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# Serious Play

## *Recent Scholarship on the Lalitavistara*

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### Abstract

The *Lalitavistara* is one of the most influential hagiographies of the Buddha. It has been known in Sanskrit since the early days of modern studies of Buddhism, but was long available only in inadequate editions. That has now changed with the publication of the edition of K. Hokazono, now complete in three volumes. The present paper discusses something of the history of the study of the text, Hokazono's edition, and another recent book by G. Ducoeur that deals with the text, as well as touching on a contribution by Xi He on the poetics of the text. It includes a concordance of a recent translation from Tibetan published by the 84000 project, aligning its sections with the Sanskrit editions of Lefmann and Hokazono.

### Keywords

*Lalitavistara* – Sanskrit Buddhist literature – sūtra – text criticism

Hokazono Kōichi 外園幸一, *Raritavisutara no kenkyū* (chūkan) ラリタヴィスタラの研究 (中巻). Tokyo: Daitō Shuppansha 大東出版社, 2019. ISBN 978-4-500-00771-4. iv, 670 pp. ¥25,000; *Raritavisutara no kenkyū* (gekan) ラリタヴィスタラの研究 (下巻). Tokyo: Daitō Shuppansha 大東出版社, 2019. ISBN 978-4-500-00772-1. vi, 614 pp. ¥24,000.<sup>1</sup>

1 When it is necessary in the following to distinguish these volumes I refer to the first as 2019a, the second as 2019b, though in most cases the intended reference will be obvious.

Guillaume Ducoeur, *La Vie du Buddha. Lalitavistara sūtra ou Sūtra du développement des jeux [du Bodhisattva], IIE–VIIIE siècle après J.-C.* Strasbourg: Presses universitaires de Strasbourg, 2018. ISBN 979-10-344-0010-2. 156 pp. €18.–.

As long ago as 1836, Robert Lenz (4 February 1808–11 August 1836)<sup>2</sup> published, in the first volume of the *Bulletin Scientifique publié par l'Académie impériale des Sciences de Saint-Petersbourg*, his “Analyse du Lalita-Vistara-Pourana, l'un des principaux ouvrages sacrés des Bouddhistes de l'Asie centrale, contenant la vie de leur prophète, et écrit en Sanscrit.”<sup>3</sup> Although I am not certain, this may have been the first modern scholarly mention of the text.<sup>4</sup> Whether or not this is so, the article (published serially) is remarkable for its thoroughness, offering a close summary over twenty or so double-columned pages of the contents of the text, chapter by chapter, based directly on a Sanskrit manuscript, now held in

2 Lenz was the first to teach Indian languages and literature at Saint Petersburg University (and apparently also the first to teach Sanskrit in Russia: <https://whowaswho-indology.info/3753/lenz-robert>), though his untimely death meant that he was able to do so only for a short time. To judge by the work I have seen, his early death was a serious loss for Indian studies.

3 This was pointed out already by de Jong 1997b, 247 with n. 1, with incorrect page references.

4 We can probably leave aside casual mentions, such as those which simply note that the text exists, or otherwise do not treat it in an understandable way. Lenz refers to Ward (perhaps in the second edition of 1815, 422–426, although there are later editions as well, a third in 1817 [the relevant vol. 2 in 1820] etc.), but characterizes this work saying, p. 50, “Un petit abrégé de l'ouvrage a été publié en anglais par M. Ward au second vol. de son ouvrage *On the history, literature etc. of the Hindoos*; mais cet abrégé est fait avec autant de légèreté que toutes les autres traductions de ce savant.” In fact, looking toward the history of the modern study of the *Lalitavistara*, Ward first published this material a bit earlier in his first edition of 1811, 231–240, although under a slightly different title (Committee of Publication 1828, 14), *Account of the Writings, Religion, and Manners of the Hindoos: Including Translations from their Principal Works*. While I have not compared the two versions in detail, they are noticeably different, and Ward himself stated the second edition to have been revised and abridged. The fact remains, in any event, that although he did not use the title (calling it “the *Booddhū Pooranū*”), already in 1811 Ward had offered an extracted summary of the *Lalitavistara*, in English. That he had access, directly or indirectly, to the text in Sanskrit is clear from the use of terms such as *Boodhalūnkarū-yyoohū*, transparently *buddhālaṅkāravayūha*. We may simply note in passing that the title *Lalitavistara* is also used in two apparently unique Śivadharmā texts, in which context it has been translated by De Simini and Mirmig 2017 as “Detailed Account of the Playful [Conversation];” as the authors note in discussing the difficult history of their text (p. 596), “the title *Lalitavistara* itself may have called into mind the popular Buddhist work of the same title, and caused further confusion.”

William Ward (1769–1823) is an interesting figure. Trained as a printer, he went to India as a missionary and in addition to his role as such, established and ran a printing press. A great deal of information can be found at [www.wmcarey.edu/carey/wmward/index.html](http://www.wmcarey.edu/carey/wmward/index.html).

the British library (IO SAN 688),<sup>5</sup> renowned among other things for two images of its patron and donor, Captain William Douglas Hunter Knox (24 November 1763–1 December 1829), first British resident in Nepal and an officer in the army of the East India Company.<sup>6</sup> Knox commissioned the manuscript and had himself depicted therein receiving a copy of the very manuscript itself from its scribe, the famous Amṛtānanda (d. 1835), who wrote it out in 1803.<sup>7</sup> One

5 According to de Jong 1997b, 247 with n. 2, Lefmann 1902 in his edition used two manuscripts copied from the Knox manuscript. See Lefmann 1908, x. The relevant passage in Lefmann reads: “Unsere Kenntnis vom L. V. datiert vom Jahre 1807, da der englische Major Will. Duglas [sic] Knox während seines amtlichen Aufenthalts als Regierungs-Entsandter in Nepal eine erste Abschrift erhielt, die er von dort nach Kalkutta zu händen H.T. Colebrookes gebracht (Ess.<sup>2</sup> 178). Dieß ist der selbe Knox (*naxa*), der im Kolophon unserer Hss. LL., einer Kopie jener ersten nepalesischen, so gar hoch und überschwenglich gefeiert wird. Auch ist es wieder nach einem dieser mss. (des India Office), dass Rob. Lenz in den Bulletins der Akademie von St. Petersburg, 1836, eine freilich sehr lückenhafte Analyse des Werkes gegeben, das Jahr zuvor, ehe B.H. Hodgson seine Sendung nepal Hss. nach Paris gerichtet, wo sie in Eug. Burnouf ihren ersten Bearbeiter erhielten.” Colebrooke mentioned the work in 1837, 199 under the title *Lalita purāna* (Lefmann referred to the second edition of 1873, 178). See also Hokazono 1994, 222.

6 Knox commanded the Fifth Bengal Light Cavalry. See further Mason 1870, who, however, does not mention Nepal.

7 This is not the only example of Knox’s patronage. As recorded in Blumhardt 1899, 49–50 (item 87), Knox commissioned of one Hengā Khān a Hindi translation of the Persian ‘*Īyar i dānīsh*’ (‘*Īyār-e dāneš*’ [‘*Tār-e dāneš*’]), one of the several versions of what we perhaps know better as the *Pañcatantra*. Inspired by this, Mizrā Mahdī, who was in the service of Knox, essayed his own translation, “Mirzā Mahdī, fired by a spirit of competition, began at the same time to translate the *Anvār i Suhaili* [*Anwār-e Sohayli*, a 15th c. Persian version, and the source of the ‘*Īyār-e dāneš*’]\*. When Hengā Khān had translated about a fourth part of the ‘*Īyar i dānīsh*, [a friend] invited Mirzā Mahdī to attend on a certain day to hear a specimen of his work read out for the approval of Captain Knox. He accordingly presented himself on the appointed day, taking with him a portion of his own translation. The two translations were read out and criticized by Captain Knox and other gentlemen assembled for the purpose, and that of Mirzā Mahdī was unanimously declared to be the best, whereupon his rival, Hengā Khān, was so annoyed that he tore in pieces the fair copies of the portion of his translation which he had brought with him. Mirzā Mahdī concludes [his lengthy preface to the extant work] by saying that Captain Knox urged him to complete the translation of the whole work, but he apparently failed to do so.”

Amṛtānanda was the extremely prolific paṇḍit who, among other things, “completed” the *Buddhacarita*, some portions of which still today remain lost in their original form. He is perhaps best known as the Residency paṇḍit for the British in Kathmandu who famously guided Brian Houghton Hodgson (1800–1894), thereby becoming (among other things) one of the formative influences on the modern study of Indian Buddhism. In his biography of Hodgson, Hunter 1896: 273–274 says: “[Hodgson] had the good fortune to attract the friendship of the greatest pandit in Nepal—a friendship which grew into a reverential affection on both sides. This erudite Buddhist, Amrita Nanda by name, was himself the author of

should keep in mind that this was some eight years before the publication of the work which may justly be considered the first significant philological study of Indian Buddhism, Eugène Burnouf's 1844 *Introduction à l'Histoire du Bouddhisme Indien*,<sup>8</sup> and one year before the Sanskrit manuscripts sent from Nepal by Brian Houghton Hodgson even arrived in Paris.<sup>9</sup>

several treatises in Sanskrit and of one in the Nepalese dialect. He presented the highest type of the ancient native scholar, courteous, dignified, a well of learning, and with a memory so capacious and so perfectly trained as almost to do away with the need of manuscripts. The questions which Hodgson put to him, and Hodgson's commentaries on his replies, opened up unknown regions of research to the Western world." This passage was drawn to my attention by its quotation in Vogel 1972: 210n5. Vogel (p. 217) concludes, incidentally, that Amṛtānanda "finalized his recension of Aśvaghōṣa's *Buddhacarita* on ... 7/8 December 1829." See also Hokazono 1981a. Getting back to the topic of the present review, in Hokazono 1981b the author suggests that Amṛtānanda based his supplementation of the *Buddhacarita* on the *Mahāvastu* and the *Lalitavistara*, with differences between chapters: 14 (from vs. 33) and 16 based on the *Lalitavistara*, 15 on both texts, 17 on the *Mahāvastu*. Brough 1948: 668–669 offers a short appraisal of Amṛtānanda's knowledge of Sanskrit.

\* See [https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-iranica-online/anwar-e-sohayli-COM\\_5518#](https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-iranica-online/anwar-e-sohayli-COM_5518#). See also more broadly [https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-iranica-online/kalila-wa-demna-COM\\_10658?lang=de](https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-iranica-online/kalila-wa-demna-COM_10658?lang=de).

- 8 As far as I can see, Burnouf does not directly refer to Lenz, but he does cite the *Lalitavistara* a number of times from a manuscript he owned. Two manuscripts are listed in Cabaton 1907, 13 (#97–98 and 99–100) with the designation "Burnouf 86" and "Burnouf 87," and I suppose these refer to manuscripts once owned by him, but as far as I can see Cabaton does not explain this designation. Hokazono 1994, 265 states that he used the manuscript 97–98, which he calls "B," stating that it belongs to the Bibliothèque nationale de France. Hokazono 1994, 223, points to Lefmann's observation, 1908, xi, that 87 is a bad copy of 86; Lefmann distinguished them as Ba and Bb, but Hokazono only used 86. One should note that no additional manuscripts beyond those employed in 1994 are used in Hokazono's 2019 volumes.

Burnouf—whose energy and breadth of interests never cease to amaze and humble—began to translate the *Lalitavistara*, and proceeded partway into the second chapter. The catalogue of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, under Papiers Burnouf 59, says the following (<https://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc112537d>): "Lalitavistara. sans date. Un vol. in-folio, 215 feuillets, 360 × 240 mm. Demi-reliure parchemin," with the notation: "Traduction française du chapitre I et d'une partie du chapitre II. Table des chapitres. Puis diverses observations et copies sur la littérature du bouddhisme du Nord comparée à celles du bouddhisme du Sud, et nombreuses notes reliées confusément et vraisemblablement destinées au second volume de l'Introduction à l'histoire du Bouddhisme indien." A transcription of these valuable notes would be wonderful, but as Burnouf crossed out and emended as he worked, decipherment would be a difficult task (but see below note 23). Unfortunately, as with their black and white scan of Burnouf's translation of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā prajñāpāramitā* (the scans are not of great quality), the color photos provided by the Bibliothèque nationale in this case too are somewhat out of focus throughout.

- 9 de Jong 1997a, 19, and see above n. 5.

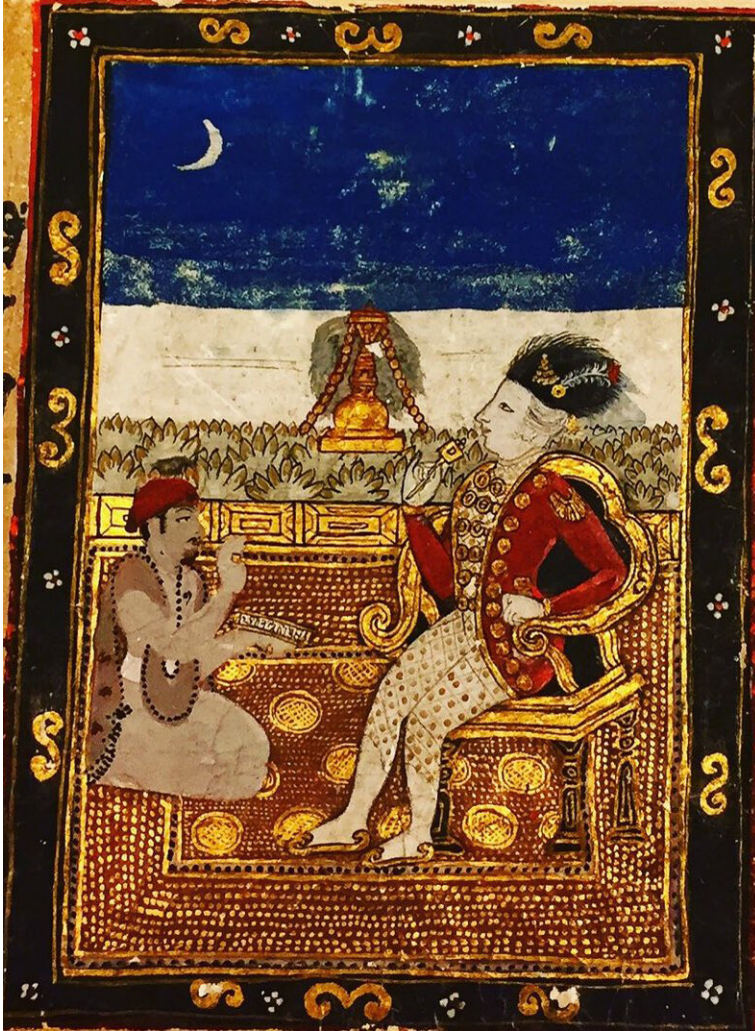


FIGURE 1 Illustration from British library Sanskrit manuscript IO SAN 688 depicting Captain William Douglas Hunter Knox receiving the *Lalitavistara* from its scribe Amṛtānanda

As is well known, the *Lalitavistara* has attracted considerable scholarly attention since the earliest days of Buddhist studies in Europe, now almost two hundred years ago.<sup>10</sup> Despite this (or perhaps, indeed, because of it), to date no complete and reliable translation of the Sanskrit text has appeared in

<sup>10</sup> One might be misled by the comment in the introduction to the 84000 translation of the

a western language. (A recent complete translation of the canonical Tibetan translation, itself evidently based on a text reasonably close to the available Sanskrit,<sup>11</sup> cannot entirely fulfill the same role.<sup>12</sup> It is discussed below.) While it is certainly true that, strictly speaking, the same could be said for nearly all Sanskrit Buddhist texts—and we may recall with, I feel, continuing embarrassment that this is the case even for the renowned *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*<sup>13</sup>—it may be that the absence of any such translation is due both to the sheer amount of available scholarship on the text, and the existence of parallel and related versions, on the one hand, and on the other hand to the fact that the heretofore available edition of the Sanskrit text by Salomon Lefmann (25 December 1831–14 January 1912) notoriously suffers from a reputation which since early on was generally far from positive.<sup>14</sup>

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text (Dharmachakra Translation Committee 2013; I used version 4.48.3), which states in section i.17 that “hardly any new research on this sūtra has been published during the last sixty years.” This is perhaps not entirely wrong if one limits oneself to publications in English, but especially if one takes into account Japanese scholarship, as one must, it is clearly very much mistaken.

- 11 In fact, de Jong 1997b, 254 suggests that “the text has been better preserved in the Tibetan translation than in the Sanskrit manuscripts and in the texts used by the Chinese translators.” While there may be some evidence for this in some cases, we cannot, without comprehensive evaluation, apply such a conclusion to the text in its entirety.
- 12 It is perhaps necessary here, to avoid misunderstanding, to mention that the author of a relatively recent attempt (Goswami 2001, vi) herself confesses, “I realise that despite my best effort, the work emerges as a second-rate attempt, for which I crave the indulgence of the reader.”
- 13 An exception to this may be the just published translation of the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* by Paul Harrison and the late Luis O. Gómez (Gómez and Harrison 2022). Gómez’s own 1996 translations of the two *Sukhāvātīvyūha* sūtras were avowedly free, and his “technical translations” have yet to appear. Certainly a few other examples could be noted, but any critical list would remain rather short, I fear.
- 14 See for instance Speyer 1903, which despite the obscurity of its publication has been noticed more than once. In fact, it is rather likely that unhappiness with available editions is also the reason for the reluctance of any competent scholar to undertake a translation of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* from Sanskrit—the best candidate would likely still be the edition of Kern and Nanjio 1908–1912, but its faults are so well known, and the textual history so complex, that it certainly appears like a nearly hopeless task to essay an integral translation on its basis. (I should clarify that numerous Japanese translations from Sanskrit do exist, but I am not aware of any I would consider critical.)

At the same time, it is essential to acknowledge that too many scholars remain insensitive to such things, as witnessed by the continual citation of the philologically virtually worthless “editions” published by P.L. Vaidya.

This situation began to change in 1994 when Hokazono Kōichi (外蘭幸一) published the first volume of his well-sourced and careful edition, consisting of text, notes and Japanese translation of chapters 1 through 14, accompanied by a lengthy introduction.<sup>15</sup> While this edition was welcomed with appreciation by de Jong (1997b, 1998), it has remained far from universally accessible outside Japan, and moreover, covering only a portion of the text, it could not be adopted as a standard reference. The situation has now, most happily, changed in crucial respects (though accessibility remains an issue). Although there was a long gap between the appearance of the first and then the second and third volumes, Hokazono had continued working on the text, despite the adverse conditions he describes in the Preface (*maegaki*) to the second (*chū*) volume (and again mentions in the final volume as well), in which he also speaks lovingly of his life's work, now brought to fruition, truly a life-work as it was begun some four and a half decades earlier when he was a second year graduate student. While these recent publications complete the text in elegant (though expensive) volumes, in the years after 1994 Hokazono had in fact continued to publish chapters in the form of journal articles, beginning in 1996 with chapter 15 and finishing in 2017 with chapter 27.<sup>16</sup> He further-

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15 It is hard to understand how this edition could have remained unknown to the translators and editors of the 84000 translation, who refer only to Lefmann. They have, further, confused Lefmann's 1902 edition (printed already in 1882; in any event, the publication date is not, as the 84000 reference has it, 1883), listed under "Secondary Sources," with his partial translation with extensive notes, itself listed under "Source Texts." Their claim (i.24) to "have also compared the Tibetan translation line by line with the Sanskrit (Lefmann 1874)," is therefore hard to credit. In fact, this is not the only oversight: their understanding of the history of the scholarship on the text is almost hopelessly confused. They write in their introduction (i.23), "In the West, the first mention of *The Play in Full* occurred in 1839 when Alexander Csoma de Koros gave a summary in his *Analysis of the Mdo* (Calcutta, pp. 288–296). Eugène Burnouf also mentioned this text in his *Introduction à l'histoire du Bouddhisme Indien* published in 1844. The first efforts toward a translation of *The Play in Full* did not occur, however, until 1874 when Salomon Lefmann published a Sanskrit edition of the text, as well as a partial translation into German. Shortly thereafter further translations appeared, including an English translation by R.L. Mitra in 1875, and most influentially a full French translation by Édouard Foucaux in 1892." As we saw above, Lenz's work preceded that of Csoma de Kōrōs by three years; Lefmann's 1874 book is not an edition; Mitra's translation began to appear in 1881, and his edition dates to 1853–1877; Foucaux's edition of the Tibetan dates to 1847, his translation of this appearing in 1848, while his translation from Sanskrit dates to 1884, with a second volume of notes appearing in 1892. One simply has to wonder how this could all have gone so very wrong.

16 Following the 1994 book, Hokazono began the continuing edition in Kagoshima Keizai



more has serially published a revised Japanese translation, also in article form.<sup>17</sup> That these are mostly available for free download (see note 17) eases the access problem in some respects, although if scholars were to cite the article publications rather than the books this could create confusions and obstacles to the establishment of a standard rational system of reference (regarding which, see below on the necessity of standardized reference systems for such literatures).

With his two 2019 volumes, Hokazono has now published in book form the remainder of the text, the first of which (the *chūkan* 中卷) contains chapters 15–21, the third and final volume (*gekan* 下卷) containing chapters 22–27. The former also contains a short series of introductory essays (pp. 3–34) on general aspects of Buddha hagiographical literature and the Mahāyāna, and the latter a much more substantial series (pp. 3–202) on a variety of more focused topics. These are:

1. From Buddha hagiographical literature to Mahāyāna (pp. 3–15)
2. The bodhisattva idea (pp. 15–29)
3. The six perfections (pp. 29–42)
4. The ten bhūmis (pp. 42–62)
5. The idea of prediction to buddhahood (pp. 62–74)

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Daigaku's *Ronshū* (*Kagoshima keizai ronshū* 鹿兒島經濟論集): 37.1 (1996), 77–118; 37.2 (1996), 1–36; 37.3 (1996), 33–69; 38.1 (1997), 55–88; 38.2 (1997), 19–57; 38.3 (1997), 59–90; 39.2 (1998), 21–54; 39.3 (1998), 15–54. This reached chapter 15. I am not sure where Hokazono published chapter 16; he continued with chapter 17 in a journal of the International University of Kagoshima, Kagoshima Kokusai Daigaku 鹿兒島国際大学, the *Kokusai bunkagakubu ronshū* 国際文化学部論集, 8.2 (2007), 59–111; 8.3 (2008), 171–217; 9.2/3 (2008), 89–141; 12.3 (2011), 187–229; 12.4 (2012), 315–358; 13.1 (2012), 1–55; 15.3 (2014), 241–295; 15.4 (2015), 395–449; 16.1 (2015), 39–101; 16.2 (2015), 137–182; 16.3 (2015), 229–277; 16.4 (2016), 337–380; 17.1 (2016), 29–77; 17.2 (2016), 95–140; 17.3 (2016), 167–211; 17.4 (2017), 253–297; 18.2 (2017), 133–160.

It is to be noted that the earlier chapters 1–14 had also, at least in part, been published in journals, but I do not have access to these, which I presume are in any event superseded by the 1994 volume.

- 17 These also appeared in the *Kokusai bunkagakubu ronshū* 国際文化学部論集: 19.1 (2018), 45–73; 19.2 (2018), 91–118; 19.4 (2019), 237–284; 20.1 (2019), 47–87; 20.2 (2019), 125–165; 20.3 (2019), 275–312; 20.4 (2020), 371–404; 21.1 (2020), 77–101; 21.2 (2020), 145–182; 21.3 (2021), 263–285; 21.4 (2021), 333–364; 22.1 (2021), 43–77. All the contributions in this journal, editions and translations, are freely available at <https://iuk-repo.repo.nii.ac.jp>. Since the Japanese translation is likely to be of interest to comparatively few English readers, I will have little to say about it here, either in its original or later revised form.

6. Transfer of merit (pp. 75–95)
7. Vows (pp. 95–110)
8. The idea of multiple buddhas (pp. 110–131)
9. Skillful means (pp. 131–202)

Regarding the essay on the Mahāyāna there is little to say, other than that its author seems more receptive toward the ideas of Hirakawa Akira than many others these days would be. Although it is touched on, little is said in the essay about the relationship between the rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism and the hagiographical literature. This is a topic somewhat more fully engaged in the essays in the third, final volume. However, truth be told the discussion feels rather old-fashioned, and it is not likely that a scholar who has kept current with the publications in the field would find much new here. Furthermore, although there is sufficient reference to the classic Japanese studies, and occasional reference to more recent Japanese work, there is virtually no engagement with non-Japanese scholarship. This said, perhaps a more attentive reading than I have been able to give these essays would indeed reveal important ideas I have overlooked, and I hope that if this is the case, our Japanese colleagues will share these insights and ideas with us.

As noted above, we still have no reliable English translation of the Sanskrit of the *Lalitavistara*. In the meanwhile, the translation made from Tibetan by the 84000 project (above note 15) may serve as a guide, although its source differs in some respects from the Sanskrit (but overall the Tibetan translation is extremely close to the—in the form in which we have it, fairly late—Sanskrit). Moreover, as a translation it is imperfect, in the sense that even in rendering the Tibetan text, closer attention to the Sanskrit might have resulted in different understandings on more than one occasion. Since, however, it is most likely to be among the first sources that at least English readers will consult to orient themselves in the rather large scripture, I offer below as an Appendix a table listing the section numbers imposed on the text by the 84000 translators and the corresponding page numbers in the editions of Hokazono and Lefmann. It should be acknowledged with gratitude that the numbering imposed on the text by the 84000 translation, although it does not always agree with the paragraphing of Hokazono's edition, is an extremely helpful addition. In the future more detailed systematic numbering should be imposed not only on the *Lalitavistara* in its various versions (by which I mean that finer divisions could be imposed on the text than have been applied so far) but on all (at least Indian) Buddhist texts, since this is the best way to provide for accuracy of cross-referencing. This is obviously also the best (and perhaps only rational) way to avoid the chaos that ensues when different editions are

referred to. As is quite obvious, when one wants to cite, let us say, Exodus 12.14, there is no need to ask to which edition reference is being made: the numeration is standard, and such a system should be applied to Buddhist texts as well.

Be that as it may, as noted, it must be very clearly stated here that there are a number of issues with the 84000 translation, beyond the obvious one that it renders a Tibetan rather than a Sanskrit version, and aside from some very odd translation choices.<sup>18</sup> There are a number of misunderstandings and misrepresentations obvious to even casual perusal, and a more careful reading would be sure to reveal more.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, despite its utility, one very important conclu-

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- 18 84000 translates *bde bar gshegs pa* (Sugata) as “Bliss-Gone One,” which at least has the merit of being original, if not unique. However, sometimes this is wrong even on its own terms, as in 26.59 (200a3) which has instead *de bzhin gshegs pa* (= Tathāgata), which is elsewhere rather reasonably rendered Thus-Gone One (at least if one’s touchstone of reasonableness is Buddhist Hybrid English). In any event, aside from its intrinsic weirdness, the translation “Bliss-Gone One,” unlike some other renderings from Tibetan which adhere more to Tibetan than Indian understandings or “pseudo-etymologies” of a certain term, does not follow any of the several traditional interpretations put forth in the commentary to the *Mahāvīyutpatti*, the *Sgra sbyor bam po gnyis pa*. See Ishikawa 1990: 9 (item §7; see also the trans. Ishikawa 1993: 11–12): *sugata zhes bya ba gcig tu na | śobhanaṅgata sugata surūpavat ces bya ste | legs par gshegs pas na legs par gshegs pa ste | gzugs legs pa bzhin | apunar āvṛtyagata sugata sunaṣṭajvaravat ces bya ste | phyir mi ldog par gshegs pas na legs par gshegs pa ste | rims nad legs par byang ba bzhin | yāvadgan-tavyagamanāt sugata | supūrṇaghaṭavat ces bya ste | ji tsaṃ du 'gro bar bya ba ma lus par phyin pas na legs par gshegs pa ste | bum pa legs par gang ba bzhin no zhes 'byung | yang gcig tu na | dharmaskandha las 'byung ba sugata iti sukhito bhagavān | svargita vyathita vyathitadharmasamanvāgata | tad ucyate sugata zhes 'byung ste | bcom ldan 'das bde bar gyur cing mtho ris kyi bde ba dang ldan la gnod ba mi mnga' zhing gnod pa med pa'i chos dang ldan pas na bde bar gshegs pa 'am bde bar brnyes pa la yang bya ste | 'dir sngar grags ba dang | dharmaskandha las 'byung ba dang sbyar te bde bar gshegs pa zhes btags |.*
- 19 Without subjecting the translation to any sort of careful reading I have noticed a number of issues. I note them here to give readers some impression of the nature of the translation. Most of the following are from the latter parts of the text, but this is genuinely random; I simply did not take notes earlier. To begin, the translators missed that the text contains two verses in chapter 5 (D 95, *mdo sde, kha*, 24b2–3 = Foucaux 1847: 43, who throughout his edition does not graphically distinguish prose from verse), although the Tibetan, also by its orthography with double *shads* and the regular 9 syllable lines, is clear. The text corresponds to Hokazono 1994: 348, which Hokazono identifies as verses in āryā and āryāgīti, though it was not so understood by Lefmann or others (Hokazono 1994: 349, note). At 10.10, verses 6–10 in Hokazono 528 are omitted by the 84000 translators, although they are found in the Tibetan text (D 95, *mdo sde, kha* 67a2–5). At 17.35 a verse is unrecognized = 11.206 verse 10. On the other hand, at 22.37–38, the text, although

sion to be strongly emphasized is that scholars (such as Sanskritists interested in the *Lalitavistara* as a poetic work, on which see below) who cannot independently control the Tibetan translation should draw no conclusions about it on the basis of this translation.

We can briefly illustrate how far Hokazono's edition brings us from the earlier efforts of Lefmann by looking at a short passage. I have chosen an example from chapter 2 because it was dealt with in one of the very few studies to look at the *Lalitavistara*'s poetics, a paper by Xi He (2011). In arguing for the poetic qualities of the *Lalitavistara*, He cites this short passage, extracted from a longer sequence of items praising the Bodhisattva, that is, Śākyamuni before his attainment of buddhahood.<sup>20</sup> The text of Lefmann (1902: 8.18–9.2) is on the left, that of Hokazono (1994: 282.24–284.3) on the right; differences are marked in bold:<sup>21</sup>

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printed in the translation as verse, is not metrical either in Tibetan (169b4–6) or Sanskrit (2019b: 228.17–19). At 24.86 (Tib 181a6–7 = Skt. 304.7–10), although again printed as verse the text is not metrical. At 25.53 (Tib 192a7–b1 = Skt. 372.18) Tib. has *snga ma bzhin du* (Hokazono 373n73, *pūrvavat*), but 84000 gives an expanded passage. The same is done elsewhere (I have not made a list, but note for instance 26.25). There are other places (eg 200b5 ff.) in which Tib. abbreviates its translation but the 84000 translators have filled in the text without note. The Sanskrit as printed by Hokazono (2019b: 416) also contains a number of indications of abbreviations. At 26.45 the text is metrical (13 syllable lines), as in Skt. 404.18, where verses are recognized but the metre is unidentified by Hokazono (see below). At 26.96–99 (202a2 ff.) again the ornate Tibetan metre of 15 syllables was not recognized by the translators, and thus they treat the verses as prose. At 26.130, 84000 has “and the one who has reached the other shore.” As Hokazono 437n38 correctly notes, Tib. 205a5 has no equivalent for the *pāraḡa ity ucyate* of earlier editions. The 84000 translators thus here do not present the text they are ostensibly translating.

- 20 She says of the portrayal (p. 89), “when the Bodhisattva is identified with a lotus, this is no superficial identification. Rather, he *is* a lotus, in every part and aspect.” Unless I am mistaken, this is the definition of a metaphor.
- 21 I have given all of Lefmann's variants, which he lists by page and line, with footnote numbers; for Hokazono I have been selective since many of his notes record information not essential here; his notes are sequential by page but here I renumber for ease of comprehension, and I consolidate notes when separate notes refer to elements of the same compound.

bodhicittamūlamahākaruṇādaṇḍā-dhyāśayodgatasya gambhīravīryasali-lābhiṣiktasya upāyakausalakarṇikasya bodhyaṅgadhyānakeśarasya<sup>1</sup> samādhikiñjalkasya guṇagaṇavimālasarasisuṅgātasya vigatamadamānaparivāhaśāśivimalavistīrṇapattrasya<sup>2</sup> śīlaśrutāprasādadaśadigapratihatagandhino<sup>3</sup> loke jñānavṛddhasyāṣṭābhīr lokadharmair anupaliptasya mahāpuruṣapadmasya puṇyajñānasambhāravīryasurabhigandhināḥ<sup>4</sup> prajñājñānadīnākarakiraṇair vikāsitasuviśuddhaśatapattrapadmatapanasya<sup>5</sup>

1. k dhyānakuśalasya

2. A śāśī°

3. Hk śrutapra°

4. k vistī°

5. αHk °kaśita° k °tāpa°

A = Royal Asiatic Society MS; H = ; Oxford Hodgson 7; k = Calcutta ed.; α = A and one India office MA

bodhicittamūlamahākaruṇādaṇḍā-dhyāśayodgatasya gambhīravīryadharmasali-lābhiṣyanditasya<sup>1</sup> upāyakausalakarṇikasya bodhyaṅgadhyānakeśarasya samādhikiñjalkasya guṇagaṇavimālasarasisuṅgātasya vigatamadamānaparidāhaśāśivimālavistīrṇapattrasya<sup>2</sup> śīlaśrutāpramādadaśadigapratihatagandhino<sup>3</sup> loke jñānavṛddhasyāṣṭābhīr lokadharmair anupaliptasya mahāpuruṣapadmasya puṇyajñānasambhāravīryasurabhigandhināḥ prajñājñānādīnākarakiraṇair vikāsitasuviśuddhaśatapattrapadmanayanasya<sup>4</sup>

1. T<sub>2</sub>, T<sub>4</sub>–6 omit ‘dharma’ (N<sub>3</sub>, N<sub>4</sub>; R, L, V.);

T<sub>3</sub> °vīryamarma°. cf. Tib. brtson ḥgrus kyī chos kyī chu (= vīryadharmasali).

T<sub>2</sub>, T<sub>4</sub>–6 °bhiṣiktasya (N<sub>3</sub>, N<sub>4</sub>; R, L, V.); T<sub>3</sub> °bhiṣyanditasya. cf. Tib. mñon par blan pa (= abhiṣyandita).

2. All mss. °parivāha° (R., L., V.). cf. Tib. gduñ ba (= paridāha; paritāpa); S. p. 32 [fn. 23].

3. All mss. °prasāda° (R., L., V.). cf. tib bag yod pa (= apramāda).

4. T<sub>4</sub> °padmatāpanasya (T<sub>2</sub>?; R.); T<sub>5</sub>, T<sub>6</sub> °padmatapanasya (L., V.). cf. N<sub>4</sub> °padmanayanasya; Tib. mig (= nayana).

While we should not assume by any means that the last word has been said on the establishment of the text—de Jong 1998: 49, almost certainly correctly, already suggested reading °kauśalya° for °kauśala°, for instance<sup>22</sup>—Hokazono’s edition is certainly a considerable improvement over that of Lefmann (which was, again, virtually copied by Vaidya). Now, as just mentioned, this passage drew the attention of Xi He, who translated it as follows:<sup>23</sup>

22 Another example: He 2011 renders *dhyānakeśara* “meditation is his stamen.” While Edgerton BHS D s.v. *keśara* offered an interpretation as the powder of pollen, He much more reasonably seems to have understood *kesara*, and the text should be so read. Hokazono 1994: 713 has [七]覺支と禪定とを花卉となし. I confess I do not understand this well; he seems to have taken *keśara* as to mean flower petals.

23 As points of comparison, here are several other translations of the passage. First, that of

Arising from determination that has the enlightened mind as its root and great compassion as its stem, sprinkled by the water of profound heroic energy, skillful means is his pericarp, meditation is his stamen, and

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Foucaux from 1884 (p. 10):

né de l'intention supérieure qui est la grande tige de la miséricorde produite par la racine de la pensée de l'intelligence suprême; sacré avec l'eau profonde de l'héroïsme; ayant l'oreille de celui qui est habile à se servir des moyens possédant les degrés de l'intelligence suprême et les filaments de la méditation; possédant les fibres de la contemplation; bien né du lac sans tache d'une foule de qualités; ayant les feuilles développées et pures d'une lune dégagée du flot de l'orgueil et de l'arrogance; possédant le parfum qui va sans obstacle aux dix points de l'espace, de la bonne conduite, de la révélation et de la sérénité; doyen de la science dans le monde; non imprégné des huit lois du monde; lotus des grands hommes; répandant le doux parfum des mérites et de l'accumulation de la science; ayant l'œil aussi parfait et pur que le lotus à cent feuilles épanoui par les rayons du soleil de la sagesse et de la science;

Here is what we find in Bays 1983: 19 (based on Foucaux's French translation from Tibetan):

From the wellspring of the enlightened mind, the stream of mercy, issuing from the higher intentions, flows forth strong and deep. Steeped in the waters of the heroism of the Dharma, the Bodhisattva arises like a lotus from the boundless lake of many qualities. The essence of skillful means flows within him, coursing through the stems of awakening, forming stamens of contemplation, anthers of meditation. Untouched by pride or arrogance, his broad unblemished leaves unfurl in the pristine moonlight. The fragrance of awareness, revelation, morality, and serenity lift toward the ten points of space. Elder of knowledge in the world, yet unstained by the eight worldly dharmas, he is the Lotus of Great Men. The sweet perfume of merit and the accumulation of wisdom wafts forth; the sun's rays of knowledge and wisdom shine upon the extended blossoms of the hundred-petaled lotus of his vision, perfect and pure.

Finally, it is now possible to quote the draft translation of Burnouf (see above note 8). While I was able to identify the relevant location in his manuscript, I was unable to read Burnouf's handwriting well enough to decipher his translation. But thanks to the great kindness and keen eyes of Vincent Tournier, I can here cite what Tournier read on folia 21r24–23r4:

Il s'est élevé jusqu'à la possession du sceptre de la ~~xxx~~ grande compassion qui est la base des Bodhisattvas. [f. 6b.] Son corps ~~xx~~ a été oint d'une énergie profonde. Il possède le cœur du lotus qui est l'habileté des moyens, les filaments du ~~x~~ lotus que sont la contemplation{s} des éléments constitutifs de l'état de Bôdhi, les ~~pétales du~~ étamines du lotus qui sont les méditations, les purs lotus de la foule des qualités. ~~Comme un lotus, les~~ Il est comme un lotus dont les purs pétales se sont développés ~~à la~~ aux rayons ~~xxxx~~ de la lune débarrassée de la masse de l'orgueil et de l'enivrement, qui répand, sans que rien ne l'arrête, dans les dix points de l'espace le parfum de la bienveillance, de la connaissance des écritures, et de la morale. ~~Il est vieux dans~~ Il a cru en science dans le monde. Il est affranchi du contact des huit conditions du monde. Il ~~x~~ est le lotus des grands hommes, qui possède l'odeur délicieuse qui s'échappe de la [illegible] formée par ses connaissances et ses ~~xxx~~ vertus. Il est le soleil du <pur> lotus aux cent feuilles qui s'épanouit aux rayons de l'auteur du jour de la connaissance de la sagesse.

profound meditation is his filament; rising from the pure lake of countless qualities, free from the inundation of pride and arrogance, his broad leaves spread out, unblemished as the moon; the fragrance of morality, revelation, serenity of disposition (spread out) unobstructed into ten directions of space; learned in knowledge in the world, yet unstained by the eight worldly dharmas, the bodhisattva is the lotus of great men; the sweet fragrance of merits and the accumulation of wisdom wafts forth; the sun's rays of wisdom and knowledge shine upon the blossomed pure hundred-petaled lotus.

And here we confront a problem: in her article He correctly printed the text established by Hokazono, but evidently translated that of Lefmann (perhaps via Vaidya?).<sup>24</sup> As a result, in the expression *gambhīravīryadharmasalila*, *dharmā* is missing in the translation.<sup>25</sup> “[F]ree from the inundation of pride and arrogance” is structurally equivalent to the printed text’s *vīgatamadamānaparidāha* but rather renders a version with the reading °*parivāha*. “[S]erenity of disposition” renders *prasāda* rather than the printed *apramāda*.<sup>26</sup> Finally, “shine upon the blossomed pure hundred-petaled lotus” renders not the printed *vikāsitasuīśuddhaśatapattrapadmanayanasya* but instead °*padmatapanasya*. It is quite obvious that the real difference in the last example is only one in graphic confusion (and see above for *keśara/kesara*): in many Indian scripts, *ta* and *na* are very similar as are *pa* and *ya*. The Bodhisattva’s eye (*nayana*), which I suppose is also meant to be open and pure, is like the open (*vikāsita*), pure, and

24 Not all errors are due to following a worse text: where in the translation are the *bodhyāṅgas*? The rendering “the sweet fragrance of merits and the accumulation of wisdom wafts forth” botches the syntax of the compound *puṇyājñānasambhāraṅgavīryadharmāsalilā*: we must understand *puṇyasya ca jñānasya ca sambhāra-*, that is, a dvandva of merit and knowledge, and the accumulations of these two.

I am well aware that at the time the contribution was published its author was a graduate student, and thus I do not refer here to He’s 2012 unpublished PhD thesis (though the passage here is presented identically in the thesis). What is more concerning is what the quality of the translation says about the care exercised by the editors of the volume in which it appeared, Yigal Bronner, Whitney Cox, and Lawrence McCrea (see below), none of whom, quite evidently, took the basic step of checking a graduate student’s translation against the text printed right alongside it.

25 For some of the points which follow, one might consult Hokazono’s notes 1994: 719–720.

26 Regarding the following word, although not directly relevant to He’s treatment of the passage, we may note that for °*daśadigapratihatagandhino*, de Jong 1998: 49 seems to suggest reading *daśadigapratihatavāggandhino*, or perhaps he is simply indicating his impression that this is what was read by the Tibetan translators?

hundred-petaled lotus flower.<sup>27</sup> I cite these examples only to show, first, the superiority of Hokazono's text, and second the need to take into account all evidence, including that of the Tibetan translation, as appropriate. Hokazono, while he might have been willing to emend conjecturally and contextually, in all instances here relied on the information offered by the Tibetan translation, with the result at the very least of a Sanskrit text which conforms more closely to the evident Vorlage of the Tibetan translators.

Now, certainly not every passage in Lefmann's edition is defective. But the superiority of Hokazono's edition is manifest. What, then, is the way forward with Hokazono's text? This question is motivated by the issues mentioned above, in the first place, that of access, both in terms of physical access but also given that the three volumes have a list price—without shipping costs—now equivalent to more than €500. Second, while the textual apparatus is written in English, many valuable remarks accompany the translation, and these are in Japanese. The first thing we would like to see, then, is an edition published in a fashion that would make it more accessible to scholars outside Japan. From another aspect, as mentioned above, I believe that this text, like all such texts, should be numbered analytically, as are Bibles, to make cross-references transparent. As it is, in fact, not only are there no line numbers in the edition itself (something remarked already by de Jong in response to the first volume), making it laborious to provide exact references, but even Hokazono's own Japanese translations are not linked to his edition. This absence sometimes, in longer chapters with dense content, makes it nearly impossible to find the location in his translation of a particular part of the text without simply starting reading at the beginning of the chapter. But of course for most non-Japanese scholars, it will be the Sanskrit text and not the Japanese translation that will be of interest. I would hope, therefore, that Prof. Hokazono will find a way to publish in a

27 Harunaga Isaacson, to whom I am in debt for several suggestions elsewhere as well, mentions a *Mahāvastu* parallel for the compound *viśuddhaśatapatrapadmanayanasya*, in an Āryā verse (Senart 1882–1897: i.201.2; ii.4.18, and Marciniak 2020: 6.1). When I was wondering if the entire compound could be meant to compare the Bodhisattva's eye to a open, pure and hundred-petaled flower, while expressing his doubt, Péter-Dániel Szántó suggested that perhaps the iris is meant. Isaacson opined that there is no need to let the *śatapatra* here correspond to the iris or anything particular in the Bodhisattva's eye. Assuming, Isaacson says, "the *Lalitavistara* to be borrowing an older formulation (the *Mahāvastu* verse may be older, though that is not certain), *viśuddhaśatapatrapadmanayanasya* has the advantage over simply *viśuddhapadmanayanasya* not only of fitting nicely into the second quarter of an Āryā or Āryāgīti (u - u | u u - | u - u | u u - | -) but also of a very pleasing sound-effect: the *śa* of *śata-* chimes with *śuddha*, and the *pa(t)* of *-patra* chimes with *padma*." Such keen observations emphasize how much scope there is for further text critical and indeed poetic investigation of the text.



single volume his critical edition, with its textual notes, in a manner that would allow it the wide dissemination it so richly deserves. This edition should contain the text he has established, perhaps even taking account of suggestions made, for instance, by de Jong in his comments on the first volume, and with the addition of a good numbering system. With it, critical studies of the *Lalitavistara* will be able to move forward even more dynamically.

Now, Hokazono's work, while beyond doubt the most significant and valuable, is not the only interesting contribution in recent years. For one hint at the broader state of the field, we may consider a small but interesting introduction. The short book (or even booklet) of Guillaume Ducoeur is an entirely different work from that of Hokazono, though one unfortunately likewise, though for different reasons, likely to remain below the radar of most of those to whom it could potentially be of interest.<sup>28</sup> However, it is based on a good familiarity with the relevant literature (although here and there somewhat out of date, and not always as critical as it might have been), makes use not only of Hokazono's 1994 edition but also of subsequently published materials, including a number of papers in Japanese by Okano Kiyoshi, and presents a number of ideas of interest even to specialists, despite the fact that the book was evidently not written for them. Ducoeur very helpfully in fact tells us for whom he intends his book (p. 9): "Nous espérons que ce petit ouvrage permettra aux enseignants, aux étudiants et à tout lecteur curieux de la doctrine bouddhique de mieux saisir les difficultés que pose un tel texte à l'historien." In light of his global aim, a summary even of this slim volume would effectively therefore also tend to become a sort of introduction to the text and context of the *Lalitavistara*, which is not appropriate here. We may nevertheless pay attention to some of the suggestive ideas presented.

Some idea of the book may be gained from its chapter-wise structure:

- I. Contextualisation historique. L'empire Kuṣāṇa et l'essor du Mahāyāna.
- II. L'auteur et son oeuvre. Le Bodhisattvayāna et ses prêcheurs de la doctrine
- III. Le genre et la Structure. Du héros épique à l'allégorie de la doctrine

<sup>28</sup> Couture 2018 is an appreciation of Ducoeur, with a number of valuable suggestions about intertextuality as well. Though I fear that the publication of Ducoeur's book in French by a regional university press will conspire to hide it from many who might otherwise profit from it, I, based in the Netherlands, was easily able to buy a copy, and it is happily inexpensive to boot. On the other hand, it is not a physically robust volume, and will not tolerate much handling.

- IV. Les sources et les thèmes. Courants dévotionnels et figure du bodhisattva  
Les sources littéraires et mythologiques  
Les thèmes
- V. La poétique. Sotériologie bouddhique et métaphores  
La poétique de la guérison  
La poétique de la traversée
- VI. La langue. Gāndhārī ou Sanskrit ?
- VII. La réception et la postérité. De Borobudur à Little Buddha

Perhaps most interesting in Ducoeur's fourth chapter are the sections on bhāgavatism and the *Mahābhārata*. Ducoeur sees a devotional bhakti attitude in the text (pp. 78–83), going on to posit a close connection also with the epic. He says (pp. 84–85), “le *Lalitavistara* suit un mode d'expression épique qui correspond au développement des grandes compositions brāhmaniques post-aśokéennes et antibouddhique, à savoir *Mahābhārata* et *Rāmāyaṇa*. ... le relecteur du *Lalitavistara* [this seems to refer to a putative fifth century redactor–JAS] connaissait au moins le chapitre sur ‘les origines [divines des héros]’ (saṁbhava) du livre (Ādi parvan) du *Mahābhārata* ... et livra son sentiment sur cette extrapolation théologique.” While I am not sure how much confidence should be placed in Ducoeur's quest for parallelisms in the hagiographies of the Bodhisattva and Kṛṣṇa, the latter as seen in the *Harivaṁśa* and *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* (e.g. p. 103), and for me his reference to the speculations of Senart (who, like Kern, was sometimes prone to wild speculations, for instance about solar worship and the like) is not necessarily a recommendation, the notion that we might read the text more broadly as an example of Indian literature is something that has been absent from most approaches to Indian Buddhist literature in recent memory. Put another way, the suggestion that we treat Indian Buddhist literature both as Indian and as literature should certainly be taken seriously!

This said, Ducoeur's extremely short fifth chapter, “La poétique,” in fact contains nothing about the poetics of the text. Regarding the language of the text, we can probably agree with the author's conclusions, namely (pp. 121–122), “Dans l'état actuel du texte sanskrit, rien n'invite à supposer qu'il fut originellement écrit en gāndhārī puis par la suite sanskritisé. Il faut certainement plutôt voir dans ce sūtra mahāyānique une oeuvre sanskrite dans laquelle le rédacteur, puis plus tard le relecteur, ont introduit des parties versifiées en prākṛit déjà plus ou moins sanskritisées, ou en les sanskritisant chacun à son tour.”

While the book is a quite good one, and much to be recommended, there do remain points which one might want to query, though these queries can

themselves be profitable. Ducoeur's remarks (p. 48) regarding ideas that the *Lalitavistara* was originally composed in verse and a subsequent redactor (in the fifth century) added prose are out of date, though the fact remains that we know very little about the process of composition of such scriptures. Be that as it may, the verses are a very important element of the text. As Ducoeur says, all chapters contain verses, and he offers a total of 1541 for the work as a whole; my count based on Hokazono's edition is 1515. I am not sure of the reason for this discrepancy, though perhaps some verses have been divided and numbered differently, but be that as it may, by either count the total is a not inconsiderable number to be sure. Following the identifications of Hokazono, one may enumerate the variety of metres found in the Sanskrit text:<sup>29</sup>

|                 |                    |                   |
|-----------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| atijagatī?      | nārāca             | rucirā            |
| atyasṭi         | pañcacāmara        | vaṁśapattrapatita |
| anuṣṭubh        | puṣpitāgrā         | vaṁśasthā         |
| āryā            | pramitākṣarā       | vaṁśamālā         |
| āryāgīti        | praharṣiṇī         | vasantatilakā     |
| upajāti         | bhujāṅgaprayāta    | vegavatī          |
| aupacchandāsika | bhujāṅgavijṛmbhita | vaitāliya         |
| candravartman   | bhramaravilasita   | śaśikalā          |
| toṭaka          | mahāmālikā         | śārdūlavikriḍita  |
| triṣṭubh        | mātrāsmaka?        | śālinī            |
| daṇḍaka         | mālinī             | skandhaka         |
| dodhaka         | modaka?            |                   |
| drutavilambita? | rathodhdhatā       |                   |

Another example of an illustrative difficulty comes with the citation and translation (p. 25) of a sentence for which, given that Hokazono's edition was not yet available for chapter 27, Ducoeur made use of the text published by Vaidya (why he did not refer to Lefmann is left unstated<sup>30</sup>). The passage is cited by Ducoeur as follows:

29 There are in addition a number of verses in unidentified metres: Chpt. 15 vss 31–33; Chpt. 21 vss 100–109, 131, 139–162 (called “gāthā gadyagati; prosaic verse”); Chpt. 22 vss 6–25, Chpt. 26 vss 19–26. This last noted may be *paripoṣakam*, six repetitions of laghu-laghu-guru syllables (that is, six *sa-gaṇas*, as Hokazono recognized). This seems to be a quite rare metre, if indeed it is anything other than wholly theoretical. (Harunaga Isaacson writes to me: “I’m inclined to think that we should consider this as a mātrāvṛtta, with a Middle-Indic flavour.”) Finally, Hokazono's note to Chpt. 21 vss 90–99 says: “Mixture of more than two rhythms: toṭaka, mālinī, moṭaka, citragati, sumukhī, aṅgaruci, aśvagati etc.”

30 In fact the reading in Lefmann 1902: 438.19–439.1 is the same.

*ayan̄ sa mārṣā lalitavistaro nāma dharmaparyāyasūtrānto mahāvai-  
pulyabodhisattvavikrīḍitaḥ buddhaviṣaye lalitapraveśa<sup>31</sup> ātmopanāyika  
tathāgatena bhāṣitaḥ*

This Ducoeur translates:

Ô honorables, cet achèvement des sūtra exposant la doctrine, nommé *Développement des jeux*, qui [relate] les jeux du Bodhisattva avec force détails, qui est l'entrée des jeux dans le domaine de buddha, qui est un guide pour soi-même [vers l'éveil], a été raconté par le Tathāgata.

It does not require access to a better edition to realize that something is wrong here,<sup>32</sup> and it is slightly surprising that the author did not simply make the obvious correction, one in fact found in Hokazono's edition (468.7), namely to read *mahāvaiṣṭyaḥ*. The term is a common adjunct to *sūtra*, or as here *sūtrānta*. If nothing else, this serves again as a small example of the superiority of Hokazono's new edition.

I have referred a moment ago to the poetics of the *Lalitavistara*, and given a list of its metres, without entering into what is surely the required discussion of the literary qualities of the text. In this light a word might be added about a contribution by Xi He, already referred to above. Although she devoted her 2012 PhD thesis to the text (He 2012), the only published result so far appears to be the abovementioned paper, on *varṇaka* (He 2011).<sup>33</sup> I mention this primarily to illustrate an unfortunate lack of accurate knowledge about the *Lalitavistara* among some otherwise well informed Indologists. For, in a review of the book in which He's paper appeared,<sup>34</sup> Fredrick M. Smith (2012: 1172) characterized her paper saying "This study represents a departure in the study of this important text, which has so far been studied only because of

31 Hokazono 2019b: 468.7–8 reads *buddhaviṣayalalitavistarapraveśaḥ*.

32 And not only the translation "cet achèvement des sūtra," which on p. 32 is "fin des sūtra."

33 A note on the university webpage of the author (<https://history.appstate.edu/faculty-staff/xi-he>) states "Dr. He is currently working on two books. Entitled *In Praise of the Buddha: Literary Design and Religious Emotions in the Lalitavistara*, the first focuses on the *Lalitavistara*, an early biography of the Buddha, and explores how emotions such as joy and gratitude have shaped Buddhist history prefiguring and transforming people through literary and emotional forces." I presume that this refers to a revision of her PhD thesis.

34 A book reviewed by Slaje 2014. As far as He's contribution is concerned, Slaje's reaction is fully justified: He praises Pollock for insights that are in fact basically commonsensical. He's suggestion that Pollock has "supplied a completely new methodology for checking the 'pulse' of the texts and the tradition" is hardly defensible.

its religious content.” Although the sentiment is understandable, it is, in fact, not accurate. Amongst other things, a considerable amount of attention was devoted to the language of the *Lalitavistara* especially in the first periods of modern Buddhist Studies. Already in 1876 Eduard Müller (later Müller-Hess) (14 April 1853–9 July 1923) published the thesis he had written under Ernst Kuhn (7 February 1846–21 August 1920), “Der Dialekt der Gâthâs des Lalita-Vistara.”<sup>35</sup> Perhaps slightly better known is Friedrich Weller’s (22 July 1889–19 November 1980) short *Zum Lalita Vistara. Über die Prosa des Lalitavistara*,<sup>36</sup> his thesis in Leipzig under August Conrady (28 April 1864–4 June 1925). Thus, although it is true that the majority of attention has come from those interested in its presentation of the life story of the Buddha, and consequently “its religious content,” from early on the *Lalitavistara* has also been the object of philological and linguistic attention.<sup>37</sup> It is however correct—and this I suspect was rather Smith’s point—that the text has not always been appreciated for its literary qualities. Arthur Berriedale Keith (5 April 1879–6 October 1944), whose judgements could at times be harsh, went so far as to write (Keith 1928: 58), “the *Lalitavistara* is written in the main in Sanskrit prose of the plain type, intermingled with ballads of the so-called Gâthâ-style; at best it is confused, at worst incoherent.” Without reference to any such judgement, He essayed to argue for the poetic qualities of the text. While we may be willing to grant that portions even of the prose of the *Lalitavistara* are poetic by classical Indian standards,<sup>38</sup> and we

35 It appeared in *Beiträge zur vergleichenden Sprachforschung auf dem Gebiete der arischen, celtischen und slavischen Sprachen* 8.3 (1876): 257–292, but had been separately issued earlier as his disertation (Weimar: Hof-Buchdruckerei, 1874), with wholly identical type-setting.

36 Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1915.

37 At the same time, we should not forget—and the scholars whose works are considered here do not forget—that art historians have also paid close attention to the text, primarily in the context of its illustrations on Barabaḍur. Probably the best known publication is a book of Nicolaas Johannes Krom (5 September 1883–8 March, 1945) on the life story of the Buddha (Krom 1926). The text is now available with illustrations online at <https://www.photodharma.net/Indonesia/05-Lalitavistara-Krom/Lalitavistara-Storyboard-1-Concepti-on.htm>. As evidence of interesting new work from different perspectives, see Ashari et al. 2021, and Metusala et al. 2020. The influence of the text on Tibetan visual art can be seen for instance in Kalantari and Allinger 2020. On the other hand, Revire 2019 seems unclear about whether the *Lalitavistara* itself shows its influence in Angkor and (p. 81) clearly states “It is doubtful ... that the *Lalitavistara* was present at Pagan, thus inspiring directly the artistic production of the birth. A more nuanced correlation between texts and images should be sought.”

38 Yet, in a volume of almost 800 pages devoted to *kāvya*, which shares one of its editors with the volume in which He’s paper was published (Bronner, Shulman and Tubb 2014), the *Lalitavistara* is barely mentioned. In Bronner’s own contribution (Bronner 2014) he says only

have above noted the metres employed in the text, many of which are certainly poetic and typical of *kāvya*, to work toward a better appreciation of those poetic qualities, the *sine qua non* is a well-established text, consideration of all sources (such as the Tibetan translation, and perhaps also the Chinese translations, not mentioned here), fundamental philological rigor, and poetic sensibilities. The *Lalitavistara* deserves precisely this sort of attention. It cries out for a reading at the same time philologically accurate and poetically sensitive. The existence of Hokazono's now complete edition provides for the first time the basic materials to make this now more possible than ever before. But it is a beginning as much as it is an ending. It is more than praiseworthy that Prof. Hokazono, working alone, as he tells us, was able to bring his edition to completion, and his publications are a suitable ending for his solo effort. To go further, however, will almost certainly require a good team of specialists, with broad knowledge of the relevant philologies (Sanskrit, Middle Indic, Tibetan, Chinese), doctrines, poetics and so on. Let us hope that we need not wait as long as we waited for a reliable edition—from Lefmann's 1902 publication, until 2019, more than a century!—for a good, comprehensive, reliable translation that puts the text in its proper contexts, and appreciates its literary qualities.

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(237n1), "The poetic nature of the prose in the anonymous Buddhist work the *Lalitavistara*, potentially a crucial link in the evolution of belletristic prose in Sanskrit, is one of the topics of He 2012." Elsewhere in the volume the work is mentioned in the editors' comment (234) regarding prose poetry, namely that Subandhu's "predecessors included Buddhist texts such as the *Lalitavistara* and the elegantly crafted *Jātakamālā* of Āryaśūra, along with the ornate prose of the inscriptions," and otherwise only in the context of Indonesia and the influence of the *Lalitavistara* on the Old Javanese *Rāmāyaṇa* (Hunter 2014). Such remarks show that despite such aspirational claims for the importance of the text, whatever its true influences on and place within traditions of Sanskrit poetics may have been, they remain to be carefully evaluated.

Despite its poetic qualities, the urge to "irrational exuberance" should be tempered to some extent. At least some of the *Lalitavistara*'s verses were not judged as good verse by Michael Hahn, a reader very experienced in Sanskrit poetry in general and Buddhist *kāvya* in particular, as can be seen from the evaluation in Hahn 2010 of the portion drawn from the *Lalitavistara* and appended to the *Śākyasiṃhajātaka*.

## Appendix

The following are tables of the section numbers in the 84000 translation of the Tibetan version of the *Lalitavistara* with the corresponding pages numbers in the editions of Hokazono and Lefmann indicated by, respectively, H and L. Each table has the chapter number indicated in roman numerals. Note that Hokazono's text is split over three volumes, containing chapters 1–14, 15–21, and 22–27.

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| 3     | 268 | 2  | 3     | 296 | 14 |       |     |    |
| 4     | 270 | 2  | 4     | 298 | 14 |       |     |    |
| 5–6   | 270 | 3  | 5–6   | 298 | 15 |       |     |    |
| 7–9   | 272 | 3  | 7     | 300 | 15 |       |     |    |
| 10–12 | 272 | 4  | 8–9   | 300 | 16 |       |     |    |
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| 16    | 276 | 5  | 12    | 302 | 18 |       |     |    |
| 17–19 | 276 | 6  | 13–15 | 304 | 18 |       |     |    |
| 20    | 278 | 6  | 16    | 304 | 19 |       |     |    |
| 21–26 | 278 | 7  | 17–19 | 306 | 19 |       |     |    |
| 27–29 | 280 | 7  | 20–21 | 306 | 20 |       |     |    |
| <hr/> |     |    | 22    | 308 | 20 |       |     |    |
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|       |     |    | 26    | 310 | 21 |       |     |    |
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| 2–5   | 282 | 8  | 33    | 316 | 25 |       |     |    |
| 6–10  | 284 | 9  | 34–36 | 316 | 26 |       |     |    |
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| 14–16 | 288 | 11 | 38–39 | 320 | 27 |       |     |    |
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| V     | H   | L  | VI    | H   | L  | VII   | H   | L   |
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| 17-18 | 678 | 190 |
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|                |     |     | 129     | 108 | 222 | 2-3   | 158 | 238 |
|                |     |     | 130-131 | 110 | 222 | 4     | 160 | 238 |
|                |     |     | 132-136 | 112 | 222 | 5     | 160 | 239 |
|                |     |     | 137-138 | 114 | 223 | 6     | 162 | 239 |
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|                |     |     | 179-183 | 138 | 233 | 5     | 180 | 245 |
|                |     |     | 184     | 140 | 233 | 6     | 182 | 245 |
|                |     |     | 185-186 | 140 | 234 | 7     | 182 | 246 |
|                |     |     | 187-191 | 142 | 234 | 8     | 184 | 246 |
|                |     |     | 192     | 144 | 234 | 9-10  | 186 | 247 |
|                |     |     | 193-196 | 144 | 235 | 11-12 | 188 | 248 |
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39 This omission, noticed by the 84000 translators in their note 7 (of a grand total of 15 notes for the entire translation) is noted by Hokazono 2019a: 351n\*\*, with reference to Hokazono 2018. See also the earlier Yamagishi 1985.

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