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Outlining the Way to Reflect (T.XV 617)

Siwei lüeyao fa 思惟略要法

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I. Introduction

1. Sthaviravāda versus Mahāsāṅghika

Much has been said about Mahāyāna, about Theravāda, etc. But looking at the development of Buddhism across the Indian cultural area, the split between Sthaviravāda and Mahāsāṅghika in Magadha's Pāṭaliputra during the reign of King Mahāpadma Nanda, ca. 340 B.C.,¹ is of crucial importance for the history of Buddhism. The Mahāsāṅghika *Śāriputrapariṣcchāsūtra*, *Shelifu wen jing* 舍利弗問經, (T.XXIV 1465) of the Eastern Jin 東晉 (317-420 A.D.), informs us that the oldest *vinaya* is the one of the Mahāsāṅghikas, and that the Sthaviras wanted to add to the rules.² W. Pachow's comparative study of the *Prātimokṣas* confirms this information.³ The synod during Aśoka's reign (ca. 264-227 B.C.)⁴ was a Sthaviravāda synod. Vibhajyavāda was declared the orthodoxy, but Sarvāstivāda was far from being persecuted. The Vātsīputrīyas had split off from the Sthaviras some time earlier.

¹ Skilton, Andrew. *A Concise History of Buddhism*, Birmingham: Windhorse Publications, 2001 (reprint of 2nd ed. of 1997). See esp. p. 48-49.

For the dates of the Nandas (346-324 B.C.): Lamotte, Étienne. *History of Indian Buddhism*, Sarah Boin-Webb (tr.) Louvain-la-Neuve: Institut Orientaliste, 1988. p. 96-98.

² Skilton, Andrew. *Ibid.*

T.XXIV 1465, 900 b 20 sq..

³ Pachow, W. (Pa-Chow Wen Tsun) *A Comparative Study of the Prātimokṣa: On the Basis of its Chinese, Tibetan, Sanskrit and Pali Versions*, Buddhist Tradition Series 31, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, (1955) 2000.

⁴ Dates given by Narain, A. K. "An Independent and Definitive Evidence on the Date of the Historical Buddha". *The Indian Journal of Buddhist Studies*, 1994. 6:43-58, esp. p. 49.

See also Willemen 2008a: 59(134).

Vibhajyavādins in Magadha and across the Indian cultural area would be renamed Mahīśāsakas. In Śrī Laṅkā a conservative reaction took place, returning to the ideas of the Vibhajyavādins of Aśoka's Magadha. They are the Theravādins.⁵ Their *abhidhamma*, said to be proclaimed by Buddha, was completed in Śrī Laṅkā with the addition of the *Kathāvatthu* in the second century B.C.⁶ This text apparently was not spoken by the Buddha. An *abhidharma* spoken by the Buddha leaves no room for any differing opinion, thus establishing an “orthodoxy”. Vaibhāṣika Sarvāstivādins would do the same in Kaśmīra, ca. 170 A.D.⁷ But Sautrāntika Sarvāstivādins, Mahīśāsakas, and other Sthaviras all had *abhidharma* texts, teaching us how to become an *arhat*.⁸ These Sthaviras had practical manuals, *śāstras*, teaching us how to practise, based on the *dharma*. That is why these texts can be placed in an *Abhidharmapiṭaka*. Śāriputra is the ultimate authority for all Sthaviravāda *abhidharma*, teaching us *jñāna*, knowledge, *zhīhui* 智慧. Mahāsāṅghikas also had manuals, teaching us *prajñā*, wisdom, *bore* 般若,⁹ leading to *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*, unsurpassed right awakening. They had *upadeśas*, explanatory discourses, in a *Peṭaka*.¹⁰ But, competing with the Sthaviras, they

⁵ Willemen 2012a.

⁶ Hirakawa, Akira. *A History of Indian Buddhism: From Śākyamuni to Early Mahāyāna*, Paul Groner (tr.) Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, (1990)1993. See p. 91.

Kathāvatthu completed no later than 250 A. D., says André Bareau in *Les Sectes Bouddhiques du Petit Véhicule*, Saigon: École Française d' Extrême-Orient, 1955. See p. 299.

⁷ Willemen 2008a: 43-47(150-146).

⁸ Willemen 2008a: 37(156), note 1.

Willemen 2004: 5, 22.

⁹ Willemen 2008a: 42(151).

¹⁰ Willemen 2008a: 65(128), 72(120).

Upadeśa, explanatory discourse, reminds one of the nine or twelve *aṅgas*, members, of the Buddha's teaching. It is just possible that the nine (four plus five?), as found in the Mahāsāṅghika *Vinaya* and in Pali sources, are the oldest set. Mahāsāṅghikas had *upadeśa* in their *Peṭaka*, and Sautrāntika-

also had meditation manuals. The Sthaviravāda-Mahāsāṅghika split seems more influential than the Mahāyāna-Hīnayāna divide. E.g. “Pure Land” Buddhism may well be of Sautrāntika Sarvāstivāda origin.¹¹ The Yogācāra of Asaṅga, a Mahīśāsaka monk, is a continuation of a Gandhāran Sautrāntika Sarvāstivāda *yogācāra* tradition. It took in (Mahāsāṅghika) Madhyamaka emptiness,¹² which in turn had been a possible reaction to Vaibhāṣika Sarvāstivāda developments. The Sthaviravāda-Mahāsāṅghika rivalry seems to be the driving force of developments. Even though the term Mahāyāna is linked with Mahāsāṅghika, as is also clear in our text, what we now consider to be Mahāyāna also comprises, *inter alia*, Sarvāstivāda movements. Early on, the Sthaviravāda-Mahāsāṅghika duality was superseded by a “one vehicle”, *ekayāna*, movement, as is seen in the *Lotus Sūtra*. But this “unique” vehicle actually seems to have originated in Mahāyāna circles, actually seems to be Mahāyāna.

The meditation manuals of Kumārajīva have a Sautrāntika first part, and a Mahāsāṅghika/Mahāyāna part is added.¹³ In Kumārajīva's Kuṣa, Sautrāntika Sarvāstivādins, at the end of the seventh century called Mūlasarvāstivādins,¹⁴ were well represented. This is obvious in the narrative art of the paintings in the Qizil caves.¹⁵ Kumārajīva was familiar with Sarvāstivāda ideas and

Dārṣṭāntikas had a long *Vinaya*, containing many *avadānas* and *nidānas*, stories. Because of the Mahāsāṅghika-Sarvāstivāda rivalry in northern India, Sarvāstivādins may have added *nidāna*, *avadāna*, and *upadeśa* to their set of nine.

¹¹ Willems 2012b.

¹² Willems 2008a: 48.

¹³ T.XV 614 and 616 are meditation manuals, rightly linked with Kumārajīva. For a study of T.614: Yamabe and Sueki 2009. Adding a Mahāyāna part to Sautrāntika manuals was very common in China. See Demiéville 1954: 349-351.

¹⁴ Willems 2008a: 45-46(148-147), 50(143) for the use of the terms Mūlasarvāstivāda, Sautrāntika, etc.

¹⁵ Ghosh 2010: 68, 71, 73, 85, 87-88, 90.

practices in Kuqa, but he became even more familiar with the latest Sanskrit literature in India's Northwest, in *Jibin* 罽賓. In his days Kaśmīra was the most important area for the Sanskrit Sarvāstivāda “orthodoxy”. Kumārajīva was the first to translate *Jñānaprasthāna* as *Fazhi* 發智.¹⁶

2. Meditation Manuals

Meditation manuals, *yoga* manuals, mainly, but not exclusively, explain what is known as a *prayogamārga*, path of preparatory application, in *abhidharma*.¹⁷ In East Asia the term *wu men chan* 五門禪 is often used for such manuals. Five gates, *wu men* 五門, lead to the first *dhyāna*. They are called gates of deliverance, *avatāra* (*dutuo* 度脫) *mukha* (*men* 門), in Dharmarddhin's *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, (T.XXX 1581: 905 b 22).¹⁸ The path of preparatory application developed from two or three exercises to quite elaborate explanations in some meditation manuals. Early Bactrian Sautrāntika *abhidharma*, as seen in Dharmasreṣṭhin's *Abhidharmahṛdaya* (T.XXVIII 1550), first century B.C., translated by Saṅghadeva in 391 A.D., knows the visualisation of impurity, *aśubhā*, and mindfulness to breathing in and out, *ānāpānasmṛti*, but the preparatory application actually begins in chapter five with the four applications of mindfulness, *smṛtyupasthāna*.¹⁹ Upaśānta's *Abhidharmahṛdaya* (T.XXVIII 1551), explains *aśubhā*, visualisation of impurity, *ānāpānasmṛti*, mindfulness to breathing in and out, and *dhātuvyavasthāna*, engaging in the elements of one's own person. Then follow the four applications of mindfulness.

¹⁶ Willemen 2008a: 59(134).

¹⁷ Willemen 2004: 4 et passim.

¹⁸ Tan Wuchen 曇無讖 (385-433 A.D.), Dharmarddhin: Willemen 2009b: XV. For the term *avatāramukha*: Demiéville 1954: 356, note 3.

¹⁹ Willemen 2006: 119 et seq.; 187, 191.

Dharmatrāta's *Miśrakābhidharmahṛdaya* (T.XXVIII 1552), translated by Saṅghavarman in 435 A.D. in South China, mentions three gates which will save us from desire, from adjusted and discursive thinking (*jueguan 覺觀, vitarkavicāra*, 908 b), and from the practice of wrong views. The text says that the first two have already been explained, and that the third exercise, against delusion, *moha*, will now be explained. Then follows the explanation of the four applications of mindfulness. These texts were, together with Saṅghadeva's translation of the Gandhāran *Aṣṭaśāstra* (T.XXVI 1543), studied in a doctrinal *Abhidharma* School, *Pitan Zong*

毘曇宗, in Jiankang 建康 (Nanjing),²⁰ fifth century. *Abhidharma* in China was Sautrāntika. It gives guidelines for meditation.

Saṅgharakṣa's *Yogācārabhūmi*²¹

The oldest *Yogācārabhūmi* in China is the work of An Shigao 安世高 (Ashkani²²), who was active in Luoyang 洛陽 between ca.148-170 A.D. He brought a *Daodi jing* 道地經 (T.XV 607), i.e. chapters 1-5, 22, and 24 of Saṅgharakṣa's *Yogācārabhūmi*. Saṅgharakṣa's complete text was later translated by Dharmarakṣa on March 26, 284 A.D. This is T.XV 606 *Xiuxing daodi jing* 修行道地經. Saṅgharakṣa was a non-Vaibhāṣika Sarvāstivādin, who is said to have been a teacher of Kaṇiṣka. It must be mentioned that a disciple is not necessarily a direct, first generation disciple. E.g. Kumārajīva was a disciple of Nāgārjuna. In chapter eight of the *Yogācārabhūmi*, 191 c 17-192 b, we find the five categories: 1. Visualisation of impurity, *aśubhā*, remedying desire; 2. Developing friendliness, *maitrī*, remedying hatred; 3. Visualisation of dependent origination, *prāṭīyasamutpāda*, remedying delusion; 4. Mindfulness

²⁰ Willems 2008a: 49(144).

²¹ Studied in Demiéville 1954.

²² Willems 2008a: 51-52(142-141).