READING THE ONE HUNDRED PARABLES SŪTRA: THE DIALOGUE PREFACE AND THE GĀTHĀ POSTFACE

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If all the world is a stage, then the ancient Indian Buddhists would say that what is being played out in this theatrum mundi is one great tragedy. To the compilers of the One Hundred Parables Sūtra, as well as the Sūtra of the Talented and the Stupid, what is played out is very much a tragicomedy: As with Shakespeare, the tragic and the comical are often inextricably intertwined. To them, this world is not a fool’s paradise. But it certainly is a Ship of Fools. Chān texts, as well as Chān practice, are thoroughly Indian-inspired. They combine flamboyantly vulgar Chinese colloquialisms with lexical, as well as syntactic, loans from non-Chinese languages, not necessarily Sanskrit and Pali. It is in China, Korea and Japan that the Buddha tends to smile, not in India.

The text known as the One Hundred Parables Sūtra, the Chinese version of which dates to 16 October 492, an example of the Piyū jīng 警喻經 (avadāna sūtras), is an important precursor to this Chān literary tradition. It is a text which uses humorous tales as a vehicle to nirvāṇa. The One Hundred Parables Sūtra is a jestbook and, like the Xiányū jīng 賢愚經 (Sūtra of the Talented and the Stupid, XYJ), it is all about entering nirvāṇa with a smile, like the smiling Chinese Buddha who is so exasperatingly absent in Indian iconography. These parables are very much like those medieval exempla or bispel used to support Christian messages.

1 A complete and profusely annotated, as well as rhetorically analyzed, bilingual edition by the present writer of the One Hundred Parables Sūtra will be found in Thesaurus Linguae Sericae (TLS) under the text label BAIYU (see http://tls.uni-hd.de/).
2 Five further examples of avadāna sūtras, presenting 12, 32, 61, 39 and 44 parables respectively, will be found in T. 4, nos. 204–208:499–542.
3 For the exemplum, see Bremont / LeGoff / Schmitt 1982 and particularly the eminently useful Tubach 1969. Moser-Rath 1984 remains the unsurpassed masterpiece on traditional European joculography. For a partial bilingual edition of the Sūtra of the Talented and the Stupid and a complete translation of the earliest extant Chinese jestbook, see the complete translation of Xiàolín 笑林 (The Forest of
I have found that the *One Hundred Parables Sūtra* (BYJ) richly rewards close reading not only from a buddhological point of view, and not only from the point of view of comparative narratology, but also in the context of Chinese literary and linguistic history.

About the provenance of the text generally known today as the BYJ we do know a surprising amount.\(^4\) The author of the original was an Indian monk named Sañgasena 僧伽斯那, about whom little is known, and the translator/compiler of the work as we have it today was a monk from childhood, whose family is said to be from central India (Zhōng Tiānzhú 中天竺), Guṇavrddhi 求那毗, who chose for himself the Chinese name Déjin 德進 (according to the GSZ, it was Ānjin 安進) when he settled under the Southern Qi 南齊 (480–502). Guṇavrddhi came to Jiànyè 建邺 (present-day Nánjīng) in 479, and is said to have finished the compilation of the book on 16 October 492, translating it in to a language which was then known as Qi yǔ 齊語, ‘the language of (the Southern, or Xiāo 蕭) Qi (Dynasty).’\(^5\) Guṇavrddhi’s biography in the GSZ tells us that he was an expert in dàoshù 道術 ‘the arts of the Way.’ He is said to have died in Jiànyè in 502 (according to L. N. Menshikov possibly in 503). As we shall see, the introductory dialogue between the Buddha and the brahmans show fairly clear evidence that Guṇavrddhi was familiar both with the book Lǎozǐ 老子, and with the Zhuāngzǐ 莊子. I would venture to suggest that this introduction may be the work of Guṇavrddhi rather than his master Sañgasena. However, I hasten to add that I have no proof.

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\(4\) See *Chā sānzhàng jījī* 出三藏記集 by Sēng Yōu 僧祐 (445–518) and *Gāosēng zhuàn* 高僧傳 (GSZ) by Huijīāo 慧皎 (467–554), and for details, see Gurevich/Menshikov 1986:7–49.

\(5\) For over 40 ways of referring to the Chinese language, see my 2008 lecture *On the Very Notion of the Chinese Language.*
Here, in any case, is a complete translation of Guṇavṛddhi’s entry in the GSZ, where his is, in fact, the last full entry:

T. 50, no. 2059:345a24

求那毘地，此言安進。  Guṇavṛddhi, called Ānjin⁶ in this country, was a man of Central Indian origins.⁷
本中天竺人。  From childhood he followed the path (of Buddhism).⁸
弱年從道。 As his teacher, he served⁹ the Mahāyāna Indian Buddhist master Saṅgasena.
師事天竺大乘法師僧伽斯。 He was intelligent, had a formidable memory and was devoted to recitation (of Buddhist texts).¹⁰

諳究大小乘將二十萬言。 He had perused up towards 200,000 characters of Hinayāna and Mahāyāna scriptures, at the same time he studied scriptures from other traditions, and he had a clear understanding of Yīn and Yáng.¹¹

兼學外典 When he predicted times and events he proved many times right.¹²

明解陰陽。 At the beginning of the Jiànyuán period of the (Southern) Qi (dynasty) he arrived in the capital [Jiànyè] and he put up at the Pìyélí Monastery.

來至京師 Holding the ritual bell hanging from a staff in his hand, accompanied by his disciples, 末

止毘耶離寺。 ²

執錫從徒威儀端肅。 ³

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⁶ Elsewhere he is said to be called Déjìn 德進. See Dà-Táng nèidiàn lù 大唐內典錄 (T. 55, no. 2157:834b8 and Lidài sānbiāo jì 歴代三寶紀 T. 49, no. 2034:96a8: 天竺三蔵法師求那毘地. 齊言德進).
⁷ Two readings are possible: either his family was ‘originally’ from Central India, or he himself was ‘originally’ born in India but moved to China.
⁸ In pre-Buddhist Chinese, cóng dào 從道 would mean ‘follow the Way,’ not, as here ‘become a monk; take the vows.’
⁹ There are, in fact, a few pre-Buddhist examples of shīshì 師事 used for the usual pre-Buddhist verbal shī 師 ‘treat as one’s teacher.’
¹⁰ Since there has been this emphasis on memory one suspects that the recitation was by heart.
¹¹ Probably fāngshù 方術 or dàoshù 道術.
¹² Lit. ‘not once’—the rhetorical figure is LITOTES.
authoritative and deeply serious, he wandered about.

Kings, dukes, and the nobility all venerated him and begged for instruction from him.

Earlier, in Central India, Sangasena had copied and edited from the Sūtrapitāka the most important parables, and had compiled them into one work.

All in all there were one hundred stories, for the teaching of the newly converted.

Guṇavṛddhi knew all these and understood the meaning of all of them, so in the 10th year of the Yōngming era (492 AD), in the Autumn, he translated these into the Qi language.

In all there were ten scrolls, and they were called the One Hundred Parables Sūtra.

After the Dàming era (457–464), the translating of scriptures was abruptly cut short.

When he devoted himself to preaching everyone in his generation was full of praise for him.

Guṇavṛddhi was a man of high caliber, so from miles around people flocked to him.

The merchants of the Nánhǎi region all offered their support.

All the gifts he accepted and used all of them for the promotion of the true dharma.

On the banks of the River Qín Huái in Jiànyè

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13 The point is crucial: These parables were collected in India by that Indian monk, and certainly not in China. Note that the parables were collected. The introductory dialogue is not mentioned.

14 Note that there were only few translators at this time!

15 This text is preserved in the T. canon.

16 After that period, there was little translating and Guṇavṛddhi marked a new departure.
he built the Zhèngguān monastery and settled down there.
He also refurbished the Halls in the Zhèng-

guānsì with multi-storey buildings, and several
levels of gates.
In the second year of the Zhōngxīng era (A.D.
502), in the Winter, he died where he had made
his home.

The Title

In fact, the One Hundred Parables Sūtra is referred to by at least the
following distinct Chinese titles:

*Bāiyù jīng 百喻經 ‘One Hundred Parables Sūtra’
Pīyù jīng 譲喻經 ‘The Parables Sūtra’ (the introduction is mentioned
as Pīyù jīng xù 譲喻經序)
*Bāijù pīyù jīng 百句譬喻經 ‘The Parables Sūtra in One Hundred
Sections’
*Bāijù pīyù jǐjīng 百句譬喻集經 ‘The Collected Sūtra of Parables in
One Hundred Sections’
*Chī huámán 瘡華鬘 ‘The Garland of Follies’

The colophon line quoted in ZZ. (CBETA R129_p0918a11) seems
to suggest that the earliest title is the last one in the series, Chī
huámán 瘡華鬘 ‘The Garland of Follies.’ I agree with Menshikov
that this is likely to have been the original title of Saṅgasena’s work.

It appears from this last line, which we shall analyze below, that
Saṅgasena did not imagine that he was writing an (apocryphal) sūtra.
He may conceivably have deliberately written in the style of a sūtra, if,
that is, if he did compose the introductory part of the composition as a
whole, and if having decided to write in the style of a sūtra he then
changed his mind in the last line of his final gāthā and did not call his
book a sūtra after all.

However, the Taoist references in that introductory dialogue would
seem to me to strongly suggest that its author was familiar with early
Chinese Taoist literature, something we know about Gunavṛddhi, but
which is unlikely to have been the case for Saṅgasena who wrote in an
Indian language and may not have known Chinese at all.

Menshikov suggests a most instructive comparison between the
following:
1. Parable 2 and the alternative version of the same story translated literally by Kumārajiva in T. 4:532–533
2. Parable 54 and the alternative version translated in T. 4:528
3. Parable 57 and the version of the same story translated in T. 4:525

Assuming for a moment, with Menshikov, that what Guṇāvṛddhi was working on was something like those versions preserved for us in these alternative avadāna collections, it would appear that Guṇāvṛddhi introduced several fundamental changes to the Indian tales in order to adapt them to the Chinese context:

1. Guṇāvṛddhi shortens the texts by leaving out descriptive narrative detail that contributes nothing to the essential story line (in Parable 4); he produced a lean Chinese narrative product.
2. Guṇāvṛddhi often added concrete details that increase comprehension of the dynamics of the story line.
3. Guṇāvṛddhi reduces highly abstract complexities didactically in the final buddhological comments to sentential simplicity, and (in Parable 57) slightly expands and in any case concretizes a brief abstract didactic final comment, reducing its message to the common sense notion that everything has its proper time and season.

In what follows, I present some reading notes on this introductory dialogue of the BYJ and on the final ji 偈 ‘gāthā’ of that influential text which is, in fact, mentioned or quoted 100 times in the CBETA version of the Tripiṭaka. My notes are intended to place the BYJ in the context of the history of Chinese literature and of the Chinese language. For the place of the BYJ in the context of Indian narrative literature, see Hertel 1912 (Ein altindisches Narrenbuch), as well as his annotation of The Thirty-Two Bharatāka Stories (Hertel 1921).

Our understanding of Chinese Buddhist literature will never be much more advanced than our detailed grasp of the semantic and rhetorical nuances of our primary Chinese Buddhist sources. The present tentative paper tries to work towards a deepening of our philological understanding of these primary sources in an effort to determine the nature of the discourse in the One Hundred Parables Sūtra. It is meant as a starting-point for discussion. It invites critical examination and learned criticism everywhere.
Part 1

TEXT

Once upon a time, the Buddha lived in the city of the dwelling of the King,

In the Bamboo Part of Quèfēng, he met with all the great monks, bodhisattvas-mahāsattvas and 36,000 of the eight categories of the spirits.

At that time within the saṅgha there were gathered 500 heterodox brahmans.

ANNOTATIONS

A. The passive is significant in Sanskrit mayā śrutam. How do you say ‘It was heard by me’ in classical Chinese? The constraints on passivization in both pre-Buddhist and Buddhist Chinese need careful exploration. There is a distinctly increased liberty to form passives, but that increase does not reach verbs like wén 聆.

B. The meaning is not: ‘I’ve heard it said (by no matter whom) that,’ but ‘I have heard (from an authoritative source) that.’

C. This is Ānanda speaking, literally, according to the traditionalist conventionalist way of presenting things (or is it only perceived as an empty façon de parler?). In any case, the BYJ poses explicitly as a sūtra 經, and not as a śāstra 論, a Chinese word which also translates the technical terms abidharma and upadeśa. The point that our book poses as a sūtra I emphasize because it will become exquisitely problematic when one gets to the highly interesting pentasyllabic jì 偈 gāthā-postface of the book, as we shall see.

Ānanda is traditionally supposed to have heard these sūtras: He

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17 Parts one to ten are the preface to the BYJ, the remaining parts are the postface.
was *not* an arhat, became one upon the Buddha’s death, we are told. And because he was not an arhat, he had not the qualifications to paraphrase what he heard as he wrote it down: He had to be painfully literal, according to ancient Indian hermeneutic traditions. He wrote down *exactly* what he heard, *evam eva ‘exactly as is,*’ to quote the Indians in their own language. What he wrote down was the *Master’s Voice,* or the *ipsissima vox.* He did not write down ‘something like what he heard.’ Such, in any case is the conventional pose. And the interesting question is how seriously we should take this pose in the case of an almost demonstrative *yijing* ‘doubtful *śutra*’ like the present one: Whoever composed this introduction, I cannot help thinking, must have known that its anachronistic and almost surreal allusions to Zhuāngzī and to Lǎozǐ would not escape the readership. It is not only unlikely but manifestly implausible to an intended Chinese audience that Ānanda heard such allusions to Taoist classics from the Buddha.

[2]
A. *Rú* 如 ‘like,’ but ‘as follows,’ as in modern *rú xià* 如下 which does not mean ‘along the following lines.’
B. *Shì* 是 ‘the following’ is not anaphoric ‘the aforesaid’ but cataphoric ‘as follows.’ *Rú shì* 如是 does not work like pre-Buddhist *rú shì* 如是 ‘like this.’

[3] *Yī* — does not mean ‘one (as opposed to two or three),’ but rather ‘a certain’: The history of the indefinite article influenced by Buddhist Chinese needs to be written.

[4] *Shí* 時 ‘period; season’ does not normally mean ‘at some point of time’ in pre-Buddhist texts. Compare the ubiquitous opening phrase of a new paragraph in Buddhist Chinese texts 時... ‘at this point of time ....’ This usage is absent in pre-Buddhist literature.

[5] *Zhù* 住 does not mean to ‘have one’s abode in, dwell in’ in pre-Buddhist texts, but is attested in this meaning in *Shīshūo xīnyū.* Karlgren glosses the word once in the *Shūjīng* as ‘emplacement.’ Why did Buddhist texts introduce this as a high-frequency word? Probably, it is a matter of picking up current colloquialisms.

[6] *Shè* 舍 ‘(often humble) dwelling’ is very curious in a proper name for a royal abode. Compare *hánshè* 寒舍 ‘my humble home’ in modern literary Chinese, which is in fact already attested in Féng Mènglóng’s 馮孟龍 *Xīngshì hēngyán—Chén duō shōu shēngsī*
**fuqī 醒世恒言** • **陈多寿生死夫妻** of the late Ming dynasty, if not before.

[7] **Chéng 城** ‘walled city’ is not normally a noun that is modified in pre-Buddhist Chinese, i.e., it is not normally NPOST-N.18 Thus, **Wángshèchéng 王师城** (translation of ‘Rājagṛha’) is a post-Buddhist construction, probably inspired by translation needs.

[8] **Yǔ 與** ‘together with’ is a scope-bearing word, and its scope goes right until **liù-qìǎn rén** 六千人 ‘6,000 people.’ Technically, 與 is VTON.ADV, i.e., a transitive verb with its object, that phrase preceding and modifying a main verbal expression. And, it turns out that this N can be highly complex, especially in Buddhist Chinese, and much less so in pre-Buddhist Chinese. Again, this change is surely induced by current needs of providing fairly literary translations of Buddhist texts.

[9] **Zhū 諸** raises many problems in addition to the question of scope which goes until 摩訶薩. An important semantic question is to what extent 諸 ‘all the (various)’ which in pre-Buddhist Chinese always must refer to delimited set, is also definite in this way in Buddhist Chinese contexts like these. There certainly are many other Buddhist Chinese contexts where it is not. An entirely unrelated syntactic point is that apparently the scope of 與 cannot go across the conjunction, as evidenced by the addition of another 諸 in the present context.

[10] ** Ji 及** and **yǔ 與** are not interchangeable or synonymous. For example, the classical Chinese for ‘with X and Y’ can only be translated as 與X及Y, never as 及X與Y. They are not just dialect variants. We do, of course, often have 及 as VT+N.ADV in pre-Buddhist Chinese. However, in pre-Buddhist Chinese there is no 及 ... 俱. Apart from everything else, the construction is rhythmically outlandish with its abnormally long subject and the minimally short predicate: This is a matter of rhetoric and style.

[11] **Zhū 諸** ‘all the’ should probably be indefinite ‘a host of (supernatural and dragon-like creatures of the eight categories).’

[12] What exactly is counted as being 36,000? The supernatural and dragon-like creatures? Or the great monks, bodhisattvas, mahā-satvas?

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18 For a definition of these syntactic constructions, see TLS.
[13] Rén 人 is not here a noun meaning ‘humans,’ but a post-posed classifier as in 堯有子十人 ‘Yáo had ten sons’ and not ‘Yáo had sons. They were ten persons.’

[14] Jù 俱 ‘get together; be together’ is a disproportionately short predicate after such a long subject. Rhythmic imbalance of this sort is exceedingly rare in pre-Buddhist Chinese, if indeed it occurs at all.


[16] Hùi zhōng 會中, ubiquitous in Buddhist prose, is very rare in pre-Buddhist Chinese, if it occurs at all: A hui 會 is a meeting for the purpose of negotiation in pre-Buddhist Chinese, and never a gathering for the propagation of religious or philosophical truth.

[17] Yìxué 異學 ‘heterodox,’ just like wàidào 外道 ‘heterodox,’ is defiantly non-Chinese, perhaps even un-Chinese, and outlandish in its diction. Moreover, since the fánzhì 梵志 ‘brahmans’ are always heterodox in Buddhist texts, the addition of 異學 is a case of redundant or tautological non-restrictive modification, as in yúmín 愚民 ‘the ignorant common people’ in pre-Buddhist Chinese, which does not normally mean ‘of the people those who are ignorant.’

[18] According to the Guǎngyùn 廣韻 dictionary, fàn 梵 ‘brahman’ has two readings, one of which has a final -m according to most Middle Chinese reconstructions.

[19] Wǔ-bǎi rén 五百人 is again not a parenthetic insertion; fánzhì wǔ-bǎi rén 梵志五百人 ‘500 brahmans’ is a plain classifier construction structurally similar to mǎ sān pǐ 马三匹 ‘of horses three items > three horses.’ Note that the construction 三匹馬 ‘three horses’ is not acceptable classical Chinese.

The book begins with a defiantly arhythmic and outlandish ‘Sanskritic’ introduction which asserts the non-Chinese superior authority of the text.
Part 2

TEXT

従座[1]而起
「吾[4]聞：
佛道洪深[6]，
無能及者[7]。
故來歸問[8]；
唯願[9]說之。」
佛言[10]：「甚善[11]。」

TRANSLATION

They got up from their seats
and politely addressed the Buddha as follows:
‘We have heard that the way of the Buddha is vast and profound
and such that nobody can reach it.
That is why we come here to ask about it.
We just hope that you will expound this way.’
The Buddha said: ‘Very good!’

ANNOTATIONS

[1] Note the redundancy of ēr 而, alternatively the addition of another
semantically superfluous word in XYJ: 念是事已 從坐處起 往至
佛所 and in Fāhuá jìng 法華經: 即從座起. Contrast the defiantly
unrhythmized ZTJ 1.8.12: 阿闍世王為結集主時，諸比丘則從座
起 as opposed to ZTJ 2.2.4: 師付法已，即從座起 and 3.16.11 從
座而起，禮拜問曰（Incidentally, pre-Buddhist received texts
usually write the word zuò 座 as zuò 坐. The notion of a seat
became current in Buddhist Chinese, as in the binomes like
shīzi-zuò 獅子座 / 師子坐 ‘Lion Seat.’)

[2] Bái 白 as a term of polite address is regular Buddhist Chinese.
Probably a demonstrative colloquialism in origin; surely the
translators knew better.

[3] Yán 言 ‘declare’ as the second in a series of verbs of saying
becomes standard Buddhist Chinese, and is not the standard in
pre-Buddhist usage, where yuē 曰 clearly predominates.
[4] 36,000 persons are said to speak *unisono*: An indifference to realism which is typical of Buddhist narrative but rare in pre-Buddhist narrative texts.

[5] *Wú* 吾 [4] wén 闕, rhythmically supernumerary, introduces a qudrisyllabic sequence of two lines. Note the unsassertive, never contrastive 吾 which significantly differs from the assertive and often contrastive 我.

[6] *Hóng-shēn* 洪深 ‘vast and profound’ is not pre-Buddhist usage. Maybe it should be regarded as loan-formation? It should be appreciated as something of an outlandish neologism, perhaps, as is, of course the phrase *néng jí zhe* 能及者 immediately below.

[7] Note the sustained asymmetry of CAESURA:

佛道/洪深，
無//能及/者。
故//來/歸問；
唯願/說之。

[8] *Lái guī wèn* 來歸問 ‘came to turn-to-and-ask’ already seems to treat *guī wèn* 歸問 as one complex transitive verb with a contextually determinate omitted object, i.e., the Way of the Buddha, (technically, it is VP(ON), but the word is also used as VPTON, and even VPT+PREP+N).

[9] *Wéi yuàn* 唯願 ‘it is our great hope that the contextually determinate but omitted subject would’ and *not* ‘we only wish’ is current elegant pre-Buddhist Chinese. Technically, this is VPTT(ON.+V and not VPTT(ON[PIVOT].)+V.

[10] Such use of *yán* 言 for *yuē* 曰 does occasionally occur in pre-Buddhist Chinese, but in Buddhist Chinese it becomes standard. One notes that 言 here does not introduce a substantial statement put forward, thus the word does not here mean anything like ‘propose, maintain.’

[11] The passage ends with a combination of ALLITERATION: Initial consonants of the two words are the same in Middle Chinese, and both words end in nasal finals. Pulleyblank’s Middle Chinese reconstruction for this would be *dzim *dzien.

The passage also ends with the rhetorical device called STACCATO, a major caesura in the form of a sentence break within a four-character phrase.
Part 3

TEXT

答曰[6]：“亦有，亦無。[7]”
如今無者，云何言有。”[13]

TRANSLATION

They asked: ‘Does the world count as existing or as non-existing?’

The Buddha replied as follows: ‘It both exists and does not exist.’

The brahmans said: ‘Supposing now that it exists, then how can one say that it does not exist?

And supposing that it does not exist, how can one say that it does exist?’

ANNOTATIONS

[1] In the narrative part the text turns to standard classical Chinese 問曰 in which 問 is the rather complex VT(+N.)+VT[0]+S, i.e., a transitive verb with an omitted contextually determinate object, that whole phrase followed by a transitive verb with a lexically determinate omitted subject and a sentential object.

[2] A. The principle that all lines have the length of multiples of four is maintained, here with STACCATO together with the rhetorical device of SYNCOPE, i.e., the main syntactic caesura in a line occurring not at the border of four-character phrases, but elsewhere. This is conveniently brought out in displaying the text in quadrisyllabic groups:

問曰[1]：“天下[2]
為有，為無。”

B. Tiānxià 天下 ‘all under heaven, the oikoumenē,’ is here used to mean something like ‘this world of visible things,’ ‘this world of ours,’ ‘the visible world,’ ‘the universe as we know it,’ as opposed to ‘the Beyond,’ ‘the transcendental other world.’ Classical Chinese wànwù 百物 could not express this. Yǔzhòu 宇宙 would refer to the framework rather than its content, and it might well be taken to refer to the whole universe including the transcendental ‘Beyond.’
A clear terminological distinction ‘Diesseits/Jenseits’ is not available in pre-Buddhist classical Chinese.

[3] Wéi 為 does not mean ‘to be’ but ‘must be held to be; count as’ and is used in a highly specialized ‘philosophical’ sense that is current in pre-Buddhist Chinese.

[4] Wéi yòu wéi wú 為有 為無 is a STACCATO phrase which involves ANAPHORA of 為 (i.e., two successive clauses begin with the same character), as well as EPHIPHORA-ANTITHESIS (of yòu 有/ wú 無; i.e., two successive clauses end in antithetic words or antonyms or ‘ANTITHETIC EPHIPHORA’).

[5] Unmarked alternative questions are standard in pre-Buddhist Chinese. Marking the alternative with yì 抑 ‘in questions: or’ would be inelegant almost to the point of ungrammaticality. The marker is omitted although it probably was present in whatever the language was that this was translated from.

[6] Dá yuē 答曰 represents a kind of grammatical or structural REPETITIO: dá 答, parallel to wèn 問 above, is used as a VT(+N.)+VT[0]+S. Note that it is not part of a subtle HYPO-ZEUGMA (omission of a word which is specified later in context), because in fact the fànzhì 梵志 mentioned below are not already the only speakers addressed here, if I understand the context properly (see note [8] below).

[7] In this STACCATO figure of speech, we have again ANAPHORA (of yì 亦) within a quadsyllabic phrase together with EPHIPHORA-ANTITHESIS (of 有 / 無 as above).

[8] Fànzhì 梵志 ‘the (heterodox 異學) brahmans’ are identified as the subject of the assertive hostile logic-chopping. They were only part of the questioning crowd before, and in view of the Buddha’s answer they now take their own independent initiative.

[9] The brahmans use technical logical terminology which specifies purely hypothetical logical PROTASIS (rù jīn 如今) as later in the Línjì lù 臨濟錄 (LJL) 13.5: ‘Suppose there were a substance made of buddhas and devils blended without distinction into a singly body, like water and milk mixed together.’ In pre-Buddhist Chinese jīn 今 alone functions as an abstract marker of the PROTASIS in purely hypothetical sentences: 今有人於此 ‘Suppose we have a man here
[...].’ The Buddhists deliberately use a colloquial variant in this technical function.

[10] Zhe 者 (technically NPRO.POST-S1:ADS2, i.e., a pronoun following after and being modified by one sentence and that phrase in turn preceding and modifying another sentence) is a general marker of the PROTASIS in conditionals is a highly literate and sophisticated pre-Buddhist usage. The translators must have been fairly literate to be able to use this kind of construction.

[11] Yúnhé 云何 ‘(you) say how’ as a rhetorical question particle is an archaism (it is found in the ancient Book of Odes) which gained extraordinary currency in Buddhist translations. One may speculate, probably idly, whether 云何 is not one of those cases of archaisms that disappear from ordinary discourse and become colloquialisms. The use of 云何 in so many Buddhist texts might possibly represent a deliberate use of the rhetorical device of COLLOQUIALISM. The matter deserves detailed investigation.

[12] Yán 言 is specifically not ‘to talk, to engage in dialogue,’ although it may sometimes be loosely used that way. Its characteristic meaning tends to be ‘to speak up, to maintain, to propose’ in pre-Buddhist Chinese.

[13] The patterns of—often antithetic—PARALLELISM need no detailed comment:

A. 為有 / 為無
B. 亦有 / 亦無
C. 如今有者 云何言無 / 如今無者 云何言有

The repeated bisyllabic ANAPHORA of 如今 and the trisyllabic ANAPHORA in 云何 almost parodies pre-Buddhist propensities towards parallelism while at the same time imposing a rigid regime of logical comparability.

Part 4

TEXT

答曰：‘生者[1]言：‘有。’
死者言：‘無。’[2]
故說[3]：‘或有，或[4]無。’”
The Buddha replied as follows: ‘When something lives one says: “It exists.”’
and when something is dead one says: “It does not exist.”
That is why one says: “It may exist or it may not exist.”

[1] The use of the particle zhe 者 here is part of highly abstract discourse: ‘As for what is alive, (one maintains that it “exists”; as for what is dead one maintains that it “does not exist.”’).

[2] This parallelism with a combination of antithetic ANAPHRORA (生 / 死) and antithetic EPHIPHORA (有 / 無) belongs to the pithy high rhetoric of the Lǎozǐ 老子.

[3] There are cases where shuō 說 is colloquial and means ‘say’ in BYJ. But the use here is the classical Chinese: ‘Therefore one explains: [...]’. The status of verbs of saying outside the quadrisyllabic pattern, is frequent, but as we have seen, not universal. It remains worth explaining why shuō yuē 說曰 has always been excluded.

[4] The STACCATO with ANAPHRORA (或) with the resumptive antithetic EPHIPHORA (有 / 無) repeated from lines two and three is again standard pre-Buddhist high style.

Part 5

TEXT
問曰：“人從何[1]生。”
答曰：“人從穀而[2]生。”
問曰：“五穀[3]從何而生。”
答曰：“五穀從四大[4]火風而生。”

TRANSLATION
The [brahmans] asked: ‘What does man originate from?’
The Buddha replied: ‘Man originates from grain.’
They asked: ‘What do the five kinds of grain originate from?’
The Buddha replied: ‘The five kinds of grain arise from the Four Elements, for Fire and Air.’
ANNOTATIONS
[1] *Cóng hé* 從何 is a colloquialism attested in *Lùnhéng* 論衡 which became current in Buddhist Chinese. Pre-Buddhist idiom is as in *Zhuàngzì* 22: 何從何道則得道？ In the present context, this colloquialism enables obvious parallelism of construction between *cóng hé* 從何 and *cóng gǔ* 從穀.

[2] *Ēr* 而 is inserted in order to create the extraordinarily neat pattern according to the length *CRESCENDO*, according to the famous ‘*Gesetz der wachsenden Glieder.*’ 五穀從何而生 below shows that there is nothing to prevent *ēr* 而 directly after the pronoun *hé* 何 in the language of the BYJ.

[3] The addition of the superfluous *wǔ* 五 serves two purposes: it links up with classical pre-Buddhist idiom, and at the same time it confirms the pattern of the length *CRESCENDO*.

[4] *Sì dà* 四大 refers to the elements *dì* 地 ‘earth,’ *shuǐ* 水 ‘water,’ *huǒ* 火 ‘fire’ and *fēng* 風 ‘wind’; 火 alone, or 火風 would have sufficed. The text defies the obligatory pentadic system of the *wǔ xíng* 五行 ‘Five Agents’ of late pre-Buddhist cosmology. Retaining the reference to ‘the Four Great Ones’ asserts the outlandishness of the text, and at the same time it serves to maintain the sustained length *CRESCENDO*. This text is an example of deliberate artistic prose, or to use Eduard Norden’s felicitous terminology, it is *Kunstprosa.*

Part 5

TEXT

問曰：“四大火風 從何而生。”
答曰：“四大火風 從空而生。”[1]
問曰：“空從何生。”
答曰：“從無所有[2]生。”
問曰：“無所有 從何而生。”[3]
答曰：“從自然[4]生。”

19 A basic handbook on the history of classical Chinese prose style, like Eduard von Norden’s *Die antike Kunstprosa vom VI. Jahrhundert v. Chr. bis in die Zeit der Renaissance. I.* (von Norden 1958), still remains to be written. I know of no such thing, even in Chinese.
TRANSLATION

The brahmans asked: ‘What do the elements, Fire and Air originate from?’
The Buddha replied: ‘The elements Fire and Air arise from Emptiness.’
The brahmans asked: ‘What does Emptiness originate from?’
The Buddha replied: ‘It arises from where there is nothing.’
The brahmans asked: ‘Where does “where there is nothing” originate from?’
The Buddha replied: ‘It originates from what is naturally so.’

ANNOTATIONS
[1] After the length crescendo, the dialogue reverts to strict quadrisyllabic parallelism.
[2] 無所有 is not current pre-Buddhist Chinese and exceedingly common, probably as a colloquialism, in Buddhist Chinese.
[3] After the quadrisyllabic parallelism, the penultimate sequence, irregular as so often in classical Chinese artistic prose, reverts to the length CRESCENDO mode.
[4] Lǎozǐ 25 has a standard pre-Buddhist CRESCENDO with REPETITIO, ending in zìrán 自然:

人法地，
地法天，
天法道，
道法自然。

The Buddha ends this sequence in the dialogue with what to a Chinese reader must look like a clear ALLUSION to an ancient Chinese text, in a standard quadrisyllabic mode.

Part 6

TEXT

問曰：“自然從何而生。”
答曰：“從泥洹而生。”[1]
問曰。“泥洹從何而生。”[2]
The brahmans asked: ‘Where does what is naturally so originate from?’

The Buddha answered: ‘It originates from nirvāṇa.’

The brahmans asked: ‘What does nirvāṇa originate from?’

The Buddha spoke: ‘As you now ask about matters, why do you go so deep into it? Nirvāṇa is a dharma that is beyond life and death.’

**ANNOTATIONS**

[1] But the Buddha goes beyond the Taoist Ultimate, relating it to something transcendental: níhuán 泥洹 ‘Nirvana.’ What is beyond Taoist comprehension is the realm of Buddhist conceptual transcendentalism. One notes that níhuán 泥洹, as opposed to the completely abstract theorizing fà 法 ‘dharma’ which is introduced further down, is abstract and esoteric, but does invite emotional attachment: It is an ultimate spiritual aim.

[2] The brahmans are not satisfied with this ultimate origin and continue to dispute and problematize.

[3] Technically, what we have here is an extensive series of Mesozeugma, i.e., the omission of a subject which has been made explicit in the beginning and is made explicit again at the end.

[4] Yán 言 ‘declare’ is not necessarily an interchangeable variation of yuē 曰 ‘say,’ as we noted before. A contrast between the two common verbs of saying may be intended here.

[5] The Buddha permits himself a very familiar and colloquial form of address to the hostile brahmans. However, rǔ 汝 is, of course, current colloquial pre-Buddhist Chinese.

[6] Rhetorical question in héyǐ 何以 ‘why (on earth)’ does not appear interchangeable here with the otherwise ubiquitous yún hé 云何 ‘how (on earth)’ in Buddhist Chinese texts which we have seen above.

[7] Èr 爾 ‘like this’ is colloquial for rúcǐ 如此, and absent in what I know of pre-Buddhist literature.

[8] The figurative use of shēn 深 is current in pre-Buddhist Chinese, but the Buddha’s focus on the intellectual style of one’s dialogue partner is unusual.

[9] Pre-Buddhist antecedents of the current Buddhist Chinese copula shì 是 do exist. But the Buddha’s colloquialism when expounding
the deepest truth in this context is striking: The translator deliberately avoids the standard pattern SUBJECT 者 PREDICATE 也.

[10] Bù shēng bù sǐ 不生不死 ‘neither prone to be born, nor to die; subject to neither birth, nor death; beyond the realm of life and death’ as a modifier of a nominal expression (technically, as VPADN) is not attested in what I know of pre-Buddhist Chinese.


Part 7

TEXT
答曰：“我未泥洹。”

TRANSLATION
The brahmans asked: ‘Have you, the Buddha, reached nirvāṇa or not yet?’
The Buddha replied: ‘I have not yet reached nirvāṇa.’
‘But if you have not yet reached nirvāṇa, how can you know that nirvāṇa is eternal bliss?’

ANNOTATIONS
[1] The question is AD HOMINEM. Fó 佛 may be taken as a so-called ‘pseudo second person pronoun’ (technically, N-PRO) serving as the subject: ‘you, the Buddha.’ Alternatively, this sentence can be taken to have an understood subject ‘you,’ and 佛 must then be taken adverbially ‘as the Buddha’ (technically: NADV, i.e., a noun preceding and modifying a verbal expression, or a ‘denominal adverb’).

[2] The verbal use of níhuán 泥洹 ‘nirvāṇa’ is important because it is one of those cases where the subtle principles of pre-Buddhist Chinese grammar are applied even to phonetic loans from the Sanskrit.

[3] Wèi 未 is not like sentence-final bù 不 or fǒu 否 ‘n’est ce pas,’ and means something like ‘or not yet,’ ‘or not quite.’ I would like to see pre-Buddhist Chinese examples of this but have not yet found one. XYJ 40 has 頗有人來 求索未 which shows that the
nuance of \(\text{wèi 未}\) meaning ‘not yet’ can be weakened. Victor Mair 1993 translates: ‘Have there been quite a few people come to seek you?’ The polite subtle suggestion does seem to be, however, that if they have not, then they will in the future. Technically, one might well have to classify \(\text{wèi 未}\) as a post-sentential question-particle along the lines of modern Chinese \(\text{shì bù shì 是不是}\). Technically, \(\text{wèi 未}\) would then be a PPOSTADS, i.e., a particle following after a sentence and modifying that sentence.\(^{20}\)

[4] \text{Ruò 若 ‘if’} can certainly also be taken to mean ‘you’ in this context, but for some reason one hesitates to think that the word-play in the form of suspended ambiguity is involved here. Technically, this might even be a case of ADIANOETA, i.e., a sentence which has one obvious surface meaning but an alternative underlying different meaning.

[5] To the reader steeped in pre-Buddhist Chinese, this introduces a passage that echoes the famous story about Zhuāngzǐ and Hui Shī crossing the bridge, where Hui Shī plays the role of the logic-chopping brahmans: ‘Not being a fish, how do you know the pleasures of the fish?’ The Buddha is cast here in Zhuāngzǐ’s rôle of the romantic empathies. \(\text{Yûnhé 云何}\) introduces what is intended as a rhetorical question: ‘How on earth ...?,’ which may be paraphrased as ‘it is impossible that ....’

[6] The main caesura in this line being after \(\text{Yûnhé 云何}\), we have a clear case of ENJAMBEMENT, the quadrasyllabic group ending between a verb and its sentential object. We do find even cases where the group ends between a verb and its ordinary nominal object.

\textit{Part 8}

\textit{TEXT}

佛言[1]：“我今問汝[2]：
答曰：“眾生甚[7]苦。”

\(^{20}\) One could perhaps regard \(\text{wèi 未}\) as a ‘tensed’ (or here rather aspect) sentence final corresponding to the positive \(\text{yǐ 矣}\) ‘have not yet until now...’; \(\text{bù 且}\) and \(\text{fǒu 乿}\) do not have this tense aspect, it seems. This connotation of aspect was probably weakened in the course of time and \(\text{wèi 未}\) became quite synonymous to sentence finals \(\text{bù, etc.}\).
TRANSLATION

The Buddha said: ‘Now I will ask you:
“The various creatures of this world, do they live in bitterness or in delight?”’
The brahmans replied as follows: ‘The various creatures suffer intense bitterness.’

ANNOTATIONS

[1] The Buddha declares: ‘I’m now going to put a question to you.’
[2] The Buddha persists in the familiar address rǔ 汝 he has used before.
[3] Tiānxià 天下 is redundant; zhòngshēng 畜生 alone would refer to all tiānxià zhòngshēng 天下畜生 in this context. We have demonstrative REDUNDANTIA-QUADRISYLLABISM which is ubiquitous throughout all Buddhist literature. The phenomenon is fairly common in pre-Buddhist Chinese, but not so typically blatant or demonstrative.
[4] Zhòngshēng 畜生 ‘living creatures; sentient beings,’ like the pre-Buddhist zhūhòu 諸侯, is not in fact always plural: ZZ. 39:334b4 故有情即是眾生也 ‘Thus what has feelings is a sentient being’; ZZ. 42:41a04 則菩薩即是眾生也 ‘A bodhisattva is a sentient being.’
[5] Repeated wéi 為 ‘does the subject count as X or does it count as Y’ as a formative of alternative questions of judgment has been used before in this brief introduction: We have a case of structural or idiomatic REPETITIO. (Technically, the syntactic function is vt+N1.+vt+N2, i.e., a transitive verb with its non-pronominalizable predicate nominal object, followed by the same transitive verb followed by a different non-pronominalizable predicate nominal.)
[6] The antonym pair kǔ 苦 ‘be characterized by bitterness’ versus lè 樂 ‘be characterized by joyfulness’ has high currency in Buddhist Chinese, but it is already found in Lùnhèng.21
[7] The degree of bitterness is, of course, irrelevant and is mentioned only for rhythmic euphony. Moreover, in pre-Buddhist Chinese, shēn kǔ 甚苦 always refers to a current highly precarious state, whereas here, the reference is not at all to any current situation which is precarious.

21 See Yang Baozhong 2002 as an important source for this kind of information.
**Part 9**

**TEXT**

我見 十方[8]諸佛 不生不死[9]，
故知 泥洹常[10]樂。”

**TRANSLATION**

The Buddha said: ‘Why do you call this bitterness?’

The brahmans answered as follows: ‘We see that when the various creatures die they suffer bitter pain and find it hard to bear, thus we know that dying is bitter.’

The Buddha said: ‘You are not dead at this point, but still you know that dying is bitter.

I have seen that the various Buddhas of the ten regions are neither born, nor die,

therefore I know that nirvāṇa is eternal bliss.’

**ANNOTATIONS**

[1] The Buddha intervenes with an assertive question in the style of the logic choppers, which one might exaggeratingly translate thus: ‘How on earth can you apply the predicate bitterness?’

[2] *Yúnhé 云何* introduces a provocative or rhetorical question here, and is probably significantly distinct from *héyī zhī zhī 何以知之?* ‘How do you know this?’

[3] *Míng 名* ‘apply the name’ is technical logical usage.

[4] *Wǒ 我* was predominantly plural in the Oracle Bones before it came to refer to the singular speaker himself. Here, the word must be taken in the plural, strictly speaking. However, the wording allows one to forget this pedantic detail.

[5] Cornered, and fully aware that needless to say, not having died they know nothing of what it is like to die, just as the Buddha, not having entered Nirvana cannot apparently speak of the delights of that state, the brahmans become guilty of a mild form of ARHYTHMIA, in that they produce a ten-character line, in self-defense.
The avoidance of the expected repetitive and perhaps insulting 未死 ‘You are not yet dead; you have never yet died’ is not fortuitous—it is part of the Buddha’s urbanitas, Zhuangzi style.

Yì 亦 is not, or at least not only ‘also, like me.’ As so often in pre-Buddhist Chinese, the word means ‘nonetheless, all the same likewise.’

Pre-Buddhist China tends to speak of 四方 ‘the four directions,’ the 逸周書 occasionally of 八方, and the 六合, but the Buddha, here, opens new transcendental vistas by the outlandish Buddhist technical term 十方 ‘the ten directions’ which refers to east, west, south, north, 東南 ‘south-east,’ 西南 ‘south-west,’ 東北 ‘north-east’ and 西北 ‘north-west,’ 上 ‘upper world’ and 下 ‘lower world.’

The Buddha mimics the rhythm of his brahman opponents by way of playful and triumphant urbanitas. (As mentioned above, 不生不死 ‘be beyond the cycle of (re)birth and death,’ seems unattested in pre-Buddhist Chinese literature. It is referred to again, here, as a Buddhist keyword by way of repetitio. It will be very interesting to see an example in the excavated literature.)

A reader imbued with the pre-Buddhist Chinese tradition will smell in this 常 an allusion to the prominent use of this term in the Laozi, as in 道可道非常道.

Part 10

TEXT

悟須陀洹果[7], 復坐如故[8]。

TRANSLATION

The 500 brahmans were delighted and relieved, and they sought to receive the Five Prohibitions.

They grasped the fruits of the srota-āpanna (first step towards enlightenment), and they sat down again, as before.

The Buddha said: ‘You people listen carefully to me.
Now I will at length expound for you the various parables.’
ANNOTATIONS
[1] This does not mean ‘500 brahmans,’ but ‘the 500 (above-mentioned) brahmans,’ i.e., the reference is definite.
   In T. xīn kāi 心開 is ubiquitous. Even Dāozàng 道藏 426, line 1638 has shì rén xīn kāi shén jiě 使人心開神解.
[3] Xīnyì 心意 is a current compound which recurs, for example, in BYJ 38 and 45, but is also well attested in pre-Buddhist literature, such as Chùci 楚辭.
[4] Kāijiē 開解 is a current compound attested, for example, in XYJ 27.5: 心情開解. The rhetorical device here, common in pre-Buddhist Chinese already, is that of interlocking split compounds: 心意開解 is artistically or artificially split into 心開意解. This rhetorical device is a natural part of the FORMULAIC ENCOMIUM at the end of a tale about the Buddha.
[5] Qiú 求 is not the standard ‘seek’ but ‘beg to,’ as often in Buddhist Chinese.
[6] Shòu wǔjiè 受五戒 does not mean ‘receive the Five Prohibitions,’ but ‘to accept the Five Prohibitions’ is formulaic and comes almost 1,000 times in T. Why and how jiè 戒 came to mean ‘prohibition,’ and apparently never ‘to prohibit’ in Buddhist Chinese is a story well worth telling in detail. It requires thorough research into the earliest translations of Buddhist texts.
[7] At this point the text reverts to the esoteric technicalities of the opening, the srota-āpanna fruits, i.e., first step to enlightenment.
[8] The formulaic cóng zuò ér qǐ 從座而起 of the opening is echoed by the equally formulaic fù zuò rú gù 復坐如故.
[9] The Buddha is not just saying something: yán 言 indicates that he is making an announcement, he declares something.
[10] The proliferation of pre-Buddhist plurals like rǔ-děng 汝等 in Buddhist Chinese is partly motivated by a desire to represent plural suffixes in the languages translated from, but in the present preface, rǔ 汝 has been used regularly to refer to a multiplicity of addressees, as it is again in the next line. The explicit plural here serves only RHYTHMIC EUPHONY.
[11] Shàn 善 is a regular marker of the imperative mode in Buddhist Chinese, as in XYJ: 善來，比丘! ‘Come, come, monks!’ and often elsewhere.
[12] *Shàn tīng* 善聽 ‘listen!’ is formulaic in Buddhist Chinese (832 examples in T.). In pre-Buddhist Chinese, of course, 善聽 is current as well, but it means ‘be good at listening to others.’
[13] The Buddha announces that he will *shuō* 說 ‘expound’ the parables, and he uses *shuō* 說 as in *shuōfǎ* 說法 ‘preach the dharma.’
[14] *Zhòng* 眾 is probably not ‘all the many,’ as it would be in pre-Buddhist Chinese, but ‘a whole set of, many, a whole lot of,’ as it often is in Buddhist Chinese, and as we find already in *Zhànguó cè* 戰國策: 故眾庶成強 ‘many ordinary people make up strength’ and as predicative in the memorable *Fāyí 法儀* chapter of Mòzǐ 墨子: 天下之為學者眾而仁者寡 ‘The learned men in this world are many, the good persons are few.’
[15] The nominal use of *yù* 喻 or *piyù* 譬喻 to refer to a literary genre is unattested in pre-Buddhist Chinese as far as I know and should probably count as a loan translation. Consider in this connection the attack on Buddhist predilections for parables in the *Lǐhuò lùn* 理惑論 (T. 52, no. 2102:4b14):

夫事莫過於誠，
說莫過於實。
老子除華飾之辭，
崇質朴之語。
佛經說不指其事，
徒廣取譬喻。

譬如非道之要，
合異為同，
非事之妙。
雖辭多語博，
猶玉屑一車，
不以為寶矣。
牟子曰：
事皆共見者，
可說以實。

As for action, nothing is superior to earnestness;
as for discourse, nothing is superior to truthfulness.
Lǎozǐ eschewed embellished diction, (he didn’t!)
and he held basic substantial talk in high esteem.
The Buddhist discourse do not point out facts,
they only make a broad choice of comparisons/parables.
But comparisons/parables are not the main point of
the Way:
they combine different things so as to identify them,
and they are not crucial in things.
Even if formulations are many and the talk is
wide-ranging,
like one carriage load of broken-jade-writing,
we still do not regard it as precious.
Móuzǐ said:
When a matter has been witnessed together
it can be discussed according to the facts.
一人見一人不見者，
難與誠言也。

But if one person has seen a thing and the other person has not
then it is difficult to speak with him truthfully.

[16] The arhythmia in the last line comprising seven characters may be surprising at first sight. It dissolves the formulaic high tone of the peroration and leads over to the light-hearted jokes that are the subject of this BYJ. These parables themselves, as we shall see, are very largely dominated by the quadrisyllabic rhythm which is typically broken at predictable points.

Part II (Postface)

TEXT

如似[12]苦毒藥[13]，
和合[14]於石蜜[15]。
藥為[16]破壞[17]病，
此論[18]亦如是[19]。
正法[20]中戲笑[21]，
譬如[22]彼狂藥[23]。
佛正法[24]寂定[25]，
明照[26]於世間[27]。

TRANSLATION

This sūtra has been produced by me.
It mixes in jokes
and in many places it contravenes the correct preaching of Buddhism.
If you meditate on the meaning corresponding or corresponding to the truth
you find the case is like that of a bitter powerful medicine
which is mixed in among sugar cane honey.
The medicine is for putting a violent end to disease.
This sūtra is also like that.
Within the true teaching of the dharma there is joking and it is like alcoholic drinks.
The true dharma is full of Buddhist tranquility, and it shines bright over the human world.

ANNOTATIONS
[1] *Cǐ lùn* 此論 ‘this śāstra’ would seem to refer to the present ‘sūtra.’

[2] The ‘authorial’ self-reference with the assertive *wǒ* 我 invites the question who is referring to himself here. The Buddha does refer to himself by this assertive pronoun when he says: *Wǒ wèi níhuán* 我未泥洹. Must we take the Buddha referring to his own act of *zào* 造 ‘creation’ of his own *sūtra* as a śāstra? The matter is confusing.

[3] Editors *zào* 造 ‘create’ or *zuò* 作 ‘make, produce’ śāstras, editors merely *jí* 集 ‘collect > compile’ sūtras, also *avadāna* sūtras, as pointed out in Menshikov 1986:9.

[4] *Hěhè* 和合 is ditransitive, and the understood second object is the *lùn* 論 ‘śāstra.’

[5] *Xǐxìào* 喜笑 ‘laugh joyfully’ may seem pleonastic, until one reflects that *笑* in pre-Buddhist Chinese is predominantly derisive rather than dominated by pleasure. Technically, the term is here VPADN, i.e., a complex verbal expression which precedes and modifies a nominal expression.

[6] *Xǐxìào-yǔ* 喜笑語 looks like a very early technical term for the simple literary genre of a ‘joke.’

[7] *Duō* 多 ‘in many places’ does not strike one as current pre-Buddhist Chinese.

[8] *Zhèngshí* 正實 renders a notion of truth which goes beyond that of mere correctness.

[9] *Shuō* 說 in contexts like these comes close to a meaning ‘dogma’ which is alien to pre-Buddhist Chinese.

[10] The imperative use of *guān* 觀 to mean ‘observe!’ is not current in pre-Buddhist Chinese. It is indeed an important task to see how the range of verbs that can be used in the imperative mode in Chinese changes through contact with other languages. No Delphic *gnōthi sauton*! ‘Know thyself’ in pre-Buddhist Chinese!

[11] Deontic *yīng* 應 ‘should’ becomes very current in Buddhist Chinese only, but does have antecedents in the *Book of Odes*. The *Hànyǔ dàzìdiàn* anachronistically presents Ěryā 爾雅 as reading *yīng* 應 as *dāng* 當 ‘should.’ The present unusual use of 應
‘approve, accept’ has an antecedent in Zhuāngzī, Yùyán 寓言: ‘與己同則應，不與己同則反。’, commented upon by Chéng Xuányīng 成玄英: ‘與己同見則應而為是。’

[12] Rúshì 如似 is first attested in Buddhist Chinese and recurs in ZTJ.

[13] Kū dúyào 苦毒藥 is another case of EURHYTHMIC PLEONASM, i.e., superfluous verbiage which serves the purpose of rhythmic euphony.

[14] Note that this REPETITIO is not merely rhetorical, but is strictly part of the argument. This shows how rhetorical forms must not be viewed in isolation from argument structure.

[15] This may be the earliest mention of sugar coating in medicine.

[16] Wèi 為 ‘serve the purpose of V-ing’ is syntactically interesting in that the syntactic category of its object is indeterminate between verbality and nominality. Thus technically, this 為 is VTOV/N.

[17] Resultative compounds like pòhuài 破壞 ‘smash so as to cause to be ruined’ are much more common in pre-Buddhist Chinese than current grammars suggest. However, the ‘bleached’ idiomatic use of huài 壞, only to reinforce a figuratively used pò 破, is unheard of in pre-Buddhist Chinese. It recurs, though in a related Buddhist text, the XYJ 27.5.

[18] Cǐ lùn 此論 is again an argumentative REPETITIO, which does confirm that what is being discussed is emphatically not a jīng 經 ‘sūtra’.

[19] Rúshì 如是 is used, here, in the current pre-Buddhist manner; contrast the opening line of this text.

[20] Zhèngfǎ 正法 is esoteric technical Buddhist terminology, where zhèngshí shuō 正實說 was an attempt to render things in comprehensible Chinese.

[21] Zhèngfǎ-zhōng xīxiào 正法中戲笑 deliberately brings out the incongruousness of the combination, as in the case of the medical pill.

[22] Pìrú 譬如 is idiomatic even in pre-Buddhist Chinese (including the Analects), but the combination became overwhelmingly common in Buddhist Chinese.

[23] Bǐ 彼 is pejorative in its deictic force (‘that appalling alcohol!’), and not, here, a case of EURHYTHMIC PLEONASM.

[24] The conventional reference of the periphrastic kuángyào 狂藥 to
alcohol is clear enough, but the periphrasis is clearly pejorative, an effect reinforced by the preceding ｂｉ 彼. It is important to ask the question whether 狂藥 is a Buddhist way of talking disparagingly of alcohol. I think it is not, compare the Pēi Kāi 裏楷傳 biography in the Jinshū 晉書: ‘足下飲人狂藥，責人正禮，不亦乖乎？’ But one might, evidently, argue that the dynastic history is written under Buddhist lexical influence.

[25] Jìdìng 寂定 ‘ultimate peace’ is a Buddhist keyword, and our Postface comes back to this crucial notion again. Indeed, it is the word on which the ZTJ postface ends: The word is unattested in pre-Buddhist literature.

[26] Míngzhào 明照 may be overtranslated as ‘throw the light of spiritual enlightenment on,’ but this figurative usage has sound resonances in pre-Buddhist Chinese.

[27] Shìjīān 世間 translates best into Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s French ‘le monde’: This mundane world. The radially-transcendental opposition is new in Buddhist Chinese, but the notion is one of those idioms which are already very common in Lùnhéng 論衡 and would appear to be a Chinese colloquialism that became a core concept in Buddhist Chinese. Contrast the current pre-Buddhist ｒｅｎｊｉān 人間.

Part 12

TEXT

如服吐下[1]藥
以酥潤[2]體中[3]。
我[4]今以此義[5]，
顯發於[6]寂定[7]。
如阿伽陀藥：
樹葉而[8]裹之。
取藥塗毒[9]竟[10]，
樹葉還棄之。[11]
戲笑[12]如葉裹[13]，
實義[14]在其中。
智者[15]取正義[16]，
戲笑便應[17]棄。[18]
尊者僧伽斯那造作“癡花鬘”竟。
TRANSLATION

This is like taking a medicine designed to make one vomit in order to cleanse the inside of one’s body.
And when I now, using this meaning, broadcast forth the message of keeping one’s Buddhist tranquility.
It is like the āqiētuó (Skr. agada) medicine: one wraps it up in leaves.
Once you have taken the medicine and you have applied the strong substance, then as for the leaves, one goes on to throw them away.
The humour is like the leaf-wrapping, and the true significance is inside it.
The wise will pick the correct meaning and the humour then corresponds to the leaves.

ANNOTATIONS
[1] Tǔxià 吐下 is another one of those common resultative verbal compounds. The special feature here is that that this resultative compound is adnominal. Technically, we have VPADN.
[2] Sūrùn 酪潤 ‘cleanse’ looks like a surprisingly poetic word in this mundane context, at first sight. But one must remember that what is at issue here is a cleansing of the spiritual inner self: It is because of this ultimate inner reference that the poetic diction is felt to be appropriate.
[3] Ti-zhōng 體中 is not just a case of EURHYTHMIC PLEONASM: The notion of the ‘inner’ is important in the context.
[4] The persistent authorial self-reference in this gāthā shows an author who feels that his is a new or original kind of composition which needs insistent justification.
[5] Yi 義 ‘main meaning; message’ is a specifically Buddhist technical usage. The word cannot be used in this way in pre-Buddhist Chinese, but in Buddhist Chinese this has become perfectly current.
[6] Yū 於 is a case of semantically extremely bleached EURHYTHMIC PLEONASM. The text would be clearer without it, but it would not follow the obligatory rhythmic pattern of this penta-syllabic gāthā.
[7] The text reverts to its buddhological buzzword, jìdìng 寂定 ‘Buddhist settled tranquility’ the elucidation of which is the purpose of this literary exercise.
[8] This postnominal ér 而 marks off an instrumental adverb: ‘by the use of tree-leaves one wraps them up.’

[9] At last we find a trace of a traditional classical Chinese PARALLELISM with ISOCOLON (same length of the parallel phrases): qū yào 取藥 ‘take the medicine’ is supported by the structurally superficially similar tú dú 塗 毒 ‘smear on the drug.’ I say ‘superficially’ because tú 塗 ‘smear on’ is in fact semantically complex in that it contains an ellipsis of a contextually determinate object, i.e., the surface that something is smeared on. Technically, 塗 is VTTON1(.+PREP+N2), i.e., a ditransitive verb with its explicit direct object, and with an omitted prepositional object which is retrievable from the pragmatic context.

[10] Jìng 竟 ‘to finish,’ ‘S1 having finished, S2 happened,’ ‘after S1, S2’ is here used in a grammatical way that is unattested in pre-Buddhist Chinese. Technically, it is VPOSTAD S1.ADS2, i.e., a verb following after and modifying a sentence S1, this whole construction preceding and modifying another sentence S2.

[11] In this line, again, the author indulges in standard pre-Buddhist Chinese classical artistic prose style:

...樹葉而裹之。
...樹葉而裹之。

[12] Xìxiào 戲笑 is nominalized here, and such nominalization of this current binome is not common in pre-Buddhist literature, although it does in fact occur in the Bān Zhāo’s 班昭 Nǚjiè 女戒 where it is advised: 無好戲笑 ‘One should not develop a liking for joking and laughing.’

[13] A. Yè 葉 is adnominal, technically: NMADN, i.e., a mass noun preceding and modifying a main nominal expression. I am not aware of an example of this in pre-Buddhist Chinese, but this absence would not seem to be significant: We might just as well have had such an example.

B. Again, this line cultivates a classical parallelism between xìxiào 戲笑 and yèlǐ 葉裏.

[14] The compiler is aware that his jests were not worthy of Buddhist truth, but they were needed as sweetener for the outlandish dogmatic pill of the Buddhist truth, the shìyì 實義 of which he has
spoken before, and for which esoteric Buddhist term there is no pre-Buddhist example.

[15] In true classical rhetorical style, the author opts for *variatio* between the synonymous *shíyì* 實義 and *zhèngyì* 正義, both of which terms refer to the true Buddhist message.

[16] The *zhizhe* 智者 is not ‘the man of true wisdom,’ but in fact ‘the man of good sense, the sensible reader.’

[17] *Yīng* 應 is ‘should, must’. Here comes the rub: It stands to argue that there came to be those who insisted that getting the true essence of the Buddhist message was not so much in rejecting the ‘inappropriate’ and non-Buddhist tale, but in *getting the joke*. One thing is to recognize that life is a joke. Another thing—true enlightenment, as it happens—is to actually get that joke.

[18] One might be tempted to diagnose a rhyme in the last two lines here, between *yì* 義 and *qì* 棄, but the facts do not oblige: The words are pronounced something like /ŋe/ and /khi/ in Middle Chinese, if we are to believe Pān Wúyún 潘悟雲, and their rhyme groups are universally recognized as being not the same: 支 versus 臆.

[19] What *jìng* 竟 ‘ends’ here, compiled by the venerable Saṅgasena is, after all, openly declared to be *The Garland of Folly*, and not some *Sūtra of One Hundred Parables*. In the first place, there are only 98 tales. In the second place the translator-compiler of the Chinese text acknowledges that what he translated did not originally present itself as a *sūtra*. There is, of course, the genre of the *jīng-lūn* 經論, the ‘śāstra on a sūtra,’ like Aśvaghoṣa’s (Mámíng 馬鳴) famous *Dàshèng zhuàngyán jìng-lūn* 大乘莊嚴經論, as Sūn Chāngwǔ 孫昌武 from Nánkāi University in Tiānjīn kindly points out to me. And the wide open question remains whether indeed we need to read our book as a *śāstra* on a *sūtra*. More specifically, whether we need to construe the Buddha, in the introductory dialogue to the book, really learning from Lǎozi after all, as the Chinese tradition has long claimed he did. There still remains very much to learn about *The Garland of Folly*. 
Conclusion

What is clear already at this point is that *The Hundred Parables Sūtra*, which is supposed to have been translated from the Sanskrit, does not, in fact, contain 100 parables, is not, in fact, a *sūtra* in the first place, and was by all appearances not, in fact, directly translated from the Sanskrit, but adapted to the Chinese audience.

Significantly, *The Hundred Parables Sūtra* opens with a joke which comes dangerously close to poking fun at replacing real life with Buddhist monasticism, while the Buddhist truth ought to be no more than ‘the salt of life.’ More seriously still, the book plays around with the formulaic conventions of *sūtras* in a text which openly declares itself not be a *sūtra* at all. It is thus neither a fake *sūtra*, nor a so-called ‘doubtful *sūtra*.’ It is a delightful new thing: A ‘playful *sūtra*.’ No wonder that this playful effect of the whole thing needed to be mitigated by narrowly sectarian moralizing commentaries which turned out so uncongenial that Eduard Chavannes, for his part, like many later translators, thought he served the book best by omitting these fundamentally apologetic ‘morals of the tales.’
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  [Authoritative translation with sparse annotation.]
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Second Sources


[This supersedes the work of the great linguist Julien but omits the final buddhological notes of all the stories.]


[This is effectively a grammar of the *One Hundred Parables Sūtra*, a pioneering work in the history of Chinese historical grammar predating Western and Chinese works within this field.]


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[Important learned treatise on apocryphal sutras by a Japanese student of Zhèng Zhènduó.]


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[This contains a useful 100-page introduction as well as a detailed bibliography of Japanese, Chinese, Russian as well as Western European sources.]

Appendix 1: Comparison between BYJ 57 and Zápíyù jīng, T.4, no.207:

Parable 57 of Bāiyù jīng

Formerly there was a very rich and distinguished person. The people around him were keen to gain his attentions, and all of them showed him great respect.

When that distinguished man was spitting away, the people in attendance trod it away with their feet. But then there was one fool who had not been in good time to tread on the spittle and he made this speech (addressed to himself):

"If he spits on the floor all these people tread it away. (Already) when he is about to spit I shall (before he has actually spit) anticipate this and tread on it (already then)."

Comment:

The three parables translated in the appendices are preserved in The Hundred Parables Sūtra as well as in more direct translations probably from Sanskrit. In these three cases, the reader may thus investigate for himself, how the composition of The Hundred Parables Sūtra differs from these more direct translations. In a foreign land, men of no significance were in the service of a nobleman and wanted to please their master. When they saw the nobleman spat on the floor, they all sallied forth competing to wipe the spittle away with their feet.

There was one man who was not greatly gifted for this task: although he wanted to step on the spittle, he never got to do it when the spittle was about to land. Later, when he saw the nobleman was about to spit, he kicked him in the mouth with his foot.

Comment:

This actually happened. He stepped near and read on it (already) when he is about to spit I shall (before he has actually spit) anticipate this and tread on it (already then) when the spittle was about to land. But later he got it wrong. When they saw the nobleman spat on the floor, all of them showed him great respect, and all of them trod it away with their feet. When the spittle reached the floor it was still warm. The people around him were keen to gain his attentions, and all of them trod it away with their feet. The people around him were keen to gain his attentions, and all of them trod it away with their feet.
Then, the senior person was just about to cough and spit. At that time this fool then raised his foot and stepped on the senior person’s mouth. He ruined the lips and broke his teeth. The senior person told the fool: "Why are you kicking me in my mouth?" The fool replied: "If your spittle emerges from the mouth and falls on the ground then all these flatterers in your entourage have already got to step on it so as to remove it. Even if I want to tread on it, every time I fail. For this reason, when the spittle comes out of your mouth I raise my foot and tread on it before it is too late, and hope in this way to gain your favour." Everything needs its proper time. When the proper moment has not yet arrived and one insists to make one’s effort, then, on the contrary, one will harvest troubles. For this reason people in this world must understand opportuneness of moments.

The nobleman asked him: "Are you trying to offend me? Why are you kicking me in my teeth?" The petty servant said: "I had the best intentions, and I was not intending to offend you." The nobleman asked: "Why are you bothering me in my mouth?" The nobleman asked him: "When the spittle comes out of your mouth when the proper moment has not yet arrived, and when the nobleman has not yet arrived, then the senior person was just about to cough and spit. The nobleman asked: "What are you kicking me in my mouth?" The nobleman asked the fool: "The spittle that falls on the ground. He needed the help and broke his teeth. How are you bothering me in my mouth?" The nobleman asked him: "When the spittle comes out of your mouth and stepped on the ground I got tied. He needed the help and broke his teeth. When the spittle leaves my mouth I raise my foot and tread on it before it is too late, and then the senior person was just about to cough and spit."
And what if I wound myself round a tree three times?"

The head said:

"Then is why you get to go, that is all.

"It is I who order you to go, and you should not count as a leader;"

Therefore I should be the leader:

When we are on the march I take the lead.

and where eyes that can look,

and I have ears that can listen.

The head said:

"I should also be the leader!"

The head told the head:

"I should be right in the lead!"

The head told the tail:

"You get to go, that is all.

of which the head and the tail were quite aware.

In ancient times there was a snake,
The disciples of Buddhist masters are also like this. They claim their masters are old and that they keep staying at the head.

We young people ought to become the leaders. Young men like this do not understand the Buddhist prohibitions and they will often break some of these. And thus they pull each other so as to enter into hell.

For three days the tail did not let go. The head was thus not able to leave in order to seek for food, and they were on the verge of dying of hunger and thirst.

The head told the tail: "Let me off! I shall obey you as the leader!"

When the tail heard these words, it immediately let him off, and the head went on to tell the tail: "Since you are the leader I shall obey you, you take the lead."

The tail took the lead, and after a few steps, the snake fell into a fiery pit and died.

This illustrates the following:

- The disciples of Buddhist masters and they will often break some of those prohibitions. They do not understand the Buddhist prohibitions and they keep staying at the head.

We young people ought to become the leaders. Young men like this do not understand the Buddhist prohibitions and they will often break some of these. And thus they pull each other so as to enter into hell.

Among the monks there was an intelligent man of great among the monks there was an intelligent man of great
Once upon a time there was a fool who was about to assemble a group of guests; in preparation for this he wanted to collect buffalo milk, and thus he was planning to provide this for his guests. On the occasion he had the following thought: “If I now in preparation for this day every midday I milk the buffalo the buffalo milk will become more and more. Then suddenly at some point there will be no place to put the milk, or again the milk will go sour. It will be best to just leave it filling up the buffalo’s belly; I shall wait until the time for our reunion comes and will then take out the milk at one go.”

When he had made these thoughts he then got hold of buffalo’s mother and daughter, and tied them up, each in a different place. And then, one month later, only at that time did he set up his party and he received and placed his guests. Only then did he pull along the buffalo and he wanted to milk her. But the milk of this buffalo had already dried up and there was none left. At this time he was either stared at angrily or laughed at by the guests.

Once upon a time there was a brahman. He lived at home in poverty and just had one cow. Milking the cow he daily got one dipper of milk, and in that way he supplied his needs. He heard it said that if he held a feat for all the monks he would gain great good fortune. so he stopped his practice and no more milked his cow. and after he had stopped for one month he would then take all of the milk at one go. He hoped he would get 300 ‘bushels’ of milk with which to serve all the monks. When the month had gone by he then asked all the monks to his home for a feast and they all came and sat down. At that time, when the brahmans had all arrived he milked his cow and got no more than just one dipper full of milk. Although he had not milked for as long as a whole month, the milk was not a great deal. All the people swore at him and said: Although he had not milked them for long, milk and go no more than just one dipper full of milk.

When the month had gone by he then asked all the monks to his home for a feast and they all came and sat down. At that time, when the brahmans had all arrived he milked his cow and got no more than just one dipper full of milk.
The fools are also like this: they wish to cultivate the making of donations, and then they say: “Let’s wait until I have a lot of the stuff, and only then will I make my donations.” Before they have accumulated the stuff, it may be either taken away by district officials, or by floods or fires, or by thieves or robbers, or indeed they may suddenly meet death, and do not at the proper time make their donations.

People today are also like this: while they have goods they are unable to dispense them according to what they have. Having stopped and after having amassed things, they need to have much, and only then will they dispense them according to what they have. The fools are also like this: they keep thinking of things after they have. People today are also like this: they keep wishing for things after they have.