

Reception History and Limits of Interpretation: The Belgian Étienne Lamotte, Japanese Buddhologists, the Chinese monk Yinshun 印順 and the Formation of a Global ‘*Da zhidu lun* 大智度論 Scholarship’

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Abstract: One of the most well-known accomplishments of Étienne Lamotte (1903–1983) was the unfinished French translation of *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論. *Da zhidu lun* is also a very popular text in East Asia, because it is attributed to Nāgārjuna, the so-called ‘patriarch of the eight schools’ (*bazong zhi zu* 八宗之祖) in East Asian Buddhism. Lamotte, however, claimed that Nāgārjuna might not have written *Da zhidu lun*.

Lamotte’s argument led to various debates that gave rise to a wide array of hypotheses on *who* the author of *Da zhidu lun* could have been. The theory that *Da zhidu lun* could have been a text not (or not only) written by Nāgārjuna reached Chinese Buddhist monks and scholars as well, including the monk Yinshun 印順 (1906–2005).

This paper will show the impact of Western scholarship on East Asian Buddhism, highlight the (pluri)directionality of knowledge

transfer, and demonstrate relevance and potentiality of the dialogue between East and West for the advancement of Buddhist learning. Finally, Umberto Eco's concepts of 'empirical reader' and 'model reader' will serve to understand this Buddhist textual debate from the wider perspective of textual interpretation and reception history.

Introduction: Academic Networks and the Limits of Interpretation

The twentieth century witnessed the creation and development of the academic field of Buddhist studies in the West. Within the Western world, Europeans were the first to begin defining the initial steps in this domain. In fact, during the first half of the twentieth-century, Europe recorded the production of translations, monographs on history and culture, and manuals on disciplinary approaches that were intended to form the first Western library on Buddhism, including the East Asian tradition. All of these works provided an *interpretation* of the Buddhist East Asia that was crucial not only for the development of the field in Europe, but also for the tension and further exchange with East Asian scholarship.

To begin with, we cannot really talk of an 'European' scholarship, but rather of single scholars who created schools and lineages around themselves, each a patriarch of a scholarly network. These scholarly networks have evolved, either independently or through communication and mutual influence. Scholarship identity should be conceived as person-based rather than region-based. Moreover, some of these scholarly networks went beyond the European borders and reached the very East Asian areas they were interpreting. In other words, the literature produced by certain Europe-based circles also came to affect secondary literature produced in the context of East Asia. This is the point where scholarly networks pass from being isolated and regional to converge and create patterns of integration, form new cross-border networks, and thus complete the full cycle of knowledge transfer.

Within this process of exchange, tension and fusion among scholarly networks, we detect a game between *interpretations*. Those interpretation endeavours may be, by nature, problematic. Important to understanding this is Umberto Eco's extensive argumentation on tex-

tual interpretation, its limits and dangers of ‘overinterpretation’, and the (often) difficult relations between author, text and reader in the making of the interpretations. Eco’s distinction between ‘empirical reader’ and ‘model reader’ is a good reference point for this analysis of a range of interpretations of the same text or context, and helps to rearrange those from an analytical perspective.¹

This study will focus on these endeavours of interpretation and trans-regional scholarly networks by focusing on the case study of Étienne Lamotte’s writings on Buddhist history, especially his translation and interpretation of *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論 [*The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*],² and the reception and responses that Lamotte’s work received in East Asia, particularly in Taiwan.

Étienne Lamotte (1903–1983) was a Belgian Catholic priest, an expert of Greek philology and, at the same time, an eminent scholar of history and scriptures of Indian Buddhism. One of his most well-known accomplishments, which was unfortunately left unfinished, is the French translation of *Da zhidu lun*. This scripture is supposedly the Chinese version of a (lost) Sanskrit version, *Mahāprajñāpāramitōpadeśa*.³ *Da zhidu lun* is a very popular text in East Asia because it is attributed to Nāgārjuna, the so-called ‘patriarch of the eight schools’ (*bazong zhi zu* 八宗之祖) in East Asian Buddhism. Lamotte, however, claimed that Nāgārjuna might not have written *Da zhidu lun*.

Lamotte’s theory received attention, and consensus, from other

¹ See Eco, ‘Interpretation and history’, 23–44; ‘Overinterpreting texts’, 45–56; the first chapter of *The limits of Interpretation*.

² This chapter will use the Chinese title of the text, *Da zhidu lun* (*T* no. 1509, 25), throughout the text, since at the present time we have only the Chinese version in hand, and it is to the Chinese version that the textual discourses highlighted in this chapter refer to.

³ *Da zhidu lun* has been often regarded as the Chinese translation of a lost manuscript that was titled in Sanskrit as either *Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra* or *Mahāprajñāpāramitōpadeśa*. In case of reference to the possible Sanskrit original, this study chose to adopt the latter instead of the former title, in line with the recent tendency in Buddhist studies.

Western Buddhist scholars like Conze. It also influenced contemporary Japanese Buddhologists, who then came to represent Lamotte's legacy in the far East and turned Lamotte's school into a transnational scholarly network. Lamotte's claim led to various debates that eventually gave rise to a wide array of hypotheses and claims concerning the true author of *Da zhidu lun*. The theory that *Da zhidu lun* was a text not (or not only) written by the very authoritative Nāgārjuna created several debates among Chinese Buddhist monks and scholars as well, including the monk Yinshun 印順 (1906–2005), and thus sparked further responses to Lamotte and the Japanese.

This paper will utilize the example of *Da zhidu lun* studies to show the impact of Western scholarship on East Asian Buddhology, highlight effects of the (pluri)directionality of knowledge transfer and integration, and demonstrate relevance and potentiality of the dialogue between East and West for the advancement of Buddhist learning. It will then explore the interaction between scholarly networks, clash between authorities in the field, and a study on contributions and limits of translations/interpretations and patterns of integration.

I. Lamotte's Contribution to Buddhist Studies: Interpretation of History and Texts

Étienne Lamotte was, first of all, a philologist, a linguist, and an Indologist. His major interest and concern focused on the Indian tradition of Buddhism. As a consequence, even his studies of Chinese texts were conducted from the perspective of Indian Buddhism. Chinese translations were seen mostly as translations of Indian Sanskrit texts and were often studied in order to retrieve and assess the possible Indian original. This specific angle marks a distance between Lamotte's scholarship on Chinese Buddhism and the works of two other eminent scholars more or less contemporary to him: the Sinologists Paul Demiéville (1894–1979)⁴ and Erik Zürcher (1928–

⁴ Lamotte studied with several teachers, authoritative figures for separate scholarly networks: de La Vallée-Poussin was his mentor for Indology, while Paul

2008)⁵, who were authoritative voices in other scholarly ‘lineages’ and networks.

Lamotte’s works that more accurately represent his own perspective and style are *Histoire du Bouddhisme Indien* (1958) and the five-volume *Le traité de la grande vertu de sagesse de Nāgārjuna* (*Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra*) (1944–1980). Richness of chronological and historical references, accuracy in linguistic and geographical details, and inclusion of textual and iconographical material are all features of *Histoire du Bouddhisme Indien* that made it an unprecedented, and still unsurpassed, achievement. This paper will look closely at his other work, *Le traité*, in comparative and cross-cultural perspective with other scholarship on *Da zhidu lun* produced by Western and Asian figures (and scholarly networks).

II. Lamotte’s *Le traité* in Context: Western and Asian Studies on *Da zhidu lun*

In his review of the English translation of *Histoire*, Maurizio Taddei commented on the work of the translation team in these terms:

Although Dr Dantine makes no mention of this aspect of the undertaking, I do not doubt that the team of Belgian scholars who took on the task of completing this edition had very much in mind the aim of bringing Lamotte’s work to the large public of Indian (and, in general, Asian) students of Buddhism.⁶

For similar reasons, in the 1980s and 1990s a Taiwanese team decided to translate parts of *Le traité* and other works by Lamotte into Chinese. The aim was to bring Lamotte’s work to the attention of

Demiéville was one of the main teachers of his in the field of Sinology. Lamotte then ‘descended’ from a few networks which informed the academic ‘lineage’ he himself created and developed.

⁵ See Barrett, ‘Erik Zürcher, 1928–2008’, 919–23.

⁶ Taddei, ‘Reviewed Work: *History of Indian Buddhism*’, 325.

Chinese scholars and, to borrow Taddei's words, 'the large public of Chinese students of Buddhism'. In those same years, that same Taiwanese team translated more publications on Indian Buddhism—especially *Mādhyamika*—authored by Western, Indian and Japanese scholars. This facilitated a further circulation of ideas and fostered local debates, which will be discussed in the final part of this paper.

Local Taiwanese responses to Lamotte's 'foreign' position on this crucial text for East Asian Buddhism took shape through various stages. Today, finally, the academic reading of *Da zhidu lun* in Taiwan is conducted with cross-reference to both the (mostly adopted) comments by the *local* Chinese Buddhist monk Yinshun and Lamotte's *foreign* analysis. Two authorities and two scholarly networks have finally merged. Therefore, the circle of knowledge transfer is complete and shows results at its best: Chinese Buddhist wisdom was studied and analysed in the West, eventually the Western results came under scrutiny of the Chinese Buddhist academia itself, and finally we have new investigations structured along both Western and Chinese perspectives.

The following sections summarise special features of *Le traité*, the main positions in the debate on authorship and translation of the text, and the real scholarly exchanges that have animated the last two decades in the Taiwanese academic world.

II.1 Lamotte's *Le traité*: Distinctive Features

Le traité should not be conceived as just a Western translation of a Chinese text. The real value of Lamotte's efforts certainly lays in the work he did to reconstruct the history of the text and assess the doctrinal debates articulated throughout the text, including the extensive and precise footnotes on terminologies and naming practices and the attempt to match Chinese and Sanskrit notions. It is this richness produced by Lamotte that takes *Da zhidu lun*'s epithet of 'Buddhist encyclopaedia' to a whole new level.⁷

⁷ For a short summary of Lamotte's contribution see also Durt, 'Le Traité de la Grande Vertu de Sagesse et l'Histoire du Bouddhisme Indien', 1–16.

The critical essays at the beginning of each volume are another important aspect of *Le traité*, and probably the most debated and read part of the entire oeuvre. Volume I commences with a short preface on the text, which is defined as an utmost product of Buddhist scholasticism, and continues with a detailed narrative on the biography of—and legends around—the supposed author of the text, Nāgārjuna. Volume II starts with an assessment of the six pāramitā, as well as a critical discussion of the pre-Mahāyāna and Mahāyāna doctrines presented in the text. The long introduction of Volume III is probably the best-known—and more controversial—part of *Le traité* and includes Lamotte's discussion on authorship and translation of the text. The translation of Volume IV is preceded by a short piece that contextualises the doctrinal elements present in Chapters 42 to 48, provides a detailed list of figures and texts that those chapters refer to or just mention, and finally adds more material on the identity of the author of the text in response to criticisms and debates that arose after the publication of Volume III.

What emerges in the introductions to each volume of *Le traité* is a precise attention to textual authenticity and interpretation, two cardinal foci of Lamotte's scholarship that find full articulation in two earlier articles of his. These features also show his purist attitude of evaluation of early Buddhism.⁸ Textual authenticity and interpretation were also highly debated topics by the Asian counterparts of Lamotte.

II. 2 *Da zhidu lun* 'Global Scholarship' in the Twentieth Century

Lamotte's *Le traité* is one of several attempts in twentieth-century Europe, as well as China and Japan, to make sense of *Da zhidu lun*. Thus, it is one of the several voices in a still-open global debate. The most debated issues were the authenticity of the text, the role of the translator Kumārajīva, and the connection with the *auctoritas* Nāgārjuna—at least in the East Asian Mahāyāna context.

⁸ Lamotte, 'La critique d'authenticité dans le bouddhisme', 213–22; and Lamotte, 'La critique d'interprétation dans le bouddhisme', 341–61.

In fact, from the 1930s to the present, several voices shaped the debate on authorship, composition and translation of the text. Linguistic elements, cultural references, quotations from certain scriptures, relations to the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (*Zhonglun* 中論 [*Treatise on the Middle*]),⁹ and attitudes towards pre-Mahāyāna doctrine became major reasons for discrepancy among the various positions. The two major recurring arguments in most of those debates are (1) an Indian, but probably post-Nāgārjuna, origin of the text (if we consider Nāgārjuna as author of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*), and (2) a Chinese origin of the text, thus probably authored by its apparent translator(s).

This section will provide a brief overview of this on-going debate on the authorship and translation of the text. According to Lamotte's position, the text had an Indian origin, but the author was a Sarvāstivādin who then converted to Mahāyāna from North Western India (while the Nāgārjuna author of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* is said to be from the South) and who certainly post-dated the Nāgārjuna author of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. This view was shared—completely or mostly—by many Western and Asian scholars, including his teacher Paul Demiéville (1971),¹⁰ A. K. Warder (1970)¹¹, Kajiyama Yūichi 梶山雄一 (1989)¹², Ramchandra Pandeya (1977)¹³, David Seyfurd Ruegg (1981)¹⁴. The latter proposed the possibility that the authorship of the text was a cooperative effort of several hands, and that Kumārajīva was part of that team. In line with this theory, Hikata Ryūsho 干瀉龍祥 (1958)¹⁵ and a student of Lamotte's, Katō Junshō 加藤純章

⁹ T no. 1564, 30.

¹⁰ Demiéville, 'Review of Lamotte's *Le traité* tome III', 144–47.

¹¹ Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, 388–89.

¹² Kajiyama, *Daichidoron*.

¹³ Pandeya, *Indian Studies in Philosophy*.

¹⁴ Ruegg, *The Literature of the Madhyamaka School*, 32–33.

¹⁵ Hikata, 'Dai chido ron no kyosha ni tsuite'. The same article was originally part of Hikata's English book *Suvikravikrami-Pariprecha Prajñāpāramitā-Sutra*, lli-lxxv. This article was translated into Chinese by Lai Xianbang 賴顯邦 as *Lun*

(1988)¹⁶, argued the presence of several additions to the original text, and, further, that those additions were certainly authored by Kumārajīva. Kumārajīva's partial authorship of the text was also the opinion of Leon Hurvitz (1957).¹⁷ Edward Conze (1978) went beyond this argument and asserted that Kumārajīva was the sole author of the text.¹⁸ Chinese authorship of the text was supported by Miyaji Kakue 宮地廓慧 (1932),¹⁹ who believed that certain descriptions of Indian customs and the use of language could have not been understood by Indian readership. Therefore, the text could have not been authored by an Indian. Very recently, Chou Po-kan 周伯戡 (2004) suggested that the text 'must be ascribed to the contemporary Chinese Buddhist intellectual situation,²⁰ not to Nāgārjuna, not to a Sarvāstivādin convert to Mahāyāna Buddhism, and not to Kumārajīva alone'.²¹ Although Tsukamoto Zenryū 塚本善隆 (1955) expressed doubt that the text was written by the same author of *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*,²² Arthur Waley (1952) was firmly convinced that the Nāgārjuna author of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* could have not also been the author of *Da zhidu lun*.²³ Meanwhile, Hirakawa Akira 平川彰 (1956) argued that the *Daśabhūmika vibhāsā śāstra* (*Shizhu piposha lun* 十住毘婆沙論)²⁴, another text commonly attributed in China to Nāgārjuna, and the potential Sanskrit original of *Da zhidu lun* could have not been attributed to the same author.²⁵ The Chinese lay scholar Yang Baiyi

'*Da Zhidu Lun*' de Zuozhe 論《大智度論》的作者 and published in *Diguan* 諦觀, no. 68 (January 1992): 85-121.

¹⁶ Katō, Hongyin trans., 'Da zhidu lun de shijie', 1–47.

¹⁷ Hurvitz, "Render Unto Caesar", 88–90.

¹⁸ Conze, *The Prajñāpāramitā Literature*.

¹⁹ Miyaji, 'A Viewpoint on the Textual Criticism of the Ta-chih-tu-lun', 514–43.

²⁰ Chou, 'The Problem of the Authorship', 281–327.

²¹ Chou, 287.

²² Tsukamoto, 'Kumajū no katsudō nendai ni tsuite', 224–26.

²³ Waley, *The Real Tripitaka*, 269.

²⁴ T no. 1521, 26.

²⁵ Hirakawa, 'Jūjūbibasharon no kyosha ni tsuite', 176–81.

楊白衣 (1978) also concluded that the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*'s Nāgārjuna could not have authored the potential Sanskrit original of *Da zhidu lun*.²⁶ Saigusa Mitsuyoshi 三枝充憲 (1969), however, believed that most of the text was authored by Nāgārjuna, i.e. 'the patriarch of the eight schools'.²⁷

Some other scholars, though, remained convinced that there was a Sanskrit original of *Da zhidu lun*, and that Nāgārjuna, the same author of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, wrote that text too. These scholars include Shōjun Mano 真野正順 (1934),²⁸ the Chinese Buddhist monk Yinshun various works from 1940 to 1993,²⁹ the Chinese Confucian Mu Zongsan 牟宗三 (1977),³⁰ and the non-Chinese Venkata Ramanan (1966),³¹ and J. W. de Jong (1971).³² These scholars also more or less agreed that Nāgārjuna wrote the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* in an earlier stage of his career and the Sanskrit of *Da zhidu lun* in a later stage.

It is important to remember that only some of these voices actually encountered and evolved into real debates within European and North American academia, as well as between Western scholarship and Japanese Buddhology. However, a number of the positions listed above remained as isolated arguments that did not have the opportunity for mutual communication, and thus did not develop into a pluri-directional (and inter-network) discussion. Chinese views, especially, were not included in this mutual exchange, and remained mostly detached from the ongoing textual diatribe. The sit-

²⁶ Yang, 'Foxue yanjiu fa shuyao', 22–23.

²⁷ Saigusa, *Studien zum Mahāprajñāpāramitā(upadeśa)śāstra*. This is the publication of the Ph.D. dissertation that he completed in Munchen in 1962.

²⁸ Shōjun, *Daichidoron*, 2.

²⁹ For Yinshun's work on *Da zhidu lun* see the next section of this paper.

³⁰ Mu, *Foxing yu banruo*.

³¹ Ramanan, *Nāgārjuna's Philosophy*, 13: 'Professor Lamotte has advanced arguments to doubt Nāgārjuna's authorship of the Śāstra. These arguments have not persuaded me and I believe that cogent arguments can be made in favour of the traditional view.'

³² De Jong, 'Review of Étienne Lamotte, *Traité III*', 105–12.

uation changed as Lamotte became available to Chinese readership and the monk Yinshun, who was *the* Chinese authority on the topic, expressed his own response. This was the turning point where scholarly networks met and evolved. Unfortunately, Yinshun's response was published a few years after the passing of Lamotte, therefore he could not counter-argue with Yinshun and Chinese/Taiwanese scholarship. Fortunately, members of the following generations of the scholarly networks rooted into Lamotte's and Yinshun's authorities were able to continue this exchange and unfold a 'global dialogue' on the relations between *Da zhidu lun* and the figure of Nāgārjuna.

In terms of quantity of writing and scholarly influence, Lamotte's *Le traité* only has one parallel in the East: the work of the monk Yinshun. Lamotte and Yinshun compiled their studies around the same time, but in different regions, both of which went through difficulties and changes in the 1940s (WWII in Europe and the Communists' conquest of China in 1949). Lamotte made an annotated translation of *Da zhidu lun*, while Yinshun made extensive notes in a forty-year period and created a new punctuated edition of the text. Yinshun and Lamotte both debated issues of authenticity, authorship and translation of the text, which started from different perspectives and ended with consequently opposing conclusive remarks. The high reputation and authority these two Buddhist figures held in their respective regions and scholarly networks made their disagreement, and especially Yinshun's response and the effect of that response in East Asia, part of this study. It was the Taiwanese reaction to Yinshun's response to Lamotte that brought a significant change to the Chinese scholarship on *Da zhidu lun*.

II. 3 Yinshun's study on *Da zhidu lun*: a Chinese Buddhist perspective

These scholars, each of them in a different extent, have eventually confuted the common theory that had enthroned Nāgārjuna as the author of the scripture. I believe that this position deserves further analysis. A careful investigation of the opinions advanced in their papers reveals that they failed to grasp the features of the scripture,

and thus also failed to measure the translation process, with the result of drawing wrong conclusions.³³

This is one of the statements that Yinshun pronounced in reaction to the Japanese and Western confutation of Nāgārjuna's authorship of the text.³⁴ Yinshun's work on *Da zhidu lun* was certainly informed by his own understanding of the history of Indian Buddhism, his project to restore Chinese Buddhism in negotiation with some Indian Buddhism, his *panjiao* 判教 (teaching classification), and his controversial conception of Mahāyāna and Mādhyamika.

In my previous work, I discussed in lengthy detail Yinshun's interpretation of Mādhyamika history and doctrine, his selection and exegesis of core scriptures, and his contribution to the revival of Mādhyamika scholarship in the second half of twentieth century China and Taiwan.³⁵ The core of Yinshun's understanding of Buddhist history and doctrines emerged clearly in his *panjiao*, which revealed Yinshun's view of the cyclical history of Buddhism, going from the 'infant' early Indian Buddhism to the 'aged' and decayed esoteric Buddhist traditions. Most importantly, it was in the moment where the pre-Mahāyā-

³³ Yinshun, *Da zhidu lun zhi zuozhe jiqi fanyi*, 8.

³⁴ Yinshun was born in 1906 at Haining 海寧, Zhejiang province. His birth name was Zhang Luqin 張麴芹. Yinshun received tonsure in 1930 under the Chan monk Qingnian 清念 at Fuquan monastery (Fuquan 福泉庵), and was fully ordained in 1931 at Tiantong monastery (Tiantong 天童寺), Ningbo 寧波. After studying at the Buddhist institutes founded by the reformer monk Taixu 太虛 (1890–1947), Yinshun moved from Mainland China through Hong Kong (1949) to Taiwan (1952), where he finally settled down, opened his own Buddhist institutes, and attracted a large number of monastic and lay students. Yinshun died on the 4th of June 2005 at Hualian, in the Tzu Chi Hospital established by his disciple the nun Zhengyan.

³⁵ Travagnin, 'Il Nuovo "Buddhismo per l'Umanità"'; Travagnin, 'The Mādhyamika Dimension of Yinshun'; Travagnin, 'What is behind Yinshun's Re-statement of *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*?'; Travagnin, 'Yinshun's Re-Assessment of Shizhu piposha lun'; Travagnin, *Yinshun and his Exposition of Mādhyamika* (forthcoming).

na enters the early stages of Mahāyāna that Yinshun individualised the ‘correct Dharma’. That was the time of Nāgārjuna, and, in fact, Nāgārjuna’s writings came to represent ‘real’ Buddhism in Yinshun’s mind. Nāgārjuna’s writings are defined as crucial texts because they encompass both the pre-Mahāyāna (*Āgama*) and the early Mahāyāna. ‘*Zhonglun* is the thorough restatement of the *Āgamas*’ (*Zhonglun shi Ahanjing de tonglun* 《中論》是《阿含經》的通論) was a key statement of Yinshun’s and also one of the most controversial from the perspective of Chinese Mahāyāna. For Yinshun, Nāgārjuna’s restatement of the *Āgama* represented the correct Dharma. In short, Yinshun was a Chinese Buddhist monk who emphasised the Indian tradition, but at the same time remained clearly Chinese-focused through his attention to certain scriptures and authoritative figures.

Yinshun envisioned a precise scriptural identity of this Mādhyamika, using *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (*Zhonglun* 中論), *Daśabhūmika vibhāsā śāstra* (*Shizhu piposha lun* 十住毘婆沙論), and *Da zhidu lun* as the key texts of the school. He chose these three because they were, according to Yinshun (but not to Lamotte and other mostly non-Chinese scholars), authored by Nāgārjuna, and together embedded the theoretical tenets (*Mūlamadhyamakakārikā/Zhonglun*) and practice (*Daśabhūmika vibhāsā śāstra/Shizhu piposha lun* and *Da zhidu lun*) of the school.

Yinshun certainly did an extensive study on *Da zhidu lun* throughout his entire career, from the early 1940s (as he was in mainland China) until mid 1990s (when he was in Taiwan). Besides several references to the text in most of his writings, Yinshun also compiled 388 pages of notes. These notes were made from the 1940s until the 1980s but, unfortunately, he never managed to edit and arrange them into a coherent book. Yinshun’s notes were made available to the public in 2005 (*Da zhidu lun biji* 大智度論筆記).³⁶ Secondly, under invitation of the monk Miaolian 妙蓮, abbot of the Pure Land temple Fo cijing si 佛慈淨寺 in Hong Kong, he produced his own punctuated edition of *Da zhidu lun*, which was published

³⁶ See the conference paper by Shi Changci, ‘Yinshun daoshi *Da zhidu lun biji*’, and Travagnin, ‘The Mādhyamika Dimension of Yinshun’, 283–318.

in December 1979 (*Da zhidu lun biaodian ben* 大智度論標點本).³⁷ Finally, and more relevant for this paper, Yinshun wrote a response to Lamotte and some Japanese scholars, to confute their position on the text's authorship and translation.

This last short work, titled *Da zhidu lun zhi zuozhe jiqi fanyi* 大智度論之作者及其翻譯, published in Taiwan first as an article and then as a short book, was eventually translated into Japanese. Actually, this was the first book by Yinshun to be fully translated and published in a foreign language.³⁸ The translation of this book into Japanese made Japanese scholarship aware of Yinshun's response and provoked reactions by the same authors that Yinshun provided commentary on. For instance, see the following works on the text by Katō Junsho,³⁹ but also the still influential volume on *Da zhidu lun* by Takeda Kōgaku 武田浩学.⁴⁰

II. 4 Lamotte vs. Yinshun: a Cross-Analysis of Distant Arguments⁴¹

Yinshun's edition can be analysed in parallel to Lamotte's work, the latter being the author of a similar project, which can be regarded as the Western counterpart to the scholar-monk.⁴² Besides a discrepancy in background and religious affiliation, the main differences between the two authors are the sources they adopted and the aim of their work. Yinshun used the *Taishō*, but relied mostly on previous

³⁷ For details on publication and distribution of Yinshun's punctuated edition of *Da zhidu lun*, see Travagnin, 'The Mādhyamika Dimension of Yinshun', 293–304 and 312–13. My research is based on the edition reprinted and distributed for free in 2015 by the Fotuo jiaoyu jijinhui 佛陀教育基金會 [Buddhist Cultural Foundation]. See also Miaolian, '*Da zhidu lun jinban ji*', 52.

³⁸ Translated by Iwaki Hidenori 岩城英規 and published by Sankibo in 1993.

³⁹ Katō, 'Raju to Dai chido ron', 32–58.

⁴⁰ Takeda, *Daichidoron no kenkyū*, especially 17–31.

⁴¹ The sections on Yinshun's study on *Da zhidu lun* and the parallel between Lamotte's oeuvre and Yinshun's work are just a summary of what my forthcoming volume *Yinshun and his Exposition of Mādhyamika* articulates in great detail.

⁴² Lamotte, *Le Traite de la Grande Vertu de Sagesse de Nāgārjuna*, Tome I–V.

canonical editions,⁴³ whereas Lamotte kept his focus on the *Taishō* version. Yinshun aimed to produce a philological reconstruction of the correct Chinese version of the text, while Lamotte pursued a reconstruction of the hypothetical Sanskrit original text based on the Chinese *Taishō* version, along with debating the authenticity of the Indian origin of the text. Yinshun also analysed the entire scripture, while Lamotte's translation remained a partial and unfinished work.

Yinshun's meticulous attention to Chinese linguistic details can be explained by his simultaneous additional study of a Chinese text for a Chinese readership and his project of recreation of Chinese Buddhism. Most of Yinshun's changes clearly addressed a Chinese readership, in fact they were aimed to make the text more understandable and tried to create consistency with the previous and following sections. On the other hand, Lamotte was not addressing a Chinese audience and conceived his translation as part of his study of Indian Buddhism. This can explain why Lamotte overlooked certain expressions that Yinshun questioned and contested in details, and why Lamotte sometimes did not translate certain sentences that appeared in the *Taishō* Canon. Yinshun aimed to highlight a consistency between *Da zhidu lun* and the other works attributed to Nāgārjuna as well; this *modus operandi* also conveys the main differences in background and aim between Lamotte and Yinshun. The former was pursuing the study of Indian Buddhism and trying to reconstruct a text belonging, according to him, to the Sarvastivada tradition which was then converted to Mahāyāna (and not authored by Nāgārjuna). Meanwhile, the latter was pursuing a negotiation between the Indian and Chinese Buddhist traditions and trying to reconfirm the authority of Nāgārjuna; this was conceived in his overall project of creating a new Chinese Buddhism for the twentieth century China. Another important difference concerns the religious affiliation of both the authors: Yinshun was a Buddhist monk, an 'insider' who was

⁴³ Yinshun used the edition included in the Jiaxing Canon (*Jiaxing zang* 嘉興藏), from the Ming dynasty, as master (and therefore, according to Yinshun, most reliable) copy. See Yinshun, 'Da zhidu lun jiaokan ji', 53; Travagnin, 'The Mādhyamika Dimension of Yinshun', 293–99.

studying the text as basis for his Buddhist practice and the issue of practice informed the entire research process; Lamotte, on the other hand, was a Christian priest, an ‘outsider’ (of Buddhism, but ‘insider’ in Catholicism) whose work was detached from personal religious/spiritual cultivation.

Their disagreements in respect to doctrinal issues (such as the Sarvastivada pattern of the text), linguistic matters (the presence of glosses in Qin 秦 and a difference in the style of writing between *Da zhidu lun* and *Zhonglun*), and generational overlapping (the quotations from the works by Nāgārjuna’s disciples in *Da zhidu lun*) are a result of Lamotte’s and Yinshun’s different understanding of the development of Buddhism in India.⁴⁴

III. Lamotte in (Chinese) Translation: Knowledge Transfer, Reception and Reaction in Taiwan (1980s and 1990s)

In the second half of the twentieth century, Chinese Buddhist scholarship came to terms with the non-Chinese study of Mādhyamika, and especially of *Da zhidu lun*. According to my research, Lamotte’s *Le Traité* was already available in Taiwan in the 1980s. The fact that not only Lamotte was aware of the Japanese scholar Ryūsho Hikata’s theories on Kumārajīva’s intervention in the text, but also that the latter was aware of the first two volumes of Lamotte’s work in 1958, is sign of the general awareness in Japan of some Western scholarship on Mādhyamika. Katō Junsho was a student of Lamotte and, therefore, familiar with Lamotte’s work and conclusions on the authorship of the text. We should also not forget the presence in Japan of Hubert Durt, a ‘disciple’ of Lamotte, and the trips that Lamotte himself made to Japan. Furthermore, several young Japanese researchers studied in Europe in those same decades, and were exposed to Western ideas and analyses, including those by

⁴⁴ A comparison between Lamotte’s *Histoire du Bouddhisme Indien* and Yinshun’s *Yindu zhi fojiao* and *Yindu fojiao sixiang shi* provide further evidences in support of this thesis.

Lamotte.⁴⁵ Again, the frequent and productive Dharma and Sangha exchanges between the two islands also facilitated the arrival of Lamotte's works in Taiwan via Japan.⁴⁶

Translations and knowledge transfer between East Asia and the West has a long history with many accomplishments from the late Qing onwards. The first decades of the twentieth century was a key period for the Japanese translation of primary literature from Tibetan Mādhyamika, the 1940s was the phase of the Chinese translations of Tibetan Mādhyamika primary sources, and the 1980s signalled the beginning of the Chinese translations of non-Chinese Mādhyamika secondary literature. Finally, the beginning of the twenty-first century marked the Chinese synthesis of previous and international debates and, eventually, the production of a new exegesis as a starting point for renewed and re-shaped San-lun/Mādhyamika scholarship. As stated previously, this is how the circle of knowledge transfer achieved closure.

Japan played an important role in circulating Western scholarship within the Chinese community, but we should also acknowledge the importance of the Chinese translations of those works and the efforts of the main institutions and figures who made the non-Chinese (i.e., Japanese and Western) publications available to the Chinese readership. Among the protagonists of this new mission of translation in the 1980s and 1990s, there is the Buddhist journal *Diguan zazhi* 諦觀雜誌, which was founded in 1983 by a small Buddhist association and published mostly translations of Japanese and Western works on Mādhyamika, and the Taiwanese lay Buddhist Guo Zhongsheng 郭忠生, who was the main translator of those Mādhyamika studies.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ See the summary presented by Wu Rujun in the article 'Ribei de foxue yanjiu de xinfazhan', 55–72.

⁴⁶ For details on travels of monks between Taiwan and Japan, and the effects that the Sangha mobility had on circulation of scholarship, see Travagnin, 'A Religious Bridge'.

⁴⁷ Guo Zhongsheng also collaborated with the Yinshun Cultural Foundation, and is the main examiner for the in process English translation of Yinshun's corpus of literature.

Published by the Beiguang wenjiao jijinhui 悲廣文教基金會 (Beiguang Cultural Foundation) at Lingshan monastery 靈山寺, *Diguan* was first distributed as a monthly (1983–1987) and later as a quarterly journal (1987–1996). The publication of the journal was interrupted in 1996 for financial reasons. In 1997, it was replaced by the quarterly *Zhengguan zazhi* 正觀雜誌, which did not focus on translations of only Mādhyamika related works, but also published research articles on any aspect of Buddhism, including Mādhyamika.

The new mission of translation was not limited solely to Lamotte. *Diguan* also published the Chinese translation of works on Mādhyamika by scholars such as Richard Robinson,⁴⁸ A. K.

⁴⁸ Several chapters from Robinson's *Early Mādhyamika in India and China* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1978) have been translated into Chinese by Darong 大容 and Tantung 曇听, and have been published in *Diguan*: 'The Lineage of the Old Three Treatise Sect' [Gu sanlunzong de chuancheng (two parts) 古三論宗的傳承 (上, 中)], trans. Darong, *Diguan*, no. 5–6 (September–October 1983); 'Prajna has no knowing' [*Banruo wu zhi lun zhu* 《般若無知論》註], trans. Darong, *Diguan*, no. 7 (November 1983): 212–21; 'Emptiness of the Non-absolute' [Sengzhao *Buzhen kong lun zhu* 僧肇《不真空論》註], trans. Darong, *Diguan*, no. 8 (December 1983): 222–26; 'Things do not shift' [Sengzhao *Wu bubian lun zhu* 僧肇《物不遷論》註], trans. Darong, *Diguan*, no. 9 (January 1984): 228–34; 'The Chief Ideas of the Mahāyāna: The Four Marks' [Huiyuan ji Jiumoluoshi zhi *Dacheng dayi zhang lun sixiang zhu* 慧遠及鳩摩羅什之《大乘大義章論四相》註], trans. Darong, *Diguan*, no. 10 (February 1984): 181–83; 'Seng-jui' [Shi Sengrui 釋僧叡], trans. Darong, *Diguan*, no. 11 (March 1984): 115–22; 'The Chief Ideas of the Mahāyāna: Suchness, Dharma-nature, and Reality-limit' [Huiyuan ji Jiumoluoshi zhi *Dacheng dayi zhang—zhi lun ru*, faxing, zhenji 慧遠及鳩摩羅什之《大乘大義章》之「論如、法性、真際」], trans. Darong, *Diguan*, no. 11 (March 1984): 184–86; 'The Chief Ideas of the Mahāyāna: The Emptiness of Division into Parts' [Luoshi yu Huiyuan *Dacheng dayi zhang—lun fen pokong zhu* 羅什與慧遠《大乘大義章》(論分破空)註], trans. Darong, *Diguan*, no. 13 (May 1984): 191–95; 'The Chief Ideas of the Mahāyāna: Existence of Real Dharmas' [Luoshi yu Huiyuan *Dacheng dayi zhang—lun shi fa you zhu* 羅什與慧遠《大乘大義章》(論實法有)註], trans.

Warder,⁴⁹ M. D. Eckel,⁵⁰ N. Katz,⁵¹ R. F. Olson,⁵² and K. V. Ramanan.⁵³ Besides the large amount of translation, *Diguan* published a special issue on Nāgārjuna and Mādhyamika to prove the main intent of the journal.⁵⁴

Tanting, *Diguan*, no. 13 (May 1984): 187–90; ‘Preface to the Twelve Topic Treatise’ [Sengrui *Shi'er men lun xu zhu* 僧叡《十二門論序》註], trans. Tanting, *Diguan*, no. 14 (June 1984): 209–09; ‘Early Indian Madhyamaka’ [Yindu zaoqi zhongguan xuepai 印度早期中觀學派 1–7], trans. Tanting, *Diguan*, no. 17–23 (September 1984–March 1985); ‘Preface to the Hundred Treatise’ [Shi Sengzhao *Bailun xu zhu* 釋僧肇《百論序》註], trans. Darong, *Diguan*, no. 19 (November 1984): 210–11; ‘Preface to the Middle Treatise’ [Shi Sengzhao *Zhonglun xu zhu* 釋僧肇《中論序》註], trans. Darong, *Diguan*, no. 20 (December 1984): 206–07; ‘Preface to the Abridged Great Perfection of Wisdom Treatise’ [Shi Huiyuan *Da zhidu lun chao xu zhu* 釋慧遠《大智度論抄序》註], trans. Darong, *Diguan*, no. 22 (February 1985): 200–05; ‘Seng-chao’ [Shi Sengzhao 釋僧肇 1–5], trans. Tanting, *Diguan*, no. 25–29 (May–September 1985); ‘Questions and methods’ [Yindu yu Zhongguo zaoqi zhongguan sixiang 印度與中國早期中觀思想 1–3], trans. Tanting, *Diguan*, no. 30–32 (October–December 1985); and ‘Hui-yuan’ [Shi Huiyuan 釋慧遠], trans. Tanting, *Diguan*, no. 47 (March 1987): 96–114.

⁴⁹ Warder, A. K., ‘Is Nāgārjuna a Mahāyānist?’ [Longshu shi dacheng sixiangzhe ma? 龍樹是大乘思想者嗎?], trans. Ying Guyue 映古月, *Diguan*, no. 12 (April 1984).

⁵⁰ Eckel, Malcolm D. ‘Bhavaviveka and the early Madhyamaka theories of language’ [Qingbian yu zaoqi zhongguan xuepai zhi yuyan lilun 清辨與早期中觀學派之語言理論], trans. Darong, *Diguan*, no. 24 (April 1985).

⁵¹ Katz, N. ‘An appraisal of the Svatantrika-Prasangika debates’ [Zhongguan yingchengpai yu zixupai zhenglun pingyi 中觀應成派與自續派評論評議], trans. Fashi 法施, *Diguan*, no. 24 (April 1985).

⁵² Olson. ‘Candrakīrti’s critique of Vijñānavāda’ [Yuecheng dui weishizong de piping 月稱對唯識宗的批評], trans. Fayu 法雨, *Diguan*, no. 32 (December 1985).

⁵³ Ramanan, K. V. ‘Life and work of Nāgārjuna’ [Longshu pusa zhi shengping yu zhuzuo shuyao 龍樹菩薩之生平與著作述要], trans. Tanting, *Diguan*, no. 50 (July 1987).

⁵⁴ See *Diguan*, no. 12 (April 1984): it also includes Yinshun’s essay ‘Zhong lun de tese’ 中論的特色.

From 1990 to 1992, *Diguan* published the translation of eight sections from Lamotte's *Le Traité de la Grande Vertu de Sagesse* (tome I and III), each authored by Guo Zhongsheng.⁵⁵ The translation of other works by Lamotte and even the publication of a short biography of his, demonstrates that Lamotte was held in high esteem within the recent Chinese Buddhist scholarship.⁵⁶ This is one of the very first Western scholars who received serious attention within the Buddhist 'insider' community and not with the purpose of defaming 'outsider' scholarship.

⁵⁵ Sections translated by Guo: '*Da zhidu lun zhi zuozhe jiqi fanyi (fanwen yi Da zhidu lun disan ce xuwen)*' 《大智度論》之作者及其翻譯——法文譯《大智度論》第三冊序文 (Lamotte, tome III, 'Introduction', v-iv), *Diguan*, no. 62 (July 1990): 97-179; '*Da zhidu lun chu pin. Diyi zhang. Da zhidu lun zhi yuanqi*' 《大智度論》初品(第一章)——《大智度論》之緣起 (Lamotte, tome I: 3-55), *Diguan*, no. 63 (October 1990): 1-118; '*Da zhidu lun chu pin. Dier zhang. "Ru shi wo wen yi shi"*' 《大智度論》初品(第二章)——「如是我聞一時」 (Lamotte, tome I: 56-79), *Diguan*, no. 64 (January 1991): 1-36; '*Da zhidu lun chu pin. Disan zhang. Shi zong shuo ru shi wo wen yi shi*' 《大智度論》初品(第三章)——釋總說「如是我聞一時」 (Lamotte, tome I: 80-114), *Diguan*, no. 65 (April 1991): 31-89; '*Da zhidu lun chu pin. Disi zhang. Shi poqiepo*' 《大智度論》初品(第四章)——釋婆伽婆 (Lamotte, tome I: 115-61), *Diguan*, no. 66 (July 1991): 37-106; '*Da zhidu lun chu pin. Diwu zhang. Shi zhu wangshecheng*' 《大智度論》初品(第五章)——釋住王舍城 (Lamotte, tome I: 162-97), *Diguan*, no. 67 (October 1991): 81-143; '*Da zhidu lun chu pin. Diliu zhang. Shi chu pin zhong gong mohe biqu seng*' 《大智度論》初品(第六章)——釋初品中共摩訶比丘僧 (Lamotte, tome I: 198-231), *Diguan*, no. 68 (January 1992): 37-84; '*Da zhidu lun chu pin. Diqi zhang. Bie shi chu pin zhong san zhong yi*' 《大智度論》初品(第七章)——別釋初品中三眾義 (Lamotte, tome I: 232-34), *Diguan*, no. 69 (April 1992): 1-4; and '*Da zhidu lun chu pin. Diba zhang. Shi chu pin zhong pusa*' 《大智度論》初品(第八章)——釋初品中菩薩 (Lamotte, tome I: 235-08), *Diguan*, no. 69 (April 1992): 5-106.

⁵⁶ Lamotte's biography, titled 'Etienne Lamotte (1903-1983) zhi shengping yu zuopin 之生平與作品', was published in January 1991 in *Diguan*, no. 64: 145-62. In the same year, Lamotte's *L'Enseignement de Vimalakīrti* (Louvain: 1962) was translated by Guo Zhongsheng and published by the Diguan Press (Diguan zazhi she 諦觀雜誌社).

Lamotte translated the *Taishō* version of the text and we also know that he had no opportunity to confront that text with the Dunhuang version. All the non-*Taishō* elements he knew came from the notes included in the *Taishō*.⁵⁷ Guo Zhongsheng, for his translation of the *Traité*, used both the *Taishō* and Yinshun's edition of the text.⁵⁸ This fact reveals the Chinese attempt to confront the two authorities of Lamotte with Yinshun and, from a different perspective, the aim to put Yinshun's and the *Taishō* editions side by side. Guo also added some (though not many) annotations himself, which include linguistic and historic observations and references to sources (by Yinshun and others) that either Lamotte had not written or were published after Lamotte's publications.

IV. A New Global '*Da zhidu lun* Scholarship' Made in Taiwan: the Post-Lamotte and Post-Yinshun Era

Following what has been argued so far, we can see three phases of development in the history of the *Da zhidu lun* scholarship, a history that started with the presence of a few regional schools and evolved into the production of a more global and interactive school. A first phase, with its apex in the 1970s, consisted of the creation of a few streams, or even 'schools', which evolved in relative isolation and without mutual confrontation. Overall, the differences in doctrinal and textual approaches and discrepancies in defining authorship and translation of the text gave birth to two major groups. The first half of the second section (II.1 and II.2) of this article analysed this first phase.

⁵⁷ Demiéville, 'Review of E. Lamotte, *Le traité de la Grande Vertu de Sagesse de Nagarjuna*, Tome II'.

⁵⁸ In the 'notes from the translator' (*yizhe shuoming* 譯者說明) that were added before all the translations, Guo Zhongsheng stated that his translation was based on a cross-check of three editions of the scripture: (1) Lamotte's French version (*la ben* 拉本); (2) *Taishō* text (*dazheng* 大正); (3) Yinshun's new edition (*yin ben* 印本).

In the 1980s and 1990s a second phase of *Da zhidu lun* scholarship began. This is the first point of encounter and constructive confrontation, on Chinese soil, among all those (mostly) isolated voices. This is also the time when Western and Japanese voices were translated into Chinese, and the time of the first Chinese reactions and partial translation of those reactions. During this phase, non-Chinese academia made a serious impact on Chinese scholarship. We also see the emergence and enshrinement of authorities, somehow leading figures from those 'schools' that developed in the first phase. Lamotte and Yinshun became two important, yet discrepant, reference points for the study of *Da zhidu lun* during this time. The second half of the second section (II.3 and II.4) and the third section (III) of this article concerns this second phase.

The Chinese translation of Western works on *Da zhidu lun* completed in Taiwan in 1980s and 1990s, and the response by Yinshun to Lamotte and Japanese scholars on authorship and translation of *Da zhidu lun* in the same years, were the roots of a third new stage of study on the text in question. This new, third phase produced the first achievements and written results in the late 1990s, and especially later in the early twenty-first century. These accomplishments rely not only on the *Taishō* or previous canonical editions of the text, but also consider those canonical editions in parallel with Lamotte's and Yinshun's works. This third phase, then, involves the almost 'canonisation' of the leading figures that were already enshrined as such in the second phase of the *Da zhidu lun* scholarship. Only a few years ago, the same monk Houguan conducted a new doctrinal and philological study of the text on the basis of the *Taishō* and Yinshun's edition, with critical cross-reference to both Yinshun's and Lamotte's annotations and previous canonical editions. Houguan's efforts are now published in the seven-volume Chinese oeuvre *Da zhidu lun jiangyi* 大智度論講義.⁵⁹ These volumes structure and propose *Da zhidu lun* according to Yinshun's notes and edition. However, footnotes refer to Lamotte and all the voices that emerged in the first phase of the history

⁵⁹ See also this earlier publication, the index and synoptic reading by Houguan and Guo, 'Da zhidu lun zhi'.

of *Da zhidu lun* scholarship. As it stands, this work is the ultimate result of the merging of the European and East Asian scholarship on the text, the closure of the cycle of knowledge transfer, and definitely shows the impact of European Buddhist studies on Chinese Buddhology, as well as its integration in the Chinese academic arena.

Finally, the cross-reference to previous works resulted not only into new philological editions of the text, but also in new doctrinal and historical discussion on it. For instance, see Chou Po-kan's article and his new conclusions on authorship and the Chinese intellectual background of the scripture. Regardless, the unsolved debate on authorship and translation of the text still continues.

Conclusion: Translation and Interpretation Patterns in the Development of Buddhist Studies

This chapter outlined the history of how the study of a Buddhist text and related doctrines developed in different regions, produced by varying authorities and carried out by those authorities-based scholarly networks. The overall global '*Da zhidu lun* scholarship' developed through three phases. Each phase is defined by a more or less mutual engagement among those scholarly networks and a different degree of emphasis and authority placed on the figures at the roots of those scholarly networks.

The history of this textual, translational and doctrinal study can be read as a discourse of interpretations, which developed first in parallel and later in mutual exchange and cross-reference. The distance between the various positions and the claims made by the different voices all converge in the tension between the 'model reader' and the 'empirical reader' that Eco discussed in his work. In fact, although each of those voices claim to be 'model reader' and analyse the text in a way that was 'faithful' to the text *per se*, they were all 'empirical readers' in that they were driven by their own specific contexts. For example, Lamotte was translating *Da zhidu lun* to understand the context of Indian Buddhism, which was his main interest. Whereas, Yinshun was reading *Da zhidu lun* to understand a particular phase of Indian Buddhism, the one of early Mādhyamika, which was the

focus of his work. At the same time, Lamotte was also influenced by the European academic context he was in and the local understanding of Nāgārjuna, while Yinshun was a Chinese Buddhist monk proposing the traditional Chinese view on Nāgārjuna's authorship of the text. The other voices involved in the *Da zhidu lun* scholarship all play into this pressure, between their claim of being 'model readers' and the reality of acting as 'empirical readers'. Here we can detect the limits of their interpretations. However, the increased improvement of encounter and constructive dialogue between those scholarly networks will gradually blur these limits and create a more advanced type of reader who can merge and resolve the tensions experienced so far.

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