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The *Gaganagañjaparipṛcchā* and the Sky as a Symbol of Mahāyāna Doctrines and Aspirations

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Abstract: The *Gaganagañjaparipṛcchā* is a Mahāyāna *dharmaparyāya* and is the eighth chapter of the great canonical collection of Mahāyāna Buddhism, the *Mahāsaṃnipāta*. The text is lost in the original Indic, but survives in Chinese and Tibetan translations, with several passages of the Sanskrit version preserved as quotations in later commentaries. It has been regarded as an authoritative canonical source throughout the intellectual history of Mahāyāna Buddhism, but scant scholarly attention has been paid to this important text. Thus, this paper aims to provide a concise yet comprehensive introduction of the *Gaganagañjaparipṛcchā*, including its textual history, its basic structure, and its reception in Indian, Tibetan, and East Asian Buddhist traditions. It also examines how the fundamental concepts of Mahāyāna Buddhism, such as emptiness, endlessness, and imperishability, are signified in the *Gaganagañjaparipṛcchā* by the image of the sky (Skt. *gagana*), the central metaphor of the text.

Keywords: *Gaganagañja*; *Mahāsaṃnipāta*; Mahāyāna literature; sky symbolism; metaphor studies



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1. Introduction

The *Gaganagañjaparipṛcchā* (hereafter Ggn), which can be translated as “Questions of [the bodhisatva]¹ *Gaganagañja*,” is a Mahāyāna *dharmaparyāya*² and is the eighth chapter of the *Mahāsaṃnipāta*.³ As is the case for many Mahāyāna texts, the original Sanskrit of Ggn is not extant, but there are three full-length translations in Tibetan and Chinese. This text has been considered as an authoritative canonical source in the intellectual history of Mahāyāna Buddhism in India, Tibet, China, Korea, and Japan. This is documented by the fact that Ggn was translated into Tibetan and at least twice into Chinese, and that it was quoted in various commentaries and exegetical works by Indian, Tibetan, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean thinkers. Thus, adequate scholarly treatment of such an important text is required, but it has been almost entirely neglected by modern scholarship, partly because there is no full Sanskrit text available. In this paper, I will first investigate its textual history, its content, and the later reception in Mahāyāna Buddhist literary traditions as an introductory overview of the text. Then, I will analyze the symbolic image of the sky, *gagana* in Sanskrit, used to illustrate the *bodhisatvacaryā* throughout the text.

2. The *Gaganagañjaparipṛcchā*: Its Textual History, Structure, and Reception

2.1. The *Gaganagañjaparipṛcchā* in Tibetan and Chinese Translations

The complete text of Ggn is now accessible in the following secondary versions:

- (a) *'Phags pa nam mkha'i mdzod kyis zhus pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo* (**Āryagaganagañjaparipṛcchānāmamahāyānasūtra*). According to the colophon,⁴ it was translated by the team Vijayaśīla, Śilendrabodhi, and Ye shes sde in the late eighth or early ninth century CE during the first propagation (*snga dar*) in the history of Tibetan Buddhism.⁵ Consisting of eight *bam pos*, the text is composed of 175 block-print pages in the Derge Kanjur.⁶
- (b) *Dafangdeng daji jing xukongzang pusa pin* 大方等大集經虛空藏菩薩品⁷ (**Mahāvaiṣṭya mahāsaṃnipātasūtragaganagañjaparivarta*), T.397(8), *juan* pp. 14–18, translated by the

- Indian monk *Dharmakṣema (曇無讖, pp. 385–433) during the Northern Liang 北涼 dynasty in Guzang 姑臧 between 420 and 421.⁸ It is the earliest extant version and is listed as the eighth chapter (*pin* 品) of the *Mahāsaṃnipāta* (*Daji jing* 大集經) corpus.
- (c) *Daji da xukongzang pusa suowen jing* 大集大虛空藏菩薩所問經 (**Mahāsaṃnipātamahāga ganagañjabodhisatvaparipṛcchāsūtra*), T.404, *juan* pp. 1–8, translated by the Tantric Buddhist monk-translator Amoghavajra (不空, pp. 704–74). He translated this sūtra, according to the colophon of T. 404, at the Daxingshan monastery 大興善寺 in Chang'an 長安, the capital of Tang dynasty, and it was during the An Lushan Rebellion (755–63) that he ensconced himself in the Daxingshan monastery. Since An Lushan and his rebel forces captured Chang'an at the beginning of 756, and it was not recaptured by Tang imperial forces until 757, we can assume that Amoghavajra translated this text between 756 and 757.⁹

As for the textual history of the Chinese translations of Ggn, two points should be mentioned:

(1) According to Chinese catalogues, besides the above-mentioned translations, there appears to have been another translation of Ggn made by Shengjian 聖堅 (fl. 385–422)¹⁰ during the Western Qin 西秦 dynasty. The oldest extant canonical catalogue, the *Chu sanzang jiji* 出三藏記集,¹¹ describes that it was translated during the reign of Qifo Chipan 乞佛熾槃, which lasted from 412 to 428 (cf. T.2145, 14c13-15). However, the *Zhongjing mulu* I 經目錄 and *Zhongjing mulu* II 經目錄,¹² both compiled approximately 80 years after the the *Chu sanzang jiji* was composed, record that it was done during the reign of Qifu Guoren 乞伏國仁, namely, from 385 to 388 (cf. T.2146, 120a7; T.2147, 159b13-14). The *Lidai sanbao ji* 歷代三寶記,¹³ nearly contemporary with the *Zhongjing mulu* I, mentions that Shengjian translated Ggn for Qifu Qiangui 乞伏乾歸, who ruled the Western Qin from 388 to 412 (cf. T. 2034, 83b18-19). The *Datang neidianlu* 大唐內典錄,¹⁴ compiled 150 years later than the *Chu sanzang jiji*, simply refers to the existence of the “second” translation of Ggn, produced by Shenjian of the Western Qin (cf. T.2149, 55c23). Judging from these records, we can see that the bibliographic information of the second rendition of Ggn was already indefinite and inconsistent even at the early stage of Chinese Buddhist translation.

(2) It is also notable that not every text associated with the term *xukongzang pusa* 虛空藏菩薩 in the Chinese Tripiṭaka, as well as in the Chinese catalogues, is related to the Ggn or the Sanskrit term *gaganagañja*. The reason for this is that, since the earliest Chinese Buddhist translations, both words, *gaganagañja* “the treasury of the sky” and *ākāśagarbha* “the essence of the sky,” have been rendered as the same term *xukongzang* 虛空藏 by such translators as Buddhayaśas 佛陀耶舍, Dharmamitra 曇摩蜜多, Dharmakṣema 曇無讖, and Amoghavajra 不空金剛 (e.g., the *Xukongzang pusa jing* 虛空藏菩薩經 T.405 by Buddhayaśas between 403 and 413, and the *Fushuo xukong zang pusa shenzhou jing* 佛虛空藏菩薩神經 T.406 by Dharmamitra between 424 and 441).¹⁵ In the *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經, there are twelve sūtras whose titles contain the term *xukongzang pusa* 虛空藏菩薩 or just *xukongzang* 虛空藏, and among them, only two sūtras, translated by Dharmakṣema T.397(8) and Amoghavajra T.404, are identified as relevant to the Ggn or the Sanskrit *gaganagañja*.¹⁶ The same rendering of two different words such as this has often caused confusion among scholars, examples of which can be found in Visser (*de Visser* 1931, pp. 17–18) and Park (1979, pp. 127–28). In both places, one can see that the term *xukongzang* 虛空藏 is misinterpreted as *ākāśagarbha*, which should be understood as *gaganagañja*. Visser counts T.397(8) and T.404 in the texts related to the bodhisatva Ākāśagarbha, and Park fails to recognize a quotation from Ggn in his annotated translation of *Dasheng qixinlun shu* 大乘起信論疏 (cf. T.1844, 202c2-22) since he reads the *Xukongzang jing* 虛空藏經 as the *Ākāśagarbhasūtra* (see also footnote 64 in Park 1979, pp. 210–11).

2.2. Textual Structure and Content

The main interlocutor of the Ggn is the bodhisatva Gaganagañja, who came from the *Mahāvīyūha Universe (Tib. *bkod pa chen po'i 'jig rten gyi khams*), seeking the teachings of

the Buddha, namely, the exposition of the dharma (*dharmaparyāya*) called “Chapter of the Great Collection (*mahāsaṃnipātaparivarta*).”¹⁷ The Ggn is divided into two parts, which are structured into seven chapters. The first part is, as the title itself suggests, centered on the bodhisatva Gaganagañja’s inquiries to the Buddha. It consists of the first four chapters: (1) occasion (*nidāna*); (2) introduction (*upodghāta*); (3) Gaganagañja’s thirty-six questions; (4) Buddha’s answers to these questions. The second part is composed of the later three chapters: (5) Gaganagañja’s seven miracles; (6) metaphysical dialogues between various figures, including the Buddha, Gaganagañja, Śāriputra, Ānanda, and Māra, on the fundamental principles of Mahāyāna Buddhism; (7) transmission (*parīdanā*) of the true dharma (*saddharma*). This structure of the Ggn, consisting of *nidāna*, *upodghāta*, main body, and *parīdanā*, appears to be shared by many Mahāyāna texts, regardless of genre, i.e., *-nirdeśa*, *-paripṛcchā*, *-vyākaraṇa*, *-samādhi*, and *-dhāraṇī*.¹⁸ Although the main part may differ depending on the text and subject, most of the Mahāyāna sūtras have the monologue and/or dialogue part as their main body in which the Buddha, or in some cases the main interlocutor of the text, delivers sermons on the various topics of the Mahāyāna Buddhism. In the case of the Ggn, the first part, especially the third and fourth chapters, Gaganagañja’s thirty-six questions and the Buddha’s answers to them, belong to the monologue part, and the second part is by and large included in the dialogue part.¹⁹

Throughout the text, the supernatural abilities of the bodhisatva Gaganagañja are highlighted as one of his distinguishing qualities. In particular, the second part of Ggn begins with a description of various kinds of miracles Gaganagañja displays. First, he pours down rains of flowers, jewels, food, clothing, ambrosia, and six *pāramitās* all over the world (cf. D281b3-284a5). Then, at the request of five hundred widows, he sends down their husbands from the sky to relieve them and further to rouse their *bodhicitta* (cf. D284a5-b5). Lastly, five hundred magically created beings are bestowed on five hundred merchants who are in danger of robbery and death (cf. D284b5-285a7).²⁰

However, to understand the Ggn as a whole, it should be noted that such magical displays are nothing but “expedient means” (*upāyakauśalya*), which are, after all, designed to emphasize the main ideas of the text, namely, emptiness (*śūnyatā*), non-duality (*advaya*), sameness (*samatā*), original purity (*ādivīśuddhi*), and inexhaustibility (*akṣayatā*) inherent all dharmas. Indeed, except for the part of Gaganagañja’s miracle, the second half of the Ggn consists, for the most part, of a series of philosophical and metaphysical discussions between the Buddha, Gaganagañja, and other characters. Here, the understanding of such ideas is consistently emphasized as the ultimate goal of the bodhisatva, and the expedient means merely serves as motivation for *bodhicitta*.

Table 1 below presents a synoptic outline of the contents of Ggn.

Table 2 below shows a list of the topics of the thirty-six questions and answers between Gaganagañja and the Buddha.

Table 1. Synoptic outline of the contents of Ggn.

Section	Character(s)	Topic(s)	Derge	Peking	Stog	T.397(8)	T.404
Title			243a1-2	204b4-5	1b1-2a2	93a4-6	613a4-9
Part I							
1. Occasion		Opening; list of attendants.	243a2-244a1	204b5-205b4	2a2-4a3	93a7-27	613a10-b5
2. Introduction		Setting the dharma-wheel in motion; occurrence of pavilion; arrival of Gaganagañja; verses 1–30.	244a1-251b6	205b4-213b4	4a3-15a1	93a28-96a4	613b6-616a20
3. 36 Questions	Bs. Gaganagañja	See Table 2.	251b6-252b4	213b4-214b3	15a1-16a4	96a5-b2	616a21-b19
4. 36 Answers	Buddha	See Table 2.	252b4-281b3	214b3-243b4	16a5-57a4	96b3-108a6	616b20-626c14

Table 1. Cont.

Section	Character(s)	Topic(s)	Derge	Peking	Stog	T.397(8)	T.404
Part II							
5. Miracle							
	Various bodhisatvas	Rains of flowers, jewels, food and clothing, ambrosia, six <i>pāramitās</i> .	281b3-284a5	243b4-246a8	57a4-61a2	No parallels (Han 2021b, pp. 635–46)	626c15-628c17
	500 widows	Bestowal of 500 husbands; verses 119–122.	284a5-b5	246a8-b8	61a2-b5	No parallels	628c18-629a8
	500 merchants	Bestowal of 500 merchants.	284b5-285a7	246b8-247b3	61b5-62b4	No parallels	629a9-b3
6. Dialogues							
	Śāriputra	Meaning of the treasury of the sky; <i>bodhicitta</i> ; the first narrative of the past; purification.	285a7-287a6	247b3-249b3	62b4-65b2	No parallels	629b4-630a9
	Bs. Dharmarāja	Hearing of the dharma; verses 123–164.	287a6-289a3	249b2-251a7	65b2-68a5	No parallels	630a10-631a8
	Bs. *Kutūhalajāta	Sound of the dharma; profoundness.	289a3-290a4	251a7-252a7	68a5-69b5	No parallels (cf. 110c20-118a27)	631a9-631b13
	Bs. Ratnaśrī	81 Samādhis; <i>samādhimukha</i> ; the second narrative of the past; verses 165–184.	290a4-296b2	252a7-258b6	69b5-79a1	No parallels (cf. 110c20-118a27)	631b13-634a10
	Buddha	Supramundane path; the great armor; the great vehicle.	296b2-302a6	258b6-264b4	79a1-87b4	No parallels (cf. 110c20-118a27)	634a11-636a4
	Bs. Ratnaśrī	Purity of the world; purity of the dharma; <i>bodhisatvacaryā</i> ; eloquence; dependent origination; <i>dharmadhātu</i> ; matter of dispute.	302a6-305b5	264b4-268a3	87b4-93a2	116b7-12 (cf. 110c20-118a27)	636a8-637b12
	Ānanda	Meaning of <i>arhat</i> ; the Buddha's smile.	305b5-307a2	268a3-269a8	93a2-95aa1	118a28-c19	637b12-638a2
	Brahmā Prabhāvvyūha	Roots of good, merits, and knowledge; <i>ekapada</i> ; the word without a word.	307a2-310b2	269a8-273a3	95a1-100a4	118c19-120a5	638a3-639a28
	Bs. Ratnapāṇi	A concise explanation of all dharmas; verses 185–192.	310b2-314b3	273a3-277a3	100a4-106a3	120a5-121c24	639a29-640c25
	Māra Pāpīyaṇ	Disguise of Māra; the works of Māra; Māra's surrender.	314b3-318b3	277a3-281a4	106a3-112a2	122a3-123c27	640c26-642b16
	Durmukha	Son of the Māra; the first <i>vidyāmantra</i> ; ²¹ 500 <i>Vajrapāṇis</i> ; Buddha's smile.	318b3-320a5	281a4-282b6	112a2-114a7	123c27-124b29	642b16-643b8
	Indra, Brahmā, and Lokapālas	Buddha-fields; the correct view; the light of the dharma.	320a5-321b4	282b6-284a5	114a7-116b1	124c1-125a8	643b3-643c20
	Upāsaka Śrīgupta	The light of the dharma; verses 193–232; unattached knowledge; one who generates more merits.	321b4-325a3	284a5-287b4	116b1-121b2	125a8-126a18	643c20-645b17
7. Transmission							
	Four Great Kings	The second <i>vidyāmantra</i> ; keeping this <i>dharmaparyāya</i> .	325a3-325b7	287b4-288a8	121b2-122b4	126a18-c6	645b18-c18

Table 1. Cont.

Section	Character(s)	Topic(s)	Derge	Peking	Stog	T.397(8)	T.404
	Śakra	The third <i>vidyāmantra</i> ; protecting this <i>dharmaparyāya</i> .	325b7-326b1	288a8-289a2	122b4-123b1	126c6-20	645c8-646a11
	Brahmā Sahāmpati	The fourth <i>vidyāmantra</i> ; upholding <i>saddharma</i> .	326b1-327b2	289a2-290a2	123b2-125a1	126c21-27	646a12-c1
	Bs. Maitreya	Non-interruption of the lineage of the three jewels ²² .	327b2-328a4	290a2-b7	125a1-126a2	126c28-127a23	646c2-25
	Mahākāśyapa and Ānanda	Upholding the awakening of the Tathāgata.	328a4-b2	290b7-291a2	126aa2-6	127a23-b2	646c26-647a2
	Bs. Puṇyālaṃkāra	Qualities of Ggn; verses 233–238; adorning <i>saddharma</i> ; the light of the Buddha; closing.	328b2-330a6	291a2-293a1	126a6-129a2	127b2-128a1	647a2-647c8
Colophon			330a6-7	293a2-3	129a2-4	128a2	647c9

Table 2. Topics of the thirty-six questions and answers between Gaganagañja and the Buddha.

	Topics	Derge	Peking	Stog	T.397(8)	T.404
1–6	Six perfections (<i>pāramitā</i>)	253a2-262b1	215a2-224b4	16b5-29b5	96b15-100a20	616c3-620b27
7–8	Accumulation of merit and knowledge (<i>puṇyajñānasambhāra</i>)	262b4-264a1	224b8-226a5	30a2-31b6	100b2-100c16	620c5-621a6
9–14	Six recollections (<i>anusmṛti</i>): on buddha, dharma, saṃgha, tyāga, śīla, and deva	264a1-266a5	226a5-228b2	31b6-35a1	100c17-102a20	621a7-c16
15	Bodhisatva practice (<i>bodhisatvacaryā</i>)	266a5-b3	228b2-8	35a1-b1	102a21-b5	621c17-27
16	Characteristics of all beings' behavior (<i>sarvasatvacaritalakṣaṇa</i>)	266b3-267a2	228b8-229a7	35b1-36a2	102b6-26	621c27-622a12
17	Treasury of the dharma jewels (<i>dharmaratnanidhāna</i>)	267a2-b4	229a7-230a1	36a3-37a1	102b27-c19	622a16-b10
18	Essential character of dharmas (<i>dharmasvabhāva</i>)	267b4-268a2	230a1-6	37a1-b1	102c19-103a1	622b10-22
19	Bringing all beings to maturity (<i>sarvasatvapariṣkāna</i>)	268a2-6	230a6-b3	37b1-7	103a2-b20	622b22-c3
20	Thorough practice (<i>yonisāhprayoga</i>)	268a6-b7	230b3-231a7	37b7-39a1	103a17-b20	622c4-26
21	Supernormal knowledge (<i>abhijñā</i>)	268b7-269b3	231a7-b7	39a1-b5	103b21-c2	622c27-623a14
22	Guiding principle of the dharma (<i>dharmanaya</i>)	269b3-270b3	231b7-232b6	39b5-41a3	103c3-13	623a15-b1
23	Dependent origination (<i>pratītyasamutpāda</i>)	270b3-271a4	232b7-233a7	41a4-b7	103c13-104a4	623b1-c2
24	Seal of the tathāgata (<i>tathāgatamudrā</i>)	271a4-b5	233a7-b8	41b7-42b5	104a4-17	623c2-22
25	Realm of the dharma (<i>dharmadhātu</i>)	271b5-272b6	233b8-235a1	42b5-44a5	104a18-b5	623c23-624a19
26	Resolve as firm as a diamond (<i>dr̥ḍhavajrāśaya</i>)	272b6-273a1	235a1-8	44a5-45a1	104b6-29	624a20-b6
27	Realm of the Buddha (<i>buddhaviśaya</i>)	273a1-274a1	235a8-236a2	45a1-46a1	104b29-c10	624b6-c1
28	Memory (<i>dhāraṇī</i>)	274a1-275a1	236a2-237a5	46a1-47b5	104c11-105a22	624c2-625a13
29	Eloquence (<i>pratibhāna</i>)	275a1-276b3	237a5-238b3	47b5-49b5	105a22-b28	625a13-b21
30	Mastery in the arising of birth and death (<i>jāticutyupapattivaśitā</i>)	276b3-277a2	238b3-239a2	49b5-50a7	105b29-c11	625b21-c6
31	Māra (<i>māra</i>)	277a2-278a1	239a2-240a1	50a7-51b6	105c11-106a18	625c7-626a11
32	Nourishing all beings (<i>satvopajīvyā</i>)	278a1-6	240a1-7	51b6-52a6	106a19-b8	626a12-23
33	Buddha-activities (<i>buddhakārya</i>)	278a6-b4	240a7-b5	52a6-b6	106b8-21	626a24-b5
34	Concentration called the Ocean-Seal (<i>sāgaramudrāsamādhi</i>)	278b4-279a5	240b5-241a6	52b7-53b4	106b21-c16	626b6-23
35	Transcending all attachments (<i>sarvasaṅgasamatikrama</i>)	279a5-7	241a6-7	53b4-6	106c17-23	626b24-c1
36	Self-originated knowledge (<i>svayaṃbhujñāna</i>)	279a7-b3	241a8-b3	53b6-54a4	106c24-107a12	626c5-18

2.3. Citations in Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Chinese Literature

The Ggn has been quoted in many important Indian commentaries, such as the *Ratnagotravibhāga* by Asaṅga (ca. 4th century CE),²³ the *Prasannapāda*²⁴ and the *Madhyamakāvātārabhāṣya*²⁵ by Candrakīrti (ca. 600–650), the *Śikṣāsamuccaya* by Śāntideva (ca. 685–763),²⁶ and the *Bhāvanākrama* by Kamalaśīla (ca. 740–795).²⁷ The citations of Ggn are also found in the Tibetan translations of Indian *śāstras*, including the *mDo kun las btus pa* by Nāgārjuna (if the attribution is correct),²⁸ the *Cig car 'jug pa rnam par mi rtog pa'i bsgom don* by Vimālamitra (ca. 8th century CE),²⁹ the *Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa'i man ngag gi bstan bcos mngon par rtogs pa'i rgyan gyi tshig le'ur byas pa'i 'grel bshad tshig rab tu gsal ba* by Dharmamitra (ca. 9th century CE),³⁰ the *dBu ma'i man ngag rin po che'i za ma tog kha phye ba*, the *Byang chub lam gyi sgron ma'i dka' 'grel*, and the *mDo kun las btus pa chen po* by Atīśa (982–1054).³¹ Further, it is referenced in the following philosophical texts composed by Tibetan masters—the *Be'u bum sngon po* by Dolpa Sherap Gyatso (1059–1419),³² the *Tshogs bshad chen mo* by Sangye Gumpa (1179–1250),³³ the *rTsa she tik chen rigs pa'i rgya mtsho* by Tsong khapa (1357–1419)³⁴, and most recently, the *Steps of the Path to Enlightenment* by Lhundub Sopa (1923–2014).³⁵ (For a comprehensive list of references to the Ggn, see [Han 2021a](#), pp. 19–21.)

The reception of Ggn as an authoritative source is not confined to Buddhist traditions in India and Tibet. The Ggn was first introduced into China by the Indian monk-translator Dharmakṣema, who played a vital role in propagating Mahāyāna doctrines and practices in Northwest China during the early decades of the fifth century CE. Since then, his translation has had a widespread influence on East Asian Buddhist traditions, being quoted in various works by Chinese, Korean, and Japanese thinkers. Here, I will give some examples to describe its historical trajectory, passing through different cultural and social milieus in East Asian countries.

First, the second narrative of the past (*bhūtapūrvā*) that relates the story of the King Puṇyālaṃkāra (T.397(8), 294b4-296a7) was extracted with a small revision and circulated as a chapter of the *Jinglu yixiang* 經律異相 “*Extraordinary Affairs from the Sūtras and Vinayas.*” (T.2121, 146c11-147a19)³⁶ The *Jinglu yixiang* is a collection of essential passages from various canonical texts, compiled by Baochang 寶唱 et al. in 516, by the decree of emperor Liang Wudi 梁武帝 (r. 502–549) to spread the marvelous wonders of Buddhism.³⁷ This canonical anthology was transmitted to Japan already in the Heian period (9–12th century CE), and had an influence on later indigenous literature, such as the *Hōbutsushū* 物集, the *Gensenshū* 言泉集, and the *Kingenruijushō* 金言類聚抄 (cf. [Komine 1982](#)). It also circulated in Korea, as part of the second Koryō Tripitaka (*Jaejo taejanggyong* 再雕大藏經), completed in the middle of the thirteenth century CE, and has been referenced in various local texts, even to the modern times.³⁸

Second, the Korean scholarly monk Wonhyo 元曉 (617–686) quoted some passages of Ggn in his *Daeseung gisillon so* 大乘起信論疏 “*Commentary on the Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith.*” The quotation deals with the concept of “mahāyāna” (T.397(8), 114c27-115a28), in which its orientation and characteristics are metaphorically described using various parts of a vehicle (T.1844, 202c2-21).³⁹ Wonhyo is one of the most influential philosophers in the history of Korean Buddhism, and his *Daeseung gisillon so* has had a great impact on Korean intellectual history.

Lastly, Gōhō 果寶 (1306–1362), a Japanese monk who was active in the late Kamakura and early Muromachi periods, quoted Dharmakṣema’s translation in his sub-commentary to the commentary of the *Mahāvairocana sūtra*, the *Dainichikyōsho ennōshō* 大日經疏演鈔 (T.2216, 166a28-b13). The passage quoted here is about the meaning of the name of Gaganagañja (T.397(8), 108a15-26). It is interesting that Gōhō, an adherent of Shingon Buddhism, referred to Dharmakṣema’s translation (T.397(8)), but not that of Amoghavajra (T.404), who has been acknowledged as the sixth of the eight patriarchs in the history of Shingon lineages.⁴⁰

Apart from these examples, it is also notable that the Ggn may be referenced in the sixth chapter of the *Book of Zambasta*, a fifth-century Khotanese Buddhist poem (Chen and Loukota 2018, p. 138). The quotation identified (verse nr. 6. 44) has not yet been fully discussed.⁴¹ However, if this identification is correct, it can show that the Ggn was distributed not only in India, Tibet, and East Asian countries, but also in Central Asia, already in the fifth century CE. It further implies that the Ggn had, at least to some extent, an influence on Khotanese Buddhist literature as well as its religious and intellectual tradition.

3. The Symbolism of the Sky Embedded in the *Gaganagañjaparipṛcchā*

A central concept, or even the central concept, of Mahāyāna Buddhism, may be said to be that of “emptiness (*śūnyatā*).” This concept is frequently symbolized by the space, *ākāśa*, or the sky, *gagana*, as in the sūtra in question here. Thus, the sky is a symbol of emptiness and is chosen as the leitmotif of our text. The sky also becomes a metaphor for the teachings of the Mahāyāna, the *pāramitās*, the *apramāṇas*, etc., as this symbol runs throughout the whole text, being a leitmotif that is related to all the items of Mahāyāna ideology.⁴² In a study published in 1995, Harrison remarked that the key factor influencing the success of religions is not their intellectual or moral superiority, but rather their capacity to capture people’s imagination.⁴³ Since the Ggn has had an impact, directly or indirectly, on Buddhist traditions almost all over Asia, it is assumed that its authors, or editors, have achieved some degree of success in capturing the reader’s imagination, and that such utilization has probably played a significant role there. In what follows, I will briefly describe how the image of the sky is used in constructing the text, and further, how the core concepts of Mahāyāna Buddhism (e.g., *śūnyatā*, *pāramitā*, and *akṣayatā*) are interpreted and symbolized in the Ggn by the image of the sky.

3.1. *The Bodhisatva Gaganagañja—A Personification of the Mahāyāna Doctrines*

The main character of this sūtra is the bodhisatva Gaganagañja, “The One Whose Treasury is like the Sky.” He is a celestial bodhisatva, created to promulgate Mahāyāna doctrines and practices. The term *gagana* literally means “the sky, atmosphere, firmament” and is an old Sanskrit word, probably dating back to the Vedic period.⁴⁴ In Pāli Buddhist literature, it is often used in connection with the moon (*candra*), though not in the Mahāyāna context or that of Sanskrit literature.⁴⁵ In Ggn, the sky (*gagana*) is used as a symbolic image to represent various features of the bodhisatva practices (e.g., greatness, expansiveness, boundlessness, and purity), but also the concept of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) inherent in such activities, and beyond, in all dharmas.

The term *gañja* means “treasury, heap [of grain], grain store.” Its etymon is unclear, but it is probably a Persian loanword (Burrow [1955] 1973, p. 389). It occurs in the Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions from Niya (G. *gaṃṇa*, *gaṃṇi*, *draṃṅa*) and late Sanskrit works,⁴⁶ but not in any of Pāli texts. Throughout Ggn, the treasury (*gañja*) is described as the source of the bodhisatva Gaganagañja’s wonder-workings, from which he brings down various gifts, including rains of flowers, jewels, food and clothing, ambrosia, and the teaching on the six *pāramitās*.⁴⁷ Then, the notion of *gaganagañja* can be understood as “a treasury in the sky (Tib. *nam mkha’ la mdzod*).” At the same time, however, it can be also interpreted as “a treasury like the sky,” since the treasury signifies Gaganagañja’s accumulation of merit and knowledge (*punyañānasambhāra*), his roots of good (*kuśalamūla*), his resolution to awakening (*bodhicitta*), and the like, all of which are described as inexhaustible, imperishable, pure, and everlasting (cf. Part II, Chapter 6, §1–4, cf. Han 2021b, pp. 467–76). In the dialogue between Śāriputra and Gaganagañja, *gaganagañja* is explained as follows:

The venerable Śāriputra addressed himself to the bodhisatva Gaganagañja: “After you set this treasury in the sky, which is inexhaustible, imperishable, and everlasting, son of good family, how long will it last?”

Gaganagañja said: “Venerable Śāriputra, do you think the sky will be exhausted, destroyed, or disappear?”

Śāriputra replied: “No indeed, son of good family.”

Gaganagañja said: “Venerable Śāriputra, in the same way that the awakening (*bodhi*) is of the essential character of the sky, my roots of good are transformed into the [treasury]. Therefore, this treasury in the sky (*gaganagañja*) is inexhaustible, imperishable, and everlasting.”⁴⁸

In Mahāyāna literature, bodhisatva names, created evidently for particular sūtras, are personifications of various Mahāyāna doctrines (e.g., the bodhisatva Akṣayamati “Imperishable Intelligence” in the *Akṣayamatīnirdeśa*, the twelfth chapter of the *Mahāsaṃnipāta* corpus). However, several of them are also generated with nature or meteorological metaphors, some examples of which are the bodhisatvas Ākāśagarbha “Essence of Space,” Sāgarāmatī “Oceanic Intelligence,” Kṣitigarbha “Essence of Earth,” Mahāmeghagarbha “Essence of the Great Cloud,” Vajrapāṇi “Thunderbolt in Hand,” Sūryagarbha “Essence of the Sun,” Candragarbha “Essence of the moon,” Dhāraṇīśvararāja “The Earth Ruler”⁴⁹ and, as in our case, Gaganagañja “Treasury of the Sky.”⁵⁰ In the Ggn, the image of the sky is exploited in the construction of the text itself, and in constructing the bodhisatva character around which the text is built. Taken all together, these bodhisatva names portray the whole universe in which we live, and the authors/editors appear to have exploited the metaphors of various elements of this existential world to construct Mahāyāna literature, as well as its own belief system. Thus, one can say that these names are nothing but symbolic expressions, and do not represent historical personalities. Further, the bodhisatva Gaganagañja functions here as a literary tool to mirror the idea that all phenomena are empty of an essential substance.

3.2. The Sky as a Metaphor for the Six Perfections

The Ggn is characterized as having a symbolic image of the sky. In the Ggn, the sky is used as a strong metaphor that carries multiple connotations related to the bodhisatva path (*bodhisatvamārga*). Additionally, it serves as the central motif that recurs throughout the entire text, generating various types of thematic imagery. The use of such literary devices as image, metaphor, and motif, allows the author to provide more concrete and specific meanings, and further to enhance the artistic quality of the text itself. Let us look at the following example, taken from the Buddha’s teachings on the first perfection, the perfection of generosity (*dānapāramitā*). Here, one can see how the metaphor of the sky is used to describe the fulfillment of six perfections, which is one of the most important principles in Mahāyāna literature:

“Son of good family, when the bodhisatva is endowed with four qualities, his generosity becomes like the sky. What are those four” To wit, (1) entering living beings into the purity through the self-purification; (2) entering into the purity of generosity (*dāna*) with the purity of living beings; (3) entering into the purity of transformation (*pariṇāmana*) by purification of generosity; (4) entering into the purity of awakening (*bodhi*) through the purification of transformation. When he is endowed with those four dharmas, son of good family, the generosity of the bodhisatva becomes like sky.”⁵¹

The underlined parts can be understood in various ways, depending on the interpretation of the term *gagana* (Tib. *nam mkha*). First, it can simply indicate “the expanse of the sky.” Then, the sentence would mean that the bodhisatva should have a vast amount of generosity like the sky that is endlessly open. At the same time, *gagana* can also signify “empty space.” In this case, the generosity of the bodhisatva should be understood from the perspective of the concept of emptiness (*śūnyatā*), which is a fundamental idea in Mahāyāna metaphysics. Further, it may denote “the clarity of the sky.” If so, the sentence should be understood from the perspective of the purity of giving, or more specifically, the principle of the threefold purity (*trimaṇḍalaparīśuddhi*), that is “being pure of the giver, recipient, and giving itself”. Lastly, it can imply the sky without boundary or obstruction. Then, the sentence means that, when the bodhisatva cultivates the perfection of generosity, he

should be free from discrimination or prejudice. In this manner, the term *gagana* can be interpreted in many ways, and such multiple connotations embedded in a single word can carry different levels of meaning, which is more profound and complex than its literal sense. The same metaphor is continually applied to the rest of the perfections, and similar interpretations can be made for them. Thus, the image of the sky, metaphorically used in the Ggn, enriches the reading of the text, stimulating the reader's literary and visual imagination. See, also, the following passage, in which the third perfection, the perfection of patience (*kṣānti*), is described with a more varied use of the sky-metaphor (here the term *gagana* is differently translated as "the sky" or "empty space" according to the context in which it is used):

"How, then, son of good family, does the patience (*kṣānti*) of the bodhisatvas become like the sky? When the bodhisatva is endowed with four qualities, his patience becomes like the sky. What are those four? To wit, (1) never responding to abuse with more abuse because the speech is just like empty space (**ākruṣṭo na pratyākrośati vāco gaganasamatvāt*);⁵² (2) never responding to beatings with more beatings because the body is just like empty space (**tādīto na pratitādayati kāyasya gaganasamatvāt*);⁵³ (3) never responding to insults with more insults because the thought is just like empty space (**paribhāṣito na pratiparibhāṣayati cittasya gaganasamatvāt*);⁵⁴ (4) never responding to anger with more anger because the intention is just like empty space (**roṣito na pratiroṣayati āśayasya gaganasamatvāt*).⁵⁵ When the bodhisatva is endowed with those four dharmas, son of good family, his patience becomes like the sky."⁵⁶

3.3. Various Elements Related to the Sky

The image of the sky is used as a central metaphor for different aspects of the *bodhisatvacaryā*, but it also serves as a leitmotif that runs deep throughout the entire text. In the Ggn, one can find various symbolic images and events with which the image of the sky is directly or indirectly associated. Perhaps the most important example of them is various sky-related miracles performed by Gaganagañja, such as the rains of flowers, jewels, food and clothing, falling down from the sky (see Chapter 5, Han 2021b, pp. 435–66). In this section, I will present several such examples.

(a) Pavilions shining in the sky

The Ggn opens with a spectacular event that a marvelous pavilion (*kūṭāgāra*) illuminates the world. When the Buddha sets the wheel of the dharma in motion, the pavilion in which an assembly of monks and bodhisatvas are sitting appears suddenly, shining in the vault of the sky. Then, the rest of the world is eclipsed and disappear (cf. Part I, Chapter 2, §1–4; Han 2021b, pp. 35–40). According to Vreese (de Vreese 1947, pp. 323–25), the term *kūṭāgāra* (lit. a point-house) means nothing but a type of building that has a pointy roof.⁵⁷ It is depicted as a house, or just a hut, with the gabled roof in the early Buddhist literature, as well as in Indian inscriptions (see, for example, Skilling 2009, p. 69). In the Ggn, however, the *kūṭāgāra* is represented not just as an ordinary building with a gabled roof, but as a splendid large pavilion, appearing in the vault of the sky. Such a magnificent image of *kūṭāgāra* can be found in Chapter on Entering the Dharma-realm (*Dharmadhātupraveśanaparivarta*) of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*. In this sūtra, that the main character Sudhana enters the *dharmadhātu* is described as entering the Maitreya's *kūṭāgāra* which is very luxurious and spacious as the sky (cf. T.293, 831c1-832a2).⁵⁸ As such, it is assumed that the image of *kūṭāgāra* has been developed as time went by, from an ordinary building to a luxury mansion. It is also likely that the Ggn makes use of the expanded image of *kūṭāgāra* shining in the sky as an auspicious sign (*pūrvanimitta*) at the very beginning of the text, probably for dramatic purposes.⁵⁹ The passage concerned runs as follows:

When the Lord revealed the exposition of the dharma, *Chapter of the Great Collection*, to bodhisatvas, the great beings, the whole assembly thought that "I am sitting in a pavilion in the vault of the sky." The display of these marvelous

pavilions illuminated the sight of living beings. Save for the bodhisatvas, the great beings, the great disciples, *devas*, *nāgas*, *yakṣas*, and *gandharvas*, who were seated in the pavilions, the rest of the beings in this trigalactic megagalactic world-system, appearing as a form, became nothing. All of them thought that “I am just like empty space.” At the time, just like the manifestations of forms in the great three-thousands of worlds disappeared in the sky at the end of the aeon, the manifestations of forms disappeared from the sight of anyone . . . Save for those who were sitting in the pavilion in the sky, the rest of them in the great three-thousands of worlds, staying on the surface of the earth, fade away . . . However, with the lion’s throne (*śimhāsana*) of the Lord it was another matter, they perceived it as shining ten thousand *yojanas* high as placed in these pavilions placed in the vault of the sky.⁶⁰

(b) Māra stuck in the dark sky

In Chapter 6, there is a section on Māra Pāpīyān and his followers. He disguises himself as a householder, comes to the presence of the Buddha, and asks how many people will believe in his teachings in the future. The Buddha replies that there will be few such people left. Having heard this, the Māra reveals his true colors and flies up to the sky to go back to his territory. However, then, Gaganagañja stops him in mid-air and makes him listen to various teachings from Mañjuśrī, Maitreya, Ratnapāṇi, Dharmarāja, etc., in which diverse ways to transcend the territory of Māra (*māragocara*) and to overcome the works of Māra (*māraakarman*) are explained (cf. Part II, Chapter 6, §58–70; Han 2021b, pp. 731–62). What is notable here is that the bodhisatvas see the sky as clear and open space, but, on the contrary, that Māra and his followers cannot see anything else but the darkness in the sky. The story of Māra stuck in the dark sky is depicted as follows:

After hearing this, Māra the Wicked One became delighted, pleased, joyous, and overjoyed. He danced and tried to leave the congregation . . . At that moment, the bodhisatva Gaganagañja said to the wicked Māra: “Wicked One, why are you leaving after having shown your true colors?”

Māra thought: “Even Gaganagañja and other bodhisatvas, to say nothing of the tathagata, perceived [my leaving], but I am going to go back to my territory.”

Then, the bodhisatva Gaganagañja, having stopped the Wicked Māra and his servants in the sky, exercised his magical power in such a way that they could not go back to his territory, saying: “Wicked One, just like the sky has no obstruction (*anavṛti*), why do you not go back to your territory?”

Māra replied: “Son of good family, the sky is without obstruction to you, but it looks dark to us. The only we can see in front of us is darkness (*tamo ’ndhakāra*), except for the congregation of the Buddha on the ground. It looks luminous.”

Gaganagañja said: “So it is, Wicked One. They are those who have the brightness of the dharma (*śukladharma*) in their mind, and the darkness in front of you is because of the works of Māra (*māraakarman*).”

Māra replied: “O good man, from now on I will never do the works of Māra.”⁶¹

(c) A flying bird that leaves no trace

A bird flying in the sky often serves as a metaphor for being free or unattached in Buddhist literature. Especially, the trace that a bird leaves in the sky is used to represent the spiritual, or rather “ethereal,” dimension of an arhat, bodhisatva, or even the buddha, as it can neither be seen nor measured by our perceptual ability. According to Lamotte ([1962] 2011, p. 154, fn. 11), it is an old comparison, and its early example can be found in the *Dhammapada*. Here, the path of an arhat, whose field of the senses (*gocara*) is empty, signless, and liberated, is compared to the “footstep (*pada*)” of a bird in the air.⁶² The same comparison also occurs in Mahāyāna literature. For example, it is found once each in the *Daśabhūmikasūtra* and the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*. In the *Daśabhūmikasūtra*, the stage (*bhūmi*) of

Son of the Conqueror (*jinaputra*) is described by the metaphor of the track of a bird in the sky as it is invisible and ineffable.⁶³ In the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*, the same metaphor is used to explain how the bodhisatva should consider all living beings.⁶⁴ In the Ggn, the metaphor of bird tracks occurs in three (!) different places and contexts (see below). It is notable that this metaphor is straightforwardly used in the *Dhammapada*, the *Daśabhūmikasūtra*, and the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* (e.g., “Just like the track of a bird in the sky, one should . . .”), while in the Ggn, it is used in a paradoxical way (e.g., “although bird tracks do not remain in the sky, one still . . .” and “bird tracks in the sky is expressible, but . . .”), which appears to be a more developed use of this metaphor.

1. Just as a bird⁶⁵ flying in the sky does not leave any trace, one who practices for awakening does not have any distinguishing mark (*nimitta*) in their behavior.⁶⁶
2. Just as, even though bird tracks do not remain in the sky, we still talk about its place by word, in the same way, whether the buddha is born or unborn, we still talk about it with the word to be born.⁶⁷
3. The water in the ocean of three thousandfold worlds is measurable, bird tracks in the sky in ten directions are expressible, and someone can have the same thought as all living beings; but the great qualities (*mahāguṇa*) of the son of the Sage are inexhaustible.⁶⁸

4. Conclusions

In this paper, I investigated an important sūtra belonging to the tradition of Mahāyāna Buddhism, the *Gaganagañjaparipṛcchā*, by focusing on its textual history, its content and structure, and its influence on Indian, Tibetan, and East Asian Buddhist traditions. I also reflected on how the image of the sky is used in this text to describe the central concepts of Mahāyāna Buddhism, and how it can be interpreted from a literary, specifically metaphorical, point of view. As such, this paper is divided into two parts: (1) a textual survey of the Ggn, which is mainly philological and historical in nature, and (2) a metaphorical analysis of the sky around which the key concepts and distinctive features of the text are constructed.

The *Gaganagañjaparipṛcchā* is a typical Mahāyāna *dharmaparyāya*, which has similar textual elements⁶⁹ and metaphysics to other Mahāyāna texts, such as the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*, the *Akṣayamatīnirdeśa*, and the *Sāgaramatiparipṛcchā*. However, it also has its own uniqueness and characteristics as a religious, as well as a literary text—that is, the ample utilization of the image of the sky throughout the text. In the Ggn, the sky, *gagana*, is pointing to the central idea of the Mahāyāna creed, namely, emptiness, endlessness, and imperishability of that which is empty and unborn. *Gagana* is then also made part of the name of the main interlocutor of the sūtra, namely, Gaganagañja, who is scarcely a historical person, but rather a personification of Mahāyāna teachings, expanded through his dialogue with the Buddha. Thus, the sky here functions as a central reference point and an expressive symbol throughout the text for *śūnyatā*, but also for the space in which the various virtues of the Mahāyāna unfolds, the compassion and generosity, the six *pāramitās*, and so forth.

It is a frequent trait in the literature we are relating to, then, that the singular texts are constructed on a basic symbol representing Mahāyāna tenets, *gagana* in our case. Further, the symbol is used to give the particular text its individuality by naming the main interlocutor by means of the symbol and naming the text itself accordingly. This principle is widely employed in the whole collection of *Mahāsaṃnipāta*.⁷⁰ In the *Akṣayamatīnirdeśa*, for example, we find that the concept of imperishability, *akṣayatā*, is personified in yet a fictitious personality, namely, Akṣayamati, “The One with Imperishable Intelligence (cf. Braarvig 1993b, pp. l–li)” It is also found in the *Sāgaramatiparipṛcchā* that the endless ocean, *sāgara*, is employed as a symbol of the endlessness of existence and personified in the main figure Sāgaramati, “The One Whose Intelligence is (Endless) like the Ocean” (for more examples, the *Dhāraṇīśocharāṅjaparivarta*, the *Sūryagarbhaparivarta*, the *Candragarbha-*

parivarta, etc.).⁷¹ Thus, one might argue that it was among the principles employed by the authors/editors of Mahāyāna texts when they were constructing their grand literature based on probably the most popular form of Buddhism in India sometimes in the first or second centuries CE.

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Abbreviations

Akṣ	<i>Akṣayamatīnirdeśa</i> (cf. Braarvig 1993a)
AkṣTib	<i>Akṣayamatīnirdeśa</i> (cf. Braarvig 1993b)
Bspṭ	<i>Bodhisatvoapiṭaka</i> (cf. Braarvig et al. Forthcoming)
CDIAL	A Comparative Dictionary of the Indo-Aryan Languages (Turner, Ralph Lilley 1962–1966). Available online: https://dsal.uchicago.edu/dictionaries/soas/ (accessed on 27 August 2021)
D	Derge Kanjur edition of the Tibetan translation of the Ggn, D148, mdo sde, pa 250a4-369a4. Available online: https://www.istb.univie.ac.at/kanjur/rktsneu/sub/index.php (accessed on 27 August 2021)
G	Gāndhārī
Ggn	<i>Gaganagañjaparipṛcchā</i>
Kpv	<i>Kāśyapaparivarta</i> (cf. Vorobyova-Desyatovskaya et al. 2002)
Mvy	<i>Mahāvīyūtpatti</i> (Sakaki Ryozauro 1916)
MW	A Sanskrit-English Dictionary (Monier-Williams, Monier 1899). Available online: https://gandhari.org/dictionary (accessed on 27 August 2021)
Q	Peking Kanjur edition of the Tibetan translation of the Ggn, Q815, mdo sna tshogs, nu 204b4-293a3. Available online: https://www.istb.univie.ac.at/kanjur/rktsneu/sub/index.php (accessed on 27 August 2021)
PTSD	The Pali Text Society's Pali-English Dictionary (Rhys Davids and William Stede 1921–1925). Available online: https://gandhari.org/dictionary (accessed on 27 August 2021)
S	Stog Palace Kanjur edition of the Tibetan translation of the Ggn, S160, mdo sde, tsha 1b1-129a3. Available online: https://www.istb.univie.ac.at/kanjur/rktsneu/sub/index.php (accessed on 27 August 2021).
ŚikṣMS	A paper manuscript of the Śikṣāsamuccaya at Cambridge University Library, MS Add. 1478. Available online: https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-ADD-01478/1 (accessed on 27 August 2021)
Skt.	Sanskrit
T.	Taishō shinshū daizōkyō 大正新脩大藏經. Available online: https://21dzk.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT2012/index.html (accessed on 27 August 2021)
Tib.	Tibetan

Notes

¹ In this paper, I use the spelling *bodhisatva* with a single *t* rather than *bodhisattva* with a double *t* in accordance with the usage in the recent works of Braarvig (2020a, 2020b) and Skilling (2013, Skilling 2014–2015, 2018a, 2020, etc.). It is the spelling used in manuscripts and inscriptions written in Sanskrit and Gāndhārī. It is also found in Khotanese, Sogdian loanwords, Tibetan transliterations, and Thai old documents. For a detailed discussion on the spelling of the term *bodhisatva*, see (Bhattacharya 2010). See, also, (Skilling 2013, p. 69; Skilling 2014–2015, p. 49n6).

- ² According to Skilling (Skilling 2014–2015, p. 49n1; 2021, pp. 37–38), the term *dharmaparyāya* (P. *dhammapariyāya*, G. *dhaṃmapayaya*, Tib. *chos kyi rnam grangs*) is the earliest term used for the titles of Buddhist texts, the surviving evidence of which can be found in King Aśoka's "Bairāṭ-Calcutta" inscription. It is probably used to indicate "a self-contained sermon of the Buddha or others, which is described internally, in the very text itself, by the Buddha or others (email from Peter Skilling, 13 July 2021)." It is also likely that the term *dharmaparyāya* or just *paryāya* was later replaced by editors with the well-known term *sūtra* (P. *sutta*, G. *sutra*, Tib. *mdo*) to give authority to them as legitimate *buddhavaocana* in the process of compilation, or rather "canonization," of Buddhist texts. Here, I quote an excerpt from Skilling's personal note on the term *dharmaparyāya*:
- "What is the difference between *dharmaparyāya* and *sūtra*? The word *sūtra*/*sutta* was also current; it stands at the head of the lists of nine/twelve *aṅga* and in manuscripts it is often used for the closing statement that ends the document: 'such and such *sūtra* is finished', the latter surely a written editorial or scribal convention rather than an internal or integral part of the discourse. *Sūtra* is rarely used as an internal title, and context suggests that the term *sūtra* refers to the complete package, with the introduction and closing (*nidāna*, *niḡamana*) as well as internal narratives, while the *dharmaparyāya* is the discourse properly speaking. But sometimes *dharmaparyāya* is used for the entire text, and it is also used for long and expanded Vaitulya/Mahāyāna compilations. It appears that the scope and meaning of the two terms changed and expanded with time and circumstances (email of 13 July, quoted with permission)."
- ³ The *Mahāsaṃnipāta*, which can be interpreted as "Great Collection of Sūtras" or "Great Congregation of Monks and Bodhisattvas" (Braarvig 1993b, p. xxv), is a voluminous canonical collection, consisting of seventeen independent *parivartas* that share a common tendency to promote the fundamental principles of Mahāyāna Buddhism. The place and date of the compilation are unclear, but it was probably in Central Asia or China around the third century CE. It appears that each text in this collection was originally composed and circulated independently, but that they were collected at a certain point under the title of *Mahāsaṃnipāta*. It is also likely that after the collection was compiled, new texts, such as the *Pratyutpannabuddhasaṃmukhāva-sthitasamādhisūtra*, was inserted as new *parivartas*. For the formation of the *Mahāsaṃnipāta* corpus and its complex textual development, see (Braarvig 1993b; Saerji 2005, 2019). It is also briefly touched upon in (Kurumiya 1978; Tudkeao 2016; Skilling 2018a; Chen and Loukota 2020; Han 2021a). Saerji's works (Saerji 2005, 2019), both written in Chinese, are introduced in (Silk 2021, pp. 61–62).
- ⁴ The text-critical analysis of the Tibetan translation of Ggn shows that twenty-four Kanjur editions share the same colophon (with only minor variants). The editions consulted are as follows: Cone, Derge, Peking, Lithang, Ragya, London, Stog, Shey, Lhasa, Narthang, Hemis I, Hemis II, Basgo, Phugbrag I, Phugbrag II, Lang, Tabo, Gondhla, Chizhi, Dodedrak, Dongkarla, Gangteng, Neyphug, and Phajoding. See (Han 2021a, pp. 234–42). Digital images of all the materials are available from Resources for Kanjur and Tanjur Studies (rKTs: <https://www.istb.univie.ac.at/kanjur/rktsneu/sub/index.php>) and Endangered Archives Programme (EAP: <https://eap.bl.uk>) (both accessed on 5 June 2021).
- ⁵ It is confirmed by the fact that the Tibetan translation of Ggn is indexed in one of the earliest catalogues produced in the ninth century, the *Ihan kar ma* (Herrmann-Pfandt 2008, pp. 50–51). The same colophon is also given in other relatively early catalogues, such as Gondhla and early Mustang. See, respectively, (Tauscher 2008, p. 37; Eimer 1999, p. 101). It is regrettable that I could not check the *'Phang thang ma* in this study, which is also regarded as one of the earliest catalogues. For more information about the three translators, their lives and works, see (Han 2021a, pp. 12–13).
- ⁶ The locations of Ggn in various Kanjur editions are as follows: Derge, no.148, mdo sde, pa 243a1-330a7; Peking, no.815, mdo sna tshogs, nu 204b4-293a3; Cone, no.788, mdo sde, pa 212b4-312a7; London, no.115, mdo sde, tsha 1b1-114a6; Stog palace, no.160, mdo sde, tsha 1b1-129a3; Ulaanbaator, no.210, mdo sde, tsha 1b1-113a8. Two versions of the Ggn included in Phugbrag: no.159, mdo sde, tsha 237a7-350b5, and no.343, mdo sde, kho 65b1-211b3. Cf. (rKTs: <https://www.istb.univie.ac.at/kanjur/rktsneu/verif/verif2.php?id=148>, accessed on 7 June 2021). The Ggn is not included in Dunhuang collections, but in Tabo and Gondhla canonical collections, both of which are regarded as proto-Kanjurs. Tabo: 1.4.0.16. 20-21, 36-38, 40-41, 46-47 (RN307) and 1.4.9.2. kha 35, 43, 48, 55-57, 63-65, 68, 80-84, 87-89, 91-99; Ga 1-3, 5, 7-9 (RN265); Gondhla: ka-na 22a6-96a5. Cf. (Scherrer-Schaub and Harrison 2009; Tauscher 2008).
- ⁷ The title given at the beginning of *juan 14* is the *Xukongzang pin diba zhi yi suowen pin diyi* 虛空藏品第八之一所問品第一 (cf. T.397, 93a6); but the other *juans* have the *Xukongzang pusa pin* 虛空藏菩薩品 with their chapter numbers.
- ⁸ For the dating of Dharmakṣema's arrival in Guzang where he translated the Ggn and other sūtras, see (Chen 2004, pp. 257–59). Yet, later catalogues, such as the *Datang neidianlu* 大唐內典錄, records that it was during the reign of Emperor An Di 安帝 of Jin dynasty, that is, between 396 and 418 (T 2149, 256a13). In this paper, I followed Chen's argument.
- ⁹ For more details on Amoghavajra's life and translational efforts, see (Orzech 2011a, 2011b), particularly on his activity during the An Lushan Rebellion, see (Lehnert 2011, p. 352). It is also briefly treated in (Han 2021a, pp. 15–16).
- ¹⁰ Also known as Jiangong 堅公 or Fajian 法堅 (cf. T.2034, 83c13-14). For his floruit, see (Bingenheimer et al. 2017, p. 2).
- ¹¹ Compiled by Sengyou 僧祐 in 515 CE.
- ¹² Compiled by Fajing 法經 et al. in 594 CE, and Yancong 彦琮 et al. in 602 CE, respectively.
- ¹³ Compiled by Fei Changqing 費長房 in 597 CE.
- ¹⁴ Compiled by Daoxuan 道宣 in 664 CE.

- 15 In Tibetan, however, *gaganagañja* and *ākāśagarbha* are differently rendered as *nam mkha'i mdzod* “treasury of the sky” and *nam mkha'i snying* “essence of the sky,” respectively. Jñānagupta 闍那崛多, a late sixth-century translator of the Sui dynasty, also used a different term *xukong yun* 虛空孕 for *ākāśagarbha*, as seen in his work *Xukong yun pusa jing* 虛空孕菩薩經 (T.408).
- 16 The twelve texts are 大方等大集經虛空藏菩薩品 (T.397(8)); 大集大虛空藏菩薩所問經 (T.404); 虛空藏菩薩經 (T.405); 佛虛空藏菩薩神經 (T.406); 虛空藏菩薩神經 (T.407); 觀虛空藏菩薩經 (T.409); 虛空藏菩薩能滿諸願最勝心陀羅尼求聞持法 (T.1145); 大虛空藏菩薩念誦法 (T.1146); 聖虛空藏菩薩陀羅尼經 (T.1147); 佛虛空藏陀羅尼 (T.1148); 五大虛空藏菩薩速疾大神驗祕密式經 (T.1149); 虛空藏菩薩問七佛陀羅尼經 (T.1333). I do not go deeper into this subject at this point but hope to investigate it in detail in the future study.
- 17 The purpose of his arrival is emphasized several times in the sūtra. For example, see D247a5-7: *shā ri'i bu byang chub sems sems dpa' sems dpa' chen po nam mkha' mdzod de* (6) *nga la blta ba dang l phyag 'tshal ba dang l bsnyen bkur byed pa dang l 'dus pa chen po'i le'u'i chos kyi rnam grangs 'di rab tu yongs su bzung ba dang l phyogs bcu'i 'jig rten gyi khams nas 'dus pa'i byang chub sems dpa' 'di dag chos kyi dga' ba dang l bde* (7) *ba dang l mchog tu dga' bskyed pa dang l theg pa chen po 'di 'ang rab tu yongs su gzungs ba dang l byang chub sems dpa' thams cad kyi byang chub kyi phyogs kyi chos kyang yongs su gzung ba'i phyir nga'i gan du' ong ngo l* “O Śāriputra, the bodhisatva, the great being Gaganagañja is coming here to see, praise, and serve me, and uphold this exposition of the dharma (*dharmaparyāya*), “Chapter of the Great Collection (*mahāsaṃnipātaparivāta*).” He is coming with the assembly of bodhisatvas who have gathered from the worlds of the ten directions for the sake of the joy of the dharma, happiness, the source of great joy, the upholding of the great vehicle, and the wings of awakening of all bodhisatvas.” Its Chinese parallels are found in T 397(8), 94b12-20 and T 404, 614b20-25.
- 18 For more details on the genres of Mahāyāna texts, cf. (Skilling 2021, pp. 35–36).
- 19 This shared structure of Mahāyāna literature is universal, but the specific terms, such as *nidāna*, *upodghāta*, and *parīdanā*, are made by later commentators, as seen in the case of the *Akṣayamatīnirdeśa*. The structure of Mahāyāna sūtras, as well as their styles and formats, may document how the Mahāyāna texts has been interpreted, changed, and developed over the time.
- 20 The description of such miracles is one of the characteristic features of Ggn. It is unlikely, however, that these miracles were included in the original, or more precisely, an earlier version in the textual development of Ggn. The reason for this is that the earliest extant witness, T. 397(8), briefly treats this section, whereas the later versions, T. 404 and the Tibetan, elaborate on this magical display as an emblematic event that opens the second half of the text. See the comparison of original texts in (Han 2021b, pp. 433–60)
- 21 According to Bhavya, *vidyāmantra* (Tib. *rig pa'i gsang sngags*), which can be translated as “knowledge-mantras,” is one of the three *mantras* (the rest of them are *dhāraṇīmantra* and *guhyanmantra*). It is concerned with the core teachings of the Buddha, such as *pāramitā* and *caturāryasatya*, by which *kleśas* can be removed. This *vidyāmantra* is difficult to understand as it is spoken in a language beyond this world (*lokottaravākya*), or in the language of *devas*, *nāgas*, *yakṣas*, and so forth. For more details, see (Braarvig 1997, pp. 34–37).
- 22 On the phrase *triratnavamśānupaccheda* in Mahāyāna literature, see (Skilling 2018b).
- 23 Cf. Johnston (1950), pp. 44–45; D4025, 98a3-b5; T.1611, 833a15-b9: on *kleśa* (corresponding to Ggn 320b6-321a7).
- 24 Cf. La Vallée Poussin 1903–1913, p. 128 on *ekadharmā* (Ggn D281a2-3).
- 25 Cf. (a) Liland (2019), p. 89: on *kṣānti* (Ggn D257a1-2); (b) Liland (2019), pp. 329–30: on imperishability (*akṣayatā*) (Ggn D288b7-289a1).
- 26 Cf. (a) ŚikṣMS 118a3-118b1; D3940, 149a2-149b4; T.1636, 127a25-b10: on the eight purities of *dāna* (Ggn D253a5-b7); (b) ŚikṣMS118b6-119a2; D3940,150a2-7; T.1636, 127b20-c2: on the eight purities of *śīla* (Ggn D255a3; 255a5-7; 255b3; 256a6-7; 257a1-3); (c) ŚikṣMS 29b5-6; D3940, 33a3-4; T.1636, 85a11-12: on *māraakarman* (Ggn D277b6); (d) ŚikṣMS 22b3; D3940, 24b1; T.1636, 82b5-7: on *kuśalamūla* (Ggn D277b6); (e) ŚikṣMS 60b5-7; D3940, 67b1-3; T.1636, 97c27-98a1: on *acchidracittatā* (Ggn D316b4-5); (f) ŚikṣMS 28a3-29a1; D3940, 31a6-32a5; ŚikṣChi 84b12-c12: on upholding the true dharma (*saddharma*) in twenty-three verses, (Ggn D322b2-5; 323a3-5; 323a7-b3; 323b4-323a2); (g) ŚikṣMS 30b5-6; D3940, 34a4-5; T.1636, 85b12-13: on *māraakarman* (Ggn D277b3); (h) ŚikṣMS 64b5-6; D3940, 72b6-7; T.1636, 99c3-5: on *pratibhāna* (Ggn D276a2-3).
- 27 Cf. (a) Tucci (1971), p. 23: on *māraakarman* (Ggn 277a5-6); (b) Tucci (1971), p. 22: on *māraakarman* (Ggn 277a7).
- 28 Tibetan translation of the *Sūtrasamuccaya*. Cf. (a) D3961, 194a7-b4: on the four dharmas and eight purities concerning *dāna* (Ggn D253a2-6); (b) D3961, 195a3-5: on *dāna* (Ggn D254b4-6). The complete Sanskrit text of *Sūtrasamuccaya* is not extant, but there is a manuscript fragment found in Central Asia (cf. Karashima 2009), and an incomplete stuck bundle consisting of approximately 35 leaves was recently discovered from Tibet (cf. Wang et al. 2020). The author is indebted to an anonymous reviewer for this reference.
- 29 Cf. D3910, 12b1-2: on *māraakarman* (no exact parallels found in the Ggn).
- 30 Cf. D3796, 62a4: on *śūnyatā* (no parallels in the Ggn).
- 31 Atīśa is the one who most frequently quoted the Ggn in his works. Cf. (a) D3930, 107b4: the title of the Ggn is briefly mentioned; (b) D3948, 244a6-244b1: on the array of offerings, including various sorts of jewels (Ggn D282a7-b4); (c) D3948, 246b4: on *dharmatā* (Ggn 264b2-3); (d) D3948, 246b7-247a1: on *gaganasambodhi* (no parallels in the Ggn); (e) D3948, 256b-257a2: on *adhyāśaya* (Ggn 310b3-7).

- 32 “Blue Compendium.” Cf. Roesler et al. (2015), p. 37 and p. 112, fn. 207: on *acchidracittatā*, (Ggn 316b4-6; ŚikṣMS 60b5-7).
 “A term (often misspelt *leitmotif*) invented (1871) by F. W. Jähns, the expert on Weber, to describe a short constantly recurring mus. phrase or theme used to denote a person, thing, or abstract idea. ‘Representative theme’ is a good Eng. alternative. Composers throughout history have used the device in one form or another, e.g., Gluck and Mozart, Weber in *Der Freischütz*, Mendelssohn, Berlioz (the *idée fixe* in the *Symphonie Fantastique*), but it was raised to its highest and most complex form by Wagner, especially in *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, where the subtle combinations of *leitmotiv* create symphonic textures. Wagner used the term *Hauptmotiv* in 1867 (Kennedy 1989, p. 579).”
- 33 “Public Explication of Mind Training.” Cf. Jinpa (2014), p. 346: on *sarvasatvopajīvoya* (Ggn 278a5-6; ŚikṣMS 22b3).
- 34 “Ocean of Reasoning,” a commentary on Nāgārjuna’s *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. Cf. Garfield and Samten (2006), p. 149: on *ekadharmā* (Ggn 281a2-3; La Vallée Poussin 1903–1913, p. 128).
- 35 “Steps of the Path to Enlightenment,” a commentary on Tsong khapa’s *Lam rim chen mo*. Cf. (a) Sopa (2007), p. 203: on *prajñāñāna* and *upāyāñāna* (Ggn 253b6; ŚikṣMS 118b1); (b) Sopa (2007), p. 295: on *mārakarman* (Ggn 277b3; ŚikṣMS 30b5-6).
- 36 In this story, the Buddha and the bodhisatva Gaganagañja appear as twin sons of the King Puṇyālaṃkāra, Siṃha and Siṃhavikrāntagāmin, who leave the palace to become renunciants. They attain the *anuttarasamyaksambodhi* and lead their father, the King Puṇyālaṃkāra, to abdicate his throne and to practice the true dharma as a monk. This story places a particular emphasis on the practice of *dānapāramitā*, the renouncement of worldly desires (including kingship and kingdom), Gaganagañja’s magical display, and most importantly the necessity of becoming a monk. Its translation and original texts, see (Han 2021b, pp. 543–74).
- 37 For the content, structure, and literary characteristics of the *Jinglu yixiang*, see (Bai and Li 1995, 1996).
- 38 Its digital images are available from the Academy of Buddhist Studies at Dongguk University: <http://abchome.dongguk.edu> (accessed on 20 June 2021).
- 39 This citation is given at the very beginning of the text, describing the meaning of the term *mahāyāna* using an analogy of a vehicle. The importance of this analogy was first identified by (Braarvig 1993b, pp. xcvi–viii) in his study on the *Akṣayamatīnirdeśa*, the twelfth chapter of the *Mahāsaṃnipāta*. For the original text and its translation, see (Han 2021b, pp. 607–12).
- 40 For his life and translational activity as a Shingon monk, see (Kameyama 2017).
- 41 This is my tentative speculation, but the verse 6. 44 (Emmerick 1968, pp. 122–23) appears to be related to the verses 89, 90, and 91 in the Ggn (cf. Han 2021b, p. 410). Another point I wish to make is that the verse 6. 39, identified as a quotation from the *Ajātaśatrukaukṛtyavinodana* by Chen and Loukota (2018, p. 138), appears to correspond to the verse 127 in the Ggn in their content and wording (cf. Han 2021b, p. 486).
- 42 “Leitmotif,” which is usually translated as “leading theme,” or “representative theme,” refers to a particular idea, person, or place that recurs in the course of the text. It is often modified on sequential appearances, but it still holds its consistent identity and character. In the *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music*, the term *leitmotif/leitmotiv* is described as follows:
 “A term (often misspelt *leitmotif*) invented (1871) by F. W. Jähns, the expert on Weber, to describe a short constantly recurring mus. phrase or theme used to denote a person, thing, or abstract idea. ‘Representative theme’ is a good Eng. alternative. Composers throughout history have used the device in one form or another, e.g., Gluck and Mozart, Weber in *Der Freischütz*, Mendelssohn, Berlioz (the *idée fixe* in the *Symphonie Fantastique*), but it was raised to its highest and most complex form by Wagner, especially in *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, where the subtle combinations of *leitmotiv* create symphonic textures. Wagner used the term *Hauptmotiv* in 1867 (Kennedy 1989, p. 579).”
- 43 “What is it, after all, to understand a religion, or a religious movement? Religions do not succeed or flourish because their doctrines are intellectually compelling, or their ideals are morally noble, but because they-or rather their practitioners-capture people’s imaginations in a certain way, they arouse their faith and convince them that they provide an exclusive or unique access to whatever power is held to underlie or pervade the world, to the numinous, to the transcendent, call it what you will.” (Harrison 1995, p. 54).
- 44 For examples, the *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* 1.2.1 *na hi bhavati gaganakusumacchanno vandhyāputra iti*; the *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* 3.5.1. *avivekibhistalamalavadiṣa gaganam gamyamānameva talamale atyeti paramārthatastābhayāmasaṃṣṭasvabhāvatoāt*; and the *Chāndogyopaniṣad* 8.1.1. *tathā yadyapyātmaikatavidāṃ gantr̥gamanagantavyābhāvāvidyāvīṣeṣasthitinimittakṣaye gagana iva vidyudbhūta iva ...*
- 45 The term *ākāśa*, which also means the sky, or rather space, is more frequently related to the sun (*sūrya*). For examples, the phrases *gaganatale puṇṇacanda* in the *Vimānavatthu* 3; *gaganatalamagga* in the *Petavatthu Commentary* 188; *suriyo ākāse antalikkhe gaganapathe gacchati* in the *Suttanipāta* 1097. For more examples, see (PTSD, s.v. *ākāśa*).
- 46 For examples, the term occurs in the *Kathāsaritsāgara*, “*Ocean of the Streams of Stories*,” a collection of ancient Indian poetic stories, compiled by a Kashmiri Brahmin Somadeva in 11th century CE, and the *Rājataranṅinī*, “*The River of Kings*,” a legendary metrical chronicle of the kings of Kashmir, written by Kalhana in 12th century CE.
- 47 It is interesting that, in the *Lalitavistara*, Gaganagañja appears as a bodhisatva who came from a different universe and brings down a rain of various gifts (cf. Lefmann 1902, pp. 295–99; but no parallels found in its Tibetan version). It is reminiscent of the arrival and miracle of the bodhisatva Gaganagañja in the Ggn.

- 48 *de nas tshe dang ldan¹ shā ri'i bus² byang chub sems dpa' nam mkha' mdzod la 'di skad ces smras so | rigs kyi bu khyod kyis gang mi skam mi zad (285b1) mi dengs pa'i nam mkha' la³ mdzod bzhag⁴ nas ji srid lon | nam mkha' mdzod kyis smras pa | btsun pa shā ri'i bu 'di ji snyam du sems | ji⁵ nam mkha' skam pa'am⁶ zad pa yod dam dengs par 'gyur ram | smras pa⁷ rigs kyi bu de lta ma yin no | smras pa | btsun pa shā ri'i bu de bzhin du⁸ byang chub de ni nam (2) mkha'i ngo bo nyid kyi mtshan nyid de la⁹ bdag gi dge ba'i rtsa ba rnams der bsngos pas¹⁰ de bas na nam mkha' la mdzod mi skam mi zad mi dengs so | (D285a7-285b2) (1) ldan DQ: ldan pa S (2) bus DQ: bus | S (3) nam mkha' la DS: nam mkha' Q (4) mdzod bzhag DS: mdzod ga nag (?) Q (error) (5) ji DQ: ci S (6) pa'am DQ: pa'am | S (7) smras pa D: smras pa | QS (8) de bzhin du DQ: de bzhin du | S (9) de la DQ: de | de la S (10) pas DQ: pas | S. For its Chinese parallels, see T.404, 629b4-11. No exact parallels found in Dharmakṣema's translation. (Cf. Han 2021b, pp. 467–68).*
- 49 Alternatively, the Lord of Mantras, or the Lord of Memory." On the term *dhāraṇī*, see (Braarvig 1985).
- 50 On the formation of the *Mahāsaṃnipāta* corpus, one might argue that the editors imported the concept of Vedic threefold universe of heaven (*gagana*), earth (*dhāraṇī*) and the space in between (*ākāśa* as in Chapter 10 of the *Mahāsaṃnipāta* collection: **Ākāśābhidheyaparivarta*) as well as the ocean (*sāgara*) to give a semi-mythological garb to its lists of doctrinal concepts.
- 51 D148, 253a2-4: *rigs kyi bu chos bzhi dang (3) ldan na¹ byang chub sems dpa' sbyin pa nam mkha' dang mtshungs pa yin te | bzhi gang zhe na | 'di lta ste² bdag rnam par dag pas sems can rnam par dag pa la 'jug pa dang | sems can rnam par dag pas sbyin pa rnam par dag pa la 'jug pa dang | sbyin pa rnam par (4) dag pas bsngo ba rnam par dag pa la 'jug pa dang | bsngo ba rnam par dag pas³ byang chub rnam par dag pa la 'jug pa ste | rigs kyi bu chos bzhi po de dag dang ldan na⁴ byang chub sems dpa' sbyin pa nam mkha' dang mtshungs pa yin no | (D148, 253a2-4) (1) na DQ: na | S (2) ste DQ: ste | S (3) pas DQ: pas | S (4) na DQ: na | S. For its Chinese parallels, see T397(8), 96b15-21; T404, 616c3-8 (Cf. Han 2021b, pp. 133–34).*
- 52 A hypothetical Sanskrit proposed by the author. A similar list of the bodhisatva's *kṣānti* occurs in the *Mahāvīyutpatti*, the *Kāśyapaparivarta*, the *Bodhisatvopīṭaka*, the *Akṣayamatīnirdeśa*, etc. Cf. Mvy 8709: *ākruṣṭena na pratyākroṣṭavyam* or *ākroṣṭona na pratyākroṣṭavyam* (Tib. *gshe yang slar mi gshe bar bya*); Kpv 55v1: *katham ca kāśyapa bhīkṣur na śvaloṣṭvanujavanasadīśo bhavati yaḥ kāśyapa bhīkṣu ākruṣṭo na pratyākroṣati* (KpvTib 141a3-4: 'od srung ji ltar na khyi rngo la snyegs pa dang mi 'dra ba yin zhe na | 'od srung gang gshe yang slar mi gshe); Bspṭ 84a3 (cf. Braarvig et al. Forthcoming): *api ca śāriputra bodhisatvākṣāntir nāma yadā kruṣṭo na pratyākroṣati pratīrutkāgḥoṣasamasuviditatvāt*; Akṣ 149: *ākruṣṭo na pratyākroṣati cittasya māyopamapratiavedhatayā*, reconstructed by Braarvig (AkṣTib 39: *sems sgyu ma dang mtshungs par rab tu rtogs pa'i phyir gshe ba la phyir mi gshe dang*).
- 53 Cf. Mvy 8712: *tādītena na pratitādītavyam* (Tib: *brdeg yang slar mi brdeg par bya*); Kpv 55v1-2: *tādīto na pratitādīyati* (KpvTib 141a4: *bsdigs kyang slar mi sdigs*); Akṣ 149: *tādīto na pratitādīyati kāyasya pratibimbopamapratiavedhatayā*, rec. by Braarvig (AkṣTib 39: *lus gzugs brnyan dang mtshungs par rab tu rtogs pa'i phyir brdeg pa la phyir mi rdeg pa dang*).
- 54 Cf. Akṣ 149: *paribhāṣito na pratiparibhāṣayati vācaḥ pratīrutkopamasupratiavedhatayā*, rec. by Braarvig (AkṣTib 39: *ngag brag ca'i sgra dang mtshungs par shin tu rtogs pa'i phyir spyos pa la slar mi spyo ba dang*).
- 55 Cf. Mvy 8710: *roṣītena na pratiroṣītavyam* (Tib. *khros kyang slar mi khro bar bya*); Kpv 55v2: *roṣīto na pratiroṣīyati* (KpvTib 141a4: *khros kyang slar mi khro*); Akṣ 149: *roṣīto na pratiroṣīyati śāntādhyaśayatayā*. rec. by Braarvig (AkṣTib 39: *lhag pa'i bsam pa zhi ba'i phyir khros pa la phyir mi khro ba dang*).
- 56 *rigs kyi bu de la ji ltar na byang chub sems dpa' bzod pa nam mkha' dang mtshungs pa yin zhe na | rigs kyi bu chos bzhi dang ldan na¹ byang chub sems dpa' bzod pa nam mkha' dang mtshungs pa yin te | bzhi (4) gang zhe na | 'di lta ste |² tshig nam mkha' dang mtshungs pa'i phyir³ gshe yang slar mi gshe ba dang | lus nam mkha' dang mtshungs pa'i phyir brdegs kyang slar mi rdeg pa dang | sems nam mkha' dang mtshungs pa'i phyir⁴ spyos kyang slar mi spyo ba dang | bsam pa nam mkha' dang (5) mtshungs pa'i phyir⁵ khros kyang slar mi khro ba ste | rigs kyi bu chos bzhi po de dag dang ldan na⁶ byang chub sems⁷ dpa' bzod pa nam mkha' dang mtshungs pa yin no | (D255b5-256a2) (1) na DQ: na | S (2) D: om. S (3) phyir DQ: phyir | S (4) phyir DQ: phyir | S (5) phyir DQ: phyir | S (6) na DQ: na | S (7) sems DQ: sem+s S (at the end of a line). For its Chinese parallels, see T397(8), 97a19-24; T404, 618a19-23 (Cf. Han 2021b, pp. 177–80).*
- 57 The *kūṭāgāra* image found in Indian inscriptions, see (Skilling 2009, pp. 67–69). For a Sanskrit manuscript of the *Kūṭāgārasūtra* found at the Potala, see (Vinītā 2010, pp. 11–95). For more details on *kūṭāgāra*, see (Bollée 1986).
- 58 As an example for the developed image of *kūṭāgāra* appearing at Borobudur and in the *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra*, see (Fontein 2012, pp. 66–83).
- 59 A similar dramatic opening scene is also found in the fifth chapter of the *Mahāsaṃnipāta* corpus, the *Sāgaramatipariprcchā*. In this *dharmaparyāya*, a great flood like the ocean, *sāgara* in Sanskrit, is used as an emblematic event that opens the story, captivating the reader.
- 60 *de nas bcom ldan 'das 'dus pa chen po'i le'u zhes bya ba'i chos kyi rnam grangs byang chub sems dpa' sems dpa' chen po rnams la rab tu ston te¹ 'dus pa chen po'i le'u'i chos kyi rnam grangs 'di bshad pa na |² thams cad dang ldan (2) pa'i 'khor de nam mkha'i dkyil na 'khod cing bkod pa chen po'i khang pa brtsegs pa'i nang na bdag 'dug pa snyam du sems so | khang pa brtsegs pa de dag gi bkod pa nyid³ sems can rnams kyi mig sngar⁴ snang bar gyur te | khang pa brtsegs pa na 'khod pa'i byang chub sems (3) dpa' sems dpa' chen po rnams dang | nyan thos chen po rnams dang | gzhan yang lha dang | klu dang | gnod sbyin dang | dri za'i 'khor de dag thams cad ma gtogs par stong gsum gyi stong chen po'i 'jig rten gyi khams na gzugs su snang ba lhag ma gzhan thams (4) cad med par gyur te |⁵ thams cad kyang nam mkha' lta bur gyur pa snyam du sems so | 'di lta ste dper na |⁶ bska pas shin tu bsregs te⁷ nam mkha' bzhin du gyur pa na |⁸ stong gsum gyi stong chen po'i 'jig rten gyi khams na gzugs su snang ba gang yang mig sngar snang (5) bar mi 'gyur ba bzhin du⁹ de'i tshe na gang gzugs su snang ba rnams sems can dag gi mig sngar mi snang bar gyur to | | ... | nam mkha' la gang brtsegs pa 'dug pa de dag ma gtogs par stong gsum gyi stong chen po'i 'jig rten gyi khams 'di¹⁰ sa'i steng dang |¹¹ gzhi'i bar*

du thams cad kyang (7) *mi snang ba snyam du rab tu shes te* | ... *gzhan du na nam mkha'i dkyil na gnas pa'i khang pa brtsegs pa de dag nyid du shes shing* | *bcom ldan 'das kyi*¹² *seng ge'i khri ni 'phang du dpag tshad khir 'phags par*¹³ *rab tu snang ngo* | | (D244a1-b1) (1) *te D: te* | QS (2) | D: om. QS (3) *nyid DQ: de nyid* S (4) *sngar DS: sngar tu Q* (5) | DS: om. Q (6) | DQ: om. S (7) *te DQ: te* | S (8) | D: om. QS (9) *bzhin du DQ: de bzhin du* S (10) *'di' i DQ: 'di* S (11) | D: om. QS (12) *kyi DS: kyi* Q (13) *'phags par DS: 'phags pa Q*. For its Chinese parallels, see T397(8), 93a28-c3; T404, 613b6-b21 (Cf. Han 2021b, pp. 35–40).

- 61 *de nas bdud sdig can tshig 'di thos nas* (315a1) *tshim zhing mgu la yi rangs te*¹ *rab tu dga' nas dga' ba dang*² *mgu ba dang*³ *yid bde ba skyes nas bro brdungs te 'khor de nas song ngo* | | ... *de nas yang byang chub sems dpa' nam mkha' mdzod kyis bdud sdig can la* (4) *'di skad ces smras so* | | *sdig can ngo bstan nas ci' i phyir slar 'gro* | *de nas bdud sdig can*⁴ *'di snyam du sem te* | *byang chub sems dpa' nam mkha' mdzod dang* | *de ma yin pa' i byang chub sems dpa' dag gis kyang tshor na* | *de bzhin gshegs pas lta smos kyang*⁵ *ci dgos* (5) *te* | *bdag da rang gi gnas su 'gro'o snyam mo* | | *de nas byang chub sems dpa' nam mkha' mdzod kyis*⁶ *bdud sdig can g-yog dang bcas te* | *nam mkha' i dkyil na 'dug nas*⁷ *rang gi gnas su 'gro mi nus par de ltar byin gyis brlabs so* | | *de nas yang byang chub sems dpa' (6) nam mkha' mdzod kyis*⁸ *bdud sdig can la 'di skad ces smras so* | | *sdig can nam mkha' ni sgrib pa med pa yin na*⁹ *ci' i phyir rang gi gnas su mi 'gro* | *bdud kyis smras pa* | *rigs kyi bu khyed la ni nam mkha' mi sgrib mod kyi*¹⁰ *bdag cag gis ni mun par mthong ste* | *gang dang gang gi* (7) *tshe ngo gyan du bltas pa de dang de' i tshe na ni mun pa mun nag tu mthong ngo*¹¹ | | *nam bcom ldan 'das kyi 'khor gyi dkyil 'khor la*¹² *bltas pa de' i tshe ni thams cad du snang bar mthong ngo* | | *smras pa* | *sdig can de de lta'o* | | *gang chos dkar po la sems pa' i sems can rnam kyis* *mun pa ni* (315b1) *bdud kyi las yin no zhes bka' stsal to*¹³ | | *smras pa* | *skyes bu dam pa de phyin chad bdud kyi las mi bgyi'o* | | (D314b3-315b3) (1) *rangs te DQ: rangs te* | S (2) *dang D: dang* | QS (3) *mgu ba dang DQ: om. S (4) sdig can DQ: om. S (5) kyang DQ: om. S (6) kyis DQ: kyis* | S (7) *nas DQ: nas* | S (8) *kyis DQ: kyis* | S (9) *na* | S (10) *kyi DQ: kyi* | S (11) *mun pa mun nag tu mthong ngo DQ: mun nag tu mthong ngo* S (12) *kyi 'khor gyi dkyil 'khor la DS: dkyil 'khor gyi dkyil 'khor la* Q (13) *gang chos dkar po la sems pa' i sems can rnam kyis mun pa ni bdud kyi las yin no zhes bka' stsal to DQ: gang gang dag chos dkar po la sems dpa' sems can dag la bdud kyi las mun pa ston pa de dag de ltar 'gyur ro* S. For its Chinese parallels, see T397(8), 122a3-c16; T404, 640c26-641b2 (Cf. Han 2021b, pp. 735–40).
- 62 Cf. *Dhammapada* 93: *yassāsavaṃ parikkhīṇā āhāre ca anissito suññato animitto ca vimokkho yassa gocaro ākāse 'va sakuntānaṃ padaṃ tassa durannayaṃ*.
- 63 In *Daśabhūmikasūtra* (Radher 1926, p. 10): *yathāntarīkṣe śakuneḥ padaṃ budhair vaktuṃ na śakyāṃ na ca darśanopagam* | *tathaiva sarvā jinaputra bhūmayo vaktuṃ na śakyāḥ kuta eva śrotum* | | “Just as the track of a bird in the air can neither be spoken nor seen by learned ones, all the stages of the son of the conqueror cannot be expressed, how much less to hear.” On the term *jinaputra* (Tib. *rgyal ba' i sras bu*) used in the *Buddhāvataṃsaka* texts, see (Skilling and Saerji 2012).
- 64 In *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* (Study Group on Buddhist Sanskrit Literature (SGBSL) 2004: 6.1): *tadyathā mañjuśrīḥ ākāśe śakunipadam evaṃ bodhisatvena sarvasatvāḥ pratyavekṣitavyāḥ* | | “Just like the track of a bird in the sky, Mañjuśrī, in the same way, the bodhisatva should consider all living beings.”
- 65 The Tibetan literally reads “a living being going in/to the sky (*sems can nam mkhar 'gro*),” but the earliest version (T. 397(8)) contains “a bird (*niao* 鳥).” See the underlined portions in the following footnote.
- 66 *sems can nam mkhar 'gro mod kyi* | | *de la 'gro ba' i rjes*¹ *kyang med* | | *sems can byang chub phyir spyod kyang* | | (4) *de ni spyod pa' i mtshan ma min* | | (D288a3-4) (1) *rjes DS: rten* Q. For its Chinese parallels, see T.397, 110a26-27: 如鳥行空 無有足跡 行菩提然 行不可見; T.404, 630b12: 猶空難成 菩提行無相 (Cf. Han 2021b, pp. 493–94).
- 67 *'di lta ste dper na* | | *nam mkha' la bya rjes kyi gnas med kyang sgras gnas su brjod pa de bzhin du*² *sangs rgyas skye ba' ang skye ba med pa ste* | | *'on kyang skye ba' i*³ *sgras brjod do* | | (D305a5) (1) *'di lta ste dper na* | D: *'di lta ste dper na* | QS (2) *du DQ: du* | S (3) *skye ba' i DQ: skye ba* S. For its Chinese parallels, see T.404, 637a22 (Cf. Han 2021b, pp. 631–32).
- 68 *stong gsum dag gi rgya mtsho' i chu ni gzhal bar nus kyang srid* | | (3) *phyogs bcu dag gi nam mkha' i bya rjes brjod par nus kyang srid* | | *mi 'ga' zhig gis sems can kun sems gcig tu byed srid kyi* | | *thub pa' i sras kyi yon tan chen po zad par mi nus so* | | (D314b2-3). For its Chinese parallels, see T.397, 121c22-23; T.404, 640c24-25 (Cf. Han 2021b, pp. 729–30).
- 69 The Mahāyāna *dharmaparyāyas* are made up by such textual elements as stanzas of praise (*stotra*), vows and aspirations (*prañidhāna*), stories of past deeds (*pūrvayoga*), predictions of future Buddhahood (*vyākaraṇa*), lists and inventories of dharmas and their relations (*mātrkā*), incantations (*dhāraṇī*), and transmission or entrustment (*parīdanā*). Cf. (Skilling 2014–2015, pp. 46–47).
- 70 In the *Mahāsaṃnipāta* collection, the frame stories are quite minimal, but the bodhisatva, carrying the symbolic name, come from a distant universe, and they have, as in many Mahāyāna sūtras, a quite confrontational Madhyamaka style dialogue with a śrāvaka. In other Mahāyāna sūtras, the frame stories are sometimes more developed, and usually taken from the then classical Buddhist lore and changed to suite the Mahāyāna ideology.
- 71 The symbol of the sea has had a strong afterlife in Buddhism, not the least in the name Dalai, *rgya mtsho* in Tibetan, both meaning “Sea (of Wisdom).”

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