A Study of the Early-Stage Translations of Foxing 佛性 in Chinese Buddhism: The Da Banniepan Jing 大般涅槃經 Trans. Dharmakṣema and the Da Fangdeng Rulaizang Jing 大方等如來藏經 Trans. Buddhhabhadra

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Abstract: The Da fangdeng rulaizang jing 大方等如來藏經 (Skt. Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra), translated by Buddhhabhadra 菩陀跋陀羅 (358–429) is one of the early Chinese Buddhist canon texts where the term foxing 佛性 (Jp. bussho; Buddha-nature) is clearly used to express Buddha-nature. However, the term foxing cannot be confirmed in other extant translations of the Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra. Another early text in the Chinese Buddhist canon, the Da banniepan jing 大般涅槃經 (Skt. Mahāparinirvāna-mahāsūtra), translated by Dharmakṣema 菩薩無盡 (385–433), also used the term foxing, which cannot be correspondingly confirmed in the surviving Sanskrit fragments of this scripture. Some significant differences in foxing between the Sanskrit fragments and Dharmakṣema’s translation of this sutra belong to the first twelve fascicles of Dharmakṣema’s translation completed under his collaborators’ support when he had not mastered the Chinese language. It is very likely that Faxian 法顯 (337–422) translated a version of the Mahāparinirvāna-mahāsūtra that featured buddhadhātu as foxing. Buddhhabhadra, in the same period, translated a version of the Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra, in which he favoured the term foxing over a literal translation of the Sanskrit. As another contemporary monk with these two, Dharmakṣema translated the Mahāparinirvāna-mahāsūtra, going further than Faxian by using the term foxing regularly. These texts influenced the Dīлан monastic tradition and their expositions. Among these, the term foxing and its Sinicism explanations played the most significant role, influencing the whole of the Chinese and even East Asian Buddhist thought.

Keywords: foxing; Da banniepan jing; Da fangdeng rulaizang jing; Dharmakṣema; Buddhhabhadra

1. Introduction

In recent years, discussions in Buddhist scholarship have focused on the concept of “Buddha-nature” within all sentient beings, whether or not this concept is compatible with classical Buddhist teachings such as no-abiding-self or even those doctrines rooted in the Nikāyas/Āgamas. This controversy is not only relevant to East Asian Buddhism but also to the roots of this tradition in the Indian Mahāyāna sutras, which deploy the concept of tathāgatagarbha (Buddha-embryo or Buddha-womb).\(^1\) Moreover, in some cases, the term tathāgatagarbha is also used to describe sentient beings themselves (Skt. sarvasattvās tathāgatagarbhaḥ; all sentient beings are those who contain tathāgata). As is widely known, in the history of East Asian Buddhism, tathāgatagarbha (Chin. rulaizang 佛性) was sometimes considered a synonym of foxing 佛性 (Jp. bussho; Buddha-nature).\(^2\) The relationship between these two terms was ambiguous in Chinese Buddhism because some monks and schools, such as the Nirvāṇa tradition (Chin. Niepan zong 涅槃宗), declared that foxing is the same as rulaizang.\(^3\) Therefore, probing the early cases where the classical Chinese term foxing appeared in China is significant to clarifying the origin and development of these two concepts in East Asian Buddhism.

Two of the early translators who translated some terms as foxing were Buddhhabhadra 菩陀跋陀羅 (358–429) and Dharmakṣema 菩薩無盡 (385–433). Both of them worked on their
texts in China in the first half of the fifth century. In this article, I investigate this issue based on the translations by Dharmakṣema and Buddhhabhadra. In other words, cases of the term *foxing* that appeared during the Northern Liang dynasty (397–439) and the second half of the Eastern Jin dynasty (317–420) are the objects of this research. Among these two dynasties, the Northern Liang is much more important for my discussion because the full text of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra* [the Great Nirvāṇa Sūtra] was completely translated into classical Chinese and spread to the whole of China after this period.

There is hardly research discussing both the translations of Dharmakṣema and Buddhhabhadra to probe the origin of the term *foxing* as a Chinese term and its context in Chinese translation in the early fifth century, especially the lack of comparison with relevant Sanskrit fragments in the context of Chinese Buddhism remains, although it is evident that in Indian Buddhist texts, *buddhadhātu* indicates Buddha-nature, which has the meaning “nature of a buddha.” The scholars in Indian and Tibetan Buddhist Studies did not pay attention to this issue in the context of East Asian Buddhism. Conversely, many scholars in Chinese Buddhist Studies have hardly used the relevant Sanskrit and Tibetan texts to investigate the origin and development of the term *foxing*. In a sense, this is also one of the purposes of this article.

Through this study, we can presume that Faxian (337–422) translated a version of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra* that featured *buddhadhātu* as *foxing*. Buddhhabhadra, in the same period, translated a version of the *Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra* in Chinese in hand and spoke Chinese to Daolang 道朗 (?–?) when he translated the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra* in 421. Daolang was one of the most accomplished monks in Hexi area at that time and was guided by Dharmakṣema in Guzang while receiving tuition from Dharmakṣema. According to the *Chu sanzang ji ji*出三藏記集 [Compilation of Notes on the Translation of the Tripitaka; or Collected Records concerning the Translation of the Tripitaka], 11 texts were regarded as Dharmakṣema’s translations, as follows.

1. *Da banniepan jing* 大般涅槃經 [the Great Nirvāṇa Sūtra], 36 juan, T374.
2. *Fangdeng daji jing* 方等大集經 [the Sūtra of the Vaipulya Great Assembly], 29 juan or 30 juan, T397.
3. *Fangdengwuxiang jing* 方等五相藏經 [the Sūtra of the King of Vaipulya and the Chamber of Space], 5 juan.
4. *Fangdeng dayun jing* 方等大雲経 [Skt. *Mahāmeghasūtra*; the Sūtra of the Vaipulya Great Cloud], 4 juan (or *Fangdeng wuxiang dayun jing* 方等無想大雲經, 6 juan), T387.
5. *Beihua jing* 菩華經 [the Sūtra of Flower with Compassion], 10 juan, T157.
6. *Jinguangming jing* 金光明經 [the Golden Light Sūtra], 4 juan, T663.
7. *Hailongwang jing* 海龍王經 [the Sūtra of the King of Marine Dragons], 4 juan, T598.
8. *Pusa dichi jing* 菩薩地持經 [the Sūtra of Stages of Bodhisattvas], 8 juan, T1581.
9. *Pusa jie ben* 菩薩戒本 [the Text on Precepts of Bodhisattvas], 1 juan (also regarded as a text translated in Dunhuang 唐敦煌), T1500.
Accordingly, following the completion of the first twelve fascicles of the translation of the Da banniepan jing is difficult. Instead, they may have been edited by different people over several stages. Dharmaks.ema noted that the original Sanskrit text of the Da banniepan jing came from Khotan. Nevertheless, they are compared with the Nihuan jing in this article. However, regarding the source text for the remaining thirty fascicles, it is possible that they are based on different versions/recensions of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra. Accordingly, following the completion of the Da banniepan jing’s translation, fewer and fewer Chinese readers read the Nihuan jing. This is a foundation of understanding the relationship between the Da banniepan jing and the Nihuan jing in Chinese Buddhism. Moreover, as it is well known, the southern text of the Da banniepan jing, containing thirty-six fascicles, was not a direct translation but an edited version based on the Nihuan jing translated by Faxian and the Da banniepan jing translated by Dharmaks.ema. Faxian returned to China from India and launched his translation work after 410. It almost overlapped with the date of the translation of the Da banniepan jing. Faxian cooperated with Buddhahadra and finished the translation of the Nihuan jing in 416. I will, therefore, ignore the southern text of the Da banniepan jing in this article. However, regarding the Nihuan jing, there will be a discussion of the Nihuan jing’s attitude to foxing, the purpose of my research, later in this article, since it is important for the study of what Dharmaks.ema likely read.

The original content of the Nihuan jing equates to the first ten fascicles of the Da banniepan jing translated by Dharmaks.ema, which contains forty fascicles in total. After completing the first twelve fascicles of the translation of the Da banniepan jing, Dharmaks.ema noted that the original Sanskrit text of the Da banniepan jing was not enough in China then; thus, he returned to India to seek an integrated version of this sutra. He arrived at Khotan by traveling through the southern path of Tianshan and found the middle and later fascicles of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra. Concerning the Sanskrit text, Takasaki Jikidō 南希藏道 mentioned partial fragments of this text. Almost simultaneously, Matsuda Kazunobu 松田和信 collected and translated all existing fragments, and Habata Hiromi 滑田裕美 used the previous research by Takasaki and Matsuda and provided a critical edition of the Tibetan text, followed by a published monograph on all extant Sanskrit fragments of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra.

Ono Hōdō 大野浩道 thinks the preface (Chin. jīngxù 經序) by Hexi Daolang 河西道朗 is more reliable. According to this account, Dharmaks.ema first came to Dunhuang 敦煌 with a variety of scriptures, and then moved to the Northern Liang 北涼, where he translated the first ten juan of the Da banniepan jing, finishing in 421. He further states that it is certain that the source text for the remaining thirty juan incorporated into Dharmaks.ema’s the Da banniepan jing came from Khotan. According to Ôchô Enichi 横越慧日, conceiving that the same person or group translated at the same time all forty fascicles of the Da banniepan jing is difficult. Instead, they may have been edited by different people over several stages.
In other words, some fascicles or sections of the forty-fascicle *Da banniepan jing* were not translated by Dharmakṣema. Feng Chengjun 馮承銓 states that Dharmakṣema used the Sanskrit text collected by Zhimeng 智猛 (?–452), who did not engage in translating. In contrast, Chen Jinhua 陳金華 objects to Feng’s conclusion. Chen asserts that Zhimeng not only brought the Sanskrit text of the *Da banniepan jing* to China but also participated in the translation. Hence, it is very likely that the translators of the *Da banniepan jing* were not only Dharmakṣema but included other people or groups, in addition to even some other materials or sources.

Therefore, I intend to discuss the classical Chinese term *foxing* based on the *Da banniepan jing* attributed to Dharmakṣema in the framework of Chinese Buddhism. In addition, as a background to contemporary translation in China, the term *foxing* as found in the *Da fangdeng rulaizang jing* (大方等如來藏經 [The Sutra of the Tathāgatagarbha]) translated by Buddhabhadra 佛陀跋陀羅 (358–429) is also the object of my discussion. In other words, as these two texts were translated into classical Chinese during almost the same and early period, I will talk of the use of the term *foxing* found in the *Da fangdeng rulaizang jing* at first and then move to the discussion on this topic in the *Da banniepan jing*. Finally, this study also slightly mentions the *Da fangdeng wuxiang jing* (大方等無想經 [Skt. *Mahāmeghasūtra*; T387]) by Dharmakṣema and the renderings by Guṇabhadra 佉那跋陀羅 (394–468) from roughly the same time.

According to the *Fozu tongji* (佛祖統紀 [Entire Records of the Buddhas and the Ancestors]), both Dharmakṣema and Buddhabhadra were engaged in the translation works in China during almost the same era.

In the fourth year of Yixi 義熙, Huiyuan 慧遠 was discontented with the uncompleted translations in Chinese Buddhism, the lack of meditation, and the incomplete canons of precept. He sent his disciples such as Zhimeng 支猛 to India to collect more Sanskrit Buddhist texts. They met Buddhabhadra in India and asked him to return to China together. In the eighth year of Yixi, Dharmakṣema moved to Guzang 姑臧, the King of the Northern Liang, asked Dharmakṣema to stay there and translate the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra* into the *Da banniepan jing*, which has forty fascicles. In the ninth year of Yixi, Buddhabhadra (Chin. Juxian 覺賢), a monk from the Kapilavastu area, went to Lushan廬山 mountain and stayed there. Huiyuan asked Buddhabhadra to translate some texts of meditation.

That is to say, Huiyuan’s 慧遠 (334–416) disciples met Buddhabhadra in about 408. In 412, Dharmakṣema launched the translation of the *Da banniepan jing* in the Northern Liang. In 413, Buddhabhadra had met Kumārajiva 廣婆羅什 (344–413) in China and moved to Lushan Mountain to continue his translation works. Evidently, the periods of Dharmakṣema and Buddhabhadra acting in China overlapped. Therefore, in my opinion, it is very likely that they had similar circumstances from 410, such as mutual assistants in China and the same Chinese texts that had been translated. On the contrary, to say the least of it, even if these two translators did not actually share many assistants and they did not directly influence each other, we cannot deny that they were engaged in the translation works in China during the same era, a very early period for the appearance of the term *foxing*. For this reason, it is inevitable to discuss not only Dharmakṣema’s translations but also those by some other translators, such as Buddhabhadra, at the beginning of the fifth century.

As has been mentioned above, there is hardly any research discussing both the translations of Dharmakṣema and Buddhabhadra to probe the origin of the term *foxing* as a Chinese term and its context in Chinese translation in the early fifth century, especially the
lack of comparison with relevant Sanskrit fragments in the context of Chinese Buddhism remains. This is also one of the purposes of this article.

3. Foxing佛性 in the Da fangdeng rulaizang jing大方等如來藏經 (Skt. Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra) Translated by Buddhabhadra

One of the earliest Buddhist texts discussing tathāgatagarbha is the Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra. The Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra, a seminal text of tathāgatagarbha doctrine, describes how tathāgatagarbha accounts for the possibility of transformation from a state of delusion to a state of enlightenment by uncovering the inherently pure nature within, referred to containing, store or “that which sentient beings possess.”

Two recensions of the Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra are extant in Chinese: the Da fangdeng rulaizang jing大方等如來藏經 (T vol. 16, no. 666), translated by Buddhabhadra佛陀跋陀羅 (358–429) in the Eastern Jin (317–420), and the Da fangguang rulaizang jing大方廣如來藏經 (T vol. 16, no. 667), translated by Amoghavajra (or Bukong) 不空 (705–774) under the Tang (618–907). While the original Sanskrit sutra is not extant for comparison, the bka’ gyur canon represents Tibetan recensions; one of them is titled Phags pa de bzhin gshegs pa’i smi’gying po shes bya ba tshegs pa chen po’i mdo, translated by Šākyaprabha and Ye-ses-sde (photographic print Tibetan Buddhist Canon 36, 240.1–245.5).

The Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra is a relatively short scripture that represents the point of a number of works in Indian Buddhism concentrating on the idea that all sentient beings are tathāgatagarbha. According to Michael Zimmermann, the hitherto accepted assumption that the Da fangdeng rulaizang jing reflects an Indian transmission, which has not undergone the textual alterations of later centuries, is partly true only because the original Sanskrit citations in the Ratnagotravibhāga [Chin. Jiujing yisheng baoxing lun究竟一乘賢性論: Treatise of the Jewel-nature of Ultimate Single Vehicle], a śāstra which was written at least fifty years before Buddhabhadra translated Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra into the Da fangdeng rulaizang jing, has turned out to be the recension represented in the Tibetan tradition. I agree with this view. That is to say, although it is possible that there are some differences between the underlying Sanskrit text of the Da fangdeng rulaizang jing and that of the Tibetan translation, we should not consider that the original Sanskrit text of the extant Tibetan translation had been substantially amended compared with that of the Da fangdeng rulaizang jing. Thus, in my opinion, it is still effective to investigate the unique way and purpose of Buddhabhadra through comparing his translation with the Tibetan text, especially about the Chinese term foxing, which appears only in Buddhabhadra’s translation.

As mentioned above, the Da fangdeng rulaizang jing translated by Buddhabhadra is a text early in the known literary history of the term foxing. At the beginning of this chapter, the following paragraph must be discussed prior to others.

In the same way, sons of good family, I see with my buddha-vision that all sentient beings, within the afflictions of desire, hostility and delusion, possess the knowledge, vision and body of a tathāgata sitting cross-legged, dignified and motionless. Sons of good family, all sentient beings, although situated in many kinds of rebirth, in the midst of their afflictions possess the tathāgatagarbha, always permanent and undefiled, replete with excellent characteristics no different to my own. Sons of good family, for example, it is like this, a person with divine-vision/eye (Skt. divyacaksus; Chin. tianyan 天眼) inspects calyces and find that the tathāgata-body within the flowers can be revealed if the drooped petals had been moved away. In the same way, sons of good family, the Buddha, seeing all sentient beings to already be tathāgatagarbha, desiring to cause this to be revealed, explains the dharma, destroying their defilements and manifesting their buddha-nature. Sons of good family, the true nature (Skt. dhammatā; Chin. fuér法爾) of all buddhas is this: whether or not buddhas appear in the world, in all living beings the store [or womb] of a tathāgata is at all times present without change.

如是善男子！我以佛眼覩一切眾生，貪欲恚癡諸煩惱中，有如來智、如來眼、如來身，結加趺坐端然不動。善男子！一切眾生雖在諸趣，煩惱身中有如來藏，常
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无染污，德相备足，如我无异。又善男子！譬如天眼之人欲见花，见诸花内有如来身相加趺坐，除去萎花便于显现。如是善男子！佛见众生如来藏已，欲令闻慧为遂经法，除烦恼颠倒现佛性。善男子！诸佛法界，若佛出世若不出世，一切众生来如来之藏常住不灭。36

[Tibetan translation] In the same way, sons of good family, also the Tathāgata, the Honorable One and Perfectly Awakened One, [perceives] with his insight (prajñā), knowledge (jñāna) and tathāgata-vision that all the various sentient beings are encased in myriads of defilements, [such as] desire (rūga), anger (dvesa), misguidedness (mohā), longing (trsna) and ignorance (avidya). And, sons of good family, [he] perceives that inside sentient beings encased in defilements sit many tathāgatas, cross-legged and motionless, endowed like myself with a [tathāgata’s] knowledge and vision. And [the Tathāgata], having perceived inside those [sentient beings] defiled by all defilements the true nature of a tathāgata (tathāgatagarbha) motionless and unaffected by any of the states of existence, then says: “Those tathāgatas are just like me!” Sons of good family, in this way a tathāgata’s vision is admirable, [because] with it [he] perceives that all sentient beings contain a tathāgata (tathāgatagarbha). “Sons of good family, it is like the example of a person endowed with divine vision [who] would [use this] divine vision to look at such unsightly and putrid lotuses, not blooming and not open, and would [owing to his vision] recognise that there are tathāgatas sitting cross-legged in their center, in the calyx of [each] lotus, and [knowing that, he] would then desire to look at the forms of the tathāgatas; [he would] then peel away and remove the unsightly, putrid and disgusting lotus petals in order to thoroughly clean the forms of the tathāgatas. In the same way, sons of good family, with the vision of a buddha, the Tathāgata also perceives that all sentient beings contain a tathāgata (tathāgatagarbha), and [therefore] teaches the Dharma [to them] in order to peel away the sheaths of those sentient beings [encased in such] defilements [as] desire, anger, misguidedness, longing and ignorance. And after [those sentient beings] have realized the [Dharma, their] tathāgatas [inside] are established in the perfection [of the tathāgatas] (na rig pa’i nyan mongs pa ’i shubs dbye ba’i phyir chos ston te’die sgrub pa’i de bzhiṅ gshes pa rnas ni yang dag pa nyid du gnas so).” Sons of good family, the essential law (dharmanā) of the dharmas is this37; whether or not tathāgatas appear in the world, all these sentient beings at all times contain a tathāgata (tathāgatagarbha).38

It is notable that in the Tibetan translation, there is a sentence stating “de bzhiṅ gshes pa rnas ni yang dag pa nyid du gnas so,” rather than the Da fangdeng rulaizang jing stating “xianxian foxing顯現佛性 (manifesting Buddha-nature).” In other words, in the Tibetan translation, it is difficult to identify the term corresponding to foxing in this paragraph, while it is very possible that this Tibetan translation is not translating the same Indic text as Buddhahadra.

A similar example can also be found in the following passage.

They [women] do not know it. Therefore, the Tathāgata teaches widely the Dharma for living beings saying: “Sons of good family, do not denigrate yourself! In your own body, you all have the buddha-nature. If you practice diligently and diminish all evil, then you will attain the designations ‘bodhisattva’ and ‘exalted one.’ You will guide and save innumerable living beings!”

如彼女人而不知，是故如来善為說法，言：善男子！莫自輕鄙，汝等自身皆有佛性，若勤精進滅盡過惡，則受菩薩及一切眾生，化導濟度無量眾生。39

[Tibetan translation] Then, though the element of a tathāgata has entered into sentient beings and is present within, those sentient beings do not realize [it]. Sons of good family, in order that sentient beings do not despise themselves, the Tathāgata in this [connection] teaches the Dharma with the [following] words: “Sons of good family, allow energy without giving in to despondency! It will happen that one day the tathāgata [who has] entered [and] is present within you will become manifest. (rig kyis bzhin ba stag nyid sro shi bar ma byed par khyed brtson ’grus brtan par gyes shig dang/khyed la de bzhiṅ gshes pa zhiṅs pa yod pa dus shig na ’byung bar ’gyur te) Then you will be designated “bodhisattva,” rather than
“[ordinary] sentient being (sattva).” [And] again in the [next stage you] will be designated “buddha,” rather than “bodhisattva.”

Here, Buddhabhadra translated “rudeng zishen jie you foxing汝等自身皆有佛性 (you all have Buddha-nature),” compared to the statement, “it will happen that one day the Tathāgata who has entered and is present within you will become manifest. Then you will be designated a bodhisattva, rather than ordinary sentient being (sattva)” in the Tibetan translation. We can only find tathāgata and sattva in the Tibetan translation, rather than a proper term matching the Chinese term foxing.

Similarly, the following passage is also typical of the difference between these two translations.

In the same way, with the vision of a Sugata (buddha) I can see that although living beings are covered over by defilements, their tathāgata-nature is indestructible. I teach the Dharma with appropriate means in order to let living beings attain buddhahood. Because their buddha-nature has been covered by defilements, I intend to remove the defilements to make their buddha-nature purified rapidly.

善逝眼如是，觀諸眾生類，
煩悩淤泥中，如來性不壞。
隨應而說法，令辦一切事，
佛性煩惱覆，速除令清淨。41

[Tibetan translation] In the same way I can see that also all sentient beings have for a long time been constantly overpowered by defilements, but knowing that their defilements [are only] accidental (āgantuka), [I] teach the Dharma with [appropriate] means in order to purify [their] intrinsic nature (prakṛti). (de dag gi nib lo bur nyon mongs shes/rang bzhin sbyang phyir thabs kyis chos ston to)42

The term foxing佛性 appears in Buddhabhadra’s translation again. If we check the Tibetan translation, the corresponding term for the Tibetan is likely to be “prakṛti (intrinsic nature).” There does not seem to be a term corresponding to at least the Chinese character fo佛.

In particular, among Chinese renderings of the Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra, the classical Chinese term foxing can only be found in the Da fangdeng rulaizang jing, which was translated by Buddhabhadra. It is difficult to accurately confirm the relevant term for foxing or corresponding Tibetan terms, such as sangs rgyas kyi khams/dbyings, in both Amoghavajra’s classical Chinese and the Tibetan translation. Similarly, as mentioned above, there are various terms related to the Chinese term rulaizang in the Tibetan translation, rather than a fixed term.

As is argued by Zimmermann (2002) and some other scholars, since it seems that Buddhabhadra has translated a different recension of the Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra, the fact that its content is different should not surprise us. I also concur with this opinion. The reason for discussing the Da fangdeng rulaizang jing by Buddhabhadra here is to reconsider the importance of this rendering for the history of the term foxing and Buddha-nature thought in Chinese Buddhism—that is, either the different Sanskrit recension of the Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra, which was read and used by Buddhabhadra, or Buddhabhadra’s own creation influenced Chinese Buddhist thought at an early stage. This point was, to my knowledge, seldom emphasized by scholars in East Asian Buddhist studies.

To summarize, although a lack of clarity about Buddhabhadra’s reasoning and motivation remains, as an early classical Chinese Buddhist canon text, the Da fangdeng rulaizang jing used the term foxing, which cannot be confirmed in other extant translations of the Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra.
4. Foxing 佛性 in the Da banniepan jing 大般涅槃經 (Skt. Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra) Translated by Dharmakṣēma

The universality of emptiness (śūnyatā) and the doctrines of no-abiding-self (anātman) and impermanence (anītya) are some basic Buddhist teachings. Conversely, one still finds texts such as the Śūramāladevi-sūtra and the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra that use terms such as ātman.44 This is, in a sense, one of the most basic issues in Buddhist Studies.45 This section focusses on which term the translators used to express the meaning such as ātman in the Chinese translation of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra.

Before discussing Dharmakṣēma’s translation, Faxian’s rendering should be mentioned first. Faxian’s version seems to be a short Chinese translation of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra if we merely read the Chinese translations, but it is better understood to be a Chinese translation of a shorter version of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra. Following Habata, the term sungs rgyas kyi khams, which is a translation of buddhadhātu in the Tibetan rendering, is found 23 times in the Tibetan version of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra. This number is relatively small because we find many instances of foxing in the Chinese translations. Among these 23 references, Dharmakṣēma translates 17 instances of foxing, compared to only 8 of foxing in Faxian’s rendering. Moreover, there is no example where Faxian translates sungs rgyas kyi khams as foxing but Dharmakṣēma does not.46 For this reason, I will focus on Dharmakṣēma’s rendering in this section.

Takasaki Jikidō notes that the underlying term of the foxing in the Da banniepan jing, translated by Dharmakṣēma, refers to the nature of tathāgata (Chin. rulai如来).47 Both Shimoda Masahiro 下田正弘 and Michael Radich state that in the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra, a strong connection exists between buddhadhātu (Buddha-nature) and tathāgatagarbha (the embryo of Buddha), related to stūpa (relic-chamber).48 Kanō Kazuo 加納和惟 also asserts that both buddhadhātu and tathāgatagarbha refer to the content of a stūpa. Furthermore, two kinds of meaning in dhatu, containing both body and relics, are present. Beings possess buddhadhātu, understood as a Buddha’s relic, which evokes the interior of a stūpa at which a relic generally sat.49 Saliently, the term buddhadhātu (Chin. foxing), regarded as the most significant term in the Da banniepan jing (Skt. Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra), cannot be found in the extant Sanskrit fragments of this scripture.50 Buddha dhatu, as noted by Takasaki and Radich, in the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra, is considered a synonym of tathāgatagarbha. Alternatively, strictly speaking, tathāgatagarbha may be a way of referring to the presence of buddhadhātu. Meanwhile, we should not ignore the cases where the Chinese term foxing is not explained by referring to tathāgatagarbha.51

An interesting fact appears: the classical Chinese term foxing, emphasized in various classical Chinese translations of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra, cannot be found in the existing Sanskrit fragments of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra.52 Therefore, the statement that in the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra, a strong connection existing between Buddha-nature and tathāgatagarbha, which was pointed out by Shimoda and Radich, is mainly based on the Tibetan and Chinese translations of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra. In this case, it is meaningful to reconsider the original terms and the reasons they were translated into the Chinese term foxing by these translators, including Dharmakṣēma.

Kamalaśīla (ca. 740–797) quotes the following in the Bhāvanākrama.

Thus, the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra states the following. Śrāvakas fail to see the lineage (rigs; gotra) of tathāgata in themselves because their meditation (samādhi) is strong, compared to their weak wisdom. Bodhisattvas can merely see an undefined lineage of tathāgata because their wisdom is strong, compared to their weak samādhi. Tathāgata can see all of these because he possesses both meditation and wisdom.

de’i phyir ‘phags pa yongs su mya ngan las ‘das pa chen po’i mdo las kyang nyan thos rnas kyis ni de bzhin gshegs pa’i rigs mi mthong ste/ting nge ‘dzin gyi shas che ba’i phyir dang/ches rab chung ba’i phyir ro’/byang chub sems dpa’ rnas kyis ni mthong mod kyi mi gsal te/shes rab kyi shas che ba’i phyir dang/ting nge ‘dzin chung ba’i phyir ro’/de bzhin gshegs pas ni thams cad
The bodhisattvas possess strong wisdom but little samādhi (meditation), so that they cannot clearly see foxing (Buddha-nature). Śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas possess strong samādhi but little wisdom, so that they cannot clearly see Buddha-nature. Buddhas can clearly see Buddha-nature because they have both meditation and wisdom and have achieved buddhahood without any obstacle.

十住菩薩智慧力多，三味力少。是故不得明見佛性。聲聞緣覚三味力多，智慧力少。以是因緣不見佛性。諸佛世尊定慧等故，明見佛性，了了無礙。§4

Commenting on this, Yoshimura Shūki contends that Kamalaśīla’s quote corresponds to the thirty-first fascicle of the Da banniepan jing translated by Dharmaks.ema. Except for small differences in their depictions of the śrāvaka and bodhisattva, these two translations correspond with each other very well. Matsuda denied the possibility that Kamalaśīla knew about the existence of the Da banniepan jing translated by Dharmaks.ema. If so, Kamalaśīla merely employed the Sanskrit text and Tibetan translations to quote the sentence that śrāvakas fail to see the lineage (rigs; gotra) of tathāgata. Conversely, the Da banniepan jing, translated by Dharmakṣema, clearly states that śrāvakas and bodhisattvas cannot see foxing (Buddha-nature). Hence, the lineage (gotra) found in this Tibetan quote was translated as foxing in the Da banniepan jing.

Some similar cases appear in the Jiujing yisheng baoxing lun 經論究竟一乘賢性論 [Skt. Ratnagotravibhāga]; namely, gotra was translated as zhenru foxing真如佛性 (Buddha-nature in thusness).

In summary, all beings, according to the Buddha, are always tathāgatagarbha according to three meanings: the tathāgata’s dharmakāya (Dharma-body) is omnipresent in all beings; there is no difference in the tathāgata’s lathatā (thusness); and the gotra of tathāgata (the cause for Buddhahood) exists.

This passage indicates three meanings. Tathāgata, therefore, the Tathāgata taught that all beings always have and share the embryo of Buddha (Skt. tathāgatagarbha; Chin. rulaiṣa 来藏), What are these three kinds? First, tathāgata’s dharmakāya (Dharma-body) is omnipresent in all beings. It is said fo fashen biannan法身遍滿 (Dharma-body of Buddha is omnipresent). Second, there is no difference in tathāgata’s zhenru (thusness). It is said zhenru wo chabie真如無差別 (there is no difference in thusness). Third, all beings have zhenru foxing真如佛性. It is said jie shiyou foxing皆實有佛性 (all beings possess Buddha-nature).

此偈明何義。有三種義。是故如來說一切時一切眾生有如來藏。何等為三？一者，如來法身遍在一切諸眾生身，偈言佛法身遍滿故。二者，如來真如無差別，偈言真如無差別故。三者，一切眾生皆悉實有真如佛性，偈言皆實有佛性故。

In the Sanskrit text, the third part of the definition of tathāgatagarbha is tathāgatagotra. In the classical Chinese translation, this term is translated as zhenru foxing真如佛性. Crucially, the three parts of tathāgatagarbha’s definition, namely, dharmakāya, lathatā and gotra, have been modified in the classical Chinese translation into: fashen法身，zhenru真如，zhenru foxing真如佛性, respectively.° This kind of translation of gotra in the Jiujing yisheng baoxing lun 經論究竟一乘賢性論 (6th century CE; ?-508-7), is the same as in the Da banniepan jing translated by Dharmakṣema. The Jiujing yisheng baoxing lun was translated into classical Chinese nearly a century after the Da banniepan jing. Furthermore, both were translated during the northern Chinese dynasties. For these reasons, the monks of Dīlun地論 tradition were very likely to have been influenced by the terms and concepts of the Da banniepan jing.
On the other hand, due to the edition and research on the Sanskrit texts of the Ratnagotravibhāga and the Lāṅkāvatāra-sūtra, it has been clarified that yichānti (Skt. icchantika; beings who cannot achieve the buddhahood) is the translation of the Sanskrit term icchantika. Saliently, as Mizutani noted, the term icchantika, which was used in the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra at a very early stage, cannot be found in any surviving Buddhist scripture established prior to the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra. In East Asia, numerous monks and scholars have attempted to demonstrate the possibility that icchantika achieve buddhahood. The most important issue, however, is the controversy about gotra and Buddha-nature (Chin. foxing).

As introduced above, Matsuda edited the existent Sanskrit fragments of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra, which can be used to further research the classical Chinese translation. In addition, Habata Hiromi edited the extant Sanskrit fragments and provided a new translation in 2019, which is more in-depth. In these Sanskrit fragments, there is one section, as stated below.

Icchantikas do not see (na paśyanti) virtuous deeds (kalyānakṛta). They see blame and evil (pāpa). Virtuous deeds (sukṛta) mean Bodhi (or enlightenment). Not coming means not approaching. The esoteric (or intended) meaning means what is virtuous (kalyāna). Who is far away from esoteric deeds (sandhākarma)? Auspicious deeds (bhadrakarma) do not approach the icchantika. Who is far away from a good mind? A good mind does not approach icchantika because they are not wholesome beings due to their arrogant attitudes. What is the basic branch (mūlānga)? It means abandoning (or rejecting) this sutra (sūtrapratikṣepa). It is terrible because abandoning (or rejecting) the sutra is frightful. . . . . . . Who does not see (or understand) virtuous deed (kṛta)? Evil icchantika does not understand virtuous deed. Icchantikas do not see (or understand) virtuous deed until the end of their transmigration. I will summarize these meanings. Therefore, we should take these terrible things seriously because it is of the utmost frightfulness. At the time when all beings, after having become of one mind, will recognize the ultimate enlightenment (anuttarā samyaksambodhi); it will be possible for icchantika to recognize Bodhi (enlightenment) at that time. However, icchantikas do not see (or understand) virtuous deed. The people who does not see enlightenment and virtuous deed should understand the fact. Namely, the deed of the Tathāgata will not end (or destroyed) unless all beings involved in transmigration recognize the ultimate enlightenment. At that moment, the Buddha will come to complete final nirvāṇa. Along with the final nirvāṇa (atyaṁtaparinirvāṇa), the Buddha will become changeable and absent, like fire and a lamp.

Good man, [regarding icchantikas,] “not seeing” refers to not seeing the buddha-nature. “What is good” is anuttarā samyaksambodhi itself. To say “they will not do it” refers to
[an ichchantika] being unable to approach a good friend who can guide him spiritually. "Only seeing" refers to seeing without good reason. The word "bad" here refers to their repudiation of the well-balanced Mahāyāna sutras. And "this they may do" refers to the fact that ichchantikas do say there are no well-balanced [sutras]. The meaning of the verse is simply that ichchantikas do not think in a way that advances them toward the pure and good dharma. What is the pure and good dharma? It is nirvāṇa itself! To advance toward nirvāṇa refers to the capacity to cultivate practices that are wise and good, yet ichchantikas have no practices that are wise and good. This is why they are incapable of progressing toward nirvāṇa. “On that basis, one should be afraid” refers to repudiating the true-dharma. Who should be frightened? . . . In addition, one may also speak of “not seeing what has been done” in reference to the fact that ichchantikas do not admit to themselves the host of bad things they have done. Because the ichchantikas are arrogant, even though they often do things that are harmful, while doing them they initially have no sense of fear. This is why ichchantikas are unable to attain nirvāṇa; they are like monkeys grabbing at the [reflection of the] moon in the water. Good man, if all living beings, however innumerable, were to say to themselves, “This truly shows impermanence, nothing more than a lamp going out when the oil is exhausted. Specifically, in the Sanskrit fragment, “nirvāṇa. “On that basis, one should be afraid” refers to repudiating the true-dharma. Who should be frightened? . . . In addition, one may also speak of “not seeing what has been done” in reference to the fact that ichchantikas do not admit to themselves the host of bad things they have done. Because the ichchantikas are arrogant, even though they often do things that are harmful, while doing them they initially have no sense of fear. This is why ichchantikas are unable to attain nirvāṇa; they are like monkeys grabbing at the [reflection of the] moon in the water. Good man, if all living beings, however innumerable, were to say to themselves, “This truly shows impermanence, nothing more than a lamp going out when its oil is extinguished.”

The Sanskrit fragment states that ichchantikas do not see (or understand) virtuous deeds (kalyānakṛta). Since this Sanskrit fragment is very likely later than what Dharmakṣema would have translated, we cannot know that this Sanskrit was what Dharmakṣema translated. The only thing I can say here is that Dharmakṣema translates this as “bu jian zhe wei bu jian foxing不見者謂不見佛性”， which differs from that in our surviving Sanskrit fragment, in his classical Chinese rendering, no matter what underlying term or phrase he read. The Sanskrit fragment states “the deed of the Tathāgata will not end (or destroyed) unless all beings involved in transmigration recognize the ultimate enlightenment. At that moment, the Buddha will come to complete final nirvāṇa. Along with the final nirvāṇa (ayantaparinirvāṇa), the Buddha will become changeable and absent, like fire and a lamp.” Alternatively, the classical Chinese translation by Dharmakṣema states that “bu jian shui zhi suozuo不見如來之所作 (not seeing whose deeds were carried out)” means ignoring tathāgata’s deeds. Although Buddha explained foxing for beings, ichchantikas cannot recognize foxing due to their transmigration. Thus, it is called “bu jian rulai suozuo不見如來之所作 (not seeing that carried out by the Tathāgata).” Seeing that the Tathāgata has gone into the ultimate nirvāṇa, the ichchantikas mistakenly thinks that the Tathāgata is impermanent, just like the light that goes out when the oil is exhausted. Specifically, in the Sanskrit fragment, “dhātu” does not appear in this passage. On the contrary, Dharmakṣema and his collaborators translated something as “foxing,” which is the Chinese translation term of “buddhadhātu” or “dhātu” in many cases.
Evidently, Dharmakṣema and his collaborators translated something, compared with kalyāṇakṛta and saṃnyāsakṣambodhi found in the extant Sanskrit fragment, as foxing in the Da banniepan jing. The case that this kind of translation was made by Dharmakṣema’s hand is doubtful. Furthermore, the material corresponding to the sentence “yichanti jian yu rulai bijing niepan—關提見於如來畢竟涅槃” cannot be found in the Sanskrit fragment. Accordingly, compared to Dharmakṣema’s translation, it is difficult to identify the direct evidence that icchantika can also achieve buddhahood in the existing Sanskrit fragments.

Notably, as the above section, the difference between the Sanskrit fragment and Chinese translation is located in the ninth fascicle of the Da banniepan jing, which is attributed to a rendering by Dharmakṣema himself. According to previous research, after the finishing of the translation of the first twelve fascicles of the Da banniepan jing, Dharmakṣema stayed in Guzang and learned the Chinese language for three years. In other words, the section discussed above, where the difference in foxing between Sanskrit and Chinese appears, was translated by Dharmakṣema when he was not proficient in the Chinese language. For this reason, it would be understandable if his collaborators and disciples inserted some personal views, or removed agency from Dharmakṣema, into their translations.

According to the Gaoseng zhuan [Biographies of Eminent Monks], Dharmakṣema was engaged in the translation work of the Da banniepan jing from 414 to 421. Dharmakṣema intended to go abroad because there was a shortage in the original text of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra. However, due to his mother’s death, he had no choice but to stay for several years. After that, he actually went to Khotan and found the middle portion of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra. Dharmakṣema then returned to Guzang and translated it. Finally, he sent people to Khotan and found the latter portion of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra. This was translated into the thirty-three fascicles of the Da boenipan jing. This translation work was launched during the third year of Xuanshi and finished on the twenty-third of October of the tenth year of Xuanshi, namely the second year of Yongchu.

Furthermore, according to the Guanding 譯頂 (561–632)’s record, from 414 to 416, Dharmakṣema was engaged in translating the Da banniepan jing by collaborating with Zhimeng and the support of other collaborators at least twice. When Dharmakṣema arrived at the western Liang state 西涼州, Juqu Mengxun 趙果騫 accomplished the Longhoulu 庾謙 area and the Xuanshi 始師 reign began. During the third year of Xuanshi, Juqu Mengxun asked Dharmakṣema to translate the Da banniepan jing. Dharmakṣema translated five fascicles of its original text into twenty fascicles of the classical Chinese translation. After that, due to the shortage in the original text, Juqu mengxun sent people abroad and found eight fascicles. They were the chapters of bingxing行品, shengxing聖行品, fanxing梵行品, yingerxing嬰兒行品, dewang德王品, shizihou師子吼品, jiashe迦葉品 and cheuru陳如品. Dharmakṣema translated them into twenty fascicles and spread them across northern China. During the fifth year of Xuanshi, the translation work of the Da banniepan jing was complete.

If these documents are examined together, they record that Dharmakṣema clearly translated the original text of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra with Zhimeng and the support of other collaborators at least twice. If so, the significant difference in foxing between the extant Sanskrit fragments and Dharmakṣema’s Da banniepan jing discussed in this section belongs to the first twelve fascicles of his translation, which was translated by Dharmakṣema and his collaborators when he had not yet mastered the Chinese language.
Accordingly, the role of Dharmakṣema’s collaborators and disciples in his translation of the *Da banniepan jing* is important. Needless to say, it is also likely that Dharmakṣema had seen Faxian’s translation, and its use of *foxing*, and himself reasoned that this was a good way of communicating what the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra* was teaching.

Regarding my hypothesis mentioned above, one of my reviewers once noted: “Even if Dharmakṣema was not familiar with the Chinese language at that time, in my opinion, a translator’s limited proficiency in the target language does not make it more likely that the translator would insert into his translation something that is not there in the source language. Probably the reverse argument can also be made, namely, a translator who has excellent proficiency in the target language would then be more likely to insert into his translation something that was not there in the source language. Alternatively, I don’t think it makes much sense for the author to suggest that, since his Chinese language was not good enough, then his collaborators and disciples inserted some personal views into their translations. Were Dharmakṣema’s colleagues to add anything into the translation of the *Da banniepan jing*, this inserted notion must had already become quite popular before the text was translated.” I have to add something of my response towards this query here. In my view, it is likely that either Dharmakṣema or his collaborators and disciples translated some other terms as the Chinese term *foxing*. There are further two possibilities. One is that they created the term *foxing* here. Another possibility is that they used the term *foxing*, which had already become popular before the translation of the *Da banniepan jing*. For the second possibility, when I say Dharmakṣema’s collaborators and disciples inserted some personal views into their translations, needless to say, it is also possible that their personal views had been influenced by some terms which had already become popular then. In other words, I do not think that there is a fundamental contradiction between my reviewer’s hypothesis and that of mine, although both of our views are merely assumptions.

Additionally, some sections of the *Da banniepan jing* translated by Dharmakṣema state that *icchantikas* also possess *foxing*.

For those who are *icchantikas*, although they possess buddha-nature, they are held down by the stain of their innumerable transgressions, unable to get free, like silkworms inside of cocoons. Because of their karmic conditions, they cannot produce a marvellous cause that would lead to bodhi and instead transmigrate through *samsāra* with no end in sight.

彼一闡提雖有佛性，而為無量罪垢所纏，不能得出。如蠶所繭，以是業緣，不能生菩提妙因。流轉生死，無有窮已。

As mentioned above, Chinese translators used the term *foxing* to correspond with various original terms. In this section, they translate “bi yichanti sui you foxing彼一闡提雖有佛性.” Furthermore, although the Chinese translation states that *icchantikas* can merely float in the stream of birth and death without becoming free from transmigration, according to its interpretation, *icchantikas* definitely possess *foxing*. This statement has strongly influenced even wider East Asian Buddhist thought.

Conversely, the *Nihuan jing* translated by Faxian states the following.

*Icchantikas* are separated from the *rulai xing*如來性 (lineage of the tathāgata) forever due to committing the crime of criticizing the Buddhist Dharma. It is like the cocoon created by bugs which controls the bugs themselves, so do *icchantikas*. They cannot stimulate their origins of Bodhi in the lineage of the tathāgata, so that they cannot become free from transmigration during all lives.

彼一闡提於如來性所以永絕，斯由誹謗作大惡業。如蠶蠶蟲繭綿綿，自纏而無出處。一闡提輩亦復如是，於如來性不能開發起菩提因，乃至一切極生死際。

Evidently, the *rulai xing*如來性 found in this section of the *Nihuan jing* corresponds to the *foxing* stated in the *Da banniepan jing*. However, the *Nihuan jing* clearly states that *icchantikas* are forever separated from the *rulai xing* due to committing the crime of criticizing the Buddhist Dharma. Although Faxian also used the term *foxing* in the *Nihuan jing*...
jing, there were fewer uses of the term than those in the *Da banniepan jing*. In this section, Faxian used the term *rulai xing* instead of *foxing*.

Regardless, it remains necessary to confirm whether the original Sanskrit text of the *Nihuan jing* and that of the *Da banniepan jing* are identical or not. From the perspective discussed above, on the relationship between *icchantika* and *rulai xing* (or *foxing*), it seems likely that the assertions of Dharmakṣema’s Chinese collaborators also influenced the translation more or less. Identical to the classical Chinese translation by Dharmakṣema, the Tibetan translation of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra* states that Buddha-nature is also within the *icchantikas’* bodies; among various translations of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra*, the only version that states the *icchantika* without Buddha-nature is the *Nihuan jing*. It is very likely that the translators of the Tibetan translation consulted Dharmakṣema’s classical Chinese translation.

According to Ochō, the *Nihuan jing* denies the possibility that *icchantikas* can achieve buddhahood, whereas the *Da banniepan jing* states that *icchantikas* can achieve this if they successfully see their *shanxin* (good mind). The discussion above also clarifies Ochō’s assertion. The sentence “*icchantikāḥ kalyāṇakṛtām na*” in the extant Sanskrit fragment corresponds to “*bu jian zhe wei bu jian foxing*” (not seeing or not seeing buddhahood). “*Icchantikas* fail to see virtuous deed (*kalyāṇakṛta*)” in this Sanskrit fragment corresponds to “*icchantikas* can achieve buddhahood” in the *Da banniepan jing*. While we cannot know what Dharmakṣema was seeing in his Sanskrit text, I contend that this translation strongly supported the theory that *icchantikas* can achieve buddhahood in East Asian Buddhism.

Concerning this issue, Takasaki notes that the *Da banniepan jing* translated by Dharmakṣema, alongside the *Nihuan jing* translated by Faxian, also states that *icchantikas* do not possess *foxing* before the eleventh fascicle. In contrast, after this fascicle, the *Da banniepan jing* admits the possibility that *icchantikas* could finally achieve buddhahood. Saliently, the above portion can only be found in the classical Chinese translation rather than the Sanskrit or other texts.

Furthermore, Matsumoto Shirō 佐本史朗 asserts that in the *Da banniepan jing*, the *you foxing* (possessing Buddha-nature) does not mean *jie chengfo* (accomplishing buddhahood for all beings). Both Takasaki and Matsumoto were aware of the difference between the first twelve and subsequent fascicles of the *Da banniepan jing*. Clearly, their assertions reinforce my opinion.

To summarize, as a classical Chinese Buddhist canon text translated at the beginning of the fifth century, the *Da banniepan jing* used the term *foxing*, which cannot be correspondingly confirmed in the surviving Sanskrit fragments of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra*. *Foxing* was most naturally translated *buddhadhātu*, but the Sanskrit fragments do not mention *buddhadhātu*. Those sections where the difference between the Sanskrit and the Chinese translation of *foxing* appears belong to the translation made by Dharmakṣema before he was proficient in the Chinese language. For this reason, it is not impossible that his collaborators and disciples may have inserted some personal views into their translations. It is possible that his inserted notion had already become popular before the translation of the *Da banniepan jing*. Meanwhile, it is also likely that Dharmakṣema had seen Faxian’s translation, and its use of *foxing*, and himself reasoned that this was a good, shorthand way of communicating what the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra* was teaching.

Moreover, over half of the *Da banniepan jing*, after the first 10 *juan*, is unique to this version. We have no Sanskrit fragments corresponding to its content and no Tibetan, apart from a Tibetan translation made from Dharmakṣema’s Chinese translation.

5. *Foxing in the Da fangdeng wuxiang jing* 大方等無想經 and Gunabhadra’s Renderings

In this short section, as a supplement for this study, I intend to slightly mention the *Da fangdeng wuxiang jing* [Skt. *Mahāmeghaśūtra*; T387] by Dharmakṣema and the renderings by Gunabhadra 求那跋陀羅 (394–468) from roughly the same time.

As mentioned in the first section of this article, according to the *Chu sanzang ji ji* 三藏記集, 11 texts were regarded as Dharmakṣema’s translations. It is impossible to
analyze the term *foxing* in all of them in this space-limited article. Since we have a Tibetan translation of the *Da fangdeng wuxiang jing*, the *Sprin chen po’i mdo* (Derge no. 232; Peking no. 898), I merely have a look at one case of *foxing* in this text.

The *Mahāmāheśasūtra* is a *tathāgatagarbha* doctrinal sutra, overlapping with the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra*. The *Da fangdeng wuxiang jing*, the Chinese rendering of the *Mahāmāheśasūtra*, was also translated by Dharmaks.ema. In the *Da fangdeng wuxiang jing* and the corresponding Tibetan translation, we can find the following example:

*Da fangdeng wuxiang jing* 方等五想經 (Taishō no. 387, 1102b–3)

猛風起者，喻如來常。風入毛孔者，喻諸眾生意有障性。

*Sprin chen po’i mdo* (Derge no. 232, 194b)

de *bzhin* du’ *dir yang ting nge* ‘dzin gyis de *bzhin gshegs* *pa’i* yon tan rtag pa nyid kyi *yon tan gyis bsgos pa’i* rlung *nyon mongs pa’i nam mkha’ la* ljang bar byed cing/

In the Tibetan rendering, confirming a reasonable corresponding term to the Chinese term *foxing* here is a little difficult. We cannot find *de bzhin gshegs pa’i* *snying po* (buddhanature), but only *de bzhin gshegs pa’i yon tan rtag pa nyid kyi yon tan*. We also confirm some similar cases in the *Da fangdeng wuxiang jing* like this.92 In other words, Dharmaks.ema uses the term *foxing* in the *Da fangdeng wuxiang jing*, while the corresponding term or phrase in the Tibetan translation is unclear.

Although the *Da fangdeng wuxiang jing* may appear to be a partial translation of the *Mahāmēgha-sūtra*, the real situation was more likely that the original text was still incomplete when Dharmaks.ema brought it to China.93

Guṇabhadra was born in central India to a brāhmaṇa family and departed from Sri Lanka for China, arriving in Guangzhou by sea in around 435.94 He translated some famous Mahāyānist sutras, including the *Yangjuemoluo jing* 夏拙魔羅經 [Pāli. *Aṅgulimaḷā-sūtra*; Skt. *Aṅgulimaḷyāsūtra*; T210] and the *Da fagu jing* 法鼓經 [Skt. *Mahābherīrākasūtra*; T270], in which the term *foxing* can be found. The *Da banniepan jing* translated by Dharmaks.ema, however, was brought to Jiankang 建康, present-day Nanjing 南京, becoming the foundation of the southern version of this scripture’s Chinese rendering. Huiyan 慧嚴 (363–433), Huiguan 慧觀 (4th to 5th centuries CE) and Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385–433) edited this scripture into the southern version in 436.95 Moreover, with their help, Guṇabhadra translated some texts.96 For this reason, the term *foxing* found in Guṇabhadra’s renderings, which were translated later than the renderings translated by Faxian, Buddhahadra and Dharmaks.ema, was probably more or less influenced by the *Da banniepan jing*.97

6. The Interpretations of *Foxing* in Later Chinese Buddhism

Dharmaks.ema was proficient at incantation and respected in many countries.98 Finally, he was assassinated by Juqu Mengxun 汲渠蒙巡 (368–433), the King of Northern Liang 北涼. Northern Wei destroyed Northern Liang very soon afterwards. Dharmaks.ema’s disciples and collaborators moved to Pingcheng 平城, the capital of Northern Wei 北魏. Furthermore, the *Da banniepan jing* translated by Dharmaks.ema was brought to Jiankang 建康, becoming the foundation of the southern version of this scripture’s classical Chinese translation. Hence, in my opinion, the translations and concepts in Dharmaks.ema’s system strongly influenced Buddhism during the Northern Wei period, especially Bodhiruci 摩訶提 (6th century CE; active in China after 508) and Ratnamati 剧那提 (6th century CE; active in China after 508). The *Da banniepan jing*, which was sufficiently researched in Northern Wei, became the foundation of the doctrines of the Dilun tradition 地論宗, including Huiyuan of the Jingying temple 智積寺慧遠 (523–592).99 The influence of the *Da banniepan jing* on Chinese Buddhist thought is apparent. As abundant amount of research already exists on this issue, I will, therefore, merely discuss the cases of Huiyuan of the Jingying temple and Guanding of the Tiantai tradition 天台宗 in this section.

In the *Da banniepan jing yi ji* 大般涅槃經義記 [Meaning of the Great Nirvana Sutra], Huiyuan’s commentary on the *Da banniepan jing*, he states the following.
There is a type of Buddha-nature that the icchantikas have but those who possess wholesome roots do not. [Namely, the icchantikas] have the unwholesome nature, and hence they lack wholesome nature. Due to dependent origination [based upon] the Buddha-nature, unwholesome aggregates arise. Hence unwholesome aggregates are named Buddha-nature, which the icchantikas have. There is another type of Buddha-nature that those who possess wholesome roots have but the icchantikas don’t. Those who have advanced above the first [bodhisattva-]stage are called people with wholesome roots. Or more broadly, the bodhisattvas above the stage of buddha-gotra (Chin. zhongxing di 种性地) are named wholesome human beings [i.e., people with wholesome roots]. They have wholesome nature and lack unwholesome nature. There is a type of Buddha-nature that both [of the above two groups of people] have, namely, they both have the nature as the principle (li foxing 理佛性). There is another type of Buddha-nature that both [of the above two groups of people] do not have, namely, neither of them has the nature as the result (meaning that they have not attained Buddhahood).

Accordingly, after Northern Wei extinguished Northern Liang, the Da banniepan jing translated by Dharmaśekha, and his assistants’ interpretations, were likely conveyed to Pingcheng, the Northern Wei capital, and influenced the Dilun monastic tradition, including monks such as Huiyuan.

Moreover, Guandings states in the Da banniepan jing shu 大般涅槃經疏 [Commentary on the Mahāparinirvāṇa-Sūtra] as below.

First, hearing (Chin. wen 闻) is divine ear (Skt. divyāśravana; Chin. tianer 天耳). Seeing (Chin. jian 见) is divine eye (Skt. divyacakṣus; Chin. tianyān 天眼). They relate to the jishen tōng (penetrating understanding with the body). Second, the ninth stage is hearing, in which one can see Buddha-nature. The tenth stage is sight, in which one can complete and clarify himself through seeing Buddha-nature. Achieving the ninth stage by liberation of wisdom is the particular hearing which is manifested without normal hearing. Achieving the tenth stage from the ninth stage is the particular seeing which is manifested without normal seeing. Achieving the buddhahood stage from the tenth stage is the particular achieving which is manifested without normal achieving.

Guandings mentions the term “jīan foxing 見佛性” as found in the Da banniepan jing translated by Dharmaśekha in his commentary and states that one would see foxing if he has achieved the ninth stage of bodhisattvas’ stages. As has been discussed above, Dharmaśekha and his assistants translated something, which is reported as the gotra of tathāgata (rīgs) and good deeds (kalūṇakṣa) in the surviving Sanskrit fragments of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra, as jīan foxing (seeing Buddha-nature). Evidently, the gotra of tathāgata (rīgs) means those people who will or have achieved the boundary of the tathāgata. However, Guanding only used the term jīan foxing, while zhongxing (Skt. gotra;
lineage/caste) cannot be found. Furthermore, he attempted to integrate *jian foxing* with the theory of the stages of the bodhisattvas, especially the ninth stage.\(^\text{104}\)

Evidently, the *Da banniepan jing* was translated by Dharmakṣema with his assistants’ interpretations, influenced not only the Dilun monastic tradition, but also the Tiantai monastic tradition and monks such as Guanding. The term “*jian foxing*” found in the *Da banniepan jing* was emphasized by Guanding, the direct disciple of Zhiyi 智乗 (538–597).\(^\text{105}\) As is well known, this term greatly influenced the later Tiantai tradition, the Huayan 紗厳 (Jp. Kegon) tradition and Chan 禪 (Jp. Zen) Buddhism through some of the early Tiantai monks such as Guanding. According to Whalen Lai, the Tiantai tradition, based on the *Lotus Sūtra* (Chin. Fahua jing法華經), superseded the Nirvāṇa tradition 涅槃宗 by incorporating many of its ideas.\(^\text{106}\) We can therefore imagine the wide influence of the *Da banniepan jing* (*Nirvāṇa Sūtra*) and the Nirvāṇa tradition. Needless to say, the most important idea of the Nirvāṇa tradition is the theory of *foxing*.\(^\text{107}\) However, also as discussed above, the extant Sanskrit fragments of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra* states that *ichchantikas* do not see good deeds (kalyāṇakṛta). Instead, the term or phrase in this corresponding place was rendered as “*bu jian foxing*不見佛性” in the *Da banniepan jing*. The most important term *foxing* cannot be found as a fixed term in our current Sanskrit fragment.

While probably correct from the perspective of those Indic original texts, I suppose that a crucial point exists. That is, from the perspective of a Chinese reader, in all these cases there is only one single term—the Chinese word *foxing*佛性.\(^\text{108}\)

### 7. Conclusions

In East Asian Buddhism, *rulaizang* (Skt. *tathāgatalokottarabha*) is sometimes considered a synonym of *foxing* (Buddha-nature) because the relationship between these two terms was ambiguous in Chinese Buddhism since some monks and schools declared that *foxing* is the same as *rulaizang*. The early translators who emphasized some translated terms as *foxing* were Buddhabhadra and Dharmakṣema, two Indian Buddhist monks living in China in the first half of the fifth century. That is to say, the cases of the Chinese term *foxing* appeared during the Northern Liang dynasty (397–439) and the second half of the Eastern Jin (317–420) are probably the key to probing some early cases where the term *foxing* appeared.

The *Da fangdeng rulaizang jing* (Skt. *Tathāgatalokottarabha-sūtra*) translated by Buddhabhadra is a very early classical Chinese Buddhist canon text where the term *foxing* is clearly used to express Buddha-nature. However, the Chinese term *foxing* is difficult to confirm in Amoghavajra’s classical Chinese translation. Although a lack of clarity remains about Buddhabhadra’s motivation, as an early classical Chinese Buddhist canon text, the *Da fangdeng rulaizang jing* used the term *foxing*, which cannot be confirmed in other extant translations of the *Tathāgatalokottarabha-sūtra*.\(^\text{109}\)

Compared to the *Da fangdeng rulaizang jing*, the *Da banniepan jing* (Skt. *Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra*) translated by Dharmakṣema has exerted a much greater influence on Chinese Buddhist thought. As another early classical Chinese Buddhist canonical text, the *Da banniepan jing* also used the term *foxing*, which cannot be correspondingly confirmed in the surviving Sanskrit fragments of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra*.\(^\text{110}\) The sections where the differences between the Sanskrit fragment and the Chinese term *foxing* appear belong to Dharmakṣema’s early translation before he was proficient in the Chinese language.

Furthermore, it is very unrealistic to believe that the same person or group simultaneously translated all forty fascicles of the *Da banniepan jing*. Different people would have edited these fascicles in several stages. Notably, *buddhadhātu*, the original Sanskrit term of the Chinese term *foxing*, which is regarded as the most significant term in the *Da banniepan jing*, cannot be found in the extant Sanskrit fragments of this scripture. Dharmakṣema translated the original text of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra* with Zhimeng and the support of other collaborators at least twice. The significant difference between the Sanskrit fragments and the classical Chinese translation of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra* in this article belongs to the first twelve fascicles of Dharmakṣema’s translation aided by his disciples.
and collaborators when he had not yet mastered the Chinese language. Therefore, we
should not ignore the role of his assistants. Of course, it is also likely that Dharmakṣema
had seen Faxian’s translation and its use of foxing and, himself, reasoned that this was a
good, shorthand way of communicating what the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra was teaching.

Meanwhile, we frequently find sangs ṛgyas kyi khams/ḥbyings, which is a translation
of buddhadhātu in the Tibetan rendering of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra. This leads us
to presume that Faxian and Dharmakṣema both read versions of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-
mahāsūtra that used this term and translated it and other terms, including those I mentioned
in this article, with foxing.

It is likely that Faxian translated a version of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra that
featured buddhadhātu as foxing. Buddhabhadra, in the same period, translated a version
of the Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra. In some passages, he had favoured the term foxing over a
literal translation of the Sanskrit. As a contemporary monk with Buddhabhadra and Faxian,
Dharmakṣema translated the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra, going further than Faxian by
using the term foxing regularly. Our Sanskrit fragments of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra
are surely of a later date.111 We can suspect that both Dharmakṣema and Buddhabhadra
employ foxing as a non-literal translation, after Faxian.

Moreover, after Northern Wei extinguished Northern Liang, the Da banniepan jing
translated by Dharmakṣema, and the interpretations of his collaborators and disciples were
likely conveyed to Pingcheng, the Northern Wei capital. These two texts translated by
Buddhabhadra and Dharmakṣema respectively, especially the Da banniepan jing, deeply
influenced the Dilun monastic tradition. Among these, the term foxing and its Sinicism
explanations played a highly significant role, influencing the whole of East Asian Buddhist
thought. Needless to say, the controversies focusing on the concept of “Buddha-nature”
within all sentient beings in East Asian Buddhism, including the theory of tathāgatagarbha,
are closely related to the term foxing and its Sinicism explanations discussed in this article.
However, it is difficult to clarify the accurate origin of the Chinese term foxing at least at
the beginning of the fifth century in the relevant Sanskrit and Tibetan fragments and texts
at present.112

The aim of this article was not to be exhaustive or comprehensive but to provide some
additional reflections on the term foxing represented in the Da fangdeng rulaizang jing and
the Da banniepan jing, two contemporary classical Chinese renderings, suggesting possible
further research. Although it is a little difficult to say that the Da fangdeng rulaizang jing
and the Da banniepan jing are the earliest classical Chinese Buddhist canon texts where the
term foxing is clearly used to express Buddha-nature, these two Chinese renderings are
very early-stage translations in this sense. It is hoped that this study can make a small
contribution to reconsider the origin and background of the Chinese term foxing within the
historical context of Chinese Buddhist translation.

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Notes
1 Regarding these controversies on Buddha-nature and tathāgatagarbha, see Swanson (1993).
2 The term buddhadhātu was also translated with foxing in some texts. While Sanskrit fragments of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra do
not preserve buddhadhātu, the Tibetan corresponding to the Chinese preserves sangs ṛgyas kyi khams/ḥbyings, which is a rendering
of buddhadhātu. See Jones (2020b). Versions of the Ratnagotravibhūjavālikā confirm that foxing was used to translate buddhadhātu.
However, following Radich (2015), Dharmakṣema seems unlikely to have made a direct translation ‘buddhadhātu > foxing’ in his
work. See Radich (2015, pp. 23–24).
3 Concerning the development of Nirvāṇa tradition in China, see Fuse (1974a, 1974b); Mather (1981).
We also find the term foxing in the *Mohe bore boluomi jing* (摩訶波羅蜜経) translated by Kumārajiva 善摩羅什 (344–413) (T. 223: 8.299a23-24) and the *Dazhidu lun* 大智度論 (T. 1509: 25.499a21-22). Since the Sanskrit text of Kumārajiva’s *Larger Prajñāpāramitā* is extant and edited, further work on the comparison with Sanskrit text is inevitable. According to most of the previous research, however, it is very likely that Kumārajiva did not know the theory of Buddha-nature.

Regarding this approach, see Radich (2015); Zimmermann (2002); Jones (2021).

6. The Sanskrit *Mahāparinirvāṇa-nāhāśūtra* is a way to identify this as the Mahayana *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*.

7. The term *dhātu* itself means other things also. The range of things communicated by *dhātu* is not perfectly covered by the character *xing* 性. Concerning the meaning of the word *xing* in Chinese non-Buddhist culture, see Satō (1998).

8. Concerning the history of the Buddha-nature concept in Chinese Buddhism, there are already a large number of books and articles. For instance, Tokiwa (1930); Liu (1982); Lai (1988); and Liu (2008), etc. However, most of these researches hardly considered and used the relevant Sanskrit and Tibetan texts.

9. *Chu sanzang ji ji* 出三藏記集 2, T. 2145: 55.11b10–25.

10. Regarding the original name and its translation of Tanwuchen (Tanmochen) 蔡無(摩)訶, see Fuse (1974a, 1974b, pp. 116–38).

11. Concerning the subsequence of the texts translated by Dharmakṣema, Chen Jinhua 陳金華 has further research. See Chen (2004).

12. The Indian Buddhist Missionary Dharmakṣema (T374) and edited by Huiguan 觀自在 (T375). Kumārajiva met Buddhabhadra and Vimalakīrti (Chin. Beimo luocha 東方摩頂) and cooperated with Huiguan. See the *Lidai sanbao ji* 代三寶記 7, T. 2034: 49.70c22–71a1.

13. According to Radich, the *Chu sanzang ji ji* played a role in limiting the impact of Baoyun’s translation activities. Moreover, Huijiao 嵩嶤 (497–554) attempted to blame Baoyun’s poor interpreting, rather than Buddhabhadra’s contrast with Kumārajiva, as the cause of the contrasts between Buddhabhadra and the *sāṅgha* in Chang’an 長安. See Lettere (2020).

14. Regarding this fact, see Fuse (1974a, pp. 98–99).

15. Regarding the biography of Faxian, see Legge (1886); Adachi (1940); Zhang (1985).

16. Radich demonstrates that the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-nāhāśūtra* was translated by Faxian (T77) and the translation of the *Buddhacarita* (T192) attributed to Baoyun 阮雲 (376–449) are closely related and were probably both translated by Baoyun. See Radich (2019b).

17. According to Lettere, the *Chu sanzang ji ji* played a role in the contrast between Buddhabhadra and the *sāṅgha* in Chang’an. See Lettere (2020).

18. Regarding this report, see Takasaki (1987).

19. Regarding this work, see Matsuda (1988).

20. See the following works, Habata (2009), Habata (2013).

21. These fragments had been edited, see Habata (2019).

22. Regarding this, see Ochō (1981, p. 39).

23. Concerning Feng’s statement, see Feng (1976).

24. Chen’s argument had been accepted by many scholars, see Chen (2004, pp. 215–63).

25. Most recently, Radich considers the material exclusive to Dharmakṣema’s translation. See Radich (2019a).

26. The following book can be related to the relationship between the *Da fangdeng rulaizang jing* and the *Da hunnipean jing*: Matsumoto (2021), chapter 3, Nyorai zo kyō to nehan gyō ‘如来藏経’ と ‘涅槃経’.

27. *F zou tongjii* 僧統記 36, T. 2035: 49.342b15–34a3.

28. For instance, the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-nāhāśūtra* was translated by Dharmakṣema (T374) and edited by Huiguan 奧觀 (T375). Kumārajiva met Buddhabhadra and Vimalākṣa (Chin. Beimo luocha善摩羅什) in Changan 長安. After Kumārajiva’s death, Vimalākṣa left Changan for Jiangling 江陵 and cooperated with Huiguan. See the *Lidai sanbao ji* 代三寶記 7, T. 2034: 49.70c22–71a1.

29. Although a decision to treat the *F zou tongjii* as an historical source for the early fifth century on a part with the primary documents needs to be further discussed, the information recorded here mentions some accurate dates and persons, which can be consulted as at least some subsidiary materials. Meanwhile, I concede that the *F zou tongjii* is a much later source, which has its disadvantages and limitations.

30. Regarding this interpretation, see Michael Zimmermann (2002, pp. 39–50); Jones (2020b, p. 145); Jones (2020a); Kanō (2020).

31. The *Lidai sanbao ji* 代三寶記 records: “大方等如來藏経一卷 (元熙二年於道場寺出, 是第二譯, 見道祖皆密録, 與法立造者小異。)… 右一十五部一百一十巻, 安帝世, 北天竺國三藏慧師佛親撰譯, 皆言覺賢。” (T49, no. 2034, 71a13-b1) This indicates that the *Da fangdeng rulaizang jing* 大方等如來藏経 (T vol. 16, no. 666), translated by Buddhabhadra, is one of the two Chinese renderings of the *Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra*.

32. Strickmann writes: ‘Properly speaking, many of [Amoghavajra’s] “167 ‘translations’” were not translations at all. Instead, they might better be called ‘adaptations’; essentially, he refurbished them in line with his own terminology and ritual practice. This becomes even more striking in those cases where texts ‘translated’ by Amoghavajra are known to have been written in China centuries earlier, and directly in Chinese. A substantial part of Amoghavajra’s output thus comprises revisions of books already known in China, rather than new materials. Among the remaining, a good many cannot be found either in corresponding
According to one of my anonymous reviewers of this article, however, here the Tibetan version is invaluable:

Zimmermann (2002) suggests two recensions of the text of the Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra: TGS1 represented just by Buddhhabhadra's version and TGS2 represented by other three extant versions. See Zimmermann (2002, pp. 12–17).

Concerning the bibliography of the Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra, see (1958). Kanzō sanyaku taishō nyoraiō kyo漢藏三譯对照如来藏經, Kyoto: Bukkyōbunka kenkyūjo 仏教文化研究所.

Regarding this argument, see Zimmermann (2002, p. 7).

Da fangdeng rulaizang jing 大方等如来藏經 1, T. 666: 16.457b28-c8.

esā kulaputra dharmānām dharmatā/utpādād vā tathāgatānām anupādād vā sadaivaite sattvās tathāgatagarbhā iti/(Johnston 1950, 73, pp. 11–12).

This is a citation from Zimmermann’s translation, see Zimmermann (2002, pp. 103–6).

Da fangdeng rulaizang jing 大方等如来藏経 1, T. 666: 16.459a10-13.

This is a citation from Zimmermann’s translation, see Zimmermann (2002, pp. 136–38).

Da fangdeng rulaizang jing 大方等如来藏経 1, T. 666: 16.458b6-10.

This is a citation from Zimmermann’s translation, see Zimmermann (2002, p. 119).

Following Ichikawa, it can be assumed that some possible underlying terms are related to the classical Chinese term rulaizang 無常性 through the extant Tibetan translation. They are: tathāgatagarbha; tathāgatadharmatā; dharmatā; buddhadhātu; sattvā; sugatakāya; jinakāya; buddhakāya; tathāgatagarbha; jinaputra; tathāgata. See Ichikawa (1982).

Concerning this, see King (1995).

As the newest research attempting to explain this problem in the context of Indian religions, see Jones (2020a).

This is based on Habata’s work, see Habata (2015).

Regarding this, see Takasaki (1974).

Concerning this statement, see Shimoda (1997); Michael Radich (2015).

Regarding this argument, see Kanō (2017).

According to one of my anonymous reviewers of this article, however, here the Tibetan version is invaluable: sāngs rgyas kyi khams sālgyang sgrub through the extant Tibetan translation. They are: tathāgatagarbha; tathāgatadharmatā; dharmatā; buddhadhātu; sattvā; sugatakāya; jinakāya; buddhakāya; tathāgatagarbha; jinaputra; tathāgata. See Ichikawa (1982).

According to Radich, both Chinese translations of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra frequently feature terms such as foxing 佛法 and rulaizang 如来性. These terms may not obviously look like translations or equivalents for tathāgatagarbha. See Michael Radich (2015, p. 23).

According to Hubata Hiromi, the Sanskrit original of Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra has come down to us only in fragments, while the underlying Sanskrit term of the Chinese term foxing 佛法 and its intended meaning poses difficulties. Moreover, it is very likely that Dharmakṣema preferred the word foxing in his translations, independent from the existing Sanskrit text. See Habata (2015, pp. 176–96).

Second Blāsānākrama, Peking ed., No. 5311, A 49a8-49b3, sDe dge ed., No. 3916 K1 45a5-6.

Da banniepan jing 大般涅槃經 30, T. 374: 12.547a9-11.

Regarding this, see Yoshimura (1974, pp. 381–82).

Concerning Matsuda’s argument, see Matsuda (1988, pp. 13–14).

Following one of my anonymous reviewers of this article, this material in the Da banniepan jing comes from content exclusive to that version, for which we have no known Indic basis. It is likely that Kamalasila here exhibits knowledge of Dharmakṣema’s translation of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra. The alternatives to this scenario are: (a) Kamalasila knew the Tibetan translation of Dharmakṣema’s Chinese into Tibetan (Derge no. 119)—but this was only in the eleventh century. (b) Kamalasila knew an Indic version of the material translated by Dharmakṣema. I think the alternative (b) is more likely, namely, that both Kamalasila and Dharmakṣema were following a hitherto unknown Sanskrit version of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra.

The Sanskrit passages in this article is based upon Johnston (1950), see Ratnagotravibhāga, ed. Edward Hamilton Johnston. Patna: The Bihar Research Society, 1950.

Regarding this issue of the Ratnagotravibhāga, see Li (2016).

The Chinese version of the Ratnagotravibhāga is often pretty different to the Sanskrit and Tibetan. We cannot rule out that tathāgatagarbha was not seen by Ratnamati.

Indeed, the fact remains that the Jiujing yisheng baoxing lun elsewhere clearly also used foxing to render Skt. buddhadhātu, not only Skt. gotra. In other words, both Dharmakṣema and Ratnamati came to use the term foxing to translate a broader range of terms and phrases, including, needless to say, tathāgatagarbha and buddhadhātu.

Sanskrit manuscripts or in Tibetan translation—at least not in the form in which Amoghavajra presents them.” See Strickmann (2002). Also see Michael Radich’s database of attributions (https://dazangthings.nz/cbc/text/967/, accessed on 1 June 2022).

Concerning Matsuda’s argument, see Matsuda (1988, pp. 11–12).

Regarding this, see Yoshimura (1974, pp. 381–82).

Concerning this, see Shimoda (1997); Michael Radich (2015).

Regarding this argument, see Kanō (2017).

According to one of my anonymous reviewers of this article, however, here the Tibetan version is invaluable: sāngs rgyas kyi khams sālgyang sgrub very probably rendered buddhadhātu, and this corresponds to foxing in Dharmakṣema’s and Faxian’s versions. I am grateful to my reviewer for this reminder.

According to Radich, both Chinese translations of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra frequently feature terms such as foxing 佛法 and rulaizang 如来性. These terms may not obviously look like translations or equivalents for tathāgatagarbha. See Michael Radich (2015, p. 23).

According to Hubata Hiromi, the Sanskrit original of Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra has come down to us only in fragments, while the underlying Sanskrit term of the Chinese term foxing 佛法 and its intended meaning poses difficulties. Moreover, it is very likely that Dharmakṣema preferred the word foxing in his translations, independent from the existing Sanskrit text. See Habata (2015, pp. 176–96).

Second Blāsānākrama, Peking ed., No. 5311, A 49a8-49b3, sDe dge ed., No. 3916 K1 45a5-6.

Da banniepan jing 大般涅槃經 30, T. 374: 12.547a9-11.

Regarding this, see Yoshimura (1974, pp. 381–82).

Concerning Matsuda’s argument, see Matsuda (1988, pp. 13–14).

Following one of my anonymous reviewers of this article, this material in the Da banniepan jing comes from content exclusive to that version, for which we have no known Indic basis. It is likely that Kamalasila here exhibits knowledge of Dharmakṣema’s translation of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra. The alternatives to this scenario are: (a) Kamalasila knew the Tibetan translation of Dharmakṣema’s Chinese into Tibetan (Derge no. 119)—but this was only in the eleventh century. (b) Kamalasila knew an Indic version of the material translated by Dharmakṣema. I think the alternative (b) is more likely, namely, that both Kamalasila and Dharmakṣema were following a hitherto unknown Sanskrit version of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra.

The Sanskrit passages in this article is based upon Johnston (1950), see Ratnagotravibhāga, ed. Edward Hamilton Johnston. Patna: The Bihar Research Society, 1950.
Mizutani analyzes the origin of ichchantika in his work, see Mizutani (1965).

Concerning the relationship between ichchantika and buddha-nature in East Asian Buddhism, see Tokiwa (1930).

Habata (2019) renders this sentence as the following German translation: “Die Icchantikas, 'eine heilvolle Tat nicht sehend', 'sieht' (sehen) aber die 'bo-se' (d. h.) tadelhafte 'angeklagte' (Tät). 'suktra (gute Tat)' bedeutet 'Ervachen'.” See Habata (2019, p. 154).

This is my translation from the Sanskrit fragment. Habata (2019) renders this sentence as the following German translation: “Zu jener Zeit, wenn die Lebewesen, nachdem sie einmütig geworden sind, zum höchsten vollkommenen Erwachen erwaehnen werden, zu dieser Zeit wird der ichcan- tikus, auch wenn er böse ist, erwaehnen. Er sieht zu dieser Zeit das höchste Erwachen, (nämlich) die gute Tat nicht.

Concerning this, Habata (2019, pp. 157–58).

Matsuda (1988, pp. 45–46). In addition, Habata Hiromi edited the extant Sanskrit fragments and provided a new translation in 1989, which is more in-depth than that of Matsuda. In Habata (2019), this passage is as the following: “ichchantikā kālañcakram na paśyātā paśyati tu pāpam ni-<cn>di[s]i]tam garhiham ca yah (r6) sukṛ[ta](a)m (b)ot[hi]r[ī] ity arthā na vayati na gacchaṭīty arthā sandhetā kālānām ity arthā samādhi-karma viśīṣṭakalānām ka-uya nāgacchati bhadrakarma ichchantikasya nāgac[ha][r7]ti (kasya nāgacchati kusa) la(ṃ)satvā ichchantikā iti [v[i][šrutā] + + + + + + [k[im mūLaṃmā sūtrapratikṣa-] pḥ tasmād bheteṣvayā sūtrapratikṣēpa ko hi dūrānaḥ (v1) ta[ṃ]sdhī yanti parinirvāṇam. tumāṣṭhītaṃ kāⁿ pramāṇaṃ samyak-sambodhiṃ abhiṣam-. botsya<cn>te ; tadā ichchantikā [p[v4]p]><pi sam[bo]lṣye ta sa tā dārām bodhi su[rva]kr[ta](n)ma na paśyati ; evaṃ jāṃsaṅya viśārada kāṣṭha kṛtāṃ na paśyati ; tathāgatasya yadā sarvāṅga(6)iva anuttarām. sarvəbhūvat veṣṭitaṃ samyak-sambodhiṃ abhiṣam-. botsya<cn>te samsāra[ga]a lā[ta tādā tātāgataśya kṛtāṃ na vinakṣayati[ti] tādā parinirvāyatamapa[ri] parinirvānena ; a[n]i[v]i[v]i[v]i[t]o buddho bhṛ[va]v[ya]t[ī] ; [d]ī[p]a i[v]i[n]a[n]a[n]a[n][s]ya[y]ād agriva tā tā[d]vāt] ichchantikasya pāpa[ṃ] kṛm garhiham nindita(m) ca.” See Habata (2019, pp. 154–58). Comparing Matsuda (1988) with Habata (1919), it seems that there is no significant difference here about the underlying expressions of the Chinese term foxing in Dharmakṣema’s translation.

This is based on Blum’s translation, see Blum (2013).

Da banniepan jing大般涅槃經 9, T. 374: 12.418b28-c6.

It is difficult to find corresponding terms or phrases here in both Tibetan and Faxian’s translations. See Radich (2015, p. 189).

Concerning this, see Chen (2004, pp. 215–63).

According to the preface in the eighth fascicle of the Chu sanzang ji ji, the Sanskrit text related to the first ten fascicles of the Da banniepan jing translated by Dharmakṣema had been brought to China by Zhimeng (?–452). The “Da niepan jing ji di shuqiangstrange name of a book 

Matsuda (1988, T. 2059: 50.336b1-6).

Regarding the references to Dharmakṣema and Zhimeng in the Gaoseng zhuana, see Naoumi (1986).

Da banniepan jing xuanyi大般涅槃經玄義 2, T. 1765: 38.14a26-b2.

On the contrary, as mentioned in the first section, Chen Jinhua argues that Dharmakṣema in fact made no translation until 421. See Chen (2004).

On the other hand, it is important to realise that the textual fluidity of Sanskrit original of the Mahāparinirvānāmahāstūtra, in addition to the possibility of the translator’s creation or insertion. Accordingly, it looks that there is currently no clear witnesses to ascertain whether the translation term foxing is the translator’s faithful representation of the Sanskrit original, the translator’s creation, or his insertion.

This is based on Blum’s translation, see Blum (2013, p. 287).

Da banniepan jing大般涅槃經 9, T. 374: 12.419b5-7.

Foshuo da banniepan jing 柏訥大般泥洹經 6, T. 376: 12.893a8-11.

Concerning this paragraph, the Tibetan translation states: “‘dod chen pa rnam la yang de bzhin gshegs pa'i snying po yod mod kyi (Even the ichchantika has tathāgatgarbha.)’/ on kyang g-yogs ma shin tu stug par 'dug goi//dper na dar gyi srin bu rang nyid kyis kun nas dkar te/sgo ma blo dpa phuyir 'byung mi nus pa de bzhin du/de bzhin gshegs pa'i snying po yang de'i las kyi
Since the extant Sanskrit fragments are just a small part of the entire text of the Sutra and there were most probably various As hypothesized by Hodge (2012), these Sanskrit and Tibetan materials of the It will be helpful if there is a comparative table of the term Cf. Robert Sharf’s perspective remarks on the role played by translations in Chinese Buddhism. See Sharf (2001, pp. 18–20).

It is a fact that we find supporting evidence in other Tibetan works where the remaining content of Dharmakṣema’s translation is unique to that version, so it is difficult to assess how close it is to other versions of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra. See Radich (2019a) for the most recent discussion of this material. It looks like the Dharmakṣema-unique material is something of a compilation of material from various sources, from Central Asia or plausibly the work of himself. I am grateful to one of my anonymous reviewers for reminding me of this.

Although the example in this section does not reflect sungs rgyas kyi khams/ ślokas, Tibetan versions of the works by Gunabhadra reflect sungs rgyas kyi khams/ ślokas. There is cause to believe that he was translating buddhādhatu in some other places.

Regarding this, see Ono and Maruyama (1937, pp. 486–87).

Concerning this, see Ono and Maruyama (1937, pp. 486–87).

To my knowledge, Christopher Jones is researching this issue in the Da fangdeng wuxiang jing. I look forward to his forthcoming publication. Regarding his previous research, see Christopher Jones (2016).

Regarding this, see Ono and Maruyama (1937, pp. 486–87).

Concerning this issue, see Fuse (1974a, 1974b); Richard B. Mather (1981, pp. 155–73).

Da banniepan jing yi ji’s concept of the Buddha’s omniscience anticipated the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra’s idea of foxing. see Keng (2013).

Concerning this issue, see Fuse (1974a, 1974b); Richard B. Mather (1981, pp. 155–73).

Concerning Huiyuan’s interpretation of foxing, see Keng (2013).

Concerning this matter.

There is no agreement in the extant Sanskrit materials as to the exact nature of these bodhisattva stages. See Har Dayal (1932).

Regarding Zhiyi’s attitude toward Buddha-nature, see Paul Swanson (1990).

Lai notes this in his work, see Lai (1982).

For example, Sengrui僧睿 (378–444) stated that the Lotus Sūtra’s concept of the Buddha’s omniscience anticipated the Da banniepan jing (Nirvāṇa Sūtra)’s idea of foxing (Buddha-nature).

Cf. Robert Shaf’s perspective remarks on the role played by translations in Chinese Buddhism. See Sharf (2001, pp. 18–20).

It will be helpful if there is a comparative table of the term foxing and its equivalents Skt. or Tib. of the Tathāgatagarbhasūtra in this article. Concerning this, we can consult Zimmermann (2002, pp. 50–52).

Since the extant Sanskrit fragments are just a small part of the entire text of the Sūtra and there were most probably various versions of Sanskrit originals of this Sūtra, it is difficult to approach a final conclusion currently.

As hypothesized by Hodge (2012), these Sanskrit and Tibetan materials of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra show signs of redaction. It is possible that instances of buddhādhatu were replaced with tathāgatagarbha.

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