Did the Monk Maranant’a Really Come from Gandhāra to Korea?

Juhyung Rhi

Abstract

This paper examines the popular claim that the monk Maranan’ta (or Mālānanda), who transmitted Buddhism to the ancient Korean kingdom of Paekche in the late fourth century CE, was originally from Gandhāra. The exponents of this claim have presented two pieces of evidence to support it: (1) a record in a thirteenth-century source from Korea that Maranant’a initially came to China from “Zhuqian,” which was identified by them as “Gandhāra of India”; (2) an alleged reference to Maranant’a’s birthplace in Chota Lahor in Pakistan in an unidentified French source. This paper will demonstrate that both of them are entirely false and thus the claim concerning Maranant’a’s origin in Gandhāra is completely unfounded.

Issue

Over the last two decades scholarly and Buddhist communities in Korea have widely accepted the claim that the monk Maranant’a (or Mālānanda), who transmitted Buddhism to the ancient Korean kingdom of Paekche in the late fourth century CE, was originally from Gandhāra. This claim has also been received with great enthusiasm in Pakistan, the site of ancient Gandhāra, because it seems to symbolize the long-standing cultural relationship between Korea and Pakistan from the early period in history. A delegation consisting of high-level monastics from the Korean Buddhist Jogye Order recently even visited the very site alleged to be the birthplace of Maranant’a and paid homage there. This visit eloquently illustrates the continued unfounded endeavor to seek the origin of Maranant’a in Gandhāra (Iqbal 2019; Kang 2019).

To state the conclusion first, the unraveling of a series of such disturbing incidents related to Maranant’a stems first from the simple but crucial misunderstanding of a short phrase in the account of Maranant’a in a historical source and second from one individual putting forward a false and unattributed claim about Maranant’a’s birthplace. This article will explore this problem and try to show how the misunderstanding arose and took a wrong course—with the ardent hope that it will be straightened out as soon as possible.

1 Maranant’a is transcribed here in the McCune-Reischauer system of Korean romanization according to the Korean pronunciation of the name originally written in Chinese characters. It would be Moluoantuo in the modern Chinese pronunciation. Although the transcription of his name in Chinese must have been made during his sojourn in China, I will refer to him according to the Korean pronunciation because he is known exclusively within the context of Korean Buddhism and he has typically been referred to by this name outside of Korea, especially in Pakistan. The original name seems to have been in the Indic language. It has been commonly speculated to be Mālānanda (Nomura 1936/1980, 355; Lee 1969, 45; Buswell & Lopez 2014, s.v. “Mālānanda”). See the further discussion regarding his Indian name on p. 4 of this article.

2 “Maranant’a” is currently listed in Wikipedia with the description “an Indian Buddhist monk from Gandhara” (accessed on December 26, 2019).

3 I started writing a paper on the meaning of Zhuqian and the mistaken origin of Maranant’a in December 2005. However, being less than enthusiastic about having to point out someone’s oversight in a translation, I was not able to proceed to complete it. In the meantime, I have seen this misunderstanding increasingly magnified on an unmanageable scale, especially in Pakistan. I pointed out the problem
Literary Evidence for Maranant’a’s Origin

Buddhism was introduced to Korea in the fourth century CE during the Three Kingdoms period of Korea. Historical sources tell us that the Chinese monks Sundo (C. Shundao) and Ado (C. Adao) brought Buddhism from the Former Qin of China to Koguryŏ, one of the three kingdoms which then ruled Korea, in 372 and 374 respectively, and the “Hu monk” Maranant’a from the Eastern Jin of China to another kingdom, Paekche, in 384. It was only in 527 that Buddhism was officially recognized in the last of the three kingdoms, Silla, though it might have arrived there more than a century earlier at least. The accounts of the transmission of Buddhism appear primarily in two major texts that document ancient Korean history, the Samguk sagi (History of the Three Kingdoms, by Kim Pu-sik, 1145) and the Samguk yusa (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms, by Iryŏn, late thirteenth century). It is only in these two Korean sources as well as another one, Haedong kosŭng chŏn (Biographies of Eminent Korean Monks, by Kakhun, 1215) that we find the historical records of Maranant’a.\(^4\)

The account in the Samguk sagi reads:

In the ninth [lunar] month [of the first year of King Ch’imnyu of Paekche] (384) the Hu monk Maranant’a arrived from Jin. The king greeted and placed him in the palace and venerated him with courtesy. The Buddhist Dharma started with this.\(^5\)

Here Maranant’a is called “Hu monk” (huseng). Although “Hu monk” is understood as “Indian monk”\(^6\) by some translators of the Samguk sagi (Pak et al. 2012, 330), \(^6\) “Hu” generically designated ethnic groups living in the border areas of China, especially in the early period. Initially during the Qin (221–207 BCE) and Han (206 BCE–220 CE) dynasties, it meant Xiongnu, but in later periods it was commonly used for diverse peoples in the xiyu, i.e., the Western Regions (which included India following the traditional Chinese world-view) (Murakami 1994, 28, n. 477).\(^7\) The “Hu Monk” in the account of account of Maranant’a (Lee 1969, 48–49). However, as Kakhun himself admits, this monk is from the eighth century and obviously a different person from Maranant’a. Thus, it is safe enough to say that Maranant’a is recorded only in the three Korean sources.

\(^5\) Samguk sagi 24 (King Ch’imnyu 1\(^{\text{st}}\) year). For the original text, I consulted the edition in the Korean History Database by the National Institute of Korean History (db.history.go.kr).

\(^6\) Besides this, a translation of the Samguk sagi published by the Academy of Korean Studies (Chŏng 2012, 447, n. 144) adds a note on Maranant’a, citing a suggestion in a translation of the Samguk yusa from North Korea (by Yi Sang-ho, P’yŏngyang: Kwahagwŏn ch’ulp’ansa, 1960, 289, n. 1), that he might be an Indian monk because of the name. However, monks from Central Asia are often named in Indian style, and thus we cannot judge Maranant’a’s nationality based on the name.

\(^7\) Moriyasu Takao (2007, 506–538) informs that in the Fanyu zaming (Diverse Names in Indian Languages, by Liyan, late eighth century) “Hu” was used specifically for Sogdians as distinct from...
Maranant’a is best understood as a “monk from the Western Regions.” In Chinese Buddhist literature this term was not restricted to India. Among Korean sources, in the Haedong kosūng chŏn (the sections on Anham and Hyeryun), written seventy years after the Samguk sagi, we find such phrases as “Hu monk from the Western Regions” (xiyu huseng) and “Hu monk from the North” (beifang huseng). These instances show that “Hu monk” was used, during the Koryŏ period (936–1392) when the Samguk sagi was written, as a term that generically indicated that the monk came from somewhere in the Western Regions. In the Koryŏsa (History of Koryŏ, 1451; vol. 120, the biography of Yun Su-jjong) Kumarajīva from Kucha is called “Hu monk,” which also apparently means “monk from the Western Regions.” The appellation “Hu monk” does not support identifying Maranant’a as an Indian, though the possibility is not ruled out. After all, the only testimony about his origin that comes from the Samguk sagi is that Maranant’a is a “Hu monk,” “a monk from the Western Regions.”

Another source, the Samguk yusa, elucidates the transmission of Buddhism to Paekche in the following passage, starting with the citation of the account from the Samguk sagi.

In the [cyclical] year kapsin (C. jiashen) (384) when King Ch’imnyu acceded to the throne, the Hu monk Maranant’a arrived from Jin [of China]. [The king] greeted and placed him in the palace and venerated him with courtesy. In the next year uryu (C. yiyou) a Buddhist monastery was founded in the new capital Hansanju, and ten monks were ordained. This was the beginning of the Buddhist Dharma in Paekche. Also, in the second month of Taiyuan9 seventeenth year (392) when King Asin acceded to the throne, he promulgated that [people] must have deep faith in the Buddhist Dharma and seek happiness. Maranant’a is Tonghak in translation.10

Here Maranant’a is referred to as “Hu monk”, just as in the Samguk sagi. An interesting new detail is that Maranant’a can be translated as “Tonghak” (C. Tongxue), “Child student.” The name Maranant’a sounds Indian, though its original is not precisely known. One speculative transliteration is “Mālānanda,” mālā meaning “wreath” and nanda “joy.”11

Indians, Persians, Turks (Tuju), Tokharians, Khotanese, Tibetans, and those from Jibin (Kashmir) or Kucha. This definition seems to have been applied to such words as hufu (Sogdian dress), hushi (Sogdian food), huyue (Sogdian music), and huji (Sogdian girl) during the Tang period, but huseng, which was possibly a term commonly used from the earlier period, seems to have been understood in a broader sense.

8 Peter Lee (1969, 45, 87, 92) translates hu from huseng as “Serindia,” which generally corresponds to the “Western Regions.” The Samguk sagi (4, King Chinhŭng 37th year) tells that in 576 the monk Anhong returned from China with the Hu monk Pimoluo (Vimala), which is an Indian-style name. Citing the account of the Samguk sagi, the Haedong kosūng chŏn additionally comments, based on a remark from Ŭlsang’s biography by Ch’oe Ch’i-wŏn, that in the year when Ŭlsang was born (625) Anhong came back from Tang with three monks from the western countries (xīguo) and two Chinese monks and that among the former Pimoluo Zhendi is from Uddiyāna in northern Tianzhu. If this comment is correct, the Hu monk Pimoluo would be an Indian monk. However, the date given here differs from that identified in the Samguk sagi, and the author Kakhun additionally comments that this Anhong might be the same as the Anham who returned from China in 605. These confusing remarks make me wonder whether we should trust Kakhun’s account of Anhong and Pimoluo overall.

9 In the Samguk yusa, this reign name is written as Dayuan, but it clearly should be Taiyuan of the Eastern Jin as all the translations have agreed.

10 Samguk yusa 3 (“Maranant’a Enlightens Paekche”). For the original text, I consulted the edited version in the Korean History Database compiled by the National Institute of Korean History (db.history.go.kr).

11 See n. 1 above. Lee cites Johannes Rahder’s as the source for this explanation.
However, the author of the *Samguk yusa*, Iryŏn, presents a different suggestion here. He seems to have considered “Mara” as an abbreviation of *kumara*, which means “child.” But Nant’a (alternatively pronounced “Nanda” in Korean) cannot easily be linked to *hak* (C. *xue*), which means “study,” “learning,” or “student.” One suggestion is that Nant’a (Nanda) might have been equated with *nandin*, which means “son” (Lee 1969, 26, n. 64). Another suggestion (Cho 2014, 182–183) links “Nant’a” in reference to Śīkṣānanda (652–?), an Indian monk who translated the *Avatamsaka-sūtra* at the end of the seventh century. The name Śīkṣānanda was translated as Xixue in Chinese, with *xì* meaning “joy.” Because it is actually *śīksā* that means “study” or “learning,” the translation should have been Xuexi in its proper order, but the order apparently has been reversed, thus resulting in Xixue. Iryŏn might have wrongly assumed that *nanda* in Śīkṣānanda corresponds to *xue* without realizing that the order had been reversed. I find this an interesting possibility. In any case, the only explanation we find with regard to the origin of Maranant’a in the *Samguk sagi* or the *Samguk yusa* is that he is “Hu monk,” “a monk from the Western Regions (which includes India).”

The reference to “Hu monk” for Maranant’a appears in a third source, *Haedong kosōng chŏn*. The account here reads:

Sŏk12 Maranant’a is a Hu monk. He was capable of communicating with the supernatural, and there was no fathoming the degree of his capability. Determined to travel to all places, he did not confine himself to one corner.

According to the old records, he originally came to China from Zhuqian. He moved himself by relying on stakes [when climbing high cliffs], and called companions by firing smoke [when crossing ravines].13 He faced dangers undaunted and endured whatever hardships came his way. As long as there were opportune conditions he sought them out, regardless of distance.

He came to this country from Jin in the ninth month of the first year14 after the enthronement of the fourteenth15 king of

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12 “Sŏk,” which corresponds to “Śākya,” was commonly used as a surname for Buddhist monks in China and Korea.

13 Lee (1969, 45) translates this, “... he took the talented as his disciples and by smoke of incense to attest the presence of the spirit, he attracted companions.” A major difference in my translation lies in reading the character yi (stake or post) instead of cai (person of talent) in the middle of this sentence. The character in question appears as cai in the edition in the Korean History Database (db.history.go.kr) compiled by the National Institute of Korean History, which I am primarily using for the translation here. It is also printed as cai in the edition published in the series *Dai Nihon bukkyō zenshō* (Complete Works of Japanese Buddhism, 1912–1922) and subsequently in the *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* (Taishō Revised Buddhist Canon, 1924–34; T2065). Since the edition in the *Taishō* canon was used for most of the modern translations of this text, the translators usually had to struggle in determining the meaning of this sentence. It makes sense when the character is yi, not cai, as it appears in the version published by Ch’oe Nam-sŏn (Chang 1991, Appendix, 67) probably based on a hand-written version first discovered in the early twentieth century and in another hand-written version in the Asami collection at the East Asiatic Library, University of California, Berkeley (Chang 1991, Appendix, 103). The sentence is apparently related to the description of the arduous journey of Buddhist monks on the way from India to China or vice versa. For a more detailed discussion, see Rhi 2019, 5, n. 15. I am grateful to my colleague Kim Ji hyun for insightfully pointing out this problem.

14 In the Korea History Database edition, the character for the number of the year appears as “nine,” However, the year in question should be the first year of King Ch’imnyu as it appears in the Ch’oe Nam-sŏn edition.

15 Ch’imnyu is actually the fifteenth, not fourteenth, king of Paekche. This is obviously a mistake in the *Haedong kosōng chŏn*. I left it as it is without correcting it.
Paekche, Ch’imnyu (384). The king went to greet him on the outskirts of the capital, invited him to the palace, treated him with courtesy, and listened respectfully to his sermon. Those above were pleased, and those below were converted. Buddhist enterprises were carried out to the great and broad extent, and [the Buddha] was praised and worshiped universally. [The speed of its propagation was] as rapid as the transmission of royal orders by stages and couriers.

In the spring of the second year (385), a monastery was founded at Hansan, and ten monks were ordained in observance of Maranant’a’s [instruction]. With this incident, Buddhism flourished in Paekche as it had done in Koguryŏ. Counting back to [the time of] Kāśyapa Mātāṅga’s16 arrival in the Later Han, it had been more than 280 years. . . .

At the beginning of this account, the author of the Haedong kosŏng chŏn, Kakhun, states that Maranant’a is a Hu monk, probably based on the account of the Samguk sagi. This is followed by a eulogy to Maranant’a’s miraculous capability and unbounded travels. It is not clear whether it was derived from any written sources or simply his own literary creation. Kakhun is known to have taken pleasure in literary embellishment in his writing (Kim 1984, 193–194). Then, he cites the account from the “old records” (not specified further), which is not included in the Samguk sagi or the Samguk yusa. It is followed by the account of the foundation of a monastery in the capital and the ordination of ten monks. This is the same as the one that appears in the Samguk yusa, which was written several decades later.

What particularly catches our eyes is the phrase that Maranant’a came to China from Zhuqian. Thus, Zhuqian is presented as the place of his origin prior to his arrival in China. What is the place called Zhuqian? Peter Lee (1969, 45), who first translated the Haedong kosŏng chŏn in English in 1969, renders it as “India or Gandhāra.” He recognized the first character, zhu, as part of Tianzhu, which is a common appellation for India in ancient and medieval China18, and regarded the second character, qian, as part of a common phonetic transliteration of Gandhāra in Chinese, Qiantuoluo. However, it seems unthinkable that the Chinese name for a foreign place would be given in the form of a combination (“. . . or . . .”) of two distinct and separate locations. Furthermore, Gandhāra was a part of ancient India, and thus the two are not in optional relationship. Chang Hwi-ok’s translation of the Haedong kosŏng chŏn, which was published in 1991 with extensive annotations and meticulous comparisons between extant versions and of which the part on translation was included in the “Buddhist Canon in Korean” series in 1994, thus being widely used afterwards, renders Zhuqian as “Qian[tuoluo] of [Tian]zhu,” i.e., “Gandhāra of India” (Chang 1991, 151; Chang 1994, 41). She identifies “zhu” with Tianzhu and “qian” with Qiantuoluo, as Lee did, but she correctly

16 Kāśyapa Mātāṅga is a Central Asian (or Indian) monk who legendarily first brought Buddhism to China during the first century CE.

17 Haedong kosŏng chŏn 1. For the original text, I consulted the edited version in the Korean History Database by the National Institute of Korean History (db.history.go.kr). The translation is made in reference to Lee’s English translation (Lee 1969, 45–46) with considerable revisions.

18 Mochizuki 1960, 1: 185a. As a name for India in Chinese sources, we first find “Shendu” in the Shiji (Records of the Grand Historian; by Sima Qian, 108–91 BCE) and then “Tianzhu” in the Hou Hanshu (Book of the Later Han; by Fan Ye, 5th century). Both “Shendu” and “Tianzhu” are considered to be derivations from Sindu, an ancient name for India. In Buddhist sources of the pre-Tang period, Tianzhu was more commonly used. As Xuanzang, who came back from India in 645, began to use the name “Indo,” “Tianzu,” and “Indo” became the most common as the names of India in Chinese literary sources. Nakamura 1961, 375–380.
considers Gandhāra to be a part of ancient India.

In Lee’s and Chang’s translations, we first encounter the scholarly notes that link Maranant’a to Gandhāra. These translations—particularly, Chang’s for Korean scholars—formed a primary basis for the claim that Maranant’a came from Gandhāra. Many scholars in Korea referred to Maranant’a’s origin as “Gandhāra of India,” though not always disclosing Chang’s translation as the source, but as far as I can see through published works, unfortunately, none of them properly checked the accuracy of the translation (Kim 1999/2002, 47–50; O 2002, 7; Sin 2006, 9; Kil 2012, 79; Cho 2014 177–178; Ch’oe & Pak 2014, 34).

What is the Place Called Zhuqian?

Does the Haedong kosūng chōn really speak of Gandhāra as Maranant’a’s origin? I feel obliged to provide an answer to this question first, which is absolutely negative. The supposition is a sheer misunderstanding based on a small but crucial mistake in translating the word Zhuqian. For Zhuqian means the same as Tianzhu. It simply indicates India, not Gandhāra.

The first modern translation of the Haedong kosūng chōn by Nomura Yōshō, which was published in Japanese in 1936 in the Kokuyaku issaikyō (Buddhist Canon in Japanese Translation) series, simply uses the word Zhuqian from the Chinese original when translating Maranant’a’s origin before reaching China and explains the word in a note:

Zhuqian: Another name for “Indo” (India). Meaning “Tianzhu, Qian in the West.” Alternatively Qianzhu. “Qian” is equivalent to tian (heaven), and qian was mistakenly placed before zhu by later people (Nomura 1936/1980, 356, n. 31).

All Korean translations prior to Chang’s—including those by Yi Pyŏng-hun (1969, 56), Kim Tal-chin (1972, 388), and the Han’guk kojŏn yŏn’guhoe (Society for the Study of Korean Classics) (1981, 35)—render Zhuqian as Tianzhu (or Ch’ŏnch’uk in Korean). These translations must have consulted Nomura’s work or those indebted to Nomura’s.

In Chinese Buddhist literature, the word Zhuqian appears quite rarely before the Tang period. It is not seen at all in major biographies of monks such as the Gaoseng zhuan (Biographies of Eminent Monks, T2059) by Huijiao (mid-sixth century) or major sūtra catalogues such as the Chu sanzang jiji (Compilation of Notices on the Translation of the Tripiṭaka, T2145) by Seungyu (early sixth Buddhist dictionary. In Chang’s translation of the Haedong kosūng chōn, she notes that she consulted all the earlier translations, so it is surprising that she neglected Nomura’s note. Also, if she had consulted Ding’s widely used dictionary, she would have been able to avoid this crucial mistake. “Zhuqian” is not found as an entry or in accounts from any major dictionaries of Buddhism or Buddhist vocabulary from Japan that I examined. This may indicate that the word was hardly known in Japanese Buddhism. While elucidating the account of Maranant’a from the Samguk yusa, Murakami Yoshio (1994, 28, n. 477) cites a passage referring to Zhuqian from the Haedong kosūng chōn and states that Maranant’a came to China from India, showing his understanding of Zhuqian as India.
century). Two extremely rare occurrences from the early period are found in Zhidun’s (314–366) two panegyrics for a Śākyamuni Buddha image and for the “Child Candraprabha” compiled in the Guang hongming ji (Expanded Collection of Aggrandizing and Clarifying; 644) (T2013, 52:196b3–4, 197c2–4). The former praises Śākyamuni and his proselytizing in Zhuqian, by which India, not Gandhāra, is clearly meant. The latter speaks of Candraprabha (Moonlight), an outstanding young man from Qianzhu (Zhuqian) who converted his father to Buddhism, apparently based on the Yueguang tongzi jing (Sūtra of the Child Candraprabha, trans. Dharmarakṣa, c. 266–313, T534). Candraprabha is said to have been active around Rājagṛha in Magadha, and Qianzhu here also has no connection to Gandhāra.

The fact that Zhuqian (as well as Qianzhu) means Tianzhu is unequivocally stated in the Hongming ji (Collection Aggrandizing and Clarifying) by Sengyu (518), which cites the following words from the Zhengwu lun (Treatise on Rectifying the False Views; probably early fourth century), a text of Buddhist refutations of Daoist claims, no longer extant.

Therefore, the scripture says, “[Laozi] heard the Dao in Zhuqian. There was an old teacher, who, having consummately entered the nirvāṇa, exists permanently and ceaselessly, without beginning or end.” Zhuqian is Tianzhu. The nirvāṇa is a word in the Hu language (Indian language in this case) and means wuwei (inexertion) in the Jin language (Chinese language) (T2102, 52:7b4–6).

The “scripture” here means a Daoist text, the Laozi xiseng jing (Scripture of Laozi Ascending to the West) (Maeda 1989). The words cited from the beginning of this text refer to an “old teacher in Zhuqian,” who must be none other than Śākyamuni Buddha. A note on these words from the Zhengwu lun explicitly clarifies that Zhuqian is synonymous with Tianzhu.

In another text of Buddhist refutations of Daoist claims written about two centuries later by Xuanyi, the Zhenzheng lun (Treatise on Examining Truthfulness; 684–705), the phrases at the same place in the Laozi xiseng jing are cited first and then followed by Xuanyi’s note.

The first chapter of this scripture says, “Laozi went to the west and heard the Dao in Zhuqian. There was an old teacher, who has neither birth nor demise and, having consummately entered wuwei, ceaselessly exists for long.” . . . However, the text should have said “Qianzhu.” “Qian” is tian (heaven). Therefore, in the Yijing (Book of Changes), the two trigrams of ☽ (qian) and ☸ (kun) symbolize heaven and earth. We can see here clearly that qian means tian. Later people, while copying this, mistakenly placed the character zhu in front of the character qian and thus called “Zhuqian.” Also, when examined, to the west of Tibet and the Pamirs as far as to the ocean in the west, there are only

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22 Hereafter, “T” stands for the Taishō shinshū daijōkyō, and the numbers followed indicate the catalogue number of a text in Taishō and the volume, page, column, and line numbers. I learned about Zhidun’s two panegyrics through Maeda 1990, 78–79.

23 Candraprabha was given special attention in Chinese Buddhism from the fifth century on in connection with the apocalyptic thought commonly called “mofa” (End of the dharma). However, in Zhidun’s time, such development had not yet taken place. For Candraprabha in relation to “mofa,” see Zürcher 1982.

24 Maeda 1989, 6. Maeda dates the Zhengwu lun to the first half of the Eastern Jin period (317–420), citing Fukui 1987, 295, which I have not been able to access.

25 Another English translation of this passage is found in Jülch 2016, 61–62.
five countries of Tianzhu, in the east, west, south, and north, and there is no country called Zhuqian. This is clearly a transcribal error by later people (T2112, 52:564c17–18, 565a4–9).

The words cited here from the *Laozi xiseng jing* have slightly different phrasing from those found in the *Hongming ji*. This must be due to differences in the editions available to the authors of these texts. Here, the “old teacher” in Zhuqian, who is said to have entered *wuwei*, which is synonymous with *nirvâna* in Chinese translation as stated in the *Zhengwu lun* cited above, obviously means Śākyamuni Buddha. 26 While “Zhuqian” is used in the citation here from the *Laozi xiseng jing*, the author Xuanyi points out that it should be corrected to “Qianzhu” and that both “Qianzhu” and “Zhuqian” are the same as Tianzhu. He reasonably explains that the character *tian* of Tianzhu was replaced by the character *qian*, which means “heaven” like *tian*, and that “Qianzhu” was mistakenly reversed in order to “Zhuqian.”

The textual references to Zhuqian we have seen so far clearly demonstrate that Zhuqian as well as Qianzhu is synonymous with Tianzhu in ancient and medieval China. In the Buddhist literature of the Tang period, the words Zhuqian and Qianzhu appear, again, extremely rarely, and the majority of the instances are related to or reflect the remark on the “old teacher in Zhuqian” in the *Laozi xiseng jing*. 28 Among them, the *Beishan lu* (Record of the Northern Mountain; 806) cites the phrase “qianzhu shengren” (the saint of Qianzhu) and explains, “Qianzhu is Tianzhu, and the saint is the Buddha.” Besides, Zhuqian is also mentioned in a stele inscription written by Bo Juyi (772–846). 29 The overall impress-

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26 In the two extant editions of the *Laozi xiseng jing*, one by Chen Jingyuan (1025–1094) and the other by Emperor Huizong of Northern Song (r. 1100–1125), the corresponding part is phrased somewhat differently: “Laozi went to the west and opened the Dao in Zhuqian. [He was] called the old teacher, who, having consummately entered *wuwei*, ceaselessly exists for long without end or beginning.” Here we read “opened the Dao” instead of “heard the Dao” in the earlier versions cited in Buddhist texts. Also, the “old teacher” seems to indicate Laozi, not the Buddha as it appears in the Buddhist texts. Based on these discrepancies, Maeda (1990, 78) suggests that the *Laozi xiseng jing* was possibly written originally from the Buddhist viewpoint but was revised later by Daoists as their own scripture. The *Fozu lidai tongzai* (Encyclopedia of Buddha and his Patriarchs under Successive Dynasties) written in the Yuan dynasty (1342) (T2036, 49:717c20–21) cites the phrase according to the Buddhist tradition and comments, “Now it has been revised as ‘Opened the Dao in Zhuqian,’” thus reflecting the awareness of its difference from the phrase in the contemporaneous Daoist edition(s).

27 Maeda (1990, 79) raises the possibility that the two characters, *qian* and *zhu*, may have been reversed in order to create a rhyme for the sentences at the beginning of the *Laozi xiseng jing*.

28 *Gu qingliang zhu* (Ancient Record of the Clear and Cold), T2098, 51:1093b3 (“the śrāmana Faxian sought enlightenment in Zhuqian”); *Tang dajianfusi*
sion regarding the textual occurrences of Zhuqian or Qianzhu up to the Tang period (618–907) is that they were hardly used in the writings of Buddhist monks who seriously engaged in translating scriptures or writing commentaries/treatises. The term may have been adopted more frequently in writings outside the Buddhist canonical or scholastic works as we witness in the writings of Zhidun in the fourth century.\(^{30}\)

Though they might have been the favorite designations for India for Chinese Buddhists through the Tang period, “Zhuqian” and “Qianzhu” apparently became more common in the writings from the Song period (918–1279) onward. We find more frequent occurrences in such Chinese canonical texts as the Song gaoseng zhuang (Song Biographies of Eminent Monks; 988), the Da Song sengshi liue (Abridged History of Monastics of the Great Song; 999), the Jingde zhuandeng lu (Jingde Record of the Transmission of the Lamp; 1004), and the Fozu tongji (Chronicle of the Buddha and Patriarchs; 1269)\(^{31}\) as well as prefaces to the translations of many sutras and treatises and the dialogues of Chan masters. For instance, in the Jingde zhuandeng lu we find the clause, “Bodhidharma [came] far away from Zhuqian, and showed the ‘eye and treasure of the true dharma’ to us” (T2076, 51_200c25), which was also cited in many other later Chan Buddhist texts. In these works, “Qianzhu” and “Zhuqian” are consistently used as synonyms for Tianzhu, and the two words were commonsensically recognized by Buddhist intellectuals, and possibly the literati as well, in this period.

The author of the Haedong kosông chón, Kak hun, must have been acquainted with the word Zhuqian through Buddhist works of the Song period or those popularly read in the period, close to him in time. It is unthinkable that, as one who had avid interest in literary expressions and must have been familiar with contemporaneous Chinese writings, he did not know its exact meaning. He seems to have adopted it in order to employ noun variations in his writing in addition to “Tianzhu,” “Indo,” and “Xiqian” (Qianzhu in the west, i.e., Tianzhu in the west) found in the Haedong kosông chón.\(^{32}\)

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\(^{30}\) I was not able review the occurrences of “Zhuqian”/“Qianzhu” in non-canonical literature, Buddhist or otherwise, from China. When I started writing on this problem around 2005, I suspected hypothetically that the words were invented or first adopted by the Daoists who were reluctant to use the character tian (found in such auspicious words as “tianming” [mandate from heaven] or “tianzi” [son of heaven, i.e., emperor]) when referring to the land of the Buddha. However, I came to realize gradually that it might be difficult to attribute the origin of these words to Daoists, especially for the reason I suspected. Still, I sense that the words were most commonly used in the contexts related to the “Old Teacher of Zhuqian” from the Lao xiseng jing cited by Buddhists up to the Tang period. The earliest occurrence by Zhidun remarks on Śākyamuni’s proselytizing in Zhuqian, and this also seems to reflect the awareness of the phrase from the Daoist text. This will, of course, have to be clarified by experts in Chinese religion. In any case, the two words were used fairly frequently in Chinese literature from the Song up to the Qing period. For this reason the word “Zhuqian” must have found its way into Ding Fubao’s Foxue dacidian (1922). On the other hand, the terms seem to have been seldom used in Korea or Japan, and this is probably why they are not found in any modern dictionary/encyclopedia of Buddhism or Buddhist vocabulary published in Japan I examined.

\(^{31}\) Song gaoseng zhuang, T2061, 50:791a28, 840a29, 885b16, 890b3; Da Song sengshi liue, T2126, 54:234c6, 234c16, 236b6, 253a18; Jingde zhuandeng lu, T2076, 51:196b28, 220c25, 341c10, 394a24, 454b11; Fozu tongji, T2035, 49:294b11, 333c9–10, 371c20. Besides these, “Qianzhu” and “Zhuqian” appear in numerous other literature from the Song period on, in which the two words are used to designate India.

\(^{32}\) In the Haedong koông chón we find the following occurrences of the words indicating India: in vol. 1, “King Ašoka of the eastern Tianzhu country collected the relics [of the Buddha]” (account related to Ašoka), “How many years passed since the nirvāṇa of Śākyamuni Buddha up to now? Also, how many years after [Buddhism appeared] in Tianzhu did it reach the land of Han (China) (section on Üyön), “Faxian entered Tianzhu to the west”
Zhuqian is found in another passage in the Haedong kosung chon. In the “Preface to the Nan-rang stele” by Ch’oe Ch’i-won (857–?) cited in the section on the monk Pŏbun, we read the phrases “One should avoid all the evil and practice all the good. [This is] the teaching of the Zhuqian prince” (cf. Lee 1969, 68). 33 The first sentence corresponds to the first two phrases of a famous verse found in the early Chinese translations of the Dharmapada (T210, 4:567b1–2; T212, 4:741b24–25), which originally reads, “One should avoid all the evil, practice all the good, and purify one’s mind. This is the teaching of all the Buddhas.” Contextually, the “Zhuqian prince” in the Ch’oe Ch’i-won’s preface obviously means Sākyamuni Buddha, who must have been named so for the fact that he was a prince in an Indian kingdom. Ch’oe Ch’i-won, who was famous for his fine writing, could have chosen the phrase, instead of the word “Buddha,” to give a literary touch to the sentence. But I would like to note that the particular writing discusses the three creeds of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism and that his choice of the phrase “Zhuqian prince” might have been made deliberately based on his acquaintance with the remark on the “old teacher of Zhuqian” from the Laozi xiseng jing. In any case, because the origin of Sākyamuni in India would have been universally known among Buddhists of the period, it seems highly unlikely that the Zhuqian prince can be linked to Gandhāra. It is clear that the “Zhuqian prince” means the “Tianzhu prince.” In recognition of this, Peter Lee (1969, 68) translates the “Zhuqian prince” as the “Indian prince.” But Chang (1991, 180) sticks to her understanding of Zhuqian, translating it as the “prince of Gandhāra of Tianzhu.”

Despite the fact that Zhuqian means Tianzhu (India), the word was mistakenly translated as “India or Gandhāra” by Lee and “Gandhāra of Tianzhu” by Chang. From this arose an absurd misconception that Maranant’a came from Gandhāra. To the Buddhists of the Koryŏ period, the place Gandhāra, though Buddhism flourished there long ago, must have been mostly forgotten. Nevertheless, with the rehabilitated knowledge of region made possible by modern scholarship, present-day Buddhists from Korea were able to recall Gandhāra in the “qian” of Zhuqian, albeit erroneously. The prayer for the daily service in contemporary Korean Buddhism has the phrase “From Sŏgŏn to Tongjin, and finally to our Haedong . . .” Here “Sŏgŏn” (C. Xiqian) means “Qian in the west,” i.e., “Qianzhu (India) in the west,” “Tongjin” (C. Dongjin) means “Jin in the east,” i.e., “China in the east,” and “Haedong” means the “East of the Sea,” which is Korea. Sŏgŏn could also give the illusion that it means “Gandhāra in the west,” although it seems unlikely that any Korean Buddhists are confused here 34. As

(www on Tanshi), “In the Song period five monks from Tianzhu traveled and reached there, first practicing the Buddhist Dharma” (section on Maranant’a), “Sŏk Ado is sometimes called originally a person from Tianzhu” (section on Ado); in vol. 2, “Pimoluo Zhendi from the country of Uddiyana in northern Tianzhu” (section on Anhong), “Finally with Master Hyŏnjo, [he] reached the Mahābodhi Monastery in Xiqian” (section on Hyŏn’gak), “[He] finally reached the middle Indo and venerated the bodhi tree” (section on HYŏN'ae). 53 The “Preface to the Nan-rang stele” is also cited in the Samguk sagi (4, King Chinhong 37th year) written seventy years earlier than the Haedong kosung chon. Kakhnun either saw the inscription himself or cited it from the Samguk sagi

34 Chang might have been confused on “Zhuqian” in the same way. I regard Chang’s translation as a respectable scholarly work based on meticulous research. Anyone can make a mistake, and such mistakes are supposed to be identified and corrected by other scholars afterwards. Unfortunately, in the current case the mistake was not noticed but repeated and expanded on an ignominious scale. In the passage “Finally with Master Hyŏnjo, [he] reached the Mahabodhi Monastery in Xiqian” in the section on Hyŏn’gak of the Haedong kosung chon (see n. 32), Chang apparently understands “Xiqian” as “Qianzhu in the west” correctly and translates it as “[Middle] India.” However, it is obvious that she did not need to insert the word “Middle” here because “India” would have been sufficient as in the original text because the meaning is clear enough. Partly an
“Sŏgŏn” (Xiqian) does not mean “Gandhāra in the west,” “Qianzhu” does not mean “Gandhāra of Tianzhu.” This is clear and simple. The Haedong kosŏng chŏn only adds one idea to those presented in the Samguk sagi and Samguk yusa: he came from India.35

The So-called Birthplace of Maranant’a

At the end of the 1990s when the claim that Maranant’a originated in Gandhāra was brought up, some suggested that Maranant’a’s actual birthplace had been identified. The designated site is Chota Lahor in the Swabi district located in the eastern side of the Peshawar basin, the center of ancient Gandhāra. I was not able to believe this from the outset. I can imagine that an individual who left the Indian subcontinent and reached Korea more than 1600 hundred years ago can still be remembered at the place of his origin only when he has whatever merit to ensure the preservation of his memory at the place. All the figures from history whose birthplaces are known in the present day are those who are historically or locally significant enough to be celebrated—regardless of the validity of their significance in terms of actual historicity. However, Maranant’a is known only through the three Korean historical sources from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and utterly unknown outside the context of Korean Buddhism. How can he still be remembered by the inhabitants of a small village in an Islamic country where Buddhism was completely forgotten and the interaction with Buddhists from East Asia was entirely severed during the last thousand years until the modern discovery of Buddhism and its material remains during the nineteenth century? How can one believe that the birthplace of a person from ancient India can be pinpointed with such minute precision? Being extremely incredulous of the claim, I once personally asked its primary exponent, Min Hee Sik (Min Hŭi-sik in proper Korean romanization), for its evidence. He only gave me an evasive answer, saying that the record exists in a French work without specification. The answer itself seemed to me highly doubtful because it can be rightfully questioned how the information regarding the birthplace of such a person as Maranant’a is handed down to us through a French record.

In early 2001, a Buddhist newspaper in Korea reported Min’s explanation that allegedly supports his claim. I will cite the article in its entirety:

Is Maranant’a, who is recorded in historical sources as an Indian monk who landed at Pulgap-myŏn, Yŏnggwang-gun, and transmitted Buddhism to Paekche, a real person in history? Efforts to clarify the trace of Maranant’a and solve this mystery finally come to fruition. On February 12, Professor Emeritus Min Hee Sik of Hanyang University states in an interim report being prepared with the subject “From Gandhāra to Yŏnggwang”: “It has been confirmed through the examination of materials at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, the British Museum library, the National Diet Library of Japan, and reputable museums overseas as well as the field research in Pakistan that Maranant’a transmitted Buddhism to Paekche by way of China.” Especially, Prof. Min notes that he found a record in a collection of old literary materials

35 On what basis did Kakhun state the remark about Zhuqian? He cites the “old record(s)” as a source, but does not specify it. Many of his phrases in the relevant part concern the praise of Maranant’a in rather trite expressions rather than the statement of historical facts. Therefore, we cannot rule out the possibility that he created the sentence regarding Maranant’a’s origin in Zhuqian based on the remark on “Hu monk” from the earlier sources, though we have no way to firmly decide on this problem.
published by Dr. Ashraf Khan that corresponds to the accounts of Maranant’a in the *Samguk sagi* and the *Samguk yusa*. The particular old document reports, “Maranant’a, who was born in Chota Lahor in present-day Pakistan, ancient Gandhāra, arrived at the port of Pŏpsŏng’o in 384.” It also carries the record that Maranant’a left Chota Lahor at the age of thirty, passed Taxila and Peshawar along the Silk Road, and propagated Buddhism in such places as Khotan, Dunhuang, the Eastern Jin, Chang’an, and Luoyang for fourteen years. In addition, Prof. Min says, the name of Pŏpsŏng’o of Yŏnggwang in the Paekche period was Amup’o, which was a variant of Amit’a (Amitābha), and later changed to Pŏpsŏng’o to clarify its identify as a port (O 2001).

Min enumerates a number of libraries in Europe and Japan where he claims to have collected materials for evidence for his assertion. However, what materials did he procure there? It is not stated at all.

In the same year he published a small book titled *Gandara esŏ Yŏnggwang kkaji* (From Gandhāra to Yŏnggwang; in 65 pages in total), in which we can read his own explanation in more detail. I will cite from the book at length in order to help the readers better judge the background of his claim and its basis.

In order to find Maranant’’a birthplace I visited Pakistan several times, and in order to check documents and purchase books, I also visited Japan three times as well as France and China. Because few documents are available in Pakistan, the visits to Pakistan, altogether of seven times, are intended for field surveys. For other countries, my purpose was to check the literature and purchase books.

In 1959, I went to France to study on a scholarship from the French government. Next spring I was told by Professor Michel Victor to give a presentation on Korean culture at a meeting of the Association for the Friendship of International students, in which students were supposed to introduce the cultures of their home countries. I wrote [home in Korea] to send me a number of books on Korean history and culture. However, when I consulted the professor for not being able to find good materials for introducing Korean thought, he [?] advised me to search at the Bibliothèque Nationale. I was surprised to have access there to [the information about] the cultures of Korea and Asia regarding which I had not known.

I was able to collect a record concerning the invention of metal movable types in Korea as well as many useful materials about Buddhist and Confucian cultures specialist, has enough knowledge about Buddhism so as to write such books as *Buddhism and Western Thought* (1989) and *Lotus Sutra and the New Testament* (1995) in Korean. However, he received no formal training suitable to conduct historical research on Gandhāra or Korean Buddhism. I hope that the readers will take his background into consideration in reading the citations from his book presented in this section.

The person could have been either Michel or Michelle Victor, but I was not able to find out more because I have information only through Min’s transcription in Korean.
of Korea. In the process I found out that the hometown of Maranant’a, who transmitted to Paekche, was Chota Lahor. I was busy preparing notes for the presentation at the time. But with its completion I was occupied [again] with the work on my own specialty, French literature, and was not able to continue research further on the subject (Min 2001A, 3–4).

Here Min repeats his previous answer to me that he discovered the record of the birthplace of Maranant’a in Paris—here more specifically, at the Bibliothéque Nationale. However, there is absolutely no information regarding the exact nature of the record. As far as I know, it has never been presented up to now. If he has not been able to present any actual evidence over the last twenty years, I cannot help but conclude that such record does not exist. If this is the case, I suspect that Min, having been confused out of his vague memory of what he had read regarding the transmission of Buddhism in Paekche (in which the account of Marananta’s must have been included) at the Bibliothéque Nationale a long time ago, may have had the illusion that he had found Maranant’a’s birthplace. Possibly, although he was never able to locate the record again in searching through his memory, he has stuck to his claim and repeated and spread it, thus misleading many people in Korea and Pakistan.38

In the book Min also talks about a record in the so-called “collection of old literary materials compiled by Dr. Ashraf Khan.”

I returned from a trip to Pakistan [in 1998] and published a book titled Gandhāra, the Birthplace of Buddhism [in Korean in 1999]. About the time, an exhibition of Gandhāran art was held at the Seoul Arts Center in Seoul and the Kyobo Culture Center in Busan, for two months at each place. Sometime after, the venerable X of the Paegyang monastery, who was trying to build a commemorative hall at the port of Pŏpsŏngp’o of Yŏnggwang, the place of Marananta’s landing, asked me to visit Pakistan together. The group that consists of the governor of the Yŏnggwang County, its staff, businessmen, and professors first visited Mathurā in India to see Buddhist images from Mathurā and then traveled to Pakistan to view Gandhāran art. At the time, we were able to visit a site related to Maranant’a at the Galli village in Chota Lahor with the guidance of local people.

Around the time Ashraf Khan, an archaeologist who came back from a trip to England, gave me a document that records Maranant’a’s birth in Chota Lahor and transmission of Buddhism to Paekche along with a map that shows Maranant’a’s itinerary starting from Chota Lahor, passing through the Tianshan mountains, reaching China, and finally arriving in Korea (Paekche). The document and the map were photocopied by Ashraf Khan at the British Museum library.

The document reads: “In AD 384, an Indian monk Maranatha or Mallananda (Gandhara = Chota Lahors) (Salatura) reached the kingdom of Paekche and

38 I wondered how Min got the idea particularly about Chota Lahor as the birthplace of Maranant’a because Chota Lahor seemed a place that would not have been easily occurred to one who is not familiar with the local geography. The modern Chota Lahor, identified as the ancient Sālātura, is actually much better known as the birthplace of the famous Sanskrit grammarian Pāṇini as discussed as early as in Alexander Cunningham’s report on the Peshawar basin from 1863-1864 (Cunningham 1872, 95). The information must be written somewhere in works in French as well, and it is possible that Min confused Pāṇini with Maranant’a.
propagated the Dharma. From Korea (Paekche), Bouddhisme [sic.] reached Japan in AD 552 (Min 2001A, 5).39

Min mentions a document and a map found in England. However, again, he does not offer any specific explanation about the document. Still, I can recognize immediately that the map placed right below the passage cited above in Min’s book is not from any old literary material.40 The “PAKISTAN” we find in the map is, of course, the name of a country created as late as 1947. Also, we find the place name “Dunhuang” in the map. This differs from the spelling used in the old French system, “Touen-Houang,” and from the spelling in the old Wade-Giles system in English, “Tun-huang,” but it follows the Chinese Pinyin system, which was first adopted internationally in 1982 and came to be established in the 1990s. On the other hand, the Buddhist cave site Maijishan is written as “MAI-CHI-SHAN” following the old Wade-Giles system. I was able to see immediately that the map was created by someone who is not familiar with the Chinese romanization systems, probably a Pakistani scholar, perhaps by Ashraf Khan.41

As well known to scholars in Pakistan, M. Ashraf Khan is a distinguished Pakistani archaeologist, formerly of the Department of Archaeology and Museums of Pakistan and of the Quaid-i-Azam University. He first visited Korea in 1999 at the time of the first exhibition of Gandhāran art in Korea and since then has maintained close contacts with a number of Korean scholars. In a personal conversation with me, he admits that Min seems to have incorrectly quoted him from a book (or article) he published in Pakistan.42 Ashraf Khan’s remark on Maranant’a was actually based on what he learned from Min. Understandably, he had no choice but to believe what Min, supposedly a Korean expert, claims. Thus, Min’s claim was cited by Ashraf Khan, and Min cites Ashraf Khan as evidence for his own claim.43 Sans phrase, there is absolutely no grounds for Min’s claim regarding the birthplace of Maranant’a. Min lists 27 works in Japanese as the “Major References” in his

39 It is not clear whether Min’s claim on assigning the birthplace of Maranant’a at Chota Lahor was affected by the reference to Zhuqian in the Haedong kosōng chôn. Rather, I have an impression that he may have gotten the idea separately. Still, Min’s book (2001A, 41–42) does cite the account from the Haedong kosōng chôn. The fact that Zhuqian is translated as “Gandhāra of Tianzhu” as well as the overall phrases in the translation indicates that he most likely cites the passage from Chang’s translation with slight modification, though he fails to state the source as he does in other places of the book.

40 The map is captioned “The Itinerary of Maranant’a from Gandhāra to Paekche (British Museum library. Obtained by Ashraf Khan)” in Korean.

41 It is notable that in the last sentence in the citation above from a document from the British Museum library we find “Bouddhisme” in the French spelling instead of “Buddhism” in the English spelling. Ashraf Khan did his postgraduate work in France.

42 Personal communications with Ashraf Khan, January and July 2019. I was not able to obtain precise information about Ashraf’s publication that Min presumably mentions.

43 The newspaper article I cited above includes the following report: “Prof. Min notes that he found a record compiled in a collection of old literary materials published by Dr. Ashraf Khan that coincides with the accounts of Maranant’a in the Samguk sagi and the Samguk yusa.” This seems an incorrect citation because Min writes in his book: “It is a well-known fact that Maranant’a transmitted Buddhism to Paekche. I have already clarified this through the documents found in the British Museum library and the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, which completely agree with what the old Korean historical sources inform us” (Min 2001A, 41). It is not at all historically significant that the accounts of the European documents coincide with those of the old Korean sources because it seems most likely to have been the case that the former simply cite the latter. The European documents do not prove or support anything because they are not primary sources as the old Korean texts are. In citing the document allegedly obtained by Ashraf Khan as discussed here, Min tries in an identical way to present the so-called “European document” for supporting his illusionary claim. This shows again that he lacks the basic skills necessary for historical research.
book. However, being familiar with all these works, I can say confidently that we can find no remark on Maranant’a, let alone his birthplace, in these works. I cannot help but say that the claim that Maranant’a was born in Chota Lahor must be a creation of Min’s sheer imagination, if not confusion.

Min also made efforts to find traces of Maranant’a’s life at Chota Lahor. Another passage from his book reads:

In the summer of 1990 I traveled to Pakistan and stayed in Lahore. Due to the circumstances of the company, I was able to look around Chota Lahor only, acquired books at the Taxila Museum, and returned home. In 1998, I traveled again to Pakistan . . . visited Chota Lahor, but was not able to locate his birthplace or monastery site.

In the next winter, I visited Pakistan upon the invitation of the Minister of Culture of Pakistan with a request to write a book on Gandhāran culture. . . . The consul [X] of the Korean Embassy invited me to dinner with Dr. Dani, an authority on Gandhāran culture. While listening to interesting stories about Buddhist images of Gandhāra from Dr. Dani, I asked him about Maranant’a. Dr. Dani was somewhat aware of the name Maranant’a and his activities, but did not know in detail because the scope of Gandhāran art he worked on was too broad. Yet he promised that he would give me more concrete information based on further research when we meet next time (Min 2001A, 4).

Dr. Ahmad Hasan Dani (1930–2009), a great pioneering scholar in Pakistani archaeology, requires no introduction to Pakistani readers. Unless he had already been deeply knowledgeable about Korean Buddhism, he would not have been able to recognize such an obscure figure as Maranant’a in the entire history of Buddhism. Rather, I assume that Min embellished Dani’s ambiguous answer given out of ignorance or perplexity—as reflecting his awareness of Maranant’a.

Min’s account continues:

. . . the Minister of Culture of Pakistan invited the governor of the Yŏnggwang County and other members of the group and declared that they would conduct excavations at the site on the basis of the examination of the literary documents and the field surveys through mutual cooperation. Interviews with news reporters were followed, and next day the news were published in every newspaper of Pakistan.44

In order to discuss this matter in more detail, I traveled to Pakistan [again] . . . At this time, I visited Chota Lahor together with two Pakistani archaeologists, Abdul Azeem and Ashraf Khan. A few days earlier Ashraf Khan did a survey in the area and searched for persons who might remember Maranant’a through oral tradition. Ashraf Khan conversed with them in Urdu and then translated their answers for me in French. In our common sense it is hard to believe that the memory of the incidents dating back to more than a thousand years ago has been handed down in oral tradition. However, Buddhist scriptures were transmitted in oral tradition for a long period of time, and in India the old custom and oral tales more than five-thousand years old are still preserved. . . . There were fairly many people who recognized the name Maranant’a or had [at least] the vague memory of him. Among them, Ugumal (65 years old), Janan (36), and Iqbal (18) told me stories about the life of Maranant’a. The core of

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44 This probably took place in 1999.
the stories is that he was born at the Galli village, was converted to Buddhism, and left for the east. . . . I tried to reconstruct his life based on the stories I heard (Min 2001A, 5–6).

Min is aware of the potential problem with the credibility of the oral tradition, but insists on its reliability in the case of Maranant’a by citing the transmission of Buddhist scriptures in oral tradition. However, the oral tradition of an obscure person in history is a completely different matter from that of sacred religious scriptures. It seems to me that with the large publicity that Chota Lahor gained through Pakistani news media the local people became familiar with the name Maranant’a. This is also what my Pakistani colleagues including Ashraf Khan suspect.

In the second chapter of his book, Min delineates the “Life of Maranant’a according to the Oral Tradition.” It is full of many anecdotes, virtually like folktales, most likely created through Min’s own imagination if not that of the local people. I will excerpt here only what might be deemed as showing the slightest affinities to a historical account, though its historicity in this case is not at all attested to by any evidence.

Maranant’a memorized the Vedas at the age of five and worked hard to manage his Brahmanical household. However, as he grew up, he found the Brahmanical teaching no longer inspiring. . . . His mother hoped that he would raise a family and maintain a life as a person who upheld his social responsibility. She frequently hosted tea meetings and invited girls from esteemed Brahmanical or kṣatriya families so that his son could freely associate with them. But Maranant’a did not show any interest in them. . . . At the age of ten he mastered every teaching of Brahmanism as well as astronomy, mathematics, physics, and medicine. . . . Rejecting his mother who tried to dissuade him, he left home. He first entered a Buddhist monastery at Chota Lahor. There he was ordained and learned the basic teaching of Buddhism. Having been fed up with the trite teaching of Brahmanism, he felt that his spirit was invigorated through learning the Buddhist teaching. Located in the middle of a fertile plain, Chota Lahor was economically affluent and academically advanced. Maranant’a met a teacher called Mahāśvāna in the monastery. Mahāśvāna was initially suspicious of the truthfulness of Maranant’a intention to follow the Buddhist teaching because of his Brahman background . . . Pretending as if he had no interest in Maranant’a, Mahāśvāna carefully observed Maranant’a in every move. He summoned Maranant’a in hours other than regular classes and examined Maranant’a’s progress in study and his thought. Vasubandhu, also from the Brahman class, worked at the same monastery. . . . Maranant’a spent joyous days while learning the life of the Buddha, his early teachings, the confrontation between diverse Buddhist schools, the theory of Mahāyāna, and the teaching of Yogācāra. By studying the theory of dependent origination [pratītyasamutpāda], he was able to resolve easily his questions about inequality and suffering in the world, for which he had long sought for answers.

Min writes this name as “Mahasyubana” in Korean. I transcribed it as “Mahāśvāna” because I cannot leave it in the way he writes it in Korean—despite the fact that aśvāna inauspiciously means “dog” while aśva means “horse.” I was not able to identify any person close to “Mahasyubana” in Indian Buddhism, though I presume that Min picked it up from his knowledge of historical figures who had been supposedly active in this area. Perhaps he was thinking of Pārśva, a master who is known to have resided in the Kaniska monastery in Peshawar, or the name must have been his arbitrary creation.
. . . At the time the lectures were given in the Kharoṣṭhī language, and every scripture was scribed in the Pāli language. However, there were scriptures scribed in the Pāli, Kharoṣṭhī, and Sanskrit languages though in incomplete form. Based at Chota Lahor, Maranant’a practiced mainly in Taxila and Peshawar. As his learning reached a certain level, he moved around visiting the remains of the Buddha in Gandhāra. . . . Listening to Vasubandhu’s elucidation on ālayavijñāna and manasvijñāna, Maranant’a was absorbed in indescribable joy. . . . (Min 200A, 12-16).

For any Indian monks who are better and more securely known as originating in Gandhāra through literary sources—such as Lokakṣema, Asanga, and Vasubandhu—no such detailed oral tradition is handed down. Maranant’a would be truly exceptional, if this synopsis of his life claimed to be based on the oral tradition were credible at all. It is, of course, highly unlikely.

Later in the book, Min describes Maranant’a’s activities after his departure from Gandhāra, mainly in China.

Maranant’a left Chota Lahor at the age of thirty, traveled through Peshawar, Swāt, Gilgit, and Hunza, passed the Tianshan mountains, practiced in Kucha, and reached Dunhuang. It was about the time when the excavation of the cave temples started at Dunhuang. From there he went to the Eastern Jin in 372—when he was thirty-four. He educated monks in China. The difficulty for the monastic community in China in emulating the practice of India or Gandhāra was a huge difference in social system and custom between China and India/Gandhāra (Min 2001A, 29).

Maranant’a arrived in China at thirty-four in 373 during the reign of Emperor Xiaowu (373–396) of the Eastern Jin. Maranant’a came to China by the land route passing through the Western Regions. We have already seen his itinerary. . . . Maranant’a journey to China through the Western Regions is attested in a document acquired for me by Ashraf Khan at the British Museum library (Min 2001A, 30–31).

Buddhism was transmitted to Koguryŏ [of Korea] from the Huabei region [northern China]. . . . However, to Paekche, which had active cultural

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46 As most experts are familiar, Kharoṣṭhī is not a language, but a script distinctively used in the Northwest of the subcontinent approximately from the third century BCE to the fifth century CE.

47 Pāli was not used in Gandhāra. The language locally used for Buddhist scriptures in this area is called Gāndhārī by modern scholars.

48 In the same year Min (2001B) published a short story of Maranant’a’s early life with a similar narrative in a literary journal. It is evident here again that Min cannot distinguish fiction from a history. Min also published literally a “novel” in Korean titled Maranant’a, the progenitor of Paekche Buddhism and coauthored with Chang Sŏng-uk (Min & Chang 2005). It was actually written mostly by Chang except for “some ten pages” as stated in Chang’s preface in its second edition published with Chang as the sole author (Chang 2013).

49 In the Korea text, he actually writes here “Chŏnyang (Dunhuang).” I had difficulty in figuring out what he means by “Chŏnyang” because there is no such alternate name for Dunhuang. Thanks to the help of one of my students, I came to the understanding that he must have meant “Chŏn Lyang” (C. Qian Liang), “Former Liang,” which ruled the Dunhuang area in 314–376.

50 Min shows here a drawing captioned as “Monastic costume of Maranant’a’s period.” However, the drawing is based on a photo of a statue of Vasubandhu made by the Japanese sculptor Unkei in 1212 during the Kamakura period of Japan. Although the statue may portray Vasubandhu, the costume is that of Japanese Buddhist monks of the period, not that of “Maranant’a’s period.”
relationship with the Jiangnan [south of the Yangtze River] region, Maranant’a from Gandhāra brought Buddhism in 384. . . . It is hard to find evidence for Maranant’a in Chinese sources. When I met Dr. Dani in Pakistan for the second time, I was able to learn through some sources that Maranant’a focused on propagation with emphasis on the salvation of people from extreme misery and the morality that would help remedy the corrupt society. Dr. Dani additionally pointed out that Maranant’a’s emphasis on the salvation in the Pure Land and the morality coincides with the thought of Huiyuan and that the two must have communicated each other. . . . As the Eastern Jin defeated the aggression of Fu Jian [of the Former Qin] and got out of the crisis in 383, Maranant’a left for the propagation in Paekche (Min 2001A, 33–34).

Therefore, Maranant’a’s activity in China may be summed up as an effort to save the society from chaos on the basis of the morality. Maranant’a worked in China and Paekche for teaching on the practice of morality and the salvation of human beings through attaining rebirth in the Western Pure Land. For this reason, despite his vigorous activity in China, he did not write his own work or translate any scriptures, and thus his name is not recorded [in China] (Min 2001A, 37).

Virtually nothing that Min states here—the itinerary, dates, activities, whatsoever—is supported by any evidence. All this is a sheer fiction without any historical basis. After all, if Maranant’a was not remembered in China for whatever reason, how could he describe Maranant’a’s achievements in such detail?

Min literally indulges in a flight of fancy by linking his imagination concerning Maranant’a to historical incidents in China that apparently have nothing to do with Maranant’a. If Dani indeed had any materials to support Min’s account, it would dramatically change our historical knowledge of Korean Buddhism. No evidence whatsoever discovered by Dani has been presented publicly. I believe that this is also Min’s sheer fantasy.

Citing Dani, Min also discusses the archaeological remains of Maranant’a.

From the end of March to the early April of 2001, I traveled again to Pakistan . . . . Professor Dani invited me in Islamabad. Delighted to see me, Dr. Dani told me important information about Maranant’a. According to him, Maranant’a was born at the Galli village in Chota Lahor, and the monastery where he devoted himself to practice is located at the Bund village. The Hund village nearby is a place where Alexander the Great stopped over and a monastery from the Kushan dynasty is buried underground; the monastery yielded many artifacts and is still being excavated . . . . Dr. Dani described how the young Maranant’a traveled through Gilgit and Hunza, crossed the Tianshan mountains, passed Kucha, and reached China, while [most of] the travelers after him used the sea route. The second meeting with Dr. Dani completely resolved my questions (Min 2001A, 6–7).

I do not know on what grounds Dani would have told such words to Min. Perhaps Dani joined Min in his illusionary imagination. Or Dani simply mentioned archaeological remains around Chota Lahor, and Min twisted

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51 Huiyuan (334–416), commonly called “Huiyuan of Lushan,” was posthumously considered to be the first patriarch of the Pure Land School of China.
what Dani said in a way that suited his imaginary account of Maranant’a’s activity. In the passage above, we can sense that what Min claims as Dani’s description of Maranant’a’s itinerary is actually a common land route connecting northern India and China. It seems to me that Min arbitrarily distorted it as Maranant’a’s itinerary.

I have so far cited Min’s claims regarding Maranant’a’s birthplace at great length. Perhaps one might wonder whether it was necessary to quote all these words surely deplorable in academic standard in such detail. However, I believe that reading Min’s claim in his own words must help the readers see for themselves what was really wrong. It is truly lamentable that claims based on such sloppy grounds have held sway over the Buddhist community in Korea and the learned public in Pakistan for the last full two decades.

Min’s stance in approaching the issue of Maranant’a can be seen in the preface of his book.

When we write a scholarly paper on a [historical] fact still hardly known to the world, we have to embrace two stances. For example, when studying ancient Chinese history, one of the methods is to explore [the subject] by setting up a materialistic system on the basis of archaeologically checking material evidence starting with the Peking man and proceeding through the Neolithic period up to the Yin [Shang] dynasty. The other method is to mythologically and spiritually explore the process of the development of history from its foundation by the Three Sovereigns of Suiren, Fuxi, and Shennong to the Five Emperors up to Yao and Shun (Min 2001A, 1).

In examining activities, thoughts, and emotions of human beings in the past, mythology is important as much as history. However, we should not forget that mythology is another form of history accumulated over time from the past. From the historical perspective, mythology cannot be used to override historical facts. At the present moment, unlike in the Koryŏ period (936–1392) or Chosŏn period (1392–1910) when a great deal of historical accounts were fabricated in diverse ways, it is no longer allowed for an individual to arbitrarily concoct history based on his/her “spiritual” imagination and thereby mislead the public.

Min also says in the preface of his book.

This study contains my own profound faith and prayer besides the logical pursuit. It is my wish and the intention of the heaven to cast light on the true value of Korean culture by resurrecting the unknown aspect of Paekche culture, which was as splendid as the Buddhist culture of Silla. To promote the Yŏnggwang area as a place of important cultural remains to the world and help it flourish culturally and economically can lead to the development of Korea (Min 2001A, 1).

Yŏnggwang, located in the South Chŏlla province, has been publicized as the port of Maranant’a’s arrival in Korea and graced with a commemorative hall built for Maranant’a in the architectural style of Gandhāra. Can it be justified to forge an episode in history for the development of a particular locale? In reading the passage above, I cannot help but suspect that even Min himself must have been aware of the dubiousness of his claim.

Conclusion

An exhibition on Kaya, one of the ancient kingdoms of Korea, which recently opened at the National Museum of Korea, rekindled the controversy regarding the historicity of the legend that tells the transmission of Buddhism to the kingdom by a lady called Hŏ Hwang-ok,
who is said to have sailed from Ayut’a (or Ayodhyā in India) during the first century CE. I am sympathetic with the assessment that the legend is an invention from a much later period (Yi 2003). Yet this legend is at least recorded in a historical source, the *Samguk yusa*, regardless of its actual historicity. However, the claim that Maranant’a came from Gandhāra is based on an absurd mistake in translating the word Zhuqian as “Gandhāra of India,” despite the fact that it simply means “India.” The assertion that Maranant’a’s birthplace is identified as Chota Lahor in Pakistan is most likely a fictional idea generated by confusion or illusion. It is lamentable that these baseless claims have been almost established as historical facts over the last two decades both in Korea and Pakistan. The greater shame would be if Koreans and Pakistanis continue to accept this misunderstanding and the chain of almost farcical events it has generated. I urge that these claims be straightened out as soon as possible unless anyone wishes to continue to profit from this ludicrous pageantry.\(^{52}\)

* While preparing this paper, I sought help from Professor Kim Jihyun, a specialist in Chinese Daoism at Seoul National University, especially with regard to the origin of the word Zhuqian and its possible link to Daoists. Though I gave up my earlier hypothesis regarding Daoists’ initiative in the creation of the word, I received a great deal of useful advice from her as to the contextual problems of Chinese religions and the understanding of passages from Chinese texts. I would like to express sincere gratitude to Professor Kim.

\(^{52}\) Concluding this paper, I would like to add a short comment on the assertion proposed since the late 1980s that Maranant’a arrived at the port of Pŏpsŏngp’o and founded the monastery Pulgapsa in Yŏnggwang. Despite the number of arguments suggested in support of the claim, I find that there is no substantial evidence admissible on scholarly or reasonable grounds. Because the problems with this claim are discussed sufficiently in the articles by Sin Chong-wŏn (2006) and Cho Kyŏng-ch’ŏl (2014), I will not provide my own criticism in this article, which has already become too long.
Glossary (selected words)

Amit’a 阿彌陀
Amup’o 阿無浦
Ayut’a 阿踰陀
beifang 北方
Bo Juyi 白居易
cai 材
Ch’oe Ch’i-wön 崔致遠
Chŏn Lyang (C. Qian Liang) 前凉
Dao 道
Dayuan 大元
Fanyu zaming 梵語雜名
Haedong 海東
Hó Hwang-ok 許黃玉
Hu 胡
Huabei 華北
Huiyuan 慧遠
huseng 胡僧
Indo 印度
Jiangnan 江南
Jin 晉
Kakhun 覺訓
Kangju 康居
kun 昆
Laozi xiseng jing 老子西昇經
Maranant’a (C. Moluonantuo) 摩羅難陀
mofa 末法
Nanta (Nanda, C. Nantuo) 難陀
Pimoluo Zhendi 毘摩羅真諦
Pŏpsŏngp’o 法聖浦
Pulgapsa 佛甲寺
qian 乾
qianzhu shengren 竺乾聖人
Qiantuoluo 乾陀羅
Qianzhu 乾竺
Shendu 身毒
Sŏgŏn (C. Xiqian) 西乾
Sŏk 釋
Taiyuan 太元
tianming 天命
tianzi 天子
Tianzhu (K. Ch’ŏnch’uk) 天竺
Tonghak (C. Tongxue) 諧學
Tongjin (C. Dongjin) 東晉
wuwei 无為
Xiqian (K. Sŏgŏn) 西干
Xixue 喜學
xiyu 西域
yi 杙
Yueguang tongzi jing 月光童子經
Yŏnngwang 靈光
Zhengwu lun 正誣論
Zhidun 支遼
zhu (in Zhuqian/Qianzhu) 竺
Zhuqian 竺乾
Zhuting shiyuan 祖庭史苑
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