Body Language

Indic śārīra and Chinese shēlǐ in the Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra and Saddharma-puṇḍarīka

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Acknowledgments

This study has taken a number of years to come to fruition. It began originally as some brief notes inspired by Schopen 1991. After I returned to these notes several years ago, the study grew in unexpected directions, and to an unexpected length, taking on a thoroughly different character. I have had the opportunity to present versions of this revised and expanded work several times over the years, particularly in Japan. The audiences and colleagues at universities and institutes in Tokyo and Kyoto were kind enough to offer stimulating and helpful suggestions and corrections. I am grateful to them all.

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Although I have consulted earlier translations when available, all translations, unless explicitly stated otherwise, are my own, including those of modern sources. Consequently, and obviously, while in much of what is correct here I have been guided by my predecessors and my contemporaries, all responsibility for any and all misunderstanding or misrepresentation rests with me alone.

It remains to thank Prof. Hara and the International Institute for Buddhist Studies for their willingness to publish this monograph, the basic contents of which I had the pleasure to present in the form of a lecture at the Institute in October 2004.
Technical Note

Although it would certainly have been preferable to have done so, I was not able to establish critical texts for many of the passages cited in the following. However, in so far as possible and practical, I have attempted to cite the best texts.

For Pāli, I have referred to the editions of the Pāli Text Society, but with reference also to the edition of the sixth (Burmese) council edition, published in devanāgarī by the Vipassana Research Institute.

For Chinese, I have in principle cited only the Taishō edition, although I am aware that it is sometimes far from perfect. I am responsible (or irresponsible) for the punctuation of the Chinese citations, although for the Dirghāgama I have had the advantage of being able to consult the punctuated text in the recent and excellent Gendaigoyaku Agonkyō Jōagonkyō. I made use of electronic texts for searching, but always confirmed readings in printed editions.

For Sanskrit texts, I have attempted to verify manuscript readings whenever possible, although I have used as is the transcriptions of scholars such as Waldschmidt and Toda. Note that what I refer to as the Kashgar manuscript might more properly be called the Khādaliq manuscript; I refer to it, however, by the name under which it is usually cited.

* Just as the camera-ready copy of this monograph was completed, I learned of the existence of an old Italian translation of T. 5, Fo banniebuan jing 佛般泥洹經, by Carlo Puini, Mahāparinirvāṇa-Sutra, ovvero, Il libro della totale estinzione del Buddha nella redazione cinese di Pe-fa-tsu. Cultura dell’anima 21 (Lanciano: R. Carabba, 1911). Apparently reprinted in 1919 and 1928, it was at least partly published earlier in Giornale della Società Asiatica Italiana 22 (1909). I have been unable to see this translation.
Introduction

It is no exaggeration to say that the single most central spiritual and philosophical question in all Buddhist traditions is: What is a Buddha? And this is a question which is, in almost all cases, equivalent to the question: Who is our Buddha, Śākyamuni? Even discourses which seem to, and which on some level certainly do, address quite different questions may frequently be understood as also talk, on another level, about what we might, in a strict sense, call “Buddhology,” the doctrine of Buddhahood.\footnote{There are a number of variant versions of this song, which is well known through its series of verses beginning “The toe bone connected to the foot bone,” and so on.} Therefore, when we study Buddhist literature, we would do well to remain aware of levels of discourse other than those which appear on the surface. If Buddhist texts are, among other things, also often speaking about, or presupposing, some vision of the nature of Buddhahood, the only sure way to perceive that vision is to understand precisely what the texts are saying, on all levels. To say this is really to say nothing more than that all hermeneutics requires, first and foremost, a reliable philology. While, then, it is only when we begin to pay careful attention to what texts say that we begin to understand what they mean, we must remember that we are rarely, if ever, the first to have paid attention to classical Buddhist texts. And while those within the tradition who came before us naturally had

\footnote{For an example of apparently strictly economic discourse which is nevertheless also to be read as an exercise in Buddhology, see Silk 2002b.}
agendas often radically different from our own, we can always learn from them. The records of earlier readers of Indian Buddhist scriptures, moreover, are not found only in self-consciously commentarial works.

Translations too function as a quite obvious form of commentary or exegesis: they restate a (perceived) meaning in other words, albeit also in a different language. This approach to translation as commentary can, naturally, have valuable implications for our understanding of the older literature of Indian Buddhism. It gives us another tool, in addition to the studies of grammar and lexicography, and the interpretations of indigenous commentaries, with which to approach what should be one of our central goals as historians, namely to gain an appreciation of the way(s) such literature was understood by the communities in which it was transmitted.³

Any attempt to make use of translations of ancient Indian Buddhist literature for comparative philological purposes, however, immediately encounters a set of serious problems, both theoretical and practical, the core of which is the following: we can never be sure either of the original linguistic form of any given scripture, or of the wording or even contents of the Vorlage from which a given translation was made.⁴ Potentially even more seriously, we are fairly sure that in a great many cases even the earliest forms of Indic Buddhist texts we now possess, extant versions in Pāli and Gandhārī, for instance, are themselves artifacts of some process of transformation from earlier, now lost, original sources in one or another Prakrit (whether these hypothetical originals were texts as such, or more amorphous entities), a process which continued in a more obvious and sometimes heavy-handed way with the subsequent recasting (or even wholesale rewriting) of texts in Sanskrit.⁵ Therefore, strictly speaking, in many cases we will never have direct access to any “original” as such. Of course, this difficulty is of an entirely different type from that which confronts us when we attempt to make use of translations into Chinese (or Tibetan). The manipulations through which a text is put to make it fit Gandhārī or even Sanskrit morphology, metrical patterns and so on probably rarely cross the threshold into “translation.”⁶ We may therefore accept, with due caution, extant Indic texts as “originals” in many cases, despite the result that there may then be important differences between variant but parallel versions of the same “original.” This resolution does not, however, address the separate problem raised by the fact that in the vast majority of cases we do not, and cannot, know the precise wording of the materials which served as the bases for Chinese (or even Tibetan) translations of Indic works. Specifically, and of greatest relevance for us at present, even as we grow closer to understanding the probable phonological and morphological shape of the materials which served as the underlying sources upon which some earlier Chinese translations of Buddhist scriptures were made, we remain locked in the position of being unable to specify word-for-word equivalences in a great many cases. That is, even assuming that we possess one or more extant Indic versions of a text translated into Chinese, as we attempt to utilize the latter to shed light on the interpretation of the former, as we attempt to employ translations as a variety of commentary, we remain and will remain incapable of determining whether a given Chinese rendering was intended by its translator to reflect his understanding of some particular term now found in our extant Indic texts, or whether perhaps the version he attempted and intended to render was worded somewhat or even considerably differently.⁷ This will continue to be a problem even as our knowledge of this literature grows, and one that must have some impact on the ways in which we use translations as commentary in the sense...

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2 In this respect, we may entirely leave aside the vexed question of whether it is possible to understand what the text meant to its own authors. Regarding translation as exegesis, see for example the remarks of Tov 1992: 124ff. (and specifically regarding the Septuagint, Tov 1997). We must keep in mind, however, that despite the considerable value afforded by comparisons with Biblical materials, it is almost always clear that the Vorlage of translations of the Hebrew Bible was the Masoretic text as transmitted. In the case of Indian Buddhist materials translated in Chinese, for instance, the subject of the inquiries to follow, it is equally clear that the details of the Vorlagen in all cases remain and will remain unknown (and only slightly less so for translations into Tibetan). Furthermore, by reading early Chinese translations of Indic texts with an eye on what they may tell us about Indian Buddhism, I do not at all mean to imply that they cannot also be read as embedded in their Chinese context. They most certainly should also be so read: but this is a task for Sinologists, among whose number I do not by any means count myself.

3 I leave aside here the possible, but if real rare, case in which we might have preserved in Tibet a specific Sanskrit manuscript from which we know a particular Tibetan translation to have been made. (However, see now Steinkellner 2004, which holds out the hope that we may indeed someday, in some cases, have direct access to the very Indic manuscripts from which some Tibetan translations were made.)

4 Of course, I do not mean to imply that all Indian Buddhist scriptures were originally composed in Prakrit—only that some certainly were.

5 This point is not, however, without considerable controversy, the resolution of which, even if possible, is fortunately irrelevant here. Even the very careful Norman 1993, for instance, alternately uses expressions of rather different import, including “translate,” “transpose,” “convert from one dialect to another,” and “update [a text] because its language was growing archaic.”

6 The materials which form the Dhammapāla/Udānavarga text corpus provide an excellent case in point.

7 Things are not always this bad, and the case with systematic or philosophical works, in which the usage of technical vocabulary can be more rigidly defined, may present fewer, or less severe, problems of interpretation than we encounter in our efforts to come to grips with less systematic texts.
discussed above. From this perspective, the value of Chinese translations for
interpretive readings of Indian texts can often be limited.

While this situation, then, disqualifies much Chinese evidence from a variety
of applications, there are nevertheless cases in which it is possible to, as it were,
sidestep this basic problem, because it is not the identification of a
precise vocabulary which is in question, but rather the way in which an almost
certainly firmly established vocabulary or concept is rendered and understood.
In the following, I would like to explore one example of a case of this particular
type.

Some years ago, Gregory Schopen took up the question of the meaning of
an important phrase in the Mahāparinibbāṇa-sutta which has, in various ways,
influenced much of what has been said by modern scholars about Early Buddhism
in India. The phrase in question appears in a passage concerning the funeral
of the Buddha, and the subsequent erection of a stūpa for his relics. In the
barest outline, Schopen’s argument runs as follows: There is a fundamental
typological difference between funerals and the relic or stūpa cult. The crucial
passage in the Mahāparinibbāṇa-sutta has been understood to restrict
participation in sarīra-pūjā to the laity, forbidding monks to engage in this
practice; because the key term sarīra-pūjā has been taken to refer to the relic
cult, or stūpa worship, it is this from which monks are thought to have been
barred. Schopen, however, raises the related questions of to what exactly the
term sarīra-pūjā refers, and whose participation in this practice is intended to
be restricted. In his opinion sarīra-pūjā does not, in this context, refer to the
relic or stūpa cult, but rather to the funeral or cremation preparations and
activities. Moreover, he suggests that the restriction against participation in
this practice is directed not to all monks, but very specifically to one particular
monk, Ananda.

In support of his suggestions, Schopen showed that the term sarīra-pūjā
means, on the one hand, literally “worship of the body” (when sarīra is taken
as grammatically singular), and on the other, relic worship (when sarīra is
plural), and that the injunction addressed by the Buddha to his disciple
Ananda—that he should refrain from sarīra-pūjā of the Buddha after the latter’s
death—refers only to the former, that is, to the process of preparation of the
body for cremation: the funeral rites. He additionally supported this argument
by further references to sarīra-pūjā in the Mulasarvāstivāda Vinaya and several
other texts.

I believe Schopen, who limited his investigations to a small number of texts
preserved in Pāli and Sanskrit, strongly established this portion of his case.
Moreover, he did so purely on the basis of Indian evidence in Indic language
texts, a method which is both appropriate and necessary. I will not suggest in
the following that we try to read or understand Indic texts through Chinese
(or other) translations, here or elsewhere. In tandem with their commentarial
function, however, Chinese materials may sometimes be able to shed light on
Indian problems, mirror or reflect Indian understandings (or misunderstandings),
or even have the capacity to help expose problems where they were not
previously recognized. In this regard, I would like to address several related
issues. First, I would like to demonstrate that careful attention to Chinese
sources should have pointed scholars long ago toward a proper understanding
of the central passage in question from the Mahāparinibbāṇa-sutta, an
understanding conforming to Schopen’s reading. Second—and in some sense con-
versely—I will consider the possible reasons why some Chinese sources, in
particular the Chinese rendering of the Dirghāgama, seem either to share in the
perplexity over the meaning of sarīra evident in some modern interpretations
of the term or, as I will argue, rather use vocabulary which, while specifically
intentioned, could nevertheless have led readers into confusion.

The basic distinction Schopen refers to between grammatically singular
and plural forms of sarīra (the Sanskrit equivalent of Pāli sarīra) is old; in the
Rg Veda sarīra means body or frame—the rigid parts of the body—in the

11 The “trick” here, of course, lies in distinguishing between Chinese reflections of Indian
understandings and Chinese (or Central Asian) understandings of Indian ideas.
12 I do not overlook the fact that more than one scholar appears to have understood
the materials before him quite properly. When Waldschmidt (1944, 1948: 214), for example,
who was thoroughly familiar with all the relevant sources, summarized the crucial passage quoted
below on the basis of its Sanskrit and Pāli versions (Waldschmidt 1950-1951: 358, §36.2), he
wrote: "Auf die Frage Anandas, wie sie mit dem Körper des Buddha nach dem Parinirvāna
verfahren sollten, antwortete der Buddha, die Mönche gehe das nichts an, das sei Laiensache." He
says much the same in his general introduction to this section (1944, 1948: 210): "Auf die Frage
Anandas, was mit dem Leichnam zu geschehen habe, verfügt der Buddha, das gehe die
Mönche nichts an, man möge diese Dinge den dafür sachverständigen Laien überlassen.
Dahit will der Buddha wohl zum Ausdruck bringen, daß die normalen Bestattungsgebrauche
auf ihn Anwendung finden sollen. ... Auf Drängen Anandas gibt der Buddha weiter an, die
Leichenfeierlichkeiten habe man in der gleichen Weise wie bei einem Weltbürger
vornahmen." There can be little doubt here that Waldschmidt correctly understood the
issue at hand to concern the disposition of the body.
singular, and bones in the plural. Of course, in Classical Sanskrit *śarīra* can and does commonly occur in the plural in the sense of "bodies" as well, both human and animal. The relation between body and bones is not problematic in theory. From the point of view of religious practice, however, as Schopen has emphasized, there is a significant difference between treatment of an intact dead body and treatment of the results of cremation—in ancient India most likely a sizable agglomeration of bones, since bodies were probably generally not burned at very high temperatures.

While Schopen argued that the oldest interpretation of the Buddha's statement in the *Mahāparinibbāṇa-sutta* must have referred only to a restriction on the participation in funerary or cremation preparations, he also suggested that by the time of the later books of the *Milindapanha*, this understanding had apparently been lost, or at least supplemented, since the text poses a dilemma which assumes that the expression *śarīra-puṇja* refers to relic worship. The implication then, as capsulized in the very title of Schopen's paper, is that the apparent misunderstanding is a very old one, going back at least to the fifth century C.E.

I have no doubt that Schopen is entirely correct that many modern interpretations of the statement in the *Mahāparinibbāṇa-sutta*, and even traditional ones such as that implied by the *Milindapanha*, are based on a misunderstanding of the original text. There has, however, long existed both significant evidence which supports the correctness of the understanding suggested by Schopen, as well as some which might be understood to demonstrate that confusion over the meaning of the word *śarīra* or, as I will suggest, an appreciation of the ambiguity or multivalence of the term, is likewise not new. In the following, I would like to focus primarily on some Chinese materials relevant to this problem. This examination will fall into three main parts: I) An exploration of the way the central passage in question, narrating the events surrounding the Buddha's cremation, has been treated in Chinese translations; II) As an extension of the first part, an investigation of several unusual uses of vocabulary, most notably that of the Chinese *Dirghāgama* and the closely related Dharmaguptaka Vinaya; III) Observations on some ways in which the terminology of *śarīra* has been treated and translated in Chinese, chiefly in the *Saddharma-pundarīka* and early Prajñāpāramitā literature.

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13 Both forms appear for instance in the well known "funeral hymn," first in the singular as body, RV 10.16.11b: *māya tvācām cikṣipsa mā śāvēram*, and then in the plural as bones 3d: *āśābhiṣu prāti ṭīrṇā śāvēraḥ*. Schopen refers for this point to Norman 1983: 278.

14 See for example Kautiya's *Arthaśāstra* (Kangle 1969): §1.20.20 and §2.2.14.

15 In addition, the results of cremation would have included large amounts of ash, for the most part from the wood or other fuel. Moreover, as we will note below, some accounts of the cremation of the Buddha explicitly mention that the funeral pyre is quenched, not allowed to burn itself out.

16 Schopen (1991: 108, 113 n. 29), following Demiéville, dates the relevant part of the text to the fifth century. Although it is clear that the *Milindapanha* more or less as we have it existed by that period, when it is cited by Buddhaghosa in his commentaries, it may well have been formed somewhat before that time, though after the composition of the earlier section set by von Hübner (1996: 85; §179) between 100 B.C.E and 200 C.E. (Norman 1993: 130 says of the *Milindapanha* that "it must have been composed long enough before the time of Buddhaghosa for it to be regarded as authoritative.") Strictly speaking, however, since what Schopen says (1991: 108) is that "This dilemma ... allows us to see ... how the injunction was understood in Sri Lanka in about the fifth century C.E." we might understand him to mean that this is how the text of the *Milindapanha* was being read by those, such as Buddhaghosa perhaps, who utilized the text in this period. This seems to be, or should be, a different claim from the assertion that this is necessarily the period to which the text's compilation belongs.
I) The Body of the Buddha in the Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra

The account of the Buddha’s funeral and the postmortem disposition of his body is taken up in a number of essentially parallel scriptural accounts. We may begin by looking first at the Pāli text of the central passage concerning the disposition of the remains of the Buddha upon his death, that upon which Schopen focused his attention. The text first approaches the issue with a question:18

(1) kathāṁ mayam bhante tathāgatassa sarīre patipajjāṁ1 ti 1 avyavattā tumhe ānanda hotaḥ tathāgatassa sarīrapajjāya 1 āṅgka tumhe ānanda sadattā ghatadhatamā anyuyjñātha sadattā appattā matapattā viharataḥ 1 sāntānā sahāyapanditāḥ pi brāhmaṇapanditāḥ pi gahapatipanditāḥ pi tathāgata bhūpajjanāṁ te tathāgatassa sarīrapajjāṁ karissamy 1

kathāṁ pana bhante tathāgatassa sarīre patipajjītān 1 ti 1 yathā kho ānanda rāhino cakkavattissā sarīre patipajjānti 1 evaṁ tathāgatassa sarīre patipajjītān 1 ti 1 kathāṁ pana bhante rāhino cakkavattissā sarīre patipajjānti 1 ti 1 rāhino ānanda cakkavattissā sarīram āhataṁ vattthi medhānti 1 ... etena upāyena pañcapi yugasatehi rāhino cakkavattissā sarīram veṭhetaṁ āciyāsa 1 teladoniyā pakkhipitvā ... rāhino cakkavattissā sarīram āhāpenti 1 cādāmaṁkathate 1 rāhino cakkavattissā ṣāāpaṁ karonti 1 evaṁ kho ānanda rāhino cakkavattissā sarīre patipajjānti 1

1) PTS pāṭaṁ 2) VRI sārātho 3) VRI omēśa satadhatam 4) VRI etemūpāya 5) VRI āciyāsa 6) VRI cādāmaṁkathate

17 These include the Pāli Mahāparinibbāṇa-sutta in the Dihe-Nikāya (Rhs Davids and Carpenter 1993), the Sanskrit Mahāparinibbāṇa-sūtra, reconstructed from Central Asian fragments (Walschmidt 1950-1951), extremely fragmentary remains of the sūtra in Gāndhāri (Salomon and Allon 2000), and the Tibetan translation of the Kusadakavaṭṭa of the Mulāsarvavivāda Vinaya (cited in Walschmidt 1950-1951), in addition to the Chinese versions we will study below. These sources (except the subsequently discovered Gāndhāri materials) have been considered in detail by Barea 1970, 1971, although I confess I do not always find his method of presentation transparent. The detailed treatment of Walschmidt 1944, 1948 is also of immense value, and considerably easier to use than Barea’s work. One should also see Barea 1975 and 1979 and Sugimoto 1984: 297-318, 472-479, while keeping in mind that there is a large secondary literature on specific problems in this literature. The comparative table in Okawama et al., 1995: 651-667 is a very useful aid to sorting out the relationship of the various versions of the Mahāparinibbāṇa-sūtra. See also the tables in Hasegawa 1974: 25-29 and Tsukamoto 1969: 42-43.

18 Rhys Davids and Carpenter 1903: 141.18-142.7 (§V.10-11) (in notes PTS = Burmese Sixth Council edition (Dhammagiri-Pāli-Ganhamāla 2 [Dhammagiri, Iṣṭupū: Vipassana Research Institute, 1991]): 107.1-13 (in notes VRI). The second portion §VI.11 is repeated at §VI.17 (161.8-24), with the Mallas asking Ānanda the same question, and getting the same answer.

My translation, which takes cognizance of Schopen’s conclusions, is here intended not to highlight the technical terms and their relations, and not necessarily to stand as a comprehensive interpretation of the passage as a whole:

“How, Reverend One, should we behave toward the Tathāgata’s body?”

“You should be unconcerned, Ānanda, with the worship of the Tathāgata’s body. Please, Ānanda, strive for the true goal, live being zealous, ardent, and resolute toward the true goal. There are wise warriors, Ānanda, wise brahmins, and wise householders with deep faith in the Tathāgata who will perform the worship of the Tathāgata’s body.”

“How, Reverend One, should they behave toward the Tathāgata’s body?”

“As, Ānanda, they behave toward the body of a universal emperor, so should they behave toward the body of the Tathāgata.”

“How, Reverend One, do they behave toward the body of a universal emperor?”

“Ānanda, they wrap the body of a universal emperor in new linen cloth. ... Wrapping the body of the universal emperor in this fashion in five hundred successive layers, they place it in an iron oil-vat, ... and they cremate the body, and they build a stūpa for the universal emperor at a great four-way intersection. So, Ānanda, do they behave toward the body of a universal emperor.

The key expression here, and the one from which so much has been drawn, is avyavattā tumhe ānanda hotaḥ tathāgatassa sarīrapajjāya, “You should be unconcerned, Ānanda, with the worship of the Tathāgata’s body.” It is this example of the term sarīra-pajjā that Schopen argued should be taken to refer not to relic worship, but rather to the funeral preparation, the word sarīra, though here in compound, to be understood in the singular as “body.” We note, moreover, that precisely the same word, sarīra, is used here to designate

19 Buddhaghosa in his commentary on the sutta here evidently takes sadattā as sad-(cat)-yatta, commenting Śuangala-Vilasini, Rhys Davids and Carpenter 1886: II.583.21 = Burmese Sixth Council edition (Dhammagiri-Pāli-Ganhamāla 5 [Dhammagiri, Iṣṭupū: Vipassana Research Institute, 1991]): §204, 156.22 sadattā ghatatā ti utramattā arhatte ghatetā, “strive for the true goal means you should strive for the highest goal, arhatship.” (As in the root text, VRI reads sārātho here too, upon what basis I do not now.) However, as noted in Rhys Davids and Stede 1921-1925: 674h, elsewhere Buddhaghosa also understands sadattā as sad-as-taṭṭha (as-taṭṭha) glossing it for instance with uke atthe in Dhammapada-atthakathā ad Dhmp 166. In that context, this does appear to be correct, as supported by the parallels in Udānavarga 23.10 (cukārtho), Patna Dhammapada 325 (cukātho) and Gāndhāri Dhammapada 263 (cukātho). But in light of Buddhaghosa’s commentary and my understanding of the general tenor of the passage, I have provisionally chosen to understand the term here as sad-as-taṭṭha, noting that its interpretation is also basically irrelevant to the main issues under discussion here. For a detailed examination of the term’s traditional interpretations, see Tamura 2003 (who does not, however, mention the present passage or its commentary).
both the body of the universal emperor (cakravartin) and that of the Buddha. Schopen also drew attention, in support of his hypothesis, to a subsequent passage in the Pāli text of the Mahāparinibbāna-sutta in which he suggested that one can actually see the transition from singular to plural sarīra, and the resulting shift in meaning from "body" to "relics".20

(2) atha kho āyasmā mahākassapo yena kusīrā mukāvatandhanānām1 mallānaṁ cetiyāṁ yena bhagavato citakato ten’ upasārikām | ... tikkhatthuṁ citakatā paḍakākāṁ kaṭati 1 pāḍato viviravīṁ bhagavato pade saṁsāra vandī | ... vandite ca pan’ āyasmato mahākassapena teha ca paṇcāhī bhikkhustoṣe hisay eva bhagavato citakato pajiļī | jhāyamānaṁ pana bhagavato sarīrasa yaṁ ahosi chavi ti vam camman ti v maṁsaṁ ti v mahaṁti ti v sasāriṁ eva chāriṁ puṇyāyittha na masi sarīraṁ eva avassissiṁ | ... daddhe1 kho pana bhagavato sarīre antalikkha udakādhārā pātu bhavavīva bhagavato citakato nibbāpesi | ... kosināraṁ pī mallā sabbagandhodake bhagavato citakato nibbāpesuṁ | atha kho kosināraṁ mallā bhagavato sarīrāṁ sattahāṁ saṁthāgāre | ... nacehi gitehi vādevi mālehi gandhehi sakkarīnuṁ garuṁ kariṁruṁ mañena pūjesuṁ | 1) VR V 2nd. nāma 2) VR omit pāḍato viviravī 3) VR add kho 4) VR add ca 5) VR sandhāgāre (misprint) 6) PTS purkarīnuṁ

Then the Venerable Mahā-Kassapa went to the Makurābandhana in Kusinārā, to the Mallā’s shrine, where the Blessed One’s pyre was. ... Thrice circumambulating the pyre, uncovering [the Blessed One’s body] at the feet he reverenced the Blessed One’s feet with his head.21 As soon as [the Blessed One’s feet] had been reverenced by the Venerable Mahā-Kassapa and the five hundred monks, the Blessed One’s pyre caught fire of its own accord.

While the Blessed One’s body was being burned, no cinder or ash of the outer skin, inner skin, flesh, tendons, or oil of the joints could be discerned. Only the relics remained. ... When the Blessed One’s body had been consumed, cascades of water fell from the sky, extinguishing the Blessed One’s pyre. ... The Mallās of Kusinārā extinguished the Blessed One’s pyre with water fragrant with all sorts of scents. Then for seven days the Mallās of Kusinārā kept the relics in their assembly hall ... worshipping, honoring, respecting, and venerating them with dances, songs, music, garlands, and perfumes.

As mentioned above, I believe that Schopen has fully established his case concerning the proper interpretation of sarīra-pājā in these passages solely on the basis of the Indic evidence he adduced. However, it will be very interesting to note that this interpretation is also comprehensively and quite unambiguously supported by the Chinese translations of the sūtra.22 We will review these in the chronological order of their translation. But before we begin, we must first make some effort to define the key terminology which will appear in these passages.

In addition to the term upon which we will focus our central attention, sāhā 舍利, two key terms are employed to express “body” in the passages in question, namely sāhā 身 and tī 體.23 We also find these compounded as sāhātī.24 As far as I can tell, while there may be some distinctions between sāhā and tī in terms of precise referent, nuance or affect in some cases of Chinese usage in general, the terms are, from Han times on at least, frequently if not usually used virtually, and most often entirely, synonymously.

A clear example may be seen in a Han funeral inscription dated to 143 C.E., in which we find the expression sāhānù mār xìngmìng, tīwàng mǐngzìn 身度行明, 精亡名存, “Although the sāhā is no more, his acts are brilliant; although the tī has perished, his reputation persists.”25 This seems to be a case of nothing other than elegant variation. However, there do exist examples which suggest that at least in some periods, or for some authors, or in some special cases, some distinction between the two was intended. In the opening words of the Xiaoqing 孝經, for instance, the Classic of Filial Piety, we find sāhātī fāfū 身體髪膚,

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21 Peter Skilling drew my attention to the ablative pāḍato here. I remain unsure of its exact sense. Two examples may be cited: at MN ii.124.6-7, māmā pāḍato karīvattā means “pointing their feet at me,” while at Vin. i.302.7-8, bhagavato sāhāya uggahāsi āyamā ānanda pāḍato uggahatā mañca naḥpāṭeṣu means “the Blessed One grasped him from by the head, Venerable Ānanda from by the feet; lifting him up, they placed him down on a bed.” The syntax (including a citation of the second example) has been discussed by von Hünberger 1968 §194, under the classification “Der Ablativ der Richtung und des Ortes.”
22 Other sources of variant potential relevance from a wider perspective are in principle not considered in the following. These include—but are not limited to—the Sarvastivāda Vinaya (T. 1435 [XXIII] 445c-446b [juan 60]), and various Mahāyāna Nirvāṇa sūtras.
23 We should note that common Chinese words for “corpse,” sī 弟 and sī 死, appear never to be used in reference to the dead body of the Buddha. While Sanskrit tātu does appear in Buddhist texts, rendered sītī 弟 and sītī 死, as far as I know it never does so in reference to the Buddha.
24 The inversion of this compound, tīsāhā, does occur in Buddhist texts, although it is not common; it appears to be unknown to dictionaries (Morohashi, Luo). Such inversions are, however, rather common in early Buddhist Chinese (see Zürcher 1977: 180), and in Chinese of early periods generally (see Cheng 1992: 282ff). For these references I am indebted to Stefano Zucchini.
“shēn and tī, hair and skin [one receives from one's parents].” The sentence structure suggests some distinction here between shēn and tī, and indeed a later commentary specifies one: shēn wèi gōng yè; tī wèi sīzhí yè. 身, 什也, 體。諸支也, “shēn means gōng [body—understood here as head and trunk]; tī means the four limbs.” Such a distinction, however, appears to be quite rare, if it is, in fact, anything other than an artifact of the commentary's need to differentiate terms which are, actually, in practice wholly synonymous.

Now, while it is certainly true that we must take into consideration the possibility that certain vocabulary choices can only be understood within the local context of the translators, detailed inquiry into the factors motivating such choices is plainly impossible, since we generally lack even the smallest shred of direct evidence of what sorts of discussions might have been going on within some particular translation group. All we have are the resulting translations themselves. On the other hand, we do have a good idea of what the main lines of philosophical disputations were within Chinese Buddhist communities, and between Buddhists, Confucians and Daoists, in the Early Medieval period, the time to which the translations of interest to us here belong. It is possible that this perspective might help us understand some vocabulary choices. For at least with respect to philosophical discussions of the nature of the body vis-à-vis the nature of the “soul,” it is plain that the vocabulary employed in such philosophical contexts was often different from what we meet in the translations under consideration here. In Han and pre-Han philosophical sources, obviously non-Buddhist since pre-Buddhist, the physical body is most frequently denoted by xíng 形, in opposition to something which animates the physicality, a “soul,” variously denoted by a great variety of terms beginning with shén 神 and going on from there. Moreover, according to a detailed study of debates over the “soul” in Early Medieval China, “pre-Eastern Jin thinkers, in their attempt to refute the possibility of an immortal soul, tended to use terms for ‘body’ like gurou [骨肉] and xingshi [形體] that unmistakably refer to perishable entities.” The same study goes on to suggest that “the terms for body and its counterpart [were] standardized as xíng and shén [here shén 神 = spirit—JAS] in almost all the discussions of the body-shen problem since the time of Zhu Sengfu’s [竺僧敷] essay,” referring here to the Shen wuxing lun 神無形論 of the mid-fourth century.

Nevertheless, there are prominent exceptions to this pattern of usage. In the Chinese version of the Milindapañha, for instance, in a discussion one purpose of which is to distinguish the life principle (jīva) from the physical body, we do indeed encounter the term shēn, body, distinguished from ming 命, life-force. As another example, Kumārajiva's late fourth-century translation Zhonglan 中譯, his rendering of the pivotal Mālamadhyamaka-kārikā of Nāgārjuna with commentary, contains a discussion of the location of “spirit,” shēn 神, arguing that it cannot exist since, if it did, it would reside either inside or outside the body, shēn 身. If inside the body, the text goes on, the body would be indestructible and the spirit always within it.

Such examples of similar usages in contemporary Chinese Buddhist literature could be multiplied. This leads us to the conclusion that, first of all, the terms shēn 身 and tī 體 either alone or in combination have the straightforward meaning of “body.” Secondly, it does not appear likely that these terms were intentionally selected by translators as equivalents of Indic sarira due to their usage in, or absence from, any particular indigenous doctrinal or philosophical contexts accessible to us now. It is, nevertheless, still possible that the Buddhist translators felt that by limiting themselves to shēn, tī and a combination of these two terms, and avoiding vocabulary such as xíng 形, they would be able to distance their treatment of the Buddha’s body from some of the complexities.

26 Quoted in Morohashi 1955-1960: 10.969d (38034.78). See Wang 2002: 1385 and 1698, s.v. shēn and tī, respectively, for further citations of the words as virtual synonyms, and as somehow slightly distinguished in meaning.
28 Lo 1991: 136; on the monk Zhu Sengfu, see Zürcher 1959: 147.
of contemporary philosophical debates over the nature of body and "soul," some but not all of which employed distinctly different body language.32

Now let us turn to the Chinese translations parallel to the Pāli passage we cited above.

The *Banniehuan jing* 般泥洹經 is recorded in traditional scripture catalogues as an anonymous translation dating from the period between 317-420. However, it is very close to certain that it is in fact to be correctly attributed to Zhi Qian 支謙,33 and therefore datable considerably earlier, to the period 220-252, making it the oldest of the texts we will compare here. In it we find the following:34

3. 梵滅度後，當作何①供。佛言，汝默。梵志居士自樂為之。又問，梵志居士為受法當云何。… 用新紡織織②身④而③聞之。其收①④於③四道，立塔起廟，表利懸幃，奉施華香。

* v.l. 敬。

After the Buddha's demise, how should one perform the funeral (zàng) ①? The Buddha said: "You be quiet! Brahmins and householders are glad to care for it themselves." [Ananda] again asked: "What is the procedure through which the Brahmins and householders should perform the funeral" ②... wrapping the body (shēn) ③ in new cotton cloth ② and cremate (shēwéi) ② it. When this is done, collect the relics (shēlǐ) ②, and set up a stūpa and erect a shrine at a crossroads, with binners and canopies drape it in silk, and offer flowers and incense.

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32 Incidentally, even in non-Buddhist Indian contexts of such debates, one standard term for body was indeed *sarīra*. The polar distinction between *sarīra* and *ātman* is found at least as early as *Sarpathakrāhmaṇa / Byadārāvyaśopaniṣad* (XIV.7.3-4 [Weber 1853: 1088] / IV.4.2-3 [Limaye and Vadekar 1958: 247]; note that the Mādhyamika recension reads *parusa* for Kāṇḍa’s *ātman in 4.4.3*). The polarity continues in philosophical literature, for instance *Niyāṇasūtra 3.1.4*: *tātāvadāte pūtakābhūtvā*, "[If the body were identical with the soul, *ātman*, when the body is burned, there would be no sins." In other words, the individual would then be released from sin with the creation of the body, which is not the case.

33 According to Ui 1962, a conclusion shared by Kanno 1997 and Natier 2003: 241; 2004: 176-177. For a radically different view of the attribution of this and several other Nirvāṇa-sūtra translations see Iwamatsu 1976b (also 1976a), who sees the work attributed to Bo Fazu as the translation of Zhi Qian, that of the unknown translator (here ascribed to Zhi Qian) as the work of Dharmaarāja and that ascribed to Faxian as the work of Guṇahābha. Despite some lingering disagreement, I follow here the views of Ui, Kanno and Natier, which among other things do not require wholesale reassignment of the attribution of other translations. Nevertheless, it remains possible that one or more of these translations has in fact been wrongly assigned. See also n. 46 on Faxian, below.


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Here the vocabulary simply distinguishes between the funeral’s treatment of the body (denoted by the compound *shēn* 身 on the one hand, and the post-cremation resultant relics (*shēlǐ*) on the other. The question posed here concerns the funeral, *zàng*, which makes it crystal clear that this translation fully accords with the interpretation Schopen offered for the Pali text: how one should "treat the body" means how one should perform the funeral.

Our next source, the *Po banniehuan jing* 般泥洹經, was translated roughly a half-century later by Bo Fazu 白法祖, between 290-306. In this translation our passage reads:35

4. 佛滅度後，吾等①受佛②身體法當云何。佛告阿難，汝默無憂。當有道心理家共憂吾③身。阿難言，彼以何法要④佛尊體。佛告阿難，法如飛行皇帝預葬之法。佛復除彼。阿難言，葬聖帝法當云何。佛告阿難，葬法用錦彰以縫⑤身。… ①蛇成錦絹，②敷①②利，於四交道起塔立石。

After the Buddha's demise, what is the procedure through which we should perform the funeral (zàng) ① for the Buddha’s body (shēn)? The Buddha said to Ananda: "You should be quiet; it does not concern [you]! Brahmins and householders together will take care of my body (shēn) ③." Ananda asked: "What is the procedure through which they will take care of the Buddha’s honorable body (fú-zàng) ④?" The Buddha said to Ananda: "The procedure for the funeral (zàng) is as the procedure for the funeral (fú-zàng) of a universal monarch.36 But the Buddha surpasses him," Ananda said: "What is the procedure for the funeral (zàng) of an emperor?" The Buddha said to Ananda: "The procedure for the funeral is to wrap the body (shēn) ⑤ in silk tissue... After the cremation (shēwéi) ② is over, collect the relics (shēlǐ) ②, and set up a stūpa at a crossroads.

Here again the vocabulary makes it clear that the funeral procedures concern the disposition of the uncremated body. The Mallas speak of the Buddha’s *shēn*. The Buddha himself refers to his shēn, the same word he uses in speaking of the body of the universal emperor (*cakravartin*), and finally Ananda speaks of the Buddha’s body as fū-zàng. There does not appear to be any fundamental distinction implied here, although of course Ananda’s vocabulary is honorific.37


36 No content or rhetorical considerations would appear to affect the alternation between *zàng* and *fū-zàng*; this appears to be purely a case of elegant variation.

37 The text may, however, be making a distinction between Ananda’s use of a plural first person pronoun "we" wǒmen 吾等, and the Buddha’s response which uses "you" ni 汝, without any plural marker. Of course, this in itself is far from conclusive. In Classical Chinese
The body of the Buddha in the Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra

One wants to know how to perform the funeral, one should follow [the procedure] for a universal monarch.” Ananda again asked: “What is the procedure for performing the funeral of a universal monarch?” The Buddha said to Ananda: “The procedure for the funeral of a universal monarch is first to wash his body (tiło) with fragrant hot water, then to wrap his entire body (śhen) in new cotton cloth, successively wrapping it in 500 layers. Placing the body (śhen) inside a golden coffin, it is then sprinkled with sesame oil, and the golden coffin is lifted up and placed inside a second large iron exterior coffin. Fragrant sandal wood is then stacked up around the outside of the exterior coffin. One piles up all sorts of renowned perfumes, covering the top of the coffin completely, and then cremates (śheti) it. When this is done, the relics (śheti) are recovered, and a stupa-temple (stupa) is set up at a crossroads.”...

“Ananda, if you want to perform my funeral, first wash [me] with fragrant hot water [... and so on as before].”

Just as in the other translators’ versions, a clear distinction is made between “body” (ti or śhen) before the cremation, and relics (śheti) after.44

Almost contemporaneous with the just cited Dhīrgāgama translation is the final version of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra we will consider here, the Daban-niupan jing 大般涅槃經, translated by Faxian 法顯 only a few years later, in 417.45 The parallel passage there reads:47

in general plural markers are very frequently omitted, and despite their more common employment in Buddhist translations, their rate of omission there is low. The absence of a plural marker, therefore, in no way allows us to necessarily assume that a singular is explicitly intended. On the other hand, the usage may very well be significant.

The second character is also written 尊.

See Barea 1966. The identity of the translator and related problems are discussed below.

Karashima 1994 concluded that this language was not identical with Gāndhāri, on the basis of materials then available. Subsequent discoveries of Gāndhāri language materials, which among other things have enhanced our knowledge of its phonology, may cast the question in a new light. However, I do not know of any attempt so far to confront the evidence of the Chinese Dhīrgāgama with the results of the most recent studies of the newly discovered Gāndhāri materials being painstakingly examined by Richard Salomon and his team at the University of Washington.

T. 1(2) (l) 20a22-b3, 4-9 (guan 5). This material has been translated before: Weller 1939, 1940: 434-435 (clxii-clxv); Waldschmidt 1944, 1948: 214; Kamitsuka in Okayama et al. 1995: 280-282.

See also the nearly identical assertion in the reprise in verse, T. 1(2) (l) 20b15-16 (guan 5):

阿難汝言，思惟所行，田中諸清信，自當樂於之。

41 T. 1(2) (l) 20a22-b 3, 4-9 (guan 5). This material has been translated before: Weller 1939, 1940: 434-435 (clxii-clxv); Waldschmidt 1944, 1948: 214; Kamitsuka in Okayama et al. 1995: 280-282.

42 See also the nearly identical assertion in the reprise in verse, T. 1(2) (l) 20b15-16 (guan 5):

阿難汝言，思惟所行，田中諸清信，自當樂於之。

43 I cannot resist pointing out, for the benefit of those who may have an interest in the popular culture of a generation ago, that the resulting edifice might also aptly be termed a “Śheti Temple.”

44 However, interestingly, despite the passage’s assertion that Ananda should not concern himself with the funeral, when Ananda insists that he wishes to be told of the procedures for the Buddha’s funeral, the Buddha’s response does seem to accept the possibility that Ananda himself will carry out these rites: “Ananda, if you want to perform my funeral [...],” 阿難汝言，思惟所行，田中諸清信，自當樂於之.

45 For a much later version, dating about three centuries afterwards, see Additional Note 1.

46 The date is according to the Chu sanzang jiji 出三藏記集 T. 2145 (LV) 11c26 (guan 2). What is in any event most important for us is that since Faxian returned from his famous travels only in 414, his translation cannot be earlier than that of the Dhīrgāgama, completed in 413. On the attribution of this translation to Faxian, see the detailed discussion in Matsumoto 1927: 5-11.

47 T. 7 (l) 199c21-200a20 (guan zhong); trans. Waldschmidt 1944, 1948: 215.
The Body of the Buddha in the Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra

As is made abundantly plain by all of these Chinese passages, the translators of these texts certainly understood Ananda’s question to concern only the procedures of a funeral and for handling the corpse, without any reference to worship of relics or stūpas—just as Schopen suggested the Pāli text should be understood. As Schopen emphasized, however, a number of modern scholarly treatments seem to have obscured the crucial distinction between corpse and relics. What is somewhat surprising is that not only those who dealt with the (conceivably ambiguous) Indic evidence but even some of those who have paid attention to the virtually unequivocal Chinese evidence also share in this confusion. For instance, having catalogued the differences and similarities of all the versions we have just examined, which should have made it very clear that the Buddha’s advice to Ananda concerns only the funeral, André Bareau nevertheless went on to say: 49

Consequently, all of our sources are agreed on this two-fold point: the funeral procedures of the Buddha are the duty of the laity and not of the monks, who are not to concern themselves with them. ... The cult of the Buddha and of his relics, at least the external forms of this cult, should in the first place be reserved for devout lay followers.

Bareau’s adventitious addition of “and of his relics” appears to reflect the influence of his own preconceptions, for despite quite accurately reading what the texts do say, he went on to attribute to them something else as well. Akira Hirakawa also noticed the Chinese sources, yet made virtually the same leap as did Bareau. He went on, moreover, to connect this result to a theory about the development of early Mahāyāna communities, building upon an assumption of separate monastic and lay involvements with stūpa worship. I have earlier suggested that this fundamental misunderstanding seriously undermines key aspects of Hirakawa’s general theory. 50

48 In particular, at the very end of the passage, the actions due a stūpa are characterized as gongyang qi shên 供養其身, perhaps to be taken as “worship of its body,” or “of their bodies,” or again “make offerings to its body,” and so on. To what the term “body,” shên, in this particular instance refers is not specified. Is it to the stūpa itself, or to the remains of the Buddha contained therein? The key ambiguity here hinges on the sense of qi, a pronoun, in contexts such as this generally possessive. The sense of the expression remains unresolved, and we are perhaps very fortunate that our larger argument does not stand or fall on the fine interpretation of this passage.

49 Bareau 1971: 37, with my added emphasis. On p. 36, after carefully registering the Chinese passages which, as he correctly notes, discuss the body, funeral and pāñci of the body, Bareau wrote: “Nous avons pu constater que le mot sanskrit désignant ici le corps, le cadavre (jātāra), désigner aussi par la suite les restes corporels infimes retrouvés sur les lieux de la crémation, les reliques corporelles, ce qui pourrait obscurcir parfois nos textes.”
Other examples illustrate further the struggle between accepted interpretations and what texts actually say. In his translation of Waldschmidt’s edition of the Sanskrit Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra, Iwamoto Yutaka naturally dealt with passages in that text which mention sarīra and sarīra-padjā. His renderings are instructive. In the crucial passage concerning the Buddha’s advice to Ānanda that he not concern himself with sarīra-padjā, Iwamoto rendered the compound with sbharī no kyō 舍利の供养, “sarīra-worship,” which is to say relic worship, as he did in several similar passages.\(^{51}\) However, precisely the same Sanskrit term is elsewhere rendered sōgi 臨仏、or otomurai no gishiki お法事の儀式, “funeral” and “funeral ritual,” respectively. At the same time, even when it means “body” in the singular, sarīra alone is translated by Iwamoto both with sbhari 舍利, “relics,” on the one hand,\(^{54}\) and with nakigara 亡骸, “corpse,” on the other.\(^{55}\) When the discussion turns to the results of the cremation, Iwamoto returns to sbhari.\(^{56}\) In this inconsistency Iwamoto is far from alone. In what seems to be the earliest Japanese translation of the Pāli Mahāparinibbāṇa-sutta, that of Byōdō Tsūshō, for example, we find a very similar pattern. Ānanda’s first question to the Buddha (at §V.10) is translated with sbhari as follows:\(^{57}\) 世尊, 我等は如来の舍利を如何に处理すべきや, “Blessed One, how should we take care of the Tathāgata’s relics?” and this vocabulary continues (in §V.11) into the discussion of the funeral of the cakravartin: 而して、世尊、轉輪王の舍利は如何に处理すべきや, “Then, Blessed One, how should we take care of the universal emperor’s relics?” But the answer suddenly switches from sbhari to karada (also read mukuro) 腐, “body, corpse,” and then immediately back again: 世尊よ、人々は轉輪王の腐を … 阿難よ、轉輪王の腐は足の如く处理するなり. 阿難よ、轉輪王の舍利を处理するが如く、足の如く如来の舍利を处理すべきなり, “Ānanda, people … the universal emperor’s corpse; Ānanda, so should you take care of the universal emperor’s corpse. Ānanda, as you take care of the universal emperor’s relics, so should you take care of the Tathāgata’s relics.” In the reprise of §VI.17, which in the Pāli is precisely the same save for the addition of the vocative “Ānanda,” the earlier sbhari has become karada: 世尊阿難よ、我等は如来の腐を如何に处理すべきや, “Blessed One Ānanda [sī], how should we take care of the Tathāgata’s corpse?” Finally, in the transitional paragraphs §VI.23-24 where sarīra moves from singular to plural, we find quite logically first karada, body, and then sbhari, relics. There is probably no way to account for such inconsistency or even incoherence (which could be instanced in any number of other places as well), other than as an effect of the translators’ preconceptions, although given these fluctuations from one sentence to the next, it is difficult to see what even the translators themselves imagined the texts might be trying to say.

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50 Hirakawa 1954: 337, and 406 n. 4. For my criticism, see Silk 2002a, as well as the work of others cited therein.
51 Iwamoto 1974: 115, 135, and 136, translating respectively Waldschmidt 1950-1951: 358 (§36.2-3), 410 (§46.4), and 412 (§47.2).
52 Iwamoto 1974: 119, 140, translating respectively Waldschmidt 1950-1951: 418 (§47.22), 420 (§48.8). In the latter case Iwamoto translates adya gate saptābhe vartate sarīra sarīrapadjā as: 今日は即日七日経っていますので、葬儀が行われています。その葬儀のときに.... When exactly the same expression occurs later (Waldschmidt 1950-1951: 432 ([§50.1]), however, Iwamoto (1974: 144) renders it: 七日経って、佛の亡骸を葬る儀式が行われた。introducing yet a slightly different vocabulary, replacing “perform the funeral rites” with “perform the rites for the funeral of the Buddha’s corpse.”
55 Iwamoto 1974: 136, 139, 141, 142, and 143 translating respectively Waldschmidt 1950-1951: 412 (§47.4), 420 (§47.23), 424 (§49.2), 426 (§49.5), 428 (§49.1), and (§49.20).
57 Byōdō 1935: 126-127, 153, 157-158. This treatment is also peculiar since Byōdō had had the benefit of access not only to Chinese sources, but to Rhys Davids’s quite correct English translation as well.
II) The Buddha’s Funeral in the Dirghāgama and Dharmaguptaka Vinaya

The treatments of the passages of some modern scholars cited above (and others noted earlier by Schopen) are clearly inconsistent, if not at least in part incoherent. What, however, of ancient Chinese translations? We have already seen that the parallels in these texts (§§3, 4, 5, 6) to the first Pāli passage we cited, (§1), are virtually unanimous in seeing references to the pre-cremation object of veneration as a body, śbeṇ, ṭī or sbeṇti. But when we look a bit more broadly at the treatment of this theme in these translations, we do notice a few oddities. These center around one particular word, śeṣṭi 舍利. We may examine the translations beginning with the oldest, focussing on the vocabulary employed in descriptions of the body of the Buddha. We should begin by looking at ordinary body language, that used of the Buddha outside the direct funeral context, and hence in reference to a living body.

In Zhi Qian’s translation, that dating from the first half of the third century, we find the following account of the Buddha’s self-description of his illness:8

(7)

是時佛身疾，摩軀皆痛。佛念，痛甚，而弟子皆不在。當須拔來，乃取泥洹。宜為疾，自力精進，以受不念衆懇之定。

At that time, the Buddha was physically (sbeṇ 身) ill, and his entire body (qū 腾) was in pain. The Buddha thought: “The pain is horrible. However, all my disciples are absent. I ought to wait for them to arrive, and only then pass into nirvāṇa. Because of this illness, I should be energetic in my own efforts,” absorbed in the meditative concentration in which one is not mindful of diversity (uññātavasamjñā).90

Here two terms refer to the Buddha’s body, sbeṇ 身 and qū 腾. In Bo Fazu’s half-century later rendering we find the same episode as follows:61

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8 T. 6 (L) 180a12-15 (juan shang); Waldschmidt 1944, 1948: 91
9 To fight this illness?
10 I here follow Barea 1970: 140.
11 The term qū 腾 is again a perfectly ordinary word for “body.” The Shuoven 説文, for instance, simply defines it as ṭī (see Wang 2002: 1386).
12 T. 5 (L) 164c5-9 (juan shang); Waldschmidt 1944, 1948: 91, 93.
13 T. 5 (L) 164c13-15 (juan shang); Waldschmidt 1944, 1948: 93.
14 T. 1 (L) 15a17-20 (juan 2); Sukri in Okayama et al. 1995: 236; Weller 75 (lxxvii); Waldschmidt 1944, 1948: 91.
we noted above, to the living body of the Buddha, which we thus see described variously as śākhā, tī, fö-shēngbēn, šēntī and qī, words which in this context appear synonymous both in denotation and connotation. We do note, however, that Bo Fazu’s text has Ānanda use the explicitly respectful appellation fö-shēngbēn.

Generally speaking, the same vocabulary is used in reference to the dead body of the Buddha, his corpse. However, there are cases in all three early translations of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra in which, instead of the vocabulary for “body,” consisting of the words just listed, we find something unusual: the term śākhā 舍利, which generally designates “relics,” is used instead in the sense of “uncremated dead body.” These cases occur in the context of the discussion of the treatment of the Buddha’s body by the Mallas. In this regard, for the contrast it provides us we may first of all refer as a baseline to the Pāli text, which is straightforward and reads as follows.65

(10)

atha kho kosinārakā mallā purise ānapesuṁ 1 tena hi bhāne kusinārayām ganhamālaṁ ca sabbā ca tīlāvacaraṁ saṃnīpāte tī 1 atha kho kosinārakā mallā ... yena upavattanaṁ ... yena bhagavato sarīraṁ ten’ upasamakāminnu upasamakāminīv bhagavato sarīraṁ naccehi gītehi māhehi gadhihehī sakkarontā garukarontā mānetā pūjantā evaṁ taṁ dvāvam viññāmesuṁ 1.

atha kho kosināracānāṁ mallānaṁ etad ahośi 1 ativikalo kho ajja bhagavato sarīraṁ jhāperuṁ 1 sve dāni mayāṁ bhagavato sarīraṁ jhāpessāma ti 1 atha kho kosināracānāṁ mallā bhagavato sarīraṁ na ca ... sakkarontā ... dutiyāṁ phī dvāvam viññāmesuṁ 1 ... 

atha kho sattamaṁ dvāvam kosināracānāṁ mallānaṁ etad ahośi 1 mayāṁ bhagavato sarīraṁ naccehi ... sakkarontā ... 1 dakkhinena dakkhinena āgarassu harītīvā bāhirenā bāhirenā dakkhino daggasseva sarīraṁ jhāpessāma ti 1

1) VRI garum karontā 2) VRI ekavāsanaṁ for evaṁ taṁ dvāvam

Then the Mallas of Kusināra ordered their servants, saying: “Gather perfumes, garlands, and all the musical instruments in Kusināra!” Then the Mallas of Kusināra ... went to where the Blessed One’s body was in Upavattana. Arriving there, they spent the entire day in honoring, respecting, venerating and worshiping the Blessed One’s body with dances, songs, music, garlands, and scents ....

Then it occurred to the Mallas of Kusināra: “It’s too late today to cremate the Blessed One’s body. We will cremate the Blessed One’s body tomorrow.” And so they spent the second day ... in honoring ... the Blessed One’s body with dances ....

65 Rhys Davids and Carpenter 1903: 159.14–160.5 (SVI.13–14) = Burmese Sixth Council edition (Dhammagiri-Pāli-Gantmala 2 [Dhammagiri, Igaruji; Vipassana Research Institute, 1993]): 119.18–120.7.

66 T. 6 (I) 189a11-13 (juan xia), Waldschmidt 1944, 1948: 272.

67 T. 6 (I) 189a16-19 (juan xia); Waldschmidt 1944, 1948: 276
wished 100,000 gold bails in the form of a cow. The Brahmanas were happy about the money, and the miserly mother was pleased. They all rejoiced and were satisfied."

They prepared new cotton cloth and 500 finely woven cloths. At that time the people gathered from all around, from the surrounding 480 li area. All of them brought musical instruments, flowers, perfumes, and came to the twin [śāla] trees. Together they took the Buddha’s body (fūshēn) and placed it atop the golden platform, then honored and worshipped it with music.

Here the very same body referred to earlier by the narrator as śēli is simply fūshēn, the body of the Buddha. After the corpse is taken out of the city and paraded by gods, however, we return to śēli."46

13

餘無數天於燄空中散天華華，而雨澤香。是時婆賢大臣與拘夷大臣議，欲以人樂讀経天樂俱送舍利。

Innumerable other strewed many types of heavenly flowers from the sky, and rained down perfumes. Then the Grand Minister Poxian and the Grand Minister Juyi conferred. They wished for the musical praises performed by humans to join in the worship of the gods to send off the śēli.

This śēli once again can point to nothing other than the uncremated corpse. After the bier is carried in one gate of the city and out another, it is taken to the place this text calls Outu 濃茶. Then the Mallas:69

14

持劫波錦緞佛身體，五百張畫，次纔千過。麻油澤膏澤滿金棺，已內佛身，舉黃金棺。... 濃茶大臣執火而欲燃佛。積火至灰滅，三進不然。賢者阿那律語阿難言，火所以不然者，是諸天意。見大迦葉將五百禮，從彼句來。已在半道，欲面禮佛故，使火不燃耳。阿難言，謂佛火燃者。

Wrapped the Buddha’s body (fūshēn) in cotton cloth, and next wrapped it a thousand times in 500 finely woven cloths. They filled the golden coffin with sesame oil, and placed the Buddha’s body (fūshēn) within the golden coffin. ... The Grand Minister Osu grasped a brand and was about to cremate the Buddha (rānfō), but the pyre was immediately extinguished. He tried three times, but it

10. The name of this city, alternatively Pāpā or Pāva, is here (and elsewhere) transcribed bōxūn 波旬, EMC pa-zwin. The second character may also be read jūn, which probably yields EMC kun or kwin, but neither of these transparently support the equivalence with vāpa. The problem was discussed in some detail by Pelliot 1932, who mentions inter alia the suggestion of the lexicographer Huilin that one should read not xūn 祐 but rather xuān 願, EMC ēwen'. Seishi Karashima, who reminded me of Pelliot's study, believes that Huilin is correct, but notes that further investigation is required.

46 T. 6 l (1) 189b1-3 (juan xià); Waldschmidt 1944, 1948: 283-284.
49 T. 6 l (1) 189b5-13 (juan xià); Waldschmidt 1944, 1948: 295-296.

11. T. 6 l (1) 189b16 (juan xià); Waldschmidt 1944, 1948: 287.
12. T. 6 l (1) 189b24 (juan xià); Waldschmidt 1944, 1948: 291.
13. T. 6 l (1) 189b28-c3 (juan xià); Waldschmidt 1944, 1948: 302.
translation, at least with regard to the specific vocabulary used in reference to his body, or for example in terms of the depiction of his physical illness, cited above, which presupposes a vulnerable and humanly physical Buddha. In addition, when the body of the Buddha is twice referred to in these verses, it is once with the word shēn, the second time with qū. The picture of the transcendent Buddha seen here by Przyluski, whatever may be its significance, does not appear to be related to, or to reflect, any specific or special vocabulary used in reference to his body.

To continue our survey, when we turn to Bo Fazu's translation, we find three “normal” references to the corpse of the Buddha designated with “body” language, as we saw earlier, but in addition the following passage which speaks of the procedures prior to cremation:99

(17)

進理家即曰。舉佛舍利床，欲從城西門入。床為不舉，理家俱曰、床不動搖，從得出城乎。　

The brahmmins and householders then said: “Lifting up the platform of the Buddha’s shēlī, we wish to enter from the city’s western gate.” But the platform could not be lifted. The householders together said: “It is not possible to move the platform. Can we take it out of the city?”

Nowhere else in this translation does the word shēlī refer to the body of the Buddha, meaning elsewhere always “relics.” In addition, as far as I can see nowhere in the last of our sources, Faxian’s translation, is shēlī used in anything other than the sense of “relics.” This leaves us with one source yet to consider, the Dirghāgama translation. And here we find the most complex set of examples of shēlī vocabulary used to refer to the body of the Buddha. What patterns, if any, direct the employment of the term is the key question we will try to address, and the central source of the perplexity which motivated the present study to begin with.

The first passage in the Dirghāgama to attract our attention reads as follows:80

(18)

時諸羅末推相謂言、宜各還歸、各舉舍利、盡諸香花及眾樂、遂乃雙樹、①供養舍利、竟一日已、以②佛舍利置於牀上。使末羅童子挾牀四角、挾持幡蓋、燒香散華、

80 T. 6 (I) 189d14-16 (juan xia); Waldschmidt 1944, 1948: 276.
81 T. 6 (I) 190a21-23 (juan xia). This material has been translated by Weller 1939, 1940: 191 (cccvi); Waldschmidt 1944, 1948: 272; Bureau 1985: 277; Hikita in Okayama et al. 1995: 345.
At that time the Mallas discussed among themselves as follows: "Let each one go back to his home, prepare perfumes, flowers and musical instruments, and quickly go to the twin trees to worship the śālī. After one day, putting the Buddha's śālī on a platform, let the Malla youths take the four corners of the platform, hold aloft banners and parasols, burn incense, scatter flowers and play music in worship. Entering through the eastern gate ... and then cremate it." 

This sequence begins with an employment of śālī in what can be nothing else than the sense of “body, dead body, corpse” (1), something which exists before the cremation (2) has yet been carried out. The reference here is to the body of the Buddha, and the speakers are the Mallas. The text goes on to say that the Mallas then did return to their homes, gather the requisites for worship and, going to the twin śāla trees, between which rested the body of the Buddha, “did worship of/to the śālī,” gongyáng śālī (供養舍利). After a day they placed the śālī on a platform, and so on. Aniruddha warns them that they are wasting effort, since the gods are about to come and lift up the platform themselves. When the Mallas ask why, Aniruddha replies: 

(19) 

汝等欲以香花伎樂供養舍利，竟一日已，以○佛舍利置於床上，... 而③聞之。而諸天意欲留舍利，七日之中，香花伎樂，禮敬供養。然後以○佛舍利藏於床上，... 而③聞之。 

You are about to take perfumes, flowers and musical instruments to worship the śālī. After one day you plan to put the Buddha's śālī on a platform ... and cremate it. But the gods wish to keep the śālī in place, and for seven days reverently worship it with perfumes, flowers and musical instruments. Later they will take the Buddha's śālī, put it on a platform ... and cremate it.

Here Aniruddha speaks, using śālī to refer to the corpse of the Buddha. The Mallas then agree and resolve that they will beautify the city, and for seven days worship the śālī (gongyáng śālī 供養舍利), the same vocabulary being used both to report their direct speech and to report their activities narratively. The narrator then goes on to describe how the gods of the Heaven of the Thirty-Three (Trayastrimśa) scatter various kinds of flowers over the śālī and play heavenly music while the spirits sing songs. To this the Mallas say: “Let’s leave aside our human music for the moment, and request divine music for the worship of the śālī (gongyáng śālī 供養舍利).” The narrator goes on to say how they worship the śālī with golden flowers as big as wagon wheels. Shortly thereafter, the text continues: 

(20) 

時諸未羅設供養已，… 告阿難曰：我等當復以何供養。阿難報曰，我親從佛聞，親受佛教。欲○受舍利者，當如轉輪聖王法也。又問阿難，轉輪聖王應法何云。答曰，聖王法也，先以香湯洗浴其身，以新劫貝周遍灌身，五百張疊次如織之，內○身金棺，… 而③聞之，收拾○○舍利，於四道道起立⑦塔廟，... 

* v.l. 度 " v.l. 歪 

At that time, after the Mallas had worshipped ... they asked Ananda: “How should we worship now?” Ananda answered: “I have heard that the Buddha, and received the Buddha's direct instructions. One who wants to perform the funeral of the śālī (sāng śālī) should follow the procedure for the funeral of a universal monarch.” Again they asked Ananda: “What is the procedure for the funeral of a universal monarch?” He answered: “The procedure for the funeral of a monarch is to first bathe his body (sēn) in fragrant hot water, then wrap the body in new cotton, successively binding it in 500 layers. The body is placed in a golden coffin ... and it is cremated, the relics (sēlī) collected, and a stūpa-shrine erected at a crossroads ... 

Here once again the Mallas are speaking when they mention in reference to the Buddha “funeral of the śālī” (1), where śālī can have no other meaning than “body, corpse.” But when the topic turns to the universal emperor, the

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81 Contextually, perhaps better “bier,” although the term chuang 架 in itself has no such connotation.
82 T. 1(2) (I) 27c24-25 (juan 4).
83 T. 1(2) (I) 27c9-28a10 (juan 4).
84 T. 1(2) (I) 28a13 (juan 4).
85 T. 1(2) (I) 28a22-23 (juan 4). As Hikita points out in Okayama et al. 1995: 636, n. 60, this is very close to the expression we find in Waldschmidt's Sanskrit text (1930-1951: §47.22): pratiti(ju)va jānanusya kāya(yā)dir (ārya dharma) gacchāya kariyam. I thus disagree with Bareau 1971: 208, who sees the humans and gods playing together. On the term gōshī 且観, which corresponds here to pratikṣip, see Sukī's note in Okayama et al. 1997: 231, n. 74.
87 The variant reading of the three editions, Song, Yuan, Ming, pí 賓 for sāng 江, could be translated “wants to bury the śālī.” I think this is not right, although it is sensible.
vocabulary shifts to shén ②③④. We may begin to speculate whether, in this
text at least, this usage of shén is a honorific one, with ordinary words for
“body” avoided out of respect for the Buddha. The first instances in this
sequence refer to the body of the Buddha, which might motivate the use of
special vocabulary. Those which follow, however, refer to the less exalted
cakravartin, with regard to whom it is said that his body (shén ⑦) is washed.
For the cakravartin, only after his cremation ⑤ do we encounter the term shēn, 
clearly now in the sense of relics ⑥. We might then wonder whether an
intentional distinction has been introduced, namely between a less exalted
mere “body,” shén, and the Buddha’s body as shēn. This hypothesis might, in
the first place, be strengthened by the immediately following paragraph, in
which the Buddha is made to use “body” language in reference to his own
(future) corpse. ⑧

(21)
阿難，汝欲①置我，先以香湯洗浴，用新劫貝、周匝繫②身，以五百張疊次
如續之。内③身金棺，…而④開棺之，收棺⑤舍利，於四衢道起立⑥塔剎…。

“[The Buddha told me] ‘Ananda, if you want to perform my funeral ①, first
wash [me] with hot fragrant water, then wrap the body (shén ②) in new cotton,
and bind it successively in 500 layers. Place the body ③ in a golden coffin, … and
cremate ④ it, collect the relics (shēn) ⑤ and erect a ⑥ stupa at a crossroads. . . .”

The word shēn appears in this passage in Ānanda’s words reporting the
direct speech of the Buddha, but it is used only to refer to post-cremation
remains, relics ⑥. When the Buddha speaks of his own dead body, he calls it
shén ②③. This is consistent with the speculation of a differential use of respect
vocabulary, since we might well imagine the Buddha depicted as avoiding
honorary language with respect to himself. However, we find a discussion
which appears to contradict this neat dichotomy slightly later in the same
narrative sequence. ⑨

(22)
末羅又問，諸天何故使火不燃。阿那律言，天以大迦葉將五百弟子從波婆國
來，今在半道，及①末羅，欲見②佛身。天知其意，故火不燃….

⑧ T. 1(2) (I) 28b10-15 (juan 4); trans. in Weller 1939, 1940: 194 (cccxx); Waldschmidt
⑨ T. 1(2) (I) 28b28-29c (juan 4); trans. in Weller 1939, 1940: 195 (cccxxiv); Waldschmidt

The Mallas again asked: “Why do the gods not permit the fire to burn?”
Aniruddha replied: “The gods consider that Mahā-Kāśyapa is presently coming
from the land of Pāvā with 500 disciples, and that he is now [just] midway;
he wants to see the body of the Buddha (fōshēn) ② while it has not yet been cremated
①. Because the gods know his intention, they do not permit the fire to burn. . . .”

Here the Buddha’s disciple Aniruddha refers to the uncremated ① object
not with the hypothesized respect term shēn, but rather as the Buddha’s body
(fōshēn) ②. While we may have no trouble with the Buddha using non-respect
vocabulary about himself, we now have to consider whether we might maintain
both that shēn functions in this text as an honorific usage contrasting with
unmarked shén, and also that the Buddha’s disciple might speak of his corpse
using the less exalted term shén. There are, however, other examples of such
usage. After Kāśyapa learns that the Buddha is dead, he and his five hundred
disciples are saddened, and lament his passing. The famous disrespectful disciple,
here called “Upānanda,” ⑩ rejoices at the Buddha’s death and the consequent
freedom he imagines it implies for the disciples, and Kāśyapa laments to his
followers: ⑩

(23)
連嚴衣鉢，時語樹雙，及末羅維，可得見佛。時諸比丘聞大迦葉語已，即從
座起，侍從迦葉，詣砳尸城，…至阿難所，問訊已，一面住，語阿難言，我等
欲一面觀①舍利。及②末羅維，寧可見不阿難答言，雖③末羅維，難復可見，
所以然者，④佛身既洗以香湯，縞以劫貝，五百張疊次如續之，藏於金棺，…
以為⑤佛身難復可觀。迦葉請至三，阿難答如初，以為⑥佛身難復得見。時大
迦葉謂之香湯。於時⑦佛身從重枷內雙出兩足，足有異色，迦葉見已，怪問阿
難。⑧佛身金色，是何故異。

Let us quickly pack up our robes and bowls, and go to the twin [sāla] trees,
where we will be able to see the still uncremated Buddha.

At that time, the monks heard what Mahā-Kāśyapa said, and getting up from
their seats they escorted Kāśyapa and went to Kuśinagara . . . to where Ānanda
was, greeted him, stood to one side, and said to Ānanda: “We want just one look
at the shēn ①. Cannot we have a look while it is still uncremated ②?”

Ānanda replied: “Although it is not yet cremated ③, it is still difficult to see
again. The reason is, the Buddha’s body (fōshēn) ④ was already washed with
fragrant hot water, bound with cotton, bound successively in 500 layers, installed

⑩ See Bérenger 1971: 223 for the varieties of ideas about the identity of this figure.
⑩ T. 1(2) (I) 28c17-29c1 (juan 4); trans. in Weller 1939, 1940: 196-197 (cccxxviii-cccxxix);
trees which were beside the Buddha's pyre had profound faith in the Buddha's Way, and with his divine power he immediately quenched the fire of the Buddha's pyre.

Then the Mallas once again discussed among themselves: "Within twelve yojanas of this town of Kuśinagara there are fragrant flowers. Let us bring all of them and worship the Buddha's body."

They went beside the city walls, and worshipped using perfumes and flowers they had brought. Then the Mallas from the kingdom of Pāpā heard that the Buddha had died at the twin (śāla) trees, and they all thought: "I should go there now and try to get a share of the śāla, take it to my homeland, erect a stūpa and worship it."

Here both the narrative voice and the speech of the Mallas use the term śāla to refer to the dead body of the Buddha. However, the uncemented body is called śāla, it is this śāla which is cremated, and what remains after the cremation fires are extinguished is likewise termed śāla.

I suggested that in this case of the translation of Zhi Qian we could see no particular pattern to his use of śāla to refer to the uncemented corpse of the Buddha, which he uses in this sense only twice. And of course, although Bo Fa-zu does use the word in this way, he does so only once, so there is no pattern possible. But the Dirghāgama translation employs the word śāla in the sense of "body" repeatedly, and this allows the possibility for detection of a pattern, if one exists. We may plot the uses of the relevant terminology according to speaker and to referent as shown in the accompanying table (see overleaf).

The only significant difference evident here seems to be that the Mallas never speak of the Buddha's corpse as fūshen, and Kāśyapa never speaks of it as śāla. Both Aniruddha, the arhat, and Ānanda, the still awakened disciple, use both terms. The first question we must ask is what significance this distribution might have. Second, and from quite another point of view, we must consider how a reader could understand this śāla which is taken, prepared, burned, and then recovered from the funeral pyre, precisely the same word in this sequence indicating both states of the object, first unburned and then burned. The context and overall narrative flow may indeed make it clear on a case-by-case basis that sometimes the word śāla must refer to a corpse that is to be initially prepared and burned, while subsequently it appears in the sense of "post-cremational relics." But is this really clearly understandable, or on the contrary, might it give an impression not unlike that one might gain by reading modern translations of the Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra which, as we have seen above, fluctuate in their treatment of the term sarīra in such a way as to render coherent comprehension of the text almost an impossibility?
The Buddha’s Funeral in the Dirghaāgama and Dharmaguptaka Vinaya

Let us turn to a basic question: why is the unburned corpse called shēli? Can it be maintained that a distinction in levels of respect is intended between body and shēli, with shēli employed as an honorific equivalent for body, otherwise designated “ordinarily” šen, fūshen, tí, shēnti or the like? In order to try to answer this question, we will first want to explore whether we find other, comparable uses of the same vocabulary elsewhere in the works of the translators whose renderings we have looked at above.

We should perhaps not be entirely surprised to find little complementary evidence in the translations of Zhi Qian and Bo Fuzu, given the rarity of the word shēli in the sense of “dead body” even in their Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra translations. As far as I can see, the word shēli appears rather rarely in the works of Zhi Qian, and outside the passages noted above (§§11, 13), never in

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94 Previous modern students of the text have not always seemed to notice any lexical distinction at all, much less attempted to explain it. Weller, for instance, in his generally extremely careful German translation consistently renders shēli simply by “Sārīra,” either “restoring” the transcription into Sanskrit or treating Sārīra as a German word. He renders shēli as consistently by “Leib” (once “Körper,” perhaps by inadvertence). But he nowhere makes any attempt to explain what this “Sārīra” might be doing in the Chinese text, or what it might mean. Walschmidt, who sometimes translates rather closely and sometimes paraphrases, freely alternates between “Leichnam” and “Körper” as equivalents of shēli, once again never noting the fluctuation of the vocabulary. (Max Deeg points out that Leib has a Christian connotation, while Körper and Leichnam refer to concrete things, body and corpse.)

Bareau (1971: 182, 194, 214, 1985: 277ff. and so on) likewise made no special notice of the vocabulary, interpreting the word contextually everywhere as “corps.” Finally, the generally excellent and heavily annotated Japanese translation of Okayama et al. retains sari 舍利 in Japanese, adding a note at the first relevant instance (Fukita in Okayama et al. 1995: 631, n. 38) indicating that it means “corps,” itai 遺体, rather than relics. The necessity for the note itself indicates that something is not right here, but no further observations are offered.

This is, incidentally, an example of one disappointing feature of this generally superb modern Japanese translation of the Dirghāgama, namely the occasional retention of Chinese terms in and as Japanese, even when this is not entirely appropriate. Since as far as I know there is no way that sari can mean “corpse” in Japanese (on some senses of sari in Japanese, including rare ones, see Yuyama 1995: 386), in this respect the translation here is wrong, despite the note. (Another oddity of this translation is the periodic use in the Japanese of honorifics nowhere even implied in the Chinese, as for example when fūshen 佛身 is translated [e.g., p. 351, 354] with futaro no ougata 仏の姿.)

95 Ideally one should systematically study all Chinese Buddhist translations of the same period, but since as a practical matter such a survey is beyond my abilities at present, I restrict this investigation to the works attributed to the translators to whom are ascribed the early Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtras.

96 I accept as the corpus of whose translations those works identified by Nattier 2003: 241-242, namely: T. 5, 64, 66, 76, 85, 97, 120, 185, 198, 210, 225, 281, 328, 361, 474, 493, 532, 533, 556, 557, 559, 581, 632, 708, 735, 790, 1011, and maybe 20, 27, 507, and 511. I searched this and other works cited here electronically, rather than reading through them in their entirety, as
the sense of “body.” However, one perhaps closely related usage does draw our attention. In a passage in Zhi Qian’s translation of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñā-pāramitā,* for which of course we have an extant Sanskrit text, we find the following:97

(25)  
佛言，不用是舍利得佛也。乃从一切智生得佛身。我灭度後，舍利供養如故。  

The Buddha said: “One does not become a Buddha through this *śān-*shāli, one obtains a Buddha-body (*śān*) from omniscience. After my death my relics (*śāli)* are still to be worshipped.

To this roughly corresponds the following in the published Sanskrit text:98

(26)  
bhagavān āha | tasmāt tarhi kauśika nānēnātmbhāvāṣaśrapratilambhaṇa tathāgataḥ tathāgataḥ iti sanikhyām gacchati | sarvaśaśajñāyām tu pratilabdhaśyaṁ tathāgataḥ tathāgataḥ iti sanikhyām gacchati | ... evam ca mama parinirvṛtyaṁ sata esāṁ śārināṁ pūjā bhaviṣyati |  

The Blessed One said: “Therefore, Kauśika, it is not by means of obtaining this *physical body* (*ātmabhāva-śāriṇa*) that one is called ‘Tathāgata.’”99 Rather, when one has obtained omniscience one is called ‘Tathāgata.’... And after I am dead too these relics of mine will be worshipped.

The Indian commentator Haribhadra interprets the Sanskrit compound *ātmabhāva-śāriṇa* here appositionally: *ātmabhāva-śāriṇaṁ ity ātmabhāva eva śāriṇaṁ.*100 If we accept that Haribhadra’s gloss and Zhi Qian’s translation, *śān-*shāli 舍利, are attempting to convey the same sense, then *śān-*shāli likewise should also be understood appositionally, as “body (śān) = śāriṇa (shāli),” or in other words, “shāli, that is to say, ‘body.’” Even if this is correct, however, the fact that what we understand to be the appositional compound *ātmabhāva-śāriṇa* was translated *verbatim et literatum,* with *ātmabhāva* rendered as *śān* and *śāriṇa* as *shāli,* may conceivably, but need not necessarily, in its turn suggest, perhaps paradoxically, that Zhi Qian did not imagine *shāli* on its own to be capable of conveying the requisite meaning of “body” as such. It may also suggest that cases in which ordinary body language is used are to be understood as in some way consequently unmarked, and without particular importance. A probably more realistic way of looking at the question, however, is to see *śān-*shāli as a mechanical effort to render the two elements of the compound *ātmabhāva-śāriṇa,* an element-by-element calque, without consideration for questions of the ease with which the result might be understood by those with access only to the Chinese text.101 The translation, then, is not interpretive so much as “literatal,” although it may simultaneously indicate Zhi Qian’s appreciation that *ātmabhāva-śāriṇa* here signifies something more than a mere “body.” I will argue that such an appreciation may hold the key to understanding other “bodily” uses of *shāli* vocabulary.

A very important point, however, is that in whatever way Zhi Qian may have understood the terminology he employed here, he did not create it. In fact, as is true for the bulk of his translation of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñā-pāramitā,* his “translation” has more the nature of a revision of the earlier translation of Lokakṣema, dating to 179 C.E., than that of an independent work. And in Lokakṣema’s translation we find the passage in question as follows:102

(27)  
佛語釋提桓因。不用身舍利。從薩雲若中得佛。憐薩阿竭侶出般若波羅蜜中。如是欲翼。薩雲若身從般若波羅蜜出。憐薩阿竭侶阿羅訶三耶三佛薩雲若身。薩雲若身生我佇身。從薩雲若得作般佛。從薩雲若生我般泥洹後舍利。供養如故。

97 T. 225 (VIII) 484a17-18 (juan 2).
98 Wogihara 1932-1935: 210: 10-12, 17-18, 211.6-7 (Mitra 58), and see below n. 102.
99 It would be possible to translate “... that a Tathāgata is called ‘Tathāgata’” and so on. However, I understand the expression in line with phrases such as that in *Kālayaparipāra* §121 (Stiel-Holstein 1926): *sramaṇa sramaṇa iti kālaya ucyate* | kṛtyo na tava kālaya sramaṇa sramaṇa ity ucyate, or a frequent refrain in the *Vajracchedikā,* for instance (Schopen 1989: 103): *kṣetrayaṁḥ kṣetrayaṁḥ iti rūpāṁ tasya vasiḥ* kṣetrayaṁḥ iti.
101 The large-scale study of Zhi Qian’s translations now being carried out by Jan Nattier will no doubt help us better understand how he treated Sanskrit compounds, and thus suggest how best to understand this particular instance.
102 T. 224 (VIII) 432a15-20 (juan 2). Actually, the portion quoted here corresponds to the Sanskrit text that extends onto Wogihara 1932-1935: 211.7, as follows: yeṣam kaustika sarojaḥ taṁ dharmastattarābhavāṁ bhavati pariṇāmaṁ dharmastattarābhavāṁ bhavati. 11 evam ca mama parinivrtyayā sata esāṁ śārināṁ pūjā bhaviṣyati.
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The Buddha spoke to Śakra Devānām Indra: “It is not through the *shēn-shēlī*, but rather from *saruṣṭhāla* (omniscience), that one becomes a Buddha. The Tathāgata emerges from within Prajñāpāramitā (the Perfection of Wisdom). Just so, Kauśikā, the body of *saruṣṭhāla* emerges from within Prajñāpāramitā. The Tathāgata, Arhat, Samyaksambuddha has a *saruṣṭhāla* body. When that *saruṣṭhāla* body is born, I create a *buddha-body* (*fūshēn*). I am able to create a *buddha-body* from *saruṣṭhāla*. After my parinirvāṇa, my relics (*shēlī*) will be worshipped.

In light of this evidence, it is clear that Zhi Qian's use of the compound *shēn-shēlī* is not original, but an adoption of an already existing rendering. What remains true, however, is that, whoever initially coined it, this usage may be relevant to other similar expressions in other translations.

As we noted a moment ago, the translations of Zhi Qian and Bo Fazu other than their *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* efforts provide no good complementary examples of clear usages of *shēlī* in the sense of corpse. But this is not so for the other translations attributed to Buddhayaśas, to whom is credited the *Dirghāgama*. In fact, we find what appears to be precisely the same usage in that translator's rendering of the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya, *Sifen lin* 四分律. This accord may, however, seem both less coincidental and simultaneously potentially less significant when we recall not only that both the Chinese *Dirghāgama* and the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya belong to the same Dharmaguptaka sect, but that the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* itself is at heart a piece of Vinaya, and thus not only the episode but the genres of the two texts in which it appears are closely parallel, if not essentially identical. In the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya, then, we find the following treatment of the events surrounding the Buddha's death:

(28)

爾時，世尊在拘尸城末羅園林娑羅林間般涅槃。諸末羅子洗①佛舍利已，以浄劫具裹。復持五百張疊次而織之，作鐵棺盛滿香油。安②舍利置中，以蓋覆上。復作木槨，安鐵棺著中積絮香薪。時末羅子中爲標首者，持③火燃之。時天滅火。

At that time, the Blessed One attained parinirvāṇa in Kuśinagara in the Malla grove, between the śāla trees. The Mallas washed the Buddha's *shēlī* ①, and wrapped it in clean cotton. They again bound it in 500 layers, made an iron coffin, filled it with fragrant oil, placed the *shēlī* ② within, and covered it with a lid. They made an outer coffin of wood, placed the iron coffin within, piling up fragrant firewood around it. Then the designated head of the Mallas lit it with a fire ③, and very quickly the gods extinguished the fire.

Here the narrator, speaking of the Buddha as seen by the Mallas, employs *shēlī* in the sense of the Buddha's corpse. The text continues saying that others try to light the fire, and again the gods immediately extinguish the flames. The Mallas ask why, and Aniruddha answers:

(29)

摩訶迦葉在波婆拘尸城兩國中間，在道行，與大比丘衆五百人俱。彼作是念，我當得見①末諸佛舍利不耶。諸天知迦葉心如是念，以是故滅火。

“Mahā-Kaśyapa is travelling on the road between the two lands of Pāvā and Kuśinagara, together with a group of 500 great monks. He thinks: ‘Will I be able to see the as yet unburnt *shēlī* of the Buddha ① or not?’ The gods knew what Kaśyapa was thinking, and so they quenched the flames.”

Here Aniruddha is speaking, reporting the thoughts of another disciple, the great Mahā-Kaśyapa, again using *shēlī* in the sense of the Buddha's corpse. We note that the vocabulary attributed to Mahā-Kaśyapa's thoughts is not the unmarked “body” vocabulary used by Aniruddha and Ānanda in the *Dirghāgama*, but the hypothesized respect term *shēlī*. As the text goes on, Kaśyapa hears that the Buddha has died, and makes his way to Kuśinagar. He tells his disciples:

(30)

且起，疾捉衣軀，時往及①世尊舍利未燒，當得見。諸比丘聞迦葉言，即疾疾執持衣軀，… 至阿難所，語言，阿難，我欲及②世尊舍利未燒見之，阿難答言，欲及③世尊舍利未燒，而欲見之，難可得見，何以故。④世尊舍利已洗浴，裹以新劫契，… 坐於鐵棺，… 是故難可得見。時大迦葉漸往及②佛舍利所…

“If we get up, quickly take robes and bowls and promptly go toward the Blessed One's *shēlī* while it is still unburned ①, we will be able to view it.” The monks heard what Mahā-Kaśyapa said, quickly took their robes and bowls, … They

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103 On broader correspondences between the Chinese *Dirghāgama* and Dharmaguptaka Vinaya, of which there are many, see Barea 1966.

104 T. 1428 (XXII) 966a19-24 (juan 54); trans. in Waldschmidt 1944, 1948: 296. In his rendering of this text too Waldschmidt alternates between “Leichman” and “Körper” as renderings of *shēlī*.

105 T. 1428 (XXII) 966a28-b2 (juan 54); trans. in Waldschmidt 1944, 1948: 296-297.

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came to where Ānanda was, and said: “Ānanda, we want to go to view the Blessed One’s shālik while it is still unburned.” Ānanda replied: “You want to go to the Blessed One’s shālik while it is still unburned, and you want to view it. It is extremely difficult to view. Why? The Blessed One’s shālik is already washed, wrapped in new cotton ... placed in an iron coffin ... This is why it is difficult to view.”

At that time, Mahā-Kāśyapa gradually approached the pyre of the Buddha’s shālik. ... 

Here Mahā-Kāśyapa, his disciples, Ānanda and the narrator all use shālik in reference to the Buddha’s corpse. Then Mahā-Kāśyapa sees the Buddha’s feet, hears the explanation of their condition, the story of the weeping woman and so on, chants his verses of lament (which are not quoted), circumambulates the pyre, and the narrator concludes: 107

(31)

火不燒自然。時大迦葉①燃舍利已，... 集比丘僧 ... 

The fire spontaneously ignited without being lit. At that time, after Mahā-Kāśyapa had burned the shālik, ... he gathered the community of monks ....

Although other versions of this episode, including that of the Dirghāgama, go on to mention the relics resulting from the cremation, their distribution and so on, this Vinaya text moves directly to a different topic. In these passages, then, shālik refers exclusively to the body of the Buddha, his corpse, without any parallel instance of its employment in the sense of “relics.” However, it is worthwhile noting that in the only other use of the word shālik in the entire Dharmaguptaka Vinaya, it equally obviously does mean “relics.” 108 In addition, we should reiterate that in this text’s presentation of the episode not only is shālik used to designate the corpse of the Buddha, but it is the only word which is so used; “ordinary” body vocabulary is entirely absent. Therefore, even Kāśyapa here refers to the Buddha’s corpse as shālik, something he does not do in the Dirghāgama. These two facts no doubt present significant problems for any hypothesis of an intentional differential deployment of body language, with shālik being used as an honorific term for the uncremated body of the Buddha by certain individuals, while others refer to the very same body as shān (or with comparably unmarked terms). Since the Dirghāgama and the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya are both attributed to the same translator, and moreover contain precisely the same episode, very similarly presented, it is difficult to argue that a particularly intentional usage of vocabulary is to be found in only one of this pair of texts, but not deployed in the almost identical presentation in the other.

Now, we have spoken of both the Dirghāgama and the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya as translations attributed to the same individual, the translator Buddhayaṣās. But with this we encounter a problem. For although tradition tells us that he is responsible for these translations, it is questionable exactly what role Buddhayaṣās himself may have played in the execution of the translations attributed to him. In fact, we may even be permitted, if not compelled, to question whether he knew much Chinese language at all. 109 The hagiographies and the Preface to the Dirghāgama translation agree in attributing “Buddhayaṣās’s” translation of both that text and of the Dharmagupta Vinaya to the bilingual Chinese native Zhu Fonian 釋佛念, with the Chinese disciples Daoshi 道士 and Daohan 道含 acting as scribes. 110 The Preface goes on to mention the careful correction the Dirghāgama translation underwent, especially with regard to the simplicity of its language.

If we attribute responsibility for the actual translation of the Dirghāgama and Dharmagupta Vinaya mainly or significantly to Zhu Fonian, rather than focussing our attention on Buddhayaṣās we might more profitably investigate the way arāra terminology is dealt with in other translations attributed to Fonian. 111 The interpretation of these potential parallels is, however, made significantly more difficult by the fact that the genre of the texts available for comparison is entirely different. While the Dirghāgama and Dharmagupta Vinaya passages we have studied belong, as we noted, to fundamentally similar genres, it being quite clear that the Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra is at heart a piece of Vinaya, originating as a portion of the nascent hagiography of the Buddha which belongs to the Vinaya literature, the other examples of Fonian’s translations in which relevant vocabulary appears all come from Mahāyāna sūtras.

107 T. 1428 (XXII) 966c11-12 (juan 54).
108 T. 1428 (XXII) 957a8 (juan 52), referring to the installation of relics in a stūpa.
Despite the genre difference, however, it is indeed a fortunate coincidence that we do find a number of passages in translations attributed to Fonian in which the circumstances of the Buddha’s parinirvāṇa, his death, are dealt with. Before we notice those passages, however, we should note an example precisely parallel to—in fact, virtually the same as—one we already studied in our considerations of the translations of Zhi Qian and Lokakṣema above. For Fonian (along with Dharmapriya, Tanmō， and others), like Zhi Qian, also translated the Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā into Chinese, and “his” translation, in fact, is even closer to that of Lokakṣema than is Zhi Qian’s. It is thus no surprise that in Fonian’s version too the Sanskrit term ātmabhūta-sārira is rendered with śrenśhi [śrenśhi].

(32)

佛語說提桓因，不用身舍利故。是身梵若佛，恒然阿難陀，是梵若波羅蜜出。如是弗護，梵若身者，是梵若波羅蜜出。如是恒然阿羅漢三耶三菩，是梵若若生。我得佛身，我般泥洹已後，舍利亦得供養。

The Buddha spoke to Śakra Devānāṃ Indra: “Because it is not through the śrenśhi, one becomes a Buddha from sarvakāla (omniscience). The Tathāgata emerges from Prajñāpāramitā (the Perfection of Wisdom). Just so, Kauśika, the body of sarvakāla emerges from Prajñāpāramitā. The Tathāgata, Arhat, Samyaksaṃbuddha is born from sarvakāla. I obtained a buddha-body (śrenśhi). After my parinirvāṇa, my relics (śrenaś) will be worshipped.

It is very plain that Zhu Fonian not only clearly knew Lokakṣema’s rendering, but for the most part, as here, essentially copied it. However, we do find the term śrenśhi employed in other works attributed to Fonian.

An example of the same compound śrenśhi appears in the first chapter of Fonian’s translation (if indeed it is a translation) of the Antarābhāva-sūtra (Zhongyin jing 中陰經). Although we cannot confirm this text’s origins in either an Indic text or Tibetan translation, it is taken as a genuine translation and attributed to Fonian already in the fifth century by Sengyou. It is indeed a very peculiar text, but whether it had a genuine Indic origin or may rather belong for instance to some Central Asian milieu is less important for us here than the particular Chinese vocabulary it contains. For in it we find a number of very similar expressions, the contexts of which (more or less) make clear

that the term śrenśhi is being used in the sense of the body which the Buddha abandons upon death. At the very beginning of the text, we read that the Buddha is in Kapilavastu, and:

(33)

爾時，如來忽然離身舍利。

At that time the Tathāgata suddenly abandoned to dissipation his śrenśhi. Immediately the sūtra begins to speak of how the earth quakes in accord with the vows of a Buddha, in which context we read:

(34)

如來捨舍利時，現震滅，入於中陰教化衆生。

The Tathāgata abandons his bodily life (śrenśhiyōning), manifesting the assumption of nirvāṇa, and entering into the Intermediate State (antarābhāva) in order to convert beings.

Here it appears to be the body that the Tathāgata abandons, although the terminology, with śrenśhiyōning, is not absolutely clear. However, immediately

115. T. 385 (XII) 1058c8-9 (juan shang). We may remark that it is not clear why he should be in Kapilavastu. We would rather expect Kuśinagara.

116. In this more than usually usual passage, it is possible we should instead understand: “abandoned the śrenśhi [made up of his] pulverized body.” I have no confidence in either interpretation, however.

117. T. 385 (XII) 1058c19-20 (juan shang).

118. One might understand śrenśhiyōning 舍身命 as “body and life.” Despite the fact that the compound is relatively well attested in Buddhist Chinese, the meaning is hard to pin down. Part of the problem is that the few examples I have been able to locate of Indic parallels suggest two different interpretations, both body and life, and length of life or physical life. Examples: Drumkinorājāparīṣṭhā, T. 624 (XV) 353a23-4 (juan shang); 其心不愛惜身命因者故。則為害 (Harrison 1992: 78.13-14 [SAE]: yān chāng kyī yan lag la ta bās jū dāng ting la mi ta bān sen rin po che; Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā, T. 226 (VIII) 528c3-4 (juan 4): 復次須菩提，阿難越致善薩摩崖薩用法故不貪有，亦不貪身命 = (Wogihara 1932-1933: 619.4-6): punar aparimai subhaye ‘vinvantariyo bodhisattvo mahāsattvac duddharma-parigratah kṛtā ānātāparāyikam apī karoṭi jātu parāyikam apī karoṭi...; Sanātadśavaṭṭa of the Mūlasārīvīravigāṇa, T. 1450 (XXIV) 109c6-7 (juan 3): 時阿私陀仙。既知太子必成正覺。即告親身瘦命長短 = (Golzi 1977: 54.1): vidrājāmāna āyukṣaro parāyikam tvayakārotasmiṃ ārdhaḥ...; Panchavīśīṣṭhāprajñāpāramitā, chapter 7, T. 223 (VIII) 390c6-5 (juan 23): 無有得菩薩記者。化佛已捨身命人無餘涅槃... = (Waraboe 1993: 129.21-23): yām anuvarga-yām samyaksaṃbodhānīvyakuryat sa āyukṣarāvajja naśvāya nirmitam abhināśnāyānapādibhāya.
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afterwards the text returns to the shēn-shēlī vocabulary: 119

(35)
爾時，世尊入火炎三昧，離碎身舍利…

At that time the Blessed One entered into the Fire Contemplation (tṛja-saṁādhi) and abandoned his shēn-shēlī to dissipation .... 120

Although the text is not perfectly clear to me, it appears to continue by saying that the Blessed One, the Buddha, sits down upon a large jewelled lotus, and then turns to his own shēlī and addresses it in verse (爾時，世尊向舍利，而說頌) 121. No matter how we take this it is, to say the least, unusual, if not downright bizarre. I nevertheless understand shēlī here to refer to the Buddha’s body, since the verses begin. 122

(36)
於無數劫中　養汝地種界　吾今離汝去　如蛇脫皮樂

For uncountable aeons I have nurtured the earth element in you [my body]. 123

Now I abandon you, as happily as a snake sloughs off his skin.

This too is far from completely transparent, but the text appears to have the Buddha addressing the body he has possessed for lifetimes (but then how did he transmigrate?), and that he now abandons. In any case, it seems almost impossible to understand shēlī as referring here to relics. A bit later in the text we find a sentence repeated three times (for the West, North and South): 124

nirvāṇadhiṣṭāna parinirvāṇaḥ.

Although the compound shēnshōunīning does not appear in dictionaries as such, the pairing itself is well attested. See for instance Chuci 楚辭 (The Songs of the South), 10 Da Zhao 大招 “The Great Summons,” in which we find 永宜厥身 保壽命只.

119 T. 385 (XII) 1058c11-22 (juan shang).
120 Or again, perhaps “abandoned his pulverized body shēlī.”
121 T. 385 (XII) 1058c25-26 (juan shang).
122 T. 385 (XII) 1058c27-28 (juan shang).
123 1 I follow the suggestion of Stefano Zucchetti, who understands zhēngjiē 地種界 as a rendition of dhātu (metri causa), so that zhēngjiē 地種界 renders prthividāthāñ. He points out that references to the prthividāthāñ in the body are common in Buddhist literature. Seishi Karashima suggests the alternate possibility, “I have nurtured you on the earthly (or: terrestrial) sphere for countless aeons.”

T. 385 (XII) 1059b23-25, c5-7, 16-18, 1060a9-11 (juan shang). Note also the expressions in the verses at 1060b4, 8 the second of which (木號釋迦牟... 舍利化) appears to have Sākyamuni transmigrate, leaving behind a shēn-shēlī. 124

On shēn-shēlī see further Additional Note 3.

124 T. 385 (XII) 1059b23-25, c5-7, 16-18, 1060a9-11 (juan shang). Note also the expressions in the verses at 1060b4, 8 the second of which (木號釋迦牟... 舍利化) appears to have Sākyamuni transmigrate, leaving behind a shēn-shēlī. 124

On shēn-shēlī see further Additional Note 3.

125 T. 309 (X) 1032b29-229 (juan 9). Earlier (1007a11-1009a27 [juan 6]) there is an entire chapter titled “Smashing the body,” raibēn.
There are several possible explanations for this situation. A number of translations are attributed to Fonian, many of which he is said to have translated along with others, but those cited above he is said to have rendered alone in the final phase of his career, 391-413, during which he also translated the *Dirghāgama* and Dharmaguptaka Vinaya along with Buddhayaśas. One possibility is that, as the Chinese collaborator of a venerable foreign monk-scholar, Fonian did not feel completely free to express himself in his most eloquent Chinese; indeed, he is reported to have been criticized earlier for his tendency to unduly embellish his Chinese translations of relatively simpler and more straightforward Indic texts. It is also possible that Buddhayaśas knew just enough Chinese to meddle with the translation of his Chinese amanuensia, perhaps insisting here and there on a specific wording. While these possibilities cannot be discounted, and may be contributing factors, it is also possible that the difference in genre between Āgama and Vinaya translations on the one hand and Mahāyāna sūtras on the other is somehow relevant. We may leave this question to the side for a moment, however, and instead briefly consider the question whether we might find support for the basic notion of a distinct use of body vocabulary with regard to the corpse of the Buddha in Indic sources themselves. And here we are in luck.

We do indeed find some Indic evidence for a similar or even parallel distinction in usage to that postulated for *Śaṭṭhā* and *Śāṇa* in the terms *śānīra* and *kāya*, respectively. In the Sanskrit *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* of the Sarvāstivādins, as edited by Waldschmidt, there are several cases in which the word *kāya* is used in reference to the dead body of the cakravartin, the universal emperor, the vocabulary switching to *śānīra* when the subject becomes the dead body of the Buddha. The word *kāya* is used in reference to the body of the cakravartin twice in the printed text, although the actual reading is attested in only one

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127 See for example T. 384 (XII) 1031b, 1031b12-13 (juan 3). There may be a reference to this latter passage in Xuanjing's *Yiqian jingyi* 一切經音義 (reprint of 1870 edition [Taipei: Xinwenfeng, 1980]: 6.1b, p. 186), which says 處胎經云。並在金剛般若也。When at 1015b5-6 (juan 1) the text says 與時、世尊入金剛三昧、碎身合利。I believe that the word sri 碎 must be a verb: pulverizing the body into relics (compare 1025a14-15 (juan 2): 身通入金剛三昧碎身合利).

128 Some instances are, nevertheless, more obscure than others. For example, the meaning(s) of *Śāṇa* in the discussion at T. 384 (XII) 1033c (juan 4) is/are more than usually unclear to me.

129 As in the expression at T. 384 (XII) 1057b26 (juan 7): 具要釋迦彌勒金棺合利。However, here too the exact sense of this expression, and its syntax, are obscure to me: "worship the *Śāṇa* in Śākyamuni Buddha's golden coffin?"

130 T. 384 (XII) 1057c19 (juan 7), and continuing on 1058a.

131 T. 656 (XVI) 95a-97a (juan 11), chapter 31; attributed to Fonian already in T. 2145 (LV) 10b29 (juan 2).

132 According to Unebe 1970, but here too things are less than entirely clear; see Okayama 1984: 25-29, 40 n. 62. It may well be that Fonian's translation style evolved considerably during his life, but since all of the works considered here appear to date to the same period, this too probably cannot be considered a significant or even a relevant factor. Note that the *Antarābhāvanā-sūtra* translation is also, as noted above, said to date after 399.

133 See Sengyou's 偈作 Chū sanzang ji ji 出藏結集 T. 2145 (LV) 71c-4 (juan 10), and Unebe 1970: 36. For a discussion of the criticisms leveled against Fonian's translations, see Kamata 1990: 116-119 (which appears to be rather closely based on Ōhō 1958: 228-232). The debate pitting "literal" against "literary" translations is old; see the references in Okayama 1980: 128.

134 This does not, however, appear to have been the case with the translation of the *Dākṣiṇamūrti-bhāgavat*, which was translated by Kumāraṇa with the assistance and guidance of his teacher Buddhayaśas. The situation here too, however, is rather complicated; the best study of the issue is Tōdō 1953 (see also Takemura 1979: 21-22).
The editors translate this as follows:

...they put it in a vat ... After an interval of a week, they took (it) out of the vat of oil and bathed the body with all fragrant liquids.... They wrapped the body with (five*) hundred pairs of (unbeaten*) cloth. Having wrapped the body with five hundred pairs of unbeated cloth, (they filled**?) an iron vat with oil ... after building a pyre of (all*) fragrant [woods], they burned the body of King Mahāsudarṣana. They built a stūpa at the crossing of four main roads.

Here in this short fragment, referring to the corpse of King Mahāsudarṣana, not the Buddha, in the first three instances the dead body of the king is spoken of as kāya, while in the fourth case, referring to the very same corpse, the word employed is instead sarīra. Although to be sure our text is very fragmentary, there is no suggestion here that the speaker or point of view of the narration has changed between those sentences in which kāya is used and that in which we find instead sarīra. Apparently, if we may judge by such a short and imperfectly preserved passage, the authors of this version employed both kāya and sarīra equivalently in the simple sense of corpse. In addition, as we saw at the very outset of our investigations in the first passage we cited from the Mahāparinibbāna-sutta (§1), that Theravāda text in Pāli uses the term sarīra equally to refer to the corpse of both the Buddha and the cakrawartin, not utilizing the term kāya at all. These Indic sources then suggest that, on the one hand, it is possible, as the Sanskrit Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra shows, to support in Indian sources the hypothesis of a differential usage of sarīra and kāya. According to this understanding, sarīra is a respectful term nevertheless functionally equivalent to kāya in terms of its basic referent. Such a distinction could possibly be represented in Chinese by a differential use of shēn and shê, respectively. However, on the other hand there is also evidence in both the Gândhārī Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra and in the Pāli Mahāparinibbāna-sutta suggesting that this need not necessarily be the case, which even within exactly the same environment, namely that of discussions of the disposition of the corpse of a Buddha, such Indic texts may make no distinction in the terms used to describe the bodies of a universal emperor and Buddha. It thus appears to be possible for Indian Buddhist texts to employ distinct words for the corpse of a Buddha and...
that of a less exalted figure. It is also possible for such texts to discuss, in this very same context, the disposition of a corpse, of the Buddha or of another, without recourse to any such distinction in vocabulary. And since we have no way of knowing what terminology may have been employed in the Indic sources from which the Dirghāgama and Dharmagupta Vinaya were translated, we consequently have no direct means of discerning whether such a possible Indic distinction is to be imagined as underlying the usages we encounter in Chinese translations.

That said, naturally it need by no means be the case that we must necessarily suppose the Chinese translator of the Dirghāgama to have been attempting to mirror some pattern he saw (or thought he saw) in his Indic source. We may imagine as a real possibility that he simply introduced such a distinction on his own. If this is so, our search for Indic prototypes or models is pointless, and we must instead concentrate our attention on the Chinese context itself. But there are, of course, other possible explanations as well. For instance, we might have to do here with a simple case of elegant variation. However, there is no other evidence of such elegant variation elsewhere in these repetitive and formulaic episodes, which suggests that elegant variation is an unlikely explanation for the phenomenon we see. Another possibility is that we have to do in the Dirghāgama translation with rhythmic considerations, the selection of the one character term shēn 身 versus the two character shēn 身 help to maintain the normal sequence of four character phrases. This is an attractive idea, which nevertheless seems to be contradicted by two cases: in expression (§20), one character would be rhythmically preferable to the two that are used, and (§23), in which the opposite is the case, and two characters would be rhythmically better than one. It would appear, therefore, that this idea cannot be maintained.

Let us approach the question now from another point of view, from the Chinese side, as it were, rather than the Indic. Earlier we explored the meaning of "ordinary" body terminology, the shēn and tǐ of our translators. In contrast to this basically clear usage, just what does shēn mean in Chinese, and how well documented is the use of the word in the sense of "body"? The word shēn is well attested in what we may say is its "ordinary" meaning of "relics" from a very early period. While there is no question that it is a transcription of Indic terminology specific to Buddhism, we apparently find it preserved earliest in secular works, in the "Rhapsody of the Western Capital" (Xījīng fù 西京賦) of Zhang Heng 張衡 (78-130 C.E.), and in the "Administrative Ceremonials of Han Officials Selected for Use" (Hanguan dianzhi yishi xuan yong 漢宮典職儀式選用) of Cai Zhi 蔡斉 in the mid-second century. While these instances are open to some doubt concerning their referent(s), quite clear is the occurrence of the word (written shēn 身, slightly differently than is usual later), on the wall of a tomb, dating from the second half of the second century, in Helinger and Kimble's In Inner Mongolia. Since this inscription accompanies or labels an illustration of relics, there is no doubt about the intended meaning or referent of the term. I do not know the earliest occurrence of the word in Chinese Buddhist scripture, but it appears already in the work of Lokakṣema, both in his translation of the Pratyutpanna-samuccaya-vibhāsita-samādhi-sūtra and, as we saw above, in his rendering of the Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāparamitā, both dating to 179 C.E. Shēn is, naturally, recorded in the meaning "relics" by comprehensive modern dictionaries, which do also however note the meaning "body" or "corpse." In this they are very probably basing themselves ultimately on

141 The Early Middle Chinese pronunciations of the transcripts would have differed slightly: the transcription of the usual term shēn 身 may be reconstructed (following Pulleyblank 1991) as cia²-tii⁴, while the final of the first syllable of shēn 身 would have glottalization rather than aspiration (marking Rising as opposed to Departing Tone), cia²-tii⁴.

142 For all of these examples are discussed in Zürcher 1990: 160-161, 164.


144 For the date, Harrison 1993, esp. 141-144. Wogihara 1932-1935: 270 (Mitra 94); T. 224 (VIII) 435c4-5 (juan 2), and elsewhere. Compare the translation of the same text attributed in part to Zhu Foonian, T. 226 (VIII) 517b19-20 (juan 2).


I would like to be able to say that neither in our texts nor elsewhere is the term sarīra in the sense of "relics" ever clearly translated (or transcribed) in Chinese with a term other than shēn or variants thereof. However, it is generally difficult to know whether instances of Chinese words such as gu 骨, bones, or bu 夔, ashes, for example, occurring in funeral contexts might have been intended to render Indic sarīra or otherwise to indicate relics as such (as opposed to translating terminology such as atithi, bones, for instance—perhaps functionally equivalent, but nevertheless at least lexically distinct).

Likewise, I do not wish to imply that any instance of references to "relics" is rendered in Chinese translations with terms which unambiguously have this literal meaning. A somewhat extreme case is found in the Mulāsāravīṣvāda Vinayadārakavatā, in which we find the
the glossaries of the Chinese Buddhist lexicographers, which at least modern specialized Buddhist dictionaries indeed frequently cite. That the authors of these glossaries infrequently mention the word’s more common sense of “relics” is undoubtedly due precisely to its currency.\(^{144}\) For the tasks of these lexicographers was to account for difficult words or difficult meanings of words, and their neglect of stdēlā in the sense of relics only underscores this as its generally assumed meaning, one calling for no further comment.

Although our investigations above leave no doubt that stdēlā was being used in the sense of “corpse” in some passages, we do not have to speculate that later Chinese readers could conceivably have seen stdēlā as a term for corpse. Yuanzhao 元照 (1048-1116) in his commentary on the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya says the following, even if not necessarily in direct reference to any particular passage in which this sense is relevant:\(^{145}\)

\[(39)\]

舍利。此翻遺身，即死屍也。

\(\text{Sdēlā.} \text{ Here [in Chinese this is] translated “left-behind body,” (yūbēn), that is, corpse.}\)

Despite this reference in a relatively late Chinese commentary, it is curious that in neither of the two most important, and centuries older, comprehensive glossaries of Chinese Buddhist terms is the use of stdēlā in any of the passages

cited above addressed.\(^{150}\) This does not mean, however, that the word is not otherwise taken up in these glossaries, and defined as “body.” What is peculiar, however, is that despite such definitions, the source passages to which these definitions are applied often do not bear out the offered interpretation. That is to say, the glossaries recognize stdēlā in the sense of “corpse” or “body,” but in the original contexts of the passages they cite in support of this definition (or the other way round), stdēlā does not actually appear to have this sense. Let us look at the examples.

Among the earliest of the glossaries is Xuanying’s 玄應 Yiqiejing yinyi一切經音義 of 649. There, in regard to a passage from the very beginning of the Lotus Sutra, we read the following:\(^{151}\)

\[(40)\]

舍利。正說，設利羅。譯云身骨。舍利有全身者，有碎身者。

\(\text{ciā-hū (stdēlā): correctly [to be transcribed] ciat-hū-la (sdbālalā).} \text{ This is translated “relic” (literally, “body-bone,” sbēngé). Sdēlā is of [two types:] the whole-body (gūnshēn), and the pulverized-body (suishēn).}\)

Here Xuanying introduces a two-fold specification, that of the complete body—without (at least any explicit) distinction between corpse and living body—and that of what are sometimes called “pulverized-body relics,” suishēn-sdēlā 碎身舍利, \(^{153}\) namely what we would normally think of as stdēlā in the simple sense of relics as such.\(^{154}\) These are terms we briefly noticed above, and to

144 There are exceptions. In the early twelfth century Fanyi mingji Ji 翻譯名義集 of Fayun 法雲, the definition of stdēlā includes no recognition of any sense of “body,” citing only its meaning “relics,” T. 2131 (LIV) 1138b4-5 (juan 5): 舍利。新云室利羅。或設利羅。此云身骨。又云骨體。即所遺骨分。通名舍利。
145 Note that part of this definition, yūbēn 骨身, appears to have been used in the sense of bones or skeleton, but not body as such. See for instance T. 220 (VII) 360a11 (juan 446), T. 1599 (XXV) 79a5, 16 (juan 3), 514b3 (juan 64), and T. 1559 (XXIX) 295b25, c1 (juan 20), where it is equivalent to asthiṃkāla (Hirakawa 1977: 144b), on which see Edgerton 1953 sv. asthi-śakalā. For the inversion stdēlā, see below, n. 157.
149 T. 1805 (XL) 412c27-28 (juan 16).
150 See T. 2128 (LIV) 650a (juan 52), 705b (juan 59); Xuanying’s 玄應 Yiqiejing yinyi一切經音義, reprint of 870 edition (Taipei: Xinwenfeng, 1980): 12b2, p. 370, 14.16a, p. 475.
152 The suggestion here and below that stdēlā is an erroneous transcription is based on the lexicographer’s belief that a-sū-rā must be properly transcribed, accounting for every syllable, which stdē-lā does not do.
153 This term is found in instance in such dictionaries as Oda 1917: 587b and Nakamura 1981: 447d. See Additional Note 4.
154 It is not wholly impossible that, even if only vaguely, this two-fold distinction may also reflect some idea of Indic sūrīra as derived either from the root sūrī, “to rely on, be supported,” or sūrī, “to be crushed,” these corresponding respectively to the senses of (whole) body and (gramular) relics. See Mochizuki 1932-1936: 2185c; Monier-Williams 1899: 1057c.
155 Sometimes it seems that sūrīra has been taken explicitly in the sense of “support.” See for example the expression in the Dalabharatika-sūtra (Rondō 1956: 5; Rādhākrṣaṇa 1926: 3.30 [1E], dharmasattvābālātantrarāja, translated by Śūkṣmaśāna (T. 287 [X] 536a1 [juan 1]) with: “已故法智所依故, in which sūrya-所依 seems to translate sūrīra. In the Yogācarābhauma (Bhartriharīya 1957: 13.17 = T. 1579 [XXX] 280a28 [juan 1], translated by Xuanzang), prakṛtya durlabhātāraṇāya
which we will return in a moment. Xuanying’s translation of śāli is shèngū, a word that dictionaries tell us should be understood as “body.”155 However, examples in Buddhist translations make it very clear that the word should rather be understood, in almost all cases,156 as “relics.”157 Moreover, Xuanying with his specification of “pulverized body” clearly allows that the reference may be to relics as usually understood. This does not appear to be the case with two other references to precisely the same occurrence of śāli in the same Lotus Sūtra passage. The lexicographer Huilin 慧琳, in his somewhat later but identically titled Yiqiejing yinyin 一切經音義 (783–807), has in reference to the same scriptural occurrence only the following:158

(41) 舍利。設利羅。此云體。


Just a few years later than Xuanying, in Kuiji’s 窮基 seventh century commentary on the Lotus Sūtra, Miaofa lianbuqing xuanzan 妙法蓮華經玄讚, we find something very similar:160

(42) 梵云。設利羅。體也。舍利者。訛。


is rendered 依止性勝劣故, in which yīzhī 依止 seems to translate sarīra.

155 Morohashi 1955-1960: 10.960b (38034.45) defines the term as “body” (karada), but cites only a Japanese authority. Luo 1986-1993: 6214b also defines it as “body” (shēn 身體, tīgé 体格), but likewise his earliest citation is quite late, from the eighteenth century Dream of the Red Chamber (Honglou meng 紅樓夢).

156 Sometimes it is of course not to be read as a compound at all, but as two different items, body and bones. See for instance T. 663 (XVI) 335c24 (juan 1) 自己骨髓肉血 = Nobel 1937: 6.12-7.1, svāla-tvā-māna-rūdhrīd-zī-majāya ... 157 For other possibilities, see for instance T. 99 (II) 242b8 (juan 34) = Sarīyutta-Nikāya ii.185, where the equivalent is arthī; T. 125 (II) 606a6 (juan 12); T. 156 (III) 138b25 (juan 3), 140c4 (juan 3), 150b15 (juan 5); T. 310 (XI) 336b12 (juan 58), and so on. (Also Karashima 1998: 388.) See n. 148 above.

158 T. 2128 (LIV) 483b21 (juan 27).

159 T. 1723 (XXXIV) 682b27-28 (juan 2-ben).

Now, what is interesting is that all three of these works, two of which acknowledge as the meaning of śāli only “body,” refer to the following passage in Kumārajīva’s translation of the Lotus Sūtra:160

(43) 復見諸佛殼殼槃後，以佛舍利起七寶塔。

Again, it was seen that after the buddhas attained parinirvāṇa, seven-jewelled stupas were erected with the Buddha’s relics.

It is clear from this passage that śāli here does not mean “body,” at least in any conventional sense, but rather plainly points to the “relics” which are normally placed within a stūpa, a reliquary mound or monument. We know this must be the case since what is placed in a stūpa is post-cremation remains, not a corpse. And in fact this attribution of the meaning “body” to śāli in instances in which, contextually, we would expect “relics,” is found elsewhere in the work of these same lexicographers. In reference to the Avatamsaka sūtra, Huilin 慧琳 says:161

(44) 舍利，正言，設利羅。或云實也。此翻為身也。


Once again, however, the context of the passage in the Avatamsaka itself from which this term is being drawn makes it crystal clear that śāli in the stūra itself does not, and cannot, refer to “body,” but without doubt means “relics.” The stūra passage reads:162

156 T. 262 (IX) 23b23-4 (juan 1). To this corresponds the following Sanskrit text (Kern and Nanjo 1908-1912: 7.2-3): ye ca teṣu buddhakṣetreyu parinirvāṇam bhagavatān bhāgavataṁ dhātustūpaṁ ratanamāyasya t’pi sarve sannirvāṇyante svaṁ. This reading is the consensus of the Nepalese manuscripts; see Toda 1998: 20-22. The Kashgar text (Toda 1981: 14b2-3) is slightly different: ye ca teṣu buddhakṣetreyu buddhā bhāgavaṁ parinirvāṇaṁ taṁ dhātustūpaṁ saraṇī ratanamāyaṁ aṣṭeṇa sannirvāṇyante svaṁ. So too is the Gilgit manuscript (Watanabe 1975: 5.16-17): ye ca teṣu buddhakṣetreyu parinirvāṇam buddhānām bhāgavatāṁ ratanamāyā dhātustūpam [t]e ’pi sarve sāndarśyante svaṁ.

161 T. 2128 (LIV) 483a2 (juan 23).

162 T. 279 (X) 248a26-27 (juan 47). Cp. Cleary 1986: 236. (The corresponding Tibetan translation is worded slightly differently; see Derge Kanjur 44, phel chen, ge 28a. See also T. 278 [IX] 597b4 (juan 31).)
(45) 隨其樂欲、自碎其身以爲舍利、無從無數不可思議。

[Buddhas, in order to save beings] as they wish pulverize their own bodies into relics (śālī), innumerable, uncountable, inconceivable.

Here the text quite explicitly distinguishes śāraḥ from śālī. It is this body, śāraḥ, which is pulverized, sui 碎, creating śālī. This wording serves to highlight the oddity of Hui-lin’s equivalence of śālī with śāraḥ.

As a final example of glossorial interpretation, in the fifth century vocabulary study Fan fanyu 翻梵語, we find the following: 163

(46) 菩流，譯曰。身，亦云體。

ciā-ra (śālī): this is translated as “body,” śāraḥ, or again ti.

The passage in reference to which this definition is offered, however, is the following, from the Da Zhidu lun 大智度論: 164

163 T. 2130 (LIV) 986b02 (jouan 1). According to the hypothesis of Ono Genmō, the text dates to between the Southern Qi 南齊 and the Sui 隋, placing it probably in the Liang 梁. Ono follows an indication in the Shikkhan Mokusoku 慈覩目録 of Enryakuji Shingen 延暦寺真源 that attributes the text to the Liang monk Baochang 貞唱 (483-518), and has it brought to Japan by Ennin 顕仁 in the ninth century. See Ono 1931, and the summary by Tsujimori Yōshū 造森要修 in Ono 1932-1935: 10.213b-214a. The relevant reference is in Busshō Kanjōkai 1914: 187b.

Of course, there are other possible references to glosses on śālī. For instance, in Puguo’s glossary commentary on Xuanzang’s translation of the Abhidharmakosabhāṣya (T. 1821 Juwe laje 般若論記 [XLI] 156a24-26 (jouan 8), commenting on T. 1558 [XXIX] 44a24 (jouan 8), explaining sarirabhatu (Pradhan 1975: 119.24, cy. to III.9) we find:

身界，梵曰，般那即佛身界也，亦名室利殿。言界體，佛身界也，薬云舍利，譯也。

Sarirabhatu (here translated: “body-realm”) In Sanskrit abhātu is the realm of the Buddha’s body. It is also called ciā-ra (śālī, saríra). In Chinese we say body (ti), the physical body of the Buddha (fōdhūn). Anciely it was termed ciā-ra (śālī), which is an error.

164 T. 1509 (XXV) 278a16-17 (jouan 30); translated in Lamotte 1944-1980: 1940. Note that although the Fan fanyu attributes the quotation to jouan 29, no mention of śālī occurs in that jouan; either the text known to Baochang was divided differently, or an error occurred at some stage in the composition or transmission of his text. Although more research would be needed to confirm the hypothesis, the tables in Itō 1996 suggest the former as more likely.
III) Śarīra in the Saddharma-pundarika and Elsewhere

In looking at translations other than those of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra but attributed to the same translators we encountered, especially in the compound expression śēn-śēlī, some indications that may help us understand the special employment of śēlī in the sense of the uncremated corpse of the Buddha. Let us now go a bit farther, and see if there might be other cases in Chinese translations belonging to the same general period in which the word śēlī is used in something other than the straightforward sense of “relics.” Since I, at any rate, have so far been unable to locate any clear case in which śēlī refers to a corpse in this body of literature, our focus must turn from possible distinctions in diction or honorific usage to metaphorical or deliberately multivalent phrasings in which the term śēlī appears.

Perhaps the most notable examples appear in the enormously influential Saddharma-pundarika and its two Chinese translations by Dharmarakṣa (published in 286 C.E.) and Kumārajīva (published in 406 C.E.). Recalling the starting point of our inquiries in Schopen’s thesis about the Pāli Mahāparinibbāna-sutta and its treatment of śarīra, one famous passage in the Saddharma-pundarika appears as especially interesting, because it concise presents precisely the contrast we noted at the outset between grammatically singular and plural uses of Indic śarīra. The Sanskrit text reads as follows:165

165 Kern and Nanjio 1908-1912: 231.9-11. This reading is also found in other Nepalese texts (Toda 1985: 3; 1991: 132-134; 2001: 126). The same passage in the Kashgar manuscript of the Saddharma-pundarika reads slightly differently, although the point is the same (Toda 1981: 113 = 220a2-4): na cāna tathāgataśarīrāni dātavyāni tat kasya beter ekagham eva bhāsajyārūpa tatva pratiśūpadale tathāgataśarīrān eva upanikṣiptam bhavati. No Gilgit text is available. See Tsukamoto 1976: 45-49, who suggests that the “whole body” of the Tathāgata here refers to the teachings written down in the form of a book. On this “equation” of the ekagham tathāgataśarīram, which Schopen translates (apparently against the grammar, but see below) as “entire tathāgata-relic,” with the “presence of the book,” namely the Saddharma-pundarika itself, see Schopen 1975: 167.

This passage has been treated by Kajiyama 2001: 5-6. It is worth noting a doctrinally significant feature of his translation of the first sentence: しかしここではじめて如来の諸骨片が安置されるべきではない．Here Kajiyama interprets the expression na ... avasāyaṃ ... pratiṣṭhāpayatvāyāni as a strong negative imperative. The implication then, for Kajiyama, is that it is strictly forbidden to establish a relic stūpa. I believe that this seriously misrepresents the intention of the text, which rather signifies that such an establishment is “not necessary,” with the implication that it is nevertheless permissible. This is how the text was read by its Tibetan translators (Nakamura 1976: 231: der de bzhin gieb pa'i sku guhung nev par gieb ma khogs so), as well as by modern interpreters (see the next note). Kajiyama also gives Kumārajīva’s 不須復安舍利 its traditional kakkudadhi reading また舍利を安ずべからず (e.g., Nakada 1989: 652). Despite this convention, which would probably be understood as indicating a strong prohibition (“must not”), it seems to me almost certain that bija 4 不须 here means “is

not necessary.”

166 Compare also the following translations: Burnouf (1852: 141) “il n’est pas nécessaire que les reliques du Tathāgata y soient déposées. Pourquoi cela? C’est que le corps du Tathāgata y est en quelque sorte contenu tout entier.” Kern (1884: 220) “it is not necessary to deposite in relics of the Tathāgata. For the body of the Tathagata is, so to say, collectively deposite there.” I do not understand “en quelque sorte” and “so to say.” Do Burnouf and Kern read ekagham eva? See also Iwamoto in Sakamoto and Iwamoto 1964: 155 and Matsumani et al. 1976: 15.

I leave aside as irrelevant to our main point the additional weakness that by subordinating to the rear of the English sentence its rendering of ekagham eva, something of the adversative force of this expression is lost.

167 Such allusions are almost common in the Saddharma-pundarika. Another example is the so-called Parable of the Burning House, which without doubt alludes to the so-called Fire Sermon in the Āgama-Nikāya literature.
(49)

不須復安舍利。所以者何。此中已有如來舍利。

There is no need to settle the relics (shêli) [there]. Why? [Because] the complete body (quanshen) of the Tathāgata is in this [stūpa] already.

There is no question that Kumārajiva’s rendering, like our English above, is entirely defensible and philologically “correct,” whether or not—again like our English—it may be judged to have fully captured the range of nuances of its Indic source.170 Dharmarakṣa, on the other hand, in his earlier Zhēngfāhuā jīng 正法華經 seems both to have grasped one essential point of the passage obscured by our English and Kumārajiva’s Chinese, namely the literal identity of (grammatically plural) sarīraṇī as relics and (grammatically singular) sarīra as body, while at the same time to have produced a translation which yields rather little obvious sense of its own:171

(50)

不當復著佛舍利。所以者何。具為全著如來舍利。

One should, again, not place the Buddha’s shēli [in a stūpa]. Why? [Because] the Tathāgata’s shēli is in its entirety completely placed [there already].

What precisely might have been intended here by “budḍha-sarīra,” fō-shēli 佛舍利, and “tathāgata-sarīra,” riddī-shēli 如來舍利,172 I do not know, but it seems reasonable to speculate that Dharmarakṣa both used shēli to represent both singular and plural forms of sarīra, in order to emphasize their literal identity, and yet distinguished the two forms, which he perhaps simultaneously realized to have distinct meanings, by the addition of the (nevertheless otherwise essentially synonymous) modifiers fō, Buddha, and riddī, Tathāgata.173 While the result can hardly be called a grand success, if my interpretation of the intent behind this rendering is correct, it nevertheless serves to demonstrate the translator’s earnest quest to preserve something of the multiplicity and layering of meaning he found in the scripture.

The key to understanding what is going on here is the realization that the issue is less one of philology than of doctrine. Other passages in the same text which refer to the body of the Buddha demonstrate the complexity of the problem. For example, one sentence which employs a different Indic term for “body” reads as follows:

(51)

mamma ku lhu bihsav na parinirvāṇa tathāgata ubhavat vigrāhayaiko maha-ratnastūpaḥ kartavyah!

Monks, after my parinirvāṇa, one great jewelled stūpa should be made for this body-frame of the Tathāgata.

The Kashgar text has:

169 T. 262 (IX) 31b28-29 (juan 4).

170 In this regard, too, one might want to give serious attention to a passage in the recently published Sanskrit text Vimalakirtinirdeśa (XII 5 = MS 71b6, Study Group on Buddhist Sanskrit Literature 2004: 472), in which we find the following: parinirvāṇaṁ ca te jānām tathāgatānāṁ esaikānya tathāgataṁ pājākarmane ekahamasyādhibhikṣitaṁ sarīrasya sarvāratiṣayam stūpaṁ pratipāpyati.... corresponding to Kumārajiva’s (T. 475 [XIV] 556a21-22 [juan xvi]) to the sūtra. (As Skilling 2005: 300 ably demonstrates, for adhibhikṣita one must read the graphically very similar avikṣita.)

171 T. 263 (IX) 101b20-21 (juan 6). Dharmarakṣa is not the only one to interpret this passage in such a way. See for example Kubo 1987: 293, 302, and Iwamoto in Sakamoto and Iwamoto 1964: 155. We note that the canonical Tibetan translation also makes a hash of the passage by failing to distinguish between the two uses of sarīra in any way at all. It reads (Nakamura 1976b: 231 = Peking 100a1):

\[\text{der de bzhin gshegs pa'i sku gdungs rgyas pa'i phyir bsa na! der de bzhin gshegs pa'i sku gdungs gyi tu' dus pa gzhag bar' byas ba'i phyir roc!}\]

On the Tibetan translations of sarīra vocabulary, see Schopen 1992: 227-228, n. 38. With regard particularly to the term ring brel, see Walter 1998.

172 Karashima in his glossary of Dharmarakṣa’s translation (1998: 385, s.v. 舍利 shè li) defines shēli as “relics, human remains,” but makes no comment about these two terms, apparently not treating them as compounds. See also Karashima’s glossary of Kumārajiva’s translation (2001: 229), in which shēli is perhaps less justifiably again glossed also with “human remains.” If this English term is taken to signify the uncremated body, since shēli does not appear to have this meaning anywhere in Kumārajiva’s translation, this definition is not apt.

173 Although perhaps not without exception, in the overwhelming majority of cases Dharmaraks uses fō to render budḍha, and riddī for tathāgata. How he may have understood the different underlying valences of these two terms is, of course, a different question. In this particular case, as Jan Nattier suggests, it may be that he distinguishes between the one and two character terms in order to preserve the phrases’ four character rhythm.


For the word vigrāha, see Additional Note 5.

175 Toda 1981: 118 = 229a5-7.
(52) mama bhikṣavaḥ parinirvṛtasyasyeṣaṃ tathāgatasya ṣāṁcārīvivṛttasyaṃ kahśaika-ghanasyaikamahāratastūpam kartavyaṃ.

Kumārajīva’s rendering, which may reflect something of Kashgar’s ekaghana, runs as follows:176

(53) 我滅度後，欲供養我全身者，應起一大塔。

After my demise, those who wish to worship my complete body (guānshén) should erect a great stūpa.

Dharmarakṣa here is also clear, despite his use of two separate terms for body:177

(54) 吾滅度後，奉如來身，全取其體一等完具，興大塔寺。

After my demise, honoring the Tathāgata’s body (rūḍāi-shén), completely take his body (tǐ) entirely and thoroughly, and raise a great stūpa-temple [for it].

We begin to sense some strain, however, in the rendering of an immediately following passage:178

(55) ayaṃ mama stūpaḥ daśaṃ dīkṣu sarvalokadhātuṣaṃ yevaṃ buddhakṣetreyah ayaṃ sādhyamapundarikāḥ dharmaparyayaḥ saṃprakṣayet tatra teṣv ayaṃ maṇātmaḥbhāvavigrasastūpam samabhūyasacchetā tait tair buddhair bhagavadbhīr asmin sādhyamapundarikāḥ dharmaparyayaḥ bhāyamānena prabhūtyaṣaṃvāyaṃ dharmaparyayaḥ bhāyamānena ayaṃ maṇātmaḥbhāvavigrasastūpam daśyāt!

* Gilgit: rastāṇātaḥ = both Chinese translations!

176 T. 262 (IX) 32c15-16 (juan 4).
177 T. 263 (IX) 102c21-22 (juan 6). See Karashima 1992: 147. As Karashima notes, this agrees with the Kashgar text rather than the Nepalese text edited in Kern-Nanjio.

Let this stūpa of mine, this stūpa of my body-frame (ātmabhāvavigraba), arise wherever in the Buddha fields of all the world-systems of the ten directions this discourse on doctrine, the Saddharmapundarikā, is expounded. Let it remain suspended in the sky above the assembly when this discourse on doctrine, the Saddharmapundarikā, is being preached by any Buddha, Blessed One, and may this stūpa of my body-frame (ātmabhāvavigraba) offer congratulations to those Buddhas, Blessed Ones, who are preaching this discourse on doctrine, the Saddharmapundarikā.

In contrast to this passage as transmitted in the Nepalese manuscript tradition, the Kashgar text here is interestingly different:179

(56) idam mama stūpam daśau dīkṣau sarvalokadhātusau sarvabuddhakṣetreyau abhy-adgacchet yatra yatra lokadhato yova tathāgata imānā saddharmapundarikāṃ dharmaparyayabhicchāsyaṃ samprakāṣayet tatra tatra lokadhato imānā maṇātmaḥbhāvavigrasastūpam mahāsuddhānām sadbhūtyaṃ prasajyataṃ sarvam asvābhāvyam.

Let this stūpa of mine arise in all the Buddha fields of all the world-systems of the ten directions. May this stūpa of the body/skull of my body-frame (ātmabhāvavigraba-sarīra)180 arise from amidst the assembly in whatever world-system some Tathāgata expounds this discourse on doctrine, the Saddharmapundarikā. And let it remain suspended there in the sky above that Tathāgata. And may my body-frame (sarīra-vigraba) fixed within the stūpa offer congratulations to those Buddhas, Blessed Ones, who are preaching this discourse on doctrine.

It is not really quite clear how the introduction of sarīra vocabulary into the Kashgar text changes its meaning,181 and we note particularly that ātmabhāvavigraba-sarīra and sarīra-vigraba appear to be used basically synonymously, and are probably also synonymous with ātmabhāvavigraba. Kumārajīva has this passage as follows:182

180 Or appositionally: “body-frame, that is, body?”
181 By using the term “introduction,” I do not mean to imply that this text has added anything to a context which previously lacked it; the distinction is merely relative and contrastive.
182 T. 262 (IX) 32c16-18 (juan 4).
(57)

Watson translates:181

That Buddha, through his transcendent powers and the power of his vow, ensures that, throughout the worlds in the ten directions, no matter in what place, if there are those who preach the Lotus Sutra, this treasure tower will in all cases come forth and appear in their presence, and his complete body will be in the tower, speaking words of praise and saying, Excellent, excellent!

While Kumārajīva then seems to pay no particular attention (or give no special treatment) to the terms we have highlighted, Dharmarakṣa’s rendering of the same section of text reads as follows:184

(58)

In the worlds of the ten directions, if there is someone who preaches this Lotus Sutra, my seven-jewelled stūpa will appear at the place where the Buddhas preach the sūtra. That [or: his] shēlī-body (śālī-bōdi) in the seven-jewelled stūpa will speak praise saying: Excellent!

Karashima in his glossary of Dharmarakṣa’s translation defines the term shēlī-bōdi 舍利身 (“śālī-body”) in this passage simply as “the body.”185 While we certainly cannot criticize this gloss, in fact it is very difficult to understand the intention of the expression with any certainty. It does seem, nevertheless, that if we were to assume there to have been some form of sarira in the Vorlage from which Kumārajīva worked, as almost certainly there was in Dharmarakṣa’s, something which seems not unlikely given the overall proximity of Kumārajīva’s translation to the Kashgar recension,186 Dharmarakṣa would here again appear to have been more sensitive to the possible importance of this particular word, even if the translation that results cannot, once more, be called a complete success. Dharmarakṣa’s translation śālī-bōdi, however we understand this compound, has the merit of drawing attention to the special nature of the vocabulary with which the body/relics of the Buddha is/are referred to here, something palpably absent from Kumārajīva’s perhaps more straightforward rendering.

We have already noticed above the compound śālī-bōdi used by both Zhi Qian and Zhu Fonian, following Lokakṣema’s original use, and here we have just seen Dharmarakṣa’s employment of its, probably synonymous, inversion, shēlī-bōdi. It is difficult to know whether, and if so how, either or both of these terms are related to the word quāṃśēlī-bōdi, “whole-body-bōdi,” which occurs in Kumārajīva’s Chinese translation of the Lotus Sūtra, in the context of a passage which reads in Sanskrit as follows:187

(59)

devarājasya khalu punar bhikṣavas tathāgatasya parinirvāṇasya viṁśatī antara-kalpān saddharmah sthāyati na ca sariraṁ dhānabhedaṃ bhetsyate ekaghañāṁ cāsyā sariraṁ bhaviṣyati sa patratatāṁ praviṣṭām!

And moreover, monks, after the parinirvāṇa of the Tathāgata Devarāja the True Teaching shall remain for twenty intermediate aeons. But his body (sarīra) will not dissolve by breaking into relics (dhātu). Rather, his body (sarīra) will become one single mass, set inside a stūpa of the seven jewels.

Kumārajīva renders this (or whatever reading he found in the Vorlage from which he worked) in an abbreviated way:188

(60)

Kumārajīva renders this (or whatever reading he found in the Vorlage from which he worked) in an abbreviated way:188

After the parinirvāṇa of Devarāja Buddha, the True Teaching will persist in the world for twenty intermediate aeons. For his whole-body-bōdi (quāṃśēlī-bōdi) a seven-jewelled stūpa will be erected.

184 T. 263 (IX) 926c24-26 (juan 6).
186 On this point, see Karashima’s conclusion (1992: 261) that “it can be assumed that the Central Asian MSS. [including Kashgar] and the underlying texts of [Dharmarakṣa’s translation] and [Kumārajīva’s translation] may have stemmed from a common version, which must have differed from the original version of the Nepalese-Gilgit MSS.”
187 Kern and Nanjo 1908-1912: 259.13-15. Both the Kashgar (Toda 1981: 127 = 249b1-3) and Gilgit (Watanabe 1975: 242.3-5) text are almost identical. The passage has been misunderstood by Iwamoto in Sakamoto and Iwamoto 1964: 211.
188 T. 262 (IX) 935a8-9 (juan 4). Again, my use of “abbreviated” is intended as merely contrastive, and not to suggest anything about the content of the Vorlage from which Kumārajīva worked.
Despite the rendering I have given it above, it is difficult to know whether we should understand this Chinese term quānsbēn-shēlī 全身舍利 as "the relics of his whole body," or "the whole relics of his body," or even in another way entirely, for example "the whole body-which-is-also-a-relic," or as perhaps suggested by Haribhadra's interpretation of ātmabhāva-sārīra in the Āṣṭaśāhārikā Prajñāpāramitā noted above, and our subsequent appositional interpretation of the term sēn-shēlī, "whole sēlī, which is to say, whole body." Here Dharmarakṣa offers a rendering which once again in a literal sense conforms more closely than does Kumārajīva's to the extant Sanskrit text:189

(61)


After his demise, the True Teaching will persist for twenty intermediate aeons. Not dispersing [his] body-bones (śēn-gu), and gathering the whole sēlī (quānsbēn) [someone] will erect a seven-jewelled stūpa.

As we noticed above, the evidence of its usage in a number of texts strongly suggests that the word sēn-gu is normally to be understood as "relics." But it is very difficult to grasp precisely what Dharmarakṣa may have intended here by his use of the term, although he may be attempting (among other things) to distinguish between his treatments of sārīra and of dhātu, respectively. The problems with this passage are complex. Let us take another look at a portion of the Sanskrit text we just quoted ($59):

na ca sārīram dhātubheda bhīṣyate | ekaghāhana cāsaṣa sārīram bhāvisyati

It seems to be fairly clear that the first instance of singular sārīra here means "body" in the sense of corpse, most importantly because it is distinguished from dhātu, which certainly here means "relics." But what of the second case of the singular sārīra, that which is "one single mass"? While it may certainly also mean "body," is it possible that we should understand it also somehow in the sense of "relic(s)," as Dharmarakṣa's translation suggests? If so, what would the passage be saying? An answer to such a question may remove us thoroughly from the realm of philology, so let us for the moment return instead to the problem at hand, approaching it from another point of view. Recalling Schopen's suggestion that in the Pāli Mahāparinītimā-sutta one can see the transition

from sārīra as body to sārīrāni as relics with the grammatical shift from singular to plural, we may now want to ask whether it is ever possible for sārīra not only in the plural but even in the grammatical singular to also mean "relic(s)."

We find an important example in a passage printed as follows in Kern and Nanjio's edition of the Sādharmacarita:190

(62)

kṛtā me tenājīta kulaṭutetra và kuladuhitrā và sāriṃsa sāriśrapūjā saptaratnamayāṣ ca stūpāḥ kārītā

This in and of itself would suggest an understanding along the lines of the following, in an overely literal rendering:

The worship of the relics is done on the relics for me, Ajita, by that gentle son or gentle daughter, and stūpas of the seven jewels are built [by the same son or daughter].

A simple transfer of the principle argued for by Schopen in regard to the Nikāya/Agama-Vinaya literature would suggest that the plural sāriṃsa here indicates that the compound sārīra-pūjā is to be understood as referring explicitly to rites performed on, or with respect to, plural relics. But these things may be rather less obvious than they at first appear.

While Kern's note informs us that all his manuscripts save one read sāriṃsa for sāriṃsa, the singular for the plural locative, we now know that the textual tradition here is more complicated, and the text Kern printed a serious conflation of diverse sources. The Nepalese manuscripts are unanimous in presenting the singular reading. One representative Nepalese manuscript tradition has the following:191

(63)

kṛtā me tenājīta kulaṭutetra và kuladuhitrā và sāriṃsa sāriśrapūjā saptaratnamayāṣ ca stūpāḥ kārītā

This text tradition, then, presents us with the same apparently singular locative sāriṃsa which, as we noticed before, Schopen in the context of the

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189 T. 263 (IX) 105c1-2 (juan 6). Note also the version in the perhaps late third or early fourth century anonymous translation Satām faentul jing 薩曇分陀利經 (T. 265 [IX] 197b24-25); 天王佛故陀泥波, 不散舍利, 起作一七寶塔.


191 See Toda 1995: 96-99, manuscripts K, C5, C6, T2, T6, N2 (with variants in the ordering of tenājīta). Manuscripts C4, N1, and Pe have instead of sāriṃsa sāriśrapūjā rather simply sāriśrapūjā, and N3 and T8 read sāriṃsa puṣjā.
Both of these translations suggest that their respective translators understood *sarīra* here to refer to relics, *sbēli*, and their worship, something which the context also demands. Of course, while we cannot be certain what readings were found in their Indic exemplars, as noted above there is significant evidence that Kumārajiva’s text was much more similar to that preserved in the Kashgar manuscript than to the Nepalese recension. This may also contribute to explaining these renderings, with which the understandings of modern interpreters basically agree, despite the fact that the grammar of the Nepalese manuscripts does not appear to support such an understanding. Once again, however, and without intending to dismiss the possibility of corruption in the Nepalese manuscript tradition, it is far from impossible that the difference between singular and plural forms of *sarīra* in this particular context is doctrinal or ritual, rather than grammatical, and points, for instance, to differing conceptions of the eternal body of the Buddha, rather than to any difference between body and relics, much less between funeral and relic (or stūpa) worship.

At the outset of our study we stated without qualification that *sarīra* in the singular means “body,” and in the plural “relics” (while of course allowing for the possibility of plural bodies as well). It might shed some light on the translations we have seen to recognize that *sarīra* in the grammatical singular may indeed be used in the sense of “relic(s),” or alternatively that the *Saddharmapuṇḍarika*

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192 Bernouf 1852: 205 translated: “C’est que ce fils ou cette fille de famille, 6 toi qui es invincible, a rendu a mes reliques le culte que l’on doit aux reliques du Buddha, qu’il a fait des Stūpas formés des sept substances précieuses.” This is peculiar since Bernouf translated directly from a Nepalese manuscript (now known as P3 or Pc, still unpublished) which had the reading *sarīre sarīrapājā,* and he could have had absolutely no knowledge of the then as yet undiscovered Kashgar text (obtained only in 1903). Matsunami et al. 1976: 128, apparently translating the text of the Kern-Nanjio edition, have: “その長家の息子あるいは娘は、すでに私の遺骨（遺髪）に遺骨供養を行ったことになっている。…” Iwamoto in Sakamoto and Iwamoto 1967: 59 apparently also renders the same with: “長家の子孫は、日本の遺骨の礼拝のために…” All of these versions appear to be predicated on an understanding of *sarīra* as a plural; if the latter two read Kern-Nanjio as printed, this is understandable. However, note also that the translation of Nanjio and Izumi 1913: 378, despite being based on Nanjio’s draft edition, which certainly contained a singular reading, has the following: 阿逸多よかなる君等男子若くは善家子は子が舎利を供養せんがために七宝合成の塔を作らんりあり，speaking once again of relic worship.

193 However, in the context of a Vinaya passage extant only in Tibetan and Chinese, but not Sanskrit, Schopen 1994: 49-50 appears, without explicitly saying so, to accept that the singular *sarīre sarīrapājā* must mean “the honor due to relics for ... relics.” There appear to be a number of other passages, in Sanskrit, in which this is also the case. I thank Klaus Wille for bringing several examples to my attention.

194 Toda 1981: 161 (325a5-7).

195 So the manuscript (as Seishi Karashima tells me) and the edition; read kṛtā.

196 T. 262 (IX) 45b27, 29 (juan 5).

197 T. 263 (IX) 117a13-14 (juan 8).
translations agree in seeing the reference here not to “body” but to śāhī, to be taken—provisionally—as “(a) relic(s).” How precisely this should be understood, and why sarīra is used in Sanskrit in the Gilgit text in the singular, remains unclear. However, in another example of almost the same construction, both the Gilgit and Nepalese traditions (identical save for Gilgit’s omission of kulaputra vā kuladuhita vā) agree in having sarīra in the singular:

(69)

yat kaŚcit kauŚika kulaputra v ā kuladuhita v ā tathāgatasya parinirvāṇasya satpatanamaya stūpe sārīram pratiśthāpayet ....

Whichever gentle son or gentle daughter, Kausika, after the death of the Tathāgata would cause his relic/body to be established in a stūpa made of the seven jewels ....

Again, the Chinese translations agree in seeing here sāhī, not (or, with caution we might say: at least not explicitly) a body. We also have at least one example in the Asaśāhasrikā cī sarīra in the singular where an interpretation as “relics” seems the only one possible, as it has indeed been understood not only by modern interpreters, but by Chinese translators as well:

(70)

yat kulaputra v ā kuladuhita v ā tathāgatasya parinirvāṇasya sārīram satyākṣa paricched dhārayet ... svayam eva yo vānyaḥ kulaputra v ā kuladuhita v ā tathāgata-sārīram svayam ca satkuryād gurukuryān ... parebhyaś ca vistareṇa samprakāsade dadyāt samvibhajed vaistārīkā pūjā bhavisyati sattvānām cānuckāpam upādana ... [On the one hand] that gentle son or daughter who having worshipped would serve, uphold [and so on] ... the relic after the death of the Tathāgata [or: relic of the deceased Tathāgata] entirely unaided, or [on the other hand] that gentle son or daughter who would worship, honor ... the relic of the Tathāgata unaided, and widely preach about it to others, donate and distribute it, thinking that its worship

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199  Watanabe 1989: 166.6 (where however the syntax is not very clear to me), translated Conze 1975: 553, and see T. 220 (VII) 358c16 (juan 466); T. 223 (VIII) 586d2 (juan 23). Watanabe 1991: 123.17 (parinirvāṇasya ca sarīre pūjā prāsavrtta), translated Conze 1975: 560, and see T. 220 (VII) 361c9 (juan 467); T. 223 (VIII) 388b25 (juan 23). All the Chinese translations seem to confirm the interpretation as “relics” by “translating” with sāhī 舍利 or sāhīdhātu 舍利端. (Earlier Conze 1967: 379, s.v. sarīra had been more sensitive to the grammar than to context, referring to the first passage listed here with the gloss “dead body.”)


201  Quoted from Schopen 1977: 143.
will [thus] become widespread, and out of compassion for beings … (which is better?).

That the approximately ninth century commentator Haribhadra glosses the word sarīra in the scripture here as “image(s) and so on” is a potentially significant clue to one understanding of the term in a medieval doctrinal or ritual framework, although what it may say about how the sūtra itself would have been earlier understood (in India, or by Chinese translators) is perhaps a different matter. Although the compound term tatbhāgata-sarīra in the sūtra is grammatically singular, the gentle son or gentle daughter to whom the text is addressed is advised not only to pay reverence to this object, but to donate and distribute it to others (parebhaya ... dādayat samavibhajet), suggesting that however sarīra was understood, it was seen to be divisible, and therefore multiple. Whether this points to objects appearing as the result of cremation, bones and so on, to images, or to something else, it nevertheless can hardly indicate one indivisible object, since a single thing cannot, by definition, be distributed.

We have, then, a number of examples of grammatically singular uses of Indic sarīra in which the meaning cannot be simply “body.” Such examples could in fact be fairly easily multiplied, and are to be found even in Pāli works such as the late thirteenth century Thīṭṭāvatamsa. Moreover, another indication that some of the responsibility for failing to appreciate the full range of significance of this terminology lies with the modern interpreter occurs in a number of Indian Buddhist inscriptions recording relic deposits, in which yet again the term sarīra can, although it does not commonly, appear in the singular.

What emerges, probably although not absolutely certainly, from the inscriptive evidence, is that, as in the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka and elsewhere, the real issue in interpretation of uses of sarīra may be less one of a grammatically or lexically ambiguous or unclear text than one of the modern scholar’s understanding and appreciation of what the authors of these texts thought they were doing. Did these authors understand that the “relic casket” contained “relics”?

Or was it rather something closer to the idea that it, somehow, contained the “whole body” of the Buddha, or even the/a living Buddha himself, as seems to be implied in some passages of the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka when similar formulations are used?

Might these authors indeed precisely be saying that the “relic casket” contains within it a visible, tangible embodiment of awakening? This in fact comes very close, if it is not indeed identical, to what some scholars see happening in the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka. Sadahiko Kariya sees the situation as follows:

The word sarīra has the meaning of the “relic” (cari) of stūpa and relic worship overflowing with religious life newly resurrected by the Lotus Sūtra. To go on further, although we say “relics,” it goes beyond the material limitations of the Buddha’s bones, in fact has nothing to do with the existence of such bones, but should rather be understood as an attempt to express what can only be seen in the teaching of the Lotus Sūtra, the eternally living Buddha who possesses a lovely flesh and blood body within the stūpa. In contrast to this, dhātu has the sense of the bones of the Buddha, the relics as the object of future stūpa and relic worship.

Although Kariya’s aim is to argue for the distinction he sees between intentional deployments of theologically distinct sarīra and dhātu, the latter representing the superseded stūpa and relic worship of the defunct pre-Lotus Sūtra Buddhism and the former pointing to the eternally vital Buddha revealed in that scripture, we do not necessarily have to accept Kariya’s overall point to agree with him that sarīra is being used in this text to mean much more than simple bodily relics—dry bones. In fact, as I have suggested, the word sarīra is intentionally used by the authors of the Lotus precisely because of this ambiguity or, better, rich multivalency and semantic potency in the term. Again, our problems in understanding the term’s precise meaning may be less grammatical or philological than conceptual and doctrinal. But even granting this in the case of the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka, how might this complexity relate to our struggles with Chinese translations of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra?

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207 Wogihara 1932-1935: 287.8: pratimādika.

208 See the expression (Jayawickrama 1971: 172.24-25; cp. his trans. p. 34): dīghāyukabuddhānām bi sarīram suvanvākkhbandhādham ekāgāhānām eva buti: “The body/relics of long-lived Buddhas are of a single mass, like a clump of gold.” This also reminds us of the use of ekāgahana in the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka. (Skilling 2005: 294-295 cites a number of additional Pāli examples of almost literally the same wording. He makes no comment about the grammatically singular sarīra, however.)

209 See Additional Note 6.

210 I am indebted to Gregory Schopen for casting doubt on my naive reading of these inscriptions.

211 Kariya 1965: 178.
Inconclusive Concluding Thoughts

We cannot entirely solve the complex questions regarding the overall interpretation of the term śāriya and all its associated concepts here. Rather, what we should do in conclusion is return our attention to our two basic problems: First is the question of what Zhi Qian, Bo Fazu, and above all Buddhayaśas and Zhu Fondian, thought they were doing when they used the term shēlī in their translations of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra to refer to the uncremated body of the Buddha. Second is the problem of whether and how such a rendering could have been understood by an audience otherwise unfamiliar with the overall account of the funeral of the Buddha. And in this regard, the additional materials to which we have drawn attention, including passages in the Saddharmapumāṇḍarīka and elsewhere, might help point us toward at least part of an answer. If, as examples from these sources suggest, the grammatical form of the word śāriya is not, after all, a sure guide to its referent, if śāriya in the singular may, like its plural form, also be understood as “relics,” or at least to signify something other than the simple “body,” then three possibilities suggest themselves. First, this lack of regular correspondence between the grammatical form of the word śāriya and its intended referent could suggest that translators beginning with Zhi Qian, and including Buddhayaśas and Zhu Fondian, did not always clearly understand what specific sense of śāriya was intended in a given passage. It is possible, in other words, that they mistook what in the Indic text was intended to refer to a body or corpse to mean instead relic, therefore rendering with shēlī what should have been expressed in Chinese with shēn or other simple body terms. Such a misunderstanding of the Indian source text, however, seems distinctly unlikely, especially in light of the fact that the contexts in which we find shēlī used to mean “body” are almost always quite clear. This very clarity of context suggests that any possible ambiguity introduced by confusions about the grammatical number of śāriya in Indic (something which even in and of itself is not very likely to have occurred) is most unlikely to have been a factor in the choice of shēlī as a Chinese translation equivalent.

A second possibility is related to what we can see as the apparently fully intentional polysemy in the Indic sources. We have seen that some Mahāyāna sources in particular attempt to convey layers or levels of meaning through self-conscious manipulation of the term śāriya. It is conceivable, then, that the Chinese translators, who were clearly familiar with at least some of this Mahāyāna literature and ideology, saw in śāriya language—even in non-Mahāyāna contexts—a deeper, richer and more complex significance than a mere discussion of the disposition of a corpse would suggest. They therefore chose to signal this complexity with a correspondingly marked and unusual Chinese vocabulary.

There is certainly something to be said for this possibility, particularly since these translators could only have seen all scriptures as equally revealing the word of the Buddha, and therefore in this respect not to be treated any differently. This possibility is probably not mutually exclusive from the third conceivable explanation. Namely, the Chinese translators may well have been, even if not fully or successfully, trying to forge a special Chinese technical vocabulary through which they could refer to the special, extraordinary body of the Buddha (not in any way necessarily connected with any particular Mahāyāna ideas). The translations we noted, from Zhi Qian, Bo Fazu, and particularly and most fully Buddhayaśas and Zhu Fondian, may contain traces of a failed—because not subsequently imitated, or perhaps even fully recognized—attempt to forge a specific technical terminology with which to speak of the body of the Buddha, perhaps most especially in the religiously potent moment of his passing into nirvāṇa. This is not entirely distinct from the second possibility mooted above, because the developing Buddhistology of the Saddharmapumāṇḍarīka, for instance, certainly (also) represents an effort to reinterpret the very status of the Buddha, and consequently distance him from ordinary humanity.

The question of the nature of the Buddha arises in an immediate and pressing manner precisely upon his death because there, like nowhere else in the narrative parade of his life, the very most basic status of his existence suddenly becomes unavoidably unclear. Asking what the Buddha becomes upon death correspondingly implies the question of what he was, how he existed, before death. This appears to be precisely the question which led the authors of the Saddharmapumāṇḍarīka to develop their ideas of the eternity of the Buddha. Of course, the background to this idea is very much more complex than a simple apparent conflict between physical (samsāric) existence and the non-existence of nirvāṇa. But the fact remains that the questions which, I believe, pressed upon Zhi Qian, Zhu Fondian and others are part of a larger tension in Buddhism, that concerning the very existence of the Buddha himself, and ultimately the possibility of his continued and continuing salvific activity in our world. For if the Buddha is well and truly gone, how can he help us? But if he is not gone, how did he ever exist, apparently like us? A great deal of Buddhist thinking can be understood as more or less direct attempts to address this basic question.

But all of these theological rationalizations do not erase one remaining problem. Even if we are able to hypothesize something of the motivation which may have led to the vocabulary choices we observe in the translations we have studied, what is most difficult about the particular instances we have examined from the Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra is not the mere use of shēlī in the sense of “body,” which may, as we have seen, potentially be explained in a variety of ways. Rather, it is the use of this term to denote both “body” and
“relics” within one and the same narrative sequence. We are still left, after all our investigations, with the question of what readers without direct access to Indic sources—which is to say, all Chinese readers—might have made of the accounts of the funeral procedures for the Buddha in Buddhāyāsa’s Dirghāgama and Dharmagupta Vinaya translations. Contextually, such readers could have guessed what might have been meant, but how would they have understood it?

This question of contemporary understanding is further complicated by the fact that in fourth century China, cremation of the dead was almost entirely unknown. Even if it is not entirely true that the Chinese believed in the necessity of maintaining the postmortem integrity of the physical body, they certainly did not consider consignment to the flames a fitting disposition of the corpse. According to Anna Seidel, “Cremation spread among monks from the fifth century attaining, at the end of the Tang, such popularity that even the laity practiced it in great numbers.” Yet Daoxuan writing in the seventh century could say that although forest exposure of the corpse and burial were practiced in China, “there are few signs of exposure in rivers and cremation.” Cremation becomes common only in the Song. This earlier unfamiliarity with cremation even among monks may have been yet another obstacle to an accurate understanding and appreciation of the episode of the Buddha’s funerary rites depicted in the Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra.

Let us ask another question: how would Chinese readers have grasped the intent behind the unusual use of vocabulary we have seen in the translations under review (assuming there was some such special intent to begin with)? Something of the difficulty even traditionally knowledgeable readers may have had in comprehending this terminology became evident in our survey of the works of Chinese Buddhist lexicographers. That survey demonstrated that at least in the particular case of śrei, even these specialists in the technical terminology of Buddhist translations, writing some centuries after the earliest translations, were frequently not sure how to understand the vocabulary of certain passages. They were, to be sure, aware that śrei might mean “body,” but in the text passages to which they themselves pointed in support of this meaning, śrei quite clearly, in almost all cases, means rather “relics” than “body.” This leaves us in a peculiar spot. We can, on the hand, imagine possible scenarios in which the translators’ usage of śrei in the sense of “corpse” was intentional and self-consciously motivated. These scenarios involve speculations of a theological nature, but are not for that less likely. There may very well have been “buddhological” motivations for an unusual yet specific choice of translation equivalents in a particularly charged religious context. What we still, despite our best efforts, have trouble imagining is how the passages in which this hypothesized special use of the term appears would or could have been understood by Chinese readers. How, we struggle to understand, could they have made sense of a passage which says that one take the Buddha’s śrei, burns it, and then collects and enshrines the Buddha’s śrei?

If any of what I have speculated here is correct, although Buddhāyāsa and Zhu Fonian, perhaps initially inspired by Zhi Qian, would appear not to have been entirely consistent in their application of the word śrei, the closest we may be able to come to appreciating their intentions is to see their renderings as evidence of an ultimately abandoned attempt to recognize and express in words some of the complex multivalency of evolving theological notions of the Buddha and his physical incarnation—an intersection of body language and bodhi language, as it were. If this is correct, the apparently odd and difficult translations we find in the Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtras must be acknowledged as being themselves precious relics indeed.

\[\text{\footnotesize 212 Thus the case of śrei is considerably different from that of translations which may in their entirety be almost completely incomprehensible. See for example the remarks of Nagao 1994: xiii regarding Buddhāśāna’s Chinese translation of the Mahāyānasamgraha, in which large blocks of text are almost totally incoherent.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize 213 As Brown 2002 suggests.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize 214 Seidel 1983: 575a.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize 215 Liu 2000: 7, translating T. 2060 (L) 685b4-5 (juan 27): 東夏所傳惟聞林士。水火兩設世罕其蹟. Note that there are early (Han dynasty) Chinese references to (attempted) auto cremation in the context of rain-making magic (see Schafer 1951: 138-1339), but although there are Buddhist examples, even these almost certainly have no connection to the present case.}\]
Additional Notes

Additional Note 1
(to n. 46)

The Chinese version of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra we did not consider in the main body of this study is that contained in the Kṣudrakavastu of the Mulasāravastivāda Vinaya, Genben shuoqiyeyoubu pinaiye zashi 根本說一切有部毘奈耶雜事, which was translated by Yijing 楊■■■■ centuries later than the translations we did notice, in the year 710. In this version we find the following:216

時具壽阿難陀而白佛言, 大德, 世尊般涅槃後, 我當云何恭敬①供養如來法身。佛告阿難陀, 汝宜且止。汝所問事當有信心覺羅門長者等自為施設。復自佛言, 了諸長者等施設其事云何。佛言, 一一皆如轉輪王②說法。又問, 轉輪王其事云何。佛言, 汝今應知, 轉輪聖王命終之後, 以五百斤上妙聲絮以用窓③身上下, 次灑香乳以滅災火。方收王④骨安置金瓶, 於四衢道興建立⑤塔。

At that time the Venerable Ananda spoke to the Buddha, saying: “Venerable One, after the Blessed One's parinirvāṇa, how should I honor and worship the Tathāgata's dharma body (fāshēn)?” The Buddha said to Ananda: “You should stop this! What you ask about faithful brahmins and householders will prepare themselves.” Again he asked the Buddha: “What are all these things that the householders will prepare?” The Buddha said: “Each and every one of them is like the procedures of the universal monarch’s funeral (zàng)②.” Again he asked: “What are the procedures for the universal monarch?” The Buddha said: “You should know now that, after the death of a universal monarch, his body (shēn)③ is bound up in 500 layers of fine cloth from top to bottom, and ... then fragrant milk is poured to extinguish the fire. At that point, taking the king’s bones (gū)④,159 they are placed in a gold vessel, and a great stupa⑥ is built at a crossroads.

As in the earlier translations, more or less precisely the same pattern is maintained here. A body is mentioned ①, Ananda is instructed that he should not concern himself with its disposition, a funeral is performed ②, and after the cremation what is left are bones ③. However, there are also interesting differences. The first reference to body here appears to be to the dharma-kāya, a term which is distinctly out of place in this passage, even (or especially) if it is taken in its simple and non-philosophical sense of “the body of teachings.”218

We may note that the same word appears several times in the text, in one instance of which it is explicitly contrasted with the sēshēn 色身, rūpa-kāya:219 It is very unlikely that the compound form fāshēn was chosen for metrical or prosodic reasons, since once again in the very same text Yijing repeatedly uses the two character compounds shēnshēn 身體 and shēnshēng 身形,220 with every indication that they are simply synonymous with the single character shēn 身 itself. It remains a puzzling question what fāshēn might mean here. To further emphasize the oddity of fāshēn in this passage, when the text continues the “body” vocabulary is entirely normal, and agrees with other versions completely. This problem aside, due to the much later date of this translation in comparison with the versions central to our study, we may leave it out of further consideration.

Additional Note 2
(to n. 109)

It seems to me quite possible or even likely that Buddhayaśas did not know Chinese, despite the fact that it is with regard to him that the famous story is told of the test in which a foreign monk is made to quickly commit to memory census data and pharmaceutical recipes—apparently in Chinese—as a test of his ability to correctly recite memorized scriptures.211 Buddhayaśas, originally from Jībin 姬宾 (see below), is said to have come to China, as I calculate from his hagiography, not before the age of 35, and he stayed only five years before his return to Jībin. If we assume that he did not know Chinese before his visit, it follows that it is extremely unlikely that his linguistic knowledge was sufficient for him to take any active part in the translation process above and beyond a recitation of the text and explanation in Sanskrit (or Prakrit).222 The translation

217 This agrees, as we might expect, with the Sanskrit Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra's asthi (Waldschmidt 1950-1951: 360, §36.7).
218 It is translated by Waldschmidt 1950-1951: 359 by “Gesetzskörper,” without any remark. Jan Nattier wonders if fā 灰 is not just prosodic filler here. If so, it is, to say the least, potentially misleading.
219 T. 1451 (XXIV) 225c1-6 (jīuan 5). See also 403c26, 404b5, 405a6 (jīuan 39). These compounds occur, respectively, at least 33 and 19 times each.
221 Okayama 1984: 27 without elaboration states that all of the foreign monk-translators assisted by the Chinese Zhu Fonian, including Buddhayaśas, were ignorant of Chinese.
would nevertheless be attributed to him for political reasons, foreign scholars legitimizing Chinese translations of Buddhist scriptures irrespective of their actual participation in the translation process.\footnote{223}

Nishimura seems willing to credit the account, based primarily on the Preface to the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya, that Buddhayaśas came not from Jibin but from Khotan (Yutian 干闥) which he connects, as I understand him, with his conclusion that the Vorlage of the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya was written in Gândhári.\footnote{224} Even if Nishimura is right about the latter point, his overall argument does not hold, since it is now clear that Jibin does not necessarily mean Kashmir, as Nishimura apparently thought. Rather, as Enomoto says: “we should safely conclude that Jībin found in the works of Chinese Buddhist monks between the 4th and 6th centuries indicated a wider area including Kashmir, Gandhára, and possibly Tokharistan, that is to say, the whole of north and north-west India, or some district within it.”\footnote{225} Therefore, it is quite possible that the Vorlage of a text in Gándhári could have been brought from Jibin, and there is no particular need to bring Khotan into the picture. Moreover, there are other reasons for questioning the reliability of the Preface, on which see note 110, above. In any case, whether Buddhayaśas was from Khotan, Kashmir, Gandhára or Tokharistan, he is equally unlikely to have been educated in Chinese in any of those lands, and it is much safer and more reasonable for us to assume his ignorance of that language than the contrary.

Additional Note 3
(to n. 125)

The examples cited in the main text are far from the only cases of the term shēn-shēli that may be located even in relatively early Chinese translations. For instance, in the anonymous but probably late fourth century rendering of the Kāranapandarika we find several examples, which may be correlated with the extant Sanskrit text. The exact sense of the term, however, is not always clear, and more research is needed. For the time being, we may simply cite the following cases:\footnote{226}

\footnote{223\ This has been highlighted by Forte 1990: 243; see also Unebe 1970: 27-28.}
\footnote{224\ Nishimura 1992, referring to T. 1428 (XXII) 567ab.}
\footnote{225\ Enomoto 1994: 361; the last clause is added to the offprint by the hand of the author.}
\footnote{226\ (a) T. 158 (III) 263c12-14 (juan 4) = Yamada 1968: 213.10-13; (b) T. 158 (III) 270a1-3 (juan 5) = Yamada 1968: 262.6-9; (c) T. 158 (III) 276b8-9 (juan 6) = Yamada 1968: 313.16-18.}

Additional Note 4
(to n. 153)

At least one colleague has suggested to me that we see in the term suibhēn-shēli an equivalent to Indic *sarīra-caitārika. I do not think this is correct. In the first place, it is difficult to cite any example of suibhēn-shēli in any text for which we have an extant Indic version. Second, I doubt the existence of such an Indic compound as *sarīra-caitārika in the first place.

Although the expression suibhēn is not rare, the compound suibhēn-shēli is much less common. Moreover, even in such examples as can be located, it is frequently the case that suibhēn is to be taken as a verb (as in §§ 33, 35, Additional Note 3 [b], and compare § 45), and therefore the sequence suibhēn-shēli should not be understood as a compound at all. Other examples may be cited, such as the following from the Kalpanāmuditikā:\footnote{228}

\footnote{228\ Note here that the Chinese text’s *suibhēn 碎身 in the sequence suibhēn-shēli 碎身舍利 must be a verb, and not the prior member of a compound *suibhēn 碎身. This is indicated both by the modal dāng 龍, and by the corresponding Sanskrit text’s bhindayam.}
When *suibhen-shêh* does occur as a clear compound, its sense seems to be “relics of a pulverized body.” For example, we find in the so-called Southern Mahâyâna Mahâparinirvâna-sûtra the following discussion:231

If the Buddha were to have a body [born of] spontaneous generation [*unapâdakak], how could there be *suibhen-shêh?* Because the Tathâgata works to increase the merit of beings, he pulverizes (su) his body so that [beings] may worship it. Therefore the Tathâgata is not born with a body of spontaneous generation.

Now, what of *sarîra-vaisârîka?* Peter Skilling has recently suggested a contrast between multiple fragmentary relics and a single solid relic.232 He identifies the former with the Sanskrit “technical term” *vaisârîka,* the latter with *ekabhâna.* Skilling’s second formulation of the meaning of the former term is better: *vaisârîka* means extensive or widespread. In this regard, he refers to a number of Pâli commentaries which state that long-lived Buddhas leave only single relics, while short-lived ones (such as Sâkyamuni) disperse multiple relics in many stupas. According to Skilling, a distinction between *ekabhâna* and *vaisârîka* relics is found in the Bhadrahakalpika-sûtra’s newly discovered second-third century Gândhâra fragments.

No published text of the Indic language Bhadrahakalpika-sûtra is yet available, so it is not possible to comment on this usage. But Skilling also refers for the same idea to the Saddharmauparâdharma. Here, however, I disagree with him when he sees in this text a compound term *sarîra-vaisârîka* (apparently with a technical meaning).233 In the Saddharmauparâdharma there are three clear appearances of the term *vaisârîka* in relevant contexts, and these make it clear that it

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228 T. 210 (IV) 347c17-21 (juan 15). Huber 1908: 460-461 has the following: “… de même le Buddha, après être entré dans le Nirvâna pour sauter les étapes, pour donner des avantages aux êtres, fit brûler ses reliques, qui remplissaient quatre boisseaux et qui furent divisées en huit parties. Ces reliques brûlées, bien qu’elles soient petites comme des grains de moutarde, sont honorées comme le Buddha lui-même partout où elles arrivent. Elles ont la capacité d’éveiller l’aspiration des êtres vers le Nirvâna.”

229 Although not a very well known story, occurring as far as I can tell in only a few relatively obscure sources, the reference is to the legendary amount of relics left by the Buddha. According to one account (a somewhat unusual note called Po banniânuâ hou bianj 佛母般尼拘呾 餓記, attached to the Fomu banniânuâ jing 佛母般尼拘呾經 T. 145 (II) 870c1-2, translated by Huijian 慧願 in the late fifth century), “King Asoke requested the eight *dronas* and four *adhakas* of relics from the eight kings [to whom they had been distributed after the cremation], and in a single day erected 84,000 stupas.” An early sixth century Lotus sûtra commentary (Fâhuajing 菩華經 律 also refers to the same amount of relics, but without reference to any story about Asoke.

230 I should stress that I am not at all confident that the Sanskrit equivalents I offer genuinely represent some real Indic terminology in this case. That the relics were divided into eight and each placed in a container called *drona* is, however, well known from multiple sources. Additionally confusing is that, according to Sircar (1965: 413), as a measure four *adhakas* are equivalent to one *drona.* Further consideration is required.

231 T. 375 (XII) 806a5-8 (juan 30). It is very interesting that a closely parallel discussion is found in the Adbhârakahâroddhisa, in which we (Pradhan 1975: 119-24:25): *apare to abhâroddhisa, avastâpani karman, asa mo ’nitya vijñyâna* (so read for *prajñâ-vijñyâna* sahatva-svarupa ca mupâpajjâs¨a tapasvam ceti, “Others say: [a Buddha does not take birth by spontaneous generation] in order to solidify his bodily relics, through which by the thousands humans and others who do worship [to them] will obtain heaven and liberation.” Vasubandhu rejects this reasoning. See La Vallée Poussin 1923-1931: ii.30-31, and Skilling 2005: 296, to which I owe the reference.


233 Skilling 2005: 300; see, however, his Appendix V, pp. 318-319, in which he has taken note of other passages in the Saddharmauparâdharma, as well as others noted by Edgerton 1995, e.g. vaisârîka, on which see the following.
is to be understood as descriptive of the distribution of the relics, not as an adjectival specification of their nature. Indeed, this understanding was already stated unambiguously by Edgerton. The expression sarīra vaistārika occurs in two verses:

śarīra vaistārika tasaya cābhūt, 分布諸舍利
śarīra vaistārika tasaya tāyinah, 舍利廣流布

In both these cases, the meaning is that the relics are distributed. There is no description here of the type or character of the relics themselves. A further, similar passage appears in prose:

parinirvānasya ca me kulaputra ye dhātavaśaṁ tāṁ anuparindāṁ ātmanā ca tvāya kulaputra mama dhātavanām vipulā pūjā kartavyā vaistārikāś ca te dhātavaśaṁ kartavyāḥ stūpānaṁ ca bahūṁ sahrsraṁ kartavyāṁ ātmanā ca tvāya kulaputra mama dhātavanām vipulā pūjā kartavyā vaistārikāś ca te dhātavaśaṁ kartavyāḥ stūpānaṁ ca bahūṁ sahrsraṁ kartavyāṁ ātmanā ca tvāya

After my death, gentle son, I will present [my] relics [to you], and you yourself, gentle son, are to cause those relics to be worshipped broadly, and cause those relics to be spread widely, and many thousands of stūpas constructed for them.

There are additional examples of the same vocabulary in the Divyāvalāda (Aṣṭakavāda), where the same Sanskrit expression recurs, with slightly different Chinese equivalents: sarīrābhāvam rājaviśālā karīyati = fēn wō shēlǐ 分我舍利 and guānglěng shēlǐ 广分舍利. We may note an additional example from the same text, referring to the distribution of stūpas with the words: vaistārikā dhātuvāhāya kṛtā ca. Here it is not a question of any qualification of the relics, but rather of the distribution of the monuments which enshrine them.

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234 Edgerton 1953, s.v. vaistārika.
235 Kern and Nanjio 1908-1912: 26.8 (1.84a) = Toda 1997: 10. Subsequently the same in Gilgit Watanabe 1975: 18.2. Kashgar however reads (Toda 1983: 17 = 341a) sarīra vaistārika tasaya ātma. Kumārajīva's Chinese at T. 262 (IX) 52a22 (Jain 1). The second verse is at Kern and Nanjio 1908-1912: 69.2 (3.31c) = Toda 1988: 61, Watanabe 1975: 208.4. Again Kashgar (Toda 1983: 38 = 73b2) is slightly different, sarīra vaistārika tasaya bhūntsī. Chinese at T. 262 (IX) 12a3 (Jain 1).
237 Cowell and Neil 1886: 388.4, recognized as a verse (Indravajra) by Mukhopadhyaya 1963: 79.
238 Additional Notes 5
(to n. 174)

The question of the meaning of zuishēn-shēlǐ appears, then, to be unrelated to the question of vaistārika sarīra, the former referring to some condition of the relics, namely their being the result of the pulverization of a body, while the Sanskrit term refers to the distribution of relics in the world. The former, moreover, is never attested as a translation of the latter.

Regarding the word vigraba in the Saddharmapundarika, Tsukamoto takes it as something like “division,” bunri 分離, bunkatsu 分割, translating atma-bhavavigraba as bunkatsu sareta shintai 分割された身体, “divided body.” I think this can hardly be right. In fact, vigraba as “body” appears to me to be perfectly ordinary Sanskrit. An example of sarīra and vigraba together is provided by the Mahābhārata: tathā divyafarīrās te na ca vigrāmürtyah, “Their [ = Rbhus] bodies are divine, but not corporeal.” My translation of the compound atma-bhava-vigraba as “body-frame” is nothing more than a mechanical calque of the compound which, I believe, is actually best considered simply to mean

239 That the word dhātudhāra means “stūpa” is virtually certain. While not all occurrences of the term in texts or inscriptions are sure (see Schopen 1988 n. 40, who citing a number of examples points out that the reading may in some cases rather be the graphically very similar “dhātura”), there are other cases where it is quite certain. One may refer to a passage in the Saddharmapundarika. There we find the following verse (Kern and Nanjio 1908-1912: 52.9-10 [2.96] = Gilgit [Watanabe 1975: 195.9-12]):

namo 'stu buddhāya kṛtaikavārā yehi tādā dhātudhāresu tresu 1 vikṣiptacātār api ekāvārā te sarvī prāptā imam agraṁdhīm 11

To this corresponds in the Kashgar manuscript the following (Toda 1983: 60a1-2):

namo 'stu buddhāya kṛtaikavāc yebhis tahi(n) dhātudhāresu tresu 1 vikṣiptacātār kari ekāvāc(m) te cāpi prāptā imam agraṁdhīm, 11

The Chinese translations by Kumārajīva and Dharmacāra respectively have the following (T. 262 [IX] 92a24-25 [Jain 1]):

若人敬心入於塔中， — 一稱南無 菩皆成佛道
And (T. 263 [IX] 71c12-15 [Jain 1]):

若使有經 舍利供養 口宣音言 南無佛尊

Although there is much to discuss in this verse (and see Karashima 1992: 57 for some remarks), what is quite clear is that dhātudhāra here refers to a stūpa.

241 See Böhtlingk and Roth 1855-1875: VL1003 (s.v. vigraba 6), “individuelle Forme,—Gestalt; Leib, Körper.”
242 Mahābhārata 3.247.21cd; the translation is that of van Buitenen 1975: 704.
Additional Note 6
(to n. 209)

Inscriptional evidence for the grammatical number of the word शारिर is, as is so often the case with inscriptions, frequently ambiguous. In the first place, the word itself is not terribly common, probably because reliquary inscriptions themselves are not so very common. Among the known examples, there is no question that a grammatically plural interpretation is more common than that as grammatically singular.

The interpretation is often ambiguous since शारिर very frequently occurs as an endingless stem form, that is, शारिर as such. A fair number of times, however, this stem form is clearly to be understood as plural, since it is preceded by the pronoun ime, and in at least one instance no ambiguity as to number at all is possible, although the case is not entirely clear. Nevertheless, even here things are not always clear. In one reliquary inscription, for instance, we find the sequence ime शारिर, understood as plural, but as the editor points out, “these relics” are associated with three verbs, all of which are in the singular.

There are, however, also at least two inscriptive examples of शारिर in the sense of “relic” which either clearly are, or at the very least appear to be, morphologically singular, one as शारिरम, a singular accusative, the other a singular instrumental.

245 In such cases there may simply be no way to know the intended grammatical number, as in the duplicate silver and gold inscriptions edited by Salomon 1996, and a number of cases in Konow 1929: 48 (§XV A 11), 152 (§ LXXXIX), 155 (§ LXXX 2), 158 (§ LXXXII 1, 2), 170 (§ LXXXVI 1). Note that this can also be the case when the technical term in question is the much less common धातु, rather than शारिर, as for instance in Sadakata 1996: 309, and perhaps Salomon 1995b: 136.

246 See the reliquaries of Indravarman (lines 4a, 1a) and Ramaka (2b) in Fussman 1980: 4-5 (and on the overall interpretation of the former, the additional remarks of Salomon and Schopen 1984); Trasaka reliquary, l. 4 (Fussman 1985b: 37); reliquary of the year 26, l. 13 (Fussman 1985c: 48); the reliquary studied by Salomon 1995a; reliquary of Prahodi (Sadakata 1996: 303); the Trami reliquary (Majumdar 1942: 10); Swat reliquary (Konow 1929: 4 §I).

247 In the Bimaran vase we find शारिरक (Konow 1929: 52, § XVII), which however may be either instrumental, or perhaps dative, in Konow’s view. Either way, it is obviously plural.

248 The Bajaur reliquary, in Fussman 1993: 106 (the inscription as a whole is treated on pp. 95-110). Tsukamoto 1996: 999 takes ime as singular, but see Konow 1929: 3.

249 In the Patika copper plate l. 3, Konow 1929: 28. The parallelism between the inscription’s apratisthavira bhagavata sakamanisa lārīravir [pratisthaveti] and scriptural expressions was noticed by Schopen 1977: 143.

250 In the reliquary of Śrīraṇa published by Fussman 1985a: 30, in l. 2 we have imāna ca śārīravan, understood (p. 33) as *imaṇa ca śārīravāna, singular instrumental.
Now, a further suggestive but, if possible, even more obscure case comes with the very first written example of the word ṣārīra in India. In the Ahruvā version of the Aśoka's First Minor Rock Edict, the last line contains the words buddhasa satile āloḍhe. It is quite sure both that satile here is a neuter nominative singular, and that the reference is to the satila of the Buddha. Unfortunately the word (if it is indeed a word) preceding this expression, and the sense of what is clearly the verb āloḍhe, remain obscure. K. R. Norman has argued that the singular grammatical form here compels us to understand satile as referring to a body. While I think that this is probably not so, the example is so fraught with difficulties that almost nothing certain can be said at all about it, much less far reaching conclusions drawn on its basis.252

251 For the inscription, perhaps the best edition is that in Andersen 1990: 16-19, and see Norman 1983, which contains reference to previous discussions.

252 A detailed discussion, earlier than and reaching conclusions quite at variance with that of Norman, is Sircar 1979: 72-82.

Literature


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