

Brill's Encyclopedia of Buddhism

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Lives

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Paramārtha

Paramārtha (499–569), an Indian who came to China during a period of tumult, is traditionally regarded as one of the four greatest translators of Buddhist texts in Chinese history (along with Kumārajīva [鳩摩羅什; 344–413]; Xuanzang [玄奘; 602–664]; and →Amoghavajra [不空; 705–774]). His name was most commonly translated into Chinese as Zhendi (真諦), and transcribed as Boluomotuo (波羅末陀), although other Chinese transcriptions such as Juluonatuo (拘羅那陀) and Junaluotuo (拘那羅陀) and the translation Qinyi (親依) suggest that he was (also) called *Kulanātha.

Despite challenging circumstances, together with a group of Chinese students, Paramārtha managed to translate a large number of Buddhist texts in a short period of time. He remains one of the most important Indian monks in the history of Chinese Buddhism, especially in view of the fact that he is traditionally credited as the translator of the hugely influential *Dasheng qi xin lun* (大乘起信論, Mahāyāna Awakening of Faith, T. 1666; hereafter *Awakening of Faith*). Since the early 20th century, however, many scholars have expressed doubts about this attribution, and opinion is still divided.

Paramārtha's Life

The principal sources for biographical information are, first, the prefaces to some of his works, such as the *She dasheng lun shi* (攝大乘論釋, *Mahāyānasamgrahabhāṣya*; T. 1595 [XXXI] 152a25–153b26), and the *Apidamo jushe shilun* (阿毘達磨俱舍釋論, *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*; T. 1559 [XXIX] 161a5–b28). These were written by his favorite student Huikai (慧愷, aka Zhikai 智愷; d. 568) and should be reckoned as the most reliable sources (however, we should note that in some other instances, even prefaces can be potentially problematic as historical sources; Ono, 1929; 1934; Chen, 1980 [1948]; Radich, 2014, 210). A second source is the extensive combined biography of Paramārtha and his main students in the *Xu Gaoseng zhuan* (續高僧傳, T. 2060 [L] 429c6–430c15), composed and compiled by Daoxuan (道宣; 596–667) (for a fuller

list of sources, see Funayama, 2012b, 3). The most detailed information on Paramārtha's biography in English can be found in D.Y. Paul (1984, 22–37); in Chinese, Su Gongwang (1937–1940); and in Japanese, Ui Hakuju (1930), all of which, however, place undue reliance on what is said about Paramārtha's life in the *Lidai sanbao ji* (歷代三寶紀, T. 2034).

According to the *Xu Gaoseng zhuan*, Paramārtha was a scholar-monk of Brahman background from Ujjayinī in West India. He traveled widely in India before arriving in Funan (扶南國, in modern Cambodia), where he stayed for an unknown time. In 546 he was invited to the Liang (梁) court by →Emperor Wu (梁武帝; r. 502–549; Liang Wudi), proceeding to the capital, Jiankang (建康, modern Nanjing), where he is said to have begun translating Buddhist texts. Before Paramārtha could do much work, however, the emperor died and the political situation rapidly changed. Various degrees of chaos prevailed for the remainder of Paramārtha's life. He ended up leading an itinerant existence, moving through the regions of modern Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Jiangxi, and Fujian, with the consequence that he was rarely able to work for long with a stable team (on Paramārtha's itinerary, see Funayama, 2012, 9–11). Perhaps this led him to feel that his work was futile; in any case, he is said to have contemplated a return to India more than once.

It was only during his last years (562–569) that Paramārtha was able to settle down to work under steady patronage from local officials and monks in Guangzhou. Together with a group of outstanding students, chief among whom were his favorite Huikai, together with Sengzong (僧宗; d.u.), Fazhun (法准; d.u.), and Sengren (僧忍; d.u.), he produced his best, most ambitious, and most influential translations, including the *She dasheng lun shi* and *Apidamo jushe shilun*. In the middle of 568, Paramārtha was overcome by loathing for the world and tried to commit suicide, but at the last minute, his students prevented him from realizing his intentions. He died of illness in the first month of 569.

As is typical of the genres in which they are written, our sources allow us to glean very little information about Paramārtha's personality. Whether

they reflect a real person or an image constructed by his students, a handful of hagiographic passages give us glimpses of a frugal, modest stoic (T. 2060 [L] 430c2–5); they depict a close affection between Paramārtha and Huikai; and they reveal a missionary dedicated to the propagation of the Dharma (T. 2060 [L] 430c6–13).

After Huikai died in 568, a grief-stricken Paramārtha summoned 12 students and asked them to do what they could to promote the teachings contained in the *She dasheng lun shi* and *Apidamo jushe shilun* (T. 2060 [L] 431c10–13). His student Fatai (法泰; d.u.) returned to Jiankang in 571, but had little success (T. 2060 [L] 431a19–25). Fatai in turn had an excellent student, Jingsong (靖嵩; 536–614), who in 590 returned to Pengcheng (彭城, modern Xuzhou, Jiangsu province), where he taught the *She dasheng lun shi*. But the *Xu Gaoseng zhuan* states that this was an exception, and Paramārtha's students dispersed, failing to make much impact (T. 2060 [L] 431c13–16). Indeed, it informs us that after the student Daoni (道尼; d. before 603; Keng, 2009, 336) was summoned to the capital Chang'an (長安, modern Xi'an) in 590, no master in this line was left in the south (T. 2060 [L] 432a5–8).

However, Paramārtha's reputation did flourish at the hands of Tanqian (曇遷; 542–607). Like Jingsong, Tanqian had also fled to Jiankang, where he came across Paramārtha's *She dasheng lun shi*. In the early Sui dynasty (隋; 581–618), Tanqian returned to Pengcheng, from where he is considered to have promoted Paramārtha's teachings in the north, as Paramārtha is supposed to have prophesied (T. 2060 [L] 572b16–20, c26–28; see discussion below). It must be noted that despite his time spent in the South, Tanqian never met Paramārtha, nor did he study with any of Paramārtha's direct students.

Paramārtha's Works

Despite the lack of patronage, Paramārtha and his team, with Huikai foremost among them (T. 2060 [L] 431b2–9), must have worked at incredible speed. According to Huikai's preface to Paramārtha's combined translation of Asaṅga's *Mahāyāna-saṃgraha* and Vasubandhu's *Mahāyāna-saṃgraha-bhāṣya* (T. 1595), the team produced 23 fascicles (the *She dasheng lun* in three fascicles; the *She dasheng lun shi* in 12 fascicles; and Paramārtha's own sub-commentary, which is no longer extant, in eight fascicles) in a period of just eight months in 563 (T. 1595 [XXXI] 153a26–b8). According to the

preface to the *Apidamo jushe shilun*, 76 fascicles were completed in only nine months in 564 (T. 2060 [L] 431b2–7). In the preface to the *Apidamo jushe shilun*, it is reported that Paramārtha was well versed in Buddhist Chinese, so that he could translate directly into Chinese without a mediator (*duyu* [度語] or *chuanyu* [傳語]; T. 1559 [XXIX] 161b11–12; also see T. 237 [VIII] 766c6–7). Surely this would have contributed to the speed of the work, at least to some degree.

Surveys of Paramārtha's works can be found in Su Gongwang (1936–1937), Yoshizu Yoshihide (2003), and Radich (2012), but there is considerable disagreement about the traditional attributions, mainly because the tradition itself is so inconsistent. There are dramatic discrepancies among the five principal Chinese Buddhist catalogs, ranging from Fajing's (法經; d.u.) *Zhongjing mulu* (眾經目錄, T. 2146) of 594 through Zhisheng's (智昇; 669–740) *Kaiyuan Shijiao lu* (開元釋教錄, T. 2154) of 730 (Radich, 2012). Extant works traditionally attributed to Paramārtha may be grouped as follows:

Group A: those that first appear in *Zhongjing mulu* and on which all five catalogues agree except on minor points regarding dates and length:

Guangyi famen jing (廣義法門經, **Arthavistara-sūtra*, T. 97).

Jin guangming jing (金光明經, *Suvarṇabhāṣotama-sūtra*; some chapters only still extant in 合部金光明經, T. 664).

Wushang yi jing (無上依經, **Anuttarāśraya-sūtra?*, T. 669).

Jiejie jing (解節經, part of the current *Samdhinirmocana-sūtra*, T. 677).

Lü ersh'er mingliao lun (律二十二明了論, T. 1461).

Fo apitan jing chujia xiang pin (佛阿毘曇經出家相品, T. 1482).

Apidamo jushe shilun (阿毘達磨俱舍釋論, *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, T. 1559).

Dasheng weishi lun (大乘唯識論, *Vimśikā*, T. 1589).

She dasheng lun (攝大乘論, *Mahāyāna-saṃgraha*, T. 1593).

She dasheng lun shi (攝大乘論釋, *Mahāyāna-saṃgraha-bhāṣya*, T. 1595).

Zhong bian fenbie lun (中邊分別論, *Madhyānta-vibhāga*, T. 1599).

Foxing lun (佛性論, T. 1610).

San wuxing lun (三無性論, T. 1617).

Rushi lun fan zhinan pin (如實論反質難品, T. 1633).

Suixiang lun jie shiliu di yi (隨相論解十六諦義, T. 1641).

Lishi apitan lun (立世阿毘曇論, **Lokasthānābhīdharma-sāstra*, T. 1644).

Si di lun (四諦論, T. 1647).

Baoxing wang zheng lun (寶行王正論, *Ratnāvalī*, T. 1656).

Posoupandou fashi zhuan (婆藪槃豆法師傳, Biography of the Dharma Master Vasubandhu, T. 2049).

Group B: those that first appear in *Zhongjing mulu* but are marked “dubious.”

Dasheng qi xin lun (大乘起信論, T. 1666).

Yijiao jing lun (遺教經論, T. 1529; titled *Yijiao lun* 遺教論 in Fajing’s *Zhongjing mulu*).

Group C: those that first appear in *Lidai sanbao ji*:

Jingang banre boluomi jing (金剛般若波羅蜜經, *Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā*, T. 237).

Niepan jing ben you jin wu jie lun (涅槃經本有今無偈論, T. 1528).

Shiba bu lun (十八部論, *Samayabhedoparacancakra*, T. 2032).

Bu zhi yi lun (部執異論, *Samayabhedoparacancakra*, T. 2033).

Jin qishi lun (金七十論, *Sāṃkhyakārikā* [and commentary], T. 2137).

Group D: those that first appear in Yancong’s (彦琮; 557–610) *Zhongjing mulu* catalogue of 602 (T. 2147):

Shiba kong lun (十八空論, T. 1616).

Wuxiang sichen lun (無相思塵論, *Ālambanaparīkṣā*, T. 1619).

Jiejuan lun (解卷論, *Hastavālaprakaraṇa*, T. 1620).

Group E: those that first appear in 690–705 or in 730 (Radich, 2012, 95):

Zhuanshi lun (轉識論, *Trīṃśikā* [and a commentary of unknown origin], T. 1587).

Jueding zang lun (決定藏論, the beginning of the *Viniścayasamgrahaṇī* portion of the *Yogācārabhūmi*, T. 1584).

Xianshi lun (顯識論, T. 1618).

Group F: a text that first appears in the *Kaiyuan Shijiao lu* of 730:

Da zong di xuanwen ben lun (大宗地玄文本論, T. 1669).

The two most important lost works, both of which were first listed in *Lidai sanbao ji*, are:

Shiqi di lun (十七地論, reportedly corresponding to portions of the *Yogācārabhūmi*).

Jiushi yi ji (九識義記, “Notes on the Doctrine of Ninth/Nine Consciousness[es]”) (Ōtake, 2012; Radich, 2012, 76–92).

This summary illustrates a dramatic change in attributions between 597 and 602. The *Lidai sanbao ji* not only added many more titles (including the *Awakening of Faith*), but also gave details about when and where Paramārtha translated those texts, information that is missing from Fajing’s *Zhongjing mulu*. The later tradition assumed that the attributions were correct, but scholarly consensus is now that many of these and other attributions added by the *Lidai sanbao ji* are in fact highly unreliable (Nattier, 2008, 14).

Another problem with the *Lidai sanbao ji* is that it dates certain of Paramārtha’s works to the Liang dynasty. Since Fajing’s *Zhongjing mulu* catalog of 594 dates all the works it ascribes to Paramārtha to the Chen dynasty (陳; 557–589), these Liang dates may well be suspect; it appears likely that all of Paramārtha’s works in Group A, for instance, were finished between 557 and 569. This may cast a shadow of doubt on all of Paramārtha’s supposed activities under the Liang (Radich, 2012, 2014, 2015).

It is a complex matter to determine whether works (or parts of works) in Paramārtha’s corpus are faithful translations of Indic texts or composed in China, because they sometimes deviate from their extant Sanskrit or Tibetan counterparts. Funayama Tōru (2002; 2006) suggests that unparalleled portions of such works may be “lecture notes” rather than literal translations. In cases where such notes may be mixed in with genuine translation (as in the *She dasheng lun shi*, the *Zhuanshi lun*, or the *San wuxing lun*), we cannot be certain whether they were inserted during Paramārtha’s lifetime or by later hands. Even where counterparts can be found in extant Sanskrit or Tibetan sources, the existence of an “Indic” parallel text may not always guarantee that Paramārtha’s work is an authentic translation. Radich (2014, 2015) has argued that in one exceptional case, Paramārtha’s chapters of the *Suvarṇabhāsottamasūtra* display patterns characteristic of texts composed in China, despite the fact that parallels are found in the Tibetan canon. This problematizes still further the corpus ascribed to Paramārtha.

Among the extant works, the most controversial attribution is that of the *Awakening of Faith*. It was first challenged by Japanese scholars at the beginning of the 20th century (for a review of these developments, see Kashiwagi, 1981, 144–177), and scholars are still divided on this issue (Yoshida, 2003; Keng, 2009; Radich, 2014).

Scholars have tried to collect Paramārtha's lost works from later quotations, though some of this important work (e.g. a collection of texts related to the title *Jiushi yiji*) is yet to be published (Funayama, 2012, 23ff.). This approach could be very useful in helping us better come to grips with the outlines and nature of Paramārtha's corpus as a whole.

Problems of authenticity, and related problems of chronology, are also of central importance when studying key issues in Paramārtha's thought and influence. For example, the doctrine of **amalavijñāna* (阿摩羅識; Radich, 2008) appears in several works, but among these works, only the *San wuxing lun* was attributed to Paramārtha in 594, and other works featuring this term do not appear in the catalogs until 690.

One possible approach to such problems might be to regard "Paramārtha" not so much as the name of an historical individual but as a label of convenience for a corporate entity – perhaps the "Paramārtha group" or "workshop". This distinction may help disambiguate Paramārtha the historical individual from the image that accreted around him with the passage of time. However, whether we take the name to refer to an individual or a collective, it is no exaggeration to say that we are still far from knowing with confidence which of "Paramārtha's" works are authentic.

The Traditional Image of Paramārtha and Its Problems

According to the tradition, Paramārtha produced a large number of texts, including the *Awakening of Faith*; he was influential in his time, given that his *She dasheng lun* spawned a school of its own, the Shelun School (*Shelun zong* [攝論宗]), one of the most important currents in doctrinal scholasticism and speculation in the 6th and 7th centuries; and he was the source of many distinctive ideas, such as **amalavijñāna*, *jiexing* (解性, "[innate] nature of liberation"; Keng, 2009) and "original awakening" (*benjue* [本覺]).

The connection of the first and second of these points to Paramārtha is certainly problematic. The third, which involves the relationship between Yogācāra and Tathāgatagarbha thought, is also a vexed issue. The *Awakening of Faith* eventually became the core text in the Huayan (華嚴) school after the time of →Wōnhyo (元曉; 617–686) and Fazang (法藏; 643–712), and Paramārtha thereby

became the key figure behind what is known as the Faxing zong (法性宗, "School of Dharmature"), which stood in opposition to Xuanzang's so-called Faxiang zong (法相宗, "School of Dharma-characteristics"). In essence, the "Paramārtha" approach was to posit the existence of a pure and transcendent element within the mind, in which case liberation would simply be a matter of recovering that innate purity; the approach stemming from Xuanzang, however, was that because the mind was fundamentally impure, it had to be totally replaced in order for liberation to occur.

How could Paramārtha have differed so dramatically from Xuanzang on such a fundamental issue, if both were translating (often the same) Indic texts? Funayama Tōru's observation that "Paramārtha" often inserted concepts and interpretations into his translations is suggestive here. Paramārtha's translation of the *Mahāyānasamgrahabhāṣya*, for example, is roughly twice as long as the other two Chinese translations, those of Dharmagupta (達摩笈多; ?–619, 攝大乘論釋論, T. 1596) and Xuanzang (攝大乘論釋, T. 1597). We must consider the likelihood that distinctive concepts like *jiexing* and **amalavijñāna*, which have often been interpreted as evidence of a project to synthesize Tathāgatagarbha and Yogācāra thought, were products of such processes of expansion and elaboration, parallel to the process of translation per se. Such key concepts also sometimes underwent significant further development in the period immediately after Paramārtha's own time (Radich, 2008; Keng, 2009).

Thus, the tradition presents us with a seemingly well-defined image of Paramārtha, but that image is fraught with serious problems. Huge discrepancies exist between the traditional image and our textual evidence.

Paramārtha's Influence and Legacy, and Images of Paramārtha in the Later Tradition

Radich (2008) has studied in detail the characterization and reception of Paramārtha's most representative concept, the **amalavijñāna* or "ninth consciousness" ("ninth" in the schema of multiple consciousnesses promulgated by the Yogācāra school), from Paramārtha's own time down to about 800. He argues that characterizations of this concept rapidly took on a life of their own, and increasingly

drifted free of any moorings in Paramārtha's own actual texts, being shaped rather by polemics and apologetics driven by the agendas of Xuanzang's school, which defined itself in part by a rhetoric of correctives to Paramārtha's supposed errors.

With the demise of the Faxiang zong after the mid-Tang dynasty, Huayan flourished, and then converged with Chan. Both Huayan and Chan take the *Awakening of Faith* as their philosophical foundation, and particularly its two main doctrines: (a) it is Thusness (*zhenru* [眞如]), *qua* the True Mind (*zhenxin* [眞心]) of all sentient beings, that, when agitated, becomes defiled phenomena (*ranfa* [染法]); and (b) all sentient beings can potentially become buddhas. Both of these ideas contribute to what was later identified as a key feature of "Sinicized" Buddhism: an organic worldview under which the distinction between unconditioned and conditioned, between absolute and conventional, or between saints and worldlings is blurred or even totally abolished. After the Song (宋) dynasty (960–1279), this Huayan-Chan confluence formed the mainstream throughout East Asia, and so "Paramārtha", hallowed by tradition as the translator of the *Awakening of Faith*, has long been held to be the Indian founding father of this "Sinicized" Buddhism.

The disputes between the translation tradition of Paramārtha and that of Xuanzang subsided as the repute of Xuanzang's school diminished. However, the contrast between the Faxing ("Dharma-nature") and Faxiang ("Dharma-characteristics") schools was still preserved in the works of Chengguan (澄觀; 738–839) and Yanshou (延壽; 904–975). Whenever Xuanzang's teachings were revived – a process that has occurred in stages, in the late Ming dynasty (明; 1368–1644), again in the early 20th century, and again today – all the old debates returned to life, and Paramārtha was always brought into the forefront of the controversy. For example, the 20th-century Neo-Confucianist thinker Xiong Shili (熊十力; 1885–1968) stood on the side of the *Awakening of Faith* and Paramārtha, and harshly criticized Xuanzang and Lü Cheng (Makeham, 2014; Lin, 2014).

Paramārtha Studies in Modern Scholarship

The challenge to the traditional image of Paramārtha among contemporary scholars began in the early 20th century, when Japanese scholars began

to doubt the attribution of the *Awakening of Faith*. Mochizuki Shinkō claimed that it originated from the Dilun school (which was based on Bodhiruci's [菩提流支; ?–527] translation of the *Daśabhūmika*, the *Shidijing lun* [十地經論, T. 1522], whose title was abbreviated as *Dilun*) (Mochizuki, 1922). Lü Cheng added that the *Awakening of Faith* was based on a misunderstanding of Bodhiruci's translation of the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* (入楞伽經, T. 671; Lü, 1991). On the other hand, some scholars still defended the attribution of the *Awakening of Faith* to Paramārtha, mostly in East Asia. The most important among these were Ui Hakuju (1930, 58–71), Hirakawa Akira (1990, 5–35), and, in a slightly different manner, Kashiwagi Hiroo (1981, in particular 177–182). There is still no consensus on the attribution of the text in East Asia.

By contrast, most Western scholars tend to believe that the *Awakening of Faith* was unrelated to Paramārtha, and originated from the Dilun school, probably due to the huge impact of the research of Liebenthal (1958).

From the Historical Paramārtha to His Image in Doxography and Polemics

It is possible that the traditional image of Paramārtha combines information about the historical Paramārtha with later reinterpretations that went hand in hand with the spread of the *Awakening of Faith*. A key problem here is a gap in our knowledge between the years 562 and 569, when Paramārtha was translating and teaching in Guangzhou, and a period of 20 years later, after 590, when the Shelun zong flourished in Chang'an.

As mentioned above, the key figure behind the flourishing of Paramārtha's texts and ideas in Chang'an was Tanqian. Yet so far as we know, Tanqian never met Paramārtha himself, nor did he study with any of Paramārtha's direct students. It is also noteworthy that Tanqian taught Paramārtha's *She dasheng lun shi* together with the *Awakening of Faith* (T. 2060 [L] 572b18–19). This might explain why both of the earliest commentaries on the *Awakening of Faith* (by Tanyan [曇延; 516–588], the *Dasheng qixin lun yishu* [大乘起信論義疏], X. 755, and by Jingying Huiyuan [淨影慧遠; 523–592], the identically named *Dasheng qixin lun yishu* [大乘起信論義疏], T. 1843) originated from Chang'an under the early Sui, rather than from the south. Based on these clues, it is very likely that under the auspices

of the Shelun zong headed by Tanqian, Paramārtha was reinterpreted mainly through the lens of the *Awakening of Faith*.

Circumstantial support for this hypothesis may be found in an anecdote in the *Xu Gaoseng zhuan*. Paramārtha, transparently disappointed in his students, and worried that the time is not yet right for his mission, prophesies that after his death, his Dharma will flourish in the northwest (T. 2060 [L] 430c6–13; cf. Paul, 1984, 36). This prophecy is best read as an apologetic justification for the later reinterpretation of Paramārtha in Chang'an, under Tanqian's leadership. The story therefore also hints that Tanqian may have met challenges against his authority (in this regard, we recall that Fajing's catalog doubts that the *Dasheng qi xin lun* is really by Paramārtha).

If this interpretation is correct, Tanqian won his battle (probably due to his good relationship with the emperor; T. 2060 [L] 571b12–574b6; Chen, 2002). His victory may already be reflected in the acceptance of the *Dasheng qi xin lun* as Paramārtha's work in the *Lidai sanbao ji*. Thus, it is likely that Tanqian was the main figure behind the reinterpretation of Paramārtha through the lens of the *Dasheng qi xin lun*, and this was an important turning point toward later reinterpretations of Paramārtha's ideas, and confusion surrounding the real Paramārtha.

We should not allow our attempt to sketch a portrait of Paramārtha to be exclusively dominated by these doctrinal and doxographical issues, however. If we step back from the most famous texts and issues in which Paramārtha's image and legacy have been embroiled, we may glimpse with reasonable confidence the outlines of a historically sound personality.

Regarding his teachings, whatever contributions may have been made to Paramārtha's translations by his Chinese collaborators, many of those works contain a core of detailed information closely conforming to what is found in Indic sources, information which is unlikely, in this period, to have been transmitted by anyone other than Paramārtha. These texts demonstrate amply that Paramārtha's learning was profound and broad, with interests and expertise not limited to Yogācāra (*Mahāyānasamgrahabhāṣya*, *Samḍhinirmocana*, *Jueding zang lun*, *Vimśikā*), Tathāgatagarbha (*Foxing lun*), or Abhidharma (*Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, but also *Lokasthānābhidharma*). His interests clearly extended also to the Āgama (*Arthavistara*), epistolical encouragement of lay adherents (*Ratnāvalī*); Vinaya (*Lü ershi'er mingliao lun*); and quite probably

debate and proto-logical literature (*Rushi lun*, *Hastavālaprakaraṇa*, *Ālambanaparīkṣā*; if the latter attributions are accurate, Paramārtha has the distinction of being the first to introduce →Dignāga to a Chinese readership). His concerns even appear to have extended to non-Buddhist learning, as evidenced by the *Sāṅkhyakārikā*, one of only a handful of non-Buddhist philosophical texts ever translated into Chinese in the pre-modern period.

From this expertise, we can also infer that Paramārtha probably had a complex, multi-dimensional identity; most likely ordained in a Sāmmitiya Vinaya lineage (Funayama, 2012, 30–33; Shōno, 2012), with a passionate commitment to the teachings of Vasubandhu and Asaṅga, grounded in extensive Abhidharmic learning, but with strong interest in especially the śāstric dimension of the Tathāgatagarbha literature. Further, from his far-ranging travels and his persistent and resourceful success in his translation project, in the teeth of adverse conditions, we gain the impression of a committed, daring, and gifted missionary. From the quantity and sheer quality of his complex translations themselves, we can be certain that he was an unusually gifted, intelligent, and insightful communicator. And finally, if any of the original concepts that historically bore his name can in fact be traced back to him, even at some remove, we can suspect that he may also have been a creative and original thinker. Taken all together, this is a picture of a formidable figure, and in that light, perhaps it is little wonder that his impact upon Chinese Buddhism was so profound.

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