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The *Shijiapu* of Sengyou:
The first Chinese attempt to produce
a critical biography of the Buddha

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This article is dedicated to Professor Hara Minoru, Member of the Japanese Academy. Now retiring from the International College for Postgraduate Buddhist Studies, Prof. Hara has been Rector, Chancellor, Professor at the College and Director of its Research Institute. Many of us hope that he will continue his magistral contribution to the Sanskrit studies for a long time to come.

INTRODUCTION

The *Shijiapu* 釋迦譜 (T. vol. 50, n° 2040, 5 j.), “Genealogy of the Śākya,” is the earliest extant example of a literary genre that has been well appreciated in Chinese Buddhism. It is an anthology of data related to the genealogical origins, the human existence, the *parinirvāṇa* and the relics of the historical Buddha. Each of the thirty-four chapters of this anthology focuses on one aspect of the historical Buddha or on matters preparing or following his presence in this world. For each topic, a passage, often from Sūtras or Vinayas, is cited as an authoritative source, but the passage is often interspersed or followed by excerpts from other scriptures in order to present a more complete overview of some of the episodes. My intention in this article is to facilitate, for the students, an access to this important compilation of the early sixth century and to refer occasionally to a few other Chinese Buddhist compilations of similar nature. This field is still broadly open to more

extensive and more thorough analysis. My cursive remarks will remain at a tentative and introductory level.

I. On the Chinese Buddhist Compilations

The Author of the Shijiapu

The compilation of the *Shijiapu* is attributed to the distinguished scholar Sengyou 僧祐 (445–518),¹ Master of Discipline (Vinaya) and representative of a Buddhism both Mahayanic and Sarvāstivādin in the late fifth and early sixth century under the Southern Dynasties. He authored several valuable compilations,² including the bibliographical and biographical *Chusanzangjiji*

¹ On the biography of Sengyou, see Arthur Link, “Shih Seng-yu and his writings”, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 80: 1 (1960), pp. 17–43. Link (p. 21) presents Sengyou as the earliest historian and bibliographer of Chinese Buddhism whose works have survived. One has to add that much of the erudition of Sengyou was devoted to Indian Buddhism as he understood it from Chinese translations. Before Huijiao 慧皎 in the *Gaosengzhuan* 高僧傳 (T. vol. 50, n° 2059, j. 11, pp. 402c–403a), Baochang (see note 8) devoted a notice to Sengyou in his *Mingsengzhuan* 明僧傳, which was issued shortly (519?) after Sengyou’s death in 518. This work was reproduced in 1235 in the *Meisōden-shō* 明僧傳抄 by the Japanese monk Shūshō 宗性 (Zokuzōkyō Taiwan reprint, vol. 134, 3b3 [Z. II-2-7-1]). Complementary informations on Sengyou and the *Shijiapu* may be found in Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer, *Das Hung-ming chi und die Aufnahme des Buddhismus in China*, Münchener Ostasiatische Studien, Bd. 12, Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1976.

² The compilations of Sengyou are listed as eight in his own *Chusanzangjiji*: T. 2145, j. 12, p. 87ab (list of the eight works), pp. 87b–94c (analytic description of seven of them). Including the four titles (1, 4, 5, 8) which will be referred to in this article, they appear in the following order: 1) *Shijiapu* (T. 2040); 2) *Jijieji* 世界記, “Records of the Worlds,” (5 j.); 3) *Sapoduobuji* 薩婆多部記, “Records of the Sarvāstivāda School,” (5 j.); 4) *Fayuanzayuananzhiji* 法苑雜緣原治集 (10 or 14 j.), “Original Collection of Mixed Records on the Garden of the Dharma;” 5) *Hungmingji* (T. 2102, 14 j.); 6) *Fajizajiming* 法集雜記銘 “Recorded Inscriptions of the Dharma,” (15 j.); 7) *Shisungyiji* 十誦義集, “Account of the Meaning of the Sarvāstivāda Vinaya” (10 j.); 8) *Chusanzangjiji*

出三藏記集 (“Collection of records on the issued [i. e. translated] *Tripitaka*,” T. vol. 55, n° 2145, 15 j.) and the *Hongmingji* 弘明集 (“Collection of ‘Enlarging and Clarifying,’ i. e. apologetical [treatises],” T. vol. 52, n° 2102, 14 j.). These encyclopedic works are only two of the many impressively comprehensive anthologies that were produced during the Qi 齊 (479–502) and the Liang 梁 (502–557) dynasties, and especially during the reign (502–549) of Emperor Liang Wudi 梁武帝, a golden age of compilation for Chinese Buddhism.³

(T. 2145, 15 j.). The *Gaosengzhuan* 高僧傳 (T. vol. 50, n° 2059, j. 11, p. 403a1–2), whose bibliographical lists are generally limited to the main works of an author, mentions five titles (8, 4, 2, 1 and 5). There are fourteen in Fei Zhangfang’s *Lidaisanbaoji* (T. 2034, j. 11, p. 97c6–15), which omits the *Fajizajiming* and the *Shisungyiji*, and adds eight unknown works, each of one *juan*. It may be worth mentioning that among these opuscula of dubious existence or attribution, there figures a record (*Chanjienlüpiposhaji* 善見律毘婆沙記) on the recently issued (488) translation of the Buddhaghosa’s Vinaya Commentary *Samantapāsādikā* (T. vol. 24, n° 1462, 18 j.). Investigations on Sengyou’s works could be extended to later Catalogues.

³ The production of compilations was related to the fear of the disappearance of the Dharma in a future age, as alluded to in the eulogistic verses following the introduction of the *Shijiapu* by Sengyou (T. 2040, j. 1, p. 1a29–b4). It was probably also a way of compensation for the obstacles to the circulation of manuscripts resulting from the separation of China into North and South. Moreover, encyclopedic compilations have a practical utility when manuscripts (or books) become too abundant. This aspect was not limited to Buddhism. See Ōuchi (written also Ohuchi) Fumio 大内文雄, “Ryōdai Bukkyō ruishūsho to *Kyōritsuisisō* 梁代佛教類聚書と經律異相 [Buddhist Encyclopedias of the Liang Dynasty and *Jing-lü-yi-xiang*], *Tōhō Shūkyō* 東方宗教 50 (1977), pp. 55–82. According to this article (p. 58), a lost compilation in 189 *juan* about the whole of Buddhism was compiled under the Qi 齊 Dynasty. It was entitled *Fayuanjing* 法苑經, “Sūtra of the Garden of the Dharma.” Subsequently, it is probably not accidental that two famous compilations with similar ambitions use the recurrent term “Garden of the Dharma” in their titles. I refer here to the lost *Fayuanzayuananyuanzhiji* 法苑雜緣原治集 (10 or 14 j.) of Sengyou and, in the Tang period, to the *Fayuanzhoulin* 法苑珠林 (T. 2122, 100 j.) of Daoji 道世. Under the Liang Dynasty, the lost 衆經要抄 (80 j.), 義林 (80 j.) 法寶集 or 法寶聯璧 (200 j.) and 內典博要 (30 j.) deserve to be mentioned (cf. T. 2034, j. 11, p. 100a) as other products of this age of erudition. We may add here that,

Although five of Sengyou's eight compilations are lost, one does have an idea of their content from Sengyou's presentation of his own works in the twelfth *juan* of his *Chusanrangjiji*.⁴ In a biographic article of 1960, Arthur Link has described Sengyou and his works, for whose titles he coined English translations that I have maintained here with a few modifications.

For our present research on the *Shijiapu*, the points of interest of this auto-presentation are multiple. We may first notice that the anthological method of Sengyou is always the same: division into chapters provided with titles and mention of one source on which each chapter is based. This auto-presentation contains a detailed description of a lost work of Sengyou whose title was *Fayuan zayuan yuanzhiji* 法苑雜緣原治集 (“Original Collection of Mixed Records on the Garden of the Dharma”), generally abbreviated as *Fayuanji* 法苑集, in fourteen *juan*.⁵ It contains also a general introduction (序) to his works and a particular introduction for each of them.⁶

according to an oral tradition, it was in order to mourn these lost Buddhist encyclopedias that Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 coined the title *Hobōgin* 法寶義林 for the French language Buddhist terminological dictionary launched in 1926 under the patronage of the Academies of Japan and France.

⁴ T, 2145, j. 12, pp. 87a-94c.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 90b-93b. On a few common scriptural sources of the *Shijiapu*, the *Fayuanji* and the *Jinglüyixiang* (also including the unknown *Jijingsho* 集經抄), see a short survey by Kanno Ryūshō 菅野龍清, “Sōyū sen *Fayuan zayuan yuanzhiji* ni tsuite 僧祐撰法苑雜緣原治集について” *IBK* 44: 2 (1997), pp. 59-62.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 87a-94c, *passim*. These short introductions are especially precious for the five compilations that are lost. For the surviving works, these introductions have been reproduced at the beginning of the printed edition: *Shijiapu* (T. 2040, j. 1, p. 1ab, with a few added verses), *Hungmingji* (T. 2102, j. 1, p. 1a). The introduction to the *Chusanrangjiji* does not figure in the auto-presentation in the twelfth *juan*, but at the head of the work (T. 2145, j. 1, p. 1ab). These author's introductions, including the introduction of the *Shijiapu*, were translated and commented by Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer in an appendix to his book on the *Hungmingji* (*cit.* note 1), p. 138-143.

Characteristics of the Early Compilations Containing a Biography of the Buddha

I will first list in chronological order the material concerned:

- a) *Shijiapu* 釋迦譜, “Genealogy of the Śākya,” (T. vol. 50, n° 2040, 5 j.) by Sengyou, first issued in 5 *juan* around 502 and re-issued in 10 *juan* possibly around 515.
- b) *Fayuanji* 法苑集 (14 j.) by Sengyou, lost, probably posterior to the first edition of the *Shijiapu*.
- c) *Jinglüyixiang* 經律異相, “Strange Stories from the Sūtras and Vinayas,” (T. vol. 53, n° 2141, 50 j.) by Baochang 寶唱, dated 516.
- d) *Lidaisanbaoji* 歷代三寶記 “Chronicle of the Three Jewels,” (T. vol. 49, n° 2034, 15 j.) by Fei Zhangfang 費長房, dated 598.
- e) *Shijiashipu* 釋迦氏譜 (T. vol. 50, n° 2042, 1 j.) by Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667), dated 665. Abbreviated version of the *Shijiapu*, not to be confused with Daoxuan’s *Shijiafangzhi* 釋迦方志 (T. vol. 51, n° 2088, 2 j., dated 650).
- f) *Fayuanzhoulin* 法苑珠林, “The Enjewelled Forest of the Garden of the Dharma,” (T. vol 53, n° 2122, 100 j.) by Daoji 道世 (d. 683), dated 668.
- g) *Chujingyaoji* 諸經要集, “Compendium of Canonical Texts” (T. vol. 54, n° 2123, 20 j.) by Daoji, posterior to the *Fayuanzhoulin* of which it is partly an abbreviated version.

A. *Compilations Contemporary with the Shijiapu*

A simple look at the extant table of contents of the *Fayuanji* allows us to note that, in the first *juan* of this encyclopedia whose scope was more ample than the *Shijiapu*, there were twenty-two chapters with titles almost identical to those of several chapters of the *Shijiapu*. The sources of each chapter were also the same as those mentioned for the chapters of the *Shijiapu*. This is not surprising because this first *juan* was devoted to the Buddha, *Fobao* 佛寶, as the first of the three jewels, *sanbao* 三寶.⁷ The focus on the Buddha as a jewel

⁷ The compilations centered on the Three Jewels (using this term repeatedly in their

and the topics selected as titles of the chapters of the *Fayuanji* are two factors indicating that the mainly biographical approach of the *Shijiapu* had shifted in the *Fayuanji* to a more devotional approach. Moreover when reading the complete table of contents of the *Fayuanji*, we have the impression that this compilation opened the way to (or perhaps competed with) the almost contemporary huge anthological encyclopedia entitled *Jinglüyixiang* 經律異相 “Strange Stories of the Sūtras and Vinayas,” (T. 2121), edited by Baochang 寶唱,⁸ a disciple of Sengyou. Concerning this compilation his name is often associated with the name of Sengmin 僧旻 (467–523), a prominent figure in Buddhism of the Liang period.⁹

For a Buddhist work, the structure of the *Jinglüyixiang* is quite original. We have seen that the *Fayuanji* began with sections on the three jewels. A similar doctrinal approach is followed in the later, massive Buddhist

titles) were a common feature of the time. During the Qi Dynasty, a *Sanbaoji* 三寶記 (“Record on the Triple Jewel,” 10 j.) had existed, whose purpose received a clear definition in later bibliographical compilations: it was “history” (史) for the Buddha, an account in the sense of “transmission” (傳) for the Dharma, and a “Record” in the sense of list (錄) for the Saṃgha (T. 2034, j. 11, p. 96b). This *Sanbaoji* was realized under the direction of Xiao Ziliang 簫子良, Prince Wenxuan 文宣王 of Jing-ling 竟陵 (460–494), who had Sengyou among his collaborators. Under the Liang Dynasty, the recurrent title of Three Jewels appears in another lost compilation, the *Sanbaoji* 三寶集 (“Collected data on the Triple Jewel,” 11 j.) by the monk Jing-ai 淨藹 (*ibid.*, p. 101ab). Again, under the Sui Dynasty, the *Lidaisanbaoji* 歷代三寶記 (“Chronicle of the Three Jewels,” T. 2034) appeared, which is the source for our information here.

⁸ Baochang 寶唱 was also the editor of the *Biqiuni zhuan* 比丘尼傳 (T. vol. 50, n^o 2063, 4 j.) and of the mostly lost *Mingseng zhuan* 明僧傳 that appeared in 519. See note 1 and Valentina Georgieva, *Buddhist Nuns in China: From the Six Dynasties to the Tang*, unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Leiden University, 2000. Baochang has been the object of an important notice in the *Xu gaosengzhuan* 續高僧傳 (T. vol. 50, n^o 2060, j. 1, p. 426b–427c) of Daoxuan 道宣.

⁹ See Mochizuki *Bukkyō daijiten* 望月佛教大辭典 (1936), reprint Tōkyō: Sekai seiten kankō kyōkai, 1966, vol. 4, p. 3104b–3105a, s. v. Sōbin 僧旻.

encyclopaedia of the Tang period, the *Fayuanzhoulin* 法苑珠林 “The Jewelled Forest of the Garden of the Dharma,” (T. 2122).¹⁰

The *Jinglüyixiang* follows a less doctrinal approach than Sengyou’s and Daoji’s works. This approach could be characterized as more anthropological and, in a sense, more trivial. The ambition of the *Jinglüyixiang* is to collect extraordinary exempla (喻) which reach the number of 782 and are grouped in twelve main sections (部) concerning living beings. Under apparently Chinese influence, these sections mix, on the one hand, fourfold Mahayanic distinction (Buddha, Bodhisattva, Pratyeka-buddha and Śrāvaka), fourfold Saṃgha distinction (Bhikṣu, Bhikṣuṇī, Upāsaka, Upāsikā), the six classical Buddhist destinies (*gati*, i. e. Deva, Man, Asura, Animal, Preta and Hell), and, on the other hand, social or secular categories where gender distinction is strictly observed.¹¹ By far the largest and most important part of the compilation is devoted to human destiny (j. 4-45), starting with a section on the Buddha (*fo pu* 佛部, j. 4-7), centered on events in his life. We will refer again below to the observation made by Ōuchi Fumio 大内文雄 that three of the four subsections of the *Jinglüyixiang*’s section on the Buddha are based on certain chapters of the *Shijiapu*.¹²

¹⁰ T. 2122. On this encyclopedia, see S. F. Teiser, “T’ang Buddhist Encyclopedias: An Introduction to *Fa-yüan chu-lin* and *Chu-ching yao-chi*,” *T’ang Studies* 3 (1985), pp. 109-128.

¹¹ The titles of the twelve sections (部), added presumably by later editors, are the following: 1) Heaven and earth (i. e. Devas), 2) Buddhas, without mention of Pratyekabuddhas, 3) Bodhisattvas, 4) Śrāvakas, 5) Kings, 6) Eminent people (長者), 7) Upāsakas and Upāsikās, 8) Heretics and Ermits/Immortals (外道仙人, including Brahmacarins and Brahmins), 9) Landlords and ordinary people (居士庶民等), 10) Spirits (鬼神) including on a very limited scale Asuras and Pretas, 11) Animals, 12) Hells.

¹² Ōuchi (*loc. cit.*, pp. 69-77) shows that the *Jinglüyixiang* has not only been influenced by the *Shijiapu*, but also by two lost works of Sengyou: the *Jijieji* 世界記, “Records of the Worlds,” (cosmological tales) and the *Fayuanzayuananzhiji* 法苑雜緣

The biographical approach, selection of texts, and methods of presentation in the three above mentioned anthologies and in what is left of the *Fayuanji* require further comparisons.

The time-consuming task of identifying the sources of many of the 782 tales of the *Jinglüyixiang* was undertaken by Edouard Chavannes.¹³ Research into this topic is now considerably helped by the identification of sources for the *Shijiapu*¹⁴ conducted by Hasuzawa Jōjun 蓮沢成淳; for the *Jinglüyixiang*¹⁵ undertaken by Sakamoto Kōbaku 坂本広博; and, for the *Fayuanzhoulin*,¹⁶ taken up by Kawaguchi Gishō 川口義照, whose survey focused on “Apocryphal” sūtras often borrowed from the *Jinglüyixiang*.

B. *Compilations Immediately Posterior to the Shijiapu*

Two more extant compilations of the Sui and of the Tang periods deserve mention. First, a comparison of the place of the Life of the Buddha within the encyclopedias must take into account a bibliographical and historical compilation of the end of the sixth century (598), the *Lidaisanbaoji* 歷代三寶記 “Chronicle of the Three Jewels,” (T. 2034) of Fei Zhangfang 費長房. In this work, the concise narrative of the Life of the Buddha is devoted only to chronology. Fei Zhangfang’s attempt to produce a concordance of the Indian

原治集, mentioned above (see note 4). Ōuchi shows also that the *Jinglüyixiang* did not make use of the chapters V, VI, VII, VIII, IX and XIV of the *Shijiapu*. It is worth mentioning that the fifth *juan* of the *Jinglüyixiang* contains seventeen tales about the active life of the Buddha Śākyamuni that had not been included in the *Shijiapu*.

¹³ E. Chavannes, *Cinq cents contes et apologues extraits du Tripitaka chinois* (in 4 volumes, Paris: Leroux, 1910–1934), vol. III (1911), p. 207, note.

¹⁴ *Kokuyaku issaikyō wakan senjutsubu, Shidenbu vol. VI: Shakafu etc.* (1936) Repr. Tōkyō: Daitō Shuppansha, 1979, pp. 1–293.

¹⁵ *Kyōritsu isō no kenkyū, Ryōdai no bukkyō bunka* 経律異相の研究：梁代の佛教文化, privately published, 2005. See especially the invaluable concordance, pp. 105–145.

¹⁶ *Chūgoku Bukkyō ni okeru kyōroku kenkyū* 中国仏教における経録研究 [“Study on the Texts/Catalogues in Chinese Buddhism”], Kyōto: Hōzōkan, 2000.

and the Chinese reckonings is vitiated by an error made by the compiler himself.¹⁷

Second, in the Tang period, let us mention an innovation by Daoxuan 道宣 (596-667), who compiled an abridged version of Sengyou's *Shijiapu* called *Shijiashipu* 釋迦氏譜 (T. 2042). It consists in an unified summary of the life of the Buddha, from birth to extinction, under the interesting title "Metamorphosis of the King of the Law," *Fawang huaxiang* 法王化相.

Scope and method of Sengyou in the Shijiapu

I. Ambitions of Sengyou

1. Erudition

It is not easy to sketch the profile of a religious erudite. We know of his relations, always in connections with Vinaya matters, with Xiao Ziliang 蕭子良, Prince Wenxuan 文宣王 of Jing-ling 竟陵 (460-494) under the Qi and, later, with the reigning Emperor Liang Wudi and several members of the court, as noted in Huijiao's *Gaosengzhuan*.¹⁸ Famous are his relations with the paramount literatus Liuxie 劉勰 (465-522), the author of a classic work on literary criticism, the *Wenxin jiaolong* 文心雕龍 (10 j.),¹⁹ who worked for

¹⁷ The calculation is first made erroneously (T. 2034, j. 1, p. 23a), and then given correctly at the end of the work (*ibid.*, j. 11, p. 95bc). See H. Durt, "The Two Different Dates of the Life of the Buddha According to the 'Dotted Record' as it is quoted in the *Li tai san pao chi* 歷代三寶紀", appendix to "La date du Buddha au Japon et en Corée" in Heinz Bechert ed., *The Dating of the Historical Buddha*, Part 1 (*Symposien zur Buddhismusforschung IV,1*), *Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Philologisch-Historische Klasse III*, 189, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), pp. 486-489.

¹⁸ T. 2059, j. 11, p. 402c12, c 20, c-23-25.

¹⁹ The *Wenxin jiaolong* 文心雕龍 is described as the earliest book of literary criticism in the Chinese language, whose value lies in its preservation of earlier critical thinking, as much as in the development of new ideas. The systematic organization was probably in imitation of "Buddhist classics" with which the author was familiar. (Jap. transl.:

Sengyou and authored his funeral inscription. As a Buddhist anthologist and bibliographer, more than an historian, Sengyou, in the *Shijiapu*, is not concerned with sources other than Buddhist scriptures, which were extant in Chinese at the time. There is no mention in his work of the *Foto jing* 浮圖經, which seems to have been a very archaic (Former Han) Life of the Buddha, lost at an early date and of which only short fragments were known through quotations in secular historical sources.²⁰ A century after Sengyou, a fragment of the *Foto jing* consisting in a few sentences on the birth of the Buddha attracted the attention of Buddhist erudites of the early Tang period.²¹ Similarly, one may also observe that, while Sengyou is eager to collect diverging traditions, he does not refer to any of the chronological debates about the date of the Buddha that were already a matter of concern during the Liang period.²²

Bunshin chōryū, transl. by Toda Kōgyō 戸田浩暁; Engl. transl.: Vincent Yu-chung Shih, introd. transl. Liu Hsieh, *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*, Columbia University Press, 1957). See Kimura Kiyotaka 木村清孝, “Ryūshi ni okeru Bukkyō no yakuwari 劉勰における〔佛教〕の役割,” *Shūkyō Kenkyū* 宗教研究 42: 4 (1969), pp. 71–73, and the review article by Victor Mair, “Wenxin diaolong and Buddhism”, in Antonino Forte and Federico Masini, eds., *A Life Journey to the East: Sinological Studies in Memory of Giuliano Bertuccioli*, Kyōto: Italian School of East Asian Studies, 2002, pp. 45–76.

²⁰ Antonello Palumbo is currently preparing a publication on this subject. Under the Qi, a short summary of the life of the Buddha was made by Wei Shou 魏収 in the Dynastic History of the Wei 魏書. This text, with the annotation of Tsukamoto Zenryū 塚本善隆, has been translated by Leon Hurvitz, ed., transl., *Wei Shou* [魏収], *Treatise on Buddhism and Taoism* [積老志], *An English Translation of the Original Chinese text of Wei-shu CXIV and the Japanese Annotation of Tsukamoto Zenryū*, Supplement (Appendix II) of Mizuno Seiichi 水野清一 and Nagahiro Toshio, 長広敏雄, *Yun-kang* 雲岡石窟, vol. XVI, Kyoto University: Jimbun Kagaku kenkyūjo 1956, p. 40–42. Tsukamoto’s annotation has been issued in *Shakurōshi no kenkyū* 積老志の研究, Kyōto: Bukkyō bunka kenkyūjo shuppanbu, 1961.

²¹ Falin 法琳 (572–640), T. vol. 52, n° 2109, j. 1, p. 478c and n° 2110, j. 6, p. 534c, 535a.

²² See H. Durt, *Problems of Chronology and Eschatology*, Kyōto: Italian School of East

2. Comparison

Comparison is often the first step before criticism. In juxtaposing the various biographies of the Buddha available to him, Sengyou made at least the first step toward a “synoptic edition” of the Lives of the Buddha. Almost fifty years ago, Etienne Lamotte expressed the hope²³ that such a synoptic work would be realized,²⁴ and there is now an attempt in this direction launched by a research group of Tōyō University in Tōkyō.²⁵

3. Exhaustiveness

With his zeal for Vinaya, the care for recovering Buddhist scriptures and establishing a Canon seems to have been a major preoccupation of Sengyou, as said eloquently in his notice for the *Gaosengzhuan*.²⁶ The political situation

Asian Studies, Occasional Papers 4, 1994, pp. 23–40.

²³ *Histoire du Bouddhisme indien*, Louvain, 1958, p. 733; Engl. transl. by Sara Boin-Webb, Louvain La Neuve, 1988, p. 662.

²⁴ On the Parinirvāṇa account, but based only on canonical sources, this kind of synoptical analysis had been attempted by Ernst Waldschmidt and André Bareau. See E. Waldschmidt, *Die Ueberlieferung vom Lebensende des Buddha*, Goettingen, vol.1 (1944), vol. 2 (1948), A. Bareau, *Recherches sur la biographie du Buddha dans les Sūtraṭīka et les Vinayaṭīka anciens*, T. II: *Les derniers mois, le Parinirvāṇa et les funérailles*, Paris: EFEO, vol. 1 (1970), vol. 2 (1971). Bareau also studied the episodes of the enlightenment of the Buddha. See the same *Recherches...* T. I: *De la quête de l'éveil à la conversion de Sāriputra et de Maudgalyāyana*, ibid. 1963; T.III: *Articles complémentaires*, ibid. 1995. This volume includes “La légende de la jeunesse du Buddha dans les Vinayaṭīka anciens,” previously issued in BEFEO, 61 (1974), pp. 199–274.

²⁵ *A Study of the Biography of Sakya-muni Based on the Early Buddhist Scriptural* (sic) *Sources* [*Genshi Bukkyō seiten shiryō ni yoru Shakusonden no kenkyū* 原始佛教聖典による釈尊伝の研究], Memoirs of the Chūō Academic Research Institute [中央学術研究所紀要], Monograph Series, Tōkyō (ten volumes issued since 1999). They include “Basic Researches” (基礎研究), “Thematic Researches” (個別研究) and “Documentary Sources” (資料集編).

²⁶ T. 2059, j. 11, p. 402c16–17: 造立經藏 搜校卷軸 使夫寺廟 開広法言無墜 咸其力也。He built up a collection of the scriptures, examined and collated its rolls and

may have been an obstacle for this task. From the comparison of the first and the second version of the crucial chapter IV (see below), one can deduce that, when compiling his first version of the *Shijiapu*, Sengyou ignored the existence of the *Yinguojing* (T. vol. 3, n° 189, 4 j.), on which more will be said below. As we will see, the choice of this biography of the Buddha as main source for his revised version was probably motivated by its innovative character, attention to many details, and perhaps also by the prestige of its translator, Guṇabhadra (394-468). Unfortunately, as we find Sengyou's same conclusive words (on the *Dharmakāya*) provided at both the end of his first version²⁷ as well as at the end of his new version,²⁸ we lack any explanation by Sengyou himself on what seems to be a shift in his sources.

II. Method of Sengyou

1. *Anthology and Not Patchwork*

In a sense, a biography is always a selective—anthological—composition. Often unrelated episodes have to be selected. The work of Sengyou depended on texts that were already of the anthological type. It is especially the case in one of the earliest biographies of the Buddha in Chinese, the *Taizi ruiying benqi jing* 太子瑞應本起經 (“Sūtra of the Auspicious Original Rise of the Prince”, T. vol. 3, n° 185, 2 j.), a partly pseudo-translation attributed to Zhi Qian 支謙 (third century). As shown in a seminal article by Matsuda Yūko 松田裕子,²⁹ this text, presented as a Life of the Buddha, is in

scrolls, acted in order that monasteries and temples should have the words of the Dharma broadly open and not falling: that is wholly due to his efforts.

²⁷ T. 2040, j. I, p. 8c3-15.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 52a3-15.

²⁹ “Chinese versions of the Buddha Biography,” *IBK* 73 (37: 1) 1988, pp. 489-480. An early approach in that direction had been made The conclusion of Matsuda were prepared by observations made by by Erik Zürcher, “Buddhist Influences on Early Taoism: A survey of the Scriptural Evidence,” *T'oung Pao* 66: 1-3 (1980), p. 111. See also

large part a juxtaposition of fragments of different origins. There are other challenges that Sengyou had to face.

The question of a unique source having existed in India for the Life of the Buddha did not bother Sengyou, although we may guess that such a belief existed at the time. We can see in a slightly later biography the form taken by that belief. A famous assertion in the *Romantic Legend of Śākya Buddha*³⁰ states that there was a unique, and thus authoritative, Life of the Buddha. With that perspective in mind, unrelated texts came to be associated.³¹ As a work devoted to the clarification of sometimes contradictory stories, the *Shijiapu* does not share that belief. In the *Shijiapu*, the division into chapters and the indication of sources is anthological, but as can be seen in some of the lengthy chapters, especially the two versions of chapter IV (on the early years of the Buddha until the time of the *bodhi*) and chapter XXVII (on his *parinirvāṇa*), the rather loose composition is close to patchwork.

The fact that in the *Shijiapu*, Sengyou does not refer to secular sources, like the sketches on the Life of the Buddha in the Dynastic Histories, may be explained as a deliberate effort on his part to use what seemed to him

“A New Look at the Earliest Chinese Buddhist Texts” in Koichi Shinohara and Gregory Schopen eds, *From Benares to Beijing: Essays on Buddhism and Chinese Religion in Honour of Prof. Jan Yün-Hua*, Oakville, 1991, p. 284.

³⁰ This title has been coined for S. Beal’s translation (London: Trübner 1875) of the *Fo benxing jijing* 佛本行集經 (*Buddhacaritasamgraha?* T. 190, 60 j.) translated by Jñānagupta (late sixth century). See a few preliminary observations on this text and its final assertion in H. Durt, “On the pregnancy of Māyā III: Late Episodes,” *JICABS* 7 (2004), p.55–64. For a recent survey on the assertion (*ibid.* j. 60, p. 932a.) of a link between the texts identified as the *Mahāvastu*, of the Mahāsāṃghikas, the *Lalitavistara* of the Sarvāstivādins, the *Jātaka-nidāna* of the Kāśyapiyas, the *Śākyamuni-buddha-pūrvacarita* of the Dharmaguptakas and the *Vinaya-piṭaka-mūlam* of the Mahīśāsakas, see Akira Yuyama, “*Mahāvastu* and *Mahāvastu-Avadāna*,” *Vividharatnakaraṇḍaka Festgabe für Adelheid Mette*, Swisttal-Oden-dorf, 2000, pp. 537–540.

³¹ See *infra* “The triad of early biographical sūtras.”

canonical sources. As we will see, he had read the Chinese Histories and, as the compiler of the *Hungmingji*, he was an expert in heterodox ways of thinking. His absence of concern for the debated issue of the dating of the Buddha support our supposition.

2. *Personal Remarks Made by the Compiler at the End of Several Chapters*

Our last preliminary remark will deal with the short conclusions, often with a Mahayanic overtone, ending more than two-thirds of the chapters of the *Shijiapu* and introduced by the name of You 祐, an abbreviation for the name of the compiler, Sengyou 僧祐. They deal either with the content of the chapter, or with its sources.³² The two versions of chapter IV end with the same conclusive remarks. As mentioned above, we are thus left in doubt as to the reason for the transformation of chapter IV.

Sengyou rarely makes observations on his task as a compiler, and his comments do not occur in the conclusive remarks. An interesting remark figures in the text of chapter III, before the customary compiler's remark. It is a pun on the contradictions existing in Chinese historical works in comparison with the divergences existing in Buddhist books, products of a distant country in more remote times.³³ In chapter XXVIII, in the middle of the narrative, we find another remark, this time about the different outlooks on the *Parinirvāṇa* in Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna texts.³⁴

III. A Few More Characteristics of the Work

1. Pu and Ji

Although the *Shijiapu* seems to have been heavily edited (thus the

³² Ten chapters (XII, XIII, XIX, XX, XXI, XXIII, XXIV, XXIX, XXXI, XXXIII) are deprived of such appended comments.

³³ T. 2040, j. 1, p. 4b16–20.

³⁴ T. 2040, j. 4, p. 70c16–17.

original work may have been modified), it is noteworthy that the first nine chapters are called “genealogy” or “registers” (*pu* 譜). In five of the chapter titles, the term *pu* is used together with the term *juan* 緣 (“condition”): *juanpu*. These chapters deal with what were probably considered the most legendary or vague components of the Buddha’s biography. They may thus have required a thorough “genealogical” approach. The later chapters (chapters X-XXXIV) are called “records” or “chronicles” (*ji* 記). They deal with matters posterior to the *bodhi* of the Buddha. Generally, *ji* is used alone when the chapter deals with a single event or a material object (statue, *śarīra*, stūpa, etc.). In contrast, *juanji* is used when the chapter deals with an evolutionary process. However, in several cases, the distinction between *ji* and *juanji* is not obvious. From the standpoint of the personal biography of Śākyamuni, the two main chapters of the *Shijiapu* are chapter IV (from the conception to the illumination) belonging to the *pu* category and chapter XXVII (Nirvāṇa) belonging to the *ji* category. The titles of the compilations of Sengyou may be abridged as *ji* (世界記, 薩婆多部記, 出藏記, 法苑記), but the *Shijiapu* always remains a *pu*.

2. Length and Content of the Chapters

The chapters vary considerably in length. Some of them are very short, two being no more than a few lines long. Others are rather long, covering five and more pages in the Taishō Canon edition. To this group belong the first version of chapter IV (on the first years of the Buddha): chapter IX (on the formation of the saṃgha): chapter XX (on the reception of Jetavana): chapter XXVII (on the *parinirvāṇa*): and chapter XXXI (on the building of 84, 000 stūpas by King Aśoka). But we reach a completely disproportionate length in the second version of chapter IV, which consists of five *juan* artificially introduced at the end of the first *juan* of the Taishō edition of the *Shijiapu*. The anomaly of the extreme length of the new version of chapter IV can be explained by the fact that the topic is precisely the unfolding of the Buddha’s first years, during which most of the “romance” of his life took place. At first

the *Shijiapu* had a rather loose chapter IV, based on the *Puyao jing* 普曜經 (“Sūtra of Universal Brilliance,” T. vol. 3, n° 186, 8 j.),³⁵ the old Chinese version of the *Lalitavistara* (early fourth century).³⁶ The oversized new chapter IV did not suppress its first version, but mixed into the same narrative the complete first version with an almost integral reproduction of the popular *Guoqu xianzai yinguojing* 過去現在因果經 (“Sūtra of the Causes and Effects from the Past to the Present,” T. vol. 3, n° 189, 4 j.), here abbreviated as *Yinguojing* 因果經. The result was that the massive, often repetitive, second version of chapter IV, became longer than the rest of the entire work (44 pages out of a total of 83), whereas the first version of chapter IV has been only five pages long. This, in particular, explains why the *Shijiapu* is described in the Catalogues of the Canon as a work either of five or of ten *juan*. The Taishō editors have combined, in two separate places,³⁷ the two editions of the *Shijiapu*, the first one in five *juan* issued around 502, and the second one in ten *juan* issued possibly around 515. The main difference between these two editions lies thus in the length of their chapter IV.

3. Order of the Chapters

The summary indications given already on the content of some chapters of the *Shijiapu* show that the compilation embraces the entire life of the Buddha at a time when, with the exception of poetical works like the *Buddhacarita*, scriptures were concerned either with the Bodhisattva’s early life until the time following his *bodhi* or with the events surrounding the *parinirvāṇa*. The sequence of the chapters and of the *juan* may be considered as

³⁵ An alternative title of this sūtra seems to have been the “Mahayanic (*vaiṣṭya*, *fang teng* 方等) Sūtra of the Original Rise of the Buddha (*Benqijing* 本起經).” On the meaning of *benqi*, as biography, especially in the case of the Buddha, see note 47.

³⁶ Later, in the Tang period, a new and more detailed version of the *Lalitavistara* (T. vol. 3, n° 187, 12 j.) was translated by Divākara.

³⁷ T. 1040, j. 1, pp. 4c–8c and pp. 13b–52a

more or less chronological. Different editions show modifications in the order of the chapters. The fact that in the second *juan*, chapters X-XIII³⁸ figure after chapters XIV-XVIII,³⁹ must be due to a question of monastic hierarchy. If we consider this genealogical work as centered on filial piety, the father, mother, and aunt-stepmother have to come first. Considering it from a monastic standpoint, however, the ordained brothers and cousins, Devadatta, Anuruddha and Bhadrīka, Saundarananda and Rāhula, the son of the Buddha, come first, according to the length of time since their ordination. An ordained bhikṣuṇī like the aunt-stepmother of the Buddha had to come after them.

4. *Multiple Variations Among the Sources Used*

The *Shijiapu* is an anthology of scriptural quotations. The source of the quotation is always mentioned under the title of the chapter. When we look at some of the chapters, especially the short ones, there is only one source used, but in several other cases, other sources often figure at the end of the chapter. They are sometimes printed in small characters. For the long chapters, many sources are used, with a *dosage* of texts produced by the mainstream “Śrāvaka” tradition and by Mahāyāna-sūtras. In those cases, it is the first quotation, generally of some length, which extends over the whole chapter. Its continuity is used as a “leit-motif” reference, as well as an emblematic source. Such is the case of the lengthy quotation of the Mahayanic *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* in chapter XXVII (on the *parinirvāṇa*). Although the quotations are often shortened, the general impression is that they are close to their texts of origin as we know them in modern editions like the Taishō Canon. There are cases where quotations could not be identified in the texts as we now know them, and that could be due to a loss in the modern editions. In other cases, there should have been shifts from one source to another, especially for what

³⁸ *Ibid.*, j. 2, pp. 58b–62c.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, j. 2, pp. 52b–58b.

regards some *Āgamas* and Aśoka-related texts. Only a few titles of texts quoted in the *Shijiapu* are unknown and could have since disappeared. Such texts are more numerous in the *Jinglüyixiang*.⁴⁰

The Crucial Chapter IV of the Shijiapu

I have so far pointed out a few methodological hints for a study of the sources of the Chinese compilations on the biography of the Buddha. A first step in this direction appears below in a case-study of use of sources in the *Shijiapu*. The case in question is the above-mentioned transformation of chapter IV dealing exclusively with events of the early life of the Buddha.

1. Contrast Between Chapter IV and the Immediately Preceding and Following Chapters

Let us first consider Sengyou's choice of texts in the first part of the *Shijiapu*. We have already observed that Sengyou is especially concerned, as indicated by the title of his work, with genealogy. For the documents connected to these problems, he compiled nine more or less "genealogical" chapters, three of them as prologue to the crucial narrative of chapter IV and the last five as descriptions of the connections existing between the Buddha Śākyamuni and other Buddhas, and of his relations with clan distinctions and with disciples. The first three chapters on the genealogy of the Buddha Śākyamuni are chapter I: his caste had been *kṣatriya* from the beginning of the *kalpas*; chapter II: his clan had been Gautama since the *Bhadrakalpa*; chapter III: his ancestors had been Śākya for the last six generations. The five last chapters of the first *juan* are chapter V: Śākyamuni is the last of the seven Buddhas; chapter VI: his similarity with the three thousand Buddhas; chapter

⁴⁰ See the recent posthumous study of Kawaguchi Gishō 川口義照, *Chūgoku Bukkyō ni okeru kyōroku kenkyū*, already referred to in note 15.

VII: the names of the clans and castes internal and external to the Śākya; chapter VIII: how the disciples belong to the Śākya clan; chapter IX: how the śrāvaka-disciples are divided into four groups related to the Buddhas of the past and to the disciples of Śākyamuni. Thus it is only chapter IV, in Sengyou's first and already extended version or in his new and over-extended version, that is strictly narrative. This chapter makes use of a great variety of sources.

2 *Discrepancy in the Chapter on the Youth of Śākyamuni:*

For one who reads first the old version of chapter IV containing a shortened version of the chapters of the *Puyaojing* dealing with the early years of the Buddha, and then reads the five sections (or scrolls in some editions) of the new version of chapter IV, which for the most part reproduce almost word-for-word the text of the *Yinguojing* (T. 189), the first impression is that these developed sections are all of approximately the same length. Although there is no separate title for each section, their content may be summarized as 1) the Buddha's descent from Tuṣita heaven, his conception and birth; 2) his youth; 3) his departure from the palace and his years of ascetic practice before his enlightenment; 4) his *bodhi* and first sermon; 5) the conversion of his first disciples and the subduing of his adversaries. One feels, thus, that a need for more detail regarding the different episodes may have led Sengyou to rely on the *Yinguojing*, in order to produce a translation of a more extended and well-balanced biography of the Buddha. The fact that the new text had been more recently translated than the *Puyaojing* probably made the *Yinguojing* more fashionable. In any case, as noted above, there was no suppression of the *Puyaojing*, but rather it was incorporated in segment within the new narrative.

Paradoxically, as I explained in another article,⁴¹ Sengyou remained

⁴¹ "The Birth of the Buddha in the Chinese Anthologies of the Early Sixth Century," forthcoming in the Acts of the Conference on the Birth of the Buddha, Lumbinī, October

faithful to the spirit of the *Puyaojing*, not only by incorporating its elements in the new chapter IV, but also by cutting from the *Yinguojing* its initial section, the tale of the Bodhisattva Chanhui 善慧, Sumedha (or Sumati) considered as an antecedent of the Buddha Śākyamuni. The opening section of the *Yinguojing*, consisting of the first three pages of the Taishō edition,⁴² tells a detailed story of Sumedha. As the earliest precursor of the Buddha in the remote time of the Buddha Dīpaṅkara, he received the prediction (*vyākaraṇa*) that he would be reborn again as the Buddha Śākyamuni in a distant future. We know that the Sumedha tale was not accepted in the *Lalitavistara* and *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya* traditions, which chose to emphasize on the Bodhisattva Siddhārtha's aristocratic affiliation. With the exception of the *Puyaojing* and the later *Lalitavistara* translation of the Tang period, a *Jātaka*-type "spiritual" or "ascetic" affiliation had been based on the Sumedha tale in most of the Lives of the Buddha translated into Chinese in the period before and after the Liang Dynasty. The *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya* is filled with *Jātaka* tales, but does not include Sumedha.⁴³ In Sanskrit, this Bodhisattva plays a minor role in the *Mahāvastu*⁴⁴ and in the *Divyāvadāna*,⁴⁵ but in the late Pāli tradition Sumedha's role is fundamental. The famous tale of the self-sacrifice of Sumedha was visibly intended to give a *pāramitā*-cum-self-sacrifice (pāli: *jīvita-pariccāga*) direction to a bodhisattva career in the Pāli *Nidānakathā*.⁴⁶ In what became the Theravāda orthodoxy, but already in the art of Gandhāra, of

2004.

⁴² T. 189, j. 1, pp. 620 c-623a.

⁴³ See Panglung, *Die Erzählstoffe des Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya Analysiert auf Grund der Tibetischen Uebersetzung*, Tokyo: The Reiyukai Library, 1981.

⁴⁴ Megha in Senart ed., *Mahāvastu*, vol. I, Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1882, pp. 231-248.

⁴⁵ Sumati in the Avadāna of Dharmaruci (chapter XVIII), Cowell/Neil ed. *Divyāvadāna*, Cambridge: University Press, 1886, pp. 246-253.

⁴⁶ *Sumedhakathā* in Fausbøel ed., *The Jātakas*, London: Trübner, 1877, pp. 2-16.

Central Asia and in the Chinese artistic and literary traditions, the Sumedha story was considered a distant “préfiguration” of the Buddha Śākyamuni’s career.

The Lives of the Buddha in the Chinese Canon Toward a Global Vision

I. The situation before Sengyou

The Triad of Early Biographical Sūtras

In other chapters, Sengyou makes use of Chinese translations of the Āgamas, Vinayas, and Mahāyāna-sūtras. But in both the old and the new version of chapter IV, Sengyou manifests a marked and almost exclusive preference for a few early translations already composed as “Lives of the Buddha” or *Benqi jing* 本起經,⁴⁷ which are now collected in the third and fourth volumes (*Hon-en bu* 本緣部) of the modern Taishō Canon.⁴⁸ They belong to two deeply interrelated groups much. The first group consists in A. the *Xiuxing benqijing* 修行本起經 (“Sūtra of the Practice in the Original Rise”: T. vol. 3, n° 184, 2 j.) and B. the already referred to *Taiziruiying benqijing* 太子瑞應本起經 (T. 185); and the second group is represented by C. the *Puyaojing* 普曜經 (T. 186). Together, they constitute the triad of early biographical sūtras. It is worth noting that, as we will see, some Catalogues of the Canon list the much later *Yinguojing* 因果經 (T. 189) with the two archaic biographies of the first group.

This association of the *Xiuxing*, the *Taiziruiying* and the *Yinguojing*

⁴⁷ *Benqi* 本起, literally “original rise” may be one of the several translations of the Sanskrit and Pāli *nidāna* which means cause (e.g. in the *Pratītyasamutpāda* with, in that case, the translation *yinyuan* 因緣), as well as of historical origin, and by extension, “biography” (e.g. in the *Nidānakathā*). *Benqi* is used especially for the biography of the Buddha. *Benxing* 本行 may be one of the translations of *avadāna*.

⁴⁸ See Hōbōgirin, *Répertoire du Canon bouddhique sino-japonais - Edition de Taishō*, Paris-Tokyo 1978, pp. 28-32.

results perhaps from the incertitudes regarding the chronology of the early translations of the Lives of the Buddha. For a long time, several of them had been considered as successive translations of the same original text. Such a presumption can be found in the Nanjō Catalogue,⁴⁹ reflecting the opinions of the Ming editors. Thus, Nanjō thought that not only the *Xiuxing benqijing* (T. 184, Nj. 664), a translation attributed to the Later Han period, and the *Taiziruiying benqijing* (T. 185, Nj. 665), a hybrid translation attributed (more safely than the preceding one) to the third century, were based on the same text, but he considered that it was also the case for the much later (middle of the fifth century) *Yinguojing* (T. 189, Nj. 666). Moreover, he thought that the *Yichu pusa benqijing* 異出菩薩本起經 (“Alternate Issue of the Sūtra of the Bodhisattva’s Original Rise,” T. vol. 3, n° 188, Nj. 509), assigned to the early fourth century and attributed to Nie Daozhen 聶道真, a pupil of Dharmarakṣa, was yet another version of the same original text. Dharmarakṣa’s translation of the *Puyaojing* (T. 186, Nj. 160) dated 308 was placed in a different group of the Nanjō Catalogue, listed in the company of the Tang version of the *Lalitavistara* (T. vol. 3, n° 187, Nj. 159).

It has already been referred to a more ancient theory assimilating the *Abhiṣkramaṇasūtra* or Romantic Legend (T. vol. 3, n° 190) to the *Mahāvastu*, the *Lalitavistara*, etc. Theories about connections between various Lives of the Buddha have flourished. Some have been rejected since long ago, but more attention has to be given to the overlaps existing among the early *Benqi jing*. A reappraisal of the early Chinese translations in the Buddhist Canon is taking place. An innovative approach has been launched by Matsuda Yūko’s short article,⁵⁰ proposing a schema for the relations between the Lives belonging to the above-mentioned triad and between their translators: T. 184 (Kang

⁴⁹ B. Nanjio, *Catalogue of the Chinese Translations of the Buddhist Tripiṭaka*, Oxford, 1883.

⁵⁰ See *supra* note 29.

Mongxiang 康孟詳), T. 185 (Zhi Qian 支謙), T. 186 (Dharmarakṣa, Zhu Fahou 竺法護). To the triad has to be added the *Yichu pusa benqijing* (T. 188), attributed to Nie Daozhen 聶道真, but not used by Sengyou. As Matsuda remained attached to the traditional chronology of these texts, she had to postulate the existence of two unknown works in order to explain the frequent overlapping between these Lives of the Buddha.

Through an analysis of the early Catalogues of the scriptures, Antonello Palumbo,⁵¹ whose research has inspired me here, has recently almost inversed the dates of the two texts that were placed at the beginning and at the end of the succession. Under discussion are the dates of T. 184, whose antiquity is dubious, and of T. 188, a work already considered by Zürcher as being older than its attribution to a pupil of Dharmarakṣa. The nine chapters of the *Xiuxing benqijing* (T. 184), a beautiful narrative about the youth of the Buddha, have benefited from their closedness to the collected fifteen chapters on the preaching career of the Buddha constituting the *Zhong benqijing* 中本起經 (“The Middle Sūtra of the Original Rise,” T. vol. 4, no 196, 2 j.). These chapters, representing another archaic translation attributed to Kang Mongxiang, record the early apostolate of the Buddha. Their antiquity seems better warranted than the antiquity of T. 184. An observation, pointed out by Palumbo, from the authoritative Catalogue of Daoan considering this text as “a recent Southern facture, which develops a small *benqi*”⁵² weighs heavily among

⁵¹ “Dharmarakṣa and Kaṅṭhaka: The origins of the White Horse Monasteries in Early Medieval China” in Giovanni Verardi and Silvio Vita, eds., *Buddhist Asia I: Papers from the First Conference of Buddhist Studies Held in Naples in May 2001*. Kyōto: Italian School of East Asian Studies, 2003, p. 203. Palumbo objects to the dating proposed for T. 184 by Erik Zürcher, in several publications since his *The Buddhist Conquest of China*, Leiden: Brill, 1959, p. 32. Zürcher translated T. 184 and T. 196 into Dutch: *Het Leven van de Boeddha: Xiuxing benqi jing & Zhong benqi jing Vertaald uit de vroegste Chinese overlevering*. Amsterdam, Meulenhoff, 1978.

⁵² T. 2145, j. 3, p.16c8: 南方近出。直益小本起耳。

the suspicions about T. 184. The case of T. 188 seems to be opposite. More than two centuries after Daoan, the often unauthoritative compilation of historical and bibliographical data by Fei Zhangfang 費長房, the already referred to *Lidaisanbaoji* 歷代三寶紀 (dated 597), attributed the *Yichu pusa benqijing* (T. 188) and numerous other works to a Nie Daozhen, whose activity is uncertain. Internal evidence shows that T. 188 could have been more archaic and that it could have influenced both T. 185 and T. 186. Finally, after the critical work of Matsuda and Palumbo, there is the probability that the *Taiziruiying benqijing* (T. 185) is Chinese patchwork, for which, as Matsuda notes, it is doubtful that there was ever a Sanskrit original in the same format. Sengyou made extensive use of this text⁵³ and of the *Puyaojing* (T. 186)⁵⁴ where the Sanskrit original is more apparent

One of the interesting aspects regarding Sengyou is his place at a still comparatively ancient stage of the formation of the Scriptures. His attempt at putting in order the Buddha's legend predates the material that dominates the present stage of knowledge of the legendary biography of the Buddha. Since the Tang period, studies on the youth of the Buddha have been much indebted to two extensive biographies of the Buddha—*Fobenxingjijing* 佛本行集經 (T. vol. 3, n° 190, 60 j., dated 587-591), the “Romantic legend” already mentioned, and *Fangguang dazhuangyanjing* 方廣大莊嚴經 (“Developed [*vaipulya*] Sūtra of Great Majesty, T. vol. 3, n° 187, 12 j.), the Tang version of the *Lalitavistara*.—A very rich source has also been the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*, known in Chinese only through Yijing in the early eighth century. For the narrative of the *parinirvāṇa*, a compilation called *Dabanniepanjing houfen* 大般涅槃經後分 (“Posterior Section of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, T. vol. 12, n° 377,

⁵³ There are seven quotations from the *Taiziruiyingbenqijing* (T.185) in the first version of chapter IV and sixteen in its second version.

⁵⁴ T. 186 was the basic sūtra of the first version of chapter IV. There are eighteen quotations from it in its second version.

2 j., dated 664–665) has enjoyed large diffusion.

II. Global Approach to the Biography of the Buddha

The earlier Lives of the Buddha, including the *Yinguojing*, which have been used in the two chapters IV do not include an account of the *parinirvāna*. Above, in the remarks about *pu* and *ji*, I pointed out that chapters IV and XXVII were the two chapters constituting the strictly biographical structure of the *Shijiapu*. Chapter IV was successively based on the *Puyaojing* and the *Yinguojing*. Chapter XXVII (which will be the object of a separate study) followed the Mahayanic *Mahāparinirvānasūtra*, with massive additions of Agamic texts and of the *Sūtra of Mahāmāyā* (T. vol. 12, no 383).

Chapters X-XXXIV of the *Shijiapu* describe many events that occurred after the Buddha's enlightenment, but, except for the *parinirvāna*-related chapter XXVII, they do not follow a narrative sequence. With the exception of a few *sūtras*⁵⁵ that select a few events of the preaching life of the Buddha, there was no structured antecedent for such a sequence. Ending a Life of the Buddha with the *bodhi* or events following closely the *bodhi* remained a common feature of all the usual "Lives of the Buddha," including the late *Fo benxing jijing* (T. 190) and the Tang *Lalitavistara* (T. 187). It seems that in India, as in China, it was only with compositions of the epic type, such as Aśvaghōṣa's *Buddhacarita* and the three *Buddhacarita*-related compositions extant in Chinese, two poetical works (T. 192 and T. 193)⁵⁶ and a moralising

⁵⁵ *Shieryoujing* 十二遊經 ("Sūtra of the twelve events," T. vol. 4, n° 195), translated by Kālodaka 迦留陀伽. and the already mentioned *Zhongbenqijing* 中本起經 (T. vol. 4, n° 196, 2 j.) translation attributed to Dharmaphala? (Tanguo 曇果) and Kang Mongxiang 康孟詳.

⁵⁶ *Fosuoxingzan* 佛所行讚 "Buddhacarita" (T. vol. 4, n° 192, 5 j.) is the *kāvya* of Aśvaghōṣa (Maming 馬鳴); translated by Dharmakṣema (Tanwuchen 曇無讖), and *Fo benxingjing* 佛本行經 "Buddha-avadāna" (T. vol. 4, n° 193, 7 j.) of Baoyun 寶雲 is perhaps more a paraphrase than a translation. T. 192 was translated by S. Beal in the

treatise (T. 194)⁵⁷ that it became possible to embrace the entire career of the Buddha, including the fate of his relics.

The global approach put out by Sengyou at a rather early period of the elaboration of the Buddha legend required an enormous effort in collecting sources of extremely different origins. The complexity, shown above, of the use of the archaic biographies of the Buddha is only a small part of the problem, and it concerns mostly chapter IV and the early years of the Buddha's life. Sengyou still had to select texts, not only from the Agamic and Vinaya traditions, but also from the collections of tales (*Jātakas* and *Avadānas*), which fill a large part of the present *Hon-en bu* of the Taishō Canon, and which must have been considered close to what we call "canonic" texts, i. e. the Āgamas and the Vinayas. This might be compared the Jātaka, Apadāna, Dhammapada and Udāna, which are all parts of the *Khuddhakanikāya* in the Pāli *Tiṭṭaka*. Moreover, and this was probably his main concern, Sengyou had to incorporate in his anthological biography multiple elements, coming from Mahayanic scriptures. We also have to take into account that making a quotation constituted a way of giving authority to the quoted text.

A special study⁵⁸ has to be devoted to the analysis of the sources used by Sengyou in the *Shijiapu* and to compare them with those used at the same time by Baochang in the corresponding parts of the *Jinglüyixiang*. It is only after

Collection of the *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. XIX (1879) with the name of the translator reconstituted in Dharmarakṣa. It is only T.192 which is referred to in the *Shijiapu*.

⁵⁷ *Sengqieluocha suojijing* 僧伽羅刹所集經, "Collected sūtras of Saṃgha-rakṣa." (T. vol. 4, n° 194, 3 j.) translated by Saṃghabhadra 僧伽跋澄, etc. Saṃgharakṣa, the author of T. 194 is perhaps a Kuṣāṇa writer anterior to Aśvaghōṣa. The Chinese translation of T. 194 by Saṃghabhadra predates the Chinese translation of the *kāvya* of Aśvaghōṣa. In this moralising work, the biographical sketch on the Buddha (youth and *parinirvāṇa* in two different parts) plays a rather marginal role.

⁵⁸ H. Durt, "On the selection of Episodes and of Sources related to the life of the Buddha in the Chinese Buddhist Anthologies of the early 6th century," forthcoming in the *Acts of the Symposium "The Life of the Buddha: New Directions in Research"*.

such an analysis that we may come to know what is new in these anthologies and which developments of the Buddha legend appeared in China in later ages.

III. The Posterity of the *Shijiapu*

As noted above, the *Shijiapu* was not the only attempt during the Liang period to craft a comprehensive biography of the Buddha. The voluminous Buddhist encyclopedia *Jinglüyixiang*, edited by Sengyou's disciple Baochang, includes material on the biography of the Buddha. Some of this material was close, and probably inherited, from the *Shijiapu*, but much is very different. I may only allude to the scarcity in the *Shijiapu* of texts on the active life of the Buddha and, in the same anthology, to the almost complete absence of texts on his sufferings.⁵⁹ Both traditions are well represented in the *Jinglüyixiang*, not only in its Section on the Buddha (佛部, scrolls 4-7), but also in almost all the other parts of the encyclopedia, especially in the scrolls 13-23 devoted to the *śrāvakas*. Two well-known enterprises of the early Tang period were mentioned above: the condensed version of the *Shijiapu* by Daoxuan and the *Fayuanzhulin* by Daoji, a disciple of Daoxuan. The latter was an encyclopedia on a scale still larger than the *Jinglüyixiang* and probably closer in spirit to the lost *Fayuanji*.

After the great changes of the Mid-Tang period, in the new ages of Chinese Buddhism, the interests of Buddhist scholars turned toward large compilations about the history of the Saṃgha. I will not mention here these

⁵⁹ The tradition on the sufferings of the Buddha is connected with his "auto-confession" at the Council of Lake Anavatapta. It is represented by the *Xingqixingjing* 興起行經 "Sūtra of the Rising Action" (T. vol. 4, n° 197, 2 j.), attributed erroneously to Kang Mongxiang 康孟詳, and by *Fowubaidizi zishuo ben qi jing* 佛五百弟子自說本起經 "Sūtra of auto-biographies by the Buddha and his five hundred disciples" (T. vol. 4, n° 199), attributed to Dharmarakṣa. The Council of Lake Anavatapta is not mentioned in the *Shijiapu*.

works, which, from the Song period, had to start their survey with an outline about the life of the Buddha and thus enter into the lineage of the *Shijiapu*.

Another connected phenomenon had a more popular character. In India (Bhārhut, Sāñcī) and probably also in China, artistic representations of episodes of the life of the Buddha predated the first written biographies of the Buddha. In Chinese painting and sculpture, there is an uninterrupted tradition of representing events in the life of the Buddha. In Japan, the first illustrated scroll is based precisely on the *Yinguojing*, the biography of the Buddha that was so highly considered by Sengyou that its text was reproduced almost in its entirety in the second version of chapter IV of the *Shijiapu*. With the invention of the book-printing, illustrated anthologies on the life of the Buddha enjoyed a success that has been studied by Emmanuelle Lesbre.⁶⁰ The printed Lives of the Buddha consisted in books divided into more than two hundred short chapters reproducing quotations synoptically, wherein the influence of the selection of the *Shijiapu* is visible, and block-printed illustrations. These books were introduced in the Western world by Léon Wiegier's pioneering edition.⁶¹ They are now the object of numerous reprints in China. Since the Ming period, one may detect their influence on the wall paintings of Chinese Buddhist temples.⁶²

⁶⁰ Emmanuelle Lesbre, "Une vie illustrée du Buddha (*Shishi yuanliu* [釈氏源流], 1425), modèle pour les peintures murales d'un monastère du xv^e s. (Jueyuan si, Sichuan oriental)," *Arts Asiatiques* 57 (2002), pp. 69–101. In a large concordance (pp. 89–96) Lesbre has attempted to identify the scriptural origin of the 207 scenes illustrated of the Sichuanese monastery she studied.

⁶¹ Léon Wiegier, *Les vies chinoises du Buddha*, coll. Bouddhisme, tome II, Hokienfou 1913, repr. Cathasia / Brill 1951 [based on the *Shijia rulai yinghua lu* 釋迦如来應化錄]. Wiegier does not indicate the date of the edition he used. The order of the chapters differs from the *shiji* 事迹 of 1869, although the illustrations (208 episodes, some of them doubled) are identical. Concerning the illustrations, Wiegier refers (p.279) to an "1808 [prince "U-fong" 裕豐]" edition, which seems to have been reproduced in Yangzhou in 1897.

Conclusion

If we try to reconstitute the different stages of the biography of the Buddha, a thorough analysis of the *Shijiapu* is a necessity because, in China and in the Far East, this anthology was the first step toward producing a more or less coherent and complete account of the life of the Buddha. To use a Germanic expression, with his compilations, Sengyou has established the constitution of a “tradition of transmission” (*überlieferungstradition*).⁶³ Through a few glimpses at the *Shijiapu*, I have tried to show how, when collecting some pieces of the legendary existence of Śākyamuni, a hero from a distant country in a remote past, Sengyou mirrored also the knowledge and trends of his time, the early sixth century A. D. Even if in his anthology, Sengyou is merely selecting as sources a number of texts, most of which are still extant to-day in their original and complete state. His approach and his choices have revealed an embryo of the critical stage in the highly evolutionary process of understanding the life of the Buddha. The development in the analysis of the life of the Buddha has never stopped. In sparsely but influential articles where he has dealt with questions related to the Buddha, Professor Hara has contributed to this process.

I wish to thank Dr Catherine Ludvik for her help in revising the English version of this article.

⁶² Mu Xue-yong 母學勇, ed. [and main author], “The Mural Paintings on the Life of the Buddha in the Ming Period Jueyuan *si* of Jiange” 劍閣覺苑寺明代佛傳壁畫, Peking: Wenwu, 1993.

⁶³ H. Schmidt-Glintzer, *Die Identität der Buddhistischen Schulen und die Kompilation Buddhistischer Universalgeschichten in China*, Münchener Ostasiatische Studien, Bd. 26, Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1982, p. 27:

Abbreviations

BEFEO = Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient

IBK = Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū 印度学仏教学研究

JICABS = Journal of the International College for Postgraduate Buddhist Studies

T = Taishō shinshū Daizōkyō 大正新修大藏經, ed. by Takusu J. and Watanabe K., Tōkyō 1928.

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