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**Review of von Hinüber, O. (2021) The
Saṃghāṭasūtra: A Popular Devotional Buddhist
Sanskrit Text: editio maior. Annual Report of the
International Research Institute for Advanced
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2020**

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Citation

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2020. *Indo-Iranian Journal*, 64, 392-402.
doi:10.1163/15728536-06404005

Version: Publisher's Version

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Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3590270>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version
(if applicable).

Oskar von Hinüber, *The Saṃghāṭasūtra: A Popular Devotional Buddhist Sanskrit Text: editio maior. Annual Report of the International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology at Soka University for the Academic Year 2020*, Vol. XXIV, Supplement, 2021. ISSN 1343–8980. cv + 154 pages.

As a result of the virtual disappearance of Buddhism from the sub-Himalayan Indian subcontinent, we have little information on how and indeed even *if* most Mahāyāna Buddhist scriptures were used in India. The climate and the destruction of the monastic institutions within which manuscripts were copied conspired to leave little of the literature directly from the Indian plains available in India itself; I am aware, in fact, out of this once vast ocean of texts only of the *Vasudhārādharmaṇī*, preserved in multiple copies in Jaina bhaṇḍārs.¹ Of course, a great deal, and perhaps almost all, of the Indic manuscript materials preserved in Tibet originated in the plains of India, from sites such as Nālandā and Vikramaśīla, otherwise from the Kathmandu valley or Kashmir, albeit from relatively later periods of Indian Buddhism, and at least some of the manuscripts found in the Northwest (Gilgit and Gandhāra) and Central Asia are likewise of Indian provenience, and in (almost?) all cases much earlier. Otherwise, we know of most of the texts only from their translations, principally in Chinese and Tibetan, also in a few cases in Khotanese. As a result of all of this, our picture of the nature, scope and importance of the Indian Mahāyāna Buddhist literature overall is very uneven, or perhaps better to say, we do not yet have such a picture at all. That said, there are of course texts which present themselves, precisely through their survival in the locations noted above, as having been of obvious interest to some groups in the past, although what continuities there may have been between these groups and groups in the Indian subcontinent during the time of Buddhism's florit remains unknown. In this regard we should certainly consider in the first place the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras, whose Indic significance we can surmise from the frequency with which they are referred to in śāstric literature, but also the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* and the Larger *Sukhāvativyūha*, the former not so very often, the latter not at all, so cited. But when we start to examine what is otherwise preserved of Indian Buddhist literature in Sanskrit, we find that much of it belongs to texts which have so far not been much noticed in modern scholarship, perhaps largely because

1 Padmanabh S. Jaini, "Vasudhārā-dhāraṇī: A Buddhist work in use among the Jainas of Gujerat." *Shri Mahavir Jaina Vidyalaya Golden Jubilee Volume*, Part 1 (Bombay: V.P. Bhagwat, 1968): English section, pp. 30–45. That this text is also preserved elsewhere is not relevant for this point. Jaini had three manuscripts, and discusses the possible reasons for its preservation among the Jainas.

they are not only (mostly) absent from the śāstric literature,² but also because they did not sufficiently draw the attention of Buddhists in East Asia, chiefly Japan, whose traditions have so influenced the lineages of scholarship we have inherited. Among these largely overlooked texts we find such works as the *Aparimitāyurjñāna* (to which I plan to devote a study in the near future), and the work which, from early in his career, drew the attention of Oskar von Hinüber, the *Samghātasūtra*.

Prof. von Hinüber (below OvH) has now presented us with an edition of the Sanskrit text (better, texts) based on 10 witnesses, of the 14 known to him.³ Since photographs of these witnesses are not freely available,⁴ we must assume that the editor has correctly read them,⁵ but of this I think I am on solid ground in believing that most scholars will accept the reliability of his transcriptions solely on the basis of the author's reputation and record. As he tells us, however, in particular for this text the choice of readings presents a challenge less of decipherment than, in the first place, of trying to make sense of what may simply not, no matter what one does to the text, actually convey coherent meaning.

The volume under consideration is, for bureaucratic reasons not explained in the volume,⁶ presented as a supplement to the *Annual Report of the International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology at Soka University*, and thus, having no ISBN, it may unfortunately fly under the radar of some who would

2 Although in the case of *dhāraṇī* texts, certainly not absent from the ritual literature, most of which in turn remains unexplored.

3 His earlier work remained unpublished and inaccessible, save for its use (in a not entirely linear way) in Giotto Canevascini, *The Khotanese Saṅghātasūtra*. Beiträge zur Iranistik Band 1 (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 1993), which drew for the Sanskrit on OvH's unpublished Habilitationsschrift, *Das Saṅghātasūtra, Ausgabe und kommentierte Übersetzung eines nordbuddhistischen Lehrtextes in Sanskrit und Sakisch*, Mainz, 1973. See OvH's note in the present volume, pp. xvii–xviii, note 46.

4 The sole exception seems to be manuscript K, noted on p. 1 as published by Tatsushi Tamai in *Sanskrit, Gāndhārī and Bactrian Manuscripts in the Hirayama Collection. Facsimile Edition* (Tokyo: International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology at Soka University, 2016).

5 It is very important that all such sources be made available to interested scholars, and scans of the photographs from which the editor worked should certainly be posted online. There can be no doubt that there are no legal obstacles to this; one may see a clear discussion of the issue in Grischka Petri, "The Public Domain vs. the Museum: The Limits of Copyright and Reproductions of Two-dimensional Works of Art." *Journal of Conservation and Museum Studies* 12(1): 8 (2014): 1–12, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/jcms.1021217>.

6 Namely, that only "members" of the Institute may publish monographs. This is an odd situation at present since there is now only a single member of the Institute, namely Prof. Noriyuki Kudo. It is to be hoped that the health and staffing of the Institute will be improved in the immediate future, such that its invaluable contributions to the study of Buddhist literature may continue.

be interested in it. At the same time, it is fortunate in this regard that the entire volume is freely available for download in PDF format.⁷

The structure of the volume, like its manner of publication, also conceals its true riches; the more than 100 pages of “Introduction” (numbered in lower case roman numerals) contain a treasure trove of careful, detailed and thoughtful reflections on the theory and method of creating an edition of a Classical text. There is simply no way in the following even to summarize this Introduction: most minimally, the portion constituted by pp. xiv–xxvi is essential reading for anyone interested in editing an Indian Buddhist text in Sanskrit, but a tremendous amount will also be learned in this regard from pp. xxviii–liii, together with its Addenda, pp. 145–154, the section “Remarks on the manuscripts,” in which detailed observations are offered on each witness. Very helpfully, the discussions are bookmarked for ease of navigation with key terms in bold type, such as “writing habits,” “initial vowels,” various manners of writing particular characters, and so on, including “Middle Indic features.”⁸

In lieu of a translation, on pp. liv–ciii OvH offers a very detailed summary of the sūtra, and in fact it is in many places almost a translation. It is clear that he did not essay an integral translation since, most principally, the variety of readings presented by the various witnesses would have meant that, essentially, each would have called for its own rendering, and yet each is so often faulty that no such translations could succeed. It is evident that the course taken by OvH is the only reasonable one at this point, so far as the Indic texts are concerned. That said, it would (probably) be possible to translate the other versions, and in fact Canevascini (above note 3) did translate the Khotanese edition he prepared,⁹ and at least one complete translation of “the Tibetan edition”

7 [http://iriab.soka.ac.jp/content/pdf/aririab/Vol.%20XXIV-Supplement%20\(2021\).pdf](http://iriab.soka.ac.jp/content/pdf/aririab/Vol.%20XXIV-Supplement%20(2021).pdf).

8 In this regard is mentioned *inter alia* “Dardic metathesis.” I must here atone for an earlier sin of mine, when in reviewing the first two volumes of OvH’s *Kleine Schriften (Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens* 54 [2011–2012]: 233–235), I asked (p. 234) “would any reader really look in an index for ‘Dardische Liquidenmetathese?’” The answer is quite obviously yes, some would, and here references to possible instances of this interesting phenomenon are collected on pp. xxx, xxxv, xlv, 147.

9 And as Canevascini 1993: ix says, “the Skt. text has also been edited and almost entirely translated in passages in which the Khotanese text is not extant.” According to the same scholar (p. xiii), in his still unpublished and unavailable 1967 Cambridge PhD thesis, *An edition with translation of the Buddhist Sanskrit text “Saṃghāṭa-sūtra,”* R.A. Gunatilaka offered not only Sanskrit and Tibetan editions but also an English translation. Moreover, it seems that in OvH’s own Habilitation he also offered a German translation, but this too remains unavailable. I do not know what is to be found in the likewise unavailable work of Diana Finnegan, “Reading the *Saṃghāṭasūtra*: Time, Narrative and the Ethical Formation of Persons in a Mahāyāna Buddhist Text of Great Claims.” Unpublished Master’s thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison,

(without any further information) is available from a group of modern followers of the text.¹⁰

The sūtra exists not only in Sanskrit but also, as mentioned, in Khotanese, as well as in Tibetan,¹¹ Sogdian,¹² and Chinese. The Chinese versions are usually cited as two, T. 423, the *Sengqiezha jing* 僧伽吒經, attributed to Yueposhouna 月婆首那, a sixth century figure, for which has been suggested as the Sanskrit origin of his name *Upasūnya or *Ūrdhvasūnya, and T. 424, *Dajihui zhengfa jing*

2003. I mention these contributions only in this note since they are not available, although of course copies may circulate privately; at least OvH had access to the thesis of Gunatilaka. It may also be mentioned that in his early study on the Khotanese translation, Sten Konow, *Saka Studies*. Oslo Etnografiske Museum Bulletin 5 (Oslo: J.J. Augustin, 1932), alongside his edition of the then known Khotanese fragments, offered an edition of the corresponding portions of the Tibetan text based on (p. 2) “the Oslo copy,” “the excellent print in the India Office Library,” and he consulted but did not use the Berlin manuscript, which he, I think, mischaracterizes as “without any value for critical purposes, because it is simply a hand-copy made from a sometimes illegible block-print.” In fact, it is indeed a manuscript, but based on the still inaccessible Wanli Kanjur, and therefore still of value, though stemmatically it is probably related to the other sources Konow used and thus could well not have contributed much in his small sample. In any event, Konow also translated these passages into English on pp. 63–111. He states (again p. 2) “I have further added an English translation, which may be of use to scholars who are not acquainted with Tibetan.” The translation however is made from the Khotanese, and covers only the portions of the text known in his day.

- 10 See <https://www.sanghatasutra.net/>. This group is associated with Lama Zopa Rinpoche, the spiritual leader of the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT). While useful, the translation cannot replace a scientific examination of the text produced in the context of a multilingual comparison.
- 11 For the most up-to-date accounting of sources, see <https://www.istb.univie.ac.at/kanjur/rktsneu/verif/verifz.php?id=102>.
- 12 See Ilya Yakubovich and Yutaka Yoshida, “The Sogdian Fragments of *Samghātasūtra* in the German Turfan Collection.” Dieter Weber, ed., *Languages of Iran: Past and Present. Iranian Studies in Memoriam David Neil MacKenzie*. Iranica Band 8 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2005): 239–268. Referring to the “six different fragmentary manuscripts,” these authors write, p. 239, “we are not aware of any other Buddhist Sogdian text, for which so many copies would be available.” The text, however, as they note is considerably abridged (p. 240). Concerning the origins of the text, the authors state (p. 244) that “There are two extant versions that could serve as a basis for the Sogdian adaptation of the [*Samghātasūtra*]. It could be adapted either from Sanskrit, possibly through a Central Asian intermediary, or from Chinese. Out of the existent Chinese versions, only T.T. 423 qualifies as a possible source since the other two versions were translated in the Song period.” But as the authors go on to argue, the case is extremely complex and no simple conclusion presents itself. Note that these authors were obviously aware of the third Chinese translation (see below), though they do not make explicit reference to it, speaking only (p. 239) of “one apocryphal version,” although I do not know why they so name it.

大集會正法經, attributed to the Song period Shihu 施護, * Dānapāla. However, the Jin Tripitaka 金藏 also contains fragmentary remains (only *juan* 2, 6, and 7 appear to survive) of another, much longer translation,¹³ the *Foshuo Dasheng sengqiezha fayi jing* 佛說大乘僧伽吒法義經, which it attributes to a Northern Song (11th c.) figure named Jin Zongchi 金惣持,¹⁴ also spelled 金總持. This version has been noticed by Shi Faxian 釋法賢,¹⁵ and clearly requires careful study.

OvH's work, which deals exclusively with the Sanskrit materials, is in the first place philological; he aims to present the best picture now possible of the Sanskrit manuscripts available to him, these primarily but not exclusively manuscripts from Gilgit. The two non-Gilgit texts taken into account are most likely from Afghanistan, although (as in all such cases) their find-spots remain unknown. OvH suggests (p. xv) that "the time span covered by the Gilgit Sanskrit manuscripts of the Saṃghāṭasūtra stretches well over a century from about 550 to perhaps about 670 with a peak between 550 and 600." He considers his manuscript A, or its descendent the hypothetical A', to stand at the top of a stemma of all the manuscripts he studied (pp. xvi, xviii). This he accounts for in some detail, but there is at least one fact that challenges it. As he points out (p. lxviii), in § 99 verses 30cd, 31 and 32cd (ed. p. 41) are missing in A, but found in F.¹⁶ If F were entirely reliant on A, this would of course be impossible.

13 First reproduced in *Songzangyizhen* 宋藏遺珍, Vol. *shangji* 上集 17. The text can be found conveniently digitized at http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/A114n1510_002.

14 In one place we read 西天譯經三藏寶輪大師賜紫沙門臣金惣持等奉 詔譯, in another 西天譯經三藏明因妙善普濟法師賜紫沙門臣金惣持等奉 詔譯. See also T. 2035 (XLIX) 419c29–420a2.

15 "Lüetan *Sengqiezha jing zhi zhong yiben*" 略談《僧伽吒經》之中譯本, *Faguang* 法光 (*Dharma Light Monthly*) 336 (2017): 2–3. As the author points out, this translation is referred to in the *Zhi yuan fabao kantong zonglu* 至元法寶勘同總錄, a work of Qing Jixiang 慶吉祥 prepared in Peking between 1285–1287, the text finalized in 1306. It is found in Taishō vol. 99 #25, pp. 203c–204a, no. 531. The following "Sanskrit" is cited: 阿唎_二合亞 八羅麻阿囉_二合怛 散瓦囉_二合底 悉地_二合牙 爾哩低沙 拏麻 麻訶 衍拏 蘇怛囉_二合. I cannot make sense of much of this, but what I can understand are **Ārya-paramārtha saṅghāṭi*[?]-*siddhi-yā* [?] *nirdeśa nāma mahāyāna sūtra*. See also p. 189c, no. 152.

16 I am not quite sure why OvH says at lxviii note 154 "Manuscript F adds verses 32cd," when this is part of the series of verses; however, we must note that with the omission of what OvH counts as 30cd and 32cd, the texts would have not created confusion in the division of verses; in other words, as the tradition stemming from A now stands, 30ab and 32ab would have been read as a single verse, though this really does not make sense.

In any event, as OvH makes clear (p. xvi):

the individual scribes or redactors had a completely free hand to replace words and to rephrase the wording by sometimes introducing far-reaching changes into this popular Buddhist text, which was not subject to the more controlled textual tradition of canonical Sūtras from the Tripiṭaka. The result is the fairly unstable, almost fluid wording mirrored in the manuscripts. Given this situation, it does not make any sense at all to even attempt the reconstruction of an original text (Urtext or archetype) that is the first version ever composed and obviously freely changed many times, almost certainly even before A was copied. For, the type of mistakes occurring in manuscript A ... shared with all manuscripts make[s] it abundantly clear that this text is already removed by a perhaps considerable interval of time from the original, albeit it is impossible to trace its prehistory.

What the editor chose to do, then, as he clearly explains, is to treat the extant sources in four groups, but as above, a key point is that his F, upon which relies his G, he sets apart, and in fact—although this could have been more clearly stated somewhere other than on page 1, the title page of the edition proper, which one has to read carefully to understand what is going on—he prints two facing editions, that on the left representing all sources save F, which stands on the right, with readings in the notes from G and from the putative root source A. This OvH justifies by his conclusion (p. xvii) that “manuscripts F and G separately branched off from manuscript A (A’) and clearly stand apart from the other two groups,” these latter being his κ10, the manuscripts which probably come from Afghanistan, and what he calls the “Gilgit vulgate,” BCDE. His fourth “group” is manuscript A itself. In view of this situation, he rightly rejects the idea to reconstruct an archetype, clearly saying (p. xvii) “any attempt to reconstruct anything would necessarily end up in failure and in creating a radically new and purely artificial text.”¹⁷ What OvH claims he has produced, he says, is not a “text-critical” edition but a “text-historical” one (p. xx). In his vocabulary, “A critical edition has to transcend the manuscripts and to extract a correct and readable text from the available manuscript material with obvious mistakes corrected and aiming at a wording as close as possible to an assumed original composed by an author or anonymously. ... In contrast, a text-historical edition such as the

17 As OvH notes at this point (p. xvii note 46): “This is sometimes the case with the Sanskrit text presented in C. [> G.] Canevascini’s edition of the Khotanese Saṃghātasūtra.” This, incidentally, is one of the *very* few examples of even trivial misprints in this volume.

present one, does not focus on the reasons for any reconstruction but on the development of the text." In my opinion, as far as Indian Buddhist scriptural materials go, this is the only possible approach in every case. The only exception would be the presentation of a *codex unicus*, in which case, obviously, one would have no other versions competing for priority in readings.

OvH has had to choose between reporting each and every feature of his witnesses and being selective, and as he concludes, only the latter course leads to a meaningful apparatus. He offers detailed notes on each manuscript, in which he records features such as the kinds of mistakes made, scribal peculiarities, and so forth. Although in the manuscript-by-manuscript treatment main headings are marked in bold type and thus visible, the absence of an index means that some valuable observations are slightly hidden, such as the notice of "north-western features" on p. xli. Likewise of interest, though hidden in a note to the Summary (p. c note 247), is an observation about anaptyxis in *sarvajñāsaya* written as *sarvajanasya*.¹⁸

As OvH himself says, it is often hard to decide what is an error, or if it is an error, of what type. One example caught my eye (p. xlv), in which *jayaṃ* for *janam* is suggested as a word replacement. But many similar examples are classified as miswritings, and it may be that OvH classified this as a replacement only because a meaningful word resulted, although in the context (§51 verse 17c), the otherwise meaningful word *jayaṃ* is not possible.¹⁹

This may be a place to note that the verses of the text, irrespective of the section to which they belong, are numbered consecutively. OvH divided the text into 261 sections; this is also the division used by Canevascini, and although I presume he took it over from OvH's Habilitation, this does not appear to be anywhere mentioned. The editions employ footnotes, with separate systems for the two editions on facing pages. Perhaps a method with further subdivisions not only into sections but into sentences might have made especially cross-linguistic references somewhat easier. For there are certainly many places in which future scholars, even if they do not dare the daunting full-scale study of all extant sources which will someday be necessary, will want to add com-

18 Also likely to avoid the attention of some who might be interested, in note 230 on p. xcii OvH wonders whether a word printed in the edition of the *Śikṣāsamuccaya* as *sūcaka* should instead be *sūcikā*, but at least the Cambridge manuscript 110a1 indeed reads *sūcaka*.

19 In the same discussion on p. xlv, OvH writes, under the category of word replacements, "In §239 (folio 81r4) *śṛṅgāṭikaś* is a mistake for *śṛṅgārikaś*." This too looks less like a replaced word than a simply miswriting, but again, these are doubtless subjective decisions, and as long as they are documented, they may be reconsidered by others in the future.

ments. As an example of one such addition, in §145, the Sanskrit text has *caturnavati brāhmaṇānyatīrthikacarakaparibrājākāḥ*, and in his summary (p. lxxv) OvH writes of “an astonishingly small number of only 94 Brahmins,” and in his note (180) states “As the subsequent paragraphs show, most likely a couple of millions, if not billions dropped out here.” Indeed, the Tibetan translation has (Derge 102, *mdo sde, nga*, 248b4): *bram ze dang gzhan mu stegs can spyod pa pa dang | kun tu rgyu brgyad khri bzhi stong dang | gcer bu pa brgya phrag du ma zhig rgyal po'i khab ga la ba der dong ngo*, fully confirming this suspicion with 84,000 brahmins, tīrthikacarakas and sages. Note that the following Sanskrit *anekāni ca nigranthaśatāni* is paralleled precisely here by Tibetan *brgya phrag du ma*. While one could add a reference referring to note 1197 on page 62 (which has no corresponding note in the facing text, as is mostly the case), and for the next term to note 1198, I feel it would have been easier to use lemmata instead of note numbers, which also incidentally would free the text of all the superscripted numerals found so very frequently.

This is not the place to engage the sūtra itself, but some things do draw our attention, and on occasion can even lead to raised eyebrows. The text, for instance, demonstrates again and again a profound interest in the so-called five sins of immediate retribution (*pañca ānantaryāṇi karmāṇi*), though this is rather difficult to understand, given that few real persons could have ever been guilty of this set of offences, and the text seems, overall, to want to encourage believers in a practical way.²⁰ There is also a concern with the question of whether, despite the Buddha liberating beings, the number of beings existing (referred to with the technical term *sattvadhātu*) would decrease or not.²¹ There is also frequent reference to the ten *bhūmis* and to one's being established in them (*daśabhūmipratīṣṭhita*). It is really not clear to me what is meant, since one would expect reference to some individual stage. It is all the more puzzling, from a doctrinal point of view, since sometimes this term seems to point to a relatively low stage of attainment (still of course noteworthy, however), while we also find at §251 *saṃsāraṃ paścānmukhaṃ kariṣyanti | adyaiva daśabhūmipratilābhino bhaviṣyanti | daśabhūmipratīṣṭhitā nirvāṇadhātum anuprāpsyanti*, that is, “they will turn away from transmigration, and immediately obtain the ten stages; firmly established in the ten stages, they

20 See J.A. Silk, “Good and Evil in Indian Buddhism: The Five Sins of Immediate Retribution.” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 35.3 (2007): 253–286.

21 On this topic, see J.A. Silk, *Buddhist Cosmic Unity: An Edition, Translation and Study of the Anūnatvāpūṇatvanirdeśaparivarta*. Hamburg Buddhist Studies 4 (Hamburg: Hamburg University Press, 2017). Incidentally, OvH insists on spelling *satva* everywhere, which I find difficult to follow, although no doubt he has his reasons.

will attain the realm of nirvāṇa.” This seems to assume a very short chronology for spiritual advancement, and to understand the term *daśabhūmi* as a single thing, not as a word denoting a complex graduated path.

From another perspective, the *Samghāṭasūtra* deploys a tactic familiar to us from a number of other texts, namely that of promising ultimate benefits to those able to hear the sūtra itself. Since one would encounter such a promise only if one were already hearing the sūtra, listeners are assured that they are already qualified for this wondrous result. The sūtra says in paragraph §91 very clearly: *tat kiṃ manyase sarvaśūra | śakyam idaṃ sūtraṃ bālapṛthagjanaiḥ śrotum | āha | no hīdaṃ bhagavan*. The Buddha asks: are immature ordinary beings able to hear this sūtra? Of course, they are not. In §92 the same idea is expressed perhaps even more forcefully: *evam eva sarvaśūra ye hīnādhimuktikāḥ satvāḥ na śakyam tair ayan dharmaparyāyāḥ śrotum*. Thus, those who are in fact hearing the sūtra are assured that they do not belong to the group of those of inferior dispositions (as OvH translates the term). Interesting is the claim that writing even a single verse of the text will guarantee one rebirth in in a buddhaheld like Sukhāvātī, where one’s lifetime will be 84,000 kalpas, *yathā sukhāvātīlokadhātus tathā teṣāṃ buddhakṣetraṃ bhaviṣyati | teṣāṃ ca sarvaśūra satvānāṃ caturaśītiḥ kalpasahasrāṇy āyuṣpramāṇaṃ bhaviṣyati*.

What is more, the sūtra, rather remarkably, proposes itself in fact as the *exclusive* means of access to Buddhahood, §119: *ye sarvaśūra satvāḥ saṃghāṭaṃ dharmaparyāyāṃ na śroṣyanti na taiḥ śakyam anuttarāṃ samyaksaṃboddhim abhisamboddhum | na śakyam dharmacakraṃ pravartayitum | na śakyam dharmagaṇḍī parāhanitum | na śakyam tair dharmasiṃhāsanam abhiroḍḍhum | na śakyam nirvāṇadhātum anupraveṣṭum | na śakyam aprameyai rāsmibhir avabhāsayitum | ya imaṃ sarvaśūra saṃghāṭaṃ dharmaparyāyāṃ na śroṣyanti na śakyam tair bodhimaṇḍe niṣattum*, “Those who do not, Sarvaśūra, hear this preaching of the Teaching, the *Samghāṭa*, will not be able to awaken to unexcelled complete Awakening. They will not be able to turn the wheel of the Teaching. They will not be able to sound the gong of the Dharma. They will not be able to mount the lion throne of the Teaching. They will not be able to penetrate the realm of nirvāṇa. They will not be able to radiate immeasurable rays of light. Those who do not, Sarvaśūra, hear this preaching of the Teaching, the *Samghāṭa*, will not be able to sit on the seat of Awakening.” However, the text seems to contradict itself later, in §§137–138, when in response to the question whether there is another good fruition of religious practice (*asty anyāḥ kaścit kuśalo dharmaphalavipākāḥ*), the Buddha in fact offers one, although at least to me it is not precisely clear what is meant (*asti kulaputrā ye dharmāṃ pattīyanti ta evaṃ vakṣyanti asti dharmo yathābhūtaḥ teṣāṃ mahāphalaṃ sukhavipākam*

anuttaraṃ dharmasukhaṃ bhaviṣyati). I suppose that the sense here depends to some extent on the meaning of *dharmasukha*, the exact signification of which remains obscure to me.

Turning to surprising references, in § 240 we read *bhagavān āha | vijñānaṃ nāmāyuṣmanto mriyate | puṇyaṃ nāmāyuṣmanto jīvati*. While the sentiment is easy to understand, being, I think, something akin to “one dies but one’s good works live on,” the statement that *vijñāna* dies seems to be in conflict with standard Buddhist doctrine, which sees it (as equivalent to the *cittasantāna*) as precisely that which transmigrates.²²

At least as presented here, the sūtra overall gives one the impression of a certain degree of incoherence, and this cannot all be due to its manner of transmission. Or we had better say, perhaps, this incoherence seems to pervade the textual record that we have. Remarking on several passages in which the Buddha is asked a question, Canevascini (1993: 144, referring most directly to § 144) opined: “The answer the Buddha finally gives ... certainly does not contribute to diminish the validity of the objection: his reply (after exhaustion of merit new merit is accumulated) can only imply that beings are reborn in good lives (for instance in some pure buddha-field) after having accumulated enough merit and that they are reborn in this world after the exhaustion of that merit. The answer does not meet the objection that beings who have become extinct cannot be reborn at all; it would be only acceptable if this text did not promise deliverance but only many good rebirths and this is certainly not the case as the question itself correctly states. The weakness of the answer might point to an author of these passages who had quite a confused idea of the Buddhist doctrine of salvation: he probably could not figure out that deliverance from saṃsāra, extinction means just the end of the process of rebirth. On the contrary, for him these terms probably meant a temporary condition of suspension of the rebirth process in saṃsāra”

Finally, a small note: a number of expressions throughout the Summary are marked with brackets following them containing a series of numbers; although OvH nowhere explains this, it refers to the pattern of waxing syllables, such that the words *hitāya sukhāya mahālābho* proceed 3+3+4. This might puzzle students and thus would have been worth a brief explanation somewhere.

This is a superb book, and one is hard pressed to think of what could have substantially improved it. Although it has an index of selected words, terms and phrases, and another of proper names, a further index of grammatical and lex-

22 Rafal Felbur kindly points me to the Chinese version in T. 423 (XIII) 972c12–13: 佛言：「善男子，識滅名死，福德因緣識起名生。」

ical points discussed in the Introduction would have been welcome. Further, the book could have profited from a bibliography. As long as I am presenting a wish list, however, I might add that all would be grateful for two gifts, one small, one large (that is, in the sense of what they would cost the giver). An electronic version of the edited text would make it much easier for future scholars to make use of this mine of jewels (*ratnākara*). Secondly, and a wish less easily fulfilled, would be for Prof. von Hinüber to publish grammatical notes on the materials, something he is no doubt the single most qualified person to produce, not only because of his familiarity with the text, but also because he is the indisputed master of this sort of Sanskrit. One must suspect that in the course of compiling the materials presented here he accumulated innumerable observations on their language, and even an unsystematic and imperfect accounting would be a prize beyond price.

In sum, it is a great pleasure indeed to welcome such a resoundingly impressive monument to scholarship. It will serve as a pillar around which further studies of this text may build, taking into account not only the known Sanskrit materials which were not included here, such as those in the Schøyen collection, but also the Tibetan and Chinese sources, with special attention due, perhaps, to the heretofore not well known (and only partially preserved) seven *juan* translation.

Prof. von Hinüber mentions that it was the enforced tenancy in his study brought on by the pandemic, which precluded travel, that allowed him to concentrate on the book. When we look back on this terrible and challenging moment in history, among those interested in Buddhist Studies and Sanskrit, this will be seen as one of the silver linings to the cloud under which we still, as I write, are forced to remain.

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