CHAPTER NINE

FAZANG THE TRANSLATOR

The last chapter showed how a *dhāraṇī* text that Fazang translated in 704 allowed him to bring together philosophical mastery with a high interest in technical innovation. This chapter delves further, taking up Fazang’s contributions as a Buddhist translator. Although he was a third-generation Sogdian immigrant who was born, raised, and educated in the Tang capital Chang’an, Fazang did not lose his fluency in Sanskrit nor in several Central Asian languages. This talent came into play when he worked with an Indian Buddhist doctor Divākara to check several versions of the *Avatamsaka sūtra* written not just in Sanskrit but those from Kunlun and Khotan. Having grown up in a Chinese cultural environment, he was fluent in Chinese. His linguistic talents, in combination with his knowledge of Buddhist doctrines and practices, made him an ideal translator, and he was sought after for a series of translation projects. Ch’oe Ch’iwôn stated:

As a descendant of the [peoples of the] western [regions] (i.e., Central Asia), [Fa]zang was good at Indic languages. Born and living in “Eastern Florescence” (i.e., China) he was also versed in the Han graphs. Therefore, when first he served Rizhao, he achieved a reputation as eminent as a lofty mountain. When subsequently he followed Xixue, he was able to accumulate merit as deep as an ocean. Thus, it happened that he was widely consulted by masters coming from the West, and he increased and spread the brilliance of the East. Standing out from the ranks of the ten *bhadanta*-monks [working with the Buddhist Trepiṭaka masters superintending the translation projects], he gathered the flowers of the “Nine Assemblies.”

Rizhao日照 (“Illumination of the Sun”) and Xixue喜學 (“Pleasure in Learning”), who were better known in China by their Sanskrit names Di-
poheluo 地婆訶羅 (Divākara, 613-688) and Shicha’nantuo 實叉難陀 (Śikṣānanda?, 652-710), were Central Indian and Khotanese erudite Buddhist monks, respectively, with whom Fazang worked. The former was invited to China in 678 and the latter in 695 in order to direct Buddhist translation centers that were established especially for them in Chang’an and Luoyang. In addition to Divākara and Śikṣānanda, Fazang also collaborated with four other Trepiṭaka-translators—the Khotanese Devendraprajña, the Tokharian Mitrasena, the Chinese Yijing, and the South Indian Bodhiruci.

Here we will take up Fazang’s collaboration efforts. The chapter focuses on three pairs of Fazang’s collaborators, either because a pair arrived in China at about the same time (Divākara and Devendraprajña, and Śikṣānanda and Mitrasena) or because their directorship of a translation center overlapped in time (Yijing and Bodhiruci).

1. COLLABORATION WITH DIVĀKARA AND DEVENDRAPRAJÑA

These were the first two; they possessed quite different backgrounds and left different degrees of impact in China. In cooperating with these famous foreign monks, Fazang quickly entered the limelight of contemporary Buddhism, and more importantly he started to project his influence from the Chang’an area to Luoyang, which was then the political and religious center of East Asia.

1.1. Fazang and Divākara

Fazang began to work with Divākara no later than May 3, 680, according to one of his commentaries on Huayan jing. Divākara, who probably arrived in China sometime toward the end of Yifeng 2 (January 27, 678), spent a couple of years in Luoyang before going to Chang’an in the spring of 680. He was to stay in Chang’an for the following five to six years, until sometime between August 6, 685 and January 19, 687, when he returned to Luoyang, where he died on February 4, 688. During his stay in Chang’an, Divākara was mainly affiliated with Western Taiyuansi, where he finished at least seven translations, although he occasionally stayed at another major monastery in Chang’an—Hongfusi 弘法寺.

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5 On the basis of its Chinese counterpart Tianhui 天慧 or Tianzhi 天智, scholars have generally reconstructed the Sanskrit name of this Khotanese monk as Devendraprajña. Antonino Forte has argued that the correct form should be Devendraprajña; see Forte, “Devendraprajña,” 289-90; idem, “Tiyunbore,” 233-34.
6 Chapter 5.2.2.
7 Appendix J.
8 Ibid.