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# On a Possible Origin of the « Ten Suchnesses » List in Kumārajīva's Translation of the *Lotus Sutra*

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## On a Possible Origin of the « Ten Suchnesses » List in Kumārajīva's Translation of the *Lotus Sutra*

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*A Hubert Durt, en toute amitié et reconnaissance*

One of the most vexed questions concerning the Chinese translation of the *Lotus Sutra* made by Kumārajīva and his « workshop » at the beginning of the fifth century is probably the origin of the passage on the « Ten Suchnesses » 十如是 (ch. *shí rúshì*, jpn. *jū-nyoze*). The wide discrepancy between the Chinese text and the Sanskrit original has been intriguing monks and scholars for centuries and led them to suggest a number of solutions which have mostly done little to solve the riddle. Some sort of consensus seems to be prevailing about the probability of either a defect or variant in the manuscript used by Kumārajīva, or of his knowledge of oral or esoteric traditions about that passage that he would have reflected in his own translation. Everybody seems to concur on the fact that, whatever be the correct solution, the problem lies in translating the Sanskrit original into Chinese, the issue being so to say bilateral. Either the Sanskrit text the Chinese translators had under their eyes was defective in some way, or their own understanding was faulty, with barely the third possibility of an interference from some unknown exegetical tradition, perchance a Central Asian one.

I shall venture here to offer another explanation that does not take into account the sole bilateral relation between the Sanskrit text and Kumārajīva's translation (406 AD), but a trilateral, or triangular, relationship involving the work of Kumārajīva's predecessor, Dharmarakṣa (286 AD). The gist of my explanation is that Kumārajīva endeavoured to

preserve the structure of Dharmarakṣa's version while bringing it closer to the Sanskrit original, thus attempting to quadrature the circle, if I may go on with geometrical comparisons, and giving the posterity a puzzling result from the philological point of view, although most fertile in the history of Buddhist thought.

It should be first emphasized that Kumārajīva's respect for Dharmarakṣa's text does not appear in this only passage, but pervades his whole translation. Any research on his translation practice ought to consider such a prominent characteristic before pronouncing any judgment. As a clear recognition of this respect, or reliance, is primordial for the acceptability of the demonstration I am proposing here, I shall first illustrate it by a very few concrete examples taken from the same *Lotus Sutra*.

As Sanskrit and Chinese are so widely diverging languages, both by their accident (or the lack thereof in Chinese) and their syntax, it would seem almost impossible for two different translators working independently from one another to achieve the same pattern for any given sentence, unless they both decided to produce a crib or a word-for-word gloss, which is clearly not the case here. It is true that we can feel a definite uneasiness with Sanskrit in Dharmarakṣa's awkward renderings, decisively contrasting with Kumārajīva's often bewildering efficiency and accuracy, but still, even when he does not seem to understand quite well the original, his Chinese is mostly idiomatic, with a richness of vocabulary superceding by far Kumārajīva. Thus, without slipping into pseudo-scientific statistics, we can be sure that the probability that two scholars working one without being aware of the other's work would produce quite different textual results. Obviously, this is not the case with Dharmarakṣa and Kumārajīva. Even if we could find only a few cases of overlapping sentence patterns in each chapter, or in the whole text, that would already be sufficient evidence for the possibility of a textual influence from the former on the latter, but the fact is that such an overwhelming majority of Kumārajīva's text

parallels his predecessor's translation that it is impossible to assess his work without referring to Dharmarakṣa.

Sometimes the parallel is almost perfect, Kumārajīva being content to replace a Chinese word by another closer to the original. Thus, in Chapter Three, for the Sanskrit: *asmākam evaiṣo parādho naiva bhagavato parādhaḥ*<sup>1</sup> « It is our own fault, not indeed the Blessed One's fault », Dharmarakṣa has: 自我等咎 非如來也<sup>2</sup>, which seems quite satisfactory, but Kumārajīva, while preserving the general meaning of the passage, renders an only slightly different sentence: 是我等咎 非世尊也<sup>3</sup>, where the changes from *rūlāi* (*tathāgata*) to *shizūn* (*bhagavat*) and from *zì* ('from', implying an ablative in Sanskrit) to *shì* ('to be', more faithful to the nominal sentence in the original) are mere technical improvements, where it is to be noticed that the alternating 'empty' and 'full' words in Chinese are equally distributed, Kumārajīva just filling differently the slots, so to say, defined by Dharmarakṣa's text.

Even when he corrects Dharmarakṣa's obvious mistakes, Kumārajīva tries to keep as conservative a stance as possible in his use of the red brush. We have a good example of his tactfulness in this passage in Chapter Four: *atha khalu sa daridra-puruṣa idaṃ vacanaṃ śrutv'āścaryādbhuta-prāpto bhavet | sa utthāya tasmāt pṛthivī-pradeśād yena daridra-vithī tenopasaṃkrāmed āhāra-civara-paryeṣṭi-hetoḥ*<sup>4</sup> « Then the poor man, on hearing those words, would be seized with wonder, and raising from the ground, he

<sup>1</sup> Wogihara, p. 59, l. 15 (I simplify some of the diacritics) I refer to the standard Ogiwara-Tsuchida edition of the Sanskrit unless it is necessary to quote other editions.

<sup>2</sup> T IX p.73b (15). I leave a blank between each syntagm of four Chinese characters to emphasize the close correspondence of both translators.

<sup>3</sup> T IX p.10c (7).

<sup>4</sup> Wogihara, p. 99, l. 7-9. The conditional mood in my rendering follows the Sanskrit, where the parable is presented as a fiction: « suppose that... »

would go to some poor village in order to beg for food and clothing. »

Dharmarakṣa's version here is almost faultless :

窮子怪之 得未曾有 則從坐起 行詣貧里 求衣索食<sup>5</sup>: « The poor son was amazed like never before and raised from his seat to go to some poor village to beg for clothing and look for food. »

It must be stated beforehand that Dharmarakṣa misunderstood the general backdrop of this scene: he translates the passage as if the father and his son had a direct conversation between themselves, though it is actually mediated by the householder's servants. With such premisses, it should be only natural that he imagines the son as raising from a seat where he would have been sitting while speaking to his father<sup>6</sup>. Kumārajīva here again corrects his elder tactfully, while following closely his sentence pattern :

窮子歡喜 得未曾有 從地而起 往至貧里 以求衣食<sup>7</sup>: « The poor son rejoiced as never before and raised from the ground to go to some poor village in order to beg for clothing and food. » In passing, he clarifies the meaning of the first verb to 'rejoice', as Dharmarakṣa's 'amazed' can be interpreted negatively, but we can see he followed the same line as his predecessor in translating the same Sanskrit word *daridra* by two distinct Chinese words 窮 and 貧. Out of five segments, one is identical<sup>8</sup>, four follow the same grammatical pattern and three end with the same character, which definitely excludes any coincidence.

<sup>5</sup> T. IX, p.80b (26-27).

<sup>6</sup> Though Dharmarakṣa had previously written that the son had indeed « collapsed on the ground » 躓地 (p. 8b (18)), he has him brought afterwards by the servants in front of his father (侍者執之 俱詣長者)(p. 8b (20)).

<sup>7</sup> T. IX, p.17a (6).

<sup>8</sup> The famous locution 得未曾有, that I choose to translate as an adverbial locution of degree, perhaps taken from the spoken language of the time and the ancestor of the modern Chinese construction.

Even when the correction to be done is minimal, it is often very interesting to superpose two parallel sentences to see how neatly Kumārajīva elaborates on Dharmarakṣa, as if he saw his text as a template for his own translation and acknowledged, so to say, his right of primogeniture. Thus, in this passage of Chapter Three, for instance, the near perfect concordance of the two translators is all the more conspicuous that Kumārajīva seems to enjoy doing variations on his predecessor's pattern, clarifying many details as he does so :

Sanskrit : *āścaryādbhuta-prāpto'smi bhagavann audbilya-prāpta idam evaṃ-rūpaṃ bhagavato 'ntikād ghoṣaṃ śrutvā.*<sup>9</sup> « I am overcome with wonder and bliss, o Blessed One, having heard such a speech from the Blessed One. »

Dharmarakṣa<sup>10</sup> : 今聞大聖 講此法要 心加歡喜 得未曾有

Kumārajīva<sup>11</sup> : 今從卍尊 聞此法音 心懷踊躍 得未曾有

It should be perfectly clear here that Kumārajīva is relying on Dharmarakṣa's text as much as on the Sanskrit original, as the words for 'now' 今 or '(my) mind' 心 are not in the Sanskrit text, and the three words meaning 'marveling' and 'rejoicing' in Sanskrit are translated by only one compound in Chinese. Two independent translators could not have reached such a symmetrical rendering.

To try to document further Kumārajīva's reliance on Dharmarakṣa's translation would be tantamount to quoting the whole of the *Lotus Sutra*, but I am sure that those few lines are enough to show that we have here a very close textual relationship, where too many of the younger translator's sentences are following the older's patterns to be a coincidental encounter. It should thus be clear that a deeper understanding of Kumārajīva's

<sup>9</sup> Wogihara, p. 59, l. 4-6.

<sup>10</sup> T. IX, p.73b (7-8).

<sup>11</sup> T. IX, p.10c (2)

translation cannot be achieved without referring to Dharmarakṣa's.

This assertion is especially true for the passage of the Ten Suchnesses.

Let us see first of all the Sanskrit original :

*sarva-dharmān api tathāgata eva jānāti :*

*ye ca te dharmā*

*yathā ca te dharmā*

*yādṛśās ca te dharmā*

*yal lakṣaṇās ca te dharmā*

*yat svabhāvās ca te dharmāh/*

*ye ca*

*yathā ca*

*yādṛśās ca*

*yal lakṣaṇās ca*

*yat svabhāvās ca te dharmā iti /*

*teṣu dharmeṣu tathāgata eva pratyakṣo 'parokṣah//<sup>12</sup>*

I shall venture to translate thus this passage :

« Only the Thus Come One knows all the dharmas :

what are the dharmas,

how are the dharmas,

what are the dharmas like,

of what characteristics are the dharmas,

of what nature are the dharmas ;

what they are,

how they are,

what they are like,

of what characteristics they are,

of what nature are the dharmas,

only the Thus Come One has had direct experience in those dharmas. »

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<sup>12</sup> Wogihara, p. 20, l. 3-7 ; here, my disposition.

I am not so foolhardy as to dare propose here a more precise translation for *dharmā*. The word is more probably, as I think, to be taken in the meaning of ‘teachings’ or ‘methods’, rather than as ‘phenomena’ or ‘phenomenal entities’, or more simply ‘things’, as most of the readers of the Chinese translation will understand it afterwards, but as this is not of the essence for the present discussion, I shall rather safely leave the Sanskrit term as such in order to concentrate on the construction of the passage. It is plain to see that it consists of ten indirect questions bound by the quotation particle *iti* which links them to *jānāti* « he knows » and more loosely to *pratyakṣo parokṣaḥ* « having witnessed directly ». These ten questions in turn are divided in two groups of five, the second one merely repeating the first and simply dropping the name *dharmāḥ*, but not in the last (the fifth instance), so that we have the following set :

(Table 1)

|    |                                    |    |                                   |
|----|------------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| 1a | <i>ye ca te dharmā</i>             | 2a | <i>ye ca</i>                      |
| 1b | <i>yathā ca te dharmā</i>          | 2b | <i>yathā ca</i>                   |
| 1c | <i>yādṛśās ca te dharmā</i>        | 2c | <i>yādṛśās ca</i>                 |
| 1d | <i>yal lakṣaṇās ca te dharmā</i>   | 2d | <i>yal lakṣaṇās ca</i>            |
| 1e | <i>yat svabhāvās ca te dharmāḥ</i> | 2e | <i>yat svabhāvās ca te dharmā</i> |

Thus both groups, the longer and the shorter one, end on the identical segment *yat svabhāvās ca te dharmā* (*ḥ*), which gives the reader a sure landmark in order to understand the structure of the text and the identity of both lists : they do refer to the same thing and are closed by the same boundary. This is an important point to keep in mind.

The first question to be raised about the subsequent and successive Chinese translations of this passage is whether the two translators had the same text under their eyes. The second question, more on the principal or methodological level, would be to inquire whether the grammatical



contrivance of the Sanskrit interrogatives can be aptly translated into Chinese. A negative answer to even one of those two questions could be enough to explain away the discrepancies between the Kumārajīva and Dharmarakṣa and between both of them and the Sanskrit text as we know it today.

As for the first question, it is difficult to give a definite answer for the time being, but, if I chose here to give the Sanskrit text as it is found in the Wogihara-Tsuchida edition, it is because there does not seem to be any significant difference between the divers Sanskrit manuscripts as we now have them and whose printed editions are listed in the bibliography. A very strong hint that the textual situation was the same at a period considerably closer to our two Chinese translators is given by the fortunate survival of the only Indian commentary on the *Lotus Sutra*, if it really to be considered as such, or at the very least an indirect and fragmentary transmission of the Indian exegetical tradition on the *Lotus Sutra*, namely the *Treatise on the Lotus Sutra* ascribed to Vasubandhu and translated into Chinese in year 508, a hundred and two years after Kumārajīva, two hundred and twenty two years after Dharmarakṣa. We have the same translation under two redactions, one by Bodhiruci, the other by Ratnamati, two scholars hailing from Northern India and working together at first before they got estranged and published their work separately. The part dealing with the « Ten Suchnesses » is the same in both redaction and can only induce us to answer positively to the two questions I have just raised, more tentatively for the first, but most affirmatively for the second : the closest evidence we have, albeit indirect, for a Sanskrit original of that passage considerably earlier than the general manuscript tradition strongly supports it and indeed suggests that it was identical. As for the skill and subtlety of the Chinese rendering, using a vocabulary already at the disposal of Kumārajīva and Dharmarakṣa, it shows that what is at stake here is not some linguistic incompatibility, but a reason to be sought elsewhere.

I give here first a translation of the Bodhiruci-Ratnamati version<sup>13</sup>: « Only a Buddha Tathagata can explain all the dharmas: what are the dharmas, how are the dharmas, what do the dharmas look like, of what aspect are the dharmas, of what substance are the dharmas; what they are, how they are, what they are like, of what aspect they are, of what substance they are: in such a way does the Tathagata actually see all dharmas, nothing that he does not actually see. »

It is plain to see that we have here two exactly corresponding texts in Sanskrit and Chinese. It is indeed a model of accuracy and clarity, and the two version can be neatly placed side by side :

(Table 2)

|    |   |    |   |
|----|---|----|---|
| 1a | <i>ye ca te dharmā</i> : 何等法                | 2a | <i>ye ca</i> : 何等                         |
| 1b | <i>yathā ca te dharmā</i> : 云何法             | 2b | <i>yathā ca</i> : 云何                      |
| 1c | <i>yādṛśās ca te dharmā</i> : 何似法           | 2c | <i>yādṛśās ca</i> : 何似                    |
| 1d | <i>yal lakṣaṇās ca te dharmā</i> :<br>何相法   | 2d | <i>yal lakṣaṇās ca</i> : 何相               |
| 1e | <i>yat svabhāvās ca te dharmāḥ</i> :<br>何體法 | 2e | <i>yat svabhāvās ca te dharmā</i> :<br>何體 |

The only visible flaw, albeit a most tiny one in such a near-perfection, is the suppression of *dharmā* in (2e), that is obviously to be explained by the translator's observance of the omission of all the occurrences of that word from list (2). The *Treatise on the Lotus Sutra* comments on three passages from the *Lotus Sutra*, the other two are quoted almost literally from

<sup>13</sup> *Miàofā liánhuá-jīng yōubōtīshè / Myōhō-rengē-kyō ubadaisha* 妙法蓮華經憂波提舍 (usual title *Fāhuá (jīng) lùn / Hokke-ron (Hokekyō-ron)*), T. XXVI, 1519 p. 4c (27-28) and 1520 p. 14b (11-12) : 唯佛如來能說一切法，何等法，云何法，何似法，何相法，何體法 // 何等，云何，何似，何相，何體：如是等一切法，如來現見，非不現見。 (my punctuation)

Kumārajīva's translation, which means that the translators were quite satisfied with its faithfulness to the Sanskrit original<sup>14</sup>. That leaves us with the strong feeling that their retranslation was not motivated by a different Sanskrit original they would have had in their hands, but by the need to bring what had now become the Vulgate Chinese text of the *Lotus Sutra* in conformity with the received Sanskrit text, which was obviously not done by Kumārajīva.

We are thus brought back to our question at the beginning : if we may safely conjecture that Kumārajīva's aberrant translation of the Ten Suchnesses does not rely on some unknown variant of the Sanskrit original, what causes did lead to such a creative act of translating?

We may perhaps at this stage go back to the chronologically first Chinese translation of the *Lotus Sutra*, the *Zhèngfāhuá-jīng* completed in 286 by Dharmarakṣa, which I have just shown how heavily Kumārajīva's « workshop » relied on. In that particular passage of Chapter Two (*Shànquán* 善權品), Dharmarakṣa has recourse to the second one of his two alternating main translation techniques : either translating the Sanskrit almost word for word often to the cost of intelligibility in Chinese, or giving a concise rendering, condensing whole sentences into a few characters, a method that Kumārajīva will bring to a supreme level of efficiency. Here is his Chinese transposition of the Sanskrit original given above :

如來皆了 諸法所由 從何所來 諸法自然 分別法貌 衆相根本 知法自然<sup>15</sup> « The Thus Come Ones all know on what rely the dharmas, from where they come, and the nature of dharmas ; they can discriminate the figure of the dharmas and the origin of their aspects ; they know the nature

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<sup>14</sup> One cannot discard the possibility that the quotations from Kumārajīva were an emendation by posterior editors, but that would not change the heart of the matter for the passage on the Ten Suchnesses, or rather the 'Five questions on the dharmas' 五何法, as this list came to be known.

<sup>15</sup> T. IX n.263 p. 68a (11-12) ; the disposition of characters is mine.

of dharmas. » My awkward translation aims simply at following as closely as possible the Chinese sentence, where we can see, compared with the Sanskrit text, both an inflation in verbs and a parcimony of nouns : three verbs describing the intellection process : *liǎo*, *fēnbié*, *zhī*, obviously translating the one Sanskrit *jānāti*, but perhaps *pratyakṣo* 'parokṣaḥ' as well, and only six segments, of which four with *fā* = *dharmāḥ*, that can be put facing the ten Sanskrit questions. Fortunately for us, Dharmarakṣa left a sure sign that he had indeed under his eyes a text very near our Sanskrit received text by repeating the locution (諸)法自然, which obviously, and adequately, translates *yat svabhāvās ca te dharmāḥ* at the end of each of the two parts. Thus, if we take this repetition as a marker for the structure he intended to render, we can sketch the following table :

(Table 3)

|    |      |    |         |
|----|------|----|---------|
| 1a | 諸法所由 | 2a | (分別) 法貌 |
| 1b | 從何所來 | 2b | 衆相根本    |
| 1c | 諸法自然 | 2c | (知) 法自然 |

If we notice that (1b) and (2b) do not repeat the word 'dharma', we can take these two segments as a brief development of the two preceding (1a) and (2a) where Dharmarakṣa sums up their meaning. We cannot ignore, too, that *fāmào* aptly translates *yādṛśās ca te dharmā*, as well as *zhòngxiàng* (*gēnběn*) embeds the translation of *yal lakṣānās*, rendering even the Sanskrit plural. With *zírán* for *svabhāva*<sup>16</sup>, we thus can say that three out of five Sanskrit terms for the five primary questions are duely translated by Dharmarakṣa, which allows us to conjecture that *zhūfā suǒyóu* and *cóng hé suǒ lái* are intended to render *ye ca te dharmā* and *yathā ca te dharmā*. In this intricate sentence, Dharmarakṣa, while translating loosely the ten Sanskrit categories, manages to render their twofold

<sup>16</sup> See Prof. Karashima Seishi's *Glossary of Dharmarakṣa's Translation*, p. 613-614.

disposition by repeating *zhūfǎ zírán* for *dharma svabhāva*. If we apply the same division as for the Sanskrit original, we thus have three categories twice repeated, which makes six, while the gist of the five basic questions is indeed rendered. The accuracy of that translation is unfortunately blurred by the looseness of the structure, added to the crossover of the two lists. Only a close reading of the passage can reveal the correspondance with the Sanskrit and I hope it is now apparent.

Such was therefore the Chinese text that Kumārajīva's workshop had to deal with in their task of bringing a more readable and understandable version of the *Lotus Sutra* to the East. And, if our assumption is correct, such was the text on which they would elaborate to produce the Ten Suchnesses.

Let us first see once more that most well know passage as we find it in all the current editions of the *Lotus Sutra* in Chinese :

*« Only a Buddha can therefore with a Buddha fully exhaust the real aspect of the dharmas, that is to say : the dharmas, such is their aspect, such is their nature, such is their substance, such is their power, such is their function, such is their cause, such is their condition, such is their fruit, such is their retribution, such is their perfect primary and derivated equality. »*<sup>17</sup>

If we compare that passage both with the Sanskrit original in its current version, with Dharmarakṣa's translation and with the Bodhiruci-Ratnamati version, we notice at once three salient features : first that Kumārajīva has in common with the Sanskrit and the Bodhiruci-Ratnamati version a clear list of ten categories ; second that it diverges from the other three in not giving a clear cut division in two sublists of five marked by the repetition of the same locution at the end of the two sublists ; third that it introduces here a term « real aspect of the dharmas » (*zhūfǎ shíxiàng* /

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<sup>17</sup> T. IX n. 262, p. 5c (13) : 唯佛與佛乃能究盡諸法實相，所謂諸法如是相，如是性，如是體，如是力，如是作，如是因，如是緣，如是果，如是報，如是本末究竟等。

*shohō-jissō*) apart from the list and not to be found in the other three versions. We shall not deal here with the differences in the introductory sentence « Only a Buddha therefore can with a Buddha... », as we have to concentrate on the Ten Suchnesses.

Let us first consider the disposition of the Ten Suchnesses. There can be little doubt that the recurring locution *rūshi* 如是 is here meant to render the Sanskrit correlative construction *ya-...ta-...* and its derivatives in the original. Kumārajīva thus agrees with Bodhiruci-Ratnamati after him in making grammatically apparent the tenfold division clearly expressed in Sanskrit, without however rendering its redundancy. It is only natural to infer from that fact that the Sanskrit text Kumārajīva was working on had the same wording as the text of Bodhiruci-Ratnamati and the current Lotus Vulgate, and that the core of the problem lies in the process of translation itself. Another obvious characteristic is the lack of symmetrical parallelism of the Ten Suchnesses; a closer look can lead us to distinguish three different constructions within :

- the first three Suchnesses (相／性／體) are independent of one another.  
 - Suchnesses four to nine form three clearly recognizable semantic and logical couples :

- 1. force-function 力－作
- 2. cause-condition 因－緣
- 3. fruit-retribution 果－報

- The tenth Suchness, however (« achieved equality of root and branches », to translate it literally) is clearly aberrant from the two previous groups both in its exceedingly long wording and in its meaning, which is apparently meant to cover the whole list.

If we discard for the time being the tenth Suchness as being a description summing up the previous enumeration, we are thus left with nine terms divided in two groups, a first one made from three independent terms and a second one made from three semantic couples. Thus

considered, we have therefore before our eyes a sixfold division, just like the one we observed in Dharmarakṣa's translation, and like in that sixfold division, there are two groups of three, the latter responding to the former, which induces us to divide Kumārajīva's first nine Suchnesses in this way :

*aspect* ⇔ *force-function*

*nature* ⇔ *cause-condition*

*substance* ⇔ *fruit-retribution*

and make the following table :

(table 4)

|      |              |
|------|--------------|
| 1. 相 | 1a 力<br>1b 作 |
| 2. 性 | 2a 因<br>2b 緣 |
| 3. 體 | 3a 果<br>3b 報 |

We have now a clearer perception of what Kumārajīva attempted to do in his translation, which seems at first sight so far from the Sanskrit original : he is actually trying to salvage Dharmarakṣa's version by keeping his primarily sixfold division based on a basis of three, while adapting it to the tenfold structure of the Sanskrit text. We can then have the following correspondences between both categories (Roman numbers for the Ten Suchnesses of Kumārajīva , Arabic numbers for the sixfold division after Dharmarakṣa) :

I (1) - II (2) - III (3) - IV (1a) - V (1b) - VI (2a) - VII (2b) - VIII (3a) - IX (3b).

The tenth Suchness then appears under its true light : it is definitely not an independent category, but is actually a gloss summing up the relation between the two groups that Kumārajīva expanded from Dharmarakṣa's version and meaning that « the primary (or 'root' 本) group of categories is entirely the same as the derivated (or 'branch' 末) one », as

well as describing the same relation in the Sanskrit original with the two sets of five questions. By incorporating this gloss as the tenth Suchness, Kumārajīva could round up his list to make it equal to the Sanskrit text while giving at the same time a new life to Dharmarakṣa's version.

We can then better understand why the Bodhiruci-Ratnamati version of the *Treatise on the Lotus Sutra*, whose translators felt the need to retranslate entirely that passage, chose to keep the word *tī* 體 as a translation for *svabhāva*: it is because they accurately perceived that Kumārajīva had already translated it in that way, and that the third Suchness was actually the end of the first group, corresponding to the fifth question of the Sanskrit original, so that we can have the equivalence 體 = 自然 = *svabhāva*<sup>18</sup>. But we can be quite certain too that for Kumārajīva the proper translation of *svabhāva* was indeed *shíxiàng* 實相 and that it was intended to replace Dharmarakṣa (諸法) 自然 in that meaning, from the other indubitable instances from his translation of the *Lotus Sutra* itself, as in Chapter One, in Sanskrit stanza 79<sup>19</sup>, where Dharmarakṣa's 經典自然<sup>20</sup> is corrected to 諸法實相<sup>21</sup>. As the locution (諸)法自然 was evidently, as we

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<sup>18</sup> We have in Chapter Five of the *Lotus Sutra* a passage very close to the one under scrutiny (which incidentally strengthens our feeling that *dharma* is to be taken here originally in the sense of 'method of teaching': *Tathāgata eva Kāśyapa tān sattvāms tathā jānāti ye ca te yathā ca te yādṛśās ca te...* » (Wogihara-Tsuchida, p. 116, l. 16-17), reading in Kumārajīva's translation (p.19b (27)) as: 唯有如來知此衆種相體性。We find here in a slightly different order the three first Suchnesses *xiàng*, *tī*, *xīng* translating the same three Sanskrit relatives *ye*, *yathā*, *yādṛśā*, but with the adjunction of a fourth Chinese word *zhòng* ('kind'). It is evidence that Kumārajīva was not attempting a word for word translation and that *tī* was not necessarily taken by him in the meaning of *svabhāva*, that was Bodhiruci-Ratnamati's interpretation. See too Prof. Karashima Seishi, *Glossary of Kumārajīva's Translation*, p. 266, s.v. *tī xīng*. And it confirms of course that in the Ten Suchnesses passage, the Sanskrit text that Kumārajīva was translating was the same as our *textus receptus*.

<sup>19</sup> *ācakṣito dharmā-svabhāva yādṛśaḥ* (Wogihara-Tsuchida, p.23, l.26).

<sup>20</sup> T. IX, n.263, p. 67a (27-28).



have seen, at the core of the ten Sanskrit questions that Dharmarakṣa translated, the fact that Kumārajīva extracted it from the list to put it, in its emended form 諸法實相, as a caption preceding his Ten Suchnesses shows his own acknowledgment of this fact. By using it as a title for the whole list, he was free to reshuffle the items of the list along his own line of thought, which was primarily to conciliate Dharmarakṣa's translation with the Sanskrit original. The list of the Ten Suchnesses becomes thus a development of the locution « Real aspects of the dharmas » which, being an emendation of *zhūfǎ zìrán*, is taken to sum up the ten categories, those being so to say sandwiched between this caption and the tenth Suchness, actually a gloss reminding the basic dual structure of the list.

It remains to explain why Kumārajīva chose the three couples *force-function*, *cause-condition*, *fruit-retribution* as attributes of the three basic terms *aspect*, *nature*, *substance*. I shall have to leave that question for another time, and for more learned persons, too. It would be perhaps rewarding to reconsider from that point of view the influence of the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra*.

In conclusion, let me restate briefly what I tried to demonstrate in these pages :

- The aberrant passage on the Ten Suchnesses by Kumārajīva is not caused by a textual variant in some yet unknown Sanskrit version of the *Lotus Sutra*; he used most probably the same version as his predecessor Dharmarakṣa and his successors Bodhiruci and Ratnamati.
- The actual reason for Kumārajīva's version was his concern for salvaging Dharmarakṣa's text, in which he rightly discerned a paraphrasis of the two

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<sup>21</sup> T. IX, n.262, p. 5a (10). See other examples in Prof. Karashima Seishi's two Glossaries, s.v. *zì rán* and *shí xiàng* respectively. Neither is it without relevance that the Chinese words for each of the first three Suchnesses, 相, 性, 體 has been used at some time by Chinese translators for rendering *svabhāva*, cf. Ogiwara *Bon-wa dai-jiten*, p. 1535b.

sets of five questions in the Sanskrit original, expressed in two sets of three clauses.

- The original construction of Kumārajīva's Suchnesses is thus two sets of three terms, the first group being composed of the three independent terms of one character each (相/性/體), the second one of three binomial compounds, whose six characters were then taken separately, bringing the list to nine.
- The tenth Suchness, originally an oral or written gloss describing the relation between the two basically identical sets, was included in the list, thus conciliating the six-term list of Dharmarakṣa with the ten-term list of the Sanskrit original.

The apparent discrepancy between Kumārajīva's translation and the Sanskrit text of the *Lotus Sutra* in such an essential passage for the history of Buddhist teachings in East Asia can thus be explained at the condition that we take into account the mediation of Dharmarakṣa's translation, which actually played as important a role, although underestimated to this day, as the two other protagonists in this textual elaboration.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> I presented a first oral outline of my interpretation after reading a communication on another subject at the New Frontier symposium of the ICABS on December, 5, 2009. A shorter written account will be found as part three of a lecture I made on October, 16, 2010 at the conference « Shifting Paradigms: How Translation Transforms the Humanities » (Levis Faculty Center, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) under the title : « Traduire les Ecritures et changer le monde – Comment la traduction transforme une langue, une vision du monde, un texte : l'exemple de l'Asie Orientale ». The English version of this lecture is to be published soon.

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