

THE LIFE OF NĀGĀRJUNA FROM TIBETAN AND
CHINESE SOURCES

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I. Tibetan Sources

The systematic development of the thought of voidness laid down in the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras*¹ is brought into junction with the name of a man of whom we cannot even positively say that he has really existed, still less that he is the author of the works ascribed to him: this name is Nāgārjuna. Indeed, we do not lack news about him either in Tibetan or in Chinese literature. Correspondingly to the extraordinary significance which the "*Middle Course Teaching*" ascribed to his ingeniousness has gained in the countries of the so-called Northern Buddhism, the interest in his person is uncommonly great. But this interest is displayed more by the invention of legendary traits than in the research of historical facts which are undoubtedly hidden behind the older accounts of the origin of the Mahāyāna.

The respective reports of the Tibetan sources are specially detailed. Here Nāgārjuna appears to us above all as the great sorcerer, a figure into which he has been changed seemingly under the influence of the Tantra-school that became from the ninth century more and more influential. As a sorcerer he is glorified in the text *Grub-thob brgyad-cu-rtsa-bshihi rnam-thar*² rendered recently into German by A. Grünwedel under the title "*Die Ge-*

¹ See my "*Prajñāpāramitā, die Vollkommenheit der Erkenntnis*" (Quellen der Religionsgeschichte, ed. by authority of the religio-histor. Commission of the Royal Society of Sciences at Göttingen), 1914.

² *Tanjur rgyud* (edition of s Nar-thang), vol. 86 (lu), f. 1—34 b. See Grünwedel l. c. p. 138; P. Cordier, *Catalogue du Fonds tibétain de la Bibl. Nat.* 2e partie Paris, 1909, p. 230 et seq.

*schichte der 84 Zauberer (Mahāsiddhas)*¹ and which refers back to an unknown Sanskrit original². In the same sense and in similar connection he is mentioned in the *dPag-bsam-ljon-bzan* of *Sum-pa mkhan-po ye-ces dpal-hbyor* p. 121 et seq. According to this, Nāgārjuna who had sprung from a Brahmin caste is said to have received the magic powers (*siddhi*) from the Tārā during his stay at Kahora, a part of Kāñcī (of to-day Conjeevaram) in Eastern India, thereupon to have gone away at a time of general distress, after having surrendered all his possessions in favour of the Brahmins of Kahora and to have proceeded over the Śitavana (near Rājagṛha) to Nālanda where he became a monk and attained the zenith of his knowledge in the five sciences. Hereupon, from aversion to preaching he enchanted the Tārā and beheld her countenance. When also here accommodation and food became short, he returned to his native soil, went later again to Rājagṛha where he remained twelve years, then to mount Ghaṇṭāśaila and herefrom to the Śrīparvata in the south where he spent the rest of his long life.

Particulars are to be found in this connection on his relations with Śālabhadra³ transformed by him into a king from an Ābhīra (ba-glañ-rdsi). If there be a confusion, as I presume, with the South-Indian king Śātavāhana⁴ who is often brought also in other accounts in connection with Nāgārjuna, that much may perhaps be taken from the legendary report of the Grub-thob that this personality represents the founder of the Śātavāhana Dynasty and not one of his successors all of whom have this name at least as surname. As the life of Nāgārjuna has been, according to these legends, a chain of magical

¹ *Baessler-Archiv, Beiträge zur Völkerkunde*. Vol. V, fasc. 4/5 (Leipzig, 1916) p. 161.

² In the *dPag-bsam-ljon-bzang*, ed. by Śrī Candra Dās (Calcutta 1908) it is mentioned on p. 131 that the author was one of the pupils of Vajrāsana (rdo-rje gdan-pa). According to p. 119 of the same text Vajrāsana was the spiritual teacher of Rājā Nayapāla of Bengal under whose reign Atīśa left the Vikramaśīla monastery in Magadha (1042 A. D., see V. A. Smith, *Early History of India*. 2nd ed., 1908, p. 368), in order to work in Tibet for the propagation of Buddhism.—Nayapāla ascended the throne 1030—1033 A. D., see *Journal As. Soc. Bengal* 1900 (vol. 69), p. 190.

³ Grünwedel, *l. c.* renders the name by Śālabhāṇḍa.

⁴ See Huber, *Bulletin de l'Ecole franç. d'Extr.-Orient* 1906 VI; Max Müller, *Journal Pali Text Soc.* 1883 p. 72; Takakusu, *I-tsing* p. 159.

adventures, so also his death: God Brahman transformed himself into a *Brāhmaṇa*, asked for the Ācārya's head and obtained it as the Ācārya himself promised to give it. He killed himself by cutting-off his head with a blade of *kuśa*.

Much more detailed than this legendary account which indirectly goes back to Indian sources and which thereby in spite of many historically impossible details deserves attention, are the equally legendary reports which Śrī Candra Dās has published in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, vol. 51, Part 1 (1882), p. 115. Unfortunately he has neglected to mention his sources so that one may presume that he has thrown the various traditions together and thereby rendered the already confused tradition more contradictory and untenable still than it may have been by the separate accounts.

His very information about the time of Nāgārjuna's¹ birth should be met with the greatest doubt when referring to the rendering of the Tibetan sources. Tāranātha's "*Geschichte des Buddhismus in Indien*" (*rgya-gar chos-hbyun*) on p. 54 of the Tibetan text, p. 68 of the German translation agrees with *Sum-pa mkhan-po ye-ces dpal-hbyor*'s historical work *dPag-bsam-ljon bzan* p. 84 in so far as Nāgārjuna is supposed to have appeared in the country of Bhaṅgala only after the presence of king Haricandra, the first of the *Candra* family, Śrī-Saraha or Rāhula having been contemporary with him. It must however be stated this chronological statement of our Tibetan sources is most doubtful, as it is not possible to identify that Candra prince with Sandrokottos, the contemporary of Alexander the Great, but on the other hand the founder of the *Gupta* Dynasty which began 308 A. D.² can well be placed hundred years after Nāgārjuna. In this case Nāgārjuna must have lived in the third century A. D. which is not unlikely having regard to other reports of his co-existence with the kings Kaniṣka and Śātavāhana. Candra Dās would like to identify the above mentioned Candra-gupta with the founder of the *Maurya* Dynasty and proposes to

¹ *L. c.* p. 115: "According to the Tibetan historians who wrote on the authority of Indian histories, he was born a century before Candra Gupta's accession to the throne of Magadha."

² See V. A. Smith, *Early History of India*. 2nd ed. p. 265.

place Nāgārjuna's life more than a century after Alexander's invasion of India, whilst thus altering his own informations. He must however admit that there can be no certainty about Nāgārjuna's time as long as we cannot obtain possession of the Indian historians of Buddhist time¹.

It has to be agreed even to-day that an exact fixing of Nāgārjuna's lifetime must remain entirely doubtful having regard to the contradictory nature of the tradition, always supposing that a writer of this name has existed at all.

The life of Nāgārjuna according to Śrī Candra Dās' reports may be summed up in the following manner. He was born in the land of Vidarbha² as the son of a wealthy Brahman who had remained childless for many years. Astrologers were called to investigate the child's fate, but they found that the child could only have a span of seven years. Before the end of the seventh year his parents sent him by a servant to a secluded place in order to be spared the painful sight of the predicted death. Here the Mahābodhisattva Avalokiteśvara Khasarpaṇa visited him in disguise and counselled him to repair to the large monastery Nāleन्द्रa in Magadha, and the child responded. At the suggestion of the High Priest of Nāleन्द्रa, Śrī Saraha Bhadra, he became a monk, and he succeeded by special veneration of the Buddha Aparimitāyuh—apparently the same to whom the *Aparimitāyur-dhāraṇī*³ is addressed—to escape death at the fateful moment. The next years were devoted to religious studies; later his enchantment of the Goddess Chaṇḍikā by whose aid the numerous priests were provided with food, plays a considerable rôle. But in various other magical ways he obtained their means of livelihood. He contradicted the doctrines of the Brahmans and taught the monks of Nāleन्द्रa. The Nāgas used to attend his sermons in the form of young boys. Their participation at his instruction was so large that they invited him to their dwelling place where he resided three months. They begged him to take up his permanent domicile in the domain of the Nāgas which

he declined saying that he had to propagate the holy doctrine at Jambudvīpa. When leaving he promised to return some time to them. He went back to Nāleन्द्रa with costly presents, with jewels of immense value, and with the religious work called the *Nāgasāhasrikā*. On account of his connections with the Nāgas he received the name of "Nāgārjuna". Other travels took him to the land of Rāḍhā where he founded many chapels and Caityas, to Uttarakuru into the town of Salama or Salamana, where he predicted a boy called Jetaka that he would once become a king which after three months really took place. After the death of the Saraha Bhadra he became in his stead High Priest at Nāleन्द्रa and brought to maturity the *Mādhyamika*-philosophy which had only been sketched by his teacher Saraha.

Although he was the head of the now spreading *Mahāyāna* sect, he also troubled about the well-being of the Śrāvakas or the followers of the Hīnayāna as the older doctrine was henceforth called. In his own community he introduced sharp discipline and expelled 8000 monks whose moral purity was suspected.

By these means he became the acknowledged head of the whole Buddhist church. At that time the germ of a third division among his followers became visible which later led to the formation of the *Yogācāra* School. Under Nāgārjuna's patriarchate Nāleन्द्रa flourished more and more and soon obscured entirely the splendour of Vajrāsana (Buddhagayā), the main seat of the followers of the "lower vehicle" (*Hīnayāna*). The kings Muñja of Oṭiṣa (Orissa) and king Bhojadeva of Dhāra in Malva were converted with thousands of their subjects to Buddhism under Nāgārjuna's influence who composed many works on the *Mādhyamika* Philosophy, such as the *Mūla-jñāna*¹, the sixth collection of knowledge², the *Dharma-dhātu-stotra*, the *Sūtra-saṅgraha*. In the later part of his life Nāgārjuna visited Dakṣiṇāpātha (Southern India) where he became a friend of king dGe-byed (Śaṅkara). By a common vow they were united to life and death. Nāgārjuna's

¹ I. e. The *Mādhyamika-kārikā*. See M. Walleser, *Buddhist. Philosophie in ihrer geschichtl. Entwicklung*, Teil II u. III.

² Sixth assemblage of *vidyā*. Should there not be a confusion with the *Yukti-ṣaṣṭikam*, the "Sixty Arguments" which is generally called the second of Nāgārjuna's five "Collections of Rules"? (See Wassiljew's note on p. 302 of Schiefner's translation of Tāranātha.)

¹ L. c. p. 115.

² Now called: Berar.

³ See *Aparimitāyur-jñāna-nāma-mahāyāna-sūtram*, ed. by M. Walleser, *Sitzungsberichte der Akad. der Wiss. Heidelberg*, 1916.

long life was thus communicated to the king whose last born son—his elder brothers having preceded him in death—obtained the sovereignty by making Nāgārjuna consent to his own death. Thereupon the prince severed the holy man's head by a stroke with a *Kuśa*-blade from the body.

As stated, Śrī Candra Dās has omitted to mention the sources for this account of the life of Nāgārjuna, but they may have been taken for a part from the *Dub-thah-sel-kyi-me-loñ* from which the other texts in the article are for the greater part derived¹. Details are also to be found in Tāranātha's historical works: "*History of Buddhism in India*" (*rgya-gar chos-hbyun*) and the "*Book of the Seven Revelations*" (*bkah-babs-bdun-ldan*). Both supplement each other, as Tāranātha refers in the "*History of Buddhism*" which was published later² on p. 58 of the Tibetan text, p. 73 of the German translation to the history of Nāgārjuna's life contained in the earlier work. It would not be correct to assume that both texts contain an unbroken presentation of Nāgārjuna's life, for they clearly go back to different sources. The earlier work is based on the tradition of the Tantras chools whilst the later one rests upon almost purely historical works such as those of the Tibetan *Bu-ston*.

But how did the life of Nāgārjuna pass according to the older of Tāranātha's two mentioned works? The Tibetan text (p. 2 et seq.) reports as follows³:

Nāgārjuna, a pupil of Rāhula⁴, was born at Vaidarbha in the South. By descent he was a Brahman. Immediately after his birth the astrologers foretold that, if hundred monks (*bhikṣu*), hundred Brahmans and hundred common people would be invited to the feast⁵, he then would live seven years, seven months and

¹ For this text see *Journal As. Soc. Bengal*, vol. L, p. 187, note 1.

² According to Śrī Candra Dās, *bkah-babs-bdun-ldan*, Introd. p. II, 1607 A. D.

³ See Tāranātha's *Edelsteinmine, das Buch von den Vermittlern der sieben Inspirationen*. Übersetzt von A. Grünwedel (*Bibliotheca Buddhica*, St. P.), p. 12 et seq.

⁴ According to the same tib. text, p. 2 from above, his teachers in ascending line were: Sthavira Kṛṣṇa (*gnas-brian nag-po*), Bhadanta Aśvaghōṣa (*bsun-pa rta-skad*), Upagupta (*ñer-sbas*).

⁵ According to the above mentioned account of Śrī Candra Dās, this invitation took place before the birth of the child after the father who had remained childless for many years had had the vision that he would only get a son if he made a present to one hundred Brahmans and treated them festively.

seven days; a longer span of life would not be possible. His parents thereupon acted in the following manner. When the given time was about to end they sent the boy on a journey to other places, until he arrived at Nālanda; the Ācārya (*mkhan-po*) Rāhula said, if he would murmur the Mantra of the immeasurable life (*aparimitāyur-dhāraṇī*) he would have a long (properly "good") life. Thus he entered the holy order and learned the *Piṭakas* of the great and little Vehicles (*yāna*) and all sciences. Then he attained the charms (*siddhi*) of Mahā-mayūrī¹, of Kurukullā², of the nine Yakṣiṇīs, of Mahā-kāla, besides many charms (*siddhi*) such as those of the beads, of the eye-medicine, of the sword, of the swiftness of foot, of the elixir of life, of the treasure finding, of the complete destruction, of the restoration³. Non-beings such as Yakṣas and Nāgas were subdued to him. Especially after having attained the elixir of life he received a diamond body⁴, he is also said to have become efficient in magic powers (*yddhi*) and clairvoyance (*abhijñā*).

Further it is told how Nāgārjuna obtained all sorts of Siddhi (charms), how he made essence of gold at the outbreak of a famine and exchanged the grains of gold for corn in far-off countries free from famine and thus provided the community (*saṅgha*) with means of subsistence. In vain had the Ācārya Rāhula-bhadra tried to magically produce rain by conjuring Tārā; when he saw at the end of twelve years the fields still desolate, he believed this was due the little compassion which Nāgārjuna showed towards living beings and which he thought in contradiction with the conduct of a Bodhisattva. Therefore he imposed upon him as penance the establishment of 108 monasteries (*vihāra*), 1000 temples and 10,000 Caityas. As Nāgārjuna saw that this was impossible for a single *Bhikṣu*, he sent for gold as building material by *Yakṣas* from Jambhala; being obliged to get Nāgas as workmen, he thought it was necessary to put confidence into the Nāgas, so he called by the Mantra of the Kurukullā the daughter of the

¹ One of the five tutelary goddesses.

² One of the goddesses associated with Kuvera, the deity of riches.

³ See Wassiljew's note in Schiefner's German translation of *Tāranātha* p. 304 to p. 73, l. 25.

⁴ I read *hgyur* instead of *rgyur* p. 3, l. 9.

Nāga King Takṣaka with her suite. When two women with their large suite appeared to listen to the sermon of the law (*dharma*) at the community (*saṅgha*), the place became filled by a profuse scent of sandal wood, and when they had left again that scent also vanished. This took often place. When he was asked: "What is there?" they replied: "We are the daughters of the Nāga Takṣaka. In order to protect ourselves from pollution by men we are covered by dust of the best sandal wood." He then wanted to make a statue of the Tārā from such sandal wood, and for this purpose the supply of sandal wood was necessary. "Although you are required, he said, for the building of my *Vihāra* and *Caitya*, yet you must say so to your father and come again." Then the two said to each other: "If the Ācārya himself will come to the Nāga country, verbal instructions will be given by the Nāga king; it cannot be achieved otherwise." Seeing great advantage in providing the *Satasahasrikā-prajñāpāramitā* for Nāgas and men, he proceeded to the country of the serpents (*nāga*).

It is told in some stories that he was a *Bhikṣu* who had seen the face of the past Buddhas, Kāśyapa, Kanakamuni, etc. As one thus can say of him that he had seen great things in another incarnation, he became great himself. Many Arhats of the teaching of the Bhagavat Sākyamuni who lived in this sanctuary of the Nāgas asked him: We are Arhats, but you are a man affected with the three poisons¹. Why do you not suffer from the poison of the Nāgas? Then he replied: I have found the spell of the Mahā-mayūrī.

Some other story relates: When he had told them after the announcement of Buddha that all things (*dharma*) were established as incorporeal while most *Bhikṣus* on earth contested this, he asked them: How then do you consider this yourself? Is the real existence (*svabhāva*) of things (*dharma*) your view? He likewise told them that Buddha had prophesied that later there would be but few *Bhikṣus* affected with this not freed (properly "dependent", *dmigs-pa*) view and that the *Madhyamaka*-conceptions ought [not] to exist².

¹ *Dveṣa* (aversion), *lobha* (avidity), *moha* (delusion).

² *Dbu-ma-pa-rnams-kyis bcos-pa min-na ruñ-ño*. The translation is doubtful.

He remained there a long time announcing the law (*dharma*) to the Nāgas. He procured the complete *Prajñāpāramitā*, *Dhāraṇīs* and many works of logic¹.

When it is said that some of the verses (*pāda*) of the *Satasahasrikā-prajñā* had not been communicated by the Nāgas, as—so it was told—the time was not yet fulfilled, when enemies of the good law (*sad-dharma*) would arise three times, the last ones were indeed announced (by Buddha)², but three chapters of the Chinese *Satasahasrikā-prajñāpāramitā* are taken from the one of twenty thousand (*Slokas*)³.

Then he came again to the surface of the earth. He now began many text books (*śāstra*) such as the collections of law⁴, etc. *Bhikṣu* Śaṅkara and all others who hated the *Mahāyāna* were refuted by him in dispute. But when the enquiries made by *Bhikṣu* Sendhapa⁵ and many other discussions appeared opposing the *Mahāyāna*, he collected all copies (*dpe*?) and hid them under the earth.

Contending again in the South in the Town called Jaṭāsaṅghāta⁶ against five hundred *Tīrthikas*, he subjected them to his doctrine. In this way he erected a temple and a *Caitya*; the *Caitya* built by the Ācārya was to be seen from all directions. Thus he made the teaching of the *Mahāyāna* shine like the sun.

Many mountains like the Bell-rock (*ghaṇṭāsaila*) and in the north the Dhiṅkoṭa he wanted to turn to gold, but the venerable Tārā prevented him from it saying there would be a fight for it one day. However it is reported that many gold mines came into existence, or at least that the stones were turned to golden colour.

¹ *gzunṣ dan rlog-pahi rigs du-ma spyan-drañs*.

² *Phyi-ma-dag gsuñ, hbum rgya-nag-pahi shabs-kyi lehu gsum ni ñi-khri-nas drañs-paho*.

³ Sanskrit *Pañca-viṃśati-sahasrikā-prajñāpāramitā*. Grünwedel (perhaps from Jaeschke), "P. in twenty-eight thousand *Slokas*".

⁴ *Rig-tshogs-la sogs-pahi bstan-bcos kyañ mañ-ñu brtsams*. Grünwedel: "Er arbeitete dann viel an ketzerischen Handbüchern, z. B. den zur Veda-Klasse gehörigen." No doubt *rig-tshogs* is synonymous with *rigs-pahi tshogs-sde*, the five fundamental works on the *Madhyamaka* doctrine which are ascribed to Nāgārjuna. See Wassiljew in Schiefner's translation of *Tāra nātha*, German edition p. 302 (to p. 71, l. 26), *dPag-bsam ljon-bzañ*, p. 47 below.

⁵ One may have to translate: *Bhikṣu* from the Indus region (*saindhava*) instead of *Bhikṣu* *Sendhapa* or *Sendhava*.

⁶ But comp. Grünwedel's note *ibid.* on p. 17, n. 2.

When he was on his way one day and found many children at play, he prophesied that one of them would become a king; then he proceeded to the Uttarakurus in the north; in another part of the world (*dvīpa*) and in the abode of the inhuman beings (*amanusya*) he remained twelve years. On his return to Jambudvīpa that former child was king by the name of Sadvāhana¹. He showed reverence to the Ācārya. Later the king obtained, having followed the advice of the Ācārya, the elixir of life and *Yakṣas* as servants. In order to house the *Bhikṣus* he erected five hundred *Vihāras*. Some time later he stayed on the mountain of salvation (Śrī-parvata) for two hundred years with a body of *Yakṣiṇīs* and practiced exorcism (*mantra*); he also obtained the thirty-two marks (of a Buddha) on his body.

As later on he gave away his head he is reported to have lived 71 less than 600 years of the duration of each of half a year.

At that time the youngest son of king Sadvāhana, named Suśakti, said: "Is the king's son only capable (*śuśakti*) of sovereignty, or is he also in possession of sovereignty (*saśakti*)?" As he thus found pleasure at the royal rule, his mother remarked: "Your father is endowed with a blessing, he is believed to have as long a span of life as the Ācārya. Since the Ācārya possesses a diamond (*vajra*) body, he cannot die. The former sons of the king are dead without having obtained the royal government; sons and even grand-sons have passed away." This distressed his mind, but his mother told him: "There is a means. The Ācārya being a *Bodhi-sattva* he will consent if you will ask him for his head, and so when after the death of the Ācārya the king also will die, the government will fall to you." Thereupon the prince went to the Śrī-parvata and begged him for his head. Remembering that he had some time in the past cut off the head of a living being (*jīva*) with green grass, he allowed himself to be beheaded by a *Kuśa* grass, when at the same time the words were heard: "I am going from here to Sukhāvātī, but later I shall move again into this body." Thereupon the world began to tremble and it is stated that a twelve years' famine had taken place. The prince was afraid that the Ācārya might, having obtained the elixir of life,

¹ Schiefner, Grünwedel and others: "Udayana" (*bde-spyod*).

unite again (viz. with his body) and carried the head many miles from the place of the cutting off. But here it was taken away by a *Yakṣiṇī*. Having placed the head on a large rock, it fell to pieces and bodies of stone (statues) of five Avalokiteśvara gods became visible. For the head as well as the body of each a temple was erected by the *Yakṣiṇī* as donor¹. The intervening space between both used to be four miles apart, but at the present time it is said to be not even one hearing distance.

In this quite legendary biography of Nāgārjuna perhaps only the names of his place of birth and of the places of his later residence show some traces of historical truth, may be also the accounts of Nāgārjuna's relations to the legendary South Indian king bDe-byed or dDe-spyod who can be construed as Śaṅkara or as Udayana² or as Sadvāhana³ and this biography is now placed by the reference in Tāranātha's "History" p. 58 (p. 73 of the German translation) within the frame of spiritual development, as it is sketched by this late-Tibetan writer in this his chief work by which alone he was known until recently to occidental research.

According to this biography, the origin of *Mahāyāna* goes back far behind Nāgārjuna's time so that he cannot by any means be considered as the founder of this branch. This is a point of great importance on which Tāranātha does not stand in opposition to any other of our sources. Soon after the time of Mahāpadma⁴ under the reign of Candragupta—this can only be the famous contemporary of Alexander the Great—a *Mahāyāna* book is said to have been issued, after the opinion of the Sautrāntikas the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā*⁵ but according to the contention of the Tantra school the *Tattvasaṅgraha*⁶. If we may trust the reports of Tāranātha it was only after the council

¹ Or proprietress (*kṣiti-pati*).

² Schiefner's rendering p. 72, note 2, and p. 2, note 2.

³ Here *sat* would correspond to the Tibetan *dbe*, "happy", "good" and *vāhana* to the Tibetan *spyod* "walking", "conducting oneself".

⁴ See V. A. Smith, *Early History* p. 36, 116: Mahāpadma reigned from 371 to about 322 B. C.

⁵ At this opinion so much may be correct that the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* is the oldest written production of the purely negative school of Buddhism.

⁶ By this we have to accept the text in the *bKah-hgyur rgyud*, vol. VII f. 213—440. See Csoma, *Asiatic Researches*, vol. XX, p. 502.

which took place under Kaniṣka that various *Mahāyāna* texts were composed and recited by some *Bhikṣus* without any dispute with the followers of the older doctrine taking place¹. It was, however, only under king Kaniṣka's son that the teaching of *Mahāyāna* advanced to greater extent. As the first who took up the doctrine of *Mahāyāna* the *Sthavira Arhat* Nanda who was a native of the Aṅga country is mentioned².

About this time a large number of friends of virtue suddenly arose in various parts who taught the *Mahāyāna*; all of them had heard the creed from Āryāvalokiteśvara, Guhyapati, Mañjuśrī, Maitreya separately and had separately obtained the *Samādhi* of the stream of the doctrine; there appeared the *Mahābhādanta Avitarka*, *Vigatāragadhvaṅga*, *Divyākaraḡupta*, *Rahulamitra*, *Jñānātala*, the great *Upāsaka Saṅgātala* and the other teachers of the law, 500 in number. At that time were also issued the manual *Ratnakūṭa* which contained 100 000 *ślokas* in 1000 chapters, the *Avataṃsaka*³ which likewise contained 100 000 *ślokas* in 1000 *prakaraṇas*, the *Laṅkāvatāra*⁴ containing 25 000 *ślokas*, the *Ghanavyūha*⁵ with 12 000 *ślokas*, the *Dharmasaṅgīti*⁶ with 12 000 *ślokas*, as well as many other works, partly *Sūtras* which were obtained from the *Devas*, *Nāgas*, *Gandharvas*, *Rākṣasas* in various regions mostly from the land of the *Nāgas*⁷.

We now hear that royal patronage and sympathy are extended to the new movement: king Laḡṣāśva is stated to have erected on the top of the Abhu mountain five hundred *Vihāras* for the five hundred interpreters of the law who produced those books, to have appointed to each of them a promulgator of the law, and himself to have induced the kinsmen of those around him to enter the holy order. He then caused the *Mahāyāna-Sūtras* then existing to be laid down in writing, besides numerous new works were composed by those *Bhikṣus*; "they were of irresistible intellect, had acquired

patience, and each one of them displayed supernatural strength and clear knowledge." Most significant for the inward superiority of the new sect opposed to the older point of view is the remark that the *Srāvakas* could not suppress them, although the followers in the 18 various schools had entered the holy order and lived together with them and though there were amongst thousands of *Srāvakas* but few *Mahāyāna* teachers. When the fame of *Mahāyāna* spread more and more they tried to work against it by saying the *Mahāyāna* doctrine was not the word of the Buddha. It may be considered as a protest against this when the followers of *Mahāyāna* erected eight *Vihāras* at the native place of Śāriputra, according to Buddha's own declaration the wisest of his disciples, at Nāleṅdra (Nālanda) and deposed here all the works of *Mahāyāna*. To the time of the founder of the *Gupta* Dynasty whom Tāranātha calls *Haricandra* (Tibetan edition p. 54, German translation p. 68) we however accept its third representative, Candragupta, the founder of the *Gupta* era¹, belongs the activity of Śrī Saṛaha and Rāhula-bhadra. The latter appears to have been of special importance to the development of *Mahāyāna* in so far as he is supposed to be Nāgārjuna's immediate predecessor as "guardian of the law". This would cause us to advance Nāgārjuna's life time up to the middle of the fourth century A. D., if the contemporary existence of Nāgārjuna and Sadvāhana (Sātavāhana) noted by Tāranātha in agreement with the Chinese sources would not refer us to the epoch of the subjection of Kṣaharata Nahapāna² by the *Andhra* king Vilivāyākura II³.

¹ See V. A. Smith, *Early History*, 2nd ed., p. 265; Rapson, *Indian Coins* p. 24.

² Bhandarkar's view is that the initial year of the *Śaka* era marks the date of the *Śaka* victory; see Rapson's *Indian Coins* § 79, p. 23; Oldenberg originally considered the *abhiṣeka* of Kaniṣka at Mathura as starting point of the *Śaka* era (*Numismat. Zeitschr.* 1881, p. 292 et seq.), but now (*Gött. Gel. Nachr.* 1911, p. 427 et seq.) inclines to Boyer's estimation (*Journal Asiat.* 1900 I, p. 579), who places the Kaniṣka era towards the end of the First Century A. D.; see also Fleet, *J. R. A. S.* 1912, p. 785, "Nahapāna... was overthrown by the great Sātavāhana Śātakarṇi king Gautami-putra-Śrī Śātakarṇi. The *Śaka* era beginning A. D. 78, was certainly founded either by Nahapāna or by Chaṣṭana", see *J. R. A. S.* 1907 p. 1043, note 2; *l. c.* 1910 p. 821.—Another view is taken by Sten Konow *Z. D. M. G.* vol. 68 (1914) p. 100: "it must then have been Wima Kadphises who extended the empire of the Kuṣāna's to those parts of Western India where we find the Western Kṣātra-

¹ *L. c.* Tibetan edition p. 48 (German p. 61).

² *L. c.* p. 50 (German ed. p. 62).

³ *Nanjio* No. 87. 88. 89; see Watanabe *J. R. A. S.* 1907 p. 663.

⁴ This text has undoubtedly been composed only after Nāgārjuna; see *J. R. A. S.* 1905 p. 831 et seq.

⁵ *Nanjio* No. 444. 971.

⁶ *Nanjio* No. 426. *T. E. V.* 7.

⁷ *L. c.* p. 50 (German ed. p. 63).

Of Nāgārjuna's personality and his activity we learn from Tāranātha's later work not much more except that he paid attention to the care of the holy places at Buddhagayā, especially of the Bho-tree by fixing stone pillars and taking precautionary measures against inundations. With regard to his literary activity the information is worth noting that he had acquired many *Dhāraṇīs* and the *Satasāhasrikā-prajñā-pāramitā* which was taken by the Srāvakaś to mean that Nāgārjuna himself had composed the latter work which supposition appears thoroughly well founded having regard to the character of this immense text composed of parts taken verbally from the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* or of endless repetitions. When Tāranātha adds that after this time no Mahāyāna Sūtras have been added, this appears highly probable, as resting upon the dates of the translations of Indian works into Chinese the *Satasāhasrikā* is proved to be one of the last, if not the last *Mahāyāna Sūtra*. In connection with the commentary which also is ascribed to Nāgārjuna, it was translated for the first time 402—405 A. D. by Kumārajīva, at a time when the *Mahāyāna* Canon had almost completely been rendered into Chinese.

Of other works by Nāgārjuna Tāranātha mentions the "Five Collections of Rules" (*rigs-pahi tshogs lna*) by which title the following texts contained in vol. (tsa) XVII of the *bsTan-gyur mDo* are comprised: 1) *Mūla-Mādhyamika-Kārikā*, 2) *Yukti-ṣaṣṭika*, 3) *Sūnyatā-saptati*, 4) *Vigraha-vyāvartanī*, 5) *Vaidalya*¹.

With this information by Tāranātha agrees that given by *Sum-pha mkhan-ṅo ye-ces dpal-hbyor* in his Buddhist historical work *dPag-bsam ljon-bzan* not only with regard to the contents, but largely to the text also. As to the proper history of the life of Nāgārjuna he particularly refers to the "History of the 84 Sorcerers" (*grub-chen gya-bshihi lo-rgyus*) whose statements he repeats to great

pas. This would lead to the conclusion that the *Śaka* era, which was used by the western *Kṣatrapas*, starts from this conquest". — An other view by J. W. Thomas J. R. A. S. 1913. (*The Date of Kaniṣka*" p. 627 et seq.) p. 635: The *Śaka* era, commencing A. D. 78, was introduced by Scytho-Parthian satrapas, who presumably were adopting an institution of their suzerain; see item p. 1037. See also Kielhorn, *Ind. Ant.* XXVI, p. 146 et seq.

¹ According to Smith (*l. c.* p. 199) in 126 A. D.

² See Wassiljew's note on p. 302 to Schiefner's translation of Tāranātha.

extent. Of special note is the remark which is not taken from the work just mentioned that Nāgārjuna had entered the holy order of the *Sarvāstivādin* Sect at Nāleन्द्रa, as both in his commentary on the *Satasāhasrikā* and the *Mādhyamika-kārikā* the teachings and rules of this school on the whole are laid down, though in a negative sense which is characteristic for the negativist stand-point of *Sūnya-vāda* (p. 85 l. 23). This fact deserves special mention because it would result from this connection of Nāgārjuna with a sect which is not identical with the *Sthavira* school of the *Mahāvihāra* at Anurādhapura familiar to us through the Pali tradition but is rather in opposition to it that the so-called Southern Buddhism—spread from Ceylon—is not affected by Nāgārjuna's polemics. It would therefore be possible that the Singhalese school itself takes up the idea of "voidness" and that either has indeed been in the minds of the founder of the creed (as recently O. Franke tries to prove in an article: "Negativism in the old Buddhist teaching", *Festschrift Kuhn* p. 366 et seq.) or that it has been interpreted into the original conception by the authors of the commentaries (*atthakathā*), above all by Buddhaghosa. This negativistic feature has already attracted the notice of the Chinese traveller Hsüan-chuang, and he has observed it in his: "*Buddhist Records of the Western World*". Thus he relates (*T. E. XXXV*, 7, 56a, 11) in the chapter on Ceylon: the 20 000 men living in a hundred monasteries follow the teaching of the Buddha, in truth the *Sthavira* school of *Mahāyāna*. After two hundred years¹ they separated of their free choice and without authority into two sects. The one called *Mahāvihāravāsins* rejected *Mahāyāna* and followed the teaching of *Hīnayāna*. The other called *Abhaya-giri-vāsins* studied both vehicles (*yāna*) and propagated the "Three Baskets" (*Tripiṭaka*). Thus it is said on the occasion of a visit at Buddhagayā that all the thousand monks living in the Mahābodhi-saṅghārāma which was erected by a former king of Ceylon belonged to the *Sthavira* school of *Mahāyāna*. Watters²

¹ It should be supplemented: after the introduction of Buddhism into Ceylon. See Beal's *Sī yu ki*, II p. 247, n. 19.

² II p. 138. "It will be noticed that Yuan-chuang describes the monks of this establishment as *Mahāyānists* of the *Sthavira* school, and he applies the same terms to the Brethren of Ceylon in his account of this island. As the *Sthavira* school is generally represented as belonging to the early and *Hīnayāna* form of

may be correct when assuming that the expression "*Mahāyāna*" at this and other places was used in a special sense. There is no reason why this expression should not be understood in the sense of the *sūnya-vāda*. Even to-day the Buddhist scholars of Ceylon object, to my mind rightly so, to be called the followers of the "*Lower Vehicle*". If I cannot accept the argument conducted by O. Franke in favour of this idea as decisive, yet there are enough places in the Pali Canon which do not admit any other interpretation save the negativistic one¹. Also in other respects the creed as represented to-day in Ceylon entirely corresponds to the notions of the original *Mahāyāna* which of course must not be confused with the modern eccentricities to be met in Tibet and China. The *Anagārika Dharmapala* (sic) quoted by Suzuki² is quite right in his statement that there is no reason why the Buddhism of Ceylon should be considered as Hīnayāna while teaching the most exalted and perfect knowledge (*anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*) as well as the six perfections (*pāramitā*)—these two features being considered as characteristic for *Mahāyānism*. He thinks it possible that the so-called *Mahāyāna* exercised great power over the whole of Central India at the time of Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva and that it found its champions on the Lion Island (*Siṃhaladvīpa*) as well. If we cannot perceive clearly at the present state of Buddhist studies how such an influence was possible, it does not preclude that a better knowledge of Sanskrit Buddhism—hereby I chiefly think of the exegetical literature connected with the *Vibhāṣā* and the *Abhidharma-kośa*—shows the threads which lead to Ceylon and the existence of which cannot well be contested having regard to the information by the Chinese travellers. A full disquisition of these points is inevitably to take into consideration the connection with the rest of the eighteen old schools and limit the various dogmatic conceptions by which they differed from each other as well as in respect of *Mahāyāna* more firmly than it has so far been possible.

Buddhism it would seem that in these and other passages Yuan-chuang uses the term *Mahāyāna* in a peculiar sense, as has already been stated. At his time many of the Brethren in the Magadha monasteries were evidently *Mahāyānists* in that sense."

¹ See Walleser's *Prajñāpāramitā* p. 6, *Philosoph. Grundlage des ält. Buddhismus* p. 101 et seq.

² *Outlines of Mahāyāna Buddhism* p. 3.

This disquisition will have to take place above all in relation to Bhavya's *Tarkajvālā* the fourth chapter (*lehu*) of which is devoted to the discussion of the teachings of the *Srāvakas*¹.

We are indebted to the historical work of *Sum-pa mkhan-po ye-ces dpal-hbyor* for something more, that is the communication of two quotations from the canonical literature of Indian Buddhism which contain prophecies about Nāgārjuna, and this proves at once that Nāgārjuna's life time reaches back to the period before the texts in point were composed. They are taken from the *Laṅkāvatāra* and *Mañjuśrī-mūla-tantra*².

There can be no doubt that the part of the *Laṅkāvatāra* which contains this quotation has been added later, and this follows from the fact that the final chapter in question which mentions the prophecies³ is wanting in the oldest Chinese version by Guṇa-bhadra (Nanjio No. 175, A. D. 443) and is only to be found in the one by Bodhiruci (No. 176, A. D. 513) and Śikṣānanda

¹ *Nān-thos-kyi de-kho-na-ñid-la hjug-pahi lehu*: Tanjur mdo XIX fol. 152a—211b of the black (sNar-thañ), fol. 157b—218b of the red (Peking) edition. See my "*Altère Vedānta*", p. 17.

² L. c. p. 68; the *Laṅkāvatāra* passage much condensed in the Text of the *dPag-bsam-ljon-bzañ* according to the sNar-thañ copy of the *bKah-hgyur* in the India Office in London runs as follows:

mgon-po hdas-pahi hog-tu ni // hdsin-par su hgyur bçad-du gsol //
bde-gçegs mya-ñan-hdas-pahi hog // ishul-rnams hdsin-par hgyur-ba ste //
dus-dag hdas-nas hbyuñ-ba de // blo-gros chen-po khyed ces byos //
lho-phyogs ve-dahi yul du ni // dge-slon dpal-ldan ches grags-pa //
de miñ klu çes bod-par ste // yod-dañ-med-pahi phyogs hjig pa //
na-yi theg-pa hjig-rtan-du // bla-med theg-chen rab-bçad-nas //
rab-tu-dgah-bahi sa bsgrubs-te // bde-ba-can-du de hgro-ho //

The Sanskrit text restored with the help of this Tibetan parallel from my own copy of the *Laṅkāvatāra* ms. belonging to the *Roy. As. Soc.*: Mss. Hodgson No. 5, f. 129b, l. 3—5, is to be found in the treatise by K. Watanabe, "*The Story of Kalmāṣapāda*", *J. R. A. S.* 1909, p. 310:

Nirvṛte sugate paścāt kālo 'ūto bhaviṣyati etc.

The Chinese parallel texts are to be found *T. E.* IV 6, 71a (*Bodhiruci*, Chapt. 18) and *T. E.* IV 6, 114a (*Śikṣānanda*, Chapt. 10); in the oldest translation (by Guṇa-bhadra A. D. 443) this passage is not contained at all, the last two sections of the Sanskrit text being here wanting, moreover the edition of the text being widely divergent.

See also *S. Candra Vidyābhūṣaṇa J. Asiat. Soc. Bengal* 1905, p. 159, Analysis of the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* and *J. R. A. S.* 1905, p. 831ff.

³ See C. Bendall, *Catalogue of Buddhist Sanskrit Mss.*, Cambridge (1883), p. 21; Burnouf, *Introduction* p. 514ff.

(No. 177, A. D. 700—704) and therefore probably added to the Sanskrit text towards the middle of the fifth century A. D. Another reason for this assertion is that this chapter includes in form of prophecies particulars referring to a much later time, for instance the one mentioned in the *J. R. A. S.* 1905, p. 835:

*Maurya Nandās ca Guptās ca tato Mlecchā nṛpādhamāḥ /
Mlecchānte śāstra-saṁksobhāḥ śāstrānte ca Kaler yugāḥ //*

To this prophecy must have preceded the invasion of Gandhāra by the "White Huns" (*Ephthalites*) which took place about 465 A. D. and the defeat of Skandagupta about 470 A. D.¹ and probably even the death of Narasiṃha Bālāditya, as at the time of Skandagupta² glorified as Vikramāditya by Paramārtha (499—569 A. D.) in his life of Vasubandhu and of his nephew Bālāditya³ Buddhism enjoyed great favour at the court of the ruling Dynasty. To the same time refers the note on the appearance of Kaliyuga the period of which⁴ beginning on the 18th February 3102 B. C. was inaugurated⁵ by Āryabhaṭa who belongs to the astronomical school of Pāṭaliputra in the year 499 A. D. or soon after in his chief work Āryabhaṭīya⁶. If that note of the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* on Nāgārjuna takes us to a much older period than may be supposed by the quoted late Tibetan sources, that is to the beginning of the sixth century, or the end of the fifth, yet one has to consider that Nāgāhvaya mentioned in that note may have nothing at all to do with Nāgārjuna. It is true that both Chinese versions, the one by Bodhiruci and the other by Śikṣānanda, render the word by the paraphrase generally used for Nāgārjuna 龍樹 *lung shu*⁷ and thereby testify

¹ See V. A. Smith, *Early History of India*, 2nd ed. p. 291, differently Hoernle *J. R. A. S.* 1911, p. 89 ff.

² See *The Life of Vasubandhu* by Paramārtha, translated by J. Takakusu. *Toung-p'ao* 1914. Reprint p. 17.

³ *L. c.* p. 23 by the same "a Study of Paramārtha's Life of Vasubandhu and the date of Vasubandhu" *J. R. A. S.* 1905, p. 12: "Vikramāditya must be a king of the Gupta Dynasty, and this king must be Skandagupta who ruled about 452—480 A. D. With his successor whose reign must have begun 481 A. D., or according to some accounts, 490 A. D. the old Gupta Dynasty came to an end".

⁴ See J. F. Fleet, *J. R. A. S.* 1911, p. 112.

⁵ See J. F. Fleet, *L. c.* p. 113; the same *J. R. A. S.* 1911, p. 486.

⁶ Edited with the commentary of Paramādīśvara by Kern, 1874.

⁷ Lit. the Arjuna tree, Pentaptera Arjuna. See Eitel, *Handbook of Buddhism*.

that according to the Indian view this was the right interpretation. However the Tibetan "*de miñ klu shes bod-pa ste*" permits the rendering "he who is called by the name of Nāga", and also the Sanskrit compound *Nāgāhvaya* "*Serpent's call*" not only allows the possibility to take the word such as it is as a proper name, but the name of Nāgāhvaya indeed occurring frequently, for instance, as the name of a famous pupil of Nāgārjuna himself¹, it also allows the translation: "*the one called Nāga*" or "*the one named Nāga*" so that Nāga would have been his real name, and this is, amongst others, the one of a *Bhikṣu* who defended the five "principles" (*t. gñzi ssk. vastu*²). The contesting of these five principles led to the council of Pāṭaliputra and to the separation of the *Mahā-saṅghika* sect (about 137 after Buddha). The latter view is urged by the Tibetan translation, and though it may appear impossible that its author thought of this quite unknown monk of the oldest Buddhist time, yet another bearer of the name of Nāga which was very frequent in compounds may have been in his mind. For this reason the quotation from the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* should not be used without warning for the chronological fixing of Nāgārjuna, especially as the *Laṅkāvatāra* commentary by Jñānaśrī, Tanjur mdo v. 42 (ni) NE fol. 291a:

*Klu hphags sogs-pa mkhas-pa-rnams // tshe rin-ba yañ rñed-pa
[hi]-rnams //*

presumes the simpler form of "Nāga".

That by Nāgāhvaya in the *Laṅkāvatāra* passage nobody but Nāgārjuna is meant, may be taken from the quotation in the *Mañjuśrī-mūla-tantra*.

Here also the word compound *klu-shes-de-hbod* would stand for the Sanskrit *Nāgāhvaya*. That hereby Nāgārjuna is meant, further details which are given of the bearer of the name tend

¹ According to Tāranātha, *Geschichte des Buddhismus* p. 83 (Tibetan 66) and 86 (Tibetan 68) Nāgāhvaya was a contemporary of Āryadeva and his proper name was Tathāgatabhadra, and at the invitation of the Nāgas went to the Nāga country seven times, and was the author of commentaries to many Mahāyāna Sūtras and the *rNam-rig-gi dbu-ma (Vijñāna-madhya?)*. See Sumpa, *dPag-bsam ljon-bzan* p. 69: "*klu bos shes kyañ rnam-par grags*" and Schiefner, *Tibetische Lebensbeschreibung* p. 101, n. 87.

² See L. de la Vallée Poussin *J. R. A. S.* 1910, p. 414.

to show: "That he will appear four hundred years after Nirvāna—this is a prediction of the Tathāgata himself—; that he will reach the grade (*bhūmi*) of *Prāmuditā*¹, live six hundred years, obtain the charm of the *Mahāmayūrī*; attain great splendour, understand the precepts of the law and the significance of incorporeality; after having thrown off his body he will re-appear at *Sukhāvātī*." The whole characteristic entirely agrees with the Tibetan accounts of Nāgārjuna. Even the particulars referring to the temporal difference of Nāgārjuna from the founder of the doctrine agree with another tradition by which according to I-tsing² Nāgārjuna is represented as a contemporary of Kaṇiṣka who himself was put down four hundred years after Buddha³.

But the *Mañjuśrī-mūla-tantra* can claim still less than the two later Chinese versions of the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* to be an historical source as it was no longer translated into Chinese. It therefore would belong to a literary epoch which had its seat no longer in India, but in the countries north of it whereto Buddhism after internal and external defeats withdrew. It has been translated into Tibetan not before the eleventh century (by order of prince Byaṅ-chub-hod at Tho-ling by Kumāra Kalaṣa and Śākya bLo-hgros)⁴ so that it may be doubted whether an Indian original text of it still existed at all or whether it be an apocryphical work of purely Tibetan origin⁵. Yet one cannot but attribute to it special importance as chief source of the whole later Tibetan historical writing, and as long as the Indian works serving as basis to the Tibetan historians are not known to us,

¹ See C. de Harlez, *Vocabulaire bouddhique sanscrit-chinois* p. 25; Schott, *Über den Buddhismus* p. 50.

² *Record of Buddhist Religion*, transl. by Takakusu p. 181.

³ See Schiefner, *Eine tibetische Lebensbeschreibung Śākya-muni's* (1849) p. 80. The author of the work here translated and dating from the year 1734 A. D. was the *Lotsaba Rin-chen-cho-kyi rgyal-po* (*Ratnadharmarāja*); see Max Müller, *India, what can it teach us?* p. 304.

⁴ Csoma Körösi, *Asiatic Researches*, vol. XX (1836), p. 513.

⁵ The prophecy in question is to be found in the *bKah-hgyur rgyud*, vol. XI in the edition of *sNar-thang* indexed by Csoma, fol. 426, in the one indexed by I. J. Schmidt, vol. XIII (na), fol. 322. See Schiefner, *l. c.* p. 100. It is also quoted dPag-bsam-ljon-bzañ p. 68 and in the introduction to *Čes-rab-sdoñ-bu* (Calcutta), see S. Candra Vidyābhūṣaṇa, *History of the Mediaeval School of Indian Logic* p. 69.

or details of them cannot be gathered¹, and the works of the *bsTan-hgyur* have been thoroughly examined, the *Mañjuśrī-mūla-tantra* will remain the text which offers special prospect for our knowledge of the development of Buddhism in India. It cannot be compared with the Chinese tradition particularly when reference is made to the older epochs for the reason that here richer, older and more original sources are at our disposal. So far as these sources are taken into account for the life time of Nāgārjuna and the history of his life, they will form the subject of further research.

II. The Chinese Sources

The "classification of the meanings of the names translated [from the Sanskrit]"² (Nanjio No. 1640) made by Fa-yun in 1151 A. D. refers with regard to Nāgārjuna³ to various older sources of which particulars from the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* have been given in the preceding section. The draft in which it is before us is the one of the third and last of the Chinese Sūtra⁴ versions made by Śikṣānanda in 700—704 A. D. which also contains the final chapter of the Sanskrit text. This text exists to-day in Nepalese manuscripts and was yet unknown to the oldest and otherwise differing edition which is rendered in the Chinese translation by Guṇabhadra.

The reports of the *Fan-i-ming-i-chi* l. c. 9a, l. 20 further refer to the account of Hsüan-chuang⁵ in the eighth chapter of his "Records of the Western World"⁶ on the occasion of his visit to

¹ The attempts to obtain information from Lhasa by diplomatic means (Rockhill) appear to have been fruitless as well as those made by Śri Candra Dās to establish the existence of such Indian texts in the Archives of the Dalailama.

² 翻譯名義集 *Fan-i-ming-i-chi*. See Walleser, *Streitlosigkeit des Subhūti*, Sitzungsberichte d. Akad. d. Wiss. Heidelberg 1917, p. 12.

³ T. E. XXXVI 11, fol. 9a.

⁴ T. E. IV 6, fol. 104a. According to the Chinese Commentary (composed 1378 A. D.) of the oldest Chinese version of the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* (Nanjio No. 175) Nanjio 1613, T. E. XXX, 1 fol. 38b, there were originally four Chinese translations of the Sūtra of which one had already disappeared at the time of the composition of this commentary, probably even at the time when the oldest Catalogue of the Chinese Tripiṭaka was compiled about 520 A. D. which only mentions the version by Guṇabhadra written about 443 A. D.

⁵ 釋玄奘

⁶ *Hsi-yü-chi*, Nanjio 1503, T. E. XXXV, 7 fol. 38b, l. 15 et seq.

the so-called "Bell-sound *Stūpa*". From this work the explanation of the name of Nāga-arjuna as 龍猛 *lung-mêng*, i. e. "Dragon Hero" is taken under rejection of the rendering of the name by 龍樹 *lung-shu*, i. e. "Dragon Tree" already declared by Hsüan-chuang to be incorrect. The passage pictures the first meeting of Nāgārjuna with his later pupil Āryadeva and details too closely the narrative of Āryadeva's match with the Tīrthikas challenged by the former by the sounding of a bell (*ghantā*) as to be able to pay greater attention to the description of Nāgārjuna himself. It is only mentioned that Nāgārjuna had already as a young man obtained fame on account of his great knowledge, that when grown up he had given up all worldly pleasure, left his home, devoted himself entirely to study and attained the first grade of inspiration¹. Also by the other statements which often go into details in the tenth section of the same work² is the personality of Nāgārjuna sufficiently described to show that they relied upon reminiscences of a being of flesh and bone though legendary traits are not always wanting. As scene of his activity the capital of the (Southern) Kosala³ is here given; as the name of the mountain on which a Saṅghārāma (monastery) of great splendour was carved to him from stone by king Sātavāha, or Sadvāha⁴ is mentioned the *Bhrāmara-giri* (Black Bee mountain)⁵ lying 300 li to the South-West of the capital. Otherwise most traits of the particulars reported by Hsüan-chuang of Nāgārjuna agree with those of the Tibetan tradition. For instance his friendship with king Sadvāha or Sātavāhana which went so far that the king ordered a constant guard for his domicile; this can be connected with the legend according to which the life time

¹ T. E. XXXV, 7. 38b, 15; Beal, *Records of the Western World* II, 97; Watters II, 101.

² T. E. XXXV, 7. 52a, 13; Beal II, 210 et seq.; Watters II, 200 et seq.

³ Watters, *l. c.* p. 201. Cunningham makes it to be the ancient province of Vidarbha or Berar of which the present capital is Nagpur (*A. G. I.* p. 520) and Fergusson seems to agree with Mr. Grant in regarding Chattisgarh as corresponding to the Kosala of our text, and Wyraghur as being the site of its capital (*J. R. A. S.* 1875, p. 260). Should not the name of the present capital remind us of Nāgārjuna?

⁴ 娑多婆訶 explained in Chinese with 引正 "well leading".

⁵ On the Chinese rendering 跋邏末羅耆釐山 of this Indian name see Watters, *l. c.* p. 207.

of the prince depended from that of his friend. Also the story of the end of Nāgārjuna's days which is told, in a similar way as in the Tibetan tales, to have occurred at the instance of the heir to the throne with the consent of the hundreds of years old sage agrees roughly with the Tibetan accounts. Another point is his finding of the elixir of life to which he owed the possibility of unlimited life time as well as his power to change stones into gold which allowed him (according to Chinese reports) the means necessary for the erection of the Saṅghārāma founded by king Sadvāha and again (according to Tibetan reports) to provide the *Bhikṣu* community a long time with provisions, above all with corn during the outbreak of a famine. The differences in the details cannot deceive us about the connection of the chief traits of the tradition nor about their common Indian source.

As such we easily recognize an Indian biography which exists in a Chinese translation made by Kumārajīva 405 A. D. (Nanjio No. 1461) which is characterized in the *Fan-i-ming-i-chi* as such though not with the same title as noted in the official Chinese Canon. The passage runs as follows: "Kumārajīva¹ says in the biography (scil. of Nāgārjuna): *His mother gave birth to him under a tree for which reason (he called) himself Arjuna; Arjuna is the name of a tree. He obtained his instruction (literally 'Way') from serpents, therefore he is called serpent tree² by means of a sign for serpent.*" Immediately following it is stated: *Fu-hsing³ says: The study of Nāgārjuna⁴ pervaded far the world (lit.: under the sky) and found no obstacle. He wanted to criticize the Sūtras of the Buddha and teach himself the law (dharma). He announced: 'I have no master.' He succeeded in penetrating the palace of the dragons (nāga)⁵. In one summer⁶ alone he learnt by heart seven Buddhist Sūtras. He himself⁷ knew the subtle basis of the Buddhist law (dharma) and*

¹ Rendered in the Chinese text in the usual manner by the sign of the fourth syllable 什 *shih*, Sanskrit *ṣi* (see Julien, *Méthode pour déchiffrer*, etc. No. 158).

² T. E. XXXVI, 11. 9a, 20.

³ 輔行. It is not clear whether the name of a text, or of an author is meant.

⁴ Rendered in the text by the sign for *arjuna* 樹.

⁵ The succession of the word signs in the Chinese text of the T. E. is undoubtedly displaced.

⁶ Stands for the Sanskrit *varṣa*, i. e. summer rainy time.

⁷ 自 is probably to be put instead of 目 of the Tokyo edition.

left his home. He subjected the king of the country and overcame the followers of the opposing schools (*tīrthika*). A *Tīrthika* made by magic a flower pond and seated himself upon a lotus flower. Nāgārjuna then created an elephant who tore out the lotus flower and struck down the *Tīrthika*. He compiled three kinds of law books (*śāstra*): first, the *śāstra* of ingenuity (*kaśālya*) in exalted charity; it explains the heavenly order (astronomy) and worldly rule, the preparation of jewels and medical herbs as well as the advancement of all worldliness. Secondly, the *śāstra* of divine splendour; it explains the change in virtue and morals. Thirdly, the exalted *śāstra* of fearlessness (*akutobhaya*), it explains the truth of the lower sense and expounds the middle teaching (*madhyama-śāstra*¹).

If we compare this passage in the *Fan-i-ming-i-chi* with the biography translated (or written?) by Kumārajīva it follows that, except an agreement of the contents, the later compilation proves to be a short condensation of the older text whilst omitting everything that appears unessential. One is tempted under these circumstances to subject the latter to close examination, and this is rendered easier because a short summary of it has been given by Wassiljew in his "*Buddhismus*", Part I, German edition p. 232 et seq.

There are considerable difficulties in understanding the Chinese text because it has been handed down to us most imperfectly before it was printed the first time², as it did not belong to the Buddhist Canon proper, and because it offered in the oldest printed edition³ such difficulty that it was revised throughout for the next Chinese printed edition⁴. This form with slight variations was used for the editions published under the *Yüan* and the *Ming*

¹ The two ideograms 中 and 觀 should probably be transposed.

² This was in 972 A. D. by order of 太祖 T'ai-tsu, the founder of the later Sung Dynasty. A catalogue of this collection does not appear to have been prepared. See Nanjio. Introduction p. XXII, XXIII.

³ According to Nanjio, l. c. p. XXIV it was completed in Korea at the beginning of the 11th century by order of the Korean king 治 Chih from the Chinese edition of 972 A. D. above mentioned and some Korean edition and also published. A copy of it is still to be found to-day at Tokyo.

⁴ Published 1239 A. D. during the Sung Dynasty. See Nanjio, l. c.

Dynasties¹. It is open to doubt whether the text as adjusted later has everywhere proper meaning, but it seems impossible that it renders the original versions when the Chinese edition of 972 which was used by the later Korean edition, was prepared with the help of all the available and existing manuscripts which may have been few in number for reasons already mentioned. At any rate we have to take up Kumārajīva's *Biography of Nāgārjuna* with great caution and must not at all imagine that we have here the authentic text before us. Wassiljew's rendering should be no criterion in this respect as his translation is much abbreviated and not at all literal.

It is striking in this biography that the legendary element is, like in the Tibetan accounts, much more pronounced than in the records of Hsüan-chuang. From earliest childhood he heard recited by the Brahmans the four Veda-compilations each containing 40 000 Gāthās of which each contains 32 syllables². He recited these lines by heart and mastered their sense. At the age of twenty he had world-wide fame³. In astronomy, mundane sciences, geography and prognosis there was nothing that he had not thoroughly fathomed. Tired of dull life and wishing to taste the pleasures of life he joined four other men of similar mind and eminence, took counsel with them how it was possible to enjoy a truly royal life, and when they had learnt that they could only succeed by gaining the charm of invisibility they addressed themselves to a necromancer who complies with their request. Thereupon they enter the royal palace where they seduce the women. But their presence is made known and communicated to the king who is enraged by it. The king sends for his chief officials in order to confer with them. They say, there are two ways possible to explain the strange event; they suspect either ghosts or magicians. In the latter case there should be foot prints visible, otherwise one should try to chase them away by exorcism. The gate-keeper is informed who soon recognizes

¹ The Tokyo edition (*TE*) offers in its list of variations four variae lectiones of the Sung edition, and two of the one of Yüan following itself the one of Ming.

² This is the correct reading of the Korean edition while Wassiljew following the later Chinese editions mentions the number 42.

³ Wassiljew: "*Er begab sich auf Reisen in verschiedene Reiche.*"

the foot prints of four men and reports his observations to the king. An officer with one hundred men receive the order to occupy the palace; the gates are closed and the soldiers brandish their swords in the air. Three of the invisible men are killed, only Nāgārjuna succeeds in saving his life, by stepping next to the king and thus avoids the strokes, for in a radius of seven paces he cannot be reached by the swords. At this moment awakens in Nāgārjuna the thought of the sufferings of life, he looks into the origin of suffering, conceives a dislike of the idea of desire and the wish grows within him to leave his home: "*If I obtain deliverance, I shall become a Śramaṇa and aspire to the state of leaving home (prāvrājya).*" As soon as he has escaped from the palace he goes to the mountain where he enters the holy order in a Buddhist temple (*stūpa*) and makes the vow of leading a moral life (*śīla*). Within ninety days he understands the three *Pitakas* and penetrates their deep meaning. Near a *Caitya*, far away in the snowy mountains, lives an old *Bhikṣu*; he recites with him *Mahāyāna Sūtras*, learns to value and to like them. Though he understands their deep significance he does not yet succeed in penetrating their value. He wanders through all countries in order, also, to find the other *Sūtras*. In the whole of *Jambudvīpa* he does not find them though he searches everywhere. He subjects the foreign teachers (*tīrthika*) and *Śramaṇas* and is so filled with his own invincibility that he becomes haughty and of proud mind. He considers that there is much dirt and mud in the worldly things (*dharma*); the *Sūtras* of the Buddha are though deep not quite perfect in logical respects. That which is not yet perfect must be logically deepened. He who teaches must first of all clearly understand and then study. In logic (lit. order) there is no contradiction, in matter (*artha*) there is no fault. What can here be deficient? After having meditated on these things he wanted to establish a new dogma and alter the dress. He now made his distinctions according to what was differentiated by the law (*dharma*) of the Buddha. Then again he wants to manifest omniscience by non-rejection and apathy. He chooses a day and fixes the time for association with his disciples. He gives new precepts of conduct (*śīla*), decides upon new garments and then wishes that the disciples should walk about in it. A *Mahā-nāga* sees him like that.

He takes pity with him and makes it possible for him to enter the sea. In the palace hall he opens to him seven precious receptacles (*pitaka*). From various places (he takes) deep abstruse *Sūtras* and precepts, numerous wonderful Dharmas and hands them to him. Nāgārjuna recites them in 90 days and understands them to great extent. His spirit penetrates deeply into their meaning and obtains true benefit. The *Nāga* understands his thought and asks him: *Hast thou not yet penetrated the Sūtra which thou seest (there)?* He replies: *In thy receptacle there are a great many Sūtras, their number is inexhaustible. I must read them later again ten times in Jambudvīpa.* The *Nāga* said: "*What there is on hand in my palace of Sūtras and law-books, is incomparably more.*" Then Nāgārjuna understands the uniform meaning of the *Sūtras* and penetrates deeply into the concentration (*samādhi*) of the resignation of non-beginning. The *Nāga* hands them to him and he returns to *Jambudvīpa*. He furthers considerably the teachings of the Buddha and defeats those of the *Tīrthikas*. He explains the *Mahāyāna* in detail and composes the *Upadeśa* of 100 000 *Gāthās*. Besides, he writes the *Splendid Way of the Buddha of 5000 Gāthās*, the great *Sāstra* (textbook) on the art of compassion of 5000 *Gāthās*, the *Madhyamaka-śāstra* of 500 *Gāthās*. He causes the spreading of the *Mahāyāna* doctrine far into India. He also composes the *Akutobhaya-śāstra* with 100 000 *Gāthās*; the *Madhyamaka-śāstra* is contained therein.

At that time there is a Brahman who knows the magic formulas and therefore wishes to fight with Nāgārjuna and defeat him. He says to the king of India: "*I can overthrow this Bhikṣu and the king will witness it.*" The king said: "*You are very foolish. This is a Bodhisattva. His light is like that of the sun and of the moon, his knowledge and the mind of the Noble (ārya) have the same lustre. Why are you immodest and bold and why do you refuse (Ch. E.) the reverence?*" The Brahman replied: "*Why will not the king, in order to know the man, allow himself to be convinced and see how he is harassed and overthrown?*" The king listens to him and at last asks Nāgārjuna that both should sit on a bright morning on the "*Palace of law and virtue*". The Brahman thereupon creates by magic in front of the palace a big pond, broad, long and very clear. There are in it Lotus flowers of thousand leaves. He himself

takes his seat on it and jeers at Nāgārjuna. "You are seated on the earth; you are not different from an ox, but you shall discuss with me who am sitting upon a pure Lotus flower and am rightly understanding the interpretation of the Śāstras." At that time Nāgārjuna also created by magic a white elephant provided with six tusks; on the surface of the pond it crushes the lotus seat. It embraces him with the tusk, tears him out and flings him on the ground. The Brahman wounded at the hip throws himself down and calls Nāgārjuna. "I myself do not abuse nor belittle the eminent master. I wish he may receive me mercifully and take me from that foolish man. They are teachers of Hinayāna who are always wrathful in their heart." Nāgārjuna asks him: "Are you glad that I stay long on earth?" The latter replies: "In reality I do not wish it." Nāgārjuna retires to an apartment, locks himself in, and does not emerge the whole day. A disciple demolishes the door and looks; a cicada flies at once from it. A hundred years after the death of Nāgārjuna temples were built for him in the countries of Southern India, and he was honoured like a Buddha.

His mother had given birth to him under a tree. As the tree was called "Arjuna" (he received) the name "Arjuna". As he obtained from the serpents the guidance (lit.: the way) he was called on account of the sign connected with Nāga (dragon) Nāgārjuna.

Note. According to the Sūtra on the "tradition of the Dharmapitaka" he was the thirteenth patriarch; he guarded (lit. kept) the teaching of the Buddha more than three hundred years¹.

So far goes the *biography*. Both recensions contain however another anecdote on the conversion of the South-Indian king. In the *Korean* edition (*Ko.E.*) it follows the story of the quarrelsome Brahman who produced by magic the flower pond and was thrown by Nāgārjuna's elephant from his flower seat on land (*T.E.* II3a, 10); in the later *Chinese* editions (*T.E.* f. II4a, 7) it follows Nāgārjuna's return from the Nāgas and his attainment of the patience of non-existence (*anutpāda-kṣānti*).

¹ *Ko.E.* "more than two hundred years".

In the latter draft the episode has been communicated by Wassiljew to whom the *Korean* recension was unknown¹.

At the time when Nāgārjuna had returned from the serpents, the ruler of Southern India favoured the teachers (*tīrthika*) from abroad and persecuted the followers of the Buddha. In order to convert him he directed the attention of the king upon himself by always carrying before him a red flag for seven years. The king began to wonder and at last enquired who the man was who always walked in front of him. He replied that he was a man all-knowing (*sarvajña*). When the king heard this, he was seized with great fright and asked: "A man all-knowing is something very uncommon. How can you prove that you are one?" Nāgārjuna replied: "If the king wishes to know my wisdom, he can learn it by instruction through me." The king thought by himself that he could make him his chief interpreter of the Śāstras and asked him what the *Devas* were doing at this moment. He replied that the *Devas* were fighting with the *Asuras*. The king heard a noise as if men were clearing their throats without being able to vomit nor to swallow. Believing that it did not come from the *Devas* he said there was nobody and how Nāgārjuna could prove the truth of his assertion. Thereupon all kinds of arms, swords, rapiers, lances and javelins fell down from heaven. As the king was still doubtful and remarked: "although these may be fighting weapons, why must they be those of the *Devas* and *Asuras*?" hands, feet, fingers, ears and noses of the *Asuras* came down. The king became frightened, bent his head and was converted. At that time there were 10 000 Brahmans on the roof of the palace; when they saw the wonder they cut down their beards and the hair of their heads and entered the holy order. Then Nāgārjuna propagated widely the Buddhist teaching in Southern India, subjected the *Tīrthikas* and interpreted at great detail the *Mahāyāna*.

This anecdote about the conversion of the South Indian king by Nāgārjuna is also known by the *Korean* edition—which precedes

¹ This results from an acceptance of wrong readings of the *Chinese* editions where the *Korean* is correct, for instance of the statement that the *Śloka* counts 42 syllables, instead of 32 (*Ko.E.*) or where the length of Nāgārjuna's patriarchate is given as "more than 300" instead of more than 200 (*Ko.E.*), also where he speaks of three (instead of two) kinds of the patience of non-existence (*anutpāda-kṣānti*).

in time the *Chinese* editions—although with a considerable difference. It lacks the characteristic information that Nāgārjuna drew the attention of the king upon himself by carrying for seven years a red flag before the king. What the *Korean* edition f. 113a, 10 et seq. offers instead is essentially incomprehensible, at any rate contradictory. The complete want of clearness of this passage was no doubt the cause that one tried in the later editions to give the reason of the formation of the king's acquaintance with Nāgārjuna in a different manner. This supposition would require no consideration if it could be proved how it happened that one added the story of the red flag. In that case the proof would also be brought that this particular feature has to be taken off the whole story as given in the biography by Kumārajīva.

How this doubt may be solved may be taken from the text itself of the biography transmitted in all recensions. In the final note an "account of the tradition of the Dharmapitaka"¹ is mentioned as the source for the information that Nāgārjuna was the thirteenth patriarch ("guardian of the law") and as such had worked more than 200 years (in the later editions 300). No doubt this is the same text which was translated into Chinese under the title *Fu-fa-tsang-yin-yüan-fu* 付法藏因緣傳, "Account of the history (lit. causes and conditions) of the tradition of the Dharma-pitaka" 472 A. D. by 吉迦夜 *Chi-chia-yeh*² and 曇曜 *T'an-yao*.

Indeed, the presentation of the circumstances by which Nāgārjuna succeeded in converting the anonymous South-Indian ruler entirely agrees with the later edition as transmitted by the Chinese printed editions of the Canon, and again with the corresponding section of the "Account of the tradition of the teaching" from the year 472³ with the exception of a few variations caused by editorial changes in the text of the "Biography". How have we to explain the divergency of the "Account of the Tradition of the Law" from the "Biography" of the *Korean* edition? Undoubtedly in the same way as we have to understand those of the latter and the later Chinese editions of the Canon, that is by the desire to replace an incomprehensible, contradictory text (in the text of Kumāra-

¹ The later Chinese editions add that it was a *Sūtra*.

² Nanjio No. 1340. See Takakusu, *J. R. A. S.* 1905, p. 8: "*Kekaya*".

³ *T. E.* XXIV, 9, 107a, 10.

jīva) by a more intelligible one. There only remains to prove the origin of that legendary incident by which Nāgārjuna had taken to the ruse of the red flag. This point offers no difficulty in so far as in the same account the same event is told with regard to another "guardian of the law", i. e. Buddhmitra¹ with the only difference that the latter had carried the flag for twelve years—not seven as by Nāgārjuna—before the king. This agreement is all the more evident as such suggestions within the "account" are not to be found. One can therefore hardly go wrong in supposing that the "*Biography of Nāgārjuna*" rendered (or composed) by Kumārajīva in the *Korean* version has been the original not only for the later Chinese versions, but also in the form given by Kumārajīva himself for the "*Account of the Tradition of the Law*" of the year 472. Hence the anecdote has passed into the later historical presentations of the Buddhist teaching in China, for example into the 佛祖統紀 *Fo-tsu-t'ung-chi* (Nanjio No. 1661, A. D. 1269—1271), *TE.* XXXV, 8, 51a, 16, and the 佛祖歷代通載 *Fo-tsu-li-tai-t'ung-tsai* (Nanjio No. 1637, A. D. 1280—1368), *TE.* XXXV, 10, 27a, in the latter work into the much abbreviated version which has been communicated to us by Edkins in his "*Chinese Buddhism*" (1880).

Whatever the case may be about this particular incident of the Nāgārjuna legend: are we entitled to seek in it anything else but phantastic embellishments of occurrences simple in their origin and in their historical arguments as they may have happened in the life of a man who born and bred in the caste of the Brahmans is seized in his early manhood by a passionate longing, is stirred through a natural shock of his feelings and frame of mind by the thought of transitoriness and of world suffering and enters the Buddhist community and does not find satisfaction in the comparatively simple and primitive teaching of its founder, but whilst finding support in the older *Sūtras* of the *Mahāyāna*—which were at that time spread among the Buddhist sects—and especially in the "*perfection of understanding*" (*Prajñā-pāramitā*) is directed to the systematic scepticism of every kind of dogma, as long as this is not limited to the negation of all positive assertions? In this

¹ *T. E.* XXIV, 9, 104b, 3.

sense and from this point of view the statement deserves attention according to which Nāgārjuna instructed in far-off snowy mountains by an aged Bhikṣu in *Mahāyāna* plans to establish a new school with special attire and its own laws until he is carried back by a sympathetic *Nāga* (dragon) to the path of the doctrine of the Enlightened one. A representative of the extreme and consequent Negativism—as such appears the author of the *Mādhyamika-vāda* ascribed to Nāgārjuna—surely would not mind to what theories he brings his dissolving sophistry. We could also understand if, instead of the dogma of Buddhism, the ideology of the *Sāṅkhya* or *Vaiśeṣika* system would be dissected under the knife of the negativist. If negativism confronts us in the close connection with the Buddhist doctrine, the reason for it would be that Buddhism held a leading position in Indian intellectual life at the time of the beginning of those aspirations and that a new intellectual tendency could hold to have sufficed all demands if it had come to an understanding with the Buddhist doctrine which was spread amongst numerous schools and communities. One has to hesitate before characterizing the Nominalism of the Middle Ages a Christian conception and yet it fits in well into the idea of the scholastic philosophy, as it takes its ideology for granted and elaborates it. The same applies to the principle of the *Sūnya-vāda*, the theory of voidness or hollowness: this self-adopted name tends to show that there cannot be a question of a system for it, as just in the contrary the imperfection of any such system shall be proved. Yet it need not be a Buddhist one.

Any further details in the "*Biography*" published by Kumārajīva from which one might draw some historical conclusions about the circumstances of the time of Nāgārjuna's activity are wanting. The South-Indian king who has been mentioned and who is to be identified on the strength of the Tibetan accounts with the *Andhra* ruler *Sadvāha* or *Śātavāhana* remains obscure. Therefore no great stress should be laid upon the statement made in the final note according to which Nāgārjuna was the thirteenth patriarch and as such worked for 200 and even 300 years. The enrolment of Nāgārjuna in the succession of the patriarchs would offer the possibility of a chronological determination of his lifetime. It does not appear possible that Buddhism enjoyed in its

infancy an institution of that kind which could only be compared with that of the papacy, and even at a later period the ground for such an institution could only have been given when the monastic schools at Nālanda were established and Buddhism divided into a multitude of sects obtained a training-establishment whose spiritual leader embodying the recognized orthodox law could in time or had to acquire an authority which was not different from that of a religious ruler. The foundation of Nālanda which took place under the protection of *Mahāyāna*, quite contrary to the law of *Hīnayāna*, cannot go back much before the time of *Nāgārjuna*, if indeed not originate after his activity. It would be difficult to understand that the influence of a single man, however eminent, could exercise the spiritual and the material power which was necessary for the establishment of extensive buildings and their colonization. Thus Nāgārjuna could not have been the thirteenth, but at the best the first of the succession of the Buddhist "*popes*", and any combination which would follow from the "*account of the tradition of the law*", would be fruitless.

If the fundamental idea, that of a solemn transfer of the mastership to the worthiest as a successor, may owe its origin to the minds of more recent times, there is no reason to regard in the mentioning of single leaders in the spiritual field or in monastic discipline the recollection of distinct, eminent men who may really have lived in a manner as described in those accounts and in about the succession such as represented here. In this sense the tradition according to which Nāgārjuna's predecessor in the office was Kapimāla and his successor Āryadeva, should not be quite valueless, especially as both are designated as authors of works which are partly still contained in the Chinese and Tibetan Canon. But we cannot go so far as to put any value to the chronological classification in the frame of Chinese history¹ as to be found in the extensive works since the T'ang 唐 Dynasty, for instance in the work from the year 597 A. D. which is mentioned by Nanjio under No. 1504.

¹ According to 佛祖歷代通載 *Fo-tsu-li-tai-t'ung-tsai*. "Complete account of Buddha and the Patriarchs" (Nanjio No. 1637) A. D. 1280—1368, T. E. XXXV, 10, 27a, 14, Nāgārjuna died in the 35th year of the reign of Emperor 始皇帝 Shih-huang-ti of the Ch'in (秦) Dynasty, hence 212 B. C.

Whereas the "Biography" of Nāgārjuna offers us no clue at all for clearing up the historical position of that personality in any direction, it would be important to know for the inherent meaning of the relations of Nāgārjuna to the older doctrine how to understand the legend according to which a Nāga opened to him the wealth of the *Mahāyāna Sūtras* as the real and most profound teaching of the Buddha. There are various things which we can take from the reported accounts. Firstly, that Buddha according to this version did not leave his whole doctrine to his immediate disciples and followers, but that he rather withheld from them the more difficult and profound Sūtras in order to confide them to the care of the Nāgas who were to hand them over to mankind at a more favourable time. This fantastic tale is of course nothing less than historical. A multitude of apocryphical law texts which were filled more and more with the idea of the principle of inanity had to be placed within the educational work of the Buddha itself, and for this purpose the division into various periods of the Buddha¹, and thus one had saved the trouble not only to explain away the contradictions of the separate Sūtras but one had succeeded in proving that Buddha himself was far above the dissensions of his doctrine and at the same time of his community.

Again, this theory of the tradition of the teaching by the Nāgas and their communication to Nāgārjuna by his followers could well be used as a reply to the objection that Nāgārjuna himself was in contradiction to the orthodox tradition since the real principles of Buddha's teaching considered from the point of view of inanity were devoid of all sense. In reality the *Madhyamaka-vāda*, especially in the version given to it by Nāgārjuna in the *Mādhyamika-kārikā*, is nothing else but a *reductio ad absurdum* of the principles of the Buddha himself, since the controversy is entirely directed against these and not against the views held by other creeds or schools.

¹ See Edkins, *Chinese Buddhism* (1880) p. 38 et seq. It has cost much labour to reduce the Sūtras into a self-consistent chronological order. The Northern Buddhists when they added the literature of the *Mahāyāna* to that which was composed by Śākyamuni's immediate disciples, felt obliged to show in a harmonious scheme of his long life, to what years the various Sūtras of the *Hinayāna* and *Mahāyāna*, or "Smaller" and "Greater Development" should be assigned.

The work was also calculated to place the novelty and extraordinary importance of the methodical principle of Negativism discovered by Nāgārjuna into the best light, since if not an almost supernatural origin, yet a supernatural intervention by the serpents acting as miraculous and magic beings in their mystic way was ascribed to him. The consequence was that the personality of Nāgārjuna himself became surrounded in an increasing manner by a mystic veil so that an unlimited number of legends arose about him, that an unlimited life-time brought to a close by himself, and the acquirement of the rarest magic powers, were ascribed to him. It also resulted in bringing the unlikeliness of the incidents of his life to such a point that it became almost impossible to the critics to collect any evidence of historical facts. Whatever one may think of the mass of texts which under the name of Nāgārjuna are scattered in the literatures of Northern Buddhism, yet also here the same impersonal element will be traced again—with few exceptions, such as the *Suhyā-lekha*—which does not allow us to regard the accounts of his life as anything else but embellishment of insignificant traits of a mental talent far above the average.

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