

Mahāyāna-saṃgraha - Translated into English from Lamotte by Gelongma Karma Migme Chodron

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I.5 Why is it (alayavijñāna) called the appropriating consciousness? - Because it appropriates all the material organs and because it is the support of the grasping of all the existences. Why is that? The material organs, appropriated by this consciousness, do not perish as long as life lasts.

(Furthermore, at the moment of reincarnation, because it grasps their production, this consciousness appropriates the states of existence. That also is why it is called appropriating consciousness.))

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I.60 When it is shared, the store-consciousness is the seed of the world-receptacle; when it is unshared, it is the seed of the individual bases of consciousness. Shared, it is the seed of the insensate world; unshared, it is the seed of the sensate world.

Shared, it is the seed of the insensate world; [unshared, it is the seed of the sensate world.] }

A Compendium of the Mahayana - Translated by Karl Brunnhölzl

I.5. “Why is it called ‘the appropriating consciousness’?” Because it is the cause of all physical sense faculties and [because] it serves as the foundation for appropriating one’s entire individual existence. Thus, for as long as one is alive, it seizes all five physical sense faculties so that they do not perish and, due to taking hold of its [re]manifestation at the time of connecting with being reborn, seizes one’s [new] individual existence.**26** Hence, it is called “the appropriating consciousness.”

I.60. [The characteristic of] what is common consists of the seeds of the world that is the container. [The characteristic of] what is uncommon consists of the seeds of the āyatanas of individual [beings]. What is common consists of the seeds of what arises without feelings. What is uncommon consists of the seeds of what arises with feelings.

Note 26. The term “connecting with being reborn” (Skt. *pratisaṃdhibandha*, Tib. *nying mtshams sbyor zhing sbrel pa*) or simply “being reborn” (Skt. *pratisaṃdhi*, Tib. *nying mtshams sbyor ba*) usually refers to consciousness at the moment of conception. In Buddhism, conception is said to be the point when consciousness enters the union of the mother’s ovum and the father’s sperm. However, in MS I.34 the term “connecting with being reborn” is specifically used for the last moment of consciousness in the intermediate state immediately before the moment of conception (for details, see there). In Guṇārabha’s *Pañcaskandhavivaraṇa* (D4067, fol. 26b.4), the quote of MS’s passage

“Because it is the cause of (kyi rgyu yin pa) all physical sense faculties... Thus, for as long as one is alive, it seizes (nye bar gzung ba) all five physical sense faculties so that they do not perish (ma zhig par)” reads “Because it appropriates [len pa; compare VGPV nye bar len par byed pa] all physical sense faculties... Thus, for as long as one is alive, it appropriates (zin pa) all five physical sense faculties so that they do not die (mi 'chi bar).” As Schmithausen (2014, 333n1524) points out, the latter rendering agrees fairly well with MS (HT) and basically also with Buddhaśānta’s translation of MS.

No matter the use of slightly different terms, this passage corresponds to Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra V.2–3, which speaks of the ālaya-consciousness’s “appropriating the physical sense faculties including their supports” and “appropriating the body.” While MS, MSB, and MSU speak here only of the five physical sense faculties, VGPV is more explicit by adding the physical supports of these sense faculties as well as the sense objects that are inseparable from them, that is, everything in the body that can be perceived to be furnished with sense faculties (which thus includes the entire body in that it is pervaded by the body sense faculty). According to Schmithausen (2014, 333), “Perhaps the intention [of MS I.5] is merely to make sure that appropriation is limited to the sentient body, i.e., does not include hair, finger-nails, etc. (except for their roots).”

From the Karl Brunnhölz’s Introduction

This text (MS; forty-three folios)¹ by Asaṅga (fourth century) exists in one Tibetan translation by Nanam Dsünba Yeshé Dé² (eighth century) and four Chinese translations by Buddhaśānta (531 CE), Paramārtha (563), Dharmagupta (609), and Hsüan-tsang (648–49).³

So far, there have been three complete translations of MS into modern languages. The text was first rendered into French from Hsüan-tsang’s Chinese version by Lamotte (1973). Lamotte’s work also contains piecemeal excerpts from MSB and MSU (usually from the Chinese but sometimes also from the Tibetan). Nagao’s Japanese translation (1982, 1987) is primarily based on the Tibetan and also includes a reconstruction of the Sanskrit. Keenan (1992) translated Paramārtha’s Chinese version of MS into English. In addition, we have English translations of chapter III (from the Tibetan; Watanabe 2000), chapter VIII (from the Japanese of Nagao; Kawamura 1991), and chapter X (from the Tibetan and the Chinese; Griffiths et al. 1989). Griffiths et al. 1989 also includes the pertinent passages of MSB (Tibetan, Hsüan-tsang’s, and Paramārtha’s versions) and MSU (Tibetan), as well as related materials from other sources.⁴ There are also a number of English renderings of selected passages from several chapters of MS by different scholars.⁵ However, to this date, there is no complete translation of MS from the Tibetan into any non-Asian language, nor are there any complete translations of MSB, MSU, or VGPV into a modern language.