The Chronological Order of the *Abhidharmāvatāra* and the *Abhidharmakośabhāsyā*:
Reexamining the Evidence in Puguang’s *Jushelun ji*

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1. Introduction

The *Abhidharmāvatāra*, written by *Skandhila, is a concise Abhidharma treatise, which summarized Sarvāstivāda doctrine and played an important role as a good introductory text. As for the date of the AA, due to its inclusion of well-established Sarvāstivāda doctrines, such as fourteen *cittaviprayukta-dharmas*, it was argued that it belongs to the same period as the *Abhidharmakośabhāsyā*, that is, around the 5th century. This dating is further supported by an episode in the Chinese commentaries to the AKBh that describes the personal relationship between Skandhila and Vasubandhu. If we want to discuss the AA’s date with further precision, we must investigate the chronological order of the AA and the AKBh. The epilogue of the AA shows the author’s apprehension that Abhidharma has become complicated by useless analyses and arguments.

If the AA predates the AKBh, then the author must be responding to the doctrines in preceding texts such as the *Mahāvibhāṣā*. On the other hand, in the case of the opposite order, Skandhila would be highly aware of Vasubandhu’s criticisms of Sarvāstivāda positions in the AKBh. Thus, this chronological order is important not only to determine the AA’s date but also to identify the Sarvāstivāda tradition to which the AA belongs. Modern studies discuss this matter in doctrinal terms, but they have not reached definitive agreement. We must acknowledge the difficulty of determining their relative chronology in doctrinal terms because the AA is mainly composed of the standard doctrine that is shared in many Sarvāstivāda texts, and is therefore only helpful to a certain extent when discussing the relative chronology of texts. Thus, it would be helpful to consider other possible approaches.

The *Jushelun ji* 俱舎論記, written by Puguang 普光, includes a clear piece of evidence that is important for the relative chronology of the AA and AKBh. In the context of discussing the two definitions of *sahabhūhetu, juyouyin* 俱有因, Puguang’s commentary pres-
ements a comment by the Jusheshi 俱舍師, which effectively dates the AA after the AKBh. Since it is difficult to determine textual chronology in doctrinal terms, this evidence has great importance. However, Funahashi 1940 denied the validity of this evidence.

In this paper, we will reexamine the evidence in the Jushelun ji. First, in order to understand the context in which this evidence appears and the author’s intention in presenting it, we must read the definition of sahabhūhetu in the AKBh and Puguang’s commentary on it. Then, we will clarify a problematic point in Funahashi’s denial of its validity and point out the possibility that this evidence must depend on some historical tradition. Finally, from differences in the definition of sahabhūhetu within the Tibetan and Chinese versions of the AA, we will show the possibility that the Jusheshi’s comment includes an interpretation added by Puguang himself.

2. Evidence in the Jushelun ji

In the second chapter of the AKBh, sahabhūhetu is defined by anyonya-phala (in kārikā, mithah-; glossed by paraspara-phala) huweiguo 烏為果, and the exception to this definition is explained by the relationship between the conditioned dharma and its anulakṣaṇas. The evidence in question comes in the last part of Puguang’s commentary on this exception. Puguang first explains that Vasubandhu pointed out the imperfection of the Sarvāstivāda definition of sahabhūhetu, as represented by the Mahāvibhāṣā and the later Nyāyānusāra, both of which define it by tongyiguo 同一果, possibly *ekaphala or *ekakārya. Then, he presents the Jusheshi’s support of the AKBh, which denies the ekaphala definition, and concludes that one can define sahabhūhetu by anyonyaphala with fewer errors than by ekaphala, because what takes anyonyaphala is surely included in sahabhūhetu, even though anyonyaphala is not a sufficient definition in and of itself. Finally, he mentions the definition in the AA, which contains the evidence concerning the relative chronology of the AA and AKBh.

According to the Abhidharmakośavatāra, there are both interpretations [concerning the definition of the sahabhūhetu by anyonyaphala and by ekaphala]. That treatise says, “The conditioned dharman which are in the mutual relationship of causality or which together cause a common effect are named sahabhūhetu.” Jusheshi says, “That treatise (the AA) was made after [the AKBh]. [The author of the AA] learned the anyonyaphala [definition] from my master Vasubandhu.”

Because neither definition is sufficient to define sahabhūhetu, the AA’s definition, which

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gives both as complements of each other, is more appropriate. Now let us examine the
function of the Jusheshi’s comments. The term “Jusheshi” cannot be found in the Chinese
translations but is found in the texts written by Xuanzang’s 玄奘 disciples, mainly in the
commentaries to the AKBh. The way in which this term is used is also limited to expres-
sions such as “the Jusheshi supports [the AKBh] (or objects [to the opponent]”), and
says” (俱舍師救 [or 破 云] and “if one presents the Jusheshi’s support (or objection)”
(若作俱舍師救 [or 破]), and we can see an intention to support the position of the AKBh.
In Puguang’s commentary summarized above, the Jusheshi’s objections are presented in
order to deny the ekaphala definition. 7)

Considering both the fact that the AA defines sahabhūhetu appropriately and the Jusheshi’s
comments support the AKBh, we can deduce that it was Puguang’s intention to degrade the
AA by presenting the Jusheshi’s comment, which ascribes the anyonyaphala definition to
the author of the AKBh.

3. Reconsider FUNAHASHI’s Denial

FUNAHASHI 1940 understood the Jusheshi’s comment to assert the historical priority of
the AKBh on the basis of the fact that the AA includes the anyonyaphala definition. Then,
FUNAHASHI denied the validity of this assertion on the basis of the fact that the anyonyaphala
definition is found in the *Samyuktābhidharmahṛdaya, which precedes the AKBh. 8) If we
presume, like FUNAHASHI, that the purpose of the Jusheshi’s comment is simply to assert the
historical priority of the AKBh, then FUNAHASHI’s denial of the validity of his assertion
would be appropriate. However, as we pointed out, the purpose of the Jusheshi’s comment
is not to discuss the chronological order but rather to degrade the AA. Thus, it is possible
that Puguang was simply trying to degrade the AA by presenting the Jusheshi’s comment,
which places the AA under the influence of the AKBh, and that his comments depended on
some tradition regarding their chronological order. According to Puguang’s biography, we
can see that he received much information from Xuanzang, who remembered the argu-
ments of the Indian Sarvāstivāda masters. 9)

4. Reexamining the Jusheshi’s Comment

The Jusheshi’s comment raises another issue. The AA’s definition of sahabhūhetu cited
in the Jusheshi’s literally corresponds to the definition in the Chinese version of the AA,
which gives both definitions. However, the Tibetan version presents the *anyonyaphala* definition only.\(^\text{10}^\) Surely, it is possible that a Sanskrit manuscript of the AA existed that included both definitions, but, if we consider the fact that the Tibetan and Chinese AA and the *Sārasamuccaya*, a commentary on the AA, give examples concerning only the *anyonyaphala* definition and do not mention the additional *ekaphala* definition,\(^\text{11}^\) it is highly probable that the AA originally defined *sahabhūhetu* simply by *anyonyaphala*, and that the *ekaphala* definition was inserted by the Chinese translator. It has been pointed out that the Chinese version of the AA includes many comments and corrections added by translator,\(^\text{12}^\) and it is likely that this reference to *ekaphala* was added as well. Thus, we can assume that Puguang depends totally on the Chinese version, not referring to the original version. If the original AA simply presents *anyonyaphala*, which is the most acceptable definition for *sahabhūhetu*, for the sake of the concise description, then we have to question the authenticity of the historical tradition upon which the Jusheshi’s comment is based: is it really possible that there was a specific tradition in India that the author of the AA learned the *anyonyaphala* definition from Vasubandhu? We should also point out that such a tradition would contradict the episode in the *Jushelun ji*, which states that Skandhila was Vasubandhu’s senior in Kashmir.

Thus, we have to consider the possibility that the Jusheshi’s comment includes an interpretation offered by Puguang himself. Synthesizing the facts that Puguang’s purpose was to degrade the AA and that the information regarding the chronological order is too specific to ascribe to Puguang himself, we can conclude that Puguang offered this interpretation in the Jusheshi’s comment, which places the AA under the influence of the AKBh, by depending on a tradition, that dates the AA after the AKBh.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, we pointed out the possibility that there was a historical tradition that dated the AA after the AKBh. This tradition would constitute important evidence for the chronological order of the two texts, and denial of its validity out of hand is unwarranted. However, we have to be cautious not to accept the relative chronology that places the AA after the AKBh on the basis of this evidence alone because this evidence is valid only to the extent of the tradition on which it is based; in other words, we can question the authenticity of the historical tradition upon which Puguang’s comment is based. Indeed, there is also doctrinal
evidence that would support the historical priority of the AA. Lastly, we would like to emphasize that this paper argues simply that the evidence in the Jushelun ji should not be summarily denied but should be evaluated carefully from a number of perspectives. It does not attempt to assert the relative chronology of the AA and AKBh on the basis of this evidence alone.

〈Notes〉

〈Abbreviations and Primary Sources〉

〈Secondary Sources〉

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〈Key words〉 Abhidharmāvatāra, 入阿毘達磨論, Abhidharmakośabhāṣya, 阿毘達磨俱舍論, chronological order, 先後關係, Jushelun ji, 俱舍論記, Puguang, 普光, sahabhūhetu, 俱有因, Jusheshi, 俱舍師

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