Though Ratnakaraśānti was a very prominent figure among the philosophers of the Yogacāra school, nothing is known accurately about his life. We can only know from Tibetan sources that he lived in the eleventh century A.D., was one of the six great erudites of the Vikramasila International Buddhist University, and was reputed to be equal in talent to Acarya Vasubandhu. At the time of Ratnakaraśānti, Buddhist philosophy attained its last maturity; indeed, he often looked back with satisfaction and gratitude at the contributions of his predecessors. Fully conversant with their views and theories, he utilized them freely in his works. Though mainly engaged in the interpretation of the views of Maitreyanātha, the founder of the Yogacāra school, he shows in his works a vast knowledge of the entire fields of the Mahāyāna philosophy. The following works of Ratnakaraśānti are preserved only in Tibetan translations.

1) Madhyamakālaṁkāra-vṛtti madhyamaka-pratipāda siddhināma.
2) Prajñāpāramitopadeśa.
3) Prajñāpāramitā-bhāvanopadeśa.
4) Vijñapti-mātratā-siddhi.
5) Antar-vyāpti.

The first three are the works on the philosophy of Mahāyana Buddhism written from the standpoint of the Yogacāra school; the last two, on the

---

(1) Tāranātha: History of Buddhism in India, p. 178, 190.
The vijnaptimatrata theory of Ratnakaraśānti (T. Umino) (8)

other hand, are works on logic.

Of the first three works, the Prajñāpāramitopadeśa is the most important; because, firstly, it deals with the Prajñāpāramitā, the central concept of Mahāyāna Buddhism, from the standpoint of the Yogacāra school, and, secondly, it is the sole extant work (as far as I know,) written by a Nirākara-vijñānāvatādin. The Prajñāpāramitopadeśa can be divided into three parts, the first (151 b-5—164 b-1), the second (164 b-1-175 a-6), and the third (175 a-6—184 b-6). In the first part he tries to interpret the theories of the old Abhidharma philosophy from his new idealistic standpoint. Here the important Buddhist technical terms of all sorts are found, both the oldest ones and the newest ones, such as “pañcaskandhāḥ”, “dvādasāyatanāni”, “āṣṭādaśadhisthātavāḥ” etc. (the oldest terms inherited from the early Buddhism) as well as “parikalpita-svabhāva”, “paratantra-svabhāva”, “parinispamna-svabhāva”, “ālaya-vijñāna”, “klista-mano-vijñāna”, pravṛtti-vijñāna” etc. (the newest terms in the history of Indian Buddhism, i. e. the terms found only in the works of the Yogacāra school). We find Ratnakaraśānti explaining all of them, as the famous commentator Sthiramati did in his commentary, by quoting from numerous Buddhist texts, such as the Sandhinirmocanasūtra, the Laṅkāvatārasūtra, the Madhyāntavibhaṅga and the Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra of Maitreya-nātha, the Trimsikāvijñānapitikārikā of Vasubandhu etc. Among them the Laṅkāvatārasūtra and the Madhyāntavibhaṅga are quoted most frequently and resorted to as the principal authorities. Thus we may conclude that the vijnaptimatrata theory of Ratnakaraśānti is entirely based on the above-mentioned two texts(2); indeed his contribution to the doctrinal developments of the Yogacāra school is negligible, e. g. he often uses Sthiramati’s commentary word by word when he comments on the verses from the Madhyāntavibhaṅga. Thus we may regard Ratnakaraśānti as one of the last faithful successors of the Nirākara-vijñānāvatādins, who were interested in

(2) The fact that the Nirākara-vijñānāvatādins earnestly followed the canonical teaching (āgama) may be the reason why they, according to Tibetan accounts, are called the Āgama-anusārins, while the Sākāra-vijñānāvatādins are called the Nyāya-anusārins.

—438—
The vijnaptimātratā theory of Ratnakarasānti (T. Umino)

the constructive details of the idealistic metaphysics(3). It is to be noted that the differences between the doctrine of the Sākāravijñānāvādins and that of the Mādhyamikas are more apparent than real; indeed, according to Prof. A. Thakur, Jñānaśrīmitra, a prominent Sākāravijñānāvādin strove his best to show the underlying unity between the two systems ignoring the details in which they differed, while the rivals of Ratnakarasānti were always the Sākāravijñānāvādins and the Mādhyamikas(4).

In the first part of the Prajñāpāramitopadeśa Ratnakarasānti gives some descriptions, similar to those of Sthiramati, of the theory of the Vijnaptimātratā. It is, however, difficult in this short paper to go into its detail. Therefore we shall only give the verses of the Madhyāntavibhāga and the Lāṅkāvatārasūtra on which the Vijnaptimātratā theory of Ratnakarasānti is based.

1) Madhyāntavibhāga, chap. 1—5, 8, 13, 14, 15, 16, 21, 22.
2) Lāṅkāvatārasūtra, Sagāthakam, 91, 94, 167, 374, 568, 592, 624, 638, 709.

(3) Though Ratnakarasānti was also interested in logic and epistemology, and wrote a few tracts on them, such as the Vijnaptimātratā-siddhi, the Antarvyāpti etc., his main interest did not lie in them. The Sākāravijñānāvādins, such as Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, Jñānaśrīmitra, Prajñākaragupta etc., on the other hand, were very much interested in logic and epistemology. Ratnakarasānti was interested in them only because he wanted to make use of them when he refuted his opponents.

(4) See the following passage:

(a) rnal ḥbyor pa pa dañ dбу ma pa ses pa rnam pa dañ bas par smra ba kha cig na re/(168 a, 4 ff.)

Some of the Yogacārins and the Mādhyamikas, the Sākāravijñānāvādins, retort (against the Nirākāracittamātravādins).

(b) de la phyi rol gyi don yod par smra ba dañ/šes pa rnam pa dañ bcas par smra ba dбу ma pa dag ni/luñ dañ bstan bcos dañ tshad ma dag las phyi rol tu gur pas śnār bdzog dzin to/rnam pa med smra baḥi sems tšam pa ḥbaḥ shig lus par ḥgyur te/(170 a, 5 ff.)

Therefore the realists, the Sākāravijñānāvādins and the Mādhyamikas have (all) been refuted because of their violation of the sacred canons (āgama), the sacred treatises (śāstra) and logic (pramāṇa). We, the Nirākāracittamātravādins, are alone exempt from being refuted.

— 437 —
As to the meaning of the word ākāra given in the subtitle of this paper, Ratnakarasānti explains it as follows:

**Tibetan text**

yaṅ dag pa gaṅ yin she na/gsal ba tsam mo/de ɲid kyis na rnam pa de ni ḥkhrul paḥi mtshan ma daṅ/spros paḥi mtshan ma shes bya bar brjod de/ḥkhrul paḥi dmigs pa yin paḥi phyir ro/gṇis kyi mtshan shes kyaṅ bya ste/gṇis ltar snaḥ baḥi phyir ro/spros paḥi mtshan ma de thams cad ḥjig rten las ḥdas paḥi ye ses la ḥgyur la/des na de ni ma ḥkhrul ba daṅ/yaṅ dag paḥi ye ses su yaṅ dag brjod do//

**English translation**

What is the reality? It is nothing but pure manifestation (vyaktimātratā); thus the images (that we experience) (ākāra) are called “bhrānti-nimitta” or “prapañca-nimitta” (=“the objects produced by illusory imagination”). This is because they are the objects of illusion. They are also called “the two-fold”, because they appear as two [i.e. as grāhaka (=subject) and grāhya (=object)]. All the illusory objects (or all the images that we experience (ākāra)] are destroyed when [we get] the supermundane knowledge (lokottara-jñāna). So, it is [called......and] well called——“abhrānti (=free from illusion)” or “sam-yagjñāna (=the true knowledge).”

According to the epistemology of the Yogacāra school, consciousness (vijñāna) is the sole reality and the external object confronting it does not exist as it appears to do. Thus, according to the Yogacāra school, our cognition consists in an apparently contradictory relation that consciousness perceives consciousness itself, i.e. the knower is not different from the known(5). According to Ratnakarasānti the object confronting the consciousness is to be divided into two, i.e. ākāra and vyakti. According to him the word “vyakti” means the object perceived by the emancipated people, while “ākāra” means the object perceived by the unemancipated people. Since for

(5) The Mādyamikas criticize this idealism, quoting the wellknown allegories of a sword and a finger-tip; i.e. a sword cannot cut itself and a finger cannot cut itself and a finger cannot point at itself. Ratnakarasānti refutes this in his Prajñāpāramitopadeśa, 174 a, 1 ff.
The vijnaptimātratā theory of Ratnakarasanti (T. Umino)

the emancipated people there is nothing but the pure consciousness, “vyakti” is nothing but the pure consciousness perceived by the emancipated. For the unemancipated people, however, the external world is conjectured to be real, and therefore, the word “ākāra” means the falsely conjectured external object perceived by the unemancipated. The Yogacara philosophers often use the following allegory to explain the relation between vyakti and ākāra. Suppose a magician has conjured horses, elephants etc. out of stones and wood. The stones and wood, in this case, correspond to the vyakti, while horses, elephants etc. to the ākāra. It is, therefore, well said by Bodhibhadra that the ākāra of the Nirākāravijnānavādins is nothing but the parikalpitasvabhāva(6). Thus we may conclude that according to Ratnakarasānti the consciousness of the unemancipated people is always endowed with images falsely conjectured (ākāra), while the consciousness of the emancipated is free from them. The emancipated people perceive only the pure consciousness, i.e. the stone and wood in the allegory above refered to; while the uneman-cipated people perceive the false images, i.e. the horses and elephants(7).

The Sākāravijnānavādins, who maintains that images are not false and therefore even the consciousness of the emancipated people are with images (sākāra), critisize this theory of the Nirākāravijnānavādins. The details of the controversy between them will, I hope, be given in my next paper.

(6) cf. The Jñānasārasamuccayanibhandhana of Bodhibhadra, 51 b, 3 ff.

(7) Mokṣākaragupta describes the theory of the Nirākāravijnānavādins as follows: The consciousness of the emancipated people is imageless (nirākāra) and is clear as a pure crystal without any specks. (cf. The Tarkabhāṣā, p. 69, 15 ff.) This is why a group of the Yogacārins represented by Ratnakara-
śānti were called “Nirākāravijnānavādins.”