

A Problem of the *Lankāvatāra-sūtra*

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This paper is focused on identifying the composition date of the Lankāvatāra-sūtra (Abb. LAS) by reexamining previous Buddhist scholars' opinions as well as providing Āryadeva's two commentaries on the LAS preserved in Chinese canon as new sources. In order to determine whether the LAS is later or earlier than Vasubandhu which is Buddhist scholar's' major criterion I proposed here that three different versions of the LAS were composed different times and places. Therefore, concerning with both the translating date into Chinese and the existence of Āryadeva's commentaries, the earliest form of the LAS which is a very similar feature of the four-volume version of the LAS was composed before Vasubandhu, and it is the basic text for Āryadeva's two commentaries on the LAS.

I. Modern Scholarly Opinion About the Date of Composition of the *Lankaatara-sutra*

Although the composition of most Mahāyāna Buddhist texts are unknown, still Buddhist scholars speculate about the dates in general. Knowing the date of the text would be helpful in identifying the sutra's philosophical position within the broader context of other Mahāyāna Buddhist texts. One of the most contested issues among Buddhist

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scholars is when the LAS was composed. However, like other Mahāyāna Buddhist texts the date of the LAS is still controversial.

Some modern scholars generally agree that the LAS was composed after the *Yogācāra* school. H. Ui and L. Schmithausen consider that the LAS was written later than Vasubandhu (L. Schmithausen, 1992:392-397). Likewise, in agreement with Ui and Schmithausen, Takasaki writes:

...the LAS belongs to the group of Mahāyāna-sūtras in the third period, the period after Asanga and Vasubandhu, and since it already existed at the end of the fourth century A.D., the date of Vasubandhu, to whom it was unknown, should be sometime in the fourth century, and assumes that the LAS is also one of the later compositions, since it expresses concurrently the *vijñaptimātra* theory and *tathāgatagarbha* theory, two theories unknown to Nāgārjuna. Furthermore, because of its unique doctrine of the identification of *alayavijñāna* with *tathāgatagarbha*, a doctrine that is not found even in the works of Asanga and Vasubandhu, the LAS is sometimes regarded as of a date later than Vasubandhu (J. Takasaki, 1982:546).

Some Buddhist scholars, however, challenge this view and argue that the LAS was composed earlier than Vasubandhu. Ch. Lindtner, for example, insists that the LAS was composed in Nāgārjuna's time.¹ S. Yamaguchi, after examining the Tibetan translation of the Vyākhyāyukti (P. Skilling, 2000: 297-350) attributed to Vasubandhu, found a series of verses similar to verses 135-7 in the tenth chapter, Sagāthakam, of the LAS. Building upon Yamaguchi's research, N. Funahashi (N. Funahashi, 1971:40-50) rightly notes that these very same three verses in Vasubandhu's Vyākhyāyukti are also found in the third chapter of the LAS. Based on his discovery, Funahashi asserts that the LAS was composed earlier than Vasubandhu.²

1 Ch. Lindtner, "The Laṅkāvatārasūtra in early Indian Madhyamaka literature," *Asiatische Studien/Études asiatiques* 46-1 (1992):244-279. In it, he insists that the LAS was composed in Nāgārjuna's time. However, Lindtner's idea was rejected by L. Schmithausen.

2 After Frauwallner presented the idea of two Vasubandhus, many Buddhist scholars had suggested regarding his view. The recent detailed information was presented by E. Hanson, *Early Yogācāra and Its Relation to Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka: Change and Continuity in the History of Mahāyāna Buddhist Thought* (Ph. D. Dissertation: Harvard University, 1998), 36-65. In it, she proposes that the date of Vasubandhu, who was a younger brother of

This difference in dating the LAS between Ui, Takasaki, and Schmithausen, and Yamaguchi and Funahashi stems from their different methodologies. For the former group of Buddhist scholars, the major criterion to determine the date of the composition of the LAS is related to the combined appearance of the theory of *ālayavijñāna* identical with the theory of *tathāgataśarīra*. Buddhist scholars generally consider that this idea is one of unique theories of the LAS (D. T. Suzuki, 1968). They believe that this theory was created sometime later than Vasubandhu's time because it is not found in Vasubandhu's major works. In contrast, in attempting to prove that the LAS was composed earlier than Vasubandhu, the latter group argues that some verses in the Vasubandhu's *Vyākhyāyukti* are similar to the verses in the LAS. Funahashi insists not only the LAS was composed before Vasubandhu, but also the origin of the *ālayavijñāna* is originally from the LAS. Therefore, he concludes that the LAS exists before Vasubandhu.

However, there is not sufficient evidence to support their argument. For the former group, they could not provide any evidence that the origin of the *ālayavijñāna* was derived from Vasubandhu. On the other hand, for the latter group, although they found three verses of the LAS in Vasubandhu's work, they could not prove how these three verses are related to the main idea of the LAS. Because we could think that these three verses were composed in other text, and then these are quoted by the LAS and the *Vyākhyāyukti*.

Instead, I will propose another criterion to determine when the LAS was composed. My hypothesis, in this paper, is that due to oryadeva's two commentaries on the LAS preserved in Chinese canon, the LAS should be existed in oryadeva's time. It means that the LAS was composed before Vasubandhu. However, among three different Chinese versions of the LAS; the four-volume, the ten-volume and the seven-volume,³ according to the time of Chinese translations of the LAS, the other two versions, the ten and the seven volume versions, were clearly composed after Vasubandhu's time. Moreover, based on

Asanga, is 320-400 CE.

3 T. 16, no. 670, ~ 672. : 『楞伽阿跋多羅寶經』, 宋天竺三藏求那跋陀羅譯, ; 『入楞伽經』, 元魏天竺三藏菩提留支譯, 『大乘入楞伽經』 大周 實叉難陀譯 .

Takasaki's analysis (Takasaki, 1980:339-352), the four-volume-version is the earliest form of the LAS. Therefore, it seems to me that the original form of the LAS, which is similar to the four-volume version of the Chinese translation, was composed earlier than Vasubandhu, and it can be said that the earliest form of the LAS seems to have served as the foundational text for oryadeva's commentaries.

II. The Date of Composition

Now I will direct my attention to the two short commentaries on the LAS⁴ attributed to oryadeva, a chief disciple of Nāgārjuna. oryadeva's two commentaries on the LAS were translated by Bodhiruci into Chinese in 513 A.D. Bodhiruchi was an eminent translator and translated the ten-volume version into Chinese. Just after Bodhiruchi finished to translate the LAS, he translated these two oryadeva's works. Focused on the titles of these two works, Bodhisattva oryadeva rejecting Hinayana s and non-Buddhist s four main tenets in the LAS and Bodhisattva oryadeva explaining Hinayana's and non-Buddhist's *nirvāṇa* in the LAS, it should be known that oryadeva explains what are Hinayanists and non-Buddhists' ideas of both form and non-form(dharma and adharma) in the LAS. According to Tucci's investigation, these two commentaries by oryadeva, which discuss *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa*, are related to the third chapter of the LAS(G. Tucci, 1925/26:16-17).

Here, the fundamental question is whether they are really oryadeva's works. A major problem is it is difficult to show the connection between oryadeva's two commentaries on the LAS and the LAS itself. A. Kunst indicates in his article that there are non-Buddhist tenets in the LAS:

...The *Lankāvatāra-sūtra* is a highly polemical text. As is often the case with Mahāyāna texts, the focus of attack and defense is directed towards the Theravāda and its diverse branches; the

4 T.32,1639, 『提婆菩薩破楞伽經中外道小乘四宗論』; T.32,1640, 『提婆菩薩釋楞伽經中外道小乘涅槃論』

Lankāvatāra, however, introduces polemics, both explicitly and implicitly, against the Naiyāyikas, the V aīśeṣikas, Sāṃkhya and the 'Lokāyatas.'(A. Kunst, 1980:103)

On the other hand, Takasaki and Tucci have done some preliminary research to demonstrate the characteristics of oryadeva's commentaries. Takasaki writes:

A fairly long passage discussing the concept of *nirvāṇa* in various heretical doctrines also has no counterpart in the *Sagathakam* and is therefore probably a later addition. The same contents as this passage are found in a commentary to the LAS allegedly by Āryadeva. Attribution of this work to Āryadeva is usually regarded as a pretense, but based upon the present assumption, Āryadeva may be the real author of this work, it afterward having been introduced into the LAS (Takasaki, 1980:346).

Tucci also indicates that oryadeva's two commentaries are related to some doctrines in the third chapter, Anityatā, of the LAS.(Tucci, 1925/26:17) This chapter consists of dialogues between the Buddha and a non-Buddhist about *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa*.

It should be mentioned that ironically, although Takasaki does not deny that the two commentaries on the LAS preserved in Chinese were composed by oryadeva, he argues that the LAS was composed later than Vasubandhu (Takasaki, J., *Sources of the Lankāvatārasūtra and its position in Mahāyāna Buddhism*, 1982; p.546). This is contradictory since oryadeva lived before Vasubandhu. To resolve this contradiction in his theory, Takasaki contends that oryadeva's commentaries are related to the later additions of the LAS. I consider this a doubtful possibility. At any rate, it seems to me that since oryadeva was able to compose the two commentaries on the LAS, it must be assumed that the LAS existed prior to the time that he could read and write.

Taking into consideration the contents of oryadeva's works to validate the authorship of these two commentaries, I will compare them in two ways. First of all, these two chapters, which presents non-Buddhist and Hinayana viewpoints on four main tenets (*siddhānta*):

permanence, oneness, duality, and non-duality, and the second commentary discusses twenty kinds of *nirvāṇa*, are relatively short and contain non-Buddhist tenets, especially Lokāyatika's views about all dharmas (phenomena) found in the Lokāyata chapter(T.16,671, 547-548) and the concept of *nirvāṇa* found in the *Nirvāṇa* chapter(T.16,671,549). These two sub-chapters are included in the third chapter of the LAS, entitled *Anityatā* (Impermanence), presents various non-Buddhist views (T.16, 672,607-618). The chief aim in providing non-Buddhist viewpoints is to distinguish between correct perception of the world of phenomenon and *nirvāṇa* according to the doctrine of non-substantiality of both self and phenomenon (*puḍgala* and *dharma nairātma*) from incorrect views. None of the tenets of non-Buddhist schools, however, accept the theory of non-substantiality of both self and phenomenon. Thus, before revealing the Buddha's ultimate teachings, it is necessary for one to abandon all incorrect tenets.

Furthermore, I believe that oryadeva's two short commentaries explain non-Buddhist viewpoints in order to help Buddhists understand the main ideas of the third chapter of the LAS. oryadeva's fundamental strategy, however, is to reject the two ontological extremes of existence and non-existence. R. Sonam also contributes toward the above view by examining other works by oryadeva:

According to modern Buddhologists there were two oryadevas, and the works on tantra are not considered to be by the author of The Four Hundred. There appears to be a consensus, however, that at least two other works may be attributed to the author of The Four Hundred. One is a text called The Hundred, found in the Chinese but not in the Tibetan canon, which, together with the works of Nāgārjuna, was considered of great importance for the study of the Mādhyamika system in China and Japan. The other is The Hundred Syllables, an extremely terse refutation of Sāṃkhya and Vaiśeṣika assertions, attributed to oryadeva in the Chinese canon and to Nāgārjuna in the Tibetan canon. The Four Hundred, The Hundred and The Hundred Syllables display a certain homogeneity in style and subject-matter which supports their attribute to oryadeva(R. Sonam, 1994:16).

If these two commentaries on the LAS are contributed to oryadeva, how these two works are related to the doctrine of mind-only (*cittamātra*, *vijñaptimātra*) which is considered as one of the main tenets in the LAS. It seems that although the LAS shows that all phenomenon originate from the self-mind, the doctrine of mind-only, especially the theory of *vijñaptimātra*, was established as a later addition in the Sagāthakam chapter. Schmithausen supports my assumption by showing that the Sagāthakam chapter is a later addition to the LAS. He writes:

... the quotation at LAS 169, 𑖀ff uses the term *vijñaptimātra*. This term is, to be sure, aberrant in LAS which prefers *cittamātra* instead; according to Suzuki's index, *vijñaptimātra* does not occur in any other place in LAS except for two passages of the Sagāthakam chapter which, however, does not yet form part of Gunabhadra's version. But *vijñaptimātra* is in perfect harmony with the terminology of Trīṃśikā where only this term is used but not *cittamātra* (Schmithausen, 1992:393).

For this reason, oryadeva's two commentaries on the LAS must have been composed before the revival of mind-only doctrine (*vijñaptimātra*) in Mahāyāna Buddhism. Therefore, one can conclude that the LAS version that oryadeva had access to in writing his commentary excluded the tenth chapter, Sagāthakam, which emphasizes the theory of *vijñaptimātra*. Thus, the early form of the LAS is very similar to the four-volume version of the Chinese translation.

Secondly, as mentioned above, oryadeva in his commentaries divides the tenets of non-Buddhist schools into four categories. These four categories are the same as those found in the third chapter of the LAS.⁵ Two passages from oryadeva's commentary illustrate this point:

Question: what are non-Buddhists' four tenets that Buddha does not teach? Answer: non-Buddhists' four tenets are oneness, difference, duality, and non-duality.... Those all non-Buddhists attach to impermanent entities (*dharmas*), because (they believe that) the external object exists as substance.⁶

5 T. 16, 670, 490c. "唯願爲說離有無一異俱不俱非有非無常無常。一切外道所不行。自覺聖智所行。離妄想自相共相。入於第一真實之義諸地相 續漸次上上增進清淨之相。隨入如來地相"

Because phenomena are established by the dependent co-arising, phenomena are appeared based on the convention, but in ultimate truth, there is nothing. Non-Buddhists' discrimination is fault.⁷

As seen in the above quotations from oryadeva's works, he considers the four categories of non-Buddhist viewpoints to be oneness, difference, duality, and non-duality. These four categories are also found in the third chapter of the LAS.

In a similar manner, Jñānaśrībhadrā's *Āryalaṅkāvatāraṅgi* which was written in the eleventh century utilizes the above four categories to explain all non-Buddhist and Hinayanist viewpoints (H. Hadano, 2000:329-360). In the first chapter, he gives the following explanation:

The Lord has explained the dharma with a view of dharma to yoga- practitioners who are non-Buddhist. In response to an argument (leveled) at positions involved with speculative thought, he explains the dharma, saying [it a] without permanence, without oneness, without two, and without non-duality.... These arguments, the Lord has made abundantly clear in the very *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*.⁸

Although Jñānaśrībhadrā's approach is slightly different from oryadeva's, they both classify all non-Buddhist viewpoints using the same four categories.

IV. Conclusion

Although the exact date of the composition of the LAS is still controversial, based on oryadeva's two commentaries on the LAS, I have shown that the early or original form of the LAS, the four-volume version, was known to oryadeva. However, the other two versions of

6 T. 32, 1639, 155a. "問曰。外道所立四宗法非佛法者何者是。答曰。謂一異俱不俱。問曰。云何言一異俱不俱。答曰。有諸外道言。一切法一。有諸外道言。一切法異。有諸外道言。一切法俱。有諸各執著。以為實有物故"

7 T. 32, 1639, 155c. "以彼法相待成故依世諦虛妄分別。第一義諦中無彼外道虛妄分別戲論過故"

8 *Jñānaśrībhadrā*, D: 5a and 6b: bcom ldan `das kyis mu stegs can gyi `byor pa rnam la chos kyi lta bas chos bzhad do/ rtog ger lta ba rnam la brgal ba' I lan du yang rtag pa dang gcig pa dang/ gnyis pa dang/ mi nyid pa med do zhes chos `chad par mdzad do/... rgal ba de dag nyid bcom ldan `das kyis lang kar gshega pa nyid du rgya cher gsal to/ See Hadano (1973), 10-11.

the LAS, the ten-volume and the seven-volume versions, appeared after oryadeva's time. Therefore, I conclude that Vasubandhu must have utilized the latter two versions of the LAS. Furthermore, oryadeva and Vasubandhu examined the LAS with quite different approaches. oryadeva studied the four-volume version of the LAS to present the doctrines of Mahāyāna Buddhism from an ontological approach. His examination of the four-volume version of the LAS is significant because this version of the LAS contains the original teachings on the *cittramātra*. Vasubandhu, on the other hand, explored and interpreted the two latter versions of the LAS that contain the theory of mind-only (*vijñaptimātra*) from an epistemological approach.

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