

Helmut Tauscher
University of Vienna
Numata Chair for Buddhist Studies, Leiden University

**Laṅkāvatāra-Sūtra 2.204-205
in the context of Kanjur research**

The overall concern of this paper is the transmission of Buddhist literature and, more precisely, Kanjur research with its two main aims: a) to study the development of the Kanjur as a literary corpus and to trace its lines of transmission with their inter-relations and mutual dependencies by structural analysis of canonical collections and by text-critical investigation of individual texts, and b) to establish possibly “authentic” versions of individual texts, with the term “authentic” – obviously – to be taken in a limited and relative sense. A few examples from the Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra (LAS) may illustrate what can happen to any text in the course of its transmission.

LAS 2.203 (= 10.457) presents the model of five *yānas* (Deva, Brahma, Śrāvaka, Pratyekabuddha, Tathāgata *yāna*), and the following verses (2.204 = 10.458 and 2.205 = 10.445) propagate the doctrine of the one-vehicle (*ekayāna*). They appear to convey a rather obvious and simple message, which could be roughly paraphrased as: ‘As long as the mind is active, there will be various vehicles; when the mind ceases to be active, the vehicle(s) become meaningless, and there will be neither a vehicle nor anybody who rides it. The various vehicles are, in fact, not distinct; the Buddha teaches “one-vehicle”. Only in order to guide the unenlightened beings he teaches different vehicles’, and one would not expect essential variants within these verses. However, appearances are deceptive.

In this paper, the published Sanskrit text is compared with the three Chinese translation, 23 Tibetan canonical versions, and the Mongolian printed Kanjur. In addition, the Derge edition of the commentaries *Ārya Laṅkāvatāravṛtti* by Jñānaśrībhadrā (Ye shes dpal bzang po) and *Ārya Laṅkāvatāra nāma mahāyānasūtravṛtti Tathāgatahrdayālaṃkāra* by Jñānavajra have been consulted, as well as several quotations of these verses in Tanjur texts and in genuine Tibetan treatises.

The variant readings found in this source material suffice to assume the possibility of at least two distinct lines of transmission of LAS that might have existed already in Sanskrit. One of these lines might have been represented by a Tibetan translation which has not come down to us, possibly even the one referred to in the *sGra sbyor bam po gnyis pa* edict as having been made “at the times of the ancestors”. However, traces of it might have survived in quotations.

In addition, evidence could be found to support the hypothesis of the “Mustang group” as an additional line in the transmission of the Tibetan Kanjur (formulated for the first time in Tauscher/Lainé 2015).