

Candrakīrti and *Lotus sutra*

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Introduction: The *Lotus Sutra* in Indian Buddhism

The *Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtra* (hereafter, *Lotus Sutra*), is one of the most popular scriptures in the history of East Asian Buddhism. Its importance in the history and culture of East Asia is evident based on the fact that it was translated into Chinese at least six times and that it influenced the thought and practices of individual scholars and schools in both China and Japan. The *Lotus Sutra* became a preeminent Buddhist scripture in East Asia after Kumārajīva and his team produced a Chinese translation in 406 C.E. Many East Asian Buddhist traditions subsequently based their institutional identity on the *Lotus Sutra*, such as the Tiantai School in China and Korea, its Japanese Tendai derivative, and Nichiren based traditions in Japan. What of the influence of the *Lotus Sutra* in Indian Buddhism? Recent modern scholarship has questioned the importance of the *Lotus Sutra* in Indian Buddhist history. J. A. Silk claimed in 2001 that the *Lotus Sutra* has minimal evidence for its popularity in India, and concluded that "...it is hardly fair to say that it is a main scriptural source for later treatises, and it is in fact relatively rarely referred to" (Silk 2001:91). Silk also emphasized in this article that "there is no known art historical or inscriptional evidence conclusively related to the Lotus [sutra] in the Indian subcontinent" and limits his discussion of the Indic manuscript evidence to a brief mention of the *Lotus Sutra* manuscripts found at Gilgit (Silk 2001:88). Rather than focus on art, inscriptional, or manuscript evidence for the place of the *Lotus Sutra* in Indian Buddhism, Silk concentrates on the evidence, or the supposed lack thereof, of the scripture in Indian Buddhist *śāstras*, or

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technical digests. Before I re-examine the evidence for reference to the *Lotus Sutra* by Indian Buddhist authors, and more specifically, the place of the *Lotus Sutra* in the work and thought of the Indian Buddhist scholar Candrakīrti, I will briefly mention the recent art historical and manuscript evidence for the *Lotus Sutra* in Indian Buddhist cultural areas.

Concerning Indian Buddhist manuscripts of the *Lotus Sutra*, in brief, there are currently two groups of Sanskrit manuscripts of the *Lotus Sutra* found in four geographical areas that were Indian, or Indian influenced: manuscripts recovered from the Bāmiyān Valley in present day Afghanistan; the so-called “Gilgit Manuscripts” found in Naupur near Gilgit; manuscripts from Nepal and Tibet; and manuscripts and fragments from Central Asia. The first group consists of texts whose readings follow the Gilgit-Nepalese recension. This includes the Bāmiyān Valley *Lotus Sutra* manuscripts gathered in the Schøyen Collection (Toda 2002), the Gilgit manuscripts (Hinüber 2014b), dating to the 7th or 8th century, and manuscripts from Nepal and Tibet, dating from the middle of the eleventh century. The second group consists of texts which follow the Central Asian recension, namely, Central Asian manuscripts and fragments that most likely date between the 5th and 8th centuries (Hinüber 2014c). These comprise at least thirteen manuscripts and fragments including (1) the so-called “Kashgar manuscript,” discovered in Khādaliq, east of Khotan, most likely dating to the 8th century; (2) a fragmentary manuscript discovered in Farhād-Bēg Yailakī, kept in the British Library and dating to around the 6th century; and (3) fragments from various collections, such as St. Petersburg, Otani (Lüshun manuscripts), and the British Library (Hinüber 2014c:134–137). The Institute of Oriental Philosophy, supported by the Soka Gakkai, since 1997 through to 2014, has published sixteen items among both recensions of the Sanskrit *Lotus Sutra* including facsimile editions and Romanized texts.¹ Based, in part, on the extant manuscript evidence, Jiang Zhongxin concluded that the *Lotus Sutra* “was the most widely circulated among the sutras of Indian Buddhism, and that, among the works of Indian Buddhism, it has

1 See Institute of Oriental Philosophy (ed.), *Soka Gakkai Lotus Sutra Manuscript Series*, Tokyo, Japan, 2015, pp. 1–39.

exercised the widest and longest influence” (cited by Harada 2012:42).

In regards to the critical study of these manuscripts, I note that present date scholars often reference the Sanskrit *Lotus Sūtra* edition by Bunyū Nanjio (1849–1927) and Hendrik Kern (1833–1917) that was published between 1908 and 1912. However, the shortcomings of the Kern-Nanjio (KN) *editio princeps* have been known since W. Baruch published his initial textual studies in the 1930s². This is nowhere more apparent than in the following analysis of Candrakīrti’s citation of the *Lotus Sūtra*, where the corresponding Sanskrit passages, edited by Karashima (2003), differ between the Gilgit/Nepalese and Central Asian recensions while the Kern-Nanjio edition reflects an arbitrary conflation representing no known recension. Although critical textual study is invaluable for the study of the history of the *Lotus Sūtra*, recent works by Ruegg (2004) and Schopen (2009) demonstrate that scholars may need to rethink the genealogical formation of Indian Buddhist textual traditions in that Mahāyāna sūtras in their early phases had multiple recensions with no fixed, standardized form.³

With regard to art historical or inscriptional evidence related to the *Lotus Sūtra* in classical Indian culture, Hinüber has recently suggested, based on a thesis of the art historian Pran Gopal Paul, a connection between the *Lotus Sūtra* and a Gilgit bronze donated by the Palola Śāhi Nandivikramādityanandi in the year corresponding to 714 c.e. The identification is based on the unusual gesture of the icon representing Śākyamuni Buddha’s right hand placed on the head of a devotee which corresponds with statements found in the tenth and twenty-sixth chapters of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtra* (KN 231.3–6, 480.5; Hinüber 2012:59–60, 67 plate 1). More concrete evidence is found in a petroglyph discovered at the site of Hodur in Pakistan. The rock drawing depicts

2 See Baruch (1938), Ruegg (1979), Karashima (2003), Hinüber (2014c).

3 Additional textual evidence for the presence of the *Lotus Sūtra* in India is found in the *Nandimitrāvādāna* (Ch. 大阿羅漢 難提蜜多羅所說法住記), “Record of the Duration of the Dharma Spoken by the Great Arhat Nandimitra,” translated by Xuanzang 玄奘 (600–664) in 654 c.e., where the *Lotus Sūtra* is listed second among a group of Mahāyāna sūtras. The *Lotus Sūtra* also contains the phrase “circulating in Jambudvīpa” (*jambudvīpe pracaramāṇaḥ*) which may signify its oral and written circulation in classical India (KN 477.7:....*saddharmapuṇḍariko dharmaparyāyo ’smiñ jambudvīpe pracaramāṇo*....;cf. Skilling 2004; Hinüber 2014b:85, note 36).

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two Buddhas sitting on either side of a *stūpa*. As Hinüber (2012:60) emphasizes, this image is “a representation of the Buddhas Śākyamuni and Prabhūtaratna as described in the eleventh chapter of the *Saddharmapūṇḍarīka-sūtra*.” Here we see direct evidence conclusively related to the Lotus Sutra found in Indian art whose importance is noted by Hinüber as “considerable.”

In relation to the *Lotus Sutra* in Indian Buddhist *śāstras*, Silk reiterates his claims in a more recent article where he states that “As I have shown, [the *Lotus Sutra*], while known to Indian authors, has left precious few direct traces in Indian texts.” He continues, it “is quoted by a small number of authors, Śāntideva and Kamalaśīla and one or two others...” (2014:158). Inexplicably, these arguments overlook the recent work of Kaie Mochizuki, who, in an article published in 2011, documents the citation of the *Lotus Sutra* among eighteen Indian Buddhist authors in twenty-four texts ranging from Nāgārjuna (2nd century) to Abhayākāragupta (11th century). In order to address the evidence for the role of the *Lotus Sutra* in the history of Indian Buddhism more closely, this paper examines the citations and understanding of the *Lotus Sutra* as found in the works of the Indian Buddhist scholar Candrakīrti (ca. 570–650). Candrakīrti, although not known in classical Chinese Buddhism, was an influential commentator in the development of Buddhist thought in India and Tibet. The examination of Candrakīrti’s use of the *Lotus Sutra* provides a significant case study for the importance of the *Lotus Sutra* in classical Indian Buddhism. In examining the citation of the *Lotus Sutra* in Candrakīrti’s works, the paper identifies important themes and concepts from the *Lotus Sutra* that influence Candrakīrti’s thought. I first discuss Candrakīrti as an Indian Buddhist scholar and identify his major works, then I examine the place of the *Lotus Sutra* in his thought and works.

Candrakīrti

Candrakīrti is a well-known Indian Buddhist thinker in post-eleventh century Tibetan Buddhist scholasticism, although the role and timeframe of Candrakīrti’s influence in India has recently been questioned and debated (Vose 2009; MacDonald 2015). The limited historical information concerning the life of Candrakīrti, and his importance in the

history of Indian Buddhism, can only be discerned from critically assessing the hagiographies of his life recorded by Tibetan historians and his extant works preserved in Sanskrit and Tibetan. Candrakīrti was most likely born in the latter part of the sixth century CE in India at a place called Samanta, according to Tibetan sources.⁴ These sources also claim that he was ordained a Buddhist monk (*bhikṣu*) under the middle way (*madhyamaka*) philosopher Buddhapālita's disciple Kamalabuddhi. Candrakīrti became a great middle way philosopher himself and is well known for defending Buddhapālita's method of Madhyamaka dialectics based on the use of "consequences" (*prasāṅga*). According to Tibetan sources, he later went to the famous Indian university of Nālandā in north-east India and eventually became abbot there. Over the years, he had a famous debate with the master Sanskrit grammarian Candragomin who supported the mind-only position of the Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda tradition.

Although numerous works are attributed to him in the Tibetan Tanjur, including Tantric texts, Candrakīrti's major works acknowledged by modern scholars (Lindtner 1979; Tillemans 1990) consist of the following:

- 1) *Madhyamakāvātāra* ("Introduction to the Middle Way") and *Bhāṣya* ("Commentary").⁵
- 2) *Prasannapadā Mūlamadhyamakavṛtti* ("In Clear Words, Commentary on [Nāgārjuna's] *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*").⁶
- 3) *Yuktiṣaṣṭikāvṛtti* ("Commentary on [Nāgārjuna's] *Sixty Stanzas*")

4 Scherrer-Schaub (1991) has argued that he was from Samatata, located in eastern Bengal. Lang (2008) argues that Candrakīrti was from South India, and that Samanta refers to the flatlands formed by the confluence of the Godavari and Krishna rivers.

5 Preserved in Tibetan (D3861 and D38620) only. Tibetan edited by La Vallée Poussin (1907–12). French translation of chapters 1–4 and 6, vs. 1–165 in La Vallée Poussin (1907, 1910, 1911); German translation of 6.166–226 in Tauscher (1981); English translation in Huntington (1989); Japanese translation in Uryūzū and Nakazawa (2012).

6 Preserved in Tibetan (D3860) and Sanskrit. Sanskrit edited by La Vallée Poussin, first chapter edited and translated by MacDonald (2015). Japanese translation in Okuzumi (2014). See MacDonald (2015) and Kragh (2006: 20–26, 30–31) for references to the numerous translations of individual chapters.

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of Reasoning).⁷

- 4) *Śūnyatāsaptatīrti* (“Commentary on [Nāgārjuna’s] Seventy Stanzas of Reasoning”).⁸
- 5) *Catuḥśatakaṭīkā* (“Commentary on [Āryadeva’s] *Four Hundred*”).⁹
- 6) *Pañcaskandhaprakaraṇa* (“Treatise on the Five Aggregates”).¹⁰
- 7) *Trisaraṇasaptatī* (“Seventy Stanzas on the Three Refuges”).¹¹

The first five texts are listed in the likely order of composition according to Erb (1997:14). These texts consist of four commentaries to Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva’s works and three independent works including the *Madhyamakāvatāra* and *Bhāṣya*, *Pañcaskandhaprakaraṇa*, and *Trisaraṇasaptatī*. The *Madhyamakāvatāra* and its *Bhāṣya* are arguably his most important independent works, as they outline the Madhyamaka doctrine of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) and the practices of a bodhisattva through ten stages to Buddhahood based on the *Daśabhūmikasūtra*. Tibetan monastic institutions since the fifteenth century have considered these texts as essential for understanding Madhyamaka thought and practice. As the following section demonstrates, Candrakīrti will reference the *Lotus Sutra*, directly and indirectly, in the (1) *Madhyamakāvatāra*, its *Bhāṣya*, (2) the *Yuktiṣaṣṭikāvṛtti*, and (3) the *Catuḥśatakaṭīkā*.

Candrakīrti and the *Lotus Sutra*

As an Indian Buddhist scholar, Candrakīrti relies on scriptural authority (*āgama*) and reasoning (*yukti*) to refine his understanding of the Buddha’s teaching, gain realization, as well as refute opponents, Buddhist and non-Buddhist, who may not agree with his understanding.

7 Tibetan (D3864) edition with French translation by Scherrer-Schaub 1991; English translation with critical edition by Loizzo (2007). Japanese translation in Uryūdzū (1974).

8 Preserved in Tibetan (D3867). Tibetan edition and German translation of verses 1–14 by F. Erb (1997).

9 Preserved in Tibetan (D3865) and Sanskrit fragments (Suzuki 1994). Edition and translation of chapter 12–13 in Tillemans (1990).

10 Tibetan (D3866; P. 5267) edited by C. Lindtner (1979).

11 Tibetan (D3971; P. 5366/5478) edited by P. Sorensen (1986).

Candrakīrti refers to the Buddha's teaching as *saddharma*, the good law or principle of Noble beings (*ārya*), which is elucidated in scripture (*āgama*), either oral or written, and leads to realization (*adhigama*) (Li 2012:50). For Candrakīrti, *saddharma* is indicated under the designation of dependent-arising (*pratītyasamutpāda*) that the Buddha taught and the principle that Nāgārjuna has elucidated in his works (Scherrer-Schaub 1991:234n445). Even though he had reservations about certain types of formal reasoning for use in debate, Candrakīrti accepted on the conventional level four means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*): perception (*pratyakṣa*), inference (*anumāna*), comparison (*upamāna*), and authoritative testimony/scriptural authority (*āgama*). Candrakīrti's definition of *āgama* is found in his *Prasannapadā* as "The statement (*vacana*) of persons of authority (*āpta*) who know directly objects/states of affairs out of the range of the sense faculties (*atīndriya*) is scriptural authority (*āgama*)" (MacDonald 2015:I, 291). Scriptural authority, therefore, is to be relied upon when perception and inference fail to provide knowledge concerning things beyond the range of the sense faculties (Tillemans 1990, 1.23–25, 120; Lang 2003:15–16). In this regard, Candrakīrti often employs scriptural authority as "proof texts" to provide examples and further understanding of the profound teaching of emptiness (*śūnyatā*). Candrakīrti, like other Mādhyamikas, classifies *sūtras* which teach emptiness, non-arising, and so forth into the category of *sūtras* with definitive meaning (*nītārtha*), and those whose assertions require further explanation and interpretation into the category of *sūtras* with provisional meaning (*neyārtha*) (MacDonald 2015, vol2, p. 158-59). Candrakīrti includes canonical Abhidharma material as authoritative testimony (*āgama*) (MacDonald 2015: I,11; II, 285n536), as well as canonical material from the Pūrvaśāila branch of the (Lokottaravādin-) Mahāsāṃghikas in his *Prasannapadā*, *Madhyamakāvātārabhāṣya*, *Śūnyatāsaptatīvr̥tti* (Ruegg 2004: 51, n.86) and his *Trīśaraṇasaptati* (Skilling and Serji 2013).¹²

12 Candrakīrti's citation of this material, and his affiliations with South India and Madhyamaka thought, may well connect him to the Mahāsāṃghika school. As suggested below, further evidence for Candrakīrti's Mahāsāṃghika affiliation may be found in his citation of Mahāyāna scriptures, particularly the *Samādhirājasūtra* and the *Saddharmapūṇḍarikasūtra*, or *Lotus Sūtra*.

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(1) Candrakīrti mentions the *Lotus Sutra* three times in his *Madhyamakāvatārabhāṣya*. (1.1) The initial occurrence of the *Lotus Sutra* is in a section where Candrakīrti explains the meaning of the word *śrāvaka* while commenting on the first verse of the *Madhyamakāvatāra*. Candrakīrti states,

“Alternatively, [they are called] *śrāvakas* since, having heard about the path of the supreme result, or perfect complete Buddhahood, from the Tathāgatas, they proclaim it to seekers. It is taught in the *Sūtra of the White Lotus of the True Dharma (Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtra)* [4.53]:

We are now truly *śrāvakas* and we shall proclaim supreme enlightenment everywhere, reveal the sound of awakening by which we are formidable disciples.

Although bodhisattvas are indeed like that, nevertheless, since those who just proclaim, but do not practice even a similitude, are *śrāvakas*, it does not follow for bodhisattvas.”¹³

In this citation, Candrakīrti references a verse proclaimed by Mahākāśyapa in the fourth chapter of the *Lotus Sutra* where Subhūti, Mahākātyāyana, and Mahākāśyapa, among other great disciples, express amazement upon hearing the Buddha’s announcement to Śāriputra that he, too, shall one day become a Buddha. The idea expressed in this passage is that *śrāvakas* receive or hear teachings on the Mahāyāna from the Buddha, and although they do not initially practice these teachings themselves, they retain these teachings through memory, and then proclaim the Mahāyāna teachings which they have memorized to those

13 MABH (de la Vallée Poussin, 1907–1912:3.5–13): *yang na 'bras bu'i mchog gam bla na med pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas kyi lam de bzhin gshegs pa rnams las thos nas don du gnyer ba rnams la sgrogs par byed pas na nyan thos dag ste/ dam pa'i chos padma dkar po'i mdo las/ mgon po de ring bdag cag nyan thos gyur/ /byang chub dam pa yang dag bsrag par bgyi/ /byang chub pa yi sgra yang rab tu rjod/ /de bas bdag cad nyan thos mi bzad 'dra/ [KN (118.13-119.1) adyo vāyama śrāvakabhūta nātha samśrāvavaiṣyāmātha cāgrabodhim / bodhīya śabdāṃ ca prakāśayāmas teno vāyama śrāvaka bhīṣmakalpāḥ // 4.53 //] /zhes ji skad gsung pa lta bu'o/ /byang chub sems rnams kyang de ltar yin mod kyi/ de lta na yang grogs par byed pa nyid yin gyi rjes su mthun pa tsam yang mi sgrub pa gang yin pa de dag nyan thos yin pas byang chub sems dpa' rnams las thal bar mi 'gyur ro/.*

suitable to understand them. As I have documented (Apple 2009, 2012), the *Avaiivartikacakrasūtra* (“The Discourse on Irreversibility”) shares with the *Lotus Sūtra* this word-play on the meaning of *śrāvaka*. Based on the authority of the *Lotus Sūtra*, Candrakīrti utilizes the “method of *nairukta*” (*nairuktavidhānena*) to modify the mainstream Buddhist understanding of *śrāvaka* from one who listens to one who proclaims the true *dharma* found in Mahāyāna scriptures.

(1.2) The concept of the “single vehicle” (*ekayāna*) is famously celebrated in the *Lotus Sūtra* and has greatly influenced the understanding of Mahāyāna Buddhism among different groups throughout the history of Buddhism up to the present day (Apple 2015). Candrakīrti cites the *Lotus Sūtra* to substantiate his understanding of the *ekayāna* theory while commenting on the 36th verse of the 12th chapter in the *Madhyamakāvātāra*. Candrakīrti writes,

“Therefore, [after] having presented the body of the Tathāgata, to indicate three vehicles for the single vehicle is explained as intentional:¹⁴

[12.36] Apart from knowing reality no effort will eliminate all stains. The reality of things is not dependent upon the divisions of manifestations and this intelligence that takes reality as its object does not become diverse; therefore, you taught all living beings an unequaled, inseparable vehicle.¹⁵ One who does not understand reality (*de kho na nyid ≈ tattva*) is unable to completely eliminate the afflictions as the suchness that exists in all entities has the nature of non-production that was previously indicated as undifferentiable. Since even perceiving differences is indivisible in that [nature], this suchness is itself immutable (*rnam par mi 'gyur ba nyid*). Therefore, as there are no divisions and it is immutable, the wisdom which takes suchness as its object is also one nature. Accordingly: if the nature of wisdom were multiple, suchness would not be realized because of not realizing the nature exactly as it abides. Therefore, in this way,

14 MABH (de la Vallée Poussin, 1907–1912:399.9–11): *de'i phyir de ltar de bshin gshegs pa'i sku'i rnam par bzhag pa byas nas theg pa gcig la gtheg pa gsum bstan pa dgongs pa can nyid du bshad pa/*

15 MA 12.36 (de la Vallée Poussin, 1907–1912:399): *gang phyir 'di ni de nyid shes las dri ma mtha' dag sel ba ni/ lhur byed gzhan med chos rnams de nyid rnam 'gyur dbye ba' ang bsten min zhing/ de nyid yul can blo gros 'di yang tha dad 'gyur ba ma yin pa/ de yi phyir na khyod kyis 'gro la theg pa mi mnyam dbyer med bstan/*

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since suchness is a state of oneness, the wisdom which takes suchness as its object is undifferentiable [from it]. Therefore, three vehicles do not exist since there is only a single vehicle. This is because of the statement which occurs [in the *Sūtra of the White Lotus of the True Dharma*]: Kaśyapa, realizing the equality of all dharmas, this itself is *nirvāṇa*, it is just one, not two, not three.”¹⁶

In this passage, Candrakīrti cites from the second half of the *Lotus Sutra*'s fifth chapter as proof of the single vehicle. This part of the *Lotus Sutra* is missing in Kumārajīva's translation but exists in the Sanskrit recensions and Dharmarakṣa's translation (Kajiyama 2000:91–92). The passage indicates that Candrakīrti understands the Buddha's teaching of three vehicles to be provisional (*neyārtha*), and the teaching of the single vehicle, as well as teachings of the *Lotus Sutra*, to be definitive (*nītārtha*). However, the definitive understanding of a single vehicle in this instance is based on realizing “the equality of all dharmas” (Skt. *sarvadharmasamatā*), an important doctrine which occurs in a number of Mahāyāna sūtras (Demiéville, 1937:270–6), such as the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* (Lamotte 1976:55, 93, 163). This differs from how the single vehicle is emphasized in East Asian Buddhist thought where *ekayāna* is often explained as a teaching that leads all people to Buddhahood (Kanno 2012), rather than focusing on a specific realization of suchness.

(1.3) While commenting on the 38th verse of the 12th chapter in

16 MABH (de la Vallée Poussin 1907–12: 399.16–400.9): /gang zhig de kho na mi shes pa des ni nyon mongs pa rnam ma lus par spang bar mi nus la dngos po ma lus pa la yod pa'i de kho na nyid skye ba med pa'i rang bzhin can yang tha dad pa med par sngar bstan zin to/ /mthong ba tha dad kyang de la dbye ba med pas de kho na nyid 'di rnam par mi 'gyur ba nyid yin la/ gang gi phyir dbye ba dang rnam (400.1) par 'gyur ba nyid med pa de'i phyir de kho na nyid kyi yul can ye shes kyang rang bzhin gcig yin no/ /'di ltar ye shes kyi rang bzhin du ma nyid yin na ni ye shes kyi de kho na nyid rtog par mi 'gyur te/ rang bzhin ji ltar gnas pa bzhin ma rtogs pa'i phyir ro/ /gang gi phyir de ltar de ko na nyid gcig nyid yin pas/ de kho na nyid kyi yul can ye shes tha mi dad pa de'i phyir theg pa gcig kho na bas theg pa gsum yod pa ma yin te/ (400.7–9)'od srungs chos thams cad mnyam pa nyid du rtogs na mya ngan las 'das pa yin la de yang gcig nyid yin gyi gnyis dang gsum ni ma yin no zhes 'byung ba'i phyir ro/ (Skt.: ... sarvadharmasamat āvabodhād dhi kāśyapa nirvāṇam / tac caikam na dve na trīni..., ch. V, KN 133.1–2...); Kanjur Tib. (Khang-dkar 2009:133): 'od srung chos thams cad mnyam pa nyid du khong du chud pa'i phyir/ mya ngan las 'da' bas na/ de ni gcig ste gnyis su med gsum du yang med do/.

the *Madhyamakāvātāra*, Candrakīrti references the *Lotus Sūtra* in explaining the parable of the conjured, or phantom, city. Candrakīrti writes,

“Because there are these many conditions hindering living beings from entering the Great Vehicle (*theg pa chen po* ≈ *mahāyāna*) and it is, without doubt, necessary to place the worldly in *nīrvāna*:¹⁷

[12.38] Therefore, as the skillful guide who displayed a delightful city in order to dispel the fatigue of travelers on their way to the island of jewels, you taught this vehicle differently for disciples, either directing their mind in a method of appeasement or in purifying the mind in solitude.¹⁸

This parable should be understood from the *Noble [Sūtra of the] White Lotus of the True Dharma*. The summarized meaning is this: just as the leader actually manifested a city for relaxation until they reached the jeweled island, likewise, the Bhagavan, from the point of view of method, also taught two vehicles, the vehicles of the *śrāvakas* and the *pratyekabuddhas*, ahead of the Great Vehicle, being a method to attain the [Great Vehicle] and being the support of the happiness of pacification. There, to those who have attained elimination of the afflictions of *samsāra*, afterwards, only the Great Vehicle is indicated. Having fully completed the collections, it is also doubtlessly necessary for them, like the Buddhas, to attain Omniscient Wisdom. This doctrine of a single vehicle is also to be understood from the *Compendium of Sūtras (sūtrasamuccaya)*

17 MABH (de la Vallée Poussin, 1907–1912:402.1–4): */gang gi phyir 'gro ba rnams theg pa chen po la 'jug pa la bgegs byed pa'i rkyen mang po 'di dag yod cing 'jig rten rnams kyang gdon mi za bar mya ngan las 'das pa la dgod par bya dgos pa/*

18 MA 12.38 (de la Vallée Poussin, 1907–1912:402.5–8): *de'i phyir mkhas pas rin po che yi gling du chas pa'i skye tshogs kyi/ 'ngal ba nyer sel grong khyer yid 'ong bar du rnam par bkod pa ltar/ /khyod kyis theg pa 'di ni slob ma nyer bar zhi ba'i tshul la yid/ /sbyar bar mdzad cing rnam par dben la blo sbyangs rnams la logs su gsungs/*

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and so forth.”¹⁹

Candrakīrti explicitly mentions the parable of the conjured city, one of the parables found in the *Lotus Sutra*. This citation utilizes the parable to explain *ekayāna* in terms of the gradual, provisional vehicles of the *śrāvakas* and the vehicle of the *pratyekabuddhas* that lead to the Mahāyāna. Candrakīrti emphasizes this in terms of method, or skilful means, which leads beings through teaching pacification as a support to attain the Mahāyāna.

(2) In the *Yuktiṣaṣṭikāvṛtti*, Candrakīrti cites the *Lotus Sutra* twice and also alludes to parables found in the *Lotus Sutra*. (2.1) Candrakīrti’s first citation of the *Lotus Sutra* follows upon verse 3 of Nāgārjuna’s *Yuktiṣaṣṭikā* which states:

If entities (*bhāva*) were real as the childish imagine them, what reason is there not to assume that the absence of an entity is liberation?²⁰

This verse is cited in response to those who propound the view of things in the world as truly existent. The idea being that if those who have not realized ultimate reality, who perceive objects as having an intrinsic nature, were not mistaken in discerning entities as having a true intrinsic nature that accords with the way the objects appear to them, then they could attain liberation, without effort, by merely perceiving

19 MABH (de la Vallée Poussin, 1907–1912:399): /*dpe 'di ni 'phags pa dam pa'i chos padma dkar po las nges par bya'o/ /bdus pa'i don ni 'di yin te/ ji ltar bsti ba'i phyir ded dpon des ring [sic rin] po che'i gling du ma phyin pa'i bar du grong khyer mngon par sprul pa de bzhin du/ bcom ldan 'das kyis kyang thabs kyi sgo nas theg pa chen po'i tshul rol du de thob pa'i thabs su gyur zhing zhi ba'i bde ba'i rten du gyur pa theg pa gnyis po nyan thos dang rang sangs rgyas kyi theg pa gsung pa yin no/ /de la 'khor ba'i nyon mongs pa spangs pa thob pa rnams la ni phyi nas theg pa chen po kho na nye bar bstan la/ de rnams kyis kyang sangs rgyas rnams ltar tshogs yongs su rdzogs par byas nas gdon mi za bar thams cad mkhyen ye shes thob par bya dgos so/ /theg pa gcig bstan pa 'di yang mdo kun las btus pa la sogs pa dag las nges par bya'o/*

20 *Yuktiṣaṣṭikā*, verse 3 (Tib., Scherrer-Schaub 1991:8): *ji ltar byis pas rnams brtags bzhin// dngos po gal te bden gyur na// de dngos med pas rnam thar du// gang gis mi 'dod rgyu ci zhig//* As Scherrer-Schaub (1991:124n68) notes, Lindtner relates this to a verse in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* X.466 (ed. Nanjio 149.4-5): *na bhāvo vidyate satyaṃ yathā bālair vikalpyate/ abhāvena tu vai mokṣaṃ kathāṃ necchanti tārikikāḥ //.*

objects. The opposite of this view is that Arhats attain liberation by merely abandoning sense perceptions. This view of liberation, or *nirvāṇa*, is that of the Sautrāntika. Lamotte (1970:2012) notes that for the Sautrāntika, “*Nirvāṇa* is the culmination, negative and unreal, of a dependent origination which was positive and real; it is a *paścad abhāva*, non-existence following after existence, a *nirodha*, none other than cessation.” For Candrakīrti this is an extreme view. In brief, as a Mādhyamika, Candrakīrti follows the middle way within the twin principles of dependent-arising (*pratītyasamutpāda*) and emptiness (*śūnyatā*). The middle way is free from the extremes of eternalism (*śāśvatavāda*) and annihilationism (*ucchedavāda*), and dependently designated within the framework of conventional (*saṃvṛti*) and ultimate (*paramārtha*) realities. On the conventional level, things originate in a field of interdependent conditionship, while being non-substantial and lacking any independent ontological status. On the ultimate level, the true state of affairs of dependent-arising is their emptiness (*śūnyatā*), which is unborn, without multiplicity and tranquil (Ruegg 1981:44–45; 2010:400). For Candrakīrti, the Sautrāntika adherent has fallen to the extreme of nihilism by positing *nirvāṇa* as non-existence, while the ordinary individual has fallen to the extreme of eternalism by positing entities as intrinsically real based on naïve sense perception. Candrakīrti cites a “proof” text of *āgama* to substantiate his refutation of each of these two views. He first cites the *Samādhirājasūtra*, followed by the *Lotus Sūtra*. He does not identify either scripture by title but references them as being spoken by the Fortunate One (*bcom ldan ’das* ≈ *bhagavan*). His citation of the *Samādhirājasūtra* (9.23–24) reads,

“The eye, the ears, the nose are not authorities; Nor are the tongue, the body, or mind authorities; If these sense-faculties were authorities, the noble path would have no purpose.

These sense-faculties are not authorities, but by nature senseless and indeterminate, therefore, those who seek the path [that leads to] *nirvāṇa*

(14)

must accomplish the work of the noble path.”²¹

These verses refute those who base their understanding on naïve sense perception. Importantly, as Skilling (2013b:231) has recently identified and documented, the first verse (9.23) is cited in Vasubandhu’s *Vyākhyāyukti* as belonging to the Mahāsāṃghikas.

Candrakīrti then cites another set of verses “pronounced by the Fortunate One” which are found in the thirteenth chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*:

All these are false, imaginary notions; one falsely imagines that the non-real is real, that the inexistent is existent, that things which are not produced and unborn are real and produced.²²

If one asks why the manner of the childish do not see correctly, it is said later in the same [discourse, i.e., the *Lotus Sutra*,] that

When one is free from engagement with anything at all, whether inferior, intermediate, or superior, conditioned or unconditioned, real or unreal; Stable, one does not say “this is a female” and does not make that the object of his action; he does not imagine that “this is a man”; when searching he does not see any dharma, because they are all unborn. When all the dharmas are declared non-existent, without birth, without beginning, all empty, without activity and at rest: this is the domain of the

21 *Samādhirājasūtra* IX, 23–24, ed. Vaidya 47–48: [9.23] *na cakṣuḥ pramāṇam na śrotra ghrāṇa/ na jihva pramāṇam na kāyacittam/ pramāṇa yady eta bhaveyur indriyā/ kasyāryamargeṇa bhaveta kāryam//* [9.24] *yasmād ime indriya apramānā/ jadāḥ svabhāvena avyākṛtās ca/ tasmād ya nirvāṇaḥ pathena arthika / sa āryamārgēṇa karotu kāryam//*

22 English translation of *Saddharmaṇḍarīkasūtra* (XIII.20) from Tibetan version of the *Yuktiṣaṣṭikāvṛtti* (*ad kārikā* 3) based on Scherrer-Schaub (1991:130; cf. Loizzo 2007:138–139): *‘di dag ‘du shes log pa brtags pa ste// yang dag min la yang dag yod la med// ma byung ba dang ma skyes chos rnam la// yang dag nyid dang ‘byung ba log par brtags//*. Tibetan also edited by Simonsson (1957:65). Karashima (2003:118) has edited the Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Chinese of this verse in his trilingual edition of the *Lotus Sutra*. Karashima reading of Gilgit/Nepalese version: *vīparītasamjñibhi ime vikalpitā asaṃta santā ti abhūta bhūtataḥ/ anutthita cāpi ajāta dharmā jātā ‘va bhūtā vīparītakalpitāḥ//* Kern-Nanjio (281.11–12): *vīparītasamjñi hi ime vikalpitā asantasantā hi abhūtabhūtataḥ / anutthitās cāpi ajātadharmā jātātha bhūta vīparītakalpitāḥ //* Central Asian readings slightly differ (see Karashima 2003:118–119).

wise.²³

Candrakīrti comments on these citations as follows:

“Thus, those who see in this way see reality. Now this [vision] does not exist for the childish. Therefore, since they do not see reality, they are not established in liberation. Thus, the view of “inexistence is the source of all errors” has as its effect unfortunate destinies and the experience of misfortune. Likewise, the view of existence, familiar to childish people, has as its effect fortunate rebirths and all pleasant sensation. Both views, having as their effect the cycle of existences, are incompatible with the reasoning [of *pratītyasamutpāda* which delivers from false views].”²⁴

For Candrakīrti, the *Lotus Sūtra* teaches a way of seeing that realizes the ultimate purport of the definitive teaching of dependent-arising bereft of conceptual thought and false views. This way of seeing based on the *Lotus Sūtra* resembles Candrakīrti’s understanding of *nirvāṇa*. As suggested by MacDonald in her study of Candrakīrti

23 English translation of *Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtra* (XIII.16–17, 19) from Tibetan version of the *Yuktiśaṣṭikāvṛtti* (*ad kārikā* 3) based on Scherrer-Schaub (1991:30–31): [13.16] *gang tshe 'dus byas 'dus may byas// yang dag yang dag ma yin dang// rab 'bring tha ma'i chos rnams la// rnam pa kun tu spyod pa med//* [13.17] *brtan pa bud med ces mi spyod// skyes pa zhes kyang mi rtog ste// chos so cog ni ma skyes phyir// btsal bar byas kyang ma mthong ngo//* [13.19] *chos 'di thams cad med pa ste// skye ba med cing 'byung ba 'ang med// rtag tu stong pa byed med gnas// 'di ni mkhas pa'i spyod yul yin//* Tibetan also edited by Simonsson (1957:59–60). Karashima (2003:116–121) has edited the Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Chinese of these verses in his trilingual edition of the *Lotus Sūtra*. Karashima reading of Gilgit/Nepalese version (XIII.16–17, 19): [13.16] *yadā na 'carate dharme hīna-utkr̥ṣṭa-madhyame// saṃskṛtāsamskṛte cāpi bhūtābhūteṣu sarvaśah//* [13.17] *stri ti n'ācarate dhīro puruṣeṭi na kalpayi// sarvadharmān ajātatvād gaveśanto na paśyati//* [13.19] *asantakā dharmā ime prakāśitā aprādubhūtās ca ajāta sarve / sūnyā nirihā sthita nityakālam ayaṃ gocaro ucyaṭi paṇḍitānām;* Kern-Nanjio (281.36, 281.9-10) and Central Asian readings (Karashima 2003:116) slightly differs.

24 Tibetan (Scherrer-Schaub 1991, p. 31; French translation 131–132): *de ltar mthong ba ni de kho na mthong ba ste/ de yang byis pa rnams la med do// de'i phyir de kho na mthong ba ma yin pas de dag rnam par thar par mi bzhag go// gang gi phyir de ltar med par lta ba de nyes pa thams cad kyi 'byung gnas yin te/ ngan par 'gro ba'i 'bras bu dang mi bde ba myong ba'i 'bras bu yang yin pa ltar/ yod par lta ba yang skye bo byis pa rnams dang 'dris pa bde 'gro'i 'bras bu dang/ tshe rabs thams cad bde ba myong ba'i 'bras bu ste/ de lta bas na lta ba gnyis 'khor ba'i 'bras bu yin pas rigs pa dang 'gal lo/*

(16)

(2010:145), “the Madhyamaka *nirvāṇa* is the world itself—in its innate and eternal state of peaceful non-arising.” When a Mādhyamika yogi no longer apprehends the assertions of others that things exist or do not exist, the object of that wisdom (*jñāna*) excludes all appearances of ignorance and realizes the ever-present suchness of things (rephrasing Franco 2009:26). According to Candrakīrti, based on the *Lotus Sutra*, the tranquil realm which is unborn and unproduced is “the domain of the wise.”²⁵

(2.2) A final allusion to the *Lotus Sutra* occurs in the *Yuktiśaṣṭhikāvṛtti* when Candrakīrti comments on verse 22. He states: “Those who are situated in the blaze of impermanence within the three realms (*traidhātuka*), as a person trapped inside a burning house, inevitably will want to escape.”²⁶ As recent scholarship has noted (Scherrer-Schaub 1991:205), this is an allusion to the parable of the burning house which is found in the *Lotus Sutra*. Specifically, the reference is found in Chapter Three of the *Lotus Sutra* which states, “This triple world is as dreadful as that house, overwhelmed with a number of evils, entirely inflamed on every side by a hundred different sorts of birth, old age, and disease.”²⁷

(3) Finally, in his *Catuḥśatakaṭīkā*, Candrakīrti refers to the *Lotus Sutra* while commenting on Āryadeva’s *Catuḥśataka* (14.25) in the chapter which refutes the belief in extreme views (*mthar ’dzin pa dgag*

25 An important aspect of this segment of Candrakīrti’s commentary is that he cites verses from both the *Samādhirājasūtra* and the *Lotus Sutra* together, without textual attribution, and as pronouncements of the Fortunate One, the Buddha. Moreover, Candrakīrti cites the verses from the *Lotus Sutra* (13.20, 13.16, 13.17, 13.19) in an pedagogical order, suggesting that he is familiar with the exegesis of this section of the text. Both the *Samādhirājasūtra* and the *Lotus Sutra* are classified in some manuscripts as belonging to the Vaipulya/Vaitulya genre, a category known to be recited by the Mahāsāṃghikas, and studies on both of these texts have shown their close association with the Mahāsāṃghikas (Skilling 2013a, 2013b; Karashima 2015:139–140n82; Iwai 2014). The fact that Candrakīrti cites these two texts together as scriptural authority (*āgama*) may indicate an affiliation with the Mahāsāṃghikas.

26 Tibetan (Scherrer-Schaub 1991, p.61; French translation 205–206): *sa gsum gyi mi rtag pa nyid kyi me rab tu ’bar ba’i ngang du ’dug pa khyim rab tu ’bar bar chud pa bzhin du gdon mi za bar de las ’da’ bar ’dod...*

27 *Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtra* (III.86; Kern-Nanjio, 89): *traidhātukaṃ ca yathā tan nīveṇaṃ subhairavaṃ duḥkhaśatābhikīraṃ/ aśeṣataḥ prajvalitaṃ samantā jāti-jarā-vyādhi-satair anekaiḥ /*

pa). This section of Candrakīrti's commentary reads:

It is said that one becomes attached to things by the power of an afflictive misunderstanding, a consciousness that superimposes an essence of things, and that one stops cyclic existence by totally stopping that which serves as the seed for the process of cyclic existence. In order to indicate this, [Āryadeva's *Four Hundred*] says:

The seed of existence is consciousness; objects are its domain; When seeing the selflessness of objects, the seed of existence will cease.

Thus, it has been explained that by seeing an object as lacking intrinsic existence, one totally stops the seed of cyclic existence, the consciousness that causes attachment. This stops cyclic existence for *śrāvakas*, *pratyekabuddhas*, and bodhisattvas who have attained forbearance with regard to the teaching of non-production.

They do not stop the mind of awakening, the seed which gives rise to the wisdom (*ye shes* ≈ *jñāna*) of a Tathāgata, because all of them will definitely obtain the wisdom of a Tathāgata. Even those who have not generated the resolution for awakening exactly like this, later, undoubtedly generate [this resolve] and through bodhisattva deeds only attain unsurpassable wisdom. Regarding this one should search the *Noble Sūtra of the White Lotus of the Holy Dharma*, and so forth.²⁸

28 *Catuḥśatakaṭīkā* (D. No. 3865, 221b5–222a1; Suzuki 1994:360–361), English translation modified in part from Cutler *et al* 2003:207; Tib. in Suzuki (1994:360–361): *de nyid kyi phyir rnam par shes pa dngos po'i rang gi ngo bo lhag par sgro 'dogs par byed pa nyon mongs pa can gyi mi shes pa'i dbang gis dngos po rnam la chags pa dang ldan zhing 'khor bar 'jug pa'i sa bon du gyur pa rnam pa thams cad du 'gags pa las 'khor ba ldog par rnam par gzhag go zhes bstan pa'i phyir bshad pa/ [Catuḥśataka 14.25] srid pa'i sa bon rnam shes te // yul rnam de yi spyod yul lo // yul la bdag med mthong na ni// srid pa'i sa bon 'gag par 'gyur // ji skad bshad pa'i tshul gyis yul rang bzhin med par mthong bas chags pa'i rgyu rnam par shes pa srid pa'i sa bon du gyur pa rnam pa thams cad du log pa las nyan thos dang rang sangs rgyas dang/ mi skye ba'i chos la bzod pa thob pa'i byang chub sems dpa' rnam la 'khor ba ldog pa rnam par gzhag go// de bzhin gshags pa'i ye shes 'byung ba'i sa bon byang chub kyi sems de ni de rnam la mi ldog ste/ thams cad la de bzhin gshags pa'i ye shes rnyed pa gdon mi za bar 'byung ba'i phyir ro// [361] gang dag gis byang chub gyis sems rnam pa de lta bu ma bskyed pa de dag gis kyang phyis gdon mi za bar bskyed nas byang chub sems dpa'i spyod pas bla na med pa'i ye shes thob par bya ba kho na ste/ 'di ni 'phags pa dam pa'i chos pa dma dkar po'i mdo la sogs pa las btsal bar bya'o //*

In this passage Candrakīrti explains that *śrāvakas*, *pratyekabuddhas*, and high-level bodhisattvas bring cyclic existence to a halt by cognizing the lack of intrinsic existence, which he equates to selflessness. However, he notes that ending the cycle of conditioned existence does not mean that *śrāvakas*, *pratyekabuddhas*, and high-level bodhisattvas will not eventually attain the wisdom of a Tathāgata, or Buddhahood. Candrakīrti advises that one should consult the *Lotus Sutra* for proof that all beings will attain the “unsurpassable wisdom” of a Tathāgata. This passage demonstrates that Candrakīrti understands the *Lotus Sutra* to be advocating universal Buddhahood. Interestingly, part of this passage from Candrakīrti is cited in Tsong kha pa’s (1357–1419) *Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment (Lam rim chen mo*, Tib. 1985:655.1–9; Cutler and Newland 2002, Volume 3, p. 207), as well as Red mda’ ba gZhon nu blo gros’s (1349–1412) and rGyal tshab Dar ma rin chen’s (1364–1432) commentaries on *Āryadeva’s Four Hundred* (translated by Sonam 1994:275).²⁹ However, these commentaries, while placing great emphasis on stopping “the seed of existence,” do not mention Candrakīrti’s points concerning not stopping “the seed which gives rise to the wisdom of a Tathāgata” and consulting the *Lotus Sutra*. This illustrates that the concept of universal Buddhahood substantiated by the proof text of the *Lotus Sutra* had a greater place in the seventh century Indian Buddhism of Candrakīrti than in the scholastic exegesis of

29 Tillemans (1990, vol. 1, p. 15n.45) notes four extant Tibetan commentaries on the *Catuhśataka* and *Catuhśatakaṭīkā*. I have also identified several additional Tibetan commentaries that exist among the facsimiles of manuscripts in the recently published Kadampa Sungbum (*bka’ gdams gsung ’bum*). These include the *bzhi brgya pa’i bsdus don* by Pa tshab lo tsa ba Nyi ma grags (1055–1145?) (volume 11, pp. 205–215), and a commentary on the difficult points by Gtsang ngag pa brtson ’grus seng ge (12th century) entitled *bzhi brgya pa’i dka’ gnad bshad pa* (volume, 13, pp. 461–471). This commentary’s brief exegesis on chapter 14 (pp. 469.13–471.1) does not mention the *Lotus Sutra*. A commentary by Dar Ma rgyal mtshan (1227–1305), aka Bcom ldan rig pa’i ral gri, entitled *Rnal ’byor spyod pa bzhi brgya pa rgyan gyi me tog* (volume 62, pp. 243–442) does not mention the *Lotus Sutra*. Red mda’ ba gZhon nu blo gros’s (1349–1412) *dbu ma bzhi brgya pa’i ’grel pa* and rGyal tshab Dar ma rin chen’s (1364–1432) *bzhi brgya pa’i rnam bshad legs bshad snyin po* do not mention the *Lotus Sutra*. I have not been able to consult a commentary by Ka’ thog mkhan po ngag dbang dpal bzang (1879–1941) and an interlinear commentary by gZhan dga’ gZhan phan chos kyi snang ba (ca. 19th century).

fifteenth century Tibetan Buddhism.

Conclusion

Although previous scholarship has cast doubt on the place of the *Lotus Sūtra* in Indian Buddhism, our examination of Candrakīrti's use of the *Lotus Sūtra* provides evidence for the importance of the *Lotus Sūtra* in classical Indian Buddhism. In examining the citation of the *Lotus Sūtra* in Candrakīrti's works, the paper has identified important themes and concepts from the *Lotus Sūtra* that influenced Candrakīrti. Candrakīrti directly cites the *Lotus Sūtra* three times in his works, with a substantial citation in the *Yuktiṣaṣṭikāvṛtti*. He also alludes to the parable of the burning house and the parable of the phantom city in his works. Candrakīrti utilizes the *Lotus Sūtra* to provide exegesis on his Mahāyāna understanding of the term *śrāvaka* and to substantiate his understanding of *ekayāna*, the one ultimate vehicle. His citations of the *Lotus Sūtra* in the *Madhyamakāvatārabhāṣya* and *Yuktiṣaṣṭikāvṛtti* indicate that Candrakīrti understood the *Lotus sūtra* to be a definitive scripture that teaches emptiness and conveys the ultimate purport of dependent-arising (*pratītyasamutpāda*). Moreover, Candrakīrti's reference in the *Catuḥśatakaṭikā* indicates that he understood the *Lotus Sūtra* to advocate universal Buddhahood for all beings. Along with the extant manuscript, art historical, and inscriptional evidence, the presence of the *Lotus Sūtra* in Candrakīrti's works indicates that the *Lotus Sūtra* had a significant place in the sixth to eighth centuries culture of Buddhist India.

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Candrakīrti and the *Lotus sutra*

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The *Lotus Sutra*, an important Mahāyāna scripture in East Asian history, influenced a great number of scholars and schools in China and Japan. What about the influence and importance of the *Lotus Sutra* in Indian Buddhism? This paper examines the understanding of the *Lotus Sutra* found in the works of the Indian Buddhist scholar Candrakīrti (ca. 570–650), an influential commentator in the Buddhist thought of India and Tibet. Candrakīrti's use of the *Lotus Sutra* provides a case study for the importance of the *Lotus Sutra* in the history of Indian Buddhism.