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

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

1. Introduction

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

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

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

Through this study, we can presume that Faxian (337–422) translated a version of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra that featured buddhadhātu as foxing. Buddhabhadra, in the same period, translated a version of the Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra, in which he favoured the term foxing over a literal translation of the Sanskrit, maybe a particular Sanskrit expression, or supplying foxing in place of diverse Sanskrit phrasings. As another contemporary monk with these two, Dharmakṣema translated the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra, going further than Faxian by using the term foxing regularly.

2. Dharmakṣema, Buddhabhadra and Chinese Buddhism at the Beginning of the Fifth Century

Unfortunately, most of the Buddhist literature produced during the Northern Liang dynasty has been lost. Only some quotes can thus be found from later treatises such as the Da banniepan jing shu [Commentary on the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra], written by Guanding (?–?) when he translated the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra in 421. Daolang was one of the most accomplished monks in Hexi area at that time and was guided by Dharmakṣema in Guzang while receiving tuition from Dharmakṣema. According to the Chu sanzang ji ji [Compilation of Notes on the Translation of the Tripitaka; or Collected Records concerning the Translation of the Tripitaka], 11 texts were regarded as Dharmakṣema’s translations, as follows.

Da banniepan jing 大般涅槃經 [the Great Nirvāṇa Sūtra], 36 juan, T374.
Fangdeng daji jing 方等大集經 [the Sūtra of the Vaipulya Great Assembly], 29 juan or 30 juan, T397.
Fangdengwang xukongzang jing 方等王虛空藏經 [the Sūtra of the King of Vaipulya and the Chamber of Space], 5 juan.
Fangdeng dayun jing 方等大雲經 [Skt. Mahāmeghasūtra; the Sūtra of the Vaipulya Great Cloud], 4 juan (or Fangdeng wuxiang dayun jing 方等無想大雲經, 6 juan), T387.
Beihua jing 悲華經 [the Sūtra of Flower with Compassion], 10 juan, T157.
Jinguangming jing 金光明經 [the Golden Light Sūtra], 4 juan, T663.
Hailongwang jing 海龍王經 [the Sūtra of the King of Marine Dragons], 4 juan, T598.
Pusa dichi jing 普薩地持經 [the Sūtra of Stages of Bodhisattvas], 8 juan, T1581.
Pusajie ben 菩薩戒本 [the Text on Precepts of Bodhisattvas], 1 juan (also regarded as a text translated in Dunhuang), T1500.
Accordingly, following the completion of the first twelve fascicles of the translation of the Da banniepan jing, finishing in 421. He further states that it is certain that the source text for the remaining thirty fascicles was not enough in China and translated these texts after 417. In the Chu sanzang ji ji, the Da banniepan jing 大般涅槃經 [the Great Nirvana Sutra] and the Fangdeng daiji jing 方等大集經 [the Sutra of the Vaipulya Great Assembly] are mentioned. Among these, the most influential text in China is the Da banniepan jing.\(^{11}\) However, regarding the Nihuan jing, fewer and fewer Chinese readers read the Nihuan jing.\(^{12}\) This is a foundation of understanding the relationship between the Da banniepan jing and the Nihuan jing in Chinese Buddhism. Moreover, as it is well known, the southern text of the Da banniepan jing, containing thirty-six fascicles, was not a direct translation but an edited version based on the Nihuan jing translated by Faxian and the Da banniepan jing translated by Dharmaśema. Faxian returned to China from India and launched his translation work after 410.\(^{13}\) It almost overlapped with the date of the translation of the Da banniepan jing. Faxian cooperated with Buddhhabhadra and finished the translation of the Nihuan jing in 416.\(^{14}\) I will, therefore, ignore the southern text of the Da banniepan jing in this article. However, regarding the Nihuan jing, there will be a discussion of the Nihuan jing’s attitude to foxing, the purpose of my research, later in this article, since it is important for the study of what Dharmaśema likely read.\(^{15}\)

The original content of the Nihuan jing equates to the first ten fascicles of the Da banniepan jing translated by Dharmaśema, which contains forty fascicles in total. After completing the first twelve fascicles of the translation of the Da banniepan jing, Dharmaśema noted that the original Sanskrit text of the Da banniepan jing was not enough in China; thus, he returned to India to seek an integrated version of this sutra. He arrived at Khotan by traveling through the southern path of Tianshan and found the middle and later fascicles of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra.\(^{16}\) Concerning the Sanskrit text, Takasaki Jikido points out the partial fragments of this text.\(^{17}\) Almost simultaneously, Matsuda Kazunobu 松田和信 collected and translated all existing fragments,\(^{18}\) and Habata Hiromi 平田好美 used the previous research by Takasaki and Matsuda and provided a critical edition of the Tibetan text,\(^{19}\) followed by a published monograph on all extant Sanskrit fragments of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra.\(^{20}\)

Ono Hōdō (1937–2016) thinks the preface (Chin. jīnxū 序) by Hexi Daolang 河西道朗 is more reliable. According to this account, Dharmaśema first came to Dunhuang 敦煌 with a variety of scriptures, and then moved to the Northern Liang 北涼, where he translated the first ten juan of the Da banniepan jing, finishing in 421. He further states that it is certain that the source text for the remaining thirty juan incorporated into Dharmaśema’s the Da banniepan jing came from Khotan.\(^{21}\) According to Ōchō Enichi (1937–2016), conceiving that the same person or group translated at the same time all forty fascicles of the Da banniepan jing is difficult. Instead, they may have been edited by different people over several stages.\(^{22}\)
In other words, some fascicles or sections of the forty-fascicle Da banniepan jing were not translated by Dharmakṣema. Feng Chengjun 馮承釗 states that Dharmakṣema used the Sanskrit text collected by Zhirmeng 智猛 (?–452), who did not engage in translating. In contrast, Chen Jinhuα 陳金華 objects to Feng’s conclusion. Chen asserts that Zhirmeng not only brought the Sanskrit text of the Da banniepan jing to China but also participated in the translation. Hence, it is very likely that the translators of the Da banniepan jing were not only Dharmakṣema but included other people or groups, in addition to even some other materials or sources.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

如是善男子！我以佛眼觀一切眾生，貪欲恚癡諸煩悩中，有如來智、如來眼、如來身、結加趺坐聖賢不動。善男子！一切眾生雖在諸趣，煩悩身中有如來藏，常
"Those tathāgatas are just like me!" Sons of good family, in this way a tathāgata’s vision (jñāna) while it is very possible that this Tibetan translation is not translating the same Indic text as whether or not tathāgatas appear in the world, all these sentient beings at all times contain (jñāna). And, sons of good family, [he] perceives that inside sentient beings encased in defilements, cross-legged and motionless, endowed like myself with a [tathāgata’s] knowledge and vision. And [the Tathāgata], having perceived inside those [sentient beings] defiled by all defilements the true nature of a tathāgata (tathāgatadharma) motionless and unaffected by any of the states of existence, then says: “Those tathāgatas are just like me!” Sons of good family, in this way a tathāgata’s vision is admirable, [because] with it [he] perceives that all sentient beings contain a tathāgata (tathāgatagarbha). “Sons of good family, it is like the example of a person endowed with divine vision [who] would [use this] divine vision to look at such unsightly and putrid lotuses, not blooming and not open, and would [owing to his vision] recognise that there are tathāgatas sitting cross-legged in their center, in the calyx of [each] lotus, and [knowing that, he] would then desire to look at the forms of the tathāgatas; [he would] then peel away and remove the unsightly, putrid and disgusting lotus petals in order to thoroughly clean the forms of the tathāgatas. In the same way, sons of good family, with the vision of a buddha, the Tathāgata also perceives that all sentient beings contain a tathāgata (tathāgatagarbha) and [therefore] teaches the Dharma [to them] in order to peel away the sheaths of those sentient beings [encased in such] defilements [as] desire, anger, misguidedness, longing and ignorance. And after [those sentient beings] have realized the [Dharma, their] tathāgatas [inside] are established in the perfection [of the tathāgatas] (ma rig pa'i nyon mong pa'i shubs dbye ba'i phyir chos ston te/ide sgrub pa'i de bzhin gshags pa rnas ni yang dag pa nyid du gnas so).” Sons of good family, the essential law (dharmattā) of the dharmas is this: whether or not tathāgatas appear in the world, all these sentient beings at all times contain a tathāgata (tathāgatagarbha).

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

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

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

如彼女人而不起知，是故如來善為說法，言：善男子！莫自輕鄙，汝等自身皆有佛性，若勤精進滅眾過惡，則受菩提及世尊號，化導諸生無量無數。[Tibetan translation] Then, though the element of a tathāgata has entered into sentient beings and is present within, those sentient beings do not realize [it]. Sons of good family, in order that sentient beings do not despise themselves, the Tathāgata in this [connection] teaches the Dharma with the [following] words: “Sons of good family, without energy without giving in to despondency! It will happen that one day the tathāgata [who has] entered [and] is present within you will become manifest. (rig kyi bud ag khyed bdag nyid sro shi bar ma byed par khyed brtson ’grus brtan par gyis shig dangkhyed la de bzhin gshags pa zhiugs pa yod pa dus shig na ’byung bar ’gyur te) Then you will be designated “bodhisattva,” rather than...
“[ordinary] sentient being (sattva).” [And] again in the [next stage you] will be designated “buddha,” rather than “bodhisattva.”[40]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ten bodhisattvas, possessing strong wisdom but little samādhi, cannot see Buddha-nature. They are, therefore, unable to clearly see Buddha-nature. This is the case for all beings, according to the Buddha, who are always ādhamagotra (Buddha-nature).

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

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

In the Sanskrit text, the third part of the definition of tathāgatagarbha is tathāgatagotra. In the classical Chinese translation, this term is translated as zhenru foxing 真如佛性. Crucially, the three parts of tathāgatagarbha’s definition, namely, dharmakāya, tathatā and gotra, have been modified in the classical Chinese translation into: fashen 佛身, zhenru 真如, and zhenru foxing 真如佛性, respectively. This kind of translation of gotra in the Jiujing yisheng baoxing lun 61, translated by Ratnamati 落那摩提 (6th century CE; ?-508-?), is the same as in the Da banniepan jing translated by Dharmakṣema. The Jiujing yisheng baoxing lun was translated into classical Chinese nearly a century after the Da banniepan jing. Furthermore, both were translated during the northern Chinese dynasties. For these reasons, the monks of Dīlūn地論 tradition were very likely to have been influenced by the terms and concepts of the Da banniepan jing.
On the other hand, due to the edition and research on the Sanskrit texts of the Ratnagotravibhāga and the Lankāvatāra-sūtra, it has been clarified that yichanti—（verb: to achieve）—is the translation of the Sanskrit term icchantika. Saliently, as Mizutani noted, the term icchantika, which was used in the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra at a very early stage, cannot be found in any surviving Buddhist scripture established prior to the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra. In East Asia, numerous monks and scholars have attempted to demonstrate the possibility that icchantika achieve buddhahood. The most important issue, however, is the controversy about gotra and Buddha-nature (Chin. foxing).

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

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

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Good man, [regarding icchantikas,] “not seeing” refers to not seeing the buddha-nature. “What is good” is anuttarā samyaksambodhi itself. To say “they will not do it” refers to
Only seeing refers to seeing without good reason. The word “bad” here refers to their
repudiation of the well-balanced Mahāyāna sutras. And “this they may do” refers to the
fact that icchantikas do say there are no well-balanced [sutras]. The meaning of the verse is
simply that icchantikas do not think in a way that advances them toward the pure and good
dharma. What is the pure and good dharma? It is nirvāna itself! To advance toward nirvāna
refers to the capacity to cultivate practices that are wise and good, yet icchantikas have no
practices that are wise and good. This is why they are incapable of progressing toward
nirvāna. “On that basis, one should be afraid” refers to repudiating the true-dharma. Who
should be frightened? … In addition, one may also speak of “not seeing what has been
done” in reference to the fact that icchantikas do not admit to themselves the host of bad
things they have done. Because the icchantikas are arrogant, even though they often do
things that are harmful, while doing them they initially have no sense of fear. This is why
icchantikas are unable to attain nirvāna; they are like monkeys grabbing at the [reflection
of the] moon in the water. Good man, if all living beings, however innumerable, were to
all at once attain anuttarā samyaksambodhi, the tathāgatas would still not see the icchantikas
attaining bodhi. This is also the meaning of what I have called “not seeing what has been
carried out.” Furthermore, not seeing whose deeds were carried out means not seeing that
carried out by the Tathāgata. The Buddha has expounded the existence of buddha-nature
for the benefit of living beings, but icchantikas transmigrate through samsāra unable to
discern which this is. It is in this sense that I used the phrase “not noticing what has been
done by the tathāgatas.” Icchantikas will also look at the complete nirvāna of the Tathāgata
and say to themselves, “This truly shows impermanence, nothing more than a lamp going
out when its oil is extinguished.”

The Sanskrit fragment states that icchantikas do not see (or understand) virtuous deeds
(kalyāṇakṛta). Since this Sanskrit fragment is very likely later than what Dharmakṣema
would have translated, we cannot know that this Sanskrit was what Dharmakṣema trans-
lated. The only thing I can say here is that Dharmakṣema translates this as “bu jian zhui
wei bu jian foxing不見者謂不見佛性”, which differs from that in our surviving Sanskrit
fragment, in his classical Chinese rendering, matter what underlying term or phrase he
read. The Sanskrit fragment states “the deed of the Tathāgata will not end (or destroyed)
unless all beings involved in transmigration recognize the ultimate enlightenment. At that
moment, the Buddha will come to complete final nirvāṇa. Along with the final nirvāṇa
(atyāntaparānirvāṇa), the Buddha will become changeable and absent, like fire and a lamp.”
Alternatively, the classical Chinese translation by Dharmakṣema states that “bu jian shui zhi
suozuo不見如來所作 (not seeing whose deeds were carried out)” means ignoring tathāgata’s
deeds. Although Buddha explained foxing for beings, icchantikas cannot recognize foxing
due to their transmigration. Thus, it is called “bu jian ruilai suozuo不見如來所作 (not seeing
that carried out by the Tathāgata).” Seeing that the Tathāgata has gone into the ultimate
nirvāṇa, the icchantikas mistakenly thinks that the Tathāgata is impermanent, just like the
light that goes out when the oil is exhausted. Specifically, in the Sanskrit fragment, “dhātu”
does not appear in this passage. On the contrary, Dharmakṣema and his collaborators
translated something as “foxing,” which is the Chinese translation term of “buddhadhātu” or
“dhātu” in many cases.
Evidently, Dharmakṣéma and his collaborators translated something, compared with kalyāṇakṛta and saṃmukha-sambodhi found in the extant Sanskrit fragment, as foxing in the Da banniepan jing. The case that this kind of translation was made by Dharmakṣéma’s hand is doubtful. Furthermore, the material corresponding to the sentence “yichantika jian yu rulei bijing niepan—聞提見於如來畢竟涅槃” cannot be found in the Sanskrit fragment. Accordingly, compared to Dharmakṣéma’s translation, it is difficult to identify the direct evidence that icchantika can also achieve buddhahood in the existing Sanskrit fragments.

Notably, as the above section, the difference between the Sanskrit fragment and Chinese translation is located in the ninth fascicle of the Da banniepan jing, which is attributed to a rendering by Dharmakṣéma himself. According to previous research, after the finishing of the translation of the first twelve fascicles of the Da banniepan jing, Dharmakṣéma stayed in Guzang and learned the Chinese language for three years.71 In other words, the section discussed above, where the difference in foxing between Sanskrit and Chinese appears, was translated by Dharmakṣéma when he was not proficient in the Chinese language. For this reason, it would be understandable if his collaborators and disciples inserted some personal views, or removed agency from Dharmakṣéma, into their translations.72

According to the Gaosong zhuan [Biographies of Eminent Monks], Dharmakṣéma was engaged in the translation work of the Da banniepan jing from 414 to 421.73

Dharmakṣéma intended to go abroad because there was a shortage in the original text of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra. However, due to his mother’s death, he had no choice but to stay for several years. After that, he actually went to Khotan and found the middle portion of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra. Dharmakṣéma then returned to Guzang and translated it. Finally, he sent people to Khotan and found the latter portion of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra. This was translated into the thirty-three fascicles of the Da boenipan jing. This translation work was launched during the third year of Xuanshi and finished on the twenty-third of October of the tenth year of Xuanshi, namely the second year of Yongchu.74

Furthermore, according to the Guanding 讀記（561–632）’s record, from 414 to 416, Dharmakṣéma was engaged in translating the Da banniepan jing by collaborating with Zhimeng 齋猛. (7–452).75

When Dharmakṣéma arrived at the western Liang state 西涼州, Juqu Mengxun 呉渠蒙遜 dominated the Longhou 魯後 area and the Xuanshi 孫始 reign began. During the third year of Xuanshi, Juqu Mengxun asked Dharmakṣéma to translate the Da banniepan jing. Dharmakṣéma translated five fascicles of its original text into twenty fascicles of the classical Chinese translation. After that, due to the shortage in the original text, Juqu mengxun sent people abroad and found eight fascicles. They were the chapters of bingxing行品, shengxing聖行品, fanxing梵行品, yingerxing嬰兒行品, dewang徳王品, shizihou師子吼品, jiaoshi迦葉品 and chenu陈如品. Dharmakṣéma translated them into twenty fascicles and spread them across northern China. During the fifth year of Xuanshi, the translation work of the Da banniepan jing was complete.

If these documents are examined together, they record that Dharmakṣéma clearly translated the original text of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra with Zhimeng and the support of other collaborators at least twice.77 If so, the significant difference in foxing between the extant Sanskrit fragments and Dharmakṣéma’s Da banniepan jing discussed in this section belongs to the first twelve fascicles of his translation, which was translated by Dharmakṣéma and his collaborators when he had not yet mastered the Chinese language.
Accordingly, the role of Dharmakṣema’s collaborators and disciples in his translation of the Da banniepan jing is important. Needless to say, it is also likely that Dharmakṣema had seen Faxian’s translation, and its use of foxing, and himself reasoned that this was a good way of communicating what the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsaṁśastra was teaching.

Regarding my hypothesis mentioned above, one of my reviewers once noted: “Even if Dharmakṣema was not familiar with the Chinese language at that time, in my opinion, a translator’s limited proficiency in the target language does not make it more likely that the translator would insert into his translation something that is not there in the source language. Probably the reverse argument can also be made, namely, a translator who has excellent proficiency in the target language would then be more likely to insert into his translation something that was not there in the source language. Additionally, some sections of the Da banniepan jing translated by Dharmakṣema state that icchantikas also possess foxing.

For those who are icchantikas, although they possess buddha-nature, they are held down by the stain of their innumerable transgressions, unable to get free, like silkworms inside of cocoons. Because of their karmic conditions, they cannot produce a marvellous cause that would lead to bodhi and instead transmigrate through samsāra with no end in sight.79

彼一闡提雖有佛性，而為無量罪垢所纏，不能得出。如蠶所繫，以是業緣，不能生於菩提妙因。流轉生死，無有窮已。80

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

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

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

彼一闡提於如來性所以永絶，斯由誹謗作大惡業。如蠶蠅蟲綿網，自繫而無出處。一闡提輩亦復如是。於如來性不能開發起菩提因，乃至一切極生死際。81

Evidently, the rulai xing如來性 found in this section of the Nihuan jing corresponds to the foxing stated in the Da banniepan jing.82 However, the Nihuan jing clearly states that icchantikas are forever separated from the rulai xing due to committing the crime of criticizing the Buddhist Dharma. Although Faxian also used the term foxing in the Nihuan
jing, there were fewer uses of the term than those in the Da banniepan jing. In this section, Faxian used the term rulai xing instead of foxing.

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

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

Concerning this issue, Takasaki notes that the Da banniepan jing translated by Dharmakṣema, alongside the Nihuan jing translated by Faxian, also states that icchantikas do not possess foxing before the eleventh fascicle. In contrast, after this fascicle, the Da banniepan jing admits the possibility that icchantikas could finally achieve buddhahood. Saliently, the above portion can only be found in the classical Chinese translation rather than the Sanskrit or other texts. Furthermore, Matsumoto Shō本木史朗 asserts that in the Da banniepan jing, the you foxing有佛性 (possessing Buddha-nature) does not mean jie chengfo 皆成佛 (accomplishing buddhahood for all beings). Both Takasaki and Matsumoto were aware of the difference between the first twelve and subsequent fascicles of the Da banniepan jing. Clearly, their assertions reinforce my opinion.

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

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

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

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

As is mentioned in the first section of this article, according to the Chu sanzang ji ji出三藏記集, 11 texts were regarded as Dharmakṣema’s translations. It is impossible to
analyze the term foxing in all of them in this space-limited article. Since we have a Tibetan translation of the *Da fangdeng wuxiang jing*, the *Sprin chen po'i mdo* (Derge no. 232; Peking no. 898), I merely have a look at one case of foxing in this text.

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

*Da fangdeng wuxiang jing* 大方等無想経 (Taishō no. 387, 1102b-3)
猛風起者，喻如來常。風入毛孔者，喻諸眾生意有續性。

*Sprin chen po'i mdo* (Derge no. 232, 194b)
de bzhiin du `dir yang ting nge `dzin gyis de bzhiin gshegs pa'i yon tan ra'g pa nyid kyi yon tan gyis bsogs pa'i rlung nyon mongs pa'i nam mkha’/ la ldang bar byed cing/‌

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

Although the *Da fangdeng wuxiang jing* may appear to be a partial translation of the *Mahāmēgha-sūtra*, the real situation was more likely that the original text was still incomplete when Dharmakṣema brought it to China.\(^{92}\)

Gunabhadra was born in central India to a brāhmaṇa family and departed from Sri Lanka for China, arriving in Guangzhou by sea in around 435.\(^{93}\) He translated some famous Mahāyānist sutras, including the *Yangguemoluo jing* 央掘魔羅經 [Pāli. Aṅgulimālā-sutta; Skt. Aṅgulimālasiṣṭātra; T210] and the *Da fagu jing* 大法鼓經 [Skt. Mahābherīhārakāṣṭātra; T270], in which the term *foxing* can be found. The *Da banniepan jing* translated by Dharmakṣema, however, was brought to Jiankang 建康, present-day Nanjing 南京, becoming the foundation of the southern version of this scripture’s Chinese rendering. Huiyan 慧嚴 (363–433), Huiguan 慧鸞 (4th to 5th centuries CE) and Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385–433) edited this scripture into the southern version in 436.\(^{94}\) Moreover, with their help, Gunabhadra translated some texts.\(^{95}\) For this reason, the term *foxing* found in Gunabhadra’s renderings, which were translated later than the renderings translated by Faxian, Buddhabhadra and Dharmakṣema, was probably more or less influenced by the *Da banniepan jing*.\(^{96}\)

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

Dharmakṣema was proficient at incantation and respected in many countries.\(^{97}\) Finally, he was assassinated by Juqu Mengxun 晉姚崇穆 (368–433), the King of Northern Liang 北涼. Northern Wei destroyed Northern Liang very soon afterwards. Dharmakṣema’s disciples and collaborators moved to Pingcheng 平城, the capital of Northern Wei 北魏. Furthermore, the *Da banniepan jing* translated by Dharmakṣema was brought to Jiankang 建康, becoming the foundation of the southern version of this scripture’s classical Chinese translation. Hence, in my opinion, the translations and concepts in Dharmakṣema’s system strongly influenced Buddhism during the Northern Wei period, especially Bodhidharma 摩提流支 (6th century CE; active in China after 508) and Ratnamati 勒那摩提 (6th century CE; active in China after 508). The *Da banniepan jing*, which was sufficiently researched in Northern Wei, became the foundation of the doctrines of the Dīlūn tradition地論宗, including Huiyuan of the Jingyijing temple 淨影寺慧遠 (523–592).\(^{98}\) The influence of the *Da banniepan jing* on Chinese Buddhist thought is apparent. As abundant amount of research already exists on this issue, I will, therefore, merely discuss the cases of Huiyuan of the Jingyijing temple and Guanling of the Tiantai tradition 天台宗 in this section.

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

或有佛性，一闡提有，善根無者，有不善性，無其善性。佛性緣起為不善性，故不善性名為佛性。闡提有此。或有佛性，善根人有，闡提無者，初地已上名善根人，通則種性已上菩薩斯名善人。然有善性，無不善性。或有佛性，二人俱有，俱有理性。或性，二俱無，俱無果性。100

Huiyuan’s interpretation contains vital information. The statement that *icchantikas* also possess Buddha-nature (foxing) is clearly influenced by the *Da banniepan jing*. According to Huiyuan’s explanation, *icchantikas* have the arising Buddha-nature and principal Buddha-nature. Among these two, the arising Buddha-nature is only possessed by *icchantikas*. Thus, it is clear that Huiyuan was deeply influenced by the *Da banniepan jing* and regarded it as the foundation of his theory of Buddha-nature.101 The most significant connection in this passage is the term *foxing*, which cannot be correspondingly confirmed in the current Sanskrit fragments of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra*.

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

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

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

一云，閲即天耳，見即天眼，至即身通。二云，九地為閲，見佛性，十地為眼。見佛性，具足明了。今因慧解脫至第九地，是不聞而聞。因九地至十地，即不見而見。因十地至佛地，為不至而至。102

Guanding mentions the term “*jian foxing*見佛性” as found in the *Da banniepan jing* translated by Dharmaśēma in his commentary and states that one would see foxing if he has achieved the ninth stage of bodhisattvas’ stages. As has been discussed above, Dharmaśēma and his assistants translated something, which is reported as the *gotra* of *tathāgata* (rīga; and good deeds (*kalyāṇa-kṛta* in the surviving Sanskrit fragments of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra*, as *jian foxing* (seeing Buddha-nature).103 Evidently, the *gotra* of *tathāgata* (rīga) means those people who will or have achieved the boundary of the *tathāgata*. However, Guanding only used the term *jian foxing*, while *zhongxing* (Skt. *gotra;
lineage/caste) cannot be found. Furthermore, he attempted to integrate jian foxing with the theory of the stages of the bodhisattvas, especially the ninth stage.\(^\text{104}\)

Evidently, the *Da banniepan jing* was translated by Dharmakṣema with his assistants’ interpretations, influenced not only the Dilun monastic tradition, but also the Tiantai monastic tradition. The term “jian foxing” found in the *Da banniepan jing* was emphasized by Guanding, the direct disciple of Zhiyi (538–597)\(^\text{105}\). As is well known, this term greatly influenced the later Tiantai tradition, the Huayan (Jp. Kegon) tradition and Chan (Jp. Zen) Buddhism through some of the early Tiantai monks such as Guanding. According to Whalen Lai, the Tiantai tradition, based on the *Lotus Sūtra* (Chin. *Fahua jing*法華経), superseded the Nirvāṇa tradition through some of the early Tiantai monks such as Guanding. The significant difference between the Sanskrit fragments of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra* states that *icchantikas* do not see good deeds (*kalyāṇakrta*). Instead, the term or phrase in this corresponding place was rendered as “bu jian foxing不見佛性” in the *Da banniepan jing*. The most important term foxing cannot be found as a fixed term in our current Sanskrit fragment.

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

7. Conclusions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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**Notes**

1. Regarding these controversies on Buddha-nature and *tathāgatagarbha*, see Swanson (1993).

2. The term *buddhadhātu* was also translated with *foxing* in some texts. While Sanskrit fragments of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra* do not preserve *buddhadhātu*, the Tibetan corresponding to the Chinese preserves *sangs rgyas kyi khams/dbyings*, which is a rendering of *buddhadhātu*. See Jones (2020b). Versions of the *Ratnagotravibhāga-vyakhya* confirm that *foxing* was used to translate *buddhadhātu*. However, following Radich (2015), Dharmakṣema seems unlikely to have made a direct translation ‘*buddhadhātu* > *foxing*’ in his work. See Radich (2015, pp. 23–24).

3. Concerning the development of Nirvāṇa tradition in China, see Fuse (1974a, 1974b); Mather (1981).
We also find the term *foxing* in the *Mohe bore huloumi jing* 摩訶波若波羅蜜經 translated by Kumāraṇāja 嘉摩羅什 (344–413) (T. 223: 8.299a23-24) and the *Dazhidu lun* 大智度論 (T. 1509: 25.499a21-22). Since the Sanskrit text of Kumāraṇāja’s *Larger Prajñāpāramitā* is extant and edited, further work on the comparison with Sanskrit text is inevitable. According to most of the previous research, however, it is very likely that Kumāraṇāja did not know the theory of Buddha-nature.

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

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

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

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

Regarding this fact, see Fuse (1974a, 1974b, pp. 116–38).

Concerning the subsequent of the texts translated by Dharmaśāmaṇa, Chen Jinhua 陳金華 has further research. See Chen (2004).

The Indian Buddhist Missionary Dharmaśāmaṇa (385–433) is closely related and was probably both translated by Baoyun. See Radich (2015).

According to Lettere, the *Chu sanzang ji ji* 鄭聖藏記 2, T. 2145: 55.11b10–25.

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

Concerning the cause of the contrasts between Buddhabhadra and the saṅgha, see Fuse (1974a, 1974b, pp. 116–38).

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

For instance, Tokiwa (1930); Liu (1982); Lai (1988); and Liu (2008), etc. However, most of these researches hardly considered and used the relevant Sanskrit and Tibetan texts.

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

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

The following book can be related to the relationship between the *Da fangdeng rulaizang jing* 大方等輪在广州 and the *nehan gyō* 涅槃経.

Regarding this report, see Takasaki (1987).

Regarding this work, see Matsuda (1988).

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

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


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

Concerning Fozu tongji’s statement, see Feng (1976).

For instance, the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra* was translated by Dharmaśāmaṇa (T374) and edited by Huiguan慧觀 (T375). Kumāraṇāja met Buddhabhadra and Vimalākṣa (Chin. Beimo luocha卑摩羅訶) in Chang’an長安. After Kumāraṇāja’s death, Vimalākṣa left Chang’an for Jiangling江陵 and cooperated with Huiguan. See the *Lidai sanbao ji* 代三寶記 7, T. 2034: 49.70c22–71a1.

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

Regarding this interpretation, see Michael Zimmermann (2002, pp. 39–50); Jones (2020b, p. 145); Jones (2021); Kanō (2020).

*The Lidai sanbao ji* 代三寶記 records: “大方等如來藏經一卷 (元熙二年於道場寺出, 是第二譯, 見道祖古今雜錄, 與法立出者小異。) … 右一十五部一百一十五卷, 安帝世, 北天竺國三藏釋佛現跋尼羅, 華言覺賢.” (T49, no. 2034, 71a13-b1) This indicates that the *Da fangdeng rulaizang jing* 大方等如來藏經 (T vol. 16, no. 666), translated by Buddhabhadra, is one of the two Chinese renderings of the *Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra*.

Strickmann writes: “Properly speaking, many of [Amoghavajra’s 167 ‘translations’] were not translations at all. Instead, they might better be called ‘adaptations’; essentially, he refurbished them in line with his own terminology and ritual practice. This becomes even more striking in those cases where texts ‘translated’ by Amoghavajra are known to have been written in China centuries earlier, and directly in Chinese. A substantial part of Amoghavajra’s output thus comprises revisions of books already known in China, rather than new materials. Among the remaining, a good many cannot be found either in corresponding
Sanskrit manuscripts or in Tibetan translation—at least not in the form in which Amoghavajra presents them.” See Strickmann (2002). Also see Michael Radich’s database of attributions (https://dazangthings.nz/cbc/text/967/, accessed on 1 June 2022).


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

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

esā kulaputra dharmānām dharmatā/utpādād vā tathāgatānām anuttādād vā sadāvaitē sattvās tathāgatagarbha iti/(Johnston 1950, 73, pp. 11–12).

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


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

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

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

Following Ichikawa, it can be assumed that some possible underlying terms are related to the classical Chinese term rulaizang如来藏 through the extant Tibetan translation. They are: tathāgatagarbra; tathāgatadharmatā; dharmatā; buddhatva; sattva; sugatakāya; jinakāya; buddhakāya; tathāgatagarbha; jinapatra; tathāgatavā. See Ichikawa (1982).

Concerning this, see King (1995).

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

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

Regarding this, see Takasaki (1974).

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

Regarding this argument, see Kanō (2017).

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

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

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

Second Blāsanaśrama, Peking ed., No. 5311, A 49a4-49b3, sDe dge ed., No. 3916 K1 45a5-6.

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

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

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

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


jiujing yisheng baoxing lun 競誠一乘性論 3, T. 1611: 31.828b1-5.

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

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

Indeed, the fact remains that the jiujing yisheng baoxing lun elsewhere clearly also used foxing to render Skt. buddhadhātu, not only Skt. gotra. In other words, both Dharmakṣema and Ratnamati came to use the term foxing to translate a broader range of terms and phrases, including, needless to say, tathāgatagarbha and buddhadhātu.
Mizutani analyzes the origin of icchantika in his work, see Mizutani (1965).

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

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


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

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

Regarding the preface to the eighth fascicle of the Chu sanzang ji ji, the Sanskrit text related to the first ten fascicles of the Da banniepan jing translated by Dharmakṣema had been brought to China by Zhīmeng (7–452). The “Da niepan jing ji di shuqi” 大涅槃經記第十七 in the eighth fascicle of the Chu sanzang ji ji states that: “此《大涅槃經》初十有五品。其前五本是方道人智猛由天竺寄來，相延諸國，有太常沙門無識，廣學博辯，遁道群緣。遠方親化，先在梵壇。河西王府種諸教，為心契眾。契應王恩，究統土業。西定佛陀，今邇其人，神解悟詣，請遊論州，安止內苑。遣使高昌，取此經本，命譯譠出。” (T. 2145: 55.60a) That is, although Dharmakṣema is considered the translator of the Da banniepan jing, this classical Chinese translation version and its Sanskrit original text are closely related to the Western Regions of China.

As mentioned above, Chen argues that Dharmakṣema in fact made no translation until 421. See Chen (2004). Although I quote some materials from the Gaoseng zhuan here, I accept Chen’s conclusion.

Gaoseng zhuan高僧傳 2, T. 2059: 50.336b1-6.

Regarding the references to Dharmakṣema and Zhīmeng in the Gaoseng zhuan, see Naoumi (1986).

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

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

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

This is based on Blum’s translation, see Mark I. Blum (2013, p. 287).
Since the extant Sanskrit fragments are just a small part of the entire text of the Sūtra and there were most probably various
As hypothesized by Hodge (2012), these Sanskrit and Tibetan materials of the
It will be helpful if there is a comparative table of the term foxing to translate a broader range of terms and phrases. We also should not totally deny the element of the activity of translators.
Concerning this version, see Ōchō (1981, p. 42).
The extant Sanskrit fragments of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra currently available to us is just a part of the entire text. I must confess that there might be other examples that contradict to my argument in undiscovered portions of the Sanskrit original text.
Takasaki points out this in his work, see Takasaki (1983).
Matsumoto points out this in his work, see Matsumoto (1989).
The remaining content of Dharmaśeṣa’s translation is unique to that version, so it is difficult to assess how close it is to other versions of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra. See Radich (2019a) for the most recent discussion of this material. It looks like the Dharmaśeṣa-unique material is something of a compilation of material from various sources, from Central Asia or plausibly the work of himself. I am grateful to one of my anonymous reviewers for reminding me of this.
Concerning this, see Radich (2019a) and Jones (2020a).
To my knowledge, Christopher Jones is researching this issue in the Da fangdeng wuxiang jing. I look forward to his forthcoming publication. Regarding his previous research, see Christopher Jones (2016).
Regarding this, see Ono and Maruyama (1937, pp. 486–87).
See Kaiyuan shijiao lu開元釋教錄 11, T. 2154: 55.591a2–5.
See Gaoseng zhuan高僧傳 3, T. 2059: 50.344a5-b10.
Although the example in this section does not reflect sangs rgyas kyi khams/dbyings, Tibetan versions of the works by Gunabbadra reflect sangs rgyas kyi khams/dbyings. There is cause to believe that he was translating buddhadhātū in some other places.
Ten fascicles of the Niepan yi ji涅槃義記, written by Huiyuan慧遠 of the Jingying temple, currently exist. This is the only extant complete commentary on the Da banniepan jing translated by Dharmaśeṣa.
Concerning this issue, see Fuse (1974a, 1974b); Richard B. Mather (1981, pp. 155–73).
Regarding Huiyuan’s interpretation of foxing, see Keng (2013).
Concerning gotra in the context of this literature, see David Seyfort Ruegg (1976).
There is no agreement in the extant Sanskrit materials as to the exact nature of these bodhisattva stages. See Har Dayal (1932).
Regarding Zhiyi’s attitude toward Buddha-nature, see Paul Swanson (1990).
Lai notes this in his work, see Lai (1982).
For example, Sengrui僧叡 (378–444) stated that the Lotus Sūtra’s concept of the Buddha’s omniscience anticipated the Da banniepan jing (Nirvāṇa Sūtra)’s idea of foxing (Buddha-nature).
It will be helpful if there is a comparative table of the term foxing and its equivalents Skt. or Tib. of the Tathāgatagarbhasūtra in this article. Concerning this, we can consult Zimmermann (2002, pp. 50–52).
Since the extant Sanskrit fragments are just a small part of the entire text of the Sūtra and there were most probably various versions of Sanskrit originals of this Sūtra, it is difficult to approach a final conclusion currently.
As hypothesized by Hodge (2012), these Sanskrit and Tibetan materials of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra show signs of redaction.
It is possible that instances of buddhādhatu were replaced with tathāgatagarbha.
It is a fact that we find supporting evidence in other Tibetan works where sangs rgyas kyi khams (Skt. buddhādhatu) corresponds to Chin. foxing. Meanwhile, according to one of my anonymous reviewers, some Tibetan renderings were sometimes translated from Chinese, instead of Sanskrit texts. It might be still a complex issue even if we find a completed Sanskrit text due to their chronological relationship.


