīn” dìshíbā jì jiěshì wéizhǔ.” 〈吉藏三諦說初探 -- 以《中觀論疏》對〈觀四諦品〉第十八偈解釋為主〉, *Zhōnghuá Fóxué yánjiū* 中華佛學研究, Vo. 5 (2001.03), pp. 291-342.

¹⁶⁹ Èrdì-yì 《二諦義》, T45, no. 1854, p. 109, a01-2.

tradition, Nāgārjuna's verse thus becomes a point of departure for speculation on the Third Truth which explains the mutual identity of conditioned factors and emptiness, and thus bridges the “yawning” gap between Provisional and Ultimate. Although there are numerous models of the Third Truth expounded in the commentarial literature, here I illuminate Jízàng's view.

For Jízàng, the performance of the eightfold negation 八不 is synonymous with the revealing of the Truth of the Middle Path 中道義. Reading from the opening verses of the *Zhōnglùn*, Jízàng applies the four-cornered negation to the four dyadic pairs “generation”生 and “cessation”滅, “permanent”常 and “discontinuous”斷, “identical”一 and “different”異, and “going”去 and “coming”來. The negation of the second either-or binome “permanent or discontinuous” yields the “neither...nor...” alternative “neither impermanent nor discontinuous.” This reveals a view of time as non-eternal and impermanent 不常, and that is continuous may not be described as being composed of durative entities 不斷.

Thus, by expressing his “Third-Truth” as the “Middle Way which is neither permanent nor discontinuous” 非常非斷中道,¹⁷⁰ Jízàng draws back to the question of time in Nāgārjuna's *Zhōnglùn*. But what are the temporal implications of this doctrine for Jízàng? Furthermore, how does Jízàng transform the seemingly tenuous result of the negative dialectic into a stable “Third Truth”?

Jízàng's use of negation circumscribes the Truth of the Middle, by describing the Truth of the Middle as exactly what it is “not.” As in Jízàng's formulation of the Truth of the Middle as the “Middle Path which is neither Ultimate nor Conventional,” Jízàng adheres to the conception of the Truth of the Middle Way as the negation of Ultimate and Conventional 非真非中道第一諦.¹⁷¹

And yet, Jízàng's Third Truth *via* negation remains tenuous at best, easily collapsing into the realm of conventionality. At the very moment when the Truth of the Middle Way is granted a provisional designation it contravenes its Ultimate status. The ineffable Ultimate Truth effaces any conventional representation; and yet, ordinary beings may only attempt to refer to the Ultimate through representations and linguistic designations.

For Jízàng, Mādhyamika philosophical practice aims at transcending dualistic thought and ultimately erasing the distinction between the Buddha and deluded beings, *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*. The performance of the eightfold negation is thus critical to

¹⁷⁰ “Contemplation of the Agent” 〈觀作者品〉, ZGLS T42, no. 1824, p. 91, b24.

¹⁷¹ *The Meaning of the Two Truths* (Èrdìyì) 《二諦義》, T45, no. 1854, p. 91, b17.

dissolving the harsh differentiation between Ultimate and Conventional. Jízàng would state that the negation of the four-alternatives or *tetralemma* might continue *ad infinitum*, until all delusions pertaining to conventional existence are uprooted and wiped out.

Although Jízàng articulates the Third Truth as the product of a “negation,” his Truth of the Middle points to a neither Conventional nor Ultimate state serving to bridge the gap between the two polarities. This attitude might be compared with Nāgārjuna who would recognize the unity of the Two Truths only when the falsehood of the Conventional is dissolved into the Ultimate.¹⁷² However, for Jízàng, the notion of the conjunction of the Two Truths within the unitary “Ultimate Truth of the Middle Path” 中道第一諦, reveals the salvific capability of the Ultimate Truth at the level of mundane experience.

Jízàng is well known for asserting the mutual identity of the Two Truths 二諦相即, through which Jízàng expresses the Ultimate and Conventional interwoven into a dynamic unity. And yet it is evident that Jizang’s “Central” Truth of the Middle Path is not a static principle, yet functions within the causative and temporal framework. This conception of the conjunction of the Two Truths at the phenomenal level is critical to Jizang’s attempt to explain the dynamics of enlightenment as functioning at the level of deluded sentient beings. The “True Marks of Reality” 實相, indicated by the the Ultimate Truth, exerts its capacity both within and apart from the realm of temporal flux.

In his discourse on the *Meaning of Two Truths* 《二諦義》, Jízàng expounds upon the correct understanding of the Two Truths *qua* Verbal Teaching 教二諦. In this formulation, Jízàng preserves the basic structure of the Two Truths in their functional aspect as didactic devices meant to guide sentient beings along the path of Buddhist practice.

This is distinct from the interpretations of the *Tattvasiddhi* masters, which to Jízàng entail the reification of the Truth of the Ultimate as a determinate principle.¹⁷³ For Jízàng, the “principle” of the highest truth is indescribable, we may only refer to it with recourse to the Two Truths *qua* standpoints 於諦. In this formulation, the Two Truths might be employed to refer indirectly to the higher mode of reference, just as the finger points at the moon, but the moon is not in the finger. The formulation of the Two Truths *qua* standpoints thus serves the skillful function of

¹⁷² See T.R.V. Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, (London: George Allen, 2008), p. 253.

¹⁷³ Èrdìyì 《二諦義》, fascicle 3. “...for the Kāishàn Temple masters clarify the Middle Path as the essence of the two truths. They aver: “the Two Truths are the singular and non-dual truth of the Ultimate Principle.” 『開善明中道為二諦體故。彼云：二諦是不二一真之極理。』T45, no. 1854, p.105, a26-27.

didactical devices meant to instruct sentient beings according to their intellectual caliber and situation.

Jízàng's readings continuously appeal to the *Zhōnglùn* in invoking the "Source Teaching" (zōng 宗) of Nāgārjuna's verbal doctrine.¹⁷⁴ The performance of Nāgārjuna's apophasis traces a continuous return to the "source," which Jízàng invokes using the graph Zōng in its connotations as both "thesis" and "source," meanings which are interwoven in Jízàng's analysis of the *Zhōnglùn*. Nāgārjuna's ambivalence surrounding the notion of the Two Truths as static polarities is paralleled in Jízàng's Mādhyamika thought.

Hirai Shunei has thus noted Jízàng's palpable anxiety regarding the Third Truth as a definitive Unity.¹⁷⁵ Indeed, Jízàng's criticisms of the contemporaneous *Tattvasiddhi* masters thus evinces a hesitance to move to the Third Truth as a hard-and-fast "principle." Jízàng's model of the Third Truth would collapse without its basis in the Conventional Truth and the underlying scaffolding that it affords. The Third Truth does not indicate an "atemporal" reality beyond impermanence, yet is interwoven into the phenomenal realm.

The Sānlùn approach stands in contrast to the Tiāntái Buddhist context, in which the "Third Truth" is interpreted as a conjunction of the Two Truths which is at once both Conventional and Ultimate 即真即俗. This model of the Third Truth assumes a further transcendent aspect as it is likened to a distinct essence 別體, which corresponds to a separate means of apprehension 別知.¹⁷⁶

Of course, this notion of a direct "unity" of Ultimate and Conventional finds no direct precursor in Nāgārjuna's *Zhōnglùn*. As we read from Zhìyī's and Jízàng's records, this doctrinal stance to a large extent found support in passages from the Sinitic "apocryphal" literature such as the *Bodhisattva Diadem Original Activity Sūtra*

¹⁷⁴ *Sānlùn xuányì* 《三論玄義》: "the *Zhōnglùn* takes the Two Truths as its source teaching; the *Bāilùn* applies the two knowledges of *upāya* and *prajñā*, thus seeking to clarify the mutual enhancement of knowledge and truth (*satya*)." 『《中論》以二諦為宗；《百論》用「二智」為宗，即欲明諦·智互相成也。』；《二諦義》，T45, no. 1854, p. 78, b09.

¹⁷⁵ Hirai Shunei, "Chūgoku sanron-shū no rekishi teki seikaku," part 2, pp. 125-7.

¹⁷⁶ *Móhě zhǐguān* 《摩訶止觀》，fascicle 3: "The Third Truth is also called the "Truth of the Ultimate" as well as the "Unitary Truth of the Middle Path," which corresponds to a distinct essence, view, and cognition; it thus serves as the mark of dispersion and coalescence between the comprehensive teaching, the Two Truths, and the Three Truths. 『第三諦亦名「真諦」，亦名「中道第一義諦」，有別體·別見·別知。是為通教·二諦·三諦離合之相也。』 T46, no. 1911, p. 28, a24-25.

《菩薩瓔珞本業經》¹⁷⁷ and the *Prajñāparāmita Sūtra for Humane Kings Protecting the State* 《仁王護國般若波羅蜜多經》.¹⁷⁸

The Temporality of Becoming the Buddha

As a conclusion to the above discussion of the Two Truths as verbal teachings, it may be instructive to draw back to the teaching of the *Lotus*. Here Jízàng invokes the analogy from the *Lotus* of concerning the development of the Three Vehicles into the ineffable truth of the One Vehicle.

According to the *Lotus Sūtra*, each of the previous manifestations of the Buddha-s point towards the prospect of his Final Enlightenment. Likewise, the Three Vehicles 三乘 point towards the climatic realization of the final, Unitary Vehicle 一乘. The Three Vehicles are distinct, yet homogenous, as manifested through the non-exclusive, Unitary Vehicle of the *Ekayāna*. As in the teaching of the *Lotus*, the development of the Three Vehicles (or Four Vehicles 四乘)¹⁷⁹ into the One Vehicle traces the religious development of the Buddhist adept in accordance the Middle Path 中道.

Permanence, impermanence; Ultimate and Conventional; Three Vehicles and One Vehicle; The five Hīnayāna schools 五部 and the eighteen Ābhidharmika sects · 十八部; the thirty odd controversies pertaining to the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, all the way to the fifty-eightfold teachings encompassing the eighty-four-hundred-thousand dharma gates – they all comprise the function of expedient means *qua* true characteristics 實相用。『常 · 無常; 真 · 俗; 三乘、一乘; 五部 · 十八部; 《涅槃經》三十餘諍論、乃至五百部八萬四千法門，皆是實相用。』

Under the rubric of the “two forms of wisdom” pertaining to “*upāya*” and

¹⁷⁷ This sūtra speaks of the “Ultimate Truth (*paramārtha*) which is the Middle Path.” 「第一義中道」; see Hirai Shunei, “Chūgoku Sanron-shū no rekishi teki seikaku,” pp. 126-9.

¹⁷⁸ Interestingly, Jízàng relies upon the apocryphal *Sūtra of the Benevolent King* in advancing the theory of the “Third Truth of the Middle” 《大乘玄論 · 卷一》: “The *Sūtra of the Benevolent King* speaks of ‘The Truth of Being, the Truth of Non-being, and the Ultimate Truth of the Middle Way.’ Thus, we are aware of the existence of the Third Truth. 『《仁王經》云: 『有諦 · 無諦 · 中道第一義諦。』故知: 有第三諦。』”

¹⁷⁹ This is the doctrine associated with Master Fāyūn 法雲法師 (467-539) of Guāngzhái Temple 光宅寺, in which the three vehicles of *śrāvaka*- 聲聞乘, *pratekyabuddha*- 緣覺乘 and *bodhisattvayāna* 菩薩乘 converge into the “Fourth Vehicle” of the *ekayāna* 一乘.

“*prājñā*” 權實二智, linguistic formulations represent a sort of *upāya* or expedient means.¹⁸⁰ This is parallel to the Abhidharma views, which operate on the level of skillful means, or provisional truth on the path of transformation.

Within the context of the teaching of the Three Vehicles, the Abhidharma is subsumed under the *śrāvaka* vehicle, which, according to the progressive development of the Three Vehicles, serves an instrumental role in the revelation of the Unitary Vehicle of the Mahāyāna.

Of course, the question of whether or not the *Lotus* itself offers such as teleological purport remains a contentious issue for the study of East Asian Mahāyāna. Does the Ekayāna of the *Lotus* represent a manifestation of the soteriological goal, or a teleology manifesting the ultimate and superior realization of the Bodhisattva path? Or does the priority of the *ekayāna* serve to objectify the “lesser vehicles” of the *Pratekya-buddha-s* and the *śrāvakas*?

Already, during the 5th-century, Chinese Buddhists such as Zhú Dào shēng 竺道生 (355-434) searched for a “subitist” doctrine of the Single Vehicle, that would take into account for and classify of the various achievements of the Three Vehicles, yet allow for the “sudden” 頓 transformation of Three into One – that is, of the “lesser” vehicles into the Universal, Unitary Mahāyāna.¹⁸¹

Of course, it is not my business here to engage these debates surrounding the interpretation of the *Lotus*, but merely to draw from the doctrine of the *ekayāna* to illuminate the constructive role of time in the religious evolution described by the East Asian Mahāyāna *sūtras*. This context illuminates the soteriological features of the Mahāyāna Vehicle as the universal, non-exclusive vehicle, writ large. For, time (*kāla*) provides as the basis for the transformation and development of the Buddhist Path, and thus serves a constructive role as the ground of religious evolution at the individual level of the Buddhist adept.

On the other hand, time’s illusive character unfolds through the realization of the emptiness of the associated factors which subsist in time. The thorough “emptying” of all *svabhāva-s* is part and parcel of the Mādhyamika approach. Jizàng inherits his preoccupation with the inconsistency and delusive character of our perception of time from Sēngzhào, to whom the deconstruction of the illusive character of time may be described as identical to the revelation of the Ultimate Truth within the realm of the

¹⁸⁰ This is a topic that Jizàng focuses on in fascicle 3 of the *Discourse on the Profundity of the Mahāyāna*.

¹⁸¹ Whalen Lai, “Tao-sheng’s Theory of Sudden Enlightenment,” *Sudden and Gradual*, pp. 178-80.

Conventional.

And yet, when viewed as the ground on which the Conventional is deconstructed and the Ultimate is revealed, it might be said that time also serves a constructive role in the Mādhyamika tradition initiated by Nāgārjuna. Of course, within framework of the *sūnyatā* teaching, time and the associated continuum of causes and conditions serves an instrumental role for religious development and in the realization of progressive insights. “Time” in this sense fulfills its role as a useful “fiction,” yet indispensable to the cultivation of the Buddhist Path.

Jay Garfield has illuminated this aspect of the MMK’s teaching which points towards a “positive account of the nature of time.”¹⁸² In other words, Nāgārjuna does not merely propose a parasitic “deconstruction” of Time, as David Loy has proposed in his 1986 article.¹⁸³ As Loy writes:

The problem with this conclusion, from a Mādhyamika point of view, is that it leaves us with something: “both ... and,” however paradoxical and anti-hierarchical, is still a solution. And as long as we identify any view as correct, our attachment to such ideas keeps us from the nondual experience to which it points. Therefore it seems better to turn each half of the assertion against the other, in order to negate any attempt at a successful description: no, there is nothing permanent, for everything is in flux; and no, also, there can be no flux if there is nothing to be in it. Each alternative deconstructs the other, leaving no residue of “lower truth” to interfere with the inexpressible “higher truth.” In classical Mādhyamika fashion, the analysis is parasitic upon the problematic duality and ends in a silence which reveals a different way of experiencing. In this way, the philosophical problem of time -- fundamentally, the relation between “things” and “time” -- is not answered, but it is ended.

Loy leaves us with the contradiction of permanence and impermanence; there is no time apart from entities, and yet no things exist apart from time. Loy highlights this tension within the tetralemma, as from Nāgārjuna’s opening verses to the MMK which expound his view of “neither identity nor difference” 不一亦不異.

Professor David Eckel has written of this Mādhyamika contradiction in light of Derrida’s notion of *différance* and of the struggle against Hegelian thought in 20th-century Francophone circles:

¹⁸² Jay Garfield, *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 257.

¹⁸³ David Loy, “The Mahāyāna Deconstruction of Time,” *Philosophy East and West* Vol. 36, No. 1 (January, 1986), pp. 13-23.

The Madhyamaka critique "deconstructs" in the sense that it brings to the surface the contradictions that lurk within particular systems of thought. It does not resolve the differences in a higher synthesis but unmasks the differences for what they are. Instead of the Hegelian *Aufhebung* that negates a previous position and conserves it by "lifting it up" to a higher level there is a *différance* that "differs" and "defers" the contradiction without leading it to a higher synthesis.¹⁸⁴

Since the 1980s with the emergence of the so-called "Critical Buddhism" 批判仏教 movement, MATSUMOTO Shirō 松本史朗 and other scholars have criticized Jizang's thought as contradicting the Buddhist teaching of "conditioned arising" (pratītya-samutpāda 緣起). At the heart of Matsumoto's critique is Jizang's usage of the tathāgatagarbha doctrine, and specifically the tathāgatagarbha teachings of the *Mahāyānaparinirvāṇa Sūtra*.¹⁸⁵

Here Matsumoto's invokes the teachings of this Mahāyāna sūtra which describes the tathāgatagarbha as "permanent" and "immutable" 常住. For Matsumoto, the doctrine of tathāgatagarbha leads to a monistic approach that relies upon the metaphysical substrate of the tathāgatagarbha which generates all phenomena. The Tathāgatagarbha is unconditioned, atemporal, and yet serves as the metaphysical substate of all temporal and conditioned factors.

Matsumoto Shiro refers to the monistic tendencies of Chinese Buddhist thinkers such as Jizang with the idea of dhatuvāda, which he sees as indicating the notion of a metaphysical realm of the tathāgatagarbha, which the Critical Buddhists see as a conception of a Unitary Locus of all phenomena antithetical to the Buddhist teaching of impermanence. Matsumoto invokes the metaphor from the *Mahāyānaparinirvāṇa Sūtra* of the "Medicine of a Single Flavor" 一味藥,¹⁸⁶ quoting from Jizang's *Commentary on the Zhonglun*:¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁴ Malcom David Eckel, *To See the Buddha: A Philosopher's Quest for the Meaning of Emptiness*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 44-5.

¹⁸⁵ MATSUMOTO Shirō 松本史朗, "Sanron kyōgaku no hihanteki kōsatsu -- dhātu-vāda toshite kichizō no shisō"〈三論教学の批判的考察--dhātu-vāda としての吉蔵の思想〉, in Hirai Shunei 平井俊榮, ed., *Sanron kyōgaku no kenkyū* 《三論宗教学の研究》, (Tōkyō: Shunjū-sha 春秋社, 1990), pp. 197.

¹⁸⁶ T12, no. 375, p. 649, b14.

¹⁸⁷ T12, no. 375, p. 649, b11-14.

Question: Why are the Eight Negations the root of the comprehension by the multitudinous sages, and yet are the root of the miscomprehension by the deluded worldings?

Answer: the insight into non-rebirth accounts for the various sages of the Three Vehicles; the delusion as to the Eight Negations accounts for the diversity of beings in the sixth realms of transmigration. Thus the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* reads: “this medicine of a single flavor has six different flavors as it flows though the different locations.” The medicine of a single flavor is the very Middle Path *qua* Buddha-nature. The Eight Negations are the Middle Path *qua* Buddha Nature which is neither eternal nor impermanent, subject to neither birth nor to cessation. Thus we know that the diversity of the six realms of transmigration arises from the non-apprehension of the Eight Negations.

問：八不但是眾聖之得源，亦是群生之失本。答：悟無生即有三乘眾聖。迷八不即有六趣紛然；故《涅槃》云：『是一味藥，隨其流處有六種味。』一味藥者即即中道佛性。中道佛性不生不滅，不常不斷，即是「八不」。故知：失於八不有六趣紛然。¹⁸⁸

Matsumoto identifies the tathāgatagarbha doctrine with the non-Buddhist teaching of the Ātman or eternal Self. The tathāgatagarbha stands for the “Unitary Superlocus” 単一の基体 of the *dharmadhātu*, the Unity from which all Diversity emerges.¹⁸⁹

The parable of the “Medicine of a Single Flavor” illuminates the Mahāyāna theme of Unity within Diversity, Singularity within Multiplicity, especially reflected in the teaching of the universality of the Buddha-nature in the Southern-version of the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*. The moral ambivalence of the teaching of the tathāgatagarbha as “True Selfhood” is not lost on Jízàng. For the teaching of the Buddha-nature is like the medicine which heals the invalid, but transforms into poison when ingested once convalesced – likewise, the teaching of emptiness may be positively instructive to those who falsely cling to the Buddha-nature as grounded in “being;” on the other hand, the same doctrine might mislead those how cling to the Buddha-nature as abiding in sterile emptiness. Likewise, the sutra-s speaks of the “permanence” of the Buddha-nature in order to remedy the harmful clinging to “impermanent” things; conversely, he expounds “impermanence” to instruct those deluded beings who cling to the view of “permanence.”

The *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* is a somewhat multivalent text, which employs many similies to explicate the meaning of the Buddha-nature or enlightened capacity

¹⁸⁸ T37, no. 1744, p. 67, a07-b11.

¹⁸⁹ Matsumoto (1990), p. 195.

of all sentient beings. These varied parables each serve to instruct the practitioner of the ultimate purport of the tathāgatagarbha or what it describes as the Buddha-nature (*Buddhagotra* 佛性). For instance, the Southern-version of the *Mahāyānaparinirvāṇa Sūtra* uses the analogy of the Buddha-nature as “space,” which we cannot envision in its absence, for it pervades everything – there is no distinction between “inside” and “outside.” Furthermore, it persists throughout the past, present, and future.¹⁹⁰

The characteristically kataphatic language of the Southern Version of the *Mahāyānaparinirvāṇa sūtra* unfolds from the epithets used to describe the Buddha in the Southern Version of the *Mahāyānaparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, who is said to abide in “permanence” 常 “bliss” 樂, “selfhood,” 我, and “purity” 淨; these are likened to the “True Self” of the Buddhature 佛性 which is identified with the tathāgatagarbha and the *buddhagotra*, the seed or immanent potentiality for enlightenment by all sentient beings. This notion of *Buddhagotra* is critical to the Mahayana gnosiology, and for Jizang culminates in the tripartite framework for the Buddha-nature from the Southern-version of the *Mahāyānaparinirvāṇa sūtra* 三因佛性, the three aspects of which serve to frame the progressive evolution of religious practice. Under this scheme, the comprehension of the Buddha-nature teaching is engendered by the “revealing cause of the of the Buddha-nature” 了因佛性. This refers to the generative aspect of the *buddhagotra* and likened to the the enzyme in milk which facilitates its fermentation, or the water and fertilizer that foster the growth of the sprout. These readings evoke the rich connotations of “gotra” as “seed” and “enzyme.” Jizang looks to the *Śrīmālādevī Siṃhanāda Sūtra* 《勝鬘師子吼一乘大方便方廣經》 in explicating the doctrine of tathāgatagarbha. As he commentaries in his *Shèngmàn bǎokū* 《勝鬘寶庫》：

Thus, inversions emerge in accordance with the matrix of Buddhahood. What we call the inversions arising from the Buddha-matrix is the many sentient beings who lack the capacity to comprehend the teaching of the Buddha-nature and roil in the sea of saṃsāra. As the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* reads: “The medicine of a single taste, adjusts to its gradual flow and generates the flavors of the six realms of transmigration.” Moreover, the tathāgatagarbha is established as the basis of saṃsāra. Thus inversions (*viparyāsa*) emerge in accordance with the matrix of Buddhahood. That which we call the “non-inversion that emerges in accordance with the matrix of Buddhahood” is the state of having given rise to a great aspiration to practice, but lacking the capacity to become enlightened due to the

¹⁹⁰ T12, no. 0375, p.828, b13-18.

lack of Buddha-nature. 是故顛倒由藏而成；言「由如來藏顛倒成」者，眾生失佛性。故輪轉苦海。如《涅槃》云：『是一味藥。隨其流處成六道味。』又如來藏為生死作依持建立；是故顛倒由藏而成。言「不顛倒由藏成」者，若無佛性，雖起大行大願，不得成佛。¹⁹¹

In the above passage, Jizang discusses the tathāgatagarbha as the sustaining “basis” 依持 of birth and death, nirvāṇa and saṃsāra. This is the inverted aspect of the tathāgatagarbha which manifests as “non-empty” within the realm of benighted worldlings. The meaning of the permanent and “non-empty” (aśūnyā 不空) aspect of the tathāgatagarbha unfolds through such early Mahāyāna scriptures as the *Śrīmālādevī Siṃhanāda Sūtra*, which describe the “non-empty tathāgatagarbha.” In accordance with the teaching of the *Śrīmālādevī Sūtra*, the inverted or “non-empty” aspect of the tathāgatagarbha accounts for the accumulation of merit and progressive religious development, the unfolding of the dynamics of enlightenment at the level of deluded sentient beings.

The tathāgatagarbha in its sustaining function enables and facilitates the transformative potential of all sentient beings to become enlightened; however, the persisting delusion as to the tathāgatagarbha teaching explains the suffering and unwholesome situation of benighted worldlings as to the Conventional Truth. For Jízàng, you cannot look at the “empty” aspect of the tathāgatagarbha without exploring its “non-empty” features. Jizang’s exegesis on the *Śrīmālādevī Sūtra* thus harkens back to the issue of the temporality of the tathāgatagarbha in its “non-empty” capacity to accrue merit which is not unsubstantial, which gradually accrues to engender the religious transformation from benighted wordling into enlightened sage.

The Transformation of the Verbal Teaching

The discussion of a recent conflict of interpretations provides a natural segue to a consideration of the historical development and transforming contexts of the Mādhyamika teaching.

There are two ramifications for this research: the first in elucidating the historical and doctrinal development of the early Sānlùn tradition and the second, which concerns the philosophical import of Jízàng’s commentary on the *Zhonglun*. These dual aspects trace the diachronic and synchronic contexts which coalesce in Jízàng’s analysis of the *Zhonglun*.

The consideration of Chinese Mādhyamika in its early development during the

5th and 6th centuries, reveals a certain rhetorical, even doctrinal, affinity with the Abhidharma teaching of the *Tattvasiddhi*, as reflected in their approaches to the Two Truths. However, according to Jizàng's polemics, the Mādhyamika teaching is synonymous with its critical stance vis-à-vis such "Hināyānists" as Harivarman 訶梨跋摩. In accordance with this reading of the Three Treatises transmitted by Kumārajīva, the manifestation of the Source Teaching, entails the refutation of the "Deluded Views" 邪見 of the Ābhidharmika-s, Hināyānists, and Tīrthika sects. And yet, this commitment to direct confrontation with the heterodox sects has the unexpected result of serving to facilitate an ongoing Mādhyamika dialogue with the Ābhidharmika-s that unfolds in the East Asian commentarial literature. In this context, the doctrine of Conventional Truth allows for the appropriation and eventual accommodation of the disparate teachings into their delimited roles as expedient means.

Of course, the refutation of the Sāṃkhyans 數人 and the Vaiśeṣikas 衛世 is a line of critique already approached in Vasubhandu's 婆藪開士 commentary to the *Śata-śāstra* 《百論》. This polemical engagement with the Tīrthikas and "non-Buddhist" schools illuminates the Chinese Buddhist's confrontation with the non-Buddhist schools and interlocutors in the debates surrounding the Two Truths. Given the rich contents of Jizàng's commentary which incorporates broad documentation of Indian Philosophical debates, this work would seem to represent a source of considerable value for the study of Buddhist intellectual trends into the Táng-dynasty, and might illuminate the contours of the Sānlùn appropriation of Indian thought in its transmission and consumption within Chinese Buddhist circles. Such 6th-thinkers as Jizàng, Zhiyi, and Jingyǐng Huiyuán (CE 523-592) spearheaded this encyclopedic approach to the Buddhist teachings, in seeking to reconcile the myriad teachings of the *Tīrthikas* into their panoramic classification schemes.

In terms of intellectual-historical developments, my aims in this thesis are to provide a frame of reference from which to re-examine and re-contextualize Jizàng's work vis-à-vis the transmission of the Mādhyamika teaching across East Asia, especially in light of the shifting textual and contextual terrain of the 6th and 7th centuries. The often explicit dissonance and incongruity between the normative sūtras and śāstras (such as between successive Chinese "translations" of the *Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇa sūtra* 《大般涅槃經》, for instance), reveals a contextual terrain rife for debate and doctrinal controversy.

Although traditional Buddhist historiography views the Three Treatise lineage as having "faded out" following the early-Táng period in its unsuccessful confrontation

with the new “scholastic” tradition initiated by Xuánzàng’s Yogācāra tradition, the Sānlùn exhibit vitality in Japan as the basis for the Sanron-study, memorialized as one of the 6 Nara “schools” (*Nantō rikushū* 南都六宗) of the Nārā period. Indeed, with the Monk Ekan’s 惠觀 transmission of Sānlùn to Japan *via* Unified Silla, the *Zhōnglùn-shū* provided the basis for Anchō’s 安澄 and later interpretations of the Heian scholiasts. Within the Chinese Buddhist traditions of the following centuries, the Mādhyamaka 中觀學 is forefronted in the Tiantai teaching. Zhìyǐ’s textual record is testament to his high estimation of the study of Mādhyamaka as corresponding to the “Perfect Teaching” 圓教.¹⁹²

Conclusions

In the *Lotus*, the many Buddhas and Bodhisattva’s avail themselves of every possible expedient device to lead each sentient being away from delusion and towards enlightenment. Jízàng’s analysis of the Mādhyamika teaching on time and transformation unfolds from this hermeneutical context of *upāya*. Sentient beings strive to escape from delusory names and forms, although it is only by means of skillful teachings that the Buddha’s may manifest the “Ultimate Truth.” Given that this “Ultimate Truth” is expressible only through expedient devices, its explicability may only be realized by clearing away unskillful and false teachings. For Jízàng, this entails the confrontation and eventual refutation of each of the false views and mistaken teachings. Jízàng thus might be seen as expanding upon Nāgārjuna’s apophatic pronouncements in such chapters as “Contemplation of Time,” while enacting a systematic refutation of such rival traditions as the Sarvāstivādins and the *Tattvasiddhi*-masters.

In contrast to the Ābhidharmikas, who construct theories of “time” with reference to their complex ontological systems, Jízàng draws upon the *Zhōnglùn* to reveal the illusory nature of time, albeit as a useful fiction which serves an instrumental role within Buddhist praxis. Jízàng thus attempts to move beyond a model of time rooted in “substances,” towards what he envisions as the “inapprehensible emptiness” 無所得空 of the Mahāyāna teaching.

It is the purpose of this thesis to offer Jízàng’s commentary on the MMK as a point of reference for critical reflection upon the past and future of Mādhyamika thought. In current debates on the Mādhyamika teaching and its philosophical import, the East Asian tradition is infrequently invoked, even marginalized. It is my hope to

¹⁹² *Wéimó jīnglùe-shū* 《維摩經略疏·卷第七》, fascicle 7, T38, no. 1778, p. 665, a22.

offer one 6th-century Chinese perspective on the philosophical issues involved.

Abbreviations

- T** *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 《大正新修大藏經》. Edited by Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭, et al. 100 vols. Tōkyō: Taishō issaikyō kankōkai 大正一切經刊刻會, 1924-1932. (CBETA version). Citations are indicated by the text number, followed by the volume, page, register (a, b, or c), and line number(s).
- X** *Shinsan Dainihon zokuzōkyō* 《卍新纂大日本續藏經》. Edited by Kawamura Kōshō 河村考照 between 1975 and 1989, printed by Kokusho kangyōkai 國書刊行會. Originally compiled by Nakano Tatsue 中野達慧. Kyōtō: Zōkyō shoin 藏經書院, 1905-1912. (CBETA version).

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2. *Āpītán pípōshā-lùn* 《阿毘曇毗婆沙論》, *Abhidharma-vibhāṣā-śāstra*, by Kātyāyanīputra 迦旃延子, explanations by the Five-Hundred Arhats 五百羅漢, translated by the Indian śrāmaṇa Buddhavarman 天竺沙門浮陀跋摩 and Dào tài 道泰 of the Northern-Liáng Dynasty, *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 《卍大正新修大藏經》, Vol. 28, No. 1546.
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5. *Chéngshí-lùn*《成實論》, (*Tattvasiddhi-sāstra*), by Harivarman 訶梨跋摩 Qín-Dynasty, translated by Tripiṭaka Master Kumārajīva of the Latter-Qín Dynasty 姚秦·三藏鳩摩羅什, *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō*《卍大正新修大藏經》, Vol. 32, No. 1646.
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7. *Dàfāng Guǎngfó huáyán jīng suīshū yǎnyì chāo*《大方廣佛華嚴經隨疏演義鈔》, composed by Chéngguān of the Táng Dynasty 唐·清涼澄觀, *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō*《卍大正新修大藏經》, Vol. 36, No. 1736.
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10. *Dàzhìdù-lùn*《大智度論》 (*Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra*), by the Bodhisattva Nāgārjuna 龍樹菩薩, translated by Tripiṭaka Master Kumārajīva, *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō*《卍大正新修大藏經》, Vol. 25, No. 1509.
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13. *Fóshuō guānwúliàng shòujīng-shū*《佛說觀無量壽經疏》, by Jízàng, *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō*《卍大正新修大藏經》, T37, no. 1726.
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